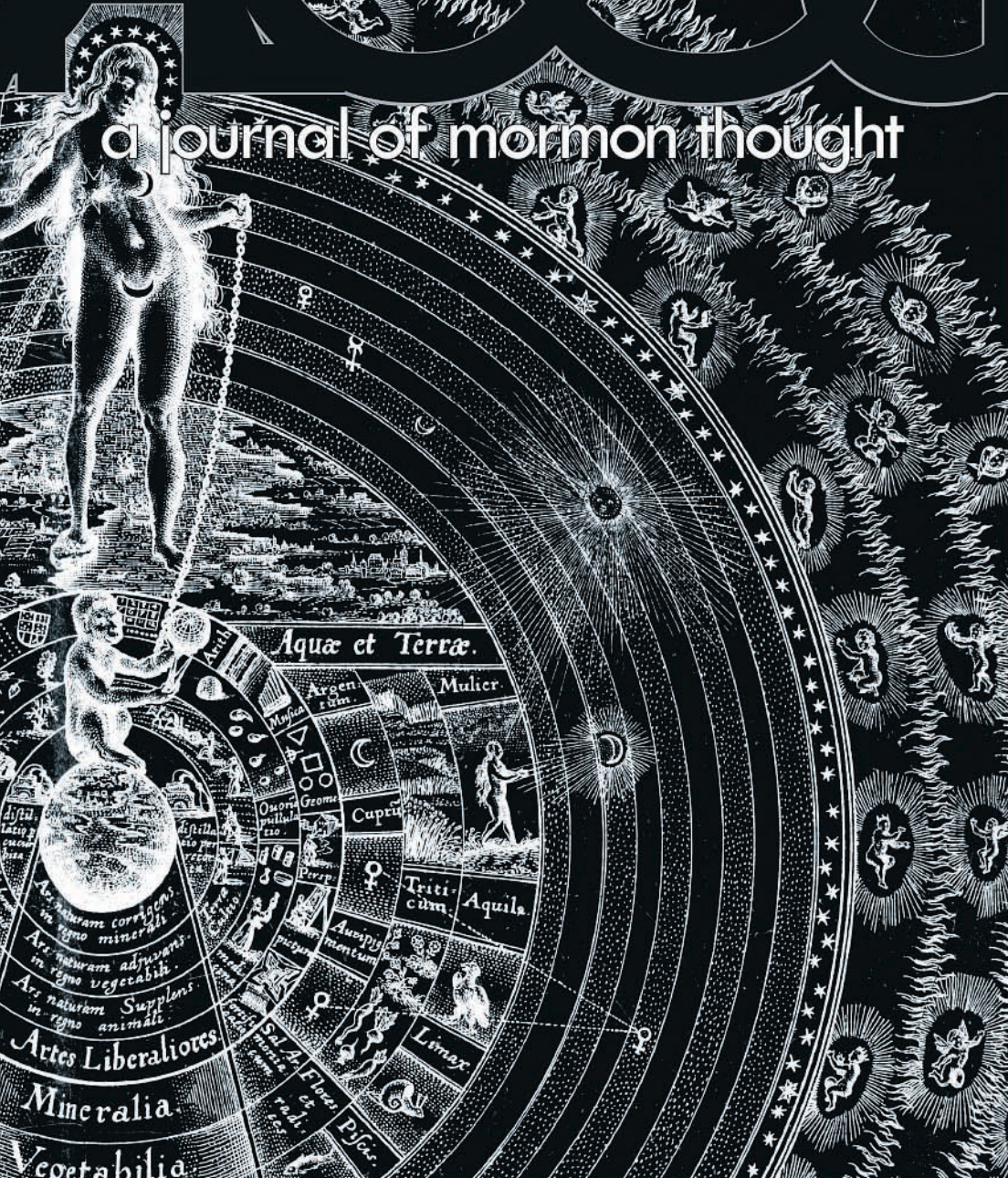


MAGI

a journal of mormon thought



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DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

is an independent quarterly established to express Mormon culture and to examine the relevance of religion to secular life. It is edited by Latter-day Saints who wish to bring their faith into dialogue with the larger stream of world religious thought and with human experience as a whole and to foster artistic and scholarly achievement based on their cultural heritage. The journal encourages a variety of viewpoints; although every effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and responsible judgment, the views expressed are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or of the editors.

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LETTERS

Deserted Promised Land?

Edwin Firmage Jr.'s call for a holy war against climate change requires a compass of curious workmanship because he insists we travel a promised land he long ago deserted. (See his "Light in Darkness: Embracing the Opportunity of Climate Change," *Dialogue* 43, no. 3 [Fall 2010]: 100–127).

He does not explain why, after discarding both organized religion and God, he believes not only that the burden of controlling climate change be shouldered by churches, but also that this is their obligation and that they hold the key to combating this threat, noting that it is from within "our communities of faith that the transformation of individuals and society must begin" (118). He argues that people of faith must "*live* the principles of Zion here and now" (199; emphasis his) to avoid the apocalypse (climate change). And he concludes: "Until every church and every member of every church is carbon-neutral, we Christians are not living the gospel that we profess" (119).

We?

I accept that those associated with a faith-based belief system often can be counted on to rally round a cause. But the gospel these people profess also asks help dealing with hunger, racism, unemployment, poverty, lack of medical care, housing, transportation, and landlords, not to mention their own marital, child-rearing, employment, and money issues. And, yes, spiritual uncertainty.

Why doesn't Firmage organize his fellow unchurched, spiritually detached population? They are certainly

equally responsible for the waste and disregard for this planet. Is he saying that they either don't have the same concern as those occupying pews each Sunday, that they lack responsibility, or that they are less competent to handle such an issue?

I'm also confused about his proclamation that "the central problem of our time is climate change, in comparison to which all other issues, even legitimate ones, shrink to insignificance" (101) because, as he states in note 12: "Righteousness is to society what water is to the desert, the source and sustainer of life" (124). Thus, the central problem is maintaining righteousness in all its forms to sustain life itself. Climate change certainly must be considered part of righteousness, but not *the* central issue above the righteousness that leads to feeding the poor, redistributing wealth, more productive use of resources, commitment to family in all its manifestations, and finding peaceful solutions to disputes at all levels. An increased love of others, the essence of righteousness, might bring about concern over climate change; I'm not sure the reverse is true.

What I'm suggesting is that while climate change certainly looms as a huge threat, the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots remains the catastrophe waiting to explode into a calamity. Until that problem is solved, forget climate change because an empty stomach makes a louder noise than a glacier sliding into the sea and those unable to pay this month's rent can't be expected to

get too worked up about the timing of spring runoffs.

Another point needs clarification. In his haste to condemn a society based on consumption, Firmage wrongly associates heart disease, obesity, and diabetes with “an indulgent lifestyle” (117). These diseases occur disproportionately among the non-white and poor, not among the rich. That suggests that a flawed medical system and indifference to poverty block controlling climate change more than consumption.

But whatever the issue, churches have no more obligation for finding solutions than other organizations—unless Firmage believes those outside organized religions lack commitment to saving earth.

Gary Rummler
Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin

Sanctimonious Review

I was dismayed to read Christian Harrison’s review of Jonathan Langford’s *No Going Back* (“Characters to Care About,” 43, no. 3 [Fall 2010]: 11–14). He starts off by condemning gay Mormons for their “vitriol and sanctimony” (211), as if that attack itself wasn’t vitriolic and sanctimonious. I admit he doesn’t specifically say it is the gays who are vitriolic. He *could* be referring to Church leaders. But that seems unlikely for someone who goes on to congratulate himself for being a gay but “faithful and active Latter-day Saint” (212) who is above the “sarmy” (211) acts of the rest of us gay Mormons.

Then he praises the book because it shows another gay Mormon who

chooses to live a life of celibacy in the Church. So is he critiquing a political agenda or a novel? I wasn’t aware that a chaste main character was required for a book to be considered good literature.

This novel may in fact be good, but that should be completely unrelated to the sexual decisions the main character makes. *Schindler’s List* was a great film (and novel) despite the adultery of the protagonist. For *Dialogue* to publish a review that seems based on the moral judgment of the reviewer rather than the quality of the writing seems misplaced in a journal of its reputation.

I appreciate the fact that *Dialogue* devoted space to review a gay novel at all, and I certainly don’t begrudge Langford a positive review. But I do think that the reviewer’s self-righteousness calls into question the value of the review.

Johnny Townsend
Seattle, Washington

Christian Harrison Responds

When I read Johnny Townsend’s letter, I genuinely wondered if he’d read someone else’s review of the book. So I reread what I’d written and am as puzzled as ever. Townsend levels a few accusations at me. Allow me to respond, briefly, inline:

He says that I condemn “gay Mormons for their ‘vitriol and sanctimony.’” What I *do* say is that the debate found at the intersection of “gay” and “Mormon” is filled with vitriol and sanctimony—which is true. And the vitriol and sanctimony are found on all sides.

He says I congratulate myself “for being a gay but ‘faithful and active Latter-day Saint.’” Stating that I am a gay man who is also a faithful and active Latter-day Saint is no more self-congratulatory than stating my preference for the color orange or my distaste for pastries. I could as easily be “faithful and active” in my local chapter of the ACLU as my church—and I could be happy in that state or disaffected. More importantly, however, my statement is essential to the review. My being gay *and* active in the Church necessarily colors my view of the book.

He says I consider myself “above the ‘smarmy’ acts of [other] gay Mormons.” Here Townsend catches an error on my part. I often confuse the terms “smarmy” and “swarthy.” My apologies to all concerned, especially to the oiled-and-bronzed denizens of the calendars in question.

He says I praise the book “because it shows another gay Mormon who chooses to live a life of celibacy in the Church.” Nowhere do I praise the protagonist’s choices. My review is almost entirely about the author’s approach to his material. But were I to praise the protagonist for choosing to “live a life of celibacy in the Church,” I’d be misrepresenting the character as the book is completely silent on Paul’s future.

So . . . the first three points strike me as a willful misreading of the review, and the last is a complete fabrication.

I feel strongly that *No Going Back* is evidence of a nascent opening of the Mormon heart with regards to homosexuality and homosexuals—a turn in affairs that has been excruciatingly slow in coming, but that promises a

brighter tomorrow for all concerned. Here’s hoping that day comes sooner rather than later.

*Christian Harrison
Salt Lake City, Utah*

Editor’s Comment

Both Johnny Townsend’s letter and Christian Harrison’s response serve as helpful reminders of the difficult and fraught nature of Mormon discourse around homosexuality. All of us approach the questions raised by Jonathan Langford’s book heavy laden with personal, cultural, and religious assumptions, biases, and judgments. I believe that Langford’s book, Harrison’s review, and these two letters offer instructive points for modeling discussion. First, Langford’s book reminds us that these questions are not abstractions, that real (or fictional, but fully developed) people must live with the questions and our best answers, and that we do well to develop the moral imagination necessary to sympathize with our brothers and sisters across the wide spectrum of opinions on these topics. Second, Harrison’s review demonstrates a willingness to forthrightly declare the subject position from which he approaches these questions. Third, Townsend’s letter speaks honestly from a position of some anger, and dares to speak freely about core issues. Finally, Harrison’s response to Townsend responds civilly to criticism with an elaboration of his understanding of the points of disagreement, as well as his objections to the criticism.

For my part, I wish to assure

Townsend (and other readers who may have drawn similar conclusions) that we chose to publish this review based on the literary merits of the book and its attempt to speak to readers of broadly varied convictions. Langford's book is particularly admirable for *not* passing preemptive moral judgment on the protagonist's choices but for simply laying out the dilemma that faces young gay Mormons and attempting a sympathetic portrayal of Mormons approaching this issue from many directions. My reading of Harrison's review leads me to the conclusion that he has fairly considered the book's successes and failures at the task it sets for itself, and that, like Langford, Harrison has not prejudged the course of action the novel's protagonist ought to take. (And Harrison is correct in pointing out that the novel itself is silent about Paul's decisions about how to live as a gay and/or Mormon man).

Mind-Changing Issue

I've changed my mind (or is it a change of heart?) about *Dialogue*.

From its beginning in 1966, I have lamented that *Dialogue* has been too cerebral and academic. Probably it was because I didn't feel smart enough to understand it much over all these years. Instead of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, I lobbied unsuccessfully for "A Journal of Mormon **Experience**." To me it seemed a continuing contest between experience and explanation with explanation (thought) always trumping—even marginalizing or disregarding—experience. Experience is one thing;

explaining it is another. And I couldn't help thinking in terms of a corollary to Heisenberg's celebrated uncertainty principle: $\Delta\Sigma \bullet \Delta E \approx K$, where Δ = uncertainty, Σ = experience, E = explanation, and K = some kind of Kairos (not chronos) constant. This means that, if one must explain something *exactly* (i.e., no uncertainty or $\Delta E = 0$), it will be done at the expense of any experience (i.e., $\Delta\Sigma = 4$).

The fall 2010 issue changed all that.

I read Dana Haight Cattani's sermon "Hidden Treasures" (221–26) and was moved to tears three times—the first as I read it quietly to myself, then to my very non-Mormon Protestant wife Birgitta, and finally to my beloved Orthodox priest friend, Fr. John, who had been an Episcopal priest for forty-seven years before his conversion to Orthodoxy. Sister Dana's sermon reminded me of Fr. John's inspired sermons.

My interest in this issue now was kindled enough to take on Edwin Firmage Jr.'s essay, "Light in Darkness: Embracing the Opportunity of Climate Change" (100–128) after which I wrote him to challenge his conclusions. He answered immediately with passion, and our fierce but friendly exchange continues at this writing.

Roger Terry's "Eternal Misfit" (182–202) wondrously reminded me of my own misfit stories of thirty-five years ago ("Heart Planting" and "Fugitive Half-Breed Russian Black Bear"), and I felt I'd found a lost-long brother.

Even Holly Welker's restrained re-

ply (v-vi) to Kevin Jones's challenge (v) to Holly's "Eight-Cow Wife" article (Spring 2010, 37-58) changed my prejudice toward her usually prickly reactions to those critical of feminist issues.

Of particular interest was David H. Bailey's "Creationism and Intelligent Design: Scientific and Theological Difficulties" (62-88). My evangelical Christian wife had earlier attended a course on this very subject at her church and wanted my opinion. Since I found the subject of no personal interest, I was reluctant to invest energy in it, but then the *Dialogue* issue came and Bailey's rigorous treatment took

the pressure off. It enabled Birgitta and me to have a civil, responsible discussion.

Amazingly enough (for me) I have now read everything in this issue, the last being Blair Dee Hodges's comprehensive essay comparing the views of C. S. Lewis to those of LDS authorities (21-61).

All in all, it's been a healthy read, and I have grown from it. Thanks, *Dialogue*, for a new lease on your stuff. I'm grateful that you include the email addresses of your contributors.

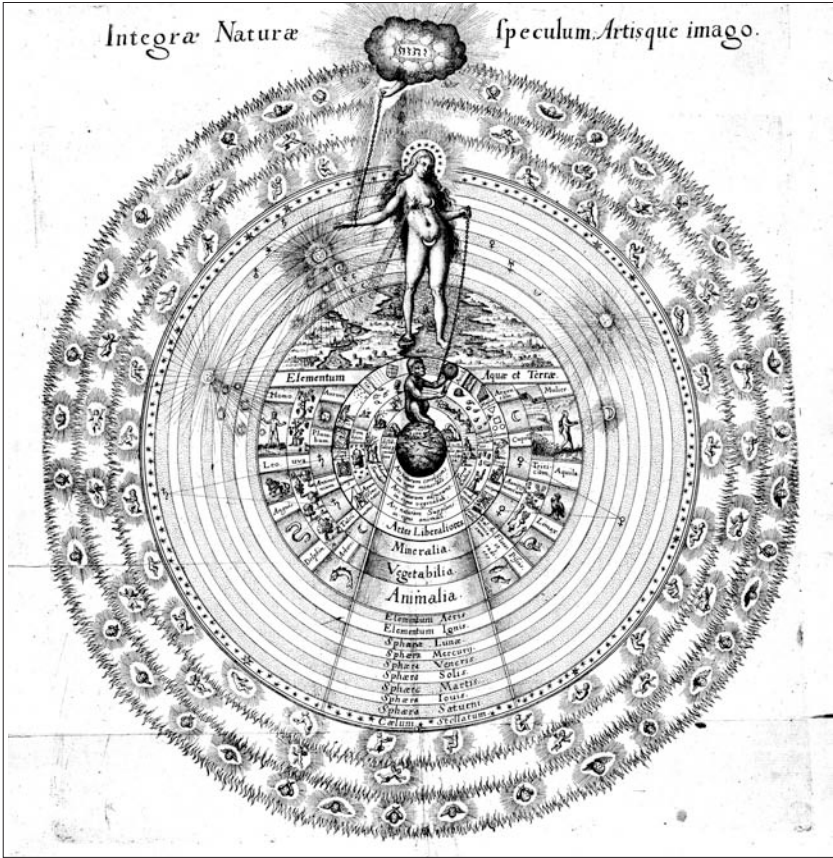
Eugene N. Kovalenko
Los Alamos, New Mexico

The Early Mormon Chain of Belonging

Samuel Brown

On March 10, 1844, Mormon founder Joseph Smith preached a sermon after the burial of his friend King Follett, killed by accidental rock-fall while building a well. To an assembled crowd of his followers, Smith proclaimed, “If you have power to seal on earth & in heaven then we should be crafty. . . . Go & seal on earth your sons & daughters unto yourself & yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory . . . use a little Craftiness & seal all you can & when you get to heaven tell your father that what you seal on earth should be sealed in heaven. I will walk through the gate of heaven and Claim what I seal & those that follow me & my Council.”¹

These instructions, an idiosyncratic combination of folk wit, biblical allusion, perfectionism, and a complex challenge to the waning theocentric heaven of Calvinism, thrilled early Latter-day Saints. Early Mormonism’s most prolific diarist, Apostle Wilford Woodruff, proclaimed this sermon “one of the most important & interesting subjects ever presented to the saints.”² Woodruff was impressed with good reason: This sermon dramatically illustrated several aspects of Joseph Smith’s theology and eschatology. Standing figuratively over the corpse of a loyal follower, Smith instructed his followers to require of God through their “Craftiness” that He honor the eternal persistence of their relationships.³ This funeral sermon, devoted generally to the relationship between the immortal prophet Elijah and the Messiah, pointed toward something grander than the immortalized hearth that would prevail in portions of mid-nineteenth-century Protestantism as the domestic heaven. Before and during Smith’s lifetime, the traditional view that human relationships amounted to nothing beside the majesty of God in the afterlife, often called



Robert Fludd (1574–1637) illustrated his 1617–1619 *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica . . .* with this “Integræ Naturæ Speculum Artisquæ Imago” (“*The Mirror of the Whole of Nature, and the Image of Art*”), which depicts the Great Chain of Being in its late medieval/early modern splendor. Notice particularly the integration of humanity and cosmos and the incorporation of astral imagery into the body.

“theocentric,” was transitioning to a “domestic” or “anthropocentric” model in which human relationships remained in full force in heaven.⁴ Over his religious career, Smith proposed a solution that relied on neither theocentric nor domestic views of afterlife.

To capture such an afterlife Smith employed a version of the ancient Great Chain of Being, a philosophical/theological construct that arranged all of creation, from stones to humans to angels to God, in exact hierarchical relations. This chain had ordered cosmic and human societies since early Christianity, with particular prominence in medieval thought, as exemplified in Robert Fludd’s 1618 depiction.

Notoriously supporting the divine right of kings, the chain’s importance had receded significantly in the wake of the American Revolution. Despite a loss in political and scientific currency, elements of the chain remained vividly alive in Joseph Smith’s world. Throughout his career, if most publicly and dramatically in the 1840s, Smith employed the Great Chain of Being (also known as the Scale of Being/Creation, *Scala Naturae*, or Golden Chain) in a novel familial reflex to define the afterlife fate of believers. In his transformation of the largely obsolete philosophical construct of the chain, Smith creatively mediated the tensions between the theocentric and domestic heavens, simultaneously negotiating the contradictory currents of the extended patriarchal family and the nuclear, “democratic” family structure of the transforming American Republic.⁵ His was a sacerdotal answer to the domestic heaven, not just one early version of it.

In an ambitious reworking of the concept, Joseph Smith linked all of creation in a new familial relationship that uprooted angels from the upper echelons of the chain and placed sanctified humans in their stead. Temple and priesthood ordinances— anointings, sealings, endowment, adoption, and polygamy— became the mechanisms by which Joseph Smith shattered death as a barrier, asserted salvation as a sacramental and relational state, and created a hierarchical kinship network whose ties were invulnerable to death. He thus cut through the competing religious views of his time: the apparent caprice of Calvinist election and the uncertainty of backsliding from Arminian regeneration.⁶ This Chain of Being, transmuted into a Chain of Belonging, made many early Mormon beliefs sensible: divine anthropology (the conspec-

ificity of angels, gods, and humans), the familialization of salvation (through temple sealings), and the continuity of human beings and cosmos (often called metaphysical “correspondence”).

Smith’s embrace of a revised chain demonstrates just how similar his worldview appeared to the antique worldview while simultaneously exhibiting a specific example of the more general process by which formal philosophical constructs evolve in the hands of non-specialist religious practitioners who are driven to meet specific communal and personal needs.⁷

This essay begins with a sketch of the origins and history of the Great Chain of Being. I then lay out the progression of Joseph Smith’s thought from the early 1830s until his death in 1844—a progression characterized by remarkable continuities of both social problems and theological solutions. Key documents in this development included (1) two remarkable 1832 revelations, “The Vision” and “The Olive Leaf,” (2) Joseph Smith’s 1835 encounter with Egyptian manuscripts and their impact on his understanding of Kirtland Temple theology, (3) Nauvoo developments, including an expanded view of temple rites, and (4) Joseph’s increasingly refined understanding of divine anthropology—the ontological equivalence of gods and humans. The abrupt end of Joseph Smith’s life in 1844 cut short his refinement of these concepts, but the Twelve—especially Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Parley P. Pratt, and Orson Hyde—explicitly and enthusiastically preached Joseph Smith’s Chain of Belonging, uniting doctrine with temple rituals in the Mormon conquest of death.

While Smith’s reconceptualization of the chain is a reminder of its flexibility—many ideas could be understood as instantiations of such a broad philosophical concept—the application of the chain among Mormons is often quite explicit and accounts for theological continuities that are otherwise difficult to explain. Smith was no neoplatonist, but his theologies represent an inspiring dialogue with remnants of neoplatonic beliefs in his milieu.⁸

The Great Chain of Being

Arthur Lovejoy’s 1933 William James lectures remain the standard intellectual history of the Chain of Being, tracing it from Plato and Aristotle to its resurgence in Christian neoplatonism (and Augustine’s influential reformulation of the neoplatonic concept) to

its final absorption into the taxonomic trees of rising evolutionary models in the late eighteenth century.⁹ Based on the principles of plenitude (all things that could exist do exist) and gradation/continuity (all types of things are hierarchically ordered with no gaps between them), the chain encompassed a taxonomy that extended from God through angels and humans to the tiniest particles of dust. Within this biological framework, the chain valorized human beings as rulers of the earth and its life forms, while simultaneously relating them to the suprabiological world.

The chain had religious and political as well as biological applications. Leibniz used the chain as a theodicy, arguing that evil was a necessary part of the entirety of creation. He explained that evil must be included in this “best of all possible worlds,” an argument that Voltaire parodied mercilessly in his *Candide*. Samuel Hopkins, Jonathan Edwards’s immediate theological successor in Puritan thought, likewise endorsed a chain-based theodicy in the late eighteenth century.¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards himself used the Chain of Being to ground his famous typologies by which American lives and experiences were anticipated throughout the biblical record.¹¹ For many, both formally and informally, the chain represented the intimacy of macrocosm and microcosm, the close and influential parallels between the universe and the human body.

More prosaically, the notion of creation’s immanent hierarchy infiltrated Western societies, whether as the Catholic priesthood, European royalty, social elites, or, in America, white hegemony over enslaved Africans or native peoples.¹² For Puritans, the chain further functioned to represent the infrastructure of their patriarchal family.¹³

Toward the end of its dominance, the chain, once static by definition, became dynamic—a form of the chain that Lovejoy characterized as “temporal.” By this he meant that hierarchical relationships persisted but that the entire chain could progress *en bloc*, a development that made boundless the potential for all participants. With beginnings in Immanuel Kant and biologists who endorsed the metaphor of seeds (with their maturation and change over time) to describe species, this temporal chain supported progress within scientific taxonomy.¹⁴ In Lovejoy’s phrase, “Man, at least, was not intended to occupy forever the *same* place. . . . The scale is literally a ladder to be ascended, not only by the imagination but in

fact.”¹⁵ This ladder, invoking Jacob’s ladder (Gen. 28:11–19), traversed the expanse between heaven and earth.¹⁶

The “temporal chain” spelled the end of the classical chain but still proved insufficiently flexible to accommodate further developments in Enlightenment thought. Scientifically, the evolutionary tree of life rapidly replaced the temporal chain. Socially the chain fared no better. Even in its dynamic guise, the chain could not resist the rise of America’s “new order for the ages.”¹⁷ In de Tocqueville’s nostalgic and manifestly un-American phrase, “Aristocracy had made a chain of all the members of the community, from the peasant to the king: democracy breaks that chain, and severs every link of it.”¹⁸

The chain had done significant philosophical work for centuries if not millennia. Minimally, it had situated humans within the cosmos, accounted for the existence of evil, explained the nature of angels, described biological diversity, and provided a framework for finding God in nature (“natural theology”). When the chain lost its scientific utility and its sociopolitical relevance, several other elements persisted. Despite a loss in currency, invocations of the chain clearly remained vital in the Early Republic in a mode easily accessible to Mormons and their peers. Several important proponents of the chain spanned the Revolutionary War by decades, including Yale president Ezra Stiles (1727–95) and Benjamin Franklin (1706–90).¹⁹ Thinkers of the following generation carried the torch. From Alexander Campbell (erstwhile friend and principal foe of Smith’s second-in-command Sidney Rigdon) to the famed anti-Mason William Morgan (whose widow, Lucinda, Joseph Smith later polygamously married) to Noah Webster (whose dictionary Smith used in various translation efforts), a variety of early antebellum sources invoked the chain in recognizable form.²⁰ Where Campbell invoked the “scale of creation” and Webster described the gradations of angels and hierarchies, Morgan invoked a chain of “all created beings, from the highest seraph in heaven to the lowest reptile of the dust.”²¹ Esoteric thinkers in the early nineteenth century continued to turn to the Chain of Being to describe how the universe populated itself and progressed.²² Early eighteenth-century sources proclaiming the chain, like Joseph Addison’s *Spectator*, available at Smith’s local library, or Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Man*, for sale near his hometown, continued to circulate widely in

the nineteenth century.²³ Mormons, among many others, enjoyed quoting from the two English writers, including Pope's famous description of the chain.²⁴

Many mainstream sources equivocated about the chain. The standard antebellum evangelical reference work (the one Smith used and preferred), Charles Buck's *Theological Dictionary*, typified nineteenth-century Anglo-American views.²⁵ Buck proposed equivocally that angels "perhaps have distinct orders." An invocation of the chain to support natural theology was even more watered down in Buck's nod toward "the almost infinite diversification of animals and vegetables, and their pertinents, that, notwithstanding an amazing similarity, not any two are exactly alike, but every form, member, or even feather or hair of animals, and every pile of grass, stalk of corn, herb, leaf, tree, berry, or other fruit, hath something peculiar to itself." Other entries relevant to older models of the chain were marked by the refusal of Buck and later editors of the *Dictionary* to endorse the chain in other than qualified terms. If anything, Buck associated the mystical chain with Gnostic heretics like the Basilidians, who preached hierarchies of angels and planetary creations.²⁶

The exceptions to the general nineteenth-century diminution of the chain were primarily natural theology and perfectionism. For some natural theologians, the chain represented an ideal method to integrate scientific taxonomies into their view of nature as a second scripture beside the Bible, something like Buck's "diversification of animals and vegetables."²⁷ Outside theology, the chain became a metaphor for the grandeur of the natural world in the hands of entertainers like P. T. Barnum and various travel writers.²⁸

Natural theology (including religious astronomy) and nature writing were not, however, the final refuge of the chain. In a society redefining itself as the ascendancy of the common man, an optimistic belief about human potential also appropriated the language of the chain, though only in its later, temporal form. Famously the conceptual plaything of metaphysical thinkers like Andrew Jackson Davis (1826–1910) or George Dexter (co-author of the noted spiritualist Judge Edmonds),²⁹ the temporal chain also had a home closer to the mainstream, including even the conservative and cautious Charles Buck, who maintained that "by this [the Knowledge of God] we are allied to angels, and are capable of

rising for ever in the scale of being.”³⁰ This dynamic chain, with its accommodation to human potential, supported endless advancement in opposition to the elitism of a static chain. Forward-looking Protestants who rejected the canonical chain as too closely associated with Catholic and royal hierarchies or European aristocracy found the temporal chain appealing. Mormon leaders promised proselytes in 1840 that, if they gathered to Mormonism’s holy Zion, they would “rise higher and higher in the scale of intel[li]gence until they ‘can comprehend with all Saints the length and breadth and de[p]th and height, and know the love of God which passeth knowledge.’”³¹ Progress in this application of the chain paralleled the progress promised by education and knowledge.³²

References to the chain were not just rhetorical flourishes. In the early national period, the image and its underlying philosophy still provided for some the infrastructure for religious belief, particularly when it came to astronomy. The Scottish amateur theologian and astronomer Thomas Dick (1774–1857) made the chain central to his characterization of the cosmos in his popular 1826 *Philosophy of Religion*. In Dick’s encapsulation, “We have the strongest reason to believe, that the distant regions of the material world are also replenished with intellectual beings, of various orders, in which there may be a *gradation* upwards, in the scale of intellect above that of a man, as diversified as that which we perceive in the descending scale, from man downwards to the immaterial principles which animates a muscle [mussel], a snail, or a microscopic animalcula.”³³ Dick called these beings “subordinate intelligences” and reveled in “the progressions they have made from one state of improvement to another.”³⁴ He advanced similar claims in his 1829 *Philosophy of a Future State*, which described a plurality of worlds filled with “intelligences,” suprahuman constituents of an astronomical Chain of Being. Dick allowed for angels to represent at least some of these “subordinate intelligences.”³⁵ Latter-day Saints proudly reprinted excerpts from Dick’s work in their Kirtland newspaper in 1837.³⁶

Joseph Smith’s Chain

The Vision

The Mormon Chain of Belonging, my name for Smith’s gene-

alogical revision of the Chain of Being, is a complex conceptual structure with impressive continuities over Smith's career. His dialogue with these ideas began as early as 1832. While with time they became more distinctly enunciated, more public, and more liturgically sophisticated, the Mormon chain appeared early in Smith's career. He began describing cosmic hierarchies in 1832 in several important revelations for the fledgling church, including the February "Vision" and the December "Olive Leaf."³⁷ In the early phase, Smith emphasized particularly the afterlife, cosmic hierarchies, and priesthood.

The Vision, a waking eschatological vision that Smith received in company with Sidney Rigdon, came as the two pondered "St. John's gospel" (John 5:29) for the New Translation of the Bible. Smith and Rigdon posited that, "if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body, the term 'heaven,' as intended for the saint's eternal home, must include more kingdoms than one."³⁸ The Vision was not simply the familiar Protestant debate about degrees of glory, though.³⁹ The biblical infrastructure for Smith's graduated heaven was the scripture most commonly associated with the chain through its history, Paul's famous treatise on resurrection (1 Corinthians 15).⁴⁰

In the letter to the Corinthians, Paul employed a sustained astral simile. As the dim stars deferred to the moon, and the moon in turn to the bright sun, so did humans enter a glorious hierarchy after death. In his letter, Paul mentioned only heavenly and earthly beings ("celestial" and "terrestrial" in the Authorized Version), while Smith, filling a perceived lacuna in the text, disclosed a third kingdom of glory that he called "telestial," apparently a composite of the first two meant to correspond to stars. Smith's scribes used language from Thomas Dick's invocation of the chain to introduce the revelation, calling it "the economy of God and his vast creation throughout all eternity." This "economy," a clumsy calque from the Greek scriptures, often referred to the chain.⁴¹ Smith was revealing human fate within an astral hierarchy, affirmed by the New Testament. When Smith returned to the Vision in 1842 in a ghostwritten poetic restatement designed to prove his prophetic credentials, he emphasized that the kingdoms "all harmonize like the parts of a tune," an allusion to the harmonies central to the chain.⁴² Though the Vision is remembered as

describing three kingdoms, in fact it described an infinite hierarchy of glories modeled on celestial bodies.

A distinctive revelation from spring 1832 helps to date the development of the Chain of Belonging and its associated divine anthropology. As part of his ongoing efforts to recover the lost language of Eden, Smith shared with his inner circle a “Sample of Pure Language.” In it Smith explained that *Awman* (spelled *Ahman* in publications) represented divinity, the divine species, “the being which made all things in all its parts.” This strange phrase emphasized the images of parts coming together to constitute a harmonic whole—a kind of dynamic integration at the center of the chain. Jesus, humans, and angels all received names in this revelation—*Son Ahman*, *Sons Ahman*, and *Angls-man*, respectively. The revelation also emphasized hierarchy. Even in this early statement stood the hint that humans would be superior to angels, for humans were “the greatest parts of Awman,” while angels were to “minister for or to” humans.⁴³ At the same time *Ahman* was beginning to figure prominently in revelations about the Garden of Eden, pan-human genealogy, and eschatology.⁴⁴ These ancient names for humans, gods, and angels emphasized their conspecificity and their integration as “parts” of a harmonious whole. *Ahman*, the *Sons Ahman*, and the association between Adam and a lineal priesthood persisted throughout Smith’s career.

In September 1832 during a prayerful meeting with itinerant elders, Smith announced a revelation “on priesthood.” After declaring the necessity of building a temple, he traced the priesthood of Moses backward to Abraham and then on to Adam. The ancient, sacred power of priesthood thus became distinctly lineal in Mormon thought (D&C 84:6–18). He also clarified that the priesthood was to be hierarchically arranged into “higher” and “lesser” orders. Hinting at metaphysical unities, the revelation on priesthood then began to describe an entity called the Light of Christ, which enlightened every human soul (D&C 84:45–46). Toward the end of the revelation, a “Song of Zion” personified the Earth as obeying God (D&C 84:100). (In May 1833 Smith expanded the image of light as metaphysical power in a striking revelation: D&C 93: esp. 2, 9, 28–29, 36). In the early 1830s, priesthood was a hierarchy of people and also the power, analogous to light, by which it all worked.

The Olive Leaf

In December 1832, Smith revealed the “Olive Leaf” as a charter for the School of the Prophets, the seminary-cum-fraternity from which the temple liturgy grew (D&C 88). The revelation ranged across a large conceptual space. After emphasizing that particular laws govern particular glories, Smith proposed afterlife glories as a cosmic map that met the requirements of the traditional chain: “There are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom” (D&C 88:37). This was an almost canonical statement of gradation/continuity from the Great Chain of Being with its emphasis on filling every possible space with an object or entity perfectly fitted to that space. Moving in and out of several loosely related proof-texts, Smith praised the perfect order of heavenly bodies, the type of religious astronomy that carried the chain into the nineteenth century. Smith reported that Jesus was not only “the light of truth” which was “the light of Christ” but was also “in” the universe’s celestial bodies: sun, moon, and stars. He was also “the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God” (D&C 88:7–13). Smith then reappropriated Christ’s parable of the twelve laborers in the vineyard to confirm the Vision. Contrary to received interpretations of the parable, in which day laborers received the same wage no matter when they started their work, Smith revealed that the twelve laborers received different “glories,” according to the time they began to labor in the vineyard. Corroborating received interpretations, Smith acknowledged that each laborer would enter into the heavenly hierarchy and be saved; but countering Protestant interpretations, Smith saw the duration of their labor as the marker of the glory they would inherit in heaven (D&C 88:51–61; cf. Matt. 20:1–16).⁴⁵ (In the 1840s, Lorenzo Snow reportedly clarified that the different glories of the laborers in the Olive Leaf were best understood within the context of the dynamic chain, further proof that believers would progress through time to a state of perfection.⁴⁶)

Among its theological ideas, the Olive Leaf also directed the construction of the Kirtland Temple and taught Mormons how to bind themselves in a covenant or “determination” intended to last

“forever and ever,” supported by ritual practices and the power Smith called priesthood (D&C 88:133). Before he completed the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith returned to images of celestial hierarchies, a mystical power called priesthood uniting them, and the compelling figure of Adam in Eden.

The Egyptian Project

In June 1835, Smith began a sustained encounter with Egyptian funerary papyri purchased from an itinerant showman named Michael Chandler who was touring Ohio. Smith’s time with the papyri yielded two principal manuscript collections, the unpublished Kirtland Egyptian Papers (KEP), which merged the Mormon quest for pure language with the problem of interpreting the hieroglyphs, and the canonized Book of Abraham. The Book of Abraham is reasonably well known; the unpublished KEP largely include interpretive dictionaries that contain names for hieroglyphs associated with various definitions that carry through multiple levels of grammatical ramification called “degrees.”⁴⁷ (Controversies over the nature of the relationships between the papyri, the KEP, and the Book of Abraham need not detain us here.⁴⁸) The Egyptian project highlighted a celestial hierarchy patterned on the Chain of Being, an idea circulating in Kirtland that spring.⁴⁹

During their encounter with the papyri, Smith and his colleagues emphasized the parallel between people and planets, linked priesthood with genealogy, described correspondences between light and time, and highlighted the significance of Eden and Adam. Smith emphasized early and often the association between the funerary papyri and “the system of astronomy” that “was unfolded” through them, with a special emphasis on “the formation of the planetary System.”⁵⁰ Though it is tempting to situate the astrophysical speculations of the Egyptian project within established astronomies—Ptolemaic, Copernican, or otherwise—early Mormon ideas about stars overflowed the boundaries of formal astronomy.⁵¹

It was natural in nineteenth-century America to associate Egypt with sacred astronomy, and astronomy within sacred history.⁵² The Bible joined traditional scholarship and folk wisdom

with narratives about magicians and divines who saw truth in the skies, about prophets who could make the sun rotate backwards, and about a God who marked the birth of his Messiah-son by positioning a star over the baby's crib. The Leonid meteor shower of November 1833 impressed many, including the Latter-day Saints, and celestial wonders played a central role in the wonder lore that defined for many the imminence of the return of Christ.⁵³

Within the KEP, Smith and William Phelps—Smith's most active collaborator on the Egyptian project—wove together a distinctive exegesis of the Hebrew astrology (Gen. 1:14–18), a literal reading of 2 Peter 3:8 (“one day is with the Lord as a thousand years”) and the commonplace view, confirmed by their favorite theological dictionary, that time is a “mode of duration marked by certain periods, chiefly by the motion and revolution of the sun.” Following these leads, they suggested that celestial bodies determined their *gravitas* on the basis of the time signaled by the length of their orbit.⁵⁴ To solidify the biblical foundation for this mathematical proposition, they employed cubits as an astronomical metric. These special cubits (one quarter of “the leng[th] from the end of the longest finger to the end of the other when the arms are extended,” approximately twenty-one inches) measured the length of an orbit, thus the amount of time required to revolve around a center place.⁵⁵

At the apex of the astronomical hierarchy, orbits and times merged. There “the measurement according to Celestial time . . . signifies one day to a cubit, which day is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of this earth.”⁵⁶ (Phelps and Smith were employing a symbolic multiplier of length parallel to the multiplier of time, whereby a day is a thousand years; neither was so obtuse as to believe that a star's orbit was actually less than two feet.) Smith had emphasized the tight correlation between planets and time in the 1832 Olive Leaf. The key passage describes the “law . . . by which they [“the heavens and the earth . . . and all the planets”] move in their times and their seasons.” The next verse repeats in even more insistent detail: “And they give light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years—all these are one year with God, but not with man” (D&C 88:42–44). A few months before the papyri arrived, Oliver Cow-

dery had conscientiously referred to “a few days, measured by this present sun.”⁵⁷ The association of human lives with the orbits of celestial bodies was already part of Mormon thought, an association strengthened in the Egyptian project.

The choice of cubits to describe orbital distances seems idiosyncratic at first glance, though others attributed Egyptian measurements to the body. In the phrase of one popular lecturer, such Egyptian measurements were “coeval with [the] hand of our first father Adam!” In Mormon hands, cubits emphasized the close association between human and cosmos in Mormon sacred astronomy. Just as orbits measured human lives, so did human bodies measure orbits.⁵⁸ These images are not precisely the zodiacal body of folk religion, though they draw on the same conceptual context.⁵⁹ The published Book of Abraham confirms this reading in its description of a gradation of “set times” for stars leading “unto the throne of God” (Abr. 3:10, 4:15–16).

Smith proposed a parallel hierarchy of celestial bodies based on light, recalling his 1832 revelation “on priesthood” and the 1833 Doctrine and Covenants 93. A distinctive exegesis of Genesis 1:14–18 appears to be the biblical basis for this hierarchy of light among celestial bodies. Light was the essence uniting them all—a metaphor (or alternate name for) priesthood. It was the medium by which stars reached human awareness, the power that separated stars from the inky blackness of the night sky. Within the KEP, the glyph *Flos isis* signifies “the highest degree of life, because its component parts are light . . . the light of the grand governi[n]g of 15 fixed stars centre there.”⁶⁰ Astral light largely confirmed the hierarchies that ordered and linked space and time; bodies with more central orbits possessed greater light. In another “degree,” the glyph *Flos isis* signifies “the King of day or the central moving planet, from which the other governing moving planets receive their light—having a less motion—slow in its motion.”⁶¹ A derivative glyph, *Kli flosis*, “signifies Kolob in its motion, which is swifter than the rest of the twelve fixed stars; going before, being first in motion.”⁶² These related glyphs merge the hierarchies of light and time within KEP.

This *Kolob*, both brightest and with the most central orbit, is the most familiar of the celestial bodies described in the Egyptian project. Within the KEP, *Kolob* represents “the first creation . . .

nearer to the Celestial, or the residence of God.”⁶³ This star was the “first in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time.”⁶⁴ Smith confirmed the KEP readings in his 1842 Facsimile 2 and in the Book of Abraham, which emphasized the role of *Kolob*.⁶⁵

The name *Kolob* sounds like a minor deformation of the Hebrew *kokab* (star), though various other derivations have been proposed. Regardless of derivation, Smith was clear that the name referred to something as “near to” or “nigh unto” God’s throne.⁶⁶ The term rapidly made its way into Mormon ritual, discourse, hymnody, and cosmology. As early as 1837, Smith’s followers promised each other that they could translate themselves to this great star at the center of the cosmos, in open defiance of death.⁶⁷ Through this especially bright star with a divinely central orbit, Smith showed his followers the way to heaven.⁶⁸

Though Phelps and Smith were not alone in embracing a physical location for heaven, their attempt to map the biblical heaven directly onto an astronomical system is impressively detailed. Within the KEP, *Kolob* grounded a scale of creation for celestial bodies. It was the pinnacle of the celestial bodies known as *kokaubeam*.⁶⁹ In this respect, the Mormon central star was the astral equivalent of Adam in the parallel and related human hierarchy described in Mormon scripture. It was the “eldest of all the Stars, the greatest body of the heavenly bodies.”⁷⁰ *Kolob* signified the “first beginning to the bodies of this creation . . . having been appointed for the last time the last or the eldest.”⁷¹ As the eldest hierarch, *Kolob* received something like priesthood scope over other celestial bodies—“the highest degree of power in government, pertaining to heavenly bodies.”⁷² The same motif continued in the published Book of Abraham—amid a chain of orbitally hierarchical stars, *Kolob* was preeminent. It “govern[ed] all those which belong to the same order as” the earth (Abr. 3:3, 6, 8–9). Using language familiar from priesthood hierarchy and the Chain of Being to describe astral hierarchies, the Egyptian project assumed a kind of equivalence of humans and celestial bodies.⁷³

At times, the KEP suggests that the celestial bodies were themselves planetary patriarchs in a Chain of Being. The KEP authors may have drawn inspiration from a famous dream by Smith’s biblical namesake. In an editorial three years earlier,

Phelps had specifically invoked the dream in which “the sun and moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to” Joseph of Egypt (Gen. 37:1–9) as evidence of Joseph Smith’s authority and holy lineage.⁷⁴ The power of the biblical Joseph over his brothers, the tribes of Israel, served as a potent image for Smith and Phelps, providing a biblical language for their astral hierarchies. In an important sense, the astral chain of the KEP recapitulates this patriarchal dream with an American rather than a Hebrew-Egyptian Joseph.

Phelps and Smith also included the hierarchical kingdoms of the Vision within the KEP hierarchies. One particularly rich glyph combines other simpler glyphs as *Lish* (a reference to God), *Zi* (woman or queen), *ho e oop* (prince), and *Iota* (seeing/eye). This composite glyph is glossed as “the glory of the celestial Kingdom: The connection of attributes; many parts perfected, and compounded into one Having been united . . . one glory above all other glories, as the [sun] excels the moon in light, this glory excels being filled with the same glory equally.” This glyph reiterated the astral hierarchy described in the Vision in a way that emphasized the familial unity of the highest echelon of that celestial chain. When the Egyptian pictogram placed a man and a woman together in the presence of God, Smith subsumed the entire Chain of Being into the human family, whose “many parts” were thereby “united.”⁷⁵ Several other glyphs describe the “degrees and parts” of the many afterlife kingdoms described in the Vision.⁷⁶ Human afterlife hierarchies paralleled astral hierarchies within the Egyptian project.

Extending Smith’s images in the Egyptian project as well as later exegesis in the 1840s, several of Smith’s lieutenants took the notion of correspondent hierarchies so far as to impute something like consciousness to celestial bodies after their prophet’s death. Whether Smith would go as far as his heirs, he certainly intended planets to be jointly encompassed by natural hierarchies.⁷⁷ Historian Michael Walzer’s description of early modern English thought might as easily apply to Smith and his associates: “Within the great chain there were discovered a whole series of lesser chains—the animal hierarchy, presided over by eagle and lion; the nine angelic orders; the greater and lesser stars—and these were held to correspond closely to one another.”⁷⁸ Such was

the language of the Vision and the Olive Leaf taken to its imaginative conclusion.

By the inexorable if often metaphorical logic of correspondence, and with the authority of ancient tradition, many antebellum Americans also saw their postmortal fate in the stars. Invoking most often the Jobian “morning stars” who “sang together” with the “sons of God” during creation (Job 38:4–7) or the story of Lucifer, the fallen star (Isa. 14:12), a variety of cultural commonplaces confirmed a belief in the identity of the dead, often as angels, with astral bodies.⁷⁹

In 1832 Phelps had urged greater industry by telling the Latter-day Saints to model their behavior on the ever-faithful stars: “Since the heaven was stretched out as a curtain between this world and the worlds beyond, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the planets, nor the stars, have ceased for a moment, (except when Joshua commanded otherwise,) from performing their daily labors.”⁸⁰ Phelps extended this image in early 1835 by urging Christian belief and practice on his readers, “that we may be quickened in the resurrection, and become angels, even Sons of God, for an eternity of glory, in a universe of worlds, which have ever taught, and will forever Teach mankind, as they shine / God’s done his part,—*do thine!*”⁸¹ Phelps’s “worlds”—his term for celestial bodies—inspired their human kin to greater obedience to the dictates of God.

Images of humans as stars were an important element in public memorials for the dead among many Americans. For example, when Elizabeth Griffin died of “inflammation of the bowels” in Nauvoo at the tender age of “10 months 19 days,” the memorialist, probably her parent, included an apostrophe to her astral spirit: “a pure and brilliant star, / Thou dost shine in realms afar.” A eulogy suggested a similar fate for Bishop Edward Partridge, who would “rise from a Saint to an angel of light.”⁸² The sense of astral correspondence is also strong in the 1840 eulogy of Smith’s own father, delivered by Joseph Jr.’s secretary, which evoked the dead who “like the stars in yonder firmament, shone in their several spheres, and filled that station in which they had been called by the providence of God.”⁸³ Even critics recognized the currency of such expressions among the Saints. For example, the learned Congregationalist Jonathan Baldwin Turner (1805–99)

reported of the Mormon faithful: "Doubtless they will shine as stars somewhere in [their] new firmament of gods."⁸⁴

Early Latter-day Saints did not stand alone in their religious astronomy. Mainstream authors also employed astral metaphors. Presbyterian revivalist Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875) referred to Lucifer and his followers as "wandering stars," an image that invoked biblical traditions (Jude 1:13) and recalled John Milton's (1608–1674) extensive use of this image in *Paradise Lost* (1667).⁸⁵ Finney's peer, Lyman Beecher (1775–1863), for his part, presented stars as steadfast witnesses of God worth emulating.⁸⁶ The ever-popular Josiah Priest (1788–1851) compared a Mesoamerican tribal belief that the "sun and the stars" were the "souls of the departed" to the biblical book of Daniel (14:12), which taught that the righteous "shall *shine* as the BRIGHTNESS of the firmament." In this apparently shared belief of postmortal astralization, Priest saw proof that Native American afterlife traditions derived directly from ancient Israel.⁸⁷ Particularly across the boundary of death, a variety of early Americans saw themselves and their fates in the stars. What distinguished Mormons was the intensity of the belief in astral correspondence and the theological and ritual supports for the belief.

In the metonymy of correspondence, the central star seemed to point toward the center of the earth's power, Eden, and its priest/patriarch Adam. Employing the sacred word *Ahman* to describe the site of Adam's deathbed and of the reunion of the entire human family at the second coming of Christ (*Adam-ondi-Ahman*), Smith and Phelps foregrounded the priestly figure Adam or *Phah eh* within the Egyptian project.⁸⁸ The Egyptian project is obsessed with the overlap between genealogy and progeny on the one hand and priesthood on the other. Many of the glyphs as well as the Book of Abraham emphasize this point. In the published scripture, God told Abraham that he and his seed were by definition "Priesthood" (Abr. 2:11). Degrees, the ramifications of meaning in the logic of the Egyptian grammar documents, draw attention to images of reproduction as extension of power. Emblematically a queen named *Katouhmun* (one of the mummies whose papyri Smith was interpreting) ascends the marital hierarchy, and a glyph for a powerful patriarch describes the "extension of power by marriage or by ordination." The center of genealogi-

cal and sacerdotal power was Adam. The word *Ahman* returned as the paradisiacal home of all humanity.⁸⁹

The Kirtland Temple

In the midst of the dramatic work on the funeral papyri and in fulfillment of the Olive Leaf revelation, the Saints completed the Kirtland Temple during the winter of 1835–36. In March and April 1836, Smith dedicated this first Mormon temple in enactments extending over several days accompanied by a Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit. Though this holy season proximately emphasized the evangelistic “endowment of power” that would allow Mormon elders to proselytize the world, the Kirtland Temple and its associated rites pointed toward later developments in Smith’s liturgy.⁹⁰

The building’s internal architecture itself represented Smith’s abandonment of Protestantism. This temple, like the others Smith planned, contained tiered pulpits against the east and west interior walls. The eastern pulpits represented the priesthood hierarchy, rising from the “Presidents of Elders” at the table below, to the “Presidents of High Priests,” to the “Presiding Apostles,” and culminating in the “Melchizedek Council Presiding.”⁹¹ These pulpits ascended the scale of Smith’s priesthood row by row, reifying his 1832 distinction between the two priesthoods and the strong hierarchy within them.

Probably the central experience of the latter-day Pentecost came on April 3. In a vision that mediated the two impulses of hierarchical order and charismatic excess, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery knelt in prayer among the tiered pulpits, at which time Jehovah appeared, followed by Elijah. This Elijah, the “Prophet, who was taken to Heaven without tasting death,” hovered atop the priesthood hierarchy, appearing as Moroni had predicted he would a decade earlier.⁹² Smith and Cowdery, at the angel’s urging, saw this encounter as a harbinger of the Millennium and as fulfilling Malachi’s prophecy that God would “turn the hearts of the children to the fathers” and vice versa.⁹³ Smith soon separated his Elijah from the more traditional Protestant view of a millennial harbinger by denominating the latter “Elias,” the Greek transliteration of Elijah.⁹⁴ In the 1840s, Smith went to great

lengths to explain the significance of Elijah and his mystical power, termed “priesthood,” to effect seals between people that would integrate them into the Chain of Belonging. Elijah’s priesthood was to be the power by which all of humanity would enter a hierarchy of power patterned on family relationships. (Though with time integrated into the Melchizedek Priesthood, initially Elijah’s priesthood seemed to exist in concert with the Melchizedek and patriarchal priesthoods.)⁹⁵

These temple experiences, coupled with the conceptual power of the Egyptian project, inspired the Saints. Enthusiastically, the *Messenger and Advocate* in 1837 published John Bowring’s (1792–1872) idiosyncratic translation of Gavrila Derzhavin’s (1743–1816) poem “God” (1784), which proclaimed:

I am something fashioned by thy hand!
I hold a middle rank, ‘twixt heaven and earth,
On the last verge of being stand,
Close to the realm where Angels have their birth,
Just on the boundary of the spirit land!
The chain of being is complete in me;
In me is matter’s last gradations lost,
And the next step is spirit-Deity!”

Bowring’s redaction (though not Derzhavin’s original) represented a heavily anthropocentric view of the chain, while maintaining its sense of heaven and earth merged in human beings.⁹⁶ The poem confirmed and echoed the doctrines the Latter-day Saints were learning from Smith’s revelations, the temple liturgy, and the translations of the Egyptian project. The modified Chain of Being emphasized human beings and their proximity to God, mediated through celestial hierarchies. In Nauvoo these concepts became dramatically more actual for the Saints through an expansion of the temple liturgy and its associated theologies.

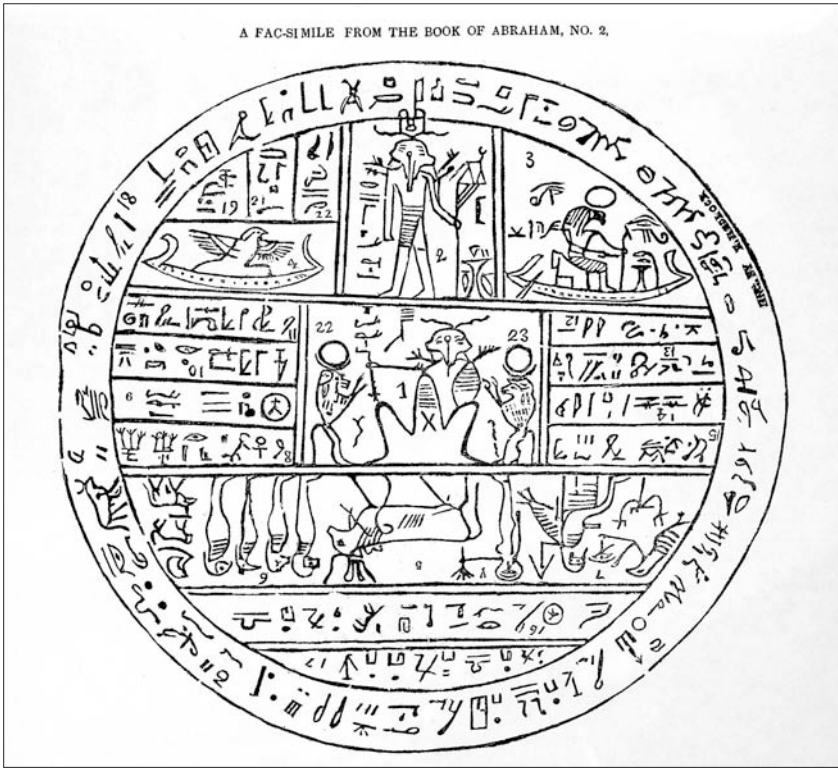
Nauvoo and the Temple

In the early 1840s, Smith expanded liturgy and doctrine to clarify and establish his Chain of Belonging primarily within the setting of the temple *cultus*. The 1830s ideas about and images of cosmic hierarchy flourished and expanded. What changed in

Nauvoo were the ritual infrastructure and the degree to which it moved onto the public stage. The fundamental notions about cosmic hierarchies, the conspecificity of humans, gods, and angels, metaphysical correspondence, and a genealogical priesthood power had been present since the 1830s. But in Nauvoo Smith expanded the temple liturgy, published the Book of Abraham as the major product of the Egyptian project, and spelled out the full implications of the divine anthropology in public sermons. The “scale of existence” to which Mormons belonged settled into its ultimate public form.⁹⁷

In fall 1840, Smith announced in a funeral sermon for Seymour Brunson that the Saints were recovering a lost rite from ancient Christianity: baptism for the dead. Through this ritual, according to the New Testament the ordinance of divine adoption, the Latter-day Saints could reach back through time to establish linkages with the long dead. In doing so, they became “Saviors on Mount Zion,” a term that not only described the rite in terms of its salvific power but also pointed toward the ultimate state of humans as divine beings patterned on Christ.⁹⁸ By early 1844, Smith was preaching that “those who are baptised for their dead are the Saviours on mount Zion & they must receive their washings and their anointings for their dead, the same as for themselves, till they are connected to the ones in the dispensation before us and trace their leniage to connect the priesthood again.”⁹⁹ In 1842 he explained that this would be a “welding link” between generations (D&C 128:18).

Baptism for the dead was the first temple rite of Smith’s adoption theology. This theology was rooted in the general Pauline sense that conversion to Christ created a new ethnicity to which believers could be united and in the fairly typical Protestant convention that evangelists “adopted” their converts into the family of God. This traditional sense expanded to incorporate patriarchal blessings and other aspects of the Mormon Chain of Belonging.¹⁰⁰ Although baptism had long been the symbol of becoming a new creature in Christ and entering God’s family (the congregation), Joseph Smith used the rite and its adoptive imagery to broaden the circle of belonging to include the living and the dead in a kinship network that merged genealogical and sacerdotal as-



This Nauvoo drawing of a hypocephalus among the funerary papyri strongly emphasizes the astral Chain of Being that Smith and his colleagues described in the 1830s. Times and Seasons 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842): 720–21.

EXPLANATION

Fig. 1. Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God. First in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time. The measurement according to celestial time, which celestial time signifies one day to a cubit. One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of this earth, which is called by the Egyptians Jah-oh-eh.

EXPLANATION (cont.)

Fig. 2. Stands next to Kolob, called by the Egyptians Oliblish, which is the next grand governing creation near to the celestial or the place where God resides; holding the key of power also, pertaining to other planets; as revealed from God to Abraham, as he offered sacrifice upon an altar, which he had built unto the Lord.

Fig. 3. Is made to represent God, sitting upon his throne, clothed with power and authority; with a crown of eternal light upon his head; representing also the grand Key-words of the Holy Priesthood, as revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchisedek, Abraham, and all to whom the Priesthood was revealed.

Fig. 4. Answers to the Hebrew word Raukeeyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament of the heavens; also a numerical figure, in Egyptian signifying one thousand; answering to the measuring of the time of Oliblish, which is equal with Kolob in its revolution and in its measuring of time.

Fig. 5. Is called in Egyptian Enish-go-on-dosh; this is one of the governing planets also, and is said by the Egyptians to be the Sun, and to borrow its light from Kolob through the medium of Kae-e-vanrash, which is the grand Key, or, in other words, the governing power, which governs fifteen other fixed planets or stars, as also Floeese or the Moon, the Earth and the Sun in their annual revolutions. This planet receives its power through the medium of Kli-flos-is-es, or Hah-ko-kau-beam, the stars represented by numbers 22 and 23, receiving light from the revolutions of Kolob.

Fig. 6. Represents this earth in its four quarters.

Fig. 7. Represents God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham, in the form of a dove.

Fig. 8. Contains writing that cannot be revealed unto the world; but is to be had in the Holy Temple of God.

Fig. 9. Ought not to be revealed at the present time.

Fig. 10. Also.

Fig. 11. Also. If the world can find out these numbers, so let it be. Amen.

Figures 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, [20,] and 21, will be given in the own due time of the Lord.

The above translation is given as far as we have any right to give at the present time (Abra. Facsimile 2; punctuation modernized).

sociations. Temple rites became the entry point for the Chain of Belonging.¹⁰¹ Priesthood, both as hierarchy and as power, undergirded this process. In 1841, Smith employed the language of the Chain of Being during a description of his priesthood hierarchy as “a principle of order or gradation.”¹⁰² Though the formal rites denominated “adoption” did not arise until after Smith’s death, the concept of adoption infiltrated the rites of anointing and sealing that integrated the Saints into the Chain of Belonging under Smith.¹⁰³

About a year after announcing baptism for the dead, Smith expanded the temple liturgy further, simultaneously publicizing and expanding the Egyptian project. When he published the Book of Abraham in 1842, he added focused translations of three illustrations known to the Latter-day Saints as “facsimiles,” all of which are reproduced to this day in LDS editions of the Book of Abraham. The hypocephalus presented as facsimile 2—a circle divided into numerous shapes, each containing a symbol and the whole surrounded by a band containing other symbols—includes textual descriptions that exemplify the astral Chain of Being of the 1830s. Its Figure 2 declares Oliblish to be “the next grand governing creation” beside Kolob, which “hold[s] the key of power also, pertaining to other planets.” Figure 4 explains that the counting of time on Oliblish underlies the Hebrew word for the heavens themselves. Figure 5 is most striking; its Enish-go-on-dosh is a “governing planet” which borrows “light” through a “grand Key” or “governing power, which governs fifteen other fixed planets” (Abr. 3, following v. 22).

In these temple-saturated accounts of a celestial hierarchy mediated by light and special keys, Smith made clear that celestial bodies were arranged into the same hierarchies as humans. Those hierarchies were governed by the same power—the temple-inflected priesthood that contained light, key words, and power.¹⁰⁴

In tandem Smith modified the charismatic endowment of power of the Kirtland Temple, translating Masonic elements to that end and producing a cosmic catechism that prepared his followers to confront the “angels that stand as sentinels” whom they would meet after death.¹⁰⁵ Inaugurated in May 1842 and rapidly expanded to include women, the Nauvoo Temple liturgy formed a Quorum of the Anointed. Within this liturgy, selected Saints be-

gan to learn more about the possibility that they would be celestial royalty and were encouraged to imagine themselves within the Abraham cosmogony as priests and priestesses in the post-mortal Chain of Belonging.¹⁰⁶

As he revealed this temple liturgy, Smith kept the creation of eternal associations between people central. Though plural marriage has generated significant controversy, it was, among other things, an idiosyncratically biblical mode of increasing the number of people to whom a man was sealed.¹⁰⁷ The model of the Chain of Belonging imparted to polygamy a decidedly dynastic scope.¹⁰⁸ Smith used dynastic images explicitly to recruit wives, counseling young Lucy Walker that her acceptance of a sealing to him “would prove an everlasting blessing to my father’s house. And form a chain that could never be broken, worlds without End.”¹⁰⁹ Helen Mar Kimball’s son eulogized her as the “golden link” connecting her father’s family to Joseph Smith.¹¹⁰ Though these specific phrases are probably influenced by later events, they correctly emphasize the familial chain that polygamy strengthened.

By merging the chain’s hierarchy with familial images, Smith made the chain relationally dynamic. The capacity to reproduce helped believers see how they could acquire endless glory in the afterlife. Joseph Fielding understood well the implication of the doctrine, diarizing in 1844: “I understand that a Man’s Dominion will be as God’s is, over his own Creatures and the more numerous the greater his Dominion.”¹¹¹ Benjamin F. Johnson recalled that “the Prophet taught us that Dominion & powr in the great Future would be Commensurate with the no of ‘Wives Childin & Friends’ that we inherit here.”¹¹² The new grades of heaven reflected no simple statement of merit or ontological superiority: they were an index of one’s placement in the genealogy of eternal “intelligences.” These “intelligences” were the Mormon version of the “crowns of many stars” anticipated by Protestant evangelists.¹¹³ In this respect, the Mormon chain tapped a potential noted at least as early as the thirteenth century. In Lovejoy’s paraphrase of Aquinas, a human could “be like God in having pre-eminence over another” within the structure of the chain.¹¹⁴ In the Mormon version, the human capacity to reproduce held the promise of eternal progress, and patterns of family life pointed to a generational hierarchy within the chain.

The ostensibly tripartite heavens espoused in Smith and Rigdon's 1832 Vision hid the real extent of Smith's heaven, which resided entirely within the celestial kingdom reserved for those who have "enter[ed] into this order of the priesthood." Using code words for his marital system, the persistence of family life, and salvation, Smith warned that, outside his celestial kingdom in heaven, the dead "cannot have increase."¹¹⁵ This heaven was organized around Smith's Chain of Belonging, the harmonizing "economy" at which his 1832 revelation hinted. It was the single place that family could persist eternally. The 1843 revelation authorizing polygamy made the point emphatically. Those who did not enter this distinctive celestial family "cannot be enlarged"; they would remain "without exaltation," a perfectionist term equated with salvation in this conception of the celestial kingdom.¹¹⁶ Those who rejected this form of marriage and family would be neutered angels who would endure salvation "separately and singly." According to a July 1843 sermon, they would be "single & alone in the eternal world."¹¹⁷ These disobedient souls would inhabit an essentially theocentric heaven without interpersonal relationships, while the obedient occupied the distinctively kinship-based heaven of the Chain of Belonging.

The key to exaltation was the temple and Elijah's priesthood. In a January 1844 sermon, Smith announced that the term "turn" in Malachi 5:6 (Elijah would "turn the hearts" of generations to each other) "should be translated (bind or seal)."¹¹⁸ Binding the generations through temple rites and their associated priesthood constituted the Chain of Belonging. In May 1844, Smith explicitly told his followers that the temple would allow them to supersede the angels, a key element of the ontological flattening of the Chain of Belonging: "You must have a promise, some ordinance some blessing in order to assend above principalities."¹¹⁹ The "promise," "ordinance," and "blessing" were to be obtained in the temple.

The Mormon heaven was emphatically not the Victorian hearth of the increasingly popular domestic heaven. Smith's genealogical chain extended from Church members to their Prophet. From Smith, the chain extended to the biblical patriarchs, all the way to Adam, who would in turn present his priesthood chain to Jesus the Son and God the Father in the valley of Adam-on-di-

Ahman.¹²⁰ The domestic heaven was generally seen to consist of reasonably independent nuclear families; Smith's heaven consisted of one boundless family of eternal intelligences—"a perfect chain from Father Adam to his latest posterity."¹²¹ This lineage was crucial to Mormon salvation, as in Smith's 1842 revelation to Newel Whitney, promising "honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house both old & young because of the lineage of my Preat Hood."¹²² In the solicitous phrase of British convert Joseph Fielding to his friends, "We are dependent on each other as links in one vast chain." They were making a soteriological point.¹²³ The chain was the theological infrastructure and Smith's temple priesthood was the welding that connected the links together in a way that secured their salvation. Through these rites and doctrines, Smith promised to "link the chain of the priesthood in Such a way that can not be broken."¹²⁴

General references to the Great Chain of Being persisted in the Nauvoo period, even as Smith gave it radically different meaning. In an 1843 pronouncement on the relationships between angels and celestial bodies, Smith referred explicitly to the hierarchical "scale of creation" for the cosmos.¹²⁵ In January 1844, a Mormon editorialist, urged the gathering of the faithful by explaining: "The chirping sparrow upon the house top, fulfils the measure of his creation, in his own sphere, as much as an archangel does in his. 'Whichever link you from the order strike, / Tenth, or tenth-thousand, breaks the chain alike.'" In this slight misquotation of Pope's *Essay on Man* during the most public period of the elaboration of the Mormon Chain of Belonging, Latter-day Saints again endorsed the language, if not the content, of the original chain. (The same editorialist also emphasized the association between the astral degrees of glory of the 1832 Vision and the Chain of Being.)¹²⁶

Divine Anthropology: The Eternal Progression of the Sons Ahman

One of the most striking modifications Smith made to the Great Chain of Being was in his characterization of the relationships among angels, gods, and humans, what I call his divine anthropology. He had made his broad approach clear as early as 1832 with his "Sample of Pure Language," and he and his follow-

ers had made continual references to the Mormon up-ending of the traditional chain, particularly with regard to the status of angels. In Nauvoo, the message became loud and unmistakable: the apparently suprahuman chain contained humans, the *Sons Ahman*. In the divine anthropology, angels, gods, and humans were conspecific, all members of the species called *Ahman*. Smith's revision of the chain meant several things. What other Christians understood as angels were in fact resurrected humans; Joseph Smith reserved the term "angel" for a lower level in the chain. Angels were ultimately less than human, humans would advance forever, and God was a family man.

Smith's familialized chain required a reconsideration of the upper echelons of the chain in ways that directly dismantled the theocentric tradition. Smith, like Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), rejected the traditional Christian view of a distinct ontology for angels.¹²⁷ When family defined the chain, those supernatural beings that had once secured the upper expanses—the vast hierarchies of more-than-mortal immortals—lost ground to Smith's *Sons Ahman*.¹²⁸ When angels occupied suprahuman stations in Mormon thought, they did so only by their integration into the family tree. Theirs was a lineal rather than an ontological priority. Smith identified the best-known archangels of popular tradition—Michael and Gabriel—with the two founding fathers of humanity, Adam and Noah.¹²⁹ Smith's amanuensis, William Phelps, seized on these humanized angels in 1835 and in a letter to the *Messenger and Advocate* asked rhetorically: "Are the angels in glory the former prophets and servants of God?" He answered this question with an emphatic "Yes."¹³⁰ Sidney Rigdon, Smith's early second-in-command, reiterated this claim in the same venue two months later.¹³¹

An 1843 revelation strongly emphasized Smith's redefined status for angels, whose superiority depended only on their lineal priority. In fact, angels who could not be integrated into the family tree (along with those humans unfit for "exaltation") would be retained as servants to their more exalted cousins, an inversion of Augustinian teaching.¹³² They would be "appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering Servants to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory."¹³³ Stripped of family, these intelligences

would become inferior to the core hierarchy of heaven. The demotion extended so far that the Nauvoo High Council asked rhetorically “Know ye not that we shall judge Angels?” then confirmed explicitly: “The saints are to judge angels.”¹³⁴ The supernatural beings who had been critical to religious valences of the chain ceded pride of place to Smith’s priesthood family. Though the imagery may be inflected by concepts of fraternal initiation, it is striking that the polygamy revelation told believers who had been adopted into the priesthood family by accepting plural marriage that they “shall pass by the angels” in the afterlife (D&C 132:19).

Just as angels were demoted below humans, those humans experienced promotion—what the Saints called “exaltation.” Phelps assured believing Mormons in 1835 that they would “become angels, even Sons of God, for an eternity of glory.”¹³⁵ He also foresaw that the faithful would inherit “a kingdom of glory; become archangels, even the sons of God.”¹³⁶ Smith emphasized an even greater future for humans, using his royal image for angelized humans: “every man who reigns is a God.”¹³⁷ His ambitious anthropology was sufficiently prominent in Mormon evangelism that outsiders commented on it. Critic Jonathan Baldwin Turner summarized in an 1842 attack, “Every Mormon is not only to be a god hereafter; he has, in his own belief, been a demigod from all eternity, or at least an angel heretofore.”¹³⁸

The obliteration of suprahuman beings and the exaltation of humans in Smith’s chain collapsed the space separating humanity from God. By eliminating this space, Smith opened up the possibility of recasting God’s place in the chain in a direct assault on theocentrism. Though Protestants called God “Father,” Smith’s sacerdotal system understood the relationship in a new way. Just as God had stood above the pulpits at the Kirtland Temple, so he would stand at the head of the eternalized human family. This is the great mystery that Smith publicized in his most famous sermon, an address to the April 1844 Church conference inspired by the recent death of King Follett. There Smith announced the “secret” that “God Himself who sits enthroned in yonder heavens is a Man like unto one of yourselves.”¹³⁹ Smith’s God was not the ontologically distinct creator of the Scale of Creation, but the founding parent of its genealogical hierarchy.

In his June 1844 “Sermon in the Grove” a few weeks later, Smith clarified his chain, situating his polytheism—a “plurality of Gods”—within both biblical proof-texts and a restatement of the chain’s principle of gradation. After explaining that the intelligences of his chain would be called “kings and priests” (and by extension “queens and priestesses”) in a temple-saturated allusion to Revelation 1:6, Smith quoted from and amplified his Book of Abraham (Abr 3:18). The Mormon prophet explained that there “may exist two men on the earth—one wiser than the other—wo[ul]d. shew that an[o]t[he]r. who is wiser than the wisest may exist—intelligences exist one above anot[he]r. that there is no end to it.”¹⁴⁰ To Smith, in a way he never entirely worked out, the family of divinities had no end. His main point, however, was clear: Eternity was organized as a family. In the Sermon in the Grove, Smith also returned to the 1832 Vision. He explained that “Paul—says there is one Glory of the Sun the moon & the Stars—& as the Star differs &C.” The heirs of the astral glories, Smith continued, “are exalted far above princ[ipalities]. thrones dom[inions]. & angels—& are expressly decl[are]d. to be heirs of God.”¹⁴¹ Smith’s followers, the heirs of God according to adoption theology, towered above the various grades of angels. Employing traditional names for hierarchies of angels (Eph. 3:10, 6:12; Col. 1:16), Smith strongly emphasized the inversion of the chain.¹⁴²

It is difficult to read Smith’s King Follett Discourse except as an application of the temporal Chain of Being. Smith explained that to be “joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17) meant “to inherit the same glory power & exaltation” and to “ascend [to] a throne as those who have gone before.” Speaking for Christ, Joseph continued, “when I get my K[ingdom] workfed [sic] out I will present to the father & it will exalt his glory” so that “he will take a Higher exhaltation & I will take his place and am also exalted.” Thus the Father “obtns K[ingdom] rollg. upon K[ingdom]. so that J[esus] treads in his tracks as he had gone before.”¹⁴³ Speaking for Jesus, Smith explained the relationship between Father and Son as paradigmatic for all human relationships in the Chain of Belonging. “I saw my Father work out his kingdom with fear and trembling. . . . He obtains kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt his glory.”¹⁴⁴ Attendee George Laub employed even more typically the image of the temporal chain in his summary of Smith’s

preaching: “We are to goe from glory to glory & as one is raised the Next may be raised to his place or Sphere and so take their Exaltation through a regular channel. And when we get to where Jesus is he will be as far ahead of us in exaltation as when we started.”¹⁴⁵

The Chain of Being was the infrastructure of this progressive theology. In Smith’s phrase, “You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves; to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done; by going from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you are able to sit in glory as doth [sic] those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.”¹⁴⁶ These transitions are the progress of the entire chain. Adopting the traditional image of the ladder to explain the temporal Chain of Being, Smith said: “When you climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom and go on until you learn the last principle; it will be a great while before you have learned the last. . . . It is a great thing to learn salvation beyond [sic] the grave.”¹⁴⁷ Smith was telling his followers to ascend a modern version of Jacob’s Ladder. As the Mormon faithful created sacerdotal families, they became heavenly fathers/mothers, priests/priestesses, and kings/queens. Thus did they become gods.

The Chain after Smith’s Death

In the aftermath of Smith’s death at the hands of a vigilante mob, his followers sought to understand and codify the elements of his Chain of Belonging. There was a lot at stake. The apostles were unable to recruit the crucial members of Smith’s family—his mother, his surviving brother, his widow, and his sons. This failure was a significant threat to their authority. Outside Nauvoo very few Latter-day Saints were yet aware of key doctrines being taught at headquarters, and the apostles needed a way to communicate the power of Smith’s theologies and rituals. The apostles needed to persuade the Church body of the superiority of their claims over those of Smith’s family while also convincing them of the validity of distinctive doctrines. The temple and the Chain of Belonging assisted the apostles significantly in this task.¹⁴⁸ Smith’s ecclesial inner circle almost immediately went to work exploring the implications of Smith’s Chain of Belonging, both in doctrine and in ritual.

William Phelps returned repeatedly to the image of the chain: in hymns, in a funeral sermon for the Smith brothers, and in a fictional presentation of the divine anthropology. Preaching Smith's eulogy in 1844, Phelps used the rhetoric of the temporal chain, framing it within the Elijah sealing rituals. He announced to the grieving Saints, who had not yet completed construction of the Nauvoo Temple:

When the temple is made ready for the holy work . . . we can go on from birth to age; from life to death; and from life to lives; and from world to heaven; and from heaven to eternity; and from eternity to ceaseless progression; and in the midst of all these changes; we can pass from scene to scene; from joy to joy; from glory to glory; from wisdom to wisdom; from system to system; from god to god, and from one perfection to another, while eternities go and eternities come, and yet there is room—for the curtains of endless progression are stretched out still and a god is there to go ahead with improvements.¹⁴⁹

In this particular version of the temporal chain, God the Father pioneered the future perfections of humanity; Elijah's temple was the nexus for Latter-day Saint connections to the Chain of Belonging.

In his short 1845 fiction, "Paracletes," Phelps referred to a universe "filled with a variety of beings," an oblique allusion to the chain, which he saw as operative at the cosmogony. He then interpreted the King Follett Discourse and the Sermon in the Grove, stating that the "head" God was indeed God the Father of the Old Testament, supervising the endless ramifications of kings and priests in the sacerdotal genealogy.¹⁵⁰ Phelps's dedication hymn for the Nauvoo Temple maintained that "the wonderful chain of our union / Is tighten'd the longer it's stretch'd."¹⁵¹

Wilford Woodruff, stressing harmony after Smith's death, preached that unity "is not confined to the Great Presidency of the Celest[i]al world, but serves as a chain by which the whole of the heavenly host are bound together in concert of action, sustaining the laws by which they are governed and preserved." He continued, "Thus shall the chain which has bound together in one the hosts of heaven, extend and grasp in its circumference all who have been obedient to the mandates of God."¹⁵² Employing Smith's imagery, Woodruff conjured priesthood power and the

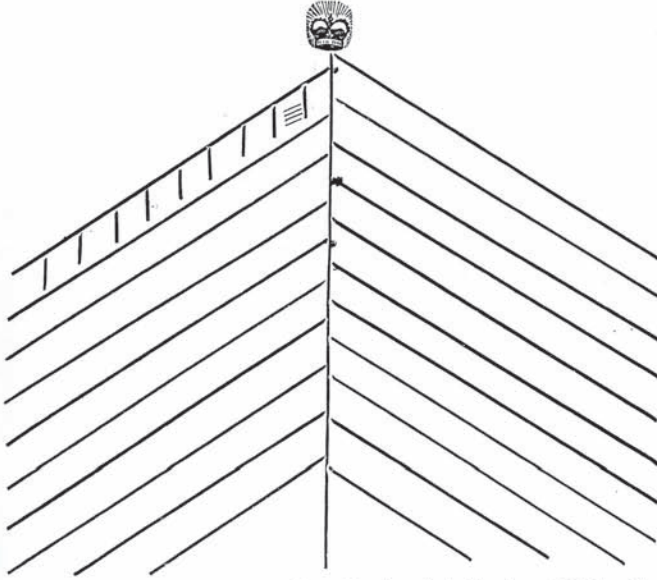
correspondence between humans and cosmos. All operated within the chain.

In Parley Pratt's phrase, "The resurrection from the dead restores [an individual] to life with all his bodily and mental powers and faculties, and (if quickened by the celestial glory) consequently associates him with his family, friends and kindred, as one of the necessary links of the chain which connects the great and royal family of heaven and earth in one eternal bond of kindred affection and association."¹⁵³ Pratt reiterated Smith's claims from his King Follett Discourse in an essay in early 1845. Latter-day Saints were to progress "till the weakest child of God which now exists upon the earth will possess more dominion, more property, more subjects, and more power and glory than is possessed by Jesus Christ or by his father; while at the same time, Jesus Christ and his father, will have their dominion, kingdoms, and subjects increased in proportion."¹⁵⁴ This was the temporal chain.

On December 26, 1844, Apostle Heber C. Kimball, "in his usual philanthropic manner, use[d] a chain as a figure to illustrate the principle of graduation, while in pursuit of celestial enjoyment in worlds to come."¹⁵⁵ Mourning their prophet, Mormonism's inner circle found solace in the distinctive eschatology of their Chain of Belonging, a system safely separate from the theocentric and domestic heavens.

Apostle John Taylor in 1846 explained that the Saints needed to understand "what ordinances to administer" that would "place you in a relationship to God and angels, and to one another."¹⁵⁶ Though Brigham Young invested great energy in completing the temple and codifying its liturgy in Nauvoo, during the exodus from Nauvoo the matter of adoption specifically became more prominent. Sacerdotal family units served to organize the migrating Saints, as they attempted to maintain their durable society in the face of severe dislocations. Young frequently and repeatedly used the image of the chain. A significant sermon in February 1847 communicated Young's view of binding people to the ancients: Those sealed to an apostle were "bound . . . by that perfect chain according to the law of God and order of Heaven that will bind the righteous from Adam to the last saint and Adam will claim us all as members of his kingdom we being his children."¹⁵⁷ Young promised to "extend the Chain of the Priesthood back

A DIAGRAM OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.



The above diagram shows the order and unity of the kingdom of God. The eternal Father sits at the head, crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Wherever the other lines meet, there sits a king and a priest unto God, bearing rule, authority, and dominion under the Father. He is one with the Father, because his kingdom is joined to his Father's and becomes part of it.

The most eminent and distinguished prophets who have laid down their lives for their testimony (Jesus among the rest), will be crowned at the head of the largest kingdoms under the Father, and will be one with Christ as Christ is one with his Father; for their kingdoms are all joined together, and such as do the will of the Father, the same are his mothers, sisters, and brothers. He that has been faithful over a few things, will be made ruler over many things; he that has been faithful over ten talents, shall have dominion over ten cities, and he that has been faithful over five talents, shall have dominion over five cities, and to every man will be given a kingdom and a dominion, according to his merit, powers, and abilities to govern and control. It will be seen by the above diagram that there are kingdoms of all sizes, an infinite variety to suit all grades of merit and ability. The chosen vessels unto God are the kings and priests that are placed at the head of these kingdoms. These have received their washings and anointings in the temple of God on this earth; they have been chosen, ordained, and anointed kings and priests, to reign as such in the resurrection of the just. Such as have not received the fulness of the priesthood, (for the fulness of the priesthood includes the authority of both king and priest) and have not been anointed and ordained in the temple of the Most High, may obtain salvation in the celestial kingdom, but not a celestial crown. Many are called to enjoy a celestial glory, yet few are chosen to wear a celestial crown, or rather, to be rulers in the celestial kingdom.

“Diagram of the Kingdom of God,” *Millennial Star* 9, no. 2 (January 15, 1847): 23, attributed to Orson Hyde. Image courtesy of the LDS Church History Library; copyright Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

through the Apostolic dispensation to Father Adam just as soon as I can get a temple built.”¹⁵⁸

Perhaps the best visual depiction of Smith’s Chain of Belonging is the “Diagram of the Kingdom of God” published in the *Millennial Star* and generally attributed to first-generation Apostle Orson Hyde. In Hyde’s description, this was

the order and unity of the kingdom of God. The eternal Father sits at the head, crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Wherever the other lines meet, there sits a king and a priest unto God, bearing rule, authority, and dominion under the Father. . . . The most eminent and distinguished prophets who have laid down their lives for their testimony . . . will be crowned at the head of the largest kingdoms under the Father, and will be one with Christ as Christ is one with his Father; for their kingdoms are all joined together . . . and to every man will be given a kingdom and a dominion, according to his merit, powers, and abilities. . . . There are kingdoms of all sizes, an infinite variety to suit all grades of merit and ability.

Hyde explicitly equated moral (or ontological) with sacerdotal-genealogical gravity within the chain. The worthiest servants would stand highest in the chain, kings of their own subkingdoms. Degrees of glory, rendered here as “grades of merit,” are explicitly defined by their patriarchal scope.

Young took Smith’s Chain of Belonging to a controversial conclusion in the last decades of his life, a doctrine known as “Adam-God.” In some respects his was a natural conclusion—because God was the God of many worlds and Adam was the father of all humans on this earth, Adam could be seen as the god of the human family. Though his statements are susceptible to multiple interpretations, Young seems to have taken this idea further than Joseph Smith or most of his inner circle, with the notable exception of Eliza Roxcy Snow Smith Young. The main Church decisively rejected these specific doctrinal claims after Young’s death.¹⁶⁰

Even as the Church backed away from the excesses of Adam-God, images of the Chain of Being persisted. Orson F. Whitney, in his epic poem *Elias*, published in the late nineteenth century, returned to the images Smith had employed. Whitney evoked “might of heaven, the pure and potent chain.” It was

The all-creating, all-controlling chain

Whereby the Gods perpetuate their reign
Whereby the higher, bending, lift the lower.¹⁶¹

Whitney continued to appreciate that the chain was central to Smith's conquest of death and family-ordered heaven—that it was a way to describe the connections among people. Mormons were “Welding the parted links of being's chain / Old making new, the dead live again.”¹⁶²

Over the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, images of the chain gradually receded. In its place, references to “binding” or “welding” links came to be understood within the context of a version of the domestic heaven. Wilford Woodruff's termination of Young's adoption rituals in 1894, part of the same process that resulted in the end of polygamy, signaled this transition.¹⁶³ By the middle twentieth century, the Chain of Belonging had largely disappeared from rhetoric, though elements of the divine anthropology persisted.

Conclusion

Throughout his religious career, Joseph Smith expended considerable ritual, organizational, and intellectual energy in protecting human relationships from dissolution in the face of death. To effect this protection he extended the Great Chain of Being to familialize the entire cosmos, thereby recasting divine and angelic ontologies as he simultaneously divinized human beings. In this sacerdotal genealogy, protected and expanded by the temple and its associated rites—endowment, sealing, adoption, polygamy, and anointings—Smith announced to his followers a solution to death, one that mediated the contradictory demands of rising sentimentalism and the vast grandeur of patriarchal order. What was missing entirely was the capricious uncertainty of Calvinist election or the specter of backsliding from Arminian regeneration.

Smith's distinctive version of a formal philosophical construct provides several important windows into the cultural work of early Mormonism. First and foremost, this system demonstrated Smith's great antipathy for both death and social incoherence. In a cultural milieu self-consciously beset by early mortality and the disruption of extended family ties, Smith proposed solutions whose details he worked out in the laboratory of the afterlife. Sec-

ond, Smith's use of what had by then become largely a commonplace to express an aspect of natural theology and a vague endorsement of perfectionism demonstrates his impressive intellectual resourcefulness in the face of death. Where others saw a defense against atheistic explanations of creation, Smith saw the weapon to vanquish the King of Terrors and protect kindreds from dissolution. Third, Joseph Smith's modification of the Chain of Being shows the afterlife of a philosophical idea among religious practitioners. The formal construct of neoplatonism served to explain important social and emotional problems in a way attuned to the cultural setting in which early Mormons lived.

Finally, understanding temple rites and Smith's divine anthropology as aspects of his death conquest provides an emotional and spiritual valence missing from accounts of Mormon eschatology based primarily in perfectionism or biblical hermeticism. Smith and his followers anticipated not just crowns and sacred power in the afterlife; they looked forward to the tender embraces of loved ones to whom they were connected by both blood and deliberate allegiance. Although Smith is hard to summarize simply, the thrust of his later years was the creation of a kinship network whose ties were invulnerable to death.

Notes

1. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898*, typescript, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85), 2:364-65. All extant sources for the sermon are published in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 327-36, 389-92. Follett died March 9. Eulogies and accounts of the funeral are printed as "Communicated," *Nauvoo Neighbor* 1, no. 47 (March 20, 1844): 2. This sermon is distinct from the better-known "King Follett Discourse" preached at the Church conference in April.

2. Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:359, March 10, 1844.

3. Smith's use of "crafty" probably meant "resourceful" rather than "conniving," though the latter reading is not unreasonable. The term "crafty" had primarily negative connotations but could be used in a positive sense then as now. I do not believe that "crafty" was a veiled reference to Masonry. The wording was revised to "wise" for the official history: Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day*

Saints, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols., 1902–12, Vol. 7, 1932; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980 printing), 6:253. Mormons used “crafty” in, e.g., Orson Pratt to Dear Brother, November 18, 1835, *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 2 (November 1835): 223–24; and Warren A. Cowdery, “Valedictory,” *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 12 (September 1837): 570–71; Joseph Smith, “The Globe,” *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 8 (April 15, 1844): 508.

4. On theocentric versus domestic heavens, see Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 2d ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001) and Samuel Brown, *In Heaven As It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2011), chap. 1.

5. On the “democratic” family, see Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 51.

6. On Calvinism and Arminianism, see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989) and E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003).

7. See the compelling account of Antiquity in Peter R. L. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

8. This essay is in part an answer to John Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), which failed to appreciate the penetration of residual neoplatonic beliefs into early nineteenth-century non-esoteric thought.

9. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948).

10. Holifield, *Theology in America*, 147.

11. Gerald R. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 114–15.

12. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 152–56, 166. On Indians, see Alden Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1995), 26–28; and Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U. S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), 10. On African Americans, see Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New

York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 197–98 and Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), 45.

13. Mintz and Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions*, 8, 54.

14. Lia Formigari, “Chain of Being,” in Philip Wiener, ed., *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, 4 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1973–74) 1:325–35.

15. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 205.

16. Charles Lyell called the same concept a “progressive chain,” a term that enjoyed some popularity in the 1850s. Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology: Or, the Modern Changes of the Earth and Its Inhabitants Considered as Illustrative of Geology* (Boston: Little Brown, and Company, 1853), 132.

17. The report of Frances Trollope is emblematic of the continuing social relevance of the chain to transatlantic arguments about social hierarchy. This visiting British littérateur complained of Thomas Jefferson’s philosophy as “too palpable to a people, each individual of whom would rather derive his importance from believing that none are above him, than from the consciousness that in his station he makes part of a noble whole.” Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of Americans* (London: Whittaker, Treacher, & Co.; reprint, New York: 1832), 253.

18. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by Henry Reeve, 2 vols., 4th ed. (New York: J. & H. G. Langley, 1841), 105. Steven Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 38, argues that shifting social status led to the demise of the chain in the eighteenth century. See also Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 252.

19. Herbert Leventhal, *In the Shadow of the Enlightenment: Occultism and Renaissance Science in Eighteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 222. As late as 1792 (e.g., “the Universe or Intellectual World,” Literary Diary entry for July 21, 1792, see 1901 edition 3:470), Stiles continued in this belief. The 1792 image is based on an earlier version in his *Itineraries* 2:240 (June 2, 1766). My gratitude to Kathryn James for locating this second reference in the Stiles papers at Beinecke Library, Yale University. For Franklin, see Arthur Stuart Pitt, “The Sources, Significance, and Date of Franklin’s ‘An Arabian Tale,’” *PMLA* 57, no. 1 (March 1942): 155–68. On other similar figures, see I. Woodbridge Riley, *American Philosophy: The Early Schools* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1907), 205: (Samuel Langdon), 248 (Benjamin Franklin), 274 (Thomas Jefferson), 376 (Joseph Buchanan).

20. Rigdon’s diatribes against Campbell and his colleagues are scattered throughout Church publications. For Lucinda Morgan, see Todd

Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 43–54, and Smith’s use of Webster’s for translation is confirmed in Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, *Journals, Vol. 1: 1832–1839*, in the JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 107.

21. William Morgan, *Illustrations of Masonry by One of the Fraternity* (Rochester, N.Y.: N.pub., 1827), 100; Robert Owen and Alexander Campbell, *Debate on the Evidences of Christianity* (Bethany, Va.: Alexander Campbell, 1829), 99; Campbell, *Christian Baptism: With Its Antecedents and Consequences* (Bethany, Va.: Alexander Campbell, 1852), 65; Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), s.v. “degree.”

22. Thomas Taylor, trans., *Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians* (Walworth, England: for the translator, 1821), viii–ix.

23. Joseph Addison, “The Course of My Last Speculation,” *The Spectator* 1 (July 7, 1711): 111, describes the attainment of various “Degree[s] of Glory” by a chain of created “intelligences.” An 1810 edition was available in Joseph Smith’s local library. Robert Paul, “Joseph Smith and the Manchester (New York) Library,” *BYU Studies* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 344, and Milton V. Backman Jr., *Joseph Smith’s First Vision: The First Vision in Its Historical Context* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 48; compare Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 60.

24. See “Mr. Snyder and Mr. Giddings,” *The Wasp* 1, no. 38 (January 28, 1843): 3, reprinted from the *Globe*; see also Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 60, 206; Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man: In Four Epistles to Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke* (Troy, N.Y.: W. & H. Merriam, 1844), 11, 24. For Pope’s popularity, see Leventhal, *Shadow of the Enlightenment*, 219; and Agnes Marie Sibley, *Alexander Pope’s Prestige in America, 1725–1835* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1949).

25. Matthew Bowman and Samuel Brown, “The Reverend Buck’s *Theological Dictionary* and the Struggle to Define American Evangelicalism, 1802–1851,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 29, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 441–73.

26. Charles Buck, *Theological Dictionary* (Philadelphia: Edwin T. Scott, 1823), 21: “angel,” 177; “existence of God,” 217; “hierarchy,” 45–56; “Basilidians,” 45–46. Some conservative voices still invoked the chain for theodicy: Henry Phillip Tappan, *A Treatise on the Will: Containing a Review of Edward’s Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1839), 63, 69. Joseph Smith owned Tappan’s *Review*: Christopher C. Jones, “The Complete Record of the Nauvoo Library

and Literary Institute,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 192. Mormons also used the chain for theodicy: Warren Cowdery, “Freedom, May 10th, 1833,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 7 (April 1835): 97–98.

27. See, for example, John Mason Good’s (1764–1827) homiletic and popular 1826 *Book of Nature* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1834), esp. 94, 101, 148, 151, 286, 312, 406, which underwent at least ten American editions in New York, Hartford, and Boston between the 1820s through the 1840s and referred to “‘the golden everlasting chain’ of intelligence.” Orson Pratt, *Absurdities of Immaterialism, or, A Reply to T. W. P. Taylder’s Pamphlet, Entitled “The Materialism of the Mormons or Latter-day Saints, Examined and Exposed”* (Liverpool: H. James, 1849), 1, employs Good’s *Book of Nature*. In a similar vein, see [Oliver Cowdery], “Selected,” *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 2 (November 1836): 416.

28. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 236. See, e.g., Charles Brand, *Journal of a Voyage to Peru: A Passage across the Cordillera of the Andes in the Winter of 1827, Performed on Foot in the Snow; and a Journey across the Pampas* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), 8.

29. Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 260–61.

30. Buck, *Theological Dictionary*, 289–90. A similar invocation is seen in Buck’s preface (3).

31. Robert B. Thompson, “To the Saints Scattered Abroad,” *Times and Seasons* 1, no. 12 (October 1840): 179.

32. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 350.

33. Thomas Dick, *Philosophy of Religion* (Philadelphia: Key and Biddle, 1833), 10. There were at least seven American editions of his *Philosophy of Religion; or an Illustration of the Moral Laws of the Universe* from 1829 to 1848. Dick also advocated for the chain in other published works. See also Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 111–22, 114–15.

34. Dick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 9, 21, 127, 236, 11.

35. Thomas Dick, *The Philosophy of a Future State* (Brookfield, Mass.: E. and G. Merriam, 1829), 145, 223, 273–74.

36. Thomas Dick, “Philosophy of Religion,” *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 5 (February 1837): 461–43; excerpts from *Philosophy of a Future State*, 224–26, in “Section X,” *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 3 (December 1836): 423–45. Smith owned a copy of *Philosophy of a Future State*. Jones, “The Complete Record of the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute,”

153–76. Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, 2d ed. rev. (1945; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), esp. 171, proposes that Smith drew his inspiration directly from Dick, an argument followed by Dan Vogel and Brent L. Metcalfe, in “Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Cosmology,” in *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scriptures*, edited by Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 194, 206. Erich Robert Paul, “Joseph Smith and Plurality of Worlds Idea,” *Dialogue* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 13–36, provides a more sophisticated discussion of Dick’s influence.

37. The Vision, first published as “A Vision,” *Evening and Morning Star* 1, no. 2 (July 1832): 2–3, was canonized in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, 225–31, and appears in the current (1981) LDS D&C edition as Section 76. See Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds. “A Vision of Joseph and Sidney,” February, 16, 1832, Revelation Book 1, *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books, Facsimile Edition*, in JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2009), 243–55; “The Vision,” February 16, 1832, Revelation Book 2, *ibid.*, 415–33; and “A Revelation Given to the First Elders of this Church of Christ,” December 27–28, 1832, Revelation Book 1, 293–309.

38. “History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 14 (August 1, 1844): 592; see also “Faith of the Church of Christ in the Last Days, No. vi,” *Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 23 (August 1834): 179. See the similar statement in *Half-Yearly Report of the London Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Held in the City of London, Saturday and Sunday, June 5th and 6th, 1852* (London: N. pub., 1852), 4, LDS Church History Library.

39. Emma Disley, “Degrees of Glory: Protestant Doctrine and the Concept of Rewards Hereafter,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (April 1991): 77–105.

40. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 156–57.

41. “The Vision,” February 16, 1832, 415. Dick referred to the chain as “the economy of the universe” in a passage reprinted in “Philosophy of Religion,” *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 5 (February 1837): 462. Though “economy” appeared significantly in discussions of dispensationalism and generic theology, the term for many captured God’s order for the universe.

42. [William Phelps for Joseph Smith], “The Answer,” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 6 (February 1, 1843): 85. On ghostwriting, see Michael Hicks,

“Joseph Smith, W. W. Phelps, and the Poetic Paraphrase of ‘The Vision,’” *Journal of Mormon History* 20, no. 2 (1994): 63–84.

43. “A Sample of Pure Language Given by Joseph the Seer,” Revelation Book 1, in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations*, 264–65.

44. See, e.g., revelations for May 19, 1838, July 8, 1838 (D&C 116:1), and July 8, 1838 (D&C 117:8, 11), in Jessee, Ashurst-McGee, and Jensen, *Journals, Vol. 1*, 271, 289–90; see also, “A Sample of Pure Language Given by Joseph the Seer,” and revelations for March 1, 1832 (D&C 78:15, 20), and June 1, 1833 (D&C 95:17), in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations*, 1:265, 269, 341.

45. Revelation, December 27, 1832, in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations*, 299, 489–91.

46. Eliza Roxcy Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow: One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884), 10, 46.

47. See Samuel M. Brown, “Joseph (Smith) in Egypt: Babel, Hieroglyphs, and the Pure Language of Eden,” *Church History* 78, no. 1 (March 2009): 26–65, for the relevant background on the KEP and the quest for pure language.

48. See, e.g., Hugh W. Nibley, “The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1971): 350–99, and Edward H. Ashment, “Reducing Dissonance: The Book of Abraham as a Case Study,” in *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Theology*, edited by Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 221–35.

49. See, e.g., Warren Cowdery, “Letter No. 2,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 8 (May 1835): 113, Oliver Cowdery, “The Last Conference at Freedom. . .,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 7 (April 1835): 108, and William Phelps, Letter to Sally Phelps, May 26, 1835, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts Division, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).

50. Jessee, Ashurst-McGee, and Jensen, *Journals, Vol. 1*, 67, 124. See also *History of the Church*, 2:286: “The principles of astronomy as understood by Father Abraham and the ancients unfolded to our understanding.”

51. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 454–55; Vogel and Metcalfe, “Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Cosmology”; John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Daniel C. Peterson, “And I Saw the Stars—The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy,” in John Gee and Brian Hauglid, eds., *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2006), 1–16.

52. John Bellamy, *The History of All Religions, with Explanations of the Doctrine and Order of Worship, as Held and Practised by All the Denominations of Professing Christians; Comprehending a Series of Researches, Explanatory of the Opinions, Customs and Representative Worship in the Churches, Which Have Been Established from the Beginning of Time to the Commencement of the Christian Dispensation, the Accomplishment of the Prophecies of the Person of Christ; Incontrovertibly Proving by the Positive Declarations of the Prophets, That He Is the True Messiah* (Boston: Charles Ewer, 1820), 27, explained that Egyptians “have long had the honor of the mention of the constellations.” See also Commentary on Genesis 41:8 and Daniel 2:10, Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, the Text Carefully Printed from the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorized Translation, Including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts: with a Commentary and Critical Notes; Designed as a Help to a Better Understanding of the Sacred Writings*, 4 vols. (New York: T. Mason & G. Lane, 1837), 1:231, Commentary on Daniel 2:10, Clark, *The Holy Bible*, 4:568, and Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.7.1–2, see also Cowdery, “Egyptian Mummies,” 236. Cowdery had framed Smith’s discovery of his golden plates within traditions from Josephus two months earlier: Oliver Cowdery, “Letter No. VIII,” *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 1 (October 1835): 196. See also the series “The Wonders of Ancient Egypt,” *Nauvoo Neighbor* 1, no. 31 (November 29, 1843); 1, no. 32 (December 6, 1843); 1, no. 33 (December 9, 1843); 1, no. 34 (December 20, 1843).

53. Edward Partridge, Liberty, Clay County, Missouri, Letter to Joseph Smith, Kirtland, Ohio, [19] November 19, 1833, LDS Church History Library, commented: “During this sight our people rejoiced but the worlds people were much frightened.” On the meteor shower, see Michael Van Wagenen, “Singular Phenomena: The Evolving Mormon Interpretation of Unidentified Flying Objects,” in Michael Van Wagenen and Paul Reeve, eds., *Between Pulpit and Pew: The Supernatural World in Mormon Folklore* (Logan: Utah State University Press, forthcoming). On wonder lore in America, see, e.g., George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 69, 121.

54. Buck, *Theological Dictionary*, 573. Webster’s 1828 dictionary contained a similar description of “relative time.”

55. “The Grammar and A[l]phabet of the Egyptian Language,” Kirtland Egyptian Papers, MS 1295, fd. 1, p. 32, LDS Church History Library. Following Brian Hauglid, *A Textual History of the Book of Abraham: Manuscripts and Editions* (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2010), 7, I cite this manuscript as GAEL.

56. *Ibid.*, 26. Cubits are generally defined as 21 to 27 inches and re-

flect the length of a forearm from elbow to fingertip. Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, 2:261, described various definitions of “cubit” in his exegesis of 1 Samuel 17:4. Buck, *Theological Dictionary*, 31 (“ark”), defined a cubit as 21.8 inches, hence within the range Phelps and Smith proposed.

57. [Oliver Cowdery], “The Last Conference,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 7 (April 1835): 108. William Phelps, “The Answer,” December 25, 1844, *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 24 (January 1, 1844): 758, used the equivalence to calculate the Earth’s age: 7,000 divine years at 1,000 human years per divine day.

58. *Southern Reformer*, reprinted as “Ancient Egypt,” *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 5 (March 1, 1844): 462.

59. On the zodiacal body, see Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 80.

60. GAEL, 25. Isis figured prominently in some American metaphysical traditions, including as a representation of the twelve stars. R. A. Heavlin, *The Mysteries of Isis: Or, the Science of Mythematics* (New York: John F. Trow, 1858), 15, 234. The glyph name may be a compound of the Greek *phos*—light—and the Egyptian goddess *Isis*.

61. GAEL, 32, 34.

62. *Ibid.*, 25. “Kli” seems to be an abbreviated Kolob prepended to a contracted *flos isis*.

63. GAEL, 26.

64. *Ibid.*, 26, 32.

65. “A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 2,” *Times and Seasons* 3 no. 10 (March 15, 1842): 720–21.

66. Louis Zucker, “Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1968): 51, proposes this minor deformation of *kokab*, but misses Smith’s emphasis on proximity: Abraham 3:3, 9. See Michael D. Rhodes, “The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus . . . Twenty Years Later,” unpublished manuscript, 2002, <http://home.comcast.net/~michael.rhodes/JosephSmithHypocephalus.pdf> (accessed September 27, 2010), 8, and R. C. Webb [pseud. of J. E. Homans], “A Critical Examination of the Fac-similes in the Book of Abraham,” *Improvement Era* 16, no. 5 (March 1913): 1088–89. I thank Kevin Barney for his guidance on this subject.

67. Such promises emerged in several patriarchal blessings and priesthood ordinations in the mid- to late-1830s; by 1837, language about *Kolob* had joined more general promises of living translation. See, e.g., Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal* 1:118; and Irene M. Bates, “Patriarchal Blessings and the Routinization of Charisma,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Fall 1993): 11–12.

68. As Vogel and Metcalfe, "Joseph Smith's Scriptural Cosmology," 201, have correctly noted, several of Smith's most prominent followers by the 1850s had emphasized that heaven, the location of the afterlife, was on the various celestial bodies they identified.

69. This transliteration of *kokabim* (stars) follows Joshua Seixas's Sephardic system.

70. GAEL, 26, 32.

71. Ibid., 28.

72. Ibid., 30.

73. The Egyptian project also emphasized connections between the patriarchs and stars, specifically the patriarchs' capacity to see those stars: GAEL, 32, 34; Abr. 3:14.

74. William Phelps, "The Tribe of Joseph," *Evening and Morning Star* 1, no. 6 (November 1832): 41.

75. GAEL, 23.

76. Ibid., 23, 33.

77. In a feat of nested correspondence, Smith taught in 1843 that the Earth would become a habitable seerstone. Scott Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith Jr.* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 339, April 2, 1843. Henry Caswall, *City of the Mormons, or 3 Days at Nauvoo in 1842* (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1842), 26, confirms this teaching as widespread in Nauvoo by 1842. For examples of conscious components of celestial bodies, see Brigham Young, October 9, 1859, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855–86), 7:287; March 25, 1860, 8:29; Orson Pratt, "The Pre-Existence of Man," *The Seer* 1, no. 7 (July 1853): 102–5.

78. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 156.

79. See, e.g., Commentary on Job 38:7, Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, 3:168.

80. William W. Phelps, "He that Will Not Work, Is Not a Disciple of the Lord," *Evening and Morning Star* 1, no. 6 (November 1832): 47.

81. William W. Phelps, "Letter No. III," *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 4 (January 1835): 51.

82. Alan Segal, *Life after Death: The Afterlife in Western Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), esp. 246–47, 262, 265, provides a survey of the history of postmortal astralization in Western religion. "Deaths," *Nauvoo Neighbor* 1, no. 14 (August 2, 1843): 3; "Extract of a letter from W. W. Phelps," *Times and Seasons* 1, no. 12 (October 1840): 190.

83. Robert B. Thompson, "An Address, Delivered at the Funeral of

Joseph Smith Sen.," *Times and Seasons* 1, no. 11 (September 1840): 170–71.

84. J. B. Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages: Of the Rise, Progress, and Causes of Mormonism* (New York: Platt & Peters, 1842), 241.

85. Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (Oberlin, Ohio: James M. Fitch, 1846), 383. Smith treated Lucifer as a fallen star in the Vision (D&C 76:26), while Phelps dramatized Lucifer's fate in his poetic reworking of the Vision: "The Answer to W. W. Phelps, Esq.[']s A Vision," *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 6 (February 1, 1843): 82–85. Lucifer's story in Isaiah 14:12 reappears in 2 Nephi 24:12. William Shakespeare employed a similar image in *Romeo and Juliet* Act 3 Scene 2: "take him and cut him out in little stars . . ."

86. Lyman Beecher, *Works of Lyman Beecher* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852), 1:24–25, 37–38.

87. Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities, and Discoveries in the West*, 2d ed. rev. (Albany, N.Y.: J. Munsell, 1839), 74–75; emphasis his.

88. Brown, "Joseph (Smith) in Egypt," 59.

89. GAEL, 9, Brown, "Joseph (Smith) in Egypt," 57–63.

90. On the temple, see Brown, *In Heaven As It Is on Earth*, chap. 6.

91. Though the precise nomenclature is disputed, given the cryptic abbreviations adorning the individual pulpits, based on the pattern employed in designs for the temple planned for Independence and the actual execution of the Kirtland, Nauvoo, and Salt Lake temples, this seems to be the most reasonable interpretation of the scale. See Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 160, and references cited therein. I thank Glen M. Leonard, personal communication, November 3, 2006, for his insights on this matter.

92. Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2003), 1:60–2; see also 1:27–28, reprinting Smith's 1839 autobiography.

93. Joseph Smith, Journal, April 3, 1838, Jessee, Ashurst-McGee, and Jensen, *Journals*, 1:222 (now D&C 110).

94. Samuel Brown, "The Prophet Elias Puzzle," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 1–17.

95. Joseph Smith, Discourse, August 27, 1843, recorded by Willard Richards, *The Words of Joseph Smith: Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 243–47.

96. "God," *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 9 (June 1837): 528, reprinted in *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 23 (October 15, 1843): 366. See Arthur Coleman, "John Bowring and the Poetry of the Slavs," *Proceedings of*

the American Philosophical Society 84, no. 3 (May 1941): 431–59, for the broad dissemination of Bowring’s poor quality but popular translations. The Russian poem states, in an apostrophe to God, “You contain the chain of beings within yourself,” in contrast to Bowring’s rendition; corrected translation mine.

97. See, e.g., Parley P. Pratt, *The Millennium, and Other Poems: To Which Is Annexed, a Treatise on the Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter* (New York: W. Molineux, 1840), 112–13.

98. On baptism for the dead, see Alexander Baugh, “‘For This Ordinance Belongeth to My House’: The Practice of Baptism for the Dead Outside the Nauvoo Temple,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 47–58, and Samuel Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology and the Mechanics of Salvation,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2011): forthcoming.

99. On Saviors on Mount Zion, see Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology.”

100. Eugene England, ed., “George Laub’s Nauvoo Journal,” *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 174. See also, Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 2:388; Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 365–69.

101. See Brown, “Early Mormon Adoption Theology” for details.

102. “Minutes of a Conference,” *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 23 (October 1, 1841): 577.

103. On the formal rites of adoption, see Jonathan A. Stapley, “Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2011): forthcoming.

104. “A Fac-simile from the Book of Abraham, No. 2,” 720–21.

105. On the Nauvoo Temple liturgy and the translation of Freemasonry, see Brown, *In Heaven As It Is on Earth*, chap. 7. On sentinels, see Brigham Young, April 6, 1863, *Journal of Discourses*, 2:31.

106. On royal imagery in the temple *cultus*, see Andrew E. Ehat, “‘It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth’: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (1980): 253–79.

107. See the complementary analysis of Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 440–41.

108. Compton, *Sacred Loneliness*, 11, 33, 81, has also argued for a dynastic component in early Mormon polygamy. See also Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 445.

109. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 351, 463. See also Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 53.

110. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 497–99.

111. Andrew F. Ehat, “‘They Might Have Known That He Was Not a

Fallen Prophet'—The Nauvoo Journal of Joseph Fielding," *BYU Studies* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1979): 154.

112. Quoted in Rex Eugene Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 138.

113. Phelps wrote to his wife, Sally, that "instead of saving myself only I must labor faithfully to save others that I may obtain a crown of many stars." Quoted in Bruce A. Van Orden, ed., "Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1834–1836)," *BYU Studies* 33, no. 3 (1993): 559.

114. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 76.

115. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 101–2, May 16, 1843; see also D&C 131:1–4.

116. Later Saints distinguished strongly between exaltation and salvation; this emphasis was less clear in earliest Mormonism.

117. Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 232; see also D&C 132 and George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 104.

118. Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:341, January 21, 1844.

119. Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 369.

120. *Ibid.*, 8–9.

121. Brigham Young used this language in describing a vision he had of Joseph Smith. Brigham Young, Dream, February 17, 1847, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church History Library. Young had made a nearly identical statement a day earlier. Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 3:132.

122. H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text & Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 315.

123. Joseph Fielding, "Dear Br. Robinson," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 5 (January 1, 1842): 649.

124. England, "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," 165.

125. Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, 339. William Clayton recorded the concept as "kingdoms of a lower order," a phrase that was ultimately canonized in Doctrine and Covenants 130:9; see also George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 96–97.

126. "The Gathering," *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 2 (January 15, 1844): 407–8. Pope's *Essay on Man*, Epistle 1, actually reads "From nature's chain whatever link we strike, / Tenth or tenth thousand, breaks the chain alike."

127. Emmanuel Swedenborg, *Concerning the Earths in Our Solar System* (Boston: Otis Clapp, 1839 [1758]), 9–10, 20–21, 60. See discussion in McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 232.

128. Harvard Divinity School professor David Tappan, "The Spirit, Employment, and Design of the Christian Ministry," a sermon to celebrate William Ellery Channing's 1803 ordination, strongly endorsed the Chain of Being in reference to his exegesis of Ephesians 3:8-10, using angels, the "higher orders of creatures," as witnesses to the gradual and deliberate unfolding of God's plan. David Tappan, *Sermons on Important Subjects* (Boston: W. Hilliard and Lincoln and Edmands, 1807), 246-68, esp. 259-62.

129. Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations*, 74.

130. William W. Phelps, "Letter No. 8," *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 9 (June 1835): 130.

131. Sidney Rigdon, "Faith of the Church," *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 11 (August 1835): 165.

132. McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 58.

133. Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations*, 324; see also D&C 132:16. Smith made the same point in a July 16, 1843, sermon. Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 232.

134. Samuel Bent et al., "The High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ to the Saints of Nauvoo," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 8 (February 15, 1842): 700. This is an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 6:3.

135. William W. Phelps, "Letter No. III," *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 4 (January 1835): 51.

136. William W. Phelps, "Letter No. 8," *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 9 (June 1835): 130.

137. Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 381.

138. Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages*, 241-42.

139. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 344, 357.

140. *Ibid.*, 380-81.

141. In the same sermon, he concluded from another reference to Paul's sermon that "every man who reigns is a God." *Ibid.*, 381.

142. Dick, *Philosophy of a Future State*, 210, 231, 258, explicitly endorsed terms like "principalities" and "powers" as the names for classes of suprahuman beings.

143. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 341, 345, 350, 358.

144. "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 15 (August 15, 1844): 614.

145. England, "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," 173; see also Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 362.

146. "Conference Minutes," 614. Compare to the James Burgess account in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 350.

147. "Conference Minutes," 614.

148. Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordi-

nances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981), 237–47.

149. Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven W. Walker, "The Joseph/Hyrum Smith Funeral Sermon," *BYU Studies* 23 (Winter 1983): 11.

150. Joseph's Speckled Bird [W. W. Phelps], "Paracletes," *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 8 (May 1, 1845): 891–92, 917–18. See also Samuel M. Brown, "William Phelps's 'Paracletes': An Early Witness to Joseph Smith's Divine Anthropology," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 62–81. "Speckled Bird" is an allusion to Jeremiah 12:9: "Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird." Joseph Smith Sr. applied this appellation to Phelps in pronouncing his patriarchal blessing, bestowed in Kirtland on August 27, 1835. H. Michael Marquardt, comp., *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 43.

151. W. W. Phelps, "Dedication Hymn," *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 23 (February 15, 1846): 1135. See also his "There Is No End," *Deseret News*, November 19, 1859, 290, and "Come to Me," *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 1 (January 15, 1845): 783, a hymn sung at the dedication of the Nauvoo Seventies Hall in December 1844.

152. W[ilford] Woodruff, "Union," *Millennial Star* 6, no. 11 (November 15, 1845): 167.

153. Parley P. Pratt, "Celestial Family Organization," *Millennial Star* 5, no. 12 (May 1845): 193.

154. [Parley P. Pratt], "Materiality," *The Prophet* 1, no. 52 (May 24, 1845): 2.

155. "Dedication of the Seventies Hall," *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 2 (February 1, 1845): 795.

156. "Discourse of Elder John Taylor," *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 21 (January 15, 1846): 1101.

157. John D. Lee, Journal, February 16, 1847, in Charles Kelly, ed., *Journals of John D. Lee: 1846–27 and 1859* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984), 82.

158. *Ibid.*; Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 3:131, 133, February 16, 1847, and Richard S. Van Wagoner, ed., *The Complete Sermons of Brigham Young*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2009), 1:180, 182, 184.

159. "A Diagram of the Kingdom of God," *Millennial Star* 9, no. 2 (January 15, 1847): 23–24. Lance Owens, "Joseph Smith and Kabbalah: The Occult Connection," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 117–94, seeking the Kabbalah in early Mormonism, sees in Hyde's diagram the influence of Robert Fludd's *Sefiroth*, the multivalent schematic of Jewish mysticism often depicted as a Tree of Life. The simi-

larity is superficial at best, based on the crown, which in Hyde's depiction symbolizes God the King and *pater familias* and in Kabbalah is the *kether elyon*. The root structure in Fludd's image is merely a redrawing of the ten *sefiroth* as feathers or wings, while in Hyde's drawing, these branching lines are the very essence of the celestial hierarchy.

160. David John Buerger, "The Adam-God Doctrine," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 14–58; Gary James Bergera, "The Orson Pratt–Brigham Young Controversies: Conflict Within the Quorums, 1853–1868," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 7–49.

161. Orson F. Whitney, *Elias: An Epic of the Ages* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1904), 68–69.

162. *Ibid.*, 78.

163. Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism."

Mormon and Queer at the Crossroads

Alan Michael Williams

Although the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been instrumental in the passage of Proposition 8 in California in 2008, it surprised the national press in November 2009 by publicly supporting Salt Lake City's sexual orientation/gender identity non-discrimination ordinances in housing and employment.¹ In early 2009, Equality Utah, an organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Utahns, had proposed a "Common Ground" initiative because the Church, which heavily influences political discourse in the state, had stated after the Prop 8 campaign that it is not "anti-gay" and "does not object to rights for same-sex couples regarding hospitalization and medical care, fair housing and employment rights, or probate rights, so long as these do not infringe on the integrity of the traditional family or the constitutional rights of churches."² The initiative has not made much progress in the Utah State Legislature; but when it became clear that the city ordinances were sure to pass with religious liberties included (such as the right of a religious organization to hire only those of the same religion), the Church was in a position to follow through on its words. Church spokesman Michael Otterson stated before the city council: "Our community in Salt Lake City is comprised of citizens of different faiths and values, different races and cultures, different political views and divergent demographics. . . . The issue is . . . the right of people to have roofs over their heads and the right to work without being discriminated against."³

The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported "secret meetings" between mid-level Church officials and queer activists prior to the unanimous vote.⁴ As recently as a decade ago, the Church would probably have sided with more conservative voices, such as the Suther-

land Institute, a public policy think-tank based in Salt Lake City which continues to publish objections to the ordinances and warns: "The meaning of marriage will die by a thousand cuts. Each new inclusion in the law of such vague terms as 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' represents a mounting threat to the meaning of marriage."⁵ Sutherland labeled the Church's support "a public relations opportunity . . . [to] assuage the minds and soften the hearts of advocates of 'gay rights' in Utah."⁶ Here seems to be a suggestion that the Church's support of the ordinances was a mere concession to deflect the backlash received after Proposition 8. In a city, country, and world of contending faiths and cultures, the Church is indeed sensitive to its reception at local, national and global levels.

Yet to pigeonhole the Church as acting only in response to such external reactions overlooks the prospect of actual LDS support for the nondiscrimination ordinances. The Church referred to them as "for those with same-sex attraction."⁷ It thus clearly acknowledged, at least to some extent, the "group" whom the ordinances were drawn up to protect. The definition of this group in Mormon culture, however, is in flux. Civil rights discourse would have individuals grouped on the basis of qualities subject to discrimination (such as "sex," "race," "sexual orientation," or "gender identity"), but Mormon cosmology holds that the ultimate potential for all individuals is to become gods and goddesses like Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother,⁸ to become divine parents of spirit children who will go through the formative experience human beings are currently undergoing. The faith avows a concept of *eternal gender*, connoting that human souls are gendered male and female and that marriage between these two genders is "ordained of God."⁹ Opposite-gender marriage and procreation have always been sacred for Mormons as foundations of this movement toward divine parenthood.

To this effect, in 1995, the Church issued a document titled "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" which declared that "gender" was "an essential characteristic of . . . eternal identity."¹⁰ The proclamation addressed concerns the Church had about changing gender roles, primarily in the United States, including rising divorce rates, single parenting, and the phenomenon of working mothers, as well as same-sex marriage and parenting. In

the 1970s and '80s during the Equal Rights Amendment campaign, the Church found itself under feminist criticism for its mantra that the genders were "different, but equal," with the understanding that such "equality" stops short of occupational and ecclesiastical realms. The Church's position against the ratification of the ERA included concern that the amendment would encourage a "blurring" of gender roles as well as forcing "states . . . to legally recognize and protect [same-sex] marriages" because "if the law must be as undiscriminating concerning sex as it is toward race, [then] . . . laws outlawing wedlock between members of the same sex would be as invalid as laws forbidding miscegenation."¹¹ One might see how Apostle Boyd K. Packer's warning in 1993 of the "ever-increasing frequency" with which local leaders had to "deal with" the "dangers" of "the gay-lesbian movement, the feminist movement . . . and the ever-present challenge from the so-called scholars or intellectuals" addressed what was and remains an interrelated conundrum for the Church.¹²

The language of "The Family" proclamation to some extent perhaps sought to pacify all three groups by providing interpretive clarity. Yet, since the proclamation's issue, the Church has found itself under a spotlight due to its campaign against same-sex marriage underpinned by its avowal of gender essentialism.

In this article, I analyze Mormon¹³ conceptions of gender and sexuality by employing the insights of gender theorist and sexual historian Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Sedgwick is one of a wide range of scholars who contend with the fact that gender and sexuality are not uniformly experienced or consistently expressed across time. In the academy, she is often referred to as one of the founders of "queer theory," a field that emerged in the early 1990s at the intersection of feminist and LGBT studies. After laying out theoretical tools and a historical framework, I will then focus on homosexuality in Mormonism over the last thirty years in policy and social services.

Sexual Orientation and Its Contradictions

As a historian, Sedgwick writes about how homosexuality prior to the twentieth century was not simply called by a different name (such as "sodomy"); rather, the same-sex bonding of past eras was potentially erotic without taking on a separate term to

differentiate it from the non-erotic.¹⁴ Sedgwick uses “homosocial” to describe the same-sex bonding of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ The word is an obvious analogy to today’s “homosexual” but is a neologism that takes into consideration the fact that homosexuality as a concept upon which identities are now constructed requires a link between “sexual object choice” and gender, a link not made *en masse* until the twentieth century.¹⁶ Whereas the 1800s were home to the aberrational sodomite and the more frequent same-sex kiss, the 1900s were home for the homosexual as a species, a result of sexological classification.¹⁷ A central problem of this classification system known as *sexual orientation* (in which people are categorized as homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual) is that the distinction between the homosocial and the homosexual is an unexact science of acts and feelings. As Sedgwick writes: “The unbrokenness of the continuum [between the homosocial and the homosexual] is not a genetic one . . . but rather a strategy for making generalizations about . . . the structure of men’s relations with other men [and women’s relations with other women].”¹⁸

In the late 1980s, in a context of ritualized debates about homosexuality—questions of nature and nurture, sexual essentialism versus constructivism—Sedgwick contended that these debates are caused by the classification system of sexual orientation itself. Nature and nurture, she writes, rest upon “a very unstable background of tacit assumptions . . . about both nurture and nature.”¹⁹ For instance, in everyday political discourse, one might hear ideas about the “biological” basis of homosexuality. Sedgwick remarks that biology tends to stand in for “nature,” triggering an “estrus of manipulative fantasy” that human technologies (whether assisted reproductive technologies, genetic engineering, or psychotherapy) might someday surmount. The nature/nurture binary is a “Cartesian bipolar psychosis that . . . [can] switch its polar assignments without surrendering a bit of its hold over the collective life.”²⁰ During the 1990s, Mormon leaders also attempted to resolve the nature/nurture debates, taking a similar stance on the limited insight of science. In 1995, Apostle Dallin H. Oaks wrote in the *Ensign*, the Church’s monthly periodical for adults: “The debate over whether, or the extent to which, specific behavior is attributable to ‘nature’ or to ‘nurture’ is centuries old.

Its application to the subject of same-sex feelings and behaviors is only one manifestation of a highly complex subject on which scientific knowledge is still in its infancy.”²¹ Oaks added: “It is wrong to use [homosexual] to denote a condition, because this implies that a person is consigned by birth to a circumstance in which he or she has no choice in respect to the critically important matter of sexual behavior.”²²

Even now, more than fifteen years later, Mormon leaders are still keen on deploying “homosexual” as an adjective (homosexual acts, thoughts, feelings) and not as a noun (homosexual or gay persons); the Church upholds an attraction/behavior distinction.²³ Sedgwick clarifies that this framing does not escape the logic of sexual orientation but is, in fact, indicative of it. “Homosexual” as a noun and “homosexual” as an adjective are part of a contradictory dialectic.²⁴ The contradiction is that, in its noun form, “homosexual” posits a minority that “really is gay” while in its adjective form, it posits an impression that anyone might choose to be gay (or not) by engaging in particular acts and/or entertaining particular feelings agreed upon as homosexual. While the adjective form provides the notion that homosexuality is curable or at least controllable through behavioral adaptation, the catch is that particular acts and feelings must already be present in a cultural imagination to denote a homosexual status that is qualitatively different than everyday homosociality. In sum, if the adjective form exists in a culture, then the noun form is always extant, and vice versa.

Sedgwick suggested the noun/adjective dialectic is usefully described as producing competing *minoritizing* and *universalizing* discourses. Simply, “homosexual” as a noun is minoritizing because it will never be the case that every person is a homosexual. “Homosexual” as an adjective is universalizing because everyone can choose to engage in acts and/or entertain feelings constructed and labeled as homosexual (although many would prefer not to).

In the early twentieth century when the classification system was first employed by sexologists, Sigmund Freud’s notion of “innate bisexuality” was merely the dialectic problematically overlain onto a “proto-sexuality” of children. For Freud, homosexuality was the result of deterministic mishaps in a child’s development

toward heterosexuality. Many of Freud's colleagues and followers disagreed with his concept of innate bisexuality and instead considered heterosexuality to be natural while homosexuality and bisexuality were deviations. The quest for a cause and cure of same-sex desire in childhood ultimately made no sense, though, because many adults who might self-identify as gay would not say they had had gay childhoods (while many others would say that they were indeed gay as children), and some "proto-gay" children do not later identify as gay in adulthood.

During Freud's heyday, homosexuality was called "inversion" (the "effeminized" male child and the "masculinized" female child), but this notion also proved problematic, as many people with same-sex attraction are "gender conforming" in all ways but sexual desire—that is, they can pass publicly as stereotypically masculine or feminine and not be suspected of having the desires they do. This passing of some, and the inability to pass of others, (as well as the fact that many heterosexuals are sometimes perceived to be gay) points to a second contradiction that Sedgwick explains as resulting from the classification system. Homosexuality has been framed as gender-nonconforming yet at the same time as a "group" within each gender (gay and lesbian).²⁵ This second contradiction explains why homosexuality and transgenderism (or gender variance that may have little to do with sexuality) have often been conflated, but it also demonstrates that the historical relationship between sexuality and gender is quite entangled.

Mormons and Sexual Orientation

In the 1950s and '60s, when Mormon leaders first spoke publicly on homosexuality, it was condemned as unnatural and unnecessary and therefore as illegitimate and sinful; an orientation toward the same sex was considered implausible.²⁶ Like much of the rest of America at the time, Mormons regarded homosexual feelings and acts as chosen and therefore amenable to repentance and correction—an affliction to be cured. This position altered slightly during the last quarter of the twentieth century when the choice of homosexuality was nuanced to include feelings as temptations to be resisted but which were not sinful in themselves unless acted upon. While this shift might be said to have occurred because curing homosexuality proved unfeasible (or an "orienta-

tion” was given credence through scientific experiment), what a poststructuralist historian like Sedgwick shows is that such a shift was the inevitable consequence of a classification system in which “experts”—both clinical and spiritual—who discern what aspects of desire are voluntary are compelled to make concessions about which aspects are not.²⁷

This development paralleled another. By the 1970s, sexuality in LDS culture began to be seen as not just for procreation, but also to enhance sexual happiness within marriage.²⁸ This change had two main catalysts that had developed in America throughout the twentieth century. The first was an overwhelming consensus that sex for pleasure was not necessarily physically or emotionally harmful. Initially, this concept was a movement away from nineteenth-century notions of “vital force,” or the idea that men possessed a limited quantity of sexual fluids that, when released detrimentally, affected their health. For many Christian groups, vital force was linked to “original sin”: Sexual desire was imbued with vice and led to children who were born as sinners like their parents. For nineteenth-century Mormons who had rejected the concept of original sin, polygamy was seen as the best way to adhere to God’s commandment to be “fruitful and multiply.” Mormons believed that sexuality, when employed with reproductive intent, could be health-giving (a gift from God for being obedient) rather than a draining of life force.²⁹ By the 1920s, when the vital-force model had fallen from scientific grace (and polygamy had fallen from societal grace), most Americans understood sexual happiness as essential to marital intimacy between one man and one woman; the question became one of the moral standing of sexuality without reproductive intent. While the country underwent a sexual revolution during the 1960s, even by the 1970s and early ’80s, LDS leaders spoke routinely against masturbation and oral sex, finding these practices “wicked” in their self-indulgence. By the 1990s, Church leaders ceased asking married couples about their sexual activities (except for assuring marital “chastity,” by which they meant “fidelity”); they also stopped asking about particular practices, except for the use of pornography, which remains strongly condemned in and outside of marriage.

The second main catalyst was feminist thought. Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century (or “first-wave”) feminists

called for a woman's right over her body, which includes the right to choose pregnancy as opposed to being required to birth children, given the dangers of childbirth. Mid- to later-twentieth-century feminists ("second-wave") called for a women's right to sexual pleasure that need not necessarily lead to pregnancy and motherhood (nor even be in the context of marriage) given the advent of reliable birth control and the rising financial independence of women. Many LDS women came to distrust second-wave feminists who, during the time of the ERA, homogenized them as "victims" of their beliefs in divine marriage, motherhood, and gender symmetry. Sentiment against "feminism" has continued to pervade LDS thought ever since, as most Latter-day Saints are unread in more nuanced post-1980 ("third-wave") feminism(s).³⁰

While homosexuality had been condemned in large part due to its non-potentiality for procreation, by the 1980s this argument no longer provided full justification, as Mormons increasingly engaged in intentionally non-procreative sex within their marriages for the purpose of shared sexual happiness. In the 1980s, heterosexuality was considered by many Mormon therapists to be the only "true" orientation while homosexuality was classified as "gender dysphoria"—a trope that continues within the culture to this day.³¹ This logic opened up space for non-procreative sex to be acceptable as long as it occurred within the intimate bounds of marriage between one man and one woman; in other words, acceptable and normative sexuality was linked to gender and not just reproduction.

In the 1990s, official discourse by the upper echelon of Church leaders, whom members ritually sustain as "prophets, seers, and revelators," saw a rise in use of the phrase "same-gender attraction," described as an affliction that should not be acted upon. One way of thinking of the phrase "same-gender attraction" is as an expression of homosexuality without the "sex" (and thus without the sin, leading to a "love the sinner, hate the sin" approach), although Church leaders also maintain that "same-gender attraction" itself should be resisted as non-normative desire, as something against which one must struggle.³²

Today, the Church seems to me to be in a precarious position. In maintenance of what I will call an "eternal heterogender," Church leaders have ventured into making definitive statements

about the “mystery” of this particular “affliction.” In recent years, the question has been said to be resolved in the next life where “same-gender attraction” will be “repaired.”³³

Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland has also recommended that Latter-day Saints not use their sexual feelings as primary identifiers (such as in use of the words “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” or “straight”) and to concentrate only on sexual behavior (no sex outside of marriage); yet this statement is made, paradoxically, in an article whose title identifies people by their sexual feelings: “Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction.”³⁴ This paradox arises from the fact that, in using “homosexual as an adjective,” Mormons have written themselves into the logic of sexual orientation, not out of it. Holland’s request that Mormons not use their sexual feelings to identify themselves might be read as a kind of nostalgia for an earlier period when the Church did not have to deal with people asserting a sexual orientation or feelings of attraction to the same sex. Yet absence of the classification system by no means equals automatic heterosexuality. In the past, cultural forces along the lines of gender, race, and class dictated “ideal” family structures, just as those forces continue to do so today.³⁵ D. Michael Quinn’s work on nineteenth-century Mormonism points to a church that, without an established concept of sexual orientation, saw a greater tolerance of same-sex intimacy, even while acts of sodomy (both homosexual and heterosexual) were condemned as unnatural because they were non-procreative.³⁶ In the twenty-first century, powerful forces outside the Church—both secular and religious—consider same-sex desire not as a mystery with which people must struggle, but as natural feelings that can manifest themselves in intimacy that is morally neutral.

1980s Changes in LDS Therapeutic Discourse

Throughout America during the first half of the twentieth century, various reparative therapies were administered in hopes of changing same-sex desire to opposite-sex desire. Brigham Young University was endorsing electroshock therapy as late as the 1970s. Homosexual Mormons were coaxed into marriages with an assumption that their desires for the same sex would disappear in the context of spousehood and parenting but, if not,

could be eliminated or substantially reduced (or heterosexual desire could be added) through the use of reparative therapies.

A turning point might be best characterized by the 1987 statement of Gordon B. Hinckley, then first counselor in the First Presidency of the largely non-functioning President Ezra Taft Benson: "Marriage should not be viewed as a therapeutic step to solve problems such as homosexual inclinations or practices."³⁷ In his 2005 study of gay Mormons, sociologist Rick Phillips argues that conversations among Church leaders, LDS Social Services, and faithful members during the 1980s moved the Church to "compromise" its policies on homosexuality—from assertions that homosexuality was freely chosen to a more careful consideration of desire with a continued condemnation of homosexual practices.³⁸ Phillips suggests that this modification occurred because curing homosexuality proved untenable despite decades of attempts.

This explanation, however, does not take into account the historical development of the diagnosis. For example, Phillips summarizes the movement as a shift from Mormon sentiment against "*being* gay" to against "*acting* gay,"³⁹ which is confusing since "*being* gay" has never been part of official LDS vocabulary except in terms of its negation. A better explanation would be that, while some in LDS Social Services subscribed to a minoritizing view of homosexuality in the 1980s—claiming that homosexuality was "incurable" except by "miracle"⁴⁰ (in essence, attesting that some indeed are "gay")—the culture as a whole merely shifted to the universalizing realm of acts. The goal changed from becoming heterosexual, *per se*, to becoming marriageable. Same-sex desire, insofar as it had been understood to be of a certain quality over decades of clinical classification, was believed to be, in most cases, neutralizable in service of married life. I would not describe this as a compromise, as Phillips does, but rather as a strategic reassertion.

Even given this reassertion, Hinckley's 1987 statement that marriage should not be regarded as a cure came in the midst of a change in Mormon sexual mores generally: a movement from sexuality being understood as primarily for reproduction, to affirming sexuality as important both procreatively and recreatively—for reproduction, of course, but also as an element of happiness within marriage. Thus, while a Latter-day Saint no longer needed

to be heterosexual to be worthy, one had to be prepared to perform heterosexually (and not just reproductively) on account of one's spouse. Church leaders recognized by the 1980s that marriages suffered if same-sex desire was not sufficiently addressed prior to marriage or the happiness of one's spouse would be compromised. In 2006, Elder Oaks stated in hindsight: "To me [Hinckley's statement] means that we are not going to stand still to put at risk daughters of God who would enter into such marriages under false pretenses or under a cloud unknown to them."⁴¹ This framing conjures notions of male selfishness (see next section) if the given affliction was not attended to beforehand, but "risk" also implies physical danger. By the late 1980s, Church leaders had become concerned during the nationwide panic over the "gay plague" that HIV was being transmitted to LDS wives from LDS husbands who were secretly having sex with men.⁴²

As Phillips shows, the 1980s saw sentiment within the Mormon therapy community that a homosexual orientation was a tangible phenomenon to the extent that a cure for same-sex desire seemed doubtful. But others agreed that a kind of logic was needed for a new era of neutralization, whether or not an orientation was verifiable. In their 1987 article "Homosexuality: Getting Beyond the Therapeutic Impasse,"⁴³ LDS therapists Ann and Thomas Pritt attempted to provide this logic. They alleged that homosexuality was more than a set of behaviors and/or feelings; rather, it was a "way of life" that required "years of pathological coping [that] . . . affect[s] most areas of the lives of those moving toward gender dysphoria."⁴⁴ The Pritts' dismissal of sexual orientation and their replacing it with gender dysphoria is significant for three reasons. First, because marital sex that lacked procreative intent had become normative in Mormon culture, the wrongfulness of homosexuality could no longer be articulated in terms of reproduction alone but was constructed as an issue of gender—hence, "gender dysphoria." The fact that many heterosexual couples cannot reproduce reinforces this point. Second, this dysphoria was explained as something one acquired through behavior (or "choice") so that gender-conformity was, in principle, all that was required to unravel it. Third, with gender-conformity as a cure of sorts, the Pritts resorted to stereotypes about what makes *all* homosexuals gender-nonconforming. This framing also conflates transgenderism

with homosexuality. Their answer: unfilled emotional bonding with members of the same sex.

The data the Pritts relied upon to make this claim were Mormons whose attempts at same-sex pairing were unsuccessful and led to unhappiness, a circular logic that it was homosexuality that failed their clients rather than Mormonism's heteronormative environment. The Pritts made a cognitive leap that homosexuality could be "changed" into heterosexuality through "appropriate" same-sex bonding. They wrote: "All of their thoughts and behaviors are involved in their 'coming out' process, so their entire self will necessarily be involved in their 'coming in' to their very real heterosexuality." This therapeutic process was said to require that past transgressions and thoughts be kept "strictly confidential" due to "homophobia and long-held misconceptions about the nature or possibility of change, [as] many people would see these growing men as they had thought they were, rather than what they really were and were becoming." Here, homophobia, as it remains understood within the Mormon context, is made clear: It is the fear, banishment, bad-mouthing, or ill-thought toward persons that prevents the construction of shared spaces where "heterosexuals [can] . . . comfortably establish healing relationships with identity-impaired individuals."⁴⁵

That the Pritts attempted to match their theological ideals—gender complementarity and reproduction within marriage—with real world queer encounters is obvious. For them, homosexuality was a kind of underdeveloped homosociality; heterosexuality was attained through a struggled, perhaps lifelong performance. The Pritts' logic, however, raises the question of whether linking homosexuality with gender-nonconformity can ever be done without stereotyping. As Sedgwick comments: "Attributions of a 'true' 'inner' heterogender may be made to stick . . . so long as dyads of people are all that are in question. [But] the broadening of view to include any larger circuit of desire must necessarily reduce the inversion . . . trope to a choreography of breathless farce."⁴⁶

In other words, if heterosexuality were ubiquitous, then it would not need to be made compulsory; it would simply happen on its own for all people. Calling homosexuality "gender-nonconforming" is an attempt to preserve an essential heterosexuality within desire itself. This essential heterosexuality might corre-

late to a theological ideal of gender complementarity, but to make this ideal fit the world will require a “choreography of farce.” As an example of how this choreography plays out, the Pritts’ notion of “change” stems from their data of homosexuals as unhappy and feeling guilt and remorse after committing acts deemed sinful. Practically speaking, the “change to . . . very real heterosexuality” might include an avoidance of homosexual behavior, a tight self-control on sexual attraction, and a maintenance of a belief in a “true, inner heterogender.”⁴⁷ All of these factors, however, point to celibacy and not heterosexuality; an actual performance of heterosexuality within marriage has yet to occur. Using the Pritts’ schema, homosexuals who are unrepentant and speak of love and happiness in the context of same-sex relationships are simply lost to their “pathology”; their happiness might be described as unhappiness in disguise or as a temporary illusion of happiness destined to become disappointment. Such sentiments seem deficient in empathy, though, and would be interpreted by the majority of today’s psychological community as signs of heterosexism.

A therapeutic stance that resembles that of the Pritts today is maintained most notably by LDS therapist A. Dean Byrd, a past president of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), who has written and contributed to several books on homosexuality. Much like the immediate descendants of Freud, Byrd declares heterosexuality to be the only “true” orientation. He rejects the notion of homosexuality as innate (or a minoritizing view of homosexuality), attesting that it can be changed. The field of psychology, however, has long since problematized and moved beyond questions of sexual determinism and is now interested in sexuality over one’s lifespan.⁴⁸ The field has been introspective of its history, recognizing that the campaign to cure homosexuality was merely for the sake of upholding heterosexuality as superior. Byrd, on the other hand, paints a one-dimensional picture of a field overwrought with politics and averse to science. As recently as September 2009, Elder Bruce C. Hafen, a member of the third-ranked First Quorum of the Seventy, following the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, cited Byrd approvingly,⁴⁹ which means his work remains relevant in terms of a discourse analysis; however, his use of gen-

der stereotypes and his propagation of misinformation about human sexuality is harmful and regrettable.⁵⁰

The 1990s: The Proclamation on the Family

In conservative Christian communities during the 1990s, the idea that people were separatist when they engaged in homosexual behavior (rather than merely experiencing same-sex desire) gained traction.⁵¹ Increasingly, Latter-day Saints in the pews asked that a “hate the sinner who sins” environment be replaced with “love the sinner, hate the sin.” The latter approach was viewed as more inclusive and conducive to helping practicing homosexuals cease their behavior and encourage those who felt tempted to never engage in “experimentation.” In essence, these Saints were asking for a Church atmosphere *sans* “homophobia,” as they understood the term. In his 1995 article, Elder Dallin Oaks quoted a letter from a parent:

Another concern we have is the way in which our sons and daughters are classified as people who practice deviant and lascivious behavior. Perhaps some do, but most do not. These young men and women want only to survive, have a spiritual life, and stay close to their families and the Church. It is especially damaging when . . . negative references are spoken from the pulpit. . . . Many simply cannot tolerate the fact that Church members judge them as “evil people,” and they, therefore, find solace in gay-oriented lifestyles.

Oaks responded: “The person that’s working [to resist] those tendencies ought not to feel himself to be a pariah. Now, quite a different thing is sexual relations outside of marriage. A person engaging in that kind of behavior should well feel guilt. . . . It’s not surprising to me that they would feel estranged from their church.”⁵² Here is a movement of blame in which those given to “those tendencies” find solace in “gay-oriented lifestyles” because either (a) the culture pushed them away, and/or (b) the individual was separatist. In both explanations, homosexuality is framed as the source of the division, and Oaks expresses surprise at those who “feel that the Church can revoke God’s commandments”⁵³ to bridge the divide.

Outside the Church, a growing consensus had found homosexuality to be neither a sign of illness nor homosexual behavior an estrangement from God. Gays and lesbians in search of marital

rights in the 1990s, pedestaled by gay rights organizations, forced conservative Christians, including Mormons, to grapple with non-libertarian queer activism.⁵⁴ Gordon B. Hinckley, speaking as Church president in 1998, stated that “those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians” are “love[d] as sons and daughters of God,” but the Church could not “stand idle if they indulge in immoral activity, if they try to uphold and defend and live in a so-called same-sex marriage situation.” Hinckley added: “To permit such would be to make light of the very serious and sacred foundation of God-sanctioned marriage and its very purpose, the rearing of families.”⁵⁵

Yet is a queer family any less a family because it is queer? Official Mormon discourse has not yet addressed the familiness of these households, even while they are increasing. Nadine Hansen, an LDS lawyer, argues that, since the family was already central to Mormon theology long prior to the 1990s and in light of the Church’s attempted intervention in the 1993 litigation regarding same-sex marriage in Hawaii (and its later involvements in Alaska in 1998 and California in 2000 and 2008), a “subtext” of homosexuality is key to understanding the proclamation’s timing. This point is particularly important given the politically mobilizing language in the proclamation on the family: “We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.” Hansen has stated: “I am unaware of any time or circumstance under which the Church has urged members or government leaders to enact a single measure to strengthen ‘the family,’ other than legislation that would undermine homosexual relationships.”⁵⁶ Yet, as mentioned already, concern over same-sex marriage was on the Mormon agenda as early as the 1970s during the time of the ERA. I would adduce that the issue of homosexuality for the Church is, at its core, about gender, as accepting same-sex parented families in full communion would upset the ecclesiastical relationship between men and women rather than necessarily disrupt theological ideals of marriage and parenthood. It is no coincidence that religions that validate same-sex marriage also ordain women. As Sedgwick writes: “It has yet to be demonstrated that . . . patriarchy structurally requires homophobia”—consider ancient Greece, for exam-

ple. Rather, the different shapes of “male and female homosexuality . . . will always be articulations . . . of the enduring inequality of power between women and men.”⁵⁷

Insofar as homosexuality had been understood within the Church as stemming from an affliction that lends to a kind of selfishness if not kept in check,⁵⁸ this selfishness has been gendered male.⁵⁹ Women who do not want to marry or produce offspring are considered to have problems adhering to their gender, as opposed to any credence being given to their desire, whether same-sex or otherwise. Internalized, this stance has rendered lesbian voices within the Church dim. The desire of the male, on the other hand, is reasoned to be of desire only; the Church has exercised diligence in displaying a conquering of male same-sex desire. The contradictions of this gendered discourse emerged during the 1990s with the increased public visibility of lesbian motherhood. The “lesbian as mother who is unselfish” quieted conservative Christian discourse of homosexuality as mere selfishness as well as deflecting arguments that homosexuality is wrong because it is non-procreative.⁶⁰

In the LDS context, the conversation concerning the wrongfulness of homosexuality saw a gradual shift from ideas of carnal selfishness and reproductive incapacity in the 1970s and '80s to a question of a God-ordained family structure and gender roles in the 1990s and beyond, as evidenced in the language of the proclamation on the family. Essentializing gender roles was a succinct way to “protect” the traditional family after the Church came to terms with the following two realities: (1) non-heterosexuality is not just a question of sex, but also often of love and family-building, and (2) sexual happiness (or carnal selfishness) is often part of marital intimacy.

God-ordained gender roles do not hold up in an American court of law, though. As Judge Vaughn Walker concluded in 2010 regarding Proposition 8 in California: If mandating sexual activity, child-bearing, and child-rearing to occur within marriage were really in the state's best interest, the proposition did not help this at all because it requires some sexual activity, child-bearing, and child-rearing to occur outside of marriage.⁶¹ In other words, Walker did not find gays and lesbians to be separatists but in fact made the same argument that had concerned the Church during

the ERA campaign: "Because of their relationship to one another,"⁶² gays and lesbians are discriminated against due to their biological sex.

A Dialectic in Full Swing: The 2000s

Elder Packer in 1978 stressed that use of "homosexual" was dangerous because it might lead people to believe they really are homosexual.⁶³ By the turn of the twenty-first century, it was not possible for the Church to avoid the terms "gay/straight" and "sexual orientation."⁶⁴ A believing Mormon in good standing with the Church today can self-identify as gay and even claim to have a homosexual orientation, provided he or she acknowledges or at least chooses to act only upon his or her "eternal heterogender." LDS therapists who still advanced the idea of heterosexuality as the only true orientation explained this new phenomenon of Mormons self-identifying as gay as the result of bad science infiltrating Mormonism and indoctrinating its youth; it was the product of a "worldly" conspiracy asserting that homosexuality is innate.⁶⁵ On the part of Mormons who self-identified with "same-gender attraction," "being gay" was a vernacular way of describing consistent same-sex desire with little to no opposite-sex desire, not unlike the Kinsey scale that does not require one to identify with one of two poles for a life course but allows one to place oneself somewhere on a continuum for now (including the poles) and to be open to what the future might bring.

Church leaders in the 2000s referred to celibacy as the only other possibility for the unmarried—an acceptable but lesser option given the "blessings of eternity" that marriage is said to provide. In a 2006 co-interview with Apostle Oaks, Lance B. Wickman, of the First Quorum of the Seventy, compared "same-gender attraction" with disability. He spoke of his disabled daughter who "stand[s] at the window of my office which overlooks the Salt Lake Temple and look[s] at the brides and their new husbands as they're having their pictures taken. . . . [S]he's at once captivated . . . and saddened."⁶⁶ Her image served as a call for humility among those whose differences do not place them beyond the realm of marriageability in this life. Only "same-gender attraction" that is unable to be controlled was deemed to reasonably necessitate lifelong celibacy.⁶⁷ Mormon scholar Ron Schow noted in

2007 that descriptions of “same-gender attraction” as being “repaired in the next life,” like disabilities that may not be “repaired” in this one, have been expressed by Church leaders only as recently as the last decade.⁶⁸

In an era of the internet and increased media representations of happy and productive queer people not considered identity-impaired or sinful, Church leaders have had the difficult task of creating continued stigma for categories of identity no longer considered shameful by large segments of American society. They have done this, in part, by steering the rising generation of Latter-day Saints away from the “worldly” designations of identity (such as “gay” or “lesbian”) that their peers use and toward what are termed more “eternal” signifiers. An example of this task at work appears in a 2007 article by LDS Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland. Holland recounted a conversation with a young man in his early twenties who was not sure he should remain a member of the Church. He did not think he was “worthy” because he was “gay.” Holland queried: “And?” noting for his readers the surprise on the young man’s face. Holland asked the young man whether he had violated the “law of chastity” (no sex outside of marriage), to which the young man answered that he had not. The apostle thanked him for “remaining clean” and then told him that knowing “the cause of your feelings” is not as important as knowing that he has “not transgressed.” Holland then told the young man: “You serve yourself poorly when you identify yourself primarily by your sexual feelings, [as] that isn’t your only characteristic, so don’t give it disproportionate attention. You are first and foremost a son of God, and He loves you.” Although the phrase “son of God” does not explicitly mean a “heterosexual son of God,” if the young man were to remain unmarried and celibate as a result of his struggle (or for whatever other reasons), he will become, to a large extent, a cultural outsider by midlife. Holland makes this fate clear at the end of the article when he says: “I weep with admiration and respect at the faith” of a second man who, now in his thirties, remains chaste, “struggling,” and “has not yet married.”⁶⁹

Holland’s weeping for those who struggle with desire is intertwined with an opposing disciplinarian stance: “All human beings struggle, so you are no different than I am,” as expressed through his request that the young man not identify himself by his sexual

feelings. This weeping-disciplinary dyad is dialectical; it resembles the God-like faces of mercy and wrath. This duality overlays Sedgwick's discussion of the contradictory minoritizing/universalizing tendency that occurs when sexuality is linked to gender. The "merciful" stance taken by Holland—that of weeping for those who struggle with desire—demonstrates an acknowledgment of a minority for whom desire is considered an issue. Holland does not cite studies that give percentages of how many Americans are gay, but he does state that there are "thousands like him [the thirtysomething man], male or female, who 'fight the good fight' . . . who struggle with . . . same-gender attraction."⁷⁰ Apostle Oaks made the "merciful" gesture as well when he said in the 2006 co-interview with Wickman: "Perhaps there is an inclination or susceptibility to such feelings that is a reality for some and not a reality for others."⁷¹ Nevertheless, the "wrathful" or universalizing stance is always taken in the same frame and given greater credence. For Holland, being "gay" is the result of a series of choices, acts, and reflections through which anyone might choose to be gay. For Oaks, the same is true: "Out of such susceptibilities come feelings, and feelings are controllable. If we cater to the feelings, they increase the power of the temptation. If we yield to the temptation, we have committed sinful behavior."⁷² In brief, the minoritizing/universalizing dialectic takes the following outline: "Same-gender attraction" becomes just like any other "affliction" (such as a disability or a propensity toward anger) and is therefore framed as not-unique, even though it is also paradoxically talked about as uniquely afflicting some people.

This binary thinking is important to explicate because it forecloses a livable middle ground for many Mormons today. On one end of the mercy/wrath binary are success stories to be emulated in which desire has been conquered or is sufficiently controlled and in which one has aligned himself or herself to find ultimate joy in the LDS life sequence (gender dyadic marriage and parenthood). On the other end are the Stuart Matises⁷³ of Mormonism whose "last desperate act[s] . . . [are] forgiven by the mercy of the Atonement."⁷⁴ When it comes to suicides in Mormon culture over the issue of homosexuality, Holland remarked "mercifully" upon meeting with the parents of Stuart Matis: "We must find ever-better ways to help the Stuart Matises of the Church . . . while they

‘fight the good fight’ in the gender-attraction they face.” He then “wrathfully” added: “I am only heartbroken that [Stuart] felt that he could not keep on fighting.”⁷⁵ As with Oaks and the question of the pariah, this approach defers blame. Either (1) we will give more love to the next one, and/or (2) it is the mysterious affliction that causes a kind of selfishness (read: weakness) that took our child from us. The disconnect here is that these suicides are not of an anomic variety in which the person lacked love in his or her life or lacked a worldly niche in the community. Often such suicides are acts of altruism in which the person feels that killing himself or herself is for the good of the community. In other words, selflessness, not selfishness, motivates the decision to die. Mormon scholar Hugo Olaiz has referred to the situation as one of “spiritual codependency” in which, “when bad things happen [namely, suicides by queer church members], they are guiltless tragedies.” Because the “theological puzzle of homosexuality” is described as “resolved in the afterlife,” Olaiz finds that Mormonism today leans toward a “culture of death” for many of its members.⁷⁶ Church leaders might describe suicide as never the answer, and individual wards may try to ensure that it welcomes those with this “struggle”; still, the framing of a life as one of “struggle” to be resolved by mysterious means after death is ultimately what is unwelcoming.

The “merciful” or minoritizing aspect of the binary has permitted the rise of queer voices that are considered legitimately Mormon and who, with their families, have worked to create livable middle grounds. Evergreen International was founded in 1989; and like its evangelical counterpart, Exodus International, changing orientation was its focus throughout the 1990s. Today, both organizations focus on the universalizing realm of acts.⁷⁷ Ty Mansfield, a Mormon thirtysomething who has spoken at Evergreen conferences and is a director of another queer Mormon organization called North Star (2006), stated in *In Quiet Desperation*, a popular 2004 book co-authored with Stuart Matis’s parents, “Just as we do not worship heterosexuality, so our salvation is not based upon the mortal realization of it.”⁷⁸ Such a declaration is common in evangelical ex-gay culture, where the opposite of gay is often described as “holy” and not as “straight.”⁷⁹ This kind of thinking can open up discursive space to question the privileging

of marriage over singleness; it can also lead one to question the comparative leniency afforded heterosexual transgressions over homosexual ones.⁸⁰

Mansfield has not questioned Mormonism's doctrine of eternal marriage. In fact, he asserts that it is "idolatrous" for those who "experience same-gender attraction" to use it as a "catch-all rationalization for failing to . . . prepare" for eternal marriage.⁸¹ However, he stated in a 2009 essay, "Clinically Single," that the importance his faith places on marriage has the unfortunate effect of equating singleness with loneliness.⁸² A kind of faithful activism has arisen in the last decade, which can be summarized as follows: Instead of maintaining a closet for everyone to "come in" as heterosexual, many believe they should "come out" as "same-gender attracted" for their Church's well-being (to raise awareness of homophobia) and their own well-being (so long as they choose to act in accordance with their "eternal heterogenders"). In another 2009 essay, "A New Conversation for a New Generation," Mansfield quoted a friend who had decided to be "out" within his Mormon community: "When I made the final decision to use my real name, knowing the potential for backlash, I decided that there is a war being waged and our side is losing while the gay rights organizations are winning. We are losing because people like me feel the need to hide and pretend. I pretend not out of fear of the gay rights organizations; I pretend out of fear of the negative reaction I will get from people in the Church."⁸³

The effect that such thinking will have on the culture will continue to be seen in coming years. Therapist Dean Byrd fears that "from acceptance [of same-gender attraction as normative], there is only a short distance to celebration."⁸⁴ His sentiment finds some validation in Mansfield's "merciful" prose in *In Quiet Desperation*: "Even love expressed in ways contrary to the Father's eternal purposes for His children still retains elements of love's grandeur."⁸⁵ In official Mormon discourse, actual same-sex intimacy always receives the brunt of "wrath" and wrath alone.

The faithful activism of these Mormons and their families is encumbered by "wrathful" statements in recent Church literature, such as those in a 2007 pamphlet titled *God Loveth His Children*: "An adverse influence [to one's spirituality] is obsession with or concentration on same-gender thoughts and feelings. It is

not helpful to flaunt homosexual tendencies or make them the subject of unnecessary observation or discussion. It is better to choose as friends those who do not publicly display their homosexual feelings.”⁸⁶ Statements like these reveal the precarious position in which the Church has put itself. Should *In Quiet Desperation* never have been published because the book puts Stuart Matis’s and Ty Mansfield’s homosexual feelings on public display? Should Evergreen and North Star disband because “same-gender attraction” is their focus? Such statements create concern among those who try to stay faithful to the Church by supporting and associating with others they view as like themselves.⁸⁷

Concluding Thoughts, Future Directions

Some gay Mormons who grew up before the 1980s have noted that their pain of growing up in a homophobic environment that insisted they be cured has been invalidated by the Church’s movement toward a more merciful, “love the sinner, hate the sin” stance.⁸⁸ In the previous section, I demonstrated how this “mercy” provides only an aura of inclusivity, as it is always tempered with exclusionary “wrath.” This mercy/wrath binary is indicative of the minoritizing/universalizing dialectic described by queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. The binary plays out in Mormonism through the notion of “same-gender attraction” whereby desire is both minoritized and dismissed through a universalizing framework of “eternal gender.” The minoritizing element helps explain why the Church supported the Salt Lake City nondiscrimination ordinances in 2009 while the universalizing element explains its continued position against same-sex marriage.

With regard to accounts of American sexual history, Mormonism disrupts the understanding of this history as a singular emergence of the homosexual/heterosexual dyad at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸⁹ While the Church engaged with the dyad as early as the 1950s, it really subscribed to it only when sex within marriage was seen as having the important function of sexual happiness as well as reproduction and when gender roles were interpreted as essential to one’s eternal identity.

The Church’s involvement in the California same-sex marriage campaigns in 2000 and 2008 may have helped slow the tide, but Americans in many cities are leaning more and more toward

acceptance of same-sex desire and intimacy as normative and morally neutral. That is, gays and lesbians are increasingly not viewed as separatists, regardless of whether their sexual feelings are thought of as “innate.” In terms of debates that compare race with sexuality (miscegenation with same-sex marriage), the 1978 LDS policy change to allow ordination of black men has sometimes been framed as late-coming, such that the Church is consequently presented as “behind the times” in terms of sexuality discourses, too.⁹⁰ This reasoning tends to rest problematically on a minoritizing-only framework in which sexuality is like race because of aspects of “immutability.” Rather, how might the Church change using its own universalizing logics as it did in 1978?

Today’s Mormon youth are in a position in which, even if they do not use the concept of sexual orientation to define themselves (and concentrate only on sexual behavior), by the time they are in their twenties, they must still grapple with the workings of the closet, due to the universalized expectation of marriage. How do they interpret “same-gender attraction” and “eternal gender” as models of self-definition? My sense is that they neither assimilate to nor strictly oppose these concepts but transform them in creative ways online and with their families and friends. These youth often do not “struggle” with sexuality, so Mormonism must struggle to find a place for them as they grow up. The relative absence of the closet in many gay-affirming locales where people no longer need to “come out” or “stay in” to be “in” has led many non-Mormon American queer youth to not define themselves by their sexuality, either.⁹¹ Thus, the debate among the next generation is likely to move away from the specific modality of sexuality to questions of how the Mormon “family” can continue to make sense soteriologically when it does not represent the diversity of American families.

Notes

1. Matt Canham, Derek Jensen, and Rosemary Winters, “Salt Lake City Adopts Pro-Gay Statutes—with LDS Church Support,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 11, 2009, http://www.sltrib.com/ci_13758070 (accessed March 1, 2010).

2. “Common Ground Initiative,” Equality Utah website, <http://www.equalityutah.org/action/common.html>; “Church Responds to

Same-Sex Marriage Votes,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-responds-to-same-sex-marriage-votes>, November 5, 2008 (both accessed October 20, 2010).

3. “The Church Supports Nondiscrimination Ordinances,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-supports-nondiscrimination-ordinances> (accessed October 20, 2010).

4. Canham, Jensen, and Winters, “Salt Lake City Adopts Pro-Gay Statutes.”

5. “Sutherland’s Statement on LDS Response to Nondiscrimination Ordinances,” November 10, 2009, http://www.sutherlandinstitute.org/news/news_details.asp?id=631 (accessed October 20, 2010).

6. Ibid.

7. “The Church Supports Nondiscrimination Ordinances.”

8. The wife of God (or Heavenly Mother) is hardly mentioned officially. See Margaret Toscano, “Is There a Place for Heavenly Mother in Mormon Theology?: An Investigation into Discourses of Power,” *Sunstone Magazine* 133 (July 2004): 14–22.

9. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 1995). Regarding spiritual gender identity or the question of transgenderism in Mormonism, Apostle Boyd K. Packer, “To Young Men Only,” October 2, 1976, pamphlet (N.p.: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), <http://mentalhealthlibrary.info/library/sex/sexlds/sexldsmag/links/foryoungmen/foryoungmen.htm> (accessed October 20, 2010), stated in 1976: “There is no mismatching of bodies and spirits.” He made this statement in the context of conflating homosexuality and transgenderism, discussed below.

10. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” sustains the LDS view that women/mothers are “primarily responsible for the nurture of their children” and men/fathers are “responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families.” Children were said to be “entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother.”

11. “The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue,” 23-page insert in *Ensign*, March 1980.

12. Boyd K. Packer, “Talk to the All-Church Coordinating Council,” May 18, 1993, <http://www.zionsbest.com/face.html> (accessed October 20, 2010). Although this speech was never published, a transcript of it was leaked onto the internet in 1993. Packer was highly perceived as instrumental behind the singling out of scholars, many of whom wrote on feminist topics, for excommunication later that year. The media dubbed the exiled scholars “the September Six.” In 2007, in an interview for the Public Broadcasting Service documentary, *The Mormons*, interviewer

Helen Whitney inquired why “those particular groups [gays, feminists, intellectuals] . . . were of special concern.” Packer stated: “We . . . feel and think and know that the ultimate end of all activity in the Church is that a man and his wife and their children can be happy at home. . . . Down some of those paths you have a right to go, but in the Church, you don’t have a right to teach and take others there.” Apostle Dallin H. Oaks was also asked the question in his interview. Oaks stated that “in any day the watchmen on the tower are going to say intellectualism is a danger to the Church.” He also said that he has “felt the benefits of feminism,” but believes it has some “troublesome aspects” such as leading women to think “I don’t want a family, I want a career,” which “goes against eternal values.” Neither man spoke of the LGBT movement. “President Packer Interview Transcript from PBS documentary,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-oaks-interview-transcript-from-pbs-documentary>; “Elder Oaks Interview Transcript from PBS documentary,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-oaks-interview-transcript-from-pbs-documentary>, July 20, 2007 (both accessed October 20, 2010).

13. Mormon demographics have shifted. By 2009, less than 45% of the Church’s membership lived in America; the proportion is not currently reflected in the leadership. “Facts & Statistics,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/facts-and-stats>, October 18, 2010 (accessed October 20, 2010). Therefore, non-American and American immigrant Mormons should be included when I say “Mormon.” Unfortunately, these perspectives are beyond the scope of this essay.

14. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 1–2.

15. Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn also uses “homosocial” in his *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

16. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 44–48. Sedgwick states that it was French philosopher Michel Foucault, who in an “act of bravado,” labeled the year “1870” as the “birth of modern homosexuality.” Sedgwick reminds us, though, that any monolithic historical narrative can obscure the nuanced conditions of the present.

17. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 43.

18. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 2.

19. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 40–41.

20. *Ibid.*, 43. By “Cartesian,” Sedgwick is referring to the idea that the mind is somehow separate from the body, a trope for which sixteenth-century philosopher René Descartes is usually blamed.

21. Dallin H. Oaks, "Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October 1995, 7.

22. *Ibid.*

23. In October 2010, in response to a petition from the Human Rights Campaign, Church spokesman Michael Otterson reiterated that the Church "distinguishes between feelings or inclinations on the one hand and behavior on the other." "Church Responds to HRC Petition," <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-mormon-responds-to-human-rights-campaign-petition-same-sex-attraction>, October 12, 2010 (accessed October 20, 2010).

24. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1.

25. *Ibid.*, 1–2.

26. See, for example, Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 85: "Many have been misinformed that they are powerless in the matter, not responsible for the tendency, and that God 'made them that way.' . . . Does the pervert think God to be 'that way?'"

27. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 225.

28. Official policy did not reflect this cultural change until the 1990s. The *General Handbook of Instructions*, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 1999), 157, cautioned members against judging each other on their family planning decisions. Sexuality was described as not just for procreation, but as also a "divinely approved . . . means of expressing love and strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife." See Melissa Proctor, "Bodies, Babies, Birth Control," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 175.

29. See B. Carmon Hardy and Dan Erickson, "'Regeneration—Now and Evermore!' Mormon Polygamy and the Physical Rehabilitation of Humankind," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 1 (2001): 40–61.

30. Amy Hoyt, "Beyond the Victim/Empowerment Paradigm: The Gendered Cosmology of Mormon Women," *Feminist Theology* 16, no. 1 (2007): 89–100.

31. See, for example, the writings of therapist A. Dean Byrd. For a critique of Byrd, see William S. Bradshaw, "Short Shrift to the Facts," a review of Douglas A. Abbott and A. Dean Byrd, *Encouraging Heterosexuality: Helping Children Develop a Traditional Sexual Orientation*, this issue. See also Apostle Boyd K. Packer, "To the One" (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 7–8, in which he again conflates homosexuality and transgenderism, framing both in terms of inappropriate "masculine" and "feminine" attributes and relations.

32. As Dallin Oaks summarized "same-gender attraction" in 2006: "The line of sin is between the feelings and the behavior. The line of pru-

dence is between the susceptibility and the feelings. We need to lay hold on the feelings and try to control them to keep us from getting into a circumstance that leads to sinful behavior.” “Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman,” posted August 2006, <http://newsroom.lds.org/official-statement/same-gender-attraction> (accessed October 20, 2010). According to the official pamphlet, *God Loveth His Children*, 11 pp. (N.p.: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 6: “Attractions alone do not make you unworthy. If you avoid immoral thoughts and actions, you have not transgressed even if you feel such an attraction.”

33. An example of this logic can be found in Elder Bruce Hafen’s speech to Evergreen International in 2009: “Come resurrection morning—and maybe even before then—you [addressing the Evergreen audience] will rise with normal attractions for the opposite sex.” “Elder Bruce C. Hafen Speaks on Same-Sex Attraction,” September 19, 2009, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-bruce-c-hafen-speaks-on-same-sex-attraction> (accessed October 20, 2010). The doctrine that “afflictions” will be removed after death after enduring them with “patience” comes from Alma 34:39–41. Still, Alma 34:34 indicates that the “same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have the power to possess your body in that eternal world.” In my ethnographic research for this essay, I have found that Mormons who identify with the phrase “same-gender attraction” are divided on the issue of whether they believe they are broken and need/will receive repair. For an analysis of this address, see James F. Cartwright, “Dialogue with Elder Hafen: Part 1—Doctrine” and Part 2—“Research Issues,” *By Common Consent* (Newsletter of the Mormon Alliance) 16, no. 1 (January 2010) and 16, no. 2 (March 2010).

34. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction,” *Ensign*, October 2007, 42–45.

35. As an example, sexual historian Bruce Burgett, “On the Mormon Question: Race, Sex, and Polygamy in the 1850s and the 1990s,” *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2005): 83, recounts how nineteenth-century Mormons were criticized by their contemporaries as acting like “Africans” and “Asians” due to their polygamous family structures. At the heart of these racial metaphors was the question of the proper “American” way of acquiring capital and progeny.

36. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans*, chap. 4.

37. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Reverence and Morality,” *Ensign*, June 1987, 45. Hinckley’s statement was also published in “First Presidency Statement on AIDS,” *Ensign*, July 1988, 79.

38. Rick Phillips, *Conservative Christian Identity and Same-Sex Orientation: The Case of Gay Mormons* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 39–41.

39. *Ibid.*, 40.

40. *Ibid.*, 39.

41. Oaks, in “Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman.”

42. In 1986, Carol Lynn Pearson published *Good-bye, I Love You* (New York: Random House) about her experiences with her ex-husband who died of AIDS, one of the first books to speak to the issue of homosexuality in a Mormon context.

43. Ann Pritt and Thomas Pritt, “Homosexuality: Getting Beyond the Therapeutic Impasse,” *AMCAP [Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists] Journal* 13, no. 1 (1987): 37–66.

44. *Ibid.*, 58.

45. *Ibid.*, 58, 59.

46. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 87.

47. Pritt and Pritt, “Homosexuality,” 55, suggest that therapists “encourage . . . individuals to affirm the truth about themselves, that they indeed are heterosexual and always have been. Such would not be ‘passing,’ or deceptively presenting a false front for purposes of temporarily fitting in. Rather, it would entail an exercise of faith in one’s own self and a determination to make ‘the unseen seen.’”

48. See, for example, psychologist Lisa Diamond, *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women’s Love and Desire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 257, 138, who states that arguments concerning the inateness of homosexuality might have short-term political use, but in the long run may “systematically disenfranchise” women. “Perhaps instead of arguing that gay/lesbian/bisexual individuals deserve civil rights because they are powerless to change their behavior, we should affirm the fundamental rights of all people to determine their own emotional and sexual lives.” Byrd can find no ally in Diamond since freedom of choice for him is unidirectional: toward heterosexuality. Byrd states in “Interview: An LDS Reparative Therapy Approach for Male Homosexuality,” *AMCAP Journal* 19, no. 1 (1993): 91, that he “acknowledge[s] the right of individuals with same-sex attraction to choose a gay lifestyle,” but he is not in the business of helping clients who make that particular choice. NARTH distorted as “change by choice” Diamond’s work on sexual fluidity—which consisted of interviews of women who experienced sexual variation not by choice. Diamond protested this misrepresentation in Brian Maffly, “U. Psychologist Says Sex Research Distorted,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 11, 2008, http://www.sltrib.com/ci_10958958 (accessed October 20, 2010). Byrd’s statement on Diamond’s work was:

“If it says ‘fluidity’ it says ‘fluidity.’ How you interpret it is something else.” Ibid. In other words, for Byrd and for NARTH, if the goal is heterosexuality, then the fact that it is reached spontaneously is beside the point, so long as people “choose” to maintain it.

49. “Elder Bruce C. Hafen Speaks on Same-Sex Attraction.”

50. Byrd’s *Mormons and Homosexuality* (Orem, Utah: Millennial Press, 2008) bears the publisher’s advertisement on the back cover that it is “the best LDS analysis of the issue of homosexuality available.” Yet much of the interior suggests material written in an earlier era when homosexuality was equated with child molestation, pedophilia, dysfunctional parent-child relationships, and disease. I find it difficult to take Byrd seriously as a scholar, but I also worry that his clout is substantial in the Mormon therapy community. Mormon scholar Ron Schow stated in 2007 that the Church has “abandoned” Byrd’s paradigms as laid out in the 1990s, but he may have been too optimistic in his appraisal, since the idea of homosexuality as a kind of gender dysphoria is still popular with many Mormons. Ron Schow, “LDS Resources Blog,” October 15, 2007, <http://ldsresourcesinfo.blogspot.com/> (accessed October 20, 2010).

51. Didi Herman, *The Antigay Agenda* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 107.

52. Oaks, “Same-Gender Attraction.”

53. Ibid.

54. Herman, *The Antigay Agenda*, 109.

55. Gordon B. Hinckley, “What Are People Asking about Us?,” *Ensign*, November 1998, 70.

56. Nadine Hansen on Panel: Kaimipono Wenger, Clark Pingree, and Nadine Hansen, “California’s Continuing Battle over Same-Sex Marriage,” August 6, 2008, Salt Lake Symposium, video, <http://ldshomosexuality.com/?p=166> (accessed May 1, 2010).

57. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 4–5.

58. Packer, “To the One,” 10, made this point explicitly: “Have you explored the possibility that the cause [of homosexuality], when found, will turn out to be a very typical form of selfishness—selfishness in a very subtle form?”

59. There is a popular, but sexist, line of reasoning that can be summarized as follows: Gay men are promiscuous (read: selfish) because women naturally tame men through marriage. Besides the fact that many men (gay or otherwise) are monogamously minded, it is also the case that men have historically had power over women’s bodies, so much so that a women had no legal recourse even if her husband raped her or brought disease into the relationship. Many women responded to this situation by *necessarily* taming their husbands, reinforcing the idea that

women “naturally” do this. One can see how Packer’s 1978 link between homosexuality as selfishness might be related to assumptions about the “nature” of sex and gender inside and outside of marriage. The absence of the lesbian in this discourse is also highly visible.

60. Herman, *The Antigay Agenda*, 51–54.

61. *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, 2010 US Dist (N CA), p. 128, <http://www.equalrightsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Prop8Decision.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2010).

62. *Ibid.*, 120–21.

63. Packer, “To the One,” 2, 3; he further stated that “it is easy—very easy—to cause the very things we are trying to avoid.”

64. For example, Church spokesman Michael Otterson in October 2010 used the words “gay” and “sexual orientation” when addressing the public after a string of public suicides by queer youth: “This past week we have all witnessed tragic deaths across the country as a result of bullying or intimidation of gay young men. We join our voice with others in unreserved condemnation of acts of cruelty or attempts to belittle or mock any group or individual that is different—whether those differences arise from race, religion, mental challenges, social status, sexual orientation or for any other reason.” “Church Responds to HRC Petition.”

65. See, as examples, Byrd, *Mormons and Homosexuality* (2008) and, the next year, a text for therapists by Dennis Dahle et al., *Where to Turn and How to Help: Understanding Same-Sex Attraction* (Salt Lake City: Foundation for Attraction Research, Millennial Press, 2009).

66. Wickman, in “Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman.”

67. Chosen singleness for a life course is frowned upon in Mormonism, having negative soteriological consequences. D&C 132:16–17. Those who are involuntarily single are consoled by the promise of marriage and children in the next life.

68. Schow, “LDS Resources Blog.”

69. Holland, “Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction,” 42, 45.

70. *Ibid.*, 45.

71. Oaks, in “Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman.”

72. *Ibid.*

73. In 2000, Matis committed suicide at age thirty-two during the Proposition 22 campaign in California.

74. Fred and Marilyn Matis and Ty Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*:

Understanding the Challenge of Same-Gender Attraction (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 40.

75. Ibid.

76. Robert A. Rees, Hugo Olaiz, Ron Schow, and William S. Bradshaw, "Steps in the Right Direction? Evaluating New LDS Publications on Homosexuality," Sunstone Symposium, Session 336, Salt Lake City, July 30, 2005, MP3 audio file, <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/shop/products/symposium-sessions-free/steps-in-the-right-direction-evaluating-new-lds-publications-on-homosexuality/> (accessed October 20, 2010).

77. Evergreen's stated mission is to help people who "want to diminish same-sex attractions and overcome homosexual behavior." http://www.evergreeninternational.org/about_us.htm (accessed October 20, 2010).

78. Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 181.

79. Lynne Gerber, "The Opposite of Gay: Nature, Creation, and Queerish Ex-Gay Experiments," *Nova Religio* 11, no. 4 (2008): 24.

80. Ibid., 21.

81. Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 181–82.

82. Ty Mansfield, "Clinically Single," North Star website, July 2009, http://northstarlds.org/directors_2009-07.php (accessed October 20, 2010). In May of 2010, Mansfield married his wife at the Salt Lake Temple, demonstrating his belief that "men are that they might have joy"—including joyful bachelorhood—"but 'in this world your joy is not full.'" Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 182.

83. Anonymously quoted in Ty Mansfield, "A New Conversation for a New Generation," November 2009, http://northstarlds.org/directors_2009-11.php (accessed October 20, 2010). That the friend remains anonymous in Mansfield's essay, despite the fact that he is quoted as "coming out," creates an interesting double message.

84. A. Dean Byrd et al., "A Slippery Slope that Limits the Atonement," review of *In Quiet Desperation*, The Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research (FAIR) website, <http://www.fairlds.org/Reviews/Rvw200505.html> (accessed October 20, 2010).

85. Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 179.

86. *God Loveth His Children*, 9. In his 2006 interview with Wickman, Oaks stated: "In a nutshell . . . if you are trying to live with and maintain ascendancy over same-gender attractions, the best way to do that is to have groups that define their members in terms other than same-gender attractions." "Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman."

87. Schow, "LDS Resources Blog."

88. Buckley Jeppson and Jeff Nielsen, "Gays in the Mormon Uni-

verse,” Sunstone Symposium, Session 316, Salt Lake City, August 12, 2006, MP3 audio file, <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/shop/products/symposium-sessions-free/gays-in-the-mormon-universe/> (accessed October 20, 2010).

89. My thanks to Bruce Burgett for this insight.

90. D. Michael Quinn, “Prelude to the National ‘Defense of Marriage’ Campaign: Civil Discrimination against Feared or Despised Minorities,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 1–52, analogized race and sexuality in this political analysis.

91. See Bertram Cohler and Phillip L. Hammack, “The Psychological World of the Gay Teenager: Social Change, Narrative, and ‘Normality,’” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 36, no. 1 (2007): 47–59.

The Discursive Construct of Virtual Angels, Temples, and Religious Worship: Mormon Theology and Culture in Second Life

David W. Scott

Cyberspace is changing the way religion is practiced in contemporary society. A 2004 Pew Internet and American Life project estimated that 64 percent of American internet users go online for spiritual or religious purposes.¹ Religious organizations large and small are increasingly participating in cyberspace; and according to Peter Horsfield, the influence of digital media is producing major consequences for religious institutions and ideologies.²

One popular digital platform is Second Life, a virtual world owned by Linden Lab. Created in 2003, this site transcends both the real and imagined. Players pay a monthly fee to “own” virtual lots or islands on which they can build virtual buildings and homes, using components purchased with virtual money—Linden dollars (\$L). Players maintain intellectual property rights to anything they create in this setting, allowing their virtual selves (avatars) to sell these cyber goods for Linden dollars, which can subsequently be exchanged for real money. Corporations selling virtual products in Second Life generate more than \$1 million a day in real-world trade.³ By 2007, Second Life had reached 10 million registered users with the estimated resident population of about 600,000 players per day.⁴

Some players use Second Life to communicate religious beliefs

or to reinforce their religious identity. Kerstin Radde-Antweiler, traced Second Life's religious topography and found clusters of Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu players who were involved in varying levels of religious practice. These included sharing beliefs through official doctrines or requiring agreement to codes of religious conduct or values; offering (or requiring) avatar clothing that was consistent with religious beliefs (i.e., modesty requirements, skull-caps, burkas); practicing ritual worship, and building sacred sites (e.g., the wailing wall, temples, mosques, cathedrals).⁵

A virtual island in Second Life, Adam-ondi-Ahman (AoA), is named after the site where, according to Mormon beliefs, Adam and Eve resided after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden and where, before Jesus Christ's second coming, Adam will judge his posterity, receiving all of the keys bestowed in each successive dispensation, preparatory to turning them back to Christ. Although not endorsed by the LDS Church, island creator Skyler Goode (avatar name) states that the island functions as a place of respite for LDS players and also as a means of communicating the message of "the Gospel of Jesus Christ" to others. Visitors and residents agree to abide by LDS standards of dress and morality.⁶ The island also offers activities and objects for LDS or LDS-curious avatars (such as singles meets, socials, genealogy forums, and retreats), but it does not feature religious services or temple ceremonies.

The prevalence of "ritual knowledge" available through cyberspace signifies a momentous shift in both the traditional structure of religion and that of religious communities.⁷ If religion becomes "virtualized" in cyberspace, what elements of "real world" faith are co-opted in a virtual world to resonate with the expectations of the player? This article addresses this question by analyzing the role of religious iconography and symbols used to represent Mormonism and the LDS Church in Second Life.

I take the approach of an ethnographer avatar examining AoA intent on locating how the layout and construction of the visual enhance my experience and connection to LDS theology and culture in this virtual space. This analysis is grounded in the constructivist theory of worldview building as applied to religious

belief systems. I season this construct delicately with postmodern concepts of the power of the visual in that world-building process.

I begin with a diversion into the ramifications of these theoretical constructs, followed by a brief examination of the unique value of studying Second Life and Mormonism. Following a brief summary of the approach guiding my analysis, I discuss the prevalent findings and offer some concluding thoughts on my role and experience as a tourist in Second Life

Religious Worldviews and Visual Theology

Anthropologist Peter Berger's 1967 treatise on religion as a social construct posits that religious worldviews are built and maintained not so much by religious institutions themselves, but by participation in networks of individuals with shared belief systems ("plausibility structures"). This paradigm recognizes that personally held religious beliefs are built and sustained primarily through "conversations" with others.⁸ Berger's theory has influenced a number of scholars interested in the interaction between social settings and religious worldviews.⁹ In fact, some research suggests that participation in religious plausibility structures correlates with higher levels of religious commitment and adherence to religious beliefs.¹⁰

To an increasing degree, scholars recognize the power of the visual in building and sustaining religious plausibility structures.¹¹ Influential anthropologist Clifford Geertz explained that a religion is embodied primarily "by images and metaphors its adherents use to characterize reality."¹² W. J. Thomas Mitchell, Distinguished Service Professor of English and Art History at the University of Chicago, argues that the visual experience is often more important than language in the development of religious worldviews, and others suggest that scholars should attempt to better understand the integration of popular culture and religious identity.¹³

Certainly, religious institutions recognize the discursive power of visual artifacts in strengthening religious commitment. Religious art has been used since the earliest days of worship;¹⁴ and in an era of mass-produced religious iconography, "the use of photographs, prints, and mass-produced paintings in religious education and devotion has been very important to Christians . . . because

these images allow a subtle transition from artifact to world.”¹⁵ Even the architecture and spatial settings of religious sites enhance a sense of the numinous.¹⁶ Religious representations are more persuasive when they appropriate popular cultural referents because, in an era of mass-mediated religion, they form a cycle of influences in which believers identify with a particular religious image they have seen elsewhere.¹⁷ When religious images are inconsistent, or when they conflict with cultural archetypes, they become confusing—thereby losing much of their persuasive power.¹⁸

The pervasiveness of digital images adds another layer to this ongoing exchange of religious plausibility structures. The world of cyberspace and the spiritual world are connected in profound ways, and the line between “virtual” and “real” in the digital age is becoming less clear.¹⁹ Virtual worlds often blur the boundaries between the “virtual” and the “real.”²⁰ This is especially true when the spiritual and ritual practices of contemporary religious culture are co-opted by the somewhat ephemeral boundaries of cyberspace.²¹ Social scientists recognize that virtual worlds become all the more plausible when they resonate with the discursive practices of their participants. “The apparent authenticity of a religious activity or experience will play a determinate role . . . in whether the Internet will become a forum for core religious activities and serious religious engagement.”²² A growing line of scholarship indicates that the increasing ability of cyberspace to recreate religious ritual and imagery is a significant factor in the growth of online religious practices in contemporary society.²³

Why Second Life and Mormons?

Despite a recent surge in investigations of online religious ritual and identity,²⁴ we lack any serious consideration of the role of religious imagery and iconography in the construct of Mormon identity on the internet. AoA in Second Life presents a unique opportunity to determine in what way religious images are appropriated from the popular religious culture of Mormonism in an effort to enhance players’ expectation of the authentic.

Second Life is user-generated. It allows players to create, trade, purchase, or sell items and objects ranging from complex structures (houses, boats, animals) to simple patterns or textures that enhance the realism of a product (such as wood grain to ap-

ply to a veranda). The limitless possibilities of arranging and creating objects in Second Life are bound only by the player's desire and imaginative ability to create a sense of the real. If a Second Life artifact deviates too far from other players' expectations or needs, (i.e., clothes do not "fit" the avatar, or perhaps a surface does not allow avatars to walk on it correctly), they typically express frustration.²⁵ This appeal to the "authority" of the natural is especially compelling if a Second Life structure is meant to represent a religious ideology or organization because of the discursive (and fragile) nature of religious worldviews.²⁶

Another reason to examine LDS images and icons is that the Mormon Church has developed a distinctive scope of art and iconography that distinguishes it from other Christian faiths.²⁷ Church leaders have endorsed (and sometimes commissioned) particular renditions of Jesus, and Utah has a growing market of artists with particular appeal to LDS congregants.²⁸ Furthermore, the Church offers a plethora of visual aids for use in teaching members and non-believers about its basic tenets.²⁹ Although LDS buildings offer various images of Christ, crosses or crucifixes are not incorporated in any way in contemporary LDS religious practices.³⁰ Instead, the quintessential icon of Mormonism today is the Angel Moroni—often displayed as a gold-covered wingless statue holding a trumpet to his lips. Mormons believe this angelic visitor first appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823, directing him to the location of inscribed metal plates with the appearance of gold from which he subsequently translated the Book of Mormon (1830). Moroni is significant to Latter-day Saints because they see him as the angel of Revelation 14:6 who would preach "the everlasting gospel" to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" before Christ's millennial reign.³¹ Most LDS temples are adorned with a statue of Moroni on their highest spires, LDS gravestones in Utah often feature a Moroni image (rather than a cross), and the Church has trademarked the archetypal angel.³²

Temples are also especially iconic and important for Mormons. The Church distinguishes temples from regular meeting-houses,³³ and leaders encourage congregants to display pictures of temples in their homes.³⁴ Entrance to LDS temples is limited only to members who are certified by their priesthood leaders as living by the highest of LDS standards. Even the Salt Lake Temple

in Utah—a dominant icon of the LDS faith—is not open to tourists. Temple worship among Mormons represents the highest and most sacred level of religious ritual and practice worldwide. Its unique status among believers offers yet another means of enhancing religious identity that is unique among Christian faiths in the United States.

Finally, the LDS Church endorses the Book of Mormon as a sacred text that recounts a history of three Middle-Eastern migrations to the Americas and a visit by the resurrected Christ around A.D. 34. The Book of Mormon is revered as scripture by Latter-day Saints and plays a central role in building and maintaining the faith. Therefore, visual representations of Book of Mormon events are uniquely aligned with LDS plausibility structures. In an attempt to identify the religious images offered to build and sustain LDS world-views in AoA, my analysis is grounded by the following questions:

1. How does AoA use LDS icons to appeal to a sense of an “authentic” Mormon place?
2. What role does iconography and/or graphics play in the building or sustaining of LDS plausibility-structures?

Procedures and Limitations

In this article, I approach AoA as a virtual ethnographer or participant observer. This approach follows a blend of research strategies used to understand museums and ritual in cyberspace.³⁵ My analysis spans approximately two weeks of real-time immersion in Adam-ondi-Ahman as a visiting and unseasoned Second Life player. Because my focus is on the role of icons and images in this virtual island, I limited my interaction with other players when possible. It isn't uncommon for players to teleport in and out of Second Life areas, so the disappearance or sudden appearance of an avatar is not unusual. This was my method of travel between disparate locations in AoA.

I recognize that the boundaries for any field site are contested in part by the ethnographers themselves, and I do not suggest that too much can be learned about AoA in a two-week period. Second Life and AoA are vast in terms of objects, people, and possibilities. Although I attempted to visit every building I could find, no doubt I missed places and objects. Furthermore, it would remiss

of me to suggest that my analysis would be the only plausible interpretation of the experience. Certainly, players bring with them many subjective positions (self, gender, age-group, family, class, nation, ethnicity, etc.) in addition to their religiosity. I also recognize that this analysis is premised on observations that are fixed in time and place but that cultures “do not hold still for their portraits.”³⁶ Even as I compose the findings of this study, AoA continues to evolve and morph into a new space as players continue to add objects and buildings to their world.

Findings

AoA encourages an “authentic” Mormon experience by recreating a sense of locale through the use of iconic LDS buildings and art. Ironically, the most iconic structures in AoA are also the least functional (or the least interactive), indicating that their primary function is to enhance realism, rather than explicate theology.

With few exceptions, the more dominant structures are copied from Temple Square in Salt Lake City and from other LDS religious structures or monuments (such as the Angel Moroni). The power of religious images in AoA is derived from their association with particular doctrines. When placed near a narrative (such as a picture of Jesus next to a scriptural reference about Him), these images can potentially strengthen the message in much the same way they would in the real world. However, in Second Life, these images often appear merely as window dressing accompanying a particular doctrinal statement. When offered in this context, they seem to detract from, rather than enhance, a sense of the real. In these situations, the subjectivity of the player shifts from that of virtual tourist in a real LDS setting to a sense of self immersed in the malleable world of Second Life.

Discussion

LDS Buildings and Their Contents

The layout of the island’s center encourages players to wander on attractive walkways through iconic Church buildings and lush gardens that feature numerous representations of LDS culture, architecture, and theology. Even before signs, pictures, and directions appear in AoA, iconic LDS buildings materialize to sur-

round the visitor. Because all of the user-created material is stored as data on Linden Lab's servers, the graphics take a few seconds to materialize as a player passes through an area. AoA is immediately recognizable as a Mormon region. Both the sacred and the mundane are framed in the context of LDS culture and theology. Many recognizable Mormon buildings and structures surround a central square, and the region is replete with posters, signs, and instructions directing the player to respect LDS values, interact with virtual missionaries, learn doctrine, tour buildings, or participate in LDS activities (such as doing genealogical research in the Family History Center or learning about the Book of Mormon).

Other buildings, while not distinctively Mormon, function primarily as spaces upon which to "hang" images or texts that advance LDS teachings. The presence of so many iconic buildings immerses the avatar in an LDS world. The most obvious—at least, obvious to anybody familiar with Mormonism—are a temple (complete with the Angel Moroni), a chapel, a Christus statue at the center of the square (from Temple Square in Salt Lake City), and the dome-roofed Salt Lake Tabernacle. Images of the Angel Moroni are also scattered throughout the island—sometimes in distracting ways, but always as signifiers of the Mormon-centric nature of the community. Ironically, these most recognizable LDS structures offer much less theology than the remaining nondescript buildings and structures in AoA. Their role, it seems, is primarily to create a sense of place.

The AoA temple resembles the Washington DC Temple located in Virginia. Like its counterpart, it sits atop a hill, towering over other buildings in the surrounding area. As a symbol of the Church in Second Life, it is illuminated even at night. Also, like its real-world counterpart, its interior is inaccessible to tourists.

The Salt Lake Tabernacle is another easily recognizable Mormon icon in AoA. The AoA building mirrors the Salt Lake Tabernacle from its iconic dome roof to the contents of the interior—right down to a KSL-TV camera set up inside. (KSL is Church-owned NBC affiliate station in Salt Lake City.)

The absence of posters, signs, and other religious texts inside the AoA buildings enhance their authenticity, as their presence would conflict with what would be seen at Temple Square. However, one anomaly stands out in the tabernacle; a large screen at the

front of the room invites the visitor to “Hear the words of a living prophet of God.” Touching it activates a streaming video of a sermon given by President Thomas S. Monson. In this moment, the evangelical mission of the Tabernacle’s creator trumps the appeal to rigid authenticity. The power of the real surrenders to the Second Life culture of embedding digital images within disparate objects. However, because this message is targeting non-Mormons (who are probably much more conversant with Second Life plausibility structures than they are with the real-world Mormon Tabernacle), it is unlikely that the fusion of the authentic and the imaginary in this particular setting would be particularly distracting.

An LDS meetinghouse sits near the tabernacle. For Latter-day Saint players, the red brick building and its interior would be easily recognizable. A sign outside the building displays “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” announced by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in 1995, which spells out the Church’s stance on marriage, homosexuality, and proper roles within the family.³⁷ In this case, its presence detracts from the building’s authenticity. It is unlikely that even a person unfamiliar with Mormonism would expect to see a larger-than-life sign rising to the height of a church building. As is true of the streaming video in the Tabernacle, a theological message in this setting only displaces the sense of realism.

Otherwise, the building’s authenticity is enhanced by the attention to detail from the arrangement of meeting rooms to the “announcements” on a bulletin board in the foyer. The sanctuary is indiscernible from what can be found in a typical LDS chapel—e.g., carpeting, pews, official green hymnals, the nature of the pulpit, a covered sacrament table, an organ, and even the page numbers of the hymns the congregation will sing, displayed on a slotted board at the front of the chapel. The fact that its creator, Skyler Goode, takes pride in the building’s realism is clear in his response to my question about why there is a basketball court in the “cultural hall,” but no baptismal font. He responded, “Not all LDS churches have baptismal fonts.” (It is also true that not all LDS chapels have basketball courts.)

In addition to the main chapel, LDS meetinghouses have numerous classrooms used for the meetings of various subgroups, including Sunday School for adults and youth, Primary for chil-

dren, priesthood quorums for the men and boys over age twelve, and Relief Society for women. Objects located in these rooms sometimes offer LDS teachings, but their primary function is to identify its purposes. For example, one classroom shows a piano next to a table decorated with a lace tablecloth and a vase of flowers. On one wall hangs a poster depicting the general presidents of the Relief Society since its founding in 1842. Written on the blackboard is the organization's motto, "Charity never faileth," a scripture that appears in both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon (1 Cor. 13:8; Moro. 7:46). These items coalesce as cultural and theological signifiers identifying that the player is in a classroom prepared for a meeting of LDS women. In fact, the flowers and lace tablecloth are so dominant in Relief Society rooms that they've become the subject of some insider jokes among Church members.³⁸ The poster depicting women leaders and the motto ("Charity never faileth") further authenticate and identify the players' locale. Furthermore, these objects function to teach players something about Mormon beliefs.

The dual nature of objects enhancing both a sense of the real and religious beliefs is prevalent throughout this building. Bulletin board announcements add authenticity and teach something about the Church's missionary program and other LDS resources. In another room, the art on the wall depicting Jesus surrounded by children identifies a Primary classroom while affirming the LDS belief in Christ. The nursery for children between ages eighteen months and three is signaled not only by the toys but also by a Book of Mormon scripture denouncing infant baptism (Moro. 8:9) written on the blackboard, making the doctrinal point that Mormons do not accept the validity of infant baptism.

There are dozens of non-iconic buildings and structures dotting the landscape of AoA. Like other structures in Second Life, these buildings, reflecting the tastes of their creators, offer a broad array of architectural styles from Southwestern desert-stylized homes to futuristic glass mansions. Nevertheless, their religious nature is often evident in their interior decor and/or names. For example, although a cabin with plank floors and a rug is relatively empty, on its walls hang pictures of the presidents of the LDS Church and a framed copy of the Articles of Faith, canonized in 1890 as statements of LDS basic tenets. Just outside the

cabin, flags of various nationalities with links to copies of the Book of Mormon in the represented languages overshadow the building. Elsewhere, a postmodern glass structure encloses a dance club, “Brother Brigham’s,” named after the Church’s iconic second leader who led the Saints to Utah from the Midwest in 1847. Another nondescript museum-like building, under construction during my visit to the site, offered a virtual walking tour of artifacts and narratives emphasizing LDS teachings about the nature of the family and the purpose of temple worship. These many other AoA buildings reflect the way that the openness of Second Life creates limitless possibilities for building styles, limited only by the desire and ability of AoA residents to integrate LDS theology or culture into their space.

Integrating Theology, Images, and Objects

Second Life not only encourages limitless architectural styles but also allows players to add random images, movies, and sounds to their properties. This feature is evident throughout AoA where popular LDS art and images dominate the landscape. These features at times add to the realism of the island; but more often, they seem awkwardly embedded in the surroundings. AoA representations of LDS objects and art can serve two primary (though not necessarily mutually exclusive) purposes: functional and theological. Functional images create context, enhancing the sense of authenticity. They act as the glue that keeps the remaining visuals cohesive and valid. Images that emphasize the theological at the expense of realism, however, might detract significantly from the experience, thus rendering their message less persuasive. These embedded displays seem to “hang” in AoA in unusual locations that sometimes seem to “shout” LDS beliefs at the player in startling ways.

The most appealing objects (as I learned when visiting the chapel) manage to fulfill both purposes. They enhance the visual experience of communing with Mormons and Mormon culture, while at the same time fostering a sense of the numinous. Such artifacts encourage a sense of the sacred that enhances the veracity of the physical and the spiritual in a very real way. A tour of AoA reveals that many of the visual artifacts used to emphasize theological (rather than cultural) aspects of the Mormonism stray

from the ideal. A haphazard stack of cubes identify the Church's Twelve Apostles; paintings of Christ are unconvincingly embedded in granite monuments or other free-standing structures; and the walls near a Christus statue feature links to LDS magazines and a slideshow about LDS temples. Random signs aimed at linking or informing players of other LDS events or ideas litter the environment and detract from the flow of religious thought embedded in the more cohesive AoA areas.

Similar context-free objects are common throughout Second Life but lose something of their appeal as signifiers of a real-world religion in these circumstances. One particularly distracting AoA locale is the Maze—an array of hedges and walls that integrates texts, images, and theology to guide the players along a path presenting LDS beliefs. It begins with a narrative about Book of Mormon events and history and concludes by explaining key Book of Mormon teachings: “faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost, the godhead, Jesus Christ, charity, service, citizenship, eternal life, second coming of Christ, priesthood, sin, judgment, mercy, & scripture.” Mormon texts, images, and theological beliefs thus appear in a setting that visitors are supposed to “follow” through to the end.

The Maze at times mimics a museum; virtual placards (resembling parchment scrolls, aged paper, or golden plates) accompany a great number of LDS pictures and objects in an effort to enhance the written narrative. The use of objects and images in the Maze is not entirely incohesive. Mormons would quickly recognize the texture backing the illustrations as a popular representation of the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon is believed to have been translated.³⁹ The images accompanying the narrative of the Maze are dominant in LDS culture and are frequently used in LDS worship and missionary work. In fact, many (if not all) of the Book of Mormon displays feature paintings by Arnold Friberg, an LDS artist commissioned by the Church's Primary Association, whose Book of Mormon characters are so prevalent in LDS culture that many Latter-day Saints tend to judge all representations of the Book of Mormon by his standard.⁴⁰

What is amiss, however, is a reasonable context in which these works of art are presented. The interplay of narrative and art mimics what one might see at the visitors' centers at Temple

Square in Salt Lake City where narratives, artifacts, and art are brought together to tell the story of the Church. In such a setting, the objects themselves take on religious significance as referents not only of a religious story, but also of the artist's devotion to the faith.⁴¹ In the AoA Maze however, the aberrant context in which these visuals are presented distances the player from the transcendent quality of the art or artifact. Without an appeal to the "authentic" museum experience, the numinous power of these objects in AoA is diminished.

The challenge of conveying religious thought by integrating art, narrative, and virtual objects in the typical fashion of Second Life is illustrated by a section of the Maze that tells a Book of Mormon story of Nephi building a ship. The narrative is inscribed on a gold-colored backing that hangs on a mural depicting the ocean. The story is illustrated by two Friberg paintings: one depicts Nephi rebuking his brothers for not helping him build the ship; the other portrays Nephi with his family aboard the ship. Leaning against this wall (which is also a hedge) are an anchor, a ship's wheel, and ship-building tools that, for the observant Second Lifer, appear to be random items gathered from other areas in this virtual world. The player travels along a grassy path that changes to sand near the display.

This cacophony of objects, structures, and cultural referents here distracted me from the intended message. Instead of enhancing the numinous by integrating authentic objects, this visual smorgasbord illustrated the creator's skill as a well-versed Second Life resident. I make this observation not as a critique of the creator, but as an example of one way in which the abilities of the virtual world can inadvertently reduce the plausibility of the intended message. Ironically, just as the most powerfully constructed messages draw their plausibility from the authentic nature of their surroundings (e.g., the iconic buildings discussed earlier), the most archetypal Mormon images littering the Maze lose their credibility because they seem out of place.

Reflections and Concluding Thoughts

Any ethnographic investigation of a location in a virtual world would be empty without at least some insight into the subjectivity and personal experience of the participant observer. My

initial visits to AoA were a little disconcerting.⁴² As anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski wrote in 1922 of his study of the indigenous people of the Trobriand Islands, I soon recognized that I was a beginner with few means of learning how to effectively find my way through this new world.⁴³ Instantly upon arrival, I was a stranger. I was immediately surrounded by buildings, signs, gardens, sidewalks, interactive missionaries, links to Church magazines, Church websites, and LDS commodities. I felt a sudden rush of confusion. Where to go? What to see first? What does it mean?

In the “real” world, I have visited Temple Square and seen much of the Mormon art there. I’ve seen LDS buildings, watched films about and/or by Mormons, and conducted research dealing with the interplay of religion, media, and culture among Utahns and Latter-day Saints. So when I first entered AoA, I found myself immersed in a place that was real and surreal, profane and sacred, strange yet familiar. Unlike other locations in Second Life, the area was largely avatar-free during most of my time there. I felt like a voyeur as I walked through empty streets and sometimes entered the homes of the local residents. I felt especially self-conscious as I walked through the vacant meetinghouse and Mormon tabernacle. At times my curiosity was tinged by feelings of guilt and apprehension. I was an intruder in a sacred place, and nobody knew I was there. What would happen if I were caught? These feelings encapsulate the power of virtual space and the convincing array of Mormon archetypes and icons in some AoA neighborhoods.

During my initial hours there, I avoided contact with others, hoping to gather impressions without being overly influenced. I brought with me a vehement distrust of any players, knowing that their avatars are unlikely to represent the person behind the keyboard of another computer. On rare occasions, I met other avatars, but I do not recall seeing more than three or four in the same region anywhere on the AoA island. This dearth of other players, more than anything else, contributed to my sense of experiencing much of AoA an outsider and a voyeur. As a newcomer to Second Life (without the subsequent knowledge of keyboard shortcuts, online etiquette, and means of using many objects there), I found

it challenging to navigate quickly through the island or to develop relationships with other players I met.

Furthermore, because I was unknown to the players in AoA (I hadn't officially befriended any of them), I was treated primarily as an outsider. This does not mean I was treated with contempt or derision; rather, I was viewed as a potential convert to the faith. With the exception of the rare avatar who wished to sell me something, the vast majority of players encouraged me to learn LDS beliefs on the island. I was directed to AoA areas that presented both beliefs and links to other internet sites where I could learn more. Furthermore, despite my attempts to avoid "going native," I was, at times, impressed and stunned by much of what I found there. Occasionally I experienced emotions ranging from awe to frustration, depending on the ease of the interface and the sense of the real as I toured the landscape. I was surprised that, on several occasions, I felt a true sense of the numinous when particular monuments or artifacts led me through a narrative that I found both real and immersive.

Most impressive and unexpected to me was the construction of the new AoA building intended to convey LDS beliefs about the temple. I suspect that it was rapidly built because of a conversation between a player and the island's owner. Only two days after another avatar asked Goode why players couldn't enter the virtual temple, this new building materialized with a sign "under construction" at the entrance. Though incomplete during my most recent visit, the interior of this virtual visitors' center presented narratives and displays in an organized fashion that in many ways resembles the two visitors' centers at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, including a Christus, images of a starry universe, a model of an LDS temple, and a baptismal font resting on the backs of twelve oxen. This tactic of not allowing visitors into the virtual temple, yet allowing them (and me) a chance to experience the theology of the sacred in another setting added, in my experience, credence to the notion of the temple as sacred and distinct from other LDS buildings—even in this virtual setting.

Conclusion

AoA illustrates the way in which religious plausibility structures have transcended typical communications venues and worked their

way into the discursive practices of believers in cyberspace. That many of the buildings and much of the virtual art I experienced there were so easily recognizable demonstrates the pervasiveness of these icons in Mormon culture. Furthermore, the prevalence of particular LDS images in a landscape built and inhabited by a variety of Second Life players suggests that AoA tends to narrow, rather than broaden, the conversation about Mormon theology. This is a surprising discovery, given the capacity of Second Life to let players borrow from a nearly limitless array of objects and artifacts created by millions of players. The prevalence of *other* “borrowed” features of this cyber world (embedded videos and images) suggests that AoA players are definitely open to the idea of expanding the method of relating their beliefs to the Mormon community and others.

But the preponderance of distinctively LDS images in the evangelical portions of the island might be more persuasive to outsiders, not only if they were contextualized more authentically, but also perhaps if they expanded the range of sacred artifacts to include religious images and archetypes from a broader array of religious belief-systems.

Future research might compare AoA directly with other religious locations in Second Life to determine if the exclusion of religious ritual or worship significantly alters the conversation occurring in virtual space. More time interacting with AoA residents is also necessary to pursue a broader understanding about why particular Mormon images and icons were chosen over others in Second Life.

Notes

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3. Tom Boellstorff, *Coming of Age in Second Life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 8.

4. Kerstin Radde-Antweiler, "Virtual Religion: An Approach to a Religious and Ritual Topography of 'Second Life,'" *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 3, no. 1 (2008): 174–211.

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'Painter of Scripture,'" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10, no. 1 (2001): 36–45.

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43. Bronislaw Malinowski, quoted in Boellstorff, *Coming of Age in "Second Life,"* 4.

Immortal for Quite Some Time (an excerpt)

Scott Abbott

I

Greek autopsyia, a seeing for oneself: auto-, auto- + opsis, sight
—The American Heritage Dictionary

July 23, 1991
425 W. Jefferson
Boise, Idaho



I'm Lila, a heat-drugged woman announces, edging her weight out of an overstuffed room into the hall. How can I help you? I explain we are his family. She says she is sorry. He seemed like such a nice man.

We pick our way up two flights of wooden stairs. Lila's key opens #41.

The battered refrigerator complains of the heat. Slick white maggots unsettle a thin layer of garbage under the sink.

A double bed crowds the bedroom. Soiled latex gloves top a trash can. Under them a desperate spattering of vomit. Then cigarette butts. A peach can. An applesauce can. Six beer cans. Containers for aspirin, Amoxicillen, Alupent.

French doors open onto a tiny balcony dominated by a single kitchen chair. I sit down, stretch my legs across two milk crates, and try to imagine him gazing across Jefferson Street at the gardens and white dome of Idaho's state government.

Dark clouds bunch over mountains on the northern horizon. Torn cellophane vibrates on a broken windowpane.

A short piece of purple thread dangles from a needle thrust into the chair back. Under the chair stands a can of "turpentine replacement paint solvent." The words feel weighty. I repeat them to myself: Turpentine. Replacement. Paint. Solvent.

In the slope-roofed living room, Christy holds up a cardboard box, the shapes of feet cut out of one panel. Jill finds greasy work shoes lined with new cardboard.

A W-2 form tucked into a manila envelope reports his total wages for last year as \$13,235. A cash-register tape lists his groceries: a case of Doral cigarettes, a six-pack of Olympia beer, a bottle of Listerine, two bars of soap, a can of applesauce, and one of peaches.

We shove his things into plastic garbage bags, carry the bags down the stairs, stuff them into the van.

A bearded man and a pregnant woman approach from the sidewalk. Are you the family of the deceased? the woman asks. My husband was the one who went into the room and found him. The café called the managers here and asked them to check why he hadn't come to work. My husband helps take care of the place, so he went up. It's the second one he's found.

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**Thank You*.*

HELP WANTED.

A woman Mom's age—gray hair, white shirt, blue skirt, and apron—is putting salt and pepper shakers on tables. We tell her who we are. She bursts into tears. Ted, a big man in suspenders, sits us down at a table.

He worked for me regularly for two years. Sometimes he slept in Saturday mornings. We'd send a waitress to wake him up, and he always came right over. One night he asked me for a hundred-dollar advance on his wages. The next day he walked in with flowers for all the waitresses. That's the way he was.

We leave the café and drive to a mortuary. A mortician offers condolences. I say I would like to see him. He explains that most family members, especially after an autopsy, find it better to wait until the body has been worked on. I explain that I need to see for myself and follow him downstairs. The smell of pizza and the sound of laughter from a side door. Three bodies laid out on tables. The mortician points to a clear plastic bag on the center table. I pull open the folded plastic. Don't touch him, he warns.

His face is drawn. An open eye leers upward. A scraggly growth of beard and moustache. The sagging jaw reveals uneven teeth.

My teeth.

From shoulder to shoulder, down the chest to the hips, a surgical Y. The top of the skull has been sawn off, then replaced. Severed locks of hair litter the forehead.

I stand before the body. It is unspeakably present. His feet are livid.

II

Those who want to approach their own buried pasts must . . . not be afraid to return again and again to the same facts; to strew them about as one strews earth, to root around in them as one roots around in earth. . . . Broken loose from all earlier associations, the images stand as precious objects in . . . our later insight.

—Walter Benjamin¹

July 22, 1991

American Fork, Utah

John died early this morning. A Boise coroner called and asked Mom if she were related to John Herbert Abbott.

July 23, 1991

American Fork–Boise

Driving west across southern Idaho, Jill's husband, Mike, points to the Snake River Canyon between Twin Falls and Jerome. A long time ago, he says, some cataclysm split it apart. See how the sides fit perfectly. Some say it happened at the time of the crucifixion.

We eat breakfast at Mountain Home's Gear Jammer Restaurant. Suddenly the thought of John lying on a coroner's table. The autopsy was scheduled for nine.

425 W. Jefferson

Boise

In John's apartment we find two pink "Patient Copies" from the Physicians Immediate Care Center. The first is dated July 9, 1991, 9:23 A.M., the second July 18, 8:32 P.M. They both list the following information: Sex: M. Date of Birth: 06/03/51. Age: 40. Home Phone: 345-4604 (message #). Address: 425 W. Jefferson #41. Employer: T&A Café.

On July 9, the attendant reports a productive cough (yellow-gray), post-nasal draining, chest tightness, very weak, S.O.B. X 2 wks. Arms and legs go numb, onset 1 month; last time he had pneumonia one side of body was numb. Exam: Ht: 6'2"; Wt: 150; B.P. 116/74; Pulse: 104; Temp: 100.4; Resp: 32 Current Medications: ASA; Allergies: NKMH; Other Observations: smokes 2 pack[s] per day, pneumonia 3 X in last 3 or 4 years.

The physician states that John's arm goes asleep if he lies on it. Legs will go numb if he sits too long in one position. Lasts for a few minutes until he shakes it out. Patient denies wheezing or asthma. Coarse breath sounds and prolonged expiratory phase. Given 2 puffs Alupent and clearing of coarse breath sounds. Bronchitis with possible bronchospasm. Amoxicillin 300 mg. Alupent Inhale 2 puffs. Recheck if any problem. Don't smoke. \$37. Payment by the 19th.

The second report, nine days later, says that John lost 20 lbs in 12 wks, no energy, short of breath, headache, lost appetite, chills. B.P. 118/84; Pulse: 80; Temp: 98.9; Resp: 28. Now current medications are aspirin, Amoxicillin, and Alupent. Seen last Tues, given the Dx of Bronchitis, started on Amox. States he forgot to

eat and lost 20 lbs. Hx heavy ETOH and heavy tobacco 2 ppd. Denies homosexual activity, 0 BRBPR.

The cost this time is \$149: \$45 for the exam, \$104 for tests and a chest x-ray. Nearly two weeks' salary. John wouldn't go to the doctor, Ted said, until one of the waitresses insisted and went with him.

We find John's car a few blocks from his apartment. His keys open the door. I try to start the car.

A young man in a knit shirt and shorts comes out of the house. We explain. I know Jay, he says. I've been watching the car for him. I'm sorry to hear about him. Would you like to sell the car? I could come up with maybe \$500. He goes to get another car and jumper cables. By the time he returns, he has decided maybe \$450 would be a better offer. The car starts right up. We agree to meet in an hour, when he will bring us \$425 in cash. We buy cold sodas at a convenience store to combat the heat, and an hour later we add the \$425 to the \$210.12 in John's wallet. And John had a \$5,000 life-insurance policy Grandpa Hilton gave him when he was born. Aren't we blessed? Mom says.

Used-car dealers in the face of death.

Decisions of style, syntax, vocabulary. Does this literate mourning draw me nearer to John or distance me from my brother?

I look back at "Autopsy," at my first attempt to tell this story. When I described the visit to the T&A Café where John worked, I said that "we" went in, that "we" spoke with the owner. But the truth is: I remained in the car while Christy and Mom went inside. I didn't want to talk with anyone about John. I didn't want to talk period. Still, I wrote "we" and reported what my mother and sister told me. *Caveat lector.*

July 25, 1991

American Fork, Utah

For John, for a man who put cardboard inserts in his shoes and borrowed money to buy flowers for waitresses, we bought a beautifully crafted casket of Carolina poplar.

I drove to a clothing store to buy underwear and socks for John, then dropped them off at the mortuary along with a beautiful leather belt I inherited from Grandpa Hilton. The mortician

added them to the shoes, checked pants, starched chef's jacket, and toque that were John's most formal clothes.

How are you feeling?

Angry.

Angry at what?

At the world, at everything.

Because people like John have such a hard time living in it?

Yes. I guess. And I'm worried about my inability to cry.

JOHN HERBERT ABBOTT
JUNE 3, 1951 – JULY 21, 1991

That much is easy. I wander around the American Fork Cemetery where John will be buried, looking at other stones, especially those from the nineteenth century. In the southeast corner next to three cedar trees stands a delicate sandstone obelisk. Cut into it is a half-sun, below which, holding one another with a curious grip, are two hands. I'll borrow this Freemasonic symbol adopted by Mormons to symbolize my fraternal hand of fellowship gripping John's as we lend one another the only kind of immortality we can count on.

Your use of the religious symbol is idiosyncratic, don't you think? Your fellow Mormons would see the hand of God reaching out to welcome your brother into the Celestial Kingdom.

Yes. But it works for me as well. It's precisely the kind of multivalence that allows me to function in a Church made up of members whose views I share only in part.



July 27, 1991
9 P.M., Orem



Sitting alone in the window seat in Maren's room, feeling, for no specific reason, grateful to be a father.

Darkness gathers. A canyon breeze blows through the window.

I'm a pinchy-assed anarchist, torn by contradictory desires. I shun disorder and invite chaos. I want to put on John's limp clothing, step into his cracked shoes. I washed his clothes as soon as possible.

A gentle bishop conducted John's funeral.

I loathed him.

The prayers in the language of an orthodoxy that would damn John twisted in my gut. Saw-toothed abstractions. I remembered the statement of a gay man after a priest told the story of the prodigal son at his friend's funeral: I'm tired of being welcome in the Catholic Church after I'm dead.

We told family stories about John. We laughed. We were brave. Some of us sobbed. I said there was no reason to pity him. He had chosen his life. He lived it. I pictured him relaxed on his balcony as the hot July day began to cool and the mountains to the north lost their color. I described the disparity between his salary and his medical bills and asked bitterly: What kind of country is this?

John's puffy cheeks and the mortician's smeared makeup were worse than the marks of the coroner's brutality.

Benjamin, six years old, walked straight up to the casket and pulled at one of the knotted buttons on John's coat. The white uniform represented John's skill, his creative ability, his discipline. It also bore an unsettling resemblance to the ritual robe and hat that accompany temple-going Mormons into the grave.

Unlike the bishop's earnest promises of a reunion in an afterlife, my Sicilian-American friend Alex's "Funerary Instructions" give me something physical to chew on:

1. I came in naked, let me go naked
2. Wash me like a baby
3. It should be a simple rectangular box
4. Leave the eyes alone
5. Breathe on the face so I can hold fast to the wind
6. Imagine the beating of earth upon wood is yet another heart

In another poem, Alex writes that he enjoys "reading the biographies of suicides. I start at the last page and read back to before the thought ever came up; back to the child with the big eyes who can't tell the difference between the cloud and his own head."



In the grass by Grandma Abbott's back steps, neither John nor I has yet identified himself as the image in a photo or as the other in the mirror. The thought of suicide is still impossible for us. Leave the eyes alone.

July 28, 1991

Orem

The tiny khaki-colored can of Emergency Drinking Water among John's things was for that horrible moment, perhaps, when there was nothing stronger in the house. During telephone conversations with Mom, John routinely promised he would quit drinking and get more education. His calls to me were often fortified by alcohol.

I don't get drunk. Nor did I call him.

John phoned Mom while he was still in Houston where he most likely contracted AIDS. He said he was in trouble, that he needed \$400 or he would go to jail. She sent him a check immediately. Then she got a call from a man who said she had filled out the check improperly and that it couldn't be cashed. Would she send a new one? She did. And someone cashed both checks.

How much I don't know about my brother.

July 31, 1991

Orem

In the afternoon sunshine, John's death certificate glows bright green on my desk.

Never married.

Sex: Male.

Not a veteran.

Autopsy, yes.

The sun transforms the books on the north wall into an ordered riot of colors.

The coroner told us John had never tested positive for AIDS. Otherwise his name would have been in a national database?

I remember squatting next to a Colorado wheat field with my father and grandfather. There had been a drought. Between my little hands, I separated wheat from the prickly chaff. A puff of breath left only underdeveloped, wizened grains on my palm. We stared across the fields, and my grandfather said: Needed rain the first week of June. Dad nodded and chewed morosely on a wheat stalk. A month later, after a meager harvest, I played happily in the warehouse, jumping from unbelievable heights into what seemed to me unending hills of grain.

Small thunderstorms sweep discreetly through the valley. Benjamin struts by, swinging a plastic bucket filled with beetles. The horizon to the north is high and close, spectacularly drawn by the sharp, sure peaks and ridges of Mount Timpanogos.

On the radio this afternoon there was an interview with a Utah AIDS patient, surprised but philosophical about the drastic changes in his life. We all, he said, feel immortal for quite some time.

* * *

Spurred by John's death to gather these fragments, bits of photographic and syntactical memory marshaled like Maxwell's imaginary demon against entropy, my pen is drawn, I am drawn, into incalculable territory.

Note

1. Walter Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle," in *Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 26.

“Take No Thought”

Adam S. Miller

They call it Christianity. I call it consciousness.
—Emerson

You’re going to miss it. You’re distracted. Sit up straight. You’re not paying attention.

God does not come and go—your attention does.

All sins are just variations on that same desire to do something else when you’re already doing something. Multitaskers are children of the devil. You can’t serve two masters. Divided attention is just dressed-up inattention.

“Hear, O Israel,” the Shema begins, “the Lord our God is one Lord!” (Deut. 6:4) But are you one? Or do you keep getting shucked, splintered, and spread by every distraction that wanders by?

Put your phone away. Recent studies agree with Jesus. In their distressing 2009 paper “Cognitive Control in Media Multitaskers,” Ophir et al. found that heavy media multitaskers (or HMMs) “have greater difficulty filtering out irrelevant stimuli from their environment.” They are “less likely to ignore irrelevant representations in memory.” And they are “less effective in suppressing the activation of irrelevant task sets.”¹

Does this remind you of anyone? Do you know anyone who can’t filter out irrelevant stimuli? Do you know anyone who keeps getting sucked down black holes of memory and fantasy? Do you know anyone who can’t suppress the impulse to do something other than what they’re supposed to be doing?

Hmm. Do you know anyone who *doesn’t* fit this description?

Such is the human condition: unable to filter stimuli or shunt impulses, everyone sins. “There is none righteous, no, not one”

because sin beds down in the distraction of our daydreams (Rom. 3:10).

Jesus's canonical take on multitasking looks like this: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).

When Jesus says that "no man can serve two masters," I understand Him to mean that no one can pay attention to two things at the same time.

Serving means paying attention. You serve by *attending*, by giving your full attention to even the least little thing at hand. And, when you attend to the least among these things, it is the same as attending to God himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40).

How freely Jesus allows you to substitute even the least little thing for Himself!

Jesus doesn't worry about these substitutions. He encourages them. He doesn't worry about you *servicing* mammon because "mammon" just names your *avoidance* of service. "Serving mammon" is oxymoronic because serving mammon is just a way of serving yourself and serving yourself isn't actually service.

It is impossible, then, to serve both God and mammon *because it is impossible to serve mammon*. Mammon names that bifurcation of attention that follows from your *failing* to serve and attend. To serve is, by definition, to serve God.

When Jesus says that no one "can serve two masters," which two masters does he have in mind? The particulars of the first may vary—doing it unto the least of these is the same as doing it unto God—but the second always seems to be the same: you.

You are mammon. You can either serve God by attending to others or in attending to others you can try to serve yourself.

Self-interest is this second master that halves your attention. You double your interest in every least little thing with an interest in yourself. Before it even pops up, you've already started to ask: How might this little thing either harm or benefit me? Will I love it or hate it? What does it have to do with me?

Often, your double vision is so bad that you can barely even *see* that little thing because you're so intent on seeing yourself. Then,

having failed to see the least among these, you inevitably fail to see God. And you're sad.

Trying to serve two masters, attention falters. When attention falters, it bifurcates into love and hatred. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other."

Instead of serving things in terms of what they need from you, you end up judging them in terms of your own preferences—in terms of your own likes and dislikes. This bifurcation of attention into modes of preference—that is, into modes of loving or hating—is the root of sin because it turns attention back on itself.

Attention neither loves nor hates. It serves.

And, in serving, it even loves what it hates by serving it.

"Okay," you may say, "but reading love and hatred as what *follows* from trying to have two masters rather than as the *cause* for its impossibility is a bit unconventional."

"And while we're at it," you may add, "I highly doubt that Jesus actually had multitasking in mind when he claimed that no man can serve two masters."

To be honest, I don't know what Jesus had in mind. But I do know something about what this saying of his *did* to me. And what it did led me to say what I said.

I take it as axiomatic that Jesus's saying is not a static picture upon which I ought to reflect. It is not (in any straightforward way) a transparent representation or object of contemplation.

Rather, my assumption is that the text is itself an agent, an actor, a will—something more like a computer program than a still cut from a movie reel. Jesus's saying is meant to *do* something, to make something happen, to change something. The text is an operation. It's a bit of open-source code. It's a plug-in that needs to be run.

But, strangers in a strange world, we've got compatibility problems, cross-platform issues that require the text to be translated and then creatively recompiled. If we want it to run—rather than sit there like a museum piece—then we're going to have to port the text onto the kinds of platforms *we've* got available. We're going to have to render the text sufficiently pliable to cross that gap.

En route, patches will have to be rigged and foreign material

spliced. Ways of hashing the code will inevitably fork; and then, though multiple paths may be workable, we'll have to settle, for the moment, for one.

But once it's up and running, the text should work more like an aggressive virus than a frozen PDF and it, in turn, will exapt, reformat, and repurpose *our* operating systems to meet *its* ends.

Jesus-text: an applet for viral inception.

In the end, the measure for success in creatively porting a text from one platform to another is just this: When we finally run the program, does it output charity? Does it repurpose my vanity? Because whatever else the text does, it is nothing without charity. If it doesn't show charity, it is only so much sounding brass and tinkling cymbals (1 Cor. 13:1-2).

The advantage, then, of how I've thus far ported this text from Matthew is twofold: Even if it appears unconventional, even if it is only one possible reading among others, my reading (1) responds directly to the experience induced by the text, and (2) opens the door to reading this saying as deeply intertwined with the details of the verses that follow.

Good readings ought to do both. They ought to bluntly connect with our lives and they ought to light up surrounding passages like Christmas trees. As readers, we must faithfully attend to both the least little thing the text does to us and the least little thing it does to the passages around it.

Taking into account the surrounding verses, I think it is crucial to read Matthew 6:24 together with 6:25-34 as one operational unit. I take 6:24 as the unit's thesis and 6:25-34 as an extended explanation of that thesis. The initial explanation of verse 24 is given in 25 and then repeated, by way of conclusion, in 34. The middle section, verses 26-33, elaborates on that explanation.

Here's the full King James Version of Matthew 6:24-34, formatted in such a way as to diagram the structure I've just outlined:

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they

reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Jesus's advice about how to pay attention—that is, about how to serve just one master—is repeated five times in these ten verses.

He pounds the point home: "*take no thought . . .*"

This is straightforward advice. To pay attention to the least little thing, you have to stop thinking about other things.

When you play with your four-year-old, stop thinking about the book you could be reading. When you go to bed at night, stop thinking about the credit card you have yet to balance. When you're out with your wife, stop thinking about the waitress you aren't impressing. (In fact, as a general rule, stop thinking about that waitress.)

Be where you are. Do what you're doing.

6:25 captures the gist of Jesus' charge. Advising that we take no thought, Jesus specifies: "Take no thought *for your life*."

How would taking no thought for your life help you to serve and pay attention?

To begin with, in order to serve and attend to others, you will have to stop thinking about *your* life. Drop the possessive. If you're thinking about *your* life when you're supposed to be attending to someone else's life, then your attention will bifurcate into prefer-

ential judgments and that familiar, second master (you!) will end up running the show.

For example, you might think: “I really should be paying attention right now to how well I wipe my baby’s bottom so she won’t get a rash, but *I hate* this smell so I’m going to think about checking my email instead.”

Here, attention that should be wholly focused on bum-wiping gets bifurcated by your preference for non-excremental smells and then slips off into daydreams about phantasmatic emails. (Hmm. Heavy media-multitasking continues to take its toll.)

But Jesus also has something more in mind. Verse 25 goes on to specify what he means by “life.” Taking thought for your life, Jesus says, amounts to taking thought for what you are going to eat, drink, and wear: “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.”

Shouldn’t we “take thought” for these things? No. This is a frank imperative. Feed and clothe yourself by feeding and clothing yourself, not by thinking about feeding and clothing yourself.

Jesus is clear about his reason for this imperative: “Is not the life *more* than meat, and the body than raiment?” What is this “more”?

Verse 34 recapitulates, by way of conclusion, what Jesus means when he says that you should take no thought for your life: “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”

Taking no thought for your life means taking no thought for tomorrow.

What, then, is this “more” to which Jesus redirects our attention? What is more than tomorrow?

This “more” is the ringing urgency of “now.”

Life is more than your distracted thoughts about what you’d like to do next. It is more than your thoughts about what you plan to eat, more than your thoughts about what you plan to drink, more than your thoughts about what you plan to wear. It is more than your preferences. It is more than you.

Life includes *all* those least little things that metonymize God.

More than your thoughts about tomorrow, life is the overflow of this unchosen moment, a moment whose current is too strong to be parlayed and, instead, can only be served.

Why do you prefer the distraction of your thoughts to the flood of the present? Because your thoughts are thin enough to mold and manipulate. Building sand castles in your head, you play master of the house. But this is one too many masters.

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" Sand castles in your head will not make you taller.

Seek first to serve. Seek first to pay attention. Seek first "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (6:33).

If you attend to the least little things, then these least little things will add themselves to you.

Instead of wrapping yourself in idle conceits, the lilies will clothe you. Instead of clouding your heart with worry, Solomon's sun will shine down on you. Instead of stuffing your belly with cardboard morale, the grasses will feed you.

When Jesus tells you to "take no thought," he's not advising that you re-pot yourself as an absent-minded vegetable. Nothing grows in the soil of apathy. Rather, taken together with Matthew 6:24 as an explanation of *how* to serve, his apparently irresponsible advice to "take no thought" is nothing of the kind.

Nothing is more demanding than "taking no thought." Nothing is harder than the work of paying attention. Nothing is more essential to service. Nothing is more responsible. And nothing is more productive. Forget yourself, go to work, and the kingdom will add *itself* to you. You will not need to take it.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Paying attention depends on our faith in this sufficiency. It depends on our willingness to trust that what is given will be enough, that if—on God's behalf—you feed the fowls of the air, they will feed you.

The grace of each day's "evil," of each day's trouble, of each day's need for our full attention, will be sufficient. You should not ask for, nor will you get, more. Tomorrow will give its own little things. As for today, there are already too many.

The kingdom of God is distressingly near. If you find yourself far from the master's face, it is not because he has hidden it from

you. It is because you, in a fever of existential multitasking, are addled and distracted.

Lay down your distraction.

Rather than taking thought, give it.

No man can have two masters.

God does not come and go—your attention does.

Note

1. Eyal Ophir, Clifford Nass, and Anthony Wagner, “Cognitive Control in Media Multitaskers,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, doi: 10.1073/pnas.0903620106 (accessed October 18, 2010).

POETRY

Marginalia

Paul Swenson

Does the margin ail you? Scary edge of things,
where fools barely cling to normal, fail
to hug the middle. Do they bug you—out there
on the ledge beyond the pale? Ugly,

should they all at once fall off—or worse,
coerce you to rehearse a crawl toward the brink
yourself. Anxious, on your shelf of false
security, do you think of all the borders

you have crossed, from found to lost,
from large to small, from boss to marginal,
so you no longer were in charge? As the mangy
herd roared by, you ate their dust. Was it

death-lust spurred you back into the chase
to claim your place in the stampede? Bleed a little,
if you must, but from your vantage in the middle,
observe the riders on the edge who turn the herd.

Accidental Mystic

Paul Swenson

Once I picnicked with an atheist
(only one in Davis County?),
spread our gourmet bounty
on a blanket where we lay,
a grassy bank beside a stream. Trick
was to appear to be agnostic,
to encourage her to dream
out loud—express her awe
for innocence of animals,
auditory mystery of bees.
And all the while—all the while—
a beam of sunlight through the trees
revealed the gorgeous dialectic
of a skeptic's smile. Reflecting now
on ecstasy (vouchsafed for angels,
saints, and the elect?) vexed to recollect
her leaving unreturned the novel
I had lent her. Complexity and doubt—

pleased or burned it sent her to the arms
of Cowboy Jesus? Too easy to forget
the link between the way I learned
to think, and drinking in
the paradox—attracted to a few
who call themselves free-thinkers.
Nat Hentoff flat refused to off
a fellow creature—wouldn't wink
at killing, if in war, the womb,
the execution room. Take care
to still adore the late Tom Lehrer—
“make a cross on on your *abdomen*,
when in Rome do as a Roman,”
Thomas sang. But it was
a she, accidental mystic,
characteristic of her kind,
who led me to lie down
and stare unblinking into heaven.

An Apocalypse

Timothy Liu

Chucked my cell phone
into the ocean in a move to be more
alone. Was the Palm Pilot
next, my laptop with the wireless net?
Had googled Patmos. Bought
my ticket to cross ten time zones
halfway around the world.
Coming up on forty and finally
unplugged. Tethered to a place
that would never be mine
as boatloads set out for the island
where the Apostle was said to have had
his vision. Digital flashbulbs
going off. I as guilty
as the rest awe-struck in that cave—

Romance

Timothy Liu

Belly flop off a high board the closest I ever got.

Nothing like that couple we saw.

Hand-in-hand freefalling off the Towers.

Only watched in reverse:

Sky where ground should have been.

Does one die before actually hitting bottom?

Try to keep me guessing at the last thing you felt.

Turncoat

Timothy Liu

On line at Rite-Aid where a woman cuts in front of me, says: He was saving my place. There's no saving places, I say. She says to him, Did I not ask you to save my place? He says nothing. She prods. She goads. He relents: There's no saving places. Then I'll just leave, she says, you two *asshole* gentlemen to yourselves. She gets behind me. He shakes his head, shoots a look my way, laughing. There's a term, she says, for people like you: Turncoat. The smell of a snuffed taper burnishes the air. The smile slips off his face. Don't call me an asshole, he says, for *your* problems. That's just what you are, she says, a coward! His laugh now resumes. Ma'am, he says, enjoy your place in line. Caught as we were between the actual and the real. A woman cutting in line. A cockroach scuttling across linoleum where the traps were sold. Things that happened in the corners of our eyes. A jar of blue Gatorade. A bed perfectly made. Unseen paratroopers overhead diving out of planes smoldering in flak as we stumbled out of our clothes. The TV on. The sound off. A coward! she said. Little monuments piled up on a desert floor.

On the Murder of Five Amish Girls

Elisa Pulido

We wanted, want quiet.

Next door the milk soured.

Heaven is, was simple.

Skipping, oh skip, skipped our daughters.

We think, thought in a spirit of
handshake and glad to meet.

Our sons pull, pulled only balls from the air.

Who knew the dairy brewing brewed?
Who knew from his truck?

He delivered bone builder.
We drank, drink from his cup.

We wanted, want prairie.
The sparest syntax possible.

Our harvest: bullets
to our backs. An eye for five flowers.

Where wast, art Thou?

Children run, ran over the prairie
with news of the invasion.

Quiet? The lynx
in the schoolyard. A snakebite

to the heart. In our plain eyes
everything blurs,

blurred.

Flannel Board

Brent Corcoran

I've been inured to violence, so understand,
I've no sensation for nails smashing through feet:
Instead, show the tale of footprints on the beach,
because I know how sore feet get in sand.

And the hands, not so blood-red!
Paint him, instead, with palm astride
a door that stays shut (it hasn't two sides),
Till the cramped fist's sense is fled.

Brush over the thorn marks that mar his face;
bandage the gash too long seeping.
Drawn there—to that brow stained by weeping—
the child who alone by his side finds his place.

The Dream

Levi S. Peterson

Niles awoke from a strange dream to find that his snoring had once again driven his wife from their bed. On his way to the bathroom, he peered into the darkened living room and, as he expected, saw her form upon the sofa. Returning to bed, he retrieved what he could of the dream, fully expecting to ponder it with amusement while drifting off for another hour or two of sleep.

Niles and Thora were younger in the dream, perhaps in their fifties. They were at an academic conference in a hotel and had a room many stories up; but he, an early riser, had gone down to the lobby to work on his paper, and then, breakfast time having come, he had returned to their room and found her conversing in the corridor with a couple of other women. He opened his mouth to utter a cheery “Good morning,” but was arrested mid-word by the collective gasp of all three of the women as they turned to look at him. He looked down at himself and saw that, over his suit, he had pulled a sleeveless party dress of flamboyant orange silk. The skirt flared with stiff petticoats, something like a ballerina’s tutu. With a surge of anger, he stripped off the dress and threw it to the floor with a vindictive strength. That was the point at which he had awakened, greatly relieved to know he had been merely dreaming.

Unfortunately, his review of these details failed either to amuse him or to lull him into a pleasant early morning drowse. Instead, it forced unwelcome questions upon him. Did the donning of a dress in a dream signify that the identity of a woman lurked in his subconscious? Was he emotionally the female that, before his birth, his mother had hoped he would prove to be? He rallied almost instantaneously from these absurd, nonsensical questions, the answer to which was an abrupt No! He had been born a male, had always felt himself to be a male, had always wanted to be a

male. Irritably, he got up, put on his robe, and, having fetched in the morning newspaper, went to the study to read it.

The paper said that an aspiring assistant professor who had been denied tenure had filed suit against the university, claiming that the formality of his attire—he habitually wore classic-fit chinos, a navy blazer, and a tie—had been the single negative point adduced by his departmental tenure and promotion committee, which was composed of professors who—according to the suit—prided themselves on an informality approaching slovenliness. Wishing for more facts, Niles read the brief article a second time. But even as he tried to fix his thoughts on the ins and outs of academic selection, his mind returned to the puzzling dream. He could easily see its immediate source: an episode in a recent movie featuring a den of male transvestites, immaculately made up in female attire. The dress he had found on himself in the dream was resplendent, richly decorated and satiny, like those in the movie. What wasn't so easy to see was why putting on a dress in a dream should prove worrisome to a seventy-six-year-old man. Time had been—a very long time ago, in high school—that he had donned a dress and high heels for a skit at an assembly or, while wandering through the state fair, had seen college students in dresses and wigs on an open stage, and had thought of it all as mere tomfoolery.

He heard his wife close the bathroom door and remembered that she had early duty at the welfare center where she served as a volunteer. He went to the kitchen and began to prepare breakfast. He planned to tell Thora about the dream, knowing that its sheer implausibility would amuse her. But the more he thought about it, the more it seemed a needless indiscretion to mention it, as if in some vague manner it wasn't so implausible after all. Better to let sleeping dogs lie, as it were.

While he poured milk onto his cereal, she came into the kitchen, fastening a brooch to her blouse. He glanced at her appreciatively, aware that even in her seventies she was beautiful. She was of medium height, five feet six or so, a height—as she often observed dryly—universally considered desirable for women who wished to bolster the confidence of the men they were attached to. She had an angular chin, lips that curved into a perpetual smile, and a mound of curly hair tinted to an auburn luster. As

for Niles, he was tallish—six feet two, or at least he had been before he began to grow old and shrink; his face was long, bland, and clean-shaven, as became the countenance of an obedient Mormon in the twenty-first century. However, the large, round spectacles, which he had put on while reading the newspaper, gave him—as he esteemed—something of an owlish appearance.

“Any big plans for the day?” Thora asked as she seated herself.

He looked out the window, unsure. There were sunbreaks in the clouds. It seemed as if he ought to do something worthwhile. “Maybe I’ll start on a paper,” he said.

He pondered that idea for a moment, then said, “Maybe I’ll go to the library and roll up my sleeves and dig into those westerns.” He was referring to a large collection of popular cowboy novels in the university library which he himself had gathered years ago.

“I thought you had lost interest in those,” she said.

“True,” he said. “I did lose interest in them.”

“Though you’ve written some very nice papers about other books,” she said.

“Thank you,” he said with a nod. “The thing about these cowboy novels is that they are all about the same imaginary cowboy. Every one of them! And he is a pretty anemic cowboy at that.”

After they finished eating, they rinsed their dishes and put them in the dishwasher. At the door, he paused and said, “But maybe I should give those westerns another try. I have been thinking lately that an old man could do worse than honor the intentions of the young man he used to be.”

“Well, then,” she said, nodding, “maybe that’s what you ought to do.”

She was the first to leave the house, pausing at the door to say simply, “Good-bye,” and to hear him reply, “Drive carefully.” He would have paid no attention to this perfunctory departure had he not felt an extraordinary impulse to give her a hug or perhaps a parting kiss, either of them a gesture so rarely exchanged between them that he couldn’t remember when they had last done so. They had never been demonstrative people. They had grown up in undemonstrative families where affection had been expressed between adults and older children through kindness and consideration, but not through touching of any sort—a reticence which, as might be expected, their own children had inherited. The ex-

ception to the reserve between Niles and Thora had been, of course, while engaging in sexual intercourse. Unfortunately, as old age grew upon them, his embarrassment over an increasing inability to achieve a climax had deprived them of even that intimacy.

A half hour later, he left the house and walked to the bus stop. At the intersection of Moormeade and Grover, he realized with some surprise that he could remember the day when he had first understood that cross-dressing was more than tomfoolery. It was soon after he had begun his mission. He and his companion had shared a train compartment with what he at first took to be three women. However, with mounting astonishment, he inferred from their intonations, gestures, and posture that two of the three were men in fashionable female attire. Even now, past seventy, he still responded to the sight of a transvestite with a smothered sense of incredulity.

After a brief wait at the stop, he caught a university-bound bus. The vehicle was crowded, and he found himself obliged either to cram himself into a half-seat next to an obese man or to stand gripping a pole. He chose the latter. This bus, like all others, smelled of sweat, oil, tobacco, and various undefined essences of an unpleasant sort. Its stark green metal walls were mercifully interrupted by wide windows. Above them on either side stretched a row of relentless placards advertising, among other things, a bank, two grocery stores, a subscription to the *New York Times*, an internet service provider, and a maverick brand of green olives.

For a few minutes, he tried to concentrate on the oft-postponed task he had impetuously decided to reconsider that morning: the production of a scholarly article on the image of the American cowboy in the popular fiction of the early twentieth century. But the flashing scene outside the windows—freeway lanes filled with speeding automobiles, roadside buildings, a background of forested hills, and above that a mottled sky—distracted him. Suddenly feeling a need to be honest with himself, he granted the utter irrelevance of any article he was capable of writing. The scenes he presently looked upon, both inside and outside the bus—*his* world, the world of now—were an infinity away from the world that had inspired all those cowboy novels he presumed to study.

He therefore surrendered all too willingly to ruminations on the bizarre dream that had unsettled his early morning. However, as before, he found himself quickly drawn into worry, if not about the implications of the dream, then about worry itself. It seemed odd that a seventy-six-year-old man would be worrying about his sexual identity. It seemed that, if he were a woman in a man's body or a man who desired carnal knowledge of other men, he would have known about it and dealt with it one way or another long before now. But then he was a worrier by temperament. He had a robust instinct for worry. All his life he had suffered from bad things that never materialized. They were beyond counting.

Soon the bus was crossing the lake on the mile-long floating bridge. He saw a few early sailboats and, only a couple of hundred feet above the blue, shining water, a float plane. After forty years, he was still startled to find himself a part of this scene. Juniper-covered plains, dissected by barbed-wire fences and dotted here and there with the derrick of a furiously whirling windmill, were his natural habitat, which brought him back to the cowboy novels—but only momentarily, for a memory now came to him of the men's restroom in a movie house where a certain fellow with tousled red hair and face marred by acne frequently loitered, waiting—so rumor had it, likely true—to make assignations of an unspeakable sort.

Why had he been so afraid of the red-haired fellow? Would he have been utterly paralyzed had the fellow made a proposition? Why did he now suddenly feel worried for having remembered the incident? Strangely, it roused the question every maturing boy faces: *How do I know that I am not one of them, the queers, or, as people called them nowadays, the gays?*—a question he had thought settled to his satisfaction even before he and Thora were married—*no, a man as interested as I am in his fiancée's intimate parts is no gay*. Suddenly, as of this morning with its strange dream of an orange dress, it was as if the question of his sexual orientation had not been settled at all.

He got off the bus at the inner campus stop and crossed the main quad to the library. He entered the east wing and trudged along a corridor. The morning sun shining through high arched windows and the scent of floor wax touched him with nostalgia. The curator of the special collections—an apparently ageless man

he knew only as Mr. Seymour—let him directly into the stacks, saying as he formerly had, “It’s against policy, but since it’s you . . .”

Niles lingered there for several hours, pulling off the shelf, one after another, hardback novels whose covers were sometimes frayed and invariably faded. They bore titles like *Silver Creek Raiders*, *Shorby of the Z-Bar Ranch*, *Bordeen Wins Again*, *Flashing Guns*, *Thunder on the Prairie*, and so on. How had Niles gotten into this business in the first place? In graduate school, his favorite professor had lectured on the sociological value of popular literature, which by definition had no pretensions to quality. Figuring out what you could know about westerners from the popular western novel had struck Niles as a charming idea. So once he was settled as an assistant professor on the present campus, he had applied for a small grant from the library committee and, with the assistance of a downtown used book dealer, spent it on close to fifteen hundred novels, which were cheap because nobody else wanted them. Unfortunately, as they began to come in, he realized you couldn’t know anything about real westerners from these novels. For the most part, they weren’t even written by westerners, and the titles gave a deceptive appearance of variety to what was actually a single, age-old story of heroic action, dressed in slightly different details from book to book. The same character could be found in cheap novels about sailing the high seas, jousting with medieval knights, and fighting Bedouins in the sands of Tunisia.

Toward noon, Niles emerged from the library, determined to grab a bite of lunch at the union cafeteria and return to the task of deciding, once and for all, whether his early dismissal of the novels had been too hasty. For a few moments, he stood on the library steps, blinking in the bright sunshine, making no move toward the cafeteria because that troublesome question confronting all teenage boys—*how do I know that I am not one of them*—had returned to his mind again just now. But after a few moments more, he relaxed, having suddenly recalled an incident from high school. After a football game in a town far from home, he and a high school friend had gone to bed in an unheated motel room, taking off their coats, shirts, and pants, and crawling between the sheets dressed only in their briefs. The friend instantly cuddled up to him, as he apparently did at home with his little brother, but Niles jumped—quite literally—out of the bed. The friend said nothing,

but the rest of the night each slept on his own side of the bed. Wasn't it sheer untutored instinct that had made him jump? No shred of homosexuality there!

With that, he changed his mind about lunch at the cafeteria. He would go home for the day, though he would keep focused on the possibility—admittedly slim, but still a possibility—that the American readers who had bought the novels composing his collection when they were new understood something about the cowboy that had evaporated from the collective American mind during the succeeding decades. If these novels, cheap as they were, reflected that understanding—and if Niles could discern and articulate it—*that* would make an article worth writing!

However, as he made his way across the quad, he found himself unable to concentrate on this new insight. A new angle to his frantic leap from the motel bed on that cold night had just occurred to him. It might have been acquired behavior, socially conditioned by the derisive banter of boys in the shower room after PE, who directed mock accusations of homosexuality at one another in strident and scornful voices because no one, including the accuser and the accused, believed them. Their banter and their mock accusations—didn't they tutor and educate? The lesson they taught was that boys don't touch, hug, embrace, or fondle one another, or stare at one another's intimate parts in the shower room even if they wanted to. They must show a studied indifference, a blithe oblivion, as if they were fence posts rather than sentient sexual creatures. So his aversion to being hugged by a high school buddy might not have been sheer untutored instinct at all.

In the middle of the quad, he ran into an acquaintance named Jerry Bovig, a lab assistant from the Biology Department whom Niles had met fifteen or twenty years ago at a Mormon-sponsored *Messiah* sing-in. Ironically—as Niles now observed to himself—Jerry was the last person among his acquaintances whom he wanted to meet on this particular day, Jerry being not only Mormon but also gay. Jerry didn't mind talking about being gay. In fact, he gave firesides in private homes on being gay and keeping Church standards, which meant that he had dedicated himself to celibacy forever. As for his colleagues in the Biology Department, they knew he was gay and were okay with that. However, they did-

n't know he was a Mormon, and he had asked Niles not to tell them.

Jerry was headed for the union cafeteria and asked Niles whether he didn't want to come along for some lunch. Not wishing to seem homophobic—and having the memory of many pleasant conversations with Jerry over the years—Niles agreed. In the cafeteria, Niles followed Jerry's example and ordered from the Mexican menu, reputed to be the least unpalatable of the cafeteria's offerings, and they carried their trays to a small table in the overflow room.

"How are things in your ward?" Jerry asked while they ate.

"Same as always," said Niles. "Sacrament meetings made unintelligible by the hoots and shrieks of dozens upon dozens of little children. Sunday School lessons read directly from the correlated lesson manual. High priest quorums divided by the perennial debate over whether Adam-ondi-Ahman is in Missouri or Iraq. At least that's the way it was last time I attended. Actually, I haven't checked in lately."

"I've been ward chorister for a couple of months now," Jerry said. "It's a job I like."

"Well, you're lucky," Niles offered. "However, don't let it be known that you like it, or they'll take it away from you and give it to somebody else."

Jerry chuckled. "You seem to have a clouded view of things."

"Yes, I suppose I do." Niles was wondering why, considering how anxious simply remembering that red-haired fellow in the theater restroom had made him, he didn't feel anxious in the actual presence of a known homosexual. But then he realized he *was* beginning to feel anxious, not so much about having lunch with this friendly man, but about what people like Jerry did to the Mormon concept of the preexistence, which held that God assigned gender to the unborn beings of the spirit world. Men who desired other men and women who desired other women implied some kind of terrible mistake in design on the part the Almighty, an obvious impossibility for any respectable theology. Moreover, a dream on the part of a man about putting on an orange dress was also an obvious affront to any respectable theology. That is, whatever kind of deity a church happened to believe in, by all measures it ought to be the kind of deity that wouldn't trouble believ-

ers with dreams of that sort. Cross-dressing shouldn't happen in a well-ordered cosmos. Not even in a dream.

After lunch, Niles went back to the special collections room in the library, more or less certain that he wanted to have nothing more to do with his collection of popular westerns. Even if diligent research could demonstrate that early twentieth-century America had an understanding of the cowboy that had evaporated from the collective national mind during the succeeding decades and even if that research could go on to demonstrate that the fifteen hundred or so novels housed in the special collections library reflected that now-vanished understanding, Niles wasn't the man to undertake it. He was too old. Too weary. Too indifferent.

However, second thoughts quickly beset him. Abandoning an intention held for forty years was no light matter. It had to be pondered, weighed, decided upon only after due process. He asked Mr. Seymour for a chair, which he placed in one of the aisles where the western novels were shelved, feeling magnanimous and perhaps a bit self-congratulatory about his fidelity to promises from the distant past. But after he had seated himself and fingered through a number of the westerns on the shelves before him, Niles realized all over again how remote they were from the real cowboy, that hired hand on horseback, as Eugene Manlove Rhodes had called him.

Niles had known some of those hired hands on horseback during his boyhood. They were nothing like the walking fashion manikin that passed for a cowboy now, whom you were likely to meet on a city street or in an airport or sports arena. That fashion rack was nothing more than *wimpus americanus* togged out in boots, jeans, pearl-buttoned shirt, and ten-gallon hat. And most assuredly, those real cowboys were nothing like the cowboy heroes in these novels, who weren't togged out in anything except vapid, colorless words. Readers were free to visualize them in any attire they wished. There was a lot of verbiage about nickering horses and wind-whipped waves of grass and spooky-eyed cattle and coyotes wailing in the distant haze. But there was nothing to make a cowboy hero in one western stand out from the heroes in a hundred others. There was nothing to make any of them into a distinct individual.

That settled it. Niles was seventy-six, retired, and not in line

for promotion or tenure and therefore in no need of publications or symposia on his résumé. He zipped his file case, folded the chair, returned it to Mr. Seymour, and shook this faithful factotum's hand, saying he doubted he would ever see him again.

There being no express bus from the campus back across the lake till much later, he took a local that followed a tedious, meandering route. Across the aisle sat a fellow dressed in shabby gray pants, a soiled sports shirt, and running shoes with a hole worn through at the point of each big toe. Incongruously perched atop his head was a brown, flat-crowned western hat. Here, Niles reflected, was a prime example of *wimpus americanus* usurping the signs and symbols of a better breed of man than himself.

Yet, curiously, as he went on to recall, the real cowboys he had known during his boyhood were often dressed as shabbily as this fellow. They wore boots and jeans for work, not for fashion. One of them he could remember, Orville Canover, was a pathetic creature, actually. Niles recalled seeing him one late spring day at the house of Orville's mother, where he had been staying because, he said, he had been let go by his employer after the spring roundup. Moreover, his employer had run out of cash the previous autumn and owed him nine months pay, which was \$30 a month with room and board. He had had the room and board, the room being furnished with a bunk with woven rope for springs and the board being rice, beans, and prunes, uncooked, of course. At the moment, he was barefoot and mowing a patchy lawn with a push mower. His scuffed, run-over-at-the-heels boots stood neatly placed in the dirt pathway leading to the front door. He wore faded jeans, a soiled white shirt, and a ragged vest from an old three-piece suit.

The city bus had got behind a yellow school bus which, with blinking yellow and flashing red lights, was making frequent stops to let off students. These seemed to be little tykes—kindergartners, apparently—which explained the bevy of mothers who stood waiting at each stop corner. Shortly, the school bus turned up a side street, and the city bus picked up speed. However, Niles scarcely noticed, having begun to think about a problem with his authentic example of American manhood, the real cowboy. Weren't those two fellows in that movie that had swept the nation not so long ago, *Brokeback Mountain*, specimens of the real cowboy,

the working cowboy? One was a Montana ranch hand, the other a Texas rodeo rider. They wore scuffed boots, blue jeans, denim jackets, and high-crowned Stetsons. And they were in love with each other. They kissed, they made love in that unspeakable manner, they yearned to be together.

When he got off the bus and walked the final few blocks home, Niles felt himself drained and dejected. It wasn't precisely a physical fatigue. It was perhaps more a weighty disappointment, and it had something to do with that abominable dream of having put on an orange dress. All day he had been set at hair trigger for thoughts and memories that somehow undermined him. Was he so sure that he had always felt himself to be a male, had always wanted to be a male? Hadn't there been the sweetest, most tender of moments in his mother's lap when he had wrapped his arms around her neck and had assented with all his heart to being her little Nilesina, as she sometimes called him? Nilesina! What a travesty to impose upon an unsuspecting child! Say he had been born a girl. Would she have really called him by a name as revolting as that? At any rate, it had influenced him to endorse heartily Thora's selection of very ordinary names for their children—Steven, Mary, Dorothy, and Lisa. Thora, of course, had never been overly charmed with her own name, which derived from a pioneer ancestor who had died on the plains of Nebraska.

Thora was across the street chatting with a neighbor when he arrived home. He waved at the two women and went inside where the dining table was set and a pot roast with potatoes, carrots, and onions simmered quietly on the back burner of the kitchen range. He was moved by deep affection. Thora's suppers were always gratifying, always calculated to please him. He had been favored beyond all merit by more than fifty years of her companionship. He recalled the extraordinary impulse he had had that morning to give her a hug, or perhaps a parting kiss, and wished that he had done so. But perhaps it didn't matter. He knew she knew he loved her. Always. Every day.

After supper he helped Thora place the dishes in the dishwasher. Following that, he went into the study to check his email. There was a message from Steven, asking Thora for the name of the de-worming medication they had used on one of their dogs fifteen or twenty years ago. Being online, Niles couldn't resist

looking up “transvestitism” on *Wikipedia*. Reading about it made him anxious again and also angry, because it seemed a shame, an outright injustice, that a man of his age and dignity should be asked to prove once again that he was qualified to be called a man. It was as if he were taking his prelims all over again, that nightmarish weeklong series of examinations by which he had qualified, not for a Ph.D., but for the mere right to advance to candidacy for a Ph.D. And all because of a single strange dream.

At that point, Thora came into the study and Niles told her about Steven’s request for information. Ceding the computer to her, he went into the family room and for an hour worked out on the stationary bicycle while he watched television. Then he showered, put on his pajamas, and sat in something of a stupor on the edge of the bed. Presently, Thora came in and began to undress, talking all the while about an excitable Vietnamese charwoman at the welfare center who had mistaken powdered milk for floor detergent. When she glanced at Niles, as she did from time to time, he averted his eyes, not wishing to reveal the depth of lust that an old, impotent man could feel while his wife prepared for bed. He thought again for the thousandth time of getting something to alleviate his condition but ended for the thousandth time by deciding the side effects were too daunting.

Once abed, he turned this way and that several times, plumping his pillow each time he did it. Thora turned out the light and climbed in on her side. “Did you have a good day?” she asked in a soft voice.

“More or less, yes, I did,” he affirmed. “I gave up once and for all on those western novels. The world will have to languish in ignorance about them as far as I am concerned.”

“Maybe it’s just as well.”

“I ran into Jerry Bovig,” Niles added. “I had lunch with him. I ordered an enchilada.”

“Sounds good,” Thora said. “How’s Jerry doing?”

“He’s about the same as always. He’s still doing fireside chats on celibacy for homosexuals.”

“Well, that’s too bad.”

“Too bad?”

“Yes. If they are born that way, if it’s their nature, then they ought to be able to marry like anyone else.”

Niles plumped his pillow again, feeling all tensed up and in need of another session on the exercise bike. He hadn't realized Thora had become so liberal. Not that it mattered. What mattered was that he needed a way to get rid of his self-doubts. Or at least to repress them, to smooth them over and go on behaving as if he didn't have any. Once upon a time, carnal knowledge of this affectionate and willing woman—a nightly event when she wasn't having a period—had allowed him to smooth over his self-doubts and go on behaving as if they didn't exist.

“Good night,” Thora murmured.

“Good night,” he replied.

He was wishing there was something more to say. With a racing heart, he suddenly blurted out, “You are a good wife.”

There was a long silence and then she said a simple, “Thank you.”

There was a rustling of the covers, and he realized she had pulled herself close to him. Before returning to her side of the bed, she brushed his forehead with her lips.

Their brief exchange was, of course, an eventuality beyond all expectation, a violation of the undefined reticence that had existed between them for decades. But the perturbations of his day evaporated, his muscles relaxed, and he felt coming over him that sweet soporific lull that precedes slumber.

Richard Golightly: A Novel

Ryan Shoemaker

Conception

“They’re up there now,” Bishop Gray croons from the pulpit. His eyes move to the chapel ceiling. “Billions and billions of spirits waiting to inhabit mortal bodies, warriors saved for these last days, ready to battle the adversary in his strongest hour, and they need us, brothers and sisters, to bring them into this world.”

The words crackle in Jackie’s ears. An ardor fills her breast. Later that day, she discards her diaphragm. John finds it under a limp lettuce leaf in the trash bin.

“What’s the deal, Jackie?” he says.

Shocked, she looks up from the cutting board where she slices carrots. “All those spirits,” she says. “I don’t want to be an old mother.”

“But Jackie”—he’s still holding the diaphragm—“you’re only twenty.”

“Ten children,” she says. “Do you know how many years that takes? Think of our posterity. They’re waiting for us.”

Posterity. The word sends a thrilling ripple through John’s groin.

Birth

4:30 A.M. Dark fluids seep from Jackie. Somewhere in the distance, a garbage truck’s hydraulic lift whines shrilly. She mistakes this sound for the singing of angels.

John feels on the edge of consciousness. Again and again he swallows hard at a scalding acidity in the back of his throat. The room tilts and then rights itself. He sees a fuzzy incandescence around the edges of things.

“A beautiful baby boy,” the nurse says, laying a white bundle on Jackie’s breast.

“Richard,” Jackie says. “That’s what we’ll name him.”

Pale and nauseous, John is suddenly lucid. “You’re joking,” he says. “Isn’t that your ancestor who fell in the . . .”

Jackie looks at him fiercely. “Back then, it happened to a lot of people.”

An Inspiring Name

The child is named after Richard Mordecai Golightly, his great-great-great-great grandfather, a man who pulled a handcart across the plains in the winter of 1857, worked a sugar beet farm in southern Utah with his six wives, cranked out children into his seventies, and expired one moonless night when he fell into a well while searching for the privy.

Excerpt from Richard’s Baby Blessing

John: *Richard, we bless you that you’ll never wander dark paths and lose your way, that you’ll never stumble into those abysses the adversary has dug for the righteous, that your feet will always be planted on gospel sod . . .*

Siblings

Kyle, Nick, Olivia, Katie, Curt, Cindy, Libby, Jack, and Jeffery.

A Family Vacation to San Francisco

Jaws slack, passers-by stare as the Golightlys file out of their Ford Econoline van. Their eyes swell as more and more children emerge. A woman taps John on the shoulder. Her index finger stabs at the sky. “The environment,” she says.

Early Years

For his eighth birthday Richard receives a small black tag inscribed with the words *Future Missionary*. He wears the tag to church, to school, to sleep, to the community swimming pool. He gives an illustrated Book of Mormon to a Protestant boy at school and invites him to Primary.

Favorite Foods

Richard loves Jell-O, pot roast, black licorice, and tuna casse-
role.

First Date

Richard is sixteen. He irons his white shirt, removes the lint from his suit jacket. The girl's name is Heather. Richard drives his mother's mini-van. His parents sit quietly in the back of the van while Richard stands in a vaulted entryway and shakes hands with Heather's father, a portly bearded man, an attorney.

"You like the painting?" Heather's father asks as Richard eyes the print hanging on the wall.

"She's not wearing any clothes," Richard says, "and she's standing in a clam."

"It's Botticelli's *Venus*," the man says, staring at the woman's creamy thighs. "Gorgeous. Stunning."

Secretly, Richard disapproves.

Second Date

Cookies, punch, Parcheesi, Uno, the Ungame. Richard takes Heather home at 9:30 P.M. That night he sleeps well and rises promptly at 6:30 A.M.

Lactose Intolerance

After overindulging at an ward ice cream social, Richard learns he's lactose intolerant.

Valedictorian, Penrose High Graduation

The first line of Richard's speech: *Infinity is not a number, but a direction. Similarly, our human potential . . .*

There's a sound, like the chugging of a lawnmower moving through thick grass, louder and louder. Richard pauses, looks up from the sheaf of papers on the podium, and squints into the radiant sky. A small Cessna appears suddenly from the north and buzzes low over the crowded stadium. People gasp. They duck under their plastic chairs. The pilot, a man with a short haircut and shades, laughs hysterically in the cockpit, and his passenger, a blond woman, presses her naked breasts against the cabin window.

Superintendent Abbott shoves Richard away from the podium. "Uhm. Yeah"—Abbot looks at the microphone as if it's something he's been asked to eat. A siren wails—"Folks. Yeah. Don't be alarmed. The chief of police feels we should evacuate the stadium. Exit in an orderly fashion, please."

Called to Serve

Richard's mission call, an excerpt: *You are assigned to labor in the Honduras San Pedro Sula Mission. You will prepare to preach the gospel in the Spanish language . . .*

Jackie pulls a map from the coat closet and spreads it across the dining room table. She's on the phone with Grandma Golightly.

"Yes, he just got his call," she yells into the phone. "Honduras. I see it right here on the map. It's in southern Mexico. . . . I'm sure they do. . . . These days everyone has a washing machine and microwave."

Richard dusts off his old junior high Spanish assignments. For dinner, Jackie makes tacos. John buys a piñata, which the family blithely pulverizes with a broomstick after dinner.

Farewell Talk

Richard, excerpt from talk: *I echo the words of that first great prophet of this dispensation, Joseph Smith, who looking out over his beloved Nauvoo for the last time, said: "I go as a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of sin and offense before God, and before all men. I shall die innocent, and it shall be said of me—he was murdered in cold blood."*

Richard weeps, Jackie weeps, John weeps, Grandma and Grandpa Golightly weep. Aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, and nieces weep. Heather weeps, friends weep, babies weep. Priests and high priests sleep. Bishop Sanders eyes his watch and nervously taps his wingtips. A deacon brings up a fresh box of Kleenex.

Missionary Training Center: Provo, Utah

Savory Salisbury steak, spaghetti with a rich meat sauce. Richard puts on weight. He devotes himself to learning Spanish. In fact, he never speaks a word of English. Brian Holland, his companion, occasionally forgets Elder Golightly's name.

Airport

Richard mutters goodbyes in Spanish. "*Voy a convertir el mundo,*" he says. He embraces Jackie, embraces John, affectionately

shakes Heather's hand. While he's away, she promises to plan their wedding.

First Night in Honduras

Fleas, ticks, chiggers, earwigs, gnats, roaches, rats. Bats, beetles, mice, mites, lice. Spitting spiders, jumping spiders, barking spiders, flying spiders. Fire ants, Azteca ants, parasol ants, tuxedo ants. Screaming monkeys. Diggers, gougers, itchers, stingers, stabbers. Iguanas. Mosquitoes.

Return with Honor

A letter from John, an excerpt: *Richard, an honorable mission is the foundation of a successful life. I truly believe that. Too many squander the experience. You might feel it's not in my character to say this, but let me impart some advice my father gave me right before I left on my mission. "Son," he said. "Keep it zipped."*

Richard's First Baptism

Richard and Pedro Sanchez wade into the dark, meandering river. Piranhas nip at their heels, crocodiles dismember a yak corpse on the opposite bank, primitive savages beat drums in the distance.

Coming up from the water, Pedro embraces Richard and intones a string of high, lispy *Gracias* in his ear. Richard feels Pedro's hand clamped tightly to his right buttock. "What a strange custom," Richard thinks.

Altercation

A letter from Richard's companion, Elder Parker, to Guadalupe Rancho de la Lengua, an excerpt translated from Spanish: *What I wouldn't give to get some distance between me and this new elder. What's his name? Golightly. That's right. What kind of name is that? Every morning I have to wake up to his chipper voice and that stupid grin on his happy face. I want him to stop shining my shoes. I think I'll scream if he says even one more time with that dreamy look in his eyes, "Elder, these are our days in the history of the Church." The only thing that makes it bearable is you, seeing you across the chapel on Sunday, getting your letters. When I get back to Utah, I'll send money for a plane ticket. We'll drive up Provo Canyon in my Mustang. We'll eat lunch in a grassy meadow above the tree line. You can make those cheese empanadas I love.*

Richard confronts Elder Parker about a letter he finds on the bathroom sink. Parker denies everything. Richard also expresses concern over Parker's lack of interest in their morning companionship study. "You'll never understand our love," Parker says, and then, right before kicking Richard in the groin, screams, "Put this in your journal!"

More Companion Problems

An excerpt from Richard's letter to John: *I just got transferred to a city off the Mosquito Coast called Trujillo. I'm now companions with Elder Ramirez. He's from Caracas and tells me he used to be a cage fighter, but gave it up when he joined the Church.*

I don't think he quite understands what we're supposed to do. He's always trying to sell our investigators these Rolex knock-offs. He has a bunch of them looped around a string he's tied into the lining of his suit jacket, and at the end of a discussion, he opens his jacket and starts making his pitch. It's quite awkward. Do you think I should speak with President Hurley?

One night Richard is suddenly awoken from a mildly erotic dream about Heather. They're in a city he doesn't recognize, sitting in the back of a taxi that's speeding through empty streets. Inexplicably, they're both dressed in purple leisure suits. Heather delicately kneads the back of Richard's neck.

There's the sound of naked feet moving over saltillo tile, a book falling, the swish of fabric. Through the pale darkness, Richard watches Ramirez thumbing through his wallet, pulling out crisp dollar bills, ogling Heather's senior picture.

"Elder," Richard asks. "*Qué estás haciendo?*"

"*Amigo,*" Ramirez hisses, and then in a broken, effeminate English, says, "the only thing in this world that gives orders is balls." His hair sticks up. His eyes are wild. "*Silenzio, Elder.*"

Dear John

Heather hasn't written in months. Richard assumes her heavy course load in family science at BYU must be the cause, and then one day a letter arrives. Instead of emanating the pleasant scent of Heather's Chanel No. 5, the letter reeks of dirty diapers.

Heather, excerpt from letter: *It just happened so quickly with Phil. I mean, it was just a group of us watching The Never Ending*

Story, and Phil and I were crying during all the same scenes, like in the end when Bastian and the Empress are sitting there and she has the last grain of sand from Fantasia in her palm. Everyone got tired of the movie and left and it was just the two of us, and I was like, "This is my favorite movie of all time," and he was like, "Yeah, mine too." It was like it was meant to be. I mean, we love the same movie. It was a sign. Anyway, since I'd already planned our wedding, all I had to do was replace your name with Phil's on the invitations. That's why it happened so quickly. It was crazy. I forgot to write. Forgive me. So have a good mission. There's someone out there for you. I'd write more but I have to feed Lizzy. She's been fussy lately. It think she has a rash.

That night Richard quietly weeps into his pillow.

A Letter from President Hurley

An excerpt: *Elder Golightly, next week I'm sending a new missionary your way, an Elder Casper from Vernon, Utah, fresh from the Missionary Training Center. I'll expect you to train him well. Teach him to preach the gospel with boldness. Teach him Spanish. With increased responsibility come greater blessings.*

Looking over your last letter to me, I see you're contemplating a major in pre-law when you return to BYU. As an attorney, I advise against it. As you see, I'm as big as a house. It came upon me suddenly in my early thirties. Too much sitting in courtrooms and conference rooms, too many lunches at Essex House and Jean Georges, all those billing hours to make partner. I let myself go. I can't even buy pants off the rack anymore. My knees are shot. If I could go back, I'd be a logger or a fisherman or a gentleman farmer. I'd learn how to cobble shoes. Law is death, Elder! Death and pain and loneliness. I'm a tender soul and they think I'm a monster. Find success serving the Lord, Elder. That's the secret.

A Trainer

Richard's advice to Elder Casper: Don't drink the water, don't pet the dogs, don't believe any girl who confesses her love for you, don't ride horses, don't eat the dried fish, and never share a bed with your companion.

They hike wooded hills, wade sewage-choked streams, knock doors. They smile. They push pamphlets and Book of Mormons on the unbelieving. They pray for the poor and needy. They implore inactive members to return to church.

One day, a little boy stops them. He's digging in a trash heap. His fingers and cheeks are stained black, and he wears an extra-large T-shirt with *Don't Piss Me Off, Butt-Munch* printed across the chest.

(Conversation with boy translated from Spanish.)

The boy points at Richard's black nametag. "That's my name, too."

"Your name?" Richard is baffled. He feels he's missed something.

"Elder," the boy says. He smiles. Strangely, his teeth are white and straight. "Elder's my first name."

Richard laughs and drops to one knee in front of the boy. "Elder. And where did you get a name like that?"

The boy stares at his grubby bare feet, suddenly shy. "My mommy said it was my daddy's first name, just like yours. You and my daddy have the same name. Do you know where he is? I never met him."

Elder Casper grins dumbly as he fumbles through a pocket-sized English/Spanish dictionary. "What's he saying? I caught about a third of it. His father. Is his father interested?"

"Let's get out of here," Richard says.

The Triumphant Return Home

Richard appears at the end of the jet way. His suit is in tatters. He has jock itch and an intestinal parasite. He has about him the smell of the jungle. The camera flashes blind him. He sprints through a paper banner that reads *Well done good and faithful servant*. All weep.

Engagement

BYU. They both stand in the Taco Bell line. Richard orders a grilled stuffed burrito. She orders three soft tacos with extra cheese and a side order of pinto beans. Her name is Linda Slack. Three months later they marry.

Marriage

. . . *For time and all eternity*, says the wizened temple worker.

Richard leans over the altar, lips quivering, puckered, unsure. Contact.

Newlyweds

Richard and Linda live in a basement apartment off Center Street. At night they hear the couple above them make raucous love.

They take a pottery class together at the Orem Recreation Center. Richard feels something deeply spiritual as he kneads the clay. He's making a Christus statue for Linda's birthday.

"Mount Timpanogos?" the instructor asks.

Richard runs a scraper over the mound of clay. "No, the Christus statue in miniature. It's almost done."

The instructor leans forward. He peers at the clay over his spotted glasses. "Yes, the Christus. Yes"—his mouth hangs open—"yes . . . a very modern interpretation."

A letter from the City of Orem's Parks and Recreation Department, an excerpt: *Dear Students, we regret to inform you that during the firing process there was an unforeseen malfunction in the kiln's heating coils, causing an explosion that damaged all the pottery. None of it was salvageable. We are deeply sorry. Please find the enclosed check for twenty dollars to cover this inconvenience. We hope to see you again, maybe this fall for our tile painting or quilting classes.*

Pharmaceutical Sales Representative, Logan and E. Salt Lake Valley

Lipitor, Zithromax, Simvastatin, Ambien, Allegra. Richard sells them all. At church, he feels a strange discomfort each time an older high priest casually asks if his company sells Viagra and if by chance he might have a free sample in his car.

First Home

Richard and Linda buy a home in Nibley. There's a willow tree in the front yard, a jungle gym out back, a view of snow-capped mountains.

"Kids, a dog," the real estate agent says, his voice echoing off the bare walls. "A place to grow old."

The Birth of Scott Richard Golightly

Nausea, the bitter tang of bile, a growing belly, an alien life squirming beneath the stretched skin, perennial fatigue, a small

cramp in the lower back, thirty-six hours of labor, an emergency C-section at 3:00 A.M.

“It’s your uterus, Mrs. Golightly”—it’s the morning after the birth. Doctor York stands above Linda. He sighs deeply—“the uterus is damaged, too thin to endure another pregnancy. I wouldn’t advise having another child.”

Richard stands at the hospital window and looks down on a city park where a pee-wee football league drills. “An Isaac,” Richard thinks, tapping the glass. “At least I’ll have an Isaac.”

Elders’ Quorum Chili Cook-Off

Presidency meeting leading up to the annual Nibley Third Ward Elders’ Quorum Chili Cook-Off, an excerpt:

President Golightly: “I don’t know about this flier. I don’t know if I’m comfortable with it?”

First counselor: “Is it the chili pepper? Is it the sombrero it’s wearing? Is it the curly, black mustache? Is it the big accordion the pepper’s playing?”

President Golightly: “No, it’s not that.”

Second counselor: “Is it the flaming cauldron of chili next to the pepper? Is it the color of the flames? Are the flames too red?”

President Golightly: “It’s not the chili or the flames. It’s this text I’m having problems with, this part under the pepper about how the evening’s sure to end with a bang. It’s . . . It’s crass.”

Bishop Golightly

It is proposed that we sustain Richard Mordecai Golightly as bishop of the Nibley Third Ward. All in favor please manifest it by the raising of the right hand. Any opposed by the same sign.

“What is this?” Richard asks his first counselor Chuck Pendleton.

“Well, Bishop, that’s Sister Verken’s cable bill. The ward’s been paying it for the last five years.”

“We’ve been paying for the premium cable package? A hundred and twenty a month so she can watch HBO and Showtime?”

“She’s ninety years old, Bishop. She can’t even go outside anymore. She doesn’t have any family.”

“A hundred and twenty a month. Tell her we’ll pay for the basic cable package. There’s nothing wrong with PBS and the Dis-

covery Channel. I happen to think *Mythbusters* and *Cash Cab* are the best programs on TV right now.”

Thirty-Third Birthday

A note from Scotty stapled to a birthday card for Richard: *Here is your birthday card. Inside is a coupon for a hug. I glued a magnet on the back. Put it on the fridge so you won't lose it. Use it when you need a hug. Love you. Scotty.*

A Great Honor: The Sederberg Sales Award

Hank Tudor, Vice President of Sales for Seabrook Pharmaceuticals. An excerpt taken from his speech at the annual Seabrook sales meeting awards dinner in Indianapolis: *Though I can't say I know Richard that well, I have an immense respect for him. I haven't seen him much on the links or at night in the hospitality suite, but all of you know I don't remember anything when there's an open bar or a guy in a golf cart handing out free drinks (pause for laughter). Seriously, folks, it's an honor to award Richard the Sederberg Sales Award for our top sales rep.*

Anniversary Dinner at Fredrico's

“I wonder what this could be?” Linda asks, taking the large, gift-wrapped box from Richard and giving it a little shake. “Maybe that Pilates set I've been talking about?”

“Pilates set?” Richard says. “This is a hundred times better. A thousand.”

Giggling, Linda tears away the wrapping paper. Her laughter stops. She stares at what's in her hands: a black metal box with a handle, four stainless steel plates attached to the top of the box, a meat thermometer. “What is it?” she asks.

“A sun oven.” Richard cuts a piece from his calzone and spears it with his fork. “You can cook a turkey in that thing. Trust me”—he leans forward. His voice is a whisper—“when the economy fails and we're thrown back into the Stone Age, you won't be doing Pilates.”

Trouble at Work

A letter to Richard from Sal Rose, Western Regional Senior Manager for Seabrook Pharmaceuticals, an excerpt: *Last Thursday I received a telephone call from your client, Doctor Gupta, closing his*

account with us. He would not say why, but when pressed, Doctor Gupta admitted that over the last few months he felt you were trying to foist your religion on him. He mentioned a number of pamphlets he'd received from you as well as visits whose purpose, he felt, had more to do with talking religion than business. While I value and respect your personal beliefs, your job at Seabrook is not a platform from which to proselytize. Please desist from doing so. Cordially, Sal Rose.

Becoming President Golightly

It's Saturday morning. The kitchen phone rings.

"Hello," Scotty says. "Hello. Hello."

The voice is low and breathy, practically unintelligible, broken by sobs and sniffles. "They want me to be stake president. Pray for me. Pray for me."

Scotty moves the phone to his other ear. "Who is this?" he asks.

Father-Son Time

"Now, Scotty, here was a fine figure of a man," Richard says, hefting a worn copy of Richard Mordecai Golightly's autobiography *Kicking against the Pricks: A Life on the Range*. "My namesake, a man who could lift the backend of a wagon or walk fifty miles a day. And that's when he was in his seventies. He once wrestled a savage Indian for a pot of honey somewhere outside Omaha."

"Didn't he have a bunch of wives?" Scotty asks.

"Well, those were different times," Richard says.

"Didn't he like fall into a well or something and die?" Scotty says.

Richard shifts uneasily in his chair. "It was a dark night. Somebody moved the outhouse. Maybe it was a joke. One of the neighbor boys trying to get some cheap laughs." Richard sighs and stares out the living room window. He watches his neighbor, Rob Munson, apply another coat of wax to his new Mercedes. "A shame, really," Richard says, setting his hand on Scotty's shoulder. "He could have lived another decade. Yes, that was when a man was a man, when you could see what you were made of by pitting yourself against the elements. Don't you ever think about that," Richard asks, "pitting yourself against the elements?"

“I dunno,” Scotty says, wiping his thumb under his nose and then onto his jeans.

Richard kneads Scotty’s bicep. He’s shocked at the loose flab there, at the gelatinous quiver under his fingertips. He looks at his son’s round face. His skin’s so pale, almost translucent. Richard has a sudden idea, a revelation. He rubs his palms together.

“What do you say, Scotty? This Saturday. Ten miles up to Box Elder Peak. Pit ourselves against the elements? We’ll take some beef jerky.”

Growing Health Concerns

Richard, an excerpt from his journal: *Kids these days! Waddling around with their guts hanging over their belts. All that fat and sugar they’re shoveling down. There’s no self-control. They can’t do anything that requires a little discomfort. At the first tingle of pain they throw their arms up and quit. It’s a pity we can’t pull a handcart across the plains every ten years, pit ourselves against the steel-hard earth and fierce blizzard winds. That would be the life. That was when a man was a man.*

President Golightly Chooses a Scout Camp

Pale Horse Survival Camp, an excerpt from its brochure: *No basket weaving at this Scout camp, no cafeteria stocked with Fruity-Pebbles and crème brûlée. If your son wants to eat, he better sharpen a stick and get out in the woods. That’s how we live here: off the fat of the land.*

Your child will spend the week living in primitive shelters. He’ll feast on cattails, nettles, yard greens, acorns, and an assortment of wild game. He’ll track cougars, hike to the top of Bald Mountain, and fashion clothing from animals he’ll track and kill.

When the food shortages finally hit, when governments collapse, when formal education is worth nothing, this is what you’ll want your son to have: the knowledge and confidence to survive.

A Poor Decision

An internal memo from Mark Bailey, legal counsel for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to the First Presidency, an excerpt: *In August, we received a number of complaints from members of the Nibley Utah Stake, whose sons attended Pale Horse Survival Scout Camp outside Ketchum, Idaho, a camp chosen, they said, by Richard Golightly, president of the Nibley Utah Stake, who felt that*

Camp Grizzly, the stake's usual choice of camp for the last five years, had become too lavish and costly, and missed the rugged spirit and survival focus of early Scouting. After seeing Pale Horse's nominal registration fees, these parents agreed with President Golightly.

When the Scouts returned from Pale Horse at the end of July, many parents claimed they couldn't recognize their sons. Many had lost a significant amount of weight. Their faces were painted black and most wore fur loincloths made from either rabbit or possum. Additionally, all carried what looked like primitive weapons—spears and hatchets—fashioned from wood and stone.

In the weeks following, it seems most of the boys had difficulties re-adjusting to their old lives. One boy killed a neighbor's pet rabbit. Some prefer a shallow hole in the backyard over their beds. A few only speak in clipped phrases and grunts. Their psychologists, however, believe they're making wonderful progress and should return to school in January.

On multiple occasions I've tried to contact the owner of this camp, a Sergeant Silko, but his staffers tell me he's involved in some kind of government project in Jalalabad. They're unsure when he'll return.

While President Golightly, whose son Scotty also attended the camp, never intentionally misled parents about the purpose of this survival camp, he does admit that he left out certain particulars, namely the tracking, hunting, and killing focus of the camp. Had they known this, most parents claim they would not have allowed their sons to attend. Further, many parents are also angry their sons didn't bring home more merit badges.

Linda Changes the Locks

The front and back doors won't open. Richard's key doesn't fit the lock. He pushes at the door, pleads through the solid oak in a whisper, dials Linda's mobile, and stares up at the dark windows as the phone rings and goes to voicemail. There's a white envelope under Linda's potted geraniums.

Excerpt from Linda's letter: You're gone all the time trying to make your little heaven on earth and you don't see your own house has fallen apart? Do you even know me anymore? Do you even know your son? He didn't even want to go to your stupid camp, but he went to make you happy. Now look at him. All he does is sit in the basement all day tying sticks together and beating that awful drum.

You're always so worried about the wicked world, always sounding the

warning that if we don't watch and listen our lives will fall apart, always so quick to judge. Your family's falling apart and you don't even see it.

Living in the Church: Day 1

Richard can't move into the Holiday Inn. There would be talk, rumor. He lives in the stake center.

There's the discomfort of the hard floor, the scratch of the carpet, a bed of forgotten clothes he took from the lost and found box in the library. A child's faux-fur coat is tucked under his chin, his feet are wrapped with a foul-smelling basketball jersey he'd mistakenly used as a pillow. Outside the wind blows branches across the windows. The building creaks and moans.

Living in the Church: Day 3

Richard buys a small air mattress from a sporting goods store. He bathes in the baptismal font and dries himself with a blue gingham tablecloth somebody left in the Relief Society room. He scours his shirt collars in the bathroom sink. In a strange way, this primitive living vaguely reminds him of his mission, minus the malaria, monkeys, tropical rot, and intestinal parasites. He feels twenty years younger.

Long Nights

Richard lies there, teeth chattering, the night an endless discomfort as he thinks of Linda and Scotty. Who are their closest friends, what are their hobbies, their favorite books, their aspirations, hopes, and wishes? He doesn't know. What do they fear? Darkness, fog, wind, lightning? What do they fear most? Richard suddenly knows. The realization is like the shock of cold water. This loneliness and separation—this is what they fear most.

Caught

Sister Grover, returning to the church late at night to retrieve a piece of forgotten piano music, discovers Richard walking down the hallway, naked and slightly damp, wrapped only in a blue gingham tablecloth. She freezes, face as white as the cinderblock wall, her mouth a dark, gaping hole. She runs. Richard contemplates chasing her through the parking lot to explain things. Instead, he quickly retreats to his office.

Release

A letter of resignation from Richard to the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an excerpt: *What does it profit anyone if he has the praise of man but not of his family? I went about the Lord's work with my ends in sight. I gave the littlest to those nearest me. I became a stranger to my family. I was desperate to be remembered by strangers and acquaintances. I lost perspective.*

A New Calling

Richard teaches a Sunday School class for the fourteen and fifteen year olds.

A questionnaire Richard gives his students their first Sunday together, an excerpt:

1. Name your two closest friends.
2. Name one of your hobbies.
3. What is your favorite music group?
4. What is your favorite sport?
5. What is your favorite song?
6. What are your aspirations, hopes, and wishes?

Rhodophobia

Richard has a deep and inexplicable fear of the color red. Staring at the rich crimson of the raspberry jam Linda puts up every summer, he feels a sickening jolt in his lower stomach.

Dental Hygiene

Richard brushes three times a day and flosses regularly. He visits the dentist twice a year. His teeth are white, hard as granite.

Retirement

Genealogy consumes Richard. He traces his lineage back to Adam, disappointed he can go no further. He speaks proudly of Richard Mordecai Golightly's long journey across the plains but turns reticent when Linda reminds him that he and Benedict Arnold are distantly related on his father's side.

A Secret Vice

Hidden in the pantry behind a fifty pound sack of black beans, Richard keeps a case of Dr. Pepper. He can't help himself. He loves the taste.

Second Mission

Stricken, shrunken, half his former self, Richard starts and ends the day with a tall glass of Metamucil. But still he accepts the call to work in the stake cannery. Because of the many complaints, he's prohibited from manning the jalapeno pepper station during salsa production.

Richard tries to explain to Linda how he thought everyone loved spicy salsa.

Golden Years

Richard can't remember the names of all his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. At family reunions, he presides over the great congregation and smiles to himself, wondering how Abraham felt as he contemplated the sands of the sea.

International Aid

A letter from Richard to Edward Magugavi, an excerpt: *They sent me a picture of you. Truthfully, you're too skinny for an eight year old. But it's understandable. I've watched the Travel Channel's Bizarre Foods. I have a pretty good idea what dinner looks like in Zimbabwe. In Honduras, I once ate a goat bladder stuffed with some kind of summer squash. It wasn't pleasant. Did I already tell you I lived in Honduras for two years? I know something about tropical afflictions.*

Hopefully the twenty dollars I send every month will reach your dinner plate. If not, let me know. I'll send it to you directly.

Chin up, Eddie. Hope you don't mind if I call you that? Life will get better. Soon the great Jehovah will declare His work done and usher in a thousand years of peace. It'll be paradise, plenty to eat, Eddie. No roundworm and dysentery. Paradise awaits you, but don't count on it. Live life to the fullest. Hug your brother. Kiss your mother. Find your paradise now.

Death

A floating sensation, the ringing of bells, a long tunnel of light leading upward. Richard moves into the white billowing mist. A man in a loose white robe greets him.

"Brother, follow me," the man says. "So much work to do, so little time."

"You look familiar," Richard says. "Did I know you?"

The man stops. "I forgot to introduce myself." He thrusts his hand forward. "We're related on your father's side. Arnold was my name, Benedict Arnold."

On the other side of the veil, on the other side of town, Richard's eight-year-old grandson Baxter stands before a mirror, trying on a small black tag inscribed with the words *Future Missionary*.

“An American Enterprise”: An Interview with Massimo Introvigne

Note: Massimo Introvigne, a Roman Catholic sociologist of religion, is the founder and managing director of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR), a scholarly organisation that studies New Religious Movements (NRMs). Ronan James Head conducted this interview during the European Mormon Studies Association conference in Turin, Italy, in July 2009. Transcription by Rebecca Head.

Ronan: How did you become interested in New Religious Movements?

Massimo: I am from a Roman Catholic background but started being interested in other religions at a very early age. I think it was by reading novels from authors like Emilio Salgari who talked about the Middle East and Far East. He wrote a couple of Western novels, but most were in Hindu or Muslim settings. Also Kipling. Of course, I now realize that neither of these authors can be taken as good guides about the real East; but at the age of about seven or eight, I didn't understand that they were not reliable sources.

Ronan: Was it unusual for a Catholic Italian to have an interest in other religions at that age?

Massimo: Of course, it wasn't unusual to read the novels of Salgari but what was not so usual was to try to graduate from novels to other sources. At age nine, I started buying weekly installments of an encyclopaedia of world religions by a famous publisher called Rizzoli. It went to six thick volumes. Of course, when I re-read the encyclopaedia now, it seems very primitive. It was published in 1964 when I was nine years old and that was the first time I heard about the Mormons. There was not even a Mormon mission here until '66, but the encyclopedia had a section on Mormons. So I



Massimo Introvigne, standing in the CESNUR library, holds a copy of the first (1966) issue of Dialogue. Photo taken by Ronan J. Head, July 2009, Turin, Italy.

started reading at age nine about Joseph Smith and the temple ceremonies. I remember I was quite impressed.

Ronan: What about your education?

Massimo: I went to study philosophy at the Gregorian University in Rome—a Vatican university—then law at the University of Turin. My dissertation—later a book—was on John Rawls, the first written in Italian. That was part of my interest in American society and religion.

Ronan: How did CESNUR come about?

Massimo: In 1987 I met Mike Homer of the Mormon History Association (MHA) at its conference in Oxford. I had heard about the MHA when visiting Salt Lake several years earlier. I think the first time I came to Salt Lake was in the early '80s. I was on my own. I had no contacts with the Italian LDS Church and no contacts with anybody, so I went to visit a member of the local Catholic diocese in Salt Lake, Francis Mannion. He gave me some materials about the MHA. I noticed that it was doing a conference in Europe so I attended with a friend of mine who also shared my interests in minority religions, a Swiss historian called Jean-François Mayer. We both met Mike Homer there. When we thought of new religions, we had in mind the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses as a field of study. I think CESNUR was really me and Mayer in the beginning, then Mike came along, plus Gordon Melton, now at UC Santa Barbara, then Eileen Barker from the London School of Economics. They were all people we had met at Oxford.

Ronan: Did INFORM [Information Network Focus on Religious Movements] exist at this time?

Massimo: It was established the same year in the United Kingdom. It wanted to liaise with families who had lost kids to the Children of God or the Moonies. We wanted to publish books and do conferences, so our purpose was slightly different. Even when we answered phone calls, once we had an office, it was not our main purpose. INFORM has a small library and publishes information sheets. CESNUR has published fifty books in Italian and has a library of 50,000 volumes so it's a different thing. It's much more research-oriented and less family-oriented, even if in practice we sometimes end up doing the same things.

Ronan: You said that from the beginning you were interested in Mormonism. Is there anything particularly that intrigues you about Mormonism?

Massimo: I think it's more intriguing than, say, the Jehovah's Witnesses whose story is not very sexy, even if there are many more Jehovah's Witnesses in Italy than Mormons. But the Jehovah's Witness story is very plain. The Witnesses didn't pick bloody fights or colonize new states. Their story is just one of a successful preacher who had unconventional ideas and whose successor became a successful bureaucrat, developing a worldwide religious organisation. In the history of Jehovah's Witnesses, the most interesting things happen in Europe with the Nazi persecution, but otherwise the story's very plain. Also the doctrines are less original and offer a less peculiar point of view.

Ronan: So Mormonism is sexier?

Massimo: Of course! Polygamy or the Haun's Mill massacre or the colonization of Utah. You don't find this stuff in the history of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Ronan: Who else interests you?

Massimo: Coming from a background in philosophy in addition to law and sociology, I was quite interested in Christian Science. Christian Science was exciting from a speculative point of view because I was always interested in how Mary Baker Eddy wrote without any professional philosophical background. She basically produced an Americanized version of Hegel. For her followers, she was just a genius. She didn't read or have revelations from God. It's quite amazing that she produced an impressive if idiosyncratic philosophical system. So speculatively, Mary Baker Eddy is quite interesting.

Ronan: You've mentioned Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Christian Scientists. Why do you think these groups tend to be American?

Massimo: There were new religions born in Europe that traveled the other way, like the Swedenborgians. They were also a very interesting group; but the American groups became a worldwide affair basically after World War II because they traveled with the American armies. I mean, they existed before—Mormons existed

in Europe before—but in Italy, the American groups had a boom after World War II.

Ronan: You're also interested in vampires and Pentecostals. Any connection?

Massimo: Yes! Harvey Cox became a friend of mine because of both Pentecostals and vampires. He's a Baptist theologian from Harvard. Cox invited me to deliver one of the famous Templeton lectures on the existence of God, and my title was "God, New Religious Movements, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer." Anyway, as Cox documented in his book, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1995), I noted that the Pentecostals are half a billion strong and so deserve some investigation, but they are seldom investigated because they are less sexy than neo-pagan witches. I think it was Rodney Stark who said that if there are fifteen witches dancing around a cauldron, preferably naked, there will probably be a hundred sociologists observing them, but if there are fifty million Jehovah's Witnesses nobody will want to write a book about them. This is changing for the Pentecostals. There are half a billion of them, and there is now a Centre for Pentecostal Studies that is similar to the Mormon History Association. Within the Pentecostal community are second- and third-generation scholars. They used to be very simple folks, a religion of the poor, so they didn't produce scholars. Now, just as they produce entrepreneurs or cabinet ministers in the United States or candidates to the office of U.S. vice president, they also produce academic scholars. So things are changing in terms of Pentecostals.

Ronan: How do you rate in-house Mormon scholarship, and do you have any Mormon scholars that you particularly like?

Massimo: When I started studying new religions, I met Leonard Arrington who was once, of course, a visiting professor at the University of Turin—but that was when I was one year old so I didn't meet him at the time! Arrington impressed me as a very good scholar and a very good Mormon.

Ronan: Do you think Mormonism has anything to contribute to religious studies in general?

Massimo: I think so. I think people need to look at the phenomenon of Mormonism because, even if it is not growing as the Church claims, it still *is* growing. It is still an example of a religion which has grown in remarkable ways.

Ronan: Will people become more or less accepting of New Religious Movements in Europe?

Massimo: It all depends on where in Europe we're talking about. The anti-cult movement is still strong in France because of peculiar French principles on secularism. The anti-cult movement is also strong in Russia because it is fueled by the Russian Orthodox Church. They are worried that Russian identity is being threatened by Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and Catholics and Muslims. Belgium is also anti-NRM—at least in the French-speaking part. Some laws are torpedoed because the Dutch-speaking members of the parliament vote against "anti-cult" proposals. There may be problems in France and Belgium but it's nothing like the problems of religious liberty that groups like the Mormons might experience in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Those problems are much worse.

Ronan: And Italy?

Massimo: Nobody complained when the LDS Church announced that it would construct a temple in Rome. Italy may have a problem with some groups like the Moonies or Children of God. In Italy Scientology was legally recognised as a religion—unlike France or Germany—in '97 after a long legal fight. The Mormons have no trouble whatsoever that I know of. There are a few anti-Mormon books written by Evangelicals or some Catholic activists, but these books don't sell very well.

Ronan: In terms of the relative lack of LDS growth in Italy, is it something specific about Mormonism, or is it religion in general, or NRMs in particular?

Massimo: A poll of Italians after World War II showed that they were ready to experience something different from the Roman Catholic Church. The Mormons made a big mistake by not coming immediately. Those were golden years for making numbers in the tens of thousands, and that's what the Pentecostals, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Seventh-day Adventists did. The Mor-

mons in those golden post-war years simply weren't here. So when they finally came in the mid-1960s, some of the people who might have converted had already converted to other American religions. The young generation after 1968 was mostly Marxist or interested in Eastern religions like hippie-style Hare Krishnas. They were more interested in talking to Americans about Vietnam. In the 1950s, everyone was pro-American. In the 1970s, everyone was anti-American because of the Vietnam War and the student protests in '68. The best time to establish a missionary stronghold in Italy was the late '50s to early '60s, and the Mormons missed this opportunity. The Mormons, for whatever reason, were very slow in recognizing Italy as a great religious market.

People like the Jehovah's Witnesses had the advantage of returnees from America. Italian returnees came from either Chicago or the East Coast, neither of which is a Mormon stronghold. So in many Italian villages, Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Halls or Pentecostal churches were started by Italian-Americans who had converted in the United States, then returned home. They returned with prestige and with money they had made in America. But they weren't returning from Utah and Arizona. They were returning from New York, Boston, and Chicago.

Ronan: So you think the Mormons made a mistake in coming too late to Italy?

Massimo: Yes. Mormons could have been part of the last big wave of conversions right after the war using the American army, but they didn't do this. They should have planned this back in the late '40s and '50s, but they didn't. The Mormon authorities were too concerned with the reaction of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church produced a few booklets against the Mormons in the late '60s, but it didn't react in any major way and not in any legal way. Most of the anti-Mormon stuff is published by Evangelicals who are only 1 percent of the Italian population. They feel more strongly against the Mormons than the Catholics do.

In 2006 when the Mormons celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the mission in Turin, I was asked to speak, as was the state's Member of Parliament. He is a very strong Catholic, but he didn't have any problem with the Mormons. Some priests may write anti-Mormon books, but that's very unimportant. One fac-

tor is the Catholic Church in Utah. It always reports to the Vatican of having an excellent relationship with the LDS Church. Prop 8 has also won Catholic admiration. As I said, when the temple was announced in Rome, I don't know of any Catholic media who said anything against it. Some Evangelicals did protest but they don't count as they're a very small minority. They're not as important as they may be in the United States.

Ronan: What is the future of Mormonism in Europe?

Massimo: I think it all depends. I don't see Mormons making inroads into European culture in the ways that Pentecostals are doing. There are leaders in business and academia who are third- and fourth-generation Pentecostals. You don't see this yet in Italy for the Mormons.

Ronan: The problem is visibility?

Massimo: The LDS leadership is still perceived as being American. Among the Pentecostals, some of the world leaders are from Latin America, although not yet from Europe. The Pentecostals give a better impression of being an international organization. Even the Jehovah's Witnesses have a more diverse leadership. The Catholic Church in the last fifty years did a great job in internationalizing the top leadership. Now, the majority of the equivalent of cabinet ministers in the Vatican are not Italian. The head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is an American from California. The two last popes have not been Italian, and many heads of the departments are not Italian, so the Catholic Church may accurately advertise itself as an international enterprise.

This is not really yet the case for Mormons. They can't pass as anything other than an American enterprise for some time. But I think this is less important than having third- and fourth-generation members who are perceived as leaders. Even the Buddhists in Italy have soccer stars and actors. I guess it's trendier to be a Buddhist. Mormons have failed to produce people in leadership in general society—though this is not true in the United States, of course. That counts for not qualifying as mainline—not having leaders in general society.

Pentecostals have football stars. They're very good at recruiting. The Brazilians came and converted fellow players. There's a Juventus player who preaches every Monday for the Assembly of

God and was converted by a Brazilian fellow player. Even the Seventh-day Adventists have a football star. Not so the Mormons. I think, if Mormons want to be regarded as mainline in Europe, they should produce European business persons and politicians and a few sports and entertainment stars.

I think in the United States the Mormons are regarded as mainline—although the Mitt Romney campaign perhaps makes the point that Mormons are not perceived as 100 percent mainline.

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REVIEWS

Short Shrift to the Facts

Douglas A. Abbott and A. Dean Byrd. *Encouraging Heterosexuality: Helping Children Develop a Traditional Sexual Orientation*. Orem, Utah: Millennial Press, 2009. 113 pp. Appendix with references by chapter. Paper: \$16.95. ISBN number: 978-1-932597-66-0

Reviewed by William S. Bradshaw

The title of this book may elicit wry smiles. Even casual consideration suggests that heterosexuality is doing just fine on its own, without the need for outside encouragement. The authors' purpose, of course, is not to encourage heterosexuality so much as it is to discourage and disparage homosexuality based on their belief that it is a learned and chosen condition that can and must be changed because of its negative consequences for individuals, families, and society at large. The book is targeted primarily at a Mormon audience, although citations of LDS scriptural passages and statements by LDS authorities are presented as the words of "Christian prophets" or generic "church leaders." Its pages provide self-help advice to parents about how to prevent or alter the unwanted same-sex attractions of their homosexual children.

Douglas A. Abbott is professor of Child, Youth, and Family Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He holds a B.A. in human biology (Oregon State, 1974), an M.A. in child development (BYU, 1979), and a Ph.D. in child and family studies (University of Georgia, 1983). A. Dean Byrd has appointments in the departments of Family and Preventive Medicine and Psychiatry at the University of Utah. He holds a Ph.D. in psychology (BYU) and an MBA and MPH from the University of Utah. He is the current president of the Thrasher Research Fund and past president of NARTH, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality.

Following an introduction, the main chapters of the book are devoted to the following themes: (1) the philosophical/religious assumptions under which the authors operate, (2) an overview of proposed causes of homosexuality—an approach that disputes biological explanations and accepts psycho/social theories, (3) an

argument that sexual orientation is subject to change through the exercise of “agency,” (4) the authors’ proposed model for how contributing factors might interact to divert a child from heterosexuality (the “natural and normal human sexual preference,” 53), and (6) what parents should do to foster heterosexuality in their children. Chapter 7 restates the authors’ conclusions.

The purpose of this review is: (1) to assess the validity of the authors’ arguments and the accuracy and reliability of the information they present, (2) to offer a judgment about the probability that a family using this book will realize the objectives which the authors hold out to its readers, and (3) to consider the potential harmful impact of the book on the Church and its members. After a careful reading, my findings are that *Encouraging Heterosexuality* is inaccurate and unreliable, especially in its treatment of the causes of homosexuality and its optimism that same-sex orientation can be changed. It is particularly troubling that Abbott and Byrd have systematically misrepresented the research of multiple scholars whose published results are at odds with the positions on these issues which they espouse.

Abbott and Byrd begin with a preemptive assertion of their charitable intent by assuring readers that they are not “taking a negative approach toward those who engage in homosexual behavior or those who champion gay rights” (ix). This claim rings hollow in the face of subsequent comments: their contention that homosexuality is an “evil” choice along the path of “sexual immorality” in company with “fornication, adultery, and incest” (39); their negative coupling of the worldview of certain mental health professionals with Darwinian evolution, in contrast to their own “Christian viewpoint” (7–8); their vilification of the published views of national medical, psychological, and educational associations that homosexuality might be “normal and healthy” (67); their contention that the major religions consider homosexuality “deviant and injurious to society” (73); the inference that it is a mistake not to consider homosexuality as a “moral evil” or “sickness” (73); the claim that accepting homosexuality reflects the belief that “there is no God” nor any “higher purpose than personal pleasure” (74); the assertion that homosexuality leads to “rampant promiscuity” and “greater risk for mental and physical health problems” (76); and finally, the outrageous and offensive

claim that gay and lesbian people are engaged in efforts to promote and legitimize sex between adults and children (10).

It is also noteworthy that Abbott and Byrd always identify the orientation of those researchers who are themselves homosexual. Examples include: "Gay psychiatrist Richard Isay," who "claims there is no evidence that homosexuality is due to childhood sexual abuse" (32); "Gay activists [unidentified] proclaim [unverified] that as much as 10% to 25% [undocumented] of the adult population is homosexual" (14); "Gay advocates Parker and De-Cecco" (26), and "activist researchers Drs. Anne Fausto-Sterling and Camille Paglia (both self-identified lesbians)" in a section attacking the notion that homosexuality has a biological basis (26). This kind of labeling is clearly pejorative and prejudicial, the implication being that these persons' sexual orientation renders them unreliable, their research questionable, and their views suspect.

Elsewhere, Byrd directly impugns the integrity of gay professionals whose work he is trying to discredit: "Of the four researchers [LeVay, Hamer, Bailey, and Pillard], three are self-identified homosexuals. This fact is not an unimportant consideration when issues of biases arise, as they often do in the research arena."¹ He further sows the seeds of mistrust by then alleging that gay people are wildly overrepresented among scientists who conduct research on the subject of homosexuality. Of course, there is no acknowledgement of the fact that the authors themselves are hardly neutral and therefore also subject to bias on this subject.

It is clear that the authors' feelings toward gay people are not benign. More importantly, the same hostile attitudes they display here are likely to have a highly negative impact on the lives of the people against whom they are directed.

Abbott and Byrd's position on the causes of sexual orientation is also clear. They assert that explanations invoking biological factors are incorrect and invalid because homosexuality is an unnatural and "learned behavior" (9)—the result of (1) unhealthy parent-child relationships, (2) socialization (sexual abuse, for example), and (3) personal choice. Their strategy in reviewing the case for biological causality ("biogenic theories") is first to trivialize this very complex issue by reducing it to two simplistic ques-

tions. Consider the following, written by the authors as an introduction to the first of these, “Is there a gay gene?”

Inside each body cell are 46 chromosomes, 23 inherited from the mother and 23 from the father. Chromosomes are squiggly little strings of DNA (**D**eoxyribo**N**ucleic**A**cid). Microscopically each chromosome looks something like a tightly twister [sic] ladder with rungs in the middle supported by side bars. The rungs of the ladder are composed of “nucleotides” or “nitrogenous bases”. There are four nucleotides: thymine linked to adenine (T-A links) or its reverse (A-T), and cytosine and guanine (C-G links) or its reverse (G-C). These nucleotides (the rungs of the ladder) are connected by sugar-phosphate molecules which act like the side bars of the ladder to give structural support to the DNA. (20)

This description is both superficial and seriously inaccurate. It should be corrected as follows:

Chromosomes consist of a single molecule of DNA chemically associated with proteins into a complex architecture whose appearance changes during different phases of a cell’s life cycle. It is the DNA in the chromosome that has a double helical (“twisted ladder”) configuration. Each strand (“side bar” of the ladder) of the DNA is composed of a long polymeric chain of nucleotides. Each nucleotide subunit of the chain is itself a combination of a sugar, a nitrogenous base, and a phosphate group (a configuration of phosphorous and oxygen atoms). The “rungs” of the ladder represent chemical linkages, hydrogen bonds, between nucleotide bases on one strand and the complementary bases on the other strand (A pairs with T, G pairs with C.)

This criticism should not be dismissed as academic nitpicking. Any knowledgeable student of biology will immediately recognize Abbott and Byrd’s description of the structure of DNA as having been written by someone who is uninformed about the basics of the subject. Most importantly, however, none of this detail is necessary—although the authors allege that it is—for a reader to judge the validity of the concept that sexual orientation has its roots in biology. The “DNA paragraph” quoted above is followed by another paragraph, the first three sentences of which define simple aspects of the nature of a gene. Although each sentence carries a separate citation of a different biology text as a reference, any one of these books would suffice to support the entire set of facts presented on the page. Such redundant use of references is appar-

ently intended to impress readers with the reliability of the presentation and is characteristic of the entire book.

A third paragraph then provides a similar treatment of the nature of a protein. None of this information is vital to the argument that Abbott and Byrd are making; it is not mentioned again in subsequent pages. Their contention that there is no such thing as a gay gene is based almost exclusively on their use of selected quotes from individuals in the scientific community without any reference to factual evidence for that assertion, either pro or con.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this simplistic foray into molecular biology is a deliberate act of name-dropping, whose only purpose is to cloak the authors with a measure of credibility by attempting to convince their readers that they possess legitimate biological expertise, which they clearly do not.

Abbott and Byrd attempt to deal with the question of the genetic basis for sexual orientation, not by citing published research data as evidence, but by offering quotations from four scientists (two geneticists and two psychologists), none of whom have published the results of laboratory or other work directly bearing on the question. The purpose of including these statements is an attempt to dismiss out of hand a genetic connection to human behavior. In nearly four pages of commentary, there is only one directly relevant sentence, which, in Abbott and Byrd's hands, becomes self-contradictory. While arguing that there is "no causative link between a single gene and a complex psychosocial behavior," they provide examples of four human physical conditions known to be the result of mutant alleles (alternate forms) of well-characterized genes having known mechanisms of action: Huntington's disease, cystic fibrosis, phenylketonuria (an inability to metabolize the amino acid phenylalanine with potentially severe neurological consequences), and achondroplasia, a form of dwarfism. There are many others. The first and third of these directly affect the functioning of the nervous system.

One of the geneticists quoted, Richard Lewontin, is on record as opposing genetic studies for behavioral traits because of the potentially negative political consequences if such information became available, not because there cannot be a biological connection.² The quotation from Francis Collins is: "There is an inescapable component of heritability to many human behavioral traits,"

and there is “evidence that sexual orientation is genetically influenced but not hardwired by DNA; . . . whatever genes are involved represent predispositions, not predeterminations.”³ Collins has stated that this use of his words misrepresents his position, which he subsequently clarified as follows: “No one has yet identified an actual gene that contributes to the hereditary component [*of sexual orientation*] (the reports about a gene on the X chromosome from the 1990s have not held up), *but it is likely that such genes will be found in the next few years.*”⁴ Abbott and Byrd contend that “there is a clear consensus among scientists that a gay gene *does not exist*” (21; emphasis theirs). This claim is patently false.

The second question in the authors’ treatment of biology is whether sexual orientation has a hormonal basis. Again, the treatment is extremely superficial, relying on opinions to the effect that information on this issue is inconclusive but without any reference to the experimental data. One would never guess from the way in which Abbott and Byrd handle the questions about causality that there is an enormous body of published evidence, much of it produced in the last fifteen years, arguing persuasively that sexual orientation is under biological control. It is not possible to detail such data here, but those interested should explore an online review of the literature that includes summaries of the research findings, with references to the original sources.⁵

In addition to studies with laboratory animals, investigations have been made in humans of brain structure and function, handedness, birth order, finger length, hearing, and cognitive ability, among others. The subjects of the experiments include identical twins, selected groups of homosexual persons, persons with known hormonal dysfunctions, and the appropriate control groups of heterosexuals. Many of the most compelling studies demonstrate that, for sexually dimorphic traits (those in which men and women normally differ), gay men and lesbians are atypical anatomically, physiologically, and cognitively for their sex. Moreover, these differences are often in place prenatally or shortly after birth. How the authors would explain this scientifically validated evidence is unclear since they completely ignore its existence.

Having given short shrift to biology as a causal factor, Abbott and Byrd move on to their preferred interpretation, based on environmental explanations. The first of these, “Psychoanalytic

Theory,” posits, for example, that an aberrant sexual orientation is due to a “weak and uninvolved father and a smothering mother” (27). The second, “Social Learning Theory,” suggests that the nefarious influence is the sexual content of TV, movies, and music, or makes the dubious claim that sexual abuse accounts “for homosexual behavior” (30). On this topic, readers should be aware that Abbott and Byrd’s most egregious fault is not the omission of pertinent facts but their inaccurate reporting of the results of researchers whose publications they cite and the fact that those data often do not actually support the arguments Abbott and Byrd are making. Making this evaluation naturally requires a careful reading of their treatment of sexual abuse and all of the cited references, including a thoughtful comparison between the two. This truly is a case where “the devil is in the details.”

What follows here, therefore, is an in-depth analysis of just two pages (30–31) from Chapter 3, “Existing Theories of Homosexuality.” (All following quotations from Abbott and Byrd are from these two pages, unless otherwise noted.) In this brief subsection, they argue that childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is a precursor to homosexual behavior because homosexuality (variously described in terms of orientation, preference, identity, or behavior) “is a result of socialization, learning, and conditioning.” In my discussion, I provide commentary about the eleven published works that they cite with citations coded in bold type (e.g., **EH #83** = Reference #83 in *Encouraging Heterosexuality*). See the Appendix for the eleven citations, listed in the order of the discussion here.

Abbott and Byrd begin this section by citing a 1977 study by Grundlach (**EH #83**) as evidence that “adult homosexuals report CSA, often by a homosexual adult, in greater proportion than that found in heterosexual comparison groups.” In fact, the relevant design features of this paper and its reported results do not warrant such a conclusion. The subjects in this study were adult women only. Grundlach conducted a qualitative analysis which contains short quotations from both heterosexual and homosexual individuals about details of earlier rape, attempted rape, or other molestation. This information was obtained from follow-up questionnaires for subsets of larger samples in which the incidence of abuse was 30 percent for lesbians and 21 percent for het-

erosexual woman. The heterosexual cohort does not represent a control as a standard for comparison, and there is no evidence that either the heterosexual or homosexual samples are random representatives of their larger populations. The paper contains no statistical analyses. In every single account, the perpetrator was male; there was no report of homosexual abuse. All of these facts render Abbott and Byrd's interpretation of this paper invalid.

Abbott and Byrd next refer to a study (**EH #84**) of "over 1000" (actually, 1,001) adult gay men, "37% of whom reported being encouraged or forced (between the ages of 9 and 12) to have sex with older men." This study was a retrospective analysis of the early experiences of patients in clinics that treat people for sexually transmitted diseases. While acknowledging that their sample may not be representative, the authors of this study (Doll et al.) still suggest several explanations for why the prevalence of childhood or adolescent sexual abuse may be somewhat higher for homosexual or bisexual men than it is in the general male population. For example, young gays, lacking peer and familial support, may not understand their right to refuse unwanted sexual contact. Also they may seek sexual contacts in risky or dangerous environments in which they are vulnerable to exploitation. At least some self-labeled heterosexual males who sexually abuse boys express an attraction to sexually immature individuals who exhibit stereotypical female characteristics. The investigators in this study also documented various negative responses by these victims of CSA and conclude "that intimacy and caring may not have been a significant component of many of these relationships." Clearly Doll and associates perceived that the victimized children were already homosexual at the time the abuse occurred and therefore were not seduced into their orientation.

The next paragraph begins by citing a report (Simari & Baskin, **EH #86**) on the incidence of homosexual incest, 46 percent and 36 percent (actually 38 percent), respectively, in the early lives of fifty-four adult gay men and twenty-nine lesbians, inferring that these values are high relative to rates of childhood sexual abuse in the general population. However, Abbott and Byrd fail to acknowledge that, for the very small number of individuals in this subset of the total sample—sixteen men and ten women—

most of the incestuous experiences were outside of the nuclear family, primarily with cousins, and that many of these experiences were perceived as positive, especially for the men. This finding suggests that the relationships represented sexual experimentation, not abuse. The key statistic in the paper is that “of the respondents who had experienced incest, 96% reported that they identified themselves as actively homosexual *before* the occurrence of the incestuous event” (emphasis mine). Abbott and Byrd then provide two references alleged to report standard values for CSA at “17% for women” and “5% for men” in the national population. These values fail to cite correctly the respective figures from the references. Finkelhor (**EH #87**) derived estimates based on an analysis of nineteen published studies. He says: “Considerable evidence exists to show that at least 20% of American women and 5% to 10% of American men experienced some form of sexual abuse as children.” He comments further (Finkelhor, p. 34), however, that these values may be too low, and cites a *Los Angeles Times* estimate for females of 27 percent and another by Russell of 34 percent, as likely being more valid because of, respectively, their national scope and careful methodology. Gold and Brown (in the book edited by Ammerman and Hersen, **EH #87**, p. 391) state: “It is generally agreed that the most accurate estimate is that approximately one-third (33%) of all girls and one-sixth (17%) of all boys have been subjected to some form of CSA, broadly defined, by the time they reach their 18th birthday.”

In an earlier reference (**EH #85**), Abbott and Byrd quote Bradford, Ryan, and Rothblum as finding that “25% of about 2000 lesbian women had been sexually abused or raped as children.” The actual figure is 21 percent (Table 5, p. 233). What Abbott and Byrd do not report is the following discussion by those authors who conclude: “The results of the current study indicate that the rate of incest among lesbians (18.7% overall) is quite similar to that among the general female population (16%). The percentage of lesbians who reported having been raped or sexually attacked was the same in the current study as it was in Russell’s (1984) sample of the general female population (34% in both studies for women under age 25).” In summary, there is nothing in these

studies to support Abbott and Byrd's assertion that sexual abuse is implicated "in the etiology of homosexual behavior."

The final reference (EH #88) in this paragraph is an example of a different type of misrepresentation. Abbott and Byrd state that "Holmes and Slap found that 'abused adolescents, particularly those victimized by males, were up to seven times more likely to self identify as gay or bisexual than peers who had not been abused.'" Thus, the reader is led to believe that this is an independent, corroborative research finding. However, the report by Holmes and Slap is a meta-analysis of a body of work performed by other investigators. The quotation above is actually a reference to a study by Shrier and Johnson, but the work of Shrier and Johnson (the identical information) is cited separately by Abbott and Byrd (EH #91) two paragraphs later using different language: "58% of the homosexual adolescents had been sexually molested by a homosexual adult prior to puberty, while only 8% of the heterosexual boys reported sexual abuse." This kind of "double-dipping," in which one reference is disguised so as to be counted twice, is obviously a violation of accepted scholarship. Shrier and Johnson, moreover, are cautious in interpreting the perception of some of the subjects in their clinical sample who "linked their homosexuality to their sexual victimization experience." They state: "It was Finkelhor's impression that the boy who had been molested by a man may label the experience as homosexual and misperceive himself as homosexual based on his having been found sexually attractive by an older man. Once self-labeled as homosexual, the boy may later place himself in situations that leave him open to homosexual activity. *It should be emphasized that the vast majority of homosexuals do not report childhood sexual experiences and also that the vast majority of male pedophiles do not regard themselves as homosexual*" (emphasis mine).

Sandwiched between these purported summaries of academic studies are personal stories of two individuals presented in an attempt to support the view that adolescent sexual abuse can lead to a homosexual orientation. The first comes from an article by Rekers (EH #89), a neuropsychiatrist, who begins his "review of the literature on the formation of homosexual orientation" by citing the different histories of three of his clinical clients and asking if

their experiences are typical (and thus indicative of causal factors) for homosexual adult males as judged from evidence in the professional literature. The story repeated by Abbott and Byrd is about "Shawn," a fifteen-year-old who reported being forced into sexual acts two years earlier by the sixteen-year-old son of one set of Shawn's foster parents. The older boy threatened violence if Shawn disclosed what was happening. At first disgusted and angry, Shawn later developed a preference for this kind of activity. Rekers concludes this anecdote by asking, "But is Shawn's experience a common pathway to homosexual orientation?" Abbott and Byrd conclude their report of this source by stating "Rekers found that '*seduction by an older person of the same sex*' was a common occurrence in the lives of homosexual men" (emphasis mine). In fact, Rekers actually stated exactly the opposite: Bell, Weinberg, and Hammer-smith (1981) "emphasized that their study *did not* provide support for other factors thought to contribute to the development of homosexuality, namely, poor peer relationships, labeling by others, atypical experience with persons of the opposite sex, or *seduction by an older person of the same sex*, even though they allowed for some *atypical individuals (such as my cases of Danny and Shawn)* having had such factors in their particular background" (emphasis mine). Clearly Reker's conclusion is that Shawn's case is neither typical nor consistent with the finding of other investigators and therefore is not valid evidence upon which to generalize any relationship between adolescent abuse and homosexual orientation. Abbott and Byrd completely misrepresent Reker's findings.

Abbott and Byrd's second story comes from the autobiography of Olympic diving champion Greg Louganis (EH# 92). It describes a sexual relationship between Louganis at age sixteen or seventeen and a man in his late thirties, which they portray as revealing the young man's "history of sexual abuse." They omit Louganis's account of his coming out (*Breaking the Surface*, Chapter 8), the details of which support a very different conclusion. Louganis "remembers being attracted to men, as far back as age seven or eight," including an older cousin. Even at that age, he was subjected to homophobic name-calling. For two years, beginning at age twelve, he engaged in frequent heterosexual intercourse with a junior high school classmate. While participating in the

1976 Montreal Olympic games (before the liaison with the older man), he disclosed his homosexuality to a diving teammate and described romantic feelings for a male member of the Russian diving team. He himself initiated the dozen or so encounters with the older man because it provided him with “affection, the holding, the cuddling—more those than the sex.” Louganis states, however, that his preference would have been for associations with gay and lesbian teenagers. He concludes his disclosure: “That said, I don’t regret the affection I exchanged with this man.” This account certainly does not qualify as a “history of sexual abuse” and certainly cannot stand as an example of sexual abuse as a causative factor for homosexual orientation.

In connection with these two personal accounts, Abbott and Byrd continue in their earlier vein by citing the observation of Roesler and Deisher (EH# 90) that the gay men in their study reported same-sex sex before adopting a homosexual identity. From this sequence, Abbott and Byrd tacitly infer a causal relationship. However, the stated research objective of these investigators was to document the common developmental milestones in the youthful years of gay adults. It was a qualitative study in which precise numbers are sometimes omitted. For example, Roesler and Deisher state that “*a few* youths in the study had decided they were homosexual before they had had any sexual experiences with other men” (emphasis mine). They made no claims that the events their subjects reported were responsible for causing their homosexual orientation. Moreover, important details of their findings contradict that supposition. On an average of three years after their first homosexual experience (mean age seventeen), 60 percent of these subjects had intercourse to orgasm with females. Some engaged in “extended heterosexual liaisons.” An average of four years intervened after the first homosexual experience before these young men self-identified as homosexual. These activities and lags suggest efforts *not* to be gay, consistent with their reports of experiencing mental turmoil because of societal revulsion about homosexuality. Although this set of subjects was a “non-clinical” sample, 48 percent had sought psychiatric help, and 31 percent had made a serious attempt at suicide, indicative of an inclination away from, not toward, homosexuality.

Abbott and Byrd's final evidential paragraph deals with a paper by Tomeo and colleagues (**EH #93**; also **EH #82**) focused on whether gay men and lesbians perceived themselves to be homosexual before or after being sexually abused as children. Abbott and Byrd correctly quote Tomeo's percentage values extracted from the "Discussion" section: "68% of the gay males and 38% of the lesbian females did not identify as homosexual until after the molestation." The 38 percent value for females is consistent with data reported in the "Results" section of the paper, but the value for males (68 percent) is not. Tomeo's Table II (p. 538) indicates that 68 percent of the gay males identified as homosexual *before* the abuse—an exact contradiction between the text and the table. When I alerted the senior author of the paper, Dr. Don Templer, to this problem, he rechecked the original research data and confirmed to me by telephone (May 24, 2008) that the 68 percent value in the "Discussion" is a typographical error. The sentence should read "32% [not 68%] of the gay males and 38% of the lesbian females . . ." The experience of at least two-thirds of the participants in this study, therefore, is not consistent with the conclusion that Abbott and Byrd draw from this study—that "the trauma of sexual molestation may, in some unknown way, confuse the child's sexual preference and trigger homoerotic feelings and behavior."

Parenthetically, most of the data in this study were not derived from college students as Abbott and Byrd imply (there were only 10 gay and lesbian people in this cohort), but from 267 homosexuals (28 percent of the total respondents) recruited from street fairs in order to provide a statistically acceptable sample.

The examples of unprofessionalism documented above include the following serious deficiencies: apparent carelessness in reading the research literature, misquoting specific information, interpreting results in ways that contradict the findings of the original authors, providing superficial or partial summaries of research (thus omitting those results and explanations that contradict the original author's preconceptions), and duplicating the alleged evidence. Abbott and Byrd are undoubtedly counting on the probability that few if any of their readers would expend the time and energy, or feel qualified, to check on the accuracy of

their use of the references they make to studies in the published literature.

When a reader identifies an error of the sort just described, the response is probably charitable: “Oops, the authors made a mistake. But even when you do your best, things can fall through the cracks.” However, after detecting the second, third, and fourth errors, the response likely becomes, “I wish the authors had been more careful.” But when there is a repeated pattern of inaccuracy, misrepresentation, and distortion, the reader is led to conclude either that these errors reflect rank scholastic ineptitude or that they are the result of intentional misuse and manipulation—a deliberate tactical decision to take liberties with the published data to spin a conclusion in a predetermined direction that supports the authors’ position.

In their summary paragraph for this section, Abbott and Byrd make a show of even-handedness in admitting that “connection (or correlation) may not mean causation, and many homosexuals do not report a history of sexual abuse.” But the damage has already been done. Many readers, unacquainted with the actual facts established by professional research and influenced by the erroneous notions promulgated in popular literature, will likely decide that “where there’s smoke, there’s fire,” and will concur with Abbott and Byrd: “These studies taken together suggest that childhood sexual abuse may be a contributing factor to later homosexual behavior.” Such an agreement would be highly regrettable, because these studies and accounts do not in fact warrant that conclusion.

Abbott and Byrd then create a hypothetical model (Chapter 5) in which they postulate four influences that contribute to a homosexual orientation: choice, family dysfunction, genes, and social factors (peers, role models, media). The role they allow for genes is minimal, however: Genes are “not direct causative agents in homosexuality”; they may only “influence a person’s temperament and social interaction” (49). Each of these four, they speculate, will make a different relative contribution toward same-sex attraction in the life of any one individual. They offer factitious scenarios to illustrate various possibilities. Then, on the basis of this concept, the authors offer “Practical Advice for Parents” (Chapter 6). This guidance is needed, they assert, for some chil-

dren for whom the “normal neural pathway” leading to heterosexuality “is short circuited” (53).

These suggestions for parents are grouped under the following headings: (1) Build healthy parent-child relationships; (2) Create a happy marriage; (3) Encourage healthy same-sex friendships in childhood; (4) Guard against sexualization by the media; (5) Remediate sexual abuse; (6) Provide value-based sex education at home; and (7) Teach personal responsibility. Of these numbers, 1 and 6 receive the greatest attention.

Contrary to scientific and therapeutic consensus, Abbott and Byrd see dysfunctional parents as perhaps the greatest culprits in the development of same-gender attraction. Of particular concern are the “sensitive son” and the “tomboy daughter,” that is, young children who exhibit childhood gender non-conforming behavior (CGN). The authors blame weak or overbearing mothers and/or fathers for the strong correlation that has been empirically observed between CGN behavior in the early years and homosexuality in adulthood.⁶ With regard to sons, fathers should “look for ways to build up and reinforce the boy’s masculinity,” and “mothers should give love and kindness but must not pamper or mollycoddle sons.” With regard to daughters, a father should “bring confidence into his daughter’s sense of feminine identity,” which will be injured if the mother fails to provide “a true sense of nurturing.” Not only do mental health professionals repudiate assigning fault to parents in this fashion, but they are also contradicted by statements issued by LDS leaders.

For example, in a discussion of homosexuality, Elder Dallin H. Oaks has stated: “We surely encourage parents not to blame themselves and we encourage Church members not to blame parents in this circumstance.”⁷ Further, the counsel provided in the official Church publication *God Loveth His Children* is: “Do not blame anyone—not yourself, not your parents, not God—for problems not fully understood in this life. . . . Please understand that abuse by others or youthful experiences should not create a present sense of guilt, unworthiness, or rejection by God or His Church. Innocent mischief early in life does not predispose a youth toward same-gender attraction as an adult.”⁸ It is important to lift from the souls of the parents of gay children the unjust torment they may bear if they incorrectly assume, as Abbott and

Byrd propose, that something they did or failed to do is responsible for the homosexual orientation of their sons or daughters.

In the twenty pages that Abbott and Byrd devote to treating their seven themes, one finds many commendable recommendations independent of whatever real or imagined effect they might have on sexual orientation. For example, they suggest that parents should “teach and model modesty in dress,” “expose your children to wholesome and appropriate music, movies, books, and TV early in life,” “direct child victims of sexual abuse to a professional therapist,” “open up a dialogue with children about human sexuality,” “discourage early dating (before 16) and encourage group dating,” and “use restrictions, supervision and guidance” against “the sexual wickedness promoted in the media” (62–63).

On the other hand, one also finds unfounded and indefensible generalities, including the statement by psychoanalyst Irving Bieber that he has never met “a male homosexual whose father openly loved and respected him” (55) and the assertion that “if parents would live a ‘normal and happy heterosexual married life,’ very few children would be attracted to homosexuality” (60). There is absolutely no scientific evidence to support these claims.

This propensity for drawing unfounded conclusions unsupported by the facts leads Abbott and Byrd to make statements that are outright falsehoods: “Very few [intersex children] struggle with homosexuality, suggesting that homosexuality is very different from intersex challenges” (71). The fact is that there are adult intersex persons (those having some combination of both male and female reproductive organs—hermaphroditism) who *do* exhibit a high frequency of homosexual orientation. Examples include (1) genetic males with functioning testes, but without the biochemical means to respond to testosterone; they develop female external genitalia, assume a female identity, and are sexually attracted to men, and (2) genetic females exposed prenatally to abnormally high levels of testosterone; they develop masculine characteristics and assume a lesbian or bisexual identity.⁹

A striking feature of Chapter 6 of *Encouraging Heterosexuality* is the authors’ defensiveness. Repeatedly they acknowledge that on, key points of concern, such as whether core sexual orientation can be changed, their prescriptions are at odds with professionals in the field. They speak of the opinions of “so-called ex-

perts" (66), whom they also describe as "the purveyors of political correctness"(67) and whose work they label as "pseudo-psychological" (66). Because "mental health professionals are biased," school counselors, for example, may fail "to help a teen affirm his or her heterosexuality" (67). School personnel as "authority figures may teach, with subtlety, the dominant philosophy of promiscuous sexuality: One is obligated to act upon one's sexual desires without reference to any moral code" (67). These quotations illustrate the importance Abbott and Byrd attach to discrediting anyone whose views about homosexuality differ from their own. As an example, they pejoratively label alternative positions, for example, as "one-sided propaganda by the school, the media, and the medical and psychological communities" (67).

They issue a particularly severe indictment of the publication *Just the Facts about Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel*.¹⁰ This document was written in recognition of the reality that "lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth must also cope with the prejudice, discrimination, and violence in society and, in some cases, in their own families, school, and communities." *Just the Facts* accurately reports that, in recognizing that sexual orientation is not an illness, "the nation's leading professional, medical, health, and mental health organizations do not support efforts to change young people's sexual orientation through therapy and have raised serious concerns about the potential harm from such efforts." This brochure provides information on pertinent legal and ethical issues and lists additional resources for those with responsibility for the well-being of young people. The contents of the publication are endorsed by a coalition of thirteen mainstream national organizations.¹¹ It is unfortunate that Abbott and Byrd so cavalierly and irresponsibly dismiss the experience and expertise of hundreds of thousands of these dedicated medical and educational professionals.

Abbott and Byrd do not discuss techniques of reorientation (reparative) therapy directly but clearly support its use. They repeatedly mention this kind of treatment and strongly defend the right of individuals to deal with an unwanted sexual orientation in this way. Absent from this discussion, however, is how to deal with the situation when neither their recommendations for parental conduct nor intervention by spiritual or secular counselors

succeed in changing same-sex attraction. When rejection by parents and alienation from the family occur in such circumstances, the consequences are usually devastating. The results of a highly regarded study document that the incidence of negative health measures (depression, attempted suicide, use of illegal drugs, and high-risk sexual behavior, for example) increases dramatically in the face of family rejection.¹² In contrast, even a modest degree of acceptance of gay and lesbian youth by their parents and siblings results in a large reduction in these harmful outcomes.

Abbott and Byrd's set of recommendations for parents is weakened considerably by their own admission that "the reader should be aware that our specific parenting advice has not been empirically tested by research" (69). In fact, their insistence that sexual orientation can be changed is strongly contradicted by the careful review of the published research literature on this subject released in 2009 by the American Psychological Association.¹³

The reason that this book will fail to deliver significant help to LDS and other families with gay and lesbian children is that the authors' approach is intrinsically flawed. Instead of beginning with an open-ended and open-minded investigation of a complex issue and seeking the best information available from knowledgeable sources, they begin with a predetermined and inflexible position—that individuals with a homosexual orientation must be changed. This firm thesis requires two wholly irresponsible actions for anyone who claims to be a professional: (1) contrary data and experience must be altered, reinterpreted, or discounted to comport with their point of view; and (2) those who hold alternative opinions must be silenced, marginalized, or characterized as motivated by evil intent.

The evidence is very strong that homosexual orientation is the result of biological factors, that it is not learned nor is it the result of conscious choice or inadequate parenting, and moreover that it is not subject to change for the vast majority of those affected. Based on these facts, the "encouraging" that should be promoted is a greater outpouring of understanding, compassion, and Christian charity toward our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters from those of us who are in the heterosexual majority.

In conclusion, *Encouraging Heterosexuality* is a book based on poor scholarship, whose major claims are invalidated by the pub-

lished work of biological researchers and which are at odds with professionals in the mental health community. By taking the position that homosexuality is a chosen and changeable condition, Abbott and Byrd have written a dangerous publication that is likely to be harmful to families with gay and lesbian children. Ultimately, it will prove to be injurious to the LDS Church. When parents and Church leaders act on the kind of information that these authors provide, the predictable results will be, in at least some cases, rejection and ostracism from the family, alienation from the Church, engagement in risky personal behavior, and suicide. I hope that there will be efforts by many in the LDS community to prevent such unacceptable outcomes and that fewer such “resources” will be produced in the future to hamper their efforts. Furthermore, an additional consequence to the Church of basing its position on such bad science and scholarship will almost certainly be a lack of credibility as it attempts to engage in civic and religious dialogue with others on this issue.

Appendix

Note: The sources below are cited in the subsection titled “Existing Theories of Homosexuality,” in *Encouraging Heterosexuality*, Chapter 3.

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2. Richard Lewontin, quoted in C. Burr, *A Separate Creation: The Search for the Biological Origins of Sexual Orientation* (New York: Hyperion, 1996), 271–73.

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Mormonism Goes Mainstream

Mark T. Decker and Michael Austin, eds. *Peculiar Portrayals: Mormons on the Page, Stage, and Screen*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2010. 196 pp. Photographs, bibliographies, index. Paper: \$24.95. ISBN: 978-087421-773-5

Reviewed by Randy Astle

In an article posted in September 2010 on Patheos.com, a website devoted to the discussion of religion and spirituality, Michael Otterson, managing director of Public Affairs for the LDS Church, wrote: "During the past few years, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has navigated a period of intense public attention and scrutiny rarely seen during any other time in its history." He buttressed this claim with the fact that for over a year

“media attention far exceeded even the considerable interest generated during the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.”¹ While *Peculiar Portrayals: Mormons on the Page, Stage, and Screen* looks at artistic productions rather than traditional journalism, its editors Mark T. Decker and Michael Austin agree with Otterson, stating that “Mormons and Mormonism have seen increasing scrutiny during the previous decade” (1). They even cite many of the same causes.²

While the media—meaning diverse entities such as journalism, film, television, literature, drama, and the internet—has been expanding its consciousness of Mormonism, scholarship on Mormon culture and media has been burgeoning as well. Building on a foundation of Mormon literary criticism, critics of audiovisual media have been publishing and presenting work in numerous journals, websites, blogs, and symposia, indicating that we are entering a renaissance of Mormon cultural studies and artistic criticism. *Peculiar Portrayals* joins recent luminous efforts like Terryl Givens’s *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Brigham Young University’s first annual Mormon Media Studies Symposium in November 2010 both to signify a new era in the study of Mormon media and also to indicate directions in which that study can go.

This peculiar historical position is, in fact, both the greatest strength and weakness of *Peculiar Portrayals*. On the one hand, the individual essays are universally engaging, erudite, and insightful. They apply strong criticism to remarkably diverse works to achieve, by and large, some of the best thoughts written about Mormon media in recent years, giving hope for criticism of the same and greater caliber in the near future. At the same time, however, in analyzing individual works in such scrupulous detail, the book lays bare the fact that it is missing a significant amount of material that might have been profitably included. It may be faint criticism to blame a book for being so good it leaves you wanting more; but the omissions, even though the editors acknowledge them (3), remain palpable and regrettable.

But more noticeable than the omission of any individual subject is the lack of an overarching systematic approach. Decker and Austin claim that “there has not [previously] been a concerted effort to explore the ways that Mormons and Mormonism have

been characterized in literature and film” and that their volume will attempt to provide that “broad perspective” (3). By “a concerted effort” it appears they mean a systematic investigation, one that covers all media and classes of portrayals of Mormonism throughout the spectrum. This is an admirable goal and would create a much-needed resource, but in their highly focused gaze on individual works not all of the essays here live up to that standard. If the goal is to systematically analyze how Mormonism is treated in media, one wonders why some of the essays, though good, focus on minor works such as the film *Pride and Prejudice* (2003) instead of on larger issues that affect many films, plays, or novels. Each of the essays has its own goal, of course, and should be judged accordingly, but only some strive for insights applicable to a range of works. Among these, J. Aaron Sanders, in “Avenging Angels: The Nephi Archetype and Blood Atonement in Neil LaBute, Brian Evenson, and Levi Peterson, and the Making of the Mormon American Writer,” examines how blood atonement is treated by these three authors. And in “Elders on the Big Screen: Film and the Globalized Circulation of Mormon Missionary Images,” John-Charles Duffy deals with the standardized image and use of missionaries in a variety of films. Duffy’s criteria in selecting the sample films seem somewhat haphazard, though, leaving out important pictures such as Danny Boyle’s *Millions* (2004) that would have supported his thesis (115).

Thus, though its insights are unique and compelling, the book is far from systematic in covering Mormon film, drama, television, and literature—indeed, no single volume of 196 pages could be. That is not to say that *Peculiar Portrayals* does not contribute to the larger dialogue about Mormon culture; certainly it will immediately become an invaluable addition to the field. It’s just that, if the trees it studies are excellent, it still does not have the capacity to synthesize the entire forest.

Part of this result is because of the breadth of the works included for analysis. My first impression was that it was somewhat foolhardy to group written, performed, and projected/electronic media together in a single volume. In fact, the variety is somewhat overwhelming. Individual authors and subjects, in addition to those mentioned above, are Cristine Hutchison-Jones on Mormons and Americana in *Angels in America*; Michael Austin on politics and

polygamy in *Big Love*—arguably the best essay in the book; Kevin Kolkmeyer on cultural tolerance and *Under the Banner of Heaven*; Mark Decker on postdenominationalism in *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint*; Juliette Wells on aesthetics and adaptation in the Mormon film version of *Pride and Prejudice*; and Karen D. Austin on the phenomenon of Mormon characters in reality television.

But the unity between the essays is remarkable, and what ties them together is their emphasis on the *depictions* of Mormons and, by inference, their *reception* by diverse viewers and readers. Here the insights can be especially keen: Karen Austin's evaluation of how Mormonism takes on narrative significance in reality TV (184) is akin to Duffy's on how Mormon missionaries have become standard cinematic tropes, even when the evangelizing characters are not even meant to be Mormon (114). Hutchison-Jones's analysis of the sexual and political mores of the Mormon characters in the theatrical and filmed versions of *Angels in America* and how playwright/screenwriter Tony Kushner uses Mormonism politically echoes Michael Austin's thoughts on the sexual and political mores of the fundamentalist Mormon characters in *Big Love* and how that show's creators use Mormonism to make a political statement. Polygamy, blood atonement, and other familiar issues each receive new life as they are examined across multiple invigorating essays.

Given this emphasis on how Mormons are portrayed and received by audiences/readers, all of the essays can be seen as social evaluations. Any formalist analysis is done at the level of the text or script, dealing with issues of plot, theme, and character, rather than with filmic features like image, sound, *mise-en-scene*, acting, music, or editing. Perhaps the closest thing to an exception is Duffy's description of missionaries' physical appearances. Given that Mormon cinematic criticism has essentially grown out of literary criticism over the past ten years, this characteristic is not surprising and represents a trend that has thus far been endemic to the entire field. With books and articles of this caliber in circulation, however, we have now hopefully reached a point in our critical maturation that we can soon begin focusing on film's other salient features besides those included in the screenplay.

Still, with publications like this one, the future of Mormon media studies—and all of Mormon cultural studies—looks very

bright. As studies of interactive media and the internet are added to criticism like that included here, our concept of the history and capacity of Mormon media will enlarge, audiences and creators will come into closer contact, and the quality of new works will improve. Decker, Austin, and their contributors have created an invaluable resource to bolster the growing field, and one can only hope that the critics who begin to fill in their gaps will do so to the same standards upheld throughout this book.

Notes

1. Michael Otterson, "The Church's Reputation: Progress, Challenges, and Opportunity," Patheos.com, August 9, 2010, <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Churchs-Reputation-Progress-Challenges-and-Opportunity.html> (accessed August 11, 2010).

2. These include Mitt Romney, Warren Jeffs, and Proposition 8; also see Austin's discussion of polygamy in his own essay, pp. 37–61.

Pirouettes on Strings

Phyllis Barber. *Raw Edges*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2010. ix + 268 pp. Hardcover: \$26.95. ISBN: 978-0-87417-807-4

Reviewed by Kathryn Lynard Soper

A mobile hangs from the ceiling above Phyllis Barber's writing desk: tissue-paper ballerinas suspended in midair, light and delicate, twirling in currents of warmth from the nearby fireplace. As she labored to finish *Raw Edges*, Barber often glanced up from the computer screen for the dancers' wordless encouragement. *You need to finish your book*, they reminded her (1). I'm glad she listened, for this memoir shares a compelling story, often poetic and sometimes heartbreaking, rich with the makings of wisdom.

The narrative cycles repeatedly through conundrums of identity and intimacy which surface during Barber's "seven lean years of being lost" (1); she writes to find herself in the shreds and patches of three love relationships, including a marriage of thirty-three years to a man ill-suited for the obligations of monogamy. The result is a weaving, sometimes frayed but still effective story

of emerging self-awareness, and a stark cautionary tale of troubled relationships and blurred boundaries.

As a BYU student in the mid-sixties, Barber senses intuitive fears about marrying her charismatic fiancé, David, but forges ahead nonetheless, considering him an intriguing puzzle as well as a lucky catch. Tension between the newlyweds builds immediately as David chafes against the restrictions of life as a married Mormon man and Barber struggles to compensate. After having two children within two years, they discover that their firstborn, Geoffrey, is hemophilic. His death as a preschooler strikes a blunt blow to Barber's already weakened sense of self, and the possibility that she may have been at fault haunts her from that point forward, becoming her agonizing "black secret" (186).

In the years following Geoffrey's death, the pressures of Barber's family life intensify, as does her husband's dissatisfaction. A third son joins the household, then a fourth. After admitting to an extramarital affair, David requests an open marriage arrangement to accommodate his desire for multiple romantic partners. "It's certainly not about not loving you," he assures Barber, as she holds herself back from punching his jaw (117). Devastated by this betrayal, Barber hears a clear inner voice: "Pay attention to *your* life. Focus on what *you* need to do. Not on him" (118). She takes this message as her cue to accept David's ethics and even adapt them as her own, despite the fact that such action constitutes "a shattering of [her] vows, [her] promises" (147).

The scenes that follow are both wrenching and surreal. In one, Phyllis Barber's first extramarital affair unfolds almost as a matter of duty (144) ; in another she attempts damage control over lunch with one of the "other women" (180). At one point, after waiting all night for her to return from a romantic visit on the final night of summer vacation, an ironically jealous David drives their minivan and three sons away, leaving her stranded on a sidewalk halfway across the country—and she laughs it off (151).

Unwilling to practice Mormonism without David and uncomfortable about attending church in the midst of their mutual infidelities, she leaves the faith that has been the center of her life since childhood, then tells her devastated oldest son that he can attend alone if he wants. After years of yo-yo decision making, including a second overt betrayal from David when he breaks a specific agree-

ment (156), she finally separates from him only to settle in with an equally troubled partner: Spinner, a man sixteen years her junior with big brown eyes and a full-blown cocaine addiction. As Spinner progressively lies, cheats, and steals from her, Barber's inner voice clearly signals danger; but her own apparent addiction to being needed by others ("I needed to go to rehab to get over being a mother," 192) deafens her to the warnings. The mess of betrayals, break-ups, and get-back-togethers, crowned by a harrowing scene of physical abuse, leads even the most sympathetic reader to wonder "What in the hell [is she] doing with a loser like that?" (130)

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of the story is the way Barber often appears to be taking the threads of her life into her own hands, only to revert to her dysfunctional ways. Her identity crisis sparks a series of adventures from the admirable (pursuing a graduate degree) to the daring (a thousand-mile cross-country bike ride) to the clichéd (a quest in a Yucatan temple to "accept the goddess within") (226). She collects potentially transformative experiences the way she collects rare stamps in a leather album, and a breakthrough seems to come when she learns that misprinted stamps dramatically increase in value—mistakes, she realizes, can become "collector's gold." Yet this alchemy is stalled because she never resolves her need to be needed, which continually arises as a taunt from her own mind: "Nobody needs you anymore. Maybe they never did" (252).

Toward the end of the story Barber is living in the stifling heat of David's Denver attic after a second failed marriage, whacking her head on the slanted ceiling, suicidal, and condemned to a prison of her own making. The narrative ends (literally) on a happy note, as Barber reunites with her faith community and savors the simple joy of singing LDS hymns on a Sabbath morning. But her hopeful concluding words—"Why had I thought I needed more?"—are outweighed by the question she's been asking herself all along: "Why have I settled for so little?" (213).

Barber is unquestionably a talented writer. She captures settings in vivid detail and evokes metaphors that are truly beautiful, even breathtaking; the emotion she expresses is sometimes sentimentalized (particularly in the overwrought passages of internal dialogue), yet her self-disclosure is sincere enough and brave enough to compensate for its heaviness. The memoir's organic

structure ambitiously aims at having form mirror function. In the introduction, Barber explains, “The endless thinking on the bicycle was never experienced in ordered chronology or form. Rather, it spun out of the vast reservoir of fragments in my head while my legs relentlessly spun the pedals” (2). This is, after all, how memory works, and how truth is experienced in real time. But Barber’s attempt to weave three storylines often feels more awkward than artistic: the narrative jumps haphazardly between scenes from the early years of her marriage to David, scenes from the present day, and scenes from her bike trip that provide a sort of framing narrative and, inevitably, impose the image of a journey. Ultimately, I found that the succession of vignettes lacked the cohesion necessary for this journey’s satisfactory resolution. Instead, I had a sense of spinning wheels, a glimpse of a destination never reached. And while the individual stamps in Barber’s album possess meaning and beauty, she doesn’t indicate what redemptive value the collection may hold.

But perhaps this sense of unmet potential conveys the memoir’s most enduring message. A life—a self—cannot be circumscribed in tidy ways and always falls short of what might have been. There’s no grand “aha” inscribed triumphantly on the last page of our personal narratives, no scene of ultimate redemption. There is only endurance through struggle, which hopefully yields mercy for others and self. By so candidly sharing her weakness, Barber offers readers an opportunity to face their own; by accepting her raw edges, she shows how our ragged selves fit seamlessly into humanity, and how this unity can salve our individual wounds. Indeed, Barber’s search for self ends as a plea for personal transcendence: “Help me out of myself, please” (214). And while her unsettling journey doesn’t lead to a place of solid truth to rest upon, through her words we hover near enlightenment like the tissue-paper dancers in her mobile, circling around and above the certainty of understanding, continually turning pirouettes on strings.

Breaking New Ground

Grant Hardy. *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide*.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Paper: \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0-19-973170-1

Reviewed by Julie M. Smith

In *On the Road with Joseph Smith: An Author's Diary* (2d ed., Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), we get a fascinating peek into Richard Lyman Bushman's psyche immediately after the publication of his monumental *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. It is delightful to find out that he checked the book's rank on Amazon several times per day but sobering to see his reaction to the book's reception by the non-Mormon scholarly community. In a letter to Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, he wrote: "The first of the serious reviews of *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* arrived this past week. . . . Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp's reaction to my book is probably about as sympathetic as we can hope for. . . . The review tells me that we cannot expect a positive reaction to the biography—or to Joseph Smith—from scholars. As Laurie says, an epistemological gap yawns between my view of the Prophet and that of most academics. . . . I had hoped my book would bridge this gap, but after this review, I can see it will go only part way. I will be consistently seen as a partisan observer" (101-2). As further reviews showed, his analysis was, unfortunately, spot on: The divide is too wide to be bridged even by a first-rate treatment of the life of Joseph Smith, if its author is a faithful member of the LDS Church.

Which brings us to Grant Hardy's *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, an attempt to bridge the gap between believers and others through a literary reading of the Book of Mormon, primarily (though not solely) by closely following—and making educated guesses about—the narrative assumptions and intentions of the book's three major narrators, Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni. He writes, "I will leave it to others to prove or disprove the historical and religious claims of the book; my goal is to help anyone interested in the Book of Mormon, for whatever reason, become a better, more perceptive reader" (xvi). That is a laudable goal; and for the LDS reader, he succeeds brilliantly. This book belongs, not on the shelf but on the desk—where it can be frequently consulted—of every serious student of the Book of Mormon. But as

much as one might wish otherwise, it is difficult to imagine a sympathetic response to this book from most non-LDS readers.

Hardy asks us to look closely at the text “without worrying too much about whether the mind ultimately responsible . . . was that of Mormon or Joseph Smith” (xiv), but how closely can the non-LDS reader look before noticing a terrible dilemma? As Hardy himself points out, the Book of Mormon has the marks of careful craftsmanship, but “the more complicated and interconnected the text, the less likely it is that Joseph Smith made it up” (xv). In other words, the greater the literary complexity of the Book of Mormon, the more likely it is what it claims to be, which places—to put it mildly—a certain burden upon the reader. The non-LDS reader cannot avoid questions of historicity when Hardy writes on the very first page: “The Book of Mormon [was] produced in a sudden rush of revelation as a young, poorly educated New York farmer dictated the text, one time through” (3). While it should be possible to analyze the Book of Mormon as literature while bypassing sticky questions of historicity, this doesn’t seem to work in practice.

For example, Hardy examines Nephi’s appropriation of Isaiah and Moroni’s inclusion of passages that echo Hebrews because these are necessary exercises for understanding what Nephi and Moroni were doing as narrators, but they require redaction criticism, which means thinking about historicity. The fact that *Rough Stone Rolling* couldn’t completely bridge the divide—even when people regularly enjoy biographies of subjects with whom they would disagree on virtually every topic—does not bode well for the reception of a book that, despite itself, forces the reader to consider the literary complexity of the Book of Mormon on every page. Hardy notes that “this is a book designed to polarize readers” (9), and he is right. But the likely cold shoulder from non-LDS readers should not stop Mormons from embracing this book with open arms.

Hardy’s analysis of the Book of Mormon has more than one moment of pure genius; his insights into the text are often jaw-droppingly compelling. For example, perhaps the most difficult and most crucial component of a close reading is noticing what is missing, and Grant Hardy is unusually adept at doing precisely that. How many readers have slogged through the Book of

Mormon dozens of times without realizing that Nephi never reports on his own kingship or his own sons? Or that when Lehi gathers his family and pronounces final blessings on his posterity, “Nephi’s blessing is conspicuous for its absence” (51)? Hardy points out that Mormon “never speaks of war figuratively or makes it a metaphor for Christian living” (108) and, unlike Nephi and Moroni, never quotes scriptures at length. Hardy notes that there are no stories in the Book of Mormon of good men who fall (no Sauls or Davids), that Captain Moroni never “engage[s] in personal acts of faith” such as proselytizing (174), that Samuel the Lamanite never mentions Jesus’s visit to the Americas, that Jesus never uses parables in the Book of Mormon, and that “a close reading of Ether suggests that Jaredite culture was almost entirely non-Christian” (235).

Hardy also excels at reading against the grain of the text. He finds in Lehi’s lack of response to Nephi’s killing of Laban a telling gap, one filled with something designed to distract the reader: an argument between Sariah and Lehi (and an artfully structured one at that). He not only presents a sympathetic portrait of Laman and Lemuel, but one which, instead of undermining the message of the text, actually enhances it. Similarly, he finds evidence that Mormon strives to create a heroic version of Captain Moroni that might skirt the edge of accuracy (“it is hard to see how the accusation ‘thou art a child of hell’ might have been a successful opening for negotiations” [148]), but the end result is a greater appreciation for both men.

A third strength of *Understanding the Book of Mormon* is Hardy’s gift for noticing textual parallels. His cases for reading Nephi as deliberately structuring his story on the model of the Old Testament Joseph, for comparing Abinadi and Moses, and for seeing the Jaredite record as reversing the Fall are compelling. And, finally, Hardy’s ability to elucidate character is nothing short of astounding. Nephi, Zeniff, Mormon, Captain Moroni, Helaman, and Moroni, are all liberated from what Joseph Smith called “the little narrow prison . . . of paper[,] pen[,] and ink” and into the kind of fully formed reality that just might keep the reader awake during Sunday School.

Understanding the Book of Mormon invites comparison to Terryl L. Givens’s *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that*

Launched a New World Religion (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)—although that work is a history of the book’s reception instead of a literary analysis—and Richard Dilworth Rust’s *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997). Hardy covers some of the same terrain as Rust, but Hardy’s method of organizing material by narrator (as opposed to Rust’s of organizing by literary element) yields a more comprehensive reading and reveals more about the narrators’ character, while Hardy’s consideration of gaps and his reading against the grain expose insights unexplored by Rust. So while it seems rather unlikely that non-LDS readers will be able to accept Hardy’s reading, *Understanding the Book of Mormon* is a groundbreaking work in the analysis of the Book of Mormon, and the wide (LDS) audience that it deserves will be amply rewarded with stunning new insights.

From Exotic to Normal

Brian Q. Cannon and Jessie L. Embry, eds. *Utah in the Twentieth Century*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009. ix, 412 pp. Photographs, maps, notes, index. Cloth: \$32.95. ISBN: 978-0-87421-744-5

Reviewed by David Salmanson

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the state of Utah had been marginalized and exotic; at the 2002 Winter Olympics held in Salt Lake City, however, it presented itself as central and metropolitan. Hailed as the state’s coming-out party, the Opening Ceremonies had distinctly Utahn features. The most memorable images from the games were not the sports, but the opening and closing ceremonies: a little skater, blond, of course, re-creating frontier history, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir belting out a John Williams composition as only it could. It seemed that beneath the veneer of sophistication was the aesthetic of a country cousin striving for cool but winding up a bit tacky. In that sense, Utah was never more American.

How did Utah make that journey from exotic to normal? And

how normal is Utah anyway? Perhaps most importantly for the readers of *Dialogue*, what difference did Mormons make in the state's century-long evolution? These questions drive the essays collected in *Utah in the Twentieth Century*. The authors' contributions emerged from a seminar sponsored by the Charles Redd Center in 2006, and revised for publication. (As a note of disclosure, I received a grant from the Charles Redd Center when I was a graduate student studying the history of uranium mining in New Mexico and therefore am very fond of the place.)

Like any multiple-author essay collection, the delights and disappointments here will vary widely depending as much on the reader as on the author. One of my favorites is Kristen Rogers-Iversen's "The Famous Blue Valley' and a Century of Hope." In evocative language that paints vivid images of hope and despair, Rogers-Iversen captures both the similarities and differences of Utah compared to the rest of the West. She chronicles how the varied hopes of settlers motivated by dreams of religious or economic reward were destroyed by the floods of the Fremont River or other disasters. Time and again citizens came to Blue Valley, west of Hanksville, near Capitol Reef in southern Utah. Settlers were called on LDS missions to make the desert bloom, tried to build an irrigation dam to make cheap land valuable, and attempted to prospect for uranium. It's a story repeated across the rural West, in the Dust Bowl of 1930s Kansas and Oklahoma, and in the oil shale boom and bust of 1970s Colorado.

But Rogers-Iversen also captures the pieces that make these stories both American and distinctly Utahn. When Fred Giles's betrothed died of diphtheria in 1902, "he buried his hopes along with her body." This sad story was repeated throughout the West and all of America until the 1950s, when death became the province of the old. But how many Americans, one wonders, would make sure they were sealed to their departed love in a temple ceremony as Giles did before his own death in 1950?

Ah, the Mormon question. Do Mormons make a difference in Utah's history? There are two schools of thought to this, the "heck, yeah's" and the "hell, no's." The former side's argument is more obvious, but the "hell, no's" have pointed to Utah's common trajectory with much of the Intermountain West, especially in the twentieth century. While the majority of articles here fall into the

“hell, no” camp, the “heck, yeah’s” have some of the more interesting pieces. We live in a time when the LDS Church’s role in politics is once again under discussion because of Mitt Romney’s presidential run and California’s Proposition 8.

While this collection was compiled before the 2008 election, several timely essays remind us that Utah’s present is not always so different from its past. In the 1930s, the Church’s social welfare program was lauded by conservative voices such as *Reader’s Digest* as a counter to the New Deal programs of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (and his Mormon adviser Marriner Eccles). Joseph Darowski explores this fight and finds that the Church Security Plan (subsequently renamed the Church Welfare Plan so as not to be confused with the federal Social Security program) was not particularly successful and that Mormons in Utah depended heavily on federal funds.

And with the Church at the center of a variety of controversies today such as the aforementioned California Prop 8, Jacob W. Olmstead’s look at how those opposed to the deployment of the MX missile in Utah over the course of two years (1979–81) persuaded the Mormon leadership to join them in their opposition is fascinating. Completely aside from the history it reveals, it lays out the intricacies of building a successful political movement that can speak to many different constituencies.

In those articles that focus explicitly on non-Mormon topics, the best tend to cover more recent history. Both Adam Eastman’s article on water management and Jedediah Rogers’s article on the Sagebrush Rebellion put national and regional issues in a Utah context. In these pieces, Utah seems not so different from Colorado or New Mexico or California.

Like any collection of this sort, this anthology contains a few articles with more limited appeal. For those particularly interested in the history of city reform movements, Jessie L. Embry’s insightful and clear essay is an excellent primer whose central lesson appears to be that the form of government is less important than what government actually does. The audience for that essay is probably a small one, although it must dwarf the number of readers who, of their own volition, will engage John McCormick and John Sillito’s essay on the 1913 International Workers of the World (IWW) free speech fight. However, they have penned a

lovely narrative piece of an ugly time; and those unaware of the repression enforced on the union or think that rolling back the Wagner Act is a good idea should give it a look.

Several articles have a more ambiguous audience. James Adams's article on public schools provides an explanation of the so-called Utah paradox of high achievement and low per-student funding. Evidently, that paradox disappears and Utah students actually do worse than national averages when the data are controlled for race and income. But this discovery emerges only after slogging through descriptions of funding battles that only a labor lobbyist could love.

To return to the question that bedevils Utah history: Do Mormons make a difference? I'm not sure, but the twenty-first century has furthered the conundrum. The Salt Lake City Olympics may have been quintessentially American, but their image is already fading. The dominant vision of Utah (and an unexpected source of revenue) is rapidly becoming St. George's role as Albuquerque's stunt double in Disney's *High School Musical* series of movies. Why did the producers shoot in St. George? Because, as any fan of *So You Think You Can Dance* knows, the best dancers are in Utah. And why are the best dancers in Utah? Could it have anything to do with what a 1950s *Time* magazine reporter once called the "dancingest denomination"? It could be, or perhaps it's just cheaper labor costs and proximity to Los Angeles. I suppose the answer depends on whether you lean toward the "hell, no's" or the "heck, yeah's." After reading this volume, I'm still with the latter camp.

Navigating Mortality

Angela Hallstrom, ed. *Dispensation: Latter-day Fiction*. Introduction by Margaret Blair Young. Provo, Utah: Zarahemla Books, 2010. 458 pp. Paperback: \$19.95. ISBN 978-0-9843603-0-7

Reviewed by Myrna Dee Marler

The cover of *Dispensation: Latter-day Fiction* shows clocks on long poles dipped into a blue lake surrounded by mountains. At first

glance, the image symbolically suggests that this is the last dispensation and that all the writers included in the collection are products of these latter days. On second glance, though, the clocks also appear to be thermometers. That symbolism is equally appropriate, as each of the stories included in this collection takes the temperature of a certain spot in the deep waters of worldwide Mormonism, and the temperature may change, given the shifting sands of everyday events and the unfathomable molten core beneath the surface.

Some of the stories have historical settings. Two examples are Doug Thayer's horrifying "Wolves" set during the Great Depression but focusing on the question of blood atonement and Phyllis Barber's "Bread for Gunnar," which addresses the challenge of polygamy. Others, however, are as current as today's newspaper. These stories take place in contemporary Utah, where modern Mormons struggle to find reason and meaning behind unexpected upheavals or even just the daily grind of raising children and living life. Notable examples are Margaret Blair Young's "Zoo Sounds" and Bruce Jorgensen's "Measures of Music."

In geographical contrast, two stories take place in contemporary Africa. In Paul Rawlins's "The Garden," a missionary runs for his life and hides in a poor black man's vegetable patch. In "Quietly" by Todd Robert Peterson, a new convert is asked to dedicate the grave of a man found killed by Hutus and hanging upside down in a tree.

All fiction, of course, deals with mortals trying to navigate the conditions of mortal life that are no more comprehensible for being universal. We are born, we age, we die. We are subject to pain, affliction, and temptation. We cannot know the minds and hearts of others except for what they tell us or what we sense. Conflict is inevitable. These stories ask whether being a Mormon can save you, anchor you, break you, make you crazy, or bring you unspeakable joy. The manifold answers have as much to do with varying faith, knowledge, thought, and personality as they have to do with the nature of Mormonism itself.

Each story seems to plumb the depths of what it means to come in contact with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, either regarding it as a peculiar feature of peculiar people, or embracing the complexities of faith and the hardship which

that faith sometimes brings in its wake. Some question policies of the past. "White Shell," by Arianne Cope, illustrates ways that the Indian Placement Program, instituted by well-meaning Mormons, affected many lives for better but also for worse. Darrell Spencer's "Blood Work" seems to say that being a Mormon can make you crazy. Brian Evensen's "The Care of the State" suggests that being a Mormon can anchor you, while allowing that we're all untethered in some way or other.

All the stories are thought-provoking, questioning, artistic, and eloquent; many transcend the confines of "Mormon" fiction. These are stories from mature writers who see the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in navigating the shoals of mortal life, whether their characters are clasping the iron rod or barely acknowledging its existence. Birth, death, divorce, conversion, living Mormon precepts, twisting them, relying upon them, or leaving them—all the conflicts of a Mormon's mortal life are here.

In her "Preface," Angela Hallstrom quotes Eugene England, to whom the book is dedicated, who said of his 1992 collection of Mormon short fiction, *Bright Angels and Familiars*: "Mormonism insists that divinity continues to reveal [truths] to prophets and further understanding of [these truths] to all people. One crucial way such insight can come, I believe, is through the telling of stories." These stories participate in that quest for revelatory storytelling, and invite thoughtful readers along for the journey.

LDS Youth in an Age of Transition

Bruce A. Chadwick, Brent L. Top, and Richard J. McClendon. *Shield of Faith: The Power of Religion in the Lives of LDS Youth and Young Adults*. Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2010. 367 pp. Tables, figures, appendices, and index. Cloth: 24.99. ISBN: 0842527613

Christian Smith with Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 355 pp. Tables, figures, appendices, and index. Cloth: 24.95. ISBN: 0195371798

Reviewed by Boyd Jay Petersen

One of the most difficult and perilous times in a life is the transition from childhood to adulthood. Moving into the freedoms of adult life while still relying on parents to pay the bills creates tensions within the adolescent even as it brings frustrations for the parents. How does one make the leap from dependent to dependable, from reactionary to responsible? And will religious faith survive, go stagnant, or flourish through these changing roles and identities?

Two recent sociological studies reveal important insights about LDS youth and their generational culture. One is by non-Mormon scholars Christian Smith, a professor of sociology and director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at Notre Dame, and Patricia Snell, a doctoral student and assistant director of the center. The other is by BYU scholars Bruce Chadwick (emeritus professor of sociology), Brent Top (professor of Church history), and Richard McClendon (associate director of Institutional Assessment and Analysis). Parents, educators, and adult leaders of LDS youth would all benefit from reading them.

While focusing on young people of varying religious traditions and levels of religious participation, *Souls in Transition* introduces readers to the values, behaviors, and larger culture of young people in the United States, statistically comparing them by denomination. The book is a follow-up to *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), a book Smith co-wrote with Melina Lundquist Denton, which reported on the ongoing National Study of Youth and Religion, a longitudinal study involving 3,290 phone interviews and 267 personal interviews in forty-five states which tracked the faith and practice of thirteen-through-seventeen-year-olds surveyed between 2001 and 2005. *Souls in Transition* looks at the same youngsters, now ages eighteen through twenty-three, as they transition into adulthood, a period characterized by complexity, confusion, and instability.

The term used in scholarly literature to describe this demographic—those between eighteen and twenty-nine—is “emerging adults.” Perhaps as a sign of my own encroaching codgerdom, however, I was sometimes tempted to place a question mark after

the “emerging” or scare quotes around the “adult,” as these young people appear to prolong the teenage years into adulthood by postponing careers, marriage, and family; avoiding most civic responsibility and political service; and aimlessly drifting in casual group relationships.

Social changes over the past few decades—an increasingly competitive world economy, an unstable job market, and the growing need for advanced educational training—may explain much of this generational drifting. Despite these changes, Smith and Snell note that, in general, these emerging adults are no less believing than previous generations but in practice have little use for organized religion.

The de facto religion of this generation, as Smith labeled it in *Soul Searching* and as it continues to manifest itself in the lives of these youth five years later, is “moralistic therapeutic deism” (MTD). A sort of civic religion, MTD incorporates the beliefs that God exists, that it is important to be kind to each other, that our ultimate goal should be personal happiness, that God is seldom personally involved in individual lives, and that the good go to heaven when they die (154–56). MTD results, Smith and Snell believe, from emerging adults having largely absorbed the greater societal beliefs in individualism, multiculturalism, and relativism to the point that they see little difference among various religious denominations and have little use for organized religion beyond teaching a basic code of conduct that, once learned, renders religious practice obsolete.

Within this generational worldview, Smith and Snell note “considerable diversity” (294) that roughly breaks down into six typical categories of religious inclination. First, “committed traditionalists” (15 percent of those surveyed) are devoted to and practice their particular religious tradition. Second, “selective adherents” (30 percent) believe and practice some parts of their religious tradition but ignore others. Third, the “spiritually open” (15 percent) are uncommitted to a religious tradition but are receptive to and somewhat interested in spiritual or religious ideas. Fourth, the “religiously indifferent” (25 percent) neither practice nor oppose any religious tradition. Fifth, the “religiously disconnected” (5 percent) have little or no contact or association with re-

ligious people, ideas, or groups. And finally, the “irreligious” (10 percent) are skeptical of or reject religion in general.

Unlike *Souls in Transition*, Chadwick, Top, and McClendon’s work focuses specifically on LDS youth and reports on various surveys conducted between 1990 and 2004. Thus, the data are a minimum of six years old; and unlike the NSYR study, these are not surveys that track the same individuals over the course of time. One set of data derives from questionnaires sent to LDS high school students in six regions: suburban Utah County; rural Castle Dale, Utah; the East Coast; the Pacific Northwest; Great Britain, and Mexico. Interestingly, strong correlations appear among the youth in all these regions, and the authors note that, regardless of culture, “active LDS youth [are] engaged in much less antisocial or immoral behavior than less-active youth” (5). The book also incorporates data from surveys of 1,000 men and 500 women who had returned from LDS missions and 380 men who had not served missions; interviews with fifty unwed mothers in Utah County; and students at BYU-Provo, BYU-Idaho, and BYU-Hawaii. Unfortunately, a strong bias appears in many of these surveys: inactive and disaffected LDS members were much less likely to participate. Nevertheless, the authors are still able to make some valid generalizations about the religiosity of LDS youth.

After an introductory chapter explaining the dimensions of religious belief surveyed in later chapters, Chapter 2 analyzes data from the high school students, BYU students, returned missionaries, and non-missionaries, comparing the findings with similar data from national studies to juxtapose the religious beliefs and practices of LDS youth and those of their non-Mormon peers. Chapters 3 through 6 are based primarily on the surveys of the high school students and focus on delinquency, education, self-esteem, and “sexual purity.” The authors incorporate data from the surveys of returned missionaries and non-missionaries into the chapter on education, and they fold the responses from the interviews with unwed mothers into the chapter on sexual behavior.

In Chapter 7, the authors look at the dating and marriage practices of BYU students, compared with those of a nationwide survey of graduating seniors. I found this to be the least insightful chapter, since BYU students are already a self-selected group and are not exactly comparable to all graduating high school students. The re-

sults of these particular surveys are, in my opinion, quite predictable, with BYU students hanging out and hooking up less, dating more, and being more concerned about marriage. In Chapters 8, 9, and 10, the authors look at family life (both the demographics and dynamics), the long-term effects of missionary service, and mental health by examining data from a 1999 survey of men and women who had completed missions two, five, ten, and seventeen years earlier. They compare these data to a 2000 survey of LDS men and women who did not serve missions as well as relevant national surveys. Unfortunately, the data from the survey of non-missionaries are the most strongly biased in the book, due to the low response rate (12 percent of men and 31 percent of the women). As the authors note, “Those who had physically and emotionally withdrawn from the Church are vastly underrepresented” (343).

Despite these deficiencies, however, the book’s statistical analyses are rigorous, the reporting is honest and open, and the results are insightful and revealing. *Shield of Faith* is a fine work of scholarship. While the authors are eager to point out the many places where LDS youth are doing better than their non-LDS peers, they are also candid about places where LDS youth are falling short. Accessible to the layperson and written for a general LDS audience, the book nevertheless lays out the data and methodology in a meticulous and scholarly fashion.

Both *Souls in Transition* and *Shield of Faith* reveal some very good news about LDS youth; however, it is the BYU volume that reveals the group’s most significant challenges. Both books suggest changes we might make in our culture, offer comfort and advice to parents, and provide encouragement for young people to remain committed to their faith.

Souls in Transition provides abundant good news about LDS youth. Mormons had a higher retention rate than any other denomination as young people transitioned into adulthood, with 72 percent of the LDS survey participants self-identifying as LDS five years later (109). A majority (59 percent) say their faith is “very important” to them, which ranks LDS youth just below black Protestants (72 percent) and just above conservative Protestants (57 percent) (113). LDS youth have the highest rates of church attendance (60 percent), personal prayer (54 percent), Sabbath observance (71 percent), and daily scripture reading (23 percent). They

exhibited somewhat fewer risky behaviors like substance abuse or premarital sex (258). They are less likely to doubt God's existence and have fewer doubts about religion in general (120, 124). They are more likely to be "committed traditionalists"; and perhaps most fortunately, they are actually more likely to become *more* religious rather than less religious during the difficult transition to adulthood (166, 126). Yet despite the number of traditionalists, LDS youth are less conflicted about evolution than their conservative Christian peers, with 53 percent believing that God created the world through evolutionary processes (122).

Shield of Faith offers much of the same good news and more. It shows that LDS youth have a high level of commitment to publicly and privately practicing their religion (32). They exhibit lower delinquency levels than their non-Mormon peers (74). They have a dramatically lower rate of premarital sex—11 percent for boys versus 58 percent for boys nationally; 19 percent for girls versus 59 percent for girls nationally (201). Activity rates of LDS youth correlate with higher academic achievement (135). Male returned missionaries are more likely to marry, avoid divorce, gain a higher education, have a higher socioeconomic standard, and remain active in the Church than those who do not go on missions (265–92). Similar results are reported for female returned missionaries, except that the likelihood of their not marrying is statistically the same as the national average. (This finding may be skewed, however, since, as the authors acknowledge, the data from non-missionaries are selective.)

Of particular interest in light of several studies that have noted a higher rate of antidepressant consumption in Utah, the researchers found no evidence that LDS members experience depression at a higher rate than others in the United States and that "those with higher private religious behavior were less likely to experience depression" (311–12). However, since the data pool surveyed was relatively young—returned missionaries who had been home for two, five, ten, and seventeen years and a group of non-missionaries of similar ages—this study may not be focusing on a demographic that experiences depression at a higher rate.

One weakness of *Shield of Faith* is that the authors fail to note whether something like Smith's moralistic therapeutic deism exists for LDS emerging adults. I believe something very much like

it is found in the culture, and I also believe that the fact LDS youth are less conflicted about evolution than their similarly conservative peers suggests that they may be absorbing something from the mainstream culture that conservative Protestants are resisting—that they are more accepting of science, technology, and change. Perhaps we can speak of Mormon moral therapeutic deism and look to cultural changes affecting our youth as a sign. Perhaps young Mormon moral therapeutic deists have a greater acceptance of science, which may, in turn, lead them to encounter less cognitive dissonance as they enter college and discover other theories that seem to conflict with religion. As they absorb other elements of MTD from the broader culture, it may also lead LDS emerging adults to be less concerned with whether birth control is taboo or whether gay marriage is wrong. Likewise, they may come to look to their leaders with a more critical appreciation for their words, believing that sometimes a prophet speaks as a prophet, and sometimes he speaks as a man. They may come to see a need for a greater role for women in the Church.

Furthermore, it may lead some to downplay the belief that the LDS Church is the one and only true church on the earth. We may expect to see more young Mormons taking the buffet-table approach to religion, selecting the parts of their own tradition that work for them, rejecting others, and incorporating ideas and practices from other religious faiths to create a sort of designer faith for the individual. It is also tempting to speculate that, if more substantial data were available from the survey of non-missionaries, MTD might account for much of the disaffection from the Church.

But there is also bad news in these surveys, most of it found in the BYU-published *Shield of Faith*. While LDS youth are involved in fewer status offenses like underage drinking and smoking, they are just as frequently involved in school fights, property offenses like shoplifting and theft, and cheating on exams (87, 98, 100). The authors note: “It is disturbing that 10 percent of the LDS young men and 7 percent of the young women admit, or perhaps brag, that they have physically hurt someone so seriously that they required medical attention from a doctor. It is disturbing that over 5 percent of the boys and about 2 percent of the girls claim they

have used a weapon like a gun, knife, or club in their attacks on other students” (83).

Less disturbing but equally surprising is that only 30 percent of LDS young men serve missions nationwide (15) and that fewer than half of the young men who do not serve missions remain active in the Church (55). It is not surprising but sad to discover that young women report lower feelings of self-esteem than young men (170–71) and that their church attendance is somewhat lower than that of young men (33). Even sadder is the finding that LDS young women are more sexually active than LDS young men (9). Startlingly, the primary reasons they give for losing their virginity are drifting into it (“it just happened,” 48 percent), feeling pressured (either “coerced or raped,” 25 percent), or hoping it would strengthen a relationship with a boy (17 percent). The authors note the tragedy that, of the 45 LDS unwed mothers surveyed, “all but one initiated sexual activity for reasons other than their own sexual feelings” and express alarm that many LDS young women “confused sex with affection, acceptance, and belonging” (212). Finally, despite the encouraging statistics showing LDS youth outdoing the youth of other denominations, it is sad that we are losing over a fourth of our young people, quite likely more, as they mature into adulthood.

These studies suggest several institutional and cultural changes we might make to help our youth transition to adulthood. First, it appears that we need to broaden our definition of “morality” in LDS culture. LDS youth are certainly getting the message from parents, Church leaders, and Church educators that sexual purity is important. They are, for the most part, doing an admirable job of saving sex for marriage. However, the fact that a not-insignificant portion of these same young people do not see cheating, fighting, bullying, shoplifting, and theft as integral to a moral life suggests that we are failing them in serious ways. Morality is about right conduct, not just sexual behavior.

Given a broader view of morality, we would perhaps also lose the close connection many LDS youth see between the Church and conservative politics. Unaddressed in either of these two studies but a subject of a growing body of research, as Robert Putnam and David Campbell have noted, is the fact that an increasing number of religiously disaffected youth “have been alien-

ated from organized religion by its increasingly conservative politics.”¹ The widespread resistance to the LDS Church activities in the political world of California’s Proposition 22 and Proposition 8 and the divisions that it caused in families and congregations is evidence, I believe, that the youth of today do not universally think the same way their parents did on these issues. Second, *Shield of Faith* suggests that it might be advantageous to encourage more of our youth to serve missions. Recent rhetoric about “raising the bar” for LDS missionaries may have left some young people feeling that missionary service is either too demanding for them or more “optional” than it was in the day of President Spencer W. Kimball’s “every young man should serve a mission.” With the strong positive effects of missionary service, whether direct or indirect, being so pervasive and extended, encompassing spiritual faith, emotional health, educational achievement, and marital success, it seems apparent that we should strive to get every young person, male and female, to serve a mission. However, the fact that 70 percent of our young men do not serve missions (and over half of that 70 percent drop out of Church participation) suggests that we might need alternate forms of missionary service that will accommodate more young people or special ecclesiastical ministering to foster faith in those who do not serve.

It also seems clear that our young women need more than they are currently getting in their Young Women’s programs and singles wards. The fact that their Church attendance lags, that their self-esteem droops, and that they feel pressured to have sex (it’s unclear how much of that pressure is coming from LDS young men), suggests that there is a need for a stronger Young Women’s program and a larger role for young women within the Church. It also suggests that young women need to be taught about sexual purity in different ways than we do at present, ways that address, as Kathryn Soper has recently observed, the “psychological motivators” that may be primary for young women, rather than just the “physiological motivators,” which may be more salient to young men.²

Our culture might also want to downplay the frequent discussion of how “special” this generation of young people is. Summarizing a significant amount of social science research, Chadwick, Top, and McClendon suggest that efforts to promote self-esteem

may lead, not to higher achievement but to narcissism (167). They point out that it is as likely for a person with high self-esteem to be caught cheating as it is for that person not to cheat, or to bully rather than standing up for someone being bullied. Those with high self-esteem may actually be more prone to risky behaviors like drinking and drug abuse (166). In short, self-esteem is not the panacea that many educators and self-help gurus once thought it was. Our youth are frequently fed a diet of self-esteem-promoting pabulum about how special they are as a result of being born in the last days, belonging to “the one true Church,” or serving a mission. While Chadwick, Top, and McClendon note that self-esteem is somewhat lower for LDS youth than it is for their non-Mormon peers (169), I suspect, based on my interactions with LDS college students, that their spiritual self-esteem, their sense of religious superiority, may border on spiritual narcissism. I sense an increasing attitude that, because they are members of “the one true Church,” these students think they intuitively know everything there is to know about everything religious.

Finally, these studies suggest that our LDS singles wards may, in some ways, be counterproductive. At an age when religion should help these young people internalize their faith and become more adult by providing them with more service opportunities and responsibilities, we are moving them into wards where they can “hang out” but where they have little accountability or responsibility. Furthermore, I have personally seen how easy it is for young people to get lost between wards when they have two or three bishops who may be responsible for them. Here in Utah Valley, we often have student wards, singles wards, and family wards with overlapping boundaries and plenty of inactive or partly active youth.

Still, parents can take a great deal of hope in the findings of these studies. First, both books confirm that parents have a strong influence on their children, whether directly or indirectly, into adulthood. Many researchers have in recent years made light of parental influence on teens, arguing that peer groups have a larger impact. But as Smith and Snell note, “Religious commitments and orientations of most people appear to be set early in life and very likely follow a consistent trajectory from that early formation through the adolescent and into the emerging adult

years” (247–48). The religious lives of parents, coupled with social connections within the congregation, lead to personal religious beliefs and practices that tend to remain throughout life. The role of parents is vital, but it’s a role of helping the young person internalize faith rather than coercing it. Chadwick, Top, and McCleendon note, for example, that the greatest influences on whether a young person will have premarital sex are public religious practice (church attendance), peer pressure, pornography (for boys only), and “parental regulation” (setting rules, ensuring compliance, and administering discipline) (205, 207, 213). As the authors put it, “Parents need to foster in their teenage children the internalization of beliefs, opinions, principles, values, and attitudes that are consistent with gospel and societal values” (113). Both studies certainly support Church teachings urging parents to hold regular family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening.

Nevertheless, statistics cannot predict an individual’s behavior, and some LDS youth will stray from the faith. It’s hard for parents to not feel responsible, feel as if they have failed, or look back with regret on what they might have done differently. The Mormon ideal of righteous eternal families can make such remorse even more painful. Smith and Snell offer hope: “When parents are seriously religious, want their children to be seriously religious, and have raised them to be so, the emerging adults’ desire to have a good connection with their parents tends to encourage them to continue to affirm and practice their religious faith, even if perhaps in a less intense way” (85–86). Furthermore, as emerging adults move into the stability of adult life (or, alternatively, if their lives disintegrate into broken relationships, drugs, or sexual license), the stability of religion often becomes more attractive (84–85). Ultimately, parents may take additional comfort in the essential optimism of Mormon theology—its prospect of near-universal salvation (as opposed to exaltation) and near-universal eternal reward.

Finally, both of these studies present objective encouragement to young people to stick with their religion. Numerous practical values derive from maintaining a religious life, including higher academic achievement, higher self esteem, lower rates of depression, marital stability, closer family relationships, fewer

risky behaviors, healthier lifestyles, and more satisfaction in life. As Smith and Snell put it, “Emerging adult religion—whatever its depth, character, or substance—correlates significantly with, and we think actually often acts as a causal influence producing, what most consider to be more positive outcomes in life” (297). Or in the words of Chadwick, Top, and McClendon, “religion matters” (321).

Notes

1. Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, “Walking Away from Church,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/oct/17/opinion/la-oe-1017-putnam-religion-20101017> (accessed November 4, 2010). The article discusses a point the authors make in their book *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010). While Putnam and Campbell do not rely on Smith and Snell’s work, they do cite it and share many of its conclusions.

2. Kathryn Soper, “Why Standards Night Is Substandard: Teaching Sexuality to the Young Women.” Patheos, September 15, 2010, <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Standards-Night-Is-Substandard-Teaching-Sexuality-to-the-Young-Women?offset=0&max=1> (accessed November 12, 2010). A wonderful resource for teaching young women about sexuality is the post by Lisa Butterworth, “13 Articles of Healthy Chastity,” *Feminist Mormon Housewives*, November 3, 2010, <http://www.feministmormonhousewives.org/?p=3354> (accessed November 12, 2010).

That the Glory of God Might Be Manifest

W. Paul Reeve

Note: W. Paul Reeve delivered this address on February 10, 2007, in the Hurricane Utah Ninth Ward, at the funeral of his sister, Roene Reeve.

Introduction

Roene Reeve was born December 21, 1946, in Hurricane, Utah, to Ora and Leo Reeve. She was welcomed into the family by her two older brothers, Stephen and David. Unknown to the doctor who delivered her, Roene was born with Rh disease. A postnatal blood transfusion prevents the disease from having negative consequences, but the doctor in Roene's case was unaware of these procedures, and she went undiagnosed. By the time Ora and Leo took her to a specialist in Salt Lake City, it was too late. She was severely handicapped, both mentally and physically. When Roene was older, doctors recommended that she be institutionalized at the Utah State Hospital in American Fork. After only one month, Ora could not stand to be away from Roene and brought her home.

Roene struggled to walk; her steps were laborious, awkward, and marked by frequent falls. She nonetheless walked unaided for most of her life and enjoyed a significant amount of independence. She competed for several years in running events in the Special Olympics and was very proud of the medals she won. She worked and learned for over twenty years at Dixie Advantages Development, an outreach program for people with special needs. She especially enjoyed the paycheck she received for her work at various jobs, including reshelving videos at a movie store and custodial work at a food market.

She struggled to talk. Her vocal cords were paralyzed and she managed to make only incoherent sounds, although those with

trained ears could recognize the few words she honed: “Mom,” “Dad,” “Paul,” “James,” “Stephen,” “David,” and “I love you.” Because of her spastic condition, sign language was not much help either. She learned a few signs, but could not control her hands enough to be effective. She learned to write letters and could copy written words onto a piece of paper, but a short note might take her an hour or more to complete. Among my prized possessions is a handwritten “I love you” note from Roene. Mostly she communicated spirit to spirit. Doctors suggested that she was intellectually stuck at a third-grade level. Those who knew her recognized a wisdom and inner strength far beyond that.

When Roene was eleven years old her mother, Ora, passed away during an operation at the Mayo Clinic for arthritis. The following year our dad, Leo, married my mom, Ruth Nelson, a woman fifteen years younger than he. In 1966 our brother David was shot and killed in the Vietnam War. James was born the following year, and I followed thirteen months later in July 1968, when Roene was twenty-one. Our father passed away in 2003. In 2005, our oldest brother, Stephen, was killed in a horse riding accident. By the time Roene was fifty-eight years old, she had witnessed the funerals of her entire “first family,” a tragic irony that no one could have predicted.

Roene’s health deteriorated over the last five years of her life. She relied more and more upon a wheelchair for mobility and struggled to stand. My mom was Roene’s primary caregiver for the majority of Roene’s life; but after she fell with Roene in the bathroom, we made the agonizing decision to place Roene in a care facility. To our relief, she enjoyed her time there and especially liked teasing the nurses and other workers. About six months later in late January 2007, Roene suffered a severe stroke and fell into a coma. On February 1, when I arrived at her bedside with my family, her breathing was heavy and erratic and we sensed that death was close. We all had the privilege of hugging her and kissing her good-bye. Four hours after we arrived, I held Roene’s hand as she slipped through the veil into the waiting arms of her brothers, mom, and dad. What follows is the talk I gave at her funeral. The chapel was crowded and mourners spilled into the overflow, a testament to the vast number of lives that Roene touched in her sixty-year sojourn.

* * *

Roene was twenty-one when I was born. I grew up with her in my family. The people with whom we associated treated her no differently than any other member of my family. As a result, it took some time before I realized that Roene was different.

When I was eight or nine, Roene went to visit Aunt Nona and Aunt Jennie, two of her favorite friends. I was allowed to tag along. After our visit, we were walking home and passed one of the rental houses in the neighborhood. Some new people had moved in who didn't know Roene. Their kids were playing in the yard and started to make fun of the way Roene walked. At first she didn't notice. Then she realized what they were doing. She got mad and started to yell at them. This only seemed to encourage more taunts. I yelled at them, too, and told them to stop. Roene started to cry. I was filled with an overwhelming desire to protect my sister, but I didn't quite know how to go about it. What followed was an episode of what I like to justify today as righteous rock throwing.

We eventually made it home safely; but perhaps for the first time, I realized that some people might view Roene as different. This episode introduced me to the potential to belittle and make fun of differences, a potential that lies dormant within all of us. When we perceive differences in others, it can be easy to amplify the differences and ignore the commonalities. It can be easy to focus on the negative and then entrench ourselves behind walls of separation. Roene, however, called us out from behind our walls and helped us to recognize the divinity that resides in each of us, despite our differences.

This episode, and Roene's life as a whole, also raise fundamental questions about the true nature of God. How could He be a loving and kind God and still allow Roene to be born into such a limited and sometimes painful body? It seems that such questions have been around for a long time. In John 9:10-13 we read the following, which I've modified a bit to fit Roene's circumstances:

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a woman which was physically and mentally handicapped from her birth.

And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this woman, or her parents, that she was born handicapped?

Jesus answered, Neither hath this woman sinned, nor her parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in her.

To me, these verses from John speak directly to Roene. They give hope, purpose, and meaning to an otherwise seemingly hopeless, purposeless, and meaningless existence.

Like Jesus's disciples, it may be easy to answer our questions about the true nature of God by looking at people who are different from us and then describing their differences as a result of sin, or as evidence of God's punishment, or even as proof of a curse. Jesus, however, beckons us away from such overly simplistic and negative explanations. He calls us to view our differences through a more complex and exalted lens. Jesus tells us that differences are, in fact, a way to manifest the works of God. Jesus's reply to his disciples suggests that one way of viewing our differences is as a calling not as a curse.¹

I'd like to explore with you three ways that Roene's life can lead us to this same conclusion. First, her calling, as Jesus put it, was to manifest the works of God in her life. One of the most profound ways that I believe Roene fulfilled her calling is through each one of you here today, her community of caregivers. One of the reasons that the rock-throwing episode stands out to me is because it was such an anomaly, the exception to the rule. The rule was the way the people in this room treated her. You hugged her and kissed her, talked with her, joked with her, visited her, remembered her birthday, and treated her in every respect in Christlike ways. The fruits of your conversion to Jesus were manifest in the way you treated my sister. I thank you for looking past her differences to see the divine embedded deeply within her soul.

I think all of us fondly remember Roene bearing her testimony in church on fast Sundays from this very pulpit. One particular Sunday stands out to me. Roene bore her testimony, and then Mabel Klimbman's daughter, Joyce Beagly, stood up. Joyce told the congregation that, for a very long time, when Roene would bear her testimony, Joyce would pray and ask Heavenly Father to please let her understand what Roene was saying. On this particular Sunday she received an answer, but not in the way she

expected. She said that the Spirit whispered to her, “It doesn’t matter that *you* understand. *I* understand and know her.”

I was touched that someone cared enough to try to understand my sister. I was touched that God cared enough to answer. It made me feel proud that Roene was willing to testify. Thus, it was through you, her community of caregivers, that I first began to see the works of God manifest in my sister. As you fulfilled your baptismal covenants, you taught me real and practical ways to comfort those who stand in need of comfort. You helped me to see Roene’s life as a calling, not a curse.

The second aspect of Roene’s calling was as a daughter of God, a celestial being in a painfully terrestrial body. Viewing Roene as a child of God helps me in turn to view others as God’s children also. Roene helps me to look for the works of God manifest all around me in the vast diversity of God’s creations.

Roene reminds me of the wonderfully progressive, open, and even liberal doctrine that Elder M. Russell Ballard calls “the doctrine of inclusion.” God excludes no one from his invitation to come unto Christ. Elder Ballard traces this doctrine to the Savior himself who set the standard in the parable of the Good Samaritan. In that parable, the Samaritan was certainly the most justified in passing the beaten Jewish man on the other side of the road. After all, the Jews despised the Samaritans.² But, isn’t that the point of the parable? Isn’t Jesus telling us that our neighbors are the people we might feel most justified in passing by on the road to Jericho without stopping to help? I have no doubt that the people in this congregation would have stopped had we seen Roene lying on the road to Jericho. Like the Good Samaritan, we would have had compassion upon her, bound up her wounds, and taken her to an inn. I know the people in this room would have done so, because for the last sixty years you’ve done just that for my sister. And I honor my mother as chief among us in this regard.

But I think that Roene’s calling is even greater than that. If we are to truly see the works of God manifest in Roene’s life, then we must respond when Jesus calls us to reach beyond ourselves to even greater acts of Christian love. What if the person who fell among thieves was black, or gay, an illegal immigrant, a Muslim, or worse still an outsider who has moved to Hurricane and is a

member of another faith? How willing, in other words, are we to see the divine, not just in Roene, but in all of God's children?

I am convinced that the political, racial, social, economic, and religious diversity that permeates our world is a part of our earthly test. Certainly God could have created Roene whole, without a handicap. He also could have created a world without racial, social, economic, and religious differences. Instead He created us in a wonderful mix of sizes, shapes, and colors, and then He sent his prophets to teach us to get along. How sad He must be at our failures to do so.

President Gordon B. Hinckley admonished Latter-day Saints: "We cannot become arrogant. We cannot become self-righteous. We cannot become smug or egotistical. We must reach out to all mankind. They are all sons and daughters of God our Eternal Father, and He will hold us accountable for what we do concerning them."³ In short, let us use our ability to recognize the divinity in Roene as a catalyst to see the divinity in all of God's children.

Roene's third calling, as I see it, is to witness of the promises of Jesus Christ to us all. In that light, I would suggest that we are gathered here today, not to mourn the passing of Roene, but to glory in Jesus. It is largely because of Roene that I look forward with hope and anticipation to the resurrection. I look forward to the day that I can talk with her, run with her, and kiss her glorified immortal cheek. Through Jesus, I know I'll have my chance to do so.

I testify that God's promises are sure. I believe that one of Roene's callings was to testify of that as well. After sixty years, I believe she fulfilled her callings well. I'm grateful for her release.

I'd like to close with this poem that I wrote for her:

Today I Walked with an Angel

Today I walked with an angel
 down a pain-filled stony path
 her cherubic immortality
 weighed down in mortal wrath
 her steps erratic and heavy—
 trapped in the body of earthly beings
 graceless, bruised, and broken,
 an angel without wings.

Today I listened to a prophetess
 reach deep within her soul
yearning to tell the world
the truths she came to know
her sermon halting and labored
 trapped in mortal speech—
stumbling, ill-formed words
 a prophetess who cannot preach.

Today I kissed the cheek of a goddess
 wrinkled with age and pain
her smile-warmed face,
 divine, celestial, plain
arthritic hands and knees
 held captive to flesh and bone—
tear-streaked and tired,
 a goddess without a throne.

Tomorrow I'll dance with my angel
 in celestial courts on high
tomorrow I'll listen to my prophetess
 witness, preach, testify
tomorrow I'll kiss her godly cheeks
 and survey her worlds unknown
tomorrow we'll worship together
 at Christ's exalted throne.

Notes

1. I am indebted and grateful to Darius Gray for sharing this concept with me.
2. M. Russell Ballard, "The Doctrine of Inclusion," *Ensign*, November 2001, 35–38.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Living in the Fullness of Times," *Ensign*, November 2001, 6.

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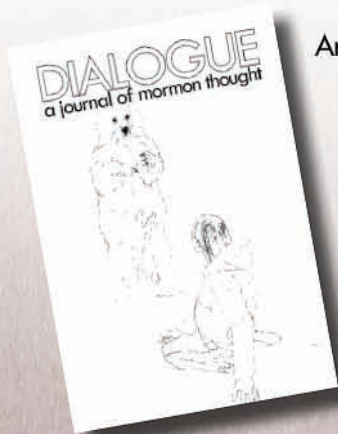
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