

DIALOGUE

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George Edward Anderson
Sacred Grove
1907, photograph
Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections,
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WHY THE PROPHET IS A PUZZLE: THE CHALLENGES OF USING PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER AND MOTIVATION OF JOSEPH SMITH, JR.

Lawrence Foster

In 1945 Fawn McKay Brodie, a niece of David O. McKay, a Mormon General Authority and later president of the LDS Church, published a thoroughly researched, brilliantly written, and highly controversial biography of Joseph Smith Jr., entitled *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*. Although Brodie was eventually excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because of the disturbing questions her book raised for believing Mormons, her biography went on to become arguably the single most influential work of Mormon historical scholarship in the twentieth century—and certainly the best-known. Astonishingly, *No Man Knows My History* remained in print in a hardbound edition (with a final “Supplement” added in 1971) for a full fifty years until 1995, when its hardbound sales had decreased sufficiently that Knopf finally brought out the book in a paperbound edition. As Fawn Brodie flamboyantly portrayed the Mormon prophet, he was an enigma flinging down a challenge to his future biographers when he declared, in a funeral address before thousands of followers in Mormon Nauvoo several months before his murder in 1844, “You don’t know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it; I shall

never understand it. . . . If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself.”¹

In 1973 the non-Mormon historian Jan Shipps took up the Mormon prophet’s challenge in “The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith,” a paper presented at the first conference of the John Whitmer Historical Association that subsequently appeared as the lead article in the first issue of the new *Journal of Mormon History* in 1974.² Shipps urged Mormon historians to begin to move beyond the two highly polarized and seemingly incompatible perspectives that had previously dominated almost all treatments of the Mormon prophet. On the one hand, believing Mormons typically portrayed Joseph Smith as God’s chosen prophet who could do no wrong. On the other hand, non-Mormon writers typically described him as a highly manipulative and psychologically disturbed

1. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), vii. Brodie’s efforts to use psychological theory to help explain Joseph Smith’s personality and motivation are found in the 1971 “Supplement” to her original 1945 biography (405–25). Weaknesses in Brodie’s use of psychological theory are discussed in Charles L. Cohen, “No Man Knows My Psychology: Fawn Brodie, Joseph Smith, and Psychoanalysis,” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 1 (2005): 55–78. Newell G. Bringhurst, *Fawn McKay Brodie: A Biographer’s Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999) provides her biography, while the continuing impact that *No Man Knows My History* has had on Mormon historical studies is explored in the essays in Newell G. Bringhurst, ed., *Reconsidering No Man Knows My History: Fawn M. Brodie and Joseph Smith in Retrospect* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996). Brodie’s later biographies of Thaddeus Stevens, Sir Richard Burton, and Thomas Jefferson also highlight her continuing fascination with larger-than-life public figures, as well as her flair for ferreting out controversial details about their private lives.

2. Jan Shipps, “The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith,” *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 3–20, reprinted with fourteen other essays about Joseph Smith’s psychological dynamics and prophetic motivation in Bryan Waterman, ed., *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999).

scoundrel. Shipps suggested, instead, that any credible historical treatment of the Mormon prophet must take him as a whole human being and see him in all his complexity as a “harmonious human multitude,” as Carl Van Doren famously characterized Benjamin Franklin.³

Although Shipps did not elaborate on precisely *how* such a holistic effort to understand Joseph Smith might best proceed, this article will explore how one of the most open-ended psychological interpretations of Smith’s prophetic leadership and motivation might contribute to better understanding the trajectory of this extraordinarily talented and conflicted individual whose life has so deeply impacted the religious movement he founded and, increasingly, the larger world.⁴

|

Understanding the personality, psychological dynamics, and motivation of any human being is a daunting task, but to comprehend the nature of genius—especially the elusive and controversial nature of religious genius—is even more challenging. The basis for great creativity in fields such as art, science, or politics has been a subject of extensive investigation

3. Shipps, “The Prophet Puzzle,” 19.

4. The literature by and about Joseph Smith Jr. is vast and often highly polemical because both Mormons and non-Mormons view him as the most important figure for understanding the early development and significance of the Mormon movement. For treatments before 1997, see James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Studies in Mormon History, 1830–1997: An Indexed Bibliography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 927–44. The ambitious Joseph Smith Papers editorial and publication project—currently underway under the auspices of the Office of the Historian of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is anticipated to include two dozen or more volumes. In the meantime, B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930) remains an important source despite its limitations. Richard L. Bushman’s *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) supplements, updates, qualifies, and in certain respects supersedes Brodie’s pioneering study, *No Man Knows My History*.

that has not led to any clear and generally agreed-upon criteria for assessing and explaining such creativity. Religious genius—especially the prophetic leadership of founders of new religious movements—has been even more difficult to evaluate with openness and objectivity. A major reason is that those who revere their founding religious prophets often unrealistically assume that the credibility of the entire belief system their prophet-founder promulgated depends upon the prophet's personal character having been exemplary and beyond reproach.

William James and other scholars have argued that great religious creativity typically begins with a problem or complex set of problems that the future prophet finds deeply disturbing. To use psychological jargon, "cognitive dissonance" is present. Individuals who eventually become prophets tend to find such dissonance more disturbing than their more normal contemporaries do. Prophets thus seek with unusual intensity to try to make sense of both their personal lives and their world. The dissonance experienced by religious geniuses—as opposed to geniuses in other fields such as art, science, or politics—also focuses with special intensity on value conflicts and inconsistencies. And once religious geniuses find a way to resolve their own inner conflicts, they come to view the approach that works for them as being universally valid for others as well. William James aptly comments: "[W]hen a superior intellect and a psychopathic temperament coalesce . . . in the same individual, we have the best possible condition for the kind of effective genius that gets into the biographical dictionaries. Such men do not remain mere critics and understanders with their intellect. Their ideas possess them, they inflict them, for better or worse, upon their companions or their age."⁵ In his essay "The Prophet," the anthropologist Kenelm Burridge further suggests: "It is not appropriate to think of

5. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: New American Library, 1958 [1902]), 36. The first chapter, "Religion and Neurology" (21–38), is especially insightful. It brilliantly explores the complexities of religious experiences and debunks popular reductionist treatments of religious genius. Charles Taylor, *Varieties of Religion*

a prophet as reduced in size to a schizophrenic or a paranoid, someone mentally sick. In relation to those to whom he speaks, a prophet is necessarily corrupted by his larger experience. He is an 'outsider', an odd one, extraordinary. Nevertheless, he specifically attempts to initiate, both in himself as well as in others, a process of moral regeneration."⁶

The line between health and illness, between normal mood swings and those that might be viewed as extreme, is a very fine one indeed. It is often difficult for a contemporary psychiatrist who has worked closely with a patient to make an accurate diagnosis. To develop a nuanced psychological understanding of those who are long dead, even if their lives are extensively documented, is a far more difficult and speculative endeavor. Nonetheless, the judicious use of psychological perspectives may significantly enhance our understanding of influential individuals and their contributions. For example, Joshua Wolf Shenk's study *Lincoln's Melancholy: How Depression Challenged a President and Fueled His Greatness* draws upon both nineteenth-century and modern understandings of depression to show how Lincoln, gradually and with great effort, learned to harness his profound "melancholy" in ways that allowed him to address, creatively and effectively, the most severe threat the United States has ever faced to its survival as a unified nation. Perhaps Shenk's greatest contribution has been to demonstrate how the skillful use of psychological insights can increase rather than decrease our appreciation of prominent historical figures and their achievements.⁷ Similarly, although Joseph Smith's complex and at times problematic personality could prove challenging, both to

Today: William James Revisited (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002) assesses the book's continuing influence and importance.

6. Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 162.

7. Joshua Wolf Shenk in *Lincoln's Melancholy: How Depression Challenged a President and Fueled His Greatness* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 211–45 also discusses how his methodology relates to previous scholarly efforts to understand the significance of Lincoln's continuing struggles with depression.

himself and to his followers, his internal contradictions and struggles to overcome them may have helped fuel his dynamism and success as a religious prophet.

I need to make three additional points before discussing one of the most compelling psychological approaches for understanding how Joseph Smith's personality impacted his life and prophetic career. First, I believe that no single psychological framework, especially if rigidly applied, can fully explain Joseph Smith's dynamic mental processes or why he did what he did throughout his larger-than-life career. For example, in *The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr. and the Dissociated Mind*, the surgeon William D. Morain has argued, in a brilliant but to my mind ultimately unconvincingly Freudian analysis, that the severe trauma young Joseph experienced when he went through major leg surgery without anesthesia at about the age of seven and then suffered a prolonged and difficult recovery period lasting several years somehow can explain *all* of his psychological characteristics and later prophetic activities as an adult.⁸

8. William D. Morain in *The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr. and the Dissociated Mind* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 2005) attributes too much importance to this one traumatic event. Although Robert D. Anderson shares Morain's view that young Joseph's traumatic leg surgery significantly impacted his psychological development and subsequent career, Anderson nevertheless opines that "a single event, even an overwhelming one, does not make a prophet." *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), xiii. Anderson's study emphasizes the conflicted internal dynamics within the Smith family and young Joseph's narcissism. Yet Anderson's argument that the earliest sections of the Book of Mormon provide "a disguised version of Smith's life" also could be criticized for being speculative and reductionist. *Mind of Joseph Smith*, 65. For a thought-provoking assessment of the tensions within the Smith family, see Dan Vogel, "Joseph Smith's Family Dynamics," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 22 (2002): 51–74. Also see the documentary account by Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001). I am grateful to Dan Vogel for his thorough and insightful critique of an earlier draft of this article.

Equally unconvincing, in my opinion, is the other extreme position: that Joseph Smith can be credibly analyzed using *any* of a variety of different psychological approaches (just take your pick). This any-approach-will-work argument is illustrated by Terry Brink's pretentious 1976 *Journal of Mormon History* article entitled, "Joseph Smith: The Verdict of Depth Psychology."⁹ In the article, Brink purports to show how Joseph Smith's psychological dynamics might be analyzed using the approaches of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Erik Erikson. Brink naively concludes: "All of these schools of depth psychology reinforce the picture of Joseph Smith as a mentally healthy individual and recognize the important and positive role which religion played in his personality development."¹⁰ I believe that Brink's superficial genuflection toward an eclectic mishmash of psychological approaches does little to help us understand anything about Joseph Smith that we don't already know, or think we know.¹¹

Finally, I must emphasize that many Mormons see any psychological interpretation of Joseph Smith's actions and motives as unnecessary and inherently reductionistic. Most Latter-day Saints are convinced they can explain everything about Joseph Smith that needs explaining by acknowledging that his mission and revelations were divinely inspired.

9. T. L. Brink, "Joseph Smith: The Verdict of Depth Psychology," *Journal of Mormon History* 3 (1976): 73–83.

10. Brink, "Verdict of Depth Psychology," 83.

11. My criticism of Brink's article is not intended to deny the value of nuanced use of multiple analytical perspectives to try to understand an individual. In *Makers of Psychology: The Personal Factor* (New York: Insight Books, 1988), clinical psychologist Harvey Mindess critically yet sympathetically analyzes the lives and work of seven pioneering figures in psychology—Wilhelm Wundt, William James, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, B. F. Skinner, Carl Rogers, and Milton H. Erickson—arguing that each man's distinctive personality influenced the type of personality theory and therapeutic approach he developed. In his tour-de-force conclusion on pages 147–68, Mindess suggests how one of his clients might have been analyzed and treated differently by Freud, Jung, a behaviorist, Rogers, or Erickson—and then how he treated her himself.

While sophisticated Mormon scholars may accept that naturalistic factors may have influenced a particular action Joseph Smith took or might provide valuable insight into his personality or actions, most committed Latter-day Saints are convinced that all they really need to know is that, however strange or puzzling Smith's behavior may appear, he was simply following God's will for his prophet and his Church. Ironically, this view that believing Mormons hold as a matter of faith is at least as reductionist as the extreme counterarguments made by non-Mormons who casually dismiss Smith as a fraud. I believe that both Joseph Smith's supporters and detractors trivialize him by portraying him as either a stick-figure saint or a stick-figure villain instead of the complex, talented, and conflicted individual he actually was.

Just as Isaac Newton's many well-documented psychological quirks and eccentricities neither prove nor disprove the validity of his brilliant discoveries about celestial mechanics, so Joseph Smith's unusual personality characteristics neither prove nor disprove the validity of his religious insights, which ultimately remain beyond purely human proof or disproof. As William James noted in his classic study *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: "If there were such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm, it might well be that the neurotic temperament would furnish the chief condition of the requisite receptivity."¹²

The remainder of this article will discuss how one psychological approach might help us better understand the dynamics of Joseph Smith's often puzzling personality and actions in a way that could be seen as credible by both secular scholars and by sophisticated Latter-day Saints who accept the divine nature of his religious mission.

II

The most useful psychological framework I have found to try to understand Joseph Smith's prophetic motivation and dynamism is one that has been characteristic of many other leaders who have significantly

12. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 37.

impacted the world for good or ill. Stated most simply, the types of individuals we are talking about have a highly self-centered perspective. They see everything that happens in terms of how it impacts themselves; they believe that the way they see the world is the way others can and should see the world; and they manipulate others to achieve their own ends rather than viewing other individuals and their divergent goals empathically. Scholars use the term “narcissism” to describe this self-centered orientation. Initially all babies are highly narcissistic. They necessarily relate to the external world almost exclusively in terms of how the world impacts them personally. Yet as infants mature and become increasingly aware of the larger world and able to function more independently within it, they gradually realize that however much they may *want* or *expect* the world to revolve exclusively around them, in fact it does not. Mature adults thus eventually develop the ability to relate to others’ wants and needs empathically instead of simply relating to others in terms of their own needs and desires.¹³

13. I alluded to this approach in my first book, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), reprinted as *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 227–28. While seeking to take the measure of the founding prophets of the three millennial religious groups I studied—Ann Lee of the Shakers, John Humphrey Noyes of the Oneida Community, and Joseph Smith of the Mormons—I realized that all three individuals appeared to view the entire world as revolving around themselves. After they eventually managed to work out a satisfying way of resolving their own religious and sexual problems, they became convinced that the same approach that worked for each of them could provide a universally valid way of resolving everyone else’s problems too.

A *Calvin and Hobbes* cartoon humorously characterizes narcissism. Calvin says to Hobbes: “I’m at peace with the world. I’m completely serene.” “Why is that?” Hobbes asks. Calvin answers: “I’ve discovered my purpose in life. I know why I was put here and why everything exists.” “Oh really?” Hobbes replies skeptically. “Yes, I am here so everybody can do what I want.” “It’s nice to have that cleared up,” Hobbes responds dryly. Calvin concludes, “Once everybody accepts it, they’ll be serene too.”

Geniuses, however, often are highly intelligent *and* narcissistic individuals who become convinced that their unique insights or the particular ways they have resolved their personal problems can provide a universally valid way for others to solve their problems and understand the world. Narcissistic individuals may become convinced that the framework they have developed to explain the world is sufficient to account for *everything*—or at least everything of importance. This conviction can infuse their ideas with great emotional and analytical power. Yet because the insights of even the most brilliant individuals necessarily can only be a partial and incomplete representation of a more complex reality, when such insights are applied to the larger world, doing so may produce harmful or even disastrous results, especially if narcissistic individuals become powerful political or religious leaders.¹⁴

14. One example is Mao Zedong, who became one of the most creative—and destructive—leaders of the twentieth century. After leading a decades-long struggle that finally brought the communists to power over mainland China in 1949, Mao went on to preside over two of the worst man-made disasters in human history before his death in 1976. Mao's most destructive campaign was the misnamed "Great Leap Forward" between 1958 and 1962. It led to the largest man-made famine in human history, with famine-related deaths variously estimated at thirty, thirty-six, or forty-five million people. Mao's second disastrous campaign between 1965 and 1969, his Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, caused more than a million deaths and set the Chinese economy and educational system back at least a generation. See Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (New York: Free Press, 1977); Yang Jisheng, *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958–1962* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2008); Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–1962* (New York: Walker & Company, 2010); and Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

The detailed memoir by Mao's personal physician, Dr. Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, translated by Tai Hung-Chao (New York: Random House, 1994), describes Mao's narcissistic and bipolar personality characteristics. In addition to Mao's narcissistic unwillingness to trust even his closest advisers, his work and sleep schedules, which were not known beyond his

The concept of narcissism is more flexible and open-ended than many other psychological frameworks because narcissism refers to a certain personality type and does not necessarily imply that a person so diagnosed suffers from a mental illness or disorder, which can seem stigmatizing, dismissive, and reductionist. In addition, behavior that might initially suggest potential bipolar or manic-depressive tendencies—such as grandiosity, hypomania, or depression—may also occur in narcissistic individuals. Although my initial attempt to understand Joseph Smith's psychology in my 1993 article "The Psychology of Religious Genius" explored the possibility that his behavior could have been influenced by manic depression, I have subsequently concluded that the behavior I initially viewed as bipolar can better be understood, instead, as associated with Smith's narcissism.¹⁵

closest inner circle of advisers, were extremely erratic. Periods of manic activity could last up to thirty-six hours at a stretch without sleep, followed by as much as ten to twelve hours of such deep sleep that nothing could wake him. Mao also suffered lengthy bouts of depression, during which he remained largely in bed for months at a time.

15. In "The Psychology of Religious Genius: Joseph Smith and the Origins of New Religious Movements," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 1–22, I explored the suggestion of Mormon psychiatrist C. Jess Groesbeck that Joseph Smith might have exhibited manic-depressive tendencies. Robert D. Anderson, another Mormon psychiatrist, took sharp exceptions to this hypothesis, however, in the addendum to his "Toward an Introduction to a Psychobiography of Joseph Smith," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 268–72. Anderson wrote: "Here are some of the issues that the diagnosis of Bipolar Affective Disorder does not address: the results of an unstable and deprived childhood with many moves and periods of near-starvation; the results of a traumatic childhood surgery; the effects of being raised in a family with an alcoholic father, a mother predisposed to depression, and repeated failures and minimal esteem in the community; and the effect of being raised in a subculture of magical delusion, requiring deceit of self and others. I agree that Smith demonstrated grandiosity, but I see it as a progressive development going out of control toward the end of his life." Anderson continued: "Five years ago, paying attention to the recurrent depressive episodes in Joseph's mother and the life-long mental illness of his

In order to assess whether or not Joseph Smith displayed narcissistic tendencies, it is helpful first to understand some of the personality characteristics associated with narcissism. A starting point is the description in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), the so-called bible of modern psychiatry, about what it labels “narcissistic personality disorder.” Note that the DSM has been justly criticized because of its tendency to label behaviors it views as problematic as “disorders” or “illnesses,” even though milder forms of such behavior might fall well within the normal range of acceptable personality characteristics.¹⁶ Qualifying its use of the term “narcissistic personality disorder,” the DSM-5 notes: “Many highly successful individuals display personality traits that might be considered narcissistic. Only when those traits are inflexible, maladaptive, and persisting, and cause significant functional impairment or subjective distress do they constitute narcissistic personality disorder.”¹⁷ In this regard, I can’t help thinking of the Peanuts cartoon in which the hypercritical Lucy (of “Psychiatric-Care-Five-Cents” fame) hands Linus a scroll with a long list of his “faults,” to which he responds in exasperation, “These aren’t faults; these are character traits.”¹⁸

son [David Hyrum Smith], I seriously considered Bipolar II but abandoned it for the reasons given. Frankly I was sorry, for I would have liked to find an explanation for Smith’s later excesses that was out of his control. Other intellectuals in the Mormon world would understand this wish” (270–71).

16. For example, editions of the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* before 1987 characterized homosexuality as a “psychiatric disorder,” although more recent editions no longer do so. In *The Book of Woe: The DSM and the Unmaking of Psychiatry* (New York: Penguin, 2013), Gary Greenberg sharply criticizes the DSM and the psychiatric profession’s tendency to “medicalize” disruptive behaviors at the extreme limits of the spectrum of normal human variability.

17. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), 672, hereafter cited as DSM-5.

18. DSM-5, 646, states that its diagnostic approach “represents the categorical perspective that personality disorders are qualitatively different clinical

According to the description of “narcissistic personality disorder” in the most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*:

Individuals with this disorder have a grandiose sense of self-importance. They routinely overestimate their abilities and inflate their accomplishments, often appearing boastful and pretentious. They may blithely assume that others attribute the same value to their efforts and may be surprised when the praise they expect and feel they deserve is not forthcoming. Often implicit in the inflated judgment of their own accomplishments is an underestimation (devaluation) of the contributions of others. Individuals with narcissistic personality disorder are often preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love. They may ruminate about “long overdue” admiration and privilege and compare themselves favorably with famous or privileged people.

Individuals with this disorder generally require excessive admiration. Their self-esteem is almost invariably very fragile. . . . They expect to be catered to and are puzzled or furious when this does not happen. . . . This sense of entitlement, combined with a lack of sensitivity to the wants and needs of others, may result in the conscious or unconscious exploitation of others. They expect to be given whatever they may want or feel they need, no matter what it might mean to others. For example, these individuals may expect great dedication from others and may overwork them without regard to the impact on their lives.

Vulnerability in self-esteem makes individuals with narcissistic personality disorder very sensitive to “injury” from criticism or defeat. . . . They may react with disdain, rage, or defiant counterattack. Though overweening ambition and confidence may lead to high achievement, performance may be disrupted because of intolerance of criticism or defeat. . . . Sustained feelings of shame or humiliation may be associated

syndromes [than the personality characteristics of normal individuals]”; however, it also acknowledges: “An alternative to the categorical approach is the dimensional perspective that personality disorders represent maladaptive variants of personality traits that merge imperceptibly into normality and into one another.” This latter approach is the one adopted in this article and suggested by Linus’s comment to Lucy in the Peanuts cartoon.

with social withdrawal, depressed mood, and persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia) or major depressive disorder. In contrast, sustained periods of grandiosity may be associated with a hypomanic mood.¹⁹

I believe that Joseph Smith's narcissism was his most obvious psychological characteristic; he ultimately viewed everything in terms of how it affected himself. For most non-Mormons, Smith's conviction that he had a unique mission from God to create a synthesis of all previously valid human truth that would allow him to restore true Christianity in preparation for the coming of a literal kingdom of heaven on earth would qualify as "a grandiose sense of self-importance." This is even more evident when one juxtaposes Smith's claims of greatness with his unpromising background growing up as a poor, struggling farm boy in central New York State during the early nineteenth century. Similarly, Smith's belief during the last three years of his life in Nauvoo that he was entitled to take large numbers of women as his plural wives may bespeak a "conscious or unconscious exploitation of others," and the expectation that he should be given whatever he might want or feel he needed, "no matter what it might mean to others."²⁰

In my 2001 article, "The Psychology of Prophetic Charisma,"²¹ I discussed some ways in which the concept of narcissism might help us better understand Joseph Smith's personality and motivation. My article drew heavily upon arguments developed by the New Zealand psychologist Len Oakes in his pathbreaking study *Prophetic Charisma*:

19. DSM-5, 670–71. For readability I have removed parenthetical references to the nine diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality disorder in the original statement.

20. DSM-5, 670.

21. Lawrence Foster, "The Psychology of Prophetic Charisma: New Approaches to Understanding Joseph Smith and the Development of Charismatic Leadership," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 1–14, with a comment by Len Oakes, "The Prophet's Fall: A Note in Response to Lawrence Foster's 'The Psychology of Prophetic Charisma,'" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 15–16.

*The Psychology of Revolutionary Religious Personalities.*²² Oakes based his research on his intensive qualitative and quantitative studies of the leaders and members of twenty contemporary New Zealand communal/religious groups and on his wide reading and his personal experience as the historian of one such group, the Centrepont Community.²³ His study skillfully analyzed how narcissism could influence the sense of religious mission and drive of charismatic figures. Oakes was concerned to understand why prophetic figures become convinced that their personal perception of the world provides a universally valid way of understanding the nature of reality,²⁴ and he created a typology of five stages through which he believes charismatic leaders progress as they develop their distinctive sense of mission and prophetic careers. Only a few of Oakes's arguments that are most relevant to this analysis will be mentioned here.

22. In *Prophetic Charisma: The Psychology of Revolutionary Religious Personalities* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1997), Oakes conducted in-depth interviews with the leader of each group, as well as with two or three important lower-level leaders. He also administered a standard psychological inventory known as the Adjective Checklist to both leaders and followers in order to secure quantitative data about how both leaders and followers in the groups compared to "normal" populations.

23. Len Oakes, *Inside Centrepont: The Story of a New Zealand Community* (Auckland, N.Z.: Benton Ross, 1986) sympathetically describes this controversial therapeutic community's development, way of life, and spiritual beliefs.

24. Oakes, *Prophetic Charisma*, 44–73. The core of Oakes's argument is that the highly narcissistic figures who eventually take on prophetic leadership roles are individuals who, as young children, were protected for an unusually long time by their mother or other primary caregiver from the inevitable adjustments necessary to adapt to a larger world in which they were not omnipotent, not the primary center of attention. When a crisis inevitably shatters the idyllic mindset of the future charismatic leaders, they seek to make the larger world conform to their own needs and desires rather than adapt themselves to the realities of the environment around them. In this article, however, I will not focus on the psychological roots of narcissism but on how narcissism may influence religious leadership.

Oakes argues that a narcissistic orientation may cause leaders to behave in paradoxical, contradictory, and often unpredictable ways, since “every leader in the study appears to have split off part of his or her self in order to pursue their vision.”²⁵ Prophetic leaders focus so intensely on their personal goals and sense of mission that they downplay, ignore, or entirely repress other aspects of their lives and awareness. Consequently, these leaders display blind spots about their own weaknesses and behavior that are obvious to all who know them but that they cannot see or admit.²⁶

Oakes further argues that the prophet ultimately needs his followers more than they need him. He notes that prophets often display an infantile, magical view of the world “wherein one need only wish to make it so.” As a result, prophets may be willing to distort reality in ways that outsiders or critics view as wishful thinking or lying. The prophet also displays a peculiar experience and transcendence of time that can be associated with memory distortions.²⁷ Oakes argues that “what the prophet knows as reality has some of the qualities of a dream, with fluid boundaries between the real and unreal, self and other, past and future, . . . God and humankind.”²⁸

III

The remainder of this article will consider whether using the psychological concept of narcissism might help us bridge the “great divide” in Mormon historical writing between devout Latter-day Saints, who are

25. Oakes, *Prophetic Charisma*, 80–84, 165.

26. Oakes, *Prophetic Charisma*, 170. Regarding Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard’s prevarications, Oakes caustically comments, “he couldn’t understand when others refused to take him seriously because *he took himself so seriously that he believed his own lies*” (emphasis in the original).

27. *Prophetic Charisma*, 171–75.

28. *Prophetic Charisma*, 175.

firmly convinced that Joseph Smith was *nothing but* a sincere prophet of God, and most non-Mormons, who are equally convinced that Smith was *nothing but* a scheming and self-serving charlatan. Could a more nuanced use of the concept of narcissism help us move beyond such simplistic prophet-versus-fraud dichotomies to better appreciate Joseph Smith in all his human complexity? And might a better understanding of Joseph Smith's psychological dynamics also help us comprehend why tensions in Nauvoo began spiraling out of control by the mid-1840s, leading to Joseph Smith's tragic murder in June 1844?

That so many Mormons and non-Mormons for the better part of the past two centuries have firmly believed that Joseph Smith's motivation could be explained by either the "sincere prophet" or the "manipulative fraud" narratives alone suggests to me that neither contradictory approach by itself can be adequate. Instead, both approaches must be partly true and partly false. In order to understand why believing Mormons have shown such intense adulation for their prophet while non-Mormons have typically denounced him as a self-serving fraud and con man, I believe that we must hold these two antithetical ways of understanding Joseph Smith in creative tension with each other. In short, to comprehend the intense positive and negative reactions Joseph Smith aroused among his followers and the larger public, I am convinced that the Mormon prophet must be understood, paradoxically, as both sincere *and* as a charlatan at the same time.

I first developed this concept in my 1981 *Church History* article "James J. Strang: The Prophet Who Failed" as I sought to understand Strang, the greatest of the many unsuccessful would-be claimants to Joseph Smith's mantle immediately after his death, although I did not attempt to apply the concept to Smith then.²⁹ Dan Vogel has similarly

29. In "James J. Strang: The Prophet Who Failed," *Church History* 50, no. 2 (June 1981): 185, I stated: "The meticulous research of the non-Mormon historian Dale Morgan has established beyond any reasonable doubt that Strang's letter of appointment from Joseph Smith was forged, and almost surely forged

described Joseph Smith as a “pious deceiver” or a “sincere fraud,” while Robert N. Hullinger has suggested that Smith may have engaged in some fraudulent activities in order to try to convey his religious message most effectively.³⁰ The point this concept seeks to convey is that Joseph Smith may have been the type of person who genuinely believed in his prophetic role and message but who also may have been prepared, if necessary, to dissimulate in order to achieve his personal and group objectives, which he saw as inextricably intertwined.

The Mormon psychiatrist Robert D. Anderson has astutely noted that people do not appeal to any objective measure of Smith’s

by Strang himself.” Yet I further argued that: “One cannot account plausibly for the sustained dedication that [Strang] showed in the face of all the hardships, poverty, and opposition he experienced, or the generally well-thought-out and humane quality of his ideals as due to simple fraud or psychopathology.” For scholarly studies of Strang, see Vickie Cleverley Speek, *God Has Made Us a Kingdom: James Strang and the Midwest Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006), the most thoroughly researched and insightful recent study of Strang, his family life, and followers, as well as Milo M. Quaife’s classic account, *The Kingdom of Saint James: A Narrative of the Mormons* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1930). Strang’s polygamy appears to have been based more on pragmatic considerations than on religious principle. For example, he said simply that his wives were women “whom I would marry if the law permitted me.” *Northern Islander*, Oct. 11, 1855, as quoted in Quaife, *Kingdom of Saint James*, 101.

30. Dan Vogel characterizes Joseph Smith as a “pious deceiver” or a “sincere fraud,” in “‘The Prophet Puzzle’ Revisited,” reprinted in Waterman, ed., *The Prophet Puzzle*, 50, after carefully analyzing several cases in which he believes there is solid evidence of conscious deception on Smith’s part. Vogel asks: “[W]hat were the rationalizations, or more precisely the inner moral conflicts of an individual who deceives in God’s name while also holding sincere religious beliefs?” (54). He concludes: “I suggest that Smith really believed he was called by God to preach repentance to a sinful world but that he felt justified in using deception to accomplish his mission more fully” (61). Vogel’s analysis draws upon ideas from Robert N. Hullinger’s *Mormon Answer to Skepticism: Why Joseph Smith Wrote the Book of Mormon* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1980), reprinted as *Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

truthfulness when they characterize him as either a sincere prophet or a self-serving fraud. Rather, both characterizations result from different ways of interpreting what the available evidence *means*. Anderson notes that while “a number of [Smith’s] dealings with others give marked evidence of expediency, deceit, coercion, and manipulation,” such behavior might also be seen as justifiable “if one believes that God commanded Smith to engage in them, or as purely manipulative and narcissistic if one does not.”³¹ The psychologist Len Oakes insightfully speculates: “Is it possible that the narcissistic mind locates its meanings as much in the future as in the past? In the telling of a great lie, the lie would not be felt as false because it would not be compared with facts located in memory. Rather, it would be compared with ‘facts’ from an imagined, yet-to-become future *that is experienced as just as real as the past*.”³²

Prophetic leaders are rarely driven either by purely self-aggrandizing or purely altruistic motives. Instead, in more intense ways than most individuals, prophetic figures typically display a combination of *both* self-interest *and* altruism. Smith’s close associate Oliver Huntington recalled: “Joseph Smith said that some people entirely denounce the principle of self-aggrandizement as wrong. ‘It is a correct principle,’ he said, ‘and may be indulged upon only one rule or plan—and that is to elevate, benefit and bless others first. If you will elevate others, the very work itself will exalt you. Upon no other plan can a man justly and permanently aggrandize himself.’”³³ Effective leaders must weigh competing interests and make hard decisions, sometimes choosing the lesser of several evils in order to attempt to move toward what they see as a higher good. Such an approach can also lead prophetic individuals

31. *Mind of Joseph Smith*, xxiv–xxv.

32. *Prophetic Charisma*, 174; emphasis in the original.

33. Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, comps., *They Knew the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974), 61, as quoted in Vogel, “‘The Prophet Puzzle’ Revisited,” 63.

to exploit or mistreat others because of what they take to be the cosmic significance of the goals they feel called upon to achieve.

An important point to keep in mind is that Joseph Smith was anything but the straitlaced prophetic stick figure so many modern Mormons have been taught to believe in. Instead, he could also be an outgoing, fun-loving, earthy, quick-thinking, and at times even outrageous man, unafraid to break with convention, who once declared, “a prophet is a prophet only when he is acting as such.”³⁴

One of the most revealing descriptions of Joseph Smith comes from the pen of Josiah Quincy (1802–1882), a prominent New England intellectual who served as the mayor of Boston from 1823 to 1828 and as president of Harvard from 1842 to 1845.³⁵ Little more than a month before Smith was murdered in June 1844, Quincy spent several days in Nauvoo. There he was given the red-carpet treatment by Smith, whom he described as a man of remarkable personal presence, authority, and “rugged power,” even though Quincy said that his readers might “find so much that is puerile and even shocking in my report of the prophet’s conversation.”³⁶

Quincy was particularly struck by the degree of adulation Smith received from his followers, who raptly hung on his every word and enthusiastically affirmed whatever Smith said as true. In a revealing aside that suggests Smith’s narcissism, Quincy commented:

I should not say quite all that struck me about Smith if I did not mention that he seemed to have a keen sense of the humorous aspects of his position. “It seems to me, General,” I said, as he was driving us to

34. *History of the Church*, 5:265. Statement from Feb. 8, 1843.

35. Quincy’s account has been reprinted as “Two Boston Brahmins Call on the Prophet,” in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, eds., *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 131–42. Richard Bushman summarizes Quincy’s report as the prologue to his biography, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 3–7.

36. Quincy, “Two Boston Brahmins,” 134.

the river, about sunset, “that you have too much power to be safely trusted to one man.” “In your hands or that of any other person,” was the reply, “so much power would no doubt be dangerous. I am the only man in the world whom it would be safe to trust with it. Remember, I am a prophet!” The last five words were spoken in a rich comical aside, as if in hearty recognition of the ridiculous sound they might have in the ears of a Gentile.³⁷

The Mormon historian Danel Bachman summarizes another story recounted by the loyal Mormon Edwin Rushton. Rushton described how Smith disguised himself as a sort of “trickster” figure and “put on” a group of Mormon converts who had just arrived in Nauvoo. Bachman writes:

On another occasion, when some new emigrants were arriving at Nauvoo, the Prophet disguised himself as a ruffian and met them at the wharf. Edwin Rushton’s father told him that the Prophet questioned them about their conviction that Joseph Smith was a prophet. When the elder Rushton affirmed his faith, Smith asked, “What would you think if I told you I was Joseph Smith?” Rushton again said that would make no difference to his belief. Smith then explained that he dressed and spoke in the manner he did to “see if their faith is strong enough to stand the things they must meet. If not they should turn back right now.”³⁸

Another curious but revealing story about Joseph Smith is one that may or may not have ever happened. The initial recorded version of the story comes from William Huntington’s journal in early 1881, as published in a Mormon magazine in 1892—nearly half a century after Smith’s death. According to the story, someone once asked Smith whether any people lived on the moon. Yes, he confidently replied. People who live on the moon typically are about six feet tall, dress

37. Quincy, “Two Boston Brahmins,” 140.

38. Edwin Rushton, *Journal*, 2, as cited in Danel W. Bachman, “A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith” (master’s thesis, Purdue University, 1975), 169. Note that “Danel” is the correct spelling of Bachman’s first name.

in Quaker style, and live nearly a thousand years!³⁹ Modern readers, knowing what we now have discovered about the moon, can't help finding such a story laughable or just plain ignorant. Yet according to Erich Robert Paul's scholarly study *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology*,⁴⁰ the belief that people lived on the moon was widely held in nineteenth-century America and it might well have sounded plausible at the time, as it apparently still did to William Huntington when he recorded the story in his journal decades later.

One thought-provoking take on the story is provided in Samuel W. Taylor's insightful novel *Nightfall at Nauvoo*. Taylor imagines Smith responding to the question about whether people lived on the moon but afterwards talking with Eliza R. Snow, who was puzzled and privately turned to him to ask "how he knew so much about the inhabitants of the moon. He replied with a shrug that she should realize that a prophet always had to have an answer to every silly question. Why would people suppose that he should know anything about the moon, anyway?"⁴¹ Of course, Smith might equally plausibly have believed that what he said was true, just as he apparently believed his own ad hoc pronouncements on many other topics about which he was in no position to know the correct answer.

Viewing Joseph Smith as a "sincere charlatan" influenced by narcissistic tendencies might help explain why he secretly introduced polygamous belief and practice among a small group of his closest

39. The original version of the story is a third-hand account found in *Oliver Huntington's Journal*, Book 14, 166, and in *The History of Oliver B. Huntington*, p. 10, typed copy, Marriott Library, University of Utah. Huntington claimed he had received the information from Philo Dibble. Huntington's story is retold in "Our Sunday Chapter: The Inhabitants of the Moon," *The Young Woman's Journal* 3, no. 6 (1892): 263–64.

40. Erich Robert Paul, *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 109.

41. Samuel W. Taylor, *Nightfall at Nauvoo* (New York: Avon, 1973), 163.

followers in Nauvoo during the early 1840s. Ever since I began investigating this controversial topic more than four decades ago, my working hypothesis has been that Joseph Smith probably believed that it was desirable for a man to have more than one wife at a time, under certain circumstances. I further assumed that Smith may have held such beliefs because he personally wanted to have more than one wife (or sexual outlet) himself and because he may have become convinced that God had (conveniently) commanded him to take more than one wife.

The double-speak and double-think that necessarily occurred when Smith privately attempted to introduce polygamous belief and practice among a small group of his most loyal followers in Nauvoo, while most Mormons there were unaware that the practice was sanctioned by him, provides a well-documented illustration of the challenges Smith faced and the difficulty of deciding whether to consider him either a sincere prophet or a self-conscious fraud. If we again assume as our working hypothesis that Smith may have sincerely believed that introducing the practice of polygamy was a good idea—and even a divine command—he was nevertheless well aware that polygamy was illegal in Illinois and that his Mormon followers, who had been repeatedly admonished that strict monogamy was God’s will, would reject or even kill him if they realized that he was advocating what they considered to be a heinously sinful practice.

To address this dilemma, Smith skillfully adopted a two-pronged approach. In the theological realm, he began to introduce the belief that if marriage and family relationships were properly “sealed” for eternity under the authority of the Mormon priesthood on earth, those relationships would continue throughout the afterlife as well. The idea of being reunited with loved ones after death was very comforting to many Mormons in Nauvoo because of the high death rates there. Extending the belief to its logical patriarchal conclusion, however, also opened the way for a man to be successively sealed to a first wife who died and then to a second wife, with both of them continuing to be his wives

in the afterlife in an “eternal marriage.” Extrapolating that heavenly model back into this life meant that a form of patriarchal polygamy could also be practiced in this life. Smith’s own polygamous behavior, and the polygamous practice that he introduced to at least thirty of his closest male followers before his death,⁴² thus became the ideal heavenly model and the basis for all growth and progression, both in this life and in the afterlife, since the largest patriarchal families would have the most power and influence in both realms.⁴³

The other part of Joseph Smith’s two-pronged approach was to issue *apparent* denials about polygamy to the vast majority of Nauvoo Mormons who didn’t realize that Smith and other Mormon leaders were advocating the practice of plural marriage using a code language to let individuals who were in on the practice understand that the denials were simply for public consumption.⁴⁴ For example, plural wives

42. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, 241–354, provides a detailed reconstruction of the circumstances under which Joseph Smith’s male followers entered into polygamous marriages prior to his death.

43. Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 142–46, summarizes the new “sealing” ceremonies introduced into the LDS Church in the early 1840s. William Victor Smith, *Textual Studies of the Doctrine and Covenants: The Plural Marriage Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2018) is a thorough and sophisticated analysis that contextualizes many issues associated with the revelation on plural and celestial marriage. The book also includes an addendum with the full text of the earliest manuscript version of the revelation, as recorded by Smith’s scribe Joseph C. Kingsbury (227–39).

44. In *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1914), Charles A. Shook analyzes, with lawyer-like precision, the reasons why the many Mormon statements in Nauvoo that appear to be denials of polygamy actually were *not* understood as denials by Latter-day Saints who had been initiated into polygamous belief and practice. *The Peace Maker, or The Doctrines of the Millennium*, a pamphlet defense of polygamy by Udney Hay Jacob published in late 1842, provides one example of such doublespeak. Although the pamphlet identified “J. Smith” as its “printer,” when Smith’s followers expressed outrage at the pamphlet’s argument, he backtracked and claimed he hadn’t been aware of the pamphlet’s contents before publishing it. Speaking out of

were often referred to as “spiritual wives” rather than temporal ones, yet they also were temporal wives.⁴⁵ When Joseph Smith was accused of practicing polygamy, he would typically issue statements along the lines of “this is too ridiculous to be believed,” although he carefully avoided saying that the allegations weren’t *true*.⁴⁶ In the meantime, Smith’s proxy surrogates would make the air blue by accusing individuals who made allegations about Smith’s improper sexual behavior of having engaged in the same actions for which they were criticizing Smith. As Fawn Brodie summarizes: “The denials of polygamy uttered by the Mormon leaders between 1835 and 1852, when it was finally admitted, are a remarkable series of evasions and circumlocutions involving all sorts of verbal gymnastics.”⁴⁷ Whether such behavior constituted a misrepresentation necessary to introduce a divine principle or was simply self-serving narcissism depends, as always, on whether one is viewing the events from inside or outside the group.

Like other narcissistic individuals, Smith felt he always had to be *right* on matters he considered important. He was upset when others did not give him the praise he expected and felt he deserved. Thus, his

both sides of his mouth, he added: “*not that I am opposed to any man enjoying his privileges [a code word for polygamy]; but I do not wish to have my name associated with the authors [sic] in such an unmeaning rigmarole of non-sense, folly and trash*” (emphasis added). *Times and Seasons* 4, Dec. 1, 1842, 32, as quoted in Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 319. For a more detailed discussion of the controversy, see *Religion and Sexuality*, 174–77.

45. In her 1882 defense of plural marriage, Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, a former plural wife of Joseph Smith, stated that during the early development of Mormon polygamy in Nauvoo, “spiritual wife was the title by which every woman who entered into this order was called, for it was taught and practiced as a spiritual order and not a temporal one though it was always spoken of sneeringly by those who did not believe in it.” *Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 15, as quoted in Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 318.

46. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 322.

47. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 321.

self-esteem was very fragile if he was criticized. He tended to see any challenge to his authority as unwarranted “persecution,” and he lashed out in fury against those he deemed his opponents, which caused even some of his closest followers to break with him. For anyone who supported Smith wholeheartedly, nothing was too good, yet those who criticized him risked being consigned to the outer darkness unless they repented and submitted themselves to his full authority again.

Portraying in-group/out-group tensions as simply the result of unjust “persecution” of one group by another can be an effective way to rationalize or explain away an individual’s or a group’s misbehavior toward those outside the group. For example, the Mormons in Nauvoo understandably believed they had been mistreated when they were harshly driven out of Missouri in 1838–39. The experience may, in turn, have led some Mormons to feel justified in retaliating against Missourians or others by “despoiling the Gentiles” in various ways. Engaging in such retaliatory actions, however, risks setting off a vicious cycle of ever-increasing conflict between opposing groups that can eventually cause both sides to feel threatened and victimized, as happened so tragically in both Missouri and in Nauvoo.⁴⁸

Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo and throughout their history have been quite successful in creating compelling persecution narratives that portray any external criticism as caused by religious “persecution.”

48. The mutual tensions between Mormons and non-Mormons in Missouri are discussed in Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987). For the tensions in Nauvoo, see John E. Hallwas and Roger D. Launius, eds., *Cultures in Conflict: A Documentary History of the Mormon War in Illinois* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1995). The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri highlights the excesses on both sides. For example, on July 4, 1838, the Mormon leader Sidney Rigdon, in his controversial “salt sermon,” declared “it must be as a war of extermination of us against them,” while three months later, on October 27, 1838, Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs officially issued his infamous order that the Mormons “must be driven from the state or exterminated if necessary.” LeSueur, *Mormon War in Missouri*, 50, 152.

But Mormon writers have typically failed to consider whether *specific* non-Mormon criticisms might have actually had some validity and identified real problems or excesses the Latter-day Saints needed to address.⁴⁹

In *Glorious in Persecution: Joseph Smith, American Prophet, 1839–1844*, the Mormon historian Martha Bradley-Evans skillfully and sympathetically frames her narrative around the ways in which Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo created and utilized complex persecution narratives in order to cement Mormon in-group loyalty. From this perspective, she is able to present some details about highly questionable polygamous behavior in which the Mormon prophet engaged without judging whether his actions were right or wrong. I believe that most present-day Mormon and non-Mormon historians would find her narrative factually and analytically credible and that many scholars from both camps would probably feel that Smith's actions in his polygamous relationships would be suggestive of exploitative or psychologically disturbed behavior if the events in question had occurred in the present day.

In his essay “Joseph Smith and the Hazards of Charismatic Leadership,”⁵⁰ Mormon historian Gary James Bergera has provided

49. Those seeking to develop a balanced understanding of controversial events in Mormon history would do well to compare the divergent approaches in such books as the sympathetic but generally candid Mormon study by James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976); the relentlessly hostile and one-sided, albeit factually accurate anti-Mormon exposé by Richard Abanes, *One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002); and the wide-ranging, candid, and insightful non-Mormon study by Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999).

50. Citations from Bergera's article are from the reprint in Waterman, *The Prophet Puzzle*, 239–57. The original article was printed as Gary James Bergera, “Joseph Smith and the Hazards of Charismatic Leadership,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 6 (1986): 33–42. The concept of charismatic

arguably the most convincing brief analysis of how Joseph Smith's increasing narcissism and grandiosity eventually led to his tragic death. Bergera's thesis is that:

When a charismatic person assumes a position of leadership and fails to recognize the limitations of his power, convinced he can "transform his . . . fantasies into reality for his followers," he may develop what psychologists refer to as megalomaniacal fantasies, including paranoid delusions. . . . The group may willingly surrender its ego to the leader "in order to preserve [its] love of the leader, and whatever esteem [it] experience[s] comes from the sense of devotion to the ideals and causes established in the leader's image." Yet the leader may experience little resistance in influencing his followers to do things they would not do otherwise, reconfirming the breadth of his own power and the ease with which his followers are able to achieve the realization of their own dreams as defined by the leader. "Attachment and omnipotence [can] mutually reinforce one another, omnipotence turning into a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' in which 'everything is allowed and nothing is off limits.'"⁵¹

Bergera continues:

Embodying both the strengths and weaknesses of charismatic leadership, Joseph, during the final two years of his life, from 1842 to 1844, tested more than once the boundaries separating fantasy from reality, succumbing to those hazards problematic to charismatic leaders.

leadership that the great German sociologist Max Weber developed was influenced by his knowledge about Joseph Smith and the Mormons. Although Weber said that the Book of Mormon was possibly a "hoax" and he opined that Joseph Smith might have been "a very sophisticated type of deliberate swindler," he nevertheless concluded: "Sociological analysis, which must abstain from value judgments, will treat all these [individuals] on the same level as the men who, according to conventional judgments are the 'greatest' heroes, prophets, and saviours." S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building: Selected Papers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 19, 49. I am grateful to Dan Vogel for calling these citations to my attention.

51. Bergera, "Charismatic Leadership," 239–40.

In significant and, I believe, revealing ways, Joseph's leadership is a case study of the hazards confronting charismatic leadership in crisis situations.⁵²

According to Bergera, Joseph Smith's conviction that he possessed a divinely based prophetic power led him to believe he had "power that transcended civil law" and that this belief suggests "the tenuousness of the grasp he may have held, at times, on reality."⁵³

But the discussion of Joseph's occasional difficulty to distinguish fantasy from reality should not be construed as an attempt to address the validity of his prophetic calling. Rather, it presents an admittedly speculative attempt to better understand the mental state—the strains, pressures, conflicts, and contradictions—we all experience when expectations clash with reality. With Joseph, the effects of such struggles were perhaps more dramatic, affecting the lives of more people than would have been the case with a lesser individual.⁵⁴

Bergera identifies twelve "examples of the extent to which Joseph may have sought to interpose his will over that normally imposed upon human behavior by external reality," and he argues that each example "reflects what may be either maladaptive responses to Joseph's environment or possible evidence of a growing sense of self-importance and personal omnipotence."⁵⁵

Here I shall only summarize Bergera's analysis of one of the most important of those twelve examples of Smith's overreach, namely, his efforts to introduce plural marriage belief and practice to some of his most loyal followers.⁵⁶ After Smith's twelve apostles returned from their

52. Bergera, 240.

53. Bergera, 241.

54. Bergera, 241.

55. Bergera, 242.

56. Bergera's 1986 summary of the development of Mormon polygamy is supported by major recent studies by professional Mormon historians. These include: Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph*

missions to England in 1841, he rapidly moved to introduce the idea of “celestial marriage” to them, along with its corollary, plural marriage. He tested their absolute loyalty to him by asking each of his apostles, at different times, to relinquish their wives to him so they might become his plural wives. “This apparently continued for almost one year before one apostle, Orson Pratt, failed to pass the test in July 1842. Sensitive to the scandal that could erupt from additional failures, Joseph suspended requiring such a show of faith.”⁵⁷

Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997); George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: “. . . but we called it celestial marriage”* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008); Martha Bradley-Evans, *Glorious in Persecution: Joseph Smith, American Prophet, 1839–1844* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2016); and D. Michael Quinn. “Evidence for the Sexual Side of Joseph Smith’s Polygamy” (presentation, Mormon History Association annual conference, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, June 29, 2012), enlarged final document dated December 31, 2012 available online at <https://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Quinns-FINAL-RESPONSE.pdf>. In addition, in *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), Brian Hales, who is not a professional historian, has compiled almost all known documents from Mormon and non-Mormon sources relating to the development of early Mormon polygamy. Professional Mormon historians who have studied early Mormon polygamy most closely, however, have not found Hales’s apologetic interpretation of much of the evidence convincing.

57. Bergera, “Charismatic Leadership,” 248. For Bergera’s reconstruction of the complex issues raised by the Orson and Sarah Pratt case, see his *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 7–51. Orson F. Whitney’s biography of his grandfather, *Life of Heber C. Kimball: An Apostle, the Father and Founder of the British Mission* (Salt Lake City: Kimball Family, 1888), 333–35, states that Joseph Smith asked Heber to give his wife Vilate to him, stating that it was a requirement. After three days of intense mental turmoil, Heber presented Vilate to Smith. Smith then wept, embraced Heber, and said that he had not really wanted Vilate. He had just been determining if Heber’s loyalty to him was absolute. For similar tests of loyalty in which Smith asked Brigham Young and John Taylor to relinquish their wives to him, see Quinn, “Sexual Side of Joseph Smith’s Polygamy,” 42–46. Apostle Orson Hyde’s case was different. During Hyde’s mission to Palestine, Joseph Smith apparently took Hyde’s wife, Marinda Nancy Johnson

Later that same month, according to the Mormon historian Andrew Ehat, Smith began to go to some of his most loyal followers in Nauvoo who had daughters of marriageable age to teach them the principles of plural marriage and request that they teach it to their daughters as well. Evidently “the price some paid for their own sealing for time and eternity was the marriage of their daughter to Joseph.”⁵⁸ “If Joseph’s move away from asking for the wives of married men to asking for the daughters of faithful couples was intended to minimize the risk of public exposure, it shortly, and not unexpectedly, proved unsuccessful. Joseph’s courtship of Nancy Rigdon, daughter of former First Presidency counselor Sidney Rigdon, became as damaging to his reputation as his attempted liaison with Apostle Orson Pratt’s wife.”⁵⁹

According to Bergera, the most important internal challenge Joseph Smith may have faced “resulted from anticipated opposition to his practice from both his brother Hyrum and his wife, Emma.”

Apparently never once during the first twenty-four months Joseph secretly promoted and practiced the “celestial law of marriage” did either Emma consent to her husband’s taking another wife or Hyrum offer to perform or teach the sacred ordinance. Joseph’s tests, it may be argued, evince the possible expression of what can be termed a paranoid delusion in which not even his most faithful friends could be completely trusted without their being first required to demonstrate unconditional

Hyde, as one of his plural wives without informing Hyde. When Hyde returned from his mission, he was reportedly very upset, but Smith apparently placated him by giving him two other women as plural wives. The details of this and other similar cases have understandably remained in contention. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 228–53; Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, 327–29; and Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 452–55.

58. Bergera, “Charismatic Leadership,” 248.

59. Bergera, 248–49. The Nancy Rigdon controversy is detailed in Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 290–310.

allegiance to his leadership. . . . If Joseph could endure the rejection of others, he could not suffer rejection from either Hyrum or Emma, and initially refused to court their hostile responses.⁶⁰

Although Emma eventually acceded to her husband's wishes temporarily, "her support was short-lived, and she soon became an active opponent of her husband's secret teachings."⁶¹ Hyrum, by contrast, preached publicly against polygamy in May 1843, but he eventually came to believe it was divine after Brigham Young explained the doctrine to him, and he then became its staunch supporter.⁶² Bergera argues that "the greatest factor contributing to [Joseph's] image of virtual omnipotence was . . . the acceptance of polygamy by his brother, wife, and closest associates. More than any other expression of allegiance, their willingness to obey Joseph's commands in an area so at odds with conventional Victorian morality may have contributed to what appears to be the slowly eroding barriers separating reality from fantasy."⁶³ This

60. Bergera, 249. The best-documented case in which Joseph Smith was married to a daughter of a close associate is that of Heber C. Kimball's fourteen-year-old daughter Helen Mar Kimball. She described the experience retrospectively as extremely traumatic. In a detailed reminiscence to her children in 1881, she wrote: "Having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, he [her father] offered me to him; this I afterwards learned from the Prophet's own mouth. My father had but one Ewe Lamb, but willingly laid her upon the alter [sic]: how cruel this seemed [sic] to the mother [Vilate] whose heartstrings were already stretched untill [sic] they were ready to snap asunder." Before Helen reluctantly agreed to become Smith's plural wife, he told her: "If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father's household & all of your kindred." She continues: "This promise was so great that I willingly gave myself to purchase so glorious a reward." Quoted in Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 498, 499.

61. Bergera, "Charismatic Leadership," 252.

62. Bergera, 249–50.

63. Bergera, 252.

eventually contributed to the creation of an opposition movement and a newspaper, *The Nauvoo Expositor*, which in effect put Joseph “on trial before his whole people.”⁶⁴ In response, Joseph destroyed both the newspaper and the printing press. This led to his arrest and incarceration in a jail in nearby Carthage, Illinois, where a mob in collusion with the local militia guarding the jail murdered Joseph and his brother Hyrum on June 23, 1844.

Bergera concludes: “The irony is that the leader who succeeds in pushing his movement toward the realization of their fantasies may well be on the way to his own self-destruction. . . . Perhaps if any benefit is to be derived from Joseph’s death it is that it may have saved his followers from a similar fate.”⁶⁵

In a sermon in 1856, Brigham Young declared that he did not base his belief in the truth of Mormonism on Joseph Smith’s personal probity but on his doctrine. Using typically blunt rhetoric, Young declared:

The doctrine he [Joseph Smith] teaches is all I know about the matter, bring anything against that if you can. As to anything else, I do not care. If he acts like a devil, he has brought forth a doctrine that will save us if we will abide by it. He may get drunk every day of his life, sleep with his neighbor’s wife every night, run horses and gamble, I do not care anything about that, for I never embrace any man in my faith. But the doctrine he has produced will save you and me, and the whole world; and if you can find fault with that, find it.⁶⁶

In conclusion, psychological frameworks are most likely to produce revealing historical insights into complex individuals when they are deployed judiciously and non-judgmentally to analyze behavior that

64. Bergera, 250.

65. Bergera, 252.

66. Brigham Young, Nov. 9, 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:78, as quoted in Quinn, “Sexual Side of Joseph Smith’s Polygamy,” 56–57.

might otherwise appear out of character or not to make sense. Conversely, when psychological theory is simply used as a Procrustean bed into which one tries to force a dynamic human being who transcends simple categories of analysis, it can become reductionist and counter-productive. Although all psychological attempts to understand human behavior are imperfect tools, I believe that the limited, judicious, and nuanced use of psychological perspectives to try to come to terms with Joseph Smith's personality and impact may help bring us closer to resolving "the prophet puzzle," including some parts of the puzzle that even Joseph himself may not have fully understood.

At the end of Josiah Quincy's revealing account of his conversations with Joseph Smith in 1844, he expressed skepticism about Smith and his religious claims while also recognizing this rough-hewn man's native intelligence and leadership ability. Quincy concluded, "I have endeavored to give the details of my visit to the Mormon prophet with absolute accuracy. If the reader does not know just what to make of Joseph Smith, I cannot help him out of the difficulty. I myself stand helpless before the puzzle."⁶⁷

Quincy's words remind me of Immanuel Kant's compelling statement in *The Critique of Practical Reason*, which I have taken the liberty to modify significantly here as: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the mind of man below."⁶⁸

67. Quincy, "Two Boston Brahmins," 142.

68. Immanuel Kant's original statement, in the Thomas Kingsmill Abbott translation of *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1927), 260, reads: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within."

The mind of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, in all its dynamic complexity, must surely remain a subject of awe, wonder, and concern for anyone who attempts to understand it. Perhaps Joseph Smith most eloquently expressed his own and his biographers' challenge when he declared: "No man knows my history. . . . If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself."⁶⁹

69. As quoted in Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, vii.

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WHAT SIZE OF CITY, AND WHAT SORT OF CITY, COULD (OR SHOULD) THE CITY OF ZION BE?

Russell Arben Fox

Mormon Agrarian Longing

At a session of general conference in 1949, Elder John A. Widtsoe shared an interesting message with the assembled Saints—a message that contained, so far as I have been able to discover, the strongest agrarian sentiment ever formally expressed by a major Church leader in the whole history of the LDS Church:

We Latter-day Saints are a land-loving people. We believe in the land. We are a land-using people. Most of us are farmers, directly or indirectly. Some few years ago—not many years ago—in a census then taken, approximately sixty-five percent, at least, of our people were engaged in agriculture, in tilling the soil, or in making use of the things that grow upon the mountains, in the valleys and on the deserts. That has given us strength. I hope that we as a people will not depart from that tradition. Those who own the land and use it in the end will determine the future of mankind. It will not come from those who work in the factories or who live in crowded cities; from those whose feet are planted upon the land will come the great determining factors in shaping human destiny. It has been so in the past. It will be so in the future. We Latter-day Saints must ever remember the sanctity and the holiness of the land given us by the Father. There is safety in the land. . . .

I am afraid a good many of us will be tempted to say, “I’ll join the industrial procession. I will forget the land.” This industrial era is welcomed.

There's no question about that; but as it arises, we must keep our minds steadily upon the old established tradition that we are a land-loving and land-using people. We must remember that industry itself thrives best in the midst of an agricultural community. Witness the social troubles of today in our own land. Analyze them, and you soon discover that if we had built, as the Saints a century ago wanted us to build, we would have escaped many of the troubles, chiefly by giving heed to the call of the land.

When Joseph Smith laid out his ideal city many years ago, he planned it so that while the farms would all be around the city, every homestead would have a kitchen garden in the rear of the house and a flower garden in front. There was tremendous wisdom in that. Men, no matter what their work may be, or what their daily callings may require of them, if steadily and vigorously they touch the soil, be it ever so lightly or ever so small an acreage, perhaps a back yard, will receive from that contact spiritual strength. There is something in the soil and mother earth that gives strength to all who make things grow on the land.¹

Now, given the thoroughly urbanized environments that the large majority of American Mormons live in today,² the temptation is to take

1. John A. Widtsoe, "Preserve Our Heritage," Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Oct. 1, 1949 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, semiannual), 62.

2. This is a statement that is easily assumed, and almost certainly correct, but rather difficult to demonstrate due to the lack of data that specifically correlates the announced religious affiliation of those surveyed with the degree of urbanization of their place of residence. Gordon and Gary Shepherd were confident enough to write, "Mormonism today is increasingly becoming an urban religion, with the majority of its members no longer rooted to the soil," but then note later that "there has been surprisingly little scholarly work on the subject of urban Mormonism" (Shepherd and Shepherd, *A Kingdom Transformed: Early Mormonism and the Modern LDS Church*, 2nd ed. [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016], 55, 330n57). One shorthand way of looking at the data is to consider the urbanization of Utah, the epicenter of Mormonism. In a state where over 60 percent of the population identifies as Mormon, less than 10 percent of the population live in what the US Census defines as "rural" areas. This suggests, even if we greatly oversample

this seventy-year-old message, a message that presents a close association with agricultural labor as normative for Latter-day Saints, quietly chuckle at how General Authorities say the darndest things, and set it aside. There are at least two good interpretive reasons to do so. First, it is very easy to read Widtsoe's language as reflecting a thoroughly institutionalized kind of rural sentimentality rather than any actual prophetic counsel. While the romance of the pioneer farm and life in the countryside has never been a dominant theme in the messages handed down by the LDS gerontocracy (note that Widtsoe was seventy-seven years old when he gave that sermon), it was a constant throughout the twentieth century nonetheless.³ The dynamics of our authoritarian church make it inevitable that the rhetorical norms expressed by one generation of leaders are taken to heart by the next, thus keeping strong an idealization of the rural pioneer experience—even though as early as 1910, forty

for Mormonism in Utah's rural areas (say, by doubling our numbers), that in the heart of American Mormonism, less than a quarter of all Mormons live anywhere besides cities. See US Census Bureau, 2010 Census of Population and Housing, *Population and Housing Unit Counts*, CPH-2-46, Utah, July 2012, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/cph-2-46.pdf>. It would be reasonable to suspect that similar urban-rural distributions of self-identified Mormons extend across the United States, and probably other countries as well.

3. It is worth noting—though it is probably not surprising—that the twenty years since the beginnings of the twenty-first century have seen very few general conference addresses that adopt this older attitude toward farming, agriculture, and the land, and none, so far as I can tell, involve the sort of exhortation that often accompanied it in the past. “The Lord’s Way,” given by Elder Stanley G. Ellis in April 2013, in which he reminisces about his boyhood on a farm as part an entirely separate sermon regarding the importance of focusing on the basics of the gospel, is a good example (available at <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2013/04/the-lords-way?lang=eng>). According to Gordon and Gary Shepherd, this shift began even earlier; by their count, the final decades of the twentieth century saw only one-sixth as many references to farming in general conference addresses as had been the case in previous decades (Shepherd and Shepherd, *A Kingdom Transformed*, 281).

years before Widtsoe's sermon, rural life had already become a minority experience among Utah's Mormon population.⁴ But no matter; the idealization continued to roll forward. Consider, for example, the way Presidents Joseph F. Smith and Spencer W. Kimball talked about the profound value of maintaining regular contact with the natural world,⁵ or the way multiple General Authorities have invoked the lessons of farm work and rural villages while talking about the Sabbath day, or teaching children discipline, or receiving the Lord's blessings.⁶ The urban and suburban American Mormons of today know this language and have made their peace with it in one fashion or another. The lessons encoded in this language don't necessarily lose their significance just because nearly everyone who hears them separates them from their context entirely.

Second, one could also consider Widtsoe's claims as reflecting of a kind of classical republican belief, one shaped by populist challenges and conservative reactions to the growth of American cities, American industry, and the American state throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Such radical—or reactionary, or both—responses to industrialization and centralization in the United States during the decades of the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and World War II, were

4. See Ethan R. Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 82.

5. Joseph Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 265–66; Spencer W. Kimball, “Fundamental Principles to Ponder and Live,” Oct. 1978, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1978/10/fundamental-principles-to-ponder-and-live?lang=eng>.

6. See, for example, J. Richard Clarke, “The Value of Work,” Apr. 1982, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1982/04/the-value-of-work?lang=eng>; and John H. Groberg, “The Power of Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy,” Oct. 1984, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1984/10/the-power-of-keeping-the-sabbath-day-holy?lang=eng>.

of little political influence in Utah, but they were present nonetheless.⁷ John Henry Smith articulated this perspective in a general conference address nearly forty years before Widtsoe did, arguing (much like the Populist William Jennings Bryan, or the Southern Agrarian Donald Davidson, or, for that matter, Thomas Jefferson) that “people who crowd into cities and live in rented homes, who are, in great measure, the slaves of their fellow-men, cannot be fully patriotic . . . [whereas the man] who lays his foundation upon the basis of the soil . . . soon finds himself among the independent ones of the world.”⁸ This is, perhaps, powerful counsel—but it is also counsel that the LDS Church never formally attempted to see institutionalized after the end of the united order experiments during the presidency of Brigham Young. As Ethan R. Yorgason put it: “This perspective . . . had little ultimate impact. Most church leaders recognized the necessary limits of . . . regional agricultural development and realized yeoman independence was no longer a viable option.”⁹ The fact that Widtsoe, as Matthew Bowman has persuasively argued, was himself a participant in bringing Progressive values of economic growth and rationalization into the culture of the LDS Church makes it doubly easy to, again, see this kind of message as a dated aberration and not anything that should be accepted as conveying divine truths.¹⁰

But whatever the value of these two interpretive strategies—treating Widtsoe’s agrarian paean as either a dated romantic reflex or an

7. See John S. McCormick and John R. Sillito, *A History of Utah Radicalism: Startling, Socialistic, and Decidedly Revolutionary* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2011).

8. John Henry Smith, Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, semiannual), Apr. 3, 1910, 35.

9. Yorgason, *Transformation*, 89.

10. See chap. 6 of Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012).

irrelevant conservative worry—they both miss something: namely, the third paragraph quoted above. For Widtsoe, in this sermon at least, there was a specific root to what he called the Mormon “belief in the land,” and that was the “ideal city” of Joseph Smith. How did that city, and the wide range of speculations and experiments associated with building Zion communities that frequently characterized American Mormonism in the decades that followed, serve as a component of Widtsoe’s inspired defense of the farm? Let’s think about Smith’s “Plat of Zion,” the document where he laid out his outline for an ideal city, and see what connections we can find.

Mormon City Planning

Smith’s original vision for a city of Zion came about in the summer of 1833, during which time he and other Mormon leaders held meetings to discuss the city “Zion,” which Smith had presented as the central point of the future of the Church. The site for this city was to be the small town of Independence in Jackson County, Missouri. Smith had held in his mind a vision for that city since at least the summer of 1831, when he had first visited Missouri.¹¹ There is much that can be said about the plat, which Smith and his fellow envisioners developed in two drafts that summer; most relevant to our discussion here is the size they had in mind. Smith stipulated that Zion would have about twenty thousand inhabitants. As Benjamin Park observed, “When that limit was reached, boundaries were to be drawn and yet another large neighboring community built to exactly the same specifications. ‘When this square is

11. Doctrine and Covenants 57:3, original text dated July 20, 1831, in Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1: Manuscript Revelations Books* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2009), 93.

thus laid off,' the June plat explained, 'lay off another in the same way, and so fill up the world in these last days.'"¹²

Why the need for a Zion environment to be kept to a particular size? Because one cannot think about Smith's ideal city without thinking about the ideal society it was imagined to be host to. The city of Zion would be the center of a consecrated society, imitating the city Enoch built. As related in Smith's "new translation" of the Bible, it would be a city in which all were "of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness" with "no poor among them" (Moses 7:18–19). Note that the word is "poor," not "poverty." Many Church leaders in the decades to come, deeply invested in the possibility of building the Mormon people into a community that protected and lifted up and treated their own as equals, were outright hostile to the possibility of outside (that is, non-Mormon) investment, even if it would be financially advantageous to some. Better for all to share things in common than for a few to advance.¹³

Achieving that condition of self-sufficiency and rough equality required, in the mind of Joseph Smith as well as in the experience of the numerous aforementioned Church leaders equally committed to the ideal of a Zion community, that the people who lived in Zion all had to be able to maintain a productive connection to arable land. As Widtsoe observed, every resident in this city would have space for at least some agricultural work, though there was no assumption that such

12. Benjamin E. Park, "To Fill up the World: Joseph Smith as Urban Planner," *Mormon Historical Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 14. Park is quoting "Explanation of the Plat of the City of Zion," June 25, 1833, Church History Library.

13. Consider the words of George Q. Cannon: "Watch the effect of wealth. . . . Communities get wealthy and they begin to think about their wealth. Where their treasure is there is their heart also. Especially is this the case if they are divided into classes. . . . If we are nearly alike temporally we feel alike. In this has been much of our strength. . . . The increase of wealth, therefore, and the consequent increase of fashions are more to be dreaded than hostile legislation." June 25, 1882, *Journal of Discourses*, 24:46–47.

kitchen gardens would be sufficient to satisfy all the food needs of the community. There would be farms surrounding the perimeter of the city, which presumably were accepted as providing the bulk of the city's food resources, but they would not be built at such a distance that those who worked in the fields would be unable to return to their homes in the heart of the community in the evening. In fact, that was expected; rather than spreading out in search of larger plots of land and distant opportunities, the community was to be a tight-knit and self-sufficient one, with everyone coming together to worship at the temples at the heart of the city, enjoy the company of their fellow citizen-saints, and "live together in love" (D&C 42:45). As B. H. Roberts observed about the plat, "The farmer and his family . . . will no longer be isolated, and his family denied the benefits of society, which has been, and always will be, the great educator of the human race."¹⁴

The world has seen many experiments with self-sustaining, egalitarian communities—with the united order experiments of the nineteenth-century Church, inspired in so many ways (if not always explicitly guided) by Smith's original plat, being a major part of that story.¹⁵ While these experiments have varied immensely in their social and economic organization, the necessity of thinking hard about scale has been a constant through all of them.¹⁶ In the context of the sufficiency and community that Smith envisioned through his plat, it would seem likely that one must either 1) abandon the kind of rough

14. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 1:312.

15. See Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation Among the Mormons*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992) and, for somewhat broader perspectives, Yaacov Oved, *Two Hundred Years of American Communes* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 1993) and Clifford F. Thies, "The Success of American Communes," *Southern Economic Journal* 67, no. 1 (2000): 186–99.

16. The writings of Peter Kropotkin, E. F. Schumacher, Colin Ward, and Wendell Berry all underline this fact, as does the work of many other community- and sustainability-minded thinkers.

equality that rural subsistence economies engender¹⁷ and instead trust in the sort of equality presumably to be achieved after capital-driven financial and commercial growth has made possible transfer payments and welfare of some kind, all of which seems to run against Smith's original ideal, or 2) contemplate serious limits upon size. For a community to spatially expand ever outward in an attempt to claim more and larger resources, much less to grow in population into an unconstrained urban agglomeration, makes the sort of unity, familiarity, and conviviality that Smith's Zion presumed an impossibility. This is not to say that Smith's consecrated and land-connected ideal city had no room whatsoever for individual preference or dissent; in fact, from the years 1831 through 1835, Smith's thinking about the actual socioeconomic and theological mechanics of a Zion community went through significant changes, moving away from the more enclosed, borderline apocalyptic tone of his earliest revelations regarding "The Laws of the Church of Christ" and showing greater awareness of the pluralism present even in the collective desires of the faithful.¹⁸ Had Smith been able and willing to spend more time working on his proposed plat during those years, very likely those changes would have further refined his urban ideas.¹⁹ But despite the evolution in Smith's thinking

17. There is evidence that small cities with strong regional connections to agricultural resources make possible a more egalitarian economy less subject to the gaps between the rich and the poor, which globalization has made a common feature in the larger cities of the world. See Catherine Tumber, *Small, Gritty, and Green: The Promise of America's Smaller Industrial Cities in a Low-Carbon World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), 136–40.

18. For more on this movement in Smith's thought, see my "'Thou Wilt Remember the Poor': Social Justice and a Radical Reading of 'The Law of the Church of Christ' (D&C 42)," in *Embracing the Law: Reading Doctrine and Covenants 42*, edited by Jeremiah John and Joseph M. Spencer (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2017), 75–78.

19. As Park observed, after the summer of 1833 "Smith never carried these ideas forward, and they remained dormant for the rest of his life." Park, "To Fill up the World," 9.

about family stewardships and bishops' storehouses and the like during these years, the basic aims of his city of Zion did not change: not to produce perfect equality, but to create a loving environment wherein the differences between rich and poor were mitigated, wherein all would share common resources and partake of common religious devotions and common civic pleasures, and by so doing enjoy a degree of solidarity with one another.²⁰ For a city to grow so large and specialized and diverse such that its inhabitants lose their involvement with their most fundamental shared resource—namely, the arable land they all live upon and draw their food from—would present an obstacle to all that. Or at least, such seems to be a reasonable conclusion if one takes seriously this theoretical elaboration of Smith's early ideas, as such Church leaders as Presidents Wilford Woodruff and Lorenzo Snow both did. First, Woodruff:

We hear that a good many of our young men are leaving this valley . . . to secure for themselves large tracts of land . . . in places remote from their own homes. . . . We have been called to gather, not to scatter; we have been called by the Lord to build up Zion[,] . . . not to spread out all over creation and become so thin and weak that there is no strength or power with us. . . . We should concentrate ourselves and combine our efforts, and not look to the ends of the earth and see how much we are missing. . . . [T]here are a great many people who seem to have the idea in earnest, and because there are large tracts of land which they hear in remote valleys they are anxious to strike out and take possession for fear that somebody else will get them. This is not wise. Let us be governed by wisdom in our movements. That is the way to build up Zion.²¹

20. Fox, "'Thou Wilt Remember the Poor,'" 66; see also A. Don Sorenson, "Being Equal in Earthly and Heavenly Power: The Idea of Stewardship in the United Order," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 1 (1978): 110–11.

21. Cited in Brigham Daniels, "Revitalizing Zion: Nineteenth-Century Mormonism and Today's Urban Sprawl," *Journal of Land, Resources, and Environmental Law* 28, no. 2 (2008): 277–78.

Next, Snow:

Zion cannot be built except on the principles of union required by celestial law. It is high time for us to enter into these things. It is more pleasant and agreeable for the Latter-day Saints to enter into this work and build up Zion, than to build up ourselves and have this great competition which is destroying us. Now let things go on in our midst in our Gentile fashion, and you would see an aristocracy growing amongst us, whose language to the poor would be, “we do not require your company; we are going to have things very fine; we are quite busy now, please call some other time.” You would have classes established here, some very poor and some very rich. Now, the Lord is not going to have anything of that kind. There has to be an equality; and we have to observe these principles that are designed to give everyone the privilege of gathering around him the comforts and conveniences of life. The Lord, in his economy of spiritual things, has fixed that every man, according to his perseverance and faithfulness, will receive exaltation and glory in the eternal worlds—a fullness of the Priesthood, and a fullness of the glory of God. This is the economy of God’s system by which men and women can be exalted spiritually. The same with regard to temporal affairs.²²

To the extent that Park is correct that Smith did not envision the city of Zion as existing primarily to “aggregate economic endeavors” but rather to “weld a community of people together,” then it would appear that the land-centric thinking of later prophetic proponents of Smith’s vision of consecration and unity held to the core of Smith’s idea of an urban space fully entwined with rural, agricultural practices.²³ The experiments in consecration that Brigham Young pushed in the 1870s were, as Leonard Arrington observed, “most adapted to small rural villages, where the social and economic life of the community already were closely entwined and limited in scale.”²⁴ In the more commercial urban centers of late nineteenth-century Utah, the track

22. Lorenzo Snow, Apr. 21, 1878, *Journal of Discourses*, 19:349.

23. Park, “To Fill up the World,” 19.

24. Arrington, Fox, and May, *Building the City of God*, 205.

record of such experiments was particularly poor (though all the united order experiments eventually collapsed or were transformed into distinct economic enterprises in time). The whole of Salt Lake County through the 1870s and 1880s showed only four orders incorporated; while variations in the form were attempted through Deseret, the communal vision of a land-based consecration such as Smith implied in his “ideal city” was seen as “patently unworkable” in larger towns and cities, primarily because therein “more complex patterns of social and economic life were established, involving gentiles and miscreant Mormons in a structure that did not permit the clustering of the faithful.”²⁵ Unfortunately, but also presumably inevitably, given the age-old appeal of the independence, the opportunity, and the anonymity that cities and urban economies promise,²⁶ by the turn of the century Matthias Cowley could observe that “we are Latter-day Saints religiously, but Gentiles financially.”²⁷ Among the reasons for this, one that Yorgason

25. Arrington, Fox, and May, 153, 220–21.

26. Well expressed by Stephen Schneek, particularly if one imagines his “city” to mean the bustling commercial center of Salt Lake City, and his “village” to mean the greatest (or at least most notorious) United Order success of nineteenth-century Utah, Orderville: “[C]onsider a line between ‘city’ and ‘village.’ The line is drawn well by that apocryphal 15th century peasant who claims that ‘Die Stadtluft macht frei!’ (‘the city air makes us free!’). Consider the tension revealed here between the qualities perceived in village life and those anticipated in the city. Village represents a smothering community. An homogeneity of tastes, styles and desires is inscribed on each villager’s soul by an intrusive familiarity that begins in the cradle. The village represents a life lived with intimate, ubiquitous authorities wherein all is public. City, for our peasant, offers the heterogeneity of anonymity and the possibility of private spaces resistant to the intrusive, public scrutiny found in village life. In the peasant’s ideal of the city there is room for private space and authority is formal, not intimate or personal.” Schneek, “City and Village,” in *Urbanization and Values*, edited by George F. McLean and John Kromkowski (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1991), 170–71.

27. Cited in Yorgason, *Transformation*, 117.

addresses stands out: “Within Mormon culture itself [into the late 1800s and early 1900s] . . . the Mormon conception of wealth was shorn of most negative connotations. Instead of wealth being a mixed blessing, easily promoting dangerous social divisions, wealth rightly separated the industrious from the idle.”²⁸ This is certainly a narrative that makes sense: the lure of the wealth of cities, their opportunity and freedom, all of which depend upon their openness and diversity, was too great a temptation for the Saints, and the ideal of a homely unity, connected to the humble and shared practices of subsistence and grounded in the promise of higher joy than that which material goods can provide, fell by the wayside. But I would add one additional wrinkle to it.

The Need for an Unplanned, or a Differently Planned, Mormon Zion

The above-mentioned passage from Arrington’s *City of God*, referencing the fact that by the 1870s and 1880s commercial urban hubs in the Territory of Utah had already organically developed patterns that the egalitarian, communal ideals of consecration directly challenged, needs further consideration. Another passage lays out the relevant issues even more clearly:

On the whole the Saints in the north [of Utah] seemed wary of efforts to alter dramatically their accustomed economic and social patterns. The accomplishments of their cooperatives greatly complemented but did not supplant traditional economic forms. Perhaps their caution worked ultimately to their advantage. Where no fast lines could be drawn between those who worked in the Order and those who did not, occasions for intramural conflict over Order affairs were greatly reduced. In the southern Utah village of Kanab factions of Order advocates were strong and unyielding in their desire to make a living reality of the communal form favored by the prophet. Treading roughly

28. Yorgason, 128.

upon the more reticent, they left a legacy that divided the community for many years thereafter.²⁹

What Arrington here describes was not just the discomfort of an urbanized population called by their religious leaders to change their commercial practices; it was also the discomfort of a community of people who, in the midst of the challenges and vicissitudes and transactions of commercial life, had formed social patterns and routines facing a top-down disruption. Disruption even in rural communities resulted in, as Arrington notes, frustration and unhappiness on the part of some; in a complex city, where patterns of life develop organically, a disruption on the scale that Smith's or Young's communal and egalitarian ideal would demand would result in even greater consternation. And when disruption arises in connection with the fulfilment of some clearly stated organizational principle, the possibility of resentment is greater still. Hence, the more successful and transformative examples of "Zion planning," as it we might call it, were those that refused to advocate for the "communal form" in "unyielding" ways.

The reality that Smith's and others' approach to orchestrating the construction of an ideal, loving, self-sufficient, equal city often took such unyielding disruption for granted is noted by Park:

The first point is how divorced the plans were from the geographic reality of Jackson County, Missouri. The city plans seem to imagine a vacant lot ready to be filled—and not just a small lot, either, but a lot that would fill twenty thousand people. This was Zion the ideal, a contemporary Eden, barren of people and previously claimed property, anxious to initiate a new civilization originating from a specific and physical location. This was a new beginning and empty drawing board. But the community of Independence was nothing close to an empty drawing board. While it was incomparable to the cities found on the East Coast, the frontier town did still claim a growing settlement . . . , [and Smith's] designs totally disregard[ed] road and city developments

29. Arrington, Fox, and May, *Building the City of God*, 224.

then in place. Westport Road, [Jackson County]’s major east-west thoroughfare, was ignored and not incorporated into the plan. However, what is more striking is how the plat seeps into Independence town proper, replacing nearly half of what was then a growing community. This problem becomes even more insurmountable in the second plat developed several months later. [And if] the June 1833 plat encroached on town property, the second obliterated it completely.³⁰

In a recent book on the history of liberal ideas, Jacob T. Levy uses a comparative framework to look at what he calls “rationalist” and “pluralist” visions of human freedom.³¹ His analysis can perhaps be expanded to how we consider other ideas, including religious ones. There is, in Smith’s, Young’s, and others’ top-down, prophetically worked out visions of those city plats and systems by which Zion could be realized, a type of rationalism that, as James Scott has observed in his magisterial study *Seeing Like a State*, invariably involves the dismissal of organically developed patterns of life and the local knowledge that those patterns reflect because the inconsistencies and exceptions that those patterns allow challenge the rational vision which the planners have in mind.³² While it might seem odd to say it, there is an element of Robert Moses hidden in the thinking which went into Smith’s plat of Zion, and certainly, no one familiar with Young’s biography would deny that there was more than just an element of authoritarianism to how he viewed the State of Deseret.

Does that mean that those Mormons, Jack Mormons, Gentiles, and everyone in-between in Salt Lake City and Ogden who rolled their eyes, dragged their feet, and declared that the idea of restricting, changing, or

30. Park, “To Fill up the World,” 8–9.

31. Jacob T. Levy, *Rationalism, Pluralism, and Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

32. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998).

channeling their habits of purchasing, selling, and laboring in the name of building up Zion was a step too far were, in essence, proto-Jane Jacobses, localist fighters for personal freedom and a more authentic sense of community against a “high modernist” project? Probably not, at least not entirely. But to the extent that we are still inspired today by the promise of Zion, and to the extent that we dwell in places and work through economies that are thoroughly globalized and urbanized and suburbanized, then we owe it to ourselves to recognize that the writings that inspire us often have a presumptuous, top-down, authoritarian character.

This is, one might note, an intellectual struggle that has characterized many efforts to articulate alternative economic arrangements of almost any sort. While I do not wish to belabor the (I think mostly silly) arguments over the degree of similarity between united order experiments and socialist economies,³³ the argument over the degree to which socialist ideals must necessarily involve adhering to a top-down program, versus the degree to which socialist principles may be accommodated to the pluralistic characteristics of a genuinely democratic civil society, is something that Mormons thinking about urban (and other types of) planning might learn from. The collapse of the Soviet Union nearly thirty years ago ended almost all apologies ever made by revolutionary thinkers for state-based socialism; the reputation of socialists as addicted to the achievement of community and equality through the coercive power of the state lingers on, however, partly because socialists themselves have not rethought enough of their

33. For those interested in diving in, Dean L. May, “The Economics of Zion,” *Sunstone* (Aug. 1990): 15–23, and Duane Boyce, “Do Liberal Economic Policies Approximate the Law of Consecration?,” *FARMS Review* 21, no. 1 (2009): 197–213, provide a good starting point, with their diametrically opposed perspectives.

own presumptions. One thinker who has, namely the sociologist Erik Olin Wright, commented on this intellectual struggle as follows:

A vibrant civil society is precisely one with a multitude of heterogeneous associations, networks, and communities, built around different goals, with different kinds of members based on different sorts of solidarities. . . . It is tempting to deal with this . . . by somehow defining civil society as only consisting of benign associations that are consistent with socialist ideals of democratic egalitarianism. . . . I think this is an undesirable response. . . . There is no guarantee that a society within which real power rooted in civil society predominates would be one that always upholds democratic egalitarian ideals. This, however, is not some unique problem for socialism; it is a characteristic of democratic institutions in general. As conservatives often point out, inherent in democracy is the potential for the tyranny of the majority, and yet in practice liberal democracies have been fairly successful at creating institutions that protect both individual rights and the interests of minorities. A socialist democracy rooted in social empowerment through associations in civil society would face similar challenges. . . . My assumption here is not that a socialism of social empowerment will inevitably successfully meet this challenge, but that moving along the pathways of social empowerment will provide a more favorable terrain on which to struggle for these ideals than does either capitalism or statism.³⁴

Those who find inspiration in Smith's plat of Zion, and thus wish to keep in mind the principles it encompassed when dealing with the (often fiscally and environmentally unsustainable) growth-centric qualities of urban life around the globe today, must also keep this principle in mind. There is, as in most other conceptions of cooperative, egalitarian, agrarian, socially oriented forms of life, a rationalist temptation here, one that arguably Smith fell victim to in blithely conceiving of the laying down of one small, self-sustaining urban form after another, so

34. Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (London: Verso, 2010), 145–48.

to “fill up the world in these last days.”³⁵ It is this rationalist temptation that contributes, however unfairly and indefensibly, to the common accusation of “fascism!” made against those who sincerely seek to make our food systems more sustainable, our cities more walkable, and our communities less subject to the dispersing, disruptive, centrifugal forces of growth.³⁶ Perhaps such accusations are unavoidable, and perhaps the rationalist, interventionary aspect of Smith’s vision for the city of Zion is unavoidable as well. But if so, those of us who find ourselves moved, however intensely or distantly, by Elder Widtsoe’s agrarian evocations, should therefore struggle with how such inspired reminders could be communicated in contemporary urban environments, which are, like all cities, organic, complex, entwined, and even a little anarchic at their foundations, and thus not easily aligned with a singular—as opposed to a pluralistic—spatial and socioeconomic model. A limited, constrained, land-oriented city of Zion and its relationship to any attempt to imagine a practicable Mormon theory of consecration

35. One may discern this same kind of temptation at work in some of Smith’s thinking about temple work; while Samuel Brown’s excellent book on this topic is very sympathetic to Smith’s vision of a “heavenly network of belonging,” he does allow that there was an element of “craftiness” to it, an “ontological flattening” wherein Smith conceived of all of us as equal, and almost desperate, participants in the race to become “saviors on Mount Zion” to ourselves and everyone we know or ever might know. See Brown, *In Heaven as it is On Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 145, 243–45, 259–60.

36. For a particularly paranoid and fairly hilarious example, consider Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning* (New York: Doubleday, 2008). This accusation is not restricted to professional conservative agitators and wing nuts, however; just last summer, the *Wall Street Journal* published a prominent piece on how just about all serious efforts at promoting more communal and egalitarian urban environments were instances of “leftist” coercion. Christopher F. Rufo, “New Left Urbanists’ Want to Remake Your City,” *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 22, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-left-urbanists-want-to-remake-your-city-11566512564>.

could be simply dismissed, of course. But given the ways in which Smith's plat of Zion nonetheless connects with the Mormon struggle for community, perhaps those inspired to continue that struggle must simultaneously attend to the possible imperative of building cities that are at least somewhat constrained and agrarian, but also to the possibility of doing so in ways that do not needlessly disrupt the urban folkways that all of us take as second nature today.

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A COMMENTARY ON JOSEPH SMITH'S REVISION OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

Kevin L. Barney

The Book of Mormon was published in March 1830, and the following month on April 6 the fledgling Church of Christ was organized. Two months later during the month of June in that year Joseph Smith and a series of scribes (primarily Sidney Rigdon) undertook a new scriptural project, consisting of a revision of the King James Version of the Bible. This new project at the time was commonly referred to as the “new translation” and began with the vision of Moses (which is customarily understood to be the beginning of the new translation) and would conclude just over three years later on July 2, 1833.

Although Smith desired to publish the new translation, circumstances were such that publication at that time was not possible. After Smith's death in 1844, a majority of Church members eventually followed Brigham Young to the Great Basin of the Intermountain West, but a significant minority rejected Young's leadership and remained in the Midwest. This included Smith's widow, Emma Hale Smith, who was in possession of the manuscripts for the new translation as well as the marked Bible that indicated where certain revisions were to go. Eventually these materials would reside with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the RLDS Church), which would publish an initial edition under the title *Holy Scriptures—Inspired Version* in 1867 and in subsequent publications. Most of the Mormons in what would become Utah did not have a clear understanding of this scriptural project, and due to denominational competition, they did not trust the RLDS Church publications.

This state of affairs would eventually change in the 1960s and 1970s when Robert J. Matthews, a Latter-day Saint, pursued research for his doctoral dissertation on the new translation. Because of this work, RLDS Church leaders gave him access to the manuscripts in their archives, and he was able to demonstrate and confirm that the RLDS Church had been responsible with the manuscripts and in their publications. As a consequence, LDS interest in the new translation grew substantially, and when The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the LDS Church) published a new, in-house edition of the KJV Bible in 1979, they included extracts from the new translation, both in footnotes and in a special appendix for longer passages. In this publication the new translation was designated the Joseph Smith Translation, or JST for short, and I shall follow that naming convention in this article.

A persistent question relating to the JST has to do with what its emendations represent. Are they all textual restorations (in English)? Is the text a kind of embedded commentary? Are there different types of changes in different passages and if so, what are the various possibilities?

I propose to attempt a provisional answer to this question by evaluating every JST emendation to an entire book of the Bible, something that I do not believe has been done before (at least not in print). This still will not provide a definitive answer to the question, as the JST can vary considerably in different sections of the project, but it will perhaps at least provide a start toward a better understanding of the types of revisions made in the JST.

For this reason I propose to use the book of 1 Corinthians. This book was dictated just a little over halfway through the project as a whole, so the project was at a mature state by this time, and Smith had not yet experienced the burnout he seemed to feel after he returned to the Old Testament and faced a large number of very lengthy books.

We shall begin by reviewing the history of scholarship on the nature of the JST revisions. I will then propose a more complete paradigm of different types of revisions attested in the JST. I will then evaluate every JST revision to 1 Corinthians and assign each passage to one or more types of revisions in the paradigm. And finally, I will review the results

and suggest what they might mean for our understanding of the JST more broadly.

History of Scholarship on JST Revisions

The late Bob Matthews (mentioned above), a longtime professor in Religious Education at Brigham Young University, offered some initial classifications of the JST in his seminal *A Plainer Translation* (taken from his PhD dissertation), when he suggested that there are several different possible ways to understand a given JST emendation:

To regard the New Translation [i.e. JST] as a product of divine inspiration given to Joseph Smith does not necessarily assume that it be a restoration of the original Bible text. It seems probable that the New Translation could be many things. For example, the nature of the work may fall into at least four categories:

1. Portions may amount to restorations of content material once written by the biblical authors but since deleted from the Bible.
2. Portions may consist of a record of actual historical events that were not recorded, or were recorded but never included in the biblical collection.
3. Portions may consist of inspired commentary by the Prophet Joseph Smith, enlarged, elaborated, and even adapted to a latter-day situation. This may be similar to what Nephi meant by “Likening” the scriptures to himself and his people in their particular circumstance. (See 1 Nephi 19:23–24; 2 Nephi 11:8).
4. Some items may be a harmonization of doctrinal concepts that were revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith independently of his translation of the Bible, but by means of which he was able to discover that a biblical passage was inaccurate.¹

1. Robert J. Matthews, “A Plainer Translation”: *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), 253. For a very similar list published the same year as the Matthews list, see Robert L. Millet, “Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible: A Historical Overview,” in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, edited by Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1985), 43–45.

Note that Matthews clearly intended for this list to be suggestive and not exhaustive, by framing it expansively with such words as “could be many things,” “for example,” “may,” and “at least.”

Similarly, Philip Barlow in his classic *Mormons and the Bible* suggests six different possible ways to understand JST emendations:

- Long revealed additions that have little or no biblical parallel, such as the visions of Moses and Enoch, and the passage on Melchizedek;
- “Common-sense” changes (e.g., Genesis 6:6 “And it repented the Lord that he had made man” is revised in Moses 8:25 to read: “And it repented Noah, and his heart was pained that the Lord had made man.” God, being perfect, needs no repentance.);
- “Interpretive additions,” often signaled by the phrase “or in other words,” which Smith appended to a passage he wished to clarify;
- “Harmonization,” in which Smith reconciled passages that seemed to conflict with other passages;
- “Not easily classifiable”; many changes are not easily classified; one can observe only that frequently the meaning of a given text has been changed, often idiosyncratically;
- Grammatical improvements, technical clarifications, and modernization of terms. These were by far the most common type of change in the JST.²

A slightly revised version of the Matthews list was published by Scott Faulring, Kent Jackson, and Matthews himself in 2004, as follows, suggesting that a given JST emendation may be:

- Restoration of original text.
- Restoration of what was once said or done but which was never in the Bible.
- Editing to make the Bible more understandable for modern readers.
- Editing to bring biblical wording into harmony with truth found in other revelations or elsewhere in the Bible.

2. Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 51–53.

- Changes to provide modern readers teachings that were not written by original authors.³

Most recently, Thomas Wayment has offered his version of the broad categories of JST changes as follows: (1) expansions of biblical narratives, (2) edits to make the text of the Bible more understandable, (3) harmonizations between the Gospels, (4) additions of new discourses that appear to have the modern reader in mind, and (5) expansions of narrative to include new theological insights.⁴

Toward a More Complete Paradigm

The lists of broad types of changes made in the JST provided by earlier scholars are useful from a big-picture perspective, but they are not sufficiently detailed to be able to account for every JST emendation in a given text. For example, the influence of italicized text on JST revisions is widely acknowledged and not controversial, yet none of these descriptions get into that level of detail. Below I propose a paradigm of JST revisions, which is grounded in the treatments set forth above⁵ but which also provides more detail with the aim of being able to account for every JST emendation in a given text.

3. Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 8–11.

4. See Thomas A. Wayment, "Intertextuality and the Purpose of Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible," in *Foundational Texts of Mormonism: Examining Major Early Sources*, edited by Mark Ashurst-McGee, Robin Scott Jensen, and Sharalyn D. Howcroft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 75.

5. I did not reflect the concept of actual history not recorded or included in the Bible, for while that may be a useful category for the sake of completeness, in the absence of a textual source it strikes me as unlikely that we would be able to determine that something was historically said or done. I also did not separately include Barlow's "common-sense changes" or "interpretive additions," as I would group such items under the broad category of Midrashic Commentary.

Paradigm of JST Revisions

Paradigm Designation	Description	Explanation and/or Illustration
A-1	English Paraphrases of KJV <i>Text in General</i>	The most common type of change made in the JST is to paraphrase the KJV text with other English words. This amounts to an intralingual translation ^a of the Jacobean English of the KJV into other, often more modern, English text. As a control for these kinds of changes I will often consider the import of the underlying Greek text and compare modern English translations—not because Smith was working with the Greek (he was not, unless through secondary sources) but as a way of evaluating the cogency and probity of the English Smith chose to use.
A-2	English Paraphrases of KJV <i>Text Based on Suspicion of Italicized Text</i>	Italics in the KJV were not used for emphasis but, among other things, to mark words that did not have a specific counterpart in the original language text but were necessary for the text to make sense in English. Smith and his scribes were aware of this usage, and the Joseph Smith marked Bible used during the translation project often crossed italicized words out, so a suspicion of italicized words was an engine that drove JST emendations.
A-3	English Paraphrases of KJV <i>Text Based on Modernization</i>	Editing to make the Bible more understandable for modern readers. Grammatical improvements, technical clarifications, and modernization of terms.
A-4	English Paraphrases of KJV <i>Text Based on Assimilation</i>	Assimilation is a common concept in New Testament textual criticism generally but does not seem to have been previously considered or applied by JST scholars. The JST text sometimes assimilates to other wording that is nearby, better known, or arguably works better in the emended passage.

Paradigm Designation	Description	Explanation and/or Illustration
A-5	English Paraphrases of KJV Text <i>Having Non-Original Textual Variants</i>	Revelation 2:22 reads as follows: "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." In lieu of "a bed," the JST reads "hell." There is ancient textual evidence for the following readings: prison, a furnace, illness, sorrow. The problem is that being tossed into a bed doesn't sound like such a bad punishment, so the JST and a number of ancient scribes posited worse fates. In fact, however, being cast into a bed here is a Semitic idiom for a bed of illness, and it really is a punishment. Smith's impulse here parallels what the ancient scribes did in trying to make sense of the passage. ^c
B	Midrashic Commentary	I see midrashic commentary as being analogous to the <i>targumin</i> , the <i>pesharim</i> , and the genre of "Rewritten Bible" attested among the Dead Sea Scrolls. For example, in Matthew 4 when Jesus is tempted the text has the devil taking Jesus places. The JST reworks all of these passages to have the Spirit move him about. The point of this is to make a commentary on the text, to the effect that the devil does not have power to physically move the Son of Man around, an issue that simply wasn't a concern to the original writer. ^d
C-1	Harmonizations <i>within the Biblical Text</i>	"Editing to bring biblical wording into harmony with truth found . . . elsewhere in the Bible" ^e in which "Smith reconciled passages that seemed to conflict with other passages." ^f
C-2	Harmonizations <i>with Modern Revelation</i>	"Changes to provide modern readers teachings that were not written by original authors." ^g
D	Long Additions with Little or No Biblical Parallel	These kinds of passages occur primarily near the beginning of the project in the book of Genesis, as with the visions of Moses and Enoch and the passage on Melchizedek.

Paradigm Designation	Description	Explanation and/or Illustration
E	Textual Restorations	These are actually quite rare. Probably the most commonly cited possible example is Mathew 5:22: "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother <i>without a cause</i> shall be in danger of the judgment." Both the JST and 3 Nephi 12:22 omit the words "without a cause," which are a translation of the Greek adverb <i>eike</i> , meaning something like "rashly," "thoughtlessly," or "unjustly." Textual evidence suggests that the adverb was not original to the text but was added in an attempt to soften the morally stark rigor of the original wording.
F	Secondary Sources	An existing translation or commentary would have the potential to be a secondary source that Smith and his scribe consulted. For purposes of this study I have compared only four of the more likely possible secondary sources: (1) the Alexander Campbell translation, ^h (2) the Adam Clarke Commentary, ⁱ (3) the Coverdale Bible, ^j and (4) John Wesley's Explanatory Notes. ^k There are numerous other potential secondary sources, but this sampling of several among the most likely to be an influence should suffice for present purposes.
G	Not Easily Classifiable	Many changes are not easily classified; one can observe only that frequently the meaning of a given text has been changed, often idiosyncratically.

a. For the concept of "intralingual translation" see David J. Shepherd, "Rendering Fiction: Translation, Pseudotranslation, and the Book of Mormon," in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, edited by Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 367–95.

b. See for instance Kent P. Jackson, "The King James Bible and the Joseph Smith Translation," in *The King James Bible and the Restoration*, edited by Kent P. Jackson (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), 197–214.

c. In general, see Kevin L. Barney, "The Joseph Smith Translation and Ancient Texts of the Bible," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 3 (Fall 1986): 85–102.

d. This is inclusive of the Robert J. Matthews and Robert L. Millet category of "inspired prophetic commentary." My intent is to be neutral as to whether any given revision is

“inspired” or “prophetic”; I prefer to use the term “midrashic,” which is descriptive of the type of comment being made.

e. Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 9.

f. Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 51–53.

g. Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible*, 10.

h. Alexander Campbell, ed., *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, Commonly Styled the New Testament*, translated by George Campbell, James MacKnight, and Philip Doddridge (Buffalo, Va. [now Bethany, W.Va.]: Alexander Campbell, 1826).

i. Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 6 vols. (New York: Emory and Waugh, 1831). Recent research has shown that several dozen JST revisions seem to have been influenced by the Adam Clarke Commentary. See Haley Wilson and Thomas Wayment, “A Recently Recovered Source: Rethinking Joseph Smith's Bible Translation” *Journal of Undergraduate Research*, Mar. 16, 2017, available at <http://jur.byu.edu/?p=21296>.

j. Myles Coverdale, *The Bible, that is the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testament, faithfully translated into English* (Antwerp, Belgium: Merten de Keyser, 1525).

k. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: Ward, Lock, Boden, 1706).

l. Wesley's Explanatory Notes, the Adam Clarke Commentary, and the Alexander Campbell translation have been cited as perhaps the most likely secondary sources available to Smith, given for all three their easy availability, for Clarke and Wesley their grounding in the Methodist tradition, and for Campbell Rigdon's close association with the translator. See Ronald V. Huggins, “Joseph Smith's ‘Inspired Translation’ of Romans 7,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 162–63. See also Thomas A. Wayment and Haley Wilson-Lemmon, “A Recovered Resource: The Use of Adam Clarke's Bible Commentary in Joseph Smith's Bible Translation,” in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity*, edited by Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Brian M. Hauglid (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2020). I also selected the Coverdale Bible as it may have been significant in the “Ships of Tarshish” variant in the Book of Mormon; see Ronald V. Huggins, “‘Without a Cause’ and ‘Ships of Tarshish’: A Possible Contemporary Source for Two Unexplained Readings from Joseph Smith,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 157–79.

An Analysis of All JST Revisions to First Corinthians

As previously indicated, at this point I intend to review every JST revision to the book of 1 Corinthians and assign each textual revision to one or more types of textual change as set forth in the Paradigm of JST Revisions. In these scriptural passages from the KJV, text deleted in the JST will be struck through and text added in the JST will be given in bold underline.

1. 1 Corinthians 1:1

Paul, ~~called to be~~ an apostle, called of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,

The KJV reflected a fashion in Bible translation of the time of using italic type to represent English words that did not directly correspond to a word in the original language. Joseph Smith and his scribes were aware of this practice, and accordingly tended to view italicized words in the English text with a significant sense of suspicion. An excellent study published over a decade ago by Thomas Wayment and Tyson Yost concludes, based on a review of the four Gospels, that on average the JST altered 29 percent of italicized words, removed altogether an additional 21 percent, and retained without revision just under 50 percent.⁶ Therefore, the presence of italicized words often acts as an engine for the development of emendations to the KJV text.

Sometimes the only point to a JST emendation is to avoid the use of the italicized words. The very first JST change in 1 Corinthians falls under this category. KJV 1 Corinthians 1:1 begins “Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ,” which the JST emends to “Paul an apostle, called of Jesus Christ.” This type of example helps to explain why the fashion of using italic type for this purpose eventually died out in most modern English translations. The copula “to be” is not literally present in Greek, where it is implied, but it is necessary in English. Putting the

6. Thomas A. Wayment and Tyson J. Yost, “The Joseph Smith Translation and Italicized Words in the King James Version,” *Religious Educator* 6, no. 1 (2005): 51–64.

copula in italics may have seemed like admirable transparency to the translators of the time, but the actual effect was to promote the notion of translation as a mechanical, *verbum pro verbo* process and to cause confusion and misunderstanding among ordinary Bible readers.

Paradigm Classification A-2 (Suspicion of Italicized Text).

2–3. 1 Corinthians 1:4–5

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you ~~by~~ of Jesus Christ;

That in every thing ye are enriched ~~by~~ of him, in all utterance, and *in* all knowledge;

The English translational tradition is split pretty evenly between “by Jesus Christ / by him” and “in Jesus Christ / in him.” The wording “by Jesus Christ” as in the KJV seems to suggest that Christ is the agent that conveys the grace of God to man. The more literal rendering of the Greek preposition *en*, “in Jesus Christ,” suggests that Christ is himself the grace that God has given us. Although Smith changes “by” to “of” rather than “in,” he seems to be making this same point.

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

4. 1 Corinthians 1:10

Now I beseech you, brethren, ~~by~~ in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

The Greek preposition *dia* + genitive can be rendered “through,” “by,” or “in.” Although “by” is the most common choice in the modern English translational tradition, over a dozen translations render it “in” with the JST (such as the New International Version).⁷

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

7. The Anchor Bible also has “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 136.

5. 1 Corinthians 1:12

Now this I say, that every one many of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

KJV “that every one of you saith” is a rendering of the Greek *hoti hekastos humon legei* “that each of you says.”⁸ Although indeed a literal rendering of the Greek text, the English of the KJV is awkward, because if every one is saying “I am of Paul,” how is it that every one is *also* saying “I am of Apollos”? The Greek notwithstanding, for the expression to read well in English it needs to be distributive, as in “some say X, others say Y” or “one says X, another says Y.” By reducing the exhaustive “every one” of the KJV to something less than that, “many,” the JST allows for this more natural way of reading the passage.⁹

There are fifteen English translations that move away from a literal rendering of the Greek substantive to a clearer presentation of the English, as illustrated by the following example:

TLB¹⁰: Some of you are saying, “I am a follower of Paul”; and others say that they are for Apollos or for Peter; and some that they alone are the true followers of Christ.¹¹

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

8. “The word *hekastos*, ‘each,’ must not of course be pressed to the effect that every single member has associated himself with one of the groups mentioned.” Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, translated by James W. Leitch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1978), 33.

9. Alternatively, the JST emendation could represent a common JST tendency to avoid hyperbolic statements. I am indebted to Julie M. Smith for this observation.

10. Abbreviations of Bible translations are used as given in Appendix A.

11. Similarly, the Anchor Bible has “What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I side with Paul!’; another, ‘I side with Apollos!’; or ‘I side with Cephas!’; or ‘I side with Christ!’” See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 136.

6. 1 Corinthians 1:24

But unto them ~~which are called~~ who believe, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

For the JST emendation to make sense, one must read the previous two verses: “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” Paul has just stated that the Jews require a sign and Christ crucified is to them a stumblingblock, and the Greeks seek after wisdom and Christ crucified is to them foolishness. So the qualification “who believe” in verse 24 is to confirm that that verse is not talking about just any Jew or Greek, but one who has become a believer in the Savior.

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary).

7. 1 Corinthians 1:26

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, ~~are called~~ are chosen:

The KJV is quite awkward here. For the sense, see the NRSV: “Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.” Since it’s in italics, there is no actual passive verb at the end of the verse meaning “are called,” and that verb can be read as being inconsistent with the nominal form “calling” earlier in the verse. This emendation seems largely motivated by the fact that the changed words are in italics.

Paradigm Classification A-2 (Suspicion of Italicized Text).

8. 1 Corinthians 1:27

~~But~~ For God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

The beginning of verse 27 is meant to show contrast with verse 26, so the conjunction *alla* is variously rendered “but,” “but rather,” or “instead.” Smith sees the verse as a continuation of and parallel with the preceding verse, and so he assimilates the first word of this verse to the first word of the prior verse, “for.”

Paradigm Classification A-4 (Assimilation).

9. 1 Corinthians 1:28

And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are mighty:

The KJV is contrasting “things that are” with “things which are not.” Literally the KJV is contrasting simple existence with nonexistence, but that is not actually Paul’s point; he is instead contrasting things that are *considered to be something* with things that are *considered to be nothing*. A more common type of modern English translation reads “to bring to nothing what the world considers important” (CJB). The VOICE uses the word “significant” and the TLB uses “great.” The JST’s “mighty” (representing *ta ischura*, which is assimilated from the prior verse) is making the same clarifying point.

Paradigm Classifications A-1 and A-4 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Assimilation).

10. 1 Corinthians 2:11

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, ~~but~~ except he has the Spirit of God.

The KJV is indeed a literal translation of the Greek text. Paul is saying that just as only the spirit of man within him can know the things of a man, only the Spirit of God can know the things of God. Taken in isolation, this formulation appears to foreclose the possibility

that a man could ever know the things of God, since a mere man is by no means himself the Spirit of God. Yes, only the Spirit of God knows the things of God, but the JST provides that a man may possess the Spirit of God and thereby know the things of God as well. That this is indeed what Paul meant to express is made clear in the following verse: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Other passages in the letter make it clear that this is Paul's meaning, such as 3:16: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The JST avoids the temporary impression Paul gives that man can in no wise know the things of God and essentially collapses verse 11 with verse 12 so as to make it clear that man may indeed receive the Spirit of God.

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary).

11. 1 Corinthians 3:2

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to ~~bear~~ receive it, neither yet now are ye able.

This is a change that was motivated in the first instance by the italics but which also reflects an English paraphrase. The Greek has *oupo gar edunasthe*, "for you were not yet able." Many translations render something like "for you were not yet ready." Three actually match the JST by using the word "receive," as in the NASB: "for you were not yet ready to receive it" (so also the NKJ and OJB). So here the concern with italics also leads to an English paraphrase of KJV text.

Paradigm Classifications A-2 and A-1 (Suspicion of Italicized Text and English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

12. 1 Corinthians 3:15

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself ~~shall~~ may be saved; yet so as by fire.

Paul's wording seems to suggest that salvation shall be a certainty for all people in all cases. The JST pulls back on that idea, making salvation a possibility rather than a sure thing in all events. Paul was assuming a Christian believer who would otherwise be a proper subject of salvation, not just any human being irrespective of her relationship with the Savior. As this is not made explicit in the text, the JST avoids a potential misunderstanding here.

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary).

13. 1 Corinthians 3:17

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; but the temple of God is holy, which ~~temple~~ Temple ye are.

The word "temple" appears three times in this verse, and the JST manuscript seems to capitalize the third occurrence only. It is not clear whether this was an intentional change or an aborted one, and if intentional what nuance he sought to clarify by the change. Perhaps temple was left lowercase when it was the "temple of God," but was changed to uppercase when referring to his readers as temples, but the intent behind the change (if the change in fact was intentional) remains unclear.

Paradigm Classification G (Not Easily Classifiable).

14. 1 Corinthians 4:2

Moreover it is required ~~in~~ of stewards, that a man be found faithful.

The KJV renders *en tois oikonomois* literally as "in stewards," but arguably "of" (as in the JST) would be the more natural idiom in English rather than "in." Nineteen translations use "of stewards" as in the JST, such as the WEB: "Here, moreover, it is required of stewards, that they be found faithful."¹² Two translations use "among" (as in DRA,

12. The Anchor Bible also has "of stewards." See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 209.

“among the dispensers”), and a number of others rework the sentence to avoid this construction altogether.

The ubiquity of the word “of” in modern translations postdating the JST suggests that “of” may also have existed in translations predating the JST, and indeed that is the case in the Coverdale Bible: “Now is there no more requyred of the stewardest, then, that they be founde faithfull.”

Paradigm Classifications A-1 and F (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Secondary Source).

15. 1 Corinthians 4:4

For though I know nothing ~~by~~ against myself; yet ~~am~~ I am not hereby justified: but he ~~that~~ who judgeth me is the Lord.

There are several changes made to this verse. The addition of “though” simply correlates with “yet” and emphasizes the contrast between the first and second parts of the verse. The switch from “am I” to “I am” is merely stylistic, and the modernization of the relative pronoun from “that” to “who” is a common type of updating found in the JST. The most significant change is emending “by myself” as a rendering of the first-person reflexive pronoun in the dative case, *emauto*, to “against myself.”

The “I know nothing by myself” of the KJV to a modern reader suggests that Paul’s knowledge does not arise from himself alone but from external authorities or instrumentalities, such as, say, the Holy Spirit. But this is manifestly *not* the meaning of the expression, which is archaic for “I know nothing against myself” as the JST correctly emends it, meaning in effect “my conscience is clear.” Although a handful of English translations retain the traditional “by myself” of the KJV, twenty-four have “against myself” with the JST, and all others rework the wording in some way to express the same concept.

Paradigm Classifications A-3 and A-1 (Modernization and English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

16. 1 Corinthians 4:5

Therefore I judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

The JST turns Paul's instruction to his readers into a statement applicable to himself. It is unclear what point Smith intended to make with this emendation.

Paradigm Classification G (Not Easily Classifiable).

17. 1 Corinthians 5:3

For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit I have judged already, ~~as though I were present, concerning him that~~ who hath so done this deed, as though I was present.

The JST emendation moves a clause for the sole purpose of avoiding the italicized "concerning" and modernizes the personal relative pronoun.

Paradigm Classification A-3 and A-2 (Modernization and Suspicion of Italicized Text).

18. 1 Corinthians 5:4

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and ~~my~~ have the spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

In verse 3 Paul talks about being absent from the Corinthians in body but present in spirit. In verse 4 the words "my spirit" hark back to verse 3 and essentially mean "I am with you in spirit." But the KJV rendering is very awkward here: "when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ." The KJV is simply too sparse to make Paul's point sensical and clear in English. The JST emendation makes the reference to "spirit" here to the Lord's spirit, not Paul's, which perhaps is a reflection that Paul uses *pneuma* ("spirit") to

refer to the Holy Spirit far more often than he does of the spirit of a human being.

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary).

19. 1 Corinthians 5:12

For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye they judge them that are within?

Here Paul is saying that God himself will judge outsiders, so the Corinthian Saints should not bother with that but rather should concentrate on judging insiders, i.e., their fellow Christians. The KJV translates verse 12b as a statement of what they are already in fact doing: “do not ye judge them that are within?” But if that were true, there would be no need for Paul to raise the point. Paul was not saying this is what you already do, but rather this is what you *should* be doing, as in the NET: “Are you not to judge those inside?” Since the KJV as written makes little sense, the JST moves the verb from second-person plural to third-person plural, as a statement of current reality that outsiders were in fact judging the Christians.

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary).

20. 1 Corinthians 6:12

12. All these things are not lawful unto me, but all these things are not expedient: ~~all~~ . All things are not lawful for me, ~~but~~ therefore I will not be brought under the power of any.

That the KJV does not use quotation marks has created a misunderstanding as to who is speaking what words in this passage. Without quotation marks, the entire verse appears to be a statement of Paul's, which then nonsensically has Paul contradicting himself twice in short order. The JST avoids these contradictions by adding a negative to the assertion “all things are lawful unto me” in both places it occurs. If the entire verse were spoken by Paul from his own perspective, the

JST would then harmonize the statements in the verse and make them consistent.

We have here a situation where Paul is quoting his opponents and disagreeing with them. In fact, there is no contradiction because “all these things are lawful unto me” is not Paul’s own point of view but a quotation from the Corinthian point of view. (Since the quotations in this verse come at the beginning of successive sentences, the KJV method of marking a quotation with capitalization is of no assistance here.) Actual quotation marks would have made this clear, as in the CJB:

You say, “For me, everything is permitted”? Maybe, but not everything is helpful. “For me, everything is permitted”? Maybe, but as far as I am concerned, I am not going to let anything gain control over me.

Without the use of quotations marks in the KJV, there is really no way to appreciate the repeated change of voice within this one verse. With that understanding, the JST becomes comprehensible as an attempt to make the statements within the verse (assuming they are all from Paul) coherent by harmonizing them.

Paradigm Classification C-1 (Harmonization [within the Biblical Text]).

21. 1 Corinthians 6:18

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man ~~doeth~~ committeth is ~~without the body; but~~ against the body of Christ, and he ~~that~~ who committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

The verb “commit” works more naturally in English with “sin” than does “do,” and so the JST assimilates “doeth” to the “committeth” later in the verse. What does it mean to sin “without [i.e., ‘outside’] the body?”¹³ That formulation in the KJV is completely unclear, and so the JST turns it into the more comprehensible “against the body of Christ.” Since there is no longer a contrast between general sins and fornication, the adversative “but” becomes the conjunction “and.”

13. Some translations understand the first part of the verse as a Corinthian slogan and therefore put it in quotation marks, as in the NET.

Although I believe the change from “doeth” to “committeth” is most likely an assimilation to “committeth” later in the verse, the modern English form “commits” appears in both the Campbell translation, which has “every sin which a man *commits* is without the body,” and Wesley’s Explanatory Notes, which has “every sin that a man *commits* against his neighbour terminates upon an object out of himself.”

Paradigm Classifications A-3, A-4 and F (Modernization, Assimilation and Secondary Source).

22–23. 1 Corinthians 7:1–2

1. Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, saying: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

2. Nevertheless, I say to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

1 Corinthians 7 begins with a *crux interpretum*: does the second half of verse 1 (“*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*”) represent Paul’s own statement or a quotation of a statement from Corinth? The Greek text itself gives no indication either way. While there are scholars on both sides of the question, something of a modern scholarly consensus has developed in favor of the Corinthian quotation view. Reasons for this position include the structural similarity of 7:1 with other secure Corinthian quotations (such as 8:1), that 7:1b as a Pauline statement would contradict what Paul would have regarded as a divine ordinance: “It is *not* good for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18), and that the Corinthian quotation reading goes all the way back to Origen.¹⁴

In translation the clearest way to mark this as a Corinthian statement would have been to use quotation marks, but the KJV does not use quotation marks at all. Quotations are sometimes marked in the KJV by capitalization (usually preceded by a comma), and while this

14. For discussion, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 498–500.

method results in ambiguity (because it cannot mark a quotation at the beginning of a sentence, where the first letter is already capitalized, and it does not mark the end of a quotation) it does often successfully mark the beginning of a quotation. Since the italicized “It” is capitalized, in KJV usage this would appear to mark the beginning of a quotation, thus making verse 7:1b a statement from Corinth.

This passage provides a good illustration as to why the common LDS assumption that JST revisions necessarily reflect textual restorations is incorrect. Below is the Greek text for this passage, with words corresponding to the JST revision added and given in bold underline:

Peri de on egrapsate moi legontes kalon anthropo gunaikos me haptesthai.

Dia de lego tas porneias hekastos ten heautou gunaika echeto kai hekaste ton idion andra echeto.

The common LDS assumption would be that the words *legontes* (“saying”) and *lego* (“I say”) were original to the Greek text. Over time, these words dropped out of the text for some reason; the JST then restored them (in English) and is therefore a textual restoration.

This would be a misapprehension of what is going on here. The JST does not presuppose ancient variants in the Greek text; rather it provides clarified meaning at the English level. The JST revisions here are providing the functional equivalent of the quotation marks that are missing in the KJV text: “saying” is in effect the equivalent of an open quote mark, and “I say” is in effect the equivalent of a close quote mark. The JST here does not work at the Greek textual level but at the English translational level, and in doing so it corrects a weakness inherent in the KJV text (lack of quotation marks).

It is the responsibility of the translator to present Paul’s meaning in a correct way in English. There are seventeen older translations that, like the KJV, use capitalization to suggest a quotation here. The modern English equivalent to introducing the passage with *legontes* would be to put the second part of verse 1 within quotation marks, showing that those words should be ascribed to the letter Paul had received and

not to Paul himself. And of the sixty English translations available at biblegateway.com, twenty-one do indeed use quotation marks here. Another three reach the same result a different way. The DLNT creates the same effect by using a dash, and the MSG creates the same effect by turning the sentence into a question. The ERV paraphrases as follows: "You asked if it is better for a man not to have sexual relations at all." So forty-one of sixty translations (over 68 percent) are functionally in accord with the JST (and many of the remaining translations are simply ambiguous on the question). Some translations explicitly take the passage as having precisely the meaning the JST rejects. The TLB has "Now about those questions you asked in your last letter: my answer is that if you do not marry, it is good." The NLT has Paul's answer as "Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations." But this is a minority view; the increasing consensus of modern scholarship takes verse 1 as a quotation from Corinth, just as the JST does.

So the JST clarifies that 7:1b is indeed a quotation, a position that is widely accepted. And the addition of "I say" in verse 2 is then essentially the equivalent of closing that quotation by giving the adversative *de* in that verse an appropriately strong force (as if to render it "on the contrary").¹⁵ This has nothing to do with textual variants in ancient manuscripts; it is rather a matter of correct presentation in English.

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

24. 1 Corinthians 7:5

~~Defraud~~ **Depart** ye not one from the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

The word "defraud" is indeed an accurate translation of the Greek verb *apostereo* ("rob, despoil"), but in English it's a very obscure way to make the point Paul is trying to make here, which is more like "do not deprive each other of marital rights," or more pointedly "do not refuse

15. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 501.

sex to each other.” The JST makes the concept clearer while still reflecting Smith’s typical conservatism in making the fewest letter changes necessary (i.e., note how close English “depart” is to KJV “defraud”).

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

25. 1 Corinthians 7:6

~~But I speak this~~ **And now what I speak is** by permission, ~~and not of~~
~~by~~ commandment.

The first change seems to be a simple paraphrase, and a number of other English translations have “by commandment” rather than “of commandment” at the end of the verse.

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

26. 1 Corinthians 7:9

But if they cannot ~~contain~~ **abide**, let them marry; for it is better to marry
than ~~to burn~~ **that any should commit sin.**

The first change is an English paraphrase. The expression (*ei ouk enkrateuontai*) the KJV obscurely rendered “if they cannot contain” means “if they do not have power over their passions.”¹⁶ The word “abide” is simply an alternative to the KJV “contain” as a way of expressing the exercise of self-control. At the end of the verse the verb *purousthai* does indeed literally mean “to burn.” Some have taken the verb here to mean “to burn in hell,” but most take it as “for their passions to burn.”¹⁷ The JST then takes this to its logical consequence, that if the couple lets its passions burn they would likely give in to such passions and commit sin as a result.

Paradigm Classification A-1 and B (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Midrashic Commentary).

16. Thiselton, 514.

17. Thiselton, 514.

27. 1 Corinthians 7:26

I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, *I say*, that *it is* good for a man so to be **remain, that he may do greater good.**

The JST gives a reason *why* it would be better for an unmarried man to remain such—so as to be in a position to do greater good.

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary)

28. 1 Corinthians 7:28

But ~~and~~ if thou marry, thou has not sinned; and if a ~~virgin~~ **Virgin** marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: ~~but I spare you~~ **for I spare you not.**

The KJV rendering here is awkward and does not adequately convey the sense of the passage. The KJV's "But and if thou marry" is overliteral; virtually all modern translations delete the word "and" here with the JST, such as the NRSV's "But if you marry." The "but I spare you" seems to say that even though Paul is telling them they will have troubles in the flesh if they marry, that's okay, go ahead and do it. But that is manifestly not Paul's meaning here, which is why the JST adds a negative to the clause. What Paul is actually saying is that by his counsel he is trying to spare them that result, as clearly expressed in the NRSV: "Yet those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you that." The JST adds a negative to avoid the misimpression the KJV gives, which was manifestly *not* what Paul meant to convey.

Note that the KJV following the Textus Receptus reads "and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned," with an anarthrous *parthenos* "a virgin." The original text most likely reads "the virgin" (*he parthenos*) with a definite article. (The definite article was probably omitted by some copyists for a perceived lack of propriety in keeping it.) The JST capitalizes "Virgin" here. The reason for the capitalization is not clear, and conceivably it was meant to mark the noun as definite. But the JST

retains the English indefinite article “a,” so in my view this revision does not amount to a textual restoration.¹⁸

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

29. 1 Corinthians 7:29

But I speak unto you who are called unto the ministry. For this I say, brethren, the time that remaineth is but short; ~~it remaineth, that both that ye shall be sent forth unto the ministry. Even they that who~~ have wives shall be as though they had none; for ye are called and chosen to do the Lord's work.

Although the JST makes a complex series of changes here, the revisions all support a simple idea: that the condition of those having wives being as though they had none is not a general statement applicable to all but applies specifically to those sent forth into the ministry, which provides a limitation as to class (ministers only) and as to time (only for the temporary duration of such ministry).

Paradigm Classifications A-3 and B (Modernization and Midrashic Commentary).

30–33. 1 Corinthians 7:30–33

And ~~they that~~ it shall be with them who weep, as though they wept not; and ~~they that~~ them who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and ~~they that~~ them who buy, as though they possessed not;

And ~~they that~~ them who use this world, as not ~~abusing~~ using it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

But I would, brethren, that ye magnify your calling. I would have you without carefulness. For he ~~He that~~ who is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; therefore he prevaieth:

18. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Society, 1971 [1975 Corrected Edition]), 555.

But he ~~that~~ **who** is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please *his* wife; therefore there is a difference, for he is hindered.

There are a number of revisions to this passage. The archaic use of “that” as a relative pronoun is modernized to “who.” The structure of these verses is changed from a more direct expression (e.g., “and they that weep”) to an indirect one (e.g., “and it shall be with them who weep”) so as to mesh better with verse 29b “that both they that have wives be as though they had none” (emphasis added). In verse 31 “abusing” is changed to “using” to match the “using” in the first part of the verse so as to make the terms parallel (as in verse 30 “weep//wept” and “rejoice//rejoiced”).¹⁹ In verses 32 and 33 the JST adds clauses to make it abundantly clear that verse 32 (not being married) reflects the superior condition in this context over verse 33 (being married).

Paradigm Classifications A-3, A-1 and B (Modernization, English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Midrashic Commentary).

34. 1 Corinthians 7:36

36. But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin whom he hath espoused, if she pass the flower of ~~her~~ age, and need so require, let him do what he ~~will~~ hath promised, he sinneth not: let them marry.

There is an ambiguity in this verse. Most translations take it as referring to a man's decision to marry a woman, where *ten parthenon autou* (“his virgin”) refers to a fiancée, but it is possible, though less

19. The KJV translates these terms differently because the first is a rendering of *chraomai* (“to use”) and the second is a rendering of the related compound verb *katachraomai* (“to use fully”). A number of modern translations similarly conform the second verb to the first as the JST does here. The NRSV renders “and those who deal with the world as if they had no dealings with it.”

likely, that those words in this passage are referring to a father's decision to allow his virgin daughter to marry, as explicitly suggested by a half dozen translations, such as the NASB:

But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin *daughter*, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.²⁰

Some translations, in order to be more explicit about how the text should be read, expressly identify the virgin as the man's fiancée, as in the ERV:

A man might think that he is not doing the right thing with his fiancée. She might be almost past the best age to marry. So he might feel that he should marry her. He should do what he wants. It is no sin for them to get married.

Other translations that do this are the CJB, NLT, NRSV, NRSVA, NRSVACE, and VOICE. (The ESV also does it, using the word "betrothed"). The JST is in accord with these translations, making the relationship explicitly one of a man to his fiancée, not a father making a decision about his virgin daughter.

Paradigm Classifications A-1 and A-2 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Suspicion of Italicized Text).

35. 1 Corinthians 7:38

So then he that giveth ~~her~~ himself in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth ~~her~~ himself not in marriage doeth better.

Verse 38 correlates with verse 36. The KJV "giveth her" contemplates a virgin daughter is in view, which is a minority position; most translations take it as referring to a man marrying his own fiancée as in

20. Other examples are the ASV, DLNT, GW, JUB, and NOG.

verse 36, and the JST is in accord, replacing both italicized occurrences of “her” with “himself.” DARBY even uses the very word “himself”: “So that he that marries himself does well; and he that does not marry does better.” So again, this is an emendation motivated by italics that also serves as an English paraphrase.

Paradigm Classifications A-1 and A-2 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Suspicion of Italicized Text).

36. 1 Corinthians 8:4

As concerning therefore the eating of those things ~~that~~ which are in the world offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing ~~in the world~~, and that *there is* none other God but one.

The JST here simply moves some text and modernizes the pronoun.

Paradigm Classification A-3 (Modernization).

37. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Know ye not that they which run in a race ~~run all, but~~ all run—only one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

The JST here intends no change in meaning but simply attempts to convey the sense in a more modern framing.

Paradigm Classification A-3 (Modernization).

38. 1 Corinthians 10:11

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition; also and for an admonition for those upon whom the ~~ends~~ end of the world are shall come.

Paul assumed that the end of the world was imminent. At the time Smith was dictating his changes to the text in 1832, the world had not ended, meaning that the end of the world had not actually been imminent at the time Paul dictated this text. So the JST harmonizes the text

with actual history in a way reminiscent of what the JST does in Matthew 24.²¹

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary).

39. 1 Corinthians 10:23

All things are lawful for me, ~~but~~ for all things are not expedient: all things are not lawful for ~~me~~, ~~but~~ all things edify not.²²

This is similar to 1 Corinthians 6:12, where the lack of quotation marks in the KJV makes the passage hard to follow and the JST attempts to remedy that. For the difference quotation marks make, consider the NRSV: “All things are lawful,’ but not all things are beneficial. ‘All things are lawful,’ but not all things build up.”

Paradigm Classification C-1 (Harmonization [within the Biblical Text]).

40. 1 Corinthians 10:24

Let no man seek therefore his own, but every man another’s ~~wealth~~ good.

The Greek of this passage is *medeis to heautou zeteito alla to tou heterou hekastos*, literally “let no one seek that of himself, but let each [seek] that of another,” where “that” is a rendering of the Greek neuter article *to*. To what does the neuter article mean to refer here? In a general sense it must have some connotation such as “benefit.” The KJV’s

21. See Kevin Barney, “Harmonizing the Text with History,” *By Common Consent* (blog), June 4, 2011, <http://bycommonconsent.com/2011/06/04/harmonizing-the-text-with-history/>.

22. The words “for me” (*moi*) that appear twice in this verse are not original but crept into the text by assimilation from 6:12. So instead of “all things are lawful for me” the text should read simply “all things are lawful.” The JST deletes the second “me” but keeps the “for,” changing “all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” to “all things are not lawful for all things edify not.” So it is just a coincidence that the JST deletes a word that was not original to the text. See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 561.

“wealth” was originally an appropriate translation, as the word was used in the now obsolete sense of “well-being” or “welfare” (compare to the archaic English term *weal*, meaning “well-being”). Unfortunately, due to linguistic drift, over time the word “wealth” has come to mean “an abundance of material possessions or resources,” which is manifestly not the meaning of the word in this passage.²³ Accordingly, the JST modernized the text with “good.” Fourteen other translations indeed use “good” here (such as the NET: “Do not seek your own good, but the good of the other person”), and a couple others use “well-being.”

Paradigm Classifications A-1 and A-2 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Suspicion of Italicized Text).

41. 1 Corinthians 10:27

If any of them that believe not bid you ~~to a feast~~ eat, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

Here the concern with italics combines with the common JST principles of conservatism²⁴ and assimilation. In lieu of the italicized “to a feast,” the JST suggests “eat,” which is assimilated from “eat” (*esthiete*) later in the verse and involves only two English letter changes from the word “feast.”

Paradigm Classifications A-4 and A-2 (Assimilation and Suspicion of Italicized Text).

42. 1 Corinthians 10:33

Even as I please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking mine own profit, but ~~the profit~~ of the many, that they may be saved.

23. I am indebted to Craig Blomberg for this observation.

24. By “conservatism,” I mean the tendency of the JST to replace English words with other English words with the fewest changes in English letters possible, such as *feast* → *eat* here or *defraud* → *depart* (keeping the *de-* compound) in JST 1 Cor. 7:5.

This change was motivated by the italics. The passage reads better in English without repeating the word “profit,” as in the NRSV: “Just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved.”

It is possible that the addition of “the” before “many” in this position was influenced by the Campbell Translation: “Even as I please all men in all things; not seeking my own advantage, but that of the many, that they may be saved.”

Paradigm Classification A-2 and F (Suspicion of Italicized Text and Secondary Source).

43. 1 Corinthians 11:10

For this cause ought the woman to have ~~power~~ a covering²⁵ on *her* head because of the angels Angels.

For a woman to have “power” (as the KJV literally renders *exousia*) on her head is simply incomprehensible; what does it mean? Many translations render something like “a sign of authority,” which is better but still unclear. A number of translations clarify that what was meant was a tangible covering of some type that a woman was to wear on her head, as in the ICB: “So that is why a woman should have her head covered with something to show that she is under authority. And also she should do this because of the angels.” Or, it may be that the head covering represents a protective power.²⁶ Some form of the word “covering” is also used in the AMP, CEV, ERV, GW, GNT, ICB, and TLB, while CJB has “The reason a woman should show by veiling her head that she is under authority has to do with the angels.” The noun *exousia* here is an abstract term standing for the concrete, and the JST emphasizes the concrete aspect of the word.

25. The difficult word *exousia* (“power”) in this verse is glossed by *kalumma* (“a veil”) in a number of versional and patristic witnesses. This is obviously not the original text but shows that the JST is approaching the passage in a way similar to many ancient writers. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 562.

26. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 189.

Note that there is a possibility the “covering” word choice was influenced by the Adam Clarke Commentary: “Theophylact explains the word, *to exousiazesthai sumbolon, toutesti, to kalumma* ‘the symbol of being under power, that is, a veil, or covering.’”

Paradigm Classification A-1 and F (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Secondary Source).

44. 1 Corinthians 11:19

For there must be also ~~heresies~~ divisions among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

The KJV renders the Greek *haireseis* with its English derivative, “heresies,” but here the sense is one of dissensions arising from a diversity of opinions and aims, a nuance that the JST “divisions” captures well. The CJB, GNT, NET, and NLT all also use “divisions,” and the MSG uses the form “divisiveness.” Other translations use a variety of synonyms, the most common of which is “factions.”

It is possible that the word choice of “divisions” was influenced by either the Adam Clarke Commentary, “Their difference in religious opinion led to a difference in their religious practice, and thus the Church of God, that should have been one body, was split into sects and parties. The divisions and the heresies sprung out of each other,” or by Wesley’s Explanatory Notes: “There must be heresies—Divisions.”

Paradigm Classification A-1 and F (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Secondary Source).

45. 1 Corinthians 11:20

When ye come together therefore into one place, *this is* is it not to eat the Lord’s supper:?

Here the italicized “this is” leads Smith to turn the disapproving statement of Paul into a rhetorical negative question, making the same point but arguably with greater force.

Paradigm Classification A-2 (Suspicion of Italicized Text).

46. 1 Corinthians 11:21

For But in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

The change made here from “for” to “but” simply coordinates this verse with the change made in the immediately preceding verse.

Paradigm Classification A-2 (Suspicion of Italicized Text).

47. 1 Corinthians 11:29

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh ~~damna-~~
~~tion~~ condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.

“Condemnation” is a suitable synonym for “damnation” here as a rendering of the Greek *krima*. Indeed, BDAG suggests that *krima heauto esthien* should be rendered “eat condemnation upon oneself,”²⁷ and the CEV has “If you fail to understand that you are the body of the Lord, you will condemn yourselves by the way you eat and drink.” The expression means to eat and drink so as to incur the judgment/punishment/condemnation of God. It is not entirely clear why Smith felt the need to make the word substitution here. One possibility is that the word “damnation” may have been perceived as a final judgment from which no repentance would be effective, whereas “condemnation” was perceived as a state of judgment from which repentance was yet possible, but whether this nuance was intended is speculation.

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

48. 1 Corinthians 12:1

Now concerning spiritual ~~gifts~~ things, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

27. Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 567, commonly stylized as BDAG.

The Greek has *peri de pneumatikon*. The gender of the adjective is ambiguous, as it could be either masculine (“spiritual people”) or neuter. Most favor the neuter reading. The most straightforward way to translate the neuter adjective would be “spiritual things,” as the JST suggests. Several translations do the same (CJB, DRA, JUB, WEB, WYC, and YLT).

Paradigm Classifications A-1 and A-2 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Suspicion of Italicized Text).

49. 1 Corinthians 12:31

But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto I say unto you, nay; for I have shewn unto you a more excellent way therefore covet earnestly the best gifts.

By “a more excellent way” Paul meant to refer the reader ahead to his discourse on love in chapter 13. The JST revises the verse to make the “more excellent way” refer back to what he has already expressed in the letter.

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary).

50–55. 1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 13, 14, 18 and 21

[Global change throughout chapter]: ~~an unknown~~ another tongue.

Here the italicized “unknown” leads to a midrashic comment, suggesting that Paul was not necessarily talking about glossolalia. This could also be taken as an English paraphrase. Probably the most common way this is rendered in modern English translations is simply as “a tongue” or “a language” with no modifying adjective, but since this tongue is obviously not one’s native language, “another tongue” as the JST has it would seem to be an appropriate clarifying adjective. The HCSB, NOG, and WEB have “another language,” the ICB “a different language,” the ISV “a foreign language,” and the NCV “different languages.”

Paradigm Classifications A-1, A-2 and B (English Paraphrase of KJV Text, Suspicion of Italicized Text and Midrashic Commentary).

56–57. 1 Corinthians 14:34–35

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to ~~speak~~ rule; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to ~~speak~~ rule in the church.

This passage has long been considered difficult by modern Christians, since only the most conservative Christian sects disallow women from speaking in church at all. Further, Paul himself in this very letter (1 Cor. 11:5 and 13) takes it for granted that it is proper for women both to pray and to prophesy in church, which seems strangely inconsistent with this passage. Therefore, if the passage were genuinely authentic, it would appear that something else is being communicated here in accordance with the context of the situation (known to the author and the addressees but not to us). The JST resolves this problem by replacing the difficult verb “speak” with the verb “rule,” which allows for substantially more participation by women in the life of the Church, even if a limitation remains.

Many scholars are of the view that verses 34–35 were not original to the letter but reflect a later addition, primarily because the Western textual tradition (and some non-Western texts) place these verses after verse 40 rather than after verse 33 as here, suggesting they were a later addition to the letter.²⁸

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary)

58. 1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; ~~but~~ for I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

28. See for instance Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 697–710, and Philip B. Payne, “Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor 14.34–5,” *New Testament Studies* 41, no. 2 (1995): 240–62.

Translations generally render the conjunction *alla* with “but,” “instead,” or “on the contrary.” The JST changes the second half of the verse from a contrast with the first to a reason for the first.

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary).

59. 1 Corinthians 15:24

~~Then~~ **Afterward** *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

“Afterward” is simply a synonym for “then.” Several modern English translations use “after” or “afterward” here.

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

60. 1 Corinthians 15:26

The last enemy, ~~that shall be destroyed is~~ death, **shall be destroyed.**

There are two possible ways to account for the generation of this emendation. First, it might be based on the italicized words “that” and “is.” Smith and his scribes often crossed italicized words out in the Joseph Smith–marked Bible and considered the import of the passage without the italicized words, which in this case would be as follows:

The last enemy shall be destroyed death.

A simple and obvious way to make sense of that would be to move the word “death” forward, put it in apposition with “the last enemy” (using commas), and thereby make “death” clearly the subject of the verb “shall be destroyed.” In such a case the revision would be explained entirely by the italics and would result in the reading preserved in the JST:

The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed.

But it is also possible that this particular reformulation was influenced by the Adam Clarke Commentary: “The last enemy, Death, shall be destroyed.” Note that the wording is identical, except that the JST did

not capitalize “Death.”²⁹ But the Clarke Commentary tends to be used for more technical, lexical, and linguistic purposes. If this revision were indeed based on the Clarke Commentary, Smith’s reliance on that source here seems to have been rather random. It is to be hoped that Thomas Wayment and Haley Wilson-Lemmon’s forthcoming study on the Clarke Commentary will provide some insight into the apparent randomness of the JST usage of that source here.³⁰

Paradigm Classification A-2 and F (Suspicion of Italicized Text and Secondary Source).

61. 1 Corinthians 15:27

For he saith, when it is manifest that he hath put all things under his feet. ~~But when he saith, and that~~ all things are put under, ~~him, it is manifest that~~ he is excepted, ~~which~~ of the father who did put all things under him.

The sense of this verse is more clearly expressed in the NRSV: “For ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, ‘All things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him.” Smith seems to be

29. We cannot make too much of this lack of capitalization, because as Kent Jackson has observed, Smith dictated the changes to his scribe without stopping to clarify matters of capitalization. See Kent P. Jackson, “Joseph Smith’s Translation of the New Testament,” in *New Testament History, Culture, and Society: A Background to the Texts of the New Testament*, edited by Lincoln H. Blumell (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2019), 710.

30. Thomas A. Wayment and Haley Wilson-Lemmon, “A Recovered Resource: The Use of Adam Clarke’s Bible Commentary in Joseph Smith’s Bible Translation,” in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith’s Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity*, edited by Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Brian M. Hauglid (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2020).

putting this into the future, is perhaps influenced by the italicized “him, it is,” and also seems to misread “excepted” as “accepted.”

Paradigm Classification B and A-2 (Midrashic Commentary and Suspicion of Italicized Text).

62. 1 Corinthians 15:31

I protest ~~by your~~ **unto you the resurrection of the dead; and this is my** rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, ~~I die daily,~~ **though I die.**

The first revision explicitly connects this passage with the general topic of this portion of 1 Corinthians 15, which is the resurrection of the dead. The second takes Paul's statement “I die every day!,” which is a description of his hardships on their behalf and obviously not to be taken literally, and expresses it in a way that may be read literally, and thus is a literalizing of Paul's expression.

Paradigm Classification B (Midrashic Commentary)

63. 1 Corinthians 15:37

And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body ~~that~~ **which** shall be, but ~~bare~~ grain, it may **be of wheat or some other** ~~chance of wheat,~~ ~~or of some other grain:~~

This is largely a modernizing revision, changing “that” to “which,” changing “bare grain” to simply “grain” (*gymnos kokkos* [“bare grain”] means only grain as opposed to the plant itself), and deleting the word “chance,” which here is simply archaic for “whether.” The italicized “grain” at the end appears also to have been an influence.

Paradigm Classification A-3 and A-2 (Modernization and Suspicion of Italicized Text).

64. 1 Corinthians 15:40

There are also ~~celestial~~ **Celestial** bodies, and bodies ~~terrestrial~~ **Terrestrial, and bodies Telesstial:** but the glory of the ~~celestial~~ **Celestial**

is one, and the ~~glory of the terrestrial~~ Terrestrial is another, and the Telesstial, another.

On February 16, 1832, Smith received the vision found in Doctrine and Covenants 76, which was inspired by his work on the JST of John 5:29. A couple weeks later Smith dictated the revisions to 1 Corinthians 15, and in verse 40 he harmonized the text to match Doctrine and Covenants 76 by adding the neologism “Telesstial” to the Latinate terms “Celestial” and “Terrestrial” and by capitalizing all three technical terms. This is a classic illustration of harmonizing the biblical text to conform to one of Smith’s modern revelations.

Paradigm Classification C-2 (Harmonization with Modern Revelation).

65. 1 Corinthians 15:46

Howbeit that ~~was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual~~ which is natural first, and not that which is spiritual, but afterwards, that which is spiritual.

This appears to be a simplifying paraphrase. The KJV structure is “not spiritual first, but first natural, then spiritual,” and the JST simply omits the first clause, simplifying to “first natural, then spiritual.”

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

66. 1 Corinthians 15:52

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the ~~last~~ sound of the trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The word *salpinx* can mean a “trumpet” itself, but it also can refer to the sound made or signal given by a trumpet, i.e., “trumpet-sound.” BDAG takes the word here in the latter sense: “at the call of the trumpet blown by God’s command.”³¹ There are five translations that explicitly

31. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 911.

take the word as the JST does, as referring to the sound of the trumpet, as in the ISV: "In a moment, faster than an eye can blink, at the sound of the last trumpet. Indeed, that trumpet will sound, and then the dead will be raised never to decay, and we will be changed." (The others are AMP, CEV, GW and NOG.)

It is possible that the addition of "sound" in the JST was an assimilation to the use of "sound" later in the verse, which then had the effect of creating a chiasm:

A at the sound
 B of the trump
 B' for the trumpet
 A' shall sound

The expression "sound of the trumpet" also occurs fifteen times in the KJV Old Testament, so the JST emendation here could be an assimilation to that Old Testament usage.

Paradigm Classification A-1 and A-4 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Assimilation).

67. 1 Corinthians 16:9

For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, ~~and~~ but *there are* many adversaries.

The conjunction between the first and second part of the verse is the Greek *kai*, which is commonly rendered into English as "and," and a majority of translations indeed translate it that way. But the first part of the verse is positive while the second is negative, which suggests that *kai* should be given more adversative force here. There are seven translations that join the JST in rendering the word "but" (CEV, NABRE, NET, NLV, OJB, VOICE, and WE), as well as others that use some other adversative ("although," "even though," "yet").

Paradigm Classification A-1 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text).

68. 1 Corinthians 16:20

All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy ~~kiss~~
salutation.

The Greek word *philema* does indeed mean “kiss,” as a sign of fraternal affection that was commonly given in the early Christian community. The JST updates the gesture culturally with the blander “salutation.” But the JST is not alone in suggesting such a cultural updating. Other translations suggest here “warm greeting” (CEV), “special greeting” (ERV), “shake hands” (PHILLIPS), “loving handshake” (TLB), and “holy embraces” (MSG). The specific word “salutation” is assimilated from verse 21.

Paradigm Classification A-1 and A-4 (English Paraphrase of KJV Text and Assimilation).

Summary of Results

Having worked our way through the entire Joseph Smith Translation of 1 Corinthians, what kinds of changes did we find there? Below I give an accounting of the types of changes made in the JST of 1 Corinthians by paradigm classification.

By my count the total number of verses modified in the JST of 1 Corinthians is sixty-eight. Several of these verses are logically grouped together into “passages” (including three groups of two verses, one group of four verses, and one group of six verses), thus resulting in fifty-seven passages. Of these fifty-seven passages, thirty-four fell into a single category on the paradigm, twenty fell into two categories on the paradigm, and three fell into three categories on the paradigm, thus giving us eighty-three total categories of change within those fifty-seven passages (i.e., $34 + [20 \times 2] + [3 \times 3] = 83$). The following chart shows the allocation of those eighty-three types of changes among the paradigm categories.

Allocation of JST Revisions among Paradigm Categories

Paradigm Designation	Description	Total Occurrences	Percentage of Total Occurrences (%)	Remarks
A-1	English Paraphrases of KJV Text in <i>general</i>	26	31.33	This was the most commonly attested category, coming in at almost one-third of all JST emendations. I was genuinely surprised by how many of these revisions seemed sensible in light of the Greek text and found parallels in modern English translations.
A-2	English Paraphrases of KJV Text <i>based on Suspicion of Italics</i>	16	19.28	Suspicion of italicized text was a very significant category, accounting for almost 20 percent of JST emendations. Although this percentage is somewhat less than that found by Wayment and Yost in their study of JST treatment of italics in the Gospels, it is nonetheless substantial and suggests that a suspicion of italicized text was a constant concern throughout the JST project. One possible conclusion from this is that it was a bad idea for the KJV to use italicized text in this fashion, as it led to substantial misunderstanding, and indeed modern translations have not followed this practice.
A-3	English Paraphrases of KJV Text <i>based on Modernization</i>	8	9.64	The impulse to modernize the archaic KJV text was reflected in just under 10 percent of JST emendations to 1 Corinthians, suggesting that that was a significant concern of the JST project, even if the JST did not attempt anything approaching a consistent emphasis on modernization of the language.
A-4	English Paraphrases of KJV Text <i>based on Assimilation</i>	6	7.23	Assimilation accounted for just over 7 percent of JST revisions, suggesting that Smith was very much attuned to the surrounding text as he made his revisions.

Allocation of JST Revisions among Paradigm Categories (*continued*)

Paradigm Designation	Description	Total Occurrences	Percentage of Total Occurrences (%)	Remarks
A-5	English Paraphrases of KJV Text <i>having Non-Original Textual Variants</i>	0	0	This category was unattested in 1 Corinthians.
B	Midrashic Commentary	16	19.28	Midrashic commentary comes in at almost 20 percent and so is a very significant type of change made in the JST of 1 Corinthians.
C-1	Harmonizations <i>within the Biblical Text</i>	2	2.41	Harmonizations within the biblical text will be far more common in the Gospels. The two occurrences here reflected attempts to make verses sensible that were unclear due to the fact that the KJV does not use quotation marks, and its older system of attempting to mark quotations is often inadequate.
C-2	Harmonizations <i>with Modern Revelation</i>	1	1.19	Although there was only a single example in this text of a harmonization with modern revelation, that example was a significant one: adding the neologism “telestial” to the Latinate terms “celestial” and “terrestrial” so as to conform this text with D&C 76.
D	Long Additions with Little or No Biblical Parallel	0	0	This category was unattested in 1 Corinthians.
E	Textual Restorations	0	0	This category was unattested in 1 Corinthians.

F	Secondary Sources	6	7.23	<p>I have noted six cases where the JST revision is paralleled by a secondary source (over 7 percent), but it does not necessarily follow in each case that the secondary source was a true influence. So in 1 Corinthians 6:18 I believe the change from “doeth” to “committeth” was due to assimilation from “committeth” later in the verse and not the use of the modern English form “commits” in the Campbell translation and Wesley’s Explanatory Notes. The possible example of secondary source influence in 1 Corinthians 10:33 strikes me as more of a fluke than a conscious influence. The change from “in stewards” to “of stewards” in 1 Corinthians 4:2 could reflect secondary source influence, or it could simply be a change that reflects the more natural euphony of “of stewards” in English. 1 Corinthians 15:26 strikes me as something of a toss-up between a revision based solely on the italics and one derived from the Clarke Commentary. The revisions to 1 Corinthians 11:10 and 11:19 strike me as the most likely illustrations of this category (the others being somewhat more equivocal), but even those are not certain examples. On the other hand, I only reviewed four possible secondary sources and there are many other potential sources that could profitably be reviewed. So the six examples I have cited here might be overstated in one respect but understated in another.</p>
G	Not Easily Classifiable	2	2.41	<p>That we only needed to include two passages in the catch-all “not easily classifiable” category suggests that the paradigm as a whole is sufficient to account for most JST emendations to the KJV text.</p>
Total		83	100.00	

Concluding Thoughts

The distribution of JST revisions among the paradigm classifications in 1 Corinthians is illustrative, but not necessarily characteristic, of other portions of the JST. 1 Corinthians would have been produced roughly in the middle of the JST project. The purposes of the project developed over time, and Smith's stamina for generating revisions started strong but seemed to flag toward the end, particularly after Smith returned to the Old Testament. But this does represent a significant illustrative subset of the JST (i.e., an entire New Testament book) and suggests that many different kinds of things are going on in the project, which therefore requires an eclectic approach by those seeking to understand it.

Before undertaking this project, I was of course generally familiar with the JST, but I had never undertaken this kind of a focused consideration of a substantial amount of JST text (i.e., an entire book) all at once. This was a new experience for me. And my overarching reaction was that I was impressed. Not that the JST is perfect; of course it is not. But it is thoughtful, and Smith obviously worked hard to make sense of textual puzzles that were not immediately clear to him. And most of the time he did pretty well with those puzzles. And he did so with minimal resources: perhaps seven years of public schooling,³² possible consultation with his scribes, and occasional use of secondary sources.

As impressive as I found Smith's effort to be generally, there were also mistakes and misunderstandings along the way. In the three-year project as a whole Smith dictated literally thousands of changes to the KJV text, and it is simply unreasonable to think that he never made a change based on a mistaken understanding of the text. There are several such examples in 1 Corinthians itself (in particular under my Midrashic Commentary category). But in a way, even the mistakes he made supported his general and basic point, to the effect that the KJV

32. William Davis, "Reassessing Joseph Smith Jr.'s Formal Education," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 1–58.

had become too difficult for many ordinary Bible readers to read with full comprehension. So, for instance, the practice of using italic type to reflect English words without specific warrant in the Greek text no doubt was well intentioned, but in the end it turned out to be a bad idea, and modern translations wisely do not follow that precedent. That the KJV did not use actual quotation marks was a problem, and so when Smith sometimes misunderstood the text for the want of quotation marks, he was demonstrating how problematic that lack was by his own errors. When the diction and syntax of the KJV were beyond Smith such that he struggled to correct them, the fact of such a struggle was in itself a demonstration of the larger point Smith sought to make with this project.

Many Latter-day Saints assume that all JST revisions fall under Paradigm Classification E, Textual Restorations. However, based on our current understanding of the history of the New Testament text, not a single JST emendation to 1 Corinthians makes any sense as a textual restoration. Given that many of the JST emendations were in their own way impressive, I believe it would be a good thing to wean people from widespread but completely unsustainable assumptions of 100 percent textual restoration. If Church scholars do not take the initiative to correct this massive misunderstanding, some day in the not too distant future those scholars will be drafting a Gospel Topics essay on the subject.

So in the end, whether Smith was successfully correcting the KJV or trying and failing (or realistically some of each), both the successes and the failures supported his basic point, that the KJV had over time become too archaic and too hard for ordinary Bible readers to read with full comprehension, which has only become more true over the 180-plus years since Smith completed the JST. That is a proposition I believe we can all agree with.

I would hope that students would be able to see what Smith did with the JST as a model for their own engagement with the scriptures.

Smith was willing to get deep into the weeds in a way I simply do not see in the average Sunday School class. Much of what he did involved seeing and pointing out anomalies in the text³³ and trying to resolve them, anomalies that the average student of the scriptures does not even notice. Smith's resolutions to those anomalies sometimes worked impressively well, and other times not so much, but the important thing was the way he rolled up his sleeves and really *tried*. That, it seems to me, is a worthy model for us all to follow.

Appendix A

Abbreviations of Bible Translations Used in this Article

AMP	Amplified Bible
ASV	American Standard Version
CEV	Contemporary English Version
CJB	Complete Jewish Bible
DARBY	Darby Translation
DLNT	Disciples' Literal New Testament
DRA	Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition
ERV	Easy-to-Read Version
GNT	Good News Translation
GW	God's Word Translation
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
ICB	International Children's Bible
ISV	International Standard Version
JUB	Jubilee Bible 2000
KJV	King James Version
MSG	The Message

33. For this concept, see Kevin Barney, "The JST as an Issue Spotting Exercise," *By Common Consent* (blog), Feb. 20, 2019, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2019/02/20/the-jst-as-an-issue-spotting-exercise/>.

NABRE	New American Bible (Revised Edition)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCV	New Century Version
NET	New English Translation
NIV	New International Version
NKJ	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NLV	New Life Version
NOG	Names of God Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NRSVA	New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised
NRSVACE	New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised Catholic Edition
OJB	Orthodox Jewish Bible
PHILLIPS	J.B. Phillips New Testament
TLB	The Living Bible
VOICE	The Voice
WE	Worldwide English (New Testament)
WEB	World English Bible
WYC	Wycliffe Bible
YLT	Young's Literal Translation

(All translations are available at biblegateway.com)

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Bradley Slade
Totality III
photographic series

ACE OF SAINTS

Marissa Burgess

My dad has always been a very political man. Growing up, if he had control of the TV, there was a decent chance that Fox News would be playing. Every morning, we would listen to Glenn Beck on our way to school. At the dinner table, my dad would often rant about whatever political issue was topical at the time. During President Obama's second term in office, gay marriage was a big issue. Obama came out in support of same-sex marriage a few years earlier when he was running against our fellow Mormon, Mitt Romney, and had been pushing for its legalization ever since.

What a strange concept it was to me. Let two men get married? Or even two women? *Why would they even want to get married?* I thought. *Can't they just live with each other and be fine with it? Why do they even want to be gay? Why can't they just choose to be straight like the rest of us? They say it's not a choice and that they're just born like that, but that doesn't make any sense to me. I mean, I could totally choose to like girls if that's what society taught me was acceptable, but I choose to like boys because that's what's right. It's too bad that these people weren't taught proper morality growing up. Plus, why would God purposely make anyone anything other than straight?*

I felt grateful that I was one of the lucky few to be born into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the only true Church upon the earth, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. In a time where the world's morality is subjective and based on the whims and appetites of the natural man, my morality was based firmly on the teachings of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the General Authorities. I reflected on how fortunate I was that I had the complete truth while the rest of the world struggled with trying to find what is right.

Growing up LDS, I had the law of chastity drilled into my mind. Whether it was in Sunday School, seminary, or Young Women, I had a lesson on chastity, modesty, or dating at least once a month. With all the lessons about modesty, dating, and pornography, it felt like we were constantly talking about sex. I often found myself thinking that for a religion that doesn't like sex, Mormons sure do talk about it a lot.

And to me, all these lessons seemed a bit unnecessary. Even as an older teen, I had never felt sexual temptation for another person before, so I doubted that any of us really needed to hear the lessons. I assumed it's kind of like teaching elementary kids to say no to drugs just in case they need to in the future.

As I sat in my cold, metal fold-up chair, leaning up against the itchy carpet walls that sometimes caught onto my dress, I would take mental notes of all the things I needed to do to keep my virtue. No dating until sixteen. *Easy. Already done. Still no dates yet.* No single dating until eighteen. *Sounds great.* Don't be alone together after dark. *Simple enough.* Don't make out or lie on top of each other. *Again, super easy. Anything more than holding hands sounds super uncomfortable and gross.* Man, I'm really good at this whole following Christ thing. I'm going to be a worthy Mormon bride in no time.

Up until the age of eighteen, I never really thought that my experience was any different from my peers. Looking back, it becomes obvious. But I was very skilled at pushing my worries to the back of my mind and ignoring anything that made me uncomfortable.

Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I had my fair share of "girl talk." Any time a group of girls would get together, the conversation would eventually shift to boys. *I mean, I like boys as much as the next girl,* I thought to myself, *but the way some girls are completely obsessed with boys is super weird and honestly kind of disgusting.* I would listen to all the girls go around in a circle, blushing and giggling as they went on and on about what boys they had a crush on. Some girls would even go into detail about kisses. As I listened to another Laurel describe her first attempt at a make-out, I was disgusted. *Making out at only seventeen? What kind of slut would do such a thing? She knows the rules*

of dating set up by the Church. She really needs to be a better example. Maybe she needs to read her scriptures more.

Eventually, all eyes would shift to me, and I was expected to give the juicy details of which boy I liked. This was always a hard decision. I would go through the short list of boys that I'd talked to and pick whichever one was nicest to me. "Um . . ." I sat, thinking. "Teddy." The other girls oohed and giggled at my answer. Then they pressed for what it was that I liked about him. "He sits next to me in art class. He's a really good artist. Plus, he's nice to me and tells really funny stories."

"Are you going to ask him to the girl's choice dance next month?" My friend Emma asked.

Ew, no, was my gut reaction. I mean, I like Teddy. He's funny and smart and an all-around nice kid. I like talking to him during art class. But I wouldn't want to like, hold hands with him or anything. Imagining him holding my hand and lightly touching my waist while dancing seemed so inappropriate. I guess the Church says that fourteen-year-olds are allowed to go to dances, but still, it just feels wrong. What if he wanted to kiss me? Blech! Gross! I would never want to kiss Teddy, or anyone else for that matter! It just seems so weird. I don't know why all these other people my age seem so obsessed with it. It must just be the over-sexualized media.

But I didn't want to seem weird by saying I wouldn't ask my "crush" on a date. That's what you're supposed to do when you have a crush, right? So I shrugged my shoulders and said that I was too shy. They moved on to the next girl. I was relieved that they didn't ask any further questions.

In high school, my physical education teacher would take roll and teach a short lesson in a classroom before moving to the gym. The lesson of the day was about heart rate. My teacher was showing us a short presentation about target heart rates when exercising, how to measure your heart rate, etc. While describing different situations that could change your heart rate, a picture of some random dude I didn't know suddenly appeared on the projector screen. Every single girl audibly swooned over this mystery man. Literally, they *swooned*! I didn't know people

actually swooned. I wondered, *What is wrong with all these adolescent girls that they sigh and squeal and fan their face at the mere sight of some thick-necked, thirtysomething-year-old man with a buzz cut?*

My teacher's face beamed with accomplishment that her lesson had had the intended effect on her class. "You guys all felt that?" She let out a small feminine giggle. "Seeing someone who you think is attractive can also increase your heart rate. I picked Channing Tatum because he's just so good-looking, he makes everyone's heart rates go up!" The room was filled with girlish snickers.

Oh, so this is Channing Tatum, I thought. I had heard of him before but never seen him. Wait, isn't he in that R-rated movie coming out soon? The one about the male strippers? My teacher had just gotten married in the temple a month before. She showed us her wedding pictures in class. I knew she was Mormon. *Why is she promoting this guy in class? How on earth could a man who sexually exploits his body ever be attractive to someone who knows the gospel?*

In the car ride home from school, my mom asked me if anything interesting happened at school, and I told her about what happened in PE. It was honestly kind of funny to seemingly be the only one out of the loop on something. She chuckled a bit when I described two dozen teenage girls all fawning over some older male celebrity they don't even know. When I said that I didn't really get it, she asked me if I had any crushes on boys at school. I thought through all the boys I'd spoken to in my grade, looking to come up with an answer in order to make myself seem normal, like I did with my friends. But I decided that I could be honest with my mom. So I told her that I didn't really have any crushes.

"Come on, you've got to have at least one crush," she teased.

"No, I don't think so," I repeated.

"Really, not one?" She looked slightly confused and also a little bit . . . sad? I shook my head no. Afraid that she wasn't understanding, I tried to explain a little more.

"I mean, I can tell when someone is 'attractive,' but I'm not attracted to them until I get to know them."

“Well, I guess that’s a good thing . . .” She trailed off, which made me nervous. “Actually, I can kind of understand that. I can admit when another woman is attractive even though I wouldn’t want to actually, like, date her or anything.” She shuddered slightly in disgust at the thought of being with another woman. “But don’t you ever see someone and your heart starts beating and you get butterflies in your stomach?”

“No.”

She quickly turned her head to look at me in the passenger seat. Her confused look was so intense it made my stomach churn slightly. *Is this not how everybody else feels? Maybe I’m just not explaining it right.*

I panicked slightly, trying to help her understand. “Well, sometimes when I see somebody, I think, ‘That person seems interesting. I’d like to get to know that person.’ But it feels the same way for boys and girls.”

My mother’s head jolted in shock and her eyebrows shot up as high as they would go.

I had said something wrong.

My face flushed red as I attempted to salvage the conversation. “I mean, it’s a little different for boys than it is for girls. It’s just . . . similar . . .” I couldn’t bring myself to lie to my mom, so that was the only thing I could say to try to convince her I wasn’t bisexual.

The look on my mom’s face told me she still didn’t get it, but she had realized that I was embarrassed, so she simply said “Oh” and dropped it.

Another common lesson I was taught in Young Women was about modesty. The discussion would go something along the lines of becoming walking pornography for boys to look at and be tempted. Modesty seemed like such an easy doctrine to follow. Most of the stores I went to had plenty of cute modest clothing, so I didn’t understand what was so hard about it. Even though my high school had a dress code, I would still see girls with low-cut shirts exposing a surprising amount of cleavage. Once during the school year, my friend Emma and I were complaining about it and she mentioned the typical response of immodest clothing being distracting for boys.

"They're distracting to me too!" I exclaimed. Emma looked strangely at me, almost accusingly. She said she didn't want to know that information. I knew what she was insinuating and tried to defend myself, but she was uncomfortable and didn't really seem interested in my explanation for why boobs were distracting to me.

Oh, no! I exclaimed internally. What if I actually am bisexual? Or worse, a full-on lesbian in denial? Is there any way to fix it? There has to be, right? God wouldn't purposely make me that way without some way to overcome it. How do I know for sure I have same-sex attraction? I may be distracted by boobs, but I would never want to kiss a girl, would I? Maybe I really do deep down inside, and I was just taught that it was gross. Is attraction just wanting to be friends with girls? Because that's what it feels like when I have a crush on a boy. Would I ever kiss a boy? I'd like to think so. Maybe some hypothetical boy, but when I think of the boys I have crushes on, I would never want to kiss them! Oh no, I definitely am a lesbian. Oh no, oh no, oh no! I tried to control my panic.

Thoughts of being a secret lesbian would swirl around my head as I tried to calm myself of this fear. *I don't like girls. I don't like girls. Like I said, I would never want to kiss one. Yuck! That definitely means I'm not a lesbian, right? I mean, I wouldn't really want to kiss a boy either . . . but that's not the point! Maybe I don't like any boys yet, but one day I'll meet The One and I'll fall in love and then everything will be fine. I just need to be patient. I like boys, just not any of the ones I know. I like boys. I like boys.*

But I didn't like boys. I thought I liked boys. I always assumed I was straight just like everybody else. But as I got older, I got more uncomfortable with the silly girly talks. And the girls camp songs. Oh my, the girls camp songs!

Every morning and evening, we would gather around the campfire for our devotional. But before we went into the actual spiritual lesson, we sang camp songs. I loved all the classics like "The Princess Pat" and "I'm a Nut." And nothing got me more pumped in the morning than singing "Rise and Shine," which was my personal favorite. Even if I was still tired, I would jump up every time the chorus came and clap

enthusiastically: “Rise and shine and (clap) give God your glory, glory. Children of the Lord!”

But of course, you can’t flip through an LDS girls camp songbook without coming across a song about boys. Three songs specifically always made me uncomfortable whenever it was time to sing them. The least offending song was “Mormon Boy,” which went like this:

*I know a Mormon boy
He is my pride and joy
He knows most everything from Alma on down
Someday I’ll be his wife
We’ll have eternal life
Oh how I love that Mormon bo-o-oy!
I am a Mormon Girl
I wear my hair in curls
I wear my skirts way down to my knees
I wear my daddy’s shirts
I am the biggest flirt
Oh, how I love that Mormon boy
M-O-R-E-M-E-N
More men, more men, sing it again!*

The song was unrelatable to me. I would sing the lyrics devoid of emotion or excitement. But it didn’t really make me uncomfortable, unlike the next song:

*I looked out the window and what did I see?
Three returned missionaries looking at me!
Spring has brought me such a nice surprise,
Tall, dark, and handsome right before my eyes!
I can take an armful and kiss all three,
But only one for eternity.
It wasn’t really so, but it seemed to be
Three returned missionaries looking at me!*

The “Popcorn Popping” song I had learned in Primary was officially ruined now. The imagery of hugging and kissing a group of twenty-year-old men sounded disgusting. Even imagining boys my own age

was gross to me. I felt icky. But the next song was by far the worst. It was to the tune of “Baby Got Back.”

*I like Mormon boys and I cannot lie!
 You other sisters can't deny!
 When a boy walks in with a scripture case
 And a big smile on his face
 You get a date
 An eternal mate
 But wait
 He's going on a mission
 Leaving you wishin'
 That you had a man
 Someone to hold your hand
 Deacons, what?
 Teachers, what?
 We don't like your features!
 Your brothers are hot
 But you are not
 So bring us those righteous priests
 HUH!*

That “Huh!” ended in an enthusiastic group pelvic thrust, which made me indescribably uncomfortable. They were singing about righteous sons of God the same way Sir Mix-a-Lot sings about big butts! *How is this song allowed?* I would think. *There are children among us for crying out loud! Those sweet, innocent Beehives are being exposed to pelvic thrusts! This is so inappropriate.* Singing “How Great Thou Art” immediately after felt extremely strange.

Eventually I did notice the difference between my experience and the experiences of others. I was “not like other girls.” I looked at other women’s sexuality with disgust. Everyone was a slut except for me. I was the normal one, following God’s commandments, refusing to even be tempted by so-called worldly pleasures.

When I was eighteen years old, I was very active in an online art community filled with teens and young adults who were very socially

liberal. In the summer of 2015, I watched my LGBT peers celebrate the legalization of same-sex marriage. By this time, I had met several gay, bisexual, and transgender people, who told me that their identity wasn't a choice, and all they wanted was to be treated equally to everyone else. I didn't quite understand. I still felt like being straight was a choice, but telling my queer friends that they were wrong was none of my business, and I was glad to see them happy.

The teens on the site seemed to be constantly coming up with new words for different genders and sexualities. I found it all pretty silly but ultimately harmless. Scrolling through the recent drawings, I came across a comment where someone mentioned the word "demisexual." Having no idea what the word meant, I searched the word online and was taken to the Asexual Visibility and Education Network website. The definition of demisexual read: "Someone who can only experience sexual attraction after an emotional bond has been formed." I rolled my eyes. *Sounds completely normal to me. Jeez, these kids think that having standards makes them special.* I kept reading the website. I had heard of asexuality before but never really learned much about it.

According to the website, about one percent of adults are asexual, and that it means not having any sexual attraction at all. But asexual people could still have sex even if they don't feel attraction. That confused me. I clicked on all the different links and tabs to better understand. The site explained that asexuality is a spectrum. Apparently, you can be attracted to a small handful of people and still call yourself asexual. The website distinguished between sexual attraction and wanting to have sex. But what was sexual attraction if it didn't mean wanting to have sex? I then had to search what sexual attraction is and what it feels like. Apparently, it's some weird magnetic pull to want to touch their privates or something, which sounds absolutely disgusting. *Wait, I thought as the realization hit me, people can feel that way without an emotional connection to a person? Like, they just look at someone and want to touch their boobs? Yuck! What the heck? Is this how most people feel? Even Mormons? Is this what people talk about when they say*

they have a crush? Why would people admit to that? That's so gross. Then apparently there's also romantic attraction, which is somehow different. There's sensual attraction and aesthetic attraction and platonic, and just how many different types of attraction are there? This is all too much and it's way too complicated. How do I even know for sure if I've felt any of these?

I spent several hours looking at different websites and forums all about asexuality. I took several different asexuality quizzes, all of which said that I was likely asexual. The only thing that gave me a shred of hope that maybe I was actually normal was the fact that I was only eighteen. *Maybe I'll finally feel it in a few years and I'm just a little late*, I hoped. *But everyone else my age seems to have feelings for other people. I know one of my friends was literally counting down the days until she turned sixteen so she could finally date. I've even seen seventh graders making out in the halls sometimes. But maybe thirteen is a bit early. Maybe I'm just a bit slow to mature in that specific field. I'm probably just a late bloomer.*

But what if you're not? the little voice in my head remarked. *That would make a lot more sense.* The voice was probably right. I thought back to the conversation with my mom. *Why would she be so surprised that I didn't have any crushes at fifteen if it was normal? Why would I feel so uncomfortable when my friends would talk about boys?* I always thought it must have been because I was more righteous than they were, but that wasn't true. They were good people who as far as I knew hadn't done any super serious sins. There was some kind of cruel irony in finding out that I was the weirdo all along after years of labeling every other normal human being a sexual deviant. Suddenly my holier-than-thou attitude regarding sex was crushed with my ego. *How did I not realize this sooner? Why did nobody tell me?*

After a few days of continued research, I finally felt like things were falling into place. Suddenly, all of these experiences I had were beginning to make sense. And I started to feel guilty about all of the silent slut-shaming I did. As I accepted the fact that I was likely somewhere on the asexual spectrum, I felt a sense of relief. Suddenly, chastity lessons

at church had a different feel. Instead of feeling holier-than-thou, I felt blessed.

Maybe being asexual isn't so bad, I thought. I mean, I feel like a freak for not feeling the way most people do and not realizing it until just a few days ago. I feel like I'm missing out on some sort of essential human experience. But maybe this is one of those blessings in disguise. I mean, chastity is one of the biggest issues facing our generation. Fourteen-year-olds are out getting pregnant. Even members of the Church break the law of chastity all the time. It's a huge deal. Members of my family haven't been able to get married in the temple because of it. They end up getting sealed later, but it's still really awkward when someone has a civil wedding and everyone can guess why. If I'm asexual then I don't have to worry about any of that! Maybe this is Heavenly Father's gift to me. He realizes I have enough problems going on right now that I don't need any chastity issues coming up.

Well, I still don't know what I'm going to do if I don't get married and have kids like every other Mormon I know. That's sort of your main goal as a Mormon, especially if you're a woman. Am I going to be that one old maid in the family ward that everyone feels bad for? I guess I could find an asexual man to marry me. But what are the odds of that? Finding another Mormon asexual man who I love and get along with is a very rare and specific combination of traits I'm not sure how to find. Or maybe I'm actually in the gray area and I can get married and have kids the old-fashioned way like everyone else? It'll just take longer, that's all.

I don't know. I don't know what to hope for. I'd like to fall in love, get married, have sex, and make babies just like everyone else, but I don't know if that's something I'll actually want. Sure, the fantasy of it all sounds nice, but I can't imagine that ever happening in real life. As soon as I imagine myself in that scenario, it feels gross. I don't know. I guess I'll just have to wait and see. I'll deal with it later. For now, I guess I should just be grateful that I don't have to worry about committing the third worst sin ever.

And for a while, that was that. I had finally discovered and accepted my asexual identity. I posted on the forums often, where I learned that asexual people often refer to themselves as “aces” for short. Soon, I was

confidently using the cute nickname for myself while still holding out hope that I could have the perfect Mormon family one day.

I started college soon after my self-discovery. During my first few weeks at Utah Valley University, I discovered that free breakfast was served on Monday and Friday mornings. I was pretty stoked to say the least. As I excitedly chewed my waffles, a young man approached me and started making small talk. I was in such a good mood from the thrilling discovery of free waffles that my social anxiety didn't give me too much trouble. After some discussion about ourselves, what we were studying in school, what music we liked, our hobbies, etc., he asked me out on a date. At eighteen years old, this would be my first date ever. No boy had shown any interest in me before, and I was flattered. I gave him my phone number, and we set up a date a few days later.

My asexuality wasn't a concern at the time. After all, I still wasn't sure if I was completely asexual or somewhere else on the spectrum. If there was any hope at all of eventually having a normal life with a husband and kids, I figured I might as well give dating a shot. There was nothing remarkable about our first date. He told me some stories about his mission. We chatted some more about our lives while we bowled, and at the end, he said that he'd like to go out again, and I politely agreed. Second date was the same story. Now that I had gone on two successful dates, I felt a great sense of accomplishment for being a normal human being. *Look at me! Going on dates now that I'm in college. Everything is going according to plan. This whole relationship stuff is easy.*

Several days later, I walked into my Ethics and Values class. The class was small, with only a dozen people or so. It was unusual for a general education course, but I liked that I really got to know how my classmates felt about all of the pressing moral issues we covered in the class. The day's lesson was on moral relativism, and our professor started off the discussion by demonstrating how some Utah cultural norms are very different from other places.

"Ladies," the Professor asked, "how long do you have to date before you feel comfortable kissing a guy? Like, how many dates?" The room was silent for a moment as I looked around the room and saw that there

were only two women in the class. I had never kissed anyone before and had only been on two dates. I was not qualified to answer this question at all. So I stayed quiet until the other girl answered the question.

But if I were to answer the question, I asked myself, what would I say? Gosh, I have no idea. Maybe like, six? That seems like enough time to get to know someone well enough. Or, is that not enough? Depending on the frequency, someone could go on six dates in about month. There's no way that's enough time to develop the kind of emotional relationship necessary to do something as intimate as kissing. Maybe like two months. Sure, two months sounds good.

"Well," my female classmate spoke up, "I guess I'd say around the third date is when I would usually kiss a guy."

What?! Three dates?! And you're already kissing? You barely know each other! What kind of person kisses on the third date?

The professor chuckled at the answer. "That's funny you say that, because in most other places, the third date is the sex date."

I was breathless. Turns out, my sense of reality and what is normal was way off base from everyone else's. Like sure, being LDS, I was raised with more conservative ideas about romantic relationships, but my opinions were even further away from the norm than my mostly Mormon classmates. The professor stated that he had asked this question to a lot of his classes, and they all gave similar answers. In Utah, you kiss on the third date. Everywhere else, that's when you have sex. *When were people going to tell me about this? How did everyone else know about this unspoken third date rule? How did I get this far out of the loop?*

My complete shock slowly turned to anxiety as I thought about my upcoming date. This would be our third official date. *What if he thinks you're supposed to kiss on the third date? What if he tries to kiss me? Or even just hold my hand? What do I do? Do I say no? Do I go along with it to be nice? Do I just awkwardly scoot away from him?* My stomach churned as I ruminated on what to do.

Soon, the dreaded third date came. We went to the UVU student center to play games. We rented a pool table, and after a few failed attempts at hitting the balls properly, it was obvious I couldn't play at all.

"Here, let me show you how to aim," my date said as he walked over to me. I stopped what I was doing, stood straight up, and backed up a few steps so that he could demonstrate proper technique. As I watched him bend over to show me how to hold the cue stick, I suddenly realized that he might have wanted me to stay there so that he could wrap his arms around me as he showed me how to shoot. I was filled with the same anxiety again that maybe he and I had different expectations about dating.

Thankfully, we made it through the third date with absolutely no physical contact whatsoever. As far as I was concerned, the date was a success.

For our fourth date, he invited me to see *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 2*. I was excited. I loved the *Hunger Games* series and was eager to see the final film. I was completely preoccupied with the movie, paying no attention to my date. After it was over, I told him what I liked about the movie and how it compared to the books. He listened but didn't seem as happy about the movie as I was.

He never texted me back asking for another date. And to be honest, I was completely unbothered. I enjoyed the activities we did together, and he was a decent person to talk to. But that was it. I wouldn't want him to be my boyfriend. Just a regular friend would be nice. I had no interest in hugging or kissing. In fact, I spent our last two dates specifically trying to avoid it. *Oh*. I had figured out why he didn't ask me out again. It was so clear that I wasn't interested in him, and he didn't want to waste his time and money on me. Even though I wasn't attracted to him, this thought hurt. I wanted so badly to be in a relationship and fall in love eventually, but I worried that most people wouldn't stick around long enough for me to maybe hopefully develop feelings over time. *If I do at all, that is. I still don't know if I'm even capable of falling in love. Maybe if I try to date anyone, I'll just be wasting their time.*

Suddenly, the goal of having a husband like I was supposed to seemed a lot harder to reach. But I didn't give up. The next fall, I went on another date. The date went fine. We ate lunch and talked for a while. Then at the end of the date, he offered to drive me home, and I

reluctantly agreed. When we arrived at my apartment, he parked the car and told me how much he liked me. That he *really, really* liked me. I was a little caught off guard. I didn't know what to say back, so I just said nothing and nodded.

"Do you want me to walk you up to your door?" he asked.

I thought that was a weird thing for him to ask. I could walk up there by myself. I didn't know why he would want to come along, but I said, "Sure."

He smiled excitedly and jumped out of the car. I walked up the stairs to my second-floor apartment door while he followed behind me. As soon as I reached the top of the stairs, I realized I had made a terrible mistake. I stood outside my door, knowing the awkward moment that was coming any moment now.

"I had a good time today," he smiled. "We should do this again sometime."

"Yeah," I lied.

We stood there silently for a moment, and then he stuck out his hand. I grabbed his hand and shook it, feeling relieved. *Yes, shaking hands. Shaking hands is great.* But the handshaking only lasted for a moment before he hugged me. After releasing each other, we said good-bye and I went inside.

Thoughts raced around my head as my stomach started to form a tiny knot. *It was only a hug. It could have been much worse. Why am I feeling like this?* I took a deep breath as I tried to untangle my thoughts. It was something about the way he gushed about how much he liked me, while I felt nothing. He seemed so happy to be around me, while I just wanted to hang out like friends getting to know each other. He seemed so sure and passionate in the way he felt about me. He didn't even know me, but he was still attracted to me. *Was he . . . sexually attracted to me? Ew. I don't want to think about that.*

Even though his forwardness made me uncomfortable, I almost felt jealous. He didn't need time. He knew right away who he wanted to pursue and who he didn't. But here I was, trying to date without feeling any strong feelings one way or the other, hoping that one day I might feel

what everybody else feels. But every time it always ended in frustration. *Can't these boys realize that not everyone is like them? That maybe some of us need more time and you just have to be patient? But then again, maybe I shouldn't expect everyone to be like me either. It's not fair to make others wait for something that might never happen. A few months ago, I thought that people who kissed on the third were floozies. But apparently, they're actually just normal. Maybe I should learn some patience. I mean, they didn't choose to feel the way they feel any more than I chose not to. I don't think I would have chosen this even if I could. Oh man, is this really how gay people feel? Now that I really think about it, I doubt very many people would choose to be gay or bi if they also had to feel like they weren't normal, or that they couldn't have the same life as everyone else. But if people are born like this, why would God do that to them? Why would God make anyone anything other than straight? Heterosexual marriage is one of the key parts of the plan. Why would he ruin that for anybody?*

Dread started to overcome me. *What if I'm like this for the rest of my life? If I never fall in love, then what? Am I just stuck with my friends? I mean, I like my friends, but they're not as good as a husband. That's why people say "just friends." Friendship isn't the same as romantic love. It's not as good. It's not as real.* I felt crushed at the thought that no one would ever love me.

I sat in my room, shaking, letting the same thoughts run around my head over and over. Worried about how I could ever be as happy as all those couples smiling and holding hands in the halls, shoving their heterosexuality in everyone else's faces. I trembled, feeling like I was about to cry, until the little voice in my head told me, *You're gonna be okay.* I tried to calm myself, listening closely to the words of the voice. It didn't say anything else, but I was suddenly reminded of the information I had been consuming over the last several months in my online community, all the frequently asked questions and the frustrated forum posts from confused and worried people. There were so many options for me! Romantic love and sexual desire were two separate things. You could have one without the other. And even if I was aromantic as well,

platonic love is just as strong and meaningful as romantic love. Some people even have platonic life partners! If I couldn't find that, maybe someone who's sexual will care about me enough to compromise. Plus, I could always adopt kids if I want. Who knows what would happen? Who knows who I'd meet? Maybe I would always live alone and still be happy. I didn't need to figure it all out right then. I could just go wherever life took me. God may have a plan, but that doesn't mean the plan is the same for everyone.

I felt free. I felt empowered. I might fall in love and get married, or I might not. Either way would be fine. I didn't need to have the same life path as all of my friends and family. I realized that I am the way I am, and I couldn't change it. I needed to respect it. I had to listen to myself, and not to everyone around me, including Church leaders. I had to follow my heart and do what makes me happy, and it would all get figured out in the end.

Thanksgiving came a few weeks later, and my grandparents invited everyone over for dinner. My mom and I shared stories from our respective jobs, relating our similar bad customer experiences. My sister showed me the poster she made to ask a boy to the school dance. I was excited for her. All the adults talked around the table as my younger cousins ran around the house. Even though the children were loud and rambunctious, there was a sense of peace throughout the house. One of love, gratitude, and kindness. We laughed and played games until the sun went down. When it was time to leave, I hugged my relatives goodbye. A few of my little cousins stood in a line, waiting to give me a quick hug. My grandma gave me a big warm embrace as she told me, "It was so nice to see you! Come visit us again soon. We love you!" My parents echoed the same sentiment.

I didn't need to date in order to find love. I already had it.

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Hannah Mason
Two Personages
2018, linocut
6" x 9"

JOSEPH SMITH AND THE FACE OF CHRIST

Robert A. Rees

“He will unveil his face to you.”

—D&C 88:67–68

“Everything in the realm of nature and human existence is a sign—a manifestation of God’s divine names and attributes. . . . As it is said in the Qur’an, ‘Wherever you turn, there is the Face of God.’”

—Avideh Shashaani¹

“To see your face is like seeing the face of God . . .”

—Jacob, upon meeting his long-estranged
brother, Esau (Genesis 33:10, NIV)

. . . his eyes

*Looked into the eyes of God; there was
that flash of absolute knowing.*

—Luci Shaw, “Simeon”²

What members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints refer to as the Restoration begins with Joseph Smith’s theophany of God and Christ in the Sacred Grove when he was in his early teens. Commonly known as the First Vision, it was the beginning of a series of what believers consider foundational communications from the heavens. Church president Joseph F. Smith declared what happened that

1. Avideh Shashaani, in Richard Rohr, “The Breath of God,” Center for Action and Contemplation, Sept. 27, 2018, <https://cac.org/the-breath-of-god-2018-09-27/>.

2. Luci Shaw, “Simeon,” in *Accompanied by Angels: Poems of the Incarnation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 39–40.

spring day in 1820 “the most significant historical event since the Savior’s resurrection.”³

During a recent fireside, wanting those in attendance to imagine Joseph’s visionary experience as if it had happened to them, I asked, “What did Joseph see that day that had the most profound influence on him for the rest of his life? What was the most startling realization he had upon seeing the Father and the Son?” After a moment, a woman answered, “He saw that God had a face like his.” I said, “Yes! Exactly.”

I have heard the Joseph Smith story recounted thousands of times over the past seventy-four years since I joined the Church at age ten. I have told it myself thousands of times during my six years of fulltime missionary service; in countless Sunday School, seminary, institute, and priesthood classes; and in the university classes I teach on Mormonism at the Graduate Theological Union and the University of California, Berkeley.

In all that time, I don’t remember a single person speaking of Joseph seeing God’s and Christ’s faces. Usually, our focus is on him seeing *beings* or *personages*, the latter of which is the word he uses in his accounts of that remarkable day; but, we don’t emphasize the most significant aspect of those sublime personages—their faces.

What Joseph Smith saw, therefore, was not simply an embodied God or gods (or, as his first recounting says, “the Lord”), nor simply beings with bodies similar to his own, but beings with faces he could look into as with all the mortals in his life, faces with their unique physiognomy and range of expressions. As John O’Donohue observes, “In a certain sense, the face is the icon of the body, the place where the inner world of the person becomes manifest. The human face is

3. Steven C. Harper, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision: A Guide to the Historical Accounts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 1. The words are Harper’s. His reference is: Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 495–96.

the subtle yet visual autobiography of each person.”⁴ And, one would assume, the autobiography of each divine person. What Joseph saw was the most powerful and transcendent thing possible for a human to see: the visage of God in all its distinctiveness and particularity, all its beauty, glory, and holiness.

Emma Lou Thayne writes of Joseph’s experience in her poem “Meditations on the Heavens”:

Suppose he really saw the vision, God, the angel
My church owns the story: Joseph in the grove, fourteen
A supernatural sight of extraordinary beauty and significance . . .
The boy kneeling at the elevated feet of the Father and the Son . . .
While praying for a truth that had eluded others.
A supernatural sight of extraordinary beauty and significance . . .⁵

Is there anything that could have prepared Joseph for this experience? From all the discussions, debates, and sermons he must have heard in the various church services and camp meetings he attended, from all he would have learned at his parents’ knees, from all his reading of scripture and other publications, he would have been taught that God is a spirit, invisible to humans and further that, as John the Baptist proclaims, “no man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18, KJV), a phrase repeated in St. John’s epistle (1 John 4:12). Joseph might also have heard references to Moses’ being allowed to look upon God’s “back parts,” but expressly forbidden from seeing his face: “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Ex. 33:20, KJV).

Even though most Christians, Jews, and Muslims do not believe it is possible for a human to literally look upon the face of God, in Ezekiel

4. John O’Donohue, *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom* (New York: Harper Perennial), 38.

5. Emma Lou Thayne, “Meditations on the Heavens,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 143–46; also found in Emma Lou Thayne, *Things Happen: Poems of Survival* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991).

God promises, “I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my spirit on the people of Israel” (Ezek. 39:29, NIV). Certainly in 1820 and thereafter, according to Latter-day Saint belief, the Lord was pouring his spirit upon the house of Israel.

While we may not be able to imagine God’s face, we also cannot imagine God not having a face any more than we can imagine him not having a heart. And even if one takes the view that God is too ineffable to either have a face or, having one, allow mortals to behold it, we know that Christ did have a face, one that artists have attempted to visualize and portray for the past two thousand years. As Richard Rohr observes, “In Jesus, God was given a face and a heart. God became someone we could love. While God can be described as a moral force, as consciousness, and as high vibrational energy, the truth is, we don’t (or can’t?) fall in love with abstractions. So God became a person ‘that we could hear, see with our eyes, look at, and touch with our hands’ (1 John 1:1).”⁶

What I want to emphasize is how absolutely profound and life-changing this experience must have been for Joseph. It was likely the most powerful experience of his truly remarkable life. Poetry and scripture can give us only an oblique glimpse into such an experience, for seeing those faces was equivalent to looking into the heart of eternity, illumined by a thousand suns.

What exactly did Joseph see on the faces of those two divine personages he witnessed standing above him in the air? The face of God must be the most beautiful thing in the universe. What Joseph beheld was the face of pure love, a face that on some deep level, in his innermost subconsciousness, must have held for him a glimmer of recognition—a face that he had seen somewhere, somehow, before time. Perhaps it was not unlike the look on the face of the father in the parable of the prodigal son. That son expected—even deserved—to see a stern face, however familiar, of disapproval and condemnation. Undoubtedly, he had imagined such a face with each fearful step homeward. Instead,

6. Richard Rohr, “Love Needs a Face,” Center for Action and Contemplation, Jan. 15, 2018, <https://cac.org/love-needs-face-2018-01-15/>.

what he saw was a face full of forgiveness, longing, and urgent love, one willing to erase all his past mistakes and transgressions. Stephen Mitchell's translation of this parable catches the exquisite drama of that moment when father and son look into one another's faces:

And when he [the prodigal] came to himself . . . he got up, and went to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him [how many days, one wonders, did the father look toward the horizon hoping to see his lost son's face?], and was moved with compassion, and ran to him, and threw his arms around him, and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick, bring out the best robe we have and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and make merry. For this son of mine was dead, and has come back to life; he was lost, and is found."⁷

The father running toward his son—and his command to his servants, "Quick!"—may be a response to the look of dread and foreboding on his son's face as well as his own generous impulse to forgive his wastrel's indulgent and profligate life. Judging from what we know of Christ's quickness to forgive, it may be what we can expect when we turn to him from our estrangement, from our sins and lostness.

A related story from the Torah, and one having to do with faces, is the reunion of Jacob and Esau after more than two decades of separation. As we recall, Jacob usurped Esau's birthright blessing, thereby placing himself in a superior position to his brother. Thereafter, Jacob is called "lord" and Esau "servant." Esau, angered at having his birthright stolen, sought to kill Jacob.

Fast forward to Genesis 31–32 where God commands Jacob to return to Canaan, the place of Esau's abode. After crossing into Canaan with his family and flocks, Jacob has his famous wrestle with an angel or divine messenger who, departing at dawn, tells Jacob, "You have

7. Stephen Mitchell, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993), 223–24, emphasis added.

striven with God and men, and won out" (Gen. 32:30).⁸ Interestingly, Jacob names the place of this encounter Peniel, which means "I have seen God face to face and I came out alive" (Gen. 32:31).

Fearful that his brother still harbors hatred toward him, Jacob hopes to placate him by sending him gifts of abundant droves of various domestic animals. When Esau sees Jacob, like the father of the prodigal son, the scripture says, "He ran to meet him and embraced him and fell upon his neck and kissed him, and they wept." Jacob responds, "For have I not seen your face as one might see God's face, and you have received me in kindness?" (Gen. 33:10). It is significant to note that since their earlier parting, Jacob has carried in his heart and mind the angry, murderous face of his brother, but Esau's face has been transformed into that of a kind, loving, and forgiving brother. When Jacob sees Esau's face, full of grace and generosity, he reverses their roles, speaking of himself as the servant and his elder brother as his lord. It is also worth noting that apparently Jacob sees something in his brother's loving visage that reminds him of what he saw on the face of the divine being with whom he wrestled.

These stories confirm the sentiment that God's face and heart are always turned to us, which the following story from the Jewish Midrash (the rabbis' imaginative expansion of scripture) illustrates: "The son of a king was a hundred days' journey away from his father. His friends said to him, 'Return to your father.' He said, 'I can't; I'm too far away.' His father sent to him and said, 'Go as far as you can and I will come the rest of the way to you.' Thus the Holy One, blessed be he, said to Israel, 'Return to me, and I will return to you.'"⁹

How delighted God must have been that a young American farm boy was turning to him at a moment when God needed someone with

8. Genesis 32:30, in Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 180–81. Subsequent citations of Genesis are from this translation.

9. Mitchell, *Gospel According to Jesus*, 227.

faith to seek his face, someone to whom God could show *his* face—and that of his Son—and set in motion the grand restoration of all things spoken by the prophets.

The look on God's face in that American forest would have changed as he turned toward Christ and said to Joseph, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (JS-H 1:17). That look of unconditional love, pride, and overwhelming gratitude the Father felt for his son we can perhaps obliquely imagine because most of us have had similar experiences of looking on or into the face of someone we love completely and unconditionally and, equally, seeing the look on the face of another person who sees us as beloved, the object of his or her unconditional love. We know that look! And Joseph, seeing the Father look toward Christ, could not have withheld his own gaze from that Son's face.

What Joseph saw in and on the faces of the Father and the Son were the mystery and majesty of their natures, their beings, their *personalities*. He saw faces filled with love, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, mercy, magnanimity, grace, and benevolence—all those virtues God reveals to us in ten thousand ways and in ten thousand places.

The moment Joseph saw the faces of God and Christ, he knew that much of what he had been taught about deity from creeds and preached from pulpits was false. This was not an invisible, distant God; it was not an angry, punitive God, and Joseph was not a despicable creature God was dangling over the fires of hell. Rather, there was the shock of recognition that God was like him and that he was like God. In his book *Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn from the Latter-day Saints*, Catholic scholar Stephen Webb writes, "Mormonism demands a rethinking of every aspect of Christian history and tradition."¹⁰ That rethinking began when Joseph beheld the faces of God

10. Stephen H. Webb, *Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn from the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16. Webb asks, "Is it really bad theology to imagine that we will see God face to face one day?" (8).

and Christ in the woods near his home. As Webb asserts, “If God looks like something (rather than being completely without form), doesn’t it stand to reason that he looks like us?” He further asks, “Is it really bad theology to imagine that we will see God face to face one day?”¹¹ This truth is confirmed by modern revelation in which we are told that “when the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves” (D&C 130:1).

Joseph would have recognized that face when he saw it again in vision at the John Johnson farm in Hiram, Ohio in 1832 when he and Sidney Rigdon were contemplating “sundry revelations which had been received [which raised] many important points concerning the salvation of man.” Joseph reports:

And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about. And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness; . . . And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father. (D&C 76:19–23)

One can assume that the “fulness” of which Joseph speaks included seeing Christ’s face, since in this same revelation he says the Lord was a personage “whom we saw and with whom we conversed in the heavenly vision” (D&C 76:14). This was followed by yet another vision in the Kirtland Temple during Holy Week in 1836 in which Joseph describes the Lord’s face in specific detail: “We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah” (D&C 110:2–3).

11. Webb, *Mormon Christianity*, 9, 8.

Modern neuroscience is unfolding our understanding of many hitherto hidden mysteries of our brains. For example, scientists have identified a part of the brain whose sole function is face recognition.¹² According to Linda Graham, a psychotherapist specializing in neuroscience and human relations, “We all rely on the fusiform gyrus in the right hemisphere of the brain to read the facial expressions of another person. The direct eye contact of emphatic, responsive parenting stimulates the development of this structure in the baby’s brain; we can strengthen the functioning of this structure through eye contact with other people lifelong. Research has shown that when our right hemisphere reads safety and trust in the facial expressions of another person, the amygdala calms down, and the stress response is reduced.”¹³

God knew of the dark terror that had enveloped Joseph just prior to his vision, a terror so threatening that Joseph experienced being on the edge of annihilation. As he describes it, he was captive to “the power of this enemy which had seized upon me . . . the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being.” It was in this moment when he was about to succumb to total despairing darkness that he cried out for deliverance, “exerting all [his] powers to call upon God to deliver” him (JS-H 1:16).

At this dramatic moment when, one assumes, God has allowed Joseph to experience the full force of demonic power in order that he might truly be open to the light that was about to envelop him—at the point when he was on the verge of being sucked into the vortex of the very heart of darkness—a pillar of light “above the brightness of the sun” descended, and Joseph looked into that light and, seeing the face

12. Elizabeth Norton, “Facial Recognition: Fusiform Gyrus Brain Region ‘Solely Devoted’ To Faces, Study Suggests,” *HuffPost*, Oct. 24, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/24/facial-recognition-brain-fusiform-gyrus_n_2010192.html.

13. Linda Graham, *Bouncing Back: Rewiring Your Brain for Maximum Resilience and Well-being* (Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 2013), 262–63.

of God, immediately found himself “delivered from the enemy which held [him] bound” (JS–H 1:16–17). Again, returning to Linda Graham’s observation: “Studies have shown that when one person sees calm in the facial expression of another person, activity in the amygdala—the fear center [of the brain]—in the first person calms down. The functioning of [this structure] is developed through eye contact and mirror neurons, as in relationships of secure attachment and between a true other and a true self.”¹⁴

Consider what Joseph experienced in the Sacred Grove. “The direct eye contact of emphatic, responsive parenting” would have stimulated the development of this structure in his brain. Also, it would have immediately dispelled the darkness surrounding him, which he described as “some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction” (JS–H 1:15). Imagine, then, how Joseph must have felt at that moment looking into the faces of the Father and the Son. It would have been like standing on the earth when “darkness was upon the face of the deep . . . And God said, Let there be light” (Gen. 1:2–3, KJV), except in this instance it was light combined with abundant, palpable love. I think of the mother who, upon gazing into the eyes of her newborn infant, said she felt as if she were beholding the universe. Or, as Elizabeth Bowen says, “To turn from everything to one face is to find oneself face to face with everything.”¹⁵ Richard Rohr adds, “Jesus is the one face, we are the interface, and Christ is the Everything.”¹⁶

14. Graham, *Bouncing Back*, 200.

15. Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day* (New York: Anchor Books, 1948), 218.

16. Richard Rohr, *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi* (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2014), 228.

It is interesting to speculate that as pre-existent creatures, however we came into being, the first faces we would have beheld were those of our Heavenly Mother and Father. That first imprinting on our pre-mortal brains—and souls (our *intelligent* refined-material bodies)—would have locked us into love from the very beginning. Our first experience of seeing the eyes and faces of these divine beings is likely embedded somewhere in our subconsciousness.

One of the things that marked Joseph's trying, at times terrifying, and even tragic life was an amazing confidence that he was on the Lord's errand. Derided, persecuted, brutalized, deserted, and betrayed, he was never defeated. On one occasion, he gave this counsel to George A. Smith: "Never be discouraged. If I were sunk in the lowest pits of Nova Scotia, with the Rocky Mountains piled on me, I would hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage, and I would come out on top."¹⁷ Even when he knew he was headed for certain death, turning back to Carthage, he said, "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men" (D&C 135:4).

Many years ago, I published a poem on this subject called "Somewhere Near Palmyra" in which, reflecting on a time when I stood in the Sacred Grove, I tried to imagine Joseph's experience:

He saw something that morning
deep among the delicate leaves
burning against the Eastern sky:
The sun and suns,
radiance enfolded
in oak and elm,
visages of light
luminous as seer stones

17. George A. Smith, "History of George Albert Smith by Himself," p. 49, George Albert Smith, Papers, 1834–75, Church Archives. This quotation also appears in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 227.

rinsing the still grasses;
 personages of fire,
 jasper and carnelian,
 dispersing the morning dew:
 images that bore him
 through dark of night,
 terror of loneliness,
 blood of betrayal,
 the ache of small graves,
 to death from the prison window
 where collapsing
 through the summer air,
 he fell—¹⁸

It was the image of those holy, glorious visages that I believe sustained Joseph throughout his life. It is interesting to speculate that as he crossed the Mississippi on his way to safety in the West, those searing images of God's and Christ's faces that he had seen so many years earlier were brought into his consciousness and caused him to turn back. My speculation is spurred by what I consider the most significant phrase in Joseph's holograph record of his first vision. After his encounter with deity, he reports, "My soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great Joy and the Lord was with me but [I] could find none that would believe the hevnlly [*sic*] vision nevertheless I pondered these things in my heart."¹⁹ This seems to me the kind of genuine expression of someone who has had a transcendent experience. It is interesting that Joseph uses the same phrase Mary used in describing her experience when Gabriel heralded the impending birth of the

18. Robert A. Rees, "Somewhere Near Palmyra," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13, no. 3 (Fall 1980): 105–06. Reprinted in Eugene England and Dennis Clark, eds., *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 100–01.

19. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 6.

Savior—to ponder in the heart. *Ponder* (from the Latin *ponderare*, “to weigh”) means “To wonder, to think of deeply . . . to consider something carefully and thoroughly.” That is what Joseph did following his theophany and, one would imagine, many times thereafter.

At the same fireside previously mentioned, another person, a new convert, said, “I also think that when God looked into Joseph’s eyes, he saw a reflection of his own face.” Of course he would have, just as we who look into our spouse’s, children’s, or grandchildren’s eyes see a reflection of our own.

It occurred to me not long ago that if we each carry the physical DNA of our earthly parents and other ancestors, why wouldn’t our spirits, which are refined matter, carry the DNA of the parents of our spirits? And if this is the case, which is the logical conclusion of Mormon cosmology, then we carry in our refined material souls the indelible imprint of the faces of our heavenly parents, Mother and Father. Their intention from the beginning was that we would be of their lineage and in their images; and their further intention was to reveal this to us. As the Midrash states, “It is with love that God made human beings in His image, but it was with a special love that *He let them know that He had made them in His image.*”²⁰ Why? So that we would understand that on both the material and refined material levels we are deeply, deliberately, literally related and connected eternally to these our divine sires. As Rabbi David J. Wolpe observes, “There is only one bond among human beings that cannot be broken, the bond of being a child of God. It can be betrayed, but never erased.”²¹

Further, Heavenly Father and Mother intended that their first begotten in the spirit world would be the means of bringing us back to them by making it possible for us to have his light—the light of Christ with which we are all born—to be attracted to and harmonize with their

20. Rabbi Akiba, as quoted in David J. Wolpe, *The Healer of Shattered Hearts: A Jewish View of God* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 71; emphasis in the original.

21. Wolpe, *Healer of Shattered Hearts*, 67.

light. Gerard Manley Hopkins shows this beautifully in his sonnet “As Kingfishers Catch Fire.” Hopkins argues that everything expresses its nature by what it does: the wings of kingfishers and dragonflies catch sunlight, stones ring when dropped down wells, strings of instruments sing when plucked, and bells ring when pealed—all sounding their inner essence by outwardly manifesting it. As with creatures and inanimate things, he adds, so with us:

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
 . . . Selves—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
 Crying *What I dó is me: for that I came.*

He then argues that it is through Christ that we are capable of doing more than this, more than what we can do by ourselves:

I say móre: the just man [Christ] justices . . .

That is, Christ, as our advocate, justifies us to God, pleading our individual cases, despite our sins and failings, as worthy of redemption.

The last three lines of the poem tie all this marvelously rich imagery together and bring us back to Joseph’s powerful experience. Hopkins writes,

For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
 Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
 To the Father through the features of men’s [and women’s] faces.²²

Christ plays our part before the Father as if he were an actor, making us lovely—lovelier and more lovable than we deserve—by showing our faces, lightened by his light, to the Father (and, presumably, hopefully, certainly, our Mother).

I think of Joseph that fateful day at Carthage, his premonition of death about to become a reality. He had to be thinking of Christ because

22. Gerard Manley Hopkins, “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), available at <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173654>.

he and his brother Hyrum requested their friend and future prophet, John Taylor, sing “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” an English hymn that Taylor had recently included in both the Manchester and general Church hymnals. That hymn, based on the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, epitomizes Christ’s gospel and is particularly poignant in relation to the theme of this paper since it invites all of us to look into the face of anyone who is poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, imprisoned, or destitute in any way—all those Mother Theresa describes as “Jesus in disguise”—to look into their faces and see the face of Christ himself. As the words of the hymn state:

Then in a moment to my view
The stranger started from disguise.
The tokens in his hands I knew;
The Savior stood before mine eyes.
He spake, and my poor name he named,
“Of me thou hast not been ashamed.
These deeds shall thy memorial be;
Fear not, thou didst them unto me.”²³

Standing on the other side of the Mississippi, imagining the Western refuge he had seen in vision then turning back to Carthage was the ultimate moment for the prophet. David Whyte’s beautiful poem “Santiago,” though not about the Prophet, catches some of what I imagine he must have felt turning east, the direction in myth and scripture associated with Eden, the birth of Christ, the Resurrection, paradise, and the triumphal return of the Savior.²⁴

the way that you followed, the way that carried you
into your future, that brought you to this place,
no matter that it sometimes took your promise from you,

23. “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” *Hymns*, no. 29.

24. Philip Kosloski, “The Ancient Symbolism of North, South, East and West,” *Aleteia*, Aug. 4, 2017, <https://aleteia.org/2017/08/04/the-ancient-symbolism-of-north-south-east-and-west/>.

no matter that it had to break your heart along the way:
 the sense of having walked from far inside yourself
 out into the revelation, to have risked yourself
 for something that seemed to stand both inside you
 and far beyond you, that called you back
 to the only road in the end you could follow . . .²⁵

It is not difficult to imagine that during these last fateful moments at Carthage as Joseph fell to his death from the prison window, he saw once more the face of Christ as he had seen it in that light-blessed woods when he was fourteen and later in the Kirtland Temple and at other times during his brief life, including in the vision described in section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

It is also possible that that was the first face he saw when he passed through the veil to the eternal worlds.

However we think of God, to whatever extent we can visualize the face of divinity with our limited minds and imaginations, we can all conceive of the possibility of seeing such a face. Most sacred books suggest that possibility. Even though Muslims do not believe it is possible for mortals to see God's face, they do believe that the righteous will have such an experience in the hereafter. As the Qur'an states, "On that day some faces will be bright, looking at their Lord" (Qur'an 75:22–23).

Asked if we will see God on the day of resurrection, the Prophet Muhammed replied, "Surely, each of you will see God on the day when you shall meet Him, and there will be no veil or translator between Him and you." As one Islamic commentator says, "The joy of seeing God for a believer will be greater than all the joys of Paradise combined."²⁶

I imagine all of us having that experience, looking into the face of divinity, rejoicing as we see ourselves reflected in his or her or their faces. As President Ezra Taft Benson observed, "Nothing is going to

25. David White, "Santiago," in *Pilgrim* (Langley, Wash.: Many Rivers, 2012), available at <https://www.davidwhyte.com/english-poetry#Santiago>.

26. "Can We See God?," *The Religion of Islam*, May 1, 2006, last modified Nov. 3, 2019, <https://www.islamreligion.com/articles/331/can-we-see-god/>.

startle us more when we pass through the veil to the other side than to realize how well we know our Father and how familiar His face is to us.”²⁷ Martin Schalling’s lovely hymn text “Herzlich lieb hab ich dich, o Herr” (“Lord, Thee I love with all my heart”), which Bach used as the final chorale for his magnificent oratorio, *The Passion According to St. John*, expresses that ultimate promise for Christians:

Lord, let at last Thine angels come,
To Abram’s bosom bear me home,
That I may die unfearing;
And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep
Until Thy reappearing.

Schalling then imagines our being awakened by Christ, perhaps in the way a loving parent awakens a sleeping child:

And then from death awaken me
In bliss untold my eyes shall see,
O Son of God, Thy glorious face,
My Savior and my fount of grace.²⁸

In the name of him who is the face of all that is lovely, loving, and holy,
Amen.

27. Ezra Taft Benson, “Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1988/12/jesus-christ-gifts-and-expectations?lang=eng>.

28. J. S. Bach, *The Passion According to St. John* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1951), 230–31.

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PANDO: THE SECRET LIFE OF TREES

Terresa Wellborn

Pando extends, a network of aspen one mile south of Fish Lake in central Utah. At eighty thousand years, it is one of the oldest and heaviest living organisms on the planet. Pando has survived despite competing conifers, climate shifts, encroaching roads. In the face of fire, this grove has kept root underground, persisting, sending up new growth post-blaze. It has withstood the freight of life and continued expanding until now. It is dying.



I am mired midlife, buried beneath acres of earth and time. Connected but atrophied. I haven't yet become the writer I thought I would be. I am not yet the wife, the mother, the daughter, the sister I thought I would become. So I persist in small ways: I remember birthdays, bake cookies, write poetry.

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
—Gerard Manley Hopkins¹

Where, indeed. The Comforter's promise exists, absolutely, but for me it's rare, when life's cacophony has ground down and I'm quiet. I reel in crisis: mid-career, mid-marriage, mid-mothering. Mid-self, mid-becoming, mid-aware. I must change my life, but how?

1. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief," in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985), 61, available at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44398/no-worst-there-is-none-pitched-past-pitch-of-grief>.

I write this sitting at Fish Lake, not in Pando's lap or at the alpine water's edge but sequestered inside a rental cabin reeking of bleach and stale bread. My day's chore? Unpack wilting Romas and romaine, prep a taco salad dinner for twelve. Yet I lag, spent from the drive, Highway 89 a ribbon of asphalt, the indigo sky marbled with clouds. Fresh from a sister-fight. Heartsick, homesick, sister sick, I pushed past Bryce Canyon and Big Rock Candy Mountain up to Richfield for gas and groceries then onto Fish Lake. Poor cell service, keening skies, a sister now mute. I wonder at the length of a grudge. A day? A month? A year? As Philippe Jaccottet suggests, "I should pull words out of my body, only in pain, or in fear, packed together like stones in the mountains."² I want to undo what we've said, unpack the pain. Or hide as Pando, then push up white stems as truce later. Instead I grab five minutes to write and avoid confrontation.



Fish Lake's distractions dominate Pando: of course there's the lake, the boat marina, the extravagant mountains, square dancing at the lodge. Enough to forget the self, at least for a while. For me, Pando remains an enigma. I'm curious, so I stalk the information desk at the lodge. Afternoon light pools through the windows, an octogenarian volunteer unfolds his arms at the back desk as I approach. I'm the only interested party for now. When I ask about Pando, he takes a pull on his oxygen tank and replies, "People come to visit the aspens from everywhere. Pando is something. Just last week a couple from New York came to see it." His ancient desk offers two slick, laminated pages on the trees. I snap pictures of them with my iPhone. Nearby, dusty magnets shout cheerily, PANDO: Oldest Greatest Largest Living Organism alongside matching metal Christmas ornaments for only \$12.99. Pando is the hors d'oeuvre, the warm-up act before Fish Lake. We came here to fish, as most do, but perhaps Pando is the reason I'm here.

2. Philippe Jaccottet, *Seedtime: Notebooks, 1954–79*, translated by Tess Lewis (London: Seagull Books, 2013).

Kit Carson didn't discover Pando, university-bred botanists did in the late 1960s. The United States Postal Service created a stamp to honor it as one of the forty "Wonders of America" in 2006. Pando covers 106 acres and weighs thirteen million pounds. Its inception began at the end of the last ice age. Today anyone can Google Pando or climb Highway 25, the desolate two-lane road sans guardrail, and drive right through the grove, witnessing the phenomenon at nearly nine thousand feet. But visitors are few.

I prefer the idea of Pando and the lake outside my window to the reality, which might explain why I live far from family; the idea of their love for me is perfect. I see them once a year, anything is possible. The reality? After weeks together in the same cabin, our nerves turn savage, tempers flare. I fail at many things, patience and tact are two of them. My family relationships, once lucid, now darkle. Pando is darkling, too. Pretty on postcards but in reality dying. Scientists cite recent lack of regeneration, drought, bark beetles, over-grazing. Heart rot and root rot are also possible reasons for its decline. The Forest Service asserts that aspens regenerate with fire and disturbance, without it they die.



My father grew up in rural southern Utah, his dad a rancher and the town drunk. My dad was the first college graduate in his family and later, a successful politician, CEO, brigadier general, and LDS bishop. We, his five children, have yet to match his feats. These days my father suffers from skin cancer, diabetes, deafness. He's a doer not a listener, and now, midlife, my relationship with him stutters still. I don't know how to reach him. My mother recently had emergency surgery. She was dehydrated, her kidneys almost shut down. She doesn't visit much anymore. I've taken this personally, as daughters do. We are at midday, they are in the gloaming. Nothing prepares us for aging and loss, how it changes you. Perhaps this trip to Fish Lake will bring clarity, resolve.



The more I study Pando, the more I want to know. I linger at the information desk despite an uncomfortable silence until the volunteer offers more. "Pando lives as a clone organism. If part of it dies, it all dies," he says, stretching his hands wide as if to demonstrate the gravity of this idea. "Researchers from the university are splitting it, trying to regrow some aspens in an area adjacent to Fish Lake. But, as life and experiments go, anything is possible. No one knows yet if it will work." I understand. In some ways, my family is a clone organism, too. Despite a reservoir of years, we still feel each other's pain en masse.



On our second day at Fish Lake we finally visit Pando. As I grab my backpack and sunscreen, my kids shout over each other to their cousins, "C'mon!" and "Are you coming with us to see the trees?"

"Aspens," I say, shouldering the door. Too late to rein my kids in, the invitation stands. My sister nods stiffly, gathers her kids, and joins us. I'm surprised. We're still not talking much but seem to have agreed wordlessly, as sisters do, to do this one thing together. We caravan over, park on gravel just off the highway. The nondescript signs states, *Aspen regeneration project*. The bright earth greets us. A simple wire fence encloses the aspen colony, accompanied by riotous clouds that appear as a down comforter, then a string of pearls. Quiet pervades Pando. Random doe dot the green. No billboards, no fanfare. Silence falls felted, nearly tangible, until a truck passes, pontoon in tow, rushing to catch the next record-breaking mackinaw. I expected a magnificent field of mile-high trees. But they were ordinary aspens, nothing more, just a multitude. We looked, we took pictures, we left.



Ten years ago, I never considered midlife, I was busy living. Now having arrived, toes edged to cliff, I have a choice, I suppose, to whorl toward

heights or fall. Like Pando, I, too, need firm footing and light to live. “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). I want to remove my mortal mask and find God, wisdom, *heimat*, not the crags of my life. I want revelation, not free fall.

Back from Pando, I pick up a trifold flyer on my pine dresser entitled, *Explore & Experience Fish Lake: Adventures for Everyone*, by the United States Department of Agriculture. I learn the lake was created over several million years when fault lines dropped along two mountain tops, Mytoge Mountain and Fish Lake Hightop, forming a graben, a basin that trapped water and created the lake. In some places its depth reaches one hundred and seventy feet. Pando is not once mentioned. I look out my cabin room window to the lake and wonder at the fissures that deepened there, the fermata of air between earth, the shifting of sand. I question the quotidian fault lines running between myself and my sister, my family, and my dreams. I’m the one sibling out of five who lives out of state; they’ll never live far from home. I’ve resented every move my husband’s catalyzed. I’ve shared deep grief with my children, forced them out of Eden too soon. I haven’t convinced them life could be beautiful.



My midlife graben hit two years ago when we moved to Dallas, a metroplex of over seven million people. I felt, like poet Katia Kapovich, “invisible, like a tree among trees.”³ In Texas, our landscape shifted and with it our everything. I only saw fault lines, death drops: a friend’s son died of leukemia, age ten. Another friend left her husband and four kids to live on an Alabama goat farm and teach yoga. Suddenly I had three

3. Katia Kapovich, “A Change of Wind,” in *Cossacks and Bandits* (Cambridge, UK: Salt Publishing, 2007), available at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57924/a-change-of-wind>.

teenagers and a tween I didn't know. My daughter became suicidal. My brother endured a brutal divorce. My father fell twice. My mother called less. My husband constantly flew away on business. I suffered otherwise: chiggers, plantar fasciitis, hot flashes, mother guilt, periodic self-loathing, depression.

My hands are bloody from digging.
 I lift them, hold them open in the wind,
 so they can branch like a tree.
 —Rainer Maria Rilke⁴

Lakeside this week I'm not sure how to let go or grow as Rilke suggests, so instead I study the pink photocopied lodge menu while our children run to the lake's lip. Evening pushes toward dinner, and I'm grateful for the distraction. My mouth waters. The mountaintop diner boasts an expansive menu and everything sounds good. Then I remember the rainbow trout my dad and sons caught and gutted. Tonight it's a fish fry—enough to feed us all. My sister and I small talk, "Where's the flour?" and "Can you set the table?"—every word measured between us. The tiny kitchen fills, my mother and sister trim and prepare the fish, I tend to dishes and table setting, opening windows to let out the sizzle.

After dinner I sneak out for a walk, the night sky knit with light. Scent of pine. Trunks the color of dark honey. Down a pebbled slope to the one-hundred-year-old lodge. It nearly melts into the lake, a sagging half-shingled, half-tin roof with gloriously thick wood and stone walls, parkitecture like that of the Grand Canyon North Rim Lodge. It stretches beside the water like an aging cat: unruffled and whole despite its scuffs. The eras it's seen, the lives lived, the seasons shed, and still it maintains a sense of humor, grace, tact. It is beautiful. President Hinckley once said, "[We] must do more than go along with what [we] find.

4. Rainer Maria Rilke, in *Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*, translated by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), 34.

[We] must lift the world.”⁵ But how to lift when all I want to do is shrink? To straighten, to forgive, to become takes effort. Perhaps more than I have.

There is something to be learned from Fish Lake: it’s always becoming. Each year it regenerates despite the aspens losing leaves, the lodge losing tourists, summer losing to fall. At this moment in late summer it’s effulgent, reminiscent of landscapes from Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. I’m not a prize-winning author. I have debts; I have duties. At present I cannot spend a year in a remote cabin, study moths aflame, write my life’s celestial work. I am living quite the opposite. I flame full splendor like Annie’s moth but inhabit a different world crammed with every fulgid thing—a trundled marriage, advanced degrees, aging parents, a sputtering career, iPhone teens, an unfinished manuscript, unpruned fruit trees, a terrier that sheds. I want another chance to become, to begin again. To root, to fly, to green treely.



When we lived in Texas, place became synonymous with failure. I joined the cult of defeat. Once I met depression, I found it everywhere. Life beggared before me. Instead of God I found baseball-sized hail, suffocating humidity, fire ants, grackles. Joy felt impossible, love foreign. I became misanthropic. Life became unmappable, the geography of self chaotic. I felt irrevocably riven. I had lost sight of Jesus’ counsel, “Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth” (John 12:35). It’s hard to champion light when we cannot see it. After thirteen moves in twenty years, I walked blind.

5. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Behold Your Little Ones,” Oct. 1978, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1978/10/behold-your-little-ones?lang=eng>.

On December 26, 2015 everything changed. From our safe room we tracked tornadoes pummeling past us. They hit a neighboring suburb: apartment buildings demolished as if by a giant's hand, uprooted trees punched through car windows, homes crushed but with a central bathroom still intact, a white refrigerator on end. Nine tornadoes confirmed, eleven dead, hundreds without homes. Tornadoes, like God, are no respecters of persons (Acts 10:34). As poet Caroline Bergvall once stated, "I had to be unhomed, or to accept my own unhoming, in order to make myself a home."⁶ Eyeballing death and destruction creates a capillary change, indelible humility, helps us see. In the face of death, I had to decide how to live. The next week we drove to Garland and Rowlett to offer our assistance in the massive cleanup. It was then I began to realize that home is not an address; it exists wherever we are. Like Adam and Eve, we too must navigate our own lone and dreary worlds. Home is internal, eternal. We came to this earth not to stagnate or stay safe in Eden but to leave, learn, move, wrench, flame. *Heimat* is each other, *heimat* is God.



This morning I spied a wooden bench while trail running along Fish Lake. I passed it, touched the hem of Pando, and circled back. Worried I wouldn't find the bench again in the verdant maze, relieved when I did. I sat, silent. Less than one month removed from Dallas. I recalled Edmond Jabès words, "Between one tree and another, there is all the thirst of the earth."⁷ I felt that thirst then and the Holy Ghost

6. Caroline Bergvall, "Caroline Bergvall: Propelled to the Edges of Language's Freedom, and to the Depths of Its Collective Traumas," interview by Eva Heisler, *Asymptote*, Jan. 2016, <https://www.asymptotejournal.com/visual/eva-heisler-caroline-bergvall-propelled-to-the-edges-of-a-languages-freedom/>.

7. Edmond Jabès, *The Book of Questions*, Vol. 1, translated by Rosmarie Waldrop (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1991), 26.

there with me at my makeshift temple, a holy of holies. And at my feet, a tumult of white trillium. Ineffable joy. My cell phone didn't work. No one knew where I was. It was delicious. I loved my sister again. I loved my husband, my children, my parents. I loved myself. In that moment of ecstatic solitude, I loved all my losses, my faltering career I've struggled not to regret, the homes we've renovated and inhabited and inhaled their dust only to sell and empty and never return. I didn't mind the missteps: the books I've left unwritten, the faith I've neglected, the friendships I've let slide.

It was then I wondered at Pando and the secret life of trees, so easily unknown, disregarded, or forgotten yet yoked to all of life. Essential. Entwined with growth and goodness, soil and time. The most magnificent thing about visiting Pando wasn't the aspens at all but learning about its resilience and root system tying countless trees together, roots invisible and undetected to the passerby. Maybe like my relationships to self, family, God. We experience strife but continue growing, inexplicably linked. God's grace exists, whether or not we see it, and the love of our loved ones may be more than we realize. "Yet, a great deal of light falls on everything,"⁸ as Van Gogh once observed. Light falls on us, we are stained with it; we liken ourselves to God when we create. As with the aspen grove, when I am the creator, when I pull on Heavenly Mother's robes, does it matter who reads what I write?



Later that night in my room, I searched the scriptures for references to light. I found this in Doctrine and Covenants 88:13:

The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things . . . by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

8. Vincent van Gogh in a letter to his brother Theo van Gogh, Oct. 15, 1882.

It is not that Christ withdraws when tornadoes hit or grabens form. He and his light are in all things, incandescent and immutable, as constant as the sun. Eternal and inextinguishable. It is us, burdened with the weight of our temporal trials, who forget to see. I've forgotten who my sister is, her good heart. My baby sister who I used to pull around our cul-de-sac in a little red wagon and later in college, surprise her with a visit home. Years later when we became mothers, we raised our children together enjoying play dates, Easter egg hunts, and cabin trips. I need to mend things with her, I'm just not sure how.



In the end, our decision to leave Texas hinged on many things: employment, deferred dreams, the health of our marriage, homesickness. My fearful imaginings. Our extended family lived 1,300 miles away and regular visits weren't an option. FOMO became a regular occurrence, not just a millennial phenomenon. I didn't want to cut ties and become a Texan. I didn't like the South, couldn't stand the drawls and *y'all*s, I didn't want to be buried there someday.

Despite the wake-up call from the tornado a year prior, I quickly fell back into old habits—negativity, homesickness, panic disorders. One Sunday after church, an older lady stopped me in the foyer and said, "You know what your problem is? You're not here, you're still in Utah. You need to leave Utah behind and just be a Texan." She smiled, Texan born and Texas proud, and walked away. I stood there and cried.

I agree with Ellen Meloy, "How our perceptions are our only internal map of the world, how there are places that claim you and places that warn you away. How you can fall in love with the light."⁹ Like the

9. Ellen Meloy, *The Anthropology of Turquoise: Meditations on Landscape, Art, and Spirit* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002).

pillar of light that saved Joseph Smith from his despair in the Sacred Grove, I know a little of that darkness, that destructive power and black fear. At last, a month before we left Dallas, I felt warned away from my own dark depths and claimed by God. The least likely thing pulled me out of my misery and self-deprecation: the necessity to paint my house.



The last day at Fish Lake we skirted the water's edge, my sister and I and our children here and there, each our own planet in our own sphere. The kids skipped rocks, some deftly, others with a *thwunk*. My son Zack, one of the youngest, picked up a flat, palm-sized rock and threw it with an expert wrist-flick. The rock skipped easy and light several times across the lake's mirrored surface. "Zack!" I asked, "How did you learn that? When? . . ."

"It's easy mom, let me show you," he replied, walking over to my side. I didn't have to worry about an audience—the rest of the kids had already scattered, and my sister appeared a small speck along the shoreline, the sun sinking behind the mountains casting shadows in the amber glow.



Before moving back to Utah, I needed to paint a large portion of our 3,000-square-foot house. The sad truth? It screamed 1980s floral and no one wanted to rent it. Much to our realtor's chagrin, instead of hiring professional painters, I threw my inhibitions aside and asked my church group for help. I established painting as a focal point: I had a specific goal and motivation. I could do this. We spent weeks mixing paint and climbing ladders. With all the energy of a barn raising, DIYers of all ages rang my doorbell, women I didn't even know texted me, "Where are you? I'm here to help paint!" This time I was grateful. It didn't matter

that summer had just begun and instead of a Disney World trip, I handed my kids paint brushes. We had work to do.

My children learned how to change roller brushes and use blue painter's tape to cover wainscoting and crown molding. It felt good to see progress, room after room painted, finished, done. And feeling good felt good, better than feeling homesick and defeated all the time. I began to sublimate the negative, see life anew—past wear and smudge. Sure, we made a lot of mistakes: paint spilled, I ruined my favorite shirt, we painted three unnecessary coats in the master bathroom (the paint we'd bought was a two-in-one basecoat and topcoat). We didn't know what we were doing half the time but kept learning and adjusting. Each brush stroke brought new color, new life. Wall by wall, room by room, I came to accept imperfection while accepting infinite possibility. I felt a brighter future forthcoming.

My husband had moved back to Salt Lake City to work and find a house, so after we finished painting, it was my job to rally the kids to the next task: packing. Everything we owned needed to be accounted for, wrapped, placed in a box, sealed, and labeled. Every spoon, sock, shoelace. There wasn't time to whine. Sometimes after sealing a cardboard box with tape, I'd fret: did our Mikasa wedding china need more foam cushioning? It didn't matter we rarely used it, I wanted to keep it whole. But there were no guarantees; everything seemed crushable. After a dozen moves I still didn't consider myself an expert, so when in doubt I'd double the bubble wrap. I scurried like an ant carrying crumbs, forgetting that, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). It was then I remembered the meaning of Mikasa, it's a Malagasy word meaning *resolve*.



The last night at Fish Lake, my dad called us together to hear Jacob Squared—stories of Jacob Micah Truman (our pioneer ancestor) and

Jacob Hamblin, early Mormon frontiersman and diplomat to the southwestern Native Americans. As a young girl I listened to my dad share so many stories my skin itched from sitting so long, struggling to be attentive. As we settled into couches that night, I felt that old itch along my spine. Every cell in my body rebelled. I didn't want to sit and listen to a variation of Sunday School on a Friday night. I wanted to run along the lake barefoot, the moon as my guide.

Dad cracked open his weathered Jacob Hamblin hardback, the same one he read aloud from when my sister and I were girls. With pale blue eyes and cracking voice, he pulled us into the world of grizzly bears and gold mines, blanket trading and bows and arrows, rarely glancing at the page, knowing each story by heart. One by one kids snuck off with excuses to grab a snack or get some water. No doubt they had their own stories to share with one another while others, heads propped on pillows, began to doze. Mom left to make brownies. In time, only my sister and I listened while dad continued.

"Do you know my favorite Jacob Hamblin story?" dad asked. He didn't wait for us to respond. "It was when Jacob was under fire from the Native Americans in a narrow pass. His gun jammed. Arrow after arrow sailed his way, hitting his gun, his hat, and almost hitting his head. The fourth arrow almost hit his heart. That day the Holy Ghost guided Jacob to spare the Native Americans and become a messenger of peace. He learned that if he honored their lives, they would honor him too, and he would live a long life." Dad paused and looked from my sister to myself.

"That's a good story, dad," I said. Yawning inside, I thought it sounded a lot like a Wild West version of the Golden Rule. I studied my fingernails, not sure how much dad knew of our sister drama or my own doubts about any of the Jacob Squared stories. My dad had the uncanny ability to read people without saying a single word. I looked up to find him studying me.

“Yeah, is it true?” my sister asked.

“What?” dad cocked his head and then paused to adjust his hearing aids. After fitting them back into each ear he answered, “Sure it’s true. Jacob Hamblin learned the Native Americans’ language and spent time with them. He loved them. Remember,” dad quieted, leaning forward, “Jacob had great paradoxes in his life. He was called to help displace Native Americans in order to establish Mormon settlements. But he was a friend to all. He helped both groups of people and was always, always kind, honest, and peaceful.”



A year and a half after the Dallas tornadoes, we left Texas for good. House painted and packed, we moved back west. Slowly, I began to emerge from the chrysalis of our trials. If my life was a tree, our time in Texas was just a small branch, part of a much larger whole. Despite Dallas, our refiner’s fire pushed us forward, eventually to new growth and a deeper understanding of self, other, God. Because everyone has trials, everyone has something. Among other things, I’d kept Christ far from me. Part of my healing required accepting him into my heart again. I began to look at my choices, deficiencies, and paradigms, reconsidering them or abandoning them, and moving on. My mother urged me, “Look forward.” I began.



Like a stone skipping across Fish Lake, some experiences have entered my life and similarly changed it: going to college, serving a mission, finishing graduate school, getting married, starting a career, and becoming a mother. One of the most recent stones thrown was our sister fight, the worst we’ve ever had. I railed a litany of criticisms against her, told her how to live, that she needed to change. Now, a week later, I realize

the person needing to change is me. As sisters we are rooted together through blood and childhood, love and time. Whatever bitter soil we encounter, we must push on.

Other stones in my life are my dad's stories, his passions. None of us children can escape them. While he's achieved great success in politics and community, his family relationships have atrophied. He's so persistently pushed the gospel, Jacob Squared, and all of his other interests, he's lost sight of us. I'm not sure he knows us, his children: who we are, what we dream. But I know he loves us, wants the best for us. And he tries in his own way—his hugs and birthday song phone calls and frequent texts tell me so.



I pack my suitcase and zip it shut and wonder at Pando. Will it continue living? If so, how? Just as Pando can regenerate with fire and disturbance . . . I pause. *Without it, it dies.* The connection becomes obvious—I have felt fire, I know disturbance—Dallas and my myriad failings. I can choose to love, grow, and reconnect with my sister and my father. I don't have to focus on the splinters between us. I can move forward and forgive. I can't fix their imperfections, but I can work on mine, letting God know my heart. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

As I roll my suitcase out the door, my heart stops. *What do I say? What if I bungle things again?* Before I lose my nerve, I call to my sister, "Hey, Niki! Do you have a minute?"



The air smells of damp leaves and autumn. Just weeks after Fish Lake, my sister-fight mended and Dallas now a few months behind us, we

find ourselves at the crux of yet another move. Life piled upon life. Bewilderment, perhaps, but also hope. I carry a handful of white trillium still.

It is no surprise
that danger and suffering surround us.
What astonishes is the singing.
—Jack Gilbert¹⁰

We suffer faults, failed expectations, family discord; Christ brings us to singing. If I forgive every offense, what is left? As Christ appeared transfigured to his disciples in the New Testament, I, too, welcome change, transfiguration. To become like Heavenly Mother, beyond anything imaginable.

Only after leaving Pando did I discover its significance. Scientists named it *Pando* for a Latin word that means, *I spread out*. Because it came from a single seed springing into an unfathomable network of roots and stems, spreading in time to over forty thousand trees. The proof of what one seed can do. To experiment then, ourselves, in coming to know truth and self, God and light: planting a seed in our heart, nurturing it with faith and patience, until it blooms precious (Alma 32). A call to grow and continue growing.

I stand now, not on the banks of Fish Lake nor at the feet of Pando, but in the brilliant, flicker-flash pearl of memory like the shining wet stones we pulled from the shore one day. A gilded moment like the first rock I skipped, the rock my son Zack held in his hand and showed me how before he placed it in mine. I flung and let go. Shining like that, beyond the temporal. I'm asking questions beyond, *Who am I, where do I belong?* to, *What can I bring to this life?* I am relearning faith, I am refinding Christ.

10. Jack Gilbert, "Horses at Midnight Without a Moon," in *Collected Poems* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 273, available at <https://poets.org/poem/horses-midnight-without-moon>.

How does one calculate a life well lived? It is too messy, too extravagant. Digressions abound. There exists no perfect map, no absolute algorithm to the authentic self. To move, to stay, to turn, to exit. I tried prayer and it doesn't always give you all the answers. It's not meant to.

While at Fish Lake my cabin window framed both water and pine. Like Pando, without trials of fire and living water, we shrink. We're meant to tread water, find the divine through life's slag and sediment, and survive to testify that the sublime is near despite its near invisibility. Our life's work is not forgotten. I am flawed but refuse to shrink. I stand, an aspen in a field, on the surface alone yet deeply rooted to all those around me—my children and husband, parents and siblings, friends and future. And to Christ. We must seek him still, in order to see. "I stand in wonder. O the great stars."¹¹ Oh, that God knows me.

11. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Uncollected Poems*, translated by Edward A. Snow (New York: North Point Press, 1996), 55.

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HUG A QUEER LATTER-DAY SAINT

Blaire Ostler

On general conference weekend a few of my queer friends and I stand at the southeast corner of the Conference Center and offer hugs to fellow Latter-day Saints as they pass. Dressed in my Sunday best, I hold a sign that says, “Hug a Queer Latter-day Saint” and wait for the hugs to come.

The purpose of this is not to discourage anyone from their faith. The purpose is to build bridges and extend an olive branch in the spirit of peace and healing. The aim is to increase the compassion and love between seemingly oppositional groups. I have found that a simple hug can be a powerful act of trust and charity for both parties.

I’ve hugged hundreds of people from all over the world over the years, and this is a short collection of memorable hugs that I jotted down in my journal. I have experienced such significant peace, joy, healing, and commiseration from these experiences that I wanted to share them with others. These hugs have helped heal me, and I’m hoping they will help heal you too.



A woman with two children approaches me in a bit of a rush. She has her hands full and obviously has no time to chitchat. Yet, she makes hugging me a priority. She hugs me without inhibition and says, “There ain’t nothing wrong with you, sweetie.” She and her children leave just as quickly as they came.



A gorgeous woman with dark espresso skin approaches me. As she gets closer, I can see she has a sleeping baby swaddled against her chest to

free both her arms. She is an experienced mother whose beauty and warmth radiates as she moves. She reaches out to hug me and says with an accent, "Hello. I am from Africa. In my country, we love all God's children."

We hug with her precious newborn nestled between us. The scent of her newborn baby reminds me of the truthfulness of her words. We are all God's children.



I hug a stylish bisexual woman who enthusiastically tells me, "I'm so happy you're doing this! I'm one of you! I'm not really 'out' yet because I'm going on a mission soon. They are going to have to deal with us sooner or later. I hope you get lots of hugs today!"

She quickly moves along and heads into the Conference Center with her spiral notebook and pen. I get the distinct impression she is an avid notetaker and has plans of her own to fulfill.

I smile at the thought of bisexual missionaries serving in the field. She has her work to do and I have mine. I whisper to myself as she walks into the Conference Center, "Godspeed."



I hug a man who asks me if I have "boy and girl parts," which leads to a lengthy discussion about accurate terminology. All things considered, he receives the first queer discussion quite well.



A young man and his girlfriend approach me warmly and give me a hug. They don't leave, though. The young man has about a thousand questions on his mind and asks me if I could discuss them with him. I answer, "Of course, that is what I'm here for."

After he finishes asking me his questions he says, "I could be wrong about this, but you tell me what you think. I feel like the younger

generations, like us, are ready for new revelation. I don't have a problem with gay people. I'd be totally happy if they could be sealed in the temple. Sometimes it feels like people are just waiting around to be told how to love each other. Sometimes it feels like we're just waiting around for the brethren to tell us what to do. Am I wrong in saying that?"

I smile and assure him, "I have felt many of those feelings myself. I don't think you're wrong for thinking that."

He looks relieved to know he isn't the only one eager for more from his religion.



An old man, roughly in his eighties, is working as a conference usher. He slowly walks toward us with an official badge on his jacket. I assume he's going to ask us to leave. Instead he says, "I love you. I don't know how this is all going to work out, but I love you. Keep doing what you're doing."

He hugs me so tightly that it seems he has no inhibition about hugging a queer woman. I am just another child of God to him. I nearly cry as he slowly walks back into the Conference Center.



A man in a hurry rushes past me. He bumps my shoulder and turns and says, "Oh! Sorry."

He sees my sign and his demeanor changes. He smiles and says, "Hey! My daughter is queer!"

He hugs me like a father longing to hug his queer daughter, just before hurrying away into the Conference Center. He calls back, "Thank you for all you do!"

I smile.



One woman has tears in her eyes before she even has a chance to hug me. She comes out of the Sunday afternoon session visibly distraught. She throws her arms around me and cries softly on my shoulder. She tells me in broken English, "My son is gay and has left the Church. I love my *iglesia* and I love my son. I don't know what to do."

I have no words of comfort. I hold her a little longer as she cries and tell her, "It's okay to cry. I'm a mother too."



A man and his son, a BYU student, give me a hug. The father looks around as if he's about to tell me something he shouldn't. He leans in, glances over his shoulder, and says, "These things take time. Try to be patient with the knuckleheads who just don't get it yet."

I grin from ear to ear and assure him, "I'll do my best."

He and his son leave and go into the priesthood session.



A Church security officer makes his way toward us. He asks, "How is everything going here? Are people being nice to you?"

I cautiously respond, "For the most part, yes. You can tell there are many people uncomfortable with our signs, but no one has been overtly unkind."

He nods his head and says, "That's good. Just wanted to make sure folks weren't being mean to you. I'll be over here if you need anything."

I don't get a hug, but the encounter still makes me smile. I wouldn't be surprised if he gives me a hug in six months at the next General Conference. These things can't be rushed.



A guy hugs me with surprising intensity. He pulls back and says, "I'm sorry. You don't know me, but my wife loves your work. She's bi and she

was afraid to come out while being married to a guy. She didn't think anyone would believe her."

I respond, "I'm so glad my work has been helpful!"

He assures me, "Oh, it has. More than you know."



I've been standing at the southeast corner of the Conference Center long enough to lose track of the time. I haven't eaten anything since breakfast. It's just before two and my stomach is growling. I look to my right to see a large man with white hair walking toward me with a plate of chocolate chip cookies. He asks me, "Would you and your friends like some cookies? They're homemade."

I too eagerly reply, "Yes!" He smiles, hands me the cookies, and is off on his way. I don't get a hug, but I am still grateful for his kindness.



A woman in her eighties approaches us slowly with her walker. She's looking directly at me as she carefully makes her way over. She smiles and gives me a big, warm hug.

She says, "Darling, I have something to tell you. I don't think there is anything wrong with you."

I reply warmly, "Well, thank you very much. I appreciate that."

She looks dissatisfied and continues, "But it hurts my feelings you callin' yourself queer. There is nothing wrong with you. You don't need to call yourself that."

I smile and respond, "That's understandable why you would feel that way and I genuinely appreciate you looking out for me. I agree that there is nothing wrong with me. In the past, the word 'queer' was used as an insult, but I don't find my queerness insulting. I'm queer and there is nothing wrong with me. Anyone can call me queer and I take it as a compliment."

She looks at me as if I don't understand her and continues, "But there's nothing wrong with you. You're a lovely girl."

Her husband, who has been standing next to us listening intently, chimes in, "That's what she's trying to tell you, dear. There's nothing wrong with her AND she's a queer."

He turns to me, gives me a big hug, and says, "We're here to support you and we love the queers. And we're happy to call you a queer if that's what you like."

I give the woman another hug and thank her again for being concerned with my welfare. They slowly make their way across the street, and I can hear them chatting with each other.

"I just don't understand why her sign says 'queer.'"

"That's what I'm telling you. Being a queer isn't bad anymore."

They remind me of my own grandparents, and I smile at their willingness to understand that "Being a queer isn't bad anymore."



A beautiful woman with copper skin and long black hair hugs me and smiles. Around her neck is a turquoise necklace and I wonder if she is indigenous. Before I can ask, she says with peace and wisdom, "I wanted to tell you that I'm indigenous and a member of the Church. In my culture, we are encouraged to learn from the queer members of our tribe. Don't stop teaching. That is why you are here."



A young woman in her twenties is visibly upset as she exits the Conference Center. Her eyes are red and wet. She walks over to me and throws her arms around me. I can feel her body shaking as she fights back tears. She tries to speak but is too flustered to manage a complete sentence, so I hold her until she decides to let go. She pulls away and says, "Keep

doing this. You are so brave. I don't think I could be that brave. Please, keep doing this."

I assure her, "I will do my best."

She pulls back and disappears into the crowded sidewalk. She never told me why she was crying.



A woman with tan skin approaches me with a radiant smile. She can barely speak English but is eager to communicate with me. With her delightful enthusiasm and Portuguese accent, I can understand her saying, "Your sign. It means you hug! Yes?"

I match her enthusiasm and reply, "Yes! Hugs!"

Just when I think her smile couldn't get any bigger, she widens her grin and embraces me with full force. She pulls back and says, "Oh, thank you! I am from Brazil and we love hugs! This is my first time in your country."

I respond, "In that case, welcome to America!" I wish I could speak Portuguese to greet her in her own language, but it appears we both speak the language of hugs and that is enough.



Just as I think the day is over, a mother and her three-year-old daughter come over and hug me. The little girl points to my sign and says, "I like your rainbows. What does it say?"

I crouch down to my knees so we are at eye level as I read her the sign: "Hug a Queer Latter-day Saint."

She asks, "What does that mean?"

I feel like a Primary president again talking with one of our little Sunbeams. I explain to her, "It means that Jesus taught us no matter how different we are we always need to love each other. That's why

I used rainbow letters. When I see rainbows, I am reminded of how important it is to love one another.”

She smiles. Her mother approves and says to her, “That’s right. We love all people.”

Her mother gives me another hug and says, “Thank you. All God’s children need to feel loved.”

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CERTAIN PLACES

William Morris

He folds his sash, his apron, his robe. Stacks them on the cold laminate counter. Places the cap on top. Slides the sacred items into the white cotton envelope. The fabric is thin and the light in the changing room is very bright, which means he can see the green of the apron and the pleats of the robe through the envelope. He feels like they should be placed in something more protective. A hard case. A shell. Something that separates them more firmly from the world outside. The world that is not the temple. But then again, they are just articles of clothing. They are sacred because he views them as such. Because he believes in what they represent.

He places the bundle of sacred clothing gently in the duffel bag that he also takes to the gym. He goes to the gym more than he goes to the temple. He goes to neither place as often as he should. He is alone. His wife was not able to come with him. She was on the night shift at the hospital. But on her off day she did find a family name for him to take. A name to carry in his mind as he was washed, anointed, endowed. He glances at the stack of slips of paper and stub of a pencil that sit on the counter near the door that leads out of the dressing room. Some names cross his mind. If he were to write those names on the pad, they would be placed on the altar that sits in a room just down the hall. People would pray for these names. Not each name individually out loud. But because they were written on paper and placed on the altar. The others who came later that day would pour their faith—no matter how strong or wavering—into a plea to God to help the people who are named. He does not write any of the names down. He is not sure why.

He thinks maybe he feels he does not want to impose on these people who have crossed his mind. He thinks maybe he should be praying for them himself. He thinks maybe he is just shy or tired or that his reticence comes from the sense there is something momentous and important in picking up that stub of a pencil and marking the slip of paper, and he just isn't up to it, or it is unnecessary at this time, or the names that came into his mind were just reflective of his own worldly concerns and not there due to some sort of inspiration. Some whisper of the Holy Spirit.

He pushes through the door and heads for the entrance that is also the exit. The entrance that is also an exit is to the side of the building. The front doors are closed off. They will remain closed off until Christ comes again. He hopes that will not be soon. He wants Christ to return. He wouldn't mind being alive when that happens. But he is afraid of all that will happen before that time. He is not sure he has the courage for it. He is too attached to the modest but comfortable life he and his wife have and too fond of all the other nice families with modest but comfortable lives that they associate with—Mormon or not. He hopes this second coming of Christ will wait until he is much, much older.

He lingers for a moment in the foyer not wanting to pass beyond the desk where old Mormon men with wrinkled smiles and thick-soled white loafers check the credentials of Mormons who want to attend the temple. To walk out is to reenter the world. The world is difficult. Treacherous. Full of temptation. Not that he is overly worried about those kinds of temptations. Lesser, more insidious temptations are his domain. The temptation of comfort and security. The temptation of minor addictions. Of laziness and leisure and distraction. Of thinking all is well. Or thinking all is doomed. Of simply thinking and not acting because to act is to decide and to risk and to infringe on others, which is unpleasant. He pauses for a moment at the door wondering what he has accomplished by coming to this sacred place and participating in sacred rites and what he will carry with him as he leaves and whether

whatever it is that he carries with him can help him be better this week. He opens the door and steps outside into the warm sun . . .

. . . and he is no longer he.

He is someone else. He is now a woman. This woman is not Mormon. She is younger than he is but is still middle-aged like he is. She is married. Like he, she is married to a woman. She is wearing a flowing skirt and a sleeveless blouse and a shawl that is also a scarf. She is someone else, but she is still also he.

She is both attracted to and repelled by the building behind her, which he knows all about and she knows very little about. There is some separation between those two pools of knowledge, but she eddies around both. So does he. He wants to explore this further. She just wants to find her car and leave. He finds that he wants what she wants. Because he is also she.

They arrive at the car. It is her car, not his car. It is an all-wheel-drive station wagon. It is dark green. There is a rainbow sticker in the back window. He thinks that it being so true to form is a clue that this she who is so different from he is maybe not all that different. She thinks nothing of it. It is just a car that she drives. She drops the duffel bag she is carrying on the seat next to her. She looks in it. He expects to see a bundle of temple clothing. There is no bundle of temple clothing. He is confused. What she sees confuses her too. She sees a pile of folded fabric. A quilt. It is white and green. The fabric is satin. It seems like something that would be part of her life, but she doesn't quite know why. She doesn't take it out of the duffel bag, which she is quite sure is her duffel bag. The one that she takes to the Y. But she lifts a layer of it and feels the fabric. It is not a complete quilt. It is a quilt top. It seems like it is for a baby blanket. She does not quilt. She thinks that her wife quilts, but she isn't sure about that now because he is so sure that his wife quilts.

The freeways and roads home are familiar to him in their bland suburban generalities and unfamiliar in their particularities. Every turn feels right. Every turn feels slightly off. She pulls into the driveway of a house that is smaller and in a neighborhood that is slightly shabbier and homier than the one he lives—lived—in. She pauses. Looks at the flower beds full of sage, lavender, fuchsia, deer grass, goldenrod, and river rock. Looks at the verdigrised hummingbird wind chime. It all seems right. She clicks the garage door opener. The door opens. She pulls in and finds everything familiar.

She is more nervous than he to find her wife. She is afraid that she will somehow be changed. He is more nervous than she when they finally find her out in the backyard tending to the late summer squashes and melons. Because it is her. That is, it is his wife too. Or rather, a version of her.

Early on she attempts to keep his wife separate from her wife, but it is difficult. She keeps opening doors for her. Keeps buying the wrong kind of ice cream. Keeps getting in on the wrong side of the bed. Her wife is remarkably indulgent about these missteps. Makes a comment about extra stress at work. She wonders if agreeing with that diagnosis is a betrayal. If she should explain that he is now part of her. But he agrees that she shouldn't. She wonders if she should let him be her conscience in this matter. But she loves her wife dearly and deeply and so does he and so, practically, there is no real difference between before and now when it comes to their relationship. This makes it easier for both of them to settle into her life. Yes, it is strange, but the very fact that they are each other makes it impossible for either of them to radically change how they live. Everything develops a patina of strange if he or she thinks about it too much. But mostly they don't think about things too much. Work is work, life is life, food is food, sex is sex. Church is not quite church, but he is largely satisfied with the liberal mainline Protestant services they attend. It still feels like church to him.

It does take her a couple of weeks to find the courage to confront the quilt top, which is still folded in the gym bag. But she really needs to go to the gym. She had wanted to blame him for that reluctance, but they both admit that exercise is a struggle for them and resolve to finally get back to a routine. Her wife (their wife) is delighted to be presented with the quilt top. A couple they are friends with will be having a baby in a few months. He is happier than she thought he would be about this. She suspects it is because he is focused on her wife engaging in an activity that mirrors that of his wife.

Two months pass. Their wife finishes the quilt. She lets them into her workroom to view it. She cries when she sees it. Cries because of him. It has been quilted with dark green thread in patterns of leaves and acorns. It means something to him beyond just being a reminder of his wife. She can't tell exactly what. He is unable or refuses to explain.

The baby is finally born. They drive down to Pleasant Hill to see the baby and present the quilt. Harried and tired though they appear, their friends are effusive in their praise of the gift. She and he and their wife aren't planning to stay long. One of the friends mentions that her work gave her a pair of tickets to the World Series game that evening. Even with the new baby, she was not going to turn such largesse down. But clearly one of them would need to stay home with the baby and to be honest the friend's partner is not at all interested in baseball. She and he are restrained in their shared enthusiasm for the idea; however, their wife knows of her fondness for the game and the team and encourages her (them) to go.

They take BART to the game. The train is crowded but good-natured. Festive. Both of them are soon swept up in the excitement as the train arrives in San Francisco. They procession with the other fans to the baseball park.

It is an all-important game five with the series tied two-two. Their mind floods with her memories as they walk in. She had spent many hours as a child taking in games on a small black-and-white television

or via AM radio in the car or, sometimes, watching in person at Candlestick, all bundled up with a blanket just in case the fog rolled in. Her father had always packed licorice. Black for him; red for her. She wishes she had thought to buy some licorice to bring with her to this game. While they wait in line for garlic fries, he lets her feel a bit of his jealousy. He had not had a good relationship with his father. She expresses sympathy. Acknowledges that while she and her father had loved each other very much she is not sure he had truly understood her. And not just after she had come out to her parents. For all the good memories she and her father had created at Candlestick and via other outings, she suspects that she had always been a mystery to him. Her mother had said as much once. Your father loves you more than anything. He just doesn't always know what to do with you. The two of them are quiet for a moment. They order their fries and take their seat, nervous but confident.

The Giants' star pitcher takes the mound. He gathers the eccentric spirit of the fans and of the region and channels it into every throw. Time slows. He clearly has the stuff. The stadium is his house. Both he and she are enthralled by his pitching.

Their team carries a small lead into the top of the ninth. The crowd is silent, nervously trying to ward off a change in fortune, anxiously focusing all their hope on victory. There are two outs now. Only one more to go. The star pitcher winds up and hurls the ball toward the plate. The opponent hits it weakly to third base and the out is made. They leap to their feet, hug her friend, hug the stranger next to them. It is as sweet a moment as either had experienced in their previous separate lives. And it is lovely feeling part of something greater, of being part of such a jubilant crowd even though they both know that some people in the crowd would disdain her because of who she is. And some would disdain him for who he is. But that thought doesn't actually come until they are filtering out of the stadium, pressed in on all sides by joyful bodies anxious to get home or to a bar, and they look back and don't see their friend, and they look down . . .

... and what they are holding is no longer the game program.

She is annoyed by the press of fans. She should have stayed and socialized at the conference, but she isn't in the mood and so had used the excuse of needing to get home to feed her cat. She glances down at the conference program, and she is now aware that the other two are now with her. Or are her. And she them.

He is delighted to discover that they share a faith even though her observation of it has been intermittent for several years. She—the other she—is happy that she remains a she across the transition but is also jealous that the she they now are has this thing in common with him. She is also disappointed that this new she seems to be straight. Seems to be because her experiences with dating, although few, seem to all have been with men. There are some intense emotional experiences with a few women, but they disentangle those a bit and discover they all come from her Mormon mission, which (he explains) facilitates such moments because you are assigned to live with one other missionary of the same gender 24/7 and those assignments rotate every few months so they're more like an intense, short-term, celibate, serial monogamy situation than just having a roommate.

Meanwhile, she approaches that she is now him and her with a scholarly fascination. What an interesting chance to explore the nature of identity. They are both older than she. They both love the same woman. Had, indeed, married the same woman. Or at the very least a version of the same woman. And this realization by her sets the other two into a sort of crisis as they realize that now that they are her, they no longer have that relationship. She not only is not in a relationship with the woman they both love—she doesn't even recognize her. This causes them both to retreat inside themselves. A sensation which fascinates her. She wonders how long the two of them had been each other before becoming her but doesn't probe that deeply out of respect for their desire to be alone. Or as alone as possible when they are both her.

She simply sits and stares out the window of the train and waits. They come back—or rather become more active—at around the same time. The other two try again to see if buried somewhere in her there is a memory of their spouse. They fail. Are sad. Resign themselves to the fact that since they are now her, finding their spouse may take some time.

He panics a little when she gets off the train and walks home to her apartment. He is not used to urban environments. But she—the other she—explains that there are gradations in exactly how bad a neighborhood is and that this is not all that bad and she—they—were likely quite safe even though it was late. Her (now their) roommate is already asleep. She wants to stay up late and probe the exact nature of their presence with, or as part of, her, but she also is looking forward to the next day of the conference so she feeds the cat and makes a late snack of half a Braeburn—he doesn't think he's ever had a Braeburn apple before—and three slices of aged white cheddar—he doesn't think he's ever had aged white cheddar before either—and goes to bed.

The next day of the conference lives up to her expectations. The panel on Fragility in the Nature Writing and YA Dystopian Novels of the Anthropocene is fascinating. She also has a wonderful chat with the editor of a mid-tier university press who is somewhat interested in her work on digital technologies and performance. And, finally, the reading by former San Francisco poet laureates is amazing. Or rather, she thinks so. He also enjoys the reading and the panels. He doesn't understand much of what is said. Or rather, only understands what is said in that he feels and has an awareness of what she understands. But he likes that the panels and the poetry reading have the same tone and rhythm as general conference or a gospel doctrine class taught by a good Sunday School teacher.

The other she seems at times mildly amused and at times mildly annoyed by the whole thing. It is strange for her to feel that from the other her. To feel more than one way about what she is—what they

are—experiencing. It is somewhat of a relief that she can ascribe such mixed emotions to the other two rather than having to wonder what is wrong with her brain or her soul or herself. And even though the other she is lukewarm on the whole poetry thing, she vows to go to more local readings. And the other she is fine with that because she is also her (and him).

At first, the other two are willing to sit back and experience her everyday life. The monotony of classes taught, papers graded, research compiled. A few (never enough) words written on the dissertation. But they soon become restless. Want her to be more active in tracking down their wife.

At first it is just a constant, vague tug like a minor headache or the feeling you've lost your boarding pass as the plane wheels up to the gate. Then it becomes more insistent. She finds herself wandering aimlessly across campus scanning the crowds of students and faculty for any glimmer of recognition. She finds herself googling combinations of names desperate for a photo, a résumé, a profile, a username. Anything that could be something. She wastes hours of time she doesn't have. She finds nothing.

She tries to reason with them—with herself. This is not who we are right now. This is who you two were, but now that we are we, you need to let this go. If it is to happen, it will happen like it happened for the two of you: spontaneously and later in life.

They are not content with this line of reasoning.

One day she finds herself on the other side of the Oakland hills hanging out in a quilt store leafing through every pattern book, handling every bolt of cloth, staring impolitely at every customer who walks in the door. It takes her awhile to conjure the feeling that she does not need to be there strongly enough for her to leave and walk back to the BART station. She chastises them the entire train ride back to Oakland. He is defiant. She is more understanding or perhaps savvy enough to know that since she is also she, she won't get far with recalcitrance. That

since she is also they, they need to find some sort of unity. Or, at the very least, cooperation. She (the other she) uses her influence to soften him a bit. She (the main she) acknowledges their deep sense of loss. She opens herself even further to them. The three of them (that are also just her) come to an understanding. But in doing so she finds something else. A fear of her. Or rather of what she might do that could attenuate the other two further. She doesn't understand that fear because it seems separate from her in a way that the other two aren't. She fears that it could be a wedge. Or a destabilizing influence.

She doesn't know how serious to treat that fear of their fear. She decides to test it. She wakes up early one Sunday morning and puts on a gray wool skirt and ivory blouse. She hasn't worn this skirt for a while because it's awkwardly modest. The hem hits her legs just below rather than just above her knees. It takes three buses to get there. He doesn't recognize it until they are already there. He had always driven there on the freeway. In fact, it's one of only two places in Oakland he had ever been to back when he was just he, and it had been more than five years since he had made that trip. The sky is gray. The air cool. The grounds are a riot of color even though it's early December: sprays of purple, magenta, and white flowers. Deep green grass. White and sand-colored stones, drawing their colors from the white and gold building that dominates the property. The palm trees are wrapped in Christmas lights that aren't on because it's mid-morning. Faint, tinny Christmas carols are playing through outdoor speakers. It's Sunday. The temple is closed. She couldn't go in anyway. She is no longer a member in good standing.

He is wary but calm until, while walking the grounds, she gets too close to the building where Sunday services are held. The Christmas carols are drowned out by the sounds of the organ in the chapel, which is playing "Be Still, My Soul." It is her favorite hymn. The first verse ends. The second starts. When the congregation sings about how the mysterious shall be bright, she veers toward the doors that lead to the

foyer that leads to the chapel. He fights it. The other she is confused but supports his efforts. Her steps slow. She gets close to the doors but just can't bring herself to open them. The three of them wander over to the visitors' center. They ignore the greetings of the smiling elderly missionary couple. They head directly to the windows at the back and look out over Oakland. The fog hasn't yet burned off, so the Bay Bridge disappears into the gray that is San Francisco. She leaves. Walks all the way down the hill so she doesn't have to wait for a bus that only comes every ninety minutes.

That evening she puts on a different skirt and goes to a bar. One that one of her fellow grad students frequents. Had invited her to once. An invitation she had declined. The bar is full of women. She hasn't been in an all-women group that large since the last time she had attended a Relief Society activity. They had put together sanitation kits for African refugees. That was after she had stopped attending church but before she had told the other women in the congregation to stop contacting her. She had gone because it had been an act of service. And for all that she was (is) conflicted about the LDS Church, she wasn't (isn't) conflicted about the need for service. She asks for a Diet Coke. No, nothing in it. Yes, this is her first time here. Yes, it's quite possible that they recognize her. She is a grad student at Cal. Yes, she was the one who taught the class on film and the male gaze. She soon finds herself talking with a small group of women. All grad students or the significant others of grad students. The other two are oddly conflicted. On the one hand, they seem to be hoping to find the woman they are looking for. On the other, they seem to be wary of her having too good of a time. She tries to pin them down on this, but it's hard because she is listening and talking to the other women who are treating her with a warm caution but genuine interest. They talk academic politics. Local activism. Theory. Poetry. She enjoys the conversation but finds herself unable to stay more than a couple of hours. She isn't sure if it's because of the other two or because of her. Or both. Before she goes, one of the

women in the bar writes down her email address so she can send her an invite to a poetry reading that's set for the new year.

She is relieved she doesn't have the funds to travel home for Christmas and that none of her family is able to come visit her. But she is also lonely even though she is not just herself but also the other two. She doesn't go back to the Oakland temple or the Oakland bar. The other two seem relieved by her lack of activity. She isn't quite sure why, although she does spend some time chasing after a selection of images they seem to be holding back from her—a roaring baseball stadium; a quiet, brightly lit room.

The new year arrives and with it the email inviting her to the poetry reading. She decides to go. As she walks into the community center where it is being held, she remembers the feelings she had had at the reading at the conference. The swelling of her mind and heart as if the sounds of the words were wrapping around her like a warm blanket. As if the other people in the room were brothers and sisters. As if she was part of something more than herself. As if she was capable of being more than who she currently was. As if the world was going to be okay.

The other two suddenly react. Overwhelm her with feelings of danger and fear. She stops. Turns around. Walks toward the doors. She needs to not be there. She needs to be outside. She needs to go home. She needs to just be her. The her that was also them. Not some other her. Or him. But as she is walking out, the woman who invited her is walking in along with some of the other women from the bar. They are delighted to see her. They invite her to sit with them. The other two flood her with feeling, but she is now pleasantly trapped by the group of women and flows into the room with them (both the women and the them that are also her).

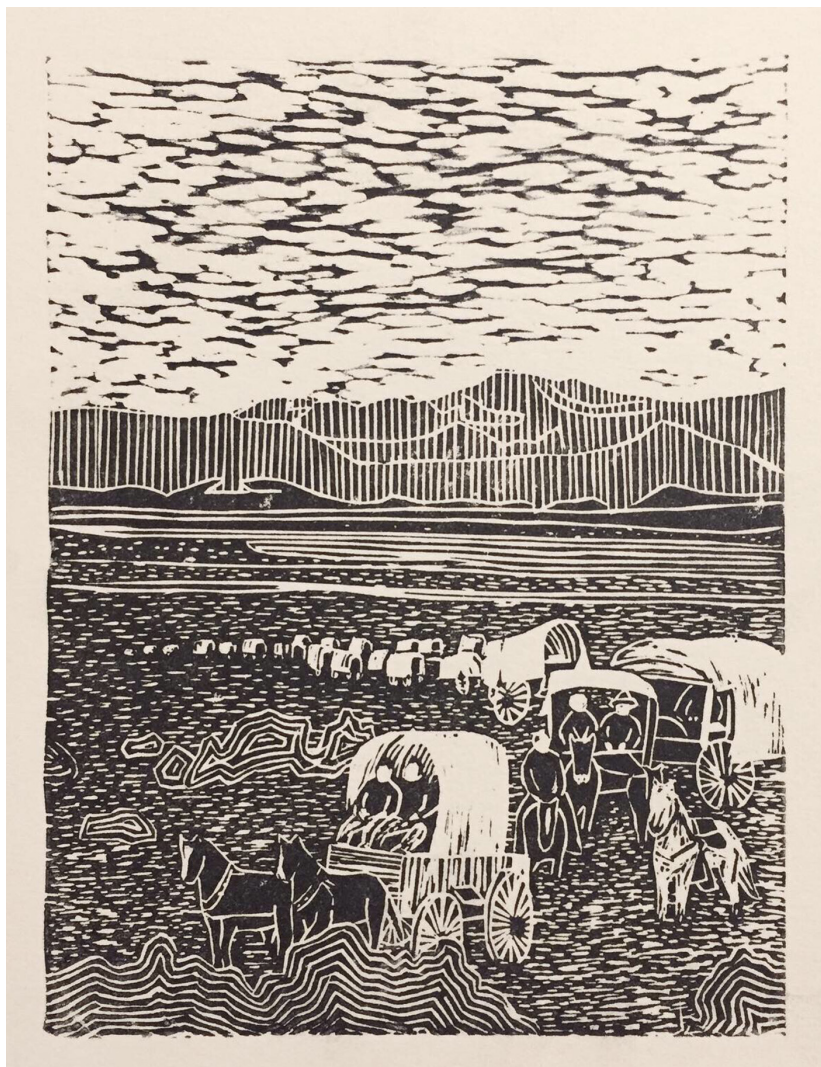
The only seats are up front. Hard folding chairs. She ends up on the outside end of the second row. She promises the other two that she will leave if they really want her to, but they have to stay for at least the first reading.

All through the first reading she feels like she is crawling with them (the other two). But also with herself and all that she doesn't like about herself. The second poet is so good—the words coming out of her mouth like honey or birds or flowers or curveballs—that she and him and her get caught up in the flow of the poetry. She looks around. The room is filled with people. So many that some are standing. All their faces are turned intently toward the poet. Some have their eyes closed. Some sway slightly to the rhythm of the words. The second poet finishes, her words cascading into a final crescendo. The room bursts with applause.

The final poet, the famous one, gets up to close out the performance. But before she reads, she calls for a few other poets in attendance to come up out of the audience and perform a short piece. The second of these guest poets comes to the stage and begins to speak, and they, the three of them, catch their breath. It doesn't look like her. Like their spouse. But there is something in her voice and something in the way she stands on the balls of her feet when she says the word *body*. And then they lean out and forward so they can see her better and realize she is wearing a long flowing white cotton skirt and has tied a dark green crepe silk scarf around her waist. And then the poet turns her head away from them, and her ear catches the light and in it is a small silver earring from which dangles a small silver acorn . . .

. . . and they are no longer just they.

WILLIAM MORRIS {william@motleyvision.org} is the author of the story collection *Dark Watch and other Mormon-American stories*. He co-edited the anthologies *Monsters & Mormons* and *States of Deseret* (both from Peculiar Pages). His Mormon alternate history story “The Darkest Abyss in America” received first place in *Dialogue*’s honoring of 2016 fiction submissions.



Hannah Mason
Westward to Zion
linocut

4 3/8" x 5 7/8" pulled on 6" x 8" paper

HANNAH MASON is an artist studying at Brigham Young University. Her work explores her relationship with people, places, and events through a system of marks and patterns.

WHAT THE SECOND COMING MEANS TO PEOPLE LIKE ME

Kim McCall

A few of you will remember Carl Poll, who served maybe three decades ago as bishop of the Palo Alto Ward. In 1967 his brother, historian Richard Poll, visited Palo Alto and gave a sacrament meeting talk exploring two distinct modes of LDS religious commitment and approaches to learning “the truth.” That talk was later published under the title “What the Church Means to People Like Me” and has proven immensely influential and beneficial.

I have no illusions that *this* talk will influence or benefit anyone outside this room, but I want to confessionally explore “What the Second Coming Means to People Like Me.” I know that, at least in this regard, at least a handful of you *are* “people like me,” and I pray that you will find comfort and maybe even a touch of inspiration in my words and thoughts. I hope those among us for whom my understanding is unfamiliar, or even discordant, will enjoy an opportunity to further cultivate the empathy and love that Jesus urged us to develop for our fellow disciples in longing.

A sacrament meeting talk delivered Sept. 23, 2018 to the Menlo Park Ward of the Menlo Park, California Stake.

Quick Summary of Doctrine

There may be some here for whom the Second Coming is a completely foreign concept. So a really quick recap: Since just after Jesus' crucifixion, which spoiled his Jewish followers' hope for an immediate glorious period of a Messianic reign of peace and righteousness, many Christians have believed, based on scripture, that someday Christ would come to earth again, not as a humble and nearly anonymous baby who would grow up to suffer to redeem us, but in a splendid, triumphant, universally visible advent heralded by at-least-metaphorical trumpets, putting an end to sin and transforming our strife-torn world into one of peace, unity, and beauty.

My Struggles with this Doctrine

I want to begin by confessing that this is pretty nearly the last topic that I, left to my own devices, would have chosen to speak on. But when the bishopric did ask me to, it made me think a little more deeply about why I am uncomfortable with it and whether I wanted to stay that way. This led to some actual reflection, followed by even a tiny bit of (probably temporary) repentance, leaving me eager to explore it more deeply and share my feelings with you.

Now I promise that I'll get to more faith-affirming ideas soon enough, but I want to spend a few minutes exploring why I've always found this doctrine uncomfortable.

Dangerous Abuse

I think my first problem might be that I've seen a lot of what I think of as dangerous "abuse" of the doctrine. As a youth growing up in the Church, I sat through lots of Sunday School and Young Men lessons on "the signs of the times," i.e., world events that were supposed to herald the Second Coming. The earth would be "rolled up like a scroll," whatever

that meant.¹ The moon would be turned to blood. There would be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes in diverse places, etc., etc. I hated those lessons. They felt like they were crafted either to scare us or to find something exciting to talk about with teenagers who couldn't sense the excitement in the actual message of the gospel. Cheap thrills. To me, they distracted from a gospel that was supposed to address both our inner life, calling us to repentance, and our outer life, calling us to service. And fascination with destruction and with cataclysmic events seemed indecent to me. (I should allow here that I sense that the Church's emphasis on the Second Coming has decreased a whole lot over the course of my life.)

Next, embracing this doctrine risks discounting the importance of our stewardship of the earth. As Bob Marley put it, "Most people think great god will come from the skies / Take away everything and make everybody feel . . ." well, let's just say "happy." If Christ is coming soon and fundamentally transforming life on earth into some kind of paradise, we don't need to do anything about overpopulation, about resource depletion, about global climate change, about rainforest or coral reef destruction, about nuclear proliferation, or about pretty much anything else. I may be lacking a certain kind of faith, but given how long the promised divine intervention has been delayed so far, I find such escapist or denialist thinking, which can sometimes even degenerate into a thinly veiled Schadenfreude at political or economic chaos, really irresponsible and dangerous.

The final point in my list of the dangers of too great a fascination with the Second Coming is the prepper movement within the Church. In recent years Church leaders have felt the need to warn members against spending their time and spiritual energy on food storage and other forms of preparedness against "the destruction that will surely

1. See Isaiah 34:4 and Revelation 6:14.

come.”² I’m reliably informed of people who tune in to general conference broadcasts listening only for hints from one talk or another that “the end is near” and miss all the other messages the Lord may actually be trying to send us.

The “Scientific Mindset”

I think my second broad problem with the idea of the Second Coming is the fact that the events it predicts are so very far from how things normally seem to go. I’m not a highly trained geologist or physicist like some of my friends, but I recognize that I was either born with or have imbibed much of the general rationalist/scientific spirit of our age. If I understand correctly, one of the undergirding assumptions of much of physical science is that the way things work now is pretty much the way they’ve always worked. The half-life of radioactive isotopes has been constant for billions of years. The amount of water on the earth has remained pretty much constant. And so on.

Given this strong naturalistic prejudice, it is more than a little bit jarring to encounter a teaching that posits that Christ will come to Earth again, descending out of heaven, surrounded by angels (and, in Mormonism, the members of “Enoch’s band”³), that “all flesh shall see it together,”⁴ that strife and enmity will be no more, and that “all men from sin will cease and will live in love and peace.”⁵

2. A slight paraphrase of Helaman 13:6. One example of such a general conference talk is Bruce R. McConkie, “Stand Independent above All Other Creatures,” Apr. 1979, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1979/04/stand-independent-above-all-other-creatures?lang=eng>.

3. “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise,” *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 41

4. Isaiah 40:5.

5. “Come, Ye Children of the Lord,” *Hymns*, no. 58.

The Faith-Affirming Perspective

So, given all of that, what have I felt that makes me eager to share my hopes for the Second Coming with you? Let me mention in passing, and by way of gentle advice, that I have often found it spiritually fruitful to reexamine previous understandings and feelings, especially negative ones. Now, let's start with the fact that I have a pretty great respect for the spiritual and temporal experiences of the early members of our faith, and I started thinking about the role that *their* belief in the Second Coming played in the life of the early Church. Today many of us think of the appropriate gravitational center of our religious or spiritual life as something like "working to develop a richer personal relationship with our Heavenly Father or with Jesus." My own impression is that that idea would have sounded pretty foreign to early Church members. My understanding of the self-identified mission of the early Saints is that they were striving instead to build Zion: a society of righteousness, devotion, unity, and spiritual and temporal equality that would be genuinely receptive to the Lord when he comes again—a "kingdom" that would serve as a model to other kingdoms and would welcome Jesus as King of kings.

For many decades this concrete utopian vision unified an extremely diverse set of frontierspeople, farmers, scholars, and immigrants, inspiring baffling levels of sacrifice and giving a transcendent meaning to their lives and struggles. This dynamic vision made the work of the kingdom urgent and motivating and brought most aspects of life together under that banner. Today, from a 150-year remove, *I miss that*. In my best hours I want us to love each other and to be equal in both earthly and heavenly things. I want us to be inspired by a goal more universal and godly than our individual or familial perfection.

And, despite my inner pull toward skepticism, I long for—I ache for—a world-transforming divine intervention that will raise our sights, our collective aspirations, above the amassing of wealth and the

cultivation of status—leading us to a world where our constant understanding of each other is as brothers and sisters.

Preparation

Let me talk for a minute about preparation. The scriptures, including at least one famous parable of Jesus, do encourage us to be vigilant in our preparation for the coming of the bridegroom.

But let's reflect on what real preparation consists of. The early Latter-day Saints tried to prepare by building the City of God. Their preparation was collective, societal. I'm grateful for the ways the Church encourages this—urging us to minister to each other. And I desire to be better at that.

A quick but hopefully appetizing aside: The word “minister” is closely related to “minestrone.” So, maybe we could be making each other more tasty soups. Less whimsically, I will remind you that early Christian services were held around literal meals that they shared together, perhaps in anticipation of the great wedding feast.

We are encouraged to feed each other both spiritually, and we often do an astounding and inspiring job of this in the lessons and talks we prepare for each other, and physically, helping each other move and caring for kids. But I feel like we (and especially I) still have a really long way to go in building an alternate society that is not seduced by worldly notions of value and success but embodies instead Jesus' values, one in which he'd be genuinely at home.

What about personal preparation? In Primary we have a lovely song “When He Comes Again.” The first verse asks whether the Second Coming will be in spring or winter, whether angels will sing, whether a special star will shine. As a kid, I confess I wondered no such things, and I didn't feel it would be honest to myself to even sing that verse. But I was riveted by the second verse. “I wonder, when he comes again / Will I be ready there / To look upon his loving face / And join with him

in prayer?”⁶ *That’s* the preparation that makes sense to me—to become a person who would feel joy in his presence and share prayers with him, as well as to cultivate an ear that will “know his voice.”⁷

The “Believing Mindset”

Now I want to respond to the “scientific” self that I talked about earlier. This is probably the most important part of this talk, and it may be the hardest to convey.

Let me simply lay out for you, my sisters and brothers, my own genuine experience. I have experienced powerful, beautiful, reassuring, sometimes challenging, and astonishingly explicit revelatory responses to prayer. I have felt divine power and inspiration flowing as I’ve given priesthood blessings or ordained people to the priesthood. When I have given especially good Sunday School lessons or talks, I have burned with the feeling that I’ve truly acted as an instrument of the Lord, partially fulfilling the “measure of my creation”: feeling and feeding his presence in the lives and hearts of my brothers and sisters. In short, having experienced divinity in my life, I believe in God. And, to paraphrase Joseph Smith, I neither desire nor dare to deny any of that.

So I can and do testify that it is possible—not only possible, but edifying, maybe even exalting—to believe both ways: to experience within one undivided but sufficiently quickened soul/mind/psyche both the rationality that invites and explores questions and the faith that experiences God in this world.

6. “When He Comes Again,” *Children’s Songbook* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 82.

7. John 10:4.

I want to repeat for you something that a dear friend who knows me well shared about me. I hope you will hear this in a spirit of charity and embracing. My friend said: “I know, Kim, that you don’t actually believe that the city of Enoch was taken into heaven—but somehow, at the same time, you believe it more deeply than anyone I’ve ever known.” I’ve tried to let this insightful observation sink into my self-understanding.

Although I am weak and often irresolute, in my heart of hearts, *that*, the city of Enoch, is *my* city. Those are my people—they are the people whom, along with Joseph Smith, Immanuel Kant, and Eleanor Roosevelt, I want to meet and get to know after this life. The longing for these people colors my entire life and structures my worldview at my best. That’s who I am, and who I’m deeply grateful to be.

So maybe a bit of advice for myself and some others: Without worrying too much about whether they are historically or literally true, allow our stories to work their divine, poetic magic in your soul. Whether it’s the city of Enoch, the temple ceremony, the Second Coming, the lighting of stones by the finger of the Lord, or the marriage supper of the Lamb, allow the universality of their symbolism to evoke in you visions of a universal community and an eternal divine plan in which the angels and their allies will, through humility and love, emerge singing triumphal songs of glory and joy.

Maranatha

We know that the original followers of Jesus thought of themselves as trying to realize three cardinal virtues: faith, hope, and love. Students of the New Testament believe they had watchwords for the first two of these. Along with their confession of faith, namely “Jesus is Lord!,” they had a confession of hope, the Aramaic phrase *Maranatha*, which means “The Lord is coming,” or perhaps more evocatively, “Come, Lord.”

Come, and bring, Jesus, that feast of love to which we are all invited.

I want (and choose to try) to live in that hope. So I join now with Christians of all ages in voicing my hope and longing in the words of Revelation — “Come, Lord Jesus.”

And I invite you all now to join in that chorus, raising our voices together to implore “Come, O thou King of Kings! We’ve waited long for thee.”⁸

8. “Come, O Thou King of Kings,” *Hymns*, no. 59. The organ started immediately as I spoke the words of this hymn at the end of my talk, and I directed the congregation in singing it as the closing hymn.

KIM MCCALL {mccall.kim@gmail.com} studied philosophy (BA) and computer science (MS) at Stanford University. His work in computing ranged from Xerox Palo Alto Research Center to Box, Inc. He sings in an excellent chorus and enjoys dance, food, and teaching music to kids. It is hard to talk with him for long without the Church coming up.



Bradley Slade
 $1+1=1$

TOTALITY

Bradley Slade

We climbed to the ridgeline atop the cliffs. With the rest of the crowd we laid out blankets, and I set up a camera. The moon slowly started to move in front of the sun. We could only see this with eclipse glasses that filtered away nearly all the sun's light.

The light slowly dimmed, and everything took on a strange aspect. The sliver of light disappeared, and the eclipse reached totality. The sky went dark except for what looked like sunset ringing the horizon all the way around. The sun was so beautiful, the ring of fire and bottomless black disk of the moon in the center. $1+1=1$.

I was surprised by the emotions I felt. I was gasping for breath as though plunged in ice water, laughing and sobbing with tears streaming down my face. Others said they felt the same. There was a cacophony of laughter and crying and howling. It was absolutely transforming, like going deep within a primal place, many layers deep.

When the first flash of light blinked on afterward, it was the cleanest, purest light I've ever seen. There are no words for this.

My son had seized on the word "transfigure" and we all found it so. It reminded me of a spiritual experience: a highly emotional state accompanied the eclipse, but the emotions weren't the eclipse. It is easy to take emotion as a spiritual experience, but the spirit is light and clarity and revelation that can trigger profound emotion, like a siren or marching band does.

BRADLEY SLADE {bradslade@byu.edu} was fourteen years old when he fell in love with photography. He has been a photographer now for more than forty years. For twenty years he has been photographing for Publications & Graphics at Brigham Young University, working on projects like *BYU Magazine* and other publications for the university and some of its various colleges. He has also been a longtime photographer for *Seeing the Everyday*, a magazine that celebrates the prosaic moments within family. His favorite subject is his family, and those are the images that he hopes will last forever.



Herman du Toit
Olive Tree in Garden of Gethsemane
2019, handprinted photogravure from
intaglio etched plate on 100% rag paper

LIGHT

Herman du Toit

Ever since Plato described shadows on the walls of the allegorical cave, light has been a metaphor for truth and enlightenment. Heaven has always been associated with light and hell with darkness. The word “education” is rooted in the Latin word *educere*, which means to lead forth. As an educator I have always believed this to mean to lead forth out of darkness and ignorance into the light of truth and understanding. Light is a universal metaphor for intellectual apprehension and for revealing aesthetic and spiritual truth. It could even be considered the common language, or lingua franca, of all major religions.

For me, the incidence of light and shade is what reveals the graphic qualities of an image. Light draws out the essence of natural phenomena—be it a transcendent sunset, the pristine beauty of a white lily, or a gnarled olive tree in the Garden of Gethsemane, weighed down by the dark mass of its oppressive foliage.

It is for this reason that I like the expressive and tactile qualities of hand-pulled photogravure prints and charcoal drawings, with their velvety blacks and pure whites. They not only establish the essential nature of things but act as a metaphor for the ever-present powers of light and darkness in our lives and in the world around us.

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He has published numerous books and articles on visual art and spirituality including *Masters of Light: Coming Unto Christ Through Inspired Devotional Art* (Cedar Fort, 2016); and *The Parables of Jesus Revealing the Plan of Salvation* with John and Jeannie Welch (Covenant Publishing, 2019). His prints, drawings, and sculptures are held in private collections in South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.



Herman du Toit
South African Sunset
2018, handprinted photogravure from
intaglio etched plate on 100% rag paper