

DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

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

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THE POLITICS OF MORMON HISTORY

Patrick Q. Mason

Upon assuming the Leonard J. Arrington Endowed Chair of Mormon History and Culture at Utah State University, I have to acknowledge two special individuals upon whose broad shoulders I stand. The first is the chair's namesake, Leonard Arrington, the "godfather of Mormon history." Many if not most of the good things that have happened in the subfield of Mormon history over the past half century have their roots in Arrington's pioneering scholarship, leadership, and organizational vision. The second is my predecessor in the Arrington Chair, Philip Barlow, who embodies in every way the spirit of Leonard Arrington. The quality of Phil's intellect is matched only by the depth of his soul. Anyone working in the field of Mormon studies in the twenty-first century is deeply in debt to these two great scholars.

I have one more person to acknowledge, which will lead me into the actual body of my remarks. Why have we convened at this university in Logan, rather than in Salt Lake City or Provo? We can trace the origins of Utah State University, the state's land-grant university, back to a piece of legislation called the Land-Grant College Act, which was signed into law by Abraham Lincoln on June 10, 1862. The law's chief sponsor was Representative Justin Morrill, a Republican from Vermont. Born in 1810 in Strafford, Vermont, Morrill considered attending college but didn't because of the cost. When he entered Congress, Morrill felt the need to create public colleges so as to expand educational opportunity for

This talk was originally delivered on the campus of Utah State University on October 16, 2019, as my inaugural lecture upon assuming the Leonard J. Arrington Endowed Chair of Mormon History and Culture. The text here has been annotated and slightly revised for print.

more of America's citizens, especially from the agricultural and working classes. The purpose of these land-grant colleges, according to the legislation, would be "to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life."¹ I trust that Representative—and later Senator—Morrill would be pleased with the way that Utah State University has fulfilled that lofty mission.

However, I'm pretty sure that on this night, that faint noise you may hear in the distance is the sound of Justin Morrill rolling over in his grave. Universal liberal and practical education is one thing, but *Mormon history*? In the same legislative session in which Congress passed the Land-Grant College Act, Morrill also sponsored another, even more popular, bill that outlawed Mormon polygamy. In fact, President Lincoln signed Morrill's Anti-Bigamy Act one day before signing the Land-Grant College Act. Representative Morrill's feelings about public education and the Mormons, respectively, were on the opposite ends of the spectrum. "I am a firm believer in universal education," he affirmed, largely because it instilled in the masses the skills and knowledge needed to be good citizens of the republic.² As for the Mormons, however, Morrill asserted that they "are quite as hostile to the republican form of government as they are to the usual forms of Christianity."³ Only five years after the Latter-day Saints publicly announced their practice of plural marriage, Congressman Morrill declared, "When the works of such a religion, in its overt acts, exhibit the grossest immorality

1. Morrill Act of 1862, 7 U.S.C. § 304, <https://www.loc.gov/item/uscode1925-002007013/>.

2. Quoted in Coy F. Cross II, *Justin Smith Morrill: Father of the Land-Grant Colleges* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), 77.

3. Justin Smith Morrill, *Speech of Hon. Justin S. Morrill, of Vermont: On Utah Territory and its Laws—Polygamy and its License, Delivered in the House of Representatives, Feb. 23, 1857* (Washington, DC: Congressional Globe, 1857), 4.

and debauchery, it is questionable whether legislators should remain neutral.”⁴

History is full of ironies, large and small. Among those ironies is that one of the universities Justin Morrill made possible is now home to an endowed professor studying the religion he so despised. So, to Justin Morrill, wherever you are: thank you . . . and I’m sorry.

I begin with this reference to Representative Morrill as a reminder that Mormon history is and always has been political. By “political,” I mean only in part what we typically think of when we refer to “politics”—federal legislation, constitutional law, ideological battles, voter behavior, and so forth. In these remarks I’m more interested in the original sense of the Greek term *polis*, connoting the ways that humans live together in community. With that in mind, I want to reflect on how Mormon history, and the broader field of Mormon studies, can serve as an arena in which differing communities of interest can discern, negotiate, and fulfill their mutual obligations to one another. To me, history is a deeply ethical endeavor. It’s not just names and dates. That is why in my office I have a poster of Malcolm X with the quote from his great 1963 speech “Message to the Grassroots” that says, “Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research.”⁵



“Can we all get along?” Rodney King famously pled in the midst of the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Historians have always been interested in the question of why and how we *don’t* get along, and I’m no exception. In graduate school I began studying religion, conflict, and peace in earnest.

4. Morrill, *Speech of Hon. Justin S. Morrill*, 12.

5. Malcolm X, “Message to the Grass Roots” (speech, Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference, King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Mich., Nov. 10, 1963), available at <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/message-to-grassroots/>.

That eventually led to my first book, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South*, which examines hundreds of episodes of violence against Latter-day Saint missionaries and converts in the late nineteenth-century southern United States.⁶ But more than the violence itself, I wanted to better understand the practice of religious tolerance in American history—often seen through its failure—and the limits of the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom.

Some late nineteenth-century southerners blithely discarded the principles of religious freedom, such as the North Carolina mob who whipped a Latter-day Saint missionary while bragging that they “did not care for the law or constitutional liberty.”⁷ But more thoughtful observers genuinely wrestled with where protected Mormon belief ended and illicit Mormon practice began. Since polygamy was a federal crime, then should the mere preaching of the principle of plural marriage be outlawed—as it became in Tennessee in 1885—or did Mormon proselytization fall under constitutionally protected free speech? Was it only Mormonism’s peculiar marital institution in the crosshairs, or the religion in general? One South Carolina newspaper called for the annihilation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in its entirety on the grounds that it had forfeited any claim to religious liberty: “All religions are guaranteed by the Constitution, but whenever a system goes beyond common morality, it ceases to be a religion, and should be unceremoniously stopped.”⁸ One didn’t need to grapple with the complicated question of how far religious freedom should extend if, in fact, you determined that there was no religion to grant freedom to at all.⁹

6. Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

7. Quoted in Mason, *Mormon Menace*, 96.

8. Quoted in Mason, *Mormon Menace*, 99.

9. This is a significant theme in J. Spencer Fluhman, “A Peculiar People”: *Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

It's easy to narrate nineteenth-century Mormon history with Latter-day Saints as the perpetual underdogs and victims. We should never forget that in all of American history there is no other example of a state-sponsored pogrom against an entire religious minority group quite like what happened in Missouri in late 1838. And yet a narrative of the Mormon past with Latter-day Saints *only* playing the part of victims is not really history at all. I suppose it's possible within Mormon *hagiography*—the stories of the saints—to promote a narrative in which God's people are always persecuted by the wicked outside world as a sign of their chosenness. But Mormon *history* cannot do this. When you pick up a stick, you pick up both ends. As I show in my most recent book, *Mormonism and Violence: The Battles of Zion, a history of the horrific anti-Mormon violence in Missouri* must also analyze the Mormon sources of and contributions to that violence.¹⁰ A *history* of Mormon pioneer settlement in Utah must also document the sometimes brutally violent dispossession of the Native peoples who already lived here. A *history* of Mormonism's remarkable global expansion must also assess the structural and cultural violence of racism against black- and brown-skinned people embedded in certain Mormon scriptures, narratives, theologies, and policies. These are not easy stories to tell or hear, especially not for many people in the pews who want to be inspired by heroic and faith-promoting stories of their religious forebears. Furthermore, certain powerful Latter-day Saint leaders have at times determined that the whole historical truth is too much truth, that some things that are true are not always useful for the Church and its believers.¹¹ The even-handed truth-telling commitment of Leonard Arrington and his professional colleagues in the Church Historical Department in the 1970s was seen as sufficiently threatening to some

10. Patrick Q. Mason, *Mormonism and Violence: The Battles of Zion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

11. See Boyd K. Packer, "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (1981): 1–18.

that the operation was shut down. It got so bad that Arrington and his associates were eventually exiled to the nether regions of Utah Valley and punished with the truly horrible fate of working at Brigham Young University.¹²

Decades later, as times changed and the disposition of Church leaders also evolved, a new generation realized that maybe Arrington & Co. had it basically right in the first place. The truth-telling commitment of the Church History Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this century is, in my estimation, nothing short of astounding. I don't know of another religious organization that dedicates so many resources, relative to size, toward first-rate historical scholarship. The Joseph Smith Papers project is jaw-dropping in scope and audacity—to track down, publish, and professionally annotate literally every extant Joseph Smith document, and to put it all up on the web for anyone to scrutinize. The Gospel Topics essays were pathbreaking in their forthright, if admittedly incomplete, treatment of some of the most difficult issues in the Latter-day Saint past. And I was personally shocked at how transparent the first volume of the new *Saints* narrative history was about the polygamy practiced by Joseph Smith and the early Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo. This is all extremely encouraging. If we want to actually understand how people in the past lived—how they muddled their way through conflict of various kinds—then we have to tell the whole story. We have to pick up both ends of the stick.



Many of us—maybe most of us—care about history not just because of its antiquarian value but because it also helps us think about the

12. I say this as a proud alum of Brigham Young University. For more information about the events mentioned here, see Gregory A. Prince, *Leonard Arrington and the Writing of Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press and Tanner Trust Fund, 2016), esp. chaps. 22–23.

present. Mark Twain is reported to have said (which means he probably didn't actually say it), "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes." It's precisely because of that rhyming quality that the study of the past can become useful for us today. Useful, but not determinative. Just as there is no one way of understanding or interpreting history, there is no one way to apply it. We have to be careful how we apply history because it can be a dangerous thing. Let me give an example.

Recently I was a guest on KUER public radio discussing the role of religion in the 2019 Salt Lake City mayoral election.¹³ Former Salt Lake City mayor Rocky Anderson made religion an issue in the campaign when he posted on Facebook, then followed up with an op-ed in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, that voters should not elect candidate Luz Escamilla precisely because she is a Latter-day Saint. Responding to the howls of religious bigotry, Anderson said he was simply applying the lessons of history. In his recounting, which is at least in the ballpark when speaking of the 1850s, "Brigham Young, with the support of the Territorial Legislature, assumed autocratic control of Utah Territory under the guise of speaking on behalf of God. At that time, the Legislature was all-Mormon, juries were all-Mormon, the courts assigned by the Legislature to hear all civil and criminal matters were all-Mormon." Anderson admitted that times have changed since the mid-nineteenth century, but not all that much. And so he insisted that voters should reject Escamilla's candidacy on the grounds that she "seems willing to do the bidding of the church."¹⁴

I'm not a resident of Salt Lake City, so I have no opinion about which candidate should win the race. There are no doubt a number of

13. Doug Fabrizio, "Salt Lake City's Mayoral Race and the Question of Religion," *RadioWest*, Oct. 11, 2019, <https://radiowest.kuer.org/post/salt-lake-citys-mayoral-race-and-question-religion>.

14. Rocky Anderson, "To Challenge LDS Church Power in Utah is Not 'Bigotry,'" *Salt Lake Tribune*, Sept. 6, 2019, <https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2019/09/06/rocky-anderson-concerns/>.

perfectly good reasons for a voter to prefer Erin Mendenhall over Luz Escamilla. And it's important to discuss and critically assess the ongoing influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Utah politics. But were Rocky Anderson to make that same argument in a paper for one of my history classes, he'd earn a C at best. To summarily dismiss a candidate in 2019 on religious grounds, based largely on the way things went down in 1852, with only a facile recognition of the enormous changes that have occurred in Utah and Mormon history in the intervening sixteen decades, is a subpar and even irresponsible application of Mormon history. What's more, Anderson's argument is an extension of a longstanding trope, traceable to the mid-nineteenth century, that Mormons are clones and drones, that the religion is a monolithic theocracy, and that Latter-day Saint women in particular are so unaware of and complicit in their own oppression that they are duped into simply doing the bidding of male patriarchs.¹⁵ That's not good history, and it doesn't take into account the complex agency of Latter-day Saint women.¹⁶ One compelling reason for the role of the humanities in a public university, and history and religious studies in particular, is that through them we learn to make and insist on better arguments in the public sphere.

Let me offer a counterexample of what I think is a better instance of applying Mormon history to contemporary issues. Cast your mind back to 2017 and 2018, when the Trump administration issued a proclamation banning immigration from several Muslim-majority countries, a measure that was immediately challenged in the courts and subsequently revised. In response to the administration's action, a group of scholars of Mormon history and law submitted an *amici curiae* brief that went first to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals then

15. See Fluhman, "A Peculiar People."

16. See Catherine A. Brekus, "Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 59–87.

to the Supreme Court.¹⁷ I was a minor contributor and signatory to the document; major credit goes to Nathan Oman, professor of law at William and Mary Law School. After tracing the depth and extent of popular and political anti-Mormonism in the late nineteenth century, we showed how the executive branch, in particular during the administration of President Rutherford B. Hayes, made a concerted effort to ban Mormon immigration in the late 1870s. For instance, in 1879 Secretary of State William Everts, frustrated that Congress was not taking more proactive measures against Mormon immigration, issued a circular to all American diplomats stationed in Europe directing them to pressure European governments to halt Mormon emigration from their countries to the United States. Most of the European nations failed to reply, and none complied—it seems they were as eager to get rid of Mormon immigrants as the Hayes administration was resistant to welcoming them. Since they couldn't control the outflow from Europe, US immigration officials tried to stop Mormon migrants at the ports by detaining them and returning them to their country of origin—a strategy that was only sporadically applied and not particularly effective. Finally, Congress acted in the late 1880s by disincorporating the Church's Perpetual Emigration Fund and seizing its assets.

Our brief was neither partisan nor polemical. The signatories did not take a position on whether President Trump's September 2017 proclamation violated the Establishment Clause or was otherwise unlawful. Rather, we wanted to inform the court with “an example of religious discrimination in immigration from America's past, and to show the harms caused by treating particular religious minorities as dangerous and foreign.” We argued, “This case presents the Court with an opportunity to give the [President's] Proclamation the sort of genuine scrutiny that did not exist in the nineteenth century. This Court should

17. Anna-Rose Mathieson, Ben Feuer, and Nathan B. Oman, “Brief of Scholars of Mormon History & Law as Amici Curiae in Support of Neither Party” (2018), *Appellate Briefs* 13, <https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/briefs/13>.

ensure that history does not repeat itself by taking a hard look at the government's purported justifications for the Proclamation."¹⁸ In other words, we didn't claim that nineteenth-century Mormon history forced us, or the courts, to believe or act in a certain way lo these many years later. But the historical record does offer a cautionary tale to at least be mindful of when we encounter new political developments that, if not quite repeating history, certainly rhyme.



I've discussed the politics of Mormon history itself, past and present. But what about the politics of *doing* Mormon history, both now and in the future? And thinking even more ambitiously, is there a way that Mormon history can inform our broader cultural politics, providing a model of how to live together despite competing interests? For this, I want to borrow from an eminently scholarly source: the NBC sitcom *The Good Place*. One of the major characters in *The Good Place* is Chidi Anagonye, a professor specializing in moral philosophy and ethics. Chidi's life is a mess because he obsesses over the ethics of even the most inconsequential actions like choosing what flavor of muffin to buy. I don't want to endorse Chidi's neurotic moral paralysis, but I do want to borrow the central question from a lecture he delivers, which forms the philosophical backbone of the entire show (and is based on a book by the real-life Harvard philosopher T. M. Scanlon): "What do we owe one another?"¹⁹

I must confess that, as a scholar of Mormonism, I am sometimes jealous of other academic colleagues who conduct their research and publish articles and books without the specter of a living

18. Mathieson, Feuer, and Oman, "Amici Curiae," 7–8.

19. See T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

community—especially one of which they are a part—peering over their shoulder.²⁰ At times I have bristled at feeling that I need to be careful about the way I say something, or even whether I should say it at all, for fear that someone, somewhere, will be offended, that their faith will somehow be challenged, that I will give the wrong impression or I will say something that a missionary or a bishop or an LDS Public Affairs representative or a General Authority simply won't like. In short, there is a *politics* to the writing and teaching of Mormon history, in terms of how scholars and the community live alongside one another.

And now there is even a politics to the very term *Mormon* history or *Mormon* studies, with the M-word becoming a new kind of shibboleth that marks you in certain ways to certain people. Every Mormon studies scholar and institution has wrestled with the question of nomenclature since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints changed its style guide, and especially when President Russell M. Nelson made clear that the emphasis on the full name of the Church was a serious institutional priority.²¹ No scholar or journalist I know wants to casually disregard the Church's request. But in the academic field of Mormon studies, we don't just study the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Indeed, if we did, technically Joseph Smith's early visions, the translation of the Book of Mormon, and the establishment of the Church of Christ would all fall outside our purview, since each foundational event occurred years before the 1838 revelation giving the

20. This section draws from and adapts Patrick Q. Mason, "Scholars, Saints, and Stakeholders: A Forgotten Alternatives Approach to Mormon History," *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 1 (Jan. 2015): 217–28.

21. See "Style Guide—The Name of the Church," *Newsroom*, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/style-guide>; and Russell M. Nelson, "The Correct Name of the Church," Oct. 2018, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/10/the-correct-name-of-the-church?lang=eng>.

Church its present name.²² In fact, Joseph Smith and the other believers in the Restoration were known as “Mormons” years before they became Latter-day Saints. What’s more, the Restoration tradition is wonderfully diverse; by one scholar’s count, there have been over four hundred organized groups over the past two centuries who have traced their spiritual lineage back to Joseph Smith, with approximately eighty still operating as of about a decade ago.²³ In short, when discussing the history and culture of Restoration traditions, the capacious words “Mormon” and “Mormonism” are simply unavoidable, and remain useful, in many contexts.²⁴

This raises a broader point. As a scholar, shouldn’t I have the right just to say what I want to say, teach what I want to teach, and write what I want to write? Why should I care about what leaders and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints think, except as an object of my study? I work in American higher education, after all, with its time-honored standards and methods of rigor and objectivity and critical analysis and academic freedom. Don’t I have the right to pursue an unfettered path toward historical truth, regardless of how people in the community *feel* about it? Of course, these questions are not unique to scholars of Mormonism. They apply to anyone studying any human community that has a stake in the stories being told about it. They apply even more to those of us who are scholar-practitioners, a fancy name for the obviously misguided lot who have made the self-evidently poor life decision to academically study the religious community they still

22. An analogy is that the settlement of Jamestown, which long predated the creation of the United States of America, fits in an American history course but somewhat more awkwardly in a history of the United States.

23. See Newell G. Bringham and John C. Hamer, eds., *Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism* (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2007), 9.

24. For thoughtful perspectives on this issue, see the roundtable on the name of the Church in the Fall 2019 issue of *Dialogue*, available at <https://www.dialoguejournal.com/issues/fall-2019/>.

actively participate in. Those of us who walk that line, which includes my Hindu and Buddhist colleagues in Religious Studies here at Utah State, are accustomed to upsetting people—or at least knowing we have the real potential to upset people—on both sides of the chasm between the academy and the temple.

I have found the tightrope walk to be easier when I pay less attention to the perilous fall on either side and more attention to the question of *relationships*. What is the relationship between scholars and their subjects? What rights and responsibilities do scholars and their subjects have in relationship to one another? What does a scholar owe the community, and what does the community owe the scholar? In terms of the politics of Mormon history, how might we talk about Mormon historians' relationship with the ecclesiastical and cultural communities that have a special stake in their writing and teaching of that history? In short, what do we owe one another?

Let me address those complicated questions with an imperfect analogy. Although we don't often recognize it, fundamentally historians are in an extractive industry. Our job is to retrieve and process the raw materials of history that were usually deposited long before we were born. There are two things to understand about those resources, two things that exist in some tension. First, those resources do not belong to anyone in particular because no living person created them. People or institutions might have legal ownership of certain documents, but nobody "owns" history. History is community property. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that some people have actually settled on certain resource-rich lands. That's where they live. That's where they've made home. That's where they raise their kids. Those of us who are in the extractive industry don't have the right to dispossess them of their ancestral lands nor to pillage the land or pollute it so as to make it inhabitable for its current inhabitants or future generations. Furthermore, whatever wealth is created from the resources we extract and refine should be shared with the community. It's true that some

community members will probably wish that we never came with our extractive machinery, preferring that the land would now and always remain pristine. They may insist that their particular ecosystem is especially fragile, that we should leave the resources alone and take our operation elsewhere. That's a legitimate and understandable sentiment. But the fact is that the community needs and can benefit from the historical resources we extract and refine as much as anyone else.

What do we do with these competing interests? It seems to me that the best plan is to steer a middle course of responsible, ethical development that lies somewhere between reckless plundering and naïve primitivism. But not everyone will agree about what is responsible or ethical, making it all the more important for those engaged in extraction to be sensitive about community concerns and maintain the highest professional standards in doing their work.

What would a responsible, ethical relationship between the religious studies scholar and the religious community look like? In my view, Mormon studies, as a subset of religious studies, will make its greatest and most unique contributions in the often-uncomfortable space between the critic and the caretaker.²⁵ Scholars will be most effective in the space in which we can rigorously analyze and discuss the tradition—its institutions, scriptures, histories, cultures, politics, gender norms, race relations, and so forth—without being obsessed with or trapped by competing truth claims. This is precisely the path that Leonard Arrington and his generation put us on and that we have been trying to discern and follow ever since.

If scholars of Mormonism cultivate a studious commitment to something approaching objectivity and neutrality, and our research is

25. I am referring to, but also departing from, Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); and Atalia Omer, "Can a Critic Be a Caretaker Too? Religion, Conflict, and Conflict Transformation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 2 (June 2011): 459–96.

conducted with evidentiary fidelity and analytical rigor, then we will be in a unique position to see Mormon history and culture in fresh ways. This is broadly true of the entire humanistic endeavor. An article published last year in *Forbes*, of all places, extolled the special virtue of the arts and humanities precisely because they “show us how things could be different than they are.”²⁶ The particular ways this plays out will take distinctive forms in various fields. But in the subfield of Mormon history, and the discipline of history more generally, I think one of our greatest and most useful strategies is to uncover and lift up history’s “forgotten alternatives.”

The notion of forgotten alternatives comes from the great Southern historian C. Vann Woodward’s classic book *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*.²⁷ I use it to mean not only paths that were once available and were either not chosen or foreclosed for various reasons but also options that may become available as our cultural, intellectual, political, and religious landscapes change and necessitate answering new questions with the resources at hand. It is not the role of scholars to act as supposedly enlightened sages telling the benighted masses, or leaders, what should be done. But in a forgotten alternatives mode of history, one key function of the scholarly community is to keep alive a multiplicity of ideas and options, gleaned from the rich bequest of our diverse histories. As scholars writing in another context have stated, “Critical moments of genuine receptivity and openness to change come unpredictably, but when they do, policymakers will look seriously at whatever is on offer which comes from a credible source and provides answers to their predicament.” Along these lines, the Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman wrote, “Only a crisis—actual or

26. Matthew Gabriele, “The Medievalist Who Fought Nazis with History,” *Forbes*, Oct. 23, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/matthewgabriele/2018/10/23/medievalist-who-fought-nazis/>.

27. C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002 [1955]), chap. 2.

perceived—produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That,” Friedman said, “is our basic function [as scholars]: to develop alternatives to existing policies, and to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.”²⁸

What forgotten alternatives can Mormon history present to us—all of us, not just those who go to an LDS ward on Sundays? What can Mormonism’s past tell us about the relationship between church and state, the nature and limits of religious freedom, marriage and family structures, gender norms and relations, majority-minority relations, the pursuit of economic justice in a market-based economy, the challenges of pluralism and particularism, racial and national identities, the rights of individuals in balance with the needs of communities, how to weigh competing authority claims, violence and peace, colonial relationships of center and periphery, and so on?

Let me give a couple concrete examples of how this has already worked. Perhaps the most famous instance of a Mormon historian working in a forgotten alternatives mode, which in turn had a significant impact on the development of the institutional Church, is Lester Bush’s classic 1973 *Dialogue* article, “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview.”²⁹ When Bush wrote his essay, a kind of historical amnesia had settled upon Church members and leaders in which they had come to believe that Joseph Smith had initiated the Church’s ban on ordaining Black men to the priesthood and that no Black men had

28. Both quotations appear in Simon Fisher and Lada Zimina, “Just Wasting our Time? Provocative Thoughts for Peacebuilders,” in *Peacebuilding at Crossroads? Dilemmas and Paths for Another Generation*, edited by Beatrix Schmelzle and Martina Fischer (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2009), 11–35. See also Milton Friedman, “Preface,” *Capitalism and Freedom*, rev. ed. (1962; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xiv.

29. Lester E. Bush Jr., “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 11–68.

ever been ordained—or if they had, it had been a mistake. Bush's essay disproved both of these cultural myths—not by way of advocacy or polemics but through careful, evidence-based historical scholarship. It seems President Spencer W. Kimball read Bush's essay during his personal wrestle with the issue and that the forgotten history that Bush uncovered was one factor giving Kimball the confidence that an alternative future was possible.³⁰

Or consider the role of a small group of Boston housewives, as they called themselves, who stumbled upon a strange set of periodicals housed in some dusty corner of the Harvard library in the 1970s. Their rediscovery of the *Woman's Exponent*, a publication by, for, and of Latter-day Saint women published from 1872 to 1914, kindled their confidence that feminism was not a foreign concept to their religion but rather part of their pioneer heritage.³¹ This group of women in Boston—which included Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Claudia Bushman—along with a handful of women employed by Leonard Arrington in the LDS Church's Historical Department, essentially created the now robust field of Mormon women's history. Their rediscovery of the forgotten alternatives of Latter-day Saint women's past inspired new paths of inquiry, exemplified in Maxine Hanks's 1992 collection, *Women and Authority*.³² Hanks's book, and her confrontational attitude at the time toward Church leaders, was more than the institution could bear, leading to her excommunication. In our current decade, however, much of

30. See Edward L. Kimball, "Spencer W. Kimball and the Revelation on Priesthood," *BYU Studies* 47, no. 2 (2008): 54.

31. See Claudia L. Bushman, et al., "My Short Happy Life with *Exponent II*," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 179–92. One important book to come out of this group was Claudia L. Bushman, ed., *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline Press, 1976; Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997).

32. Maxine Hanks, ed., *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

what women's historians and theologians were writing about for some four decades, often under a cloud of suspicion, has become a new orthodoxy. Hanks was rebaptized in the Church, and the restoration of moderate Mormon feminism has become mainstream with publications like Neylan McBaine's book *Women at Church*.³³ Gradually, incrementally, painstakingly, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is leaning into the forgotten alternatives of women's activism, leadership, and ritual participation.

The role of Mormon studies scholars is not to dictate policy to institutions or individuals, even in moments of crisis. But Mormon studies is and must always be political, meaning it is oriented toward questions of the common good. Mormon studies must preserve among its practitioners (and readers) a lively sense that what we say and write and teach really matters—if not in obviously direct ways today, then perhaps someday, somehow, for someone. This is not, however, a call for advocacy-based scholarship. Indeed, scholarship is usually poor scholarship when it is only footnoted versions of contemporary cultural politics. The trick for each Mormon studies scholar is not to be caught up in scheming how she will be the next Lester Bush, while still retaining a sense of purpose that her scholarship may indeed somehow matter in an unimagined present or unanticipated future.

A forgotten alternatives approach requires a kind of unspoken compact between the Mormon studies scholar and the Latter-day Saint community. Goodwill, trust, forbearance, and occasionally forgiveness must be extended to the scholar, particularly when she offers forgotten alternatives that do not square with present institutional or cultural norms. In exchange, the scholar must recognize that there are external stakeholders whose claims are valid, even compelling. The scholar must be content to a life—at least a professional life—somewhat apart, somewhat divorced from the corridors of ecclesiastical power. This is

33. Neylan McBaine, *Women at Church: Magnifying LDS Women's Local Impact* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014).

because the scholar will be held in at least benign suspicion by those who can't always tell what "team" she is on because she calls it like she sees it, and not necessarily the way the institution would prefer it to be seen.³⁴

So what, in the end, do the Mormon studies scholar and the Latter-day Saint community owe one another? Spencer Fluhman had it right when he suggested that what we can offer one another is our friendship.³⁵ It seems to me that the scholar owes the community her best efforts in pursuing rigor, candor, accuracy, neutrality, and creative insight, all conditioned by humane generosity and the benefit of the doubt. In turn, the community owes the scholar space, sources, patience, and curiosity, all conditioned by humane generosity and the benefit of the doubt. Of course, when I speak of these mutual obligations born of friendship, I recognize that there is nothing binding on either side. Scholars can be biased and petty, and communities can be parochial and unforgiving. But where does that get us? How does that advance knowledge? Polemicists on both sides may score a few short-term wins by appealing to their respective bases of power—academic or ecclesiastical—but their impact is temporary, and they are typically not remembered kindly in the long run.

In perhaps his most trenchant insight into the human condition, canonized in the LDS scripture as Doctrine and Covenants section 121, Joseph Smith perceived that coercion born of ambition and self-importance can secure grudging acquiescence for a time, but true power and lasting influence can only be maintained long-term through persuasion, forbearance, humility, kindness, and indeed love.

34. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich talks about the "double-bind of identity politics" that practicing Mormon women scholars often find themselves in. See Ulrich, "Mormon Women in the History of Second-Wave Feminism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 48.

35. See J. Spencer Fluhman, "Friendship: An Editor's Introduction," *Mormon Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (2014): 1–7.

He intuited that knowledge was truly capable of enlarging our souls only when pursued without hypocrisy or guile.³⁶ Honesty, generosity, and liberality of spirit are not exactly the coin of the realm in our current culture, but those are the virtues I find among my colleagues in the field of Mormon history. Can Mormon history, as a shared endeavor involving both scholars and the community, offer an alternative ethos of truth-telling, accountability, and reconciliation as a counterweight to our broader environment of fear, deception, and mutual recrimination? In other words, can Mormon history be the site of a different kind of politics? That may seem an audacious and idealistic claim for a tiny academic subfield. But I hear it as a distant sounding of the vision of the Restoration that Joseph Smith offered a month before the end of his life. Perhaps in some small way, Mormon history, like the movement Smith began nearly two centuries ago, can help “lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world”—not by force but rather by “the power of truth.”³⁷

36. Doctrine and Covenants 121:37, 41–42.

37. “History, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844],” 18, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-f-1-1-may-1844-8-august-1844/24>.

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THE QUEST FOR UNIVERSAL MUSIC IN THE LDS CHILDREN'S SONGBOOK

Colleen Karnas-Haines

Introduction

Over the years, the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has expressed a set of theories about the nature and purpose of music. Elder Bruce R. McConkie asserted a divine origin of music: “Music is given of God to further his purposes.”¹ Former Church President Heber J. Grant proclaimed the evangelical power of music when he said, “The singing of our sacred hymns, written by the servants of God, has a powerful effect in converting people to the principles of the Gospel, and in promoting peace and spiritual growth.”² This is similar to former President Harold B. Lee’s belief that, “The most effective preaching of the gospel is when it is accompanied by beautiful, appropriate music.”³ While former President David O. McKay’s characterization of music as “truly the universal language” is inaccurate due to cultural differences that shape how people interpret musical sound, he recognizes

1. Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1966, as cited in “Music Quotes,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/resources/music-quotes?lang=eng>.

2. Heber J. Grant, *Improvement Era*, (September 1940): 522, as cited in “Music Quotes,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/resources/music-quotes?lang=eng>.

3. Harold B. Lee, *Conference Report*, (April 1973): 181, as cited in “Music Quotes,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/resources/music-quotes?lang=eng>.

“when it is excellently expressed how deeply it moves our souls.”⁴ In 1970, the First Presidency released the following statement: “Through music, man’s ability to express himself extends beyond the limits of the spoken language in both subtlety and power. Music can be used to exalt and inspire or to carry messages of degradation and destruction.”⁵

Children’s music has taken on special importance in the Church’s efforts to inculcate its message. The Church’s official site for music distribution and the children’s songbook state that, “Music is a language that everyone can understand. Children all over the world sing these same songs’ . . . This online version of the current *Children’s Songbook* makes it easy to learn and share this music anytime, anywhere.”⁶ The global aspirations of this music receive special attention in this framework. In June of 2018, the Church released a public notice stating that the children’s songbook was beginning a multi-year revision process. This revision project helps to continue the long line of Latter-day Saint children’s songbooks that started with Eliza R. Snow’s first children’s songbook published in 1880. The musical expectations of this new songbook were listed at the *Church News* site: “Sacred music teaches the doctrines of the gospel, nourishes us spiritually, and has the power to unify Church members throughout the world.”⁷ Sister Cristina B. Franco, member of the Primary general presidency, declared that, “Gospel-centered music will assist families worldwide in raising a

4. David O. McKay, *Conference Report*, (April 1945): 119, as cited in “Music Quotes,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/resources/music-quotes?lang=eng>.

5. *Priesthood Bulletin*, Aug. 1973, 3.

6. “Children’s Songbook,” accessed Dec. 30, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/childrens-songbook?lang=eng>.

7. Camille West, “Church Announces Plans for New Hymnbook and Children’s Songbook,” *Church News*, June 18, 2018, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/church-announces-plans-for-new-hymnbook-and-childrens-songbook?lang=eng>.

sin-resistant generation.”⁸ The article continued, “As a source of doctrine, hymns and children’s songs have a unique way of feeding us spiritually while uniting us as families, congregations, and members of a worldwide church.”⁹

Using music to educate children, nourish members spiritually, and unite the global church generates a set of complex goals because, contrary to the message in the children’s songbook, music is not universally understood. Even with the best intentions, musical messaging may fail and even divide people. There are two challenges that Church leadership and the songbook revision committee must face to achieve the abovementioned educational, spiritual, and social cohesion goals: understanding the complexity of children’s musical cognition and taking advantage of the rich musical heritages of diverse Church members while operating in a church that has traditionally been centered, culturally, administratively, and physically, in the United States.¹⁰ Children’s songs can create a unique opportunity for building unity in the global church through music, but only if those compiling the new children’s songbook understand and use what is known about children’s musical cognition to that effect. However, achieving this goal entails decentering American/Western music.

Understanding Music Cognition

Earlier theories of children’s music in the Church have relied on a notion of children as musically immature. For instance, the 1989 version of the

8. West, “Church Announces Plans for New Hymnbook and Children’s Songbook.”

9. West, “Church Announces Plans for New Hymnbook and Children’s Songbook.”

10. D. Michael Quinn, “LDS ‘Headquarters Culture’ and the Rest of Mormonism: Past and Present,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 34, nos. 3–4 (2001): 135–64, 209.

children's songbook by the Church emphasized "simplification" as a central goal for children's music to make it more universally applicable.

Brother Moody, who has worked side by side with the Primary General Presidency and board in the production of the songbook, notes that some Primary leaders . . . have expressed a desire for simpler musical arrangements. For these reasons, the decision was made . . . to simplify some of the more difficult arrangements. . . . "This will open up songs that are real jewels," says Sister Cannon [former first counselor in the Primary general presidency], "and make them more accessible to everyone."¹¹

However, there has not always been a clear agreement about what constitutes simplicity. In a 2004 interview with Church member and early childhood music professor Susan Kenney, she talked about the challenges of defining "simple" music by discussing a children's song titled "Praise" by Merrill Bradshaw.

It really does appear to be hard. He [Merrill Bradshaw] is a contemporary composer. . . . Now at first glance you would say, "I don't really think that is child appropriate." I mean, look at all the accidentals, look at the meter changes all the way through it and everything, I mean, it's ridiculous! And yet, it is so childlike because it's the way children speak. . . . It's really based on how language is built and when we [taught] this to kids, they would just learn it, just like that [snap]. . . . But adults hated it . . . because they would look at that and say, "Ahh, 5/4, 4/4, 2/4!" . . . But when I [watched] children learn this and [saw] how easily they could sing it I would say, "We should be looking at the children here and not what the adults like."¹²

Kenney proposed that a song is truly simple, musically, for a child when the rhythm follows speech patterns, even though that may

11. Ann Edwards Cannon, "The New *Children's Songbook*," *Ensign*, June 1989, 15, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1989/06/the-new-childrens-songbook?lang=eng>.

12. Susan Kenney, interview with author, Mar. 4, 2004, Provo, Utah, minidisc recording.

produce complex-looking rhythmic notation on the printed page. “We don’t speak in 4/4 time; we speak syncopated.”¹³ Syncopation may look complex in written form, but as former Primary general president Michaelene P. Grassli stated, “Children don’t sing the songs from copies of the book; they learn the words by rote, so they can concentrate on the words and their meanings.”¹⁴

Such a recognition exemplifies how new research would benefit the Latter-day Saint understanding of children’s music. Children’s musical cognition is surprisingly flexible, more flexible than adults’ musical cognition. Adults perceive, produce, and react to music in the ways they have been culturally conditioned to perceive, produce, and react. While this may narrow an adult’s musical abilities, it aids in musical communication. If an adult has been conditioned to perceive a minor scale as sad, that adult can better understand what a minor-based song performed within their culture is trying to communicate. On the flip side, children may miss the cultural significance of singing a song in a minor key, but they will be more open to hearing a variety of emotions (not just sad) in a song produced outside their culture that happens to contain harmonic markers of a minor scale. As expectations become refined with age, cognitive musical flexibility is reduced but intracultural communication is enhanced.

Given the obvious developmental trajectory of children becoming adults, it can be tempting to view children as mini- or pre-adults, but the interplay between cognition/biology and enculturation challenges that view. Sociobiological scholars describe the difference between *music* and *musicality* by acknowledging various cultural musical practices. In this view, “*Musicality* in all its complexity can be defined as a natural, spontaneously developing set of traits based on and constrained by our

13. Kenney, interview.

14. Kellene Ricks, “‘The Power of Music’ Found in New Songbook,” *Church News*, May 20, 1989, 5, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/archives/1989-05-20/the-power-of-music-found-in-new-songbook-151373>.

cognitive and biological system. *Music* in all its variety can be defined as a social and cultural construct based on that very musicality.”¹⁵ Children’s musicality, however, does not mature in a straight line from inability to mature ability. One of the richest areas of discovery in music development research is musical innateness. Just as with speech sound production and perception, some aspects of musical ability are amplified and some atrophy according to the musical “language” the child learns. Children are not born with culturally appropriate letter sound production; they are born with the ability to learn letter sound production. Likewise, children are not born with music; they are born with a musicality, a predisposition to produce and perceive musical sounds. If innate aspects of musicality exist, then young children are not “blank slates” but instead bring something to the experience and production of music. What they bring to music is arguably different than adults as the process of cultural amplification and atrophying is at a nascent stage.

Changes in a growing child’s musical perception do not imply maturation or becoming “better” at tasks. Often, the opposite is true. Music cognition researchers describe how culture alters humans’ innate abilities to process music. For instance, Stephanie M. Stalinski and E. Glenn Schellenberg tracked children’s process of musical enculturation. They found that children adjust their temporal perception in music to suit their culture by twelve months. Young infants in Western cultures can detect disruptions in both isochronous meters (in which beats per measure remain constant, typical in Western musical traditions)¹⁶ and non-isochronous meters (in which beats per measure change while still maintaining cycles within the song, often found outside of

15. H. Honing, et al., “Without It No Music: Cognition, Biology and Evolution of Musicality,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 370, no. 1664 (2015): 2.

16. Stephanie M. Stalinski and E. Glenn Schellenberg, “Music Cognition: A Developmental Perspective,” *Topics in Cognitive Science* 4 (2012): 487.

Western musical traditions).¹⁷ Contrast that ability with North American adults, most of whom can only detect disruptions in isochronous meters. Infants lose this ability to perceive meters outside their cultural norms around twelve months old.¹⁸ Children adjust their understanding of harmony to match their culture somewhere between four and six years old. Tonality perception as it relates to key-defining contexts matches adult performance typically by twelve years old.¹⁹ Related studies include topics on absolute pitch, emotional judgments of musical mood, and other aspects of music processing to understand the unique musical perceptions of children and how they evolve (not necessarily improve) over time.

The dilemma arises when the Church attempts to create a global musical experience by placing its most familiar musical system, Western, in the center and the other musical systems on the periphery as deviations from the norm. John O'Flynn, concerned about intercultural contexts in music education, explains, "European methodologies that start with simple song materials, skills, and concepts appear to work well in some European contexts where such cultural-educational assumptions "fit" with society's beliefs about music and education. . . . However, developmental strategies such as these make little sense in parts of the globe where children may be involved in complex musical activities at an early age, largely owing to their immersion in community-based musical practices."²⁰

Musics of other cultures may be represented, but if children are taught to develop music processing in a way that makes the Western musical system "understandable," then the other musics of the world

17. Stalinski and Schellenberg, 489.

18. Stalinski and Schellenberg, 489.

19. Stalinski and Schellenberg, 489.

20. John O'Flynn, "Re-appraising Ideas of Musicality in Intercultural Contexts of Music Education," *International Journal of Music Education* 23, no. 3 (2005): 196.

will always be a distinct “other.” Children will always be “translating” the foreign sounds, hampering the unity the Church desires to build. The aforementioned studies of children’s wide and varied musical abilities are significant because they suggest that children’s music, rather than adult hymns, may provide the best chance the Church has of building a cross-cultural musical understanding. Before those music cognition milestones (twelve months, four to six years, twelve years), children may be able to perceive another culture’s music as “music” and not “the other’s music.”

Otherness in Latter-day Saint Music Making

How does the adoption of particular musical styles create division? The efforts of the revised children’s songbook focus on making sure that the words are translated into as many languages as possible.²¹ However, there is no explicit request for culturally diverse rhythms, harmonies, or instrumentation. The closest the Church gets to such a request is a press release regarding music submission guidelines that states, “Music composed in traditional styles (similar to previously requested and published pieces) and in more modern or culturally varied styles, which may resonate with the Church’s increasingly diverse membership, will be considered.”²² It is hard not to notice the significance of the language used; “traditional styles” means past American Latter-day Saint styles whereas the traditional music of other cultures is not, in this context, deemed “traditional” but “culturally varied.”

21. Tad Walch, “Call for a New Church Hymnbook Generates 17,000 Submissions, Suggestions” *Deseret News*, Aug. 4, 2019, <https://www.deseret.com/2019/8/4/20755999/call-for-a-new-church-hymnbook-generates-17-000-submissions-suggestions>.

22. “Music Submission Content Guidelines,” Apr. 2019, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/ldsorg/music/PD60008660_000%20MusicSubmission.pdf?lang=eng.

The establishment of a center versus peripheries in Latter-day Saint music making creates a sense of otherness and hampers communication in various ways. In the United States, some Black Latter-day Saint communities struggle to both adopt typical Latter-day Saint musical traditions and find a home in the Church for their own musical heritage. “I know this is the Lord’s church,’ [Debra] Bonner [director of the Genesis gospel choir, a predominantly Black choir] said. ‘But the hardest part has been the music.’”²³ Outside the United States, some African cultures view Latter-day Saint music as overly secular. “The LDS church in Kumasi draws criticism because, unlike other Christian denominations, meetings do not feature cultural elements such as drumming, clapping or dancing,” reports Lauren Malner in a *Daily Universe* article discussing Garrett Nagaishi’s research with LDS converts in Ghana. “Some African cultures see pianos as bar instruments and find it strange that they are in every LDS meeting house.”²⁴ Such misinterpretations hamper the very thing Church leaders view as a primary musical purpose—the conversion of souls. In a recent article about Mormon studies in Africa, Amy Hoyt writes, “Despite the obvious connections between Latter-day Saint and African beliefs regarding the importance of the extended family and communal connections, the growth rate will remain hindered without allowing for cultural assimilation of local worship styles regarding music, sermons, and healing.”²⁵

West African musical culture is very different from the musical culture that bloomed from the founding nineteenth-century Latter-day

23. Associated Press, “A New Sound for Mormon Hymns,” *Telegram & Gazette* (Worcester, Mass.), Feb. 22, 2016, <https://www.telegram.com/article/20160222/NEWS/160229847>.

24. Lauren Malner, “Cultural Elements Affect Mormon Missionary Work in Africa,” *Daily Universe*, Apr. 16, 2018, <https://universe.byu.edu/2018/04/16/cultural-elements-affect-mormon-missionary-work-in-africa/>.

25. Amy Hoyt, “Mormon Studies in Africa,” *Mormon Studies Review* 6 (2019): 50.

Saint pioneers. Those steeped in Latter-day Saint musical traditions will likewise find it difficult to interpret musics from outside what they consider the “norm.” Internal power structures determine who is required to do the work of imposing one cultural norm over another and who is required to do the work of translation. As composer Murray Boren observed, “A missionary attending his first worship service in Nigeria is confronted with unfamiliar sights and sounds. He sees ‘dancing,’ he hears rhythmic accompaniment to a repetitive responsorial song, and he witnesses an almost tumultuous participation by the congregation. He feels uncomfortable. His first impulse is to replace the unfamiliar with music which seems more appropriate, more ‘reverent,’ more Mormon, more American.”²⁶

While the population growth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is slowing, it is still growing, especially in areas such as Africa. A 2016 Church press release claims, “[T]he Church in Africa has grown exponentially in . . . the past 30 years” with “20 times more members than in 1985.”²⁷ Much of this growth is concentrated in West Africa, although the characterization of “exponential” growth is debated.²⁸

West African music practices have been controversial for the predominantly white American Church leadership. Briefly, in the late 1960s, members of the Church Music Committee accepted these practices because “the Old Testament peoples had danced and clapped before the Lord with drums, timbrels, and cymbals.”²⁹ Over a decade

26. Murray Boren, “Worship Through Music Nigerian Style,” *Sunstone* 10, no. 5 (May 1985): 64.

27. “With Kinshasa Temple Groundbreaking, Church Growing Rapidly in Africa,” *Church Newsroom*, Feb. 12 2016, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-growing-rapidly-africa>.

28. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormonism is growing in Africa, but is its rise ‘exponential?’” *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 20, 2016, <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2016/06/21/mormonism-is-growing-in-africa-but-is-its-rise-exponential/>.

29. Michael Hicks, *Mormonism and Music: A History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 219.

later a mission president denounced the West African musical practices as “satanic and . . . descended from the culture of Cain himself.”³⁰ More recently, many Latter-day Saints have resigned themselves to the fact that perhaps “the westernization of alien cultures is inevitable.”³¹

The Church has occasionally adopted a paradigm of “diversity” to address its global status and to attempt to decenter American musical traditions. For example, in 2009 a Brazilian member of the Church, Liriel Domiciano, performed in Portuguese during the Church’s general conference broadcast. Judd Case analyzed the performance to show the inroads made in cultural diversity. “[The performance] allows Brazilian and other Portuguese-speaking Mormons to hear a few moments of Conference without a translator. English-speaking Saints can experience a powerful Conference moment in a language other than their own. The global Church can likewise experience difference amidst familiarity; it can experience the brief subversion of the Anglo American Church’s cultural norms in a way that affirms shared Mormon identities.”³² “Brief” is the key word as the chosen song, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” is familiar to and culturally comfortable for the Church’s American audience. This comfort stems from the fact that the song was written by an Englishman in 1738, sung in English by both Liriel Domiciano and the Tabernacle Choir, performed in Salt Lake City, Utah, and sung in Portuguese only by the guest singer. While this was a display of diversity, it did not decenter American/Western music.

The performance of diversity asks very little of the dominant American/English-speaking culture. Compare this to the work required of non-English, non-Western converts who are asked to make music by changing instruments, styles, languages, and their definition of appropriate “church” songs. This comparison reveals the challenges in

30. Hicks, *Mormonism and Music*, 221.

31. Hicks, *Mormonism and Music*, 221.

32. Judd Case, “Sounds from the Center: Liriel’s Performance and Ritual Pilgrimage,” *Journal of Media and Religion* 8, no. 4 (2009): 223.

equalizing the musical and, more generally, the cultural power structure of the global church. In an analysis of his Navajo grandfather's conversion to the Latter-day Saint religion, Moroni Benally asserts that "the biopolitical power of the Church attempts to structure and dictate what is and is not culturally appropriate."³³ In the Church's discouragement of member participation in Native ceremonies, Benally sees a Church that "is constructed upon premises that privilege upholding whiteness."³⁴ The Indigenous members must practice "passive non-compliant resistance,"³⁵ not as a challenge against authority but as an integrated act of their cultural identity-informed faith. As Gina Colvin articulates, many decentered members wonder if "the white Utah church will ever soften enough to admit the stories and narratives from beyond its borders."³⁶ The question can be expanded to include the musical world of lyrical stories and narratives, and also instrumentation, rhythms, and musical styles. Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye studied the children's Primary program in Hong Kong and Auckland, New Zealand and found that members across the globe have found ways to fully realize their complex, multifaceted selves and have claimed their "agency to embrace, redefine, and reproduce" their integrated Church identities.³⁷ The question is: to what extent do those at the center have to perform the same negotiations?

33. Moroni Benally, "Decolonizing the Blossoming: Indigenous People's Faith in a Colonizing Church," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 4 (2017): 76.

34. Benally, 26.

35. Benally, 77.

36. Gina Colvin, "A Maori Mormon Testimony," in *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion*, edited by Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018), 40.

37. Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye, "A Tale of Three Primaries: The Gravity of Mormonism's Informal Institutions," in *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion*, edited by Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018), 229–62.

Given that the Church is already located across the globe, the stories “beyond its border” already do exist. A balanced relationship requires that the leadership at the center of the Church allow those diverse voices to not only be heard in comfortable spaces, with provided translations, and framed in familiar constructs but to allow those voices to leave a perceptible imprint upon the institution.

Universals

Music that communicates to a culturally diverse population must go beyond simply offering multiple translations of the lyrics. It must also go beyond a token chapter representing “other” world music, which may be conveniently overlooked by the dominant culture that has the privilege of musical representation in every other chapter. Given the vast differences in music due to differing geographic, cultural, and social influences, one wonders if it is possible to create a musical culture that is truly universal. There are some musical elements that provide a foundation for such an enterprise. Music researcher Reinhard Kopiez proposed that while true universals are elusive, *statistical* universals can be found in the concepts of music-driven movement, synchronization, and expectancy.

Statistically universal musicality suggests that music sparks motion because music is meant to spark movement, no matter the age or culture. Kopiez outlines emerging studies on the relationship between music and perceived movement.³⁸ While the movements across cultures may look different and serve different purposes, the fact that humans in some way link music to movement (dances, work songs, rocking lullabies) is a statistical universal.

38. Reinhard Kopiez, “Making Music and Making Sense Through Music: Expressive Performance and Communication,” in *MENC Handbook of Musical Cognition and Development*, edited by Richard Colwell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 213.

In the Latter-day Saint context, what purpose does it serve to train children to “pop” from their seats when singing, “I looked out the window and what did I see? POP-corn popping on the apricot tree,”³⁹ only to tell them to stop popping, stop clapping, stop dancing in church once they have grown to a certain age? The ability to listen and interpret musical sound through motion may be exactly how music allows people to “express [themselves] . . . beyond the limits of the spoken language.”⁴⁰ The Church has a well-established history of incorporating songs in their children’s program with hand motions, sign language, body movements, etc. What may need reconsideration is the attitude that considers those motions “childlike” instead of integral to understanding music.

Music and movement has been and continues to be a controversial subject within the Church. In the analysis of Liriel Domiciano’s performance at general conference, Case notes Domiciano’s movement during the performance,

The camera’s focus on her gestures—on the movements of her hands and arms, on the swaying of her head, and on the alternation of her eyes between closing and looking up (as if to heaven)—is made powerful by the sudden, devoted silence of the female singers behind her. As the multilayered shots move in some of them increasingly become a jumble of elbows, shoulders, and locks of hair as choir members become a backdrop for Liriel, but the Choir’s reverent attentiveness remains unmistakable. The female choir members’ performance of closed-mouth, arms-at-side solemnity, when juxtaposed with their soaring unison only moments before, shows their respect for both Liriel and Conference. Their solemnity also serves as a visual cue for the broadcasting audience to engage in similar reverence.⁴¹

39. “Popcorn Popping,” *Children’s Songbook*, 242, words and music by Georgia W. Bello, <https://www.lds.org/music/library/childrens-songbook/popcorn-popping?lang=eng>.

40. *Priesthood Bulletin*, Aug. 1973, 3.

41. Case, “Sounds from the Center,” 222.

It is an analysis that interprets a soloist's movements as powerful and the choir's stillness as devoted and reverent. What would a swaying choir imply? What about a choir that claps or nods in affirmation of the soloist's words? Even among Latter-day Saints in the United States this hesitation to move is noted during gospel choir tours for Latter-day Saint audiences. "Songs like 'When Jesus Says Yes' and 'He's a Battle Axe' are accompanied by swaying, clapping and stomping as the Genesis Gospel Choir makes what members call 'a joyful noise,'" writes the Associated Press in an article about the Genesis Group Choir. "Genesis Group President Don Harwell says the clapping may make some Mormons uncomfortable, but gospel music appeals to new church members from different cultures and they should be able to add their culture to the church."⁴² It is important to note that the gospel choirs are giving concerts, not integrating their music and movements into an average Sunday service. Even in the stillest of congregations, music creates movement—the opening of hymnals, the opening of mouths, the swing of the conductor's arm, and the jump of the pianist's fingers. The Church can create a teachable moment about cross-cultural movement in music through children's songs and through the children's as-of-yet loose understanding of the culturally constructed link between reverence and stillness. Instead of asking for token diverse songs that somehow unify a worldwide Church, the songbook revision committee can actively request songs that explore prescribed stomping, spontaneous clapping, reverently raised arms of affirmation, and Spirit-inspired swaying just as previous songbooks explored reverent stillness in songs such as "Reverently, Quietly," "The Chapel Doors," and "We Are Reverent."

Besides movement, synchronization is proposed to be socio-biologically universal because synchronization allows sound signals to magnify in volume and increase signal range.⁴³ While this ability

42. Associated Press, "A New Sound for Mormon Hymns."

43. Kopiez, "Making Music and Making Sense Through Music," 211.

may not be an adaptation for individuals, it benefits the society. Social cohesion requires synchronization, which can include, but does not necessarily mean, singing in unison. As music cognition researcher Nikki Moran explains,

As physical movement is increasingly recognized as central to the perspective and process of the cognition of the individual musician, there is a corollary for musical communication: from this *social* perspective, the immediacy and relevance of others' bodies in relation to oneself becomes paramount. Advocates of the enactive approach to cognition, DeJaegher and Di Paolo (2007) theorize that social interaction is driven by "participatory sense-making," the moment-by-moment processes of engagement by which two or more individuals co-construct communicative events in the world.⁴⁴

Some cultures contained within the Church are very skilled at participatory sense-making during music performances. As previously mentioned, traditions that allow for physical interpretation of music into body movements let individuals interact not only with the music and lyrics but with each other through synchronization (clapping, swaying together, etc.). There are also many cultures that use call-and-response techniques to break down the barrier between performer and audience by allowing for imitation, question/answer replies, and affirmations. Enabling less scripted, more spontaneous musical participation requires a great deal of trust in a congregation but it also builds bonds through communication. Speaking of music performance cognition, Moran explains that "the experience of live performance reveals that musicians need to be especially good at facilitating shared, social action"⁴⁵ because music is "an event of interaction."⁴⁶

44. Nikki Moran, "Music, Bodies and Relationships: An Ethnographic Contribution to Embodied Cognition Studies," *Psychology of Music* 41, no. 1 (2013): 5.

45. Moran, "Music, Bodies and Relationships," 6.

46. Moran, "Music, Bodies and Relationships," 14.

Just as singing together amplifies the decibels produced, unifying songs across generations amplifies the messages. The music of the Church, including the famed Tabernacle Choir, connects many American members with past generations—singing the songs that their ancestors sang. The songs in the previous 1989 songbook were said to “allow our children to join their voices with the voices of children of earlier times in their expression of the gospel,”⁴⁷ as described by the then-chairman of the Church Music Committee Michael Moody. Inter-generational social group cohesion has always been an expressed goal of the children’s songbooks. As is evidenced by the simple fact that the children’s songbooks are piano based, the songs unite Latter-day Saint children to past generations of mostly Western-centered Latter-day Saints. The nearly exclusive use of piano-based music in the children’s songbooks detaches non-Westernized Saint children from the rich spiritual musical heritage of their own ancestors. The challenge for the Church is to recognize that all children need to synchronize their voices and musical movements, both scripted and spontaneously negotiated, with the musicians around them but also with previous generations, regardless of their ancestral heritage.

Lastly, expectancy, or the ability to predict where a song will move harmonically, melodically, or rhythmically, is another suggested universal characteristic of music according to current research.⁴⁸ If past songbooks are an indication of the future, the fluency that will be promoted is Western-based with Western classical translations of other cultures’ musics. As an alternative, Latter-day Saints might seek to cultivate intermusicality, a term coined by Ingrid Monson. Intermusicality describes “the phenomenon by which musicians can sometimes import specific practices and nuances from one style or performance context to other styles or performance contexts. This idea lends itself

47. Cannon, “The New *Children’s Songbook*.”

48. Kopiez, “Making Music and Making Sense,” 212.

to an understanding of multiple practices and conceptions of music within an integrated experiential plane and suggests a way forward for the development of music curricula that are at once pluralistic and dialogic.”⁴⁹ Such a pluralistic musicality decenters any one musical culture as the standard or norm and explores a variety of musics. Intermusicality, as opposed to the inclusion of a few culturally diverse songs, expands what is possible for all Church members to experience musically. Intermusicality integrates instead of categorizes, weaves together instead of segregates. It fundamentally rethinks the musical experience rather than satisfying a diversity quota. John O’Flynn explores how to effectively introduce various culturally informed musics in music education. “If musicality is a flexible and inclusive term, it also needs to be considered in the singular, rather than as a set of distinct ‘musicalities,’” he writes. “It is also a conception of musicality that challenges orthodox methodologies of music education, where different styles and traditions are hierarchized and/or treated in taxonomic terms.”⁵⁰ Therefore, to achieve any sort of understanding of and predictive ability about songs from any culture, the Church should not compartmentalize “world” music but integrate non-Western and Western musics so that the borders between the two and subsequent hierarchies start to fade. Integration eliminates the tendency to treat musics of non-Western cultures as objects to be translated into more Western-palatable versions.

Conclusion

A well-developed children’s songbook has the potential to move the Latter-day Saint community one step closer to achieving social cohesion on a global scale. Music can be a language that “even children can understand”⁵¹ if the new generation of songbook compilers, song

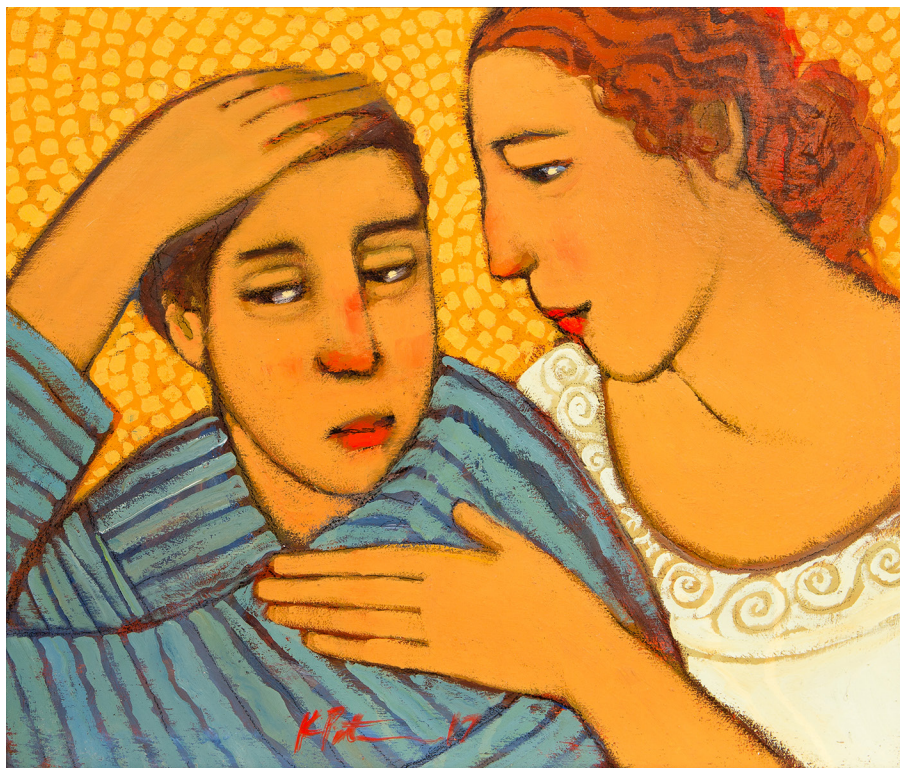
49. John O’Flynn, “Musicality in Intercultural Contexts,” 199.

50. O’Flynn, 198.

51. West, “Church Announces Plans.”

leaders, and music composers recognize that children are more than budding musicians; they are already musicians with more flexible music cognition abilities than adults. Music can help leaders teach gospel doctrines if children and adults are allowed to experience music that not only moves their souls but also their bodies. Music can unite members around the world, if Church leaders successfully dismantle the musical hierarchy that puts Western music and Western musicality in the center and relegates all other musics to an unintegrated periphery. This next iteration of the Church's children's songbook will determine if the Church moves beyond good intentions and takes innovative steps toward universal music.

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Kathleen Peterson
Comfort
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REBRANDING THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN CHINESE-SPEAKING REGIONS

Chiung Hwang Chen

During the October 2018 general conference, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints President Russell M. Nelson denounced the use of common nicknames of the Church such as Mormon and LDS, as they, in his view, offend Jesus and please Satan.¹ His pronouncement ignited the latest debate about what the Church should be called and how members should identify themselves.² Less well-known is that similar branding issues exist outside of English-speaking regions. Members in the Chinese-speaking world (mainly China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau) have dealt with their own Church branding problems for many years as well, particularly in regard to how the

1. Peggy Fletcher Stack, Scott D. Pierce, and David Noyce, “Members ‘Offend’ Jesus and Please the Devil When They Use the Term ‘Mormon,’ President Nelson Says,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Oct. 7, 2018, <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2018/10/07/members-offend-jesus>.

2. Sam Brunson, “Mormon Obedience: On Disregarding the Prophet’s Preferences,” *By Common Consent* (blog), Oct. 11, 2018, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2018/10/11/mormon-obedience-on-disregarding-the-prophets-preferences>; Jared Cook, “God’s Name is Dangerous to Hold in Your Lips,” *By Common Consent* (blog), Oct. 25, 2018, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2018/10/25/gods-name-is-dangerous-to-hold-in-your-lips>; Patrick Mason and Morgan McKeown, “The No More ‘Mormon’ ‘LDS’ Name Announcement,” Oct. 3, 2018, in *Latter-day Landscape*, podcast, <http://www.mormonismmagnified.com/2018/10/03/episode3>. (The podcast was previously named *Mormonism Magnified*, including when this episode was recorded.)

Church's name and the title of the Book of Mormon should be translated. An effort was undertaken in late 2000 to address the issue, and the Church's Chinese name was officially changed on January 12, 2001. Six and a half years later, on August 22, 2007, with a new translation of the triple combination, the title of the Book of Mormon was also changed.

This paper deals with the issue of branding and translation in the context of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Chinese regions. Some saw the original titles as roadblocks for the Church to reach millions of potential converts in China and advocated for the name changes. Others were reluctant toward the proposal, insisting on the accuracy of the original translations and fearing that the changes might undermine the Church's hard-earned, long-built reputation in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. I first provide a brief historical review of the Church's development in these Chinese areas. I then discuss the notion of branding and the intricacy of translation, especially from a phonographic language (e.g., English) to a logographic one (e.g., Chinese). The main objective of this paper is twofold: to lay out the debate and process of the name changes and to discuss the fallout and implications of the new branding. As these changes aim to make the Church more acceptable, the conclusion looks toward the future by identifying some challenges and prospects of Mormonism in China.

The LDS Church in the Chinese Region

The Church had China in mind as a mission field as early as 1849, but the plan did not materialize until a conference held in Salt Lake City in August of 1852. Twenty-eight missionaries were called thereafter to proselytize in China, Siam (Thailand), Australia, and India. Among them, four were to go to China. Due to Walter Thompson's illness, however, in the end only three—Hosea Stout, James Lewis, and Chapman

Duncan—actually arrived in Hong Kong on April 28, 1853.³ Mid-nineteenth-century China was in turmoil, facing both external foreign invasions (e.g., the Opium Wars) and internal social instability (e.g., the Taiping Rebellion). Hong Kong at that time was over a decade into British colonial rule (1841–1997) as the result of the first Opium War.

The first LDS mission in Hong Kong was very short-lived; it lasted a bit shy of two months. Missionaries left to return home on June 22, 1853, citing various obstacles. Targeting mostly Caucasians then, the three elders found most European businessmen uninterested in religion and British soldiers “immoral and corrupt.”⁴ Unfamiliar with the culture, holding racial prejudice, and unable to communicate with the local population, the missionaries were treated with suspicion, probably seen by locals as 鬼佬⁵ (“gwai louh” in the Cantonese dialect, meaning

3. For an overall historical account of the first China mission, see R. Lanier Britsch, *From the East: The History of the Latter-day Saints in Asia, 1851–1996* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 33–39; Po Nien (Felipe) Chou and Petra Mei Wah Sin Chou, *Voice of the Saints in Taiwan* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017), 4–5; Jamie Howell, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Mainland China,” in *2013 BYU Religious Education Student Symposium* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2013), available at <https://rsc-legacy.byu.edu/archived/byu-religious-education-student-symposium-2013/church-jesus-christ-latter-day-saints>; Andrew Jenson, ed., “China Mission,” in *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company, 1941), 136–37; Wayne Dunham Stout, *Hosea Stout, Utah’s Pioneer Statesman* (Salt Lake City: printed by the author, 1953), 160–84; Xi Feng, “A History of Mormon-Chinese Relations: 1849–1993” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1994), 11–39.

4. Stout, *Hosea Stout*, 178.

5. There are two main Chinese writing systems that differ for many characters but are closely related: traditional (used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau) and simplified (used in China). This paper utilizes traditional characters throughout.

“foreign devils”), like all other white invaders.⁶ A few more missionaries were also called to the China Mission in April 1853. But word of the first batch of missionaries’ intention to return had been spread before the trip; the second group thus did not even leave for Hong Kong, based on the assumption that their efforts there would be useless. In evaluating the failed initial attempt in China, historian Xi Feng laid blame mostly at the institutional level, suggesting that the Church did not provide enough support for missionaries in funds and language training.⁷

The Church did not deal with China for almost six decades afterward until it agreed to sponsor an exploratory trip in January 1910 by two missionaries, Alma O. Taylor and Frederick A. Caine, who had recently finished their missions in Japan and were on their way home, taking a route through Korea and China. Seeing political unrest still rampant, they recommended that the Church “postpone the opening of a mission in China until the present chaotic, transitory state changes sufficiently to assure the world that China really intends and wants to give her foreign friends protection and a fair chance.”⁸

A decade later President Joseph F. Smith sent David O. McKay and Hugh J. Cannon on a yearlong world trip in late 1920 to evaluate various regions for potential missionary work. They arrived in Beijing in early 1921 and immediately formed a pessimistic view regarding the prospect of reintroducing the gospel there. McKay observed:

China is a disintegrating nation. China is a mercenary nation. China is a land of beggars and parasites! China appears to be made up of not

6. For early missionaries’ experiences and racial attitudes in China see Stout, *Hosea Stout*, 170–72, 183; James Lewis, “James Lewis autobiography, circa 1896,” Church History Library, available at <https://catalog.lds.org/assets/8a12322b-6f47-4b7d-a27f-419a1led5ef6/0/0>.

7. Feng, “History of Mormon-Chinese Relations,” 28.

8. Reid L. Neilson, “Alma O. Taylor’s Fact-Finding Mission to China,” *BYU Studies* 40, no. 1 (2001): 177, 203.

a religious but a superstitious people. . . . The Chinese people cannot be successfully Christianized by the usual missionary propaganda.⁹

Nevertheless, McKay dutifully gave a dedicatory prayer to bless the land in a small grove in the Forbidden City on January 9. In it he described China as a “benighted and senile nation,” its people “bound by fetters of superstition and false doctrine.” He thus prayed for “peace and stability to be established throughout this republic, if not by the present government, then through the intervention of the allied powers of the civilized world.” McKay also asked for heavenly mercy to release Chinese people from famine, starvation, and “the darkness of the past” through “thy chosen servants . . . with Glad Tidings of Great Joy.”¹⁰

Nearly three decades later, in 1949, the Communist Party emerged victorious from China’s civil war, forcing the Nationalist government to escape to Taiwan and many refugees to Hong Kong. It is noteworthy that the Church decided to send missionaries back to Hong Kong at this juncture, in 1950, nearly a century after the initial missionary effort. Fearing Communist expansion and the Korean War, however, the Church withdrew missionaries from Hong Kong again not long afterward and did not resume the work until 1955. The next year, four missionaries were sent to Taiwan, and about ten years later the Chinese Book of Mormon was published in December 1965. The Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price were subsequently translated, in 1974 and 1976,

9. David O. McKay, diary, Jan. 10, 1921, quoted in Reid L. Neilson, “Turning the Key that Unlocked the Door: Elder David O. McKay’s 1921 Apostolic Dedication of the Chinese Realm,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 88.

10. David O. McKay, “Dedicatory Prayer of the Chinese Realm for the Preaching of the Gospel,” Jan. 9, 1921, available at <https://rsc.byu.edu/voice-saints-taiwan/appendix-2-dedicatory-prayer-chinese-realm-preaching-gospel-elder-david-o-mckay>. This version of the text is quoted in Spencer J. Palmer, *The Church Encounters Asia* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 35–37.

respectively.¹¹ The Taipei Taiwan Temple, the first LDS temple in the Chinese region, was dedicated on November 17–18, 1984 and the Hong Kong China Temple on May 26–27, 1996, before the handover of the island city back to China on July 1, 1997. The Church has experienced modest but steady growth overall in both Taiwan and Hong Kong. As of February 2020, the Church website counts 24,933 members in Hong Kong (1 in 297 people are LDS, or about 0.34% of the total population) and 61,034 in Taiwan (about 1 in 386, 0.26% of the total population).¹²

11. The Book of Mormon Chinese translation effort started in 1957 when H. Grant Heaton, the first president of the Southern Far East Mission, set up a committee in Hong Kong for the task. Unfortunately, because of time constraints, translators' lack of doctrinal foundations, and poor communication during the process, the draft released in 1959 contained many errors. The effort was terminated partially because of insufficient language proficiency of subsequent mission presidents. In 1963, Gordon B. Hinckley, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, commissioned Larry K. Browning and 胡唯一 (Hú Wéiyī in the Chinese pinyin system with diacritical marks; it is spelled Hu Wei-I in Taiwan) to translate the Book of Mormon into Chinese. The two men held different translation philosophies. While Hu insisted on literal, faithful translation, Browning emphasized literary liberties for readability. They also had different views on their responsibilities. Browning saw himself as a co-translator, but Hu saw himself as the sole translator and Browning as a manager or facilitator whose job was mainly to supply material needs to push the translation forward. Cultural differences added to the tension and miscommunication. To keep the peace, Browning withheld his suggestions and let Hu take the lead. The first translation was completed in December 1965 and presented to the First Presidency on January 29, 1966. The translation struggle over the Doctrine and Covenants resided in identity politics between Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong and Mandarin speakers in Taiwan. Each insisted on their own preferred word choice and language structure. At the end each came up with their own edition. For detailed accounts, see Britsch, *From the East*, 266–68; Chou and Chou, *Voice of the Saints*, 77–91, 164–71; Feng, "History of Mormon-Chinese Relations," 92–106.

12. For detailed accounts of Church's development in Hong Kong and Taiwan, see Britsch, *From the East*, 227–80; Chou and Chou, *Voice of the Saints*; Feng, "History of Mormon-Chinese Relations," 59–91. For statistical information, see the Church Newsroom website, <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics>.

The Church in modern China took a different path. The Communist Party proclaimed the state atheistic after its political takeover in 1949. It implemented the three-self principle—self-administration, self-support, and self-propagation—in regulating religions to prevent foreign interference. Religion was severely suppressed during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) with countless believers persecuted and places of worship destroyed. The Church saw the door begin to open after China announced establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States in late 1978. President Spencer W. Kimball anticipated the prospect of proselytizing to a billion Chinese souls and thus strongly encouraged members to learn Mandarin.¹³ In the meantime, the Church began a series of cultural exchanges in hopes of gaining a foothold there. For example, Brigham Young University performance groups started touring China in July 1979. Six children of top-ranking government officials, including the daughter of Premier 趙紫陽 (Zhào Zǐyáng), kicked off an ongoing study program at Brigham Young University–Hawai‘i and the Polynesian Cultural Center in 1980. Russell M. Nelson, then a cardiovascular surgeon, was invited to lecture on open-heart surgery and conduct operations at various medical institutions in China, including the Shandong University School of Medicine, in the early 1980s.¹⁴

These friendship-building activities led to a meeting between high-level Church authorities and Chinese government officials in January

13. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Uttermost Parts of the Earth,” *Ensign*, July 1979, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1979/07/the-uttermost-parts-of-the-earth?lang=eng>.

14. Britsch, *From the East*, 300–05; Feng, “History of Mormon-Chinese Relations,” 213–26; Tad Walch, “President Nelson Honored as ‘Old Friend’ by Chinese Doctors He Trained,” *Church News*, Nov. 3, 2015, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/president-nelson-honored-as-old-friend-by-chinese-doctors-he-trained?lang=eng>.

1989. Upon returning from China, Russell M. Nelson and Dallin H. Oaks proclaimed that “the door to China is already open”:

We were assured that the people in China or Chinese citizens who are abroad are free to join any religious denomination they choose and to practice the tenets of that religion in China without fear of repression. . . . You can be a Latter-day Saint and live in the People’s Republic of China, and you won’t be isolated from your fellow members of the Church or penalized for your beliefs.¹⁵

As a non-state-sanctioned religion, the Church, in return, promised not to disobey China’s laws through formal missionary proselytizing activities. This relationship has since become the status quo. While clarifying rumors of sending missionaries there through alternative paths, Nelson reaffirmed in 2012 that the Church will enter China “through the front door. We do not go in through the back door or via the alley. Our relationships are based on honesty, openness, integrity, and complete compliance with local law.”¹⁶ Due to political sensitivities (explained later), there are no publicly available membership statistics on China at this point. In terms of Church resources, selections of the simplified-Chinese-character Book of Mormon were published in 1983, and the full-length version was made available in 2001.¹⁷ Though not a promi-

15. “China: Two Apostles Visit, Assured that Religious Freedom Exists and People Are Free to Worship as They Choose,” *Church News*, Jan. 28, 1989, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/archives/1989-01-28/china-two-apostles-visit-assured-that-religious-freedom-exists-and-people-are-free-to-worship-as-they-choose-152054>; Dallin H. Oaks, “Getting to Know China” (devotional address, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Mar. 12, 1991), <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/dallin-h-oaks/getting-know-china/>.

16. Whitney Evans, “Elder Russell M. Nelson Urges Missionaries to Refute Rumors,” *Church News*, Dec. 31, 2012, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/elder-russell-m-nelson-urges-missionaries-to-refute-rumors?lang=eng>; Pierre Vendassi, “Mormonism and the Chinese State: Becoming an Official Church in the People’s Republic of China?,” translated by Will Thornely, *China Perspectives* 1 (2014): 43–50.

17. Christine Rappleye, “Chinese Translation of the Book of Mormon,” *Deseret News*, Feb. 25, 2012, <https://www.deseret.com/2012/2/25/20499013>

nent issue among most English-speaking Latter-day Saints, branding and translation have been key elements within the expansion of the Church into the Chinese region.

Branding and Translation

The purpose of branding is to distinguish one's own product from other similar offerings and thus to attract consumers. General rules of thumb for good brand names include simplicity, distinctiveness, meaningfulness, recognizability, and pronounceability.¹⁸ Corporations build brand images by associating themselves with positive traits and symbolism, such as sophistication, excitement, competence, progress, freedom, and so on, in order to stimulate purchases.¹⁹ Not-for-profit organizations increasingly also rely on carefully cultivated brand images to compete for donations.²⁰ Religion has a long and inseparable relationship with branding and marketing in the United States. The First Amendment of the Constitution guarantees religious freedom, precludes a state-sanctioned creed, and thus lays the foundation for the marketization

/chinese-translation-of-the-book-of-mormon#several-editions-of-the-book-of-mormon-and-triple-combination-in-chinese.

18. Kim Robertson, "Strategically Desirable Brand Name Characteristics," *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 6, no. 4 (1989): 61–71.

19. Jennifer L. Aaker, "Dimensions of Brand Personality," *Journal of Marketing Research* 34, no. 3 (Aug. 1997): 347–56; Ya-hui Wang and Cing-Fen Tsai, "The Relationship between Brand Image and Purchase Intention: Evidence from Award Winning Mutual Funds," *International Journal of Business and Finance Research* 8, no. 2 (Feb. 2014): 27–40; Hsiaoping Yeh, "Effects of ICT's Innovative Applications on Brand Image and Customer's Purchase Intention," *International Journal of Organizational Innovation* 7, no. 4 (Apr. 2015): 31–47.

20. Shiu-Li Huang and Hsiao-Hsuan Ku, "Brand Image Management for Non-profit Organizations: Exploring the Relationships between Websites, Brand Images and Donations," *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research* 17, no. 1 (Feb. 2016): 80–96; Géraldine Michel and Sophie Rieunier, "Nonprofit Brand Image and Typicality Influences on Charitable Giving," *Journal of Business Research* 65, no. 5 (May 2012): 701–07.

of faith. In order to survive in the competitive marketplace, different religions build their own brands; some even adopt business strategies to sell their versions of god, truth, and salvation.²¹ It is little wonder that many Christian ministers, or their immediate descendants, were among the pioneers in the fields of advertising, marketing, and public relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²² The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, since its birth, is no exception to the brand-building impulse. The Book of Mormon and other modern scriptures, latter-day prophets, temples, and the Word of Wisdom are some elements of the faith's branding. "The Homefront" TV commercial series in the 1970s and '80s cemented the Church's family-oriented image. The more recent "I'm a Mormon" ad campaign attempted to combat the Church's perceived "cultish" stereotype by featuring cool, likable members other people can relate to.

The issue of translation is crucial when a brand (commercial or otherwise) reaches an international market. The general debate has been over standardization versus localization. Ideally, a brand should hold a uniform, consistent image worldwide. Language barriers and unintended meanings or connotations conveyed in other cultures make this ideal difficult to achieve.²³ Local adaptation, although costly and

21. R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); John M. Giggie and Diane Winston, eds., *Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Sarah Banet-Weiser, "Branding Religion," in *Authentic: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 165–210.

22. T. J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880–1930," *Advertising & Society Review* 1, no. 1 (2000).

23. Gerard A. Athaide and Rechara R. Klink, "Creating Global Brand Names: The Use of Sound Symbolism," *Journal of Global Marketing* 25, no. 4 (2012):

sometimes deviating from the original brand image, is often unavoidable. The fabric softener Snuggle, for example, is marketed as Cajoline in France, Yumoş in Turkey, Kuschelweich in Germany, Coccolino in Italy, and Mimosin in Spain. These names are not necessarily word-for-word translations, but all convey images of softness, gentleness, and caressing that the original brand attempts to project.²⁴

When translating a brand name, marketers generally consider three methods: by sound (phonetic translation; e.g., from Audi to 奧迪 [ào dí] and Kodak to 柯達 [kē dá]),²⁵ by meaning (semantic translation; e.g., from Microsoft to 微軟 [wēi ruǎn] and Apple to 蘋果 [píng guǒ]), or by combining both (phono-semantic translation; e.g., from Goldlion to 金利來 [jīn lì lái; “gold” is semantically translated to 金, but “lion” is phonetically translated to 利來, which literally means “profit come”]).²⁶ A wild-card creative translation method can be employed when neither

203; Clement S. F. Chow, Esther P. Y. Tang, and Isabel S. F. Fu, “Global Marketers’ Dilemma: Whether to Translate the Brand Name into Local Language,” *Journal of Global Marketing* 20, no. 4 (2007): 25–38.

24. Sally Dibb, Lyndon Simkin, and Rex Yuen, “Pan-European Advertising: Think Europe—Act Local,” *International Journal of Advertising* 13, no. 2 (1994): 125–36; Jean-Noël Kapferer, *The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking*, 5th ed. (London: Kogan Page, 2012), 418–19.

25. These characters are usually artificially put together to reflect the sound of the original brand name. As a whole, however, these phrases often do not carry specific meanings of their own. The phonetic strategy is also used to emphasize a product’s foreignness and thus create an exotic feel, which is one of the attractive features of imported goods.

26. Goldlion is a Singaporean men’s apparel and accessory company. For brand translation rules to Chinese, see Shi Zhang and Bernd H. Schmitt, “Creating Local Brands in Multilingual International Markets,” *Journal of Marketing Research* 38, no. 3 (Aug. 2001): 315; Jian Sang and Grace Zhang, “Communication Across Languages and Cultures: A Perspective of Brand Name Translation from English to Chinese,” *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 18, no. 2 (2008): 229; Hongxin Zhao and Gaofeng Yu, “Translation Standards and Strategies for Trademark Names of Cosmetics,” *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 8, no. 8 (Aug. 2018): 1024–28.

sound nor meaning works (e.g., from BMW to 寶馬 [bǎo mǎ, meaning “precious horse”]).²⁷ In any case, scholars suggest that cultural factors and consumer perceptions should always be taken into account.²⁸

These simple guidelines, however, become more complicated when translating from a phonographic language, in which words are composed of sound-based letters, to a logographic one, in which words are composed of signs or characters. English is a phonographic system; each syllable has a sound but not necessarily a meaning. Chinese, on the other hand, is logographic; each character almost always carries at least one meaning, but the character itself often gives no clue as to its pronunciation. Chinese tones and homonyms (one character with multiple meanings or pronunciations, or many characters sharing one pronunciation) make the language even more intricate and difficult to translate into. Based on the pocket-size dictionary I own,²⁹ for instance, there are at least thirteen commonly used characters associated with the Mandarin sound “shī” (the first tone alone): 師 (teacher), 施 (give), 失 (lose), 濕/溼 (wet), 詩 (poem), 獅 (lion), 屍 (corpse), 虱/虱 (lice), etc. When considering the three other main tones, the total number of distinctive characters that share the “shi” sound jumps to seventy-two.³⁰ As

27. Lily C. Dong and Marilyn M. Helms, “Brand Name Translation Model: A Case Analysis of US Brands in China,” *Journal of Brand Management* 9, no. 2 (Nov. 2001): 99–115.

28. Sang and Zhang, “Communication Across Languages and Cultures,” 233; Ying Cui, “The Presentation of Brand Personality in English-Chinese Brand Name Translation,” *International Journal of Market Research* 61, no. 1 (2019): 33–49; Paul Chao and Shengdong Lin, “Translating Brand Names Effectively: Brand Attitude Reversal and Perceived Brand Name Translation Relevance in an Emerging Market,” *Journal of International Consumer Marketing* 29, no. 3 (2017): 120–34.

29. Shih-chiu Liang (梁實秋), ed., *Far East Concise Chinese-English Dictionary* (遠東袖珍字辭典), 2nd ed. (Taipei: Far East Book, 1987).

30. Mandarin Chinese has five tones (four main and one neutral), Taiwanese has seven, and Cantonese nine. Most written words, however, are shared across dialects.

a result, when translating a brand name from a phonographic language to Chinese, one has to take not only sound or meaning into account but also which character of the same or similar sound to use. For consumer goods, words with positive connotations and appropriate associations with the nature of the product are naturally preferred.

Take Coca-Cola as an example; its Chinese name is regarded as a textbook case of successful translation. When first introduced to China in 1927, as the legend goes, shopkeepers put out signs with random phonetic words such as 蝌蚪啃蠟 (“kē dǒu kěn là,” meaning “tadpoles bite the wax”) to promote the product. The official translation 可口可樂 (“kě kǒu kě lè,” meaning “delicious happiness”) was trademarked one year later.³¹ Based on principles of phonetic translation, it follows the original pronunciation very closely. More importantly, the characters evoke a strong satisfaction of the mouth (note that there are three mouths [口 “kǒu”] in the phrase) as well as the emotion of happiness (樂 “lè”). Coca-Cola paved a way for its competitor Pepsi-Cola

31. Phil Mooney, “Bite the Wax Tadpole?” Coca-Cola Company, Mar. 6, 2008. A widely cited myth attributes Coca-Cola’s Chinese translation to 蔣彝 (Jiǎng Yí), a Chinese scholar in England who answered a £350 translation call in *The Times* in the 1920s or 1930s, depending on which account you read. This story seems suspicious. For one thing, isn’t it more reasonable for the company to post the call in Chinese media than a London newspaper? There is also no proof of such an ad ever published in *The Times* during that period of time. I therefore rely on the Coke historian Phil Mooney’s account, previously available on the company’s website, which indicates that the Chinese translation was the result of a collective effort by early employees in China. For discussions of other accounts, see Shiyang Ran, “Chinese Translation of Coca Cola: Analysis and Enlightenment,” *Asian Culture and History* 2, no. 1 (Jan. 2010): 108–15; Xiao, “可口可樂中文譯名的傳說與事實” (Facts and Legends around the Chinese Translation of Coca Cola), *ShareAmerica*, July 25, 2018, <https://share.america.gov/zh-hans/facts-and-legends-around-the-chinese-translation-of-coca-cola>; 楊全紅 (Yáng, Quán Hóng), “可口可樂譯者簡考” (A Brief Study of the Coca Cola Translator), *中國讀書報* (The Chinese Reading Report), Mar. 7, 2018, 19, https://epaper.gmw.cn/zhdsb/html/2018-03/07/nw.D110000zhdsb_20180307_1-19.htm.

(百事可樂 “bǎi shì kě lè”) in Chinese markets, connotating a sense of happiness in one hundred/all things.

The translation for Revlon (露華濃 “lù huá nóng”) is also widely seen as top-notch. 露 literally means “morning dew” or “to reveal”; 華 means “magnificent,” “splendid,” or “flowery”; and 濃 “thick,” “dense,” or “full.” The ingenuity of this translation resides in more than just its proximate sound to the original pronunciation and the pleasing picture each character paints. The phrase actually comes from a famous poem 清平調 (“qīng píng diào,” which I translate as the ballad of purity and tranquility) by arguably the most talented poet in Chinese history 李白 (Lǐ Bái), describing the Tang Dynasty’s most beautiful woman 楊貴妃 (Concubine Yáng), beloved by 唐玄宗 (Emperor Xuánzōng). The name is simply perfect for a cosmetic brand.

Church Branding Issues in the Chinese Region

As mentioned earlier, the LDS Church’s Chinese name and the Book of Mormon’s Chinese title underwent a translation makeover in 2001 and 2007, respectively. So why the name changes? What was the problem with the original titles? For the Church’s name, the key issue resides in how to properly translate the phrase “Latter-day.” In English, dictionaries define that phrase as “modern,” “recent,” “current,” or “contemporary.” It refers to “a modern version of someone or something from the past.” The original Chinese translation was 末世 (mò shì). 末 (mò) literally means “end,” “final stage,” or “latter part.” 世 (shì) means “world,” “generation,” “era,” or “lifetime.” Together the phrase is often understood as “the last phase” or “the final period.” It connotes “end times” or “the end of the world” and therefore has an apocalyptic feel to it. Some say it reminds people of radical Christian groups who hold signs warning about the coming end of days on downtown street corners.

The new translation is 後期 (hòu qī). 後 (hòu) means “back,” “behind,” “after,” or “later.” 期 (qī) means “a period of time,” “phase,”

“stage,” “later times,” or “to hope.” The phrase is therefore often used for “late stage,” “later period,” or “post period.” Proponents of this new translation argue that this term reflects more closely the meaning of “Latter-day” in English, with a restorationist tilt to it. A point of comparison: the Japanese and Korean translation of “Latter-day” was 末日 (mò rì; 日 means “day,” “sun”), almost an equivalent to the original Chinese translation, if not more limiting or urgent, implying “the last day(s).” In Korea, the Church’s name changed from 말일 (末日 pronounced “mal il” in Korean) to 후기 (後期 “hu gī”) in 2006. The Church in Japan, however, has continued to use the original translation.

In the case of the Book of Mormon, the original Chinese title 摩門經 (mó mén jīng) can be considered a phono-semantic translation. The phrase 摩門 (mó mén) has no intrinsic meaning in Chinese; it is used simply for its phonetic association with “Mormon” in Mandarin. 經 (jīng) has a definite meaning, referring to “classics,” “sutra,” or “scriptures.” Together 摩門經 reads “Mormon scripture,” like Bible as 聖經 (shèng jīng), meaning “holy scripture.” Unfortunately, 摩門 not only sounds exactly the same as but also looks very similar to the different term 魔門 (mó mén, meaning “the devil’s gate/door”). It does not take much imagination for people to connect the two together, particularly in the context of religion. The term also sounds like 無/沒門 (muo meng, meaning “without/no door”) in the Taiwanese dialect.

The new 2007 translation pronounces the “r” in Mormon, which was omitted in the original translation. The new title thus becomes 摩爾門經 (mó ěr mén jīng). The “ěr” breaks up “mó” and “mén” and thus softens the “devil’s gate” implication to a degree. 爾 (ěr) literally can mean “you” or “thus,” but it is not a common word in everyday life. Instead, it is often used in translated foreign names such as 查爾斯 (chá ěr sī, for Charles) or 希爾頓 (xī ěr dùn, for Hilton).³² The inclusion of the word in a proper noun, as with the Book of Mormon,

32. Chinese, along with Korean and Japanese, does not have a distinct differentiation between the “l” and the “r” sounds.

almost always carries a sense of foreignness. The change, however, does not totally solve the problem the original name had because 爾 (ěr) sounds very much like 兒 (ér, meaning “child” or “son”) in Mandarin, with only a tone difference. The new translation merely shifts the sound from “the devil’s gate” to “the devil’s son’s gate” or “evil child’s gate.” Thus, the new translation has not made things more difficult for mockers.

Negotiating Identity Politics in Name Changes

Even with negative implications, however, most people do not hold the troublesome titles against the Church; they are mostly used within inoffensive jokes, if at all. Some people I talked to in Taiwan said that they had not even thought about the devil’s gate connection. After all, the Church has had modest success in the past half-century-plus in both Taiwan and Hong Kong using those titles. But what triggered the name changes? Who initiated the process? What did it attempt to achieve? Whose voices were present? How were different interests negotiated? Who had the final say? How was the idea communicated to Church headquarters? How has the local general membership reacted to the changes? In late 2018 and early 2019 I interviewed a few key players in both translation changes to explore these questions.

Chinese Official Name Change

The central figure is 賈居仁 (Jiǎ Jūrén a.k.a. Chia Chu-jen), whose family migrated from 安徽 (Ānhuī), China to Taiwan with the Nationalist government in 1949 when he was a teenager. He worked in Canada after college and joined the Church there. He went to graduate school in Toronto and was later called to the Toronto Ontario Stake presidency in the 1980s with a recommendation from M. Russell Ballard. In a 2008 speech at BYU–Hawai‘i, Ballard recalled that he felt inspired “by the power of God” when he first met Chia in Canada “that the Lord would open the way and that within a short season he would be transferred

to his native country, the People's Republic of China, where he would take on the great work of establishing the Church."³³ Chia's company later sent him to China, where he served the Church for thirteen years as an Area Seventy starting in 1996.

Chia's lobbying effort for name changes can be traced back to the late 1990s. His Church calling required him to be in contact with government officials, particularly those from the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA).³⁴ In 1998, he and John H. Groberg, then Asia Area President, invited several high SARA officials to tour Salt Lake City and Hawai'i. Treated as VIPs, especially at BYU–Hawai'i and the Polynesian Cultural Center, these Chinese officials were impressed with the Church. However, they were concerned about the names of the Church and the Book of Mormon. The visitors suggested that although 摩門 (mó mén) also sounded bad in Chinese, in comparison to the official name 末世 (mò shì), the Church might have better luck registering with the nickname than with the official name.

A short digression into Chinese history helps explain why Chinese officials were concerned with the name. China has experienced a long history of millenarian religious unrest, including the Yellow Turban Rebellion (184–205 CE), the Celestial Masters Uprising (or the Five Pecks of Rice, 186–216 CE), the White Lotus movements (for example, 1352–1368 CE; 1796–1804 CE), and the Taiping Revolution (1850–1864 CE). In attempting to build ideal new societies, these movements weakened or even toppled dynasties such as Han (206 BCE–220 CE), Yuan

33. M. Russell Ballard, "Toward Our Destiny" (address, Presidents' Leadership Council Hawaii meeting, Salt Lake City, Utah, Apr. 7, 2008), adaptation of remarks available at <https://speeches.byuh.edu/foundational-speech/toward-our-destiny>.

34. The office was first created in 1951 as the Religious Affairs Bureau and was dissolved and replaced under the United Front Work Department in 2018.

(1279–1368 CE), and Qing (1644–1911 CE).³⁵ Falun Gong, a contemporary qigong exercise-based quasi-religious organization, is viewed by many as operating out of this tradition. It embraces an apocalyptic end-days theory and is critical of the Chinese Communist Party. As a result, Falun Gong has been deemed an evil religion and a heresy by the government and has been subject to government crackdown since the late 1990s.³⁶ Against this backdrop, a faith attempting to enter China with a last-days, millenarian focus, such as the LDS Church, was naturally greeted with suspicion.

After the Chinese officials' visits to Salt Lake City and Hawai'i, Chia was determined to have the Church's and Book of Mormon's titles changed in Chinese. To him, these were translation errors. He felt it should be easy to persuade Church administrators to correct the translations. He consulted with Groberg not long after the trip and, to test the waters, sent letters to local Church leaders in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China (most of whom were non-Chinese at that time). To his surprise, the opposition to name changes was overwhelming, especially from Taiwan, as most believed that the original translations were inspired by God and were not human mistakes.

35. Richard Landes, "Millennialism," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, edited by James R. Lewis (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 333–58; Scott Lowe, "Chinese Millennial Movements," in *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, edited by Catherine Wessinger (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 307–23; Scott Lowe, "China and New Religious Movements," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 4, no. 2 (Apr. 2001): 213–24; David Ownby, "Chinese Millenarian Traditions: The Formative Age," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 5 (Dec. 1999): 1513–30.

36. Craig A. Burdoff, "How Falun Gong Practice Undermines Li Hongzhi's Totalistic Rhetoric," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 6, no. 2 (Apr. 2003): 332–47; David A. Palmer, "Modernity and Millennialism in China: Qigong and the Birth of Falun Gong," *Asian Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2003): 79–109.

After the initial setback, Chia turned higher up to M. Russell Ballard, with whom he had a personal relationship. But at that time, Dallin H. Oaks oversaw the translation department. Apparently, the issue had been raised before. Oaks showed Ballard and Chia previously filed proposals for name changes and suggested that Chia put the issue to rest. Chia was not deterred, however. In a July 30, 1999 letter to Neil Glad, supervisor for the Chinese translation team at the Church's translation department, he outlined a few items of mistranslations identified by a team in charge of translating the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price into simplified Chinese and proposed that the Church correct errors in the sacrament prayers and the Church's official name. His request was not answered, however.

One year later, with a reshuffling of the General Authorities' responsibilities, Ballard took over Oaks's duties, including overseeing the translation department. Chia saw an opportunity and brought up the issue again. In a follow-up letter to Glad on July 3, 2000, he urged the Church "to remove these stumbling blocks" and not "allow the same mistakes made in Taiwan and Hong Kong [to be repeated] in the Mainland of China." Chia made it clear that his name change effort aimed mainly at the Church's potential development in China. Anticipating the publication of the Chinese Book of Mormon in simplified characters, Chia reasoned that many copies could end up in China with returning Chinese converts overseas. Therefore, it was crucial for the Church to change its Chinese name before the Book of Mormon spread so that potential investigators would recognize the Church of "latter-day saints" rather than "last-day or dooms-day saints," as he phrased it.³⁷

Chia called for a meeting in late 2000 with a handful of local priesthood leaders and representatives from the Church's translation

37. The letters are in Chia's possession. He shared with me a copy of his 2000 letter, which includes a summary of his 1999 letter.

department in Taipei to discuss the name change issue. He insisted that the original translations were inadequate and explained to the group the difficulties the Church faced in China due to the negative implication of the term 末世 (mò shì) in general and its unfortunate connection with the Falun Gong movement in particular. Chia added that without a formal Church organization, Chinese members who converted to Mormonism overseas may not stay active when they returned to China. The group considered all possible Chinese terms related to “latter-day” and at the end it came down to either keeping the original translation or changing it to 後期 (hòu qí). The group took an anonymous ballot, and the result was one vote shy of being unanimous to change.

蔡琳 (Cài Lín a.k.a. Casandra Tsai), then director of the translation department in Taipei and the only woman in the meeting, confessed to the group that she was the one who voted against the proposal. While understanding Chia’s position and the potential issues in China, she had two objections to the name change, both from a linguistic perspective. First, she disagreed that the original translation was an error. To her, 末世 (mò shì) does not necessarily narrowly imply a doomsday scenario because the word 世 (shì) also refers to “generation” or “dispensation” in addition to “the world” (as in “end of the world”). The phrase should be understood as the last or latter “dispensation,” which is what “latter-day” can also mean in English. She also pointed out that the original translation of the Church’s name had the blessing of Master 林語堂 (Lín Yǔtáng), the most celebrated linguist and philosopher in Taiwan’s modern history.

Tsai’s second objection resided in the use of the phrase 後期 (hòu qí) in this specific context. It is either unclear grammatically or cannot stand independently. The term usually refers to the later stage of a time period, such as the late 1950s, or as a prefix antonymic to “pre-,” for example as in postmodern or postfeminism. Neither of these two cases work well for the Church’s name in Chinese because they indicate that the LDS Church was restored either during the latter stages of

Jesus' life or right after his death. She felt that the Church's name should not be changed in the absence of a better alternative.³⁸

Tsai said that she knew at least two other people in the meeting voted for the change simply because of their consideration of the Church's potential development in China, even though they were not entirely satisfied with the prospect of the name change. I tried to interview a couple of leaders who also attended the meeting. But being formal local Church leaders, they were tight-lipped, carefully avoiding disclosing their personal opinion or meeting details.

The meeting adjourned without a clear solution. Cree-L Kofford replaced Groberg in 1998 as the Asia Area President and confronted the name change issue head on. He started to meet with local stake and district presidents to solicit their thoughts. Tsai was appointed to translate for these meetings. Kofford also consulted with a well-regarded non-LDS professor from Taiwan for a more objective view. In the meantime, Chia Chu-jen met with David Frischknecht, director of Church's translation department, in Beijing on November 6, 2000 under the direction of Ballard. Frischknecht took Chia's suggestion back to Salt Lake City.

Two months later, a letter dated January 12, 2001 from President Boyd K. Packer was received and announced in sacrament meetings throughout Taiwan regarding the immediate change of Church's name in Chinese, replacing 末世 (mò shì) with 後期 (hòu qí). This letter

38. Tsai's point gains support from insight provided by Kim Sang-hyun (김상현), a professor in the philosophy of education at South Korea's Kyungpook National University. In discussing the new Korean translation of the Church's name, he sees the phrase 後期 (in Korean 후기, pronounced "hu gi") as grammatically modifying Jesus Christ; therefore, the new name could imply that the Church was restored during the era right after Jesus instead of in our contemporary time. However, he understands why the old name held doomsday connotations. To him personally, the new name, although not entirely accurately translated linguistically, is an improvement because it helps to reduce the burden of being seen as a church that single-mindedly proclaims the end days.

came as a surprise to most, including Kofford, according to Tsai, as he was still in the early stages of meeting local leaders in Taiwan (and presumably in Hong Kong and Macau as well). Packer's letter suggests that the decision was made "after careful consideration and review by translators, ecclesiastical reviewers, and local and General Authorities."³⁹ Chia said that in normal circumstances, recommendations usually come from the grassroots and work their way up through bureaucracy to Church headquarters (as Kofford was apparently trying to do). However, this case seems to suggest a top-down decision, affected by Chia's recommendation. Tsai said that although she held a different perspective regarding the name change, as a Church employee her duty was to obey and follow instructions.

The Book of Mormon Name Change

With one issue taken care of, Chia started to work on changing the title of the Book of Mormon. Just as with the Church's name in Chinese, problems with the negative connotation of the Book of Mormon's title had been raised before, especially by members in Hong Kong. According to Tsai and 梁世威 (Liáng Shìwēi a.k.a. Karl Liang), former manager of Taiwan's translation department, President Gordon B. Hinckley refused to change the title and instructed members "to leave it alone." However, at a different time, in a different political environment (China had become more open to the outside world), and with a boost from the Church's name changing effort, Chia thought it might be the right time to give the Book of Mormon concern another try. A meeting was convened in Hong Kong on November 16–17, 2001. Fifteen people were in attendance, including two from Church headquarters (the director of the Asian translation department, who did not speak Chinese, and an English-Chinese translator who served a mission in

39. Chou and Chou, *Voice of the Saints*, 339–40; for a scanned copy of the original letter, see http://cdn.simplesite.com/i/49/c6/286823007387043401/i286823014285869169.szw1280h1280_.jpg.

Hong Kong), three from China (Chia Chu-jen being one of them), two from Hong Kong (one being a representative in the parliament and another a well-regarded surgeon), and eight from Taiwan (Casandra Tsai and Karl Liang were among them).⁴⁰

According to Chia, the English-Chinese translator from Church headquarters spoke first and proposed to not change the Book of Mormon title; the opinions then varied. Chia was worried about being outnumbered since there were only three people from China at the meeting. He addressed those in attendance before the meeting ended and asked the group to consider the potential impact of their decisions. He said that the current title might not have a strong impact on people in Hong Kong and Taiwan since the Church had been there for quite some time. However, it would affect millions of souls in China. He emotionally appealed to the group by painting a scenario of what Chinese people would say at the Final Judgment in front of Heavenly Father, blaming the negative connotations of Church and scripture names for their inability to accept the gospel. Chia told them that they would have to bear responsibility for those millions of people's salvation.

The group dynamic and attitude appear to have shifted over the night. When the group reassembled the next day, a vote was taken on whether to change the title. They found themselves agreeing with each other, as no one opposed the change. The result led to the next question about what the new title should be. The group came up with many possibilities including one that caught many eyes: use 牧民 (mù mín) to replace 摩門 (mó mén). 牧 (mù) means "shepherd" or "to shepherd" and 民 (mín) means "people." The phrase gives a "feed my sheep" image with a positive connotation that fits the Christian context well. The only problem the participants in the meeting had was that the phrase, although close, doesn't sound exactly like "Mormon" in Mandarin, Cantonese, or Taiwanese.

40. Minutes were not taken for that meeting. The people I interviewed (Chia, Tsai, and Liang) could not recall the names of participants.

Individual prayers were suggested to seek inspiration and spiritual guidance. Chia said he had his prayer answered two or three years prior to the meeting and the answer had not changed since. When the meeting resumed, Chia said many had tears in their eyes. The result was unanimous; all agreed to Chia's idea to simply pronounce the "r" by adding the word "爾" (ěr) to the original phrase to make the title 摩爾門經 (mó ěr mén jīng).

No immediate official announcement was made regarding the Book of Mormon title change after the meeting. It was finally revealed when the retranslated triple combination was published six years later. In an August 22, 2007 letter signed by Presidents Hinckley and Monson, the First Presidency announced the newly translated scriptures. However, the letter did not mention the change of the title itself. The new title appeared quietly with the newly retranslated scriptures without fanfare or an explanation from the Church.

Sacrament prayers were also altered with the retranslated scriptures in both style and meaning. The new translation uses more vernacular wording than classical expression. By adopting the more common, everyday spoken language, the new prayers read as less poetic, rhyming, and elegant than the old ones. Literal translation is also more emphasized in the new prayers. One observation is the replacement of 上帝 (shàng dì) with 神啊 (shén a) for "Oh God" at the beginning of the prayers. Although both 上帝 and 神 mean "god," the former tends to be more specifically used for the Christian god; the latter, on the other hand, refers to god in general. The latter seems also to fit better with the expression of 啊 ("oh"), which was not included in the original translation. Another notable change is the translation of the word "always." The consistency of remembering Jesus Christ and of the Spirit's accompaniment in the old prayers were more implied than overt through the use of the phrase 確常 (確 què, meaning "definite," "certain," or "indeed"; 常 cháng, meaning "frequent" or "often"). The new prayers leave no ambiguity in the expectation of Saints' devotion through adopting the

term 一直 (yī zhí, meaning “continuously” or “always”). This change actually addresses Chia’s concern outlined in his 1999 and 2000 letters to the Church translation department, in which he suggested “always” be used instead of “often” in the sacrament prayers.

Chia also pushed for other modifications of Church terminology, ten of which were formally announced on September 16, 2010, to either comply with common language usage in China or to be more aligned with their meanings in English.⁴¹

Many of the new terms are Sinocentric, prioritizing political sensitivity and common usage in China over conventions in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. Take the translation of “clerk.” The old translation 書記 (shū jì), which literally means “bookkeeper” or “recorder”) was entirely accurate and adequate, except that it is specifically used to refer to the chief official of a branch of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Current Chinese president 習近平 (Xí Jìnpíng), for example, is also the General Secretary (總書記 zǒng shū jì) of the CCP. To avoid potential confusion in China, the title was changed to 文書 (wén shū), which is used more often for a document or Microsoft’s word processing software than a position. The term “General Authority” is very LDS-specific and a totally foreign concept to Chinese generally. There is no equivalent in Chinese; any translation, therefore, will inevitably sound awkward and distant. The original translation used six words to convey the idea: 總會當局人員 (zǒng huì dāng jú rén yuán), which indicates “people who are in charge of the general Church.” The word “authority” was not directly translated but certainly implied. To people in China, however, the translation might carry a political connotation, as the term 當局 (dāng jú) is conventionally used to refer to the Chinese government but not to other forms of authority. The new term utilizes eight words: 總會持有權柄人員 (zǒng huì chí yǒu quán bǐng

41. For the announcement in Chinese, see <http://www.ldstaiwanhistory.com/434178496>; Chou and Chou, *Voice of the Saints*, 382–83.

Table 1: Church Terminology Changes in Chinese Translation

Key Term	Old Translation	New Translation
clerk	書記 (shū jì)	文書 (wén shū)
counselor	副會長 (fù huì zhǎng) 副主教 (fù zhǔ jiào)	諮理 (zī lǐ)
family history	家譜 (jiā pǔ) 家庭歷史 (jiā tíng lì shǐ)	家譜 (jiā pǔ)
genealogy	家譜 (jiā pǔ)	族譜 (zú pǔ)
General Authority	總會當局人員 (zǒng huì dāng jú rén yuán)	總會持有權柄人員 (zǒng huì chí yǒu quán bǐng rén yuán)
member	教友 (jiào yǒu)	成員 (chéng yuán)
president (of a Young Women class)	班長 (bān zhǎng)	會長 (huì zhǎng)
Primary	兒童會 (ér tóng huì)	初級班 (chū jí bān)
release	卸免 (xiè miǎn)	卸任 (xiè rèn)
Relief Society	婦女會 (fù nǚ huì)	慈助會 (cí zhù huì)

rén yuán), which suggests “people who hold the authority in the general Church.” In this case, the word “authority” is literally translated and the political implication seems to be removed.

Some new terms reflect more literal translations. For example, the Relief Society has been changed from 婦女會 (fù nǚ huì, meaning “women’s meeting/society”) to 慈助會 (cí zhù huì, meaning “compassionate service meeting/society”) and the Primary from 兒童會 (ér tóng huì, meaning “children’s meeting/society”) to 初級班 (chū jí bān, meaning “beginning-level class”). Many I talked to have the most problem with the change of Church membership from 教友 (jiào yǒu, literally meaning “Church friends”) to 成員 (chéng yuán, meaning “members”), because the new term removes connection, friendship, and intimacy; it conveys nothing more than a membership affiliation such as in a club or at Costco. To them, the new term seems aloof and unaffectionate.

In commenting on the adjustment to news names and terminologies, Chia suggests that the short-term unease (mainly for members in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau) is necessary when considering the long-term benefit for potential converts in China. He expects that current members will soon get used to the changes and incoming members will never know the difference.

New Brand Recognition

The second aspect of this research involves the fallout and implications of the new branding. How are the new names received by the public? Have they made a difference in missionary efforts? Do people outside of the Church use the new names or do they still associate the Church with the old? To understand the impact of the rollout of the name changes, I conducted an online survey in Taiwan in late 2018 and early 2019, targeting non-Latter-day Saints to explore the brand recognition of the Church. I utilized the snowball method to recruit respondents. In the survey, aside from demographic questions, I showed a picture of two male missionaries who carry an iconic representation of the Church and asked questions based on the picture. I received 475 responses; among them nine identified themselves as Latter-day Saints. I deleted those nine responses and focused on the remaining 466. The results showed a very low brand recognition overall, which indicates that the Church is mostly unknown to the general public in Taiwan.

Figure 1 and figure 2 show that the majority (73%) of respondents recalled having seen missionaries; however, only less than half of respondents (44%) had actually talked to missionaries. When asked to identify the formal title of the Church from several choices, table 2 indicates that among the 466 respondents, only sixty-five (or 14%) were able to correctly identify the full name (either new or old) of the church that these missionaries belong to. This number does not include another eight who chose the “other” option and wrote down the nickname of the Church as the official name. Among those sixty-five people, only a

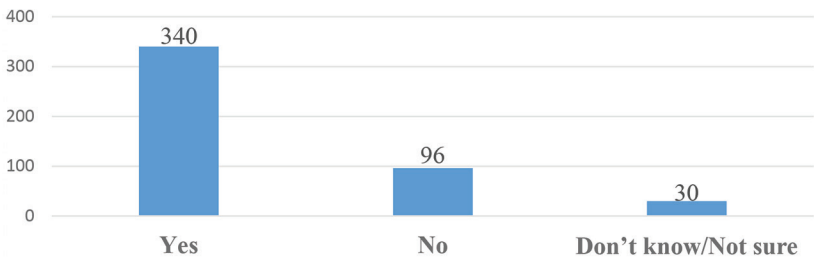


Figure 1: Have Seen Missionaries Before

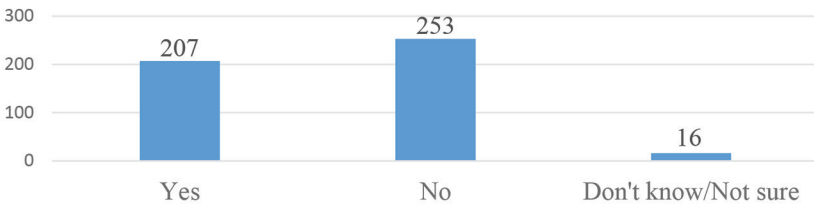


Figure 2: Have Talked to Missionaries Before

bit over half (58%) recognized the new name. The vast majority of all respondents (74%) simply chose the “don’t know/not sure” answer.

In comparison to the official name, table 3 shows that many people (38%) recognized the Church’s nickname, although the majority (62%) still had a hard time figuring which church this is. It is interesting to find that among those who knew the Church’s nickname, only seven recognized the new term 摩爾門教 (mó ěr mén jiào), while the overwhelming majority were more familiar with the old term 摩門教 (mó mén jiào). Of course, one can argue that the Church never officially changed its nickname; the name just came naturally with the title of the scripture.

Table 4 is consistent with the general pattern found in the study. It suggests that the majority (75%) of those surveyed were unable to correctly identify the main scripture for the LDS Church. Comparing this result with table 3, one wonders why many more people were able

Table 2: Official Church Name Recognition

Official name of the Church	Frequency
Don't know/Not sure	346
LDS (New)	38
LDS (Old)	27
Jehovah's Witnesses	13
True Jesus Church	12
Baptists	11
Presbyterian Church	11
Other (Mormon Church)	8
Total	466

Table 3: Nickname Recognition

Nickname of the Church	Frequency
Don't know/Not sure	277
Mormon Church (Old)	171
Presbyterian Church	25
Baptists	20
Moonies	7
Mormon Church (New)	7
American Church	3
Unification Church	2
Amish	0
Other	0
Total	466

to identify the Church's nickname but unable to name the scripture the nickname is based on. Among the 117 who recognized the title of the book, only fourteen knew the new title 摩爾門經 (mó ěr mén jīng) without prompting.

I asked respondents about their educational level and religious beliefs but did not find meaningful correlations between these two

Table 4: Major Scripture Recognition

Main scripture of this church	Frequency
Don't know/Not sure	284
Book of Mormon (Old)	103
Heaven Lord God Doctrine ^a	53
Book of Mormon (New)	14
Koran	7
Other (Bible)	3
Book of Moonies	2
Book of Zhuluo ^b	0
Total	466

a. This is a made-up title: 天主神教約 (tiān zhǔ shén jiào yuē), a rough combination of Catholicism and the Chinese abbreviation of the Doctrine and Covenants.
b. Another made-up name: 珠羅經 (zhū luó jīng); it has a Buddhist-sounding tenor.

variables and their knowledge about the LDS Church. The survey results suggest at least two things: First, the Church is still very much on the margin of Taiwanese society. As mentioned earlier, LDS membership constitutes only 0.26% of Taiwan's total population (one person in 386 is a member). The Church is not only small but almost entirely unknown there. People in Taiwan simply do not have much knowledge about the Church at all, even the most basic information. Second, the name changes seem to have had very little, if any, effect outside of the Church. Among those who know about the Church, only a handful of them are aware of the new titles, even a decade or two after the fact. The LDS Church has thus far failed to build its (re-)brand in Taiwan. I interviewed two former members of the Area Seventy, 梁世安 (Liáng Shì ān a.k.a. Kent Liang) and 楊宗廷 (Yáng Zōngtíng a.k.a. Jared Yang), about advertising efforts after the name changes. Both of them maintained that there was no specific budget allocated for public relations purposes. Liang pointed out that one thing the local Church has been

doing is establishing good relationships with government officials by meeting with some of them from time to time. He asserted that “the opinion leaders” would influence the public. While this two-step information flow can save time and money, it shows some passivity on the Church’s side. It seems to have proven ineffective thus far, perhaps because politicians have many other things to do and have no obligation to promote any particular religious group. Yang emphasized Church members’ personal responsibility to influence people around them. He suggested that members use social media and community activities to promote the Church. While this latter approach is more practical, a correlated effort is still lacking. Judging from the big budget the Church uses for public relations in the US and elsewhere (e.g., the multi-million-dollar “I’m a Mormon” campaign), some local members saw a missed opportunity for Church PR efforts in Taiwan, especially after the name changes.

Future Prospects in China

The main aim for both name changes and other terminology modifications was to help the LDS Church be acceptable in China. Yet even after the Church’s four decades of relationship building with the Chinese government and a decade or two after the name changes, the effects remain somewhat uncertain. To avoid political sensitivity, the Church withholds information regarding its development there. Pierre Vendassi, a French sociologist at the University of Bordeaux, estimated in 2014 that there were “several thousand practicing Mormons and congregations in every province.”⁴² Some Chinese members I talked to in 2019 think that the membership may have now reached ten thousand, with the bulk in major cities such as 瀋陽 (Shěnyáng), 北京 (Běijīng), 青島 (Qīngdǎo), 鄭州 (Zhèngzhōu), 上海 (Shànghǎi), 成都 (Chéngdū), 廣

42. Vendassi, “Mormonism and the Chinese State,” 47.

州 (Guǎngzhōu), and 中山 (Zhōngshān). The assessment by Matt Martinich, an independent demographer and project manager for the Cumorah Foundation, confirms the number and concentrations in an April 2020 *Salt Lake Tribune* article.⁴³

Two phenomena could, theoretically speaking, favor the Church's potential in the Chinese market. In terms of the religious landscape, after decades of religious deprivation, people are hungry for a spiritual feast. China has experienced a religious surge since the 1980s. Official Chinese statistics count 100 million religion practitioners, but other estimates put the number between 350 million and one billion.⁴⁴ The figure from the US State Department sat at 650 million in 2015.⁴⁵ Non-traditional religions such as Christianity are swelling alongside traditional ones. One estimate shows Protestants at between 93 million and 115 million with Catholics between 10 million and 12 million.⁴⁶ The field seems to be wide open for all. The cultural landscape may also put the LDS Church in an advantageous position among certain people because of its perceived Americanness. Many Chinese have a positive perception of the West, especially toward certain aspects of US culture. The Chinese saying that “the foreign moon is rounder” hints of foreign (Western) envy. Some imported products retain their original names

43. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Plans for an LDS Temple in Shanghai May Have Hit an Obstacle,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Apr. 29, 2020, <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2020/04/29/plans-an-lds-temple/>.

44. Eleanor Albert and Lindsay Maizland, “Religion in China,” Council on Foreign Relations, last updated Sept. 25, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/religion-china>.

45. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2015*, U.S. Department of State, <https://2009–2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom//index.htm>.

46. Eleanor Albert, “Christianity in China,” Council on Foreign Relations, last updated Oct. 11, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/christianity-china>.

in the Chinese market simply to sound foreign and exotic. A religion with an American brand can be an asset in some ways.

If the numbers reported by Vendassi, Chinese members I talked to, and Martinich are any guide, the growth of the LDS Church in China is rather minimal thus far in comparison to other religions. Three challenges the Church currently faces in China seem to run deeper than what name changes can cover. First is the burden of stereotypes. Even in a brand-new market, the faith still cannot escape from being seen as cult-like, as it is elsewhere. Abundant negative information online does not allow the religion to shake off its stereotypes and start anew, even with a new name. People are warned by their pastors or other Christians about the “heresy” Mormonism embraces before they have a strong grip on the belief system. A quick survey of “Mormon Church” on Baidu (百度), China’s main online search engine, yielded mostly negative information in the first five result pages. Aside from a few more neutral encyclopedia entries, most discussions center around whether the Church is a cult (an “evil religion”), its history with polygamy, and its non-Christian characteristics. Even tourism-themed websites often point out how mysterious, secret, and strange the religion is. Reviews of Mormon-related films such as *A Mormon Maid* and *Mobsters and Mormons* add to the effect.

Second, the Church’s Americanness is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, its foreignness and exoticism can attract attention and curiosity. Yet even in this case there is a problem: in reality the Church has not been able to take advantage of its Americanness. Since the Chinese government bans formal proselytizing, missionaries are not present in China. Without those young missionaries with white shirts, ties, and name tags—the icon of Americanness—visible on the streets around the country, the LDS Church seems less genuinely American and perhaps less appealing. However, on the other hand, a foreign (especially Western) religion carries imperialist baggage in China. Nineteenth-century Christian missionaries went to China with

imperialist powers and weapons that sent the Middle Kingdom into a humiliating colonial condition.⁴⁷ One of the strongest motivating ideologies within the PRC, from its origin until now, has been an effort to resist Western (especially US) imperialism. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao called Christians, among others, running dogs of Western imperialism (帝國主義走狗 *dì guó zhǔ yì zǒu gǒu*). This implied that they were lowlives utilized to the imperialists' ends. "Running dog" is often not attached to the phrase anymore, but animosity toward American imperialism and wariness of its cultural accompaniments persists. The US's recent trade war with China and American accusations blaming the Chinese regime for the COVID-19 pandemic are among recent events that have led to stronger anti-American sentiment in China. A church with distinguishing American characteristics can still provoke much distrust.

The third and the biggest challenge is political. China is officially an atheist state under the Communist regime. The government has long held an antagonistic attitude toward religion, seeing it a threat competing for people's loyalty and allegiance. It proclaims religious freedom, but spiritual activities are closely monitored. Faiths with an apocalyptic, end-days outlook, as mentioned earlier, are treated with deep suspicion, even though communism itself may be regarded as a type of millenarian utopia that hopes to build a socialist paradise.⁴⁸ The Church's name translation change may reduce the hurdle of immediate suspicion. However, it would be hard to remove or even disguise millenarian belief within Mormon theology.

47. Ka Lun Leung, "Missions, Cultural Imperialism, and the Development of the Chinese Church," in *After Imperialism: Christian Identity in China and the Global Evangelical Movement*, edited by Richard R. Cook and David W. Pao (Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2011), 23–34; Ambrose Ih-Ren Mong, *Guns and Gospel: Imperialism and Evangelism in China* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 2016), 2–3.

48. Lowe, "China and New Religious Movements," 218–21.

According to the sociologist Fenggang Yang, religious organizations in contemporary China operate roughly in one of three markets: red, black, and gray.⁴⁹ The five state-sanctioned “patriotic” religions—Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism—belong to the red market (the color of communism). Although legal, they are subject to strict regulation and expected to mingle patriotism into religious doctrines. The black market refers to the underground banned religions 邪教 (xié jiào, meaning “evil cults”), which face regular government crackdowns. The gray market includes anything in between, unregistered but tolerated spiritual practices. Technically, the LDS Church falls under the third category as it is still not registered, even twenty years after the name changes.

Chinese president Xi Jinping’s policy is moving toward a redefinition of the religious markets. Speaking at the 2016 National Religious Work Conference, he suggested that the Communist Party should take active measures

to guide religious believers to love the motherland and people, to safeguard the unity of China, to obey and serve the interests of the Chinese nation, to support the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system, and stick to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics; promote Chinese culture and integrate beliefs with Chinese culture, and contribute to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.⁵⁰

His talk has been interpreted as an attempt to close the gray market and force religions, especially foreign ones such as Christianity and Islam, to either join the red market under state control or go underground,

49. Fenggang Yang, *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 85–122.

50. Jérôme Doyon, “Actively Guiding Religion under Xi Jinping,” *Asia Dialogue*, June 21, 2018, <https://theasiadialogue.com/2018/06/21/actively-guiding-religion-under-xi-jinping/>.

becoming part of the black market with its attendant suppression.⁵¹ To survive, most Protestant denominations choose to comply, localizing their beliefs and practices under the three-self guidelines and developing a unique brand of “Christianity with Chinese characteristics.” Catholics in China, however, are more divided than Protestants due to Catholicism’s centralized structure and ties with the Vatican. Some choose red, working closely with the Chinese government; others resist in order to maintain doctrinal orthodoxy and loyalty to the Pope.⁵²

The LDS Church’s insistence on entering China through the front door is noble and respectable. Going in via the alley or the back door might have enabled the Church’s compatibility with other underground Christian denominations, but it would have damaged the trust with government officials. Being in the gray market, the Church has been able to grow, although not as rapidly as some other churches. Chia Chu-jen said that the Church in China thus far is in an ambiguous wink-and-nod situation. It is better for the Church to keep a low profile to avoid being seen by political leaders as a threat.

But what decision will the Church make if it is presented with the choice of going either red or black? Choosing red means that the Church in China will become an independent entity, cutting ties with the Church headquarters to avoid “foreign interference.” It also means that the Church there will need to not only comply with strict religious control but also likely teach Communist ideologies and become an indigenized “Mormonism with Chinese characteristics.” Choosing black means abandoning the good relationship the Church has made with the Chinese government and becoming one of the “evil cults.” I cannot imagine the Church in either of these scenarios. But how will the Church negotiate with the political establishment in China if Xi

51. June Cheng, “Sinicizing’ Religion,” *World Magazine*, Apr. 27, 2019, 42, available at https://world.wng.org/2019/04/sinicizing_religion.

52. Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (New York: Wiley, 2011), 176–79, 202–05; Leung, “Missions, Cultural Imperialism,” 30–34.

eliminates the gray market? The problem is more complicated than a simple name change can resolve. Nevertheless, the announcement of the Shanghai Temple during the April 2020 general conference, while not without obstacles,⁵³ seems to point to the Church's determination to have a presence in China for the long haul.

53. Stack, "Plans for an LDS Temple."

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Kathleen Peterson
Father and Daughter
oil on board 12"x12"

ARCHIVE OF THE COVENANT: REFLECTIONS ON MORMON INTERACTIONS WITH STATE AND BODY

Kit Hermanson

The Family Tree and Nation

“And again, let all the records be had in order, that they may be put in the archives of my holy temple, to be held in remembrance from generation to generation, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Doctrine and Covenants 127:9

Each of the following sections relates to a document that aids in the construction of the Mormon family tree: the birth certificate, the temple recommend, the marriage certificate, and the death certificate. Each of these is a document of high theological and social importance to Mormons. They are not innocent documents; they are created by institutions like the State or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and enable a variety of rituals, like the bestowing of citizenship and the priesthood. I will briefly explore how each document functions in the archive, the ramifications of those functions outside of the archive, and the inability of the archive (in theory and praxis) to encompass narratives of the human experiences it claims. Queerness may present itself in the archive as “scraps,”¹ but it also sits in the space between papers, the glitches in the data, the pew closest to the door.

1. See Robb Hernández, “Drawn from the Scraps: The Finding AIDS of Mundo Meza,” *Radical History Review* 122 (2015): 70–88.

If the archive is organized to *hide* certain bodies and actions, but not necessarily exclude them, then we can find them without having to look elsewhere. Sometimes, we might even find pieces of ourselves.

The Church has modeled itself after nation-states since its inception in the nineteenth century. Early and contemporary models of LDS authority have assumed heteropatriarchal, Western, democratic structures. Despite early communitarian efforts like polygamy and the united order, the necessity to assimilate for survival has minimized much of what made Mormonism unique and hated, socially and theologically. Communal land ownership gave way to corporatism. Polygamy to the nuclear family. Speaking in tongues to silent reverence. I don't mean to imply that the Church hasn't always been patriarchal and hierarchal (it has), only that it has conformed more and more to a specific model of hierarchy that reflects the state structure of the United States. Its biopolitical and disciplinary practices have evolved in accordance. These practices are built with the power of the archive.

I was born into this latter tradition. My grandparents are Church genealogists. Their den is our family archive and they are aging and frail *archons* standing on strength of faith and heart medication alone. For my tenth birthday, they gave me three floppy disks and an early version of the family history mapping software later popularized as Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org. My parents had left the Church several years before, but to me the floppy disks were evidence of our belonging to the Mormon faith and to God himself. My grandparents gifted me with maps, stories, charts, and moral lessons, all the details of how my ancestors' actions in the 1800s resulted in my birth on the edge of the twenty-first century. I believed in the ontological truth that, despite my breaking family and my internal struggle to believe in Heavenly Father as I was taken geographically and morally further and further from my hometown in Arizona, we were Mormon by blood. Our blood was transposed into text on my computer monitor and the words there told me I belonged.

Of course, any relationship involving blood is complicated. The Victorian milieu in which the faith is rooted required theological reconciliations with new scientific reproductive logics. Mormons self-describe as the children of Ephraim, the literal descendants of one of the lost tribes of Israel. Descendance not only justified adherence to parts of the Old Testament, like polygamy and communitarian economics, but also declarations of sovereignty against the United States government and Protestants who balked at their “peculiar” ways. The Mormon ability to trace one’s family tree to the Bible itself literalized the covenant, asserted Truth, and justified violent colonization of Native Americans.² But not all converts, particularly the theologically all-important Native American ones, could trace their ancestry to Ephraim within the historiographical structures of the Church. Blood had to be created and re-created in accordance with the proclaimed universal theology of the Book of Mormon.

The Mormon faith quite literally created its own blood. In their struggle to maintain whiteness, nineteenth-century Mormons developed the ability to speak the language of proto-eugenics in the dialect of faith; that is, how to maintain essential difference and substance-specific convenance with God while conforming to their own claims of universalism and democracy.³ In addition to the constant infusion of good (read: white) blood into the Mormon community through the labor of conversion, Mormon blood was *made* through ritual.

For those to whom the blood of Israel was not given by their parents, it was created through baptism. Joseph Smith stated that “the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually the seed of Abraham. That man that has none

2. See W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

3. See John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost.”⁴ Out with the old, in with the holy. Inter-marriage with non-Ephraimites did not endanger purity because the option of baptism made Mormon blood as universally viable as O negative. The transmutation of blood ensured that lineages went unbroken and the logic of the Book of Mormon was preserved. New branches could be continuously grafted onto the family tree.

Of course, this new plasma need only be made for those who cannot claim Ephraim through their own agency. A white person, specifically one raised in the Church, can justly *assume* a blood connection within Mormon genetic logics whereas converts of color cannot.⁵ The process of acquiring holy blood requires purging of the natal past and adopting of a new celestial pre-mortality. In this light, conversion is not only about interiorized faith, like other Protestant Christian traditions, but a new formulation of bodyhood that is inextricably connected to voluntary natal alienation and the adoption of a specific population of dead.

This is why my grandparents are genealogists. The “archive fever” experienced by Max and Maurine is a sickness of spirit, a longing for the eschaton. It is homesickness for their pre-mortal lives with Heavenly Father. As living Mormons, they have a responsibility to the dead: to provide them with the choice of exaltation only possible through baptism. The work of the family tree, in the faith, is not only to reflect on one’s righteousness as a descendent of Abraham—even if it feels like that is what they’re doing most of the time. Investigating the family tree

4. Joseph F. Smith, comp., *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1938), 150.

5. Modern “Lamanites” can also assume covenant descentance. “Lamanites” is the term used in the Book of Mormon to describe Native Americans. In short, the Lamanites and Nephites were two tribes of Native Americans, each descended from Ephraim. The Lamanites killed the Nephites and fell from God’s grace and, as such, he cursed them with dark skin.

provides the information necessary for baptisms for the dead. It is to make all aware of the possibility of their place in the family tree, if not by their own blood then by transfusion and transmutation.

The Birth Certificate and Authority

I was born in Phoenix, Arizona. My birth certificate is blue with the outline of the state faintly in the background. The floral border is interrupted in the bottom left corner for a circle containing the logo for the Arizona Department of Health Services, the keepers of the state's natal archive. The department requires that certificates list the hospitals children are born in, the time and date, their given names, the names of their parents, and their parents' birthdates. In contrast to the newer birth certificates being adopted post-June 2015, there are two slots for my parents and they are labeled "MOTHER" and "FATHER."

It seems to me that the mission of queer and transgender millennials like us is to make as much of the listed "data" on our birth certificates irrelevant as possible. It's our way of proving to ourselves that the state can't *really* know us. I, as a non-binary person, can never have my felt gendered experience reflected on paper without a change to the foundation of Arizona's stance on gender assignment. And, to be honest, I would not want the state to know, or attempt to approximate, my internal and external conceptualization of my soul and body.

The birth certificate functions as a declaration of an individual's categorical belonging with the family. This applies to both the biological family as well as the categorization of archived documents into "families." Cataloguing methods are designed to preserve lineage following heteropatriarchal logics of reproductivity, ownership, and capital.⁶ Correctly identifying biological relationship and sex is central to the identification of heirs and thus the relationship between the living and

6. Hernández, "Drawn from Scraps."

the dead. Incongruencies between one's birth certificate, license, and other documents places one at social and legal risk with the living. Each piece of identification that bears a separate name, gender marker, or photo reduces one's archived existence to "scraps": fragments of experience that are an incongruous inconvenience to the state's overarching project of population management.⁷ For example, a trans person's birth certificate, license, passport, and school ID cards might each show a moment in their process of self-development that are related only through their own retroactive narrativizing of their life and the continuity of their internal self, not through their physical bodily presentation. These documents as a collection are largely incomprehensible to a cis-heteronormative taxonomy of experience. There are obvious real-life benefits for binary trans people to change their birth certificates, even if they refuse the state's authority to define her gender or sex. Access to healthcare, licenses, adoption, and non-violent treatment by the state itself is much more easily obtained, though not guaranteed, by aligning gender presentation with archived sex. The state accommodates the transgender person in this way as a reflection of its interest in assimilation and the transgender person accommodates the state's interest in their genital/gender dynamic in the interest of self-preservation: this tension is worked out in the archive and its bureaucracy.

Of course, this job is never done. Socially constructed gender and sexual identities are phased out, continuously complicating the ability of the archive to maintain categorical continuity and cohesion and periodically demonstrating its own inherent inability to not only encompass but to even conceptualize the ephemeral queer (or genderqueer).⁸ Various states have attempted to solve this archival difficulty through

7. Hernández, "Drawn from Scraps."

8. Emily Drabinski, "Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction," *Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 83, no. 2 (Apr. 2013): 94–111.

the creation of bureaucratic processes to change the original marker (thus denying the mistake at the source) or including third-gender options.⁹ These band-aid solutions are obviously insufficient to cover the festering wound splitting the state's interest in population management and individual and communal interests in self-definition. These problems exist on their own without even beginning to broach the complex topic of genital variety and intersex conditions that largely disprove bifurcated models of sexed bodyhood.¹⁰

Regardless of these complications, the birth certificate is a key component of baptisms for the dead. Place, date, and time of birth, gender, and parents' names are necessary for everyone baptized by proxy. This information can be gathered elsewhere, but it is most conveniently located in the forms provided by, and required by, the state for each person born on its soil. This alliance with the state enables the ritual to be as prolific as it is today. However, this dependency reveals itself to be as fallible in its reliance on the information as it is coherent with Mormon conceptualizations of bodily truth. Thanks to many of the trans-normative and homonationalist projects of largely white, middle-class activists in the United States, the state archive has revealed itself to be willing to incorporate and work with certain kinds of queer and transgender people.¹¹ But while the state may be willing to accept "deviancy" in specific, otherwise conforming gendered situations, the Church is not.

In 1995, the leadership of the LDS Church published "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" in *Ensign* and *Liahona* and read it aloud on

9. Sweden is one country that has recently added a third, gender-neutral option that is assigned in case of intersex birth or upon request of the parents.

10. See Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

11. See Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

the globally televised annual general conference meeting.¹² In defense of cisheteronormative logics it unequivocally states:

All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. *Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.*¹³

This statement theologically essentialized gender to the body as signaled by sex.¹⁴ The assumption of sex as gender, already taken for granted in discourses of the state and the Church, was sanctified. The proclamation goes on: “We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, *lawfully* wedded as husband and wife.”¹⁵ And later that: “Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, . . . observe the commandments of God, and be *law-abiding citizens* wherever they live.”¹⁶ The proclamation rhetorically connects religious and civic duty. If one of the responsibilities of essentially gendered souls/bodies is “lawful” marriage, then the Church relies on

12. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129, available at <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world?lang=eng>.

13. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (emphasis mine).

14. It is important to note here that it is assumed based on the binary sexing system that intersex bodies are entirely disregarded or assumed to be “corrected” into one of the two gendered categories. In 1995, medical and popular understandings of intersexuality were limited, however this situation has changed drastically since without a reflecting statement or any guidance from the Church.

15. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” emphasis added.

16. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” emphasis added.

the state to provide mechanisms with which to manifest each person's "divine nature and destiny."

As such, the state determines which life-path each Mormon child will take at birth. The Church relies on the state to reconcile the sex/gender relationship and adheres to that decision as a matter of theological principle. Deviations from gendered predestinations are explained through individual accountabilities to God's plan rather than as a problem of the limitation of the archive's ability to encapsulate the full range of gender and sexual experience. Divinely/legally inspired marriages also require divinely/legally inspired gender role affiliation in their children. The LDS Church's self-published *A Parent's Guide* states:

Gender identity involves an understanding and accepting of one's own gender, with little reference to others; one's gender roles usually focus upon the social interaction associated with being male or female. Parents can help children to establish during these years a good foundation for later intimacy by helping them understand true principles about how a son or daughter of God should relate to others in his or her gender roles.¹⁷

Parenting children to adhere to their gender roles relies on the determination of the state as catalogued in the archive, as well. This paragraph also reveals the circumvention of the body that the essentialization of gender to the soul allows. Gender identity becomes about "understanding and accepting of one's own gender" (gender here meaning biological sex) as assigned by the state. The Church trusts in the state specialist and archives to reveal the correct gender of each child and borrows the state's archival authority to reinforce its theological claims. As Judith Butler states, "There is no reference to a pure body which is not at the

17. *A Parent's Guide* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), available at <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/a-parents-guide?lang=eng>.

same time a further formation of that body.”¹⁸ This is especially true for restatements of state-sponsored biological truths. The state’s revealed gender becomes the yardstick by which each person’s moral virtue is measured as well as the justification for biopolitical discipline enacted upon children’s bodies for the sake of later heterosexual reproduction and celestial exaltation. Additionally, the Proclamation makes the state a necessary mechanism for revealing vital characteristics of a person’s soul.

The recent shifts in state policies discussed above indicate an increasing tendency to regard gender markers as symbolic rather than as literal, a view that is incompatible with the relationship the Church has developed with the authority of the archive. Symbols, as Talal Asad discusses, call for interpretations, which are multiple in nature as criteria for their interpretation is socially expanded.¹⁹ Interpretations of the gender marker as “symbol” can be equated to gender performance, e.g., my birth certificate loudly declares “FEMALE” but my baggy pants, compression bra, lack of makeup, disposition, and my fingers intertwined with those of a woman make old ladies do a double take at the “WOMEN” sign on the restroom door when I walk in. This is the cis-normative logic through which many activists and the state justify the ability to change the symbol when the interpretation of gender in performance does not meet any credible criteria for the symbol or better aligns with the opposing one.

For Mormons, however, the gender marker indicates proper forms of disciplinary practice that are not as open to interpretation. There is a specific “way” in which to properly inhabit a gendered body and to parent one’s children to become properly gendered people.

18. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 10.

19. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 79.

“Disciplinary practices,” Asad states, “cannot be varied so easily [as symbols], because learning to develop moral capabilities is not the same as learning to invent representations.”²⁰ Gender performance among Mormon people obviously varies, but gender variety is less accessible because of the threat of social repercussions that are directly tied to the theological connection between gender, soul, and sex. Parental and ecclesiastic disciplining in accordance with documented gender creates the very capacity for correct gender identification. The birth certificate is not up for interpretation or for revision. Rather, the Church draws on the legal authority of the state archive to indicate the ways in which one *should* exercise their God-given agency.

The Temple Recommend and Agency

The temple recommend is a formal document given by a local bishop or other male lay leader that indicates one’s worthiness to enter a temple. It is invariable proof of the piety and bodily purity that is required to take part in temple work such as celestial marriages, family sealings, and baptisms for the dead. Certain acts taken upon and by the body violate this purity permanently while others require waiting periods and proof of penance. Most permanent offenses are those that relate to gendered “violations” of the body that conflict with the requirements set forth by the birth certificate.

Handbook 1 is the official guide for local bishops on the management of their congregations.²¹ There is no formal ecclesiastic training in the Church, but it does provide a copious amount of literature on how to handle certain situations from budgeting to apostasy. *Handbook 1* specifically outlines the moral requirements for entering a temple.

20. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 79.

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

It is in the temple recommend that the Church shifts its focus away from the state archive and toward its internal archive. Stake presidents and bishops have access to files on members that record their tithings, Church involvement and responsibilities, baptisms, marriages, sealings, etc. These are no more outstanding than those kept by other Christian denominations with centralized organization like Catholics or Episcopalians. However, the details in these files and their interpretation by the bishop control access to the rituals that determine one's validity for exaltation after death. *Handbook 1* and Church policy situate stake presidents and bishops as literal *archons* of their local archives. In addition to acting as "presiding high priest," "he oversees records, finances, and properties."²² One of the duties interwoven between the responsibilities of high priest and record-keeper is to control access to the archive as well as its ritual use.

In the foundational text *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida gives an embellished, haunting image of the *archons*:

The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect speak the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this *speaking the law*, they needed at once a guardian and a localization. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could do neither without substrate nor without residence.²³

I'll admit that even as I construct the image of a local bishop as the Mormon *archon* it is difficult for me to imagine the pudgy, middle-aged Elder Johnson as a mythic Greek angel with glorious wings and

22. *Handbook 1*, 1.3–6.

23. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2.

omnipotent power over treasured information. However, seeming innocuousness is one of the key ways in which hierarchical power operates. What is at stake here, as Derrida states, “is nothing less than the *future*.”²⁴

Temple work, including sealings and marriage, but most pertinently baptisms for the dead, is necessary for the exaltation of the soul to the highest realms of heaven and the achievement of godhood. In addition to the literal, physical gathering of Zion as required by the tenth article of faith,²⁵ souls are gathered through rituals that seal heteronormative family units for time and eternity. Although in Mormon cosmology souls preexist their mortal containers, the mortal world is where humans forge the bonds that God the Father desires they preserve for all time. Only in the temple can these sacraments be achieved; only the bishop can give you access to the temple.

As I said before, certain serious transgression can temporarily or permanently disallow one from entering the temple. In these situations, it is up to the discretion of the bishop/archon as to whether the person has adequately repented. Serious transgressions, defined as “deliberate or major offense[s] against morality” include murder, rape, abuse, adultery, “homosexual relations (especially sexual cohabitation),” and various forms of theft.²⁶ Additionally listed, each with their own separate paragraph for expansion, are abortion and “transsexual operations.”²⁷

On the topic of “transsexual operations,” *Handbook 1* specifically advises that “Church leaders counsel against elective transsexual operations. If a member is contemplating such an operation, a presiding

24. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 14.

25. Articles of Faith 1:10.

26. *Handbook 1*, 4.5.2.1.

27. *Handbook 1*, 4.5.2.1

officer informs him of this counsel and advises him that the operation may be cause for formal Church discipline.”²⁸ Furthermore, “A member who has undergone an elective transsexual operation may not receive a temple recommend.”²⁹ Rhetorically, two interesting things happen here: 1) the hypothetical “transsexual” in question is already assumed to be a “him,” ostensibly referring to a transgender woman, and 2) like the Church’s stance on homosexuality, it is not the *thoughts* of gendered difference that make one unworthy to enter the house of God, but the physical actualization of those thoughts on the body, in this case through the specific act of surgical cutting. The controversial trans theorist Jay Prosser emphasizes this moment of cisnormative thinking in his book *Second Skins*: “More than the potentially dramatic somatic effects of the long-term hormone therapy that necessarily precedes it, sex reassignment surgery is considered the hinge upon which the transsexual’s ‘transsex’ turns: the magical moment of ‘sex change.’”³⁰ The pre-operative or non-operative binary transgender person, much less the genderqueer or gender deviant, has not seriously transgressed. They may even be worthy of temple admittance if they do not “elect” to change the genital aesthetics that inspired the state’s original sex categorization—that is, to challenge the authority of the archive, and by extension the Church and God himself.

Ironically, the system set forth by the Church could, on paper, admit me and several of my friends into the temple. Despite years of hormone therapy and even more years disregarding hegemonic standards of gendered and sexual behavior, if they have not undergone operative changes to the surface of their body, they technically don’t qualify as transgender. In a certain Mormon imagining, I have been in

28. *Handbook 1*, 4.5.2.1

29. *Handbook 1*, 4.5.2.1.

30. Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 63.

a committed, heterosexual relationship with a man, even though she was a transwoman. I am sure my family found this comforting. However, when my older cousin was married, I stood outside the temple with the youngest children and the more distant friends and waited for the newly celestially sealed couple to emerge. My partner chose not to come because she would have had to conform to masculine standards for the ordeal just as I had to shave my legs and don a pink dress for the first time in a decade, *acting* through a femininity that was not my own.

After the temple ceremony, my younger cousin drove us to the reception in my grandfather's ancient Cadillac. The windows on the Cadillac didn't roll down and the air conditioning was broken. The scene was as stereotypical of Arizona as the fact that the reception took place on a local, Mormon-owned farm. The highlight of the night was a fat pink pig that ran through the middle of the outdoor dance floor. Two children and the owner of the farm chased it, apologizing loudly and making more of a scene than necessary. Soon after, I sat at the head table with the other bridesmaids who, though unrelated, knew the bride better than I ever will. My uncle gave a speech. He waxed romantically about the righteousness of a temple wedding, the strength of faith that it takes in the face of an increasingly secular society to remain celibate before marriage. Typical of his personality, the metaphor was financial: marriage is an investment you bank with God himself. "Living with your loved one before marriage," he concluded, "is like shoplifting from God." My grandmother caught my eye and sighed sadly. After dinner was served, she encouraged me to rethink my cohabitation with my then-partner and return to the Church.

Reflecting on this incredibly uncomfortable experience demonstrated to me that the theological implications of gendered Mormon worthiness go beyond identity politics. Deviation from the destiny laid out for me by the state's gender assignment is, theologically, a result of my own God-granted agency. Performance of sex/gender, body/soul

congruency is a method of becoming closer to God himself, a vital part of Mormon subject formation. Demonstrating pious gender/soul/sex/body congruency is not about simple identification, as in humanist discourses of gender. Rather, it more closely follows the model of agency discussed by Saba Mahmood in *Politics of Piety*; the moral disciplining of the Mormon body creates the piety, worthiness, and pleasure in conforming to the gender roles, not the other way around.³¹

In the logic of Mormon theology, an internal lack of faith is in part a result of the mismanagement of my mortal embodiment. Part of the reason that the “born this way” language of the marriage equality movement has had so little effect on the Mormon population compared to others is that it directly contradicts very recent and revered theological claims. Any deviation from assigned gender performance cannot be based on an internal sense of self because the soul, the interior of all interiors, is gendered before birth. The physical body simply forms in accordance. Therefore, gendered “maiming” of the body, through medical procedures like abortion or gender-affirming surgery, is so polluting of its purity that it directly betrays the internally and eternally gendered soul. Such pollution can only result in the denial of a temple recommend. Jasbir Puar might argue that in these forms of religious regulation, the Church is enacting control as well as discipline because “while discipline works at the level of identity, control works at the level of affective intensification.”³² While the Church would discourage my identification as “queer” because it buys into a secular rhetoric of sexual orientation and desire, the true problem is the misuse of my bodily capacity and agency. As Church leader Dallin H. Oaks has stated, homosexual relations are “a confusion of what it means to be male or

31. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

32. Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017), 122.

female.”³³ In discouraging identification with the Other through the language produced by the queer community *and* forbidding physical enactment of sinful internal desires, the Church seesaws between discipline and control, identity and affect, public declarations of self and private desires.

The Marriage Certificate and Periodization

When historians speak of the non-normative Mormon past, they often use the term “peculiar.” The epithet was a popular way to signal the oddity, even the spectacle, that Mormonism posed to the mainstream Protestant American East in the nineteenth century. In his famous book *The Angel and the Beehive*, Armand Mauss proposes that Church history can be described in periods of assimilation—changes to more resemble other American Christians— and retrenchment—self-described opposition to Protestant and secular American values.³⁴ This ebb and flow of reliance on and opposition to norms reflects external pressures, usually from the state, for the Church to conform to American hegemony. Mormons have taken up a difficult historical position: simultaneously being white and struggling for whiteness; being actively pushed out of Missouri and then pushing Native Americans out of what is now Utah; striving for both mainstream acceptance and religious particularism.³⁵ In the late nineteenth century, the conflict between Mormons and other white Americans culminated in an ultimatum posed by the

33. Dallin H. Oaks, “Same-Gender Attraction,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1995, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1995/10/same-gender-attraction?lang=eng>.

34. Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

35. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*.

government: stop practicing polygamy or leave.³⁶ Many, including members of my family, fled to Mexico when the Church leadership issued a statement declaring that polygamous unions were no longer compatible with the faith.³⁷

The history of polygamy was largely covered up by Church historians between its denouncement in the 1890s and Leonard J. Arrington's term as Church Historian in the 1970s. He is often recognized as the first person to "open up" the Church archives to non-members and to release more sensitive information regarding the history of prominent figures like Joseph Smith.³⁸ Today, some of the archives are also digitized; the Church curates the Joseph Smith Papers, where one can find documents relating to the early history of the Church. Some information on your (the reader's) family members, Mormon or not, can be found on the Church-members-only FamilySearch.org or its more popular, "secular" cognate, Ancestry.com. While not owned by the Church directly, Ancestry.com is owned and operated by Mormons who became invested in genealogy through their faith.³⁹ The site allows users to create profiles for deceased relatives and find, label, or upload their own documents that prove relationships between the dead.

Each profile, however, only allows one spouse per person. Ironically, figures like my great-great-great-grandfather have multiple profiles, one for each spouse. Some contain all available information

36. For information on this process, see the *Reynolds v. United States* Supreme Court case of 1879.

37. Wilford Woodruff, "Official Declaration 1," *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979 edition), 291.

38. The impact of Leonard J. Arrington and his fall from the graces of Church leadership is described in various essays appearing in *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History*, edited by George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

39. Wikipedia, s.v. "Ancestry.com," last modified Oct. 9, 2020, 20:11, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancestry.com>.

about him on the website, and some do not. The problem of polygamy (or of monogamy, depending on how you look at it) pervades the site's cataloguing system. The inability of the Church to either hide or reconcile its own past is evident in this discrepancy. As a result, the lives of some of the most important and influential early members⁴⁰ are distorted and misrepresented. The heteronormativity that the Church today so desperately clings to in its mission to both be accepted by outsiders and bring outsiders in skews its ability to catalogue its own peculiarity. This crisis in the catalogue is like the one posed by the ever-changing standards and practices of gender and sexuality that make cataloguing and finding queer experience so difficult.⁴¹ It's clear here that the organization of the archive itself is political: if Mormons were to design a user interface that allows more than one spouse, they would reignite the spectacle, or for some even confirm the suspicion, that they still believe in and practice polygamy. Instead, the spouse for which there was a legal marriage certificate is featured on the profile. Spiritual marriages with no proper legal documentation are disregarded.

There is no solution for this problem in terms of Ancestry.com that does not expose the website's affiliation with the faith, risking its profit and user rates in the process. However, Church officials and members find comfort in the largely accepted historical divisions between the "early" Church and the "modern" Church. Mormonism is centered on the claim of ongoing revelation. Beginning with Joseph Smith, the mantle of First President has been passed down with all theocratic authority over the Church. It is similar to the power of the pope: not

40. Polygamy was a financial difficulty and thus only a certain few men were able to provide for multiple wives. Polygamous marriage was also considered to be a sort of "special calling" that some men were especially instructed to pursue as part of their religious duty to God.

41. Drabinski. "Queering the Catalog."

entirely unchecked (quorums of apostles also contribute to theological, political, and official positioning), but incredibly effective. Their claims to sovereignty simultaneously rest on liberal humanist discourse embedded within the teachings and culture of Mormonism as well as in the careful periodization between Mormons who were “peculiar” and Mormons who are almost unbearably *normal*.

Mormon leadership’s claim to sovereignty lies in this historically insufficient and politically intentional archival organization. Kathleen Davis argues that modern claims to statehood are based in logics of juridical precedent in which the details that affirm historical presence and ownership are acknowledged while details of transhistorical difference between the past nation and present nation-state are grounded in a carefully constructed division.⁴² This division, in her study, marks the difference between the “medieval” and the “modern” in categorizations and interpretations of English literature for British national interests. In the case of the Mormons, however, demarcating the “early” Church from today’s Church separates the faith from the racialized and politicized practice of polygamy that historically barred access to whiteness and normative sociality, according to scholars of race and Mormonism like Max Perry Mueller and W. Paul Reeve.⁴³ The Church’s periodization takes President Wilford Woodruff’s declaration against polygamy as its turning point. Rhetorically, the 1890 Manifesto, and the loss of one of the key tenets of the faith, marks an early commitment

42. Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

43. For recent scholarship on the racialization of early Mormons, see Reeve’s *Religion of a Different Color*, Max Perry Mueller’s *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), and Peter Coviello’s *Make Yourselves Gods: Mormons and the Unfinished Business of American Secularism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

to assimilation and the entrance into the privileges of nineteenth-century whiteness that had eluded the faith community since before Missouri.⁴⁴

There's a nebulous community of people in the United States that I lovingly refer to as the Bitter Ex-Mormons. Many of them (us) are academics, punks, activists, queers. Whether our difference from our families is innate, manifesting from the inside out, or our own agential misgivings, failing to internalize exterior discipline and control, most of us consider ourselves traumatized or disgraced by the Church. Many us no longer identify as "faithful" or "practicing" Mormons, but as "ethnically" or "culturally" Mormon.⁴⁵ Mormons and non-Mormons outside the community tend to take this phrasing offensively; after all, it's understood that there is *no one* whiter than Mormons, and "ethnic" is often perceived as coded language for "brown." Non-Mormons think that by using this term we're playing into the Mormon claims to victimization, appropriating the aesthetics and pathos of histories of ethnic cleansing and racial discrimination. These non-Mormons tend to associate Mormon history with polygamy, which is more easily imagined as a story of Mormon patriarchal violence against women than as a story of state violence against Mormons, or even as part of the history of the creation of a racially coded Mormon culture.

Polygamy is still the fascination of historians and feminist theorists of Mormonism today. Often, the field recreates the centuries-old question of "was polygamy good for Mormon women?" Reading through this literature, from the 1800s polemics like Metta Victor's *Mormon Wives*, which calls polygamy "a thing more loathsome and poisonous

44. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 186.

45. Devan Mark Hite, "The 'Queer' God(s) of Mormonism: Considering an Inclusive, Post-Heteronormative LGBTQI Hermeneutics," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 64, nos. 2–3 (2013): 52–65.

to social and political purity”⁴⁶ than slavery, to *Salt Lake Tribune* articles that vehemently deny or affirm *just how many* wives Joseph Smith sealed himself to before his death, can become tiresome. The history of Mormon sexual deviance (it was, in fact, so deviant as to “require” government intervention and the incarceration of practitioners in Utah) presents a specific kind of pleasure to a Bitter Ex-Mormon like me; the ability to cross-identify with my own ancestors is the only chance I feel I have left to identify at all with my biological family, to reclaim Mormonism for myself on my own terms.⁴⁷

The first Mormon in my family, Parley P. Pratt, was a famous early apostle. He wrote several hymns and the famous *A Voice of Warning*, was an excellent missionary, and even ran a newspaper in New York City in the mid-1800s called *The Prophet*.⁴⁸ I got a job at the Brooklyn Historical Society shortly after moving to New York. Their archive and library consist only of Brooklyn history, including a prominent genealogy section. Out of sheer habit, I checked the P’s for any record of my line. I audibly yelped when I found a manila folder labeled “Parley Parker Pratt” on the bookshelf. I opened it and carefully slid the only item, an actively disintegrating, small blue book, onto a nearby table. This first edition copy of *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* is older than the building that houses it. I go back to visit it occasionally when I’m homesick; I must admit that’s not very often.

There’s a special joy in my family’s legacy crumbling in my fingers, a perverse pleasure I take in watching the memory of the man who I learned to respect highly as a child sit idle and unnoticed on a shelf next

46. Metta Victoria Fuller Victor, *Mormon Wives: A Narrative of Facts Stranger than Fiction* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1856).

47. The concept of “cross-identify” I take from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer and Now,” in *Tendencies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 1–20.

48. The title page of the primary source is missing, so here I refer to the republication information: Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1874).

to the Pratt family that *really* matters in New York. Carolyn Steedman in *Dust* states that “there is a particular pleasure in willfully asserting of a text so intimately connected by its authorship to the practice of deconstruction.”⁴⁹ In this case, I find pleasure in the intimacy of the life and death in that book; it is literally deconstructing itself before my eyes, a process I encourage every time I lay the oils of my queer fingers on its pages, even as I find new ways to bind my own narrative to the one it houses on the bottom shelf of the genealogical section.

It was this draw of the archive that first inspired my interest in genealogy when I was a child, the reason I was gifted floppy disks of dead peoples’ personal information while my cousins received gift cards to the mall. Today, I love to declare to my friends, “I’m a better Mormon than anyone else in my family.” It’s a joke, mostly, because by today’s standards, I’m a horrible, awful, unworthy Mormon. But in the archive, I found the connective tissue between my life and the lives of my ancestors and began, unwittingly, to identify with them in new, more peculiar ways than I ever imagined possible as a child.

Most notably, about five or six years ago I became interested in the women in my lineage who were in polygamist marriages. When I came out as queer in my first year of college, I also started practicing polyamory. This more recently developed attack against monogamy is usually cited as specifically juxtaposed to the heteronormative institution of marriage, but I was inspired to “convert” to it because of the autobiography of my great-great-grandmother Bertha Wilcken Pratt.⁵⁰ After an abusive monogamous marriage to a man in Salt Lake City, she was granted divorce by the Church and moved to Chihuahua, Mexico to marry her sister’s husband, Helaman Pratt. In the account of her life

49. Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 10.

50. Bertha Wilcken Pratt, “Bertha Wilcken Pratt,” Jared Pratt Family Association, http://jared.pratt-family.org/parley_family_histories/bertha-wilcken-autobiography.html.

she wrote shortly before her death in 1947, she said, “Now began a great contrast between this marriage and that other one. I have been recognized, respected, loved, and esteemed as much as any wife could desire without infringing upon the rights of others.”⁵¹ Before I read this, it had not occurred to me that being loved could infringe on anyone else. Since then, it is all I think about when I talk to my partners or anyone else that I or they become involved with. There is something I find conceptually queer in considering love, like the Foucauldian concept of power, as something that exists in a dynamic between entities rather than as something one can simply have, give, or take away. In a way, it is a more significant formation of love because a dynamic is something you must continuously choose to maintain and nourish rather than relying on stagnant incarnations of past selves’ desires. Polygamy and polyamory force us to ask ourselves: do we want love to be an object?

In all reality, Bertha Wilcken Pratt would think me a sinful and disturbed woman—a woman, specifically, even though I haven’t thought of myself as such in years. I have no delusions about the relationship between me, as a living polyamorous queer partner, and her, a deceased heterosexual polygamist wife. I allow myself to be enchanted by this trace of a familial connection between us and extrapolate that trace to a political stance because, as Zeb Tortorici says, “that process of extraction [of queerness from the archives] is more effective if we understand all that we seek through them, and all that we are never quite able to locate, uncover, or grasp within the archives themselves.”⁵² I knew going into her story that I was looking for family. I may never be able to find a “real queer” in my family archive because the Mormon archive is built on the heterosexual logics of reproduction as resembled by the

51. Wilcken Pratt, “Bertha Wilcken Pratt.”

52. Zeb Tortorici, “Archival Seduction: Indexical Absences and Historiographical Ghosts,” *Archive Journal* 5 (Nov. 2015), <http://www.archivejournal.net/essays/archival-seduction/>.

family tree itself. This archival structure forbids any affirmation that my experience of my gendered sexual body is comparable to those of my ancestors. However, when I take into account that family history archives are mutually constituted by Mormon theological and state legal conceptualizations of how humans *should* relate to one another (and themselves) and not necessarily how they *did*, I open the possibility for myself to reclaim pieces of the past that the Church itself has surrendered in its own mission of self-preservation.

My joke-not-joke that I am the best Mormon in my family is not appreciated by my cousins or grandparents. Unlike my family, I have not abandoned the communitarian economics, non-monogamy, or vegetarianism that were so important to nineteenth-century Mormons. Sodomy aside, my lifestyle is arguably more “correct” than the socially isolated capitalist, monogamous, middle-class lives of my cousins when compared to those of our common ancestors like Bertha. Neither my family, nor the modern Church, can get out of the archive what I as a queer person can. In fact, they go to great lengths to cover up the same past I revel in.

The Death Certificate and Consent

“Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple . . . a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptation.”

Doctrine and Covenants 128:22–24

Baptisms for the dead, like polygamy, are Mormon practices that are rooted in the often-unused parts of the New Testament, what we might call a highly curated archive. Early Church leaders like Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery led the Church in the revival of these practices as part of the larger return to a select covenant with God. While speaking of the logics of physical resurrection, Paul asks, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they

then baptized for the dead?”⁵³ In section 127 of Joseph Smith’s *Doctrine and Covenants*, where the ritual is most discussed, he places emphasis on the importance of record-keeping: “When any of you are baptized for your dead, let there be a recorder, and let him be eye-witness of your baptisms; let him hear with his ears, that he may testify of a truth, saith the Lord.”⁵⁴ In the cases of the birth certificate, the temple recommend, and the marriage certificate, the power of the state archive is drawn upon to supplement the power of the Church itself. The records of baptisms for the dead, however, institutionalize a separate archive. This archive is carefully guarded from secular intrusion by being created and stored in the temple itself.

Organizing and performing ordinances for the dead still rely on the outside archives, however. For baptisms or sealings of the family to be done, state-archived information like birthplace, death place, dates, parents’ names, names of spouses, and dates of marriage are necessary. The state information is drawn upon and, through ritual, transformed into another, more sacred archive. This archive deals in the dead exclusively. In a much more literal way than Achille Mbembe intended, these rituals “keep the dead from stirring up trouble” in the present.⁵⁵ A posthumous baptism does not automatically convert a deceased person to Mormonism. Rather, the theology states that it gives their post-mortal soul the opportunity for conversion in the afterlife. Eternity, through the archive and its uses, is collapsed onto the present. The dead retain their ability to consent, make decisions, and relieve their spirit even after death.

Surprisingly, baptisms for the dead cause relatively little legal trouble for the Church. It’s difficult to imagine that the state, which so

53. 1 Corinthians 15:29.

54. *Doctrine and Covenants* 127:6.

55. Achille Mbembe, “The Power of the Archive and its Limits,” in *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by Carolyn Hamilton, et al. (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 24.

carefully presents itself the ultimate life-binding force, would meddle in the politics of dead people that the state itself did not kill. This sacred archive is part of the larger project of preparing for the eschaton. “Early” Mormons were millenarians to the core, helping along the coming of the rapture through conversion and the literal gathering of Zion. Baptisms for the dead are a continued part of this project, a solution for the Church’s inability to convert all of the living. A posthumously baptized person can accept or reject the offer of salvation, but they cannot accept or reject their presence in the archive. They are necessarily implicit in the always-already political, sacred, or secular organization the state, the Church, or the lay archivist subjects them to.

Luckily for the Church and the state, it seems that most people are not interested in excusing themselves from inclusion. The intense interest in genealogy that has made its way to mainstream American culture reveals that people are increasingly interested in “where they’re from.”⁵⁶ Queer negativity theorists like Lee Edelman would argue that this information does nothing more than play into heteronormative logics of reproductivity and “legacy” and distract from contemporary political concerns by rooting them in historical violence and nostalgia.⁵⁷ But it is unlikely that queer theory will detract from the spectacle of death or the greater and more violent spectacle of heterosexuality.

Mormon baptisms for the dead are one of the more eyebrow-raising contemporary practices to the American public. Particularly, my fellow leftists scoff at what seems like an overindulgence of ancestral white pridefulness. At the same time, we read Marx and talk about him as if we had coffee with him last week. We speculate as to what Audre Lorde,

56. Samuel M. Otterstrom, “Genealogy as Religious Ritual: The Doctrine and Practice of Family History in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” in *Geography and Genealogy: Locating Personal Pasts*, edited by Dallen J. Timothy and Jeanne Kay Guelke (New York: Routledge, 2008), 137.

57. For example, see Stephen Best, “On Failing to Make the Past Present,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 73, no. 3. (Sept. 2012): 453–74.

Mikhail Bakunin, or Malcom X would do if they were alive now. We argue about archives and museums. We want the mummies to go back to Egypt. We want reparations. We are all obsessed with the dead. Some of us imagine we don't believe in the afterlife, but there is no denying we believe in *something* that provides the basis for our righteous indignation when *our* dead are disrespected. Some people pay the county clerk for a death certificate or search FindAGrave.com for their death tourism, some of us visit Haymarket or Stonewall.

When my cousin and I were eight and six our great-grandfather Emerson Pratt, Bertha's middle son, died. His funeral was the first I ever went to. It was an open casket, and my cousin and I were too young to understand the severity of Old Papa "moving on." We became obsessed with his lifeless body. Someone had brought over a stool for the children to step up and kiss him goodbye. We stood next to each other on it.

"I think he's wearing makeup like a girl," she cried.

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

"Yeah! Look!" She wiped some blush from his cheek and showed it to me. We both started laughing loudly at the absurdity of our Old Papa, *a man*, with makeup on. Our mothers were appalled. They stormed over and pulled us away from the casket and out of the room of women hiding their crying faces in their black shawls. My aunt was the real disciplinarian: "You *cannot* talk about Papa's makeup!"

"Why?"

"Because you shouldn't disrespect the dead."

Conclusion

Two questions spring from the existence of the archive, both state and Church: does the archive control us? Do we, in our un-categorizable self-perceptions and actions, exist in the archive in any meaningful way at all? For queer people, the desire for inclusion is always in tension with the desire to fundamentally change the operations of society. Is it

enough to have a marriage certificate, or should romantic and sexual relationships be defined in new ways that better reflect our lived experiences? When do we declare our gender and to whom? How can we effectively disregard sex? What does it mean to be “Mormon” without a temple recommend? Documentation that supports the heteropatriarchal structure of both the Church and state enforces its power and persuades us to work toward reform, recategorization, and recognition rather than disruption. The family tree, birth certificate, temple recommend, marriage certificate, and death certificate are all part of this cycle. And surely we can all, regardless of identity, find ourselves and stories like ours in the archive if we work hard enough. The theological and political question that is then posed to us is: how should we use the archive as we construct our own worlds around us? As queer people, what do we fight for?

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Kathleen Peterson
Heart to Heart
oil on board 12"x12"

TIKKUN K'NESSIAH: REPAIRING THE CHURCH

Robert A. Rees

I believe 'Mormonism' . . . calls for thoughtful disciples who will not be content with merely repeating some of its truths, but will develop its truths; and enlarge it by that development. Not half—not one-hundredth part—not a thousandth part of that which Joseph Smith revealed to the Church has yet been unfolded, either to the Church or to the world.”

—B. H. Roberts¹

The Jews have a term, “Tikkun olam,” which means “repairing the world.” It is both a statement of belief and a commitment to action by individual Jews to heal, repair, and transform the world. Appropriating the concept and inspired by the Jewish passion for repairing the world, I have coined the term “Tikkun k’nessiah”—meaning repairing or healing the Church. In this essay, I hope to explore the dimensions of what “Tikkun k’nessiah” may mean to those of us who are members of the restored Church at this critical juncture in its history.

The meaning of “tikkun olam” as it is used among certain Jews today can be traced back to the sixteenth-century Kabbalist Isaac Luria. Luria taught that when God created the world, he sought to light it by shaping special lamps or vessels to hold his light. He explains, “But as God poured the Light into the vessels, they catastrophically shattered, tumbling down toward the realm of matter [that is, the earth]. Thus, our world consists of countless shards of the original vessels entrapping sparks of the Divine Light. Humanity’s great task involves helping God by freeing and reuniting the scattered Light, raising the sparks back

1. B. H. Roberts, *Improvement Era* 9 (1906): 713.

to Divinity and restoring the broken world.”² Many Jews believe it is their duty to participate in the repair and redemption of the world by “freeing and reuniting the scattered Light.” In some traditions, this is seen as the shared, sacred work of God and humans.

When I spoke at the Berkeley Institute of Religion several years ago, I asked the students, “Whose church is this?” They responded, “It’s the Church of Jesus Christ.” I replied, “There are two possessives in the name of the Church: it *is* the Church of Jesus Christ, certainly, but it is also the Church of the Latter-day Saints. It isn’t the Church of the First Presidency or the Quorum of the Twelve or the General Authorities, it isn’t the Church of conservatives or liberals or of any particular group, but rather the Church of all those who are or can be called saints. Thus, the Church is our joint stewardship. Ultimately, it will be no better or no worse than we ourselves choose to make it, than we ourselves choose to be.”

It is in this sense of joint stewardship that I want to say a few words about repairing and healing the Church. At the outset, I want to make it clear that I don’t consider myself a member of the Ark Steadier’s Society (whose initials are A.S.S.!) or in any way presume to have an elevated or enlightened position or to have any special calling in relation to the Church. Like other Latter-day Saints, I am simply a member, a disciple, a follower of Christ, one of the workers in his vineyard. But as such, I feel I am called to try and help the Church more perfectly to reflect the truths, glories, and beauties of Christ’s gospel, to help set right, first, those things that I need to repair and heal within myself, and then, along with everyone else who feels so called, to do the same in the Church. What I am suggesting is that we could learn something important from our Jewish brothers and sisters in relation to the ethic of repairing. Perhaps like Jews, Latter-day Saints could have as part of our devotion, “the ‘repairing imperative,’ that things must be mended, a

2. “Tikkun Olam: The Spiritual Purpose of Life,” *Inner Frontier*, <http://www.innerfrontier.org/Practices/TikkunOlam.htm>.

sense livened by the constant perception of God's presence and concern behind all things."³

Repairing the world or the Church presumes that it is in some ways and to some degree broken. As Rabbi David Wolpe asserts, "Tikkun olam presupposes that the world is 'broken' and needs to be fixed by the care and application of people working with the guidance of God."⁴ The same could be said of the Church. Reading Church history, that brokenness is apparent; but it is also apparent in our own time as the Church has grown into a worldwide faith and faces the challenge of adapting to an increasingly secular society and an increasingly complex and diverse membership. While some might consider it disloyal to speak of the brokenness of the contemporary Church, anyone who has an authentic engagement with the Church knows that invariably it is in some ways less than its promise. Saying so is to state a reality, not voice a criticism.

From the beginning, God has known that any earthly manifestation of his Son's kingdom on earth would be imperfect because we, who constitute the body of Christ as well as those he calls to lead it, are imperfect. Both Jesus' parables and Paul's sermons (as well as those of Nephi, Moroni, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and a host of other latter-day prophets) are directed at repairing the brokenness of the Church. Throughout scriptural history, we read of God pleading, persuading, cajoling, at times even bribing his children to take ownership of the Church (however it was defined in different dispensations), to build and magnify it, to expand its borders of thought, imagination, and action. I think it is safe to say that at times we have broken God's heart over our reluctance to better shape ourselves and therefore the Church to the ideal and standard to which he has called us.

3. David J. Wolpe, *The Healer of Shattered Hearts: A Jewish View of God* (Henry Holt: New York, 1990), 93.

4. Wolpe, *Healer of Shattered Hearts*, 65.

Instead, we have insisted on building golden calves, on wandering in the desert, on, as the scriptures say, “going a-whoring after strange gods” (Deut. 31:16), on being drunk on the nectar of the world and in love with our own narcissism. At times, the Israelites, Jaredites, Nephites, early Christians, and modern Latter-day Saints have all, to one degree or another, allowed the Church to fall into disrepair. At times we have come to our senses (assisted by famine, persecution, or temporary withdrawal of the heavens) and repaired or renewed the Church, whether in the wilderness, in small enclaves of righteousness, in the Great Basin Kingdom, or in great communities like the city of Enoch and the land of Bountiful following Christ’s visit to the New World.

In practical terms, how do we go about repairing the Church? As I said at the outset, it should begin by each of us doing (and maintaining) a thorough inventory of our intentions, motives, and integrity. Next, we should carefully consider how and under what conditions to participate in the work of repairing. Most Latter-day Saints I know would immediately shift their attention to the leaders of the Church, but before focusing on them, we should consider reform and repair in our individual lives and among the membership. Where to begin? For me, the following suggests brokenness among the body of the Saints and represents opportunities and challenges for grassroots repair: It is my observation that as a body of believers, we are more . . .

interested in answers than in questions.

comfortable with certainty than doubt.

inclined to surrender responsibility to those in authority than to trust

the integrity of our own thoughts and inspiration.

interested in being right than in being good.

focused on obedience than on love.

interested in the next world than in this one.⁵

5. The Jews have a saying, “Just one world at a time please. God has presently placed me upon planet earth and I want to be here 100% so I can accomplish the reason for my being.”

inclined to trust our feelings over our thoughts.
committed to the values of our political parties than to those of the
gospel.
focused on ourselves than on others and, thus, we have a tendency
toward cultural egoism.

Many of these might be considered virtues, but in their extreme expressions they all constitute brokenness. I believe that repairing the Church means that individually and collectively we need to address these cultural characteristics, which essentially prevent change and impede progress.

This means that some of the most important work of repair begins at the local level. That is, the work of *tikkun k'nessiah* begins with ourselves and in our families, wards, and stakes. It begins by being willing to accept callings and then magnifying them, by volunteering to do something that needs doing—small things that might make a small difference.

Sometimes the work of repairing requires us to stand up for principle, as a number of California Latter-day Saints did during Proposition 8. I heard of one bishop who refused to follow instructions about asking members of his congregation to contribute to the effort to enact the proposition. He said to the stake president, “This is not something I feel I can do. If you need to release me, then I will understand.” The stake president excused him from the assignment. Others were not treated so charitably but nevertheless were willing to suffer censure and ecclesiastical discipline out of love for the Church.

There is immense pain in the Church today. Addressing that pain depends on our individual acts of courage, of sacrifice, and especially of love. It is in that realm where much of the most important work of repairing is to be done. But there is also the larger realm, the Church beyond the individual broken heart, beyond the sin and insensitivity with which each of us must contend, and beyond the madness and mystery of trying to make the gospel and the Church work in our

lives, families, and congregations. It is in that realm, the macrocosm of the institutional Church, where the work of repair also is required, even though it is more daunting and more difficult because it is largely beyond any one person's control. And yet it is also part of our individual and collective stewardship.

Based on my more than seventy-five years as a member of the Church, the following is my personal list of things that might be considered in need of repair. It is because I believe the ultimate mission of the Church would be enhanced by intelligently and compassionately addressing such matters that I risk listing them here (and, based on my experience, doing so is indeed a risk):

- 1) As a large bureaucracy, the Church is less flexible, less open, less efficient, and less effective than one would wish. As a General Authority friend said to me a couple of years ago, "We can't get anything done in the Church! I'm not complaining, but I am lamenting." In many ways, the Church has adjusted well to its rapid growth and increasing complexity, but there are problems, one of which is related to what my friend Truman Madsen used to call the "Church Social Service":⁶ Church employees who are more afraid of making mistakes than decisions. This is true of any bureaucracy, of course, but likely more true of a church whose leaders and employees are aware that those who give them direction are sustained as "prophets, seers, and revelators."⁷ That is, such an administrative culture, one in which taking independent initiative or engaging in imaginative problem-solving might be seen as disrespectful or in which questioning the judgment of leaders might be seen as "evil speaking against the Lord's anointed," could inhibit the very kinds of actions that might constitute the work of repairing or healing.

6. Personal conversation with the author.

7. A friend who worked for the Church (Bonneville International) told me of several examples of mission presidents not reporting accurately on conditions in the mission field for fear of being blamed. Everyone is familiar with leaders who seem hesitant to take problems to a higher level as well as those who have an unrealistic idea as to the inerrancy of General Authorities, something I imagine is not pleasing to those very authorities.

- 2) The Church's method of choosing its president/prophet might be improved by instituting a method of succession based on a different principle than longevity of service. While the present system produces a certain stability and continuity, it also produces significant periods in which the Church is in a sort of limbo because the prophet is cognitively diminished or incapacitated.⁸ Having a more flexible process for prophetic succession might open the way for the kind of change one currently sees in the Catholic Church under Pope Francis. At the least, given the miracles of modern medicine in keeping people alive into their eighties and nineties, expanding the status of "emeritus" to the Quorum of the Twelve might be a step in the right direction.
- 3) The Church is, at least to some in its liberal/progressive wing, too imbalanced toward conservatism and, in some areas, perhaps even toward fundamentalism. While a certain degree of conformity in terms of politics and culture is desirable, some observers contend that the degree of conformity in the center stakes of Zion constitutes a barrier to reform and renewal. Many have the perception that, for example, Saints in the Latter-day Saint heartland (Utah, Idaho, Arizona, and Wyoming) have more in common politically and ideologically with non-Latter-day Saints in the US South than with their fellow members on the coasts. I'm not sure what, if anything, can be done about this, but I think it is an example of a less diverse, less coherent, and therefore less dynamic, productive, and effective culture. Although some would argue that the Church's conservatism is its strength, I contend that a church that is too conservative can be as problematic as one that is too liberal (although, to work toward some kind of balance, I wouldn't mind seeing the latter experimented with for a century or so!).
- 4) Related to and reflective of this imbalance is the perception that the dominant culture influencing the Church on matters of war and peace, the environment, social justice, immigration, politics, and Church polity is the culture of the Intermountain West, especially Utah. For an international church, this can be a significant liability. One of the challenges for the future of the Church is the degree to which it can shed its

8. See Gregory A. Prince, Lester E. Bush, Jr., and Brent N. Rushforth, "Gerontocracy and the Future of Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 49, no. 3 (Fall 2016).

more provincial, US-centric image. As John Sorenson observed many years ago, “When the time comes that Mormons in the central homeland come to the realization that they too are constrained by cultural ways which have nothing directly to do with the gospel they espouse, the result could be a kind of Copernican revolution with attendant new insights into the Church and the scriptures and the meaning of life.”⁹ The dynamism of twenty-first-century Mormonism depends on the Church’s success in truly becoming intercultural and international.

- 5) Although the Church has made some positive steps toward finding a more favorable balance in terms of gender equality, currently the situation is less than ideal. The Church has not yet figured out what to do with women, especially young, faithful, and progressive women who have less patience with a male-dominant, patriarchal Church culture. Since women once played a more prominent role in the Church, there is precedent for reviving some past practices that might help repair the estrangement that many women, especially millennials, are experiencing.¹⁰
- 6) The same could be said of other kinds of inequity and injustice.
- 7) Lack of financial transparency. Because the Church does not disclose its finances, there is inevitable speculation about how much money the Church takes in in tithes and offerings (an estimated \$7 billion annually¹¹) and how much it has in assets (estimated at \$35 billion¹²) and therefore how and where and on what it spends members’ tithing and other contributions. While disclosing financial data might be considered risky by some, many feel that a more transparent system would diminish both speculation and criticism. As contributors and shareholders, many individual Latter-day Saints feel they have a right to an accounting of Church finances.

9. John Sorenson, “Mormon World View and American Culture,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1973): 17–29.

10. See Jana Riess, *The Next Mormons: How Millennials Are Changing the LDS Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

11. Esther Zuckerman, “The Mormon Church Takes In \$7 Billion a Year,” *The Atlantic*, Aug. 14, 2012, <http://www.thewire.com/global/2012/08/mormon-church-gets-7-billion-year/55755/>.

12. Zuckerman, “Mormon Church Takes In \$7 Billion a Year.”

- 8) Adjusting to social change. While some argue that the reluctance and slowness of the Church's willingness and ability to change is what creates its stability, there is also the sense that the Church is often significantly late in adjusting to social issues that could have a positive impact on its mission. The issue of Black members and the priesthood is a dramatic example. It took 125 years for the Church to change its policy on the denial of priesthood and temple blessings to Black members and another forty years to admit that the scriptural and other justifications for the policy were wrong.¹³
- 9) Dealing with questions, challenges, and dissent. In other words, the heart of the Latter-day Saint faith crisis. One of the more complicated problems for the Church is how, in the age of the internet, to deal with dissent and criticism as well as open hostility. These kinds of issues are difficult for any organization but especially so for one that makes an ultimate claim to truth and legitimacy. The modern Church has a history of responding to criticism by not responding, by being defensive, and sometimes by retaliating against those who criticize. The steps the Church has taken over the past several years in publishing the Joseph Smith Papers, underwriting white papers on various controversial subjects, and openly admitting past errors have all helped repair the Church, but additional work is needed.

If these are indeed some of the areas in which the work of repairing could be done, the question for individual Latter-day Saints, especially the vast majority without any significant power or position, is when, by whom, and by what means it should be done. This is a critical question, if for no other reason than that many would consider it presumptuous for any individual to feel that he or she could help repair the Church when the consensus is that such work is "best left to the brethren." But, as I have tried to argue, this is the work of all who have covenanted to build and expand Christ's kingdom. It is also the charge the Lord gives us in the Doctrine and Covenants where, speaking to all members (tenderly calling us his "little flock"), he says, "The kingdom is *yours* until

13. See "Race and the Priesthood," *Gospel Topics Essays*, available at <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>.

I come.”¹⁴ In other words, he is entrusting the Church to the collective care of the Saints and, I believe, will hold us accountable for whatever condition the Church is in, not only when he comes but each step along the way.

I have immense respect for those in authority. I have always gladly sustained the General Authorities. I do not envy anyone who has the onerous responsibility of governing such a large and diverse church during such a complex period in world history. Being a General Authority, from all I can gather, requires both broad administrative skills and deep spiritual sensitivities. They must handle on a daily basis the complexities of a large and growing organization while also being ready to respond to a Saint somewhere in the world who wants a miracle performed on the spot. Judging from what I have been told by the few General Authorities I have known personally, I also sense that it is difficult at times for Church leadership to distinguish between those who have a genuine desire to effect change and those who may have a frivolous intention, personal grievance, or sinister agenda. Obviously, the General Authorities can't have a completely open-door policy as far as such issues are concerned, otherwise they wouldn't have time for anything else. It is extremely challenging for people in such positions to constantly be in the public eye, to always be spiritually in tune, and to be called upon to make Solomonic decisions on a daily basis. Probably the last thing a General Authority wants to hear is how he might do his job better!

At the same time, if one has made a covenant to consecrate all that one has to the Church for the building up of the kingdom of God on earth and the establishment, strengthening, enhancement, and enlargement of Zion, then repairing the Church is a sacred obligation—albeit one that must be discharged with all of the virtues of the priesthood (which apply equally to men and women): “by persuasion,

14. Doctrine and Covenants 35:27 (emphasis added).

by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile.”¹⁵ Especially by “love unfeigned.” Whatever we do, however we do it, the important thing is to believe we can make a difference.

I’m aware that to want, out of love, to repair the Church, to hope for change is not easy. Nevertheless, if we don’t do this work, who will? As Annie Dillard writes, “There is no one but us. There is no one . . . on the face of the earth, or in the earth, but only us, a generation comforting ourselves with the notion that we have come at an awkward time, . . . and our children busy and troubled, and we ourselves unfit, not yet ready, having each of us chosen wrongly, made a false start, failed, yielded to impulse, and the tangled comfort of pleasure and grown exhausted. . . . But there is no one but us. There never has been.”¹⁶ And, one might add, there never will be.

To illustrate the concept of repairing the Church, I would like to use the metaphor of repairing or renovating a house. Having owned several houses in my lifetime, all of which needed continuous repair and sometimes major renovation, I know something of what it takes to make a house work for those who live in it. I’m not very skilled as a carpenter, electrician, or plumber, although I have done such repairs on my homes. Mainly I am a handyman, one who is continually solving small problems and calling on more skilled craftspeople for major, more complicated tasks. I have always felt a sense of satisfaction when I have been able to fix a leaky toilet, a broken window, a jammed garbage disposal, or a faulty electrical junction. I also work on the outside when necessary, but I do so with a familiarity and knowledge of what’s on the inside.

15. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–42.

16. Annie Dillard, *Holy the Firm* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 56–57.

What I have learned is that almost all repairs have to be made from inside the house. Most of the time, one has to climb into the attic or crawl under the sink, raise floorboards or replace light switches. The same is true for the house of my faith: to have any chance of repairing this house, I have to live in it. I can stand outside and criticize or complain about it, but that's not very useful or very rewarding—and the house doesn't get fixed. Abandoning the Church because of something broken in it is like leaving a house because the plumbing isn't working well.

Some critics of the Church remind me of those who come into a house and see only what's wrong with it but don't volunteer to fix it. They run their fingers over the mantel to see if it is dusty, they complain about the color of the carpet, they make disparaging comments about the smallness of the rooms, and they comment about how poor it is in comparison with their or someone else's house. Others remind me of renters. I have had a couple of rental properties and my experience is that renters tend not to have the same sense of obligation or care that a homeowner does. The worst renters seldom take pains to fix things and often complain that the owner hasn't created a perfect house for them to live in. Some "renters" in the Church are those who come but don't really participate, who don't really feel the house of the Lord is their house, who don't show up on Saturday mornings to clean it for Sunday services or on Tuesday evenings to work with the youth.¹⁷ Some of these Saints are like those Elder Uchtdorf characterized as "sleeping through the Restoration."¹⁸

17. To be fair, one might also argue that the Church at times can seem like a landlord who doesn't fix things that are broken or in need of repair or who raises the rent without making any improvements!

18. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Are You Sleeping through the Restoration?," Apr. 2014, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2014/04/are-you-sleeping-through-the-restoration?lang=eng>.

I don't want to sleep through the Restoration or even stroll through it. Its blessings are too great and its promises too grand for me to consider doing so. The Restoration is not an event or series of events that happened in the nineteenth century; it is a process, a continual unfolding. There are many great and important truths yet to be revealed, some of them to ordinary Saints, and I don't want to miss any of them. My guess is that not many of these "great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God"¹⁹ will be revealed to those who leave the Church.

Latter-day Saints speak of the Church being true, but I would like to consider how a deeper, wider understanding of that word might be instructive in considering how one might repair the Church. Generally, we use "true" as an adjective, as when we speak of "*the* true Church" (especially if we add the qualifiers "one and only"), by which we mean the one that most conforms to or accords with the primitive Church. But "true" can also be a noun, a verb, and an adverb. It is as a verb that I think it has the most relevance to the concept of repairing the Church because in this sense it means to bring something into adjustment as with a carpenter using a tool to "true" a piece of lumber so as to make it fit. Thus, as individual members, we can help "true" the Church by aligning our own devotion and behavior with what we understand the Lord would like.

As I said at the outset, I have no authority beyond the authority of my own conscience or power beyond that of my own mind, voice, and spirit; I have no knowledge beyond that of an ordinary person who has lived long enough to have learned a few lessons, including, especially, from his own mistakes and misdeeds; I have no calling beyond that which Christ calls all of his followers to fulfill—to love him and the Father with all our heart, might, mind, and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves. Embedded in those two "great" commandments, I

19. Articles of Faith 1:9.

believe, is another commandment that involves both deity and humanity—to love the Church enough to try and change it, even if that means risking the displeasure of the Church.

This is Christ's church and it is our church. It is the house of God to which we all belong. In repairing the Church with God's help, we too can be, as Isaiah says, healers of shattered hearts. That's the place I want the Church to be for everyone, including you and me—and all of those currently outside the house of the Church, those who have left or are undecided if they want to be inside this house, and those who do not yet know this house. I see our great united charge, our sacred and holy calling as "helping God by freeing and reuniting the scattered Light, raising the sparks back to Divinity and restoring the broken [church and the broken] world."²⁰ Let's begin!

20. "Tikkun Olam: The Spiritual Purpose of Life."

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His Twelve Points of the Scout Law (Grandpa Fesses Up)

R. A. Christmas

Excerpt from "Taps for the BSA"

*Mormon Church to cut all ties
with the Boy Scouts of America
at the end of 2019.*

News release

*Dedicated to the memory of James "Jim" Tuepker,
field-archer, Scoutmaster extraordinaire,
BSA Troop 10, Pasadena, California.*

Trustworthy

Generally, with exceptions.
Buffalo Nickels skimmed when
he worked at Botts' Ice-Cream,
small bills at Sam's parking-lot
when he was desperate to pay
for babies that kept coming,
supplements when he was a
caregiver for a blind old lady.
An opportunistic pilferer, a

The complete poem, "Taps for the BSA," can be found in the author's collection *Leaves of Sass*.

borrower of no-return. Face it,
a bit of a thief. Ouch! But he
only cheated on a wife once—
oops, forgot, well twice.
(No wonder Baden-Powell
put this first. Ouch!)

Loyal

Another stinger. Yes, but
passively, irresponsibly.
A beatnik outsider, a rebel
without a cause partly raised
by pinko-commie-sympathizers
Wants to overthrow everything,
marched in '67 in S.F. against
the Vietnam War, but stands
and sings the National Anthem.
WWII history buff, files but
doesn't pay. A contrarian—thinks
Bernie's too conservative, etc.
Wants to put everyone on
Social Security and Medicare
pay couples to marry, and pay
them for having kids too.
Complains, but seldom votes
(he lives in Utah, folks!).

Helpful

Easy to be entreated
(facile à supplier).
Soup-kitchen volunteer,
Anyone on his road

holding up a sign gets
five bucks (at least),
a Book of Mormon,
and some Grandpa
Teresa conversation.
("Where you from,
where you going?
God bless you on your
way.") Shows love.
Picks up hitchhikers,
gives blood, big tipper.

Friendly

Superficially, always,
but no glad-hander.
Treasures old friends,
but seldom writes or calls,
(neither do they, but
such waters run deep).
He's here for them, and
them for him, if possible—
the mystery of knowing
some so deeply he
can't discover why
they met or why they
continue connected, the
experience too sacred to
take lightly, analyze.

Courteous

Door opener. Pro-driver.
Signals, yields right-of-way,

lets people in, Keeps
under the limit, never
tailgates. Looks both ways
checks his mirrors, no
hollow-headed lane switcher.

Kind

Unfailingly, but firm
rather than gentle.
Non-combative, simply
finds less to do with
those he can't abide.
Forgives everything
short of murder (Do
yo thang!) "Loosey-
goosey," his wife
would say. Sweetly,
secretly resentful
and judgmental like
his mom, but a quick
counter-puncher,
like his dad, when
pushed too far.

Obedient

Fearfully so.
Church every Sunday,
Temple every Monday,
Prayers morning
and night. A chapter
of Scripture most
mornings: Bible,

(Old T and New T)
Book of Mormon,
Doctrine & Covenants.
Full tithe-payer
(on gross) plus
\$100/m for the needy.
Family history buff.
But like his friend
Gene England, Grandpa
has “moments of utter
skepticism” (How
could an embodied
God survive in a
space full of black
holes?) A Jesus freak,
but still trying to fathom
His mysterious Father,
and still more in love
with himself than his
neighbor. A religious
revolutionary, like
Joseph Smith (his 4th
cousin) and Brigham
Young. An evolutionist,
Gay-Rights Advocate
(“Same rules same
blessings for all!”) Sees
the Body of Christ as
a person—born, growing,
messing up Big Time,
learning from mistakes
(about now a teenager).

Cheerful

Seriously, because
as soon as he could talk
he had to find words
to make his lonely
anxious mom smile.
(Dad worked seven days.)
So Grandpa still has
this habit of listening just
enough to hear something he
can spin into a one-liner
for a laugh, or better yet,
something unforgettable,
amazing if possible,
at least droll. And while
he's got your attention,
hit a shot over his net
and see if he doesn't
return it to a corner
to your left while
you're running right.

Thrifty

Compulsive saver,
agonized spender.
14% Scot on one
side (Muir, Stewart)
14% German-Swiss
Jew (Wetzler-Guggen-
heim) on the other.
His pinched pennies

look like the ones
the kids used to
put on tracks
for trains to run
over. But married
a money-maker
spender. Loved it!
Lived on Osmond
Lane in Provo
in a 6,000 sq. ft.
French Country
chateau. Went
bankrupt twice.

Brave

Two minor tussles with
bullies in grade-school.
Boxed at Stanford until
he didn't see a left-
hook coming and came
fully "to" a couple hours
later and decided he
preferred to be able
to think. Otherwise
physically and militarily
untested. Too young or
too old or too married
with kids for any wars,
but foolhardy enough
to get hitched in Vegas
on a weekend and
make it last 12 years.

Clean

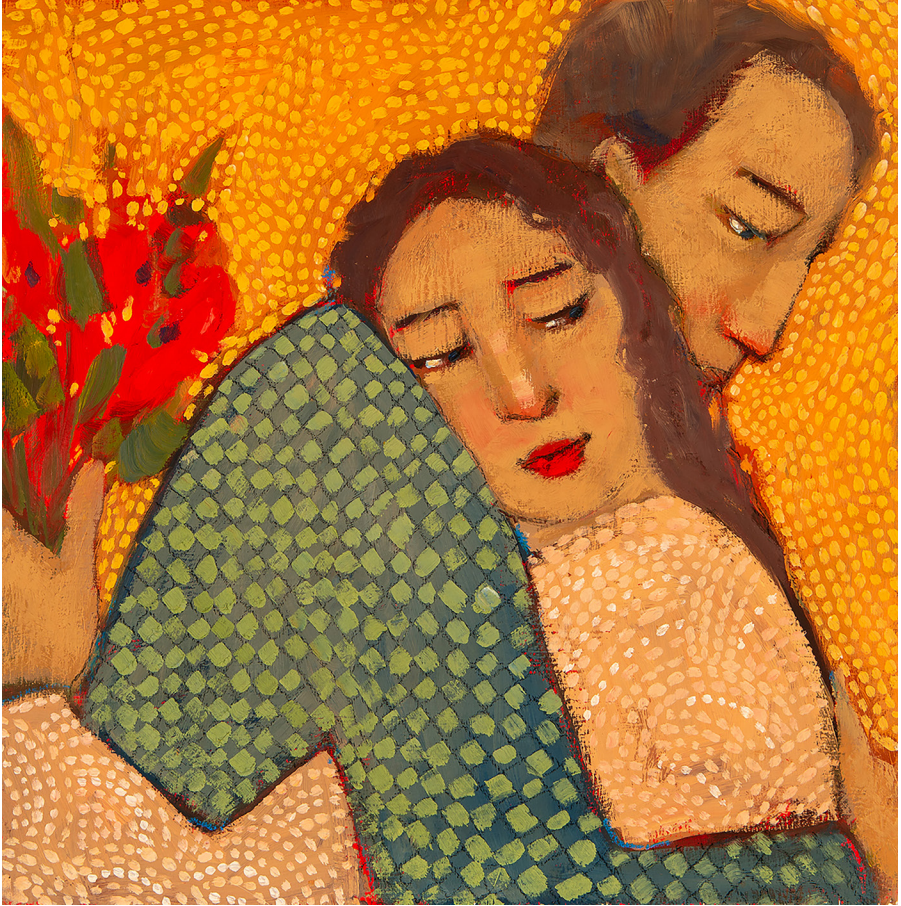
Addicted to the usual
suspects until he
was fifty. Went cold
turkey on cigarettes
and alcohol when he
got married the third
time. Porn was tougher.
Finally forswore all
images, even bathing-
suits (No Images
Therapy). There's
scars on his plate,
some flecks, leftovers
for Jesus to wipe off,
but Grandpa keeps it
clean as he can.
A poster-adult for
continuing repentance.

Reverent

Shuts his mouth and
parks his brain and
his butt in Church
most Sundays and
bows his head, folds
his arms like a little
kid and closes his eyes
as he partakes of a
piece of bread and a

thimble of water in
remembrance of the One
who descended below
and rose above, in order
to redeem him and
everyone else, in a
world that looks like
it created itself.

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Kathleen Peterson
Gift
oil on board 12"x12"

MORMON SAGA

Maurine Whipple

Editor's Note:

Maurine Whipple wrote this previously unpublished story of blind, unrelenting faith in the 1920s, perhaps for a course at the University of Utah. It probably grew out of the countless hours a young Whipple spent listening to “women’s talk,” the telling and retelling of stories of travail, birth, illness, and faith that were largely separate from the male world. In a 1991 interview, Whipple told her biographer Veda Hale the following:

In St. George, as I suppose in other towns, too, there wasn’t much to do except visit. There were all those quiltings where women wore down their reticence and finally spilled out intimate things. There were long summer evenings where people walked and stopped at someone’s yard to be invited to visit on the porch. There were Relief Society visiting teachers who stayed and stayed and talked about old family stories, some in the category of folklore. And I listened—little miss big-ears.

My father scoffed at women’s talk, claiming that women believed everything. He made fun of Momma, of her family and friends. . . . He was always questioning things. He often pointed out how gullible some people were about believing Brigham Young saying not to trust doctors, but to trust the priesthood. And there were people in our community who were that narrow, who didn’t believe in doctors. There are always those kinds of zealots. I could see both sides, but most of the time felt doctors should have been consulted.

Recently published in Veda Hale, Andrew Hall, and Lynne Larson, eds., *A Craving for Beauty: The Collected Writings of Maurine Whipple* (Salt Lake City: By Common Consent Press, 2020).

The character Cinda can be seen as an early version of two of the sister wives in her 1941 novel *The Giant Joshua*. Like Clory, Cinda is young, high-spirited, and sporting a red sunbonnet, and the childbirth scene resembles Willie's experience in the novel.



Dust clogged my nose and the strong smell of horses, the clump, clump of their hoofs regular-like and slow, the heavy creak of the wheels, and over and above everything else, like sad heartbeats, the solemn thud, thud of the muffled drums. A sort of sigh went over all the multitude, and a woman sobbed out loud once. But mostly folks were quiet. A hush and a fear like the day of doom. You didn't dare look, and yet it was like something glued your eyes toward that wagon passing, the stars and stripes with the black crepe edgings fluttering clean to the wheels.

Cinda shivered and drew herself up close to me and took hold of my arm. Sudden-like I was all over goose pimples. It wouldn't have surprised me none for the heavens to open up and God's hand come forth and smite every living thing off this fair land in pay for the precious blood of our Prophet, spilled on it yesterday.

Somehow when the crowd broke and we all began to move, tight-packed like we was, toward that home where Joseph's wife waited with her tears, a man couldn't find no bit of word to say to the neighbor trudging beside him. He didn't even dare look. It was like if he did, he'd see his thought in his neighbor's eyes, too, and then his thought might be stronger than him. But just the same, a man fingered the gun the state had ordered him to give up and itched more than ever to break loose just once and give the dirty mobocrats hell.

Once out of that house of grief and walking down the street, I couldn't help thinking how strange the cool stars should be the same as ever and the breeze from the river as fresh. When we was all lost. When God's chosen people was deserted and lost.

Cinda said in a scared little voice, "Do you reckon his murderers will ever get caught?"

“They’ll go just so long,” growled Brother Clawson, who was stepping along beside us with his head down, “just so long as the Lord suffers them!”

“But now he’s gone,” says I, “and we be deserted—”

“At the mercy of the mobocrats,” said Brother Clawson, low.

“But won’t they be satisfied with Joseph? Won’t they leave us alone now?” cries Cinda, trembling.

Brother Clawson ain’t got much patience with women folk. “Didn’t you read the note I prepared for Missouri mobbers, Sister Cinda? If your husband ain’t got a gun, he’d better get one quick. Mark my words, we’ll be driven out of Nauvoo just like we was out of Kirtland and Jackson County. I reckon Governor Ford knows about Mormon extermination orders same as the others.”

Even after we got inside our own home, Cinda didn’t say nothing. She’d fixed for me the supper I liked best, and the warm, spicy steam was oozing up from the baked beans. But I set there in our cozy kitchen and couldn’t swallow past the lump in my throat. I knew what Cinda was thinking, and I felt worse to see her quiet than sputtering. You see, Cinda’s like her red hair—pretty as a picture but stormy as all get-out.

I sat and watched her go through all the rooms of our new house, feeling every object from the china shepherdess on the mantle to the crocheted fixings on the chair backs. She took down every dish in the cupboard and wiped it with a towel gentle-like, the way you’d wipe the face of a child. I knew she was fearing she’d have to leave this home, too, and I rebuked her for thinking of material things when the Prophet lay dead. But at that she run and throwed herself into my arms and cried like her heart would bust.

You see, Cinda was big with child when we first got to Nauvoo. I was seeing the old, lopsided, dirt-covered, one-room log cabin I had to move her into. The roof leaked mud onto the bedclothes where Cinda lay. You’d mire up to your knees in mud in the yard. And the mud stunk.

All our neighbors was poor Saints fled from Missouri mobocrats. I was seeing tents made out of ragged quilts pitched in the mud. The cold

and the hunger. Cinda giving away all our store of dried fruit. A poor sister huddled under a torn kiverlid,¹ fighting off a mosquito sounding in her ears like a buzz saw and hearing the death wagons slush through the mud past her door.

I was remembering a man we got to know who'd had his arm torn off by a Gentile rifle ball at Haun's Mill, and with blood spurting from the stump had been throwed on top the other wounded and dead in a well where he laid and seen the fiends drag out his own little boy hiding behind the forge.

"I guess he won't care. Them Mormon bastards ain't got much feeling," a mobber says. "Anyways, I'd just as soon shoot a Mormon as a dog!"

I was seeing Cinda's face when the man was telling us.

There was another man we got to know, too. He was a doctor. He named as how when he'd been plowing one day back East, the Lord advised him to take up doctoring, and from that time forth, he'd gone about healing the sick. I thought in my mind he was first-rate, too, using sensible cures like marshmallow for bed-wetting and cayenne pepper for thinning the blood. When Cinda's time came, she got this feller to physic her. He give her lobelia to relax her, but when the baby come it was dead. I knew it was because Cinda hadn't had enough victuals.

Seemed like Cinda couldn't stop flooding. The doctor give her cayenne and slippery elm tea, but she kept on flooding. I got scared and rushed out to get an elder to come and help me lay on hands. I made out to get the Prophet himself for Cinda; but before he'd administer, he rebuked us for being so weak in the faith as to have a doctor in. You never heard such rebuking! He says to "trust in God when sick and not in an arm of flesh, to live by faith and not by medicine."² But he blessed

1. A coverlet or comforter.

2. *History of the Church*, 4:414. From a sermon given September 5, 1841. Joseph Smith and many early Mormons believed in the efficacy of blessings supplemented by Thomsonian medicine, with its focus on herbal remedies. They tended to be distrustful of orthodox medical practices, which at the time were

Cinda she'd get well—"In the name of Jesus Christ, arise and be made whole!"—and he promised us both if we lived our religion and had a strong testimony of the gospel, we'd have posterity as numerous as the sands of the sea. Posterity enough to raise us up to the highest glory hereafter.

You see, that's why now—Joseph telling us like that, and it taking us three years for Cinda to get in the family way again, and then just when we had the drains in so the damp and sickness left the city, and a flour mill and a sawmill and a college and stores and the temple started, and the streets so wide, and Cinda's home with four fireplaces even better'n the other new homes, and then Cinda's babe born so easy-like—a right biddable little chap—just when we was fixing for some happiness, the boy's dead with the green sickness.³

As I says, after it took us three years to get Cinda in the family way and then when the boy was ailing, we *did* obey the Prophet and didn't get no doctor but called in Brother Clawson and tried laying on of hands, why it didn't do no good, after all. Me and Cinda's faith hadn't rusted none, neither. But, you see, Cinda knew the doctor to cure lots of other babies of the green sickness.

It ain't I been upholding Cinda for the way she's been thinking and speaking since then. And many's the time I told her about apostates being give over to the buffetings of Satan. But seems like Cinda's tears touch my tender spot. Sometimes I was afraid God might punish me for the way I loved her—almost more than I loved him.

For weeks after Joseph's death seemed like I was being torn into two parts, and one part was marked Cinda and I loved every hair on her red head, but the other part was marked the gospel, and for *that* I'd lay me down and die.

dominated by dangerously "heroic" remedies that often did more damage than good. Lester E. Bush, Jr., *Health and Medicine Among the Latter-Day Saints: Science, Sense, and Scripture* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 92–93.

3. Hypochromic anemia.

I tried to work the same as usual, but somehow the stone I was cutting didn't seem like part of the temple of God no more, but only just a stone. Nothing was the same in the whole city. Folks gathered on street corners instead of tending to their jobs. But talk of Whittling Deacons and Danites and Destroying Angels always bumped up against the counsel in the note, "Brethren, in the name of the Lord, *be still*." So having got no way to get rid of our bile and fear, we just stewed up tight with it inside till the whole of the City of Joseph was like a hissing pot ready to boil over.

In August Brother Brigham and most of the Twelve come home, and our worried hearts felt to rejoice for the first time. They had been in the East campaigning for Joseph to be president of the United States, but now they had to come home and find us a new prophet.

Early in the morning on August 8, as soon as chores and dishes was done, folks from all over took their way to the temple grove. There was a platform under the trees, and the benches stretched away out in front of it. But by ten o'clock all the room was used up, and you couldn't see the temple nearby nor the city spreading out down in the flats below for a tight-packed wall of standing men and women.

A wind sprung up from nowhere and shook the huge old trees till they rocked and groaned and whirled up dirt with bits of trash chasing around in the whirlings and stinging your eyes. Maybe a cinder from a forgotten picnic fire when Mormons had a right to be happy same as other folks.

Cinda held onto her bonnet and shawl, and I clutched my hat in both hands while that wicked wind was tearing my hair from my scalp. Like a lonesome wolf, that moaning wind seemed to be asking the questions in all our hearts: Could we finish the temple? What about Nauvoo the beautiful? Who would lead God's people? Had he deserted us? And Cinda's bonnet slapping its stiff sides against her face seemed to be saying, "Such a price, such a price, such a price!"

Brother Rigdon talked for a long time. The wind got madder and madder, and we couldn't hear him. When he sat down, nobody moved.

Not even a hand clapped. There with the wind shrilled in our ears, we waited and held our breaths for something—nobody knew what. It was like God had tried his people to the very limit and now we had to have a sign.

When Brother Brigham, the Lion of the Lord, stood up, we all leaned forward toward him. But when he began to speak, we didn't have no trouble hearing *him*. His voice seemed to grow and boom and ride on the wind itself to our ears. Sudden-like folks smiled a little and leaned back, contented to listen. For neither wind nor Gentile could threaten us no more. We was the Lord's chosen people, and we knew it.

Brother Brigham rebuking us same as usual seemed good. Telling us it wasn't fittin' for us to be there electin' a new prophet—only God could tend to that. "You are like children without a father, sheep without a shepherd. Your place is home, mourning for Joseph."

Then the miracle happened. Before God I'm telling this. There on the stand as we looked stood *not* Brigham but *Joseph*, smiling at us, patting us, loving us. The Lord had give us a sign! Brother Brigham under the mantle of Joseph was our new prophet, and to listen to him was to partake anew of the bread of life. That night even Cinda rejoiced and seemed firmer in the faith.

But we still knew our days was numbered in Nauvoo. It's a good thing we couldn't see the whole year of waiting ahead. Living them next months from day to day was like walking a tightrope across the pit of hell.

Straight off we drove ourselves to get the temple done. Brother Joseph had wanted it finished so's we could have our sealings and endowments and baptizings for the dead, and I started carvin' giant moon faces and sun faces and cherubim with a will.

But 'twas hard. In October the judges at Carthage turned the Prophet's murderers loose for more "Mormon baiting." And in January the legislature took away the Nauvoo Charter, so's even in the city, we had no more law. We commenced up the Whittling Deacons again; and with our long, sharp bowie knives slicing off pine sticks, we whittled

many a Gentile clean down to the ferry where us boys stood on the bank whistling low and soft till he got on the ship and puffed away. But nothing did no good. We was licked, and we knew it.

That summer “fire-and-sword” parties got to be commoner than sewing bees. And in the fall begun the “burnings.” Women and children mobbed. One old man gummed up with scalding tar and feathers pricked into the blistered skin. Another old man cutting grain on his farm tied to a tree and his back whipped into bleeding strips for no other reason than he was a Latter-day Saint and too old to fight back. If a Mormon *did* fight back, the law always punished him and not the Gentile.

’Twas the hardest for me to watch Cinda. She never railed out at me nor the Church no more, but I seen her lips getting tighter and tighter. She was so *little*, you understand. All them months it was like our homes, our lives, our happiness was all packaged together with a rubber band, and the band kept stretching, stretching—

A man couldn’t go to his job loving his fellow man no more. He took his gun and peeled his eye every step of the way. Finally, it came. Latter part of September, year and a half after the martyrdom, the Gentiles met at Quincy and drew up a resolution that we must leave the country. Brother Brigham answered that we’d leave soon’s “water runs and grass grows in the spring.” It was actually a kind of relief to get the waiting over with.

We finished enough of the temple—having “more revelation, more splendor, and more God than all the rest of the world”—to hold the first meeting. And on that night, the heavens over Nauvoo was full of armies of marching angels. Brother Brigham and the Twelve worked early and late administering the ordinance of endowment and baptizing them who’d paid their tithes. Not everybody got took care of, but me and Cinda was sealed up in the celestial kingdom for time and eternity, and I felt to rejoice in the Lord.

You wouldn’t have known Nauvoo that winter. It was turned into one big wagon shop. And now we knew the worst and was gettin’ ready to go to a new Zion in the Rock Mountain and we wouldn’t have to leave

no more. Cinda seemed more cheerful and helped get ready like her old self.

Even the meetinghouses was turned into blacksmith shops. We got hickory and hardwoods from the forests and boiled them in salt water and dried them in kilns. We melted up all the old iron in town for wagon tires; we fixed up guns and pistols, wagons and tents. If you got yours done, you worked on someone else's. The sound of the hammer and saw was heard all night long. Women patched up old wagon covers and made others from carpets and quilts. Brother Brigham himself helped make the boats to take us across the river in the spring. A man would work from dawn to dark till he'd pretty nigh sleep in his tracks, and then he'd wake up to hear a hammer pounding, pounding somewhere in the night.

Saints were all this time swarming in from every quarter with a mob just behind them. The whole city was in an uproar. Folks rushing around the streets and in and out of places. Most of the Saints had been tormented so much they was like folks driven by demons. Rush, rush to get away. You could feel the fear in folks' hearts and see it in their eyes. Cobble up a wagon—any wagon! Strip your house of its furnishings, gather in your wheat and corn but don't waste no time—what if the wagon be rickety and your children ain't got no warm clothes. If you can buy a team of oxen, all well and good; if you can't, put the pack on your own back, but go! The mobocrats are coming! If you have to crawl—go!

But we couldn't get ready fast enough. Bands of the devils begun dragging people out of them homes even in parts of the city. The governor sent Major Warren and a body of militia to protect us in Nauvoo, but outside nothing was safe.

Every day I went up in town to see if I couldn't sell my land and home and sheep to one of the new citizens. They was decenter than most Gentiles, because they was willing to pay us some cash, but there wasn't enough of them to go around. Didn't look like I'd get a dime. Other Gentiles from towns like Warsaw and Carthage figured to get our stuff without pay if they just waited long enough. All that fall, they'd

come into town and hang around like vultures. A fellow's hands was tied, too, because Brother Brigham had promised we'd go peaceable. Them days I had to leave Cinda, I made her pull the door latch inside and not move without the gun. I never came home without a scared feeling in my heart till I saw her again.

Them nights I'd lay with Cinda in my arms, and she'd talk to me all night long about our new home in the West. Cinda was still scared, but 'twas a different kind of scared. She wasn't giving up no more now because she was *planning* again.

I and Cinda was luckier than most. I had a pretty good wagon I farmed with. Cinda had a little iron step-stove she used in the kitchen, and we figured to take that along. But I hated to look at all my young peach and pear trees and know all my work would go for naught.

At first Cinda packed up all her furniture and dishes and carpets, the spinning wheel, and the orchestrone,⁴ and the hair flowers in the glass case she'd brung from Fayette. She had our clothes in a carpetbag and her geraniums in a old box. But when she tried to get all them things in the wagon, they wouldn't go. One by one Cinda had to take out what we didn't downright need. She was blinking at tears when she took the hair flowers and the geraniums back in the house.

On the fourth day of February 1846, the Saints was ready to begin their last exodus. The wagons all lined up on Main Street a little ways above our house to wait the signal. Women was peering out from the flaps, kids yelling from the backs, drivers clutching a rifle with one hand and the reins or the ox whip with the other, teams breathing white into the cold air, and sneerin' Gentiles bundled up against the frost, watching from the sidewalks.

Next door to us I could see Bishop Clawson putting the finishing touches on two big wagon loads, and Sister Clawson setting white and

4. An anachronism. The orchestrone, a small automatic music machine used rolls of paper, was not invented until 1879 by Merritt Gally. Robert F. Gellerman, *The American Reed Organ and the Harmonium* (Lanham, Md.: Vestal Press, 1996), 153–54.

still beside the driver's seat of the lead wagon. Brother Clawson was arranging his squealing boys in the two wagons and telling his oldest about driving the stock.

I and Cinda had been packed for weeks, so it wasn't no trouble getting our wagon ready. Just as I was leading Old Baldy out the double gates, someone yelled, "Wait a minute, Brother Phineas!"

I looked up to see Brother Brigham pulling up in his buggy. His team was lathered and heaving. I tied Old Baldy and went up to the buggy. Brother Brigham was frowning, and some of the fine hairs of his chin beard ended in little icicles where the sweat on his face had run down and froze.

"You all ready to start, Phineas?"

I nodded.

He wetted his lips and kind of looked away from me for a minute. Then his eyes came back to mine and stared a hole right through me. "Well, listen, lad. You and Sister Cinda ain't got any children, and you're pretty well fixed." He seemed to hesitate a spell. I noticed Cinda's face looking out between the wagon flaps, and my heart was sick. "You're willing to do whatever the Lord requires of you, ain't you, Brother Phineas?"

I nodded again and tried to tell him with my eyes what my voice wouldn't say.

"You're young and able-bodied and not afraid. You're strong in the faith. . . . You see, Brother Phineas, some of the brethren can't go on this first trip. Some of them's sick, and some ain't ready. I've got to leave someone behind to help take care of them."

I found my voice at last. "I'm willing, Brother Brigham."

"You see, Brother Phineas, I'll start now with what wagons are ready, and Apostle Woodruff'll follow with the main body. I've got to leave someone to see that the rest of the Saints are all cleared out by next season."

"They'll all be out," I says. I made up my mind I'd somehow fight the Gentiles and hurry the Saints and pacify Cinda all with one hand if necessary.

Brother Brigham drove off, and I and Cinda stood and watched the wagons rattle slow down the street, our friends calling good-bye to us. Somewheres up in town Captain Pitt's brass band was playing, and the silvery, even marching beat of the music and the slow roll of the wagon wheels got all mixed up in my mind.

When the last white wagon cover had melted into the faraway shine of the river, we started carrying our goods and chattels back inside the house. It wasn't till that minute I realized my hands had been gripping the hitching post so long and so hard they was half-froze.

All the time we was putting things away I didn't dare look at Cinda. She hadn't said nary a word. It was dinner time when I finally drove the oxen back to the barn. But when I came into the kitchen I couldn't find Cinda. I heard a noise in the bedroom and found her kneeling in front of a trunk of the baby's clothes she's saved.

She looked up at me white and quiet-like. "My baby'd be alive if we wasn't Mormons," she says, "My *baby*! And now I'll never had another. Phineas—why do we have to go? Why can't we just stay here in our home? We ain't hurting nobody—"

"That would be apostatizing, Cinda!" I couldn't hardly speak that awful word.

"Oh, Phineas, I got a *right* to a home! Phineas, Phineas—"

I knew it was just the thought of waiting around some more that was hard on her.

"I guess you love your religion more than me, Phineas. I'm going back to Fayette."

I couldn't think how to comfort her. Then it just come to me sudden-like. "Listen, wife Cinda," I says and kneeled beside her and took hold of her hands, "if Brother Brigham administers to you and promises you in the name of the Lord you'll get to Zion safe and that you shall yet have many children, will you try just once more to stick it out?"

Then her face broke into little bits, and the tears come.

I finally found Brother Brigham and brought him back. He came in with his stovepipe hat and his long black coat, and his eyes and the

lines around his mouth looking so stern. But Cinda never paid him no mind but went on rockin' back and forth, back and forth in front of the baby clothes. After I had rubbed the oil on Cinda's hair (making a little round shiny place like dark red stain) and we had both laid our hands on her head, she stopped rocking and looked up at us, and her eyes came alive again.

Brother Brigham in a stern voice did bless her she'd yet be a mother in Zion. The words sounded first-rate to my scared heart. I felt the presence of the Lord in that room.

After the prayer Cinda just stared up at him solemn-like for a whole minute. "Is that a promise, Brother Brigham?" she says. "Is that a promise that we'll get to the Rocky Mountains safe and I'll really have another home and babies?"

He nodded at her grave-like. "That's a promise, Sister Cinda."

She sighed a little and turned to me. "Do you recollect, Phineas, the Prophet Joseph promising me the same thing in a blessing when we first come to Nauvoo and I was sick?"

I nodded. "Then you must believe it's true."

"I do," she answers solemn-like.

Before Brother Brigham left, he rebuked her for her fears and said, "The Lord expects every one of his handmaidens to be firm in the faith."

I thought he looked at me like he'd never let a wife of *his* act up so. "Remember, Brother Phineas," he pronounced to me slow, "remember, it is a woman's duty to obey her husband, to honor his priesthood!"

But he needn't have worried none about Cinda. During the next hard months, she was my helpmeet for sure. Seemed like nothing was too much if it would help her get quicker to Zion.

Day after day and night after night, I and she stood on the riverbank and told our friends good-bye. Seemed like I never knew there was so many folks in the whole world before. They kept coming and kept coming. Seemed they couldn't wait to get across; and all the time we was getting their wagons and animals tied on a flatboat, they'd set in the littler boats and stare uneasy-like back over their shoulders at Nauvoo.

I wasn't any too comfortable in my own mind myself. And when it would start getting dark and Cinda had waved to the last boatload till it had melted into the mist on the water and I took her cold hand, and we started trudging back up the frozen ruts of the road, my legs would be weak with just being scared till I saw our house again and knew it wasn't burnt down nor full of mobbers. But Cinda would say in her sweet voice, "Don't forget Brother Brigham's promise, Phineas."

We slept them nights with the rifle standing against the bedpost. You'd have thought we'd of been glad to have a nice, warm bed when the others was camped across the river in frozen reed and willows, but we'd have give our hearts to be with them.

By the middle of the month, the weather changed, and we was sending the wagons across on the ice. Seemed funny not to hear the water gurgling no more but only the sharp, slow clunking of the oxen's hoofs on the shining froze river with the long line of white-topped wagons stretching clean across it.

But the ice busted, and then it was mud again. Finally, the last night before Brother Brigham was to break camp, he held a dance in the mud and snow. You'd have thought all was first-rate, the way folks laughed. You had to laugh, because if you swung your partner very hard, she'd fall down in the slush!

After Brother Brigham took us back, I and Cinda stood on the shore waving at his boat pulling away for the last time while snow made crystals in Cinda's red hair. We stood until we couldn't see nothing but the stars in the dark water, until the splash of the oars was gone and only the sharp swishing of ice cakes and Cinda's sighing stirred the stillness. Maybe we wouldn't never see Brother Brigham again. It was a feeling time for me.

All that spring and way into the summer, I and Cinda worked till we was like to drop getting the rest of the Saints out of Nauvoo. At the last there was one man with a big family who was desperate to go, and I up and gave him my ox team and wagon, thinking I'd have time to get another fit-out for me and Cinda.

Do you recollect me telling you how I and Cinda felt there was a rubber band holding together us and our home and our happiness? Well, 'twas like all them months of spring and summer it kept stretching tighter and tighter till we held our breaths waiting for it to snap. Nauvoo was a powder keg, and for nigh a whole year we set and waited for all hell to bust loose. In September, just when I was thinking I and Cinda would pull out with the next load, hell busted.

You see, in the summer Major Warren and the militia had gone with the Mormon Battalion to Mexico. So now there was the crashing of cannon balls through houses, the glass windows of our home cracking like a giant fish had banged them, and me and the few brethren left putting up breastworks of sandbags in the street and fixing up a homemade cannon out of a piece of steamboat shaft bored through and stuffed with a six-pound shot. There was our people, disarmed by the government, sharpening pitchforks for weapons. There was women and children holering, and wounded men bleeding all over Cinda's front-room rag carpet. Finally, there was the Gentile soldiers marching in the city tearing down doors of houses, stamping into bedrooms and insulting helpless women, kickin' sick old people out of bed, pelting with stones our sad-faced little children if they sneaked outside to play, and entering our holy temple and defiling the baptismal font with Satan's own corruption. There was Brockman giving every last Mormon just till sundown to get out of town.

With one arm around Cinda and the other around my rifle, I stood peeking between our front-room lace curtains. Cinda's orchestrone and all our chairs was stacked up against the front door; but nothing could stop a bunch of devils with bayonets, and I knew it. We could hear the faint barking of rifle shots and the sound of a horse pounding madly over cobblestones. Then a woman's shrieks, high and crazy-like, splitting your eardrums.

"I've *got* to get us a fit-out . . ." I couldn't seem to keep the shake out of my voice.

Things happened so fast after that, everything seemed kind of blurred. But somehow, there we was, Cinda and me, hurrying like mad

to carry stuff out to a rickety old wagon. It was like in a dream when you're running away from something, and no matter how fast you run, the thing's panting right behind you.

A blood-bandaged feller on a horse holding a woman up in front of him galloped by the gate and called: "You better hurry! Mobbers heading this way!"

Cinda gave a little sob and put down the bundle she was carrying on the porch and rushed back into the house. "The eatables, Phineas! That box of bread and corn—"

We got the box out to the porch, and Cinda was going back in again but I pulled her gentle-like out the door. There wasn't no more time. Just for a second, we stood there looking in at our house and saying good-bye. The door was open into the kitchen, and we could see the red checked tablecloth, the plate and knife and fork where Cinda was setting the table when the scare first come. The geranium was blooming so pink and brave in the kitchen window. In the front room, coals still glowed on the hearth; the horsehair sofa and chairs was as bright as ever, and the orchestrone smiled good-bye with its ivory teeth, and the grandfather clock⁵ ticked on like the family living here might just be off on a holiday and would soon be back.

With my arm around Cinda, I took firm hold of the latch and pulled shut the door to our house. We'd always said to our friends that the latch was always out, and now that we was leaving forever, it was still out. I couldn't see no more for bawling, but as we turned away, we could still hear that old grandfather clock a-ticking, ticking.

Cinda picked up the bundle, and we went out to the wagon. "Don't feel bad, Phineas," she says. "We can build us another house."

I looked at the bundle on her lap; Cinda had rescued the baby clothes.

5. Although longcase clocks were commonly found in homes during the 1840s, the term "grandfather clock" was not used until the creation of the popular song "My Grandfather's Clock" in 1876.

Hurrying down to the river, I couldn't help thinking it was like this town we loved was under a spell. Wooden kegs aside the well-curbs cracking apart, vines already choking chimneys, lawns curling brownly around the edges, fences torn, heavy-headed yellow grain rotten ungathered in field after field—in the blacksmith shop the coal-heap and ladling pool and crooked water horn waiting to begin work; in the bake-shop, fresh-chopped light wood waiting against the oven; in the tannery, fresh bark waiting in the vat—and all over the city, homes we'd built and furnished with such love and care just setting there ready to be lived in, waiting till Judgment Day.

Halfway to the river was a hill from which we could catch our last glimpse of the temple. Every wagon stopped; and driven like we was, we all turned around and looked and looked. The white and shining and gilded spire rose up in the sunlight like a finger of God himself. But we clucked to our teams. We knew we'd turned our eyes backward for the last time.

At the ferry folks fought to get across. A bunch of mobbers was there, swaggering, cursing. They grabbed one brother and ducked him in the river. "The commandments must be fulfilled, and God damn you, we baptize you!" they shouted.

Shiverin' in his wet clothes, he got in with us on the last boatload while the devils on the riverbank shook their fists at us and threatened to shoot us if we ever came back. The sun, just going down, was making a long lane of little silver ripples on the water, and you could hear birds singing.

We was in Poor Camp a month before Brother Brigham in Winter Quarters four hundred miles away sent wagons back to rescue us. Poor Camp was a sloughy place. I can see one sister yet setting in the mud under a bush trying to spread her shawl over two shivering little kids soaked to the skin and looking like drowned sparrows.

I and Cinda had a bed, though lots of mornings we'd wake up to find it a pool of water. But she'd only laugh and hug me and say, "It sure costs a lot to be wife to you, Brother Phineas, but it's worth it!"

We was looking forward again, you see, instead of back. We had each other them times, too.

You never saw nothing like Cinda. Cheering up the downcast, taking care of the sick. When I worried about her getting the fever again herself she'd smile gentle-like and say, "Remember Brother Brigham's promise, Phineas. Nothing can touch me."

Seemed like troubles only strengthened our faith in the gospel and brought us closer together in our love for each other. I could be hungry and cold, but with Cinda beside me I was a king!

Recollecting now, it is hard to believe that we were able to find happiness. Eating roasted corn ground with slippery elm bark and getting the dysentery. Crawling in Brother Brigham's wagons to Winter Quarters, feeding our stock on buds and twigs of trees, deaths so common we couldn't even fix up burial clothes—one sister shooing the flies from her dead child's face a whole day before we could stop to bury it. And that next winter, folks turning black with the cholera and dying like flies so there wasn't enough of us well to bury the stinking corpses.

But in spite of everything, Mormons could always find a little honey to suck. One night in the spring, coming home after a shindig, Cinda told me about the new baby. "I wanted to make sure first," she says, her eyes like blue fire. "Oh, Phineas, it's coming true! It's all coming true!"

Seeing Cinda like that made *me* feel first-rate, too. I had never had no real sorrowings over leaving Nauvoo nor Fayette nor nothing because 'twas all for the gospel's sake. What I wanted most all along was for I and Cinda to be worthy of the blessing of the new and everlasting covenant, but what Cinda wanted most was female things, the things of this earth. All my worrying was over Cinda all along.

The trip across the plains the next summer was as easy as pie. We started like Abraham, not knowing whither we went; but we trusted in the living God and, in spite of our hardships and trials, our hearts swelled with thanksgiving. We knew it was the last of our roamings, you see, and that we was finally headed for Zion where Gentile nor mobber

couldn't disturb us no more. Brother Brigham himself had come back from the valley to lead us.

My old wagon that was so rickety in dry weather and that looked like falling to pieces having no iron about it, seemed to swell with the rains and get stouter. I had a pair of young bulls under the tongue that could kick without taking sigh or rest, but when I and Cinda was up there on the wagon seat, singing as we rattled across the prairies, we wouldn't trade places with nobody. We knew our butter was being churned from the cream that jolted behind us in the rafters, and that our salt-rising dough coming up as we rode would be baked in an oven hollowed out of the hillside when we stopped. We knew the Lord would put out the prairie fires blackening our faces with soot and lead us to a stream where we could wash off the stains of the last meal before eating the next. During the rains when we'd have to stay in camp till the weather relaxed and the soil would hold up the wagons after we'd corduroyed it with branches of trees—even then we knew the Lord was just giving us the chance to hold a few shindigs in the mud.

And once when we passed a grave with a buffalo-skull headstone bearing Sister Clawson's name—Cinda, she knowed more than ever. She knowed. "This tabernacle of clay ain't important," says Cinda, "and besides, she died with her face turned toward the west and Zion!"

Finally, we come to the mountains. I and Cinda loved the mountains. In the evening we'd watch the snow-covered peaks gradually lose the redness of the sunset and then the little stars light up like candles. And when we'd get up in the morning, we'd see the peaks lose their silvery shine as the moon grew cold and pale before the new-climbing sun.

And when, at last, after five long years of waiting, ever since the Prophet's death when we first knew we'd have to flee, we drove down through the rocky canyon to where the valley opened up before us and we could see the tents and houses of Zion and the little black figures of men that we knew was our brethren coming to meet us—the valley

of the Great Salt Lake, our real home in the fat valley of Ephraim, the garden of the world, our mountain home we wouldn't never had to leave no more. I tell you, it was a feeling time for us all.

I and Cinda was down on our knees beside our wagon giving thanks to God. I couldn't find words enough. When I got through praying, Cinda whispered to me in a small voice as lightsome as a breeze on a summer's day, "Feel, Phineas. Put your hand here. The little fellow's kicking to beat the band. He knows he's home, too."

I no sooner got Cinda settled in a cabin than her pains started and her time came. I fetched the two midwives and then went out and borrowed the piece of sweet-smelling soap one of the sisters had brought across the plains and sometimes loaned out for birthings. Cinda was in hands for a night and a day, and the sisters talking female talk kept me out of her room. But finally, when I did go in that evening, there was Cinda sleeping, and I could see by the candlelight a fine, biddable little boy with a red fuzzy head nuzzling by her side. I felt to rejoice in the Lord.

It wasn't till the next morning I learned the truth.

"We thought we'd best tell you," says one of the sisters. "The after-birth didn't come, and we can't get it out ourselves. Don't worry none though, Brother Phineas, as it sometimes comes even twelve hours after; and Sister Cinda in general is doing first-rate."

Now I don't know straight up about sickness, and so I couldn't do nothing. But the next day when Cinda wasn't no stronger and started saying she had pains in her arms and legs and belly, and puked up all her food, and couldn't suckle the baby, I told her about the afterbirth.

Her blue eyes got scared and big. "Oh, Phineas, find a doctor," she says. "I'll die if you don't! The afterbirth *has* to come out or I'll die! Get a doctor, Phineas!"

"Ain't you forgetting Brother Brigham's promise, Cinda?"

I wasn't upset much as I knowed my faith was greater than I had ever felt it before. But to pacify her, I went out and asked one of the

midwives if there was a doctor in town. She says, sure enough, there be this same doctor who delivered Cinda the first time, at the beginning of our days in Nauvoo. He'd come west with the first wagon train.

Of course, when I told Cinda, she begged me to get this doctor right off. But knowing I didn't understand sic 'em⁶ in this matter, I went and laid the case before Brother Brigham, God's mouthpiece on this earth, and asked for counsel. And Brother Brigham says, "It is my counsel to let nature have its course; and if you will obey my counsel, the afterbirth will come away of its own accord, and she will get better and all will be well."

I felt that I must obey that message and have confidence for the best. If I went contrary, I would be considered weak in the faith in the authority of the holy priesthood.

But when I told Cinda, she only started clutching at the kiverlid and cried out, "You don't want me to die, do you, Phineas? Don't you want me to get well and raise up our baby and make us a home like we been planning?"

"I wouldn't dare go contrary to counsel, wife Cinda."

She just laid and looked at me with the tears slipping down her white cheeks and her red hair spreading like a flame against the pillow.

But I was strong in the faith, and I told myself she was going to be all right. I got the sisters to wash her and anoint her with the consecrated oil from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, and then I laid my hands on her and blessed her by the authority of the holy priesthood vested in me. Dressed in clean linen and laid back on her bed, she seemed more cheerful-like, though very weak and feeble.

The next day Cinda waked up screaming with pain. Seemed like there was a swelling starting up in her belly, and something about her was beginning to smell awful bad. I couldn't convince myself not to worry no more. I went up in town and traded my wagon for a bit of

6. To know nothing about, to be ignorant.

sugar and tea, and my team for a little brandy and half a pint of port wine. Cinda could just swallow half a teaspoon of the wine at a time, but it seemed to help her some, and she tried to let the baby have the breast a spell.

A day or two after that, Cinda begged me to let her suck some of the sugar I had got. I was afraid to give her too much, but she gasps in between the pains she was having, “It can’t hurt me none where I’m going, Phineas. You’ve got a lot of time for good things to eat, but I only got a spell—”

Then one morning Cinda’s eyes and teeth was set, and the smell about her like to made me puke, and her skin had got the color of white of egg, and the sister says there was a black spot on her belly where mortification was setting in. I laid my hands on her head and prayed with all my power and tried to reason with the Lord and tell him I could not feel to give her up.

“Oh, wife of my youth and choice of my heart,” I says, “arise and be made whole!”

Cinda kind of come to after that and threw her arms around my neck and kissed me and begged me not to leave her no more as she was going to die soon now. Seemed like all them days was just a time of Cinda screaming with pain. I can hear the screams even now, tearing out my heart.

“Do something for me!” she’d scream. “I can’t stand it! Please get the doctor, Phineas. He can stop the pain! It’s your Cinda that’s asking you.”

Then other times she’d moan quiet-like, “My baby, Phineas. Who’ll take care of my baby? Won’t you get the doctor, Phineas—don’t let me die—”

I’d hold her wild hands and cradle her in my arms, and my heart would bust with grieving, but I’d made up my mind to be strong for us both. Brother Brigham knew best. I was depending on the Lord.

Then, come Saturday, I and some of the sisters set with Cinda all night long. She waked once in such pain she could not talk and

motioned me to anoint her. I rebuked the pain, and it left, and she fell asleep again. The next time she waked, she called for the baby and pressed it to her breast and say to me, "Do you think I'll hurt him, Phineas, hugging him too hard?"

I couldn't talk much for bawling, but I says, "No, Cinda dear, of course not."

She kisses the top of the baby's red head and looks at it loving-like. "I wouldn't want to hurt it none," she whispers. "Ain't it funny, we been planning on *his* coming so long and now *I* won't be here. Oh, Phineas, I love him—"

Then the pain tears at her face again and draws up her knees, and she hands the baby to me and beats the covers. The next time she waked up she was calm. The sisters was all sobbing, but Cinda was calm. She looked at me wistful-like and whispered, "You know, Phineas, I needn't of died."

For some reason, all our fleeing from the mobocrats, and Poor Camp, and Winter Quarters, and our times crossing the plains was all like they had never been, and I was back in our old home in Nauvoo hearing Cinda say, "You love your religion more'n me, Phineas."

My knees trembled under me, but I says, "Cinda, are you satisfied that I have done the best I possibly could since we been man and wife? Are you satisfied I love you, Cinda?"

She smiled quiet-like. "Of course, Phineas, and I love you. Don't—blame yourself."

Her saying that is what I can't rightly understand now. How could I blame myself when all I had done was listen to counsel and do the will of the Lord? My spirit seemed to mourn within me, but I says to Cinda, "Do you feel happy in your mind concerning the work of God?"

And Cinda answered, "Yes, oh yes, for I know it is right. But oh, Phineas, I did so want a *home*—" She kind of closed her eyes, and her head rolled to one side after that, and I thought she had fell asleep in Jesus to await the resurrection morn, and so I stopped wetting her lips with the wine. But then she looked up at me again and motioned me

to go on. Her eyes was blazing with the most unearthly blue light, and she was smiling.

I leaned closer. "Have you seen something?" I says.

Her lips shaped out "Yes," and she tried hard to tell me, but I could see Cinda hadn't no more time left.

Seemed like I couldn't find no comfort, and so that afternoon, it being the Sabbath, I went to the bowery where Brother Brigham was holding meeting and giving the Saints exhortation.

"If a promised blessing don't come true," he preached, and I thought he was looking down at me, "you mustn't get stiff-necked and blame the gospel; you must look in your own heart for some sin that made you unworthy, or else rebuke yourself for lack of faith—"

'Twas mighty fine discourse.

MAURINE WHIPPLE (1903–1992) was a novelist, essayist, and short story author best known for her historical novel *The Giant Joshua* (1941). She also created the illustrated guide *This is the Place: Utah* (1945) and wrote articles that appeared in *Life*, *Look*, *Collier's*, and *Saturday Evening Post*. *A Craving for Beauty: The Collected Writings of Maurine Whipple* (edited by Veda Hale, Andrew Hall, and Lynne Larson) was recently published by By Common Consent Press.

Faith and Mercy

Lavina Fielding Anderson. *Mercy without End: Toward a More Inclusive Church*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2020. 288 pp. Paper: \$18.95. ISBN: 978-1560852834.

Reviewed by Claudia L. Bushman

Lavina Fielding Anderson's new book, *Mercy without End*, is a collection of essays, mostly delivered as public presentations and later published, mostly in the 1990s, by one of the most erudite and articulate living women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She brings the collection up to the present with a long introduction and a recent essay. The essays chronicle, in engaging fashion, many of the current issues for thinking Mormons as well as visiting and revisiting the cause célèbre that has come to define her public life: In 1993, Lavina Fielding Anderson, a faithful and active member, was excommunicated from the Church of her fathers and her father's fathers for publishing an article in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* critical of the misuse of power by Church leaders against Church members and for refusing to repent of the action or apologize for the publication and to promise never to do such a thing again. The crime she had committed, she was told after the fact, was apostasy, defined as embarrassing the Church and the brethren. Her husband Paul, in a letter to the stake president, described Lavina's deed as speaking "some unpleasant truths more loudly and clearly than Church leaders like to hear them" and giving a voice "to the quiet pain of friends and acquaintances who have been hurt" (6).

Because of this central event, I wish that the *Dialogue* article that prompted the action was reprinted in this collection. Diligent readers may find it as "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 7–64.

Unlike other members disciplined by their leaders, Lavina has not disappeared into the hinterlands or become a consistent dissenting voice. She has never left the Church, even as the Church has left her. Her Mormonness is deep and essential. She remains a faithful member of her LDS congregation in all manageable ways. For her twenty-seven years of exile she has continued to attend meetings, sing hymns, read scriptures, and engage in family prayer. She feels harmony with deity and with Church teachings, sometimes guided by a distinct voice. This dissident annually reads the Book of Mormon. She says that it takes about six weeks and gets the year off to a good start. Recent efforts for her rebaptism into the Church have been denied at high levels, apparently because she is not sorry or not sorry enough for shining light on questionable behavior. There is no question that this is a person of deep devotion, a person who shapes words skillfully and makes arguments with care. She values the holy words of the scriptures. She is aware and angry, but she is also at peace.

Among the themes she frequently visits are diversity and inclusion and then, of course, inclusion despite diversity. She skillfully crafts her essays with memorable images and metaphors. My favorite from many examples is that the Church leadership would like us to be similar, like blades of grass in a garden and the whole Church a beautiful, well-tended lawn. She dismisses that uniformity saying that “God doesn’t plant lawns. He plants meadows.” What we have from God is “the fundamental holiness of diversity” (185–86).

She recommends silently thinking and talking aloud in inclusive language terms whenever scriptures are involved or in talking about Church activities, in our songs and our prayers. She laments that women are excluded from our familiar religious speech. Her family always includes others when reading the scriptures and singing the hymns. Brothers *and sisters*, boys *and girls*. She wants our formal prayer language replaced with everyday speech. She reads the scriptures edited into contemporary language.

She writes that the Church promises many things that will come to you if you are good, but they don't always come through. Situations are much more complex than expected. She notes that Church members are trained to be afraid even as they are trained to deny that there is anything to be afraid of. She says fear is used "as a mechanism of social control for both women and men in the church" who are committed members (207). She says that some members are categorized and demonized after which they can be punished, that silencing, reprisals, and intimidations are very real in the Church. She objects to the idea that leaders are more inspired than members. She says that free agency argues against the infallibility of leaders. She opposes the use of the temple recommend to coerce certain behavior.

She has much to say about the unequal treatment of women in the Church and notes how women are unjustly left out of the official discourse. She writes, "The mechanisms of patriarchy are embedded deep in our culture and our language. Inequity is wrong—ethically and morally wrong" (194). She says that the Church is a "socially constructed patriarchy." She thinks that "as an institution, it is afraid of its own women." That its men "in general are selfish and lazy enough to prefer being served by women to being partners with them, that these men lack the moral imagination to envision true partnership, and that they are genuinely ignorant of the pain they are inflicting on the women in their lives and the pain in which they are consequently living themselves" (226).

She says that women receive "constricting messages" from the Church. They are told that they have been "created for a purpose that serves the convenience of others, a purpose they were not consulted about and did not consent to (at least in this life), that God will punish them if they neglect their duty, which is to serve their families" (236). She observes that Mormon women are allowed to have strengths only if we use them to benefit others. She argues that the only way women can save themselves is to trust the voice within them.

Having been excommunicated, she describes feeling freer. “The fear is gone; and along with it is the burden of the rules and regulations and restrictions. It simply slipped off my back. . . . I no longer feel any need to evaluate my own righteousness or, more importantly, the righteousness of others according to the rules” (176). She has moved to a broader landscape, noting that the Church teaches many correct principles, “but I no longer believe that it teaches all of them nor do I believe that the church is the only place we should seek them.” So, where are they? She thinks that the Lord “expects us to identify those correct principles out of the floods and torrents of raw experience with which he drenches us daily—experiences of good and evil and every gradation in-between” (186).

Lavina’s mind and voice have been a trial to several layers of Church leadership. She is more articulate than most men, thinking and talking at levels they are not used to. She writes of people, personal experiences, diaries, and reminiscences. She records the mundane and the precious. She says we still have miracles and recounts some. She believes that all will be well. She says and believes that “the glory of Mormonism is its joyous affirmation of eternal human worth” (154).

She often takes an accepted aspect of Mormon life and turns it on its head in these thoughtful and well worked-out presentations. We would all do well to shape talks as good as these. She sets questions and answers them. Her essays are sermons, carefully crafted, embroidered, trimmed with fancy stitches.

And here for your homework are her seven suggestions for living with integrity, for living according to her principles in harmony with a church that has disowned her.

Develop more faith.

Grow a backbone. Don’t act against your conscience.

Do not mistake the medium for the message, the vessel for the content,
the Church for the gospel.

We must learn to affirm covenant relationships with people even when
they break contracts.

Learn to disagree without ceasing to love. We need to manifest patience, tolerance and good will to handle dissent.

Even though we are excluded and shunned we can remain attached to the church by offering the testimony of presence. (151–54)

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Ezra Taft Benson: Christian Libertarian

Matthew L. Harris, ed. *Thunder from the Right: Ezra Taft Benson in Mormonism and Politics*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2019. 260 pp. Paper: \$27.95. ISBN: 978-0252042256.

Reviewed by Russell Arben Fox

Years ago, I was attending a local discussion group hosted by a fairly traditional (and Christian, though ecumenical) private school near the university where I teach. It was a great discussion, but one participant—a successful businessman then recently retired who has since become an idiosyncratic friend of mine—completely mystified me. He unwound a long theological spiel emphasizing that those who truly understood scripture (particularly John 3:8 and Revelation 22:17) would recognize the priority of an unforced, unguided, “whosoever will” relationship

with God. Moreover, since all interactions between Christians are to be guided by the Holy Spirit, the obvious conclusion is that Adam Smith's unforced, unguided, invisible hand should be emulated as reflecting the will of God. Thus, in any truly Christian society, or even one that only aspires to such, any regulation or redistribution that interferes with the free will decisions of individual Christians regarding how to dispose of their property or share their wealth must be seen as contravening the word of God.

At the time, while I knew (and still know) plenty of devout Christians who consider any kind of socialism an evil, I nonetheless considered this a pretty original theological synthesis. Now that I've read Matthew Harris's fine collection of essays, *Thunder from the Right*, though, I understand: far from simply hanging out and mostly disagreeing with a group of friends, I'd actually received a sermon from President Ezra Taft Benson's doppelgänger. I wish I'd known it at the time.

Harris's book is a short but very smart selection of scholarly takes on President Benson, looking at his political priorities, his government service, his Cold War worldview, his attitude regarding the push for civil rights, and how he articulated all of the above and more through his long and very public life. Benson became president of the LDS Church in 1985, when I was a junior in high school; his ministry, particularly his call to "flood the earth" with the Book of Mormon, structured a great deal of my young adulthood, especially my proselyting mission for the Church (as J. B. Haws explains well in the excellent though somewhat off-topic concluding essay in this volume; see pp. 225–26). But politically speaking, I have considered Benson's archconservative legacy to be embarrassing and, more importantly, uninteresting for decades. This book, by presenting the elements of a theory of a particular kind of Christian libertarianism and individualism through its different takes on Benson, has changed my mind. Engaging directly with Benson's extreme and often paranoid conservatism in either

Mormon congregations or America at large would likely be of little practical value today; it's not as though individuals like my aforementioned friend are thick on the ground. But developing a sympathetic interest in how such ideas hold together, what role they played in the past, and most of all how they continue to evolve in the midst of the present political moment is very valuable indeed, and for that we owe Harris and his contributors a vote of thanks.

I should note that the description I gave of what I called then (and still call) a form of "Christian libertarianism" is not a perfect match with what Matthew Bowman, in his essay, calls Benson's "moralistic libertarianism" (160). But it is a workable enough label, involving as it does an individualism presented in connection with a heavy dose of conspiratorial thinking, theological innovation, and cultural outsourcing. There is no one point in Harris's collection where these disparate elements are brought together as part of a single analytical argument about Benson's personal political philosophy, but Bowman's essay probably comes closest, with those by Brian Q. Cannon, Robert A. Goldberg, and Andrea G. Radke-Moss providing essential pieces of the puzzle as well. Let me emphasize that for anyone interested in post-WWII Mormon history, every essay in this collection is very much worth reading and pondering: Gary James Bergera's thoughtful consideration of Benson's meeting with Nikita Khrushchev and his subsequent retelling of that encounter; Newell G. Bringhurst's eye-opening look at Benson's presidential aspirations (and those who both supported and opposed him); Harris's own thorough examination of Benson's often extreme determination to see the civil rights movement as a communist conspiracy; and of course Haws's concluding essay as well, despite its minimal engagement with Benson's politics. But I believe the strongest intellectual insights of this collection are to be found in the essays by Bowman (on Benson's development of the Mormon notion of "free agency"), Cannon (on Benson's views of farming and his work as Secretary of Agriculture during the Eisenhower administration), Goldberg (on the relationship

between Benson's conservatism and the emergence of the "new right" in American politics), and Radke-Moss (on Benson's traditionalist views regarding women and condemnation of America's changing sexual mores). They all warrant particular attention.

Bowman's essay is built around the idea of the "producerist ethos" (162–63), which is another way of expressing the American attachment to the ideal of self-sustaining agrarian communities, a moral vision of positive freedom that echoed Jefferson's yeoman civic republicanism and was reflected in the populist challenges by farmers to the emergence of industrial capitalism and mass consumerism in late nineteenth-century America. Bowman does not explore all of these aspects of producerism, nor the ways it both paralleled and differed from the communitarian economic arrangements of the early Church's united order experiments. The most important element that Bowman misses is the connection between producerism and place—that is, the fact that producerist thinking assumed the ability, and the right, of people to work productively on their own land. Instead, Bowman presents the Mormon approach to producerism as involving an affirmation of freedom to be "realized through the mediation of tradition, law, and culture passed down from heaven" (167). But that bit of abstraction aside, he persuasively shows how the "moral rigor" demanded by producerism (165) was crucial to the thinking of President Heber J. Grant, Susa Young Gates, and others who shaped the still mostly-rural early twentieth-century Church that Benson grew up in, on his family's small farm in Idaho.

Bowman's thesis is that Benson, through his experiences in Europe delivering aid to struggling Saints following WWII and then later while serving in Eisenhower's cabinet, changed his thinking about freedom. In time, he came to see it less an inheritance tied to productive work and more ideologically, as a "political and economic liberty" that was part of the "plan of God," which "we fought to uphold during the war in heaven" (171–72). This shift is reflected not just in his many public statements, his association with the John Birch Society, and his relentless

anti-communism, but also in how he came to assess his own farming experiences while serving in Washington, DC.

Cannon's essay provides important support for this argument of Bowman's by showing how Benson, though he "instinctively identified with the yeoman ideal" and insisted that the small family farm was "the best way to produce American citizens" (25), was ultimately unwilling to tie those beliefs to the sort of communal practices and places that characterized his early life. That sort of farming stood in opposition to the "production shifts toward a balanced supply in terms of demand" (30) that Benson came to accept as an appropriate element of an advanced free market society, and that meant sacrificing some "suppliers" in order to reflect presumably inevitable economic realities.

Confronted with the fundamental problem of industrial agriculture in the twentieth century—namely, the drive to continually overproduce as expanding farming costs burdened farmers and required they generate ever more product to sell, which then lowered prices and continued the cycle—Benson, first as a county agent in the 1930s and then as a lobbyist through the 1940s, originally emphasized cooperative marketing to lower costs for farmers and enable them to price crops as a block. This, he insisted, was a better alternative to outright subsidies following the Keynesian model embraced by the New Deal. But rather than pushing such ideas more comprehensively later in his career, Benson instead embraced the premise that family farms on their own had to be large enough to be "commercially oriented and economically efficient" (37). Thus, as Secretary of Agriculture, he pushed Congress to change farming programs to recognize the reality that "the nation has an excess of cropland and farmers" and "many would have to quit farming" (42, 45). While Cannon does not explore the theoretical implications here (himself noting that Benson's thinking about social matters was always more ideological than theoretical), they are consistent with Bowman's thesis. In the decades of the Cold War, Benson's producerist resistance to government programs as something that would undermine moral

responsibility—an attitude that would be fully compatible with farming communities organizing themselves cooperatively—was replaced with, or at least overshadowed by, a more individualistic and libertarian resistance premised upon an idealization of Adam Smith’s invisible hand. The disruptive changes that made “the departure of some struggling farmers . . . inevitable” was, to Benson, perhaps nothing less than a reflection of that “eternal principle [of individual freedom] vouchsafed to us under the Constitution” (45). In Benson’s celebration of *laissez-faire* nearly seventy years ago, the neoliberal assumptions of contemporary globalization—which have come to be seen over the past thirty years as a successor to the confusions of a socialism-haunted Cold War world—were fully anticipated.

There was more to Benson’s vision than this, however. Goldberg’s careful documentation of how Benson’s rhetoric through the 1960s increasingly came to focus on what he perceived as various conspiratorial threats to America’s individualistic culture shows his growing—and narrowing—focus on the social contexts that the producerist ethic of his farming boyhood took for granted. Some of these threats, of course, were grounded in his Cold War worldview; others were partially guided by the teachings of the John Birch Society, which Benson remained a member of until the end of his life, even when they claimed President Eisenhower—the man who had defended Benson’s sometimes controversial tenure as his Secretary of Agriculture for eight years—had been an agent of, or at least a dupe within, an international communist conspiracy. This controversial group’s worldview stretched out to touch a wide range of features of modern life: for example, civic organizations (which Benson once harshly condemned as “do-gooders”; see p. 75), the push for civil rights, and most importantly, the traditional family. From his early work on behalf of expanding a productive community’s collective strength, Benson increasingly assumed that our primary concern should be defending an individual (male) producer’s castle against ideological and cultural threats.

Radke-Moss's superb reconstruction of Benson's views on women, family, and sexuality is particularly helpful here. Read in light of the other glimpses of Benson's peculiar conservatism throughout the book, the implications of his fondness for the rambunctious youth captured in the lyrics of "A Mormon Boy" and of his lifelong commitment to the patriarchal idea of male headship in the family come into sharp relief. Benson casts women—specifically, wives and mothers—in the position of providing the support and social formation that under the producerist ideal or its antecedents was presumably to be provided by the whole self-sufficient community. That Benson's wife Flora fully embraced this family-centric ideal isn't to be doubted; as Radke-Moss quotes her saying, "We women should encourage and help our menfolk in their line of duty. . . . Mothers are the builders of men" (190).

Benson, through the 1970s and 1980s, played a central role in shaping the LDS Church's opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment and, as one might conclude by looking at the past thirty years, propping up collapsing traditionalist assumptions within the Church about women in the workforce, birth control, and a host of other issues. It would be easy to assume that such attitudes were simply the reactions of an older man to changes in American society in the wake of the sexual revolution of the 1960s. Certainly with his cheerleading for large families, discouraging of women's educational and professional goals, and blaming juvenile crime on working mothers (194–99), the connection to any kind of libertarian concern with individual freedom might seem distant. Yet if one understands the agency Benson celebrated as a gift from God to be a concept that was coded primarily as male, it makes sense. The model of a loving Mormon home should have gender complementarity, Benson assured his flock, but nonetheless women were "given to man," not the other way around (195). The givenness that was once tied to the shared moral responsibility of the productive community became tied to a righteous family, with definite

roles prescribing who the agent of liberty was and who was there to support him.

These reflections of mine go beyond any specific thesis threaded throughout this excellent book and obviously gloss over dozens of historical insights and observations throughout the collection. One reason for presenting different facets of a particular character is to invite readers to find an argument that they can assemble into a whole. If I had not had the encounter I had years ago with my libertarian friend, it might never have occurred to me to read this excellent collection in the way that I have. But because I did, and because Harris has expertly assembled these scholarly investigations in the way he did, I am now in possession of a new understanding of man who, long ago, loomed so large in my faith life, as well as a new understanding of a kind of conservatism that replaced something else—something, I am comfortable asserting, that was much better—in the politics of mainstream American Mormonism. For all that, I give him my thanks.

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Two Trails to the Muddy

Dean Hughes. *Muddy: Where Faith and Polygamy Collide*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019. 373 pp. Hardcover: \$25.99. ISBN: 978-1629725857.

Phyllis Barber. *The Desert Between Us*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2020. 304 pp. Hardcover: \$27.95. ISBN: 978-1948908566.

Reviewed by Lynne Larson

The dry wasteland of early Nevada's Big Muddy Valley is the setting of two recent novels that capture the colorful era when Brigham Young sent a colony of Saints to establish St. Thomas southwest of St. George in the mid-1860s. Young hoped to grow cotton in the desert, taking advantage of the disruptions in the market because of the Civil War. It was a daunting endeavor. Rain was rare in the valley, and the few precious drops that did fall were soaked up quickly by the ubiquitous sand. The Muddy River was little more than a gurgling stream most seasons, barely able to support the sagebrush on its banks, let alone a few hundred desperate settlers.

Novelists Dean Hughes in *Muddy: Where Faith and Polygamy Collide* and Phyllis Barber in *The Desert Between Us* use this desolate area, smothered by heat, wind, and isolation to frame spiritual, moral, and psychological questions that required more from the early settlers than faith in the prophet and steadfast determination. Most dramatic is plural marriage, prominently featured in both novels and portrayed to be, at times, as intolerable as the land itself.

The frank exploration of polygamy is a rare and commendable step for Deseret Book, *Muddy's* publisher. Hughes has long been Deseret Book's best author of historical fiction and has often included material

challenging to Mormon sensibilities. Here he tackles the issue of plural marriage with appealing characters, genuine human conflicts, and a direct writing style that remains lean and crisp even as it covers every corner of the novel's theme and ultimate purpose: an honest exploration of polygamy for his faithful reading audience.

Hughes introduces us to newlyweds Morgan and Angeline Davis, a faithful young couple who are sent by Brigham Young with a group of pioneers to the Muddy Mission. Morgan and Angie endure everything from unbearable heat to backbreaking labor. They live with dust that seeps through clothes and into food, bedding, and every available source of water. They see outlying villages abandoned for fear of Paiutes. They watch many of their friends pack up and leave, unwilling to see their crops wither and their babies die. And yet Morgan and Angie stay. In spite of Angie's unfulfilled desire for a child, they are happy in their marriage if not their circumstances. They valiantly continue to endure and are determined to keep their pledge to Brigham Young and to the Muddy Mission. That is, until one day when the bishop comes to call. *Muddy* suddenly becomes an even more compelling story as Morgan and Angie face their greatest test of faith. "I won't do it," Morgan says, "And I'll leave this place if Bishop Morrison keeps pushing me" (210).

What Bishop Morrison is pushing, of course, is polygamy. A woman in the settlement, Ruth Nilsson, has been left a widow with a small son. "I'm not suggestin' you take Ruth as yer wife," the bishop tells Morgan, "I'm callin' you in the name of the Lord. . . . Will you accept God's will or go against it and live with the consequences?" (209).

Morgan is shocked and insists he has already promised Angie that he will have nothing to do with plural marriage. He is torn, for he loves his wife but he also loves and fears his God. The narrator tells us that Morgan "was haunted by the idea that if he turned the bishop down, didn't capitulate, some disaster would befall him—or, worse yet, would strike Angeline" (211). It's a very human admission from the faithful

hero of a Deseret Book–published novel. Hughes is forthright with his characters, covering every objection to plural marriage that enters Morgan’s mind, and many his readers may consider.

Eventually Morgan and Angie do agree to enter polygamy, and for the remainder of *Muddy*, Hughes explores the effects of plural marriage on the family and the Muddy Mission. Just as he described the uniting of the colony for Zion’s cause, so he describes the uniting of the new Morgan Davis family. Hughes paints a realistic portrait of two women sharing one husband in a three-room house and carefully includes the missteps and problems such a situation would provoke in spite of the best intentions. But Hughes also describes the comfort of friendship, the joy of having common goals and interests, of shared good fortune, and of mutual support in times of sorrow. He knows the literary soil where the seeds of love are planted and how to lead his characters naturally to that garden. Their faults are mostly petty sins, eventually overcome by good will and a common faith.

At some point on the fictional landscape in St. Thomas, Angeline Davis may well have been a neighbor of Sophia Poultney, the heroine of Barber’s novel, a young woman who shares Angie’s religion but finds little joy in the conviction. She is also a polygamous wife, but her husband, Charles, is uncouth, obnoxious, foul-mouthed, and verbally abusive, as different from Morgan Davis as the Muddy is from the verdant fields of Utah’s northern valleys where the Poultnays have previously lived. Sophia is his third and youngest wife and the pleasure of his older years, but what Charles really wants from her is more children, something she has not yet been able to provide. She is alone with him on the Muddy, away from his other families, who remain in the north while he serves a mission.

Phyllis Barber’s *The Desert Between Us* gives us Sophia Poultney’s story, and though the Big Muddy Valley with its drifting sand and its desolation is the stark panorama behind the narrative, Barber spends more time in the psychological wilderness where her characters find

themselves than in the valley itself. Her prose is dense and multilayered, her descriptions of the desert exquisite: “Bursts of red—the sand turning pink and red rocks eroded into hoodoos as the hills rise” (159). And as she reveals these human beings and the desert around them, Barber goes beneath the surface to explore the eternal mysteries of both.

Sophia is a plural wife, but polygamy is not this novel’s theme. There is no crisis of faith or climactic decision to be made. Polygamy has been embraced as God’s plan long ago and is an accepted part of daily life in the Big Muddy Valley. The settlement’s success is an obsession of Charles, his key to divine approval. These challenges are merely trappings for Barber’s main themes—loneliness; the need for freedom, accomplishment, and beauty; the yearning for approval, both from God and those we love; and love itself with all its mystery.

Self-awareness begins for Sophia when she meets a handsome road builder named Geoffrey Scott who rides up one day as she is outside hanging clothes, a particularly astonishing occurrence since his “horse” is a large camel, Adababa, a regal animal whose presence helps to reveal Scott’s engaging idiosyncrasies. Scott is flirtatious, kind, and fascinating to Sophia, whose years with her boorish husband have been as brutal as the landscape around her. She has not been seeking or expecting to find relief from her situation in a tryst outside her marriage. Sailing from England with a group of Saints, she married a man she loved while the ship was still mid-ocean. But he deserted her once they got to Utah, claiming he no longer believed in Mormonism. Jaded by the experience, she has passively accepted her position as a third wife, believing her duty is to forget herself and bear children for her husband and for the Lord. The arrival of Geoffrey and his camel stirs Sophia and reminds her of ambitions long buried. Her skill at hat-making had brought zest and beauty into her world, and her decision to embark to America was prompted at least in part by a desire to expand her horizons. Now she remembers those feelings once again.

Geoffrey Scott has his own demons. His mother has been murdered by marauding Indians, and he is estranged from his father. He has come west to be a road builder, to find freedom, to gain the approval of the father who abandoned him. But what he yearns to build is not only a pathway for horses and wagons, but trails between people—Native Americans, the newly freed slaves, and the Arab herders who have come with their camels to master the American desert as they have their own. Geoffrey Scott's efforts have brought him a tall Paiute friend, Kwami, a Syrian guide named Hadji Ali, and, most important of all, Adababa, the camel itself, a symbolic connection to the desert and its mysteries. Throughout the novel Adababa stands like a god, silently observing his mortal companions floundering around him.

Eventually, Sophia and Geoffrey's flirtatious friendship ends in a single illicit act. Sophia is tired of coping with Charles, tired of his calling her meals "slop," tired of his unresponsive awkwardness when she tries to flirt or be playful with him. He is an old man with only one thing on his mind—patriarchy. He must please God and the Brethren at all costs. Still, the transgression brings guilt to Sophia, who is committed to her faith. When a baby arrives that might belong to Geoffrey, Sophia has genuine sympathy for Charles when he suspects the truth. Even stubborn, blustery Charles, Barber reminds us, will eventually wither when he has no self-respect, no desert to conquer, and nothing left to sacrifice to God. Barber has created rounded characters who demand our compassion as well as our recrimination.

Despite their significant differences in tone and content, these are both excellent novels. Near the end of *Muddy*, Morgan Davis's bishop counsels him, "Brigham thought this valley might be a good place to grow cotton, and he was right. Still, things didn't work out. But that doesn't mean God had nothin' to do with the decision. He sent us to earth to do hard things and come back to Him humbled—and stronger. So how can you say that it wasn't worth comin' here?" (362). The bishop,

of course, is talking of polygamy as well as cotton when he speaks of hard things making people strong.

The last chapter of *The Desert Between Us* is more open-ended. There is no bishop to sum up the value of Sophia and Geoffrey's experiences, and there is still a desert between them and the elusive resolution that lonely mortals seek. But Sophia is hopeful as she finally leaves the Big Muddy Valley, walking through the sand for the last time, where she "watches the sky spin with stars" (289).

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The Tapestry of Mormonism, Woven Larger

Mette Harrison. *The Women's Book of Mormon: Volume One*. Salt Lake City: By Common Consent Press, 2020. 204 pp. Paper: \$9.99. Kindle: \$6.99. ISBN: 978-1948218283.

Reviewed by Adam McLain

"It was only in this moment that I realized that God felt the same love for me—that nothing I had ever done could remove me from the love of God. Leaving Jerusalem had only brought me closer to God. Losing my hope of a future as a wife and mother had brought me closer to God. Everything in my life had brought me closer to God because it was impossible to move

away from God. God was always there, with me, helping me, nodding at my choices. I didn't need to do anything to be accepted or welcomed home. I only had to be myself."

—*The Book of Miri, The Women's Book of Mormon: Volume One, 55–56*

At the end of the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, having semi-retired from her fight for women's suffrage, decided to create what would come to be known as *The Woman's Bible*. This biblical production sought to academically redress gender as it was then seen in the primary text. By working with a group of scholars and translators to re-navigate the conceptions of gender in the narrative, Stanton sought to radically liberate women from their contemporary oppressions, which she saw as being caused at least in part by the machinations of religion. I begin this review by turning to Stanton's work because I believe Mette Harrison's *The Women's Book of Mormon: Volume One* is delving into similar territory by telling the story of the Book of Mormon through lenses, points of view, and characters that are rarely, if ever, seen in the text: the woman, the transgender person, the homosexual, the bisexual, the genderqueer, the asexual, the widowed, the unmarried, the demisexual, the nonbinary being, and more.

The narrative of the text is that of an oral history passed down from daughter to daughter (*daughter* used in an appropriately broad sense of the term). Like the Book of Mormon, there are various books named after the significant characters who helm the project of keeping the oral history in memory. Sariah begins the history, expressing her dealings with Mother-God while traveling through the wilderness to the promised land and the beginning of this matriarchal line of scripture. Sariah delivers the oral history to the care of her daughter Miri, who gives it to her niece Eva. Eva, motherless, does not give it to a direct familial connection but instead chooses to deliver the history to Saren, a transgender man watched over and cared for by Mother-God, who then passes it to Grissela and so on (dutiful to its source material, the

novel even contains a book that can easily be likened unto the Book of Omni). The text follows the narrative plot of the Book of Mormon, growing and advancing as the Nephites interact with the Lamanites, and culminates in the Book of Heshu, which ends with the people of Limhi reuniting with the Nephites, as told through the view of Limhi's wife. As Harrison explains in her introduction, this two-volume story will culminate in the coming of Christ and the bringing forth of this ancient record to give an accounting of the works of the lineage of Mother Sarah.

With these new voices come new themes that Harrison adeptly brings to the pages of her text. For example, as seen in the opening quote to this review, Harrison focuses on, rather bluntly, Paul's confession in Romans 8:38–39: namely, that nothing will separate God's followers from God's love. Instead of platitudes, though, Harrison gives us characters that actually struggle with feeling the love of God and describes how they go about still believing in this eternal love. She also adds themes of marital and gendered abuse, the love of Heavenly Mother, and the difficulties within marriage and singleness. Additionally, she interacts with themes that are present in the Book of Mormon: the pride cycle, nonviolence, anti-war rhetoric, and familial obligation. As she adds the stories of the non-male characters who must have populated the world of the Book of Mormon, Harrison's text fills in narrative holes that exist in the Book of Mormon; for example, she shows the interactions between the Nephites, the Lamanites, and the many people who were on the American continent before Lehi and Nephi landed, and the influence and interaction that various people had on the prophets who wrote or were recorded by Mormon and Moroni in the Book of Mormon.

It is with welcome relief that Harrison introduces the reader to a feminine God who is voiced, who is present, who is divine. With the recent debates sparked around artistic depictions of the feminine divine, Harrison's description of the Mother-God is reserved enough

to be open to a variety of interpretations and is thus very welcoming to any reader. More than the descriptions of Mother-God, Harrison's feminine divine is an active participant in the story, just as the more masculinized God—the God of Lehi, Nephi, King Benjamin, Mosiah, and Alma—is present throughout the Book of Mormon. Mother-God speaks to Sariah; she works through her daughters, preserving their special record. These special works are focal points for the text, but they also serve as scaffolding as Harrison's characters interact with their world on their own, sometimes without the divine intervention of God, which adds layers to her narrative.

Harrison humanizes the characters and voices that are not at first apparent—or are completely nonexistent—in readings of the Book of Mormon. For example, as stated earlier, one of the keepers of the sacred feminine history of the Nephites is a transgender man; Harrison handles this portrayal with care, doing as much as she can to invest the concept that God loves everyone into the tale of Saren. In branching out from the normative, cisgender female character, Harrison provides ample opportunity for readers to consider and relate, through fictive and imaginative meditation, to people in the world of scripture who are similar to them. This work seems to be the culmination of Harrison's own efforts at allowing herself (and others) to finally be a part of a book that she never saw as truly hers due to the lack of characters that exude the feminine, the non-masculine. The entire project subverts notions of how to interact with scripture while maintaining the narrative thrust, along with the versatile themes, of the primary text. In this reviewer's opinion, all who respect, enjoy, and laud the Book of Mormon will find joy in Harrison's approach—and perhaps even see themselves within the text.

To return to the invocation of Stanton at the beginning of this review, Harrison's text is an active effort to broaden the inclusivity provided by the scriptures. Whereas Stanton worked from translation and commentary, one cannot do that with the Book of Mormon since we

do not have the original words or records of those who wrote the Book of Mormon. This is why a fictive effort is needed and appreciated. One can only delve so deeply into the fabled “war chapters” of the Book of Mormon in an attempt to discover the complexities and nuances of personal identities only to come up short. The Book of Mormon is lacking and silent in areas and matters that need to be considered, nuanced, and interrogated if faith and spirituality are to grow. Harrison, I hope, is an angel on a hill, heralding in a new age of fictive reimagining of sacred texts in order to broaden the tent, invite others in, and find joy in the complexities of mortality.

Indeed, Harrison’s work shows one way for those not represented in the scriptures to shape their own stories and priorities, knitting them into the complex fabric that makes up the tapestries of Mormonism. She beckons with this work for those forgotten to join her at the loom and weave their myths and identities into the great work begun by a god in a manger, restored by a boy in the woods, and continued by the writer at the page, the reader of the word. Harrison is doing a great and marvelous work as she responds to Christ’s command to the Nephites: “Bring forth the record which ye have kept” (3 Ne. 23:7).

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Exploring Disenchantment

E. Marshall Brooks, *Disenchanted Lives: Apostasy and Ex-Mormonism among the Latter-day Saints* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018). 258 pp. Paper \$34.95. ISBN: 978-0813592190.

Reviewed by Jana Riess

More Americans are leaving organized religion, and the fastest-growing faith tradition in the United States for some years now has been “no religion.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has not been as adversely affected by this trend as some other religious groups, partly because of the commitment level it requires of its members and partly because its historically high birth rate has kept it out of negative numerical territory. Still, recent years have witnessed rising numbers of people who leave the LDS Church as adults, and it is refreshing to see that some scholars are turning their attention to this understudied—and often misunderstood—group. One such book is Marshall Brooks’s close ethnographic study *Disenchanted Lives*, for which he interviewed many ex-Mormons in the Provo area between 2008 and 2014, attended their support group meetings, and listened closely as they attempted to make sense of the often profound shifts in their lives.

Brooks positions himself right away in the book, declaring that he has never been a Mormon himself and became interested in studying the religion ethnographically while in graduate school. This project began as his dissertation in 2008, and took ten years of work before its publication as a book in 2018. His goal, he says, is to represent “the disenchantment experience here equitably and reflexively, without unduly romanticizing or disparaging either religious or secular life” (vii).

In this he largely succeeds. The book is balanced and well-informed, driven not by ideology but by a desire to position the ex-Mormon experience with sensitivity and in the light of other scholarship on religious disaffection. It makes four primary contributions to advance the existing literature.

First, the book sets a high bar in its careful use of the scholarship of social theorists like Bourdieu, Durkheim, Žižek, Freud, Taylor, and Heidegger. I am not aware of any other study of either Mormons or former Mormons that offers such fascinating connections between the religious world of Mormonism and the contributions of these thinkers. Granted, at times it can be densely theoretical and wonky (this started as a dissertation, after all), but it also creatively applies the contributions of an intriguing range of religious theorists as they put a name to phenomena that might pass unnoticed otherwise. Whether he is discussing Bourdieu's concept of classification and how it relates to the way former Mormons choose to identify themselves (ex-Mormons? Former Mormons? Apostates, agnostics, atheists?) or Charles Taylor's notion of the buffered self, he puts classical theorists in conversation with very contemporary problems, with fine results.

Second, *Disenchanted Lives* is groundbreaking in the way it connects sexuality to our understanding of former Mormons. Previous scholarship on leaving religion, Brooks says, has focused so much on rationality—the intellectual reasons for losing faith—that it has neglected the embodied and emotional aspects of the experience (15). For Mormons in particular, this means that everything about their sex lives can be upended when they leave the Church. They have learned that their sexuality is literally the means to godhood and exaltation, and that the highest roles they can attain in this lifetime come through marriage and parenting. These could be interpreted as sex-positive messages, yet many ex-Mormons, especially women, have also internalized messages that sex is dangerous, even sinful.

And that bifurcation does not easily disappear upon leaving the Church:

For ex-Mormon women, loss was a polysemic metaphor that pointed to feelings of not knowing how their sexual bodies worked, of realizing that for decades they had been unable to use their bodies as they wished and had been trained to look at them as an enduring source of sin, not pleasure. Ex-Mormon women described lifetimes of “not knowing” their bodies, feeling unable, or unwilling, to fully explore their pleasure potential (126).

It is a real strength of the book that Brooks illuminates this important aspect of reconstructing an identity outside the Church—not in a sensationalistic way, overemphasizing stories of a long-repressed desire for sexual experimentation, but as a responsible scholar attending to the ways that religion in general, and Mormonism in particular, can be embodied.

Third, Brooks’s work helps readers understand why former Mormons are considered so dangerous to current church members, who have constructed multiple narratives to explain their disaffection. Most of these narratives place the blame squarely on the shoulders of those who left: they were spiritually lazy; they were too easily offended; they wanted to sow their wild oats. As Brooks points out, the realities are far more complex than such simplistic narratives would suggest.

Ex-Mormons are dangerous because they occupy a curious liminal space that unsettles current church members (167). Brooks writes that when non-Mormons say critical things about the LDS Church, their views are easily dismissible as being incorrect or based on poor information. But when the criticisms come from former insiders, the “poorly informed” rationale begins to wear thin; ex-Mormons are often people with years of intimate experience of the religion—sometimes more experience and knowledge than the people who remain (17). They may be close friends and family members. As such, their insights are

difficult to ignore. One contribution of Brooks's work is his observation that current Mormons' level of uneasiness about former Mormons seems most intense when the church itself is changing (155). This would be a fascinating thesis for historians to test as they study various epochs of LDS history.

Finally, and on a related point, Brooks's concluding pages offer important insights into what might be possible for "pastoral apologetics" in the church—in other words, what it would mean for current members to truly listen to former ones. In particular, he singles out the tendency of current church members to judge the decision to leave the church as either a pathology or as proof of a virulent anti-Mormonism. If some former Mormons are angry, if they appear zealous to demonstrate that the church's historical and theological claims are incorrect, that is a logical and even healthy response to the behavior orthodox Mormons have modeled for them. "As I have attempted to show, these behaviors must be recognized as a by-product of, and reasonable response to, the combination of a lifetime of church membership and a litany of social and psychological traumas inflicted on them as apostates" (220).

For all the book's many contributions, something important is missing: it is based on selective interviews, not representative data. The experiences of ex-Mormons in Provo do not necessarily reflect the experiences of former Mormons nationwide. Brooks acknowledges this briefly near the beginning of the book (18), but does not repeat the caution. Let me do so here. Outside of Utah, the Church includes a significantly higher percentage of converts as opposed to those who grew up in it. For converts, leaving the Church may be somewhat less traumatic than it is for those who were raised in the faith, because they do not have all of their milestone experiences connected with Mormonism—adolescence, college, marriage, childrearing—and their family ties are comparatively less affected. The experiences of former Mormons in Provo, the very heart of Latter-day Saint culture and education,

are not as likely to include those who were converts to the faith, stopped attending after a short time, and were the only church members in their families.

Brooks's interviewees also appear better-educated than former Mormons nationally. According to the Pew Research Center, only one in five former Mormons in the United States has a college degree, but in Brooks's interview pool, a majority seemed to be college-educated, some at BYU. His pool is in keeping with the educational profile of that segment of former Mormons who are involved in ex-Mormon social media groups more generally: among those who participated in a snowball survey shared in ex-Mormon affinity groups online, only three in ten did *not* have a college degree.¹ The subgroup who are active in the ex-Mormon community, which as Brooks notes was the main source of his interview pool, were also more likely to be white than former Mormons nationally, less likely to still believe in God, and less likely to get involved with another religion after leaving Mormonism.

That is in no way to undermine the fact that this is a significant and groundbreaking book. Throughout *Disenchanted Lives*, Brooks allows his interviewees to speak for themselves and name their own experiences. In fact, he observes that the church has only itself to blame if some former Mormons seem especially vocal about their feelings about leaving. The church gave them a script in which they were taught to discuss their religion constantly, and then it recoiled when they proved similarly vocal about their *loss* of belief (162). Brooks does a fine job of not only allowing his interviewees to tell their stories in their own words, but of positioning those stories in a larger context that is informed by both classic and recent social

1. Jana Riess, "This Is Your Brain on Mormon Facebook," Religion News Service, September 18, 2019, <https://religionnews.com/2019/09/18/this-is-your-brain-on-mormon-facebook/>.

theory. As such, this is a welcome addition to the libraries of people who are interested in both Mormonism and the rise of nonreligion in the United States.

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Embodied Mormonism: Casting Poetic Light on a Worldwide Faith

James Goldberg and Ardis Parshall. *Song of Names: A Mormon Mosaic*. Mormon Lit Lab, 2020. With artwork by Carla Jimison. 205 pp.

Reviewed by Mark Sheffield Brown

Poetry is a kind of embodiment, a conjuring. Through writing, poets can materialize anything whether it's a hammock in Pine Island, Minnesota or a red wheelbarrow glazed with rain. But in addition to creating wordy, mental approximations of specific people or objects, poetry can also embody larger things—concepts and abstractions, cultural entities, traumatic experience, contact with the Transcendent. This year, a new book of poetry has come out that embodies specific elements of the Latter-day Saint experience in ways that are new, artful, and important.

Song of Names: A Mormon Mosaic is a unique collaboration between multi-hyphenate writer James Goldberg (novelist, poet, essayist, playwright), the historian and blogger Ardis Parshall, and master

printmaker and educator Carla Jimison. They, along with Scott Hales and Merrijane Rice who each contribute a “guest poem,” have created a multilayered reading experience that, in many ways, embodies much about Latter-day Saint history and culture.

The project draws on Parshall’s deep knowledge of the more obscure, less celebrated figures and events of LDS history and braids together her short, informative essays with Goldberg’s riffing poetic experiments and personal reflections, along with Jimison’s lovely though unfinished symbolic imagery. Broken into twenty-two short sections, each begins with Parshall’s clean prose offering context with titles like “Church History in Syria and Lebanon” and “The Ebola Epidemic in Sierra Leone.” She writes about unknown figures in Church history in corners usually far from Temple Square. Whether it is Goldberg’s own grandfather, Gurcharan Singh Gill, the first known Sikh convert to the Latter-day Saint church, or Tsune Nachie, a woman who worked as a cook and housekeeper for missionaries in Japan for two decades before relocating to Hawaii to do temple and missionary work full time, the figures in *Song of Names* are far from the stereotypical image of blonde farmboys from Utah that are often associated with the LDS church. This inclusion embodies what the Latter-day Saint church aims to be—that stone cut out of the mountain that fills the whole world, not just the Intermountain American West. More importantly, Parshall’s contextual essays also show real people interacting with the thorny complexities of faith in the real world. The stories aren’t “faith affirming” in the sanitized, vetted-by-correlation manner often featured in official church talks and publications, but rather they are uplifting in grounded, authentic, sometimes mundane ways that many readers will recognize from their own lives. Her work embodies the real, sometimes ambiguous experiences most Latter-day Saints have as they experience faith in the real world.

After each contextual essay, a poem by Goldberg (or Hales or Rice) follows, and it uses varying forms to riff off of the information we just

learned. Goldberg uses the Japanese tanka form for Tsune Nachie's poem and a Middle Eastern ghazal for his grandfather. He also uses a triolet, a sonnet, and a villanelle among other forms. Despite the formal virtuosity, the poems are not flashy or grandiose. The language is often simple and direct, and the poems allow the formal elegance and the power of their subject to do most of the work. The book's longest poem, the six-part "The Ballad of Ith Vichit," follows a young Cambodian man fleeing his home country during the beginning of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1974 all the way to his return to Phnom Penh in 2014, a converted member of the church witnessing blessings from heaven replacing the falling bombs he saw forty years before. Goldberg uses repetition to give the poem a dirge-like feel at first, echoing "Fire falls from the heavens like rain" and "Is this war or the end of the world?" By the sixth section of the poem, the repetition eventually becomes hymn-like with "Twelve thousand saints worship in Cambodia / Twelve thousand saints worship in Cambodia." Goldberg's poetry is simultaneously ambitious and humble, beautiful and plain. In that way, his work is an excellent parallel for a people who believe in perfection while knowing they'll never attain it, who build opulent temples and simple churches. The combination of simplicity and straightforwardness combined with an almost cosmic ambition is Mormon to its core.

Goldberg follows up each poem with a brief reflection. These pieces synthesize the straightforward facts of Parshall's essays and the beauty of the poems to offer up insight into what it all might *mean*. It is in reflection that *Song of Names* embodies its Mormon-ness, its Latter-day Saint-ness the most. The book, like the people and faith tradition it represents, is a combination of historical fact, mythmaking, mundanity, art, craftsmanship, hands-on labor, and striving to make something holy. The reflections are sometimes based in scripture, sometimes in personal memory. Often, Goldberg draws on ideas and comments from other writers to shed light on his intersections between history, poetry, art, and spirit. In the reflection that follows the poem "Imperfect Sonnet

for Vienna Jacques,” he quotes LDS artist and scholar Faith Heard’s criticism of Mormon visual art for “offering a vision of ‘discipleship minus the hard parts.’ In attempting to communicate the overall goodness of the gospel, we often omit the heights and depths that give meaning to our lives . . . If we only celebrate the pleasant in the gospel, we fail to find meaning in the range of experiences God gives us” (49). He then goes on to describe what is essentially the thesis of the book and, in my opinion, the heart of how *Song of Names* embodies LDS experience: “If disappointment, uncertainty, and apparently unfulfilled promises are all essentially components of a disciple’s life and not simply statistical flukes of the spirit, we need to find ways to honor them in art” (49). The book highlights miracles, certainly, and stories and figures that could be considered traditionally “faith affirming,” but that is far from all that it is. On the contrary, *Song of Names*, in its history, its poetry, and its reflection, focuses on the beauty of the common, the miraculous nature of the earthbound and the striving, the divinity of whole lives rather than just the shining, easily understood moments from them. *Song of Names* celebrates and commemorates the wholeness of the Latter-day Saint experience, not just the well-known or easily digested parts of it.

The other aspect of the book, Carla Jimison’s illustrations, also dovetails nicely with the theme of the book and with Mormonism. In the book’s introduction, Goldberg explains how he and Parshall invited Jimison to create six prints that would exist “in conversation with the text.” With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, each of the writers was able to continue their work, but Jimison, a professor at BYU-Idaho, was blocked from the printmaking labs on campus due to quarantine and therefore couldn’t actually finish her part of the project. The book features her preliminary drawings instead. I’m sure it’s a frustrating situation for Jimison and not what any of the book’s contributors planned, and yet, in a way, it’s appropriate that a book celebrating the uncertain and the unfulfilled should be released during one of the most uncertain times in recent world history and feature illustrations that have

the promise of so much more. What is more in keeping with Latter-Day Saint theology than art that is good but that, with the right tools and time, has the capacity to be so much more than what immediately meets the eye? Jimison's spare pen-and-ink sketches hint at a much richer, more fully realized possibility in the future. Her drawings in the book, like the figures written about in *Song of Names*, have divine potential.

Each individual component of *Song of Names* is worthwhile and expertly crafted, but taken as a whole, the book goes beyond interesting historical fact, well-made poems, insightful reflection, and artfully composed illustrations. In the best tradition of poetry, the book takes something lovely, vast, and somewhat abstract, in this case the large, varied, profoundly human Latter-Day Saint experience, and conjures it into concrete, compact existence, casting light into some of its lesser-known corners and celebrating the delayed blessings, mortal foibles, and quotidian miracles and victories that make it up.

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THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING
ABOUT KATHLEEN PETERSON'S
"THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY"
(COVER ART OF THE CURRENT ISSUE)

James Goldberg

1

The most beautiful thing about Kathleen Peterson's "The Woman Taken in Adultery" is not simply that it is a painting about Jesus. I believe in Jesus. I have spent my life trying to listen to Jesus.

But I am worried we have fallen into the trap lately of believing that the thing Jesus really wants from a religion is more pictures purporting to depict him. More of his name. I worry we are beginning to emphasize the brand "Jesus" while emptying out reminders of all the many ways he relates to us. And that the more we try to wave Jesus like a flag, the more his spirit slips away, forgotten.

Maybe we're trying to do something good and just missing the mark. Or maybe somewhere along the way, our mark drifted from discipleship to Christianity. To claiming we belong by showing off how Christian we are. How decent.

The quest for respectability is alluring but toxic. It leaves you with little more than the vanity of repetition.

The most beautiful thing about this painting is that it's still searching for something.

2

The most beautiful thing about this painting is the way the shape of a cross spans clear from alpha to omega. The way its textured light fills the space between who we have been and will be. The taste of grace as day draws toward its close, the setting sun haloing the head of a man whose eyes are looking down. Giving you space outside the gaze that shames.

In this moment, he has bought you a breath.

Religion and *ligament* share an etymological root. *Ligare*: a joining, a linking, a binding. Religion is neither about Jesus nor about you—but a thing that happens in the space between. He is looking down, and you are looking down, and something strained thin by the tugs and pulls of this life is knitting itself together again.

In this moment, he has bought you a breath. And the air you breathe is the breath of life, the breath of God.

So breathe. The most beautiful thing is to breathe.

3

The most beautiful thing about this painting is the way the cross bears a pattern from your scarlet clothes. As they were placed there by a single hand in a single moment, a signature of eternity placed before time came to be. Before an ever-shifting now birthed before and afters. As if the falling and the raising in the history of salvation are one. Were always one.

The most beautiful thing is the symmetry that links the scarlet and the white. The way sin, washed, flows straight into holiness.

The most beautiful thing is the way his left arm, between scarlet and snow, is no longer stretched out in anger. But still.

4

The most beautiful thing is how unlike a commercial this painting is. How little need it feels to glow. How unconcerned it is with showing off Jesus' virtue by suggesting the power of his shampoo.

It is an easy thing for us to worship commercials. An easy thing for us to worship the shiny hair, the clear white skin, the conventionally good looks. For the way they remind us of wealth and status and the media messaging they've been wrapped up in.

The most beautiful thing about this painting is its quiet. The way its message is not shouted from the rooftops but written in the silent, shifting sand.

The most beautiful thing, the most true thing, is a message written only in sand.

5

The most beautiful thing about this painting is that the writing is for her.

Not for them. He'll never write for them: they've had his word already. He speaks to the priests and the scholars, sometimes shouts even. But he doesn't write for them.

The most beautiful thing about this painting is that the one thing he ever writes is for her.

6

The most beautiful thing about this painting is the brown of the skin on her back, on his face. A Faiyum brown. An Israelite brown. The brown of bodies held at the border of an empire, sneered at with contempt while the proud make gods in their own marble image.

Oh, but the richness of that brown. No marble as beautiful as her hands' earthen brown. How beautiful upon Mount Zion his brown feet.

Without that shade, the vineyard grows sick. Anemic. Poor Jesus
trapped pale in our art.

7

The most beautiful thing about this painting is the quiet hope it gives
me. In an hour of frustration, the tiny springtime stir of hope.

This people has blind eyes, You said. Still necks. Hard hearts. Of
course we stumble. Of course we stray.

But the most beautiful thing about this painting is this feeling I get:
like softening.

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 co-founder 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. To follow or support his writing, visit www.patreon.com/jamesgoldberg.

ARTIST

KATHLEEN PETERSON was born the third child of a third child to school-teacher parents in Provo, Utah. Having been raised with the idea that the best education is travel she has lived in the Virgin Islands, Malaysia, and Hawaii and traveled throughout southeast Asia and Central and South America. As an artist she is continually learning painting with oils and watercolors, illustrating books, making batiks, and building clay figures. She and her husband have four grown children and live on a farm in Spring City in Sanpete Valley, Utah, with two mules, eight free-range chickens, and Maggie the Dog.

She paints landscapes, architecture, and people, using oils, watercolors, pastels, and batik. Kathy also enjoys illustrating books and publications. Books include *A World of Faith* by Peggy Fletcher Stack, featuring twenty-eight world religions; *The Stones of the Temple* by J. Frederic Voros, about the building of the Salt Lake Temple; seven books of fables by Carol Lynn Pearson including *The Lesson*, *What Love Is*, *Will You Still Be My Daughter?*, *A Strong Man*, *Girlfriend!*, *The Gift*, and *A Sister*; *Koa's Seed*, a Hawaiian legend by Carolyn Han; *Moon Mangoes* by Lindy Shapiro; and *Girls Who Choose God: Stories of Courageous Women from the Bible* by Bethany Brady Spalding and McArthur Krishna.



Kathleen Peterson
Angels Among Us
oil on canvas 24"x36"



Kathleen Peterson
Lessons
oil on canvas 24"x24"

Journal of Mormon History

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The *Journal of Mormon History* aspires to be the preeminent journal worldwide in the field of Mormon history, fostering independent scholarly research into all aspects of the Mormon past, and publishing rigorously peer-reviewed articles and book reviews that meet the highest levels of originality, literary quality, accuracy, and relevance.

The journal's articles reflect topical diversity that spans time periods and geography; that encompasses historiography, folklore, gender, race, class, and interdisciplinary perspectives; that includes the history of all churches, ethnicities, and minorities within the Mormon religious tradition.

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