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EDITORIAL

David M. Morris

Editor

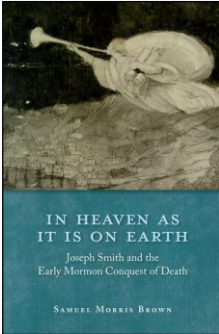
Since 2007, we have published one volume a year filled with scholarly articles, as well as book reviews. We will of course continue to do this, however, we will begin to publish book reviews directly, to the website and make a selection for each volume. This is to respond to the now numerous books and publications that are coming out.

In this issue, we are excited to publish a lengthy consideration of Mormon identity by Wilfried Decoo, as well as Armand Mauss' article 'From Galatia to Ghana'. Following which, we are able to publish, 'Sacred Secrecy and the Latter-day Saints' by Douglas J. Davies as well as articles by Alan Goff and Kirk Caudle. A number of book reviews also appear, all of which are available on <http://www.ijmsonline.org>. A special appreciation is extended to the contributors for their kindness in making available their submissions.

We, as always, extend our appreciation to those who took time to blind peer-review articles and review books fairly and as formatively as possible. As an editorial board we hope you will enjoy the contents of this issue.

If you wish to make a comment or suggestions on its improvement, please feel free to email us at editorial@ijmsonline.org

**BOOK REVIEW: IN HEAVEN AS IT IS ON EARTH: JOSEPH SMITH
AND THE EARLY MORMON CONQUEST OF DEATH – JAMES D.
HOLT**



Title: In Heaven as It Is On Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death

Author: Samuel Morris Brown

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Year: 2012

Pages: 408

Binding: Hardback

ISBN-13: 978-0199793573

List Price: \$36.95

Sam Brown is one of the brightest minds in Mormon Studies at the moment. This is nowhere more evident than in *In Heaven as it is on Earth* published in 2012 by Oxford University Press. This is a book whose publication I had been eagerly anticipating having listened to Sam present some of the various themes at two conferences in the preceding two years. Sam is an engaging speaker, and is no less so in the written word.

Heaven as it is on Earth is a treatment of early Mormonism “through the lens of the founder Joseph Smith’s profound spectre of death.” The recognition of the impact of death on Joseph Smith’s thought has been dealt with elsewhere; two examples include Dan Vogel’s *The Making of a Prophet* and Robert Anderson’s *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith*. Both of these volumes, however, were lacking in an objective analysis. Brown’s treatment of the subject is expansive but does so in a way that his prophetic role is not questioned (and at the same time not promulgated).

Brown’s book extends the treatment of death and salvation by Douglas Davies in *The Mormon Culture of Salvation*, and does much more to show how death and its attendant issues in the earliest period of Church history contributed to the development of Mormon thought. For the reader it provides a context to the beginning of the Church that is

often overlooked in today's world of the established Church. The early part of Brown's book helps the reader understand the nature, role and importance of death in 19th Century America; with death remaining an "acute and severe [problem] throughout the antebellum period" the influence to it and its solutions this book is an important work to provide an insight into the cultural context of the early Church.

The book has two sections: "Death, Dying, and the Dead," and "Everlasting Communities." The first section describes in great detail early 19th Century (and hence, early Mormon) views on death including work on such interesting topics as "holy dying". This is the idea that "the holy death featured a ritualized deathbed in which the decedent became resigned to death as an act of salvation." This would enable the person dying to face death with a calm resignation while being mourned in a salvifically appropriate way. Through a short exploration of Alvin Smith's death, Brown is able to show how Joseph Smith's dissatisfaction with the concept of holy dying was overcome in a radical redefinition of such culture through the revelations he received.

"Everlasting Communities" focuses on the conquest of death in Mormon belief. It traces the development of such beliefs in light of ritual development and doctrinal development. Brown links death with the spiritual experiences and manifestations associated with the Kirtland Temple; further with developments in genealogical ties and also through the exploration of the nature of God and humanity; the temple rites in Nauvoo; and the practice of plural marriage. The co-specialty of humanity, the angels (and God) led to what Brown has described as a flattening of "the ontologies of prior angelic hierarchies."

In saying all of this, Brown does not decry Joseph Smith as a prophet who opportunistically drew on the social and cultural context. Rather, he provides an image of a prophet who through his revelations was able to make them accessible to the community by speaking the language of the society in which he found himself. The heterodox (in relation to traditional 19th Century Christian) beliefs that Joseph Smith taught are presented in such a way to recognise their divergence but also their immediate applicability to the immediate members of the Church

Brown's book does so much to transcend the artificial divide between Mormon and non-Mormon writing about Latter-day Saint history and belief. His is a style that is honest, rigorous, detailed that will provide a development of knowledge and understanding to all scholars of early

Mormon history. He writes in an engaging way and draws the reader into the history of Mormon ideas, now and again he may have you running for a dictionary but he presents in such a way that he can be forgiven for that.

Heaven as it is on Earth places death front and centre in the development of the early Church for instance recasting Cumorah as a burial mound which has received little, if any, prior attention. For the emphasis on the centrality of death if for nothing else, this book deserves a place on the Mormon bookshelf. It does so much more than this, however, in helping the reader thoroughly contextualise the Restoration of the Gospel and the development of the various revelations that Joseph received.