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.

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought is published quarterly by the University of Illinois Press for the Dialogue Foundation. *Dialogue* has no official connection with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Contents copyrighted by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. Print ISSN 0012-2157; electronic ISSN 1554-9399. *Dialogue* is available in full text in electronic form at www.dialoguejournal.com and JSTOR.org and is archived by the University of Utah Marriott Library Special Collections, available online at www.lib.utah.edu /portal/site/marriottlibrary. *Dialogue* is also available on microforms through University Microfilms International, www.umi.com.

Dialogue welcomes articles, essays, poetry, notes, fiction, letters to the editor, and art. Submissions should follow the current Chicago Manual of Style, using footnotes for all citations. All submissions should be in Word and may be submitted electronically at https://dialoguejournal.com/submissions/. For submissions of visual art, please contact art@dialoguejournal.com.

CONTENTS

JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH'S EVOLVING VIEWS ON RACE: THE ODYSSEY OF A MORMON APOSTLE-PRESIDENT[1]

Matthew L. Harris

In 1963, Joseph Henderson, a non-Mormon from New York, wrote a pointed letter to LDS Church apostle Joseph Fielding Smith asking him about the racial teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[2] The letter triggered a sharp response from Smith, who informed his interrogator that he was "getting a little fed up on the idea that so many people think I am responsible for the Negro not holding the priesthood."[3] It is easy to see why Henderson held Smith responsible for the Mormon priesthood ban, which also restricted Black people from temple access. The apostle had authored several books defending the ban and he was the Church's most aggressive leader condemning Mormon intellectuals who criticized it. Smith saw himself as the guardian of Mormon orthodoxy, not just on matters of race and lineage but

1. The author wishes to thank W. Paul Reeve, Matthew Bowman, Newell G. Bringhurst, Armand L. Mauss, Becky Roesler, Taylor G. Petrey, and Stirling Adams for their warm encouragement. Each reviewed a draft of the article and provided constructive feedback.

2. This article uses Latter-day Saint, LDS, and Mormon interchangeably. All denote members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

3. Smith to Henderson, Apr. 10, 1963, Matthew Harris files. We can glean the contents of Henderson's letter from Smith's response.

also on issues like evolution and doctrinal exegesis.[4] Yet over the course of Smith's long ministry, and especially during the last decade of his life, he began to envision a more inclusive LDS Church for persons of African ancestry. He took dramatic steps to both convert and retain Black Latter-day Saints. It was less a change in how Smith read scripture and more about the turbulent times in which he lived. The civil rights movement—and more critically Smith's own awareness of how the priesthood and temple ban affected Black members—convinced him to reimagine a place for them within the Church.

~

Born in 1876 in what was then the Utah Territory, Joseph Fielding Smith came from royal Mormon stock. He was the grandnephew of Mormon founder Joseph Smith, grandson of high-ranking Church leader Hyrum Smith, son of apostle and Church president Joseph F. Smith, and cousin, brother, or relative to several other apostles, including leaders in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (today the Community of Christ). He was unique in that he spent virtually all of his adult life in the highest councils of the LDS Church. Though he lacked formal training in higher education, Joseph Fielding Smith was one of the Church's most prolific writers in the twentieth century, authoring scores of books and articles that, as two recent writers

4. For more on Smith condemning Mormon intellectuals for expressing unorthodox views, see Thomas Simpson, *American Universities and the Birth of Modern Mormonism, 1867–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 115–17; Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of Latter-day Saints in American Religion*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 136–41, 156–57, 170; and Richard Sherlock and Jeffrey E. Keller, "The B. H. Roberts, Joseph Fielding Smith, and James E. Talmage Affair," in *The Search for Harmony: Essays on Science and Mormonism*, edited by Gene A. Sessions and Craig J. Oberg (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), chap. 6. Smith's most important book advancing his position on science and religion, particularly as it relates to evolution, is *Man, His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954).

explained, "helped educate generations of Latter-day Saints about the history and doctrine of the Church."[5]

Called as an apostle in 1910 at the age of thirty-four, Smith served in a number of capacities in the Church, including Assistant Church Historian, Church Historian, president of the Genealogical Society, president of the Salt Lake Temple, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, First Presidency counselor, and Church president.[6] Like many Latter-day Saints, Smith received a patriarchal blessing—a special bestowment by an LDS Church patriarch—that guided his life and shaped his ministry.[7] He received the blessing in 1913 at the age

5. Reid L. Neilson and Scott D. Marianno, "True and Faithful: Joseph Fielding Smith as Mormon Historian and Theologian," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 7. See also "New Volume of 'Answers'" in the *Church News*, published in the *Deseret News*, Nov. 26, 1966, in which the editor stated that Joseph Fielding Smith "is known Church-wide as an authority on Church doctrine. It has been said of him: 'In the Church he is a scriptorian without peer. . . It would be difficult to find a subject of Church doctrine or history that President Smith has not written extensively upon in magazine articles, pamphlets and books." Matthew Bowman notes that Smith was one of "Mormonism's most respected religious thinker[s]" in the decades after World War II. In Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of An American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012), 200.

6. For three hagiographic accounts of Smith, see Joseph F. McConkie, *True and Faithful: The Life Story of Joseph Fielding Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971); Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. and John J. Stewart, *The Life of Joseph Fielding Smith, Tenth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972); and Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph Fielding Smith: Gospel Scholar, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

7. An LDS Church patriarch is an ordained position within the LDS lay priesthood. Patriarchs give special blessings to the Mormon faithful, providing them with comfort, guidance, and caution. Patriarchs also declare lineage in these blessings. For more on LDS patriarchal blessings, see Irene M. Bates, "Patriarchal Blessings and the Routinization of Charisma," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 11–29; Matthew L. Harris, "Mormons and Lineage: The Complicated History of Blacks and Patriarchal Blessings, 1830–2018," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 83–129; and Irene M. Bates and E. Gary Smith, *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

of thirty-seven, three years after he was ordained to the Council of the Twelve Apostles, the second-highest governing body in the LDS Church next to the First Presidency. The patriarch promised him that he would "always be in possession of the spirit of revelation" and that his "counsels will be considered conservative and wise."[8] The blessing proved prophetic, for Smith's vigorous defense of the priesthood and temple ban during his sixty-two years as a Church officer marked both his commitment to conservative Mormon teachings and his willingness to defend the ban as revelatory and divine.

Although Smith first discussed the ban in a 1924 article published in the Church's magazine, the *Improvement Era*, his most spirited defense of it occurred in 1931 when he published *The Way to Perfection*.[9] It was one of his most successful publishing ventures, second only to his *Essentials in Church History* (1922) and perhaps the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (1938).[10] *The Way to Perfection* went

8. Blessing of Joseph Fielding Smith by Patriarch Joseph D. Smith of Fillmore, Utah, May 11, 1913, box 3, folder 9, Irene Bates Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter JWML).

9. Joseph Fielding Smith, "The Negro and the Priesthood," *Improvement Era* 27 (Apr. 1924): 564–65; Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection: Short Discourses on Gospel Themes*, 5th ed. (1931; repr., Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1945).

10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1922); Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith: Taken from His Sermons and Writings as They Are Found in the Documentary History and Other Publications of the Church and Written or Published in the Days of the Prophet's Ministry* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938). Mormon rare books dealer Curt Bench estimates that these two books were among the most influential Mormon books ever published. See Curt Bench, "Fifty Important Mormon Books," *Sunstone* 14 (Oct. 1990): 55–57; and Neilson and Marianno, "True and Faithful," 9–10. Gregory A. Prince, *Leonard Arrington and the Writing of Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016), 185, notes that *Essentials of Church History* "sold about ten thousand copies a year."

through eighteen reprint editions and sold tens of thousands of copies, amassing royalties even after his death in 1972. Published in English, German, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Danish, Finish, and Japanese, it did not go out of print until Church authorities removed the hard copy from publication in 1990 and the Amazon Kindle edition in 2018.[11] The book served as the manual for a Sunday School course in genealogy, reflective of Smith's close association with the Genealogical Society of Utah. The First Presidency approved it, and the book quickly became an authoritative statement on LDS racial teachings.[12]

Smith published *The Way to Perfection* at a time when Mormon racial teachings were unsettled and when Americans in general struggled to define race.[13] Although Smith and early Church leaders had taught for years that Black people bore the mark of a divine curse—that they merited a black skin for their sinful conduct in a premortal life—these teachings raised more questions than answers. Since the Church's founding in 1830, leaders offered a variety of conflicting statements about Black people, undoubtedly influenced by the culture of slavery in

11. For the popularity of *The Way to Perfection*, see Gibbons, *Joseph Fielding Smith*, 311, 370; and Smith Jr. and Stewart, *Life of Joseph Fielding Smith*, 210–11. For the publishing history of *The Way to Perfection*, see Stirling Adams's video, "Race, Lineage, and the 1920s–1940s Genealogical Society of Utah," Dialogue-Journal.com, Mar. 27, 2019, https://www.dialoguejournal.com/2019/03/race-lineage-and-the-1920s-1940s-genealogical-society-of-utah/.

12. *Topical Outlines to the Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1936), 1.

13. In the early twentieth century, laws defining racial groups varied from state to state. Some states defined "negroes" as anyone with one-eighth African ancestry, some with one-sixteenth, while others "one drop" or one-quarter. The best studies of the construction of race in the United States include Ariela J. Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008); Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Peter Wallenstein, *Race, Sex, and the Freedom to Marry: Loving v. Virginia* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2014).

which they lived. As recent scholarship attests, early LDS leaders could not determine to what degree Black people should be able to participate in the Church's rituals.[14] Mormon founder Joseph Smith produced three books of scripture that, along with the Bible, later became canonized as the standard works, yet these scriptures were largely silent on the spiritual destiny of African descendants. Correspondingly, the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants—two essential books of Mormon scripture (the other the Pearl of Great Price)—had much to say about Lamanites or American Indians, privileging them for "redemption and whiteness."[15] By contrast, the Bible—specifically Genesis chapter 4—discussed a "mark" God had placed on Cain, which LDS apostles equated with dark skin, designating Black people unfit to hold the priesthood. The other proof text was Abraham chapter 3 from the Pearl of Great Price, which the Church hierarchy interpreted to mean that Black members were disqualified from the Church's sacred rituals because they had committed some alleged misdeed or sin before they were born.[16]

Church leaders arrived at these conclusions gradually over the course of the nineteenth century. There is no evidence that Joseph

14. W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Max Perry Mueller, *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); and Jonathan A. Stapley, *The Power of Godliness: Mormon Liturgy and Cosmology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

15. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 56. For Native Americans' privileged standing in Mormon theology, see Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 97–99; Matthew Garrett, *Making Lamanites: Mormons, Native Americans, and the Indian Student Placement Program, 1947–2000* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016); and Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball, Working Draft* (Salt Lake City: Benchmark Books, 2009), chap. 30.

16. Genesis, 4:15; Abraham, 3:22–28; see also 1:27. For context to race and lineage in the Pearl of Great Price, see Terryl Givens and Brian M. Hauglid, *The Pearl of Greatest Price: Mormonism's Most Controversial Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 134–37.

Smith restricted Black people from the priesthood or disqualified them from the Church's temple rituals. In fact, early records indicate that at least a handful of Black men had been ordained to the LDS priesthood during Smith's tenure as founding prophet.[17] Some even received their patriarchal blessings, which pronounced their lineage and provided a roadmap to their eternal salvation, and some participated in important temple rituals, served church missions, and presided over church congregations. Black Latter-day Saint women enjoyed special privileges too. They received patriarchal blessings and participated in some temple rituals.[18]

However, the status of Black Latter-day Saints changed dramatically after Joseph Smith's death in 1844. In the ensuing years, Smith's successors developed a theology of race that marginalized Black people. In 1845, apostle Orson Hyde was the first Mormon leader to link black skin with moral impurity, declaring that Black people had been neutral in a premortal "war in heaven," which prompted God to place them "in the accursed lineage of Canaan; and hence the negro or African race."

17. Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People Within Mormonism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 36–38, 90–98; Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*; 107–14, 128–34; Mueller, *Race and the Making of the Mormon People*, 87–89, 95, 97–98, 106–08, 146–49; Russell W. Stevenson, *For the Cause of Righteousness: A Global History of Blacks and Mormonism, 1830–2013* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2014), 10, 13–15; Lester E. Bush Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 8, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 11–68; Connell O'Donovan, "The Mormon Priesthood Ban and Elder Q. Walker Lewis: 'An Example for His More Whiter Brethren to Follow,'" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 48–100; Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringhurst, eds., *The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), chaps. 2–3.

18. Quincy D. Newell, *Your Sister in the Gospel: The Life of Jane Manning James, A Nineteenth-Century Black Mormon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 105–06; Tonya Reiter, "Black Saviors on Mount Zion: Proxy Baptisms and Latter-day Saints of African Descent," *Journal of Mormon History* 43, no. 4 (Oct. 2017): 100–23; Harris, "Mormons and Lineage," 87–93.

In 1847, apostle Parley P. Pratt advanced the argument further, insisting that their cursed lineage had disqualified them from the priesthood.[19] In 1852, after Latter-day Saints migrated west to the Great Basin, territorial governor and Mormon prophet Brigham Young reversed Black priesthood ordination and instituted a ban barring Black people from full access to temple rituals. Young announced a "one-drop" rule to determine African heritage, but he provided no guidelines on how to do it.[20]

This rudderless policy left Young's successors in a lurch, for he never specified how Church leaders could detect one drop of African blood. At the time, there were no ways to detect bloodlines or reliable ways to discern lineage. Light-skinned and biracial people with African ancestry were the most difficult to identify. Their mixed-race

19. Orson Hyde, *Speech of Elder Orson Hyde delivered before the High Priests Quorum in Nauvoo, April 27, 1845* . . . (Liverpool: James and Woodburn, 1845), 30; Pratt, sermon transcript, General Meeting Minutes, Apr. 25, 1847, in *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by Richard E. Turley, 2 vols., DVD, 1:18, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter CHL).

20. Brigham Young, quoted in Wilford Woodruff journal, Jan. 16, 1852, Wilford Woodruff Journals and Papers, CHL, available at https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a5c827b5-938d-4a08-b80e-71570704e323/0/361. According to Joseph F. Smith, Brigham Young also applied the "one-drop" rule to whites or "Ephraimites"—meaning that they couldn't have any "negro blood" in them to be considered "pure whites." In Council of Twelve Minutes, Jan. 2, 1902, *Minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve and First Presidency, 1900–1909*, 3:181. See also Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks*, 145; John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 226. The "one-drop" rule was a racial definition designed by white Southerners to prevent Black men from having intimate relationships with white women. For this point, see Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), 157, 199–200. In 1930, the US Census Bureau adopted the "one-drop" rule to classify all persons with mixed-race ancestry "negroes." The Bureau established this rule despite some state laws designating racial distinctions that conflicted with the "one-drop" rule. See Michael Wayne, *Imagining Black America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2014), chap. 4.

status presented additional challenges for LDS Church leaders as they grappled with the uncertainty of not knowing who had Black ancestry.[21]

The "one-drop" rule, moreover, posed another significant challenge for leaders: It negated years of African, European, and Native American cohabitation in colonial North America. These multiracial peoples had shared the continent for hundreds of years, mixing and marrying, which complicated racial policing and made it all but certain that no one truly had a "pure race." From the convergence of these free and unfree peoples on the North American continent arose new racial identities resulting in "mulattoes," "mestizos," "mustees," and other "mixed bloods."[22] Determining a cursed lineage was therefore difficult to discern because mixed-race peoples were ubiquitous in early America.

~

Given the inadequate tools to police racial boundaries, LDS Church leaders like Joseph Fielding Smith struggled to define precisely where Black and light-skinned Latter-day Saints fit into the Church's conception of soteriology. In 1907, as the Assistant Church Historian, Smith called the rationales of the ban "tradition" and "the opinion" of earlier leaders.[23] Here he echoed the view of Church president Lorenzo Snow, who

21. Not until the 1980s did scientists discover new tools to trace race and lineage. See David Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past* (New York: Pantheon, 2018); and Bryan Sykes, *DNA USA: A Genetic Portrait of America* (New York: Liveright, 2012).

22. A. B. Wilkinson, *Blurring the Lines of Race and Freedom: Mulattoes and Mixed Bloods in English Colonial America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020); Colin G. Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991).

23. Joseph Fielding Smith to Alfred M. Nelson, Jan. 31, 1907, MS 14591, reel 1, CHL.

noted in 1900 that he did not know whether the curse of Cain teaching originated with Joseph Smith or Brigham Young. He could not determine if this teaching was the product of revelation or whether Young "was giving his own personal views of what had been told to him by the Prophet Joseph." Likewise, in 1912, Church president Joseph F. Smith and his counselors Anthon H. Lund and Charles W. Penrose confessed that they did not know of any "revelation, ancient or modern" supporting the teaching that "negroes" were "neutral in heaven," which was clearly at odds with apostle Orson Hyde's teachings some sixty years earlier.[24]

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Church leaders continued to express unease over how the Church had justified its teachings about race. In 1918, apostle Orson F. Whitney wrote that "Ham's sin, which brought the curse upon Canaan . . . may not be fully known; but even if it were," he cautioned, "there would still remain the unsolved problem of the punishment of a whole race for an offense committed by one of its ancestors." In contrast, while Whitney found the Church's teachings about the premortal existence "unsolved," apostle Melvin J. Ballard sermonized in 1922 that "it is alleged that the Prophet Joseph said—and I have no reason to dispute it—that it is because of some act committed by them before they came into this life."[25]

In any event, Joseph Fielding Smith's labeling Mormon racial teachings "the opinion" of earlier leaders was hardly reassuring to Latter-day

24. Council of the Twelve minutes, Mar. 11, 1900, in *Minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve and First Presidency, 1900–1909*, 3:35; First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose) to Milton H. Knudson, Jan. 13, 1912, in *Minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve and First Presidency, 1910–1951*, 4:107.

25. Whitney, "Saturday Night Thoughts" (1918–1919), reprinted in *Cowley and Whitney on Doctrine*, compiled by Forace Green (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1963), 224–25; Melvin J. Ballard, "Three Degrees of Glory," a discourse delivered in the Ogden Tabernacle, Sept. 22, 1922, 22, CHL. For different perspectives among LDS leaders on the "war in heaven," see Boyd Jay Petersen, "'One Soul Shall Not Be Lost': The War in Heaven in Mormon Thought," *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 1–50.

Saints who wanted definitive answers about why Black members were barred from the priesthood and temple. When he published *The Way to Perfection* in 1931, he knew that Mormon racial teachings were in flux, functioning more as speculative theology than as revealed doctrine. At the same time, Smith also knew that the Church lacked a clear-cut revelation affirming the ban, which prompted apostle Ballard to assert that "it is alleged" that it began with Joseph Smith. Joseph Fielding Smith's father, acting in his capacity as Church president, was even more frank in admitting that "there is no written revelation" to "show why the negroes are ineligible to hold the priesthood." Nevertheless, he opined that it began with "the Prophet Joseph Smith."[26]

The uncertainty about the ban's origins troubled Joseph Fielding Smith throughout his ministry, particularly questions dealing with the fate of Cain and Abel's posterity. In a letter to a concerned Latter-day Saint, Smith noted that "Abel was cut-off without posterity but according to the doctrine of the Church, he will have posterity in eternity because he is worthy of all the blessings." Smith further claimed that "until he does, the seed of Cain are barred from holding the priesthood." When the interrogator expressed skepticism about Smith's answer, the apostle exasperatingly noted that this issue "comes back to me constantly as a plague."[27] In another revealing letter, a concerned Church member asked Smith to explain "why the negro has a black skin and why he cannot hold the priesthood. I have heard many different reasons but I would like to know where I can find the true one." Smith could not answer the question satisfactorily and admitted in the reply letter that the "information we have regarding the Negro is limited."[28]

---

26. First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose) to Milton H. Knudson, Jan. 13, 1912.

27. Alfred J. Burdett to Smith, June 27, 1956, and Smith's reply, Jan. 28, 1957, both in box 39, folder 9, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL.

28. Mrs. R. E. Smith to Joseph Fielding Smith, Oct. 24, 1951, and Smith's reply, Oct. 29, 1951, both in box 28, folder 1, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL.

Particularly challenging were questions Smith entertained when he visited LDS Church missions. When a missionary in Brazil asked him point-blank, "Where is the revelation denying the Priesthood to the seed of Cain?" Smith stumbled.[29] He couldn't answer the missionary because neither he nor his colleagues had ever found one. These questions presented a challenge for other Church leaders, too. In 1921, then-apostle David O. McKay embarked on a mission tour to the South Pacific and encountered a "worthy man" with a cursed lineage. McKay promptly wrote Church president Heber J. Grant asking if he could ordain the man to the priesthood, but the Church president said no. "David, I am as sympathetic as you are, but until the Lord gives us a revelation regarding the matter, we shall have to maintain the policy of the church."[30] Other apostles experienced similar challenges, as did lower-level Mormon leaders. In the early 1970s, Lester Bush, a Latter-day Saint medical doctor, compiled an exhaustive documentary record on Mormon racial teachings, which included dozens of letters from local LDS leaders in which they asked the First Presidency difficult doctrinal questions about Black members, lineage, and the priesthood and temple restriction. Many of them date to the 1910s and 1920s as the Church expanded in the United States and abroad.[31]

29. Brazilian Mission president William Grant Bangerter recorded this question in his diary, recounting a question a missionary asked Joseph Fielding Smith when he visited the mission. See Nov. 3, 1960 entry, William Grant Bangerter diary, 1958–1963, CHL. For questions to Smith about Mormon racial teachings, see box 23, folder 8, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers; and Smith, "Negro and the Priesthood," 564.

30. "Minutes of Special Meeting by President McKay," McKay diary, Jan. 17, 1954, box 32, folder 3, David O. McKay Papers, JWML. For a recent account of McKay's visit to the South Pacific, see Reid L. Neilson and Carson V. Teuscher, eds., *Pacific Apostle: The 1920–21 Diary of David O. McKay in the Latter-day Saint Island Missions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020).

31. A copy of Lester Bush's "Compilation of the Negro" is located at the LDS Church History Library, the Harold B. Lee Library at BYU, and the J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah.

This uncertainty and ambiguity prompted Smith to write *The Way to Perfection*. He sought to quell doubts about the origins of the ban but, more importantly, he wanted to create a theological framework for Black priesthood denial. Among Smith's most controversial chapters include 15 ("The Seed of Cain") and 16 ("The Seed of Cain After the Flood"). There the apostle outlined a hierarchy of race based on his interpretation of Mormon scripture, his study of the racial theories of early LDS Church leaders, and his embrace of two secular theories—British Israelism and eugenics—prominent during his lifetime.[32]

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, Mormon leaders were immersed in British Israelism ideology—a Protestant teaching that privileged Anglo-Saxons as God's "favored lineage." For Latter-day Saints, these "lost tribes of Israel" had "believing blood," meaning they were more likely to convert to the LDS Church than groups or races outside of the house of Israel. Mormon Sunday School manuals and other Church publications echoed these views. Such theories reflected similar concepts expressed by Joseph Smith and Brigham Young half a century earlier.[33] Church publications, moreover, informed Latter-day

32. Smith's influence on British Israelism is best explained in Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 29–31; Armand L. Mauss, "In Search of Ephraim: Traditional Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 131–73; and Arnold H. Green, "Gathering and Election: Israelite Descent and Universalism in Mormon Discourse," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 195–228.

33. "Our Lineage," lessons 1 to 10 of the *Course for First Year Senior Genealogical Classes* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1934); "Children of the Covenant," *A Lesson Book for Second Year Junior Genealogical Classes* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1937); "Youth and its Culture," *Manual for the Gleaner Department of the Y.W.M.I.A.* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1938); and "Birthright Blessings: Genealogical Training Class," *Sunday School Lessons for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Board, 1942). For Joseph Smith and Brigham Young's views on race and lineage, see Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, chap. 4; and Turner, *Brigham Young*, chap. 8.

Saints of their chosen status. Unlike persons of African lineage, who were deemed cursed and therefore excluded from the Abrahamic covenant, white people derived their ancestry from Anglo-Saxons and were considered the "covenant race." To that end, many Latter-day Saints believed that because of their chosen lineage, they had to preserve and protect their "racial purity" lest miscegenation taint their bloodlines.[34]

Smith and his fellow apostles imbibed these ideas, but they also looked to eugenics to privilege hierarchies of race. In the early twentieth century, Latter-day Saints, like many Americans, embraced eugenics—the faddish (and erroneous) idea that science could improve the human race by breeding, good hygiene, and good morals.[35] "A very great deal is expected of this movement," General Authority B. H. Roberts stated in 1916.[36] Mormon leaders opined that Latter-day Saints were uniquely qualified to improve the human race. As polygamists and virtuous Christians, Mormons would preserve their status as God's covenant people through child-rearing and righteous living. This required them to shun birth control and embrace proper parenting and child-rearing practices consistent with Latter-day Saint teachings about families. If Latter-day Saints failed in this sacred obligation, Joseph Fielding Smith

34. James H. Anderson, *God's Covenant Race: From Patriarchal Times to the Present* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1946), 93 (my thanks to Stirling Adams for alerting me to this book).

35. The literature on eugenics is vast. See Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Adam Cohen, *Imbeciles: The Supreme Court, American Eugenics, and the Sterilization of Carrie Buck* (New York: Penguin, 2016); and Daniel Okrent, *The Guarded Gate: Bigotry, Eugenics, and the Law That Kept Two Generations of Jews, Italians, and Other European Immigrants Out of America* (New York: Scribner, 2019).

36. B. H. Roberts, "A Great Responsibility," *Young Women's Journal* 27 (Sept. 1916): 524–26 (quotation at 524). See also John A. Widtsoe, "Our Interest in Eugenics," *Young Women's Journal* 24 (Feb. 1913): 81–83; and Amy B. Eaton, "Eugenics and Parenthood," *Young Women's Journal* 24 (Jan. 1913): 13–17.

reasoned, the "more worthy race" would be overwhelmed by "lower classes" of European immigrants then flocking into the United States following the American Civil War. The failure of the "covenant race" to reproduce would lead to "race suicide" putting "themselves and their kind out of this mortal existence."[37]

All of these ideas culminated in *The Way to Perfection*, which affirmed Smith's belief that God privileged racial hierarchies. He insisted that because God had placed a curse upon "negroes," they were a "less favored lineage," which barred them from the "holy priesthood." Furthermore, he argued that because of their "less valiance" in a pre-mortal life, the blessings of the house of Israel did not apply to them like it did the descendants of Ephraim and other "favored lineages." Only "choice spirits" from a "better grade of nations" could enjoy the full privileges of the Church's liturgical rites. But Smith did not stop there: He claimed that Black people were an "inferior race," forever doomed as eternal servants to God's covenant people. Less dramatic but no less significant, Smith posited that the priesthood restriction began with Joseph Smith, despite the absence of a definitive revelation and despite the fact that Black men had been ordained to the priesthood during his great uncle's tenure as founding prophet.[38]

The Way to Perfection proved a seminal work. It was the first time that an LDS leader had ever systemized Mormon racial teachings. Several of Smith's colleagues, impressed by his thoroughness and clear,

37. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Birth Control," *Relief Society Magazine* 3 (July 1916): 368; Okrent, *Guarded Gate*, 85–86, 95 ("race suicide"), 114, 168. For deeper context to Mormon eugenics, see Joseph R. Stuart, "'Our Religion Is Not Hostile to Real Science': Evolution, Eugenics, and Race/Religion-Making in Mormonism's First Century" and Cassandra L. Clark, "'No True Religion without True Science': Science and the Construction of Mormon Whiteness," both in *Journal of Mormon History* 42, no. 1 (Jan. 2016): 1–43 and 44–72; and Miranda Wilcox, "Sacralizing the Secular in Latter-day Saint Salvation Histories (1890–1930)," *Journal of Mormon History* 46, no. 3 (July 2020): 23–59 (esp. 47–52).

38. Smith, *Way to Perfection*, 42–48, 101, 103–07, 109–11.

conversational writing style, recommended chapters 15 and 16 of *The Way to Perfection* when Latter-day Saints asked about the priesthood ban; Smith himself recommended the same chapters when he fielded similar queries. In addition, the book was cited in LDS Church manuals, in the publications of Mormon prophets and apostles, and in sermons at the faith's semiannual general conference in Salt Lake City.[39] Most notably, the essential teachings of *The Way to Perfection* were incorporated into an adult Sunday School manual in 1935. Accompanying the manual was a fifty-three-page "Topical Outline," which included a section called "Study Thoughts." These study questions asked students to ponder a number of passages about Black people—in specific, "How do we know the negro is descended from Cain through Ham?" "Name any great leaders this race has produced." And most dramatic, "Discuss the truth of the statement in the text, p. 101, that Cain 'became the father of an inferior race.'"[40]

39. Smith recommended these chapters in a number of letters. See, for example, letters to J. Reuben Clark, Apr. 3, 1939, box 17, folder 7, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL; to Ida E. Holmes, Feb. 9, 1949, box 27, folder 3, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL; letter to Eulis E. Hubbs, Mar. 5, 1958, box 9, folder 7, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL; Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:188; Smith to Sidney B. Sperry, Dec. 26, 1951, box 3, folder 3, William E. Berrett Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter HBLL). Smith's colleagues in the Church hierarchy also referred to chapters 15 and 16 of his work when asked about racial questions. See George Albert Smith, J. box 78, folder 7, George Albert Smith Papers, JWML; Spencer W. Kimball's notes, box 64, folder 5, Spencer W. Kimball Papers, CHL; J. Reuben Clark's "Negro and the Church" folder, box 210, J. Reuben Clark Papers, HBLL; Boyd K. Packer, "The Curse Upon Cain and Descendants," Jan. 3, 1951, box 63, folder 11, Leonard J. Arrington Papers, Special Collections, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah (hereafter MCL); Joseph F. Merrill to J.W. Monroe, Jan. 26, 1951, box 20, folder 2, Joseph F. Merrill Papers, HBLL; and Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 477.

40. *Topical Outlines to the Way to Perfection*, 15.

Perhaps most importantly, however, *The Way to Perfection* became the basis for a First Presidency statement in 1949, in which the Church hierarchy enshrined into doctrine the divine curse and the premortal existence hypothesis. The First Presidency cleared up any ambiguity about the provenance of the ban when they declared unequivocally that it was a "direct commandment from the Lord on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization."[41] The First Presidency's bold statement, however, ignored the fact that Black Mormon men were ordained to the priesthood during Joseph Smith's tenure as founding prophet and that at least one of them participated in limited temple rituals and presided over a Mormon congregation.

Smith followed up *The Way to Perfection* with additional books that defined and reaffirmed Mormon racial teachings as essential Church doctrine. Along with *The Way to Perfection*, Smith's *Doctrines of Salvation* (1954–1956) and *Answers to Gospel Questions* (1957–1966) established him as the Church's foremost authority on the priesthood and temple ban.[42] Because of these definitive works, his fellow Church leaders turned to him to settle difficult questions involving race and lineage. In 1951, for example, Stephen L. Richards and J. Reuben Clark, Smith's colleagues in the Church hierarchy, wanted to know if Smith could determine if "the inhabitants of the Melanesian and Micronesian Islands" were of "the seed of Cain." After thoroughly researching the matter in the *Encyclopedia of Britannica*, Smith claimed he did not

41. Apostle John A. Widtsoe wrote at the top of his copy of the First Presidency statement of August 17, 1949: "Church Doctrine Regarding Negroes." In box 6, folder 5, John A. Widtsoe Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter USHS); see also box 64, folder 6, Spencer W. Kimball Papers, CHL. For context to this statement, see Harris and Bringhurst, *Mormon Church and Blacks*, 64–66.

42. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, compiled by Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954–1956); Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957–1966).

know.[43] Similarly, Brigham Young University president Ernest Wilkinson looked to Smith for guidance on whether a prospective student with "one-eighth negroid" ancestry could enroll at the Church-owned school. "What is your advice to me?" Wilkinson asked. "Should we try to discourage him from coming to Provo?" Just as importantly, when LDS Church patriarchs had questions about how to pronounce lineage for Black and biracial Latter-day Saints, they looked to Smith for guidance. He informed them that they had to declare the lineage of Cain.[44]

As Smith's hardline views on race circulated throughout the Church, some teachers within the LDS Church Educational System challenged him. Lowell Bennion, a highly-regarded Mormon religion instructor at the University of Utah Institute of Religion, criticized him, as did others within the Church Educational System. During one memorable moment in 1954, Bennion "openly questioned" Smith's racial teachings at a training session attended by dozens of Church seminary and institute teachers at Brigham Young University. Smith took offense at such criticisms, deciding that Bennion was not sufficiently orthodox and had to go. In 1962, Bennion and his colleague T. Edgar Lyon, another critic

43. Stephen L. Richards and J. Reuben Clark to Joseph Fielding Smith, May 29, 1951 and Smith's response, June 8, 1951, box 17, folder 13, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL. See also J. Reuben Clark diary, June 1, 1948, in which he noted that Latter-day Saints submitted questions about LDS doctrine in "the question and answer column in the Church News," at which point they "were all submitted to Bro. Joseph Fielding Smith." In box 15, folder 1, J. Reuben Clark Papers, HBLL.

44. Wilkinson to Smith, Aug. 15, 1952, box 3, folder 3, William E. Berrett Papers, HBLL. For Smith's views on lineage and patriarchal blessings, see Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:168; Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:172; and "Digest of the minutes of the meeting of patriarchs of the Church with the General Authorities held in Barratt Hall, Salt Lake City, Utah, Oct. 11, 1958, at 8:00 a.m. with President Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Quorum of the Twelve," box 64, folder 4, Spencer W. Kimball Papers, CHL. Harris, "Mormons and Lineage," provides a richer context for Church leaders' ambivalence about declaring lineage for persons of African lineage.

of the ban, were ousted in a well-publicized purge at the University of Utah Institute of Religion.[45] Smith, who had clashed with Church religion teachers and Mormon intellectuals repeatedly over the years, recorded the experience in his diary: "I received a number of letters of protest because of the release of Drs. Bennion and Lyon who have been at the Institute for a number of years. I have also interviewed some students who were taught by them and reached the conclusion that the change and release was in order."[46]

Other Mormon intellectuals likewise incurred Smith's wrath. Sterling McMurrin, a liberal Mormon philosopher at the University of Utah, emerged as Smith's most vocal critic. The two had clashed since the 1950s, culminating in Church president David O. McKay's

45. T. Edgar Lyon Jr., *T. Edgar Lyon: A Teacher in Zion* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 188, 242, 253–57 (quote at 242); Mary Lythgoe Bradford, *Lowell L. Bennion: Teacher, Counselor, Humanitarian* (Salt Lake City: Dialogue Foundation, 1995), 132–33, 154–75. For the publicity surrounding the change in leadership, see "New Director Named for the U. of U. Institute of Religion," *Deseret News*, Aug. 11, 1962. Bennion expressed his views about Mormon racial teachings in at least two public venues. See his debate with BYU professor Chauncey Riddle titled "The Liberal and Conservative View of Mormonism," 1962, transcript in box 30, folder 12, John W. Fitzgerald Papers, MCL; and "The Church and Negroes," in *Religious Situation*, edited by Donald Cutler (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 547–54.

46. Joseph Fielding Smith diary, Aug. 2, 1962, box 4, folder 1, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL. LDS religion instructor George Boyd, who also came into Smith's crosshairs, recalled that "Brother Joseph Fielding Smith seemed to be the most exercised over the liberal attitude of the Institute faculty on the Negro issue." In David Whittaker interview with George Boyd, July 28, 1984, box 27, folder 19, George T. Boyd Papers, HBLL. For Smith clashing with liberal religion instructors and Mormon intellectuals, see Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, 154; Simpson, *American Universities*, 115–16; Sterling M. McMurrin and L. Jackson Newell, eds., *Matters of Conscience: Conversations with Sterling M. McMurrin on Philosophy, Education, and Religion* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 191–99; Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 96–97.

vow to protect McMurrin from Smith, who wanted to excommunicate the outspoken philosopher.[47] Smith's ire toward McMurrin reached an inflection point when, in 1968, McMurrin delivered a forceful speech to the Salt Lake City chapter of the NAACP in which he condemned LDS racial teachings as "crude," "superstitious," and "harmful to the church." He chided LDS leaders like Smith for maintaining a racist policy and predicted that if the Church did not lift the ban, members would leave. The speech received extended media coverage throughout the United States, causing embarrassment for the Church, already under fire for the priesthood and temple ban.[48] After reading McMurrin's address, an agitated Smith vowed to excommunicate him again.[49] He failed because of McMurrin's strong support from within the Mormon intellectual community. Not only was he a one-time United States Commissioner of Education in the John F. Kennedy administration, the grandson of

47. McKay told McMurrin: "All I will say is that if they put you on trial for excommunication, I will be there as the first witness in your behalf." In McMurrin and Newell, *Matters of Conscience*, 199–200. See also Gregory A. Prince and William Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 55–56.

48. Sterling McMurrin, "Negroes Among the Mormons," June 21, 1968, box 289, folder 2, Sterling M. McMurrin Papers, JWML. For media coverage of McMurrin's 1968 speech, see "Expert Says Racism Hurts Mormon Church," *Bridgeport Post* (Conn.), June 23, 1968; "Mormon Negro Policies Called Harmful to Church," *Middletown Journal* (Ohio), June 23, 1968; "Bias Will Drive Out Members, Mormon Warns," *Miami Herald*, June 23, 1968; "Mormon Says Church to Lose 'Thousands' over Negro Stand," *Palo Alto Times*, June 22, 1968; "Mormon Race Practices Criticized," *Phoenix Gazette*, June 22, 1968.

49. Smith's copy of the "Negroes Among the Mormons" is in box 14, folder 30, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL. The First Presidency minutes of July 16, 1968, state: "President Smith indicated that this man [McMurrin] should be excommunicated from the Church." In box 68, folder 1, David O. McKay Papers, JWML.

high-ranking LDS Church leader Joseph W. McMurrin, and author of two critically acclaimed books on Mormon theology, but he was close friends with then–Church president David O. McKay and his counselor Hugh B. Brown.[50]

More critically, Smith's passionate defense of the priesthood and temple ban affected his relationship with counselor Brown, who denounced the "curse of Cain" ideology as "a bunch of gobbley gook."[51] The two had clashed for years over the ban. Not only did Smith keep Brown out of the Quorum of the Twelve when Church president Heber J. Grant first proposed his name for ordination in 1931, but he vigorously protested Brown's repeated attempts to lift the ban. The first attempt occurred in 1961 just after McKay appointed Brown as a counselor in the First Presidency. Brown, deeply affected by letters coming into Church headquarters questioning the ban, supported granting Nigerians the Aaronic Priesthood when Church leaders proposed a mission there in the early 1960s. Smith and other hardliners scuttled the move, fearing that ordaining Black men to the lesser priesthood

50. For background and context to McMurrin's life and writings, see L. Jackson Newell, "The Essential McMurrin: Formation of Character and Courage," Brian D. Birch, "The 'Old Orthodoxy': Sterling McMurrin and the Development of Mormon Thought," and J. Boyer Jarvis, "Fertile Ground, Fruitful Harvests: Sterling McMurrin in Arizona and Washington, D.C.," in *Conscience and Community: Sterling M. McMurrin, Obert C. Tanner, and Lowell L. Bennion*, edited by Robert Alan Goldberg, L. Jackson Newell, and Linda King Newell (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018), chaps. 3–5. McMurrin's most prominent publications include *The Philosophical Foundations of Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1959) and *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965).

51. Paul Dunn, oral history interview with Gregory A. Prince, June 5, 1995, Matthew Harris files (courtesy of Gregory A. Prince). See also McMurrin and Newell, *Matters of Conscience*, 200.

would prompt them to want the Melchizedek Priesthood, the so-called "higher priesthood."[52]

Establishing the Church in Black Africa prompted heated discussions within the Quorum of the Twelve about ordaining Black men to the priesthood.[53] In 1962, Brown confided to a concerned Church member that the priesthood ban "is having [more] constant and serious attention by the First Presidency and the Twelve than at any time, I think, in the history of Church."[54] Also that year, Brown informed Lowell Bennion that the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve had been discussing the issue intently. "Almost to a man," Brown explained, the apostles agreed that "a change would have to take place. President McKay said a change must come, but he didn't know when." McKay further reiterated that the "Negro question was the greatest issue the church had faced since plural marriage."[55]

The following year, Brown escalated the tension between himself and Smith when he violated an unspoken quorum rule by reaching out to the media to disclose sensitive deliberations the apostles had been having about lifting the priesthood ban. "We are in the midst of

52. Heber J. Grant diary, May 21, 1931, Oct. 4, 1933, CHL (courtesy of Smith-Pettit Foundation). Edwin B. Firmage, oral history interview with Gregory A. Prince, Oct. 10, 1996, Matthew Harris files (courtesy of Gregory A. Prince). Also, Matthew Harris telephone conversation with Edwin B. Firmage, Jan. 27, 2016. Council of the Twelve minutes, Nov. 4, 1965, box 64, folder 8, Spencer W. Kimball Papers, CHL; First Presidency minutes, Jan. 9, 1962, box 49, folder 3, David O. McKay Papers, JWML.

53. Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 81–87; Harris and Bringhurst, *Mormon Church and Blacks*, 75. See also Dima Hurlbut, "The LDS Church and the Problem of Race: Mormonism in Nigeria, 1946–1978," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2018): 1–16.

54. Hugh B. Brown to John W. Fitzgerald, Mar. 13, 1962, box 4, folder 10, John W. Fitzgerald Papers, MCL.

55. Bennion recounted his conversation with Pres. McKay to his colleague T. Edgar Lyon. See Lyon's notes, Feb. 12, 1962, box 26, folder 1, T. Edgar Lyon Papers, CHL.

a survey [now] looking toward the possibility of admitting Negroes," Brown explained to *New York Times* reporter Wallace Turner. The counselor's frank admission prompted Turner to write that "The top leadership of the Mormon church is seriously considering the abandonment of its historic policy of discrimination against Negroes."[56] Senior apostles, stunned by Brown's private conversations with Turner, confronted him, demanding an explanation. Embarrassed, Brown said he had been "misquoted," but a Church public relations employee who heard the interview confirmed the accuracy of Brown's statement, as did Wallace Turner, who noted that the "quotes that appeared in the story were precisely the words spoken by Mr. Brown."[57]

Blindsided by the *New York Times* story, Smith countered Brown. In a public interview, published in October 1963, just a few months after Brown's interview with the *Times*, the senior apostle bluntly declared that "The Negro cannot achieve the Priesthood in the Mormon Church." This was consistent with Smith's position of the previous year when he

56. Wallace Turner, "Mormons Weigh Stand on Negro," *New York Times*, June 7, 1963; this story was also published as "Negro Issue is Considered by Mormons: Church May Abandon Its Discrimination" in the *Chicago Tribune*, July 9, 1963.

57. For McKay's meeting with Brown over the statement he made "on the holding of the Priesthood by the Negro," see First Presidency minutes, June 7, 1963, box 53, folder 5, David O. McKay Papers, JWML. Turner confirms that Brown had been quoted accurately in a letter to Stephen Holbrook, July 9, 1963, box 1, folder 23, Stephen Holbrook Papers, USHS. Brown also claimed he was "misquoted" in a letter to Stuart Udall, July 22, 1963, box 209, folder 3, Stewart L. Udall Papers, Special Collections, Hayden Library, University of Arizona and in an oral history interview with Richard Poll and Eugene Campbell that also included Edwin Firmage and Vera Hutchison (Brown's secretary), Jan. 26, 1973, box 51, folder 23, Richard D. Poll Papers, JWML.

claimed that "No consideration is being given now to changing the doctrine of the Church to permit him to attain that status."[58]

~

Meanwhile, as Smith tussled with First Presidency member Brown over the priesthood and temple ban, Smith also encountered push-back from some of his fellow apostles in the Quorum of the Twelve. The post–World War II years exposing racial injustices with the brutal murder of Emmett Till, the arrest of activist Rosa Parks, and the non-violent marches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his supporters brought civil rights issues in the United States under a laser-like focus.[59] Smith's racial teachings, which were promoted unabashedly within the Mormon community in the 1930s and 1940s, were now spoken of in hushed whispers in the 1950s and 1960s as more Americans, including Latter-day Saints, became attuned to the injustices of Jim Crow America. In the mid-1960s, for instance, the First Presidency dropped chapters 15 and 16 from *The Way to Perfection* when they published

58. Joseph Fielding Smith, quoted in Jeff Nye, "Memo from a Mormon," *Look* (October 22, 1963): 78, in box 9, folder 6, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL. *Look* managing editor William B. Arthur interviewed Joseph Fielding Smith and recorded Smith's views on the ban. Smith also reaffirmed the ban in a Church publication the preceding year. See "President Smith discusses vital issue," *Church News*, July 14, 1962.

59. Among the most insightful treatments of racial injustices in postwar America include David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Perennial, 1986); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006); and Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

the Portuguese edition of the controversial book.[60] At the same time, they denied permission for BYU religion professor James R. Clark to publish the 1949 First Presidency statement on race and priesthood in a multivolume edition of *The Messages of the First Presidency*, and they refused to print a controversial address dealing with race and lineage by Church patriarch Eldred G. Smith "because of the present turmoil over the Negro question." And finally, they instructed Church leaders to refrain from speaking about Black people as cursed or less valiant in public expressions to the media. Our teachings about "negroes," the First Presidency declared in 1968, must be "clear, positive, and brief."[61]

Smith was certainly not immune to the changes swirling around him, the Church, or the broader American society. During the turbulent civil rights years, he began to rethink the status of Black people and their place within the Church. When dozens of Latter-day Saints petitioned him asking if the scriptures justified denying Black people

60. I am grateful to retired BYU librarian Mark Grover, a specialist in Latin American studies, for this insight. I am also grateful to Stirling Adams for checking several Portuguese editions of *The Way to Perfection* at the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, HBLL.

61. Smith instructed Clark not to publish the 1949 First Presidency statement in a "Memorandum on a trip to see President Joseph Fielding Smith," June 29, 1964, box 7, folder 9, James R. Clark Papers, HBLL. See James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–1975). David O. McKay, as Church president, refused to publish a controversial address by Eldred Smith in which he explained to BYU students that Black people would be servants to white people in the Resurrection. See McKay diary, Nov. 13, 1966, box 63, folder 7, David O. McKay Papers, JWML; and Ernest Wilkinson to Eldred Smith, Nov. 25, 1966, box 378, folder 3, Ernest L. Wilkinson Presidential Papers, HBLL. For Smith's controversial address, see "A Patriarchal Blessing Defined," Nov. 8, 1966, CHL; also in box 211, folder 6, Ernest L. Wilkinson Papers, HBLL. For the First Presidency's instructions to tone down LDS racial teachings, see First Presidency minutes, Mar. 1, 1968, box 67, folder 3, David O. McKay Papers, JWML.

civil rights, Smith experienced a change of heart.[62] Sensitive to public criticism about *The Way to Perfection*, the aging apostle denied in the *LDS Church News* and in *Answers to Gospel Questions* that he ever taught that Black people were an "inferior race." More instructively, he began to champion a qualified version of racial equality for persons of African lineage—this despite Mark E. Petersen, Ezra Taft Benson, and other apostles opposing civil rights at the time.[63] In *Answers to Gospel Questions*, Smith stated unequivocally that Black people should have equal access "to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,'" adding that they "should be equal in the matter of education" and that they "should be free to choose any kind of employment, to go into business in any field they may choose and to make their lives happy as it is possible without interference from white men, labor unions or from any other source."[64] Furthermore, Smith did not object to Hugh B. Brown's land-

62. Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:184–85, discusses "the flood of correspondence from all parts of the Church" asking about civil rights and LDS racial teachings. For a sampling of this correspondence, see box 23, folder 8, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL.

63. For Smith denying that he described Black people "as belonging to an 'inferior race,'" see "President Smith discusses vital issue," *Church News*, in *Deseret News*, July 14, 1962, and Smith *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:170. For the apostle's conflicted views about civil rights, see Harris and Bringhurst, *Mormon Church and Blacks*, 67–71, 76–79; and Matthew L. Harris, "Martin Luther King, Civil Rights, and Perceptions of a 'Communist Conspiracy,'" chap. 5 in *Thunder from the Right: Ezra Taft Benson in Mormonism and Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019).

64. Joseph Fielding Smith, "NON-SEGREGATION," 1962, box 9, folder 7, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL. See also box 64, folder 8, Spencer W. Kimball Papers, CHL; and Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:184–85. Smith also approved an article by a librarian at the University of Utah in which the author stated: "There is actually official doctrine in favor of earthly rights for the Negro." In L. H. Kirkpatrick, "The Negro and the L.D.S. Church," *Pen Magazine* (Winter 1954): 12–13, 29. See also Sterling McMurrin to Lowry Nelson, Aug. 2, 1952, box 20, folder 5, Lowry Nelson Papers, JWML, who confirmed that Smith (and J. Reuben Clark) conveyed to Kirkpatrick their support for

mark 1963 statement in the LDS Church general conference when he proclaimed that "there is in this Church no doctrine, belief, or practice that is intended to deny the enjoyment of full civil rights by any person regardless of race, color, or creed."[65]

Even so, racial equality had limits for Smith, as it did for many of his colleagues in Church leadership. He shared the fears of miscegenation common in the rest of the nation and he still referred to Black people as the "seed of Cain" in his sermons and writings and even called them "Darkies" during a well-publicized interview.[66] Just as troubling, he did not support specific civil rights bills, although he accepted civil rights as a general concept. When Catholics along with two of the South's oldest and most prominent regional churches—the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)—supported integration and called for protections in jobs and housing, Smith remained conspicuously silent.[67]

---

civil rights. McMurrin wrote that "Each insisted that the negro should have full civil rights" (ibid.).

65. Hugh B. Brown, *Conference Report of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Oct. 1963, 91.

66. For LDS leaders' views on miscegenation, see Harris and Bringhurst, *Mormon Church and Blacks*, 109–11; for background and context to miscegenation in Utah, see Patrick Q. Mason, "The Prohibition of Interracial Marriage in Utah, 1888–1963," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 108–31; and Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 85, 93, 118, 240–41. For miscegenation in general after World War II, see Renee C. Romano, *Race Mixing: Black-White Marriage in Postwar America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). For Smith's "darkies" comment, see William B. Arthur, interview with Smith, July 14, 1962, in Nye, "Memo from a Mormon," 78.

67. David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 107–08; Mark A. Noll, *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 130–32; John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 147–49.

All the while, he was mindful of how housing and employment bills to prevent racial discrimination could complicate the Church's anti-miscegenation teachings. He feared that if Black and white people lived and worked among each other, it could potentially lead to dating and ultimately marriage. To an inquisitive Church member, the apostle said forcefully that "It would be a serious error for a white person to marry a Negro, for the Lord forbade it."[68]

But Smith's issues with Black people extended well beyond theology; Black music vexed him. He cautioned BYU president Ernest Wilkinson not to permit the "negro twist" at school-sanctioned dances, fearing that this popular dance, which involved a series of gyrations and stomps, would sully the morals of the predominantly white student body. He also demanded loyalty from BYU faculty on LDS racial teachings. He supported a survey, for example, asking two unorthodox religion professors a series of questions about fundamental LDS teachings. One question asked: "Is the Church wrong for not giving the priesthood to the Negro?"[69] Furthermore, Smith expressed ambivalence about proselytizing among persons of African descent. Determining who had "negro blood" was a challenging and serious problem, especially as the Church accelerated its missionary efforts following the Second World War. Proselytizing in racially-mixed countries like Brazil and South Africa posed considerable challenges for Smith and his fellow apostles because missionaries could not determine who had "a cursed lineage." To avoid controversy, Smith instructed missionaries

68. Joseph Fielding Smith to Morris L. Reynolds, May 9, 1966, Matthew Harris files. See also Smith, "NON-SEGREGATION."

69. Smith to Wilkinson, Sept. 10, 1963, box 269, folder 16, Ernest L. Wilkinson Presidential Papers, HBLL. For Smith demanding orthodoxy on LDS racial teachings, and the survey, see Ernest Wilkinson to Smith, Apr. 12, 1963, ibid.

that "whenever possible" they should avoid teaching persons of African ancestry "in view of the problems which generally arise."[70]

Smith fumbled on questions regarding Black priesthood ordination as well. When a well-intentioned Latter-day Saint asked him about Elijah Abel, an early Black Latter-day Saint priesthood holder, Smith noted that the "story that Joseph Smith [had] ordained a Negro and sent him on a mission is not true." On another occasion, he informed a concerned Church member that there were actually two Elijah Abels in Nauvoo in the 1840s—one Black and one white. The white Elijah Abel held the priesthood, he stubbornly insisted. Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson stoked the controversy when he published a four-volume book entitled *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, in which he acknowledged that early Church leaders had conferred priesthood ordination on Abel. Smith claimed, without evidence, that Jenson was mistaken, and the apostle huffed that admitting Abel's ordination

70. As Smith explained to missionaries in Brazil, Oct. 25, 1960, in William Grant Bangerter diary, 1958–1963, CHL. Smith, of course, was not the only LDS leader to discourage proselytizing among Black members. In 1947, the First Presidency (George Albert Smith, J. Reuben Clark Jr., and David O. McKay) wrote to a mission president and commented that "No special effort has ever been made to proselytize among the Negro race, and social intercourse between the Whites and the Negroes should certainly not be encouraged because of leading to intermarriage, which the Lord has forbidden." First Presidency to Francis W. Brown (president of the Central States Mission), Jan. 13, 1947, Matthew Harris files (courtesy of Mark Grover of BYU).

had done "the Church a disservice that has turned out to plague us."[71] To BYU and Church Educational System educators, however, Smith acknowledged Abel's ordination, even conceding that "perhaps more than one negro" was ordained during the early days of the Church. But he quickly added that "when it came to the attention of the Prophet Joseph Smith, he said it was wrong."[72]

Why did Smith offer conflicting accounts of Abel's ordination? Simply put, he could not reconcile Black priesthood ordination with the narrative he created in *The Way to Perfection*.

---

71. Smith to Eulis E. Hubbs, Mar. 5, 1958, box 9, folder 7, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL; Smith to Floren S. Preece, Jan. 18, 1955, box 24, folder 28, S. George Ellsworth Papers, MCL. Andrew Jenson, ed., *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Co., 1901–36), 3:577. When Jenson published the account acknowledging Abel's priesthood ordination, it prompted a flurry of letters from the grassroots to LDS Church headquarters. Some LDS officials acknowledged Abel's ordination, though they called it "exceptional" (Joseph Anderson [Secretary to First Presidency] to Dorothy Woods, Oct. 24, 1947, box 49, folder 19, Richard D. Poll Papers, JWML), while others asserted that when the ordination was discovered, it "was declared null and void by the Prophet himself and . . . by the next three presidents who succeeded the Prophet Joseph" (Harold B. Lee, "Doing the Right Things for the Right Reasons," BYU devotional address, Apr. 19, 1961, *BYU Speeches of the Year* [Provo, Utah: BYU Extension Services, 1961], 7). First Presidency counselor J. Reuben Clark acknowledged that "[t]here was one and possible two colored men upon whom the priesthood was confirmed in the very early days of the Church before the Brethren understood the scriptures on the subject" (Clark, untitled general conference address, "Draft #3, Sept. 13, 1954, box 210, "Negro and the Church" folder, J. Reuben Clark Papers, HBLL). Likewise, LDS Church president David O. McKay noted that "in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith one of Negro blood received the Priesthood. Another in the days of Brigham Young received it and went through the Temple. These are authenticated facts but exceptions" (David O. McKay diary, Jan. 17, 1954, box 32, folder 3, David O. McKay Papers, JWML).

72. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Discussion After Talk on Racial Prejudice," Oct. 7, 1954, 34, box 4, folder 7, William E. Berrett Papers, HBLL.

Nevertheless, Smith insisted that Black people had a place in the Church. In *The Way to Perfection*, he commented that "these unfortunate people" could be baptized into the Church but that was the extent of their involvement. In *Doctrines of Salvation* and *Answers to Gospel Questions*, he offered more details, outlining the basic functions of the Church in which Black members could participate. They could be baptized, have their children blessed, participate in the sacrament, receive their patriarchal blessings, and even qualify for the "celestial kingdom" if they "remained faithful and true to the teachings of the church."[73] In that context, Smith declared that "the Church does and can do more for the Negro pertaining to his salvation than any other Church in existence."[74]

In 1955, at about the same time that Church leaders began to deemphasize *The Way to Perfection*, Smith showed another side of himself when, as president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he proposed a program to the First Presidency to better meet the needs of Black Latter-day Saints in the Salt Lake Valley. He recommended that "all the Negro members in the [Salt Lake] area be organized into a unit and made a part of one of the stakes of Zion." He envisioned that it would act as "an independent unit which would function somewhat the same as the Deaf Branch or the Spanish-American Branch." Of the "144 Negroes in this area," Smith explained, "very few of them are active, undoubtedly because the church has not met their needs."[75] The following year, he instructed apostle Mark E. Petersen to hold "Cottage Meetings in Negro homes for the purpose of finding out why so few Negroes belonged to the Mormon Church." On instructions from

73. Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, 111; Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:170–72 (quote at 171); and Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:55.

74. Joseph Fielding Smith diary, Feb. 22, 1962, box 4, folder 1, Joseph Fielding Smith Papers, CHL.

75. Joseph Fielding Smith to First Presidency, Mar. 30, 1955, box 64, folder 6, Spencer W. Kimball Papers, CHL.

Smith, his file leader, Petersen promised Black Latter-day Saints that the Church "would build them a chapel of their own where they could worship themselves" if they remained loyal to the Church.[76]

Smith's proposal did not come to fruition at the time. The First Presidency rejected the proposal because they feared that a segregated unit within the Church would bring unwanted national publicity, especially during the turbulent civil rights years when civil rights activists condemned Protestant churches for segregating their pews.[77] The public, in other words, would assume that the Church wanted to segregate Black and white church attendees when this was not Smith's intent. He wanted to reactivate Black Latter-day Saints, create a community for them, and provide a hospitable place for them to worship. Years later, his efforts culminated in the founding of the Genesis Group, the LDS Church's first Black support group.[78]

During the later years of his ministry, Smith also dampened expectations for Latter-day Saints who expressed anguish over Mormon racial teachings. When he was president of the Quorum of the Twelve, he met with a concerned Church member who agonized over the notion

76. Mark E. Petersen, as quoted in David H. Oliver, *A Negro on Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: self-pub., 1963), 12. Oliver held a cottage meeting in his home with apostle Petersen.

77. J. Reuben Clark, "Negro" statement, n.d., box 64, folder 6, Spencer W. Kimball Papers, CHL; First Presidency minutes, Jan. 14, 1964, box 56, folder 1, David O. McKay Papers, JWML. Martin Luther King often said that "the church is the most segregated major institution in America." In Martin Luther King Jr., "The Case Against 'Tokenism'" (1962), in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by James M. Washington (New York: HarperOne, 1986), 107; and Martin Luther King Jr., "An Address Before the National Press Club" (1962), in *A Testament of Hope*, 101. For biblical justifications of segregation, see Chappell, *A Stone of Hope*, 112–21; and Fay Botham, *Almighty God Created the Races: Christianity, Interracial Marriage, and American Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 97–98.

78. For discussion of the Genesis Group, see below.

that Black people were "less valiant" in a premortal life. As the two searched the scriptures together during one intensely revealing meeting, Smith assured the troubled Latter-day Saint that he did not have to believe in the Church's racial teachings to stay in its good graces. As the man recounted years later: "President Smith patiently went through the sources with me, particularly the Pearl of Great Price, and then he said something quite remarkable: 'No, you do not have to believe that Negroes are denied the priesthood because of the pre-existence.'" Smith told his interrogator that he had not received a "revelation on the matter." The Church member, a liberal BYU professor named Eugene England, was overjoyed at Smith's frankness and his willingness to make himself vulnerable on a subject that seemed so firm and so entrenched in his sermons and writings.[79]

~

In addition to advocating for civil rights and stand-alone worship services for Black people, Smith began to internalize the consequences of the priesthood and temple ban when Latter-day Saints discovered they had a cursed lineage. He was aware, for example, of the pain that such disclosures caused Latter-day Saint families, for he had interviewed dozens of Latter-day Saints of African lineage. He knew of examples in the Church when branch presidents and bishops discovered their African ancestry, only to be released from their church callings amid embarrassing and painful humiliation. He also knew of instances in heavily-populated Mormon communities when white members refused

79. Eugene England, "Are All Alike unto God?: Prejudice against Blacks and Women in Popular Mormon Theology," *Sunstone* 14, no. 2 (Apr. 1990): 20. For a scholarly appraisal of England's influence within the Mormon intellectual community, see Terryl L. Givens, *Stretching the Heavens: The Life of Eugene England and the Crisis of Modern Mormonism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021); and Kristine L. Haglund, *Eugene England: A Mormon Liberal* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021).

to patronize businesses after learning that the store owners, many of whom were faithful Latter-day Saints, had "negro blood."[80]

After hearing about these troubling episodes, and indeed lamenting over them, Smith became more sensitive to Mormon racial teachings toward the end of his life. In the early 1960s, for instance, when Smith was the presiding authority at a Church priesthood meeting, a teacher in the LDS Church Educational System informed him about a young man with a cursed lineage. The young man had been active in the Church, served a church mission, and was scheduled to be married in an LDS temple. His family was also active. His brothers had served in several positions within the priesthood: an older brother served as a stake president, another as a high councilor, and the other in a bishopric. And now the problem: despite having "blond hair and blue eyes," the young man discovered that he was "128th negro." His "great-grandfather had apparently gone to the West Indies and married a native woman who was half Negro and half Indian."[81]

As Smith listened to the story, he was at first impervious to the young man's plight. Without hesitation, he told the religion teacher that

80. Joseph Fielding Smith's diaries (at the LDS Church History Library) and David O. McKay's diaries (at the University of Utah) make it abundantly clear that Smith was a part of these discussions. For details about Smith and other General Authorities' familiarity with mixed-race lineages in the Church, including bishops and mission presidents, see Jeremy Talmage and Clinton D. Christensen, "Black, White, or Brown?: Racial Perceptions and Priesthood Policy in Latin America," *Journal of Mormon History* 44, no. 1 (Jan. 2018): 119–45; Robert Greenwell, "One Devout Mormon Family's Struggle with Racism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 155–80; Bradford, *Lowell L. Bennion*, 165; and Lowell L. Bennion, oral history interview with Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Mar. 9, 1985, James H. Moyle Oral History Program, CHL.

81. LDS religion instructor T. Edgar Lyon recounted this story to Church historian Leonard Arrington, in Leonard J. Arrington diary, July 17, 1962, box 57, folder 6, Leonard J. Arrington Papers, MCL. See also T. Edgar Lyon, "Negro Problem," box 26, folder 1, T. Edgar Lyon Papers, CHL.

he should instruct the young man to tell his fiancée about his cursed lineage, which meant, of course, that there would be no temple wedding. "Our doctrine is very clear on that," Smith intoned. But as he pondered the situation further, Smith had a change of heart. At the close of the meeting, he whispered to the religion teacher to see him in private. There, the aging Mormon leader—the man who once said that Black people were inferior—did something dramatic and uncharacteristic for this dogmatic and seemingly unyielding man: He told the religion teacher to tell the boy to keep the matter to himself. Smith explained that if the boy disclosed his ancestry, it would harm himself and his brothers. "All of these [men] have been married in the temple and have participated in Church ordinances," Smith noted. This disclosure "would ruin their lives." Smith further instructed the religion teacher to inform the boy not to explain his circumstance to either his fiancée or his bishop. "This is something between him and the Lord, and if the Lord ratifies the sealing in the Temple, who are we to question it?"[82]

Such episodes revealed the increasing difficulty that LDS Church leaders encountered in policing racial boundaries. Indeed, the "one-drop" rule meant that the man noted above could pass as white even though his Church leaders had deemed him Black after learning of his African ancestry. LDS apostles, keenly aware of this reality, lamented that it was "impossible" to determine "those who have Negro blood and those who have not."[83] During Smith's lifetime, there were no scientific means to test bloodlines or reliable ways to trace lineage. Thus, Smith and his colleagues knew that they were baptizing and conferring

82. Leonard J. Arrington diary, July 17, 1962; Lyon, "Negro Problem."

83. J. Reuben Clark, as quoted in "Manuscripts of Council of the Twelve Minutes and First Presidency statements on the Negro," Jan. 25, 1940, box 64, folder 5, Spencer W. Kimball Papers, CHL. See also Church leader David O. McKay, who explained to a mission president in Brazil that determining African ancestry in South America "is not an easy problem to handle." David O. McKay to Rulon S. Howells, June 29, 1935, Dorothy H. Ipsen Collection of Rulon S. Howells Missionary Papers, 1934–1949, CHL.

priesthood ordination on persons of African descent, yet they felt powerless to stop it because racial identification had eluded them, much as it did Americans in general throughout the twentieth century.[84] When asked about the "practical problems" of dealing with members who have "one-eighth Negro blood or something of that kind," Smith's colleague N. Eldon Tanner candidly stated, "We just deal with them as they come."[85]

It is impossible to determine how many Latter-day Saints of African lineage flouted the Church's racial marker and crossed the color line. Scholars are only now beginning to uncover the extent to which these individuals passed as white.[86] Nevertheless, as questions of race and lineage vexed the Church hierarchy, Smith's belief that the Church should do more to help Mormons of African descent was reinforced. During his brief tenure as Church president, Smith authorized his counselors, Harold B. Lee and N. Eldon Tanner, to form the Genesis Group,

84. There is a growing body of literature on "racial passing" in the United States. See Allyson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014); Gayle Wald, *Crossing the Line: Racial Passing in Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); Scott L. Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).

85. N. Eldon Tanner, oral history interview with Davis Bitton, Nov. 10, 1972, 50, James H. Moyle Oral History Program, CHL.

86. W. Paul Reeve and his colleagues at the Century of Black Mormons digital history database have done painstaking work identifying mixed-race Latter-day Saints who passed as white. This ongoing project is the most definitive and comprehensive account to date detailing the lives and lived experiences of persons of African lineage within the LDS Church. The project focuses on the first century of the Church, from 1830 to 1930. For examples of mixed-race Latter-day Saints passing as white, see the entries for Nelson Holder Richie, Olive Ellen Ritchie Cleverly, Elsie Virginia Ritchie Olson Langston, Johanna Dorothea Louisa Langeveld Provis, and Norma Rachel Ables Dana, in Century of Black Mormons, http://centuryofblackmormons.org. My thanks to Paul Reeve for these references.

the Church's first Black support group.[87] Formed in 1971, a year after Smith became the Church president, the First Presidency instructed the Genesis Group to hold monthly sacrament services for families, weekly Relief Society meetings for women, and weekly Primary meetings for children. Following Smith's instructions to the First Presidency in 1955, Genesis members were tasked with reactivating some 250 Black members in the Salt Lake Valley who had drifted away from church activity. At the same time, the elderly Mormon leader wanted to create a spiritual home for Black Latter-day Saints where they could "identify with each other," as Genesis member James Sinquefield remembered.[88] Today, the Genesis Group spans congregations in nearly a dozen cities in the United States, comprised of hundreds of Black Latter-day Saints who serve in a variety of leadership positions within the Church.[89] Smith's official biography is silent on this aspect of his Church ministry,

87. For background and context to the creation of the Genesis Group, see Harris and Bringhurst, *Blacks and Mormons*, 84–85; Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 323; and Peggy Olsen, "Ruffin Bridgeforth: Leader and Father to Mormon Blacks," *This People* (Winter 1980): 11–17.

88. In 1971, Eugene Orr, a charter member of the Genesis Group, noted that there were "about 250 baptized members of the Church who are Black" and that "of these 40 are active." Orr further noted that one of the primary purposes of the Genesis Group was to reactivate Black Latter-day Saints. In Eugene Orr interview with Michael Marquardt, Nov. 7, 1971, box 6, folder 3, H. Michael Marquardt Papers, JWML. See also Wallace Turner, "Mormons Operating a Special Meeting Unit for Blacks," *New York Times*, Apr. 6, 1972. James Sinquefield, oral history interview with Alan Cherry, Mar. 30, 1985, 12, LDS Afro-American Oral History Project, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, HBLL.

89. For Genesis Group congregations throughout the United States, see Jessie L. Embry, "Separate but Equal? Black Branches, Genesis Groups, or Integrated Wards?," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23, no. 1 (1990): 11–36; and Jessie L. Embry, *Black Saints in a White Church: Contemporary African American Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 181–91.

yet it marks an important episode in his maturing views toward persons of African lineage.[90]

~

Joseph Fielding Smith, Mormonism's most important theologian of race in the twentieth century, died in 1972 after having taught for nearly six decades that Black people were cursed. But as his support for the blond-haired, blue-eyed boy suggests and as he became more attuned to the racial injustices faced by Black people, another side of him emerged that was nearly lost on the Church body. His views about Black people had evolved. He was no longer the hard-crusted, doctrinaire theologian as he appeared in *The Way to Perfection*. Times had changed—and Smith had too. True enough, he *still* defended the priesthood and temple ban as divine, but he also recognized that persons of African lineage had suffered because of it.

In 1978, Smith's teachings on race and lineage became moot when LDS Church president Spencer W. Kimball lifted the 126-year-old priesthood and temple ban, some six years after Smith's death.[91] Kimball's revelation announcing the end of the ban led to new racial doctrine, for it prompted Mormon apostles to challenge Smith's most fundamental claims in *The Way to Perfection*. None other than Smith's son-in-law, apostle Bruce R. McConkie, himself a controversial figure within the Mormon community, played a critical role in this endeavor—this

90. Gibbons, *Joseph Fielding Smith: Gospel Scholar* does not discuss the Genesis Group.

91. See Edward L. Kimball, "Spencer W. Kimball and the Revelation on Priesthood," *BYU Studies* 47, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 5–85; Harris and Bringhurst, *Mormon Church and Blacks*, 105–09.

despite his own anti-Black teachings in his seminal book *Mormon Doctrine*.[92]

In an important memo to President Kimball, just weeks before the priesthood revelation, McConkie collapsed the theological scaffolding for Black priesthood denial when he insisted that Black people could be "adopted" into the house of Israel by virtue of their priesthood ordination. He averred that "Negro blood" would be purged from their bodies when they converted to Mormonism, thereby making them heirs of the Abrahamic covenant.[93] Following the priesthood revelation, McConkie continued to finesse his late father-in-law's teachings. He proclaimed that God favored all groups and lineages equally, doing so in a prominent address called "All Are Alike Unto God." McConkie likewise asserted that God had lifted "the ancient curse" on Black people, making their past misdeeds in a premortal life both obsolete and irrelevant.[94]

---

92. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 102–03, 107–08, 476–77, 553–54; Joseph Fielding McConkie, *The Bruce R. McConkie Story: Reflections of a Son* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 373–79; Kimball, "Spencer W. Kimball and the Revelation on Priesthood," 46–47. For McConkie's influence on the contemporary LDS Church, see Bowman, *The Mormon People*, 201–02; and David John Buerger, "Speaking with Authority: The Theological Influence of Elder Bruce R. McConkie," *Sunstone* 10, no. 2 (Mar. 1985): 8–13.

93. Bruce R. McConkie, memo to Spencer W. Kimball, "Doctrinal Basis for Conferring the Melchizedek Priesthood Upon the Negroes," Mar. 1978, box 64, folder 3, Spencer W. Kimball Papers, CHL. McConkie wrote this memo at Kimball's request, as the Church president felt that he needed a theological rationale to grant priesthood ordination to Black Latter-day Saints.

94. Bruce R. McConkie, "All Are Alike Unto God" (address given at a Book of Mormon symposium for [LDS] Seminary and Institute Instructors at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Aug. 18, 1978), transcript at the CHL, available online at https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/bruce-r-mcconkie/alike-unto-god/. For the notion that God had lifted the curse, see Bruce R. McConkie, "The Blessings of the Priesthood," in *Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 128.

As the twenty-first century approached, Church authorities continued to slice away at Smith's racial theology. In 1978, less than two months after the priesthood revelation, Spencer W. Kimball asked the apostles not to teach that Black people lacked moral impurity in a premortal life. Neither did he want them to sermonize on the "curse of Cain," which further distanced the Church from Smith's embattled teachings. "We just don't know what the reason was" for the priesthood and temple ban, Kimball concluded.[95]

In 2013, the Mormon hierarchy eclipsed the last vestiges of Smith's racial teachings when it publicly repudiated them. In an important document entitled "Race and the Priesthood," posted on the LDS Church website, high Church leaders condemned "the theories . . . that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse" and the notion that the priesthood and temple restriction reflected the "unrighteous actions [of Black people] in a premortal life." At the same time, the essay acknowledges that Black men held the priesthood during Joseph Smith's tenure as founding prophet and, just as importantly, that Brigham Young had implemented the ban. And finally, the Church hierarchy denounced the idea that Black people "or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else," unambiguously repudiating Smith's most controversial claim.[96] In these stunning admissions, the Church hierarchy demonstrated just how far it was willing to go to confront and condemn Smith's racial teachings. What is most remarkable, though,

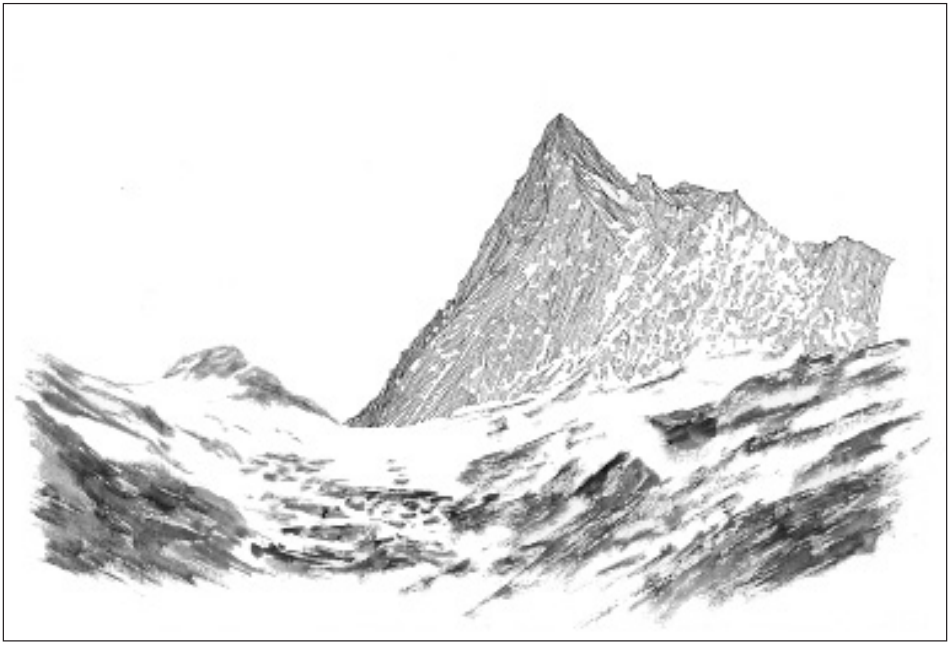
95. Spencer W. Kimball, quoted in LeGrand Richards interview with Wesley P. Walters and Chris Vlachos, Aug. 16, 1978, transcript at the CHL. See also Richard N. Ostling, "Mormonism Enters a New Era," *Time*, Aug. 7, 1978, 55.

96. "Race and the Priesthood," *Gospel Topics Essays*, available at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng. For an appraisal of this important document, see Matthew L. Harris, "Whiteness Theology and the Evolution of Mormon Racial Teachings," in *The LDS Gospel Topics Series: A Scholarly Engagement*, edited by Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringhurst (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2020), chap. 10.

is that the "Race and the Priesthood" essay places Latter-day Saints among the ranks of the penitent: Latter-day Saints had now joined Presbyterians, Southern Baptists, and Pentecostals in expressing regret for their anti-Black teachings.[97]

97. See Pentecostal "Racial Reconciliation Manifesto" (1994), in *The Columbia Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1945*, edited by Paul Harvey and Philip Goff (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 387. For the Southern Baptist Convention Apology, see Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 218; and Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "Presbyterian Church in America Apologizes for Old and New Racism," *Christianity Today*, June 24, 2016. My thanks to Paul Harvey for these references.

MATTHEW L. HARRIS {matt.harris@csupueblo.edu} is a professor of history at Colorado State University-Pueblo, where he teaches and researches on race and religion, civil rights, and legal history. He is the author and/or editor of numerous books and articles, including *Watchman on the Tower: Ezra Taft Benson and the Making of the Mormon Right* (University of Utah Press, 2020) and *The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History* (University of Illinois Press, 2015). He is currently writing a book on Black people and Mormons since World War II in which he explores the backstory to how the priesthood and temple ban was lifted.



Kirsten Sparenborg,
Alps Highest Peak, 2020,
watercolor and ink, 11″ x 14″

DRUM RHYTHMS AND GOLDEN SCRIPTURES: REASONS FOR MORMON CONVERSION WITHIN HAITI'S CULTURE OF VODOU

Catherine S. Freeman

At first glance, it may be difficult to see a relationship between Haitian Vodou and Mormonism.[1] How could Mormonism, which established and upheld racist policies and doctrines, be associated with a religion born out of Black power?[2] Connections between Haitian Vodou and

1.Throughout this paper, I will regularly use the terms "Mormon" or "LDS" interchangeably to describe the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

2. For the Latter-day Saint take on their racist past, see "Race and the Priesthood," *Gospel Topics Essays*, available at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng. Mormon leaders have too often downplayed their devastating and problematic relationship with racial doctrine, policies, and practices. For an example of Mormon racist doctrine of the mid-twentieth century see John J. Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro* (Orem, Utah: Bookmark Division of Community Press Publishing, 1960). This work will be discussed at great length in the essay. For recent scholarly work on Mormonism and racism, see Joanna Brooks, *Mormonism and White Supremacy: American Religion and the Problem of Racial Innocence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). For notable scholarly works relating to Mormonism and race, see Newell G. Bringhurst and Darron T. Smith, eds., *Black and Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Max Perry Mueller, *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). For scholarship on Haitian Vodou and Black power, see Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley:

Mormonism, however, are worth investigating because thousands of people living in Haiti have been converting to Mormonism since the official opening of an LDS Haitian mission in 1983.[3] This article shows that Haitians are not attracted to Mormonism simply because converting often means access to social mobility but also because tremendous and paradoxical similarities exist between the two religions despite their differences.[4]

In 2020, the LDS Church tallied 24,192 Latter-day Saints in Haiti.[5] Conversion among Haitians, which only started in the 1980s, is relatively

University of California Press, 2001); Michael Largey, *Vodou Nation: Haitian Art Music and Cultural Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, eds., *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

3. Trent Toone, "'A Beautiful Day' in Haiti: Early Converts Reflect on Church Growth, Temple Announcement," *Deseret News*, July 2, 2015, https://www.deseret.com/2015/7/2/20567752/a-beautiful-day-in-haiti-early-converts-reflect-on-church-growth-temple-announcement; "Haiti: Chronology," *Global Histories*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, available at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/global-histories/haiti/ht-chronology?lang=eng. Even though Mormon missionaries started to preach in Haiti in 1980, the LDS Church officially announced the opening of the Haitian Mormon mission and dedicated the country to missionary work on April 17, 1983.

4. This paper is based on interdisciplinary research. Much of the information relating to Haitian Vodou comes from published anthropological, historical, and literary studies from scholars of Haitian Vodou. Information regarding Mormonism is mostly from published primary sources from Mormon archives, the LDS Church's websites, news outlets, as well as recent secondary sources pertaining to Mormon studies. For this paper, I also rely on an interview with a Haitian convert to Mormonism, an interview with a returned missionary from Haiti, conversations with numerous Haitian-born citizens, and an observation of the Fet Gede, an important Vodou ceremony, in 2020.

5. "Facts and Statistics: Haiti," *Newsroom*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics/country/haiti.

new in Mormon history.[6] Within two months after the foundation of the Church on April 6, 1830, the Mormon gospel spread through missionary work within the United States.[7] Seven years later, on June 1, 1837, the prophet and founder of the Church, Joseph Smith Jr., decided to send missionaries overseas. He announced to one of his fervent followers, Heber C. Kimball, that God told him, "Let my servant Heber go to England and proclaim my gospel."[8] One month later, Kimball left North America to preach in Preston, England.[9] Kimball's missionary efforts brought over two thousand converts from the British laboring classes to the Mormon fold. This success fueled Smith's desire to build an international Mormon community.[10]

However, it took 143 years after Kimball's British mission for Mormon missionaries to start preaching in Haiti. The LDS Church's policies on race were the main reason it took so long. Originally, Smith did not put racial restrictions on priesthood ordination, and Black individuals, such as Elijah Abel, were "ordained to the priesthood during

6. "Facts and Statistics: United States" *Newsroom*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, http://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics/country/united-states.

7. Ryan Combs, "The History of Missionary Work and the Early Mormon Missionaries Database," June 28, 2018, https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/blog/the-history-of-missionary-work-and-the-early-mormon-missionaries-database?lang=eng.

8. Heber C. Kimball, "Synopsis of the History of Heber Chase Kimball," *Deseret News*, Apr. 14, 1858.

9. "Lesson 15: The First Mission to Great Britain," in *Latter-day Saint History: 1815–1846 Teacher Material* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), available at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/latter-day-saint-history-1815-1846-teacher-material/lesson-15?lang=eng.

10. "First Mission to Great Britain."

Joseph Smith's lifetime."[11] Unfortunately, after Smith's death, his successor, Brigham Young, imposed racial policies within the Mormon community. He announced in 1852 that men of African descent could no longer receive the priesthood. Young further restricted all Black members from participating in temple rituals. These decisions prevented Black members from going through the fundamental Mormon ritual of sealing that has the purpose of joining "a man and a woman and their children for eternity," creating "family relationships that will endure after death."[12] Hence, Latter-day Saints of African descent were denied spiritual privileges on Earth and in the afterlife. From the pulpit, Young recited racist rhetoric backing his priesthood and temple ban by claiming that "the negro," whom he called the seed of Canaan, "should serve" the white population.[13]

A racist culture grew stronger within the Mormon community for the next 126 years. In the 1950s and 1960s, Brigham Young University's vice president and head of the Church Educational System, William E. Berrett, openly embraced Young's discriminatory policies. Berrett taught that during the premortal life, God punished those who sided with Satan with a black body. He argued that "Men are not equal when entering this life" and "We were not equal in the pre-earth life and will

11. "Elijah Able," *Church History Topics*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/elijah-able?lang=eng.

12. "Sealing," *Newsroom*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/sealing.

13. "History of Brigham Young," entry dated Jan. 5, 1852, Church Historian's Office Records Collection, LDS Church Archives; also quoted in Nathaniel R. Ricks, "A Peculiar Place for the Peculiar Institution: Slavery and Sovereignty in Early Territorial Utah" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2007), 114; see also Joanna Brooks, "The Possessive Investment in Rightness: White Supremacy and the Mormon Movement," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 45–82.

not be equal in the eternities."[14] According to Berrett, a black body was a reminder of one's transgression in heaven before being born. One of Berrett's essays, "The Church and the Negroid People," was even published as a supplementary essay in the second edition of Utah State University professor John Stewart's book titled *Mormonism and the Negro* "to provide needed historical information to the many teachers in the educational system of the church."[15] Although Stewart's book and Berrett's essay were not published by the LDS Church, they were highly circulated within the Church Educational System and fed doctrinal racism.

The priesthood ban and temple exclusion were lifted in 1978 by LDS Church president Spencer W. Kimball 126 years after Young enchained racism into Mormonism. Kimball announced that all worthy male Latter-day Saints, regardless of their race, could again receive the priesthood, and all worthy members could enter Mormon temples and perform sacred rituals.[16] This decision changed the religious status of thousands of Latter-day Saints of African descent throughout the world and finally enabled the opening of missionary work to Haiti.

Not only would Blackness have impacted Haitian Church membership until 1978, but also discrimination toward Vodou cultures was flagrant in Mormon publications. One example of this discrimination comes from a 1991 article published in the official Church magazine the *Ensign* that uses racist stereotypes and terminology claiming that Haitians need to overcome "voodoo" in order to "fully" convert to Mormonism. In this article, Haitian Vodou is described as a satanic religion

14. William E. Berrett, "The Church and the Negroid People," in Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro*, 28–30. Berrett's essay is not in Stewart's first edition of *Mormonism and the Negro* but first appears in the second edition (also published in 1960) and is included in every subsequent edition.

15. Stewart, foreword to *Mormonism and the Negro*.

16. "Race and the Priesthood."

focused on "spirit possession, curses, and blood sacrifice."[17] Why would people in Haiti join the LDS Church when their membership requires the abandonment of former religious practices that are entrenched in their cultural identity, history, and society?

Religious Representation of Social Mobility

The wealth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is visible through its financial support programs and its humanitarian efforts, specifically in impoverished countries such as Haiti. Mormon leader Dallin H. Oaks claims that on average the Church spends "$40 million on welfare, humanitarian and other LDS Church-sponsored projects" annually, without support from the US government.[18] When facing financial troubles, Latter-day Saints are encouraged to reach out to their bishop.[19] Managing director of the bishops' storehouse (a commodity resource center for LDS members in need of food and other basic amenities) Steven Peterson explains that "the idea of caring for those in need" is "a scriptural mandate."[20] The Church's financial programs and humanitarian efforts are available to its members and to

17. Elizabeth VanDenBerghe and Jed VanDenBerghe, "Haitian Saints See Hope in the Gospel," *Ensign*, Mar. 1991, https://abn.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1991/03/haitian-saints-see-hope-in-the-gospel. For more information on the term "Voodoo," see Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 9–21.

18. Morgan Jones, "LDS Church Welfare, Humanitarian Efforts Average $40 Million Per Year, Apostle Says," *Deseret News*, July 12, 2016, https://www.deseret.com/2016/7/12/20591934/lds-church-welfare-humanitarian-efforts-average-40-million-per-year-apostle-says.

19. However, members are encouraged to reach out to friends and family members first before asking for financial help from the Church.

20. "Mormon Welfare Program," *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, PBS, June 24, 2016, https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2016/06/24/mormon-welfare-program/31091/.

nonmembers worldwide and promote an image of institutional wealth and self-reliance.

For many Haitians, converting to Mormonism is associated with coming in closer contact with American culture and the opportunities of social mobility connected to it. The LDS Church was founded in the United States and is headquartered in the state of Utah. From 1978 to 2018, 77 percent of General Authorities within the Mormon community were US citizens. Since 2018, nationality diversity among LDS leaders has grown, going from 16 percent of General Authorities born outside the United States in 1978 to 40 percent in 2018. Despite this increase of international presence in the leadership of the Church, most of the leaders remain US citizens.[21] It is, therefore, common to associate Mormonism with the United States.

D. Michael Quinn's research on the wealth and corporate power of Mormonism shows that the LDS Church's hierarchy is modeled after an American business structure that he describes as "a formal, stratified hierarchy of officers with church-wide jurisdiction."[22] Because of this configuration, the current LDS Church has been referred to as "corporate Mormonism," which not only describes the Church's American businesslike structure but also the outward appearance of General Authorities and male missionaries, who must dress according to the Church's dress code.[23] Their outfits look similar to the Hollywood image of the American professional. These men travel the world, no matter the climate or customs of the country, in dark-colored suits,

21. Scott Taylor, "Number of International General Authorities Has Quadrupled in Past 40 Years," *Church News*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Oct. 5, 2018, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/number-of-international-general-authorities-has-quadrupled-in-past-40-years?lang=eng.

22. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Wealth and Corporate Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2017), 2.

23. Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy*, 49.

white button-down collared shirts, ties, and dress shoes—a wardrobe associated with businesslike matters.

During my high school years in France, my friends and I often crossed paths with Mormon missionaries. Knowing me from church, they would ask me about my day. Some of my friends who were not familiar with Mormonism would often ask: "Are your friends American secret agents?" To them, missionaries looked like characters from Barry Sonnenfeld's movie *Men in Black* (1997) rather than volunteer preachers. Anthropologist Jennifer Huss Basquiat also stumbled upon some American stereotypes while doing field research in Haiti. She writes that "the LDS Church has had to face interesting and prevailing stereotypes held by many Haitians, [including] that the Church and the Central Intelligence Agency, or CIA, are one and the same." Basquiat mentions that this was a common idea among "the majority of Haitians" she interviewed.[24] These two examples illustrate that in countries other than the United States, LDS leaders' and male missionaries' dress and appearance is disconnected from their religious work and instead reflects an American professional stereotype.

I had the opportunity to discuss the relationship between the United States and social mobility in an interview I conducted with Mathew Gérard, a Haitian Mormon convert living in the United States. When I questioned him about the origin of his American first name, he answered that his father picked it "because like many Haitians, he loved things American."[25] I asked if this admiration for the United States was common among Haitians. Gérard replied that "most Haitians are fascinated with America because of the socioeconomic possibilities this country can provide them."[26]

---

24. Jennifer Huss Basquiat, "Embodied Mormonism: Performance, Vodou and the LDS Faith in Haiti," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2004): 5.

25. Mathew Gérard, interview with author, Jan. 4, 2021.

26. Mathew Gérard, interview with author, Jan. 4, 2021.

The data on the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) website illustrates Gérard's comment by showing that the "United States is the top global destination for Haitian migrants."[27] In 2018, Haitian immigrants in the United States reached 687,000, making them "the fourth-largest foreign-born group from the Caribbean" in the country.[28] Gérard used the French term "terre d'asile" (land of refuge) to describe what the US represents for countless Haitians. This idealization is further illustrated by the MPI website's statistics showing that most Haitian immigrants find employment in service, sales, office occupation, production, and transportation in the United States. Haitians can earn the minimum wage, and 26 percent of them can afford health insurance. Even though Haitian immigrants often fall into the low-income category in the United States, many of them are able to send money to family members in Haiti. The employment opportunities and transfer of dollars reinforce the Haitian concept of the United States as a land of opportunity and motivates more Haitians to immigrate there.

The LDS Church in Haiti reflects this idea of American wealth and social mobility, especially through its architecture. Gérard explained that the Church is well-regarded in Haiti. Mormon programs air on the radio, positive articles on Mormonism are frequently published in local newspapers, and the Church's humanitarian work is well-received in the country. However, what seems to make Mormonism most noticeable in Haiti are the luxurious meetinghouses and the Port-au-Prince Temple. Those religious spaces are earthquake-resistant and built with expensive material, unlike most buildings in Haiti that are "not durable" and do not follow any building codes.[29]

27. Kira Olsen-Medina and Jeanne Batalova, "Haitian Immigrants in the United States," Migration Policy Institute, Aug. 12, 2020, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/haitian-immigrants-united-states-2018.

28. Olsen-Medina and Batalova, "Haitian Immigrants."

29. Kelley C. Eaton, "Housing Crisis in Haiti Post 2010 Earthquake," (master's thesis, Clark University, 2017), 1, https://commons.clarku.edu/idce_masters_papers/145.

During Haiti's devastating earthquake in January 2010, most Mormon constructions suffered little to no damage. On his 2013 visit to Haiti, Utah-born LDS General Authority Neil L. Andersen explained that the Church's meetinghouses became shelters for those who lost their homes in the earthquake. The Petionville LDS bishop, Harry Mardy, reported that "600 people—some members of L'Église de Jésus-Christ des Saints des Derniers Jours (LDS Church), some not—call the meetinghouse grounds home."[30] Andersen expressed joy concerning the help the Church provided to the Haitian people in a video clip posted on the Church's *Newsroom* website. He is filmed in a spacious meetinghouse with high ceilings, freshly painted walls, and uses a microphone and a smart board while addressing the Haitian congregation.[31] The luxury, cleanliness, and technology of Mormon buildings in Haiti make it difficult to believe that they stand in one of the poorest countries in the Caribbean. The meetinghouses and the temple's luxurious appearance, the modern plumbing, electricity, internet access, air conditioning, and other amenities are generally available only to the wealthiest Haitians. These amenities support the image of a prosperous America and advertise a lifestyle that countless Haitians do not have access to. Hence, for many Haitians, converting to Mormonism can be seen as coming in closer contact with the wealth of the United States.

Embodied Phenomenon

One of the only scholars who has written about Haitian Vodou and Mormonism together, Jennifer Huss Basquiat, noticed that many

30. Dennis Romboy, "LDS Relief: Tent Village Surrounds Mormon Meetinghouse in Haiti," *Deseret News*, Jan. 29, 2010, https://www.deseret.com/2010/1/29/20367582/lds-relief-tent-village-surrounds-mormon-meetinghouse-in-haiti.

31. Church Newsroom, "April 2013 World Report: Elder Neil L. Andersen Marks Church's 30-Year Anniversary in Haiti," YouTube video, 3:13, Apr. 12, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVTNlIG6-yQ&list=ULmo5eL8F1bSc&index=603.

Haitian converts were particularly drawn to Joseph Smith's story because they could relate to his mystical experiences and personal background.[32] This interest in Smith differs from non-Haitian conversion stories that usually focus on the miraculous translation of the Book of Mormon. Smith's life story is full of magic and supernatural events. He saw and conversed with God and Jesus Christ, was attacked by Satan, had visions of angels, and was given magical tools to translate a book made of gold.[33] Smith's First Vision is easily accepted as truth by Haitians because mystical visitations and interactions with the divine are common among the population. Basquiat makes note of these paranormal events while interviewing Elder Vigliotti, an LDS missionary preaching in Haiti. Vigliotti explains that when he tells the story of Smith's encounter with God to Haitians interested in the Church, they are not surprised, nor do they find it strange. Vigliotti quotes several Haitian investigators who told him that their friends "just saw God and Jesus Christ last night."[34] Mystical experiences are part of Haitian culture, and Smith's story fits right into it.

Basquiat uses another interview with Alex Lamoricie, a Haitian Mormon convert, to illustrate the social connections that exist between Haitians and Smith. Lamoricie explains that what struck him about Smith's story was his humble background as a poor farmer. Countless Haitians can relate to Smith's financial struggles. Indeed, a large percentage of the population in Haiti lives in poverty and experiences the difficulties of farming. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the Caribbean. In 2012, it was reported that "six million Haitians lived below the

32. Basquiat, "Embodied Mormonism," 13–14.

33. "How Did Joseph Smith Translate the Book of Mormon?," *Liahona*, Apr. 2020, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2020/04/youth/what-do-you-say-when-your-friends-dont-believe-that-things-like-the-first-vision-could-happen/how-did-joseph-smith-translate-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng.

34. Basquiat, "Embodied Mormonism," 15.

poverty line on less than US $2.41 per day, and more than 2.5 million fell below the extreme poverty line."[35] Haitians make personal connections with Smith through their common economic trials.

Lamoricie additionally noticed that Smith "was not an intellect."[36] Like Smith, Lamoricie did not receive a formal education and had trouble reading and writing. This part of Smith's background is reflected in the literacy rate in Haiti, where "un analphabétisme achevé handicape socialement environ 8,5 personnes sur 10" [illiteracy socially handicaps about 8.5 individuals out of 10].[37] Basquiat calls this shared phenomenon of educational and economic circumstances an "embodied understanding" of Mormonism because Haitians see themselves in Smith. However, Basquiat's concept of "embodied understanding" is not limited only to Smith's background story but also extends to Mormonism's collective history of suffering, the practice of spirit possession, and an emphasis on ancestors that apply to Haitian Mormons regardless of their upbringing or education.

A Common History of Suffering

Vodou is a religion with branches from many parts of the world, particularly from Western Africa. Vodou arrived in Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti) with African slaves and evolved into Haitian Vodou, a product of the resolute human spirit that found joy and hope in spirituality among the hellish realities of slavery. Haitian Vodou is a combination of an array of African myths and traditions brought to the Caribbean during European colonization, when over 800,000 Africans of various cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds were removed from their native land, shipped to Haiti, and forced into labor

35. "Haiti: Nutrition Profile," USAID, Feb. 4, 2022, https://www.usaid.gov/nutrition/countries/haiti-profile-2022/.

36. Basquiat, "Embodied Mormonism," 14.

37. Fridolin Saint-Louis, *Le Vodou haïtien: reflet d'une société bloquée* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), 97.

on plantations.[38] The slave system in Saint-Domingue under the control of the French "was regarded as one of the harshest in the Americas, with high levels of both mortality and violence."[39]

Spirituality became a source of support and a coping mechanism to these oppressed peoples. As Haitian-born anthropologist Leslie Desmangles shows in *The Faces of the Gods*, slaves secretly interacted with each other, grouping together according to their native language and common cultural backgrounds to call on their gods for comfort and strength. They organized themselves, shared their religious knowledge from diverse African spiritual traditions, and created a common religion, Haitian Vodou, which is still at the core of Haitian culture today.[40]

In *Le Vodou haïtien: reflet d'une société bloquée*, Fridolin Saint-Louis deepens the argument that Haitian Vodou emerged from the enslaved populations' need for spirituality to survive the conditions of slavery. He argues that the desire to incorporate religious traditions into their daily life also illustrates how the enslaved people held on to their African identities. Haitian Vodou became an expression of cultural identity and quickly transformed into a powerful tool in the hands of those practicing it. Saint-Louis writes that Vodou in Haiti "s'affirma aussi comme l'expression culturelle la plus profonde des résistances" [also asserted itself as the deepest cultural expression of resistance].[41] Haitian Vodou was a way for African slaves to conserve and express their culture in a European colonial world.[42]

As C. L. R. James demonstrates in *The Black Jacobins*, Haitian Vodou was indeed a "medium of conspiracy" against slavery and a form

38. "Haiti (Saint-Domingue)," Slavery and Remembrance, http://slaveryandremembrance.org/articles/article/?id=A0111/.

39. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 9–11.

40. Leslie G. Desmangles, *The Faces of the Gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 35.

41. Saint-Louis, "Préface," in *Le Vodou haïtien*.

42. Desmangles, *Faces of the Gods*, 23.

of resistance against oppression.[43] Runaway slaves called maroons hid in the mountains and created their own communities. Their leaders were Vodou priests (ougan) and priestesses (mambo), who united their community through spirituality and encouraged their followers to fight against the colonizers. During rituals, maroon ougans and manbos called on the lwa (Vodou gods) for protection and strength to defeat the colonists. Haitian Vodou fueled the maroons' desire for revenge and mentally and spiritually prepared them before each attack against their oppressors.[44] The drums that accompanied Vodou rituals became a symbol of destruction for the European colonists who could hear them echo in the mountains before a maroon raid.

The ougan Dutty Boukman represents this image of powerful maroon religious leaders who led communities of runaway slaves to fight for freedom. On August 22, 1791, Boukman directed a Vodou ceremony at Bois Caïman where "he stimulated his followers by a prayer spoken in creole," a common language created by the enslaved that is still spoken today in Haiti. Boukman told his listeners that the lwa saw their suffering and were willing to help them "revenge their wrongs."[45] The Bois Caïman ceremony is considered an important event in the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution even though Boukman was ultimately defeated and beheaded by the colonists. Bois Caïman is one of the many religious events showing that Haitian Vodou connected spirituality to rebellion against tyrannical authorities.

Haitian Vodou has continued to evolve by incorporating elements from other faiths into its religious traditions. This phenomenon of fusing different religious traditions is referred to by scholars as syncretism. Haitians do not see any conflicts in practicing more than one religion at a time. As the Haitian saying goes, Haiti is "70 percent

43. James, *Black Jacobins*, 86.

44. Desmangles, *Faces of the Gods*, 31, 40.

45. James, *Black Jacobins*, 87.

Catholic, 30 percent Protestant, and 100 percent Vodou."[46] Desmangles explains that Haitians, Vodouisants and non-Vodouisants alike, "feel the need to participate" and claim "their allegiance" to other mainstream religions in their country but still have strong desires to serve the lwa and act according to their Vodou culture. Joining other faiths enables Haitians to worship Christian Saints and God while serving the lwa. This common practice helps create additional connections with the divine and expand the Haitian people's religious traditions.

Desmangles describes the nature of this syncretism as a symbiotic religious relationship between Haitian Vodou and Christianity. He explains that by incorporating elements of other faiths into Haitian Vodou traditions, a juxtaposition of beliefs is created in space and time to "constitute the whole of Vodou."[47] Therefore, Haitians are not restricted to the practices, beliefs, and traditions of one religion only. This cultural and religious flexibility eases the conversion of many Haitians to Mormonism.

The persecutions of the Mormon community cannot be compared to the violence of slavery in Haiti. However, the way African slaves in Haiti and Latter-day Saints reinforced their religious traditions through communal suffering and used spirituality to resist oppression are commonalities that both religions share. The collective history of Mormon suffering is regularly preached at church and is part of the curriculum in LDS seminaries. This suffering starts with Joseph Smith Jr. even before the founding of the LDS Church.[48] In 1820, in Palmyra, New

46. Kim Wall and Caterina Clerici, "Vodou is Elusive and Endangered, But It Remains the Soul of Haitian People," *The Guardian*, Nov. 7, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/07/vodou-haiti-endangered-faith-soul-of-haitian-people/.

47. Desmangles, *Faces of the Gods*, 7–8.

48. Joseph Smith Jr.'s mystical experience is referred to as the "First Vision." It is taught to individuals showing interest in Mormonism and to members of all ages attending church meetings. For a detailed historical analysis of Mormon memory surrounding the First Vision, see Steven C. Harper, *First Vision: Memory and Mormon Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

York, Smith experienced "great uneasiness" to find God's true church.[49] He entered a grove of trees to pray God in hopes of receiving an answer on which church he should join. His answer came in the form of a vision, commonly referred to by Mormons as the First Vision. Smith's stroll into the woods marked the beginning of his troubles. According to Smith, God appeared, ordered him to restore his "true" church, and called him as a prophet.[50] The news of Smith's mystical experience generated animosity against him and he soon became a target of violence. In *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, historian Richard Bushman mentions that on one occasion a mob "meant to castrate" Smith, but the doctor's "heart failed him, and he refused to operate."[51] Smith's followers also became subject to brutality. They were publicly mocked, tarred and feathered, and received death threats. The suffering that came because of Smith's visions only increased as Mormonism grew.[52]

The quintessential example of Mormon persecution came at the hands of Missouri's government in the 1830s. Smith planned to build a New Jerusalem, or Zion, on American soil, where his followers could "dedicate their time, talents, and wealth to the establishment and building up of God's kingdom."[53] Smith chose Missouri as the place for communal gathering. As Mormons flooded into the state, they became the target of violence.[54] Some Mormons started to fight back, but the

49. Joseph Smith—History 1:7.

50. Joseph Smith—History 1:19.

51. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 179.

52. Joseph Smith—History 1:21–23.

53. "Consecrate, Law of Consecration," Guide to the Scriptures, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/gs/consecrate-law-of-consecration?lang=eng.

54. "Peace and Violence among 19th-Century Latter-day Saints," *Gospel Topics Essays*, available at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/peace-and-violence-among-19th-century-latter-day-saints?lang=eng.

government sided with non-Mormon Missourians. On October 27, 1838, Missouri governor Lilburn W. Boggs declared that "Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State if necessary."[55] With this order, violence against Latter-day Saints increased.[56] On October 31, 1838, Smith surrendered to state authorities, hoping his arrest would end the persecutions of his people and prevent the Church's ultimate destruction.[57] Soon after Smith was taken into custody, the Latter-day Saints fled across the Mississippi River hoping to find refuge in Illinois.

Once Smith escaped from the Missouri authorities, he moved his people to settle in Nauvoo, Illinois. The Mormon community continued to grow, and persecution followed. Much of the Mormon persecution in Illinois, however, was due to rumors about Smith's personal sex life. In July 1843, Smith received orders from God to practice plural marriage, or polygamy. In *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870*, historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich explains that within three years after the start of polygamy, Smith "was sealed to more than two dozen women" who swore secrecy on their union to protect the prophet from harmful reactions to this practice.[58] Scandals relating to Smith's sexual practices caused deep unrest both within and outside the Mormon community, which eventually lead to his assassination.[59] Disgruntled Mormons fuming over the issue of plural marriage published a newspaper, *The Nauvoo*

55. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 356.

56. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 367.

57. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 366.

58. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), xi–xii.

59. The mainstream Mormon historical narrative often downplays the role of polygamy in Smith's death and claims that his assassination was proof of continual religious persecution.

Expositor, which uncovered the secret of polygamy in Nauvoo.[60] Soon after the paper was printed, Smith ordered and assisted in the destruction of the newspaper's press, which resulted in his arrest for "inciting riots."[61] Within twenty-four hours of detention, Smith was murdered by vigilantes who broke into Carthage Jail.[62]

After Smith's death, Mormons again turned to spirituality for strength and guidance for survival, not unlike enslaved Africans in Saint-Domingue. This spiritual tenacity helped the religious community move forward and rebuild their Zion in the American West, away from the oppression of the US government. Marilène Phipps, a Haitian Mormon convert, recognizes the past suffering that Haitians and Latter-day Saints share when she writes in her memoir that "it is not just Haitians who bear a hard legacy" but that "Mormons also have a troubling history of bloodshed."[63]

The images and stories of persecuted Latter-day Saints on the verge of extermination are so important in Mormon collective memory that Church members reenact their nineteenth-century westward exodus every year. The Mormon pioneer trek has become a "cultural ritual" with the goal to give participants "a small taste of what it was like for Mormon pioneers to push a handcart to Utah."[64] Participants dress up

60. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 538–39.

61. "Lesson 26: The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith," in *Latter-day Saint History: 1815–1846 Teacher Material* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), available at https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/latter-day-saint-history-1815-1846-teacher-material/lesson-26?lang=eng.

62. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 538–39.

63. Marilène Phipps, *Unseen Worlds: Adventures at the Crossroads of Vodou Spirits and Latter-day Saints* (Minneapolis: Calumet Editions, 2018), 229.

64. Melvin Bashore, "Op-ed: Ever Wondered Where the Mormon Youth Trek Phenomenon Came From?," *Deseret News*, Apr. 6, 2018, https://www.deseret.com/2018/4/6/20642916/op-ed-ever-wondered-where-the-mormon-youth-trek-phenomenon-came-from/.

like pioneers, bring a few toiletries, camp, and eat outside. Remembering the early Latter-day Saints' sacrifices is an important part of institutional Mormon collective memory. These stories and rituals encourage Latter-day Saints to understand that Mormonism gave their predecessors the strength necessary to endure governmental oppression and survive as a community.

These examples of suffering show that, like many Haitians, Mormons consider themselves an oppressed people. The early Latter-day Saints were harassed by mobs and governmental authorities, their possessions were stolen and destroyed, and their prophet was murdered. Like African slaves in Haiti, Mormons used spirituality as a coping mechanism to endure their suffering, rebel against the government, and create their own religious culture and identity. Despite their differences, this history of communal suffering and spiritual strength ties Mormonism to Haitian Vodou, as do other religious beliefs and practices.

Spirit Possession

The confirmation ritual, which occurs shortly after Latter-day Saint baptism, symbolizes the reception of the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit, into one's body.[65] This ritual consists of a blessing given by a male member of the priesthood who places his hands upon the head of a newly baptized person and "confirms" this individual as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The priesthood holder uses the specific ritual words: "receive the Holy Ghost," ordering the person to allow the Spirit to enter their body.[66] LDS apostle David A. Bednar calls the confirmation ritual the moment where a member of the Church

65. 2 Nephi 31:13.

66. "Baptism and Confirmation," Priesthood Ordinances and Blessings, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/priesthood-ordinances-and-blessings/baptism-and-confirmation?lang=eng.

receives the "companionship of the Spirit."[67] Through this ritual of confirmation, the baptized body becomes a host for the Spirit.

For Mormons, receiving the Holy Ghost in one's body is a sacred honor and divine gift because, according to Bednar, its "communication to our spirit carries far more certainty than any communication we can receive through our natural senses."[68] Mormons often use expressions such as being "guided," "pushed," or "moved" by the Spirit to refer to their mystical encounters with this supernatural being. In several ways, the confirmation ritual and the reception of the Spirit parallel the scholarly definition of spirit possession. Religious scholar Pieter F. Craffert defines spirit possession as "a central feature in the emergence and growth of most religious traditions," characterized by a sudden change in a person's behavior that is controlled by an external and supernatural power.[69] Even though twenty-first-century Latter-day Saints almost exclusively use the term "possession" in the context of the work of the devil, they, however, experience spirit possession through the reception of the Holy Ghost into their body.

In mainstream Mormonism, the idea of possession is most visible in accounts of casting out malevolent spirits such as Newel Knight's story. In 1830, Knight's wife fetched Joseph Smith to rescue her husband. When the prophet arrived at the Knight's home, Newel's body was "distorted and twisted" and "tossed about most fearfully." Smith caught Knight by the hand and cast the devil out of him through the

67. "The Baptism of Fire," Media Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/video/2012-08-1520-the-baptism-of-fire?lang=eng.

68. "Holy Ghost," Gospel Topics, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/holy-ghost?lang=eng.

69. Pieter F. Craffert, "Spirit Possession in Jesus Research: Insights from the Anthropological Study of Possession," *Religion and Theology* 25, nos. 1–2 (2018): 111–29.

power of the priesthood.[70] This event is often referred to as "the first miracle of the Church" and is used to illustrate how the priesthood can deliver mortals from satanic possession.

Mormons, however, resist using the term "possession." Religious studies scholar Stephen Taysom argues that in Mormon doctrine, certain terms such as "possession" are considered fraught because they are "closely associated with the specific Roman Catholic ritual" of exorcism from which Latter-day Saints want to disassociate themselves.[71] Even though twenty-first-century Mormonism refrains from using the term "possession" when referring to contact with the Spirit, Latter-day Saints experience possession because of the doctrinal centrality of the Holy Ghost, whom they receive in their body after baptism. The story of Knight and many other similar encounters in the history of Mormonism have shaped how Latter-day Saints negatively view spirit possession.

Vodouisants, like Mormons, experience what religious scholars call "spirit possession" but likewise do not use the term "possession" to describe their experiences. Literary scholar Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken has noted that in Haitian Kreyòl there is no translatable word for possession; Vodouisants instead use the Kreyòl expression "monte chwal" (ridden horse) to describe encounters with supernatural beings.[72] In Haitian Vodou, it is said that the lwa "ride" ritual participants. The

70. "History of Joseph Smith," *Times and Seasons* 4, Dec. 15, 1842, 39–41; also located in Dan Vogel, ed., *History of Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: A Source- and Text-Critical Edition* 1 (Salt Lake City: The Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2015), 65.

71. Stephen Taysom, "'Satan Mourns Naked upon the Earth': Locating Mormon Possession and Exorcism Rituals in the American Religious Landscape, 1830–1977," *Religion and American Culture* 27, no. 1 (2017): 57.

72. Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken, *Spirit Possession in French, Haitian, and Vodou Thought: An Intellectual History* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2014), 2.

word "chwal" (horse) illustrates how a participant's body falls under the complete control of a lwa, like riders control a horse.[73]

A visible physical transition often announces the start of possession in Vodou ceremonies. Anthropologist Karen McCarthy Brown, in her study of Haitian Vodou in Brooklyn, New York, noticed that when the mambo (Haitian Vodou priestess) Alourdes experienced possession, her body "shuddered and jerked." These movements are understood as the embodiment of the fight between a lwa and the *gwo bonanj* (a person's consciousness and personality), which, as Brown explains, "is sent to wander" while possession lasts.[74] Once the *gwo bonanj* gives in, the spirit's personality is transferred into an individual's body. This is a phenomenon I also noticed during the November 2020 virtual Fet Gede organized by mambo Sabine in Boston, Massachusetts.[75] One participant fell to the floor during a ritual dance. His head started to move side to side as his mouth opened and closed. He then stood up, looking disoriented. His body language and attitude were visibly different than before. He glanced at the other participants with a confidence he did not radiate earlier and mumbled a few words while rolling his hips sensually. He then smiled at the audience, and the lwa who "rode" him asked for food and a drink. Once possession ended, the dancer's body dropped to the floor once more, announcing the departure of the spirit. Participants who become "monte cheval" experience a powerful connection with the divine, one that is considered a sacred honor by the entire Vodou community.

Mormons today might be shocked at the vibrant spiritual practices of Haitian Vodou. However, Latter-day Saints also have a long history of ecstatic spirit possession. In their article "'The Tongue of Angels':

73. *Chwal* is the Haitian Kreyòl word originally from the French word "cheval," meaning "horse" in English.

74. Brown, *Mama Lola*, 61.

75. The November 2020 Fet Gede was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. A Zoom link was emailed to those wanting to watch the ceremony.

Glossolalia among Mormonism's Founders," Dan Vogel and Scott C. Dunn explain that when nineteenth-century Mormons felt the Spirit, they often gained the ability to speak in tongues, commonly referred to as "glossolalia."[76] This phenomenon happened during church meetings, which, like in Haitian Vodou rituals, included prayers and songs to call in the Spirit. Nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints wrote that "the outward manifestation of the spirit reception usually entailed fainting, convulsing, barking, or tongues," and as Vogel and Dunn show, those events were not "an isolated or infrequent occurrence but rather a widespread, persistent, and integral feature of early Mormon religious experience."[77]

In Haitian Vodou and Mormonism, spirit possession also involves the delivery of important messages. In Haitian Vodou, spirits give advice, warnings, and reprimands and answer Vodouisants' questions. During the birthday celebration of the lwa Azaka, Karen McCarthy Brown explains that Maggie, a ritual participant, was reprimanded for not welcoming him properly. As a result, Azaka threatened to leave the ceremony without delivering the messages participants were eager to hear. Maggie pleaded with Azaka, explaining that she was sick and desperately needed his advice to help heal her body. Azaka agreed to answer her questions, but under the condition that she changed her attitude toward him by showing excitement about his visit in the world of the living.[78] Once Maggie obeyed the lwa, Azaka granted her wish and delivered the message she was hoping to receive.

In Mormonism, interactions with the Spirit, likewise, involve the delivery of messages. The transmission of those messages has, however, evolved significantly since the 1830s. In the mid-1800s, glossolalia

76. Dan Vogel and Scott C. Dunn, "'The Tongue of Angels': Glossolalia among Mormonism's Founders," *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 1–34.

77. Vogel and Dunn, "Tongue of Angels," 2–10.

78. Brown, *Mama Lola*, 61–62.

among Latter-day Saints was considered a divine gift and required an interpreter to translate the words of the Spirit coming out of the mouth of the individual being possessed. The translated words were considered sacred among the Mormon community. It was, and still is, taught that like the Haitian Vodou lwa, the Spirit uses its divine power to pass on warnings, advice, and instructions that are commonly called revelations. Those revelations are essential to the organization of the Church, as well as the well-being of its members.

Unfortunately, some messages received during episodes of glossolalia generated tension within the Mormon community. LDS leaders interpreted them as "a challenge to Smith's charismatic powers."[79] Vogel and Dunn show that on several occasions, Church authorities claimed that the messages received came from the devil because they contradicted Church policies. Consequently, revelations coming from individuals other than LDS leaders were closely monitored and sometimes censored because they were judged as a threat to the well-being of the Mormon community. Eventually, glossolalia became prohibited, and members holding on to the practice were reprimanded by their religious leaders. By the early twentieth century, glossolalia came to be considered a strange practice that incited doctrinal derision among the Mormon community.[80]

Even though glossolalia is highly discouraged in twenty-first-century Mormonism and rarely discussed in church meetings, the reception of the Spirit in one's body and the messages it delivers are still an active component in modern Mormon doctrine. Larry Y. Wilson's Conference talk "Take the Holy Spirit as your Guide" illustrates the importance of the Spirit's messages. Wilson tells the story of Ensign Frank Blair, an American naval officer who saved his ship from sinking because he listened and obeyed the Spirit's messages. Blair claimed that

79. Vogel and Dunn, "Tongue of Angels," 16.

80. Vogel and Dunn, "Tongue of Angels," 34.

"the Holy Ghost whispered [in his ear] that he needed to walk around the ship . . . to gather more information."[81] This advice was followed by an additional message that led Blair to keep the ship's remaining engine running long enough to outlast a dangerous storm. Blair's lifesaving mystical experience is one of many demonstrating the Spirit's power to "guide" those in need of its help.

A Mormon's relationship with the Spirit is similar to a Vodouisant's relationship with the lwa. The Spirit and the lwa have the power to enter in communication, through possession, with mortals seeking their divine guidance. These mystical encounters are praised by the ones experiencing them. They feel privileged to be able to interact with sacred beings and value the messages given to them. The Mormon interpretation of the Spirit shows that, like in Haitian Vodou, invisible divine beings can inhabit bodies, influence individuals, and protect them from dangerous situations. Hence, in both religions, spirit possession experiences are sacred phenomena. This commonality facilitates the conversion process to Mormonism for many Haitians immersed in Haitian Vodou culture.

Ancestors and the Dead

Another commonality shared between Haitian Vodou and Mormonism that facilitates conversion is a deep respect and reverence for the dead. In both religions, death is not considered an end to life but a continuity of life in a world connected to the one of the living. In Mormonism, the distance between the mortals and the dead is described as a thin veil that "separates the seen from the unseen."[82] Mormon prophet Brigham

81. Larry Y. Wilson, "Take the Holy Spirit as Your Guide," Apr. 2018, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2018/04/take-the-holy-spirit-as-your-guide?lang=eng.

82. Ezra Taft Benson, "Life Is Eternal," Apr. 1971, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1971/04/life-is-eternal?lang=eng.

Young expanded this doctrinal point by saying that "the spirit world is not far away. Sometimes the veil between this life and the life beyond becomes very thin." Hence, this proximity facilitates communication between the two worlds.[83]

Heavenly beings have played a central role since Mormonism's founding. This notion is best illustrated by the angel Moroni's visitations to Joseph Smith. Moroni is a resurrected being who during his mortal life was a prophet in the Americas and one of the authors of the gold plates Smith procured in the 1820s. Moroni was sent by God as "a resurrected being to reveal" the location of the gold plates and commanded Smith to translate them into what became known as the Book of Mormon, a foundational text in Mormonism alongside the Bible.[84]

Once Smith finished translating the plates, he returned them to Moroni. LDS authorities claim that the gold plates are no longer on earth because they "would cause men to attempt to use them to obtain money, or personal notoriety."[85] From 1823 until his assassination, Smith regularly met with the angel Moroni.[86] LDS authority Glen L. Rudd said in his talk "The Angel Moroni" that this ancient prophet met with Smith about twenty-two times and has continued to visit with

83. Brigham Young, June 22, 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:367–69.

84. "Moroni, Son of Mormon," Guide to the Scriptures, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/gs/moroni-son-of-mormon?lang=eng. The LDS Church's belief in the validity of the Book of Mormon is the major difference between Mormonism and other Christian religions.

85. Monte S. Nyman, "Why Were the Book of Mormon Gold Plates Not Placed in a Museum So That People Might Know Joseph Smith Had Them?," *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1986/12/i-have-a-question/why-were-the-book-of-mormon-gold-plates-not-placed-in-a-museum?lang=eng.

86. "Moroni, Son of Mormon."

other Mormon prophets.[87] Mormon doctrine teaches that prophets are "seers." Since the twentieth century, however, Latter-day Saints prophets have stopped mentioning their interactions with angels, God, and Jesus Christ—though rumors continue to circulate that leaders still communicate with heavenly beings.[88] Smith was not only visited by the angel Moroni. He also documented his conversations with John the Baptist and the apostles Peter, James, and John. These repeated mystical encounters have been used as evidence for Mormons that life continues after death and that communication between mortals and the dead is possible.

Deep and meaningful relationships with deceased individuals also exist in Haitian Vodou. Karen McCarthy Brown explains that the root of Vodou is a tripartite of "the ancestors, the land, and the spirits."[89] Staying connected to these three components is foundational for Haitians. Brown emphasizes the importance of ancestors in Haitian Vodou when she writes about the mambo Alourdes's comments regarding her late mother's visitations. The women's strong relationship was not impacted by death. Alourdes explains that even though her mother, Philomise, does not have a body of flesh and bone anymore, her spirit continues to help her in her daily life. One of Philomise's frequent ways of interacting with Alourdes is through her dreams. She visits Alourdes and gives her answers to problems she cannot solve by herself.[90] Thus, even

87. Glen L. Rudd, "The Angel Moroni" (devotional address, Brigham Young University–Idaho, Rexburg, Idaho, Mar. 11, 2003), https://www2.byui.edu/Presentations/transcripts/devotionals/2003_03_11_rudd.htm.

88. "Prophet," Guide to the Scriptures, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/gs/prophet?lang=eng.

89. Brown, *Mama Lola*, 371.

90. Brown, *Mama Lola*, 245.

though Philomise died, she remains an active component of Alourdes's life. These examples demonstrate that in both religions, physical death does not prevent communication between mortals and the dead.

Keeping in touch with the dead is a fundamental belief and practice of Haitian Vodou and Mormonism. The Church's website states that Mormons believe that families can be together forever.[91] To put this belief into practice, the Church created in 1894 the Genealogical Society of Utah, which gave members access to birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, and census records. This program, now renamed FamilySearch, gives Mormons the ability to search for their ancestors' names and download and upload pictures and other relevant documents giving details about the life of the deceased.[92] When using the FamilySearch program, Latter-day Saints contribute to a historical web that uncovers their ancestors' past and creates a connection between the deceased and the living.

FamilySearch also gives members access to the Church's records to check whether their ancestors were Latter-day Saints. According to LDS doctrine, one can only reach salvation if baptized into the Church. Baptizing ancestors is part of the Church's mission, which consists of "proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the saints, and redeeming the dead."[93] For this reason, a temple ritual exists with the purpose of baptizing by proxy those who either refused to join the Church while alive

91. "Genealogy," *Newsroom*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/topic/genealogy.

92. "Archives—FamilySearch.Org," FamilySearch, https://www.familysearch.org/en/info/archive.

93. "Three-Fold Mission of the Church," Church History, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/event/three-fold-mission-of-church?lang=eng.

or were unable to do so.[94] Through this temple ritual, Latter-day Saints act as saviors for their ancestors and give them access to salvation they would not be granted otherwise.

In the process of doing genealogical research, Mormons are encouraged to share their family history at religious gatherings. The last time my daughter participated in an LDS youth meeting for young women, the children were asked to share stories about their ancestors. Some told stories about family members who were heroes in the American Civil War and others proudly said they were direct descendants of the first Mormons to settle in Utah. Mormons take pride in their family history.

This focus on strong family connections is likewise deeply present in Haitian Vodou. Brown claims that remembering ancestors and revering them is essential for Haitian families because "their anxiety centers on the possibility that their history might become lifeless or be forgotten."[95] Ancestors' stories must be told frequently not only so family members can remember their lineage but also to help future generations find guidance in their ancestors' past. By doing so, Brown explains that the "lineage is a chain, each generation a link" that persists over time and strengthens families.[96] The research tools and data the LDS Church puts at its members' disposal and its family-focused doctrine enable Haitian converts to create additional ancestral connections with the support of a religious organization with the financial means to give them free access to the technology necessary for genealogical work.

---

94. Baptism for the dead requires the participation of four individuals: two people stand in a baptismal font. One recites the baptismal prayer using the deceased's name, and the other acts as a proxy for the deceased person. After the prayer is recited, the proxy is immersed in water. The two other people ensure the ritual is done correctly. See "Baptisms for the Dead," Gospel Topics, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/baptisms-for-the-dead?lang=eng.

95. Brown, *Mama Lola*, 19.

96. Brown, *Mama Lola*, 286.

Conclusion

Mormon doctrine, practices, and beliefs pave the way for conversion among the Haitian people because of the similarities Mormonism shares with Haitian Vodou. While these two religions emerged from distant geographical locations, have distinct racial histories, and differ in many other ways, their fundamental beliefs relating to rebelling against oppressive government, persisting in religious practices, and maintaining strong relationships with the dead cross paths. Even though, according to Mathew Gérard, Haitian Mormon converts are not all Vodou initiates, Haiti's culture remains immersed in Vodou and has shaped the Haitian people's understanding of the world. Gérard explains that Haitians believe that the world they live in is enchanted.[97] They grow up in an environment where the supernatural is part of reality and where life is manipulated by their ancestors and Vodou spirits called lwa. The world of the living and the world of the dead depend on each other to maintain a balance in the universe. Mormonism offers Haitians an additional way to reinforce those beliefs and create stronger connection with the divine.

A meaningful relationship with the supernatural is found in Mormonism through its teachings of the physical proximity between mortal life and the spirit world. The interaction between these two spaces and their closeness are illustrated by numerous accounts of Latter-day Saints' mystical experiences such as visitations and spirit possession. Mormonism offers Haitians a religious world that is in constant communication with the supernatural through its teachings of the Holy Ghost, whose spiritual powers range from whispering in someone's ear to possessing an individual's body.

The Mormon doctrine on eternal families also enables Haitians to track down and stay in contact with their ancestors and family history through the LDS Church's genealogy program and temple rituals. These programs and ceremonies have the purpose of redeeming the

97. Mathew Gérard, interview with author.

dead and maintaining everlasting relationships with deceased individuals. Mormon doctrine echoes many parts of the cultural and religious practices of Haitian society. This mystical context and family-focused doctrine resonate with countless Haitians willing to hear the Mormon gospel.

Mormonism additionally exposes Haitians to an American culture and business model that they often see as a path to social mobility they otherwise do not have access to in their country. The male missionaries' attire, the visits of American LDS leaders, and the luxurious meetinghouses and temples all contribute to an image of institutional American wealth. This image reinforces the Haitian concept of social mobility linked to the United States, a country that Haitians believe can guarantee them financial stability.

However, conversion to Mormonism does not come without compromise for those whose culture and society are immersed in Vodou. The LDS Church expects a full conversion and dedication to the doctrine from all its members along with the abandonment of traditions that do not "fit" Mormon beliefs and practices. For Haitian converts it often means effacing their cultural identity by "overcoming Voodoo," a shortsighted and misguided expression born of racist ideas regarding Haitian Vodou.[98] Haitians who choose to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should continue to embrace, not erase, their rich history and culture that has shaped their society and led them to Mormonism.

98. VanDenBerghe and VanDenBerghe, "Haitian Saints See Hope in the Gospel."

CATHERINE S. FREEMAN {petitbateau340@gmail.com} is an instructor of French at The Foote School in New Haven, Connecticut. She received a bachelor of arts in religious studies and French studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, where she was awarded the Theodore M. Mauch Memorial Prize for her research on Mormonism and Haitian Vodou. She lives in Wallingford, Connecticut, with her husband, two daughters, seven hens, four ducks, and bunny.

HONG KONG

Kirsten Sparenborg,
Hong Kong City Streets, 2020,
digital print of ink drawing, 16″ x 20″

"THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS": EXILIC AND POST-EXILIC ISAIAH IN *THE BOOK OF MORMON*

Colby Townsend

The book of Isaiah has enjoyed an enduring presence within Christian thought since the earliest period of Christian history. Isaiah has famously been called "the fifth gospel"[1] because of its ubiquitous presence within Christian writing, thought, and history and its immense influence on the New Testament.[2] The importance of Isaiah within broader Christianity carries over into early Mormon texts as well, and readers of *The Book of Mormon*[3] get a sense early on in their reading that they will have to deal with a significant amount of quoted material from Isaiah if they are going to engage the book and take it seriously. The book's earliest character and émigré prophet, Nephi, explicitly states that he does not just want his readers to know his interpretation of Isaiah's message. Instead, he wants them to read and know Isaiah's

1. John F. A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

2. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken, eds., *Isaiah in the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2005).

3. I refer to the 1830 printing of *The Book of Mormon*, just as other early Americanists do, when describing the text throughout this essay. My focus is on *The Book of Mormon* as a part of the print culture of the early national period of US history, and I recognize it as a major site where scholars of Mormon studies can more fully interact with other fields in the academy. See Joseph Smith Jr., *The Book of Mormon* (Palmyra: E. B. Grandin, 1830); Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman, eds., *Americanist Approaches to* The Book of Mormon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

words, mediated at least through a slightly revised and updated version of the King James text of Isaiah.

Scholars of *The Book of Mormon* have noted at least since H. Grant Vest that it is a historical problem for the book to quote from Isaiah chapters 40–66 because it is widely accepted in biblical scholarship that this section of the book dates to after 600 BCE, the period when Lehi and Nephi left Jerusalem.[4] Numerous previous studies have examined the "problem of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon,"[5] however, few have set

4. H. Grant Vest, "The Problem of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1938). There were earlier treatments and acknowledgements of the "problem," including by B. H. Roberts and Sidney B. Sperry. However, Vest's stands, in my opinion, as the first formal, sophisticated discussion of the issue in an academic setting.

5. See Sidney Brenton Sperry, "The Text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon" (master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1926); H. Grant Vest, "The Problem of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon"; Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 73–97; Wayne Ham, "A Textual Comparison of the Isaiah Passages in The Book of Mormon With the Same Passages in the St. Mark's Isaiah Scroll of the Dead Sea Community" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1961); Gary L. Bishop, "The Tradition of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974); John A. Tvedtnes, *The Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon* (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1981); Carol F. Ellertson, "The Isaiah Passages in the Book of Mormon: A Non-Aligned Text" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2001); David P. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, edited by Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234; Ronald V. Huggins, "Joseph Smith's 'Inspired Translation' of Romans 7," in *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith*, edited by Bryan Waterman (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 199), 259–87; Dana M. Pike and David Rolph Seely, "'Upon All the Ships of the Sea, and Upon All the Ships of Tarshish': Revisiting 2 Nephi 12:16 and Isaiah 2:16," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005): 12–25, 67–71; Joseph M. Spencer, "Isaiah 52 in the Book of Mormon: Notes on Isaiah's Reception History," *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 6, no. 2 (2016): 189–217; and Joseph M. Spencer, "Nephi, Isaiah, and Europe," in *Reading Nephi Reading Isaiah: 2 Nephi 26–27*, edited by Joseph M. Spencer and Jenny Webb, 2nd ed. (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute Press, 2016), 19–35.

this issue in the more comprehensive, poignant problem of the influence of the entire King James Bible on the composition of *The Book of Mormon* as a whole.[6] As a contribution to the larger project of examining the King James Bible's influence on *The Book of Mormon*, this essay focuses on several aspects of the problem of Isaiah in *The Book of Mormon* as they relate to the more significant issue. I will focus on two problems with the use of Isaiah in *The Book of Mormon*. First, previous scholarship has assumed that none of Third Isaiah has had any effect on the text of *The Book of Mormon* and the Isaiah chapters it quotes. This assumption has relied on a mistaken way of identifying influence by looking only for long quotations. Second, I examine how biblical scholarship on Isaiah complicates having a block quotation including portions of not only Isaiah chapters 40–55 but also those from chapters 2–14 as well. It was just as unlikely for a sixth-century Israelite immigrating from the Middle East to the Americas to have Isaiah 2–14 as they appear in the KJV as it was to have 40–55, and it is the fact that most of the scholarship on *The Book of Mormon* up to now has obscured this that I wish to address.[7]

---

6. There is at least one exception to this rule. See Wesley P. Walters, *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1990). Some reviewers criticized Walters for including analysis on *The Book of Mormon*'s use of the New Testament, but this is a strength of his master's thesis. *The Book of Mormon* blends phrases from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The way the Bible influences *The Book of Mormon* cannot be analyzed unless scholars consider both. See John A. Tvedtnes, review of *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon*, by Wesley P. Walters," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4, no. 1 (1992): 228ff.

7. There are two exceptions to this. See Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 69; and Joseph M. Spencer, *The Vision of All: Twenty-five Lectures on Isaiah in Nephi's Record* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016), 21. Both Hardy and Spencer point out how scholarship on Isaiah problematizes the availability of Isaiah 2–14 to characters of *The Book of Mormon*.

1. The Problem of Dating Isaiah

Since the pioneering eighteenth-century work of both Johann Christoph Döderlein and Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, scholars have understood the compositional history of the book of Isaiah to be far more complicated than the notion that Isaiah of Jerusalem wrote all sixty-six chapters of the book.[8] In fact, since the last quarter of that century, scholars have argued that historians need to separate the historical person, Isaiah of Jerusalem, from the literary book itself. This observation is partially due to how scholars argue that Isaiah wrote portions of chapters 1–39 but not 40–66.[9] Scholars continued to examine and refine this approach to the compositional history of the book of Isaiah, and it became the leading theory of the book's authorship soon after the publication of Döderlein's and Eichhorn's work in the 1770s and 1780s.

The best expression of this position is found a century later in Samuel R. Driver's 1891 study *An Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament*.[10] Driver argued that chapters 40–66 are clearly of a later date and authorship than 1–39 because, primarily, the prophecies in 40–66 presuppose a sixth-century audience without ever claiming to be about the future and, secondarily, the literary style and theological perspective

8. Johann Christoph Döderlein, *Esaias ex Recensione Textus Hebraei* (Altorfi: Officina Schupfeliana, 1775); and Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Einleitung ins Alte* Testament, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben and Reich, 1780–1783).

9. Although the theory proposed by these eighteenth-century scholars broadly argued that a later author wrote all of chapters 40–66 during the sixth century, Eichhorn believed that he could extract more "inauthentic" material from chapters 1–39 as well. Christopher R. Seitz, "Isaiah, Book of (First Isaiah)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 3: H–J*, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 473.

10. S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1910).

of the later chapters differ significantly from the earlier chapters.[11] A year after the publication of Driver's book, Bernhard Duhm identified a third author in the book, Trito-Isaiah, and argued that this anonymous author wrote later than both Isaiah of Jerusalem and Deutero-Isaiah.[12]

Duhm's theory would later become the standard account of the book's formation. In the wake of Duhm's work, most scholarship on Isaiah has engaged the book by dividing it into these three sections, roughly chapters 1–39, 40–55, and 56–66. This designation has remained a valuable tool in biblical studies to quickly explain three of the major blocks in the formation of the book,[13] although for the purposes of this study, it is beneficial to break down the sections of Isaiah

11. Driver, *Literature of the Old Testament*, 230–246. See John Goldingay and David Payne, *Isaiah 40–55, Volume 1: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2006), 1n2.

12. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892). Duhm would change his position to separate the three sections to 1–39, 40–57, and 58–66 in the third edition (1914) of the commentary. See Øystein Lund, *Way Metaphors and Way Topics in Isaiah 40–55*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe, 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 25n86.

13. While some scholars deny the idea that there is a Third Isaiah, the vast majority of scholarship on this question accepts the notion that there is a broad, tripartite division in the composition history of Isaiah: a Proto-, Deutero-, and Trito-Isaiah. However, all major scholars on Isaiah view chapters 40–66 as written well after 600 BCE. See Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969); Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 1; J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 2–3; and Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39: A Continental Commentary*, translated by Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 496ff. Two of the most relevant scholars who see chapters 40–66 as still later than 1–39 but written by a single author include Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66*, Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 187–95; and Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary*, The Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 12.

further in order to go beyond this simplified and truncated portrait of the critical understanding of the book. The oversimplification of the division of source material in the book of Isaiah has unfortunately led scholars within Mormon studies to assume that only the quotation of Isaiah 48–54 in *The Book of Mormon* is historically problematic.[14] It is time for a broader and deeper engagement with all the relevant data.

2. Identifying Third Isaiah in *The Book of Mormon*

The influence of specific phrases from portions of verses in Isaiah 56–66 on *The Book of Mormon* has almost wholly eluded scholars of the book since they became aware of the problem of Isaiah's authorship over a century ago. H. Grant Vest, a master's student at Brigham Young University in the 1930s working under Sidney B. Sperry, believed that he found one example of Third Isaiah in *The Book of Mormon*, but it comes from Isaiah 55. When he was working on his thesis, scholars identified Isaiah 55 as part of Third Isaiah.[15] To my knowledge, only one other scholar has previously connected language in *The Book of Mormon* with Third Isaiah.[16] In the following sections, I will describe *The Book of Mormon* verses influenced by Third Isaiah individually.

2.1 Isaiah 61:10

In 2 Nephi 4, the Lehite company has just arrived at the New World, and Lehi has provided patriarchal blessings and counsel to his and Ishmael's sons and grandchildren. In verse 12, he dies, and soon after Nephi states that his brothers Laman and Lemuel were again angry with Nephi for chastising them (vv. 13–14). Scholars have labeled the text from verse 15

14. Cf. Kent P. Jackson, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," in *A Reason for Faith: Navigating LDS Doctrine and Church History*, edited by Laura Harris Hales (Provo: Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University and Deseret Book Company, 2016), 69–78.

15. Vest, "Problem of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 230.

16. See footnote 32.

to the end of the chapter "the Psalm of Nephi," the "only . . . psalm in the entire volume,"[17] and in verse 33, we find the first instance of language from Third Isaiah in *The Book of Mormon*. "O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness!"[18]

The phrase "the robe of righteousness" is found in the KJV only in Isaiah 61:10. The separate words "robe" and "righteousness" are not found together in any other verse in the KJV. In Isaiah 61, the author states that they "will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."[19] As Claus Westermann has argued, this is related to the songs of praise in Deutero-Isaiah, but the two different authors show "characteristic" differences in how they present their songs of praise. As Westermann states, Deutero-Isaiah's songs of praise are "sung by the community (call to praise in the imperative)," whereas the song in Isaiah 61:10 is "sung by an individual."[20]

At stake is Nephi's use of a part of Isaiah that dates far after his leaving Jerusalem sometime around 600 BCE. It is similar to his quotations of Romans 7:24 in 2 Nephi 4:17 ("O wretched man that I am!"), Hebrews 12:1 in 2 Nephi 4:18 ("I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which doth so easily beset me"), and both James 1:5 ("I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh") and James 4:3 ("if I ask not amiss") in 2 Nephi 4:35.[21] These texts date to well after

17. Sidney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, Inc., 1948), 110.

18. Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, 70–71.

19. All quotations from the Bible are from the KJV unless otherwise noted.

20. Westermann notes Isaiah 44:23 as an example of this kind of song in Deutero-Isaiah. See Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 371. Joseph Blenkinsopp provides this longer list: 42:10–13; 44:23; 45:8; 49:13, and to cf. 12:1–6. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible Commentary, 19b (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 230.

21. Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, 80.

the period that an ostensible historical Nephi could have used them.[22] The key here is that the author of 2 Nephi 4 is dependent on a phrase in Third Isaiah and blends the language taken from that source with language taken from multiple books in the New Testament.

Dependence on this phrase from Isaiah 61:10 is also found in 2 Nephi 9:14.[23] Beginning in 2 Nephi 6:6–7, Jacob quotes Isaiah 49:22–23, then Isaiah 49:24–52:2 in 2 Nephi 6:16–8:25. Jacob expounds on these chapters in 2 Nephi 9, like Nephi did for Isaiah 48–49 in 1 Nephi 22. In verse 14, Jacob explains how "the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness."[24] Nephi and Jacob both approach the text of Isaiah in the same way by quoting entire chapters and then explaining those chapters to their audiences. Although the two sermons are decades separated, Jacob continues Nephi's quotation and is dependent in his exposition on the exact phrase from Isaiah 61:10 that we find Nephi using in 2 Nephi 4:33. This brings attention to the singular use of Isaiah by two characters in the narrative.

Likewise, we also find many biblical quotations and echoes in this chapter from several New Testament sources. As Philip Barlow has previously shown, 2 Nephi 9:16–17 borrows language from a range of texts, including (in the order they appear in the verses) Matthew 24:35; Revelation 22:11; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10; Hebrews 12:2; Matthew

22. It is noteworthy that Smith also used the terminology from these sources in Doctrine and Covenants 29:12 and 109:76. See Michael Hubbard MacKay, et al., eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 179; and Brent M. Rogers, et al., eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2017), 206n139.

23. I made the connection to 2 Nephi 9:14 independent of the Joseph Smith Papers editors in the previous note.

24. Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, 80.

25:34; and John 15:11.[25] We can also add an informal quotation of 2 Corinthians 5:10 in 2 Nephi 9:15 to this long list ("must appear before the judgment seat of the Holy One of Israel").[26] Jacob's extensive use of the New Testament around the phrase "robe of righteousness" in 2 Nephi 9 is similar to what we found in Nephi's dependence on Third Isaiah in 2 Nephi 4. Both sections of *The Book of Mormon* are dependent on Third Isaiah and several texts from the New Testament. These verses also cannot be stripped from Nephi's or Jacob's texts without doing irreparable harm to their message. The author of these chapters knew Third Isaiah and the New Testament.

2.2 Isaiah 65:2/Romans 10:21

The second example of a phrase in Third Isaiah that influenced *The Book of Mormon* is found in Isaiah 65:2. However, the use of this verse was mediated through the New Testament's quotation of this same passage, specifically in Romans 10:21.[27] The formal quotation of Isaiah 65:2 in Romans 10:21 takes only from the first half of the source text. This part of Isaiah 65:2 reads in the KJV, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people." Romans 10:21 says, "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Although slightly varying among themselves in terminology, each of the three verses in *The Book of Mormon* dependent on Isaiah 65:2 is far closer in its wording to the KJV of Romans 10:21

25. Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 30.

26. The KJV of the beginning of 2 Corinthians 5:10 reads, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. . . ."

27. See J. Ross Wagner, "Isaiah in Romans and Galatians," in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, edited by Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 124–25; and Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture: Seeing the Old Testament in the New* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 33–34n5.

than Third Isaiah.[28] We find the one exemplar that deviates most from the other two in 2 Nephi 28:32. There the divine states, "for notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me."[29] Both Jacob 5:47 and 6:4 agree with Romans 10:21 and have "stretched" and "stretches," respectively, instead of "lengthen," like in 2 Nephi 28:32, whereas Isaiah 65:2 has "spread out." The two verses in Jacob also have "all the day long," which is closer to Romans 10:21, "all day long," contrary to 2 Nephi 28:32, "from day to day." These are all different than what we find in Isaiah 65:2, "all the day." The similarity in thought and imagery suggests that the author was familiar with the basic idea stated in Isaiah 65:2 as quoted in Romans 10:21 but, due to the disparity in wording, likely could not recall the exact wording so instead relied on their memory.[30]

Each of the three verses in *The Book of Mormon* ends with a negative sentiment about those God reaches out to help. They will deny him (2 Nephi 28:32), they are corrupted (Jacob 5:47), and "they are a stiffnecked, and a gainsaying people" (Jacob 6:4).[31] In each verse, there is some improvisation in how the author uses the language from the

28. Isaiah 65:2a reads, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people," whereas Romans 10:21 reads, "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

29. Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, 115.

30. It is common for Smith, and other early Americans, to not remember the exact wording of a biblical source text but retain the main idea and vocabulary within their allusions. One example found in a handful of Smith's texts is at the end of Doctrine and Covenants section 4. I have argued elsewhere that in the earliest version, Smith likely realized that he could not remember exactly the list of virtues in 2 Peter 1:5. After a failed attempt, he left a placeholder, "&c," which was then published in *The Book of Commandments* (1833) and subsequently updated to reflect the wording in 2 Peter 1:5 in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*. See Michael Hubbard MacKay, et al, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 13.

31. Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, 139.

source texts. 2 Nephi 28:32 is, just like Jacob 5:47 and 6:4, ultimately dependent on Isaiah 65:2 through Romans 10:21 but more freely engages with the imagery in the text rather than the specific language.[32]

2.3 Isaiah 63:1

Nephi continues to echo Third Isaiah when he is about to "make an end of [his] prophesying" in 2 Nephi 31:19.[33] Earlier in the chapter, Nephi wants the implied audience to remember that he prophesied about how John the Baptist would baptize Jesus, so, it follows, it is vital for everyone to follow Jesus' actions. In verse 19, Nephi asks if the reader has started on the path of discipleship and whether they are now done; he answers in the negative. "For ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save."[34] The one "mighty to save" is explicitly Jesus in his capacity as savior and redeemer of humanity,

32. I am not the first to note the connection between at least one of the three links to Isaiah 65:2 in *The Book of Mormon*. Brent Metcalfe independently identified this same influence back in the 1980s, decades before my work. At the Sunstone Symposium in 1988, Metcalfe described his forthcoming edited collection *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* in a presentation entitled "Chiasmus as Necessary Proof of Ancient Semitic Origins of the Book of Mormon." In the course of giving the presentation, Metcalfe mentioned the intertextual connection between Jacob 6:4 and Isaiah 65:2 and how it is through Paul's epistle to the Romans that Third Isaiah influenced Jacob 6:4. See Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), though Metcalfe's published paper was ultimately on a different topic. For the presentation, see "New Approaches to the Book of Mormon," Sunstone, Jan. 1, 1988, available in audio form at https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/new-approaches-to-the-book-of-mormon/. Metcalfe describes the connection just after the 48-minute mark.

33. The quotation is found in 2 Nephi 31:1.

34. 2 Nephi 31:19. Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, 120.

an explicitly Christian soteriology that is significantly different from anything found in the book of Isaiah.

There are two other instances of this "mighty to save" language. In Alma 7:14, Alma states that in order to "inherit the kingdom of heaven" a person has to "be baptized unto repentance" and "washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God . . . which is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness."[35] Alma 34:18 is more ambiguous, however. After describing the importance of Jesus' atonement, in verse 18, Amulek echoes Isaiah 63:1 when he states, "Yea, cry unto him for mercy, for he is mighty to save."[36]

The Book of Mormon brings a Christological interpretation to Third Isaiah's phrase. In contrast to how Third Isaiah employs the terminology of YHWH being the one "mighty to save," the way the chapters of *The Book of Mormon* specifically engage with Isaiah 63:1 place Jesus front and center as the one "mighty to save." This Christianizing of the text clarifies how historians should date the texts Smith dictated in a period after the development of Christian soteriology and the rereading of Isaiah 63 as Jesus' second coming. This development in the history of ideas is crucial for the composition of the passages in *The Book of Mormon* that are dependent on Isaiah 63:1.

2.4 Isaiah 66:1 and Matthew 5:34–35

The final verse from Third Isaiah that has influenced *The Book of Mormon* is also found in the New Testament, like the examples above. In Jesus' injunction against oath swearing (Matthew 5:34–35), Matthew cites Isaiah 66:1: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." The passage is also referenced in the New Testament in Acts 7:49. Both 1 Nephi 17:39 and 3 Nephi 12:34–35 are dependent on Matthew 5:34–35, the latter more explicitly than the former because 3 Nephi 12–14 is a block quotation of Matthew 5–7. 1 Nephi 17:39 reads,

35. Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, 240–41.

36. Smith, *The Book of Mormon*, 320.

"He ruleth high in the heavens, for it is his throne, and this earth is his footstool." The particle "for," found in both 1 Nephi 17:39 and Matthew 5:34—but not in Acts 7:49 or Isaiah 66:1—just before describing the heavens as the throne and the earth as the footstool, indicates the dependence of 1 Nephi 17:39 on Matthew 5:34 rather than either Acts 7:49 or the ultimate source, Isaiah 66:1. Still, that the idea and language originate with Third Isaiah supports the influence of Third Isaiah on *The Book of Mormon* as mediated through the New Testament.

3. Deutero-Isaianic, Exilic, and Post-Exilic Revision of Isaiah 2–14

As noted above, the dominant approach to the "Isaiah problem" of *The Book of Mormon* has been to see the uses of First Isaiah, including chapters 2–14, as posing no historical problem for the Nephite record. However, this view adopts a theory that all or nearly all of First Isaiah is authentic and available in its current form by 600 BCE. Many scholars have noted that other parts of Isaiah 2–14 were not written by Isaiah of Jerusalem but rather in the exilic or post-exilic periods. Bernhard Duhm, the scholar who initially proposed the tripartite division of the book of Isaiah in 1892,[37] also recognized that not all of chapters 1–39 could be ascribed to Isaiah of Jerusalem. Instead, scholars had to recognize that much of this material was composed and added to the book of Isaiah centuries after Isaiah's prophetic career.[38] It is essential to recognize this fact and not forget that the tripartite division is more

37. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja übersetzt und erklärt*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922).

38. While discussing "literary continuity" between the different parts of Isaiah, Kent Jackson recently stated that, "In fact, the literary variations within chapters 1–35 are such that if one wanted to, one could argue for multiple authors within that section alone." Jackson, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 74. The problem is that this is not hypothetical; scholars have been making this exact argument since the eighteenth century.

a heuristic model than an exact representation of scholarship over the last three centuries.

In his 1994 study, H. G. M. Williamson convincingly argued that Deutero-Isaiah redacted, and therefore reorganized and rewrote, much of the material in Isaiah 2–14.[39] Although not everyone accepts his theory exactly as he argued it, Williamson brilliantly grounded his entire argument on specific verses in Isaiah 1–39 that most Isaiah scholars already accepted as later than Isaiah of Jerusalem. The rhetorical power of this approach allowed Williamson to focus on the similarities between the later additions in First Isaiah and the lexicon, historical setting, and theological perspective in Isaiah 40–55 over against those of the sections of 1–39 that scholars view as original to Isaiah himself.

Some scholars have rightly cautioned against approaches they see as too confident in identifying "the editorial growth of a biblical book over the centuries with the barest minimum of actual evidence."[40] But, as is also the case in J. J. M. Roberts's commentary, sometimes the later additions and editorial structures are so clear that even a more cautious commentator like Roberts must note how First Isaiah developed well after Isaiah of Jerusalem's lifetime. It is essential to note the specific passages in Isaiah 2–14 that Roberts, Williamson, and most other Isaiah scholars have agreed are later additions or editorial changes to these passages. The fact that parts of Isaiah 2–14 were either revised, restructured, or composed during or after the Babylonian exile complicates the assumption that Nephi or any of his descendants could have quoted these chapters in full the way Nephi did in 2 Nephi 12–24. As we will see, the shape of Isaiah 2–14 would have been drastically different in a pre-exilic setting than what we find in the KJV, and therefore *The Book of Mormon*. Due to space constraints, I will only analyze a few examples.

39. H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

40. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 3.

3.1 Isaiah 2:1–5

The block quotation of Isaiah 2–14 begins in 2 Nephi 12:1. The first verse of this quotation is widely recognized as a later addition to Isaiah 2. Roberts views Isaiah 2:1 as a late addition—even later than Williamson dates the verse—connecting Isaiah 1:29–31 to 2:2–4.[41] Isaiah 2:2–4 has a complicated history because of its close parallel in Micah 4:1–4, but the entire pericope, too, is almost universally recognized as a late addition to First Isaiah. Roberts argues that 2:1 was added to bridge Isaiah 2 to Isaiah 1:29–31 and contextualize 2:2–4 and claims that the oracle is original to Isaiah and not Micah.[42] Most scholars also argue that the text in Micah 4:1–4 is a late addition to that book,[43] although scholars

41. Roberts argues that Isaiah 2:1 was added as a bridge to connect Isaiah 1:29–31, even though most scholars think that chapter 1 was added as part of the latest redaction of the book as a whole, well into the post-exilic period. See Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 35. Williamson argues that the author of Deutero-Isaiah added Isaiah 2:1 as the heading of the book as it was in the late exilic period, before the return of the Israelites from Babylon. See Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 153.

42. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 35.

43. Cf. Hans Walter Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary*, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 116–18. Gary Stansell leaves it as a given that critical scholarship has isolated Micah 4:1–4 as a later addition to the book. Gary Stansell, *Micah and Isaiah: A Form and Tradition Historical Comparison*, SBL Dissertation Series 85 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 7. Berges has noted, "the post-exilic origin of Isa. 2.2–4/Mic. 4.1–3 is nearly universally accepted," in Ulrich F. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition and Final Form*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 46 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 61. These scholars note that Wildberger is an outlier, believing that Isaiah 2:2–4 is original. See Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 85–87. Williamson notes that "a very early post-exilic date is favoured by a number of the most recent studies of the passage." Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 148.

often view the version in Micah as more complete than what is found in Isaiah 2:2–4.[44]

There is also the problem of Isaiah 2:5. Williamson argues that Deutero-Isaiah added this verse to connect 2:2–4 to 2:6–21.[45] Otto Kaiser, Hans Wildberger, Ulrich Berges, and others support the argument that 2:5 is a late addition to the text, even though some scholars believe 2:2–4 is original to Isaiah.[46] Recent scholarship has identified at least parts, if not the whole, of Isaiah 2:1–5 as being too late of an addition to the book of Isaiah to have been available on the brass plates as described in *The Book of Mormon*.

3.2 Isaiah 3:18–23

According to Wildberger and most Isaiah scholars, Isaiah 3:18–23 is a redactional interpolation that interrupts the continuity between verses 17 and 24.[47] There have been several attempts to argue that this is not

44. Cf. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 149. As Williamson has noted in his commentary, though, fragment 1of 4QIsa^{e} of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) complicates this notion by agreeing with both the Masoretic Text (MT; the traditional Hebrew Bible) of Micah instead of Isaiah, as well as varying from the standard text and Micah in its own way. H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2006), 166.

45. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 146. Roberts accepts 2:5, as he does 2:2–4, as being original Isaiah but fails to engage critically with all of the major points brought up by Williamson, Blenkinsopp, Berges, and others. Cf. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 44.

46. Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 56; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 84; Berger, *The Book of Isaiah*, 60–61.

47. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 147, contra Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 60. Roberts offers an argument similar to one made by H. Barth in 1977. Williamson responds exhaustively to Barth's argument (Williams, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 139), but Roberts does not engage with Williamson—or any of the other numerous scholars on this point besides Wildberger—in his argument that these verses are original. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 69, notes the obvious textual problems

the case, most recently by Roberts, but the responses have failed to adequately counter all the reasons for seeing Isaiah 3:18–23 as a later, post-exilic (according to Williamson and others) interpolation.[48] Although Williamson notes that for these verses, "Authorship and date is impossible to determine with certainty,"[49] the latter part of his statement is determinative. Williamson, along with numerous other scholars, identifies the final editor of this section, chapters 2–4, as working in the post-exilic period.[50] Wildberger and Kaiser both restructure this section in their commentaries to account for the interpolation of verses 18–23, moving verse 24 after verses 16 and 17.[51] Williamson notes that "Verse 24 follows smoothly on v. 17 both in subject matter and in form."[52] Many scholars view the use of the phrase "in that day" at the beginning of verse 18 as introducing a redactional gloss,[53] and Williamson sees the statement in verse 18 that "the Lord will take away" as a reference to verse 1, "suggesting a reader who had the wider passage in view rather than being just a late annotator who worked atomistically."[54]

---

in the traditional Hebrew Bible (MT) and the different versions, showing how 1QIsa[a] of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) resolves the issue by adding the word "shame." Roberts takes this reading as a given rather than dealing with the textual problems. According to Roberts, "MT seems clearly defective," but this is right at the point of the literary seam. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 60.

48. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 288; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 79; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 201; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 147f. Sweeney says that "3:16–24 could have been composed at any time" (Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 110), demonstrating at least a slight shift from his earlier thinking that all of Isaiah 3:16–4:1 was Isaianic (Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4* and the *Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Traditions*, 178, 181).

49. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 288.

50. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 238.

51. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 148–51; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 79–80.

52. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 286.

53. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 286; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 147.

54. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 290.

The list of women's fine clothing and jewelry in verses 18–23 would have a significant influence on the editing of the whole of Isaiah 2–4, according to Williamson, especially as it was developed further in Isaiah 4:2–6, another later addition to this section.

3.3 Isaiah 4:2–6

Wildberger notes that chapters 2–4 have a great deal of material that originally comes from Isaiah of Jerusalem, but that "it is common to find secondary messages" added "at the conclusion of each" of these three chapters.[55] He sees 4:2–6 as a likely addition to the text and non-Isaianic for the following reasons: (1) the introduction includes the formula "on that day," which he notes several times in his commentary as usually indicating a secondary expansion;[56] (2) the passage uses "the prosaic form in vv. 3ff.";[57] and (3) there is much secondary material in chapters 2–4 that includes messages of salvation, especially at the ends, that verses 2–6 share. For Wildberger, these verses have to be described generally as post-exilic, since they are a part of the later "shaping of the book of Isaiah, including such additions which announce salvation, and thereby set all of the harshnesses of the preceding words of judgment into the framework of Yahweh's eventual goal for history and for his people."[58] Accordingly, this later rethinking of the earlier judgments

55. The following all view Isaiah 4:2–6 as a later addition: George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 77; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 85; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 165; Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 143; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 110–11; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 69; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 204; Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 305–06; Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 174–83; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 67.

56. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 147, 164.

57. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 164.

58. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 165. Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 204, develops some of Wildberger's points even further and shows how "We are . . . justified in suspecting that this kind of language is presenting an idealization of the specific form of temple community existing in the province of Judah under Iranian rule (sixth to fourth century B.C.E.)."

"was not the learned work of someone sitting at a writing desk, but developed instead in the liturgical use of the prophetic writings in the assemblies of the community during the era of the second temple."[59] Williamson further notes that 4:2–6 works with 2:2–4, which we saw earlier is a secondary edition, as a "bookend" to this section of Isaiah, chapters 2–4.[60] These two additions were integral to the final redactor's purposes in their attempt to unify the disparate content that became Isaiah 2–4. I will show further below that more recent scholarship has argued that at least 4:2–6 was authored either by Third Isaiah[61] or one of their contemporaries.

3.4 Isaiah 5:25–30

In his commentary on First Isaiah, which we have seen is more critical of the idea that parts of 2–14 were edited, rewritten, and shifted to their current position within the text at later periods, Roberts places Isaiah 10:1–4a between 5:8–24 and 5:25–30. He does this because "there are a number of indications that the connection between v. 24 and v. 25 is secondary" and that "In terms of form, it would appear that 10:1–4a goes with 5:8–24 and 5:25–30 goes with 9:7–20, probably at its conclusion."[62] The text as it now stands in 2–14 is not even close to the original order Roberts argues it would have been in during the earlier stages of the book. Although there is some uncertainty about what order exactly these four sections of Isaiah 5, 9, and 10 would have been in, many scholars agree that its current form is due to later redactional activity and that 5:25–30 was heavily edited and added last to its current

59. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 165.

60. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 305n13.

61. In biblical scholarship, it is common to call both the text and the potential author Third Isaiah.

62. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 85.

position.[63] Most of Isaiah 6–9 gets in the way of this earlier organization of the text of First Isaiah.

3.5 Isaiah 8:21–23a

Scholars have long argued that Isaiah 8:21–23a is an intricate collection of small text fragments that likely go back to Isaiah.[64] Williamson noted in his study on the role of Isaiah 40–55 on the editing of 1–39 that 8:21–23a "has been compiled along exactly the same lines as those we suggested for 5:25–30,"[65] namely, that "the redactor was responsible for giving [5:25–30] its new and present setting in the book"[66] and comes closest to the thought and revisionary perspective, against what is in First Isaiah, to Deutero-Isaiah.[67] Although scholars disagree on the dating of this passage, whether it is originally Isaianic or later,[68] they agree that the way it has been edited and brought into its current position occurred later in the book's history.[69] Wherever these verses might have been initially in a collection of writings by First Isaiah, it is clear that they would not have been in their present position because they do not flow with the surrounding text and that the editor changed some of the wording to fit its new location in the text.

---

63. Gray, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 95; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 96, 110–11; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 194f.; Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 132; Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 195; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 75; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 211, 217, 221–22.

64. Gray believed that it was three separate fragments. Gray, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 157. Cf. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 378–79.

65. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 140.

66. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 134.

67. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 140–43.

68. Wildberger made a convincing case for its origins with Isaiah. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 378–79.

69. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 244–45.

3.6 Isaiah 11:10–12:6

In his commentary on Isaiah 1–12, Wildberger notes that there has been an almost universal agreement in Isaiah scholarship that Isaiah 11:10–16 and all of chapter 12 do not come from First Isaiah.[70] This depiction of the field was accurate up to the time Wildberger was working[71] and it is still the current position within biblical studies.[72] After considering all the reasons why scholars view 11:10–16 and chapter 12 as later additions to 2–11, Williamson shows that none of the objections raised by scholars allow a date of this material beyond the time of Deutero-Isaiah. Because 11:10–12:6 build upon 2–11 in ways similar in theme and content to the way that Isaiah 40–55 build on these earlier chapters as well as the other later additions to 2–11, and because they act as a literary bridge to 13–27 (highlighting their editorial nature), Williamson argues that they likely come from the same hand as the editor he identified for the other sections: Deutero-Isaiah himself.[73] Even if Williamson is incorrect to state that these chapters were either edited or authored by Deutero-Isaiah, the point still stands that Isaiah 11:10–12:6 would not have been a part of the book of Isaiah before 600 BCE because they were written either by Deutero-Isaiah or a contemporary.

70. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 489, 502.

71. Cf. Driver, *Literature of the Old Testament*, 210–11; Gray, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 223; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 262, 269–70.

72. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 204 (but see H. G. M. Williamson, "The Theory of a Josianic Edition of the First Part of the Book of Isaiah: A Critical Examination," in *Studies in Isaiah: History, Theology, and Reception*, edited by Tommy Wasserman, Greger Andersson, and David Willgren [London: Bloomsbury, 2017], 3–21); Berger, *The Book of Isaiah*, 113–14; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 266–68; Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 5, 84–86; Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 669–70, 687–89.

73. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 118–23, 141–43.

3.7 Isaiah 13–14

According to Williamson, most scholars generally date Isaiah 13, which they view as mostly a unified, discrete text, to right before the rise of Cyrus, king of Persia.[74] He notes that some of the major attempts to connect this chapter with Isaiah of Jerusalem have failed because of the text's references to the nations at play. The Medes, in particular, are depicted in a way in Isaiah 13 that does not comport with the time when Assyria was the dominant power in the Near East, but the prophecy also does not reflect what most likely took place during Cyrus's reign ca. 539 BCE either.[75] Isaiah 14 does not incorporate enough historical information for scholars to date it exactly, but the fact that the editor has joined it with chapter 13 means that the text refers to the king of Babylon. Williamson notes how the editorial material in Isaiah 14:1–4a and 22–23 make this connection explicit, therefore setting chapters 13–14 in this later context well after the life of Isaiah and into the sixth century, decades after the Lehite group are depicted as leaving Jerusalem.

Even at the minimum, based on the knowledge that we have about the growth of the book of Isaiah, a pre-exilic Israelite scribe or author would not have had access to the full text of Isaiah 2–14, or in the order it is found in the KJV. Although *The Book of Mormon* quotation of these chapters does vary from the source text, sometimes more than others—this also indicates a redactional and expansionistic approach in Smith's quotation—it very rarely deletes text from Isaiah, for the most part preserving the text that is found in the KJV. Nephi would not have had available to him most or significant parts of Isaiah 2:1–5, 3:18–23, 4:2–6, 5:25–30, 8:21–23a, 11:10–12:6, or 13:1–14:32. Other verses could also be isolated and analyzed throughout Isaiah 2–14 that would not have been available to Nephi, but for the sake of both space and argument, these examples suffice to highlight the problem that this block

74. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 158.

75. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 158n5.

quotation poses to simple explanations of the problem of Isaiah in *The Book of Mormon*. I will now turn to six examples of late additions to Isaiah 2–14 and 48–55 that scholars identify as either related to the circle that produced Isaiah 56–66 or, possibly, written by Third Isaiah himself as he redacted, and therefore rewrote, the book of Isaiah.

4. Third Isaiah in Isaiah 2–14 and 48–55

Recent scholarship has highlighted the probability that several of the late additions to Isaiah 2–14 and 48–55 were composed by the same author as the final redaction of Third Isaiah. The principal scholar proposing this argument has been Jacob Stromberg, whose 2011 publication *Isaiah After Exile: The Author of Third Isaiah as Reader and Redactor of the Book* has had a positive reception in the field since it was initially published.[76] Likewise, Williamson incorporated Stromberg's findings in the most recent volume of his commentary on Isaiah 1–27.[77] Further problematizing the issue, this opens the possibility that more of Third Isaiah is in *The Book of Mormon* than just the verses already discussed in section 2, specifically in the block quotations of Isaiah 2–14 and 48–55 themselves. This also means that *The Book of Mormon* formally quotes material from Third Isaiah. I will now examine the sections of Isaiah 2–14 and 48–55 that Stromberg and Williamson have identified as Third Isaiah and their reasons for doing so.

4.1 Isaiah 4:2–6

As noted above, Isaiah 4:2–6, quoted in 2 Nephi 14, is not likely traceable to the historical Isaiah. According to Stromberg, Isaiah 4:2–6 is "a text almost universally regarded as much later than the prophet himself,

76. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*.

77. H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 2018).

and usually dated to at least as late as the post-exilic period."[78] Many of the studies published in the years leading up to Stromberg's work pointed toward his argument that Isaiah 4:2–6 was composed by the final author of Third Isaiah.[79] Most of these scholars asserted that Isaiah 60–62 influenced the author of Isaiah 4:2–6, but Stromberg emphasizes how the author of 60–62 developed these ideas and language to frame the beginning and end of Isaiah 56–66.[80]

Those who reject a post-exilic dating for Isaiah 4:2–6, like J. J. M. Roberts,[81] often fail to engage exhaustively with the reasons why most scholars do so. Roberts notes how the connection between Isaiah 3:16–4:1 and 4:2–6 "and the difficulty of analyzing the oracle as poetry have led many scholars to treat the oracle as a post-exilic insertion."[82] In fact, the arguments put forward for this view are far more robust than this. Marvin Sweeney, for example, provides at least four reasons outside of the two noted by Roberts to view 4:2–6 as post-exilic in origin.[83] Sweeney notes that (1) the reference to "YHWH's book of life" is now understood by scholars "as a late concept in Biblical literature," (2) "the use of Exodus motifs is not characteristic of Isaiah of Jerusalem" but

78. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 174.

79. For instance, as noted above, Sweeney's fourth argument for dating Isaiah 4:2–6 as post-exilic. Others include Blenkinsopp, who, after noting that some of the language in 4:2–6 best connects to Isaiah 66:15–16, states that "all of this highly charged language projecting a future very different from the unsatisfactory present is in keeping with the perspective of the last few chapters of the book," i.e., Third Isaiah. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 204. Stromberg notes others in Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 175n114.

80. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 176.

81. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 67–68.

82. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 67.

83. Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition*, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 171 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 179–81. Cf. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 174.

is an integral part of Deutero-Isaiah, (3) "the use of creation language, such as *bara* in v. 5, is characteristic of Deutero-Isaiah," not Isaiah of Jerusalem, and (4) these verses are influenced by "an unmistakable priestly stamp which is not characteristic of Deutero-Isaiah but does appear in the Trito-Isaiah materials."[84] Due to these specific considerations in the development of biblical traditions and the uncharacteristic nature of the vocabulary and ideas to Isaiah of Jerusalem, Sweeney and most other scholars view Isaiah 4:2–6 as originating in the post-exilic period.[85]

Important to our present purposes, those scholars who argue that Isaiah of Jerusalem wrote Isaiah 4:2–6 do so by reordering the verses. As Wildberger has noted, both Bernhard Stade and Karl Budde argued that the verses in Isaiah 4:2–4 are original but have them in the following order: after verse 1, it then goes verse 4, verse 3, and then verse 2. Verse 5 is, according to them, later than Isaiah of Jerusalem.[86] This rearrangement suggests that even if we went with the minority view that some of the verses in 4:2–6 are original to Isaiah, they should be in a completely different order than found in 2 Nephi 14:2–6. The ordering throughout *The Book of Mormon* simply follows the KJV.

4.2 Isaiah 6:13b

Nephi's quotation of Isaiah chapter 6 in 2 Nephi 16 includes the second half of verse 13. Stromberg was not the first to connect Third Isaiah with Isaiah 6:13, although he is the first to argue the relationship in detail and explore the possibility that Third Isaiah wrote 6:13.[87] Sweeney also

84. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4*, 179–180.

85. See also Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 143–44; and Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 203–04; and Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, 205–15; and Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 164–65; and Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 85; and Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 69–70.

86. Stade wrote in 1884 and Budde in 1932. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 164.

87. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 160–74.

suggested this in an essay originally published in 1997, as did Willem Beuken in an essay in 1989.[88] Berges notes how most scholars view Isaiah 6:12–13 as a late addition to the chapter, some arguing for up to four additions in these two verses.[89] Berges argues convincingly that verses 12–13a are from only one hand and that a later redactor added 13b ("so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof," KJV) with Isaiah 4:3 in mind.[90] As we saw in section 4.1, Isaiah 4:2–6 is a late addition and, if we follow Stromberg's argument, either written by Third Isaiah or one of his contemporaries.

According to Stromberg, after analyzing the connections between Isaiah 6:13b and the rest of Isaiah and finding that Isaiah 65:9 is the only text that clearly shares a relationship with this gloss, "it seems best to ascribe 6:13bβ either to the same author who composed 65:9 or to a later imitator familiar with this passage."[91] Stromberg supports the former option by comparing how the author of Isaiah 57, Third Isaiah, alluded to and developed Isaiah chapter 6 in chapter 57 the same way

88. Cited in Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 161n53. The essay was republished in Marvin A. Sweeney, *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 45 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 46–62. Sweeney briefly notes the connection on p. 56. W. A. M. Beuken, "Does Trito-Isaiah Reject the Temple? An Intertextual Inquiry into Isa. 66:1–6," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel*, edited by Sipke Draisma (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok), 53–66.

89. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 87. Stromberg also notes that the following scholars view 13b as a later gloss: Beuken, Blenkinsopp, Childs, Clements, Duhm, Gray, Kaiser, Marti, Skinner, Barthel, Emerton, and Williamson. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 161. As J. A. Emerton notes, "There thus seems to be a contrast, or even a contradiction, between the total disaster of which the beginning of the verse speaks and the hope that is implied at the end." Emerton, "The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah vi.13," in *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in honour of E.I.J. Rosenthal*, edited by J. A. Emerton and Stefan C. Reif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 86.

90. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 88.

91. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 164.

the gloss does in Isaiah 6:13b. It would make sense, then, since Third Isaiah redacted the book that he would harmonize his addition and Isaiah 6:13b.

4.3 Isaiah 7:15

Again, as part of Nephi's large block quotation of the early chapters of Isaiah, 2 Nephi 17 quotes Isaiah 7:15. In general, for decades, scholars have understood Isaiah 7:15 as a later addition to this chapter, meant to further elaborate on the sign in 7:14. Citing Paul Humbert, Wildberger noted that Isaiah 7 verses 14 and 16 followed what Humbert called "the biblical annunciation style," or, as Wildberger preferred, "an annunciation oracle."[92] In this style or oracle formula, there are generally four elements: (1) a clause that begins with "behold" that announces pregnancy or birth; (2) a clause that "instructs the mother how to name the child"; (3) a clause introduced by "for" or "because" (כי, *ki*) that explains the name; and (4) supplementary information describing what the son will do.[93] This is significant because Isaiah 7:14 and 7:16 follow this annunciation formula perfectly, but the structure is interrupted by 7:15. In every one of the other cases of the formula in the Hebrew Bible, "the naming element is immediately followed . . . by כי."[94]

The addition builds off both 7:16 and 7:22, initially appearing as a doublet of 7:16 because both texts state that the boy will learn "how to reject the bad and choose the good."[95] According to Stromberg, this combination of verses 16 and 22 in the interpolated material in verse 15 works "to project the sign into the future beyond the time of Ahaz."[96] Stromberg notes the close connections between 7:15 and Isaiah 4:3 and

92. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 307.

93. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 307.

94. Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 163–164, nt. 70.

95. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 223.

96. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 224.

chapters 36–39, both of which Stromberg argues to have likely been the work of Third Isaiah.[97] Although Stromberg notes, "That both 7 and 36–9 are so closely related, and that the sign in each has been edited to point beyond the circumstances of its respective narrative, seems beyond coincidence,"[98] he concludes by stating that 7:15 is tentatively the work of Third Isaiah. In the end, whether one follows Stromberg's arguments to their conclusion or not, 7:15 is a later addition to the chapter and would not have been included in a pre-exilic version of Isaiah 2–14.

4.4 Isaiah 11:10

The large block quotation of Isaiah in 2 Nephi includes Isaiah 11:10 as well. Stromberg argues that the author of Third Isaiah read Isaiah 11 and integrated the idea of a peaceful reign in verses 6–9, which is a later addition to 11:1–5,[99] into his writing of Isaiah 65:25.[100] Because of the evidence that Third Isaiah was reading Isaiah 11 and incorporating aspects of it into his composition well after the return from exile, Stromberg asks if it is also possible that the same author redacted chapter 11 and added verse 10. As Williamson recently noted, "The verse has to be a join between the two parts [i.e., 11:1–9 and 11–16], and so later than them both" because the depiction of a root as a signal or banner in verse 10 "can only be understood as the result of the welding together of figures from vv. 1 and 12."[101] Verse 10 therefore cannot be part of either 11:1–9 or 11:11–16 but instead works to bridge the two together as a later addition to the chapter.[102]

97. See Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 174–183, 205–222.

98. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 227.

99. Gray views all of Isaiah 11:1–16 as at least late or post-exilic. Gray, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 214–15, 223.

100. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 101–09.

101. Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 669.

102. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*, 262; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 266–67; Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 463; Jongkyung Lee, *A Redactional Study of the Book of Isaiah 13–23* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 164n2.

In this light, then, Stromberg notes the following clear and unique links between Isaiah 11:10 and 65:25. In no other place in the Hebrew Bible do you find the concept of "rest place" and "my holy mountain" together, and these two sections of Isaiah are both explicitly connected to the idea of the Davidic covenant. Scholars have also understood the verse as an editorial addition commenting on the chapter because the verse begins with the formula "on that day," which is generally understood to mean that it is a later addition, and verse 10 blends material from the first and second halves of the chapter.[103] In all of the examples that Stromberg finds where Third Isaiah most likely wrote the later additions to parts of Isaiah 1–39 or 40–55, he notes that Third Isaiah's actions as an editor are related to the ways that he reads these earlier chapters of Isaiah and incorporates them into his writing. In this example, Isaiah 11:10 builds on 11:12 the same way that sections of Third Isaiah (Isaiah 56:8 and 66:18–20) built on 11:12 by being more inclusive concerning the nations than the earlier authors in Isaiah had been.[104] Williamson accepts Stromberg's thesis and notes that "Within the major redactional phases in the growth of the book of Isaiah which I identify, this verse may be set among the last."[105]

4.5 Isaiah 48:1, 19b, 22

A smaller block quotation of Isaiah 48 appears in 1 Nephi 21. Stromberg and several other scholars have noted that Isaiah 48:22 is an additional verse added to the end of Isaiah 40–48 to connect this part of the book to what comes later. Specifically, they view Isaiah 48:22 as an editorial insertion that builds on Isaiah 57:21, part of Third Isaiah.[106] Stromberg

103. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 184–85.

104. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 191.

105. Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 670.

106. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 205; Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah*, 210–11; Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 304; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 286f.; Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 230; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 310.

shows how the dichotomy between salvation for the righteous and the wicked, found only in Isaiah 48:22 and nowhere else in Deutero-Isaiah, develops Isaiah 40–48 in the same way that Isaiah 57 does. That "there is nothing in Isaiah 48:20–21 that prepares for the same statement in 48:22" is telling[107] and supports the notion that the verse is a later addition that tries to temper the universalizing views on salvation in Isaiah 40–48. Accordingly, Stromberg views this verse as having been added by the author of Isaiah 57 since they both build on and revise Isaiah 40–48 in the same way.

4.6 Isaiah 54:17b

The Book of Mormon also includes a citation of Isaiah 54 in 3 Nephi 22.[108] Several scholars in recent decades have viewed Isaiah 54:11–17 as a later addition to the chapter that stems from historical groups contemporary to Third Isaiah.[109] Stromberg focuses only on verse 17b and agrees with Odil Hannes Steck that verses 1–16 share a great deal with Isaiah 40–55 in general, but that 17b has some significant variations that go against the norms in Deutero-Isaiah.[110] Primarily, in every place the term "servant" is found in Isaiah 40–55, it is in the singular except for in Isaiah 54:17b. On the other hand, every time the phrase is found in Isaiah 56–66, it is always in the plural, "servants of the Lord," as found in 54:17b. After examining the arguments about the composition of chapter 54, Stromberg notes that verses 1–16 could still be a later hand than Deutero-Isaiah, but that 17b itself is connected to Third Isaiah,

107. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 230.

108. Nephi quotes Isaiah 48:1–52:2 and 55:1–2. If Nephi had these chapters, then he presumably would have had chapter 54 by implication.

109. Cf. Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 245n63.

110. Odil Hannes Steck, *Gottesknecht und Zion: Gesammelte Aufsätze zu Deuterojesaja* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 111–12, 124, 170–71. Cited in Stromberg, *Isaiah After Exile*, 245.

and, since it is generally viewed as an editorial addition, it makes sense to view this as having been added by Third Isaiah.

Conclusion

Although the problem of Isaiah in *The Book of Mormon* has been a part of Mormon studies since its beginning as an academic subfield, scholars have yet to fully incorporate biblical scholarship into their work on this crucial issue. Prior work has attempted to isolate the problem of Isaiah in *The Book of Mormon* as only regarding the dating of Deutero-Isaiah. Attempts to understand this issue have not involved more direct engagement with continuing contemporary scholarship on Isaiah. Relatedly, very few attempts to further identify the influence of all of Isaiah on *The Book of Mormon* have been carried out in the last several decades. This paper invites those engaged in the study of *The Book of Mormon* to not remain in isolation but to broaden their studies by incorporating different methods, fields, and approaches to locating and analyzing the influence of the Bible on *The Book of Mormon*. This influence is crucial to understanding the content, message, and composition of the book.

Further, attention to Isaianic scholarship and its relation to the dating of the block quotations of Isaiah 2–14 and 48–55 in *The Book of Mormon* complicates the normative approach to explaining the quotation of these chapters. *The Book of Mormon* not only dates them to the pre-exilic period, but it also assumes that before 600 BCE, the book of Isaiah was in its present form and had been well-known and accepted scripture as it is in the KJV, or close to it. Isaiah 2–14 would have been a far shorter text in the pre-exilic period than what is cited in 2 Nephi 12–24. Scholarship on Isaiah broadly speaking has identified numerous verses in both Isaiah 2–14 and 48–55 that date well after Deutero-Isaiah. If Stromberg's thesis is to be adopted, some of these were composed during the redactional process of the book by the final author of Third Isaiah or one of his contemporaries. This evidence, blended with what we know about how other parts of *The Book of Mormon* utilize biblical

texts,[111] suggests that the author of *The Book of Mormon* only knew the book of Isaiah as it is found in the KJV.

One of the most important implications of a fresh view of this scholarship is a reconsideration of the influence of Third Isaiah on *The Book of Mormon*. Until now, the consensus has been that Third Isaiah was missing entirely from *The Book of Mormon*. In this paper, I have identified several verses in *The Book of Mormon* that are dependent on Third Isaiah. 2 Nephi 4:33 and 9:14 allude to Isaiah 61:10 for the phrase "robe of righteousness." 2 Nephi 28:32, Jacob 5:47, and Jacob 6:4 allude to Isaiah 65:2 but are mediated through Romans 10:21, further problematizing the dating and dependence of these *Book of Mormon* passages on Third Isaiah. 2 Nephi 31:19, Alma 7:14, and Alma 34:18 allude to the description that God is "mighty to save," originally from Isaiah 63:1. The author of these verses knew both Third Isaiah and New Testament passages dependent on Isaiah 63:1. We can no longer say that Third Isaiah did not influence the composition of *The Book of Mormon* or that Third Isaiah cannot be found within the book.

111. See Colby Townsend, "'Behold, Other Scriptures I Would that Ye Should Write': Malachi in the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 103–37; and David P. Wright, "'In Plain Terms that We May Understand': Joseph Smith's Transformation of Hebrews in Alma 12–13," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 165–229; and Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon," 157–234. The way *The Book of Mormon* uses biblical texts is similar to what we find in the revelations Smith dictated during his lifetime, most of which are now in the various versions of the Doctrine and Covenants in the churches based on Smith's restoration movement. For a complete analysis of these from 1828–1830, see Colby Townsend, "Rewriting Eden with the Book of Mormon: Joseph Smith and the Reception of Genesis 1–6 in Early America" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 2019), 75–131.

COLBY TOWNSEND {colbtown@iu.edu} is a dual PhD student in the English and religious studies departments at Indiana University Bloomington, studying transatlantic literature and religion of the long eighteenth century. He has published essays in the *Journal of Mormon History* and *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and reviews in journals such as *Church History*, *Early American Literature*, the *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, and *Reading Religion*.

TRANS IN THE CHAPEL: ATTENDING CHURCH AS A NEWLY OUT TRANSGENDER WOMAN

Emily English

The ratchet tightened in my chest pulling into the parking lot. Four of our five children in tow and one serving a mission. Fifteen minutes early in the hopes that we could settle in before anyone noticed. My children insist we sit in our usual pew to the right side, six rows back on the bleached knotty pine and speckled blue-green padded benches that were clean of goldfish and Cheerios. Dressed in a freshly pressed Foxcroft white oxford women's button-up blouse and black pleated polyester women's dress slacks, I slid into the bench and practiced my breathing exercises while trying to look away from anyone who might look over. My eyelashes were subtly coated in matte black mascara, on my cheeks a light dusting of dusty rose-colored blush powder, just enough that I could feel comfortable and almost myself.

"Nice to see you back where you belong, Brother English."

Look down, don't make eye contact, and breathe.

"Thank you."

Breathe in and hold for three seconds, breathe out and hold for three seconds. Breathe in and hold for three seconds, and again, breathe out and hold for three seconds.

"Well, hello, young man . . . nice to see you, it has been a while. Are you sticking around for priesthood this time?"

It will be okay. Three, two, one . . . let the breath out.

"Hello, it has been a while."

I forced a smile then looked back down at the polished, almond-shaped tips of my shiny black Naturalizer flats, remembering that my toes were painted the color of lilacs somewhere underneath. I hoped I didn't scuff them on the way in.

I watched peripherally as the Relief Society president came in the room and moved from sister to sister, greeting them as they came in with their families. Her navy, floor-length chevron maxi dress moved gracefully with her from Sister Tanner to Sister Johnston to Sister Brown. A stiff and highly appropriate handshake with the second counselor, then on to Sister Hansen. As she came toward the English family pew, she sat down beside me and softly took my hand.

"I'm so glad you made the extra effort to be here. You look beautiful and full of grace."

I took a deep breath, and we wept together until the meeting was about to start.

She moved her family over to sit in front of my little family, pulling a small pack of tissues out of her purse and handing them to me with a subtle look of reassurance.

Forty-seven minutes of breathing exercises and making small origami frogs out of the program to distract myself from the anxiety of the meeting. Someone said a closing prayer. The Relief Society president returned to my side, held my hand again, tears again.

"Would it be okay if I stay here with you for a minute?"

"No, thank you, I need to go outside if I am going to be okay."

"Okay, is it okay if I check on you?"

"Yes, I will be out in the car until the kids are done with their meetings."

Standing up, adjusting the blouse, careful to not scuff my toes. Taking a breath as two hands extend in front of me.

"Nice to see you, Brother English. Glad you are back where you belong."

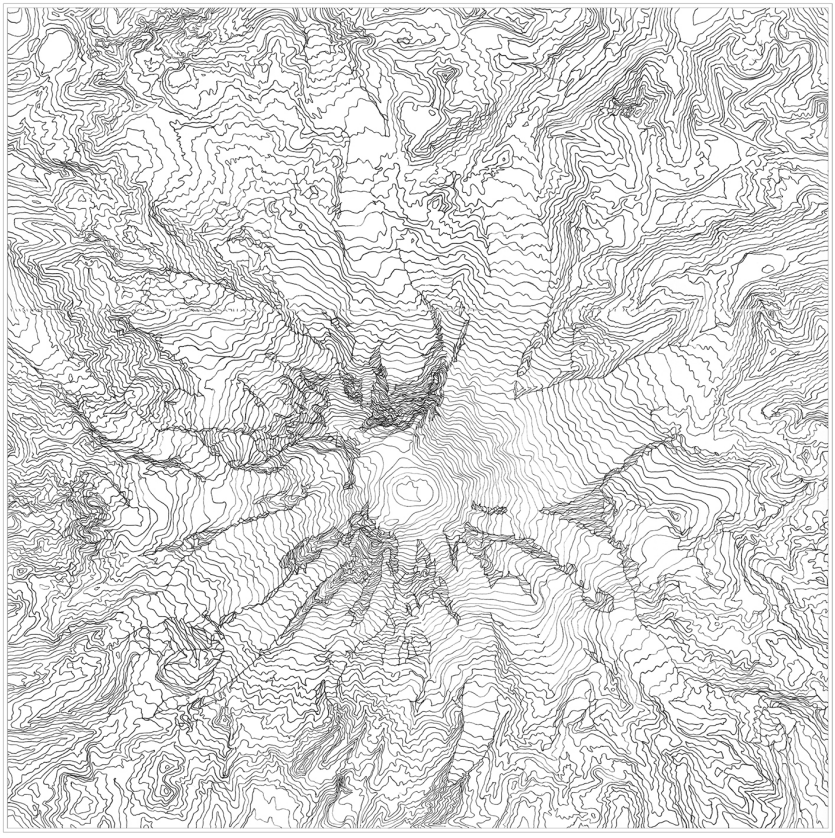
Breathe, correct my posture after the aggressive grab and shake of my clamped-down left shoulder.

"Would you consider coming early to help the young men pass the sacrament next week?"

"Maybe."

Moving to the car, I reach into my pocket, pull out one of the tissues, dab the corner of my eye, careful to not disturb the long black lashes. Grateful to have worn waterproof mascara this time.

EMILY (EM) ENGLISH {emenglish@csi.edu} is a technical writer and educator at the College of Southern Idaho. She is married and proud co-parent of five children and a min-pin (Pepper). Currently, she is obsessed with collecting sand from Idaho's beautiful places to go along with a collection from national and state parks.



Kirsten Sparenborg,
Tahoma, Washington, 2021,
ink, watercolor, and homemade
natural pigment, 16″ x 20″

PIONEER MOTHER

Tara Godwin

I come from a family of Mormons, although perhaps somewhat unorthodox ones. Somewhere in England and what is today Romania, my father's ancestors heard of a man named Joseph Smith and his vision of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. They left Europe and traveled with other devout Saints to Utah, settling in Salt Lake City and Vernal. Fast forward a century or so and my father still practices Mormonism. I'm certain his relationship with the Church must be far from simple. He entered into fatherhood as a teenager and worked all his life to be worthy of the daughters who called him "Dad." He and I don't talk about religion. All I know is that when he felt lost, not unlike Joseph Smith, he prayed.

Meanwhile, my mother's ancestors lived in Pennslyvania and Italy, unaware that, after roughly two decades of prayer and quietly passing the sacrament tray without partaking, my mother would join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I'm uncertain how her Roman Catholic predecessors might feel about her conversion, but I like to think they would have, at the very least, respected her desire to follow God's will. My time with my mother was short. She died during my freshman year of college, when I was still too young to appreciate her personhood and valued only her motherhood. I wish now I could talk to her about all the questions I have. I know she loved God.

I write all of this to say that Mormonism informed, and continues to inform, many of my life's decisions. I say "Mormonism" rather than the longer, stuffier "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" because I refer to both the faith tradition and the culture. Although my mother converted when I neared the end of primary school, I grew up attending church functions like Activity Days, used Mormon vernacular like

"CTR," and learned family history from my grandmother. We never read scriptures at home, probably due in part to my mother's hesitancy to accept the Book of Mormon as God's word. As a kid, my Mormon upbringing proved far more cultural than religious.

My religious education occurred on my mission. I surprised myself by serving—I always considered missions a modern form of imperialism. I'm sure some continue to argue that missionary work is imperialist, but I felt called to the work and submitted to the call. When I returned home from my mission in Estonia, I held a deep love for the uniqueness of Mormon religious texts and their vision of the divine. Upon returning to university, I changed my major from chemistry to history. I found myself fascinated by the history of the Soviet Union and the fallout of its dissolution—something I witnessed while wearing a black name tag.

The study of history is so often filled with painful topics. To study history is to peer into the darkest parts of human nature—how and why we choose to harm others, how and why we engage in conflict, and how the oppressed suffer. Our failures as humankind inform our present, and our past cannot, and should not, be forgotten.

Somewhere in my university training, I stumbled into a Mormon studies class. The idea of an academic study of my faith tradition seemed odd—who cared?—but I signed up anyway. The course proved fascinating and challenging, placing stories I grew up with in conversation with broader historical movements like Christian primitivism and the Cold War. I attempted to confront the contradictions in Church history and the Mormon experiment, although I am certain now I did not master it. As a historian, I thought myself impervious to the pain of history, even my own. A few years later, I confronted this pain in an art museum in Cody, Wyoming.

I took a trip to Cody to see my favorite companion from my mission. I say "favorite companion" and I mean that, but I also mean my only companion. We served together for over a year of our eighteen-month service and I consider her a dear friend. She lives in Cody. Although I had visited once before, she graciously acted as my tour

guide, and we found ourselves at the art museum inside the Buffalo Bill Center of the West.

The piece is titled *Pioneer Mother*. I saw her in plaster, although the original is cast in bronze. Some may find her unremarkable—a middle-aged woman dressed in the modest clothes of those who trekked west, gazing straight ahead. She is the first time I ever saw my history and culture housed in the clinical walls of a museum—housed to be analyzed, appreciated, pondered. She peered directly at me, through time, a conduit for my ancestors. More than likely, the sculptor envisioned women who pushed westward intoxicated with the ideals of Manifest

Figure 1: "Pioneer Mother," Alexander Phimister Proctor, sculpture, 1925. Photography by Tara Godwin, 2021.

Destiny rather than Mormonism when he crafted the determination in her face. Art, however, remains open to interpretation, and, to me, her determination signifies a desire within the Pioneer Mother to practice her faith in peace and a commitment to her God so strong it compelled her to cross a continent.

Later that night, my former companion and I attended an Apsáalooke (Crow) cultural presentation. "Give the Natives their land back," the presenter said. "This country was founded on genocide before the word even existed."

In Mormon folklore, we envision that when Brother Brigham declared "This is the place!" the land lay empty, that early Mormons found refuge without violence or conflict. This folktale is untrue. Although convinced of Native American's ancient Lamanite ancestry, Mormon pioneers inhabited foreign land that did not belong to them and massacred Indigenous peoples. Was the Pioneer Mother conscious of the genocide in which she participated? Did she feel guilty? Or did she feel justified under the pretense of divine ordination?

Moreover, as she sought asylum in what was then Mexican territory, did she consider herself an American? An Englishwoman? A German? Or, did she feel like something entirely new—a Mormon? Her flight to Mexico certainly indicates that she felt unable to assimilate into American life. Her American contemporaries used her sister wives and her belief in tales of gold plates and angels as evidence that she was not a decent American woman.

As her descendant, I find myself inextricably tied to my Mormon identity. The older I become, the more I gain awareness of my clumsy attempt to assimilate into American culture. The comments on a recent *New York Times* article concerning women's usage of sacred garments that call my religious community a "cult" remind me that I am not welcomed everywhere.[1] The vitriol that accosts me on TikTok concerning

1. Ruth Graham, "Among Mormon Women, Frank Talk About Sacred Underclothes," *New York Times*, July 21, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/21/us/mormon-women-underclothes.html.

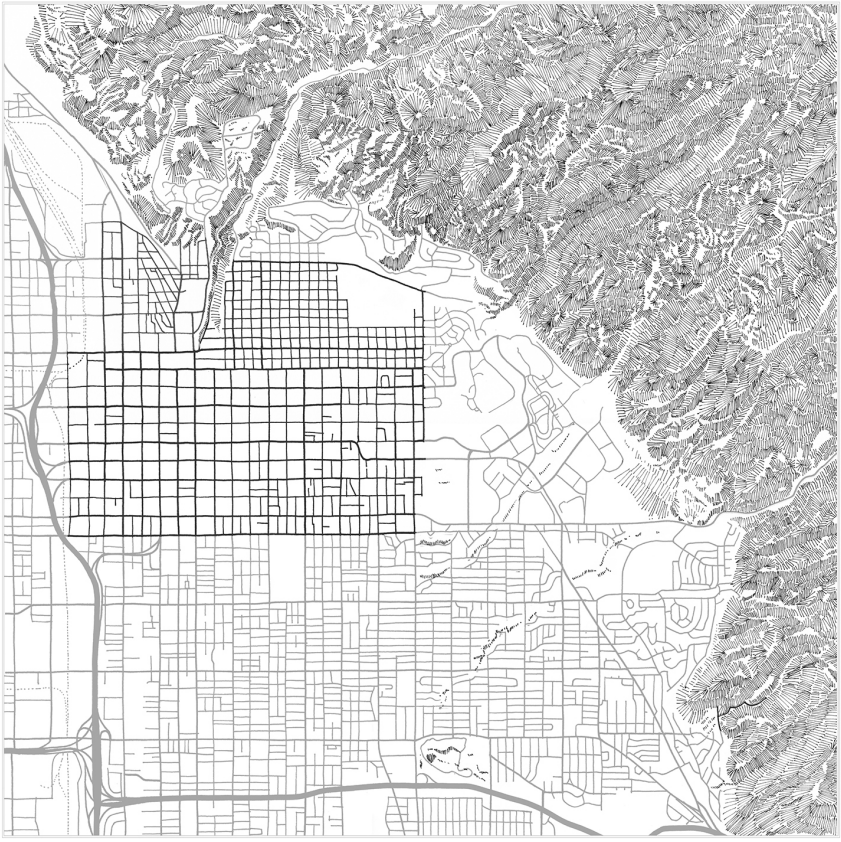
Mormon dietary restrictions and marriage practices reminds me that I am not understood by all Americans, religious or otherwise. My mission experience reminds me that to be Mormon is to not be American, and I am not convinced I want to be American at all.

Mormonism is not simply my faith—it is my culture, my language, and my people. It may be my nationality. It is also my pain. I feel acutely the irony of the Pioneer Mother seeking solace away from a hostile government while the institutional Church today denies such peace to queer Saints—pioneers in the present. I agonize over how to celebrate my cultural heritage while acknowledging the violence and devastation this history symbolizesfor Native Americans. I am embarrassed and irate that white leaders denied my Black siblings salvation, and when white hatred toward God's children proved untenable, they arrogantly labeled the policy reversal "revelation." This history is painful because it is mine, and because it is mine, I must not escape it.

I don't know what it means to be Mormon, other than to grapple with Mormonism's difficult history and cultural legacy. I find hope in Mormonism's radical roots and sense of community. The early Saints' willingness to defy conventional social norms and sacrifice for their religious values gives me hope that we can now theologically embrace our queer siblings. The proto-feminism evinced by early female Mormon leaders breathes life into me that the glass ceiling that suffocates Mormon women will shatter. I pray we can honor the Pioneer Mother and allow women to once again heal the sick and speak in tongues—leaders in their own right. Forgive us, Father, and forgive us, Mother, our transgressions.

The lines between myself and the Pioneer Mother blur. Mormonism is nothing if not complicated, and that is why I hold it so close.

TARA GODWIN {tara.isabelle.godwin@gmail.com} graduated from the University of Utah with an HBA in history in May 2020. She currently works as a development analyst at the University of Toledo Foundation. She volunteers with local LGBTQ+ support groups and attempts to train for a marathon in her free time.



SALT LAKE CITY

Kirsten Sparenborg,
Salt Lake City, Utah City Streets, 2015,
digital print of ink drawing, 16″ x 20″

MORONI, MOSES, AND PRESIDENT NELSON: VITAL CORRELATIONS WITH THE COVID-19 VACCINE

Robin Litster Johnson

I listen to the Book of Mormon almost every day and often find what I consider to be interesting correlations with other goings-on in life. Most recently, I am struck by the similarities between the Nephites' attitudes regarding defending themselves against the Lamanites, Moroni's preparations for war, Moses and the brazen serpent, and the development of the COVID-19 vaccines and President Nelson's emphatic encouragement to be vaccinated.

In Alma 48:15–16, it says, "this was their faith . . . that he [God] would prosper them in the land; yea, warn them to flee, or to prepare for war, according to their danger; And also, that God would make it known unto them whither they should go to defend themselves against their enemies." This was not a static set of actions the Nephites were to take in every circumstance in order defend themselves but rather a belief that in each varying circumstance they would be inspired and led to do what was appropriate for the situation.

Then, in Alma 49:8–9, when the Lamanites, led by apostate Nephites, came against them in battle, it reads,

> But behold, to their [the Lamanites' and apostate Nephites'] uttermost astonishment, they [the righteous Nephites] were prepared for them, in a manner which never had been known among the children of Lehi. Now they were prepared for the Lamanites, to battle after the manner

> of the instructions of Moroni. And it came to pass that the Lamanites, or the Amalickiahites, were exceedingly astonished at their manner of preparation for war.

It is clear in these verses that entirely new technologies, new tactics, and new strategies had been innovated and developed by the Nephites because of the inspiration and guidance of their leaders—and because of the people's cooperation and collaboration with their leaders.

Now flash back a few thousand years to Moses in the desert with the children of Israel. In Numbers 21:6–9 we read:

> And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

The people asked Moses to pray to have the fiery serpents removed. The scriptures here do not say that that is what Moses asked the Lord to do. It simply says, "Moses prayed for the people." The Lord did not remove the fiery serpents, which had been the people's request. Instead, they were given an antidote to quell the effects of having been bitten.

This entire "Moses and the fiery serpent" scenario is expounded various times in the Book of Mormon. Consider these verses:

> After they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished. (1 Nephi 17:41)

> But there were many who were so hardened that they would not look, therefore they perished. Now the reason they would not look is because they did not believe that it would heal them. (Alma 33:20)

Now flash forward to March 29, 2020. President Nelson asked the Church, and the world, to join in a worldwide fast for relief from the COVID-19 pandemic. He included, "As a physician and surgeon, I have great admiration for medical professionals, scientists, and all who are working around the clock to curb the spread of COVID-19."[1]

Less than two weeks later, President Nelson called for a second worldwide fast on April 10, 2020 for relief from the pandemic, including "that the present *pandemic may be controlled*," and for "our Heavenly Father and His Son—the Master Healer—to show forth Their marvelous power to bless the people of the earth."[2]

Nine months later, on January 19, 2021, President Nelson was vaccinated and shared these comments:

> We are thankful for the countless doctors, scientists, researchers, manufacturers, government leaders, and others who have performed the grueling work required to make this vaccine available. *We have prayed often for this literal godsend.*
>
> As a former surgeon and medical researcher, I know something of the effort needed to accomplish such a remarkable feat. *Producing a safe, effective vaccine in less than a year is nothing short of miraculous*. I was a young surgeon when, in 1953, Dr. Jonas Salk announced that he had developed a vaccine against the cruel and crippling disease of polio. I then watched the dramatic impact that vaccine had on eradicating polio as most people around the world were vaccinated. . . .
>
> My professional and ecclesiastical experiences convince me that vaccinations administered by competent medical professionals protect health and preserve life.

1. Tad Walch, "Video: President Nelson invites all to participate in worldwide fast Sunday and to pray for relief from coronavirus pandemic," *Deseret News*, Mar. 26, 2020, https://www.deseret.com/faith/2020/3/26/21196285/coronavirus-covid-19-russell-m-nelson-pandemic-faith-mormon-lds-church-prayer-fasting.

2. Jason Swensen, "President Nelson calls for a second worldwide fast in response to COVID-19," *Church News*, Apr. 4, 2020, https://www.thechurchnews.com/leaders-and-ministry/2020-04-04/general-conference-april-2020-worldwide-fast-president-nelson-180010 (italics added).

> Receiving the vaccine today was part of our personal efforts to *be good global citizens in helping to eliminate COVID-19 from the world*."[3]

It is interesting to note President Nelson specifically mentioning that the polio vaccine eliminated polio *because* most people around the world were vaccinated, implying, if not directly stating, that COVID-19 could be eliminated thusly as well, if most people around the world were to become vaccinated.

On January 19, 2021, the First Presidency released the following statement:

> Vaccinations have helped curb or eliminate devastating communicable diseases. . . . COVID-19 vaccines that many have worked, prayed, and fasted for are being developed, and some are being provided. . . . As appropriate opportunities become available, *the Church urges its members, employees and missionaries to be good global citizens and help quell the pandemic by safeguarding themselves and others through immunization*.[4]

These efforts continued. In February 2021, per President Nelson's direction, the Church, through LDS Charities, gave $20 million to support global efforts to provide two billion COVID-19 vaccines to people in low- and middle-income countries.[5] In March 2021, the First Presidency upgraded the Church's general handbook to encourage

---

3. Russell M. Nelson, "With approval from our physician, my wife Wendy and I were vaccinated today . . .," Facebook, Jan. 19, 2021, https://m.facebook.com/russell.m.nelson/photos/a.607086232692150/3650726764994733/?type=3&source=48 (italics added).

4. "The First Presidency and Apostles Over Age 70 Receive the COVID-19 Vaccine," Newsroom, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Jan. 19, 2021, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-leaders-covid-19-vaccine (italics added).

5. Tad Walch, "President Russell M. Nelson and the COVID-19 vaccine: What the church leader has said and done," *Deseret News*, Apr. 29, 2021, https://www.deseret.com/faith/2021/4/29/22407953/president-nelson-on-covid-19-vaccine-comments-speeches-actions-prayers-shot-church-news.

vaccinations.[6] In April 2021, it was announced that missionaries should be vaccinated, and if not, they would only be assigned to missions within their home country.[7] In August 2021, another statement was released by the First Presidency, including this plea: "We find ourselves *fighting a war* against the ravages of COVID-19 and its variants. . . . We know that protection from the diseases they cause can only be achieved by immunizing a very high percentage of the population. . . . *We urge individuals to be vaccinated*."[8]

In the event that my argument and the vital correlations between Moroni, Moses, and President Nelson are not apparent, I will attempt to lay them bare here. We are at war like the Nephites, though our battle is metaphorical. Like the Nephites, new technologies have been developed to fight and win this war. The prophet, highly knowledgeable and experienced in this battleground, has himself used these new technologies and has repeatedly urged Church members to use them as well in order to win this war. Yet, like the children of Israel ignoring Moses as he lifted the brazen serpent for all to see, and like those whom Moronihah attempted to lead (see Helaman 4), there continue to be Church members who refuse to be vaccinated, many due to belief in a false narrative.

It is true that individual choice in this matter has always been affirmed in each of the statements by President Nelson and the First

6. *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* 38.7.13, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/38-church-policies-and-guidelines?lang=eng#title_number238.

7. "Church Encourages Missionaries to Receive a COVID-19 Vaccine," Newsroom, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Apr. 23, 2021, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/missionaries-covid-19-vaccine.

8. "The First Presidency Urges Latter-day Saints to Wear Face-Masks When Needed and Get Vaccinated Against COVID-19," Newsroom, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Aug. 12, 2021, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/first-presidency-message-covid-19-august-2021 (italics added).

Presidency, as personal agency is a prime directive. It is also true that there are genuine medical conditions that preclude some from getting a COVID-19 vaccination. For example, the daughter of a friend is expecting her first child, and because of her and her husband's blood types, she had to receive a RhoGAM shot.[9] Her doctors were uncertain how the COVID-19 vaccine would interact with that and recommended waiting until after the baby's birth to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. There are other medical conditions that prohibit small numbers of others from getting the vaccine.

However, in my opinion, complacency, obstinacy, or an affiliation with conspiracy theories do not constitute medical conditions that warrant the refusal to be vaccinated. Stories are proliferating about unvaccinated people in the hospital who sorely regret their refusal to be vaccinated, along with those mourning the unnecessary deaths of the unvaccinated.[10] "In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me" (D&C 101:8).

I have several family members who are currently choosing to not be vaccinated. Their research for making this decision comes from what some consider to be "alternative" doctors. Some of their evidence can appear quite compelling. However, more compelling than their research, more compelling than the research presented by traditional doctors, and more compelling than any opinions proffered by political

9. "Rh Disease," Stanford Children's Health, accessed Aug. 20, 2021, https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=rh-disease-90-P02498.

10. Erika Edwards, "Unvaccinated hospitalized patients say they regret not getting the shot," NBC News, July 8, 2021, https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/unvaccinated-hospitalized-patients-say-they-regret-not-getting-shot-n1273342; Stephen Collinson, "The tragedy of Covid victims who said no to the vaccine," CNN, Aug. 3, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/03/politics/covid-victims-who-said-no-to-the-vaccine/index.html.

pundits on either side of the aisle is my testimony in the concept of a living prophet. I believe in the concept of a living prophet. Right now, the living prophet happens to be Russell M. Nelson. On this topic of being vaccinated against COVID-19, he has given clear, consistent, and continual counsel: Get vaccinated.

ROBIN LITSTER JOHNSON {RLLJ@yahoo.com} is a resilience and well-being advisor, fraud prevention expert, and Suzuki violin teacher. She LOVES the Book of Mormon and its relevance to our lives. Her favorite church callings have been stake music chair and Primary chorister. She received an MBA, emphasis in organizational behavior, from Brigham Young University and a Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) from the University of Pennsylvania—"COVID Class of 2020." She can be contacted through RobinLearningSystems.com and MusicMadeEasier.com.

Kirsten Sparenborg,
San Rafael Reef Drawing Process, 2021,
photograph of artist's hand and ink on paper, 17" x 17"

Bear One Another's Burdens

Lorren Lemmons

I.
When I was a child
I entered baptismal waters
with one pair of folded hands
and rose up, one with hosts
of linked fingers weaving nets
for catching burdens—

for bearing the weight
of doubts and doubters.

II.
I know the Shepherd
counts each woolly head,
knows each bleating cry,
loves us even when wonder
leads us to wander
beyond ordained fences.

Surely every wounded
sheep is cradled and carried
home, washed with the same
gentle, wounded hand.

Do the others lean their soft,
musky bodies against the lost
one's side, warm
breath mingling
in the night's air?

III.
Lawyers sit at court, twisting
statutes, wresting loopholes.
Can't He who confounded
their bladed questions,
conjured every sheltered alcove
from the dust of stars,
make space for every facet
of His love, reflected in us?

IV.
Zion is not a place
where we will whisper
murky judgments from closed
circles.

Light will pierce every spirit,
soul-motes glittering
like dust in a window.

We will know how we've been carried,
how our hands have been wiped clean.

LORREN LEMMONS {lorrenrichelle@gmail.com} is the deputy editor for *WRKWNDR Magazine*. Her essays and short fiction have been published in *Literary Mama*, *Coffee + Crumbs*, *Military Mom Collective*, *Motherwell*, and other publications. Lorren and her family recently left military life and settled in her hometown in Idaho. When she isn't chasing one of her three children, Lorren can be found scribbling in a notebook, playing the harp or piano, or experimenting in the kitchen.

Getting there

Millie Tullis

my husband questions the good historical centers like this do.
Kids come every year on a field trip and leave thinking
history sucks because they don't want to touch a cow's hot udder.

He did not want to touch the cow's udder and is remembering
how the man dressed as a pioneer called them city slickers
when they lived ten minutes down the road.

I loved these field trips and saved babysitting money to return
in the summer. I made candles by running in a circle.
Imagined I was Laura Ingalls Wilder. Churned butter in a skirt.

The historical farm was his great great grandfather's.
He says it's not like this is that farm. Half the valley
was somebody's farm a hundred years ago. When I was a kid here

we kept our eyes peeled for the adults working behind the scenes
who wore blue jeans and t-shirts like us. There are rules
about what clothing volunteers wear on the farm.

My husband did not know his great great grandfather had three wives
but he isn't surprised. The first dead.
The next two in polygamy.

The second and third were sisters. They share one headstone nearby.
The sisters and the husband. The oldest sister who is the second wife
    buried
between her husband and sister.

They were both nineteen the years he married them.
I can't stop digging up my dead men for judgment.
My great grandfather who had an affair

with his secretary after his round-faced wife gave birth
to nine-pound twins and lived. My mother remembers the skin
on this grandmother's stomach hung over her aproned waist

like a long pancake. My third great grandfather
married his stepdaughter. My second great grandfather also
married his stepdaughter after raising her from the age of eight.

Tonight we do not enter the visitors center where the photograph
of my husband's great great grandfather hangs.
We are walking to the open grass before

the too-clean-to-be-accurate mercantile storefront selling honey and
rock candy
sticks to listen to the state-sponsored symphony perform
in the 125th year of Utah statehood.

We open our camping chairs above the earth
my husband's great great grandmother walked.
The younger sister of her husband's second wife

she married him in Mexico
three months before Wilford Woodruff's revelation
renounced the practice of polygamy publicly

clearing the way for statehood.
Tonight the smoke from California's fires reddens the setting sun
until the only lights left on are the stars

the stringed bulbs of the mercantile store
and the half domes of light letting the players see
the song they have already began to play.

Saint George, Utah

Millie Tullis

Not named for the Saint
who met the princess by
the lake and with her girdle
leashed the dragon. Who killed

    it for the people's conversion.
    Whose chapel in Windsor
    holds a part of his skull
    part of his arm or

his heart. In a cup
of griffin's egg
two fingers.
Mormons have no saints

    save the pioneers. Saint George
    the cousin of Joseph Smith.
    George A Smith whom the Paiutes
    called *Non-choko-wicher* takes himself

apart after watching
him remove his teeth
glasses and wig. Who did not
settle that place but called

    the saints to settle it.
    Instructed them to eat
    potatoes raw with skin
    to prevent scurvy.

They called him Potato Saint.
A few miles north my English
great great grandmother
Agnes ate only potatoes

    and salt for three weeks
    when her husband was on a mission
    in Europe. Because there was
    no other food.

I do not know
what her sister wife
ate. When her baby
fell into the fire

    Agnes rubbed halved
    potatoes onto the burned
    hands. Wrapped each finger
    separately so they would not

graft together.
A finger was taken
three months later.
Someone said

    it was corrupting
    the other fingers.
    Agnes told a story
    from England.

A poor woman's
pastor visits and asks
to pray with her.
As he prays she

interrupts
him with
potatoes!
potatoes!

When he stops
praying she explains
God might hear her
between the man's words

and think to send
a starving woman
potatoes
potatoes.

This is the joke.

MILLIE TULLIS is a poet and folklorist from Northern Utah. She received an MFA from George Mason University in 2021 and is currently studying folklore at Utah State University. Her work has been published in *Sugar House Review*, *Rock & Sling*, *Cimarron Review*, *Ninth Letter*, and elsewhere. She is the editor-in-chief for *Psaltery & Lyre*, an online literary journal publishing literature at the intersection of faith and doubt.

Kirsten Sparenborg,
Carrara Marble Mine, 2020,
watercolor and ink, 22" x 30"

THE GREAT ZUCCHINI WAR

Lisa Bolin Hawkins

We figured the Utah Mormons started it, because they were the gardening crowd.

Now, to most of the Saints in the College Village Ward, my family and I were Utah Mormons, since we had come to the university town from BYU so Jeff could get his PhD. As a convert from Oklahoma married to a many-generations Mormon who grew up in Boston, and as the working mother of only one child, I did feel closer to being a Utah Mormon than I did to being, say, a Martian—but not a whole lot.

Anyway, we weren't "Utah" enough to anticipate a vegetable war. The first salvo was fired on a hot July Sunday, when we parked in the church parking lot and left the car unlocked and the windows down. The skimpy trees around our genuine Salt Lake–issue stage-one chapel didn't provide much shade, yet, so the vinyl car seats would otherwise be hot as branding irons when we came out of our meetings; nevertheless, it was our first mistake. I noticed the car next to us had its windows rolled up, was locked tight, and had roll-down window shades on the side windows and a California Raisins fold-out dashboard protector visible through the windshield. But it was a much newer car than ours, so I didn't think much of it. Especially since the visual aids I'd brought so the Primary kids could sing "Oh, What Do You Do in the Summertime?"—including lemonade glass, poster-board clouds, stick-and-string fishing pole, black fabric sky with Reynolds Wrap stars, and an American flag for the "parade"—were breaking out of their ancient tote bag, and Marisa was about to pull my skirt right off if I didn't pick her up. It was Sunday.

Three hours later, I discovered what we really do in the summertime. We grow zucchini. Well, our family doesn't, but apparently everyone else in the ward did, because our car was so packed with grocery sacks of green, sausage-like squash that the three of us could hardly fit inside. There were a few sacks of tomatoes in there, too, which gave the car a vaguely yuletide appearance and underdone-casserole smell. I was in no mood, after a long-winded high council speaker in sacrament meeting and two hours in Primary, to think much further than "We'll unload the car after dinner."

I was trying to hold Marisa and dig her car seat out from under a sack of zucchinious bounty when she noticed one specimen that looked like a two-foot baseball bat and started to scream, scrambling down me and running to crawl up Jeff, who was just coming out of the building and was deeply engaged in a discussion of something important (like the BYU football team) when he found himself being treated like nightmare playground equipment. He smiled absent-mindedly, shifted his weight to accommodate his screaming daughter, and finished his sentence before turning from Brother Selkirk to ask Marisa what was wrong. Then he saw the car.

"What the—did you volunteer for some Relief Society thing?" I glanced briefly at the other ward members, fastening their own kids into minivans or herding older kids into their cars. The two-foot baseball-bat zucchini lay there, invitingly within my reach. But no. "I think someone thought we might not be getting our veggies," I replied, with a lame smile, trying to balance my tote bag on top of the pile without squishing any tomatoes.

"What are we supposed to do with all this stuff? What is this stuff, anyway?"

"Zucchini—you know, the squash. Maybe I should have signed up for the homemaking meeting class on ways to fix it."

"Maybe it can be made into something useful, like paper or cloth or building materials. Like soda-pop liters can be recycled to become carpet."

I moved the offensive monster vegetable from sight under some other sacks and began again to buckle Marisa into the car. "After you finish up, I'll go get *my* PhD—on zucchini. I'll win the Nobel Prize for inventing a zucchini composite that could survive reentry from outer space."

We laughed and shifted a few bags so we could get into the car and go home. After all, people were just sharing their surplus and it got a little out of hand. That's what we thought at first.

As it happened, I didn't need to learn how to cook zucchini beyond the elementary method of slicing up the small, tender ones (the few, the proud, among our gifts) and steaming them a little. My wedding-gift Betty Crocker cookbook got me that far. Beyond that, the College Village Ward was my tutor. On Monday, the Olsens brought zucchini bread, along with the recipe and yet another bag of the stuff. They left it on the doorstep, rang the bell, and ran, but we recognized the car. On Tuesday, my visiting teacher said she knew I was really busy at work and brought over a casserole for dinner, the chief ingredient of which was zucchini.

When Jeff came to bed that night, I was still awake. I waited till he got settled and asked, "What are we going to do?"

He rolled over and stroked my hair. "Is there something you wanted to do, sweetheart?"

"No—I mean, not right now. What are we going to do about the zucchini?"

If you can see disappointment in the dark, then I guess I'm not the only one who's seen it. Jeff sighed and rolled onto his back, but he did reach over to keep stroking my hair, with less enthusiasm than before. "Oh. Why don't you throw it away?" he asked.

"I can't do that. It would be wasting food. Children are starving in—somewhere. And don't say to pack up the zucchini and send it to them."

"So wait till it gets moldy and then you can throw it away."

"And have a great excuse to clean out the refrigerator. My idea of a good time. Could you rub the back of my neck a little?"

"Mm-hmm." Jeff shifted to reach the back of my neck. "You worry too much."

"That feels so good. I'm feeling more relaxed."

"Yeah?"

"Mmmmmm."

Somehow the subject of zucchini was lost in the moment. But that moment, like so many you'd like to hang on to, was fleeting.

Our cup ran over on Thursday after Mutual, when some young women brought by a plate of zucchini cookies—which I didn't even know were possible. I smiled and thanked them and, immediately after closing the front door, flung the cookies, paper plate and all, against the living room wall and burst into tears. Marisa, who was playing on the floor across the room, also started to cry, of course, but we both were reduced to an astonished whimper when we looked up to see that two of the cookies stuck. To the wall, I mean.

Jeff came bounding down the stairs, sweat-suited and with a basketball cradled in his arms. "I'm going over to the church to play—" His voice trailed off at the sight of his tearful wife and daughter staring at the cookies stuck to the wall and the rest of the cookies scattered on the carpet. The paper plate had skidded under the couch.

"Those cookies are made of—?" he began.

"Don't say it!" I said, unleashing a fresh onslaught of tears. Marisa joined in.

"I don't get it," Jeff said. "If the house caught fire or we had been burglarized, I'd like to think we'd know what to do. How do you defend against slow death by vegetable donation?"

Marisa and I were still snuffling. "Maybe I should stay home?" Jeff asked. I appreciated the gesture but knew it was intended only as such. I shook my head. There was nothing he could do, but I still felt like a victim. "Don't tell anyone," I said. He smiled and sort of hugged me on his way out the door. There are still two faint, greasy, irregular cookie-shaped marks on the wall that we can't scrub off.

~

"You know, Jeff," I said the next evening as I looked over the Olsens' zucchini bread recipe, "The zucchini is just filler. It doesn't taste like anything, so you can shred it and mix it into any recipe."

He withdrew from the computer printout he had been examining intimately since Marisa went to bed. "Can you mix it into my dissertation?"

"That would make it a lot heavier, if that's what you need. This one loaf of bread has an entire cup of vegetable oil in it. I find that repulsive."

"I find that expensive."

Cooking oil was indeed expensive, so we restrained any impulses we may have had toward zucchini bread. And on Saturday morning at the grocery store, when I saw that zucchini (they called it "Italian squash") was selling for 33 cents a pound, we laughed hard enough to attract attention from other shoppers. "What, Mommy?" Marisa asked.

"You know that green vegetable that people keep giving us for free? They're selling it here."

She didn't get it.

Perhaps because the week had been so full of zucchini, we were lulled into thinking that Sunday would be a day of rest from it, a sort of squash Sabbath. Fools that we were, we again left the car unlocked and windows rolled down. Jeff got to the car first after our meetings, and as Marisa and I approached and saw him standing, defeated, by the driver's-side door, I knew exactly what kind of fools we were. Once again, our car looked like the final resting place for zucchini with pituitary problems. These weren't young, succulent, side-dish zucchini; these were large, dense, seed-laden zucchini, with a few bags of tomatoes for added color. We did like the home-grown tomatoes, but all the squash?

I decided it was time for action. Sharon Baumgartner was shepherding her four boys toward their station wagon when I smiled and stopped her. "Apparently somebody thinks we need zucchini, but we really have quite a bit. Could you use some?"

"No, thanks," she said with a knowing smile and went on shepherding.

The Marshalls only had one teenager left at home, but teenagers eat a lot. Polly Marshall wasn't buying. "We have a large garden, dear. Lots of zucchini already." From the way she smiled, I wondered if the Marshalls hadn't contributed one of the sacks of charity to our car. I dismissed the thought as paranoia, but after Brother Wald turned me down (I even told him Sister Wald would be delighted to get the fresh produce), I knew. We would once again have sacks of zucchini on every kitchen counter. We had yet to experiment with non-food uses.

That evening at Primary in-service I cornered LaVella Curry, a "lifer" and a genuine Utah Mormon. "Tell me about zucchini," I asked, trying to keep the desperation out of my voice.

"Are you the designated recipient this year?" she asked.

"It would seem so."

She sighed. "Zucchini grows anywhere. Profusely. After a nuclear attack, zucchini and cockroaches will be left. Sometimes it grows again next year, even when you didn't plant it. It has huge leaves that hide the good little zucchini until they grow to the size of the pods in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. But it's against everything we've been taught to waste food. You're graduate students and you don't have room for a garden, so you're prime targets. You're also new to the ward this summer—have you noticed that everyone else is closing up their cars during church, even though they risk second-degree burns on sunny days?"

I nodded.

"See, they learned last year, or the year before that. You are the victims of generosity and guilt. Nasty combination."

On Monday morning, I called the food bank to ask if they wanted our zucchini. No thanks, they had plenty. That night, we carved large zucchini into jack-o'-lantern–like creations, put candles inside, and displayed them on the balcony off our bedroom for family home evening. Marisa was delighted.

I prepared a ratatouille of zucchini and tomatoes for the chipmunk who lived under the back porch. After three days, he quit coming.

Jeff volunteered to take zucchini to school with him as an offering to the famously aggressive Avery State Attack Squirrels. The voracious little creatures weren't shy of anyone sitting on a bench under the trees shading that venerable institution, especially when the bench-sitter was trying to eat lunch. So Jeff went off with a plastic bag of zucchini chunks in his backpack. My hopes ran high; those squirrels had been rumored to try to eat sleeping students. But Jeff was in a foul mood when I got home from work. It was the zucchini's fault.

"There I was, risking rabies to give little furry creatures some variety in their diet," he said. "Meanwhile, their friends were stealing my peanut butter sandwich and the granola bar that I'd left on the bench. I was starving all afternoon." And he looked at me as though I had trained the squirrels to steal his lunch myself.

That's when I got serious, maybe even reckless.

Our neighbor, the Art Student Who Had Wild Parties (as we always referred to him), was surprised when he opened his apartment door and the Mormon Woman Next Door (me) was standing there, laden with the largest specimens of zucchini we had received. "Hi!" I said brightly. "Do you sculpt?"

He didn't seem to think I was crazy; maybe he was used to the extraordinary. "Do you want to put that stuff down?" he asked and made the crucial mistake of allowing me to enter his apartment and put the squash down on the floor. One of them rolled and wobbled across the living room and bumped into a stereo speaker. He winced.

"I thought you might be able to create something out of these, being an artist," I said, feeling like an idiot and smiling my best "Golden Questions" smile.

He looked at the pile of zucchini, then at me. "Well—I guess I could try. Did you grow this stuff?"

"It was a gift."

His eyes met mine with some understanding. "You could just throw it away."

"Oh, no, I think—well, it could be useful."

"There's always casserole."

I managed a weak laugh. I didn't look too closely at the contents of the dumpster that week, but we did become friends with the Art Student Who Had Wild Parties, who turned out to be named Rick and might be famous someday, but not for vegetable art.

By Friday night, I was eternally tired of the sight and smell of zucchini, but there was still some crowding the refrigerator. I slammed my way into the car and sped down to Kmart, where I bought some craft supplies and a fold-out cardboard windshield protector, which was 99 cents. The only choices were a giant Budweiser beer label or a bikini-clad, buxom sunbather, so I chose to sacrifice the Word of Wisdom to the law of chastity. As a result, Marisa after couple of years could recite "This is the famous Budweiser beer. We know of no brand—," etc., etc., complete with "exclusive beechwood aging," to the amazement of her friends and the distress of their parents. I didn't see the long-term implications; I only wanted to be able to lock my car on Sunday. I practiced rolling up car windows so they would squish the edges of old towels that could hang down to shade the seats. I moved boxes of Christmas ornaments and baby clothes we'd crammed into the closet under the stairs to find, and open for the first time, my sister-in-law's Christmas gift of two years ago: a food dehydrator.

I would beat them at their own game. I spent Saturday slicing and drying zucchini. Jeff tiptoed around and made lunch for himself and Marisa; with my apron and rather large knife, I was a woman possessed. He tried: "You shouldn't spend all day on this. Why don't I use my leverage as sacrament meeting chorister to threaten them with having to sing 'There is Sunshine in My Soul Today' every Sunday until this stops?"

There was no sunshine in my soul. It could be Thanksgiving before the guilt-and-generosity zucchini fest let up. So I invented retaliatory kindness. By Sunday morning, all was ready. Jeff wouldn't park in the

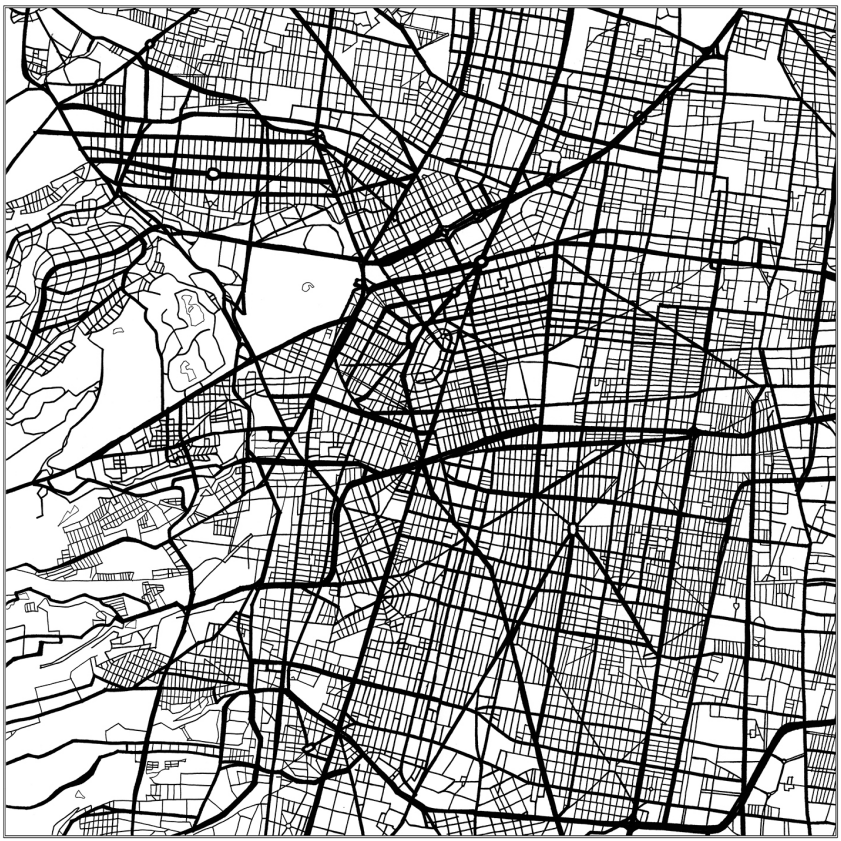
church lot with that Budweiser thing visible through the windshield, so we parked a couple of blocks away. He carried Marisa and I carried my Primary visual aids and other stuff in the laundry basket, which I had emptied for the purpose and wiped out in case of contamination from the dirty clothes.

After sacrament meeting, I hurried to catch up with the Relief Society homemaking counselor, Sister Abbott. Since we hadn't exchanged more than two words, ever, I thought I'd better introduce myself, but after that I unveiled my gift. "I thought these would fit perfectly with the theme for our homemaking meeting this month," I said with feigned innocence and presented her with the fruits of my labors: for every sister in the ward, a new (and slightly brittle) refrigerator magnet made of a slice of dried zucchini and painted with the popular legend, "Bloom Where You Are Planted."

Sister Abbott was momentarily speechless but recovered and said a lot of nice things about all the work I'd gone to and how cute the magnets were—way too many nice things, really. My conscience twinged, but I repressed it with the hope of a blissfully zucchini-free refrigerator.

I've been thinking, though—maybe I'll ask the landlord next spring if I can dig up a small space by the back porch for a garden. If the resident chipmunk doesn't like vegetables, the garden could stand a chance. I wouldn't plant anything delicate that required a lot of skill or attention. And of course, not any zucchini. Certainly not. I didn't even keep a refrigerator magnet for myself.

LISA BOLIN HAWKINS has published articles, poetry, and short stories in *Dialogue*, *Public Square Magazine*, *BYU Studies*, the *Ensign*, *Exponent II*, and elsewhere. She also has published a novel, *Mrs Holmes*. Lisa formerly worked as a lawyer and professor, still works as a writer and editor, and is happy to put together the weekly ward newsletter and consult on temple and family history work. She is married to Alan and has two children, a child-in-law, and two grandsons.



MEXICO CITY

Kirsten Sparenborg,
Mexico City Streets, 2020,
digital print of ink drawing, 16" x 20"

Book of Mormon Theology—Anticipating the Future of a Discipline

The Book of Mormon: Brief Theological Introductions. Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020.

Reviewed by John Christopher Thomas

The academic discipline of Book of Mormon theology is a relatively recent development that appears to have begun in earnest with a little-cited 1997 University of Nottingham PhD thesis by Tyler Rex Moulton entitled "Divine Benevolence, Embodiment, and Salvation in the Teachings of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon." Nearly two decades later, the discipline would take shape with the appearance of studies by LDS scholar Charles R. Harrell[1] and Community of Christ apostle Dale E. Luffman.[2] My own contribution—from outside the Restoration tradition—would follow three years later, which ironically would be the most extensive examination of Book of Mormon theology to that point.[3] Rather clearly, these attempts focus on the theology of the Book of Mormon as a whole, a necessary first step, or so it would seem. At the same time, a variety of theological soundings in individual Book of Mormon books—and in some cases individual chapters within those books—was taking place via the efforts of the Mormon Theology Seminar, signaling that the discipline was developing still further.

1. Charles R. Harrell, *"This Is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Gregg Kofford Books, 2013).

2. Dale E. Luffman, *The Book of Mormon's Witness to Its First Readers* (Independence, Mo.: Community of Christ Seminary Press, 2013), 126–79.

3. John Christopher Thomas, *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Cleveland, Tenn.: CPT Press, 2016), 189–291.

With the appearance of the Book of Mormon: Brief Theological Introductions series from the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Book of Mormon theology as an academic discipline has taken an important and necessary step forward. This ambitious undertaking has in one fell swoop changed the Book of Mormon theological lay of the land in ways that are significant and will no doubt prove lasting in various respects. Remarkably, the entire twelve-volume series seems to have appeared in print within one calendar year, a testament to the efficiency of the series editors and publishers and an accomplishment few series have ever achieved.

The physical appearance of these paperback volumes is reminiscent of Oxford University Press's Very Short Introductions series, complete with cover flaps that double as bookmarks. The front covers feature nicely designed raised letters, and each of the twelve volumes displays a woodcut illustration by Brian Kershisnik, originally created for the Maxwell Institute Study Edition of the Book of Mormon, providing a visual link between these two important Maxwell Institute projects that may not go unnoticed by the discerning reader.

The entire Book of Mormon—with the exception of the Words of Mormon—are covered in twelve published volumes that make up the series: 1 Nephi;[4] 2 Nephi;[5] Jacob;[6] Enos, Jarom, and Omni;[7] Mosiah;[8]

4. Joseph M. Spencer, *1st Nephi: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

5. Terryl Givens, *2nd Nephi: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

6. Deidre Nicole Green, *Jacob: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

7. Sharon J. Harris, *Enos, Jarom, Omni: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

8. James E. Faulconer, *Mosiah: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

Alma 1–29;[9] Alma 30–63;[10] Helaman;[11] 3 Nephi and 4 Nephi;[12] Mormon;[13] Ether;[14] and Moroni.[15] An examination of the individual volumes reveals a significant amount of gender diversity among its contributors, where nearly half the writers (five of twelve) are women. One contributor is from outside the United States (the UK), with one contributor adding a little ethnic diversity. With regard to the academic backgrounds of the contributors, five come from philosophy (Spencer, Green, Faulconer, Wrathall, and Miller), four from literature (Givens, Harris, Turley, and Welch), two from history (Becerra and Holland), and one from theology (Berkey). Significantly, no biblical scholars are to be found among the contributors. For the most part, the age demographic of the contributors tilts in favor of younger scholars, perhaps a testament to the imaginative approach envisioned for the series.

According to the editors' series introduction, no methodological approach was prescribed, freeing writers to follow their own instincts about how best to approach their individual assignments. This approach may well reflect the reality of the current state of Book of Mormon theology studies, where there has been little by way of models to follow in

9. Kylie Nielson Turley, *Alma 1–29: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

10. Mark A. Wrathall, *Alma 30–63: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Maxwell Institute, BYU, 2020).

11. Kimberly Matheson Berkey, *Helaman: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

12. Daniel Becerra, *3rd, 4th Nephi: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

13. Adam S. Miller, *Mormon: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

14. Rosalynde Frandsen Welch, *Ether: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

15. David F. Holland, *Moroni: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2020).

such an innovative endeavor. Thus, part of the encouragement for individual writers to find their own way might well have been an attempt to identify the approaches that work better for the tradition than others—a sort of first step in discerning the way forward, one might say. Despite this lack of uniformity in method, it should be observed that at least half of the writers offer a structural overview of their individual books to serve as the basis for the theological reflection and discussions to follow. Interestingly, these approaches were not confined to those with backgrounds in literature but included three trained in philosophy, one trained in theology, and one trained in history. While each of the volumes in the series is worthy of its own detailed review, in the space that follows I will attempt to give interested readers a taste of some of the volumes' contents.

After offering a somewhat detailed discussion of the structure of 1 Nephi, Joseph M. Spencer, assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, leads his readers in theological reflection on three significant questions that arise from the book: the significance of the killing of Laban, Nephi's difficult relationship with his brothers, and the near invisibility of women in the text. The open-endedness of this approach as well as Spencer's keen theological observations on nearly every page indicate something of the depth of this volume.

For Terryl Givens, senior research fellow at the Maxwell Institute, 2 Nephi is best engaged in the shadow of the "visionary" destruction of Jerusalem and the people on the other side of the world from this destruction, "the new (and very old) covenant," and the role of Jesus as the covenant's foundation. Methodologically, Givens makes sense of the theology of 2 Nephi by placing it within the broad sweep of restoration scripture and thought.

The volume devoted to Jacob by Deidre Nicole Green, postdoctoral research fellow at the Maxwell Institute, grounds her own theological reflections on the suffering of Jesus and that of Jacob, as well as the social nature of our spiritual lives, in the broader issues of equality, the

dissolution of hierarchies, and empathy for all people. The condemnation of those who abuse the powerless, regardless of the reason for such powerlessness, is seen as one of Jacob's overarching themes.

For Sharon J. Harris, assistant professor of English at BYU, covenant and inheritance function in some ways as the centralizing topics found in her volume on Enos, Jarom, and Omni. A distinctive aspect of this volume is Harris's decision to follow the dictation order of the Book of Mormon, seeking to tease out any theological significance that concluding the volume with Enos, Jarom, and Omni might make.

The volume on Mosiah by James E. Faulconer, professor of philosophy at BYU and senior research fellow at the Maxwell Institute, gives pride of place to Mosiah's structure, which he sees as intentional on the author's part despite the chronological challenges presented. Among the theological issues addressed are the futility of politics and the necessity of the Atonement, along with salvation as creation from nothing and an extensive discussion of the person of God.

Kylie Nielson Turley, who teaches English and ancient scripture at BYU, contextualizes her work on Alma 1–29 by exploring Alma's age, "the beliefs and practices of unbelievers," and the relationship between his unbelieving past and the contents of these chapters. The second half of the volume addresses Nephite conceptions of mourning, national grief, and Alma's experience of healing and hope in Alma 29.

The volume on Alma 30–63 comes from Mark A. Wrathall, professor of philosophy at the University of Oxford, who takes an avowedly philosophical approach to his work. The volume has a three-fold structure based on Alma's structure of the Christian life. Part I focuses on Alma's sermon on the seed and how one's response to this planting can shape characters and dispositions. Part II examines the Christian present as a "probationary" or "preparatory" state. Part III explores the temporal nature of human existence.

Helaman is examined by Kimberly Matheson Berkey, PhD candidate in theology at Loyola University Chicago. Grounding her analysis

in an examination of the politics, structure, and theme of the book of Helaman, Berkey is intentional about following the chapter divisions of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, owing to the internal narrative coherence of each chapter. This structure provides the basis for her very careful theological reading in which she identifies a pattern of comparisons and contrasts that are imbedded throughout the text.

Rather than moving chronologically through the structure of the books of 3 Nephi and 4 Nephi, Daniel Becerra, assistant professor of ancient scripture at BYU, structures his volume thematically around "Christ," "Humankind," "Spiritual Development," and "Society." In this methodological decision, Becerra's contribution resembles many of the volumes in Cambridge University Press's New Testament Theology series. The author supplements his careful analysis of the text by intentionally drawing on the later Christian theological tradition to demonstrate its similarities to and dissimilarities from the Book of Mormon.

Adam S. Miller, professor of philosophy at Collin College, provides the volume on Mormon. Contextualizing his work in Mormon's experience of living through the end of his world, Miller uses this question as a means of raising important theological inquiries for contemporary discipleship. Drawing on both a structural synopsis and a narrative synopsis, the author works his way narratively through the book, usually commencing with a general discussion of a theological theme that is explored in the particular section of Mormon under consideration.

The volume on Ether is contributed by Rosalynde Frandsen Welch, an independent scholar with close ties to the Maxwell Institute at BYU. Welch begins with basic questions and an outline of the book that is structured around Moroni's six inserted comments. Her theological interests include the brother of Jared's experience of Christ, the theme of faith, Moroni's editorial purposes and the book's ethics of reading, and a reader-centered theology of scripture.

The series' final contribution—on Moroni—comes from David F. Holland, John A. Bartlett Professor of New England Church History at Harvard Divinity School. For Holland, the theme of the giving of gifts is Moroni's dominant one, and, consequently, the author structures his own volume around Moroni's "soteriological" structure. This structure includes: resolute faith in Jesus, the ordinances, the church as coalesced around these ordinances, Mormon's sermon culminating in pure love, the reception by the saints of the essential gifts of grace, two letters from Mormon, and a final declaration of God's gifts to humanity.

It should be self-evident, even from this briefest of surveys, that the appearance of the Book of Mormon Brief Theological Introductions series changes the landscape of Book of Mormon theology in many ways. With their appearance, scholars working on any number of topics in Book of Mormon studies will have ready access to a depth and breadth of theological reflection not available to past students. While future researchers will no doubt determine that some of the efforts work better than others and that perhaps some of the positions advocated will need to be rethought, the publication of the series is a significant step forward for Book of Mormon theology in particular and Book of Mormon studies in general. The series is to be enthusiastically welcomed.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER THOMAS {cpt@pentecostaltheology.org} (PhD, University of Sheffield; DD, Bangor University) is Clarence J. Abbott Professor of Biblical Studies at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tennessee and director of the Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies at Bangor University in Bangor, Wales.

~

Vardis Fisher Pioneered Literary Mormon Writing

Michael Austin. *Vardis Fisher: A Mormon Novelist*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021. 128 pp. Paper: $14.95. ISBN: 978-0-252-04409-0.

Reviewed by John Bennion

Michael Austin's biography positions Vardis Fisher as the first Mormon novelist to escape the binary of ardent anti-Mormon writing and just as ardent home literature. This work is one of the first two books in a series published by the University of Illinois Press—Introductions to Mormon Thought. The second being *Eugene England: A Mormon Liberal* by Kristine L. Haglund. According to the UIP website, the series will provide 40,000–45,000-word "reassessments of leading figures in the development of Latter-day Saint thought and culture, synthesizing and systematizing their contributions and influence." The general editors, Matthew Bowman and Joseph Spencer, intend to use an expansive definition of Mormon thought and to include underrepresented authors. Such a series from such a press will help increase the stature of Mormon studies inside the tent of American studies.

If future books in this series are as authoritative as Austin's biography of Fisher, the series will illuminate and transform our concept of many Mormon thinkers and writers we have either ignored or valued only in regional rather than national terms. The book is set up for dual audiences—general readers interested in Mormon literary history and specialists who want a gateway to a serious study of Fisher and other pioneers of Mormon literary fiction. The text is both readable and rigorous, as much about Fisher's milieu as it is about Fisher. The notes are at the end, enabling the reading to flow. Also, the text contains a bibliographic essay about everything Fisher wrote.

A good critic is a good reader and establishes contexts and ways of thinking that open the text to other readers who haven't examined an author's entire corpus, his correspondence and interviews, and the historical context of his work. Both writers and critics stand on the shoulders of archivists, transcribers, and researchers, and Austin acknowledges the help of friends in the production of this work, notably of Ardis Parshall, who retrieved and transcribed hundreds of letters stored in the Church archives. Many contemporary critics are narrow specialists, but Austin, who has published ten books about literature, rhetoric, reading, and civil discourse, as well as essential essays about Mormon literary studies, has one foot in national discourse and one foot in what is often the more insular area of Mormon literature. He is an apt scholar to fulfill the objective of the series editors to provide wide and deep context in order to reassess the writer's life and work.

The first chapter describes Fisher's youth and influences—hard-laboring Mormon parents in rural Southern Utah, education at the University of Utah and the University of Chicago, and early marriage to a traditional Mormon woman. This chapter also describes Fisher's departure from the Church. The second chapter describes his autobiographical novels about Mormon families pioneering in the landscapes and communities of Fisher's youth. His characters are forged between the rock of the desert and the hard place of Mormon zealotry. The chapter also discusses Fisher's groundbreaking role in literary Mormon regional fiction.

The next chapter discusses Fisher's historical novels including *Children of God*, his epic of Nauvoo and the Mormon exodus to the West. Austin places *Children of God* in the context of the golden age of Mormon literature, along with Maurine Whipple, Virginia Sorensen, and Samuel Taylor. The fourth chapter discusses Fisher's final series of novels, The Testament of Man, which describe the development of the human race from prehistory to modern times. These novels embody Fisher's departure from Mormon cosmology. Through all these

chapters, Austin continually follows the thread of Fisher's work inside the tapestry of Mormon and American Western literary history. He crafts an engaging narrative out of Fisher's struggle against the religion that created and irritated him and with the East Coast publishers who wanted him to write what would sell well.

As I've tried to make clear, this biography is not merely a chronology but a thesis-driven literary history. Austin uses what has been a central critical concern with Fisher—*Is he a Mormon writer?*—to explore the general question *What makes anyone a Mormon writer?* Fisher's wife at the time of his death claimed "Vardis Fisher was not a Mormon." She had been upset by Leonard Arrington's paper presented at the first Association for Mormon Letters conference, "The Mormon Heritage of Vardis Fisher." Fisher's own answer to that question, written in an autobiographical novel, was, "Religion is like smallpox. If you get a good dose, you wear scars" (1). Fisher's work, according to Austin, depends on Mormon culture, even as it rejects much of the theology. To understand writers like Fisher, Austin argues, readers must distinguish between being a practitioner of the religion and having a specific regional experience. Before there could be a Mormon culture region, Austin claims, Mormons and non-Mormons had to begin to see themselves as living in a common culture. Fisher forged a literature that demanded that the nation recognize that Mormonism was not just a historical but a cultural force and that writers from Mormon culture were developing a literature of their own. Fisher's work created a space for Mormon fiction in part because he was an intellectual writer, concerned as much with ideas as with stories. He was atheistic, libertarian, anti-communist, anti–federal government, and anti-Puritan. Through tracing the forces that defined Fisher culturally and intellectually, Austin establishes Fisher's essential Mormon-ness.

As I said earlier, Austin claims that Fisher was the first who escaped the anti-Mormon caricatures of the religion and the faith-promoting home literature, neither of which captured the essence and vitality of

Mormon culture. Austin suggests that "successful regional writing rarely comes from the center of a region's culture" (27). Fisher was raised as Mormon but became disaffected, so he established a mode of narrating from an insider/outsider perspective. Austin writes, "because Fisher had a greater stature with the Eastern literary establishment than any other Mormon writer of the first half of the 20th century, his framing of the Mormon experience has had profound implications for the way that Latter-day Saints have been portrayed in American literature since" (23). Fisher pioneered way for future writers by creating both the writerly tradition of working realistically with Mormon materials and by opening the market for Eastern publishers to accept that work.

I eagerly read most of the book in one day and discovered again that Michael Austin is not just a significant critic but an excellent wordsmith. This book establishes a high benchmark for future work in this series because of how eloquently and convincingly it places Vardis Fisher not only in the center of Mormon thought but in the center of American thought and literary studies.

JOHN BENNION {johnsergebennion@gmail.com} is an emeritus professor of creative writing at Brigham Young University. He writes about people living on the eastern edge of the Great Basin. He has published a collection of short fiction and four novels. Another novel is forthcoming from BCC Press. He has published short stories and essays in *Southwest Review*, *Utah Historical Quarterly*, *Journal of Mormon History*, and others. He is a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award (2021) from the Association for Mormon Letters.

~

Mormonism and the Natural World

Karin Anderson and Danielle Beazer Dubrasky, eds. *Blossom as the Cliffrose: Mormon Legacies and the Beckoning Wild*. Salt Lake City: Torrey House Press, 2021. 250 pp. Paper: $21.95. ISBN: 978-1-948814-42-3.

Reviewed by Gary Ettari

This collection of fiction, essays, and poetry is a timely and necessary one, reflecting a growing Mormon interest in and concern for the natural world. The theme of the 2019 Mormon Scholars in the Humanities conference, for instance, was "Ecologies," and there has been a steadily growing scholarly interest in the relationship between Mormonism and the environment. Given Mormonism's belief that the earth itself is a gift from God, such an interest is to be expected. The complication, however, is the fact that the institutional church remains largely silent on the matter. As Patrick Q. Mason notes, "As an institution, the modern church has typically taken a laissez-faire approach to the environment."[1] The reasons for this are legion, not least among them being a skepticism regarding both political activism and regulatory solutions proposed by the government, as well as an emphasis on personal accountability and the ethics of individual agency. Indeed, as the very existence of the book itself suggests, Mormons may be more inspired to honor the earth by reading personal responses to the natural world than by sifting through the byzantine and partisan rhetoric of environmental policy debates.

The question regarding the comparative dearth of a Church-wide commitment to ethical and sustainable environmental stewardship is

1. Patrick Q. Mason, "'The fulness of the earth is yours': Environmental Politics in the Mormon Culture Region," in *Religion and Politics Beyond the Culture Wars: New Directions in a Divided America*, edited by Darren Dochuk (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), 94.

framed this way by one of the editors: "Why is environmentalism seen as an enemy to many followers of the Mormon Church rather than as a way to honor divine creation?" asks Danielle Beazer Dubrasky in the prelude to the volume (9). That question strikes at the heart of one of many Mormon paradoxes, one that has to do with how Mormonism views the earth, the constellation of ideas surrounding the meaning of stewardship, and competing political ideologies that exist both within and outside of the LDS Church. For the most part, the selections eschew political rhetoric and instead narrate unique and deeply personal attempts both to connect with nature itself and to see a reflection of the divine in it. Dubrasky herself notes the varied significance that the natural world may hold for Mormons—its potential to be both "a sacred reflection of our divine origins" and "a desolate landscape, a range of mountains and an open sky that call to us from a source even deeper than God" (15).

The complexity of the Mormon environmental question toward which Dubrasky gestures is reflected in the variety of voices and perspectives contained in this book. The pieces offer no final or easy solution to the dilemma confronting the fact that Mormon environmentalism still appears to contain a morass of unresolvable paradoxes; instead, they offer a multitude of encounters with nature, with memory, and with faith. It's an approach that is both wise and generous. The table of contents features a variety of headings, some of which ("Revel," "Intercede," "Unveil") appear to be suggestions about how to both interact with and honor the natural world. Many of the pieces are ruminations on each author's experiences with both the wilderness and with family. Jennifer Champoux's "Maternal Eternal," for instance, notes the connections not only between the familial and natural worlds ("I have stood with my children in awe before the petroglyphs" [100]) but also between the natural world and the divine. The concluding sentence of her essay knits into one whole family the individual, the environment, and God: "Like the parachuting spider I saw on the pond, we glide through our days,

finding signs of God's love all around and learning to reflect it back to the world," she writes (105). Sarah Newcomb, in her essay "Where Grandmother Walked," brings an Indigenous perspective to themes of nature and family, chronicling her decision to leave the LDS Church and the difficulty of establishing (or reestablishing) family ties in the wake of such a separation. Despite the challenges facing her, Newcomb recounts taking her children to visit extended family in Alaska and describes the strong memories of older family members she experiences there. Newcomb, too, looks to nature for connections, at one point seeing "eagles flying high" and realizing that "the beautiful life within the community had not changed in all the years I had been gone" (286). Nature itself serves to remind Newcomb of community and familial connectedness, yet another of its functions in this collection.

It is heartening also to encounter so much poetry in a volume such as this. One of the standouts is Kimberly Johnson's "Goodfriday," which includes the lines "O happy deformation, / spunky verb, I embrace you in my / degradation, my shoddy embodiment / making thunder endless: impossible: sublime" (114). Johnson's solution to the fraught relationship between Mormonism and environmentalism is decidedly both rhetorical and bodily; the muscularity of her language matches the thunder's rolls, and the body itself, "shoddy" though it is, becomes a means whereby the poem's speaker experiences the sublime and endless echoing of thunder. Another poem, Lisa Bickmore's "Vesper Sparrow on a Fence Post," emphasizes the role that language itself plays in our encounters with the natural world. Bickmore observes that language is a reminder of both familiarity and estrangement, that the complexities of the natural world demand an equally complex rhetorical response, demand "a language that is both / home and exile, that scatters and gathers / an antiphon in my ear: noise of water- / clatter, a dun bird on its shorn tree" (326).

As Bickmore's poetry and as many of the other pieces remind us, solutions for bolstering Mormonism's anemic record on environmentalism

perhaps ought not to be sought through institutional channels at all. If this book communicates anything to us, it is that a personal connection with nature and an awe in the face of its grandeur are more likely to produce both a love for the environment and a sustained commitment to caring for it. The concept of stewardship is based as much on subjective experience as it is on the communal good. Such a vision of stewardship is hardly surprising, considering that the core of Mormon belief (obtaining a "testimony") is, in theory, almost entirely subjective; one approaches the divine with questions and, it is assumed, if one prays often and sincerely enough, one receives a direct answer from beyond. In that way, the writings here offer a similar dynamic: The journey to the knowledge of and appreciation for nature begins with an individual encountering its vastness, engaging with it through language, the senses, memory, etc., and then gaining a deeper understanding of its significance. In that context, *Blossom as the Cliffrose* is an exemplary volume in more than one sense of the word. The writing here is not only generally quite good but also serves as a template in many instances for how to encounter nature and hold it sacred. The variety of voices also serves to enrich a collection such as this. The diverse perspectives provide thoughtful and mostly successful attempts to not only commune with nature but also to see within it a reflection of both the divine and ourselves.

GARY ETTARI {gettari@unca.edu} is an associate professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. He is the author of several articles on Mormonism and the book *Mormonism, Empathy, and Aesthetics: Beholding the Body* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

~

Grappling with LDS Identity Formation: A Review of Recent Young Adult Novels

Rosalyn Eves. *Beyond the Mapped Stars*. New York: Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2021. 368 pp. Hardcover: $17.99. ISBN: 9781984849557.

James Goldberg and Janci Patterson. *The Bollywood Lovers' Club*. Garden Ninja Books, 2021. 286 pp. Paperback: $16.99. ISBN: 9798525195578.

Reviewed by Lisa Torcasso Downing

Identity formation is a challenge for any teenager, but when the hand-me-down identity a teen receives stretches beyond holiday expectations into realms fraught with eternal consequences, a high-stakes story is born. Because the formation of self can be a risky endeavor for LDS youth, it's not surprising that two recently released young adult novels, *Beyond the Mapped Stars* by Rosalyn Eves and *The Bollywood Lovers' Club* by James Goldberg and Janci Patterson, feature young Mormon characters who confront the identities they are expected to live. What is surprising, however, is the way each novel—though markedly different from one other in storyline and setting—offers characters who set boundaries *on* their Mormon identity rather than push the boundaries of Mormonism.

In *The Bollywood Lovers' Club*, Goldberg and Patterson craft the love story of Ohio transplant Amrita Sidhu, a high school basketball star who is both Punjabi and Sikh, and Ohio native Dave Gill, a third-generation Mormon whose family heritage is similar to that of his love interest. Their relationship innocently blossoms when a mutual friend invites them to join her at a movie night she affectionately calls (of course) the Bollywood Lovers' Club. The definition of star-crossed lovers, Dave and Amrita grapple with the cultural and religious

expectations they've inherited and the degree to which they will allow these pressures to impact who they love and what their future will hold.

On the other hand, *Beyond the Mapped Stars* opens in the 1878 polygamous world of southern Utah. Although it, too, includes a love story, the novel is more an exploration of the intersection of religion and secularism as seen through the eyes of Elizabeth Bertelsen, a sixteen-year-old daughter of polygamist parents. She feels pushed toward marriage by both her mother, who wants her to settle down as a second wife of an older man, and by her young love interest, whose patience may only last so long. And yet, her heart calls her to the work of astronomy. The protagonist doesn't call her Mormon theology into question but does question her obligation to its popularly accepted role for women.

So it is with *Bollywood*'s Dave Gill. He loves Amrita for exactly who she is (and vice versa) and sees clearly how her Sikh background has formed her. He realizes she'd cease to be who she is were she to adopt his traditions and beliefs, just as he would cease to be who he is without his Mormonism. Dave's questions regarding his identity development don't revolve around whether or not he wants to be Mormon. He does. He just isn't sure that the life of mission, college, and temple marriage that his parents and church leaders present to him as the ideal is necessarily the ideal for *him*.

The great strength of *The Bollywood Lovers' Club* (besides its wonderful characterization) is its conviction that love celebrates differences without an expectation of change—or conversion. There is a delightful underscore of peace in the relationship between Sikh Amrita and Mormon Dave rather than a struggle for one to become more like the other. Goldberg and Patterson achieve the balance of creating a compelling star-crossed romance without making adversaries out of the couple's families or their cultures.

In *Beyond the Mapped Stars*, Eves has crafted a remarkable feminist treatise that deserves a respected place in the Mormon literary canon.

Elizabeth Bertelsen wants an education—a real one, the kind that will teach her about the stars and maybe, just maybe, allow her to become a scientist in her own right. However, as her mother would remind her, such dreams don't belong to a Mormon girl who loves God and her family. In this way, Elizabeth's story problem isn't vastly different from ones that play out in the lives of many of today's LDS young women.

When Elizabeth's quest for forbidden knowledge leads to a near-tragedy for the family, she finds herself feeling unappreciated in her home. Rather than enter into the plural marriage her mother favors, she jumps at the opportunity to travel to Wyoming and assist an older half-sister during a high-risk pregnancy. The journey leads to both adventure and romance, but it also brings Elizabeth to Colorado, where her passion for learning places her in the company of the era's most brilliant astronomers, men and women who have gathered to study a rare eclipse. As Elizabeth tries to fit in with the intellectuals—some with decisive prejudice against Mormons—she experiments with deception around revealing her beliefs and heritage.

Of the two novels, *Beyond the Mapped Stars* is more likely to find a mainstream audience. It is a feminist treatise, a story of the awakening of self-determination. Eves succeeds in showing her readers the peculiarities of nineteenth-century life for a Utah Mormon girl whose identity and life trajectory are predetermined by her birth. What is most intriguing to me about Eves's novel, however, is its potential to palatably present Mormon feminism to modern Mormon girls and their mothers. The drive to break free from staid expectations is a universal one, but it is also one that has left many LDS women bruised from the struggle. The role of women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues to idealize the role of mother-nurturer as God's plan for all women. Many of today's young women continue to feel pressure to downplay career ambition and to forfeit career for motherhood. They long for careers that allow their talents to flourish.

If Eves had set her story in the Mormonism of today, its feminist themes would likely be perceived as threatening to the LDS patriarchal

order and rejected by faithful readers. However, by placing the story in the past, Eves positions her contemporary LDS readers at a safe distance from the difficult realities of female identity formation within the patriarchal society, one that continues to oppress women. In this way, *Beyond the Mapped Stars* is a brilliant and wise addition to Mormon feminist literature.

If LDS parents want novels for their teens with recognizable Mormon protagonists and relevant Mormon problems without challenging core theological tenets, both *The Bollywood Lovers' Club* and *Beyond the Mapped Stars* are wonderful options. Elizabeth Bertelsen is a stronger character and more satisfying protagonist than Dave Gill, simply because she takes full control of both her identity and destiny in ways Dave never quite manages. Amrita, however, is decisive, a leader destined for a successful life. Of course, there is a feminist charm in that, and it wouldn't be fair to fault Goldberg and Patterson for choosing to make their heroine stronger than their hero. Amrita is a fully-fleshed, lovely, and dynamic character I've all but neglected in my focus on identity formation of the Mormon characters, and Goldberg and Patterson crafted a stellar cultural bridge-building between Mormon and Sikh culture that I can't praise enough.

Both *The Bollywood Lovers' Club* and *Beyond the Mapped Stars* are worthwhile, thought-provoking reads for young adults, LDS or not. Each will tap into the Mormon angst of young LDS readers in important ways, giving them the practice field of ideas that fiction offers so well.

LISA TORCASSO DOWNING {downinglt@gmail.com} has served as fiction editor for *Sunstone Magazine* and *Irreantum*. Her short stories and essays have appeared in multiple publications, and she has published three novels for middle-grade readers. You can read her commentary on the Mormon experience at *Life Outside the Book of Mormon Belt* (outsidethebookofmormonbelt.com). She is a former adjunct professor for Collin College.

~

Understanding the Community of Christ's Doctrine and Covenants

Dale E. Luffman. *Commentary on the Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants. Volume 2: The Reorganization—Community of Christ Era*. Independence, Mo.: Herald House, 2020. 515 pp. Paperback: $44.95. ISBN: 9780830917310.

Reviewed by Chrystal Vanel

Even though with nearly 200,000 members worldwide Community of Christ (CofC) is the second-largest denomination finding its roots in Joseph Smith's Restoration movement, publications on CofC history and theology are much less numerous than publications tackling the sixteen million members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, headquartered in Salt Lake City. Thus, any new publication about CofC should be more than welcome among specialists of the Restoration movement, and clearly Dale Luffman's book is already an important contribution to a more precise understanding of a pluralistic Restoration movement and its development in various denominations and theologies.

Out of transparency and honesty, I need to make it clear that I personally knew Dale Luffman. While doing my PhD thesis, I worked as a translator for CofC, and I had the opportunity to work alongside Dale Luffman. Dale passed away in 2020 after ministering as an apostle for nearly twenty years and serving on the governing board and the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches (USA). As many others in CofC, I remember him as a very kind and considerate apostle, calling people easily but heartfully "friend." I remember fondly laughing out loud with him in the CofC Independence Temple and also learning a lot from our discussions, as Dale was an intellectual apostle, and maybe foremost a preacher and a teacher.

Dale's teaching skills are apparent in his commentary on CofC Doctrine and Covenants, as his writing is clear, precise, and easy to understand. The first volume of the commentary was published in 2020 and covers revelations of CofC Doctrine and Covenants received by Joseph Smith. This second volume, with 515 pages, covers the "Reorganization—Community of Christ era" from section 114, presented by Joseph Smith III to the RLDS Church in 1861 to section 165, presented to Community of Christ by president Stephen M. Veazey in 2015.

Each section is presented through the same pattern: "introduction," "historical and theological context," "commentary and exegesis," and "the significance of this text for its readers and today's readers." At the beginning of the volume, Luffman deals with "the role of Scripture in Community of Christ" (1–10), making it clear that the commentary is for "preachers and teachers in the church" (11–12), and tackles the issue of canonization through the Doctrine and Covenants (13–30). Having a PhD from a presbyterian seminary and being in alignment with CofC's current American Christian progressive theology, Dale's exegetical methods reflect mainline progressive protestant exegesis, here applied to Doctrine and Covenants: "traditional exegetical methods are employed in this commentary; they reflect Community of Christ's scripture statement. These methods are intended to lead to understanding through historical criticism, literary criticism, textual criticism, textual comparisons, and redactions criticism" (11).

Even though scholarly criticism and critical scholarship is clearly promoted, still the commentary is primarily made for "preachers and teachers" in CofC, and so one shouldn't be surprised by the somewhat faithful approach of a book published by Herald House (the official CofC publishing house) and having the CofC logo on its cover. Even though the commentary stills brings important and insider insights about recent developments in CofC theology, practices, and ethics—such as commentaries on section 156, which opened the priesthood to women, and section 165, which enabled LGBT marriages in CofC in

some nations—the global historical and American context is somewhat lacking development whereas the institutional RLDS/CofC context is well explained. For example, commentaries on sections 156 (from 1984) and 165 (canonized in 2010) could have given a more detailed historical context of American Christianity's various responses toward women's ordination and LGBT rights, as those sections could partly be explained as direct responses to those societal issues. It may also have been difficult for Dale to be critical of CofC leaders he worked closely with and may have considered friends. Thus, one shouldn't be surprised that Grant McMurray's resignation as CofC president in 2004 is only quickly and quietly mentioned through a footnote referring to Mark Scherer's CofC history (468n1393). While RLDS/CofC historians and theologians have been critical of Joseph Smith and the early years of the Restoration movement, such scholarly criticism is lacking when it comes to more contemporary events and prophets.

Even though a "faithful history" is somewhat present in the commentary, historians will learn a lot about CofC's peculiar theological history and development from Luffman's book, as the more recent RLDS/CofC still suffers from a lack of publications (despite the tremendous work being done by the John Whitmer Historical Association). And the commentary's faith-promoting tone could also be considered as a strength: as CofC is lacking a clear worldwide common identity, the commentary will enable CofC members, priesthood holders (male and female, Black and white, heterosexual and LGBT), and leaders to learn and ponder more about their faith and their peculiar canon of scripture. Surely translations of the commentary in languages such as French, Spanish, Tahitian, Haitian Creole, and Lingala would be useful for the institution and its diverse worldwide membership, which needs a common identity. And one would hope that future editions in English would give a quality binding (presently of poor quality) to such a book. Dale Luffman's commentary gives much-needed information about RLDS/CofC history and theology.

CHRYSTAL VANEL {chrystal.vanel@hotmail.fr} is a certified teacher for the French national education system and an associate member of the research laboratory Histoire et dynamique des espaces anglophones (Sorbonne Université). He holds a PhD in sociology (EPHE, Paris), a MA in religious studies (EPHE), a BA in theology (University of Geneva), and a BA in history (Panthéon-Sorbonne). He has written articles and book chapters in French and in English about various aspects of Mormonisms, and he is currently part of a research project on race and religion (relrace.hypotheses.org).

~

Mormonism's Inside-Outsider

Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd. *Jan Shipps: A Social and Intellectual Portrait: How a Methodist Girl from Hueytown, Alabama, Became an Acclaimed Mormon Studies Scholar*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019. 254 pp. Paperback: $24.95. ISBN: 978-1-58958-767-0.

Reviewed by Cristina Rosetti

Jan Shipps is Mormonism's "inside-outsider" who transformed the field of Mormon studies and paved the way for many who followed in her footsteps. Her book *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* remains one of the most widely read and assigned books about the Mormon Restoration, offering a concise introduction to the faith from someone on the outside of it. Her status as an outsider who earned the respect and trust of insiders lent credibility to both her writing and a field that was insular and dominated by believing historians. Drawing on previously published autobiographical writing, oral history interviews by the Church History Department, and lengthy personal interviews, Gordon and Gary Shepherd's biographical sketch of Shipps's life welcomes readers into the life of one of Mormon studies' pioneering voices.

In *Jan Shipps: A Social and Intellectual Portrait: How a Methodist Girl from Hueytown, Alabama, Became an Acclaimed Mormon Studies Scholar*, the scholar becomes the subject, and readers of Mormon history are given the opportunity to learn about one of the field's leading voices. The biography is written in two parts. The first tells the story of Jan's life, her upbringing, marriage, college career, and arduous journey through the academic job market. Most importantly, her biographers highlight the extent to which Jan immersed herself not only in Mormonism but in the academic study of Mormonism. Jan was among the first to bridge the academic study of the Latter-day Saints and Community of Christ. She was the first non-Mormon to serve as president of the Mormon History Association, advocated for the Mormon Studies Unit at the American Academy of Religion, and published one of the most widely read books on Mormonism in the twentieth century.

The second half of the book takes a different approach from the first, which is purely biographical overview. In chapters 5–8, the authors analyze the major events in Jan's life that led to her rise to fame in Mormon studies and place her life alongside other prominent women in the field. The authors chose to compare Jan's life and work to Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie because, as they argue, their books are "indisputably the most important or impactful that have ever been written about Mormons and their history" (143). While some may dispute this claim, these three authors represented women's scholarship in a field comprised mostly of men. Along these lines, the Shepherds conclude their overview of Jan's life with a focus on Jan's view of feminism. Although Jan does not identify as a feminist, the authors situate Jan in a long line of "proto-feminists" who impacted both Mormon history and the lives of Mormon women.

Readers will be impressed by Jan's determination and intellectual journey. Graduate students and those interested in academic work will find this book particularly compelling. Jan spent years on the academic job market and struggled to find full-time employment, with varied jobs including a brief position at the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research.

While her life represents that of an exemplary and groundbreaking scholar, the biographers did not paint an easy ascent in academia. It is honest and represents a reality that many entering the field will find useful, even consoling.

It would be dishonest not to admit that this book was not only intellectually but personally meaningful to me. As a fellow non-Mormon woman in Mormon studies, Jan Shipps became something of a role model to me and someone whose scholarship I have admired since graduate school. In their conclusion, Gordon and Gary Shepherd write, "Jan Shipps's salient scholarly contributions to the understanding go Mormon history, and her influential role in legitimating Mormon Studies as a significant discipline area of inquiry, merit deep appreciation of all contemporary scholars of the religious culture and history of the Latter-day Saints" (208). I, for one, am grateful.

CRISTINA ROSETTI {cristina.rosetti@utahtech.edu} is an assistant professor of humanities at Utah Tech University. Her research focuses on the history and lived experience of Mormon fundamentalists in the Intermountain West.

~

From Private Dreams to Public Damnings

George D. Smith, ed. *Brigham Young, Colonizer of the American West: Diaries and Office Journals, 1832–1871*, 2 vols. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2021. 1296 pp. Hardcover: $95.00. ISBN: 978-1-56085-274-2.

Reviewed by Katie Ludlow Rich

"Dont give me Council, its an insult to me . . . any man who takes a course independent of me—its a stink to me—I can not bear it" (1:200). On Saturday, September 23, 1849, Brigham Young spoke from the stand

in Salt Lake City with the sharpness and bravado that characterized many of his public speeches after assuming leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From the outset of his leadership in Nauvoo, Illinois, Young insisted that he would grant no quarter to the dissension that he blamed for contributing to the murder of his predecessor, Joseph Smith. Unable to remain in Nauvoo, Young led the majority of the Latter-day Saints across the plains to settle in the Great Basin in what became the Utah Territory. He ultimately directed the founding of 340 settlements (1:xxv), married fifty-five women (1:xlii-xlviii), and led both the Church and government of Utah—either officially as governor or unofficially—for three decades.

Beyond the sharpness of Young's tongue and leadership style, George D. Smith's edited collection of Young's diaries and office journals offers a more complex picture of the life of the pioneer prophet. This two-volume set includes entries from dozens of diaries, journals, minute books, travel itineraries, and miscellaneous records. The first entries come from a diary that Young wrote in his own hand beginning at his baptism into the Church on April 9, 1832. As Young lacked formal education, the early diaries contain his irregular, phonetic spelling. They also highlight a softer version of Young who worried about the meaning of his dreams, wondered at miracles, and cherished quiet time at home with his wife Mary Ann after months or years away in missionary service. While his succession as leader of the Church was fraught with conflict, it is possible to see why so many trusted and were loyal to him through his accounts of relationships built as an apostle missionary and his personal ministering to the Saints in Nauvoo. On July 12, 1845, he wrote, ". . . laid hands on several sick which I do daily and thereby keep myself nearly sick" (1:122). Young could be an exacting leader, but throughout his life, he also spent significant time ministering, counseling, and performing temple ordinances for the Saints.

In 1846, handwriting indicates that multiple clerks assisted Young in maintaining a diary, which became the dominant trend for the

remainder of Young's records. The level of detail varies widely according to the style of the clerk, with some providing the basic outlines of office duties (such as noting the rotation of clerks who slept in Young's office as nighttime security from December 1855 through 1857 [1:337]) and others recording more details of Young's sermons and conversations (including one wherein he insisted he would not be dictated by Emma Smith and that "he had heard geese fart before" [2:112]). The records contain a mix of ecclesiastical, theological, business, civic, military, and political affairs and demonstrate that Young maintained a taxing schedule. In a single day, Young might be at a cattle yard directing business, counseling with men about marrying additional wives, working in the tithing office, meeting about overland migration, and receiving reports about new judges and a military guard expected to come to Utah (1:501).

Though many of the sources included are digitized and available for public research, Smith's editorial skills bring immense value to this collection. For some of the journals, Smith painstakingly went through previously produced transcripts alongside full-color scans of the original sources made available online by the Church History Library, adding in missing details to compile a more precise transcript. The volumes also contain several valuable resources in the front matter, including a genealogy that traces Young's ancestors back several generations and lists the names of each of his wives, the year of their marriage, and any children from each union. The genealogy also notes the page numbers in the text where the names of these family members appear, allowing readers to search the text according to family relationships in a way that an index doesn't easily permit.

Young is of course the main character of his own diaries and office journals. However, Smith's footnotes often include brief biographical information or point to other sources in a way that grants greater place to women, racial minorities, and lesser-known figures with whom Young interacted. For instance, Young's diaries and journals are vital for

tracing many key developments of plural marriage in Young's life and the Mormon community, such as his early Nauvoo marriages recorded in Masonic cypher (1:69) and his decision for the Church to go public about the practice in 1852 (1:269). However, the journals offer mere glimpses into Young's home and family life and certainly don't provide the perspectives of Young's wives and children. The footnotes are a rich starting point for further research on people whose lives intersected with Young but whose stories and voices lie beyond these volumes.

Smith's edited collection is certain to become an essential text for any scholar or student of early Mormonism or the Intermountain West. The volumes are especially timely, arriving as the Joseph Smith Papers Project nears completion of its twenty-seven volumes of documents from Joseph Smith's life. Many readers are certainly eager for similarly accessible, quality volumes on Brigham Young, and George D. Smith provides an immense contribution here. Though the printed two-volume set is costly for individual collectors, there is a more affordable e-book version that is also searchable. As an independent scholar without institutional support to travel to archives, I appreciate just how valuable volumes like these are to making research accessible.

KATIE LUDLOW RICH {katierich87@gmail.com} is a writer and independent scholar living in Saratoga Springs, Utah with her husband and four children. She has a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in English, both from Brigham Young University. She is the blog feature editor for *Exponent II* magazine and blogs monthly at the-exponent.com. Her research interests include nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mormon women's history and gender-based power dynamics in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

~

Searching For Sally

Virginia Kerns. *Sally in Three Worlds: An Indian Captive in the House of Brigham Young*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2021. 288 pp. Paperback: $34.95. ISBN: 9781647690151.

Reviewed by Jenny Hale Pulsipher

Over the long history of the genre, most biographies have been written about elite white men. There is a practical reason for that: the wealth and status of those subjects made them far more likely than other people to be literate, to have access to the materials needed to create written records, and to have descendants preserve them. Historians who wish to write about women, people of color, or people with little or no wealth face considerable challenges, even today, and have to approach their task with creativity and persistence. In her biography of Sally Young Kanosh, author Virginia Kerns has done just that.

Sally, a Pahvant Ute captive purchased by Latter-day Saint settlers and taken into Brigham Young's household as a servant in 1849, left no written records (she could neither read nor write) and only a few traces in the records left by others. Those few people who recounted her life distorted or reframed it for their own purposes. To find the real Sally, Kerns, an anthropologist by training, undertook a metaphorical dig, exposing the accumulated layers of legend and situating Sally in the context of her three worlds—her Native homeland, her longtime residence in the Lion and Beehive Houses, and her return to her Native people as a "civilized" woman.

In her introduction, Kerns declares her belief that her "ethno-narrative style" can "reveal the complexity of individuals' lived experience: the links between their inner and outer lives, and the cultural perceptions and interpretations that influenced their emotions and actions"

(2). In addition, she asserts that the story of Sally's life can serve as a "particular case that stands for a general process," enabling us to see "how people living in American civilization have represented and treated what they regard as wild" (2). Kerns returns to this theme throughout the book; it is impossible to miss, particularly in the epilogue ("The Telling"), which discusses the ways Sally's story was framed after her death as an example of the triumph of civilization over wildness.

Kerns uses the dichotomy between "civilized" (or "tame") and "wild" to reflect how white settlers perceived themselves in opposition to their Native American neighbors, eschewing the frequently used but offensive pairing of "civilized" with "savage." Kerns argues that Sally herself adopted the tame/wild dichotomy over her decades living in Young's household. Seeing herself as civilized in opposition to her biological kin made returning to live among the Utes after her marriage to Pahvant chief Kanosh a painful exile.

The reader might ask: how do we know that this exile was painful for Sally? Indeed, how do we know how she felt about anything? That is the crux of the dilemma for this or any biography in which the subject left no personal account. Kerns has to get at Sally's experience in a roundabout way, through historical context (the events that happened to her or around her and the experiences of people who shared her circumstances) and by reading between the lines of those who mention her.

While Kerns succeeds in providing a case study illuminating how settler-colonists viewed and treated someone they considered "wild," Sally the individual remains largely enigmatic in these pages. Accessing the inner life of one's subject is a tall order even for a biographer whose subject left extensive personal writings; it may be impossible for someone like Sally, despite Kerns's best efforts. She clearly gave long and hard thought to Sally's inner life, examined a vast number of sources, and used imagination and an engaging style in her writing and structure. But without Sally's own words, we are left only with what

people (including Kerns) have projected onto her—resentment, joy, satisfaction, longing. Surely, she did feel these human emotions, but no one seems to have known her well enough to give us an intimate view. That itself is a comment on Sally's isolation as a woman living between worlds.

While we don't get a reliable intimate view of Sally Young Kanosh, Kerns deserves kudos for what she has accomplished here: a beautifully written, thought-provoking history of settler colonialism (a current theoretical approach in Indigenous studies) in Utah Territory, personalized through the multiple perspectives she gleans from a host of personal narratives. For context on Sally's Native world, Kerns relies heavily on the ethnographic descriptions of John Wesley Powell, who traveled through Utah and observed the Pahvant Utes during Sally's lifetime. For Sally's sojourn in "the heart of civilization" Kerns draws on a multitude of settler accounts and perspectives. I use the term "perspectives" in addition to "accounts" because Kerns imaginatively narrates the experiences of people who moved in Sally's orbit but left no accounts of their own. So, in the process of exploring Sally's life, the reader gets acquainted with a multitude of people who lived in or passed through the territory, from well-known figures like Zina D. H. Young to more obscure ones like Elijah Barney Ward and his Shoshone wife, also named Sally.

These many perspectives allow Kerns to construct a richly detailed description of Sally's various worlds, but they also provide a fairly comprehensive overview of the history of Utah Territory from 1849 until Sally's death in 1878. We learn about the arrival of the settler-colonists, their initial interactions with Native Utes and Shoshones, and their response to finding themselves in the middle of an active Indigenous/European slave trade in Native women and children, including the Pahvant Ute woman who is the subject of this book. Through the perspectives of the cast of characters Kerns lists in her appendix, we also see the way the settlers' need for land for their burgeoning population

shaped relations with Native people, and how violence and political conflicts reverberated in the lives of those sheltered in the "mansions" of Salt Lake City as well as those directly in harm's way.

In *Sally in Three Worlds*, Virginia Kerns has provided an overview of nineteenth-century Utah Territory that foregrounds Native American people, and that is a significant accomplishment. It is valuable to read this oft-told story from an unexpected perspective, despite the limitations imposed by the sources. While readers may not truly get to *know* Sally, they will learn everything it is possible to know *about* her. And they will get a very good sense of the worlds that she inhabited.

JENNY HALE PULSIPHER {jenny_pulsipher@byu.edu} teaches early American and Native American history at BYU. Her books include *"Subjects unto the Same King": Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (2005) and *Swindler Sachem: The American Indian who Sold His Birthright, Dropped Out of Harvard, and Conned the King of England* (2018). Her current project is a biography of her Shoshone ancestors, Sally Exervier Ward and Adelaide Exervier Brown.

~

Joseph Smith's History: It's Complicated

Ronald O. Barney. *Joseph Smith: History, Methods, and Memory*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2020. 423 pp. Paper: $40.00. ISBN: 978-1607817550.

Reviewed by Samuel B. Hislop

Joseph Smith defined truth as a "knowledge of things as they are, and *as they were*, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24, emphasis added).

I remember well the first time I learned that I did not know nearly as much as I thought I did about things "as they were" in the life of the prophet. In October 2017, I was writing a piece for the Church's

Communication Department about how the faith promotes an expansive vision of truth. Our managing director at the time, Rick Turley, reviewed my writing and told me that two of the quotations I had attributed to Joseph Smith would likely not survive historical scrutiny. For example, you will not find the famous line "by proving contraries, truth is made manifest" anywhere in the Joseph Smith Papers.

Rick, perhaps the world's foremost living authority on Church history, directed me to a contact in the Church History Department who seconded his assessment. This good man pointed me to original source documents in the Joseph Smith Papers (something I had never paid much attention to) for more accurate quotations, both of which were significantly different from what I had.

At that time, I had worked for the Church for seven years and had been connected to the faith since the day I was born. But I had no idea that early leaders who helped compile the history of the Church, such as B. H. Roberts, sometimes took liberties in changing what the record shows the prophet said. This piqued my curiosity: *What else that I think I know about Joseph Smith was altered by others*? Rick later helped me understand (as the introductions in the Histories volumes of the Joseph Smith Papers make clear) the many layers that Joseph Smith's words have been through over the years. From then until now, I have become a diligent student of the Joseph Smith Papers and other learnings from the life of the prophet.

A recent addition to that scholarship—and one that speaks directly to my experience—is Ronald O. Barney's *Joseph Smith: History, Methods, and Memory*. Barney presents the serious student of Joseph Smith with a handbook of sorts to better study and understand the prophet—and to start or resume that journey with lessons like the one Rick and other Church history experts have taught me.

Barney covers the waterfront of important issues, giving the reader a compendium of some of the most important findings to date about Joseph Smith. He provides a primer on the basics of historiography. He summarizes the contextual background of Joseph Smith's time, the

foundational experiences for Joseph and his Church, and how the history shows Joseph as both man and prophet.

Barney's book is an invitation into epistemological modesty and honest inquiry. "Frankly, we don't know as much as we think we know" about the life of Joseph Smith, he tells us. "It is probably safe to say that most Latter-day Saints don't want to read about the sometimes crooked though progressive course of the faith with its warts and all. Yet it is in the course correction, the stumbling while climbing, along with the remarkable successes portrayed in the historical record that Joseph Smith in his unsanitized appearance is best understood" (30–31).

Barney warns us of the absence of a complete documentary record of Joseph Smith's life—especially his inner life. Though the voluminous output of the Joseph Smith Papers seems to indicate otherwise, Barney tells readers of previous scholarship from Dean Jessee that shows that much of what we might assume to be Joseph Smith's thinking is in fact "the product of other men's minds"—namely, his scribes and clerks. "*We must face the reality that information about the most important feature of Joseph Smith's life may never have been created in the first place; what may be most useful to us totally eluded pen and paper altogether*," Barney writes (52–53, emphasis in the original).

Even so, Barney encourages the student onward in honest and engaged study because that is the only path to understanding. Importantly, this is a path full of fascinating and joyful encounters. For example, in a chapter about the religious times of Joseph Smith, Barney helps students understand the importance of acknowledging Joseph Smith "as an engaging and imaginative prophet who drew from not only Deity and his instincts but also the world in which he lived." This is important to grasp, Barney writes, because it "better fits the biblical model of ancient Israel's prophetic figures and shows his prescient instincts of 'religion making'" (104).

In a section about Joseph Smith's character, Barney calls out one of the many comments from the prophet that give a glimpse of his large-heartedness toward the Saints and the outside world. Joseph had the

following published in response to a man asking "what is required to constitute good membership" in the Church:

> Respecting how much a man of property shall give annually, we have no special instructions to give; He is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or any other church, or in no church at all, wherever he find them, to believe and obey all that God has revealed, does reveal, or will reveal, to do good and all men, to be a member in good standing in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (314)

The same chapter shows Joseph's rougher side, including a story his nephew Joseph F. Smith told in 1894. Toward the end of March 1843, Joseph F. said, he was playing near the prophet's home, "when all of a sudden the door flew open and I looked, and there came a great, big man right off the end of Joseph Smith's foot, and he lit on the sidewalk just by the gate." The man on the other end of the boot, Joseph F. said, was insulting the prophet in his own house. Recognizing that some would be shocked to hear of a prophet exhibiting such brutality, Joseph F. responds: "There was never a moment of [Joseph's] life that he was free from such things as these, being hounded, and abused, and insulted by wicked men. . . . [He would have been] less a man if he had not kicked [the man] out of his house on that day" (316–17).

Anyone concerned about truth as Joseph Smith defined it must not ignore things "as they were" in his life, no matter how unflattering. This truth will, among other things, set us free from the prison of unrealistic expectations too many continue to have for prophets—and for ourselves. This book is written by an academic for academics and comes at the steep price of $40. But it is an invaluable resource for anyone seeking to know, to the extent possible, more of the truth of this nineteenth-century faith leader.

SAMUEL B. HISLOP {samuelbhislop@gmail.com} is a writer with the Communication Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He also contributes to several other publications.

This Girl Is On Fire: Strength, Faith, and *Ninety-Nine Fire Hoops*

Allison Hong Merrill. *Ninety-Nine Fire Hoops: A Memoir*. Berkeley, Calif.: She Writes Press, 2021. 346 pp. Paper: $16.95. ISBN: 647421896.

Reviewed by Shayla Frandsen

Allison Hong Merrill's menstrual period begins when she's in the fifth grade, and she feels palpable confusion and worry that she's going to bleed all over everything. When a concerned teacher spots her stained skirt, Allison remembers wanting to shout, "I'm innocent! My body is doing its own thing. I can't stop it!" (76)

Merrill's new memoir, *Ninety-Nine Fire Hoops*, is full of moments such as these, where Allison finds herself the desperate victim of situations and perpetrators who appear too strong for her to stop. Her memoir is strikingly vulnerable, with almost every one of the ninety-nine chapters revealing new information that knits readers' hearts to Allison's story. Her childhood in Taiwan, her first husband Cameron's pornography addiction, the abandonment that left her without heating, food, and transportation, her complicated relationship with her parents—nothing is off-limits, and the memoir is all the better for it. In the end, I saw that through this book I was given the gift of a funny, heart-wrenching, and spiritual window into another's life.

Despite lasting less than two years, Allison's marriage to Cameron feels like a slog, purposely so. Her account of his abuses and manipulations are like beads on a string, one following right after the other. "Thorn in my side, rock in my shoe, sand in my eye," Merrill writes. "Cameron, born in July with Cancer for his astrological sign, was the cancer in my life" (293). We fear and distrust her first husband, experiencing in a small way how keenly Allison must have felt in his

suffocating presence. Despite this, she writes with sympathy, painting Cameron in a nuanced light that a lesser author might have avoided or mishandled.

Descriptions of Allison's lowest lows—one can almost feel her refusal to fade to black as she painstakingly details her self-harm and long struggles with depression—make her many successes feel that much more poignant and triumphant. Her relationship with an American couple who became her surrogate parents is a life preserver in stormy waters, as is her conversion to the Church and subsequent missionary experience. Her friend Ethan, who shows such compassion to her in the immediate aftermath of her divorce, feels like a precious jewel of whom Allison has offered to give us a glimpse.

Another triumph is her determination to break the cycle of familial abuse and neglect that plagued both her and Cameron. When she considers the importance of her choices in paving a path for her descendants, she writes, "Could this be the price every pioneer pays for those who come after, to give them the best, to make them the lucky ones? If so, then it's not really about me finding my tribe, is it? It's about me creating it" (266). The power of this sentiment struck me. In fact, I found myself pausing in my reading and marinating in her words. Family, legacy, heritage: these are big ideas, but Merrill weaves them throughout her memoir with grace and purpose.

Chapters from her childhood form some of the most difficult moments of the book, but these, too, she writes with a clear-eyed resolve, driven to get every detail right. After her divorce she embarks on various and occasionally bumpy attempts at romantic relationships at Brigham Young University, which she recounts with a similar unapologetic determination. Of her desire to fit in at BYU, she writes, "I was a foreigner who didn't get cultural jokes, didn't have blonde hair and milky skin, didn't have parents or relatives in church leadership positions, or pioneer ancestors who pushed handcarts across the plain to come to Utah. But I could at least get married while still an

undergrad, like everybody else" (299). It's a sad, bold statement, yet somehow funny, too. This is a tricky balance that Merrill pulls off just right. Her metaphors are surprising, and the writing is peppered with Chinese sayings that illuminate the narrative. When somebody snickers at her word choice during a Missionary Training Center job interview, Allison attempts to discover the meaning for his laughter after. The conversation is awkward, and she leaves feeling unsatisfied with his answer. "What perfectly captures this exact moment," she writes, "is the Chinese saying, 'Playing on a harp to a cow,' which depicts a wasted effort" (272). It's a fantastic aside, one that imbues extra texture into her story. (The fact that readers eventually discover that the man who laughed would later become her husband is a delightful detail.) One might wish for a few less exclamatory phrases, for Merrill's humor stands solidly on its own two feet, but her candor is exciting and refreshing.

Merrill informs us that in the Chinese language, the terms "nine" and "a long time" are homophones (295). As such, the word "ninety-nine" sounds even longer, usually taken to mean "never-ending" or "infinite." But in *Ninety-Nine Fire Hoops,* where readers are engaged with questions of shame, love, healing, faith, country, and home, I found myself wishing that the book reflected the "ninety-nine" of its title: I enjoyed it so much, I never wanted it to end.

SHAYLA FRANDSEN {shaylawfrandsen@gmail.com} is an MFA student studying fiction at Brigham Young University. She previously received an MA in English from The City University of New York and a BA in English from BYU. Her writing has appeared in *Exponent II* and *Dialogue*, and her short story "Post" was selected as the winner of the Ann Doty Short Fiction Award. She enjoys reading, meditative exercise, and staying cozy with her husband and three children.

ART NOTE

BLACK JOY

Grace Soelberg

When the Stop Your Silence organization began in the spring of 2020, our goal was to create a safe space where Brigham Young University students of color could share their stories of racist discrimination and hardships and find community, healing, and support. Via Instagram, we rapidly received hundreds of stories and began to expand our content and audience not only to people of color but to white members of the Church. We realized there was a need for antiracist education specifically geared toward Latter-day Saints that showed how our doctrines and beliefs not only encourage but exhort us as disciples of Christ to mourn with those who mourn and take a stand against racial injustice.

I was initially drawn to Mikenzi Jones's work for how it unapologetically displays femininity. Through vibrant yet soft shades, organic line work, and a vast range of skin tones and body compositions, Jones's artwork reflects the stunning essence of womanhood and all its diversity. Positive, euphoric, non-sexualized artwork for women can be difficult to find. But Jones is able to capture the beauty of women and the wondrous work that can be accomplished when they come together across racial, cultural, and national divides.

A common struggle Latter-day Saints of color have expressed to us at Stop Your Silence was a lack of representation. Whether it be in their congregations, in Church leadership, in music or worship styles, these Saints feel disregarded and unheard for a multitude of reasons. However, there was one area in particular regarding representation that came up repeatedly: the overwhelmingly whitewashed depictions of

Christ, God, and scriptural figures. The most well-known and highly circulated artistic renderings in the LDS art tradition tend to depict white, hypermasculine men. There was a lack of artwork that featured women from scripture and people of color that didn't fall into the racist "black-skinned" Lamanite caricature. With this in mind, we made it a priority to only highlight art that depicted people of color. Our page is filled with renderings of Black Heavenly Mothers, Indigenous angels, brown-skinned Christs, and more. It is our belief that our Heavenly Parents blessed the world by creating a beautifully diverse human population, and that every child of God deserves to see themselves represented in the divine. To deny someone that connection with God and to force God to fit solely in the square of whiteness is damaging to all of us. It is paramount to our relationship as human beings to see each other and God fully and honestly, to see clearly the stunning medley of divine creation on this earth.

The cover art for this issue in particular also highlights something that for me, as a Black woman, is often overlooked in art: joy. Oftentimes Black women are shown and described as strong, confident, independent, and persevering. These are all qualities that many Black women exude and epitomize, but what is missing is their inner happiness and joy. Black women are rarely given the space to simply exist and be joyous, to reside in a space that isn't defined by activism, emotional labor, and work. The Black woman on the cover of this issue effuses a joy and radiance that I hope all Black women, but especially Black Mormon women, can experience as they navigate this world. While they remain confident and strong, I hope they, too, can have joy.

GRACE SOELBERG is a recent Honors graduate from Brigham Young University. She majored in history with an emphasis on twentieth-century US history with minors in sociology and Africana studies. She is currently on the research staff at the Maxwell Institute continuing her research on BYU's first Black graduate, Dr. Norman Wilson, as well as working with the BYU Slavery Project.

ON THE VALUE OF DOUBT

Arle Lommel

I start my talk with the tale of a young man who grew up in a house of faith but had serious doubts about what he had been taught. He did not believe what his religious authorities told him, or was at least profoundly uncertain about their teachings. In short, he was a doubter. Eventually his doubts became serious enough that he contemplated leaving the faith of his family.

If I asked you what you think of this young man and his struggles, I suspect that some of you would have sympathy for him, while others might wonder what sins he was hiding that would lead him to abandon the teachings of his youth. I think some of us would see his dalliance with disbelief as a dance with the devil. And that was, in fact, how his questioning was taken by many around him. When he confessed his doubts, many erstwhile friends turned their backs on him.

If I were to ask you how to counsel this young man, what would you tell him? Would he hear from you that he should put aside his doubts and trust what he had been taught? Would you tell him that Satan put the doubts in his mind and that his duty was to ignore them? Or would you discuss his concerns openly? Would you let your children associate with someone like him, or would you shun him?

This tale could describe many people we know in the Church, and almost invariably we interpret this story from the perspective that we have the truth and that doubting is a negative thing. But I would ask

---

This sacrament meeting talk was delivered in the University Ward (now the Jackson Creek Ward) of the Bloomington Indiana Stake on July 11, 2021.

you to contemplate the individual in another light. As some of you may have guessed, this young man I have described is Joseph Smith, the founder of our religion, and the doubts I have described are what we see as his great act of faith. He was willing to question what he had been taught, and his doubts and questions concerning what he was told by the professors of religion are directly responsible for us being in this room today. From our perspective, Joseph hoped for things that were not seen but were true, but from the perspective of the preachers of the Second Great Awakening in the Burned-Over District, Joseph was someone whose doubts led to an outcome worthy of damnation.

I have met some people in my life who have seemingly had no doubts, and I envy their certainty, but I think most of us live in a liminal realm between certainty and despair, between light and dark. We have questions for which we do not find satisfactory answers, or we wonder if some parts of what we have been told are true. Some of us struggle to accept teachings or the history our faith. Others of us labor to make the transition from a conception of the gospel in which "Jesus wants us for a sunbeam" to a mature faith that can sustain us when we do not see rays of sunlight but instead perceive darkness all around us. We face the anguish of loss of loved ones, the collapse of cherished relationships, the dashing of hope, and we wonder if some deity really cares for us. Or we learn about things in our history that give us pause. Perhaps we discover that our leaders are humans like us, with strengths and weaknesses, and that our mythologizing of them is not exactly true or fair to them or to us.

In the course of my life, I have known too many people who, when they ask questions or express concerns, have been told that "that's the devil speaking." So they quietly bury these questions and pretend they don't exist. They create doubts that they dare not name, and then those doubts hide in the dark and become malignant until they erupt forth and carry away all faith. These people need the freedom to ask questions without condemnation—as long as they are not using those questions

to harm others—and find answers. Because their doubts and concerns cannot be discussed, they transform into something destructive.

In my experience, there are doubts that lead to despair and the absence of hope and others that lead to greater maturity of faith and empathy for our brothers and sisters. When we mistake sincere questions for diabolical influence, we only help to ensure that they transform to darkness and disillusionment. But if we open up to questions and do not hide them, we create conditions in which mature faith can flourish. Even prophets in the scriptures have their moments of doubt, as when Elijah, fresh from his victory over the priests of Baal in which he called down fire from heaven, was driven into the wilderness and wondered why God had forsaken him. Lehi grumbled when things were not going well in the desert. I suspect Abraham's initial reaction to being told to sacrifice his son was probably incredulity. Or at least I hope it was, because if I thought God was telling me to kill my child, my first impulse would be to check myself into the psych ward. When Joseph went from the favored child of Jacob to being cast by his brothers into the pit, I imagine he had his moments of questioning as well. Sometimes our greatest faith comes when we act in spite of our doubts or when those doubts require moral courage to overcome.

I would also note that a healthy skepticism is an advantage in matters of religion as in other areas. We should ask ourselves *how* we know things we say we know. And if someone comes to us with extraordinary claims, we should have the wherewithal to ask for confirmation (something we would not do if we did not have doubts at some level). There are many wolves in sheep's clothing who would deceive us, and if we do not have a finely tuned baloney detector, we will be bamboozled. In other words, we need the ability to doubt and then move beyond to find truth. Otherwise, we find ourselves prey to any charlatan or confidence man who comes along. The problem of affinity fraud among Church members shows that our meters may at times be defective because we do not allow ourselves to doubt and question.

When I was a child in Alaska, a local woman in the Church started teaching her own views on the gospel. I think it started with no ill intent, but over time her claims became more grandiose, and she was not one to doubt herself. Others followed her, excited by things she said and the feeling that they were receiving special knowledge, but eventually she left the Church and took many with her. Here, a little skepticism would have helped those she led astray immensely.

For those of you who say that you have no doubts, I would argue that you do, but your doubts are aimed at things you *should* doubt. We are taught and observe many things that faith teaches us to doubt. Our experience tells us that people who die stay dead. It tells us that evil often wins and gets ahead in this world. It tells us that the universe is hostile and doesn't care about us. And it tells us that life isn't fair. But these are all things faith tells us are not true in the grand scheme of things, and so we doubt the evidence of our senses and what we can directly know.

Other times we make scientific or historical discoveries that bring into question things we thought we knew about the universe, and sometimes those things contradict teachings that we also thought were essential. If we are not prepared to doubt what we have received as truth, we risk spiritual stagnation and leave ourselves vulnerable to despair when circumstances change and we cannot reconcile our belief with new knowledge. In order to have faith, we must be able to doubt and question and have the strength to change and grow. In order to have humility, we must have faith strong enough to contemplate that we may be wrong about something and yet still go on. Every act of faith is a simultaneous act of doubt in whatever holds us back, a gamble that we can cast ourselves into the void, knowing we will fall and yet finding ourselves—to paraphrase Kierkegaard—resting transparently in the hand of God.

We cannot have faith—as the substance of things not seen that are true—unless we can question and doubt that what our senses and the voices around us tell us. But if we are to be appropriately skeptical, we

also need to, to quote President Uchtdorf, "doubt our doubts." We need to be open and humble enough to admit we may be wrong. To use the framing of the great Elizabethan philosopher Francis Bacon, we need to avoid the "idols of our minds," things we assume to be true because we think they are true without evidence.

We need to ask humbly for answers. We need to be honest with God about our questions and not hide them, thinking that admitting them will strike us down. We need to make them open to God and ourselves, even if not necessarily to everyone around us, so that we can address rather than hide them.

And when others find their doubts too much to bear, we need to respond with love and compassion, not with condemnation or with argument and confrontation. If friends have doubts, do not treat them as thralls to the devil. Instead, be open to the fact that all of us are at different points on our journey back home. Make our faith a beacon for what we wish to become and accept others in love and friendship, even if they question. If our children come to us with doubts, let them know that they are loved and discuss these things with them and talk about how you have faced them. And if their doubts concern things you don't understand, find others who can help.

In closing, I mention something Brother Chye Teh in our ward once asked: Why, if we truly believe a testimony is something that is valuable, do we think we shouldn't have to fight for it? Our doubts are the price we pay to find strength and testimony, not something to be ashamed of. They are what enable us to grow in capacity, love, and empathy.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

ARLE LOMMEL {arle.r.lommel@gmail.com} is a linguist, folklorist, and researcher in translation theory and artificial intelligence. Originally from Alaska, he currently resides in Bloomington, Indiana.

ARTISTS

North Carolina–based artist MIKENZI JONES is the artist behind Kenzi Studio Co. Mikenzi's art embraces diversity, beautiful natural tones, and earthy boho vibes. Mikenzi has a BFA in graphic design from Brigham Young University–Idaho and has been working as a freelance designer and illustrator for the past ten years. When she's not creating designs and prints through her Etsy shop, Mikenzi is busy being a mom to two small boys. Follow @kenzistudioco for new art.

KIRSTEN SPARENBORG {Kirsten.Sparenborg@gmail.com} makes art that is explorative, cartographic, earth-bound. Her work interprets the emotional power of place in peoples' lives, using watercolor, ink, and collage. Maps, mountains/landscape, and sketches/studies offer a visual memory of place at three scales: aerial, distant yet omnipresent, and intimate/inhabited. Altogether, the work may be called architectural map-drawings because it is Kirsten's education and practice as an architect and urban designer that led her to appreciate and manifest the sensory value of places. Learn more at www.turnofthecenturies.com.