

DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

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PERFORMATIVE THEOLOGY: NOT SUCH A NEW THING

James E. Faulconer

A movement called “scriptural theology” has been part of academic theology for some time now, since the 1980s or earlier.¹ In spite of that, with some exceptions I will note, it has had little impact on Latter-day Saint scholars, much less on Latter-day Saint readers. We see little theology among the Saints, but what we do see tends to be dogmatic.² In other words, most of our theology consists of statements of doctrines (or assumed doctrines)—traditionally called dogmas—accompanied by rational justifications. Scripture has its place in dogmatic theologies as proof texts, or sources for the doctrine, but we seldom do theology by studying scripture. If we engage scripture itself in a scholarly rather than a devotional way, whether we do so as theological liberals or conservatives (whatever we take those terms to mean), we tend to do so historically, using some version of the canons of history developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to examine the history that the scriptures reflect or portray. The assumption is that understanding

1. For a representative cross-section of those in this movement, see Stephen E. Fowl, ed., *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997); Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003); Hans Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2017).

2. See, for example, Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Attributes of God* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2001); Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Problems of Theism and the Love of God* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books 2006); Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: Of God and Gods* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2008).

the history of or behind the texts will give us an understanding of their meaning. So, when we do theology, we usually do dogmatic theology, and when we engage scripture, we usually do so historically.

However, one exception to each of these alternatives, among others, is in the movement represented by the Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar.³ It seeks to do non-dogmatic theology, and it doesn't assume that scriptural scholarship is necessarily historical. The Theology Seminar does theology by reflecting on scripture in a scholarly way that is different than what we usually expect. In this paper I give some brief historical background by which I hope to show how the Seminar's version of scriptural theology fits into the Christian tradition as theology.⁴ I also briefly explain why one way to describe what the Seminar does is "performative theology."

Today most Latter-day Saints who read scripture, for whatever reason, do so using implicit assumptions about what scripture is and does and about how it ought to be read that were developed beginning in the seventeenth century and culminating in the nineteenth. We read scripture as historical documents that we understand by applying the canons of history, even if we don't know what those canons are and even when the texts in question are not themselves about history (for example, the Psalms). Devotional reading might be an exception, wherein we proof text beliefs that we already hold and understand, an interpretive practice known as eisegesis. But even that, I believe, is an effect of modernism's assumptions misused: eisegesis appears to be the only possibility that remains if we harbor modernist assumptions about scripture and, at the same time, think as many do that we can avoid the historical questions. For many, our emotional or psychological responses seem to be the only source of scriptural meaning if either

3. Formerly, Mormon Theology Seminar.

4. It is important to recognize, however, that though what the Theology Seminar is doing is related to scriptural theology in the mainstream Christian tradition, the two are not the same.

we don't know how to deal with scripture as history or we are unable to find meaning in it as scripture using historical methods.

The division between exegesis, or finding the meaning of the text from the text itself, and eisegesis, or reading into the text what we believe it says, is not as clean as we might hope. There is no neutral background of truths, untouched by preexisting conceptual frameworks and contemporaneous social and political arrangements, that we can use to determine the meaning of a text. But, equally, the meaning of a text cannot be reduced merely to the meanings that we impute to it because we always interpret out of a historical background and from a social and political situation. As always, things are more complicated than either of those alternatives recognizes.⁵ The goal of the Theology Seminar is to recognize that complication and to offer a way of reading that can replace psychological and emotional—in other words Rorschach-like—eisegesis with something that has a stronger claim to truth, something that avoids mere subjectivism.

At the same time, the Seminar also rejects what many scholars perceive to be the only alternative, namely the idea that scriptural meaning can only be ascertained through some version of the historical-critical method. Such methods are often helpful and even necessary, but they are never enough. As readers and scholars, the organizers of the Theology Seminar want to contest modernism's understanding of scriptural meaning, retaining its insights into historical and social context, philology, and so on without allowing themselves to be seduced into thinking that those insights are sufficient for theological understanding. They argue that scripture gives us genuine non-subjective truth, though that truth is also not merely the product of rational critique. The claim is that the Seminar's approach to scriptural exegesis is not eisegesis, but

5. The work of Hans-Georg Gadamer is directly relevant to the question of how exegesis and eisegesis are intertwined. In particular, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., translated by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (New York: Crossroads, 1989).

neither is it objective. And, I argue, the Seminar's alternative is not particularly new.

To see that alternative, start by thinking about modernism's assumptions, the assumptions that undid early Christian and medieval methods of scripture interpretation, making them seem laughable. The Renaissance and the Reformation brought considerable attention to the texts of the Bible: How are they best translated? What are their provenances? What do we make of the differences between them as well as between different manuscripts of the same text? How do we determine the authenticity of a manuscript? Brilliant thinkers put their minds to questions like these and initiated what came to be the discipline of textual scholarship, a part of which is biblical scholarship. Though this approach to the Bible did not drop full-blown from heaven—the work of thinkers for several hundred years before the Renaissance had a great deal to do with the birth of this new way of thinking—the birth of the science of texts inaugurated an important way of understanding history and a new way of thinking about scripture.

That development of textual criticism has been incredibly important, not only to biblical studies but to the whole discipline of history. The work of the Theology Seminar does not contest critical history or the discipline of biblical and scriptural studies. Rather, it argues that an important way of reading scripture, perhaps (for believers) the most important way of reading it, was inadvertently lost with this new development and deserves to be recovered. The discipline of history as it relates to scripture was conflated with disciplined thought about the meaning of scripture, and that conflation has made it difficult for scholars of religion to see that the earlier Jewish and Christian forms of scriptural theology were more than just fancy forms of eisegesis. Further, that conflation not only causes us to misunderstand past interpretation, it closes off possibilities in the present.

Though there were certainly differences in the ways that Jews and Christians interpreted scripture anciently, and Christian scriptural exegesis developed in a variety of ways over the 1,500 years after Christ,

broadly speaking, there was continuity of scriptural interpretation from the first century until about the time of the Reformation. However, in the sixteenth century a change began to occur in the understanding of what scripture is and how one interprets it, and that change eventually marked a radical departure from earlier approaches. With the Reformation and the Renaissance, the question of scriptural truth became a positive question: what do the scriptures *posit about* reality. As obvious as this seems to us—that narrative texts refer to an independently existing reality that can be examined in order to judge the text’s accuracy—this was a new idea about the relationship between narratives and the world. Making the question of scriptural truth a positive question—a question about posits—reflected a wholesale change that had happened in Western Europe. That invention of modern representational history and the assumption that there is a reality to be examined independently, apart from any text and independent of any author/re-presenter, led to scripture being understood in those new terms. Previously the story had been inseparable from the event and, so, was studied as that *through* which we know what is real—the story was the way in which the real reveals itself. Now “real events and real people about which Scripture reported . . . moved to the fore and began to be studied for their own sake,”⁶ apart from the texts that speak of them.

Perhaps no one serves as a touchstone of modern thinking about questions of scripture better than the seventeenth-century thinker Spinoza. In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* we see two assumptions that are new to the study of the Bible: (1) We determine what is real and true by the critical use of reason rather than by revelation, and (2) every text should be approached in the same way.⁷

The import of the first is clear: ultimately reason is the only tool we have for understanding any of the things we encounter; a God-given

6. James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 686.

7. Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, edited by Jan Rieuwertsz (Amsterdam, 1670), ch. 6.

gift, reason is that by which we decide and understand what is real. In itself, that assumption was not new. But with Spinoza it was coupled with the notion that if we are examining texts that purport to be historical in some sense, reason's function is ultimately to compare them, as best we can, to independently existing reality. A rational comparison of the text and the independently existing world allows us to decide the veracity or validity of the texts. Too simply put, this is the modern view of what it means to do biblical scholarship, whether one is talking about the meaning of a Hebrew word in the eighth century BCE, the date of composition of the letter to the Hebrews, or the events surrounding the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Equally, of course, this is also the modern understanding of what it means to do scholarly work on the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, or the Pearl of Great Price—whether one is, at one end of the interpretive spectrum, a person interested in the ideological critique of Latter-day Saint scripture or, at the other end of the spectrum, a person trying to reconstruct Book of Mormon geography. Texts are about events or objects that exist independently, and we judge the validity of those texts by comparing them to the things they purport to describe. That is what Spinoza's first assumption comes down to for modern readers like us.⁸

The second of Spinoza's assumptions, perhaps the one least often talked about, means that scriptural books should be understood no differently than any other books. All texts are to be understood by the

8. I ignore here another question that Spinoza's assumptions raise, namely "What do we mean by 'reason'?" As one might expect, I believe that question too needs to be raised and that Spinoza's modern understanding of reason is too narrow. See my discussion of that question in James E. Faulconer, "An Alternative (to) Theology: The Privilege of Scripture Study," chap. 4 in *Thinking Otherwise: Theological Explorations of Joseph Smith's Revelations* (Provo: Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, forthcoming). I also recognize that there is a more nuanced interpretation of Spinoza's understanding of scripture (see Gilles Hanus, *Sans images ni paroles: Spinoza face à la révélation* [Lagrasse: Verdier, 2018]), but I am less interested in the best interpretation of Spinoza than in the interpretation that has been most influential.

methods of rational critique, the method I have just roughly described. These two Spinozist assumptions are not easily teased apart. Perhaps they cannot be. The problem is that, for a modern interpreter, beginning from them, particularly the second one, works of scripture should have no more authority than any other, similar books. But if no book has more authority than another, it is difficult to know why so many of us would care about these old books. And if a book *does* have more authority than others, we need to be able to explain that authority without explaining it away.

If we use nothing but Spinoza's assumptions—which have become commonsense and, so, are often invisible to us—the scriptures are, at best, a set of obliquely written moral maxims. We see the extreme to which that view can go in Thomas Jefferson's (1743–1826) redaction of the New Testament, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, one of the best-known examples of the naturalistic, rational approach to scripture using Spinoza's assumptions. Speaking of his small book, Jefferson says he has “strip[ped] off the artificial vestments in which [Jesus' teachings] have been muffled by priests” and “par[ed] off the amphibologisms into which [the Evangelists] have been led . . . by giving their own misconceptions of [Jesus'] dicta, . . . expressing unintelligibly for others what they had not understood themselves.”⁹ His book, he says, separates the diamonds of the New Testament—“the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man”—from the dunghill of Jesus' disciples' writings and, in particular, from what he described as the “wretched depravity” of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰

Few Christians would explicitly agree with Jefferson's description of either of the Testaments. I hope few would agree with his reduction of

9. An amphibologism is an amphiboly, an ambiguity of language created by syntax: “I am writing on my couch.”

10. Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, Oct. 12, 1813, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 6:549, transcription available at <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0431>.

Christianity to only a set of moral principles, or with his understanding of Judaism as founded in depravity. Yet in spite of that, many of us implicitly read scripture as Jefferson did, stripping off the supposedly irrelevant figural, rhetorical, and syntactic vestments in which the diamonds of divine principles and moral teachings have been “draped and muffled,” putting into supposedly plain English what, for some reason, the prophets, apostles, and other writers of scripture seem to have failed to express clearly themselves. Unlike Jefferson, Latter-day Saints may believe in miracles. Or they may believe in modern prophets. But many of us read scripture using the same assumptions he held, assumptions that deny both miracles and prophets. We use those assumptions whether or not we have explicitly reflected on them. But if we use them, then we implicitly make a good deal of scripture, probably most of it, redundant or superfluous *as scripture*.

If the modernist assumptions are correct, what is the point of having so many pages of scripture when the scriptures can be reduced to a few principles? And why continue to reread our scriptures after we know the principles that are in them? Lawyers do not reread the basic law codes if they know the laws. Physicists do not return to their textbooks on fundamentals after they have learned them. Why should scripture be any different? I am not likely to forget that I should not commit murder,¹¹ nor that I ought to lead by gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned.¹² I may not lead that way, but I will probably know and remember that I should. So why reread the books from which I have already imbibed the principles?

There is an answer with historical precedent, namely, the assumption that all books should be read in the same way is incorrect; different kinds of texts work in different ways, so they must be read differently, according to the norms and standards of their type. Specifically, traditional Wisdom literature and modern history cannot be understood in the same way.

11. Exodus 20:13.

12. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.

Before the hegemony of Spinoza's assumptions, scripture was construed as Wisdom literature (usually implicitly) rather than what we think of as history in modern terms, so it must be read as Wisdom literature. We have much to gain by approaching the scriptures as Wisdom rather than anachronistically taking them as texts describing an independent reality.

As an undergraduate, I first came across the idea that texts can function in different ways in Erich Auerbach's (1892–1957) famous book, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. There he points out that the Hebrew Bible and Homer differ in that whereas Homer's work is recited so that we will forget our own reality for a while, the Hebrew Bible is read "to overcome our [individual] reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of . . . history."¹³ Neither Homer nor the Bible is history in post-Reformation (i.e., modern) terms, but they each function differently than the other. Homer is closer to what we now call fiction, and the Bible is in another category altogether, one our culture is no longer familiar with. It is in the category of teachings meant to bring us to a new way of living, namely Wisdom. Ancient Wisdom literature has been supplanted by contemporary self-help literature.¹⁴

Auerbach's description of the Hebrew Bible as Wisdom (המכּה; σοφία) applies equally to the New Testament.¹⁵ It is an explicit theme in

13. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, translated by Willard R. Trask. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), 12, italics added.

14. What that replacement says about Western culture is an important story, one for another paper. Suffice it to say that the replacement has everything to do with the nominalists' focus on will rather than love as the distinguishing feature of divinity and the consequent understanding of human beings primarily in terms of will rather than love.

15. Pierre Hadot argues that ancient Greek philosophical texts were also understood as like biblical Wisdom. See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, edited by Arnold Davidson, translated by Michael Chase (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995).

the Book of Mormon. There Nephi and Jacob all but explicitly say that scripture teaches Wisdom when they distinguish between the record they keep on the gold plates ('things of my soul'¹⁶) and the record on the other plates ('a more history part'¹⁷). More directly, Jesus tells us that all of scripture—"the Law and the Prophets" in the terms of first-century Judaism—comes down to Wisdom: love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as you love yourself.¹⁸ Both of those are things we must learn how to *do* rather than emotions we should have, principles we must learn, or beliefs we must hold. Scripture teaches us how to love God, in other words serve him,¹⁹ and how to serve him by serving our fellows²⁰—which James and King Benjamin agree are the same.²¹ The two great commandments summarize Wisdom.²²

Since learning Wisdom is learning how to live a particular kind of life, it is not the same as learning principles or dogmas. One can live wisely without being a specialist in philosophical ethics or the theology of ethics, and knowing more theory doesn't in itself make one wiser. Rather than learning theory (in its modern sense), learning Wisdom means putting oneself in a relationship of discipleship to it: Wisdom is my master. More accurately, she is my "mistress" in both Hebrew and Greek, and I put myself at her feet, not to learn particular principles, though those may be relevant, but to learn a skill, the skill of understanding the divine order of the world so that I can serve God and our fellows. That skill begins with hearing,²³ which means not just listen-

16. 2 Nephi 14:15.

17. 2 Nephi 14:14. For other references to this difference, see 1 Nephi 9:2–4; 2 Nephi 4:14–16; 5:33; Jacob 1:2–4.

18. Matthew 22:37–40.

19. Exodus 19:6.

20. Mosiah 2:17.

21. James 1:27; 2:27; Mosiah 2:17.

22. See Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, esp. 662–89.

23. See Proverbs 1:8, 22; 4:10; 12:15, and so on.

ing, but obeying. Understanding scripture as Wisdom is behind what we find in 2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God [*theopneustos*; θεόπνευστος], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction [*paideia*; παιδεία] in righteousness.” If we use the literal translation of the word translated as the phrase “inspiration of God,” we would say that all scripture is God-breathed. It is the breath breathed into Adam by God to give him life. As such it can be our breath of life, the Wisdom that makes godly life possible.

James Kugel discusses several traits of Wisdom literature, two of which are relevant here:²⁴ First, even when a text recounts past events, as Wisdom, historical narratives are instruction rather than simply representations of events. According to this understanding, the point of the history or any other kind of text that we find in scripture is to show us God at work in the world so that we can know how we ought to live. Thus, scriptural history isn’t judged by how accurately it represents events of the past but by how well it teaches the truth or meaning of what it means to be a human being in a divinely given world.²⁵ Often it can do the latter well only at the expense of the former.

Second, like gnomic proverbs, in the Wisdom tradition the writings of scripture are likely to contain more than one meaning, and even the surface or literal meaning may require some digging. Perhaps nothing is so obviously gnomic as Proverbs 30:18–23:

There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:

The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.

Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

24. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 671.

25. I have dealt with this at length, perhaps too much length, in James E. Faulconer, “Scripture as Incarnation,” in *Faith, Philosophy, Scripture* (Provo: Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2010), 151–202.

For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear:
 For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat;
 For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is
 heir to her mistress.

Seldom is scripture as gnomic as those verses, but the book of Proverbs seems to explicitly enjoin us to seek out things that God has concealed: “The glory of God conceals things, / but the glory of kings searches out things.”²⁶ The enigma of the gnomic is meant to provoke us to thought and action rather than simply to confuse us.

Especially before the Reformation, though not ending with it,²⁷ scripture readers have been encouraged to assume that there is an understanding of the text that they have yet to discover. But if history is supposed to be an accurate representation of events, then, as John Locke and his disciple Anthony Collins pointed out in the eighteenth century,²⁸ it makes no sense to believe that historical accounts can have more than one meaning: there was only one event, so ultimately it has only one truthful representation. By this reasoning, biblical narrative texts, like any texts describing events, can have only one meaning, a meaning to be discerned by critical inquiry. But if, instead, the texts of biblical history are not fundamentally representations of what happened but instructions for wise living then, like a riddle, they may be understood—solved—in more than one way.²⁹ Texts that are, at

26. Proverbs 25:2. See W. Hall Harris, ed., *The Lexham English Bible* (Bellingham, Wash.: Lexham Press, 2012).

27. It is important to recognize that scriptural theology has been an important movement in contemporary Protestantism.

28. Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974), 66–85.

29. For a contemporary approach to scripture as gnomic utterance, see Stephen Mulhall, *The Great Riddle: Wittgenstein and Nonsense, Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

least on the surface, historical may have more than one meaning; they may teach us more than one thing. Theology remains kataphatic. It is not reduced to negative theology, but more than one truthful posit is possible for any given event.

The notion that the Bible has more than one sense is an ancient idea. The point of figural reading, for example, was to show its multiplicity of senses. But that ancient idea “has been obscured by . . . the disrespect that it has received from the hands of historical critics convinced that only they know what the Bible *really* means.”³⁰ For ancient and medieval readers, the meanings of scripture are the multiplicity of things taught through the text by divine Wisdom rather than merely the particular intention of the text’s original human author (an author who, we must remember, is a reconstruction by the modern historian). The author’s intention, if we can figure out what it is, isn’t irrelevant, but it also isn’t decisive.

At least in the beginning of Jewish and Christian scriptural exegesis, to understand scripture as scripture—in other words, as a text that has religious authority over the one who recognizes it³¹—meant keeping Kugel’s points in mind. Ancient narrative claimed to *tell us* what is real, to teach us the real rather than to *represent* it. On that view, a narrative is the revelation (small “r”) of the reality of the event it narrates, not a description of that event that we could match independently to a reality established by other means. (That difference is what gets lost in much modern biblical criticism.) But ancient scriptural narrative is not only revelation with a small “r,” it is also Revelation with a capital, though

30. Jon D. Levenson, “Historical Criticism and the Father of the Enlightenment Project,” in *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 106–26, 124.

31. For an excellent analysis of the authority of scripture, see Paul Ricoeur, “The Canon between the Text and the Community,” translated by Peter Stephens, in *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*, edited by Petr Pokorný and Jan Roskovec (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 7–26.

the two are not at odds: in scripture, the revelation of the meaning of the event, a revelation that any full recounting of history should give us, is also divine Revelation, a revelation of God and his purposes and our place in those purposes.

Origen (184–253) is an excellent example of someone who understands scripture as showing us Wisdom in the premodern way, and for Origen it does that by means of patterns or figures in the world that imitate divine things.³² For him, to read scripture properly is to understand it in terms of antitypes and types or, in the language of the Book of Mormon, “types and shadows.”³³ Scripture is not only a way of seeing God’s grace among us, it is a way of apprehending God himself by apprehending his revelation of himself in the patterns of the world as divine patterns that manifest themselves in earthly patterns that are imitated in scriptural texts.

As Origen and other early Christians understand scripture, figural or typological readings are not at odds with literal ones. For them *literal* means “by the letter,” in other words according to the primary or usual meaning of the words and grammar; *literal* does not mean “faithfully representing independent reality.” The literal and the figural are not even especially different, for the figural is a function of the literal since it is a way of structuring the historical narratives—the letters and words that make them up—into the single history of the world,³⁴ a history in which God reveals himself. Since the figural reading shows us what is real in

32. Origen, *On First Principles*, §4.

33. Mosiah 3:15.

34. Frei, *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 2. Ricoeur complicates the question of whether the unity of scripture is the unity of a single history. See Paul Ricoeur, “Experience and Language in Religious Discourse,” in *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”: The French Debate*, by Dominique Janicaud, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, and Paul Ricoeur, translated by Bernard G. Prusak, Jeffrey L. Kosky, and Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 127–46.

history, it coincides with the literal reading, though that coincidence may not be obvious at first. It may require careful consideration.

For a reader like Origen, to find the treasure hidden in a field of Matthew 13:44 is to find Christ; and to buy the field and make it one's own at the price of all that one has is to be changed, to be a new person.³⁵ The reader should be changed by her reading, and for Origen that change occurs when the reader repeats the patterns that she has learned from scripture—Origen's understanding of the Platonic term *participation*. As a reader, I participate in the divine patterns that I discover revealed in scripture by making those patterns part of my life. The parable of the treasure buried in a field and the experience of repentance have the same pattern, so the meaning of one informs the meaning of the other. Readers are transformed when the figures revealed in scripture become patterns in their lives. To be renewed is to participate in the divine order rather than in the old chaos of the world, and seeing the figural in scripture is one way that participation can occur. We could say, as Hans Boersma does, that this kind of reading is sacramental.³⁶ Sacramental reading takes up scripture as a means by which God reveals his grace to human beings not only conceptually but—more importantly—in what his grace gives to us.

It is important to recognize that Origen's understanding of the divine and the world does not divide what-is into the natural and the supernatural. That division comes much later. Instead Origen divides what-is into the visible and the invisible, that which one can readily see and that which one must learn to discern in what one sees. *Invisible* doesn't mean "not at all available to sight." Rather, it means "what one must learn to see; what one doesn't see at first glance." The color of the green grass reflected in the girl's white dress is something I do not see,

35. Origen, *Matthew*, vol. 2, book 10, ¶¶4–6.

36. Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*. Sacramental reading is one via which we receive God's grace.

but the painter does. Not that I cannot possibly see it, but that doing so requires training. I can learn to see what is otherwise invisible.

The distinction between the visible and the invisible doesn't become the natural/supernatural distinction until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, with nominalist thinkers like William of Ockham (1287–1347) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464).³⁷ Before that, the relationship of the natural to the divine is understood to be imitative and participatory rather than oppositional or mutually exclusive. Instead of the divine and the natural being two radically different realities—one that is changeable and subject to causal law and the other that is neither, with an absolute gulf between them—for premoderns, the natural is real to the degree that it imitates or, to use Platonic language, “participates in” the divine. That means that some things that are indisputably real to a modern are not real for most premodern Europeans. Evil is an example: the premodern person understands evil as the failure to participate in the divine, as a deficiency rather than itself actual. Thus, the two eras equivocate on what is real, and the premodern goal of scriptural exegesis is to see, through the texts of scripture, the revelation of the otherwise invisible divine—and ultimately real—world showing itself in our natural world.

That is, more or less, the understanding of scriptural interpretation that holds for approximately the first 1,300 years of Christianity. With Ockham and nominalism, though, a tremendous shift occurs. Thinking that he will protect theology from the untrained speculations of natural philosophers, Ockham argues that one can learn nothing about eternal things by looking at natural ones. He and subsequent theorists of interpretation fail to understand, as Boersma points out, that if we deny the presence of divine exemplaria in visible things, then we trivialize those visible things; if visible things do not imitate invisible ones, then they are *no more than* what is observable rather than what is observable

37. For detail on this shift, see Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993).

manifesting what is divine.³⁸ After Ockham, worldly things no longer bode forth, in their very being, divine things, as they previously did. The window for the Reformation and modernism is opened while the possibility of understanding scripture as revealing the divine world in which God has placed human beings is closed.

In the new way of understanding that modernism brings, scholarship tells us about the world and then compares scriptural texts to the independent world that scholarship shows us; in the old way, scholarship helps us see God's self-manifestation in the world that is revealed in scripture. That old way of understanding things has often been criticized and even derided. It is frequently caricatured. But the Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar seeks to reconsider that old form of scholarly interpretation. Of course, we cannot just leave modern learning behind and return to premodern methods of interpretation. We are historical beings; we cannot ignore the history that has brought us about in our present context, even if by some sleight of hand we could pretend to do so conceptually. But knowing that history also means that we can see alternatives. We cannot *be* ancients or medievals, nor should we desire to, but we can learn from them, and one thing to learn is that reading scripture is not like doing either natural science or scholarly history. When we read scripture as scripture, we are not looking for causes and their effects or explanations—or at least if we are reading it *as* scripture, rather than as simply an ancient text, we are not.

If we are reading scripture in a sacramental way, then we are reading it for the effect that reading brings about, the grace it brings into the world. That effect, that grace, is not something I create as an individual reader, whatever contribution I may make to the effect I experience. The grace given by the sacramental reading of scripture is also, and more importantly, something that happens to me in reading. According to this understanding, reading scripture is middle-voiced, if you

38. Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*, 12.

will—not quite active, not quite passive.³⁹ Think of the verb *cooks* in the sentence, “The soup cooks in the pot.” It is not active. The soup is not doing what the chef is. But neither is *cooks* simply passive. It isn’t only that the chef is making soup; there is a sense in which the soup in the pot *is* doing something. It is cooking. We might even say, a bit strangely, that it is cooking itself. *Cooks* is in the middle between passive and active. The Theology Seminar takes reading scripture to be middle-voiced in that, like the soup, the reader does something, but at the same time something is happening to her.

It is not difficult to imagine the objection: this way of reading robs scripture of universalizable truth; it becomes *just* a text that is meaningful to those whose scripture it is, but not to those who do not share the text. This is the problem of, as I may seem to be doing, reducing truth to Wittgensteinian language games (or, at least, to a common understanding of Wittgenstein’s language games). But it is clear that neither the writers of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament nor, perhaps especially, the Book of Mormon are making that mistake. The text of a Gospel is a depiction of Jesus’ life that shows us the *actual* possible world in which the mystery of the kingdom of God is revealed, and that actual possible world is publicly intelligible, even if disputed.⁴⁰ The text makes universalizable truth and normative claims, so it cannot be only one language game among a possible infinity of others without self-contradiction.

39. Sometimes reflexive verbs are understood to be in the middle voice: “The cat licks itself.” In that sentence, *licks* is either both active and passive, or it is neither.

40. Gary Comstock, “Truth or Meaning: Ricoeur versus Frei on Biblical Narrative,” *Journal of Religion* 66, no. 2 (1986): 117–40. For a fuller exposition of the way of reading recommended here, see Paul Ricoeur, “Toward a Narrative Theology: Its Necessity, Its Resources, Its Difficulties,” in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, translated by David Pellauer, edited by Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 236–48.

Thus, those who understand interpretation in a more or less premodern way don't claim that there is no historical truth to which scripture corresponds. There may or may not be, depending on the passage in question. Instead, they claim that since the intent of scripture is not to depict events that can be verified independently but to show us the divine reality of the human world, we will not be able to understand scripture *as scripture* by means of only modern historical methods. Those methods may help us in ancillary ways. Understanding the meaning of ancient or nineteenth-century words or grammar may help us understand better what the text we are reading says. Knowing about textual variants may give us insight into how interpreters before us saw things. Understanding the powers at work in the sociopolitical context of a particular revelation may remind us of powers at work in our own lives and perhaps make us more careful about what we infer from the text.⁴¹ Understanding the original context in which a work appeared may expose some of the prejudgments that have guided our interpretations heretofore and, by doing so, open us to new insights.

Nevertheless, we understand scripture—as a text that has religious authority for us rather than as one more text among others—when it makes real for us what it says. But “what it says” does not here mean “the historical facts (or authorial intention) that it is putatively about.” To Boersma's principles for understanding wisdom literature we add another: like wisdom literature, the purpose of scripture is to invite the reader to repent, to change her life. For a Christian, ultimately that is what scripture makes real, the possibility of new life. The reader's job, then, is to be open to that happening, to be open to scripture's call to repentance. Jesus says: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”⁴² and “I say unto you, if ye will come

41. But for a cogent criticism of ideological critique, see Levenson, “Historical Criticism,” 111–15. See also James E. Faulconer, “Response to Taylor Petrey's ‘Theorizing Critical Mormon Biblical Studies,’” *Element: The Journal of the Society of Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 8, no. 1 (2019): 29–34.

42. Matthew 11:28.

unto me ye shall have eternal life.”⁴³ A reader of scripture as scripture is someone who reads in response to that call to come to Christ and who listens, while reading, for new expressions of the call. The ears of the scripture reader are open to the invitation to repent.

But, of course, that way of reading is not in itself a way of doing theology. Not all responsive reading is theology because theology must go further. It must explain. A theology of this kind must show us *how* scripture reveals an actual possible world, how it makes universalizable truth claims. A theology of scripture should show how the invitation to middle-voiced repentance and love comes about, and it begins to do that by looking closely at the details and relations of the texts of scripture.

Paying attention to those details and relations could mean looking for the figures in scripture that so interested premodern readers.⁴⁴ Until about the seventeenth century, that was a major part of reading scripture theologically. It is likely to involve the kind of careful attention to words, grammar, and rhetorical patterns that was part of the close reading movement of literary criticism in the 1940s (think Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, and Allen Tate). The British writer and thinker Arthur Henry King⁴⁵ taught many Brigham Young University students a version of close reading from the early 70s through the late 90s. Close reading of scripture may involve many of the kinds of insights that the rhetorical analyses of John W. Welch and others have shown us.⁴⁶

43. 3 Nephi 9:14.

44. For a contemporary example, see Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology*, 2nd ed. (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2016).

45. Kathy Riordan, “Arthur Henry King,” *In My Life* (blog), Apr. 1, 2009, <http://famouspeopleihaveknown.blogspot.com/2009/04/arthur-henry-king.html>.

46. Most notably, Welch created interest in chiasms (and to a lesser degree other rhetorical figures) in the Book of Mormon. The initial publication of his ongoing work was John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 10, no. 1 (1969): 69–84.

Whatever the particulars of its methodology, the initial approach of close reading is something similar to what Paul de Man describes at Harvard in the 1950s:

Students, as they began to write on the writings of others, were not to say anything that was not derived from the text they were considering. They were not to make any statements that they could not support by a specific use of language that actually occurred in the text. They were asked, in other words, to begin by reading texts closely as texts and not to move at once into the general context of human experience or history.⁴⁷

Students were to start out from “the bafflement that such singular turns of tone, phrase, and figure were bound to produce” in attentive readers,⁴⁸ a common theme among those who advocate close reading of whatever kind. Finding oneself baffled by the text is where this kind of interpretation begins, whether scriptural or not. According to de Man, this approach to interpretation was philosophically sophisticated, but the sophistication stayed in the background, putting the pragmatic questions of reading and meaning at the fore.⁴⁹ Presumably something similar ought to be able to be said of an analogous kind of theological reading, that it is theologically sophisticated, though that sophistication is in the background with questions about close reading in front.

Of course, as I said earlier, the point of this kind of reading is not merely to know what baffles one or what kinds of language games can be seen in the text (intended by the author or not). Nor—especially—is the point to know how a reader feels about a text, how her experience intersects with the text and produces an emotion. Of course, such things as personal experience are relevant, but only to the degree that

47. Paul de Man, “The Return to Philology,” in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 21–26, 23. See also Jonathan Culler, “The Closeness of Close Reading,” *ADE Bulletin* 149 (2010): 20–25.

48. de Man, “The Return to Philology,” 23.

49. de Man, “The Return to Philology,” 24.

they help us be baffled by a text and then respond to it in a meaningful way. And in the case of performative theology, the way of responding is to demonstrate how the passage in question performs its call to repentance.

If we understand theologizing this way, then theology, like probably all scholarly disciplines, requires the exercise of imagination of a certain type: how do this text or these texts reconfigure the world for readers? How does scripture issue its call for our response—not a response to abstract theological questions but a response to scripture's call to repent?⁵⁰ The scriptural theologian's job is to show the ways in which that call-and-response are performed, so we call her work "performative theology." The Theology Seminar tries to do performative theology.

To say that this theology is performative is to say that it brings about something in the doing of it. Most of all, then, performative theology would enact God's loving invitation to come to him. It would enact the reality of that love. Thus, performative theology—attentive to the details of the text and paying attention to relevant historical and philological scholarship—will think more in terms of invitation than of explanation. Explanation will be important, but secondary, to making the invitation heard and the response possible.

We assume that performative theology can be an answer to a common problem, namely that of no longer hearing anything new in scripture as one studies. It is not an uncommon experience for Latter-day Saints, having read the scriptures numerous times, especially the Book of Mormon, to say that they no longer learn anything as they read. Coming to the text with a settled idea of what it says, they are no longer baffled by it because they now read only their own ideas. They appear to read the words on the page, but in fact do not. Instead, they read what they already think those words say. That kind of reading makes it all but impossible for them to hear the invitation of scripture. Our

50. See Paul Ricoeur, *Amour et justice*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Éditions Points, 2008), 45–46.

interpretations of scripture can express little more than our personal preferences if we read them so that they say what we have always known they say. Only if they challenge us, if they make things difficult, can they help us make that distinction. The point of performative theology is to reorient our attitude by making the scriptures once again baffling, once again a source of wonder, once again a text from which the reader can hear God's invitation.⁵¹

51. For examples of theological readings (many of them as yet in embryo), see the archives and podcasts of the Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar (formerly Mormon Theology Seminar).

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A SPELL TO NOURISH
& STRENGTHEN.

A SPELL OF BLESSING

Ingredients:

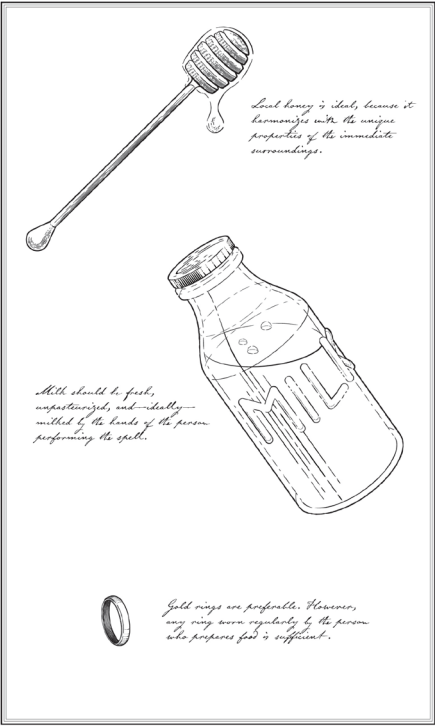
- one bottle FRESH MILK
3 drops LOCAL HONEY
one RING FROM THE HAND OF
ONE THAT PREPARES FOOD

Instructions:

1. With the thumb and first finger of your right hand, hold the ring parallel to the ground, gripping the outer edges so the center of the ring is unobstructed.
2. Slowly pour the milk through the center of the ring so it falls to the ground.
3. Drip three drops of honey through the ring.
4. The land, and all food issuing from it, is now blessed.

AND ALL SAINTS WHO REMEMBER TO KEEP
AND DO THESE SAYINGS SHALL RECEIVE
HEALTH IN THEIR NAVEL AND MARROW TO
THEIR BONES, AND SHALL FIND WISDOM AND
GREAT TREASURES OF KNOWLEDGE, EVEN
HIDDEN TREASURES.

DOCTRINE & COVENANTS 89:18-19



Camilla Stark

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ON CARE: PERFORMATIVE THEOLOGY, MOSIAH, AND A GATHERED COMMUNITY

Jenny Webb

The question I am considering here is at its heart relational. What kind of relationship with scripture exists within performative theology? When we understand scripture as wisdom rather than history, what does this understanding do to that relationship? How is this relationship changed, shifted, or reforged in performative theology? Is there anything in performative theology that allows us to approach the work of scripture such that the work of messianic typology is foregrounded, and if so, how does this framing of the theological project revise and rewire our relationship with scripture on every level, from the theoretical to the pragmatic? In other words, what could we do, and how could we do it, in light of a serious commitment to a performative theology of scripture? And, last but certainly not intended to be least, is there anything particularly Mormon about this project thus conceived?¹

1. My use of the term “Mormon” here is meant to reflect the broader cultural influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Restoration event from which it sprang. It is not meant to ignore the request from the Church that its official name be used but rather to acknowledge that the project I undertake here is provisional, unofficial, and work that—due to its focus on the Book of Mormon, which remains a book of scripture for multiple churches and congregations that trace their lineage back to Joseph Smith and the Restoration in one way or another—consciously operates within the broader space of “Mormonisms.”

To gain a certain perspective on all these questions, I want to turn to one of the more convoluted sections of the Book of Mormon: the book of Mosiah. The book of Mosiah follows one of the most temporally jarring sections in all scripture: the Words of Mormon. Within the Words of Mormon, the authorial voice of Mormon₂ breaks in, rupturing the narrative expectations in place following Amaleki₁'s words at the end of Omni and collapsing the linear, temporal distance of the Lehite narrative. For the contemporary reader, Mormon₂ speaks as a voice that is simultaneously future—the future editor making his efforts at shaping scripture explicit—and past—the past prophetic voice speaking from a lineage and cultural context that, despite the connective tissue of covenant, in some ways feels utterly alien to our modern ears. Following the Words of Mormon, the book of Mosiah evidences the shock of Mormon₂'s interruption through literary means. The book of Mosiah exhibits a type of temporal rippling—a surging back and forth that continues to interrupt the expectation of linear history—that occurs as an ongoing witness to the aftereffects that result from Mormon₂'s unanticipated rupturing of the narrative. In the book of Mosiah, the narrative backtracks, returning from Mormon₂'s future to the King Benjamin referenced by Amaleki₁ back in Omni (Omni 1:23–25), moving through King Benjamin's discourse (Mosiah 1–6), through Mosiah₂'s coronation (Mosiah 6:3), and into Ammon's encounter with the subjugated King Limhi (Mosiah 7–8). The narrative is then interrupted and thrust back several generations into the past via the record of Zeniff (Mosiah 9–21:27), recounting the journey first alluded to by Amaleki₁ back in Omni (Omni 1:27–28) and then following the Zeniff-Noah₃-Limhi narrative (Mosiah 7–25) with its own internal excursions and explorations.

It is worth noting that another temporal ripple occurs within the Noah₃ portion of the Zeniff-Noah₃-Limhi narrative during Noah₃'s encounter with Abinadi. The trial of Abinadi begins as Noah₃'s priests question the prophet concerning the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10; in

response, Abinadi in turn brings the text of the Law of Moses—initially Exodus 20:1–4, and then verses 4–17 of the same chapter though with several alterations—into the discussion. Abinadi then continues to return to the words of past prophets in his citation, discussion, and explicative likening of Isaiah 52–53 in Mosiah 14–15.² These references to external scriptural texts are not as temporally jarring as the switch from Amaleki₁ to Mormon₂ in the transition from Omni to the Words of Mormon, and I am not arguing that every quotation of a past prophet or scripture within the Book of Mormon narrative equates to a significant temporal disturbance. However, within the context of the temporally convoluted texture of the book of Mosiah, these quotations, and especially Abinadi's own explication and interweaving of the Isaianic texts in his own preaching in Mosiah 15–16, contribute to the overall sensation of the multiple temporal narrative disturbances taking place throughout the book of Mosiah.

When Zeniff's record finishes, the narrative returns to Limhi and Ammon, recounting their escape and return to Zarahemla and Mosiah₂ (Mosiah 21:28–22), who was last seen in Mosiah 7:2. The text appears to be heading toward a general sense of the narrative present and reconciliation as Limhi's people join with Mosiah₂'s people in Mosiah 22, but that narrative present is deferred again by another flashback to the Alma₁-Amulon narrative (Mosiah 23–24), which is a continuation of the Alma₁ narrative (Mosiah 17–18) that initially occurs within the Noah₃ portion (Mosiah 11–19) of the Zeniff-Noah₃-Limhi

2. For helpful discussions concerning “likening” as initially practiced by Nephi₁ as a specific process for reading and reworking Isaiah's words via the spirit of prophecy, see Joseph M. Spencer's excellent books *The Vision of All: Twenty-five Lectures on Isaiah in Nephi's Record* (Salt Lake City: Kofford, 2016), 74–79; and *1st Nephi: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2020), 21–22. While Abinadi's approach to Isaiah is distinct from that of Nephi₁, it is important to consider the ways that Abinadi's own fluency within the Isaianic text may derive from the role Isaiah's words played in the initial Nephite culture due to Nephi's likening project.

narrative (Mosiah 7–25). Strikingly, Mosiah 23 contains an overt interruption by Mormon₂'s voice in verse 23,³ such that this second flashback to the Alma₁-Amulon narrative is further temporally strained between narratively past events (Alma₁-Amulon's story) and future editorializing assessment (Mormon₂'s explanation and promise). Up until this point, Mormon₂'s explicit voice has appeared overtly twice within the book of Mosiah, each time providing a brief heading prior to the two flashbacks (the record of Zeniff [Mosiah 9] and the account of Alma₁'s people [Mosiah 23]) to alert the reader to the interruption. However, in Mosiah 23:23, Mormon₂'s editorial voice interrupts the narrative flow of the text through the use of the first person "I" in a manner that forces the reader to remember Mormon₂'s temporally future position as the redactive force and voice operating throughout the book of Mosiah. In other words, Mormon₂'s overt textual presence in Mosiah 23:23 contributes substantially to the aftershocks or temporal ripples that pervade the book of Mosiah following his initial narrative interruption in the Words of Mormon.⁴ At last, however, the narrative settles somewhat with all participants gathered together

3. "For behold, I will show unto you that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob." All citations of the Book of Mormon text are taken from the *Maxwell Institute Study Edition*, edited by Grant Hardy (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2018).

4. Note that Mormon₂'s editorial presence can additionally be seen and felt in a number of indirect ways, ranging from the choices regarding which sources to utilize, which to include without redaction, and which to summarize, as well as the ways the compositional choices of redacted or summarized passages inherently reflect Mormon₂'s own editorial direction and overarching project. See, for example, Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 97–120; Grant Hardy, "Mormon as Editor," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, edited by John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo: FARMS, 1991), 15–28; and Thomas W. Mackay, "Mormon as Editor: A Study in Colophons, Headers, and Source Indicators," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993): 90–109.

under Mosiah₂'s rule; the final few chapters of the book of Mosiah are relatively temporally and narratively stable, and the irruptive force of Mormon₂'s preceding interruption appears to have calmed.⁵

I think it is significant that the temporal and narrative rippling throughout the book of Mosiah is centered around the appearance, translation, and eventual sharing of textual records. The book of Mosiah is itself an explicitly redacted text—Mormon₂ has just memorably shown us his editorial hand in the Words of Mormon, and then we see that hand at work throughout the book of Mosiah. While we don't know how many of the cuts, transitions, and insertions are Mormon₂'s, we know that we are reading a text that has been worked, and it is clear that that text is comprised of several accounts from various perspectives and records.

Embedded in this narrative web, we find another mysterious text: a set of twenty-four gold plates, brought back to Limhi by a group of forty explorers who had been sent out to find the way back to Zarahemla. They failed to find Zarahemla, but they did encounter a ruined land, covered with the bones of men and beasts and buildings. In order to provide a witness that their description is true, they bring back metal armor, rusted swords, and the twenty-four golden plates.⁶ However, the plates are undecipherable, and Limhi asks Ammon if he knows anyone able to interpret or translate the unreadable record: "And I say unto thee again: Knowest thou of any one that can translate? For I am desirous that these records should be translated into our language; for, perhaps,

5. Although the narrative proceeds in a temporally linear manner throughout these final chapters of Mosiah, the translation of the twenty-four plates (which will be discussed in further detail momentarily) referenced in Mosiah 28:10–19 does allude to the undetermined past of a destroyed people as well as their origin from the time of the Tower of Babel and further back to Adam, thus bringing the dynamic flux between past, present, and future (in the promise that the translated contents will be shared later on in the Book of Mormon [verse 19]) thematically back into the text.

6. See Mosiah 8:9–11.

they will give us a knowledge of a remnant of the people who have been destroyed, from whence these records came; or, perhaps, they will give us a knowledge of this very people who have been destroyed; and I am desirous to know the cause of their destruction” (Mosiah 8:12). Limhi calls himself “desirous”—he is filled with desire that the records be translated and understood, and for what appears to be very pragmatic reasons: overall, he wants to know the cause of such a catastrophic and total destruction. Ammon reassures Limhi that Mosiah has not only the capacity to produce such a translation but also the means—several interpreters that, with God’s aid, allow an authorized person access to hidden items, including unreadable texts.⁷ The divinely capacitated person able to make this translation is then identified as a seer, a combination of revelator and prophet whose knowledge is explicitly tied to the theme of temporal disturbance: they can know both the past and the future, the sum total of which comprises a whole able to be revealed, uncovered, unhidden, un-secreted—in other words, known.⁸ Limhi rejoices to hear that the mystery in his possession can be revealed through God’s prepared intervention in the world, and he derides the inferior knowledge of men, which is limited precisely because “they will not seek *wisdom*, neither do they desire that she should rule over them” (Mosiah 8:20; my emphasis).

7. “Now Ammon said unto him, ‘I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters, and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer’” (Mosiah 8:13).

8. “But a seer can know things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known” (Mosiah 8:17). See also verses 14–16.

A few key points to draw out from this particular story. First: Limhi is ostensibly interested in the plates for pragmatic reasons, most importantly the possibility that they may contain historical knowledge concerning the cause of the massive destruction encountered by his explorers. As the political leader of his people, Limhi is rightly concerned with the group's viability and survival, and his desire for knowledge and his anxiety in seeking out a translator are correctly understood in this context. However, the text exhibits a marked shift from the historical to the theological: Limhi's original concerns center around knowing the historical "cause" of the destruction, but by verse 19 he characterizes the plates' contents as containing a "great mystery" that will be revealed through the interpreters, which operate through divine power.⁹ This shift in terminology points toward a shift from the historical to the theological, and Limhi's closing prayer of praise in the final verses of the chapter further develops the theological register, contrasting the "understandings . . . of men" (i.e., the realm of historical knowledge) with "wisdom," personified by Limhi as a ruling goddess.¹⁰ It is important to note that the actual content of the twenty-four gold plates is not presumed to change in this shift. Rather, the content, once seen through the interpreters as material markers of God's power on earth, is received with a different sort of care: a desire for discrete historical knowledge changes into care for mystery and a desire for the rule of wisdom. What has changed, then,

9. "The king rejoiced exceedingly and gave thanks to God, saying, 'Doubtless a great mystery is contained within these plates, and these interpreters were doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men'" (Mosiah 8:19).

10. "O how marvelous are the works of the Lord, and how long doth he suffer with his people; yea, and how blind and impenetrable are the understandings of the children of men; for they will not seek wisdom, neither do they desire that she should rule over them! Yea, they are as a wild flock which fleeth from the shepherd, and scattereth, and are driven, and are devoured by the beasts of the forest" (Mosiah 8:20–21).

is not the content but Limhi himself: his perspective on the plates and his relationship to them have shifted from one of hierarchical ownership, use, and appropriation to one of humility, gratitude, and witness. This change marks the performative force of the theological within the narrative:¹¹ the words shared by Ammon convey something in excess

11. My usage of the terms “performative” and “constative” is informed by the work developed by John L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962). In it, Austin posits a distinction between “constative” and “performative” utterances. A constative utterance conveys content that is either true or false and is measured by its truth-value. In a constative utterance, the gap between words and things remains intact: the word is not, itself, the thing it signifies but remains a referential sign. In contrast, in a performative utterance that gap collapses in that the word itself does or accomplishes the act it simultaneously refers to. Performative utterances are not descriptive (as are constative utterances) but instead active: a performative utterance changes something in the actual world. A performative utterance is therefore not true or false but rather successful or unsuccessful to one degree or another (Austin calls these conditions of success “felicity conditions”—a performative utterance is either “happy” [successful] or “unhappy” [unsuccessful].) Austin illustrates the performative in various ways, such as the phrase used by the priest performing a marriage: “I now pronounce you man and wife.” It is in the act of actually saying those words that the marriage is pronounced, effected, and in force. The phrase is neither true nor false but either felicitous (if carried out by someone with the proper authority, in the proper circumstances, etc.) or infelicitous. After developing this initial distinction between the constative and the performative, Austin then probes, problematizes, and clarifies the construct until he ultimately develops a more nuanced approach. He argues that ultimately, the constative and the performative are *not* distinct categories or classes into which all utterances can be divided but instead are a bit closer to an aspect or dimension that is manifest in a specific, individual utterance. Thus, every utterance has something like both a performative and a constative dimension: it has meaning (content understood) as well as force (content accomplished). In this sense, the performative force of an utterance provides a measure of its effectiveness (its felicity/success) as it is understood via its specific discursive contexts. Distinct contexts may increase or decrease the felicity of an identical utterance, hence Austin’s characterization of the performative

of their historical content, and while Limhi understands the historical content shared by Ammon—he understands that there is a man who is a seer and who has the interpreters through which he can translate the text—the effect of that content exhibits performative force, evidenced through Limhi’s own change in register and rhetoric. Ammon’s words convey constative content (there is a seer who has interpreters and can translate), but their performative force lies in the way those words actively witness God, and in doing so, call Limhi to change himself as he reworks his understanding of God’s relationship to the world. Limhi’s world has been reshaped and understood anew through the words Ammon shares: it is now a world in which God reveals mysteries to mankind and is praised.

Second: there is a physical component to this shift into the theological register, and it is both material and multiple. Ammon tells Limhi that he knows a man capable of producing the desired translation by means of some type of material objects, which are identified as interpreters. We know that the interpreters are used in some way in the process of seeing, we know that they are “things,” and we know that their use must be directed by God (Mosiah 8:13). These material objects, which are handled and manipulated by a human being, are things that are hidden, either in time as the past or the future, or hidden in being—in the mode of their existence—i.e., through secrecy, inaccessibility,

force; for Austin, every utterance occurs within a field of forces that foregrounds its contexts and the way those contexts shape the utterance’s specific felicity, thus locating the utterance within a virtual map of its possible/potential uses. This footnote is, of course, unable to do justice to Austin’s project but hopefully helps to provide a brief orientation to the theoretical underpinnings of the terms I use here. For those interested in more details, Austin provides a concise orientation to his project in “Performative Utterances,” *Philosophical Papers*, edited by J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 220–39; of course the aforementioned *How to Do Things with Words* gives even greater detail.

or unknowability. These hidden things “shall come to light,” through which they will be known, comprehended, understood, seen, made visible, etc. (Mosiah 8:17). These interpreters act as the material means through which mystery is translated into knowledge. Thus translated, the once-mystery-now-knowledge witnesses the sealing of heaven and earth through that very act of translative permeability. By sealing, I mean to designate the way in which the things of heaven are brought into earth, and the things of earth are brought into heaven. Ammon characterizes the physical component of the interpreters’ function as the material site for the divine—a material reality on earth that manifests and witnesses God’s will and power while also translating that testimony into something that can be distributed, consumed, and even replicated on earth while maintaining its connection to the divine. The promise of textual translation made by Ammon to Limhi exhibits a performative force that rewrites the physical and the material in terms of its already potentiated divinity, and the interpreters serve as the material instantiation of that promise.

Third: beyond this materiality, I want to especially pay attention to the interpreters’ multiplicity. Ammon clearly identifies the interpreters as multiple—they are “things,” not a thing, and “interpreters,” not an interpreter (Mosiah 8:13). Whatever their material composition, they are not a single, solitary item: they are multiple things that are used together in order to bring about translation. Now, the following line of thought is admittedly hypothetical and derives from a subjective personal experience, but I think it is important to consider the potential implications from having multiple things used as interpreters, especially when their use involves the eyes and sight in some way.¹² My question is: why was more than one interpreter involved in the process? Why not just a single stone? Can’t God translate through some singular

12. We know from Mosiah 28:13 that these particular interpreters are described as two stones set into two bow rims, somewhat like glasses.

thing? My oldest daughter was born with a congenital eye defect that has left her in danger of losing her sight in her left eye. We have spent years doing daily eye therapy, patching, and having multiple surgeries all in order to preserve the sight in the affected eye. The result is that even looking through an incredibly powerful lens in her glasses, she can only achieve approximately 20/60 vision in her left eye. Why go through all this effort, especially when the result is not perfect vision? In essence, it is because we value perspective. Her sight, though not perfect, is better—truer—when she uses both eyes. Multiple interpreters may provide a similar sort of perspective. And, to push this hypothetical reading further, I would argue that multiple interpretations—from multiple people with multiple skills and multiple views—would again present a better—truer—perspective.

I have been using the text of Mosiah 8 to try to gain some sort of perspective on the type of relationship that exists between scripture and performative theology. In the background, though, remains the question of the ways in which performative theology may or may not exhibit some sort of inherent “Mormonness.” In this text, I have highlighted an overarching context of non-linear narrative temporality, which makes the multiple authorial and editorial voices and perspectives involved in textual composition, transmission, and reception explicit. I have tried to bring into focus the way that texts, when they are inscribed within the theological register as “mystery” rather than the historical register as “fact,” are potentiated as scripture and, as such, understood through wisdom’s rule rather than history’s measure. I have argued that this narrative exhibits a particular attention to the concept of materiality, and that this attention configures translation in terms of an uncovering or revealing that witnesses the ways in which heaven and earth are intermingled relationally, sealed up together. This reading suggests that the act of scriptural translation (including the individual translation accomplished in reading) can be viewed in terms of what it, in its material phenomena, actually does—its act of witnessing

the relationship between heaven and earth—rather than necessarily remaining only concerned with what the scripture itself indicates (i.e., its constative dimension). And finally, I have suggested a reading of the multiplicity of the interpreters themselves that positions that multiplicity as an argument for ongoing, open-ended readings from a variety of readers, all with the aim of producing a truer perspective, in which truer means *more* fully (but simultaneously *never* fully) realized rather than the last word.

I am trying to read Mosiah 8 in a way that looks closely at its constative content, paying attention to what it says and how it says it, and then looks again, and again, and again in order to try to peer into the way this particular text witnesses scripture as a material phenomenon, embedded in time and transmitted through physical means. In doing so, I am attempting to draw out the way in which this witnessing is both the end and the means of this text: the narrative relates the story of Limhi's shift from the historical to the theological register as effected by Ammon's witnessing words, and in doing so, the text simultaneously witnesses as scripture to us as readers, inviting us to reconsider our own material and temporal relationship with God—in other words, inviting us to reconsider our own repentance. The relationship between scripture and performative theology that I can discern through this process is one that ultimately centers on what I call care.

Performative theology is fundamentally grounded on a practice of careful reading and caring rereading. It commits to the scriptural text and honors that commitment by refusing to curtail scripture's ongoing, continuously potentiated capacity for connection and community. It is impossible to take up the theological task without a deep and abiding sense of care for the text being read. Note that care is not, at root, concerned with belief—the theologian does not need to have some sort of impermeable testimony of the divine inspiration behind the scriptural text in question, but she does need to care for it, and care deeply enough to seek the immanence of its performative force. She must

believe that these words are, in terms of their material and temporal effects, capable of changing a materially constituted and temporally situated world.

The theologian cares for scripture as a parent cares for a child. A parent does not dictate or prescribe what a child may or may not be or become. Instead, they accept the gift of the child's becoming. The child's very existence presents the parent with a daily mystery, an ongoing question, and the parent remains attentive. The child unfolds anew each day, different, changed by what has passed, always oriented toward an unmarked future, and the parent listens, and talks, and listens again. The parent cares for the child through cultivation and conversation, and that care is manifest in a relationship that cannot, constitutively, end.

I am trying to think through the question "Is there anything particularly Mormon about the project of performative theology?" I think at least a partial answer lies in this relationship between the theologian and scripture, which is a relationship grounded in a particular, and perhaps peculiar, care. To be clear, I am not claiming that it would be impossible to engage performative theology outside Mormonism—such a claim makes no sense to me, given Mormonism's insatiable appetite for truths. But I do think that there is something very Mormon surrounding performative theology's insistence on this specific type of care. The task that undergirds the project of performative theology—the careful reading and the caring rereading—is a task that is at heart temporally irruptive in that it refuses closure. The commitment in this care is a commitment that in some sense mimics the contours of covenant: ongoing, open, without end. In other words, care is concerned with the promise and project of gathering. Care configured in this way strikes me as Mormon but does not bind me to Mormonism in any essential way. Instead, the commitment to the text manifested as care in performative theology is a commitment to rereading, and as such also an ongoing commitment to community. To reread a text in

openness is to acknowledge one's own inherent incompleteness as a reader. A true commitment to rereading is a commitment to not only reread as oneself but to also invite and listen to others as they engage the text through their own rereadings. In this sense, care in performative theology constructs community.

In performative theology, care delineates a gathered community. To be gathered, the voice of Christ tells the people mourning the destruction following his death, is to be sheltered: "how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (3 Nephi 10:4). This shelter—a mother hen's outstretched wing—is inadequate, provisional, and temporary. It cannot force the chicks to stay with the mother, and while it may deflect some dangers, it cannot provide comprehensive protection against or a sealing off from the outside world. To be gathered—to be sheltered by a fragile wing, an extension of a maternal body seeking children—is to remain attuned to the ways feathers and air work together in their mutually unsubstantial natures to create a force that repeatedly reaches out, seeking the unaware, covering the wandering, and sheltering the absorbed. To be gathered is to look up and still not see what is coming, for one only sees the familiar arc of a mother's wing. To be gathered is to turn and, surprised, recognize the familial nature of those whose lives have been haphazardly swept up with our own before we manage to leave once again.

A gathered community is a community created by the kind of care that keeps on gathering despite the constitutive inadequacy of the shelter and the only partial awareness of the participants. Such care is relentless and ongoing. The care of gathering is a care undeterred by the logical futility of the project. This care—the care of the gathering hen—both motivates and manifests the creation of community within the ongoing commitments of performative theology. And it is in this community—a community of caring rereaders committed to the open potential of the scriptural text—that I see a core kernel of Mormonism

within the project of performative theology. Performative theology is Mormon, then, in the sense that it arises from the kind of care that gathers communities—gathers Zions—through the messy imperfection of an ongoing, unflagging hope.

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A SPELL FOR MOISTURE.

A SPELL OF PRECIPITATION

Ingredients:

- 50-100 grams UNSpun WOOL (CARDED OR UNCARED)
- one handful FRESH SAGEBRUSH
- 3-4 DRIED ROSEHIPS
- one cup WATER FROM A DESERT SPRING

Instructions:

1. Place the wool on the ground outdoors.
2. Build a small fire. Heat the water from the desert spring.
3. Crush the rosehips. Place in a separate cup.
4. When the water comes to a boil, pour it into the cup. Allow to steep for 10-15 minutes.
5. After the tea has steeped & cooled, place the sagebrush in the fire. It should begin to smoke.
6. Drink the tea while the sagebrush is burning.
7. Leave the wool outdoors overnight. If, in the morning, the wool is wet but the ground is dry or vice versa, that means moisture will come soon. Be patient.

BEHOLD, I WILL PUT A FLEECE OF WOOL IN THE FLOOR, AND IF THE DEW BE ON THE FLEECE ONLY, AND IT BE DRY UPON ALL THE EARTH BESIDE, THEN SHALL I KNOW THAT THOU WILT SAVE ISRAEL . . . AS THOU HAST SAID.

JUDGES 6:37



Wool may be carded or uncarded, but should ideally be unspun. This allows water to adhere to it better.



You may use fresh or dried rosehips, depending on the season.



Fresh sagebrush will create the most smoke.

Even though spring water is generally safe to drink, please boil it before consuming.



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A Spell for Moisture
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REVISITING JOSEPH SMITH AND THE AVAILABILITY OF THE BOOK OF ENOCH

Colby Townsend

The book known as 1 Enoch has enjoyed an unwieldy amount of influence since it was originally written in separate parts by different authors from about 200 BCE to 50 CE.¹ Some sections of the book were written prior to the composition of the biblical book of Daniel while others were written well after it.² The book influenced the thought of several authors of New Testament writings,³ early Jewish Rabbinic and Christian patristic sources,⁴ and some medieval sources,⁵

1. James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 16 (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 1984). Throughout this essay I will refer to the full text of this book as 1 Enoch when generally referring to the historical book and the *Book of Enoch* when referring to Richard Laurence's 1821 publication of the text.

2. George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37–82* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 58–59.

3. R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, Volume II: Pseudepigrapha* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 180–81; and Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Gabriele Boccaccini, eds., *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality*, Early Judaism and Its Literature 44 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016).

4. Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122–59.

5. Frederick M. Biggs, *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture: The Apocrypha, Instrumenta Anglistica Mediaevalia 1* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), 8–10.

and then disappeared in the West around the eighth century CE.⁶ Partially preserved in Aramaic, the original language of the book, it is only known in its complete form today in Ethiopic manuscripts. It is designated 1 Enoch to distinguish it from 2 Enoch, an ancient Jewish text preserved in old Slavonic, and 3 Enoch, a text written in Hebrew centuries after both 1 and 2 Enoch.⁷

Too often scholars have assumed that for 1 Enoch to have any influence on an English-speaking author in the modern era the entire book needed to be available to them, specifically Richard Laurence's 1821 English translation.⁸ This essay will complicate this assumption by examining the availability of portions of 1 Enoch in English from the early eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. This is important historical context for scholars who study the influence of 1 Enoch on William Blake (1757–1827), John Flaxman (1755–1826), Thomas Moore (1779–1852), Richard Westall (1765–1836), William Hayley (1745–1820), Lord Byron (1788–1824), and Joseph Smith Jr. (1805–1844), among others.

This essay will primarily contextualize Joseph Smith's textual work in his "Extract of the Prophecy of Enoch," added in his "translation" of the Bible to the brief mention of Enoch in Genesis 5 that constitutes Moses 6:24–7:69 in the LDS canon. I will provide a brief historiographical survey and examine previous work on the subject and then analyze the general knowledge about 1 Enoch during the period 1715–1830 in

6. E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, edited by James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 8.

7. See F. I. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 91–221; and P. Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 223–315.

8. Richard Laurence, *The Book of Enoch The Prophet: An Apocryphal Production, Supposed to Have Been Lost for Ages; but Discovered at the Close of the Last Century in Abyssinia; Now First Translated from an Ethiopic MS. in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: At the University Press for the Author, 1821).

both British and early Anglo-American history. I show that the relevant portions of 1 Enoch for Smith's writings were far better known and broadly discussed than has previously been recognized. During this period English-speaking audiences would have been familiar with the story of the fallen angels and their marriage to human women. They understood this story to be about the separate lineages of Cain and Seth: the sons of God were Seth's children and the daughters of women were Cain's. Miscegenation—the marrying of people from different racial types—was assumed to be the major breach of the covenant between God and the group known as the sons of God. This ties directly to Smith's rewriting of Genesis 1–6 in the book of Moses.

Historiography

Explaining the presence of themes and images from 1 Enoch in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has been puzzling in a variety of scholarly fields. For instance, scholars have long debated how it was that William Blake could have been familiar with the contents of 1 Enoch in his work during the first decades of the nineteenth century. In his 1978 essay, “A Jewel in an Ethiop's Ear,” G. E. Bentley, Jr. assumed that Blake could not have known the contents of 1 Enoch until after 1821 when Laurence's translation was published.⁹ Blake had been working on several illustrations based on passages in 1 Enoch in the years prior to his death, and produced a handful of drawings although he never finished the project. In 1994 John Beer responded to the ongoing discussion by arguing that, “There is, however, one further place of publishing which has apparently been overlooked by everyone who has looked at the problem—including even the 1821 translator, Richard

9. G. E. Bentley, Jr., “A Jewel in an Ethiop's Ear,” in *Blake in His Time*, edited by Robert N. Essick and Donald Pearce (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 230. See also Susan Matthews, *Blake, Sexuality and Bourgeois Politeness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 228, n. 47.

Laurence.”¹⁰ Beer quoted an article in the February 1, 1801 issue of the *Monthly Magazine* printed in London titled, “Concerning the Writings and Readings of Jude.”¹¹ In this short piece the anonymous author was able to discuss several non-canonical texts that the author of Jude quoted in his epistle and summarize some of the contents of 1 Enoch 1–22.¹² The author of the essay provided translations they made based on the Latin text that Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy had previously made available in France. Therefore, according to Beer, some of the content and general substance of 1 Enoch could have been known to English-speaking audiences as early as 1801, and, most importantly, this made available the relevant section for Blake’s project.

In actuality, as Susan Matthews has shown, portions of 1 Enoch had been available in English translation since the beginning of the eighteenth century, making it possible that English readers like Blake could have had access to parts of 1 Enoch well before 1801.¹³ In his 1700 publication *Spicilegium SS. Patrum*, Johann Ernst Grabe published Greek fragments of parts of 1 Enoch.¹⁴ These were translated into English by a Mr. Lewis and published in 1715 in his book *The History of the Seventy-Two Interpreters* in a section titled “The History of the

10. John Beer, “Blake’s Changing View of History: The Impact of the Book of Enoch,” in *Historicizing Blake*, edited by Steve Clark and David Worrall (Houndmills, UK: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 167.

11. Anonymous, “For the Monthly Magazine. Concerning the Writings and Readings of Jude,” *Monthly Magazine* 11, no. 1, Feb. 1, 1801, 18–23.

12. There are 108 chapters today in 1 Enoch. The modern chapter and verse system was set by R. H. Charles in his work on 1 Enoch. See R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 163–281.

13. Susan Matthews, “Blake, Hayley and the History of Sexuality,” in *Blake, Nation and Empire*, edited by Steve Clark and David Worrall (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 93.

14. Joannes Ernestus Grabeus, *Spicilegium SS. Patrum ut et Haereticorum, Seculi post Christum natum I. II. & III.* (Editio Secunda; Oxoniae: E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1700).

Angels, and their Gallantry with the Daughters of Men.”¹⁵ As I will show further below, these three texts offer only a small glimpse to what was available about 1 Enoch in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century English reading circles. There were far more sources published in both Britain and America at that time that support the idea that Blake and others could have had access to at least parts of 1 Enoch when they produced their art and writings.

Similar to Blake studies, scholars in Mormon studies have long assumed that Joseph Smith Jr. could not have been aware of 1 Enoch because Laurence’s translation was only made available in 1821 and Smith began working on his revision of Genesis in the latter half of 1830. Hugh Nibley first popularized this issue in a series of articles published in the LDS Church’s periodical *Ensign* from October 1975 to August 1977.¹⁶ In the series Nibley made connections between the Enochic text Smith added to the King James Version of Genesis 5 and ancient Jewish and Christian pseudepigrapha.¹⁷ The overarching assumption throughout Nibley’s essays was that if you could show that the concepts, language, and motifs in the “Extract of the Prophecy of Enoch” could also be found in ancient Jewish and Christian sources, then there was no other way to describe Smith’s additions to Genesis 5 than as divinely

15. Mr. Lewis, *The History of the Seventy-two Interpreters—to which is added, the History of the Angels, and their Gallantry with the Daughters of Men, written by Enoch the Patriarch. Published in Greek by Dr. Grabe, made English by Mr. Lewis* (London, 1715), 175–96. See also Adam Clarke, *An Account of the English Translations of all the Greek and Roman Classics, and Ecclesiastical Writers* (London: Printed for W. Baynes, 1806), 16.

16. Nibley published his work on 1 Enoch in thirteen parts in the *Ensign*. All of them were brought together in Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, vol. 2 (Provo: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986).

17. For more on the pseudepigrapha see Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, xxi–xxxiv; and George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

inspired. How could he, a poor, uneducated farm boy,¹⁸ have come to know about these ancient traditions except through revelation?¹⁹

It became more difficult for scholars to passively accept Nibley's prior conclusions with the publication in 1987 of D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*,²⁰ and even more so with the expanded and revised edition of the book in 1998.²¹ In the second edition, Quinn added fourteen pages to the first part of chapter 6, "Mormon Scriptures, the Magic World View, and Rural New York's Intellectual Life." Quinn's additional material explored the potential direct or indirect availability of ideas and documents about the biblical figure of Enoch to Smith during 1830 and early 1831 while he revised the first six chapters of Genesis.

In a lengthy section Quinn responded directly to several of Nibley's claims. Nibley had commented at length on the unlikelihood of Smith having access to a copy of Richard Laurence's English translation of 1 Enoch. Because the book was only printed in England, and so recently, Nibley argued that it was unlikely if not impossible for Smith to have had access to the English translation. In responding to Nibley's previous work Quinn noted that Laurence's *Book of Enoch* had another printing in 1828. Nibley did not know this at the time of writing his article, because even the British Museum Library's published catalog mentioned no imprint between 1821 and the 1833 "Second edition,

18. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 6, 112–13. On this issue see Colby Townsend, "Rewriting Eden with the Book of Mormon: Joseph Smith and the Reception of Genesis 1–6 in Early America" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 2019), 75–131.

19. See Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites*, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 5 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1988), 31.

20. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987).

21. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998). All subsequent citations refer to this edition.

corrected and enlarged.” However, published five years after Nibley’s article, the more comprehensive *National Union Catalog of Pre-1956 Imprints* showed that the 1833 edition actually “corrected and enlarged” an 1828 reprinting of Laurence’s Enoch translation. Only one copy of this 1828 imprint now survives, Quinn noted, and it is in the New York Public Library according to his source.²²

Quinn made what appeared to be a significant discovery. The question of the availability of Laurence’s translation of 1 Enoch had moved from the possibility of only one printing being available to Smith to two printings, the 1821 and 1828. Besides these printings, Quinn made it clear in the revised chapter that Nibley downplayed the interest in 1 Enoch during this period. There were several volumes, some available in print in Smith’s area, that not only mentioned Laurence’s new translation, but there was also a commentary on the Bible, “which discussed Laurence’s *Book of Enoch*.”²³

While he may not have investigated the sources that Quinn cited in his book, Salvatore Cirillo depended heavily on Quinn in his master’s thesis, completed in 2010 at Durham University.²⁴ Cirillo’s thesis has been cited in several articles that explore the availability of Laurence’s *Book of Enoch* to Smith, but it has not always been taken very seriously.²⁵

22. Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 191.

23. Quinn, 191.

24. Salvatore Cirillo, “Joseph Smith, Mormonism and Enochic Tradition” (master’s thesis, Durham University, 2010).

25. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel* (Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014), 45, n. 96; and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, “Ancient Affinities within the LDS Book of Enoch, Part One,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 10, n. 25; and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Sorting Out the Sources in Scripture,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 9 (2014): 255–56, n. 156, and 259, n. 169; and Cheryl L. Bruno, “Congruence and Concatenation in Jewish Mystical Literature, American Freemasonry, and Mormon Enoch Writings,” *Journal of Religion and Society* 16 (2014): 4, n. 8.

In a section entitled “Access to Materials,” Cirillo reviewed Nibley’s book in ways similar to Quinn. In response to Nibley’s argument that 1 Enoch was unknown in America up to the time Smith created the “Extract of the Prophecy of Enoch,” Cirillo quoted Quinn’s statement that there was an 1828 printing of Laurence’s *Book of Enoch*. According to Cirillo, Quinn wrote that “Laurence’s 1821 translation had another printing in 1828 just in America.”²⁶ Quinn did not actually note that this publication was “in America.”²⁷ Instead, as noted above, Quinn wrote, “Laurence’s *Book of Enoch* had another printing in 1828.” In paraphrasing Quinn’s passage, Cirillo misquoted him. He replaced “*Book of Enoch*” with “1821 translation” and added “just in America” at the end. Besides the obvious issues of misquotation, there is also the problem of locating this printing.

In the relevant sections of the *National Union Catalog* quoted by Quinn, in volumes 55 and 318, information is provided about the publication of the *Book of Enoch* and the publications of Richard Laurence, respectively. Quinn pointed to the following entry in volume 55, page 313:

Bible. O. T. Apocryphal books. 1 Enoch. English. 1828. Laurence.

The book of Enoch the prophet, an apocryphal production supposed to have been lost for ages, but discovered at the close of the last century in Abyssinia. Oxford. 1828. 8°

NBi 0041105 NN

The final line is the catalog’s assigned number for this printing and indication that it is only found in the New York Public Library (NN). It is not clear how exactly Cirillo got the idea that the 1828 printing listed here was printed in America; the catalog states that it was published in Oxford. There is also no note, as Quinn suggests, that the second edition printed in 1833 was a corrected and enlarged version of the 1828. All that the entry for that printing states is, “2d ed., cor. and enl.”

26. Cirillo, “Joseph Smith, Mormonism and Enochic Tradition,” 73. According to Cirillo’s footnote, this quotation is found in Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 191.

27. Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 191.

One might expect to be able to locate this copy in the New York Public Library, but it does not exist. The Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division does not have any record of ever having an 1828 printing of Laurence's *Book of Enoch*.²⁸ Nor is it the case that the New York Public Library had a copy of an 1828 printing of the *Book of Enoch* and then later removed it from their holdings. A catalog published in 1928 by the Library specifically listed their holdings in Ethiopic and Amharic up to that year.²⁹ In this catalog there are two entries on page 42 about the *Book of Enoch* that were printed in 1838: one in Ethiopic and the other in English.³⁰ The *National Union Catalog* only lists one version of the 1838, the English edition. It is possible that this second Ethiopic edition of Laurence's *Book of Enoch* was mistakenly marked as the 1828 entry in the *National Union Catalog* because there is no evidence that an 1828 printing ever existed outside of the *National Union Catalog* itself. Unfortunately, Quinn's discovery only leads to a dead end.

Jed Woodworth followed Nibley's lead during a summer seminar at Brigham Young University by attempting to situate Smith's "Extract of the Prophecy of Enoch" with specific themes in 1 Enoch, mainly by comparing and contrasting the depiction of God in the two texts.³¹ Later, while working on his biography of Smith, Richard Bushman relied on Woodworth's paper to provide historical background for his

28. Kyle R. Triplett, librarian in the Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Division, email message to author, Oct. 4, 2017.

29. George F. Black, *Ethiopica & Amharica: A List of Works in the New York Public Library* (New York: New York Public Library, 1928).

30. The *National Union Catalog* also claims that the library had a copy of the 1821 printing, but both the 1928 catalog and their current catalog do not support the notion they owned a copy in the twentieth century.

31. Jed L. Woodworth, "Extra-Biblical Enoch Texts in Early American Culture," in *Archive of Restoration Culture: Summer Fellows' Papers, 1997–1999*, edited by Richard L. Bushman (Provo: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, 2000), 185–93.

comments on Smith's "Extract."³² This led Bushman to the inaccurate claim that up to 1830 "modern biblical commentators on Enoch had been restricted to the five verses in Genesis and the three in the New Testament that speak of Enoch's genealogy, prophecy of judgment, and ascent into heaven without dying."³³ Bushman was aware of Quinn's work on the issue and rejected the idea that Smith might have had access to a copy of Laurence's *Book of Enoch*, assuming that Smith could only have known the contents of the book if he had a complete copy.³⁴

This assessment, however, is incorrect, and contemporary scholars of Mormonism must revise their understandings of the place of Enochic literature in Europe and America prior to Smith's revision of the Bible in 1830 according to new research. The new evidence shows that biblical scholars writing in English and other European languages had access to multiple extra-biblical sources on Enoch since at least the medieval period, and in 1601 Isaac Casaubon expanded these sources when he copied extracts from the Greek text of 1 Enoch in the *Chronography of George Syncellus*.³⁵ These extracts were then used and made popular by scholars like Joseph Scaliger the next year.³⁶ Besides this, medieval and Renaissance scholars long had access to references to 1 Enoch in multiple sources.³⁷ In the next section I will analyze the extent to which

32. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 591, n. 51.

33. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 138.

34. Bushman, 591, n. 52.

35. Ariel Hessayon, "Og King of Bashan, Enoch and the Books of Enoch: Extra-Canonical Texts and Interpretations of Genesis 6:1–4," in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 31.

36. Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship, II: Historical Chronology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 544–45, 685–86.

37. Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 160–89.

I have been able to locate the availability of information on 1 Enoch in English sources printed in Britain and the United States in the century leading up to the 1820s.

The Availability of Enoch in English, 1715–1830³⁸

There are numerous English translations, summaries, and media reports about the contents of 1 Enoch printed between 1715 and 1830. English authors had much more of 1 Enoch available to them than just the reference in Jude or a few scattered references in patristic literature. In 1715 Mr. Lewis published an English translation of portions of 1 Enoch taken from the Greek provided in Dr. Grabe's *Spicilegium SS. Patrum*,³⁹ including twenty pages from portions of 1 Enoch 1–22. In 1712, just before Lewis's publication was in print, an English translation of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* was printed in America,⁴⁰ and this text explicitly cites 1 Enoch and discusses many of its themes. It was reprinted again in America soon after and became a popular source for scholarly treatments of world history at the time.⁴¹ Johann Fabricius published his famous *Codex pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti* in 1713. Fabricius was the first to gather together ancient Jewish and

38. Many of the dates associated with the documents cited in this section represent the specific year the edition was printed that I have access to. Some of the documents had been previously published or borrowed much of their information from prior sources.

39. Mr. Lewis, *The History of the Angels, and their Gallantry with the Daughters of Men*.

40. Robert Grossthead [Grosseteste], *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, The Sons of Jacob. Translated out of Greek into Latine, by Robert Grossthead, Sometimes Bishop of Lincoln: And out of his Copy into French and Dutch, and now English. The Three and Fortieth Edition* (New York: Printed and Sold by William and Andrew Bradford, 1712).

41. Robert Grossthead [Grosseteste], *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: The Sons of Jacob* (Boston: Printed by T. Fleet and T. Crump, for Eleazer Phillips in Charlestown, 1716).

Christian texts under the term *pseudepigrapha*, which he coined.⁴² There is a reason he chose such a pejorative name (“false writings”) for his collection.

Several of Fabricius’s contemporaries actually believed that the texts were authentic and could be verified as genuine ancient scripture worthy of inclusion in the Christian canon. The most vocal of these after Fabricius’s initial publication was William Whiston, successor of Isaac Newton as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge. Besides translating Flavius Josephus’s *Antiquities of the Jews*, Whiston compiled many of the texts Fabricius labeled *pseudepigrapha*, translated them into English, and published them in 1727 as *A Collection of Authentick Records Belonging to the Old and New Testament*.⁴³ His text included ten pages of English translation of 1 Enoch and an extended argument in fourteen pages defending the authenticity of the book. The work published by Scaliger, Fabricius, and Whiston would make English audiences for the next hundred years aware that the “prophecy of Enoch,” quoted by the author of the epistle of Jude, was at least partially accessible to them and their contemporaries.

In 1732 John Chapman, a priest of the University of Cambridge, alluded to 1 Enoch in his book *Remarks on a Book Intituled, Christianity as old as the Creation* as “an antient Apocryphal Book of *Enoch*, part of which is still preserv’d, giving a large account of the Angels, their Conduct, and Punishment.” Pointing his readers even further to that book he suggested that if they were interested in “see[ing] a fuller account of this Story” to “consult *Syncellus*, *Joseph Scaliger*,

42. Johann Albert Fabricius, *Codex pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti: Collectus castigatus, testimoniisque, censuris et animadversionibus illustratus à Johanne Alberto* (Hamburg: C. Liebezeit, 1713).

43. William Whiston, *A Collection of Authentick Records Belonging to the Old and New Testament. Translated into English* (London: Printed for the Author, 1727). I have modernized the archaic long s (which looks like this in modern typeset: f) in all quotations in this paper. Spelling and grammar are retained.

Heidegger, and *Fabricius*,” and he provided references to each of the previous publications.⁴⁴

In 1739 the abbé Antoine Banier published *The Mythology and Fables of the Ancients*.⁴⁵ In this volume Banier described how an interpretation based on the Septuagint of Genesis 6 developed in antiquity wherein giants were the offspring of angels and the daughters of men. He noted how the Septuagint, Philo, Josephus, Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and even rabbis and Muslims had adopted it.⁴⁶ Next, he described how 1 Enoch contributed to the widespread influence of this idea, and that it was a very ancient book. Although a “heretical” story, Banier provided a brief account of the narrative of the fallen angels as found in 1 Enoch. His summary incorporates the passages of the book that had recently been published in English by Mr. Lewis and William Whiston.⁴⁷

In 1747 a group of British authors published a multi-volume set titled *An Universal History, from the Earliest Account of Time*.⁴⁸ In the first volume one of the compilers wrote about the history of the world from the Creation to the Flood and noted that copies of 1 Enoch were then believed to be in Ethiopia and that a Mr. Peiresc had “used his utmost endeavours to get it from thence, but to no purpose.” In the body of his commentary on the history of the world, the compiler noted “That Enoch was a prophet, and that some prophecy of his was preserved, either in writing, or by tradition . . . appears from the passage quoted

44. John Chapman, *Remarks on a Book Intituled Christianity as old as the Creation, With Regard to Ecclesiastical Authority* (Cambridge: Printed at the University Press for Cornelius Crownfield, 1732), 33. Names italicized in the original.

45. Abbé Banier, *The Mythology and Fables of the Ancients, Explain'd from History, Vol. I. Translated from the Original French* (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1739).

46. Banier, *Mythology and Fables of the Ancients*, 120.

47. Banier, 121.

48. *An Universal History, from the Earliest Account of Time. Compiled from Original Authors; with A General Index to the Whole*, 65 vols. (London: Printed for T. Osborne, 1747–1766).

thence by St. Jude. However, the piece under the title of The Scripture of Prophecy of Enoch, of which we have some fragments extant (B), is allowed to be a manifest forgery; though several of the fathers had a better opinion of it than it deserves.”⁴⁹ In note B the author refers the reader to the publication of these fragments of 1 Enoch by Joseph Scaliger and in J. Goar’s edition of George Syncellus’s *Chronography*.⁵⁰

In 1752 John Jackson attempted to reconcile all of ancient world history in his *Chronological Antiquities* by closely examining the major sources he had access to, including the Bible and numerous other texts from antiquity. In the first volume he discussed 1 Enoch, including Syncellus’s “Extracts” of the book, and noted how it was “frequently cited” in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Augustine.⁵¹ He argued, with the eleventh-century author George Kedrenos, that the descendants of Seth occupied an area in the upper hills around Eden and the children of Cain in the lower country. Around the year of the world 1000 Seth’s “sons of God” fell in love with some of Cain’s “daughters of men.” This led to a “lawless tyranny” in Babylon and the ancient Near East,⁵² tyrannical because it was not a patriarchal government. Seth’s descendants apostatized and “Injustice, Violence, and Wars ensued.”⁵³ Accordingly, righteous Enoch preached to them in an attempt to save them from wickedness, but their disdain for his preaching was too intense and they turned to violence. Enoch was translated to heaven before they could harm him.

In 1768 an article was published in *The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure* that discussed “Whether the Patriarchs, before

49. *An Universal History*, 1:36. See also pages 400–01 in the second volume.

50. J. Goar, ed., *Georgii monachi quondam Syncelli chronographia et Nicephori patriarchae breviarium chronographicum*, Corpus byzantinae historiae 15 (Roma, 1652).

51. John Jackson, *Chronological Antiquities: or, the Antiquities and Chronology of the Most Ancient Kingdoms, from the Creation of the World, for the Space of Five thousand Years. In Three Volumes* (London: Printed for the Author, 1752), 1:60.

52. Jackson, *Chronological Antiquities*, 60–61.

53. Jackson, 62, nn. 6–7.

the Flood, had delivered their Knowledge by Tradition? and, Whether Enoch wrote before that Period?”⁵⁴ In this essay the anonymous author summarizes the references to 1 Enoch in the patristic literature and responds to the ongoing debate about whether Enoch actually wrote a book, handed down traditions that were later written into a book, or even possibly existed as oral tradition up to the time of the writing of Jude. The author believed that Enoch had written a book and summarized some of the contents of 1 Enoch then known.

Readers across the British American colonies throughout December 1773 would open their newspapers to read about how James Bruce had gifted one of his three manuscript copies of the Ethiopic 1 Enoch to the king of France. Readers in Britain were made aware in September.⁵⁵ On December 1 and in the days following, audiences throughout Pennsylvania would have learned in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* that “Letters from Paris mention, that the Sieur Guys, of the Academy at Marseilles, Secretary to the French King, has had the honour to present to his Majesty, on the part of the Chevalier James Bruce, a celebrated English Traveller, with whom he corresponded, an Abyssinian manuscript, which contains the Prophecy of Enoch. His Majesty has ordered that this manuscript, of which St. Jerome makes mention, and which the late Sieur Colbert had searched for in vain, shall be deposited in his Library.”⁵⁶ The same text was printed in the *Maryland Gazette* on December 9,⁵⁷ and on December 16 it was printed in the *Virginia Gazette* and the *Rind’s Virginia Gazette*.⁵⁸ Bruce would publish

54. Anonymous, “To the Proprietors of the Universal Magazine. Gentlemen, I here send you an Inquiry on a Question of Some Importance, Whether the Patriarchs, before the Flood, had delivered their Knowledge by Tradition? and, Whether Enoch wrote before that Period?” *Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure* 43 (1768): 252–54.

55. *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, no. 1065, Sept. 25, 1883, 1.

56. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, no. 2345, Dec. 1, 1773, 2.

57. *Maryland Gazette* 29, no. 1474, Dec. 9, 1773, 1.

58. *Virginia Gazette*, no. 1168, Dec. 16, 1773, 1; and *Rind’s Virginia Gazette*, no. 397, Dec. 16, 1773, 3.

his *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* in 1790 throughout Great Britain,⁵⁹ and the same year American citizens would be treated to an abridged version of the publication printed in New York.⁶⁰ Both versions describe Bruce's discovery of 1 Enoch.

In 1782 the third edition of William Alexander's *The History of Women* was published in London.⁶¹ Alexander's history began with the antediluvian women of the Bible. He described how soon after Cain and his family were exiled following the death of Abel it did not take long for the group "to abandon themselves to every species of wickedness." They were then known as the Daughters of Men because of their actions, and Seth's righteous line was called the "Sons and Daughters of God."⁶² Seth's descendants lived on a hill near Eden and Cain's down in the valley. After a time, one hundred and twenty of Seth's sons heard music at the bottom of the hill and decided to investigate, and, after seeing beautiful naked women dancing, they were tempted to return from time to time and eventually decided to intermarry with Cain's line.

According to Alexander, this story "gave birth to an opinion, that by the Sons of God were meant Angels," and that this version of the story was based on "a forgery, called the Prophecy of Enoch."⁶³ In a lengthy footnote Alexander provided a summary of the first part of 1 Enoch that by that time was common knowledge. The guardian angels were

59. James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: Printed by J. Ruthven, 1790).

60. Samuel Shaw, *An Interesting Narrative of the Travels of James Bruce, Esq., into Abyssinia, to Discover the Source of the Nile. Abridged from the Original Work* (New York: Reprinted for Berry and Rogers, 1790); and Samuel Shaw, *An Interesting Narrative of the Travels of James Bruce, Esq., into Abyssinia, to Discover the Source of the Nile: Abridged from the Original Work*, 2nd American ed. (Boston: Printed by Samuel Etheridge, 1798).

61. William Alexander, *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time*, Vol. I, 2 vols. (London: Printed for C. Dilly and R. Christopher, 1782).

62. Alexander, *History of Women*, 30.

63. Alexander, 31–32.

enamored by the human women they watched over and made a secret oath to go together and marry the women that they would choose. Their offspring became giants who eventually began to eat humans, which caused the human cries to go up to God. In time, God sent four archangels down to bind and imprison the angels in the earth and to destroy the giants. This wickedness led to the Flood.⁶⁴

By 1783 enough of 1 Enoch was available to English readers that the author Samuel Hoole (1757–1839) wrote a lengthy poem based on the angel Azazel of 1 Enoch.⁶⁵ At the beginning of the original publication a three-page “Advertisement” was added to provide context for the readers of the poem, since “many Readers may be unacquainted with Azäel, the chief Agent in the machinery of the . . . Poem.” According to the author of the advertisement, “It was supposed by Josephus, Philo Judæus, and several others, that Angels, before the flood, were enamoured of women; but this opinion was chiefly propagated by a forgery entitled The Prophecy of Enoch.”⁶⁶

Further, the “watching angels, fell in love with [the daughters of men], and proposed to one another, that they should go down, and attach themselves to the daughters of Eve.” The author of the advertisement knew the names of several of these angels and provided enough context for the reader of the poem to be familiar with the contents of most of the Book of Watchers, or 1 Enoch 1–36. Hoole’s poem shows a deep awareness of the contents of 1 Enoch and portrays the uneasiness of the relationships between the fallen angels and their human wives.

A shift in individual opinion about the story of the fallen angels and the daughters of men is found in William Hayley’s 1786 publication *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids*.⁶⁷ After first

64. Alexander, 32.

65. Samuel Hoole, *Aurelia; or, The Contest: An Heroi-Comic Poem; in Four Cantos* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1783).

66. Hoole, *Aurelia*, v.

67. William Hayley, *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids. In Three Volumes, Vol. II* (Dublin: Printed for Messrs. White, Byrne, Cash, and Moore, 1786).

attacking and dismissing the story, Hayley reverts his position and states that “I was grossly mistaken in my conjectural account of antediluvian virginity,” and that a new discovery made by a renowned traveling friend “destroys my hypothesis.”⁶⁸ Bruce, Hayley’s friend, had written him a letter from Spain explaining the discovery and how he could “clearly prove that the fragment . . . must have proceeded from the pen of Enoch himself . . . and that he can demonstrate, by unanswerable arguments, that this fragment was contained among those very writings of Enoch which the pious Tertullian declared he had perused.”⁶⁹ Although much of what Hayley wrote about this story in his *Essay* is disconnected from the reality of Bruce’s discovery,⁷⁰ it does offer another example of the widespread knowledge about what Bruce had found.

By 1797 the *Encyclopædia Britannica* included an entry on Enoch that listed contemporary approaches to explaining the relationship between Jude 14–15 and 1 Enoch. According to the editors, “The question is, whether the apostle took this passage out of any particular book written by Enoch, which might be extant in the first ages of the church? whether he received it by tradition? or lastly, by some particular revelation?”⁷¹ After describing some of the ancient Christian patristic commentary on 1 Enoch, the editors turn to Scaliger and then Greek and rabbinic traditions. These three options for interpreting the relationship between the epistle of Jude and 1 Enoch remained normative until at least 1830.

Although many British and American publications had already previously engaged extensively with 1 Enoch up to the year 1800, more direct analyses on the text began to appear in earnest in 1801. In the February 1801 issue of the *Monthly Magazine; or, British Register*, an

68. Hayley, *Essay on Old Maids*, 14–15.

69. Hayley, 15.

70. Matthews, “Blake, Hayley and the History of Sexuality,” 92–93.

71. *Encyclopædia Britannica; Or, A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature, The Third Edition, In Eighteen Volumes, Greatly Improved, Vol. VI* (Edinburgh: Printed for A. Bell and C. MacFarquhar, 1797), 674.

anonymous author wrote “Concerning the Writings and Readings of Jude.”⁷² The author provided a detailed history that engaged with several ancient pseudepigrapha, including Fourth Ezra, the Assumption of Moses, and 1 Enoch.

1 Enoch received special attention, and the author described seventeenth-century failed attempts to discover a full copy of the book in Ethiopia until the discovery made by Bruce. Since Bruce left a copy of 1 Enoch in Paris, another one in London, and kept one in his own possession, it was no wonder that scholars would be interested in seeing these copies for themselves. The author of the essay provides an English translation of “extracts” from 1 Enoch that are designated in the modern scholarly chapter and verse system as 1 Enoch 1:1–2:3; 6:1–13:10; 14:8–15:11; 22:5–7; and 32:1–6, which he made based on the Latin translation of C. G. Woide. Woide had himself traveled to Paris to make a copy of the manuscript of 1 Enoch Bruce had deposited there.⁷³ That year, 1801, the *Monthly Magazine* also featured two more essays that either mentioned or directly commented on 1 Enoch, one published in March and the other in May.⁷⁴

Not long after this publication in 1801 parts of 1 Enoch were again translated into English and published to a broad audience, this time in both Britain and America. In January 1806 the *Orthodox Churchman's Magazine and Review* published an essay on the “Apocryphal Book of Enoch” by an anonymous author only identifying himself as “W.”⁷⁵ The author begins by assuming that all of the journal's readers are familiar

72. Anonymous, “Concerning the Writings and Readings of Jude,” *Monthly Magazine; or, British Register* 2, no. 1 (Feb. 1801): 18–23.

73. Anonymous, “Writings and Readings of Jude,” 20–23.

74. Anonymous, “To the Editor of the Monthly Magazine,” *Monthly Magazine; or, British Register* 2, no. 2 (Mar. 1801): 132; and Anonymous, “Remarks on the Book of Enoch,” *Monthly Magazine; or, British Register* 2, no. 4 (May 1801): 300–01.

75. W., “Apocryphal Book of Enoch,” *Orthodox Churchman's Magazine and Review* 10 (Jan. 1806): 24–28.

with the passage in Jude that references a prophecy of Enoch and how the Ethiopians have long had this prophecy in their canon in 1 Enoch. The author notes the failed attempts in the seventeenth century to obtain a copy of the Ethiopian text and the successful recovery by Bruce of his manuscripts.

This author likewise mentions Dr. Woide's travel and copying of the manuscript of 1 Enoch in Paris, and how the source for his English translation is the French scholar M. de Sacy, who "has published some extracts of this book."⁷⁶ The bulk of the essay is a fresh English translation of 1 Enoch, and the contents included are slightly different from that found in the 1801 publication. W. translated 1 Enoch 1:1–9; 6:1–8:4; 22:5–7; and 32:1–6 and made a few errors in the identification of chapter headings. The article was reprinted in the February 1808 issue of the *Churchman's Magazine* in New York.⁷⁷

Several more references to 1 Enoch were made in 1801,⁷⁸ 1806,⁷⁹ 1809,⁸⁰ 1810,⁸¹ 1811,⁸² and 1813⁸³ in both Britain and America. In 1812

76. W., "Apocryphal Book of Enoch," 25.

77. W., 68–71.

78. Asia, "On the Prophecy of Enoch," in *The Baptist Annual Register, for 1801 and 1802, Vol. 4*, edited by John Rippon (London: Sold by Button and Conder, 1803), 845–50.

79. George Pretyman, *An Introduction to the Study of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by Kimber, Conrad, and Co., 1806), 333. Pretyman notes the belief that 1 Enoch was a forgery of the second century CE.

80. Abraham Rees, *The Cyclopædia; Or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature, Vol. XIII*, 41 vols. (Philadelphia: Published by Samuel F. Bradford, 1806–1820). See the entry under "Enoch."

81. William Cave, *A Complete History of the Lives, Acts, and Martyrdoms of the Holy Apostles, Vol. I* (Philadelphia: Published by Solomon Wiatt, 1810), 333–40.

82. W. R., "The Prophecy of Enoch," in *The Baptist Magazine for 1811, Vol. III* (London: Sold by W. Button, 1811), 485–90.

83. Elijah Parish, *Sacred Geography: Or, A Gazetteer of the Bible* (Boston: Published by Samuel T. Armstrong, 1813); and The Archaeologist, "On the Book of Genesis," *Monthly Magazine; or, British Register* 35, no. 3 (Apr. 1801): 214–17.

1 Enoch was mentioned in several entries in Charles Taylor's edition of *Calmet's Great Dictionary of the Holy Bible*.⁸⁴ Under the entry for "Angel," the editor of the dictionary assumed the readers were aware of 1 Enoch when they noted, "it is true, we find many angels called by their names in the book of Enoch; but that is of no authority." Later, under the entry on "Demon," the editor noted that "The apocryphal book of Enoch, and some passages of the LXX . . . misled several of the ancient fathers, to assert that angels and demons had certain subtile bodies, and particular passions which consist only with material substance." They went on to argue that angels are immaterial and that those angels who "kept not their first estate" were sent directly from heaven to hell without ever having physical forms. Under the second entry on "Enoch" the editor noted the quotation of 1 Enoch in Jude 14–15 and is the exact same as the text found in the 1797 printing of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The editor then went on to describe different religious and geographical traditions about the character Enoch. Finally, under the entry on "Jude" the editor went away from the opinion in the entry on "Enoch" and suggested that Jude might have understood what was inspired within 1 Enoch and what was not.

In 1815 Robert Mayo borrowed material from Banier's 1739 *The Mythology and Fables of the Ancients* to describe the fallen angels and 1 Enoch.⁸⁵ That same year T. Bensley printed *The Works of Nathaniel Lardner* in London and the first volume included Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*. He looked closely at the writings of various early Christians in order to examine what books of the Bible were quoted as authoritative in early Christianity. In the section on Tertullian he spent a significant amount of time on the epistle of Jude and its quotation of 1 Enoch. He noted that the book was also quoted in the Testaments of

84. Charles Taylor, *Calmet's Great Dictionary of the Holy Bible, Historical, Critical, Geographical, and Etymological*. Vol. I, 4 vols. (Charlestown, Mass.: Printed and Sold by Samuel Etheridge, 1812). The volume is not paginated.

85. Robert Mayo, *A New System of Mythology* (Philadelphia: Printed for the Author, 1815), 40–41.

the Twelve Patriarchs, and was dependent on William Whiston's 1727 publication of these texts.⁸⁶ He later noted that Origen quoted 1 Enoch as scripture, but also that Origen stated that the early church as he knew it did not view 1 Enoch "as divine."⁸⁷

The eminent and well-known commentator on the Bible⁸⁸ Adam Clarke mentioned 1 Enoch several times in the final volume of his commentary on the New Testament.⁸⁹ First, he mentioned the book in the preface to 2 John among other non-canonical writings that early Christians had cited. Alluding to 1 Enoch and others, Clarke wrote, "some . . . are come down to the present time, but are convicted of *forgery* by the *sentiment*, the *style*, and the *doctrine*."⁹⁰ In his preface to Jude he quoted heavily from the work of Johann David Michaelis, an eighteenth-century biblical scholar, to explain how it was unclear whether or not Enoch had written a book and if he was actually a prophet.⁹¹ In any case, in his commentary on Jude 14–15 Clarke noted that 1 Enoch "is still extant among the *Abyssinians*."⁹²

More announcements about 1 Enoch were made in both America and Britain. The *Republican Compiler* announced on November 29,

86. Nathaniel Lardner, *The Works of Nathaniel Lardner, D.D., in Five Volumes, Vol. I* (London: Printed by T. Bensley, 1815), 458.

87. Lardner, *Works of Nathaniel Lardner*, 551, 557.

88. See 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).

89. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, Vol. VI* (New York: Published by Andrew Sargeant, 1819).

90. Clarke, *Holy Bible*, n.p. Emphasis in the original.

91. See Johann David Michaelis, *Introduction to the New Testament, Vol. IV*, 4th ed. (London: Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, 1823), 393.

92. Clarke, *Holy Bible*, n.p.

1820 that the renowned biblical scholar Wilhelm Gesenius was working on a translation of 1 Enoch from “the Abyssinian language.”⁹³ Only a few months later the *Maryland Gazette* announced on July 26, 1821 the publication of Laurence’s translation,⁹⁴ and the next year started to see book-length responses to 1 Enoch. John Overton’s *Inquiry into the Truth and Use of the Book of Enoch* explicitly responded to Laurence’s work and built upon it by examining how nineteenth-century Christian scholars might appropriate aspects of the *Book of Enoch* into their understanding of early Judaism and Christianity.⁹⁵ Ultimately Overton found the *Book of Enoch* to be useful and informative in dozens of ways and recommended that his readers form their own opinions of the book by using their own judgment.

In 1822 several British newspapers announced the coming publication of Thomas Moore’s 1823 *The Loves of the Angels* and its literary dependence on the *Book of Enoch*.⁹⁶ In 1823 Thomas Tomkinson’s grandson published in Britain his predecessor’s late-seventeenth-century book *A Practical Discourse, Upon the Epistle, by Jude*.⁹⁷ In it Tomkinson (1631–1710) mentioned the contemporary seventeenth-century approaches to understanding what it was that Jude 14–15 was quoting—whether it was a book, a tradition, or a revelation—and

93. *Republican Compiler* (Gettysburg, Pa.) 3, no. 12, Nov. 29, 1820, 1.

94. *Maryland Gazette and Political Intelligencer* 77, no. 80, July 26, 1821, 3.

95. John Overton, *Inquiry into the Truth and Use of the Book of Enoch, as to its Prophecies, Visions, and Account of Fallen Angels* (London: Printed for the Author, 1822).

96. *Derby Mercury* (England) 91, no. 4711, Oct. 23, 1822, 1; and *Leeds Intelligencer and Yorkshire General Advertiser* 70, no. 3565, Nov. 4, 1822, 4; and Thomas Moore, *The Loves of the Angels: A Poem* (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Orme, and Brown, 1823); and Thomas Moore, *The Works of Thomas Moore, Esq., Complete in Six Volumes, Vol. VI* (New York: Published by G. Smith, 1825), 6–102.

97. Thomas Tomkinson, *A Practical Discourse, Upon the Epistle by Jude* (Deal, UK: Printed for James May, & Joseph Gandar by J. B. Underdown, 1823).

used the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs to argue that the biblical patriarchs had a book of Enoch since they clearly quoted from one in the Testaments. That same year the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* published an excerpt of the first couple chapters from Laurence's *Book of Enoch*.⁹⁸

The year 1825 witnessed an explosion of popular and scholarly publications that either discussed or were dependent on 1 Enoch. *The Works of the Right Hon. Lord Byron* were published in Philadelphia, and included in volume five of that collection was Byron's "Heaven and Earth, A Mystery."⁹⁹ Byron explicitly referenced 1 Enoch, noted that it was preserved by the Ethiopians, that angels and humans could not intermarry because mortals "are sent Upon the earth to toil and die; and they [angels] Are made to minister on high."¹⁰⁰ He also noted, agreeing with the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century consensus, that Genesis 6 was about Cain's and Seth's lines intermarrying.

An article was printed that year in the *Christian Observer* that, although brief, engaged with much of the contemporary knowledge about 1 Enoch.¹⁰¹ The book was quoted by Jude and several early Christians but then lost, partially rediscovered by Joseph Scaliger in George Syncellus's *Chronography*. Some people believed 1 Enoch was a forgery based on Jude, some seventeenth-century scholars argued it could be a Greek translation of a Hebrew or Aramaic original, and

98. "The First Chapter, and Part of the Second, of the Apocryphal Book of Enoch, Containing the Passage Cited by Jude," *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine for the Year 1823* (London: Printed by T. Cordeux, 1823), 239–40.

99. Lord Byron, *The Works of the Right Hon. Lord Byron. In Eight Volumes—Vol. V* (Philadelphia: R. W. Pomeroy, 1825), 227–68.

100. Byron, *Works of Lord Byron*, 248, 251.

101. Y., "To the Elders of the Christian Observer," *The Christian Observer, Conducted by Members of the Established Church, for the Year 182[5], being the Twenty-[Fifth] Volume* (New York: Reprinted and published by Samuel Whiting, 1825), 558–560.

Ludolph failed in his attempts to discover it and it was left to Bruce to make the discovery. Laurence translated and published Bruce's text, and the anonymous author ended the essay by providing a summary of the contents of the *Book of Enoch*.

That same year Thomas Hartwell Horne's *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* was published in Philadelphia,¹⁰² and it incorporated much of the same content as the previously discussed essay except that Horne argued that 1 Enoch was a second-century CE forgery and that the author of 1 Enoch was dependent on the book of Daniel for style and other aspects of their new composition.

Continuing in 1825, James Sabine responded to a book by Walter Balfour in a series of lectures.¹⁰³ Both theologians were focused on explaining hell and the end of the world and disagreed about whether or not 1 Enoch could be helpful in understanding early Jewish and Christian ideas about these topics. Sabine argued that Enoch and Noah prophesied about impending retribution on the wicked and the righteous, and Enoch particularly prophesied about destruction.¹⁰⁴ Sabine argued that whether or not the current *Book of Enoch*, which he implied both he and Balfour had copies of in America but that Balfour had "scarcely glanced" at, was exactly the same as the book that Jude quoted or had been corrupted. For Sabine, what mattered was that the book represents early Jewish thought on Sheol and retribution.¹⁰⁵ In his response to Sabine, Walter Balfour was not interested just in ancient

102. Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, Volume I*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Published by E. Littell, 1825).

103. James Sabine, *A Reply to "An Inquiry into the Scriptural Import of the Words Sheol, Hades, Tartarus, and Gehenna . . . by Walter Balfour" in a Series of Lectures* (Boston: Printed by Ezra Lincoln, 1825).

104. Sabine, *A Reply*, 47, 53.

105. Sabine, 74.

Jewish interpretation but whether or not the writers of apocryphal texts had been divinely inspired or if their ideas had support in the Bible.¹⁰⁶ It is significant that two authors engaged in a public debate in Boston in 1825 both had access to the full text of 1 Enoch.

In 1826 S. S. Schmucker argued that 1 Enoch was a forgery based on Jude 6 and 14–15 and that since the story of the fallen angels had nothing to do with Enoch in the Bible, its forger took the idea for the book from Jude 6.¹⁰⁷ A similar idea about 1 Enoch also influenced Archibald Alexander's *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained*. Alexander noted in his book that in the past the canonicity of the epistle of Jude had been challenged because of its quotation of a few apocryphal sources, especially 1 Enoch. He denied that this makes any difference for Jude's authority because Jude does not say he quoted any book from Enoch, and even if he did, Paul quoted from pagan authors all the time without imputing any canonical status to them.¹⁰⁸

In 1826 two articles on the *Book of Enoch* were published in the *Classical Journal* in Britain.¹⁰⁹ The anonymous "Remarks on Ancient Chronology" was hopeful that the new translation of 1 Enoch, presumably Laurence's translation, would help to explain the antediluvian history

106. Walter Balfour, *A Reply to Mr. J. Sabine's Lectures on the "Inquiry" into the Scriptural Import of the Words Sheol, Hades, Tartarus, and Gehenna* (Boston: Howe & Norton, 1825), 91–93.

107. S. S. Schmucker, *An Elementary Course of Biblical Theology, Translated from the Work of Professors Storr and Flatt, with Additions* (Andover, Mass.: Printed and Published by Flagg & Gould, 1826), 125–26.

108. Archibald Alexander, *The Canon of the Old and New Testaments Ascertained; or, the Bible Complete with the Apocrypha & Unwritten Traditions* (New York: Princeton Press, Printed and Published by D. A. Borrenstein, 1826), 254–55, 261–62.

109. Anonymous, "Remarks on Ancient Chronology, &c.," *Classical Journal* 34, no. 67 (1826): 103–13; and J. M. B., "Remarks on the Prometheus of Æschylus and the Book of Enoch," *Classical Journal* 34, no. 68 (1826): 290–305. It is possible that the same author wrote both of these essays. The *Classical Journal* was available for purchase in the states from the early nineteenth century onward. See "Literary Rooms," *Evening Post* (New York), June 8, 1815.

of the Bible and was aware of the fragments that were available prior to the printing of Laurence's book.¹¹⁰ The second essay explicitly cited Laurence's translation and found no reason to agree with Laurence that Enoch did not author the book himself.¹¹¹ Instead, he relied on Jackson's 1752 *Chronological Antiquities* to argue against Laurence on several points, believing that 1 Enoch was written during the times of the patriarchs.

In July 1827 the *National Gazette*, published in Philadelphia, reprinted an announcement of the sale of Bruce's personal library due to his recent passing. "It includes the Book of Enoch," stated the editorial, "which was first brought into Europe by Mr. Bruce. The three copies of it originally belonging to him (one of which is in Paris, and the other at Oxford), are all that are known to exist of it on our continent."¹¹² Back in Britain a book-length investigation into 1 Enoch by J. M. Butt was published.¹¹³ Butt argued that the book quoted by Jude was in fact 1 Enoch, since that was the common assumption in early Christianity by all those who had the book. He then argued from internal and external evidence that it was authored sometime during the reign of Herod.¹¹⁴ He also explored dozens of other questions related to 1 Enoch and possible reasons why the book was denied entrance into the canon in early Christianity.¹¹⁵

That same year John Oxlee published letters he had written to Richard Laurence about his recent publications on apocryphal texts.¹¹⁶ Oxlee argued against the then common argument that Jude did not necessarily

110. Anonymous, "Remarks on Ancient Chronology," 108.

111. J. M. B., "Prometheus of Æschylus and the Book of Enoch," 297–98.

112. *National Gazette* (Philadelphia) 7, no. 2043, July 7, 1827, 1.

113. J. M. Butt, *The Genuineness of the Book of Enoch Investigated* (London: Printed for L. B. Seeley and Son, 1827).

114. Butt, *Genuineness of the Book of Enoch Investigated*, 3–4.

115. Butt, 12–14.

116. John Oxlee, *Three Letters Humbly Submitted to the Consideration of the Most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of Cashel, on the Recent Apocryphal Publications of his Grace* (York, UK: Printed by Thomas Wilson and Sons, 1827).

view 1 Enoch as an inspired text similar to how Paul quoted Menander and others without viewing their works as divine. Oxlee stated that Jude does not reference 1 Enoch as some heathen poet but a significant Hebrew patriarch. Similar to how the author of Matthew quoted single verses from the eminent Hebrew prophet Isaiah, it would not be logical to argue that Matthew only found those specific verses inspired but not the whole book.¹¹⁷ Oxlee agreed with some other commentators that the book was written sometime between the Babylonian exile and the first century CE.¹¹⁸ By the late 1820s many commentators were already advancing conclusions about 1 Enoch that would become standard academic approaches to the text by the twentieth century.

There were more references in English literature to 1 Enoch in 1828¹¹⁹ and 1829,¹²⁰ and in 1830 there were several significant publications. One briefly mentioned 1 Enoch to observe that it was “of too little value to be preserved,”¹²¹ and another that Enoch was the first astrologer, Abraham a celebrated magician of Chaldea, having inherited “knowledge of the heavenly bodies” from Enoch, and how 1 Enoch was one among at least a couple of other writings from the patriarchs that were lost.¹²² This adds a potentially new way of understanding why Joseph Smith Jr., as

117. Oxlee, *Three Letters*, 105–06.

118. Oxlee, 107.

119. Lord Bolingbroke, “Important Examination,” *Correspondent* (New York) 3, no. 11, Apr. 5, 1828, 165–67.

120. J. P. Dabney, *Annotations on the New Testament: Compiled from the Best Critical Authorities, and Designed for Popular Use. Part II: The Epistles of Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude* (Cambridge, Mass.: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), 560; and Anonymous, “Hints on the Antiquity of Languages, and on the Origin of Alphabetic Writing,” *The Quarterly Journal of Science, Literature, and Art. January to June, 1829* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), 433–36.

121. Warren Skinner, *Essays on the Coming of Christ* (Boston: Printed by G. W. Bazin, 1830), 110.

122. R. R. Madden, *The Mussulman* (Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1830), 32, 47.

well as other early American authors, would focus on expanding the biblical stories of Enoch, Abraham, and the patriarchs.

In July 1829 a review article on Laurence's, Oxlee's, and Butt's books was published in the British journal the *Christian Observer*.¹²³ The next February the *National Gazette* announced the contents of that month's publication in the *Christian Observer*'s American counterpart, the *Religious Magazine*.¹²⁴ This single article distilled into one place all of the major scholarship on 1 Enoch up to that point. The author himself believed strongly that the book was written in the second century CE, but he noted that other scholars believed it was written sometime between the Babylonian exile and the first century CE. He discussed all of the major early Christians who commented on 1 Enoch, its loss in late antiquity, the belief by the seventeenth century that it was in Ethiopia and the failure of Peiresc and others to locate a copy, and the eventual discovery by Bruce.

The author described the history from Bruce to Laurence and the various efforts to get the text into wider circulation by de Sacy and Gesenius until Laurence's successful publication. He described how scholarly approaches to the complicated compositional history of 1 Enoch had already become sophisticated by the early nineteenth century. First Enoch was not just one single book but multiple books that had been brought together into one. He took issue with some of the textual emendations that Laurence made throughout his version of the book and then proceeded to describe in detail the contents of the different books scholars at the time identified had been edited together to form 1 Enoch. In all there were nine separate and distinct books. The

123. Anonymous, "Review of Works on the Book of Enoch," *Christian Observer* (London) 29, no. 331 (July 1829): 417–26.

124. *National Gazette and Literary Register* (Philadelphia) 10, no. 279, Feb. 4, 1830, 3; and Anonymous, "The Book of Enoch," *Religious Magazine or Spirit of the Foreign Theological Journals and Reviews* (Philadelphia) 4, no. 26 (Feb. 1830): 394–400.

author then promised to look at the dating of 1 Enoch closer in a future publication.¹²⁵

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the fact that, contrary to previous treatment of the subject, interest in 1 Enoch did not die down during the period between Bruce's discovery of the book to 1800, or from then until Laurence's translation of the full text of 1 Enoch in 1821. In fact, interest continued to steadily grow, with multiple independent English translations of Syncellus's excerpt of the book becoming available in print up to about 1800. Much of that literature was reprinted in the early United States within only a few years, and then in the 1820s there was an explosion of interest in the book in both Britain and the United States, leading up to Joseph Smith's work in the latter half of 1830. It is fitting that Smith would focus on the character of Enoch for an expansive retelling of Genesis since from 1825 onward so much attention was paid to 1 Enoch in both Britain and the United States.

The documents analyzed in this paper also show that it was possible for a general English-speaking audience to have access to at least the general story found in the Book of Watchers from multiple sources, and those suggest that there was a robust shared tradition about the lost book of Enoch. This tradition, which would have been both textual and oral, dealt with fallen angels, secret oaths by the angels (or Seth's children) to go against God's will, a vision Enoch had of all of history from the Creation to the future destruction of the world, the idea that Enoch was part of an early tradition of scribes and scribal culture, that he or God had to fend off wicked enemies who would not accept the gospel, and that the book was a second-century CE forgery based on the epistle of Jude.

125. Anonymous, "Review of Works on the Book of Enoch," *Christian Observer* (London) 29, no. 332 (Aug. 1829): 496–503. See also "Answers to Correspondents," *Christian Observer* (London) 29, no. 332 (Aug. 1829): 647.

Of utmost importance in analyzing these printed texts is that scholars today recognize that these publications do not represent all of what was available in print during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the transatlantic book trade, nor do they represent fully the conversations that English speakers were having about Enoch in both Britain and the United States. We do not have direct access to the conversations that Protestants would have had on a day-to-day or a week-to-week basis about biblical subjects that they found important, so we must rely on the fragmentary historical record that remains. This paper has only analyzed a fraction of what would have been available in print, and future work should consider British and early Anglo-American manuscript sources to see how the book of Enoch was discussed and, in the case of revivals and weekly sermons, performed in British and early American contexts.¹²⁶

Regarding the discussions in Mormon studies and other literary sub-fields related to contemporaries of Smith, the availability of ideas about 1 Enoch and some of the actual content were far more complicated than has usually been assumed in past scholarship. More recent work in Blake studies has highlighted the fact that Blake did not need to rely solely on Laurence's 1821 *Book of Enoch* in order to perform his work, and it would be advisable for Mormon studies to begin a shift toward recognizing the same in early Mormon history.

126. See Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), xvi, 140–70.

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A SPELL FOR THE SICK
& AFFLICTED.

A SPELL OF HEALING

Ingredients:

- one vial OLIVE OIL
one flask BRANDY
one pinch VARIOUS AROMATIC HERBS
AND SPICES

Instructions:

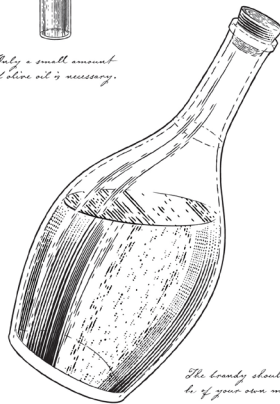
1. Mix the olive oil & spices in a single container.
2. Wash the afflicted person's head & feet with the brandy. If they have any wounds, wash those with the brandy as well.
3. Anoint the afflicted person's head & feet with the olive oil and spices.
4. Continue in prayer & fasting for the continual health of the afflicted person.

BUT A CERTAIN SAMARITAN . . . WENT TO HIM
AND BOUND UP HIS WOUNDS, POURING IN OIL
AND WINE, AND SET HIM ON HIS OWN BEAST,
AND BROUGHT HIM TO AN INN, AND TOOK
CARE OF HIM.

LUKE 10:33-34

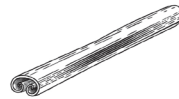


Only a small amount
of olive oil is necessary.



The brandy should ideally
be of your own make.

Cinnamon is the traditional
aromatic spice used for anoint-
ing oil, but other aromatic
spices may also be used.



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THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE LIMITS OF NATURALISTIC CRITERIA: COMPARING JOSEPH SMITH AND ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS

William L. Davis

In an 1879 interview with her son, Emma Smith famously asserted: “My belief is that the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity—I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired.” In support of her declaration, Emma turned from a confessional assertion to a naturalistic line of reasoning, arguing, “for, when [I was] acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having a portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.”¹ Emma’s turn to naturalistic criteria offers an opportunity to explore the persistent relationships that often emerge in Mormon communities between personal testimonies and naturalistic arguments, which usually take the form of direct claims or indirect assumptions about Joseph’s alleged ignorance

This essay is indebted to insights from Brent Metcalfe, David Rodes, Colby Townsend, and the editor and anonymous readers for *Dialogue*.

1. Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 1:542. Hereafter *EMD*.

and illiteracy. Emma's statement offers a template for this pervasive dynamic: her testimony suggests that her *belief* in the Book of Mormon hinged, at least in part, on her *disbelief* in Joseph's ability to produce the work on his own accord.

Emma, of course, was not alone in this attitude. Early accounts of Joseph's intellectual abilities, from critics and followers alike, often emphasize his illiteracy and lack of education; whereas those hostile to him did so in order to assert that another person or persons composed the text (hence the Spalding–Rigdon theory), believers did it in an effort to provide supporting evidence for the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon.² In time, such naturalistic arguments occasionally evolved into complex lists of criteria aimed at disqualifying Smith—or any other individual, for that matter—as the author of the work. In a 1955 devotional at Brigham Young University, the future LDS apostle Hugh B. Brown provided his audience with criteria that would influence subsequent lists of such naturalistic argumentation. “I submit to you that the Prophet Joseph Smith in translating the Book of Mormon did a superhuman task,” Brown declared to his audience. “I ask you students to go out and write a Book of Mormon. . . . I ask you to write, if you can, any kind of a story of the ancient inhabitants of America, and I ask you to write it without any source material.” Brown continued with a list of selective criteria, focusing on the ability to produce multiple chapters devoted to wars, history, visions, prophecies, and the ministry of Jesus Christ. In addition, any undertakers of such a task would need to incorporate “figures of speech, similes, metaphors, narration, exposition, description, oratory, epic, lyric, logic, and parables.” Moreover, alluding to Joseph's age and lack of education, Brown singled

2. Joseph Smith Sr. may well have started the tradition. According to Fayette Lapham, a farmer from nearby Perinton (aka Perrinton), New York, who visited the Smith home in 1829 or 1830, Joseph Sr. referred to Joseph Jr. as “the illiterate.” *EMD* 1:457.

out “those of you who are under twenty” to write the book (Joseph was twenty-three when he dictated the current text), while reminding them that “the man that translated the Book of Mormon was a young man, and he hadn’t had the opportunity of schooling that you have had.”³ Like Emma’s assertions regarding Joseph’s lack of ability, Brown’s declarations offered a buttress for faith based on naturalistic lines of reasoning.

Brown’s list apparently inspired BYU professor Hugh Nibley to produce a similar but more detailed set of criteria. In addition to the general ideas proposed by Brown, Nibley specified that anyone attempting to replicate Joseph’s feat must produce a work “five to six hundred pages in length,” provide the names of hundreds of characters, and “be lavish with cultural and technical details—manners and customs, arts and industries, political and religious institutions, rites, and traditions, include long and complicated military and economic histories,” among several additional requirements.⁴ Brown’s and Nibley’s selective catalogues spurred numerous imitations, often referred to as the “Book of Mormon Challenge.” They might also contain additional exclusionary points of comparison, such as, “You are twenty-three years of age,” “You have had no more than three years of formal school education,” and “Your history must be 531 pages and over 300,000 words in length [at approximately 269,510 words, the Book of Mormon actually falls

3. Hugh B. Brown, “The Profile of a Prophet” (devotional, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Oct. 4, 1955). For a modified transcript, see <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/hugh-b-brown/profile-of-a-prophet/>. For an audio recording, see BYU Speeches, “The Profile of a Prophet | Hugh B. Brown,” YouTube video, 27:04, June 29, 2018, https://youtu.be/QnhPeGI__DY, 17:10–19:55. The quotations follow my own transcription of the original audio recording.

4. Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, edited by John W. Welch, vol. 8 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 221–22.

short of this criterion].”⁵ The popularity of such lists has long saturated the cultural imagination of believers, reinforcing the idea that Joseph’s translation of the Book of Mormon would require, to use Brown’s words, a “superhuman task” to duplicate.

Such frameworks of evaluation, though unofficial and nondoctrinal, ostensibly gratify a need for tangible evidence of divine intervention, and variations of these lists make regular appearances in formal and informal settings. In a recent conference addressing the topic of Joseph Smith’s translation, for example, Richard L. Bushman offered an informal set of criteria that revealed the presence of such framing: “Despite all the naturalist arguments, I still do not believe that no matter what his [Smith’s] genius, he could have done it as himself.” In support of his position, Bushman proposed a comparative framework of naturalistic criteria intended to demonstrate the improbability of Smith’s possible authorship: “What I want is a text of similar complexity, produced under such primitive conditions, with so little background or training or precedence, to turn out his master work—not at the end of his career but at the beginning of his career, just as he’s getting started. That seems to me really beyond anything you could call natural.”⁶ Bushman’s response was, of course, improvised, rather than a formal statement on the matter. Even so, his observations offer a fitting example of the ways in which naturalistic checklists weave their way into informal discussions about the origins of the Book of Mormon,

5. For a common list of criteria, together with commentary, see Jerald and Sandra Tanner, “Book of Mormon Challenge,” *Salt Lake City Messenger* 107, Oct. 2006, <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no107.htm>. For the 269,510-word count, see John W. Welch, “Timing the Translation of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2018): 22.

6. Richard L. Bushman (panel discussion, “New Perspectives on Joseph Smith and Translation” conference, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, sponsored by USU Religious Studies and Faith Matters Foundation, Mar. 16, 2017). See Faith Matters Foundation, “The Translation Team—with highlights,” YouTube video, 18:53, Apr. 27, 2017, <https://youtu.be/E-X5Hsv16BE?t=210>, 3:30–4:06.

influencing opinions and oftentimes buttressing the very foundations of faith.

Within the broader spectrum of Mormon apologetic discourse, the regular appearance of such comparative “proofs” (either as individual issues or collective catalogues) reflects a strong and common tendency to move beyond confessional affirmations—such as testimonies of spiritual witnesses confirming the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon—to decidedly non-confessional appeals to naturalistic criteria.⁷ Nevertheless, such proposals, which directly entangle naturalistic criteria with the effort to strengthen faith, carry inherent and unpredictable risks. Should the proffered checklists fail to distinguish the Book of Mormon in any substantive way from other notable contemporary examples, then such comparisons not only result in the weakening of popular supports to faith but potentially undermine faith itself. As Loyd Isao Ericson cautions, the possibility then exists that “instead of tearing down potential stumbling blocks to faith, Mormon apologetics actually and unknowingly engages in building and establishing those blocks.”⁸ Moreover, such comparisons are burdened with implications of unspoken (and unintended) commentaries on the very nature of faith and belief. The insistent turn to naturalistic criteria in the cultural imagination of believers strongly suggests the existence of an unacknowledged, paradoxical, and potentially incompatible component within the foundations of faith: *belief* in the Book of Mormon contains an embedded *disbelief* in Smith’s capacity to create it, or even to participate actively in its creation.

7. As neither a doctrine nor principle of faith, the issue of plausibility falls technically outside the realm of theological apologetics.

8. Loyd Isao Ericson, “Conceptual Confusion and the Building of Stumbling Blocks of Faith,” in *Perspectives on Mormon Theology: Apologetics*, edited by Blair G. Van Dyke and Loyd Isao Ericson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2017), 209.

Within the community of faith, the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon finds its anchors exclusively in the personal spiritual witnesses and lived experiences of believers, independent of any additional appeals to naturalistic assumptions. Such, at least, is the idealistic and theological claim. The relentless invocations of naturalist arguments, however, trouble this idealism. Whether appearing as broad claims asserting Joseph's alleged ignorance and illiteracy or as detailed catalogues of idiosyncratic criteria, it becomes clear that naturalistic arguments do, in fact, participate in the actual framework of day-to-day belief and workaday faith concerning the origins and authenticity (and therefore the authority) of the Book of Mormon. The pragmatic nature of faith seems not only to reflect a belief in "things which are not seen, which are true" (Alma 32:21), but likewise involves a subjective *disbelief* in alternative possibilities. Thus, doubt comes to play a role in the composition of faith. The embedded reliance on naturalistic arguments, however tangential, therefore presents the uneasy and troubling possibility that a portion of one's faith rests upon a foundation of limited mortal assumptions, constrained within the narrow and finite compass of an individual's personal knowledge, hopes, needs, and experience. As such, the presumably solid rock foundation of faith turns out to contain a lot of destabilizing sand.

Comparing American Seers

With such thoughts on faith and belief serving as a meditative backdrop, we might treat these naturalistic arguments as a convenient analytic framework to compare—and contrast—Joseph Smith and his 1829 translation of the Book of Mormon with Andrew Jackson Davis (1826–1910), another early American "prophet and a seer," and his trance performance of *The Principles of Nature* (1847).⁹ For within this

9. J. Stanley Grimes describes how Davis came to the realization that he "was a prophet and a seer." J. Stanley Grimes, *The Mysteries of Human Nature Explained* (Buffalo, N.Y.: R. M. Wanzer, 1857), 353.

comparison, we find another complex text produced by a speaker with limited formal education and training, created under similar conditions and circumstances, and a work that stands as its young creator's greatest masterpiece, even though the text was created at the dawn of the speaker's career. Davis, like Smith, was raised in a poor household and received little formal education—Davis, in fact, would claim to have received only “little more than five months” of schooling.¹⁰ Davis also received visions and met with angelic messengers, who informed him that he was chosen to reveal important truths to the world. Through a mystical process of mesmeric trance and “conscious clairvoyance,” Davis dictated—without the use of notes, manuscripts, or books—his first and most popular volume, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*, which, at approximately 320,000 words, contains a collection of intricate revelations that many of his readers treated as new scripture.¹¹ Though Davis eventually composed more than thirty books, *The Principles of Nature* would remain “the most famous” and influential text of his career.¹²

These broad-stroke comparisons do not, however, do justice to the compelling and oftentimes uncanny similarities between Smith and Davis. A closer examination of the circumstances surrounding the oral production of their works—both their similarities and important

10. Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Magic Staff: An Autobiography of Andrew Jackson Davis* (New York: J. S. Brown, 1857), 173.

11. Catherine L. Albanese aptly describes Davis's work as “a new Bible of Nature.” See Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 212. See also Grimes, *Mysteries*, 354. Brian Hales estimates that *The Principles of Nature* contains approximately 340,000 words, though I can only account for approximately 320,000. See Brian C. Hales, “Automatic Writing and The Book of Mormon: An Update,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 52, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 5.

12. Anthony A. Walsh, “A Note on the Origin of ‘Modern’ Spiritualism,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 28, no. 2 (Apr. 1973): 170. See also Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 218.

differences—can thus provide crucial insights into the cultural context in which these two fledgling seers performed their respective texts into existence. Moreover, such a comparative exploration alerts us to the problems of invoking arbitrary criteria in a strategic effort to privilege the work of a favored candidate.

The Poughkeepsie Seer

In April of 1829, when Joseph Smith started dictating the Book of Mormon in Harmony, Pennsylvania, Andrew Jackson Davis, not yet three years old, lived just over one hundred miles away in Blooming Grove, New York, a small town in the Hudson River Valley.¹³ Like Smith, Davis was born into an impoverished family: his father was a weaver and journeyman shoemaker, while his mother occasionally supplemented the family's meager income through domestic work in neighbors' homes.¹⁴ Their indigent circumstances forced them into a peripatetic life, moving from town to town in a constant search for work, disrupting any sense of familial stability. Their arrival in Poughkeepsie in 1841, when young "Jackson" turned fourteen years old, would mark the seventh time the family had moved.¹⁵

13. For a sample of biographical sketches on Andrew Jackson Davis, see Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 206–20, and Albanese, "On the Matter of Spirit: Andrew Jackson Davis and the Marriage of God and Nature," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 1–17. Robert W. Delp, "Andrew Jackson Davis: Prophet of American Spiritualism," *Journal of American History* 54, no. 1 (June 1967): 43–56; Delp, "A Spiritualist in Connecticut: Andrew Jackson Davis, the Hartford Years, 1850–1854," *New England Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (Sept. 1980): 345–62; and Delp, "Andrew Jackson Davis and Spiritualism," in *Pseudo-Science and Society in 19th-Century America*, edited by Arthur Wrobel (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 100–21. See also Grimes, *Mysteries*, 350–62.

14. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 24–26, 68, 119.

15. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 40, 51, 87, 118, 123, 136, 169–70, 177, 185.

According to Davis, the constant moving from one town to another, coupled with the impoverished circumstances of the family, resulted in a poor education. Indeed, Davis's supporters and detractors alike would eagerly embrace his claim of having little more than five months of formal education, arguing that Davis's miraculous revelations could not possibly have come from the mind of such an untutored, ignorant boy. J. Stanley Grimes, a well-known contemporary mesmerist and phrenologist, argued that "*Davis was notoriously ignorant and illiterate. . . . How, then, was he to write a superior book?*"¹⁶ The Reverend William Fishbough, Davis's scribe during the dictation of *The Principles of Nature*, described the young visionary's purported naïveté in more florid terms: "*He remained, then, up to the commencement of his lectures, the uneducated, unsophisticated child of Nature, entirely free from the creeds, theories, and philosophies of the world.*"¹⁷ Ira Armstrong, a Poughkeepsie merchant who once hired Davis as an apprentice, stated, "His education barely amounted to a knowledge of reading, writing, and the rudiments of arithmetic."¹⁸ Armstrong's description (a common refrain in the period) might well be compared to Smith's claim that "I was merely instructed in reading, writing, and the ground rules of arithmetic."¹⁹ The familiar trope of the illiterate mouthpiece of God's pure and undefiled word offered a convenient framework in which to cast the budding prophet's career, and Davis's self-reported

16. Grimes, *Mysteries*, 354, italics in the original.

17. Grimes, *Mysteries*, xiv, italics in the original.

18. Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind* (New York: S. S. Lyon and Wm. Fishbough, 1847), ix.

19. EMD, 1:27, spelling and punctuation modernized. Davis, describing himself in the third person, would assert that prior to his revelations he had only read one book in his lifetime "on a very unimportant subject" (later identified as *The Three Spaniards* [1800], a Gothic melodrama by George Walker) and that he knew "nothing of grammar or the rules of language." *Magic Staff*, 304–05.

ignorance provided his supporters with compelling evidence of divine intervention.²⁰

Like the Smiths, the transient life of the Davis household also reflected their restless search for a religious home—at least for some of the family members. Davis's father seems not to have held much interest in religion, yet his mother was deeply spiritual. Along with formal religious organizations, she was also a firm believer and practitioner in various forms of folk magic. "She had real clairvoyance," Davis would later recall, adding that she had a "mysterious faculty to foretell the future."²¹ Davis also attended various churches with his mother, who joined at least two different denominations: the Dutch Reformed Church and the Presbyterians.²² Working as both a farm laborer and an apprentice shoemaker, Davis would also frequently attend the churches to which his employers belonged, exposing him further to the Episcopalians, Methodists, and (indirectly) Universalists.²³

Among these traditions, Methodism emerged as perhaps the most influential—another commonality with Smith. Davis's interest began in the spring of 1842, when he started working as an apprentice to Ira Armstrong, a devout Methodist. Davis participated in a variety of services, including probationary meetings, class meetings, Sunday services, and at least one revival.²⁴ In such gatherings, Davis would have observed ministers and lay members engaged in semi-extemporaneous speaking, praying, and exhorting. He also would have witnessed the audience responses, which, apart from members rising and "shouting"

20. In spite of Davis's claims, a careful reading of his autobiography suggests that he deliberately downplayed the actual amount of formal and informal education he received.

21. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 110, 119; see also 94–95.

22. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 160, 178.

23. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 158, 191, 200 ("Rev. A. R. Bartlett" was a Universalist preacher).

24. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 192.

out praises and calling for mercy, would have included members falling unconscious or into trance-like states of spiritual conviction.²⁵

Davis's prophetic career began in December 1843, shortly after J. Stanley Grimes, an itinerant lecturer, arrived in Poughkeepsie to demonstrate the wonders of mesmerism (a form of hypnotism) and phrenology (inferring an individual's personality traits based on features of the cranium).²⁶ Davis volunteered as a subject, yet Grimes failed to hypnotize him. A few days later, however, William Levingston, a local tailor studying Chauncy Hare Townshend's *Facts in Mesmerism* (1840) and an amateur mesmerist in his own right, approached Davis and asked if he could try to succeed where Grimes had failed. In this next attempt, Davis slipped into a deep trance.²⁷ In time, among other clairvoyant skills, Davis claimed that he could see the internal organs of people placed before him, as if "the whole body was transparent as a sheet of glass."²⁸ This alleged ability prompted Davis and Levingston to set up a clairvoyant medical practice in March of 1844.²⁹ Levingston, acting as Davis's "operator," would induce the mesmeric trance, and then Davis, wrapped in a mystical vision, would look into the patient's body, diagnose the ailments, and then advise homeopathic remedies.

During this early period, Davis also received visions in which angelic messengers met with him and foretold his mission in life. In his best known vision, much like Moroni's visit to young Joseph, Davis would claim that the spirits of Galen, the ancient Greek physician and philosopher, and Emanuel Swedenborg, the eighteenth-century mystic and theologian, appeared to him and guided him in a quest to reveal

25. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 192–93, 199.

26. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 201.

27. Grimes, *Mysteries*, 350. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 201–02, 210.

28. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 215.

29. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xii.

greater spiritual truths to humankind.³⁰ Such “prophetic admonitions,” as Davis described them, revealed that he was destined for a higher calling as a prophet and seer.³¹

In the months that followed, a Universalist minister in Poughkeepsie, the Reverend Gibson Smith, took great interest in Davis and Levingston’s medical practice and convinced the pair to travel with him on a healing/lecture tour throughout the region, stopping at Albany, New York, and Danbury, Connecticut.³² During the tour, Davis not only diagnosed patients but spoke in trance about the natural and universal laws that governed all creation. The lectures fascinated Gibson Smith, and Davis “promised to give him three or four lectures on the subject.”³³ Nonetheless, and apparently without Davis’s permission or editorial input, Gibson Smith revised and published the lectures in a thirty-two-page pamphlet, *Lectures on Clairmativeness: Or, Human Magnetism* (1845). But Davis was not happy with Gibson Smith’s alterations or the resulting publication, describing the pamphlet as “a fugitive and mongrel production—containing a strong infusion of the editor’s own mind.”³⁴ As Catherine L. Albanese notes, “Davis would later disown the pamphlet.”³⁵

As he continued his clairvoyant medical practice, Davis began to focus more attention on the revelation of eternal truths. His patients, in fact, often prompted this transition. “From the very beginning of my

30. Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 207–08; Delp, “Andrew Jackson Davis: Prophet,” 44; Davis, *Magic Staff*, 238–45; for Davis’s identification of these visitors, see *Magic Staff*, 248.

31. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 244.

32. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 277.

33. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 275; see also 276, 279.

34. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 279. Likewise, Joseph Smith produced three recorded revelations (Doctrine and Covenants sections 3, 4, and 5) before the publication of the Book of Mormon.

35. Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 207.

mystical experience,” Davis recalled, “convalescing patients and investigating minds” had peppered him with theological questions: “Can you tell me what constitutes the soul?’ or ‘Is man’s spirit immortal?’ or ‘Is man a free agent?’ ‘Is God a person, or an essence?’ ‘What is life?’ . . . ‘What is the main purpose of man’s creation?’ ‘Is the Bible all true, or in part only?’”³⁶ In time, the barrage of questions and Davis’s responsive revelations led to the incremental formation of a complete and systematic cosmology. Later, when patients continued to ask such questions, Davis replied that he would “dictate a Book, which will contain my answers to your interrogatories.”³⁷ This ambitious book, according to Davis, would contain “a series of extraordinary revelations” that would outline a new system of scientific theology encompassing the natural and spiritual laws that governed all creation.³⁸

Later, in the fall of 1845, Davis ended his partnership with Gibson Smith and Levingston.³⁹ In their place, Davis enlisted the help of a homeopathic physician in Bridgeport, Connecticut, one Dr. Silas S. Lyon, who would act as Davis’s new mesmeric operator.⁴⁰ Davis and Lyon then moved to Manhattan, where they set up a clairvoyant medical practice in a local boarding house.⁴¹ In preparation for recording Davis’s revelations, they also recruited the help of the Reverend William Fishbough, a Universalist minister living in New Haven, Connecticut, to act as the scribe for the project.⁴² Davis and Lyon then arranged to

36. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 286.

37. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 286.

38. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 286.

39. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 296–98. Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 208.

40. Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 208; Delp, “Andrew Jackson Davis: Prophet,” 44; Davis, *Magic Staff*, 298; Davis, *Principles of Nature*, viii, xiii.

41. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 299.

42. Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 208; Delp, “Andrew Jackson Davis: Prophet,” 44; Davis, *Magic Staff*, 300.

have three formal witnesses regularly attend the trance lectures in order to provide eyewitness testimony concerning the process of dictation. Along with these witnesses, no less than twenty-three additional observers attended some of the proceedings, “ranging from one to six” guests per session.⁴³ “Among the more noteworthy visitors,” Robert W. Delp notes, “were Edgar Allan Poe and the organizer of communitarian experiments, Albert Brisbane.”⁴⁴ After approximately three months of preparation, in which Davis supported himself and Lyon by seeing patients in their clairvoyant medical practice, Davis finally started delivering the “lectures” on November 28, 1845.⁴⁵ The ambitious prophet and precocious seer had only recently turned nineteen years old.⁴⁶

If presented as a tableau, Davis’s revelatory sessions would look similar to Smith’s translations with the seer stone. Both Smith and Davis would sit center stage in a room, their scribes near at hand writing furiously to keep pace, with a small but select audience of eyewitnesses to observe the proceedings.⁴⁷ There were, of course, differences. Smith used a seer stone in an upturned hat to block out light, while Davis was blindfolded and induced into a mesmeric trance by his operator, Lyon. Nevertheless, some of the parallel mechanics of the sessions prove intriguing. For example, Davis, like Smith, dictated the majority of his work one phrase at a time, pausing after each phrase and waiting for the operator or scribe to repeat each line back to him. According to Davis, the purpose was “to make sure that each word was correctly heard and written.”⁴⁸ Fishbough also described the dynamic: “A few words only

43. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xv; see also 2.

44. Delp, “Andrew Jackson Davis: Prophet,” 44.

45. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xviii.

46. Davis was born on August 11, 1826.

47. For David Whitmer’s description of Smith’s dictation sessions, see *EMD*, 5:153–54.

48. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 307.

are uttered at a time, which the clairvoyant requires to be repeated by Dr. Lyon, in order that he may know that he is understood. A pause then ensues until what he has said has been written, when he again proceeds.”⁴⁹ In this phrase-by-phrase process, Davis appeared to slip in and out of his trance state: “the passage into and out of the spiritual state occurs at an average of about once every sentence.”⁵⁰ Thus, Davis, like Smith, retained some form of conscious awareness of the development of the transcribed text.

In addition, Davis also spelled out unfamiliar words. When transcribing the term “Univercoelum,” a word that Davis coined to describe the original state of all the physical and spiritual components of the universe, Fishbough interrupted and asked, “What was that word?” Davis then “carefully spelled it, letter by letter, to make the scribe’s writing a matter of certainty.”⁵¹ Moreover, Davis never referred to notes, manuscripts, or books during his trance state—he was, after all, blind-folded.⁵² Neither did he review the physical manuscripts of his prior revelations before launching into new revelations. He did, however, claim to review visionary manifestations of the manuscripts in his clairvoyant state. Fishbough recalled, “At each entrance into the abnormal state for the purpose of lecturing, he [Davis] was capable, by an effort of a few moments’ duration, of reviewing all the manuscripts of his previous lectures.”⁵³ From the very beginning of the project, Davis also claimed that in his trance state he had the ability to view and scan the entire outline of his work.⁵⁴ Thus, through this clairvoyant process, Davis was able to start each new dictation session where the last one

49. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xviii.

50. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xviii.

51. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 318.

52. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xvii.

53. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xx.

54. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 299.

left off, without referring to material notes or texts—a feat that Smith had also performed during the translation of the Book of Mormon.⁵⁵

In another noteworthy comparison, Davis also explicitly equated his mesmeric trance visions with the same visionary perceptions that allegedly occurred with the use of seer stones. When Davis was still in Poughkeepsie and developing his newfound skills in clairvoyance, an “old English gentleman” by the name of Dr. Maryatt came for a visit and “brought an egg-shaped white crystal, into which he requested me [Davis] to look, and tell him what I saw.” Initially confused about how to make the seer stone operate, Davis eventually succeeded in invoking its power. Within the “glass” he saw visions that revealed Maryatt’s house, environs, and family circumstances in England.⁵⁶ Later, when reflecting on the experience and how the seer stone worked, Davis observed that the object merely facilitated the same form of clairvoyance that he experienced with mesmerism: “it occurred to me that my gazing into it [the seer stone], with so much characteristic earnestness, had induced, temporarily, the state of conscious clairvoyance, which had enabled me first to see the landscape, house, paper, &c., and then, by simple concentration of thought, produced a miniature reflection of them in the glass before me.” This “conscious clairvoyance,” as Davis continued to describe it, allowed crystal-gazers to slip into a conscious trance-like state, “without going into sleep.”⁵⁷

Davis’s level of consciousness during the dictation of his revelations alerts us to another important similarity between Smith and Davis. Even though Smith’s translation of the Book of Mormon and Davis’s trance lectures have both been analyzed in terms of automatic writing, neither of these two young seers was actually operating within that particular

55. See e.g., *EMD*, 1:542.

56. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 266–68.

57. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 268. Davis borrowed the term “conscious clairvoyance” (and plagiarized portions of text) from William Gregory’s observations on the use of seer stones. See William Gregory, *Letters to a Candid Inquirer, on Animal Magnetism* (London: Taylor, Walton, and Maberly, 1851), 367–76.

process.⁵⁸ With automatic writing, the person receiving the revelations is the same person writing them, acting as a passive medium through whom some other disembodied spirit physically communicates a message. Though Scott C. Dunn has proposed that trance dictation and automatic writing “are only different techniques or expressions of the same underlying process,” the conflation of these modalities obliterates significant and crucial distinctions.⁵⁹ Apart from the challenge that neither Smith nor Davis claimed to channel the voice of another spirit or supernatural being, for example, the argument contains an embedded and faulty assumption that a text arising from an oral performance would express the same content, language, and characteristics as a written effort (conscious or otherwise). But these two modes of composition inevitably express significant and crucial differences.⁶⁰

58. See e.g., Scott C. Dunn, “Automaticity and the Dictation of the Book of Mormon,” in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, edited by Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 17–46; Hales, “Automatic Writing,” 1–35; Robert A. Rees, “The Book of Mormon and Automatic Writing,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 4–17, 68–70.

59. Dunn, “Automaticity,” 23.

60. Anita M. Mühl conducted experiments with subjects narrating memories by dictation via crystal gazing and also automatic writing. Though the subjects described the same stories in both modes, the expression of events were inevitably different (e.g., alterations in phraseology, vocabulary, and narrative omissions and additions from one mode to the next); see Anita M. Mühl, “Automatic Writing Combined with Crystal Gazing as a Means of Recalling Forgotten Incidents,” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology and Social Psychology* 19, no. 3 (Oct. 1924): 264–73. More recently, Alexandra A. Cleland and Martin J. Pickering observe that “language is clearly used differently in written and spoken production,” identifying differences in the use of passives, complex phrasal constructions, and size of vocabulary; see “Do Writing and Speaking Employ the Same Syntactic Representations?” *Journal of Memory and Language* 54, no. 1 (2006): 185–98, esp. 185–86. In an oft reprinted article, David Crystal offers a concise list of distinctions between written and spoken language; see “Speaking of Writing and Writing of Speaking,” *Longman Language Review* 1 (repr. 2005): 1–5. For a more comprehensive analysis, see Douglas Biber, *Variation Across Speech and Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Moreover, Davis vehemently argued that his process of revelatory dictation did not equate to that of writing and speaking mediums: “how glaring becomes the misapprehension of those who advertise my lectures as ‘given through the *mediumship* of A. J. Davis’—as if my mind . . . were an insensible, unintelligent, and passive substance, or *spout*, through which disembodied personages express or promulgate their own specific opinions! This is an egregious error—a most unwholesome misrepresentation.”⁶¹ Davis did not passively channel other spirits but rather spoke actively *as himself*, communicating the enlightened knowledge and divine revelations that flooded into his mind during his transcendent state.⁶² When analyzing this process of performance, we find that neither the spontaneous utterances of automatic writing nor the free associations of extemporaneous trance speaking provides an adequate framework for the revelations and oral performances of either Davis or Smith.⁶³

Another point of comparison involves the time it took to produce Smith’s and Davis’s revelations, and their resulting lengths. Smith produced the Book of Mormon within a three-month span, while Davis’s revelations occurred over a period of fifteen months.⁶⁴ In terms

61. Davis, *Magic Staff*, 311–12, italics in the original.

62. Davis referred to several different trance states, with different levels of consciousness, ranging from being oblivious to his surroundings to being acutely aware of his environment. For Davis’s sketch outline of four trance (“magnetic”) states, see *Principles of Nature*, 35–37. For his scribe Fishbough’s observations of different trance states, see Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xvii–xviii.

63. For the historical context regarding the development of conscious and unconscious trance states, see Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 207–27.

64. Fishbough states that the first lecture began on November 28, 1845, and the last ended on January 25, 1847; see Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xviii. In other words, Davis spent fourteen months of actual work time spanning a fifteen-month calendar period.

of actual working days, however, the disparity is not so great as these inclusive times might suggest. Scholars believe that Smith produced the Book of Mormon within a period ranging from fifty-seven to seventy-five working days, during which time he often worked at a full-time pace.⁶⁵ And, as David Whitmer observed, “the days were long, and they [Smith and Cowdery] worked from morning till night.”⁶⁶ Davis, on the other hand, supported himself and Lyon with the proceeds from their shared clairvoyant medical practice when he was not performing his revelations.⁶⁷ Financial exigencies forced Davis to produce the lectures intermittently and on a part-time basis, while devoting the majority of his time to treating enough patients to cover the living expenses for himself and his partner. In all, Davis intermittently delivered 157 lectures, each varying in length “from forty minutes to about four hours.”⁶⁸ If he could have worked “from morning till night,” as Smith had done, Davis theoretically could have produced at least two lectures per working day, spending a total amount of time that would have ranged from a low of one hour and twenty minutes per day to a high of eight hours. Thus, Davis’s total amount of dictation time, when converted to “full-time” days, equates to a rough estimate of 78.5 working days, and his series of revelatory lectures resulted in a work containing approximately 320,000 words.

When preparing the scribal manuscript for publication, Davis supervised the process but made few editorial corrections to the original outpouring of inspired words. Fishbough, who handled the preparations, stated, “With the exception of striking out a few sentences and supplying others, according to [Davis’s] direction, I have only found

65. For John Welch’s most recent estimate “of only 57 to 63 available full-time working days,” see Welch, “Timing the Translation,” 34.

66. *EMD*, 5:104.

67. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xiv.

68. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xviii.

it necessary to correct the grammar, to prune out verbal redundancies, and to clarify such sentences as would to the general reader appear obscure.” Occasionally, the original manuscript was apparently illegible, requiring Fishbough to “reconstruct sentences” using “only the verbal materials found in the sentence as it first stood, preserving the peculiarities of style and mode of expression.” In perhaps the most invasive change, Fishbough indicated, “The *arrangement* of the work is the same as when delivered, except that in three instances contiguous paragraphs have been transposed for the sake of a closer connexion.” Finally, Fishbough asserted, “With these unimportant qualifications, the work may be considered as paragraph for paragraph, sentence for sentence, and word for word, as it was delivered by the author.”⁶⁹ In this regard (apart from Fishbough’s transpositions), the final published text of *The Principles of Nature* parallels similar editorial modifications that appeared in the 1837 and 1840 editions of the Book of Mormon, in which Smith revised the grammar and made selective changes in both editions.⁷⁰

In terms of textual complexity, a comparison between Smith and Davis falls prey to subjective measurement, given that their texts are two fundamentally different products of oral performance. Smith produced an epic narrative containing a relatively complex collection of story episodes that included, as Grant Hardy has detailed, “flashbacks,” “embedded documents,” “year-by-year chronological markers through a century of judges,” “multiple wars,” “scriptural quotations and exegesis,” and “successions of rulers,” among several other standard narrative typologies.⁷¹ Hardy has further argued (curiously) that the

69. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xviii–xix.

70. For a concise description of Smith’s changes, see Paul C. Gutjahr, *The Book of Mormon: A Biography* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 63–65.

71. Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, Maxwell Institute Study Edition* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious

stories are “original.”⁷² By comparison, Davis produced a series of lectures that outlined his vision of a scientific theology that would guide the world to a state of harmonious perfection. Such lectures, however, lacked the compelling drive of narrative structures filled with interesting, exotically named characters and dynamic storylines. Yet, as a systematic course of instruction that developed a new way of understanding the world, Davis’s lectures were never meant to be an epic narrative—a difference that hinders any direct comparison with the Book of Mormon. Evaluating the complexity of Davis’s thought therefore requires another perspective.

In terms of overall structure, *The Principles of Nature* contains three major divisions: “Part I.—The Key,” which establishes the fundamental framework of Davis’s ideas; “Part II.—The Revelation,” which Catherine L. Albanese describes as a “Swedenborgian-plus-‘popular-science’ section”; and “Part III.—The Application,” which ultimately provides a utopian vision of a harmonious society, or “The New Heaven and the New Earth.”⁷³ Albanese also observes that “*The Principles of Nature* was a complexly combinative work” that moved “in emphatically metaphysical directions.” And, in spite of its “trance dictation and sententious prose,”

Scholarship and Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2018), 621.

72. Hardy recently claimed that one of the features of the Book of Mormon is its “originality,” specifically stating that, “the content [of the Book of Mormon] is original.” See Grant Hardy, “Textual Criticism and the Book of Mormon,” 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), 39. In the absence of clarification, Hardy’s claim is debatable, given the large body of research in literary criticism that hotly contests the meaning of “originality” in the way that Hardy appears to use the term. The stories of the Book of Mormon, though often “original” with regard to surface features, nevertheless rely heavily on preexisting core narrative templates for their shape and structure.

73. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, xxiii; Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 210.

the work “possessed a logic and coherence that were, in structural terms, clear.”⁷⁴ This three-part division offers a simple yet effective organization for the entire work, though, from a structural viewpoint, it does not approach the complexity of the narrative twists and turns found in the Book of Mormon.

Moving beyond structure to evaluate the content, however, the reader discovers a sophisticated syncretism of contemporary scientific, theological, and philosophical thought. Though most of his ideas are now long outdated, especially with regard to scientific theories, Davis nevertheless stakes out positions and provides commentary on cutting-edge scientific theories of his day. And his philosophical forays reveal unexpected adaptations and developments of complex ideas. In the opening “Key,” for example, Davis sets about the task of reshaping the readers’ fundamental epistemologies, moving them away from standard theological narratives and traditional histories to novel views and assumptions informed by Enlightenment ideas, biblical criticism, scientific advances, and new philosophical perspectives. Davis alerts readers that their understanding of the world—how it operates, the nature of universal and divine laws, conceptions of God, and the spiritual nature of all things—is fundamentally distorted. For instance, as David Mihalyfy indicates, Davis addresses the issue of a historical Jesus, insisting rationally that Christ “was no apocalyptic prophet,” but a gifted (mortal) healer and, as Davis describes him, “the great Moral Reformer.”⁷⁵ In a quasi-primitivist turn, Davis also reveals that in order to understand how the universe truly operates, we need to

74. Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 209.

75. David Mihalyfy, “What They Don’t Want You to Know About Jesus Christ and the Seer of Poughkeepsie,” *Contingent Magazine*, June 21, 2019, <https://contingentmagazine.org/2019/06/21/jesus-poughkeepsie/>; Davis, *Principles of Nature*, 434. For a detailed analysis of Davis’s views on a historical Jesus and biblical criticism, see David Francis Mihalyfy, “Heterodoxies and the Historical Jesus: Biblical Criticism of the Gospels in the U.S., 1794–1860” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2017), esp. 7, 180–84, 193–217.

sweep away false traditions and conceptions (with an emphasis on traditional religious opinions) and go back to the beginning of creation to understand how the world came to be, how it developed into its current state, and the principles that will structure further development.

In doing so, Davis invokes an overt Neoplatonic concept of material reality, where tangible matter and material forms exist in concert with perfected ideals (their “ultimate” state): “forms and appearances are effects of matter in approximating to its future state of perfection; while its perfected state, or ultimate, is in return controlling and refining these substances and forms.”⁷⁶ In this modification of Plato’s theory of forms, Davis extrapolates multiple “spheres” of existence, in which earthly matter interacts with its perfected ideal on higher planes of existence—planes that also offer error-free concepts, greater truths, and complete knowledge. But these relationships do not remain static. With this philosophical foundation, Davis incorporates contemporary scientific advancements into his philosophy to postulate a process of biological evolution.

Drawing on adapted concepts of Newtonian physics and laws of motion to theorize a mechanism for evolution (revising Newton’s concept of *vis inertia* and commenting on the relationships among rectilinear, curvilinear, and spiral motion) and incorporating contemporary studies in geology and paleobiology (the evolution of lower life forms observed in “the remains of the mollusca, radiata, articulata, and vertebrata” found in successive geological strata), Davis traces the origin, development, and transmutation of plants and animals in the natural world.⁷⁷ Not one to avoid controversy, Davis further includes the evolution of “Man” (the human body, though not the spirit) as the

76. Davis, *Principles of Nature*, 47.

77. For Davis’s references to Newton’s laws, see *Principles of Nature*, 57, 69. For his discussion on lower life forms, see 78–79. For evolution, see e.g., 57–85.

pinnacle form of that evolutionary process.⁷⁸ Thus, in his 1846 and 1847 trance lectures, Davis rejected a literal interpretation of the traditional story of Adam and Eve and the instantaneous six-day creation of all things and substituted a controversial model of biological evolution that contemporary scholars were fiercely debating in the years leading up to the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859.⁷⁹

Moreover, in a point critical to note, Davis did not simply regurgitate information from a wide range of contemporary source materials and fields of knowledge. Rather, he saw their interrelated connections (or presumed relationships) and used those links to construct the scaffolding of a new belief system. For instance, this modified conception of the universe provided Davis with a philosophical and scientific explanation for how his own trance states operated: while in trance, his spirit transcended this earthly state to the higher planes of existence, where he received pure and unadulterated knowledge, which, in turn, he would share with the world through his revelatory trance utterances. Through a series of adaptations and calculated borrowings, especially from Swedenborg, Davis amalgamated the disparate fields of his knowledge and beliefs into a cohesive and multifaceted cosmology that served his ultimate project of social reform. He was, in essence, a magpie prophet-scientist, drawing on diverse sources of knowledge in order to weave his own innovative patchwork quilt explaining the laws that governed all creation. When we further consider that Davis

78. Davis situated his theory in what we describe today as intelligent design. See *Principles of Nature*, 70–76, 92. For an unambiguous statement on the evolutionary process resulting in humankind, see 328.

79. Darwin was not, of course, the first to propose a theory of biological evolution. Rather, he proposed new theories regarding the mechanisms driving the transmutation of species (e.g., natural selection). For a contemporary study that acknowledges the controversies of biological evolution and includes the categories of Radiata, Mollusca, Articulata, and Vertebrata, see Charles Girard, "Life in its Physical Aspects," *Proceedings of the National Institute for the Promotion of Science* (annual meeting, National Institute for the Promotion of Science, Washington, DC, Jan. 15, 1855), 2–22, esp. 20–22.

performed these lectures while blindfolded, at the ages of nineteen and twenty, without the aid of notes or manuscripts for easy reference, and all the while supporting himself and an associate, we might begin to understand why many of his observers believed that this barely educated, substantially illiterate, poverty-stricken son of a poor journeyman shoemaker must have been truly inspired.

Turning from content to form, Davis also displays a wide range of rhetorical devices on par with those found in the Book of Mormon.⁸⁰ Because Fishbough kept his editorial changes to a minimum, *The Principles of Nature* preserves a number of interesting characteristics of Davis's oral performance techniques, specifically regarding the use of rhetorical figures. Throughout the text, Davis makes use of such devices as anaphora (successive phrases beginning with the same word or words); antithesis (ideas set in opposition); epistrophe (successive phrases ending with the same word or words); various forms of parallelism; symploce (a combination of anaphora and epistrophe); zeugma (multiple phrases, often in a series or catalogue, controlled by a single verb); and, among many other devices, various types of "ring composition" or "envelope patterns" (also called simple and complex "chiasmus," "inclusio," and "inverted parallelism," among other terms).⁸¹

80. For a detailed and helpful overview of several species of parallelism and a selection of rhetorical devices in the Book of Mormon, see Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted*, 2nd ed. (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2007), xi–xlvi.

81. The final paragraph on page 6 of *The Principles of Nature* (1847) offers several common examples: "This ignorance still exists; this bigotry and superstition still exist" (parallelism, symploce); "It has in its long career," "It has obstructed," "It has obscured," "It has covered," "It has sapped," "It has produced" (anaphora, parallelism); "Wisdom/folly," "Knowledge/ignorance," "Happiness/misery" (antithesis). Such devices are ubiquitous in oral traditions as storytelling techniques, as well as in written texts. Thus, any assertion that such devices provide evidence of the Book of Mormon's *literary* (written) origins faces the added burden of proving how such devices were exclusively literary constructions and not orally derived features.

Indeed, Davis's pervasive use of chiasmic structures suggests that the various patterns of ring composition—patterns of repetition and expansion quite common in oral traditions—reflect a habit of mind in the organization of his thoughts. Scholarship has not yet examined Davis's use of complex chiasmic structures, though it is highly unlikely that Davis knew about or intentionally formed them, particularly when they often lack the precision and clarity of consciously constructed (and revised) literary texts. Davis's style of dense repetition, however, allows for the ready imposition of chiasmic patterns onto his thoughts. A cursory reading can locate numerous examples, which, though certainly produced unconsciously, rival similar complex patterns found in the Book of Mormon (see figures 1 and 2).

Given the prominence of complex chiasmic structures and the techniques of ring composition (conscious or otherwise) in oral performances, it would appear that the scholarship on chiasmus in the Book of Mormon needs to address further critical questions regarding the differences between literary and orally derived chiasmic structures, as well as revisiting the purported intentionality behind them. Attributing such structures exclusively to the presence of underlying Hebraic

- A: So men should not **criticise each other's thoughts**
 B: with a **superficial judgment**; but instead of this,
 C: they should **present truth** in all its native simplicity,
 D: and **leave error** and all the depressing influences
 E: existing in the **physical**
 E: and **mental** world to themselves: [antithesis]
 D: for the best **antidote for error**
 C: is the **presentation of truth.**
 B: Marvel not, then, concerning the **superficials things**
 of which I have spoken,
 A: nor falsely **accuse each other's sentiments.**

Andrew Jackson Davis
The Principles of Nature (1847), p. 392.

Figure 1

A: The next in the class of ideas the origin of which is to be traced,
is the traditional opinion **concerning Cain and Abel**.

[Parenthetical 39-word interjection: "It will be recollected that I have spoken..."]

B: **The history of this was transferred**, with other and **similar expressions**,
through successive generations and centuries, until we find it first
expressed by **a writer among the early Egyptians**.

[B levels: corresponding characters/concepts in generations of histories/traditions]

B: A **correspondence** was connected with **this tradition**, which was of the
following import (for the early inhabitants knew things by their obvious
correspondences and representatives):

C: The **younger**

D: **and weaker** tribe (which was Abel)

E: corresponded to **light**, purity, and innocence.

F: Cain (which was **the stronger and grosser** nation)

G: corresponded to **darkness**, wickedness, and abomination.

H: For, according to **the early theology**,

G: **darkness** was the first principle in being,

F: and therefore the **oldest and most powerful**;

E: while **light** was subsequently created,

D: and was consequently **weak**

C: and **immature**.

B: And thus the **comparison** was **written among the Egyptians** as follows:---

C: "And from the forefathers sprang **two children** [both children]

whose names were **Osiris and Typhon** [C levels: Osiris:Typh::Typh:Osiris]

D: **Osiris** was a **good and gentle** brother, and **was loved by Brahama**.

E: **Typhon** was a **strong** brother, and cultivated the things of the earth.

E: For **Typhon** is the child of **darkness** which was over all and for ever:

D: but **Osiris** was a child of **light**, because light **was permitted by Vishnu**
the good spirit."

C: But **Typhon**, which is darkness, was represented as attacking and
overpowering Osiris, which is light and innocence.

B: This is the first **written correspondential account** of this **primitive tradition**.

B1: I find that this was admitted into other manuscripts,

B1: and appeared among the Chaldean writings.

B1: Afterward it was transcribed into Greek,

B1: and ultimately into the Hebrew oracles and manuscripts;

B: and through this medium **it was conveyed to subsequent generations**
who admitted it into the "**primitive history**:"

A: and in this the characters are named **Cain and Abel**.

Andrew Jackson Davis
The Principles of Nature (1847), pp. 404-405.

Figure 2

literary devices ignores the global pervasiveness of such structures in both spoken and literary contexts, creating yet another illusory buttress to faith that crumbles upon closer examination.

Fixations on Idiosyncratic Criteria

In discussions concerning the origins and nature of the Book of Mormon, the fixation on naturalistic comparisons continues to thrive as a prominent and insistent need. The persistent creation of arbitrary taxonomies that divide and subdivide lists of selective criteria in an effort to privilege a predetermined chosen text suggests that such naturalistic comparisons play a far more important role in the cultural performance of faith and belief in the Book of Mormon than is usually acknowledged (or theologically desirable). Such lists attempt to manufacture miracles with an impressive array of contested categories, such as natural versus supernatural composition; conscious versus unconscious production; the purported significance of lengthy texts; the fixation on (often irrelevant) stylistic differences; dubious lists of information that the speaker allegedly could not possibly have known; and, above all, the purported ignorance and illiteracy of the person producing the work.⁸² Given that such non-theological issues ideally do not participate in the confirmation of faith, the inordinate obsession with such naturalistic comparisons would seem to offer a troubling distraction, sending the tacit signal to the audience of believers that such comparisons and criteria must indeed be a crucial if unofficial component of faith.

The introduction of selective criteria, however, presents a double-edged sword that cuts both ways. We might, for example, create a new framework of naturalistic criteria, one calculated to dismiss Smith and the Book of Mormon in favor of Davis and *The Principles of Nature*: 1)

82. See e.g., Hales, "Automatic Writing," 1–35. Rees, "The Book of Mormon and Automatic Writing," 4–17; 68–70.

The author or translator must be only twenty years of age or younger when he or she produces the work; 2) The author or translator cannot receive financial support from outside sources during the course of the project but must financially support himself or herself and an associate for the duration of the work; 3) The inspired text must consist of no less than 300,000 words, without being artificially expanded by the incorporation of extensive passages from other texts, especially the Bible; 4) When describing historical events and circumstances, the subject must frequently refer to *known* historical events and traditions that witnesses can independently verify for accuracy, using sources outside the text; 5) As evidence of truly divine revelation, the author must predict the existence of a planet in the solar system before the scientific community has discovered that same celestial body; and, finally, 6) When in a visionary state, the revelator must have the ability to utter phrases in Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Sanskrit, even though the subject has never studied such languages, and then have a reputable university professor of Hebrew witness and verify such a feat.⁸³ If we were to accept this arbitrary list of criteria, we might hail Andrew Jackson Davis as a true prophet and seer, while Joseph Smith would be disqualified at every point along the way.

While naturalistic catalogues prove popular as rhetorical tools of persuasion, and while the mobilization of exclusionary rhetoric and

83. Albanese notes how Davis “predicted an eighth [planet]—in a lecture delivered six months before the discovery of Neptune.” Albanese, *Republic of Mind*, 211. George Bush, a New York University professor of Hebrew and a devoted Swedenborgian, stated, “I can most solemnly affirm, that I have heard him correctly quote the Hebrew language in his Lectures.” Bush also claimed that Davis dictated phrases “from the ancient languages,” including “long extracts from the Sanscrit [sic].” See George Bush, *Mesmer and Swedenborg*, 2nd ed. (New York: John Allen, 1847), 161, 203. The “ancient languages” would be later identified as “Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.” See Theophilus Parsons, “Review,” *New Jerusalem Magazine* 20, no. 5 (Boston: Otis Clapp, Jan. 1847), 190.

claims of textual exceptionalism might appear to buttress belief, such dependence on arbitrary naturalistic criteria runs the risk of making faith more vulnerable. Indeed, the damage might already be done: the common day-to-day expressions of belief in the Book of Mormon strongly suggest that the persistent turn to naturalist comparisons reveals an entanglement of personal opinion, belief, theory, and faith. Belief in the Book of Mormon becomes inextricably bound to disbelief in Smith's ability to create it—a position that reveals the uncomfortable prospect that the foundation of faith contains limited mortal perceptions, impressionability, and finite experience.

With such potential hazards, we might pause for a moment to ask what cultural work these comparative lists of selective criteria are actually performing and inadvertently revealing—not just about the texts but about ourselves. Such projects, after all, cannot prove or disprove the divine origins of the Book of Mormon. They never will. Such lists merely consist of tailored, calculated requirements that artificially isolate a preferred outcome, even as they showcase the preconceptions and assumptions of those who create and/or employ them. Such special pleading thus puts our own biases into sharp relief. Even if a text involves unusual characteristics beyond anything that we might personally describe as “natural,” the conclusion that the text must therefore be “divine” reveals a fatal leap in logic. We thereby display a faulty line of syllogistic reasoning that equates things purportedly unique and allegedly inexplicable with things miraculous and divine, as if these concepts were all somehow synonymous.

The persistent valorization of such projects, which ultimately compete with the development of authentic faith and potentially threaten whatever faith may already exist, should therefore make us pause and question their real value. Though such catalogues of criteria aim to impress (and entertain) an audience of believers, and though they might initially appear to strengthen faith, their effects prove ultimately unreliable and illusory. Moreover, they obfuscate

historical complexities, transforming the young Joseph Smith into a two-dimensional, illiterate, know-nothing boy, when a close reading of historical sources rather reveals a young man with a gifted intellect and ambitious desires for self-education and self-improvement. Perhaps most importantly, however, naturalistic sets of criteria reveal more about ourselves than they reveal about Joseph Smith or the origins of the Book of Mormon: instead of discovering eternal markers that signal the presence of the divine, we merely discover the limitations of our individual experience, the borders of our imagination, and the measure of our credulity.

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A SPELL TO BE FORGIVEN.

A SPELL OF REPENTANCE

Ingredients:

one handful FRESH ASHES

one vial BLOOD

one piece, APPROX. 5in. x 7in. WORN CLOTH

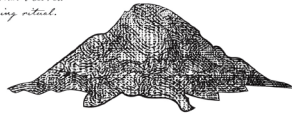
Instructions:

1. Mix the ashes with the blood.
2. Smear the ashes & blood across your forehead.
3. While crying unto God, rend the scrap of cloth.
4. Wash the ashes & blood from your forehead with clear, fresh water.
5. You are forgiven. Take especial care to not transgress again.

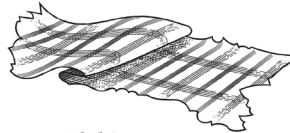
EXCEPT THEY REPENT IN SACKCLOTH AND ASHES, AND CRY MIGHTILY TO THE LORD THEIR GOD, I WILL NOT HEAR THEIR PRAYERS, NEITHER WILL I DELIVER THEM OUT OF THEIR AFFLICTIONS; AND THUS SAITH THE LORD.

MOSIAH 11:25

Ashes are part of the traditional Hebrew mourning ritual.



The blood may be from an animal, but maybe it ought to be yours.



Choose a scrap of cloth that you can rend with adequate fervor.

Camilla Stark

PLATE 505

Peter, Ltd.

Camilla Stark
A Spell to be Forgiven
digital media

Born Again

Christopher Bissett

Because I did not fit a second time
in the womb of my mother,
I was born of my father instead.

He held my arm to haul me from the water
and with the other, squared it to the air
as if to slaughter the old creature
and push out another me.

In the beginning, my head was born first.
The second time it was my heart.
But after I toweled away the afterbirth,
they decorated my head with their hands.

Now I know that heaven is a corridor
of mirrors, where I see myself reflected
in every father and mother—

every rock from whence I was hewn,
every pit from whence I was digged.

Genesis Chiasmus

Luisa Perkins

In the Big Ending,
My son used to say
When I read him the Genesis board book.
Which was perfect, I thought.
Such a start must surely have followed
An ending that was big.
What brought that ending on? And what
Gave it inherent magnitude?
What cataclysm preceded the birth
Of the universe?
I had no answers, nor do I now,
But I like questions better than answers, anyway.
Answers close the mind, but questions keep it open.
And I don't want closure, not now nor then.
The universe,
Full of birth and death and disaster,
Its magnitude self-contained,
Without an end in sight:
What could follow such a start?
I think it's perfect.
When I read him the Genesis board book,
My son used to say,
In the Big Ending.

Daryl Prays

Tamara Pace Thomson

How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!

—Lamentations 4:1

At fourteen, Daryl cut across an empty lot
behind a brick pharmacy
where he had picked up his mom's pills
(linden trees in town bloomed in pale sweetness),
and three older boys jumped him and beat him
with brass knuckles. They stole his five bucks,
his mom's antibiotic, and broke Daryl's skull.
After six months, he left the hospital
with crutches and a baseball cap,
with a crooked knee and erratic hands.

Forty years later, Daryl lives in a group home
where he tells jokes:

Why can't a bank keep secrets?

Because it is full of tellers!

We laugh—to be polite.

And his hands tremble,

his crutches lean against a mauve wall,

his trucker's cap is grease coated,

and his pant leg is half tucked into a white
tube sock.

Over the Thanksgiving dinner he offers to pray:

Thank you, God, for the abundance

of divine providence,

and for the farmers who toil to grow our food.

*And please anoint us with power, and wisdom,
and healing.*

And Daryl says, *Many are our pleasures,*
dear Lord.

Thank you for the truckers who bring us our food
And for our dear friends who prepare it
That we might be strong and healthy.

Daryl's lower lip sags like a fractured lamp post—
his eyes are the color of depleted soil.

He says, *Bless you, God, our flaming sword,*
our light of kings, our feast of comfort,
our sanctuary. Bless you.

The Snake River

Tamara Pace Thomson

The night is cool but the window
is open—lilac, lilac, lilac fills the room;
robins begin their call early and I awake.
A week ago, my father's last sister passed—her ashes
await a grave in Burley where alfalfa
and cottonwoods are greening
this mid-spring beneath sun and rain and moon.

I remember, from my childhood,
a night near the river, its movement orphic,
the undying smell of mud and water—
wading, sinking—my feet
sucked under the splintered dock,
trees and then water above my head,
the taste like mollusks on my tongue.

Just twenty yards from me,
my father and his sister visited
in her home on the water's edge—
I was their unknown oblation
to the river, to the night,
to the slime of the bank my fingers clawed.

But it couldn't be that the river filled my lungs,
as I remember,
and the medallion in my pocket,
was it real? Etched with the profile
of a Native chief in feathered
headdress, stern chin, eye of a stallion?
I remember this:
all was silent but for the kick
of my feet against the dock.

Insomnia

Tamara Pace Thomson

Sleep aids fail her—from chamomile to Ambien. Nerves alight like electrons moving in a wire. Power lines cross the yawning canyon and pullulate and seethe with wind—the sound gushes past her ears and all but drowns the *who'll who'll who* of a perched owl. What memory comes to her is the layered tissue open through muscle to the bone of her sister's knee when they chased a wheat-colored hare westward across a field where old barbed wire slept decades after the last farmer had abandoned the mountain's short growing season. And, later, how the calico dress her sister wore teased the fibrous scar that was shaped like a sickle cupping her sister's knee. Leaves in decay beneath scrub oak smell of stale tobacco spilled in her leather bag. Aster petals curl in muteness. She longs to prophesy. To see into the future and not only the past—for her sleeplessness to presage visions. To see fire on the hill. In Aeschylus's telling, she remembers, Clytemnestra learned the news of fallen Troy, during her midnight watch, from flames of signal fires: *fire for word of fire*. Troy was burning. Clytemnestra was no woman of visions or senseless dreams—yet she prophesied that Agamemnon and his men were eating *breakfast on the last remains of Troy*. But here, in the clamor of canyon wind and the withering year, there is no burning, no idiot's tale to tell, no fire for word of fire, only the call of an owl, the perishing of green things, the sightless and sleepless night. And, she thinks, *What light can match my darkness?*

The Stars Saw God

Chris A. Peck

I found God huddled in my father's insanity.
There beneath the layers
of confusion—as to why none of us saw the
spinning ball or the parade outside—
I saw his vacant expression shine out like
God-rays through the clouds.
Clarity in absolutes.
And so, when he came down the steps,
pillow in hand, and asked me where
his pillow was,
I wept because he was lost in the confusion
of God.

I felt God as my mother
put her hands on my diseased stomach
speaking aloud as I cried.
And called out like Job of old,
“Who are we to you?”
And with no response, no reward,
I felt I knew God that day better than
all the other years.

I saw God in the way the stars
peeked through the bare branches
in the winter sky.
Pleiades shouted down to me of
their distance and age and
still their nothingness.
And as the sanity of stars—
that post-nebula order—
finished speaking, they asked of me
(of God)
“Where were you when I laid
the foundations of the Earth?”

Becky, not God¹

Henry Landon Miles

set the hour for their reunion.

She's under the green
canopy in the closed coffin.

She signed away her body,
except for her skin,
so her hip bones might be recycled

into screws to repair broken ankles
or wedges to fuse spines
or to let others bend on her knees.

Are those Navajos?
One is wearing a jacket
with *Navajo Nation Fair* on the back.

I look over her mourners,
hoping my prayer
will be apt.

What did Becky believe?
What do her gathering
people believe?

Bishop Tillack chokes up
on Mormon words
for a woman he has never met.

The man in the Navajo jacket (as she willed),
stands at her coffin,
speaks a language I do not understand,

1. A version of this poem was previously published in *Touchstones* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 49–51.

places beads, backs away,
picks up an eagle's wing,
brushes coffin, grass, chairs, and Grandma Laura.

He lights the smudge
aromas of sage, tobacco, and sweet grass
intermingle.

He eagle wings the cleansing smoke
over her sacred space,
sits down with four men

around a rawhide drum.
They lay their wood sticks on the drum,
chant long *aye, aye, ayes* and *oh, oh, ohs* for Becky.

The five men grasp their sticks,
thump an unrelenting beat and
beat and chant evoke for her

a path of music up the pines
while a Navajo woman looks on.
One man chants solo and four answer back.

A distant diesel draws near and
steel wheels on steel rails and air whistle blasts
erase beat and chant

like the diesel paused the bishop
in his ceremony half an hour ago.
As steel turns to irony

I ponder the coffin in which
lie and yet lie not
the remains of Becky, age 29.

CHRISTOPHER BISSETT {chrisbissett@gmail.com} is a poet, registered nurse, and home care case manager at Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. He graduated in English and women's studies from Brigham Young University in 2010. Besides writing, Christopher spends much of his time studying and admiring nature, especially insects, plants, and a lifelong obsession with shells. He lives with his wife, Rebecca, and their five children in Raymond, Alberta, Canada.

LUISA PERKINS is a novelist, essayist, and lyricist. Her book *Prayers in Bath* was a finalist for the Association for Mormon Letters Novel Award in 2017. Her award-winning short work has been published in *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* and has been heavily anthologized. She holds an MFA in writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts.

TAMARA PACE THOMSON {breedinglilacs@icloud.com} is a visiting faculty member at Brigham Young University, where she teaches composition and creative writing. She writes mostly fiction and poetry but has published an occasional creative nonfiction essay and book review. Her favorite teaching gig is a volunteer creative writing workshop that she started at the Utah State Hospital. She and her husband have three children and two children-in-law and like to spend their extra time with them.

CHRIS A. PECK currently works as a high school English teacher in Orem, Utah. He has had poetry published in a variety of places, including *Wilderness Interface Zone* and *Dialogue*. Peck has also had essays published through the *Utah English Journal* and *Sci Phi Journal* and has presented at the Utah Valley University Philosophy Conference and at *Sunstone*.

HENRY LANDON MILES grew up in Blackfoot, Idaho and received his BA from Idaho State in 1961 and an MA in economics from American University in 1968. He became a Foreign Service Officer and served in US embassies in Latin America. He retired into Brigham Young University's MA program in creative nonfiction writing and learned what he wanted to be when he grew up. His essay "My Mission Decision" won *Dialogue's* Eugene England Memorial Personal Essay Contest in 2007.

THREE DOGS IN THE AFTERLIFE

Luisa Perkins

that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there

✦ waits while ● gets her bearings. It always takes a little while, he says.
● lifts her spirit nose, trying and failing to scan the air. I can't smell, she says.

No, ✦ agrees. Smelling means taking in bits and letting them give you messages. We don't have that here.

● looks around. This is probably still her street, but she's never trusted only in her eyes before.

Is my person here?

She is. You will see her soon.

But how will I know her if I can't smell?

You have a sense beyond smell—you always did.

● cocks her head, confused.

Much of what you think of as smell is actually ♠♠. With it, you sense energy and intention. That's how we're talking now, do you understand?

● yawns the way she always does when she has deep thinking to do. I suppose, she says.

And spirit eyes see light, as I'm sure you recognize, ✦ adds.

● looks up and down the street. It's flat and faded without the voluptuous dimension of odors, aromas, fragrances—like the screen her person watched in the evening sometimes. (● never understood the appeal.)

I guess so, she says doubtfully.

She looks at ✦ more closely, fighting the impulse to sniff. Where's your person?

The Master is my person. He asked me to greet you. I greet all the new ones. We find it helps ease the disorientation.

A bit of grey flashes past ● and up a tree trunk. ● puts up her spirit ears. Was that a . . .

Squirrel, yes. They're usually up for a good chase, but always ask first. It's one of the rules.

I'm supposed to ask a squirrel if I can chase it?

Yes. We're not enemies here. There is no prey, only the pack. Squirrels, persons, even cats—

● yawns again, unable to believe what ✦ has just said. Cats. You've got to be kidding. They're pure evil.

Cats are the Master's creations, like you and me, ✦ says firmly. They're part of the pack. So chasing is okay, as long as you remember it's a game.



Later, ● recognizes ☿. Before . . . all this . . . he ran down her street most days at dawn and dusk. ● barked a greeting every time he passed, almost envying ☿'s freedom—until her person gave ● a tasty and scratched behind her ears. Persons were the best. ☿ had no person, ate out of tipped trash cans, and slept in forgotten corners. But he trailed scents of places ● had never been, and ● picked up those whispers and rumors on walks with her person. Remembering them now, she bites back a whine.

I can see that I will look on the absence of my body's nose as a bondage, she says.



✦ agrees that ● can go around with him until her person is ready. They walk all through the neighborhood, then beyond and into the city, and ●'s spirit paws never ache with fatigue. That's one nice change. It almost makes up for the lack of smell.

It's not long now until you'll have it back. The Master won't tell any persons when, but He told me.

● cocks her head, hoping for more. But, no.

I can't tell you yet. But it's soon.

I'll see my person first, though.

✦ assured ● earlier, but she needs to hear it again.

Yes.

✦ is patient, which tells ● good things about ✦'s Master. As the person, so the dog, was what ●'s mother said when ● was a pup.

✧ runs by again—with two cats and a big animal ● doesn't recognize. ● still finds it odd, the different animals and the persons all going around together. One pack, she reminds herself. A question occurs to her.

✧ didn't have a person before. Will it always be so?

The Master saves special persons for wild dogs like ✧. He has been promised a person who had no dog before.

● knew there were such people, felt bad for them when she met them. It is good this Master has a plan.

I'd like to meet your Master.

And so you shall. In fact, it's time. Your person will be there, too.

They cross a bridge and come into a vast park, one ● has never seen.

● feels a tingle of ♠♠ in her spirit nose, and all the colors of the plants and flowers and sky flare brighter for just a moment. The pulse comes again, stronger, and ● puts up her spirit ears.

♠♠, she says, increasing her pace. It's my person.

Indeed, says ✦.

They run, never tiring, and the pulses flare more often and more brightly until they round a corner and everything is round and real and almost smelly in its varied beauty.

And then, walking toward them on a path, two persons.

● barks like crazy. She speeds to her person's side and circles around and through her person's spirit legs, wagging her spirit tail frantically. ●'s person kneels and places her spirit hand on ●'s spirit head, and it's almost as good as a tasty. ● is about to lick her person's spirit face, but then comes a Voice.

"●."

● looks up. And knows.

Master, she whispers. Looking into his eyes, ● remembers everything from before—and from before that. She rolls onto her spirit back humbly.

The Master kneels by ●'s person's side and rubs ●'s spirit belly with His hand.

"●," the Master repeats. "IT IS WELL."

LUIA PERKINS is a novelist, essayist, and lyricist. Her book *Prayers in Bath* was a finalist for the Association for Mormon Letters Novel Award in 2017. Her award-winning short work has been published in *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* and has been heavily anthologized. She holds an MFA in writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts.

A Blessing for Starting Over

Joanna Brooks

First, bless the burst of anger; its force will get you free.

Then, bless the tears that follow; they will provide new sight.

Bless your bare feet as you put them on the earth. Run.

Bless your toes when they bleed.

They may be small but they don't shrink from working and feeling.

Just like your broken nails, your scarred belly, your startled mind.

So bless them as well.

Bless the clothes that have covered you, then leave them at the shore.

Walk into the water until it covers you, lift your feet,

and recite a known prayer over yourself. Twice.

Any known prayer will do.

If you come from ocean, taste salt.

If you come from scrub, burn sage.

If you come from desert, offer pollen.

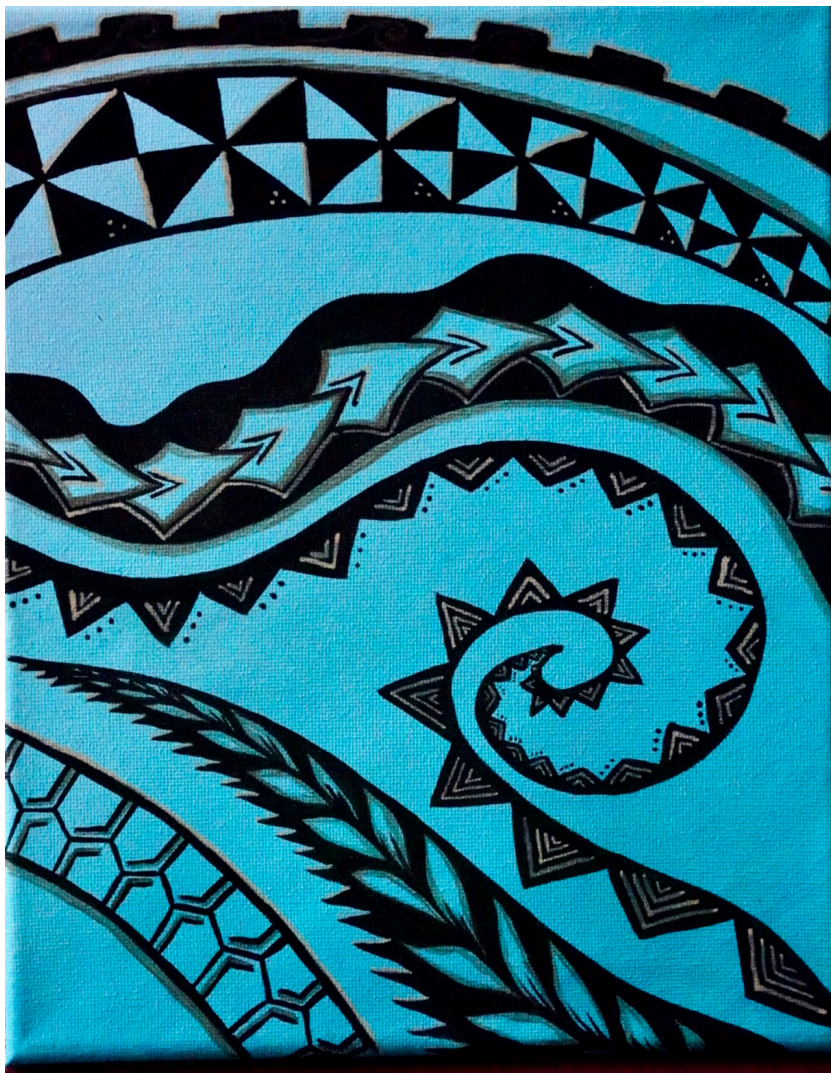
If you come from prairie, grind grain.

Bless the freshly floured board.

Bless the blank page,

The bare canvas.

Bless the fact that these simple things have a place in your life.



Kalani Tonga
Taste Salt
acrylic on canvas, 8"x10"

And bless your actual life, the life you made,
The bodies you gather in at night,
The ones who trust you for light, soup, and blankets.
Bless the parts of you that stayed behind to hold it all together,
So that other parts could run to survive.

They are the stubborn ones hiding in the hills among the bones of
wild horses.
They are the tough ones sheltered under the concrete hum of highway
overpasses.
They are the beautiful ones who refuse to surrender the meadow or
the moon to sleep.
They are the burning ones who go about in strange cities discovering
whole alphabets.

One of them is on her way home now.
With these words I bless her.
Offer her light, soup, and blankets.
Hear what she has to say.
Hear again for the first time
the sound of your actual name.

JOANNA BROOKS is an award-winning author or editor of ten books on race, religion, gender, social movements, and American culture. She has appeared in global media outlets including the BBC, NPR, the *Daily Show*, CNN, MSNBC, and the *Washington Post* and helped create and lead organizations advancing the rights and well-being of people seeking asylum and progressive people of faith. As Associate Vice President for Faculty Advancement at San Diego State University, she leads faculty development efforts responsive to the needs of diverse faculty at a large, public, and research-intensive Hispanic-serving institution of higher education. She holds a PhD in English from the University of California, Los Angeles, and is a proud fourth-generation Southern Californian.



Trevor Southey
Stewardship/Breadmaker
intaglio print, 18"x24"

Elegy for the Eaten

Madison Daniels

To the Ones who
Awakened the Universe with a word
And set the Cosmos afire.

God-Mom and God-Dad—

Stretching forth our hands,
We pluck from the Tree of Life.
For our mortal lives to be sustained,
creaturely blood must be spilled.
Through animal, plant, and fungus—we live.

This is the Way.
Death is the engine of Life.

Tell them, God-Mom and God-Dad,
That we are grateful for their lives.
That we are sorry we did not do better by them.
Tell them they are more than beef
More than pork.

Tell them they are precious
Beyond their grocered price.
Dollars and cents mean nothing,
For without them
We are nothing.

We pray that we can be worthy
Of Creation's ever-giving Sacrifice.

With fire, earth, water, air,
And a heaping cup of spirited love,
We have cooked a meal
In the Cosmos of our Kitchen.
A similitude of Creation.

Bless us with Presence that we may eat
And taste Grace made flesh.
Made vegetable.
Made fruit.

And without end,
We give thanks for the gift of life
The communion of food
And the company to share it with.

We pray in the name that embodies
Creation's Grace and Power;
Life into Death into Renewed Life;
Jesus Christ
Amen.

MADISON DANIELS is a stay-at-home chef, a gardener, and an avid hiker. For work, he organizes Utah's faith communities for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. In his downtime, Madison explores the intersection of Mormonism and the environment at bristleconefiresides.com.

ARTISTS

NAMON BILLS received a BFA from Brigham Young University and an MFA from Utah State University. He works primarily in collage and mixed media. In addition to exhibiting his own work in solo and juried shows, Namon has curated several large group exhibitions. He lives in Santaquin, Utah with his wife and two children.

CAMILLA STARK is an artist, designer, storyteller, and occasional desert prophet. She is intensely curious and is interested in natural history, religion, and folklore. She lives in Provo, Utah and is a founding member of the ARCH-HIVE.

KALANI TONGA is an artist, activist, and writer who spends her energy keeping her adorable but adventurous five runts alive. She has been featured in *A Book of Mormons: Latter-day Saints on a Modern-Day Zion* and the blog FeministMormonHousewives.org.

TREVOR SOUTHEY (1940–2015) was born in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1940. He joined the Church Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in South Africa and, in 1967, emigrated to the United States to study at Brigham Young University, where he remained as a professor of art until 1977. Until his death in 2015, Southey was a popular painter and sculptor known for his exacting depictions of the human form.

A SPELL FIND SOMETHING LOST.

A SPELL OF DIVINING

Ingredients:

one FORKED STICK

or

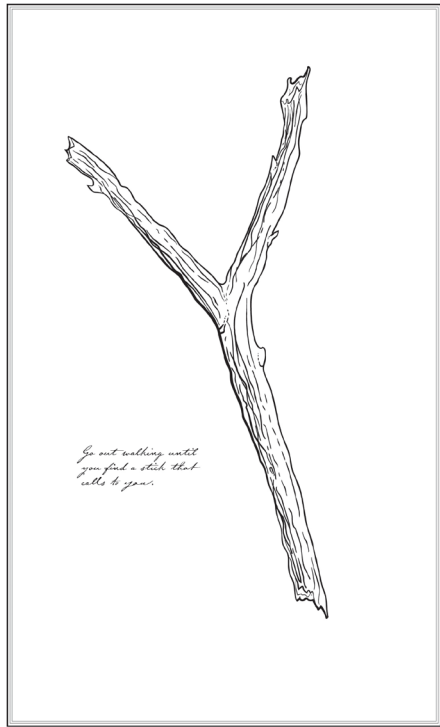
two L-SHAPED COPPER RODS

Instructions:

1. Hold the forked ends of the stick, one in each hand, so the stick is parallel to the ground.
2. Walk slowly with the stick in the area where you are searching for the missing item.
3. When the stick "jumps" or "dips" on its own accord, you have located your quarry. (If you are using the copper rods, this is indicated by the rods crossing.)
4. Thank the stick, and give thanks unto God.

NOW THIS IS NOT ALL THY GIFT; FOR YOU HAVE
ANOTHER GIFT, WHICH IS THE GIFT OF AARON;
BEHOLD, IT HAS TOLD YOU MANY THINGS.

DOCTRINE & COVENANTS 8:6



Camilla Stark

PLATETM 6

Pearce, Utah

Camilla Stark
A Spell to Find Something Lost
digital media

The Cunning Man and Fiction of the Mormon Corridor

D. J. Butler and Aaron Michael Ritchey. *The Cunning Man*. Wake Forest, N.C.: Baen Books, 2019. 312 pp. Paperback: \$16.00. ISBN: 978-1982124168.

Reviewed by James Goldberg

On December 6, 2019, the Western Mining and Railroad Museum in Helper, Utah hosted a release party for *The Cunning Man*. The novel, which has scenes in the city and in the old coal mines nearby up Spring Canyon, is set during the Great Depression and features a Mormon protagonist, Hiram Woolley, who uses faith-powered folk magic to face down old evil within a new and fast-changing world.

There is a vibrant tradition in Mormon literature of searching for the Mormon Corridor's soul through tales grounded in its historical centers of economic activity. Levi Peterson's *The Backslider* is the great Mormon ranching novel. Darin Cozzens's *Light of the New Day* choreographs its meditations on change to the rhythms of farm life. *The Cunning Man* now joins Carla Kelly's *My Loving Vigil Keeping* in turning its attention to the mines dispersed at the geographical and social fringes of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Mormon Corridor life.

I like the mine novels. Both Kelly's novel and *The Cunning Man* introduce us to multiethnic communities—"Dey call Helper 'de town of fifty-seven varieties,'" one miner jokes in *The Cunning Man* (184)—where the only thing everyone has in common is debt owed to the local company store. In both novels, the dangers of mine life (economic, social, and physical) loom large. And in both, the outsider protagonists feel a certain sense of connection to the mining towns they

find themselves in because of their own marginal status in respectable society.

Hiram's marginal, liminal position comes in part because the respectable world is growing less tolerant of the Christian charms whose use his grandmother trained him in. Though prayers, scripture study, and priesthood blessings are smiled upon in Mormon communities, the use of objects like rods or protective amulets made with just the right passage or invocation inscribed on them is met with a growing unease. "Is this *nineteen* thirty-five . . . or *eighteen* thirty-five?" a counselor in the presiding bishopric asks Hiram by way of warning when he's assigned to deliver food from the storehouse to the Kimball mine (4). The warning is hardly necessary: Hiram already feels the tension between the charismatic and communal world his polygamist parents inhabited and the world his adopted son, Michael, dreams of "when the superstitions of the past would fade away, and scientific theory would be applied to improve all aspects of life" (206).

Gus Dollar, a German immigrant and fellow practitioner of folklore, recognizes the difficult position Hiram inhabits. "The practices that were mandatory when you were a child became the oddities that were winked at when you were a young man, and the crimes that are now prosecuted when you are grown," he observes. "The world you were born into has disappeared" (77).

"You are not a man of this century, Hiram Wooley," Dollar notes, unknowingly echoing voices within Church leadership.

"I don't know," Hiram responds. "I *do* like my truck" (78).

And yet, even in the new world, Hiram finds that old problems persist. For him, wearing the yoke of discipleship means using every available means to help those in need. In the mines near Helper, he encounters starving miners, a bitterly divided Kimball family at odds with an ambitious railroad executive, and an ancient loose demon or two to boot. Hiram finds an unexpected ally in a labor organizer named Mary McGill. When a contact of Hiram's speculates that the demon

name “Mahoun” may be related to “Mahan” in the book of Moses, Mary asks what Mahan means and Hiram responds,

“Master Mahan is a sort of title, I guess. It means someone who has learned to kill for gain. To convert human life into wealth.”

Mary snorted. “Well, that’s Ammon Kimball [the mine owner]. And Naman Retting [the railroad executive]. A lot of people turn human life into money.” (239)

As the book escalates, Hiram’s efforts to help the miners transcend the action sequences they are made up of. Butler and Ritchey channel imagery of hidden tunnels and secret rites from nineteenth-century pulp depictions of Mormons (such as those reprinted in Michael Austin and Ardis Parshall’s *Dime Novel Mormons*) but with the twist that commercial rather than religious fanaticism is the real threat in their telling. The specificity of the way in which one character betrays Mormon polygamous principles is particularly chilling.

Like Butler’s fantastic *Witchy War* series, *The Cunning Man* shows what is possible when Mormon writers are willing to engage with Mormon imagery and themes. Surprising and strange, with a lingering richness in its repurposing of religious language and imagery, *The Cunning Man* deserves to be part of a discourse about who we are, where we’ve been, and what we owe each other as a people.

JAMES GOLDBERG {james.goldberg@gmail.com} is a poet, playwright, essayist, novelist, documentary filmmaker, scholar, and translator who specializes in Mormon literature. He is a cofounder of the Mormon Lit Lab and currently serves on the board of the Association for Mormon Letters and on the advisory board for the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts. Further information on his writing is available at goldbergish.com.



As Above, So Below: Mormonism in D. J. Butler's Kaleidoscopic Cosmological Fantasy

D. J. Butler. *Witchy Eye*. Riverdale, N.Y.: Baen Books, 2017. 576 pp. Hardcover: \$25.00. ISBN: 978-1476782119.

D. J. Butler. *Witchy Winter*. Riverdale, N.Y.: Baen Books, 2018. 586 pp. Hardcover: \$25.00. ISBN: 978-1481483148.

D. J. Butler. *Witchy Kingdom*. Riverdale, N.Y.: Baen Books, 2019. 624 pp. Hardcover: \$25.00. ISBN: 978-1481484152.

Reviewed by Mattathias Singh Goldberg Westwood

There are many different ways to construct a fantasy universe. Some are flowers, carefully grown from a single seed. Some are mirrors, with each element corresponding to a specific parallel in our own world for the purposes of allegory. Some are photocopies, carefully repeating standard tropes, while others are stadiums, equipped for large crowds, where games are played according to clearly defined rules. The world of D. J. Butler's *Witchy War* novels is an old-growth forest, a kaleidoscope, the stomach of a shark—growing thickly with a thousand different things, constantly shifting to reveal new patterns and connections between its disparate elements, devouring everything in its path and mixing it all together in one crowded room.

Butler's saga began with 2017's *Witchy Eye*, which was followed swiftly in 2018 by *Witchy Winter* (winner of both the Association for Mormon Letters Award for Best Novel and the Whitney Award for Best Speculative Fiction) and in 2019 by *Witchy Kingdom*. At their core, the books chart the progress of Sarah Calhoun, hidden daughter of the empress of the New World, as she battles to understand and claim her

legacy. More widely, they explore the culture, theology, folklore, history, and ritual practice of a wide gamut of early Americans and magical beings. Butler's alternate America—filled with a mass of peoples and nations sharply divided by differing interpretations of sacred texts and the nature of the cosmos and steeped in ritual traditions and ways of seeing reality beyond the material—is a place where old things become new and all belief systems are seen as tantalizing hints in the direction of a greater whole. And while this world contains no Mormons, nearly every page resonates in fascinating ways with Latter-day Saint scripture and belief.

Some of these resonances are on the surface, and there's much to enjoy in the details: characters named Sherem and Gazalem, turns of phrase such as “measure of their creation” and “sinning against light and knowledge,” a set of eight witnesses to a holy work, or obscure references to early Mormon history, such as the inclusion of an itinerant magician by the name of Luman Walters who uses a divining rod and participates in treasure-digging. But it's further, in the very foundations of Butler's world and the structure of his story, in which the quest for a kingdom becomes the quest to understand a forgotten Goddess, that Butler's kaleidoscopic imagination shines brightest.

As If It Had Been a World

As referenced above, Butler's world is a diverse one. The cultures, languages, and religions of early America, along with a few invented by Butler, are explored expansively. English, Irish, Scots, German, Dutch, French, Spanish, Basque, Algonquin, Haudenosaunee, Ojibwe, Cherokee, Choctaw, Bantu, Igbo, Amharic, and many other tongues mix together within Butler's Empire. And while misunderstandings and stereotypes influence the interactions between groups and individuals, Butler presents each as a vital part of the fabric of the nation. Each book emphasizes encounters between cultures, starting with the opening

sequence in a crowded tobacco fair in Nashville, with merchants and visitors from a dizzying range of backgrounds all swirling together. Later sequences along the Natchez Trace, in New Orleans, and up and down the Mississippi River continue to emphasize the diversity of this society. From the beginning of the saga, the diversity of his world is cast in theologically positive terms, with Sarah's religious mentor saying that he "loved all Adam's children, in their colors and their smells and their busy motion and their relentless creative buzz of choice and free will" (*Witchy Eye*, 20). While conflict between groups is certainly not ignored in Butler's drama, the beauty of a diverse world and the opportunity to learn from the practices of other communities are repeatedly emphasized.

The diversity of the New World and the relatively equal balance of power between its many communities are revealed in the political structure of Butler's saga through the careful balance of treaties that form the framework of the Empire, with its system of Electors and strong regional powers. Elector songs scattered throughout the text explain how authority is shared. The peace of the Empire depends on strong respect for the individual practices of the Empire's many peoples, no matter who or how they worship.

The many different faiths and traditions of this mixed multitude have a tremendous influence on the world's cosmology and magic, which is shaped by the fact that many different gods answer prayers, and many different traditions offer both secret knowledge and power to influence the world through supernatural means. Christian priests, Voudon mambos, Norse godis, German brauchers, Anishinaabe Mide-wiwin, Tarot casters, and many others intercede on behalf of various heavenly powers. These various powers make competing claims of truth a live issue in a particularly interesting way—none of Butler's characters dares to question whether miracles are possible, but they remain divided over who truly rules over the heavens and whether different powers can be trusted.

Out of the Books

Butler's world certainly experiences its own wars of words and tumult of opinions, and the Bible is at the center of these disputes. In fact, the Bible plays a central role in this world that goes far beyond theological conflict. Biblical images and narratives pervade thought and speech even for characters who are not particularly devout, and especially for characters who are, such as the saintly Bishop of New Orleans. Scripture is engaged through homilies, hymns, and the stained glass and statuary of churches, but also jokes, such as those used to heckle a visiting minister, and even patterns of swearing, such as Calvin Calhoun's repeated exclamation of "Jerusalem!" in situations of surprise or dismay.

As in our own world, the meaning of the Bible is far from a settled question, and the central conflicts of Butler's saga revolve around how different groups interpret the creation narratives of Genesis. The elf-like Firstborn claim to be the descendants of Adam's first wife, whom they call Wisdom, rather than Eve. Using texts that will be familiar to anyone who has read the work of biblical scholar Margaret Barker, some of the Firstborn claim biblical support for worshipping Wisdom as a goddess. Others among the Firstborn quote other passages to claim that the traditional worship of Wisdom is a heresy that violates the boundaries of Christian faith. The opponents of the Firstborn claim biblical support for their arguments that the Firstborn are soulless imitations of humanity, created by the tempting serpent from the Garden of Eden, and that they must be in submission to the Eve's children. Since all parties quote the Bible in their defense, the Bible alone cannot resolve their disputes.

Butler also explores the idea of an open canon of scripture by introducing Firstborn religious texts beyond the Bible, both defending and opposing the worship of Wisdom. These additional texts are viewed as equal in significance to the Bible by those who accept them, but they are unfamiliar to most of the Christians in Butler's world and are derided

as heresy or forgery by some who are familiar with them but who do not believe the doctrines they teach. Two books in particular, *The Song of Etyles*, a Firstborn gloss on the Creation that describes Wisdom, and *The Way of the Law*, a text revered by those among the Firstborn who reject goddess-worship, play major roles as the question of Sarah's own relationship with the Firstborn and the Goddess becomes more significant and pressing.

Keys of the Kingdom

Sarah's saga is one of earthly thrones, and Butler addresses the politics of this alternate America quite ably, but the kingdom with which the books are most concerned is not entirely of this world. Political conflicts are tied to cosmological ones, and knowledge of heaven's will is as crucial to their resolution as armies and courtiers. Thus, Sarah and her allies find themselves traveling unexpected paths, seeking answers to the sacred mysteries of Butler's world.

From early in *Witchy Eye*, when Sarah's companion Calvin is inducted as a Mason, to the climax of *Witchy Winter*, when Sarah completes a sacred enthronement ceremony, the subject of initiation fills the books. When Sarah asks her cousin Alzbieta at one point to explain these rituals, she is told "I cannot tell you here, or now, or in the presence of others" (*Witchy Winter*, 139), but Alzbieta goes on to reassure Sarah that what she wants to know will "reveal itself, in the proper place and time, to a person who has been properly prepared" (*Witchy Winter*, 142).

From here, many riddles are examined as Sarah seeks the sacred knowledge that will answer her own questions and give peace to her people. In one of Butler's most direct nods to Joseph Smith, Sarah discovers that the rituals she needs have been lost, and she and her companions must reconstruct them. To do so, they depend on confidence that truth is one great whole, and that the knowledge gleaned from one

initiatc path will shed light on all. In the end, Sarah encounters the heavens, but these sacred experiences produce additional questions. As she explores mysteries beyond what she would have imagined at the beginning of her journey, it becomes clear that Sarah has taken her first steps on a ladder that doesn't end.

Roots and Branches

The world Butler has built in the three *Witchy War* books is diverse and intriguing, and the interlocking mysteries its characters are drawn into are fascinating. The saga combines compelling forward action with a wide range of characters, and the writing, while full of lavish descriptions, remains gripping. But perhaps of the most interest to Latter-day Saint readers are the ways in which the complex religious context and numerous scriptural debates and initiatic paths of Butler's world refract familiar images from our own tradition into new patterns. This kaleidoscopic impact makes the three books already released a treasure trove for Mormon readers and suggests that there's much to look forward to from future visits into the worlds of Butler's robust imagination.

MATTATHIAS SINGH GOLDBERG WESTWOOD {mattathiasingh@gmail.com} was born in the shadow of the Wasatch Mountains and grew up near where the Olentangy meets the Scioto River. He likes stories, whether new or old, and trees, whether short or tall. He hopes someday to make sense of something.



The Things We Make True

Michael William Palmer. *Baptizing the Dead and Other Jobs*. Peterborough, N.H.: Bauhan Publishing, 2019.
128 pp. Paperback: \$16.00. ISBN: 978-0-87233-302-4.

Reviewed by Susan Meredith Hinckley

As a kid growing up near the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, I spent most of my time plotting my escape—from childhood itself, but more specifically from a Mormon childhood in Utah. I wrote away for literature from boarding schools on the East Coast. I dreamed of being a nanny in any big city to which someone might be willing to send me a plane ticket. I vowed I would at least go away to college. I couldn't bear the thought of hanging out in the same student union where I'd spent lame Saturday afternoons bowling with my brother. How could I ever go to class on that campus where, about two years after every self-respecting kid on the block, I'd finally learned to ride a bike?

My ward chafed. Mormonism itself made me itchy, as if I had been born with an allergy to it that my parents either failed to notice or hoped I would grow out of. I spent a lot of time bouncing back and forth to extended family in Utah County. My inability to fit was even more glaring there, telling me that no matter where I went in the state, I'd likely never feel at home. I'm not sure why, but many decades later I still can't think of my childhood in Utah without also thinking about wishing I could be anywhere else. I also can't quite stop missing it.

So although I was unfamiliar with his work, I felt an immediate recognition of the voice behind the extraordinary essays in Michael William Palmer's *Baptizing the Dead and Other Jobs*. This prize-winning collection forms a coming-of-age memoir that is not so much *about* Mormonism—or growing up in Utah—as haunted by it.

As I read, I settled almost too easily into the places and people of someone I've never known, completely at home in the unease of another's fraught adolescent footsteps. It was a bit unnerving to know so well some details of a story I was seeing for the first time.

The author's list of early jobs reads like a pretty ordinary roadmap to adulthood, at least for a kid from Utah County. Convenience store clerk, telemarketer, nighttime janitor, knife salesman, Jazz-obsessed basketball fan (okay, some are perhaps not so much *jobs* as states of being). The unremarkable occupations and experiences he describes form a backdrop for the people that shape him, reminding us that a life story is never so much a catalog of the mindless jobs we'd rather forget as a deeply ingrained inventory of the love and losses we can't.

In the first essay, "7-Eleven Clerk," Palmer is remembering a friend who has died. He writes, "Blake once told me that one of the things he liked best about tattoos was the way they mapped a person's life—for him, there was nothing sad about a straight edge tattoo on someone smoking a cigarette, or the name of a long-irrelevant lover scrawled across someone's heart, because of the way those tattoos were honest about the past" (9). Reading these essays felt like I was looking at a person covered in tattoos they didn't choose but are used to living with—as if they wrote the past all over themselves as they lived it but unwittingly let the ink sink under their skin. Now it simply can't be helped.

We watch as Palmer feels his way from the middle to the fringes of the church in which he was raised, until eventually he stands on the outside looking in. Even after he has outgrown his religion, there's a feeling in these essays that relationships and experiences continue to be filtered through the old lens, as if he can set it aside but can't quite stop looking at himself and everyone else through it. Mormonism continues to not just inform his perspective but somehow lurk in his personal shadows until it feels to the reader almost like it must inevitably chase him from the physical places of his youth.

And yet, in the haunting essay from which the collection takes its title, he uncovers meaning and so finds comfort in a memory of his first experience attending the temple with the youth from his ward. This suddenness of beauty pulled from the past is deeply moving. He recalls waiting nervously in line for his own turn in the font, watching as the friend whose suicide he now vainly struggles to reconcile ascends the steps after completing baptisms for the dead. He writes, "I know that ritual is creepy and audacious to a lot of people, but that image of water falling from Steve's eyes and hair as he crossed to the other side of the baptismal font made all my years of church and seminary and broom hockey and all the other Mormon activities worth it. When I think about that, I almost become religious again, or at the very least feel as though the things we make true are true" (172). Palmer's ability to hold the sacred and meaningless together in an easy way that gives both full expression contributes to the feeling of raw truth in the experiences he selects to tell his story.

His descriptions are delivered with a measured neutrality that somehow heightened meaning for me. I know how deeply Mormonism is tangled into our families and relationships. I know what's required to leave it behind. You don't miss that story behind the story just because Palmer doesn't really tell it. Although it isn't the focus, we glimpse the difficulty occasionally, as when he writes, "One day my mom, doing her best to contain her frustration with the church-free and directionless adult I'd become, asked me, 'What is it you want, exactly?' 'I just want to live my own life,' I said. She rolled her eyes. 'What *else*?' " (21)

Which is, of course, exactly what he's trying to figure out himself.

Eventually, Palmer ends up at the University of Utah (as did I). He's finally launched on a trajectory out of his Utah County childhood, but in the kind of cosmic "not so fast" one might expect when trying to escape one's former self, he ends up working at 7-Eleven for a second time.

Surely it's written somewhere that you can take the person out of Mormonism, but you can't take Mormonism out of the person? Something like that. In this case, the friction created in shaking off his old skin generated a spark of truth that continues to testify long after I've finished the book. Someone else knows just what it's like to grow up in that particular place, and that particular way, focused mostly on the vague goal of escaping it. But the goal is complicated by the same details that drive it—the familiar faces of the mountains he loves, the endless feel of certain folding chairs in a cultural hall, the taste of punch forever mixed with Sprite.

"I just want to live my own life," says every adolescent at some time. But are Mormons allowed to say it out loud? It somehow never felt that way to me. This collection of essays says it clearly and yet doesn't feel quite as sure as those words sound. Artfully subtle but unmistakable, its tacit unrest will speak to anyone who's ever felt conflicted about the unique combination of place and people called home.

Maybe we're not so different—maybe Palmer's experiences are the same as that of every kid, love/hate roots sunk deeply into the first place they landed through no choice of their own. Those roots retain a certain wistfulness for their early soil. As he describes it, "I'd shed my skin, but while I might have walked outside afterward feeling like a new person, what I remember when I think about it now is what I left behind" (18).

Palmer experiments with form in ways that are not only creative but particularly effective, yielding a collection I found as engaging to read from the standpoint of craft as from our shared cultural experience.

In a short entry labeled "Zion From My Rearview Mirror," he describes driving away from Utah for the last time on his way to his new life in Texas. "I was relieved to escape, even as I grieved anew the reality of fleeing the place I once thought I'd never leave. I watched the mountains in my rearview mirror as I drove west toward the freeway. The sun blazed on Timpanogos and I knew exactly where I was. I

don't think I'll ever feel that certainty in another place" (97). The wholly unexpected depth of resonance for me in these collected essays makes me wonder whether any of us will. I'll undoubtedly return to this book again, whenever I need a reminder that I'm not the only one whose heart carries the complex, indelible imprints of growing up exactly where and how I did.

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Karin Anderson's Excavation of Ghosts

Karin Anderson. *Before Us Like a Land of Dreams*.
Salt Lake City: Torrey House Press, 2019. 375 pp.
Paper: \$18.95. ISBN: 978-1-948814-03-4.

Reviewed by Lauren Matthews

Mark 5:9—"My name is Legion: for we are many"—opens Karin Anderson's masterwork *Before Us Like a Land of Dreams*. Anderson lyrically pools her ancestral narrative in sweeping loops, eddying history, religion, and landscape. Ghosts speak elusive, needling "truths." Homesteads are temples of their own. The narrator is excavated as artifact—the individual is not individual, the collective not merely alive.

This excavation occurs through pilgrimage, both automotive and digital. Anderson and her narrator bleed together in the drives to sun-drenched towns and sun-stripped cemeteries, tracing genealogical roots and mining journals, maps, and microfiche newspaper archives. There is urgency. This truly *is* a pilgrimage, a dusty highway where the narratives explored are not relics but reliquaries. They hold the holy: communion with the self via the embedded many.

Guided by the Catholic Saint Ignatius, the narrator steps into pivotal and poignant moments of her own intangible history. At a graveyard, many years before she will be born, the narrator confronts her stranger-grandfather: “How much is unforgivable? I saw you—the ghost of you—in my father’s worst moments. I don’t know how to forgive him. I don’t know that I should” (69).

Another ghost, a grandmother, admonishes the narrator: “And you can’t let go what you must hold. This is a sin. The kind you still believe in” (71).

If forgiveness is a more violent form of consignment, which I suspect, then it is to this novel’s credit that it is far too sage for half-strung easy condolences. Instead, this novel is a performance of empathy. In prose all talon and yellow eye, no forgiveness is found, but each ancestral—and ancestral-adjacent—ghost is given their voice.

Sometimes they speak over each other or against each other. Some accuse. Some grieve. There are horrors and beauties. Gravestones pepper their tales, as they pepper ours. Ghosts are carefully revealed to be un-whole, a fragment constructed from shared flashpaper memory. One ghost rails against another ghost’s glib documentation of him: “In the end that’s what I, Olaf Larson, was remembered for in Fremont County, Idaho. Not the last jar of pickled onions in my dead wife’s sitting, not the lousy farming nor even the huckleberries or the Victrola. Not even for the hundreds of stereoscopic images of a brief world loved and lost. It was my love for Leon Wheelwright” (154).

These encounters draw attention to the unknown, the displaced, and the denied. The connection between the titular “land of dreams” and the dream of the American West and its Manifest Destiny is unmistakable; so is Anderson’s subversion as she depicts its reckoning. Within the great American West, Anderson frames the perspectives absent from normative family histories seeking to establish, well, the constructed norm. You will recognize these voices as the cavernous absences in annals of the West and Pioneer Day narratives. Indigenous peoples and queer people step into their stories.

Guided by Ignatius, the narrator—also denied, also displaced in a patriarchal, heteronormative narrative—reflects on the events and family that compelled this journey. A mother, a son, a writer’s block, and then in the compressed layers, a father with no latitude for queer children; the first blinking understanding of 1960s racial politics; the clawing scrabble for language to communicate and connect, and its inevitable, bewildering failures. Anderson writes, “Why Be is an unanswerable question, and so I tend to stop asking for a while and feel better. Eighty or so years on a planet like this one is such a puny interval it usually seems reasonable—even sweet—to see it through. . . . I’m generally satisfied to believe we exist to watch sunlight strike Permian planes. But I was driving south in a chokehold of personal crisis so maybe I wasn’t myself” (13).

“Why Be” reframes into “Why Was.” It informs the narrator’s research, but it also informs her catalogue of herself: why was that anger toward male effeminacy carried from her father’s people to her father? Why was it that that form of violence stopped with herself? “Do you think that stuff stays in us, even sideways?” the narrator asks (201). “*What say you,*” Ignatius repeats (202).

Later, the speaker mourns both the absence of the narratives and their presence (for if they exist, so does the distilled “sideways stuff”—relic and reliquary): “Do we even exist—did we ever exist—if the

stories, even the imperfect ones, even the fragments, dissipate with the tellers?" (290).

The response, not the answer, is adjacent to the title of this novel, a line from Matthew Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach": "for the world, which seems / To lie before us like a land of dreams, / So various, so beautiful, so new, / Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain; / And we are here as on a darkling plain" (28). As though through a glass darkly, between life and the shredding death, there is no certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain, even in—*especially in*—bearing witness to it.

Slinging through the Coronado Trail through the White Mountains, after encountering generations of ghosts, witnessing and then leaving the contoured geography of the family body, the narrator comes to a rest. There is no reconciliation, but perhaps there is recognition—and we as readers, ever mindful of the liveness of our own ghosts, feel their legion.

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History Written in Celluloid

Randy Astle. *Mormon Cinema: Origins to 1952*. New York: Mormon Arts Center, 2018. 680 pp. Paper: \$19.95. ISBN: 978-0692137093.

Reviewed by Davey Morrison

In March of 1895, in Paris, Auguste and Louis Lumière screened ten short, single-shot films for an audience of two hundred, and the movies were born. Less than ten months later, after years of petitioning, Utah officially entered the union as the forty-fifth state in the United States of America. Within a year, the motion picture medium had begun and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had reached a significant turning point in its history, pivoting from isolationism toward integration into larger American society. Both the religion and the art form would spend the subsequent decades coming of age in tandem—sometimes cooperatively, other times antagonistically—and the fascinating relationship between the two is the subject of Randy Astle’s comprehensive new history, *Mormon Cinema: Origins to 1952*.

Astle’s book is indispensable to scholars of both Mormonism and film studies, an encyclopedic chronicling of stories, characters, and trivia related to Mormonism as it was depicted on-screen, whether by the institutional Church as it sought to utilize the new medium for propagandistic, proselytizing, entrenchment, and historical purposes, or by non-Mormons as Hollywood turned to Mormons for both heroes and villains and traveled to Utah for its breathtaking vistas, made famous in the westerns of John Ford and others.

The story begins at the dawn of the century, when Mormonism was a go-to boogeyman for early silent melodrama. Film was just beginning to find its footing as a narrative medium right as Mormonism was coming to prominent (and nefarious) national attention. In the

wake of the Smoot hearings—in which Senator Reed Smoot's eligibility for elected office was called into question by his leadership position as an apostle in a church long associated with and still practicing (albeit underground) polygamy—Mormons had become a villain *du jour* not only in the headlines but in all kinds of pulp fiction, from Zane Grey's western *Riders of the Purple Sage* to Arthur Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* (both adapted for the screen multiple times in the early decades of film). This led to a string of screen melodramas—including, notably, *A Mormon Maid* in America and *Trapped by the Mormons* in England—capitalizing on both Mormonism's prominence in the headlines and its most sensational elements and featuring Mormon missionaries or pioneers kidnapping women to be plural brides, mysterious rituals with unusual robes, Danites seeking blood atonement, or all of the above.

Church leaders responded—not only with missionaries at the doors of film screenings, offering cash rewards for any women found to be kidnapped by the Mormons, but also by making their own films, seeking to tell their own story on-screen. *One Hundred Years of Mormonism* marked the first institutionally sanctioned and approved attempt at putting the story of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and the early pioneers on-screen; it was also an early historical epic, among the first feature-length films produced anywhere, predating D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* by two years. Other projects included *The Life of Nephi*, a now-lost Book of Mormon feature, and *The Romance of Mormonism*, which might have marked the first sympathetic portrait of Mormon history from entirely non-Mormon filmmakers had its producer and director, William H. Harbeck, not booked a fateful trip on the Titanic before production had begun in earnest.

Astle's book is full of such stories, from the tragedy of the Clawson brothers, early documentarians and chroniclers of Mormon life and history who met a tragic end when their films went up in flames, killing one brother and sending the other into an early filmmaking retirement

from grief, to Judge Whitaker's early years as a Disney animator, which would go on to inform both the aesthetics and ideology implicit in Mormon film in every subsequent generation after he left animation to run the infant Brigham Young University Motion Picture Studio, to Philo T. Farnsworth's invention of the television.

Another chapter details the production and reception of *Corianton: A Story of Unholy Love*, a recently rediscovered Book of Mormon epic from 1931 based on the novel by B. H. Roberts and the play by Orestes U. Bean. The film, now restored and housed in BYU's Special Collections, mimics the style of early Cecil B. DeMille biblical dramas with a salacious emphasis on sex and violence (including some rather racy pre-Code¹ nudity) coupled with a conservative, Victorian attitude toward morality (the fallen woman must meet a tragic end in order to redeem herself, while the hero who has succumbed to her temptation is allowed to live on, a penitent man).

The larger narrative is one of a church and an artistic medium solidifying their place within twentieth-century America, as screen depictions of Mormonism shifted from the villains of the early silent period to the heroic, all-American victims of intolerance portrayed in Hollywood films like John Ford's *Wagon Master* and Henry Hathaway's *Brigham Young*, in which the Mormons serve as on-screen stand-ins for another persecuted religious minority at the time of its production

1. The Hays Code was a set of moral guidelines for Hollywood's self-censorship, implemented in 1934 and lasting until 1968. The Code not only imposed strict rules on all mainstream American film with regard to the use of profane language and indications (or in some cases even depictions) of sex, violence, and nudity, it also included a long list of other moral suggestions and criteria that had to be met in order for a film to see public release, including but not limited to forbidding any depiction of a man and woman (including husband and wife) sharing a bed, depictions of miscegenation, depictions of criminal characters in a sympathetic light, and depictions of bad deeds left unpunished by the film's end.

in 1940. Of the latter film, one on-set Mormon consultant who knew Brigham Young as a young man remarked, “When I watched Mr. Jagger pleading in a courtroom scene, I thought I was listening again to Brigham Young.” The film was a critical success, and although some Mormons were upset by the depiction of Young doubting his faith and calling, LDS prophet Heber J. Grant publicly thanked producer Darryl F. Zanuck for the film, calling its premiere “one of the greatest days of [his] life.” Dean Jagger would later convert to Mormonism himself (donating his papers, fittingly, to Brigham Young University), while studio head Zanuck, producer of such classics as *All About Eve* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, considered it the finest film he’d ever produced.

Ultimately, Mormonism would fade as source material for mainstream movies—a result, largely, of the Hays Code, which both discouraged Hollywood from targeting specific faiths for criticism while also rendering it difficult to depict Mormon history on-screen in any sympathetic light, as positive depictions of polygamy would violate the moral standards of the Code. This paradoxical situation paved the way for Mormons—including future Church president Gordon B. Hinckley—to develop their own film tradition, with the “home cinema” Astle describes produced exclusively by and for Mormons, using the medium of film and filmstrips for missionary work, for boosting morale and strengthening testimonies among the membership, and for documenting the lives of Mormons, whether it be through TV and radio transmissions of general conference or through simple, small actuality films of otherwise anonymous members and hobbyist filmmakers whose access to early consumer motion picture cameras turned their quiet domestic moments into pieces of history.

Astle writes with clarity, precision, and an understated compassion for the lives he chronicles. He has the obsessive curiosity and attention to detail of an avid historian—tracing Mormons’ involvement in classic films from *The Gold Rush* to *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* to *His Girl*

Friday to Willow—coupled with a working filmmaker’s appreciation for and understanding of film as both art and business. *Mormon Cinema: Origins to 1952* is, like the films it details, a gift, a blessing, and a historical treasure, one to be cherished and remembered.

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Latter-day Screens: Mormonism in Popular Culture

Brenda R. Weber. *Latter-day Screens: Gender, Sexuality, and Mediated Mormonism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2019. 384 pp. Paper: \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1-4780-0486-8.

Reviewed by Conor Bruce Hilton

Latter-day Screens is a fascinating, compelling, and, at times, frustrating look at a wide range of Mormon-related media. This is largely due to the central conceit of the book—essentially working with Mormonism as a meme and analytic—which works brilliantly in some instances but feels limiting and artificially constrains the discussion in harmful, rather than productive, ways in others. Weber’s background and expertise in gender and media studies shows throughout the book. She

argues that “the amalgamation of materials that turns on Mormonism as a trope—and public conversation about those texts—has had the effect of opening more channels for progressivism, by which I mean a pluralized, diverse, and polylogic regard toward meaning and identity” (19). Weber provides some compelling analysis in support of this audacious claim, though perhaps a deeper engagement on a narrower plane would have been more persuasive.

Weber notes in the introduction that by “the word ‘Mormonism’ I mean not specific or actual F/LDS people, practices, or histories as much as the multiple stories told and retold about these things. It is thus mediated Mormonism as both an idea (meme) and a way of thinking (analytic) that beats at the heart of my inquiry” (15). The limitation of such an approach is that the people, practices, and histories of Mormonism (or Mormonisms, if you prefer) are often an inevitable and inextricable piece of the mediated versions she discusses. Weber doesn’t completely ignore people, practices, or histories, and in fact seems quite eager to share snippets that further her broader ideological argument and match her own lived experience, which may or may not resonate with Mormons of a variety of stripes.

The book’s engagement with Mormonism as a practice, history, and religion was often frustrating—occasionally including slight factual errors like men gaining the status of elder at age twelve (p. 50) and other disputable information. However, I grew much more sympathetic in retrospect when I read the epilogue, which describes Weber’s own fraught relationship with Mormonism growing up Presbyterian in Mesa, Arizona. The Mormonism that Weber describes here, and in places throughout the book, felt foreign or like a distortion of my own lived experience with Mormonism. Yet, reading Weber’s own firsthand account at the end of the book caused me to reflect more graciously on what had come before.

Weber’s broad consideration of what Mormonism is functions as one of the greatest strengths of the text. She engages with all sorts of

portrayals of a large swath of Mormonisms, including a wide range of fundamentalist and polygamist groups. The book is undoubtedly richer for this choice and the considerations that it brings about, even if it will likely cause some frustration to historians and scholars of religion who would appreciate a clearer discussion of the various historical and theological backgrounds of the groups present in Weber's media selections. Such context could have enriched her conversations and analysis.

Weber engages throughout the book with various aspects of Mormonism, largely clustered around gender and sexuality, though chapters cover spiritual neoliberalism (a phrase Weber defines as "a neoliberal regard toward self and systems emphasizing smart choices, care of the self, maximum efficiency, and reduced government intervention" that "mandates loftier, more spiritual goals as markers of achievement—personal well-being, enlightenment, heavenly happiness, the godhead" [54]), racial implications of the "Mormon glow," polygamy, feminism, and queer desire.

The text is best when Weber is engaging closely with one of the various media texts that she has selected for analysis. Weber is undeniably skilled at analyzing these texts (often doing a close reading) and remarkably adept at pointing to complexities, contradictions, and paradoxes that are embedded within each of the moments that she has chosen to highlight. Perhaps the moment that best illustrates this skill is when Weber explores the portrayals of Warren Jeffs and other predatory polygamists in chapter 4. Weber argues that "polygamy fosters feminism" because in these mediated depictions "of male excess, these stories often function as self-making devices for women" (169). She continues by writing that "it is not the ego-driven cardboard cutout leader but those traumatized by his autocratic power that have stories to tell and interiorities to share" (169). This analysis is born out through a careful reading of two reality TV shows, *Escaping Polygamy* and *Escaping the Prophet*, and the rhetoric surrounding FLDS polygamist Warren Jeffs. The chapter ends with a discussion of Joseph Smith and Brigham

Young, both of whom she presents in ways that some will find off-putting, if not misleading, or at least incomplete.

Weber engages almost exclusively with media about but not produced by Mormons (with a few minor Mormon-produced exceptions) including *Sister Wives* (reality TV), *Big Love*, *The Book of Mormon* (musical), interviews with the Osmonds, various news and other media featuring and about Elizabeth Smart, MLMs, various podcast episodes hosted by John Dehlin, a smattering of memoirs by former Mormons, Marriott hotels, *Teenage Newlyweds*, countless think pieces from online news magazines during the “Mormon Moment,” the novel *The Lonely Polygamist*, the Bundys, and even the Bloggernacle. Weber chose texts that are primarily in the popular culture surrounding Mormons but coming from outside Mormonism, most of which are relevant to her thesis about the progressive nature of the gender and sexuality conversation surrounding mediated Mormonism. Weber doesn’t offer an explicit reason for almost completely ignoring Mormon-created media, though I’d assume the reason is tied to her focus on Mormonism as meme and that Mormon-created media would be too close to Mormonism as a people, religion, history, etc. Further work could take the analyses that Weber performs here and look at what happens to the thesis when the focus is on Mormon-created texts (films like *Jane and Emma*, *Brigham City*, and the Halestorm Entertainment comedies; novels like *The Scholar of Moab* or the Linda Wallheim mysteries; and plays like *Pilot Program* or *Huebener*).

Latter-day Screens has a lot on its mind and seems to barely scratch the surface of the potential for the ideas and themes that Weber is exploring. Each chapter felt like it could have been its own monograph, exploring more deeply each facet of the context that surrounds and informs the various texts. The book is provocative in some of the most positive ways by laying the groundwork for all sorts of future scholarship that could play with Mormonism as a meme and analytic. One such idea that was teased, which I would love to see more work on, was

“Joseph Smith, founding prophet and fallen martyr, as a camp celebrity figure” (194). This brief section is the moment from Weber’s text that lodges itself most firmly in my mind and speaks to the thought-provoking nuggets of insight that are scattered throughout the text.

Weber’s text is a fascinating exploration of a wide range of Mormonisms and how they are mediated through all sorts of media, essentially working with Mormonism as it is replicated throughout the broader popular culture and not overly, or at all, concerned with how it exists as a practice, people, or history. This move leads to some deeply insightful analyses and also some blind spots.

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Beauty in the Irreversible

Lisa Van Orman Hadley. *Irreversible Things*. Minneapolis: Howling Bird Press, 2019. 153 pp. Paper: \$18.00. ISBN: 978-0-9961952-5-6.

Reviewed by Sarah Nickel Moore

Judging by its length, *Irreversible Things* is the kind of book that I should have been able to finish in a couple hours. Perhaps one evening, after the kids had gone to bed, I could curl up on the couch for a quick, light read with some hot chocolate. It is small enough to easily fit in my purse to read in snatches while commuting or waiting in the doctor’s office. Like its narrator, however, *Irreversible Things* demands to be read

slowly. No, perhaps “demands” is the wrong word—rather, this book sits down next to you, softly puts its hands on your knee and says, in a gentle Floridian accent, “Wait honey, I don’t think you heard me right. Try reading that bit again.” It took me weeks to finish this book because I kept pausing to catch my breath, rereading and rediscovering passages and savoring a language that is heartbreakingly simple and poetic.

Shortly into the book, styled as a collection of autobiographical short vignettes narrated by the author’s younger self, the titular chapter “Irreversible Things” opens with the sound of cicadas. As a born-and-raised southerner myself, I remember being a child and listening to the rhythmic wailing of thousands of bugs as my father explained to me that I wouldn’t hear this again for seventeen years. I remember, in that moment, feeling a terrible sadness as I tried to listen to every song, to hear each insect, and with each buzzing decrescendo I wondered, “Is this the last? Is it over?” Lisa Van Orman Hadley beautifully recreates that desire to hold onto something even as it disappears with simple, everyday childhood stories that are infused with urgency—she compels us to notice the texture of thermals, sweatpants, and jeans all layered to keep out the cold (82), the chill as the night air switches “from summer to autumn overnight” (62), and the familiarity of your very own chair (114). Van Orman Hadley invites you into her home without tidying up first, allowing you to see that the messes are the most beautiful part. Each family member and friend is portrayed with a perfect mix of childhood innocence and honesty; when her mother complains that in every story she is a “complete idiot,” Van Orman Hadley fittingly responds, “But the mother is my favorite character!” (135).

Just like her characters, Van Orman Hadley allows her narrator to be flawed. She deftly maneuvers the difficulties of the memoir genre by creating a narrator whose tone matures as the book progresses but who never loses her identity. This can be frustrating as a reader, especially when, for example, the childhood narrator recalls the tragic murder of their neighbor but does so in the context of missing cats, cicadas, and first crushes. I wanted to know more about her neighbor, I wanted to

make sure the kids were safe, I wanted, in short, a news article. This was the first moment when Van Orman Hadley asked me, gently, to read it again. As I went back and reread the passages, paying attention to the inverted timeline and the sounds and smells and images that infused her writing, I realized that this is not a book about her life events but rather a book about her life. Van Orman Hadley is refreshingly frank about the unreliability of her narrator—in one memorable section she admits that she does not recall the events surrounding the discovery that her grandmother wore a wig. She then invites the reader to explore this memory in a chose-your-own-adventure fashion, allowing you to build your own chain of memories and choose which story you like best. While at first glance this may seem playful or even kitschy, it does the important critical work of reminding the reader that every story in this memoir is chosen and crafted, and even that we ourselves choose our own memories and build the narratives that surround our lives.

As I sit in the middle of my life, I think about the narratives I've built, the messes I've made, and the distorted timelines that run backward and forward in my mind. *Irreversible Things* reminds me that life is not an irreversible series of events that stack from birth to death but rather an existence that is constantly redefined by overlapping experiences. Lisa Van Orman Hadley has created here a kaleidoscope of memories that come together to form a new and ever-changing picture of her life. This was an absolutely delightful read, and I sincerely hope to see more from her.

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Sunni Brown Wilkinson. *The Marriage of the Moon and the Field*. New York: Black Lawrence Press, 2019. 65 pp. Paper: \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1625570048.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Cranford Garcia

“To speak to Moses, God / put a stone in his mouth, put on / a sackcloth of verbs (*want, need*), / cleared his throat. Cried out” (3). Sunni Brown Wilkinson this way begins her collection *The Marriage of the Moon and the Field*, effectively highlighting two threads that run throughout it: the impetus of desire for human connection and for joining two seemingly disparate worlds. In this aforementioned image, she places God in that space of desire, a lovely reversal and correlative to prayer; our desire to connect with deity is matched by God’s equal (if not stronger) desire to connect with us, to be understood.

She follows through with these images of desire, depicting the

way the ghost enters—
humbly—the brittle hardware
of our bodies, or hidden fires hum
in all the wires of the house [. . .]
That’s why we kiss
with cracked and speechless mouths.
That’s why the bush burned. (3)

Desire permeates the experience of the Holy Ghost, of love and sexuality, and of revelation in a physical way, implying that the spiritual and physical are unnecessary distinctions. This idea of desire-as-prayer/ordinance recurs throughout later poems. It emerges in the cigarette smoke of her father, who is killing time in Vietnam, likened to the prayers of his relatives:

We’re all heartsick
sometimes: strangers in the architecture
and burning incense at the temples,
the names of ancestors in calligraphies of smoke
we can’t read. (4)

Then later in several other poems, it appears with Kelly O'Brien, local drunk, bearing awkward testimony "in the robes of heaven, our best sermon, / the bread we taste / before our mouths tear it to pieces" as well as with a lady balloonist who listens to the sounds of living hundreds of feet below, which she compares to "sacraments" she "ate and ate": "It was a new faith: / hearing what I couldn't see / and believing what I only heard" (21–22). In another poem, Wilkinson depicts the desire of "a dryer so full of want it burst / into flames, burned the whole house down," evoking the burning bush, symbol of revelation (25). And near the end, she clinches this concept together by observing deer;

the moon above them
is a hole in the sky. If you reach high enough,
you can put your hand through,
find a hand on the other side. (53)

By reaching through, one attains physical contact with the "other world" we seek in the sky.

These two worlds "married" together are not merely that of humankind seeking deity but an erasing of dichotomies. One of the epigraphs to the collection, "This world is the other world," epitomizes what Wilkinson's poems accomplish, reinforcing the title of the collection; she marries "the moon and the field," evoking the creation mythology of the masculine/feminine dichotomy, yet also fills her collection with images of thresholds and the world of the living and the dead coexisting in the same place. In "Two Sides of the Same," she juxtaposes thoughts of Crazy Horse awaking in the world of the dead with fruit flies that linger for days, then depicts this joining of sky and earth in a way that merges masculine and feminine images:

In the Moon of Making Fat,
the elderberries swelled and the colts ate a world
of grass. When the moon rose, the milk of it spilled
onto this world's field, and the next world's pines. (12)

Crazy Horse, as Native American seer, “could see both without closing his eyes” (12). Despite the stereotype, the effect of her trope is to assert that the dichotomy of separate worlds is illusory, but it takes a visionary to see it. This is brought home as the speaker walks through the dust of sheet rock in her home, leaving footprints “all over the house, like evidence of guests we live with and don’t see.” The title of the poem itself elides the word “coin,” implying that the two worlds described in the body are so close that the distinction is negligible.

She continues this erasing of dichotomies in “Approaching the Threshold” as she describes the bodies of murdered women being brought back to the world of the living, piece by piece, as the medical examiner bathes each piece in a solution that slowly reveals previously undetectable scars or wounds, effectively retelling their story. But rather than a clinical portrayal, this doctor is Orpheus, who has successfully brought Eurydice back from the dead:

On the stereo, he plays ballads, love songs,
woos and comforts dead women in a den
of puce liquids and glycerin.
[. . .] He carries them to the bath
the way a man carries his bride
over the threshold. (9)

Because this poem follows on the heels of “Girls of the Underworld,” the mythological implications are more apparent. The end of the poem seems to imply a resurrection of sorts, that the women are brought “back to the night it happened: / she waited for the green bus / to take her to work in *maquiladora* [. . .] The green bus / the edge of night / and all the women / stepping on” like Charon’s barge (11).

Interestingly, this repeated erasure of distinction between the world of the living and the dead conveys a uniquely Mormon belief, that this physical world literally *is* where spirits reside. The world of the living and the dead are not at all separate. It is a concept articulated by Joseph

Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 131:7–8: “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter.”

One of the most interesting stylistic features of Wilkinson’s work is her frequent use of sudden transitions and cyclical imagery; she often switches gears in her poems, jumping from one image to another within a line, then returning back to a previous image. This requires the reader to slow down and try to reconcile the disparate images—to turn us into “seers” who can see both worlds at once, like Crazy Horse. In “Concertato,” she moves from the image of canning tomatoes to finches outside the window to a neighbor waving, then repeats the cycle:

Bottled, each tomato presses its face
 against the glass, curious and childlike,
 like a heart thumping in wonder,

 like the soft knock at the door. Open it
 and there is a dead finch
 yellow at the heart and one feather on the glass.
 Pick it up. Open your hands and Gene waves hello,
 pitches hard, letting an invisible baseball go. (42)

In “Trade,” her thoughts jump quickly:

I lost a child once. Too early to know
 boy or girl.
 Spotting.
 The woman’s breasts are brush-
 stroked circles, the man reaches
 for her. I told my dad he could live with us
 when he’s old and wants to die
 picking corn or weeding tomatoes. (47)

These sudden moves without transition in effect provide a sense that all things are happening at once, as if attempting to overcome the

spatiotemporal limitations of the written word. It reminds us that time is not linear, that there is no before or after, that those, too, are an illusory dichotomy.

Notwithstanding Wilkinson's skill and adeptness with language, there are moments when the lyricism falls short of its potential, particularly with the poems evoking domesticity. Though she seems to initiate a defense of the subject—"And for all the art about Paris or the sea, why not more about laundry?" (26)—the few poems within the collection that center on this subject seem tangential to the collection's prominent themes of desire and "marriage" of disparate worlds. A few of them read as workshop exercises ("Culinary Arts," "My Possible Pasts"), while others are inventive and thought-provoking ("My Son Says He Has an Owl Inside of Him," "Butter on the Bread") but only marginally relevant. Yet all of these are poems still worth savoring and unpacking. Her language is lovely and fresh, often enlivening clichéd tropes like falling leaves—"The leaves' infectious lecture about dying / is spreading wild across town" (29).

Combined together, Wilkinson's techniques and imagery convey a central moving idea: that all it takes to erase perceived distances is desire; that desire is a sacred offering, that "even the ram / became a bright fire" (30). One is reminded of William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, both through the title and through both collections' entwined threads of dichotomies and desire, prompting a closer look at Blake's comments on the subject: "Those who restrain Desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or Reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling. And being restrained, it by degrees becomes passive, till it is only the shadow of Desire."¹ Like Blake, Wilkinson is attempting to redeem desire from its

1. William Blake, "The Voice of the Devil," in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), available at www.bartleby.com/235/253.html.

association with sin, purifying it, making it itself a redemptive force. Her collection is not merely an assortment of nice poems but a stunning theological statement.

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Lessons in Scriptural Origami

James Goldberg. *Remember the Revolution: Mormon Essays and Stories*. Self-published, 2019. 161 pp. Paper: \$12.95. ISBN: 978-1695244900.

James Goldberg. *The First Five-Dozen Tales of Razia Shah: and Other Stories*. Self-published, 2019. 148 pp. Paper: \$12.95. ISBN: 978-1695025226.¹

Reviewed by Chad Curtis

I first discovered James Goldberg when a friend from my mission shared a blog post from the *Mormon Midrashim* entitled “Explanation, Justification, Sanctification.” In it, the author shares some profound theology with his ten-year-old daughter in a way that she could readily understand through the genre of children’s post-fighting storytelling:

1. All citations in this review refer to the location number from the e-book editions.

[A]n explanation is not necessarily a justification. A justification has to do with whether something is wrong or right. Understanding how your brother's actions made you want to hit him is not the same as making it right for you to hit him. . . . Explanation is about why you did something, justification is about whether it's right, and sanctification is about whether it makes you holy.²

My first thought after reading this was, *Does this guy have a book?* I didn't follow up on the thought, and I later found myself trying to hunt down that long-lost blog post to no avail. Goldberg popped up again when my elders quorum president and fellow book enthusiast recommended I read Goldberg's novel *The Five Books of Jesus* and even lent me his copy. This book is also deeply profound, though in a less directly didactic way. It paints an image of Jesus through his interactions that you may not get through Church manuals or *Come, Follow Me* lessons. Going back to his blog post, a lot of what Goldberg shares is wisdom: "Most of what I will give my daughter is not conscious. Things like my belief in the strengthening and healing potential of humor aren't talks or lessons, they just leak out of me in my day to day responses to the world."³ In short, James Goldberg is a mystic—a mystic for Mormons. I don't mean that what he has to say is mysterious or purposefully arcane. What he does is help you find the profound in the everyday and reexamine what you thought was a given.



In 2019 Goldberg published two anthologies of short works, the mostly nonfiction collection *Remember the Revolution* and the short story collection *The First Five-Dozen Tales of Razia Shah: and Other Stories*.

2. James Goldberg, "Explanation, Justification, Sanctification," *Mormon Midrashim* (blog), Jan. 24, 2015, <https://mormonmidrashim.blogspot.com/2015/01/explanation-justification-sanctification.html>.

3. Goldberg, "Explanation, Justification, Sanctification."

Remember the Revolution is Goldberg's rallying cry for a distinctly Mormon art and literature. The title comes from an essay of the same name where he makes this statement: "Now I want to say this: hip or not, in my heart of hearts, I think Mormonism is the Revolution. And I wish that instead of talking about how we're bored with the politics of the Intermountain West, or how we can't stand the conformity and social pressure, we'd take the time to articulate in our generation's language the reason for the hope that is in us" (loc. 2007).

What is Mormon literature? Is it more than just being written by a Mormon? Does it have to be theological in nature? Is there a connection between Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series, Brandon Sanderson's *Stormlight Archive*, and Chris Heimerdinger's *Tennis Shoes Among the Nephites*? Perhaps that isn't the most diverse list of books to include under the genre of Mormon literature, and to be honest, my idea of Mormon literature was very limited in scope before encountering the broad vision of Goldberg. For Goldberg, Mormon literature should engage with both Mormon myth and audience. He outlines a few ways authors can achieve this in his essay "Wrestling with God: Invoking Scriptural Mythos and Language in LDS Literary Works," my favorite example being what he calls "scriptural origami." Here, Goldberg quotes and comments on Sarah Page's poem "Coring the Apple":

Instead of the thorn
 hast thou found honey
 I would like to ask Eve someday
 what she saw in the apple

Extra meaning takes place when the author's text makes itself a literary link between the two [scriptural references], folding one scriptural passage onto another. I call this mode of folding together multiple allusion "scriptural origami" (loc. 1108).

Goldberg is an expert at this, as we see in his collection of stories *The First Five-Dozen Tales of Razia Shah*, specifically "multi-mythic

origami,” the “folding together [of] scriptural and non-scriptural myths” (loc. 1231).

In the conclusion of the same essay, Goldberg reflects on the sad prospects facing Mormon writers, despite the rich source material available to them:

Mormons who choose to write for Mormon audiences don’t always feels lucky. In addition to the usual challenges of writing, they face culturally specific challenges such as handling exceptionally delicate audience sensibilities and finding their niche within a fairly small market with limited publishing and distribution capacity. But Mormons who choose to write for Mormon audiences are lucky because their audience has a fairly large body of literary knowledge and investment to tap into, raw materials for story building that the world’s best writers would be jealous of if only they knew about them. (loc. 1241)

It is in this way that Goldberg reveals both his project and his craft in *Remember the Revolution*. But even as I’ve focused on the “container” of Mormon literature in this review, Goldberg provides a lot of good content as well, such as this reflection and reimagining of a pronouncement from President Wilford Woodruff through the words of Teancum Singh Rosenberg (the name itself is multi-mythic origami!): “The Prophet can never lead the church away from the Lord because a Prophet can never escape the Lord. As it was in the days of Jonah, so it is in the last days: even a disobedient Prophet does not cease to be a Prophet, and even his rebellion is swallowed up into the purpose of Ha-Shem. A prophet is bound to the Lord, even cursed with Him: as it is written, ‘the burden of the word is the Lord’” (loc. 1772). The original quotation from Wilford Woodruff has always made me cringe a little bit because it seems to invite Church members to be unapologetic for historical wrongs. But Goldberg has woven it as a story of God’s grace.



The stories in *The First Five-Dozen Tales of Razia Shah* are not as explicitly Mormon in character as some of Goldberg's other work, although there are some exceptions such as "Tales of Teancum Singh Rosenberg." But even though Mormonism takes a back seat for most of these stories, the tales are a compelling mix of different religious backgrounds and traditions. And Goldberg has a lot to work with, as evidenced from his bio: "Goldberg's family is Jewish on one side, Sikh on the other, and Mormon in the middle" (loc. 2426). "Sojourners" is a collection of *very* short stories of migrants, as told through the Jewish liturgical calendar. In quick succession, you get a collection of varied backgrounds—Indian, Latino, Iranian—all with themes drawn from Jewish festivals. For me, many of these stories were strange and unfamiliar. But rather than becoming disengaged, I felt like I was treading on holy ground, a stranger allowed to share in something sacred. These tales are a lot less straightforward than the essays in *Remember the Revolution* because they are less an explanation and more an experience. Each reads like poetry. Reading Goldberg is like reading Isaiah: you can't always be sure you understand exactly what's going on, you feel like you're eavesdropping on a conversation you don't fully understand, and there are moments of profound beauty throughout.

There is a bittersweet element woven throughout each tale. You can tell that the author has included an element of his own pain. In the essay "Dealing with Darkness," Goldberg relates his own experience with cancer:

I remember one night in the hospital during my cancer treatment. I had neutropenic fever, which is how your body responds to an infection when you've got a severely compromised immune system, at the same time I had a bunch of other uncomfortable chronic symptoms. I felt like my body was falling apart and I remember thinking, "OK, Lord. I know and I've accepted that life is supposed to be difficult, but how difficult? I can accept some eggs have to get broken to bake a cake,

but it's getting hot in here and I'm pretty sure you're gonna burn this one." (loc. 2342)

I recalled Goldberg's struggle when I read the story of the prince in "The First Five-Dozen Tales of Razia Shah":

So they locked the prince high up in a tower, far away from the living world. And in the tower, he drank poison each day to fool death into thinking he was already its own.

The poison was thick and bitter: it burned his throat and rotted away the lining of his stomach, but each day the prince thought of the distant world and he drank. He drank, and he retched black vomit, and he lost all the hair on his head, his face, his chest, his arms, his legs. He lost the hair up his nose and the hair of his eyelashes and he sat in the tower and he drank poison alone alone alone. (loc. 609)

These stories require effort to engage with, and I wish I had the background to fully appreciate the work Goldberg has done here. But to me, his writing is a promise of what Mormon literature can be. Mormonism isn't limited to white middle-class suburbia in the Intermountain West. Here I think back to Elder Ulisses Soares's recent general conference talk:

My home country of Brazil is very rich in natural resources. One of them is the famous Amazon River, one of the largest and longest rivers in the world. It is formed by two separate rivers, the Solimões and Negro. Interestingly, they flow together for a number of miles before the waters blend, due to the rivers having very different origins, speeds, temperatures, and chemical compositions. After several miles, the waters finally blend together, becoming a river different than its individual parts. Only after these parts merge, the Amazon River becomes so powerful that when it reaches the Atlantic Ocean, it pushes back the seawater so that fresh water can still be found for many miles out into the ocean.

In a similar way that the Solimões and Negro Rivers flow together to make the great Amazon River, the children of God come together in the restored Church of Jesus Christ from different social backgrounds,

traditions, and cultures, forming this wonderful community of Saints in Christ. Eventually, as we encourage, support, and love each other, we combine to form a mighty force for good in the world. As followers of Jesus Christ, flowing as one in this river of goodness, we will be able to provide the “fresh water” of the gospel to a thirsty world.⁴

I find this to be a beautiful endorsement of diversity in the Church, exemplified by Elder Soares himself, the first apostle from South America. Goldberg is engaging in a similar work in Mormon literature, and these two collections are great additions to the expanding canon.

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4. Ulisses Soares, “One in Christ,” Oct. 2018, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/10/one-in-christ?lang=eng>.

Modern Mormonism, Gender, and the Tangled Nature of History

Gregory A. Prince. *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church: Intended Actions, Unintended Consequences*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019. 416 pp. Hardcover: \$34.95. ISBN: 978-1607816638.

Reviewed by Benjamin E. Park

Few topics have dominated modern Mormon discourse as much as those related to homosexuality. Especially following the contentious and engrossing debates surrounding Proposition 8—the electoral battle in California in 2008 over the legality of same-sex marriage—the LDS Church has not been shy to step into public discourse defending what they define as traditional values. In November 2015, months after a Supreme Court decision in America legalized gay marriage across the nation, the Church established strict and, to many, draconian punishments for not only those who enter such relationships, but also tight restrictions of children raised in families with same-sex parents. And while leaders announced that the policy was revoked in 2019, LDS discourse has remained stridently traditional and entrenched, reflecting its centrality to many leaders' thinking.

Yet while developments related to these issues over the past decade have been frequent and often furious, it is easy to lose track of the larger story, especially the events that preceded 2008. The community has long needed, then, a meticulous history of all the institutional decisions that brought the LDS Church to this point, especially one containing insider information that could flesh out traditional narratives. Fortunately, we finally have a book that fulfills this need. Gregory A. Prince's *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church: Intended*

Actions, Unintended Consequences is a nearly exhaustive collection of institutional deliberations and actions over the past few decades, often buttressed by interviews and correspondence that have been previously inaccessible to scholars.

The story, at least in Prince's telling, begins with the presidency of Spencer W. Kimball, who was the first modern leader to heavily emphasize the "threat" of homosexuality. Kimball argued that homosexual thoughts and inclinations were a sin on their own and could only be overcome through repentance and righteousness. Eventually, however, Church discourse later evolved, often through the influence—or at least the voice—of Dallin H. Oaks, to argue that while sexual orientation may be innate, acting on homosexual inclinations was sinful. These two leaders, Kimball and Oaks, hover over the entirety of the book, and in many ways *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church* is framed as a response to these two towering figures and their still-prevalent ideas. This shift from rejecting the biological basis for homosexuality (Kimball) to begrudgingly making the concession yet trenchantly maintaining the traditional form of marriage (Oaks) is interwoven throughout the book, including some of the most painful parts of that story, like Brigham Young University's tragic experiments with reparative therapy. Indeed, many readers will be struck by how far, and how quickly, the LDS institution has come in two decades—not to mention how recent it was that Church policies regarding homosexual members were far more draconian.

The most useful parts of the book include the exhaustive details concerning how the Church was involved in the numerous legislative and electoral initiatives throughout the 1990s and 2000s in an attempt to forbid same-sex marriage. Hawaii was the starting point, as it served as a testing ground for how LDS leaders would navigate the politics. Several lessons they learned from this episode included framing the debate as a moral rather than a civil rights issue, working in collaboration with other faiths (particularly the Catholic Church),

as well as staying out of the spotlight. The Church then repeated these steps over and over again across several other states for the next decade, always to victory, and often avoiding overwhelming negative press. I was personally struck by how often BYU law professor Lynn Wardle showed up in the narrative, as he was frequently behind many of the Church's efforts to frame their legal battles and buttress legislative initiatives; I hope scholars in the future do more to tease out his role in this complicated affair.

Things changed with the Proposition 8 campaign in 2008, when California voted on an amendment to the state constitution that would ban gay marriage. The ballot measure was prompted when a previous state law that had done the same thing, which the Church had helped pass several years before, was struck down by the state's supreme court. Once again, local members, actively urged by their leaders, sprung to action. One study estimated that though Mormons made up only 2 percent of California's population, they accounted for half of the Prop 8 campaign's donations, and another calculated that they provided around 90 percent of the on-the-ground volunteers. And again, they were victorious. Yet this time, the cultural climate had changed so much that the negative backlash overshadowed anything that had come before, and 2008 became a turning point in the larger national picture, eventually leading to the 2015 Supreme Court decision that legalized same-sex marriage nationwide.

Following legalization, the LDS Church was once again forced to adapt, which required both external negotiations—like working with state politicians to support granting legal rights to LGBT persons but still maintaining religious exemptions—as well as internal practices, like the November 2015 policy that declared anyone in a same-sex marriage to be considered in apostasy, and their children barred from ordinances until they turned eighteen. Prince was able to piece together the origins of the policy by holding discussions with people “on condition of anonymity,” and it appears to have been both rushed and poorly

fleshed out.¹ (Given it was repealed less than four years later, that may very well have been the case.) The blowback, of course, was monumental, and the book closes on an ambiguous note with a church and community still seeking firm land on which to stand, and without a clear path forward.

As with his previous biographies on David O. McKay and Leonard Arrington, Prince's greatest contribution is compiling mountains of firsthand information into one place, often drawing from untapped resources. *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church* will therefore be an essential sourcebook for decades to come. But the compendium style, with short topical chapters that at times jump between decades, can make the overall narrative feel disjointed, and the lack of connective tissue between the episodes and themes can make it difficult to trace the larger trajectory. Some of the sources also raise questions. For example, footnote 39 for chapter 3 cites "Boyd K. Packer to Dallin H. Oaks, March 16, 1978," which appears to be a private letter between the apostles. Any historian who studies modern Mormonism, though, knows that these kinds of sources are typically restricted, so there is a question of provenance. It is likely that letters like this one are what Prince is referring to when he says that "many people" had "shared with me unpublished documents," of which he then left photocopies in his personal archive (363). It is wonderful to have access to these crucial sources, of course, but there are plenty of questions regarding where they came from and how reliable they can be.

Having said what I believe to be crucial strengths of the book, allow me to close by highlighting a few questions the book leaves unanswered. First, Prince's own background shapes much of how he approaches the topic. As a scientist, he spends a lot of time on the biology behind homosexuality and at times even refutes the Church's discourse

1. Among these anonymous sources seems to have been an apostle, as Prince quotes "one Quorum member" without any citation (259–60).

point-by-point. This analysis sometimes disrupts the narrative, however, and it can overshadow the cultural dimensions of sexuality. Indeed, it also appears a bit discordant with most scholarly literature on sexuality in America, which has moved away from biological determinism in order to better capture the dynamic spectrum of gendered experience.

Another aspect of *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church* that makes it distinct from other works in the field is his avoidance of the broader cultural context. While the book does mention the legislative scaffolding of modern America, and Prince ably summarizes the legal and political activities in the fights for and against LGBT rights, he does not explore how the Mormon experience fits into other religious movements, particularly the religious right. In what ways did the institution borrow from the wider discourse, and in what ways did it diverge from it? For most of the narrative, the LDS Church appears to exist in a cultural vacuum.

And finally, perhaps one of the most questionable aspects of the book is its focus on men. Indeed, save for one chapter—unironically titled “What About Lesbians?”—the entire book focuses on how the Church approached gay men. Prince explains he did this “not because lesbianism or bisexuality are any less important but rather because the nearly universal focus of—indeed, fixation on—LDS Church policies, procedures, and statements have been gay men” (20). Yet that very gendered fact requires unpacking. *Why* does the LDS Church focus on gay men? And further, even if these policies were directed at gay men, how did they affect lesbians or bisexuals? Indeed, for a book on sexuality, there is surprisingly little gendered analysis.

It is notable that these issues that I have highlighted within Prince’s book often reflect the LDS Church itself. By making the narrative science-driven, exceptional, and patriarchal, *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church* is as much an extension of LDS gender discourse as it is an analysis of it. This is, in part, a result of Prince’s own interpretive approach: he often uncritically mirrors the language and arguments of those he

believes to be the “heroes” of the story, usually those who pushed for change from the inside. Prince’s argument, in other words, is part of the very cause he documents. Indeed, the book opens with an anecdote that places the author in the middle of the story, making it clear that he sees himself as one of the enlistments for the battle.

As such, *Gay Rights and the Mormon Church* is a pretty powerful addition to that message. This is an important book in the constant, complicated, and dynamic dialogue regarding homosexuality and modern Mormonism. Further, this compendium of “actions” and “consequences” will be immensely useful in the discussions yet to come, as I doubt the tensions at play will disappear any time soon.

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Remembering Jane Manning James

Quincy D. Newell. *Your Sister in the Gospel: The Life of Jane Manning James, a Nineteenth-Century Black Mormon*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 203 pp. Hardcover: \$24.95. ISBN: 978-0199338665.

Reviewed by Charlotte Hansen Terry

In this carefully researched work, Quincy D. Newell produces a powerful narrative of Jane Manning James's life from limited records. Newell reveals what life was like for someone like James, whom she refers to as Jane throughout the text, showing the intersections of her racial, gendered, and religious identities and the various systems of oppression she encountered. Newell masterfully guides her readers in *Your Sister in the Gospel*, providing a fresh perspective on Mormonism from the view of an African American convert in the nineteenth century. Jane's perspective, Newell argues, shows a form of Mormonism focused on supernatural religious experiences rather than on priesthood and temple rituals. It was these experiences that made Mormonism appealing to Jane. Newell begins and ends her work with the observation that Jane wanted to be remembered. With the increased interest in Jane Manning James in the recent decades, this biography is an important addition that shows the intricacies of her life. Newell carefully makes conjectures to consider how Jane felt about her circumstances, and she intentionally refers to her by first name throughout the text to focus the history on her rather than the men in her life. By centering Jane in the narrative, Newell helps her readers remember this historical figure in all her complexity.

One of the greatest strengths of this book is how the author weaves Jane into the larger context of her time. Since there are such limited records on Jane herself, Newell uses contemporary documents

from Jane's peers, including accounts from other African Americans, women, and Latter-day Saints, to further her observations of Jane's life. Scholars who are more familiar with the secondary literature on African American history, American women's history, religious history, and Mormon history will appreciate how well Newell includes material from these many fields to create a strong portrait of Jane. Newell seamlessly incorporates important arguments into her text. For those less familiar with these fields, her footnotes are filled with helpful references that can open opportunities for many readers to learn more about historical scholarship. Newell uses words such as "perhaps" and "likely" to signal to her readers when she pulls from this larger body of scholarship to help illuminate Jane's life and actions.

Jane was born in the Northern United States in a period when this region was attempting to forget their history of slavery but nevertheless had an enduring ideology of white supremacy. Jane and her family had to grapple with this daily, as Jane worked as a domestic servant, possibly indentured, in Connecticut. It was during this time that Jane gave birth to her first child, though she kept silent about the circumstances in later accounts of her life. This is one such moment in the text where Newell considers this silence and suggests possible readings of Jane's circumstances. Newell also explores Jane's religious conversion to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1842, speculating on which factors led to her baptism. Newell observes that Jane was "making her own beginning" with this conversion (22). This theme of new beginnings continues to emerge in Jane's life moving forward.

Jane's journey to Nauvoo shows the difficulties of traveling in the United States for African Americans during this period. Jane and her family took significant risks in this migration, encountering discrimination, black codes, and the risk of enslavement. Newell carefully traces their journey, and their possible routes, bringing the realities of their trek to life. She then considers what Nauvoo was like for them as they encountered the racial positions of the Church. Nauvoo held a central

place in Jane's narratives of her life. She centered her accounts on this short period (less than a year) of when she lived in Nauvoo, and her experiences with Joseph and Emma Smith. Newell also observes that Jane's labor in their home is what made it possible for the Smiths to be hospitable community leaders. Her work in the Mansion House also means she possibly observed interactions and evidence of plural marriage. It was in Nauvoo that Jane received her first patriarchal blessing, a document she treasured for the rest of her life. Newell recreates the journey west for Jane and her husband, Isaac James, by looking at correspondence and diaries from their company. The James family made it possible for George Dykes to join the Mormon Battalion, as their labor supported his three wives. Once they reached Salt Lake City, another new beginning, the James family labored to support Brigham Young and his family. Time and again, Jane's labors made particular moments and practices within Mormonism possible.

Newell explores Jane's religious experiences in more detail for the rest of the book and shows how Jane's race and gender informed her religious convictions and practices. Newell uses the James family to illustrate the experiences of the African American community in Salt Lake City, particularly in a period where positions on race and slavery were being debated in the territory. Racial restrictions on the priesthood and the temple made it so that Isaac could not live up to the ideal masculinity of the Church. Newell considers how these restrictions and Jane's life experiences—including the string of losses of her children, some of whom died while others left the Church—created a desire in her to live up to the ideal femininity of the Church. Jane attended her meetings, including Relief Society and Retrenchment meetings. Newell finds these wonderful hints into Jane's spiritual life through these records, showing how important these minute books are for uncovering the lives of women in the early Church. Within these records, Jane speaks in tongues, bears testimony, and gives accounts of faith healings. Jane also performed baptisms for the dead. Newell traces

these spiritual practices as she also narrates the development of temple restrictions that limited what rituals Jane could do, making it so Jane's family could not be together in the afterlife.

As Jane got older, this belief that she would not reach the highest glories in the afterlife bothered her more. Newell analyzes in detail Jane's letters to various Church leaders and the continued conversations she had as she asked where the blessings were for her. The interpretations in this chapter of the book are particularly strong, as Newell pulls together such a variety of evidence, showing Jane's family connections, her petitions, and her religious participation. Jane enlisted the help of her Relief Society sisters for her cause. Newell considers what type of eternal family Jane envisioned, contrasted with that of white Church leaders. Her continual petitions made it so that Church leaders had to grapple with these racial restrictions and what their repercussions might be. They compromised and created a new ritual. Newell explains that this ceremony was an "unsatisfactory compromise" for both Jane and these Church leaders (115). Jane had wanted to be adopted as a child, attempting to create a heavenly family that could fit LDS ideals, but Church leaders had attached her as a "servitor" to Joseph and Emma Smith instead. They were connected, but not quite family. Newell juxtaposes this ceremony, which Jane was not allowed to attend, with Jane's unusual request the following day in Retrenchment meeting for her patriarchal blessing to be read in full. Even as she was excluded from the temple, Jane wanted the promises made to her to be known.

Newell finishes her account of Jane's life by looking at how Jane made her memories and life a part of the public record. Joseph Smith was central in the accounts of her life story. Her memory of Smith was used in this period by Church leaders and by Jane to paint different pictures of the prophet. Church leaders worked to change the memory of racial restrictions and say that those practices were rooted in Smith. Jane gave an alternative perspective of a racially progressive prophet, but this position was marginalized. Newell considers how Jane was

seen in the community, particularly in how she was called “Aunt Jane.” This was a way to show respect and honor, but it also had racial connotations. Newell argues that like her sealing in the temple, this name connected her to the community while also putting her in a subservient role. Jane wanted to be remembered but was then forgotten. Her story was reimagined in the twenty-first century as the Church attempted to grapple with its racial history.

This book convincingly shows how Jane’s life troubles our typical narratives of the nineteenth century. As an African American woman who joined the LDS Church and migrated west, Jane’s life touches on many fields in US history. Jane’s intersecting identities as an African American, a woman, and a Mormon bring up important questions on race, gender, and religion. Newell invites her readers to participate in further work by including the narratives of Jane’s life in an appendix, along with her patriarchal blessings. This is a commendable move. Some readers might not agree with particular extrapolations Newell makes from the limited records, but she invites further discussion with the inclusion of these sources. *Your Sister in the Gospel* provides a fresh perspective of Mormonism in the nineteenth century. Scholars interested in African American history, American women’s history, American religious history, and the history of the American West, will find much here that furthers scholarship in these fields. I look forward to seeing the additional works that emerge as a result of this engaging biography.

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Mormon Modernity

David Walker. *Railroading Religion: Mormons, Tourists, and the Corporate Spirit of the West*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019. 343 pp. Paper: \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1-4696-5320-4.

Reviewed by Dmitri Brown

Railroading Religion is a welcome addition to the influx of timely scholarship published in anticipation of the 150-year anniversary of the Golden Spike ceremony. The tensions between religion, geography, and history provide a thought-provoking backdrop to David Walker's well-argued account of the making of Mormon modernity in the railroad era.

Anti-Mormon founders of Corinne, Utah believed that railroads and modernity spelled the end of Mormonism. They were wrong. As president of the Union Pacific Railroad Charles Francis Adams Jr. noted, Mormons were good for business. For their part, leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints realized that railroads could ensure the security of Mormonism in the West. Walker's work shows how Church leaders effectively responded to "Corinnethian" (a play on Corinthians used by the town's founders) attacks against their religion, society, and practices.

Corinne was established north of Salt Lake City in 1869. Town boosters believed they could extinguish Mormonism in Utah provided the Union Pacific and Central Pacific selected Corinne as the connecting hub between the two lines. As historian Richard White has argued, corporate failure was the stuff of transcontinental railroading in the West.¹ Along similar lines, Corinne failed to become a preeminent non-

1. Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011).

Mormon settlement by the end of the nineteenth century. As Walker points out, the town's founders misjudged Mormon adaptability and resilience. Using their enemies' weapons against them, Church leaders bent railroads and industry toward their own economic goals—the Union Pacific and Central Pacific agreed on Ogden as their hub over Corinne. Church officials used tourism to maintain relevance in national conversations on religion and guide outside perceptions. Even an intra-Mormon schism afforded the LDS Church time to modernize and adopt industrially favorable policies. Persevering through Corinne's failures, Mormonism demanded a place in modern America's narrative and history; Mormon modernity was not an oxymoron.

Railroading Religion shows how iron tracks and ironic twists steered nearly every attempt of anti-Mormon settlement or legislation to Mormon advantage in Utah. Brigham Young, other Church leaders, and railroad agents often shared priorities and interests. In the expanse between the Midwest and California, Mormons held productive land, sizeable population, viable markets, and political will, all of which encouraged transcontinental railroads. Though occasionally disappointed by the transcontinentals' decisions, Church officials recognized how the railroad age could ensure the success of Mormon culture. Corinne had little choice but to accept the appeal of Salt Lake City and cater to patrons' ambiguous curiosity rather than to show outright hostility toward Mormon culture. Walker describes how Corinne had tried to profit from negative perceptions of Mormonism by sponsoring "atrocious tourism" that showcased supposedly degraded Mormon life. That strategy backfired. Eventually regional tours found demonstrations of "the shortfalls of modern western urbanity" in Corinne (182).

Through tourist reports and railroad guidebooks, Mormonism grew as a subject of national conversation and religious debate. Mormon leaders, tour guides, and museum curators recognized a version of P. T. Barnum's dictum—there was no such thing as bad publicity, if properly managed (Barnum himself makes a cameo in Walker's book, attempting

to sell oddities to Salt Lake City's Deseret Museum). Mormons repackaged their religion, successfully marketing to railroads and the tourists who rode the lines. Walker does not go so far as to characterize tourism's effects on Mormonism as a "devil's bargain," historian Hal Rothman's phrase to describe the sacrifice of cultural identity for the sake of economic opportunity.² Instead, Mormonism accommodated touristic gazes and encouraged the religious discourse these encounters produced. Church leaders guided visitors to certain viewpoints and followers to certain practices. They increasingly emphasized industrial production and by 1890 had officially renounced polygamy. Walker demonstrates that if railroads presented Mormonism with a Weberian "iron cage" that restricted, rationalized, and modernized its policies and options by degrees, Mormons found ample space within this cage and even ways to bend it to their benefit.

Modernity is an analytic key in *Railroading Religion*. However, the term is somewhat elusive—intuitive and discursive rather than concrete. Walker's primary sources only mention the concept indirectly through terms like "civilization" and "progress." The discrepancy between the language of Walker's analysis and the language of his primary sources speaks to a larger point of the book: modernity, its meaning, and its relationship with religion were (and are) debatable. The term "modern," which is distinct from but related to "modernity," is instructive when it appears in Walker's sources. In one telling example, the Deseret Museum exhibited artifacts from both "ancient as well as modern races" of Indians (171). Walker argues that such exhibits reflected Mormon curators' own position and security within modernity. They also served as a response to paranoid theories that Mormons and Native Americans would conspire to thwart more normative American settlement in the

2. Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

West. Mentioned throughout the text, Native American populations on the peripheries of Utahn settlements play an interesting if understated role. American perspectives at times pinned both Native Americans and Mormons as backwards, depraved, and other. Yet the possibility of Shoshoni or Ute modernity lies beyond the scope of Walker's analysis, leaving the reader to wonder perhaps if that idea is a contradiction.

Alongside iron tracks and ironies, linguistic ploys in *Railroading Religion* invite further reflection. Walker holds Protestant anti-ritualism against the "ritual" of Western settlement. He showcases railroad platforms as platforms of religious discourse. He juxtaposes "Morrill"—of land grant and anti-bigamy legislation fame—and its homonym (moral), suggesting the intertwining bureaucratic and religious scopes of Western settlement. Each chapter builds toward the central question of the next, and each is comprised of often cleverly titled, bite-size sections—an organizational pattern that offers readers frequent opportunities to pause. Walker supports his metaphors and arguments through a variety of archival sources. He encourages scholars to pay greater attention to land grants, railroad guidebooks, and tourist scrapbooks as constitutive elements of religious discourse. For those seeking to broaden the field of comparative religious studies, *Railroading Religion* provides a useful model in its analysis of original sources, clarity of argument, and theoretical engagements.

Religion deals with meaning beyond history, with the eternal. Walker's text raises the question: how well is academic scholarship equipped to handle questions of the sacred? The answer depends on the extent to which we view the substance of religion, sacredness, and the eternal as human constructs that exist in temporal and spatial contexts. Humans have imbued Utahn landscapes with meaning for millennia. The idea that a landscape or geography may be inherently sacred is ahistorical but resonates in Mormon, Shoshoni, and Ute conceptions of the land. Materialist logic, cartographic reason, rationality, and

efficiency justified corporate railroad interest in Utah, but these are not mutually exclusive of geographic predestination. Walker effectively demonstrates the influence of railroads on religion, but his work does not negate the possibility of spiritual realities.

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PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Boyd Jay Petersen

The scriptures often admonish us to pray continuously. Note that I said “continuously,” not “continually.” “Continually” means repeated with interruptions, but “continuously” means without interruptions. Paul tells the saints in Thessalonica to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thes. 5:17); in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord reminds missionaries to continue “praying always” (D&C 75:11); “Pray always,” states Nephi (2 Ne. 32:9); echoing Paul’s words, Alma calls on his followers to “pray without ceasing” (Mosiah 26:39); and when Jesus asks his followers in the New World to cease praying verbally, he demands that they “not cease to pray in their hearts” (3 Ne. 20:1).

To pray without ceasing is asking a great deal from human brains. We live in an age where we are constantly multitasking—talking on the phone while driving, listening to a podcast while exercising, or cooking dinner, feeding the dog, cleaning up a mess, answering a math homework question, and yelling at the kids in the other room to stop fighting all at the same time. However, what we call multitasking should really be called “task switching.” Our brains are, in fact, capable of thinking about only one thing at a time, so when performing two tasks at once our brains are really just switching between tasks at a really fast pace. Unfortunately, when switching between tasks, despite how fast it occurs, the brain must pause in between, so it is really less productive than when focusing on one task at a time.

So how can we pray unceasingly when our brains are incapable of focusing on two things at once? We can’t ignore the other tasks in our lives to focus exclusively on praying. In fact, most of us find it enough

of a challenge to get in three or four prayers per day with all of the other things we have to focus on.

While the brain can only think about one thing at a time, it is designed to handle multitasking quite well when actions or activities become so familiar to be habitual. Humans are able to carry out simultaneous complex tasks by practicing behaviors until they achieve a degree of what cognitive scientists call “automaticity,” where individual practices require less attention, allowing for the bundling of more tasks. That’s why children who are learning to walk must focus exclusively on the task, but adults pretty much have that task down and can do other things while walking. A friend of mine who is a music professor at Brigham Young University-Idaho studied how students learn new music skills. She found that when they were told to focus on one task, they were able to significantly improve that task. But when another task was also introduced, both tasks got worse. However, when musicians have practiced a technique for a significant amount of time and have achieved a high degree of automaticity in their technique, they can perform without really thinking about it.

Perhaps that is the key: we must practice enough to have prayer become an automatic process. But how do we do that? I certainly have not mastered this skill.

It may be significant that when the scriptures speak of praying unceasingly, they often also mention giving thanks unceasingly: Alma tells his followers that they are “commanded of God to pray without ceasing and to give thanks in all things” (Mosiah 26:39). Paul states, “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks” (1 Thes. 5:16–18). Interestingly, these two acts—praying and thanking—may be related. The word “think” is etymologically and phonetically related to the word “thank” and goes back to the Old English word *thanc*, which refers to a grateful thought or the expression of such a thought. In an essay titled “What Is Called Thinking?” the philosopher Martin Heidegger notes this philological connection between the two

words and asks, “Is thinking a giving of thanks? Or do thanks consist in thinking?”¹ He responds, “In giving thanks, the heart gives thought to what it has and what it is.”² Heidegger then asks, “The supreme thanks would be thinking? And the profoundest thanklessness, thoughtlessness? . . . As we give thought to what is most thought-provoking we give thanks.”³

I find it significant that when Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery came out of the water after baptizing each other, they were blessed, not with a surge of poignant emotion and heartfelt tears but with an outpouring of knowledge. “Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of” (JS-H 1:74). Joseph Smith also defined the gift of the Holy Ghost as a gift of knowledge: “This first Comforter or Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence. It is more powerful in expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing intellect with present knowledge.” And Joseph defined revelation as “when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you,” adding that “it may give you sudden strokes of ideas.”⁴

In sum, I believe, thinking itself *may* be a perfect prayer and simultaneous act of thanksgiving. But thinking of what? If we are here to become like our Heavenly Parents, we should be cultivating divine

1. Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, translated by Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 139.

2. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 141.

3. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 143.

4. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 3:381; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on June 27, 1839, in Commerce, Illinois; reported by Willard Richards.

attributes and divine thoughts. One of the things Joseph Smith stated that has resonated most deeply with me is this:

The things of God are of deep import, and time and experience and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O Man, if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of eternal expanse; he must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart, none but fools will trifle with the souls of men.⁵

I have the opportunity to teach college students, and I certainly would not suggest that I have continuously felt my mind enlarged in the ways Joseph Smith spoke of, but I have had sublime moments where I have felt a kind of surging power as students and I discover new knowledge. It feels like our entire classroom is charged with a kind of electric current. Even in “secular” matters, like Friday afternoon in my British Lit class where we were discussing the differences between classicism and Romanticism, that power has been present. When it does, it gives me joy, and I gain a feeling of abiding thanks for having been in that moment.

I also feel thoughtful praise when outdoors in the beauty of God’s creations. The silent prayer I utter in those moments is often beyond words. I had the opportunity to spend time during the holidays in the Portland, Oregon area, and while walking on trails from waterfall to waterfall or while standing on the beach observing the Pacific Ocean my heart rejoiced in the glory of God’s handiwork.

But there are also types of knowledge that can be harrowing and painful. This past year and a half, my life was pretty much ripped

5. Letter to the Church and Edward Partridge, Mar. 20, 1839, Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-and-edward-partridge-20-march-1839/12>.

apart as I went through a painful, though amicable, divorce. I have experienced the pain of losing both my parents, but going through this experience was much more excruciating. I would not wish this horror on anyone. During this time, my prayers have consisted mostly of short but constant supplications of “Please, God, please!” Not all of my prayers have been answered. I have always suffered from depression, and when it’s at its worst, I often feel the heavens are closed. But remember Joseph’s cry in Liberty Jail—“O God, where art thou?”—and the Lord’s response, “All these things shall give thee experience.”⁶ I can say that these events have given me new knowledge, new understanding, and new empathy for others. And many of my prayers have been answered, often in miraculous, if sometimes strange, ways.

However, not all thinking is created equal; not all thinking could be considered an unceasing prayer. The Doctrine and Covenants, for example, commands us to avoid light-mindedness (D&C 88:121). This has always bothered me because I firmly believe laughter is a gift from the divine. I have experienced God’s love in moments of laughter with friends and family. I have seen God’s face in the joy on a child’s face. I have felt God’s approval when I’ve brought a smile to someone else’s face.

Hugh Nibley once defined light-mindedness in a way that makes great sense to me: “What is light-minded is kitsch, delight in shallow trivia, and the viewing of serious or tragic events with complacency or indifference. It is light-minded, as Brigham Young often observed, to take seriously and devote one’s interest to modes, styles, fads, and manners of speech and deportment that are passing and trivial, without solid worth or intellectual appeal.”⁷ I deeply believe that laughter is a prayer of gratitude to God, but unworthy, trivial, or mean-spirited indifference are what the scriptures are warning about.

6. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1; 122:7.

7. Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 553.

In sum, I believe thinking itself can be a prayer. I also believe that God desires to expand both our minds and our souls. If we seek Christ, we will find ourselves stretched to the very limits. And as we think—as we actively engage our minds in productive, creative, joyous, and solemn thought—we will be offering a prayer of gratitude to our God.

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