

International Journal of
Mormon Studies

Volume 6

2013



PUBLICATION DETAILS

EDITOR

David M. Morris

EDITORIAL BOARD

James D. Holt

Kim B. Östman

Ingrid Sherlock-Taselaar

The *International Journal of Mormon Studies* is a European based internationally focused, peer-reviewed online and printed scholarly journal, which is committed to the promotion of interdisciplinary scholarship by publishing articles and reviews of current work in the field of Mormon studies. With high quality international contributors, the journal explores Mormon studies and its related subjects. In addition, *IJMS* provides those who submit manuscripts for publication with useful, timely feedback by making the review process constructive. To submit a manuscript or review, including book reviews please email them for consideration in the first instance to submissions@ijmsonline.org.

International Journal of Mormon Studies (Print) ISSN 1757-5532
International Journal of Mormon Studies (Online) ISSN 1757-5540

Published in the United Kingdom

©2013 *International Journal of Mormon Studies*

All rights reserved.

<http://www.ijmsonline.org>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
MORMON STUDIES

Volume 6, 2013

Contents

Publication Details.....	ii
Editorial	v
In Search of Mormon Identity: Mormon Culture, Gospel Culture, and an American Worldwide Church – <i>Wilfried Decoo</i>	1
From Galatia to Ghana: The Racial Dynamic in Mormon History – <i>Armand L. Mauss</i>	54
Sacred Secrecy and the Latter-day Saints – <i>Douglas J. Davies</i>	74
To Insinuate All Ideas and Inevitably Mislead Historical Judgment: Epistemological Metaphor in Mormon Biography – <i>Alan Goff</i>	81
Joseph Smith and the Gift of Translation: The Development of Discourse about Spiritual Gifts during the Early Book of Mormon Translation Process (1828–1829) – <i>Kirk Caudle</i>	109
Book Review: Joseph Smith’s Polygamy, Volume 1 & 2: History – <i>David M. Morris</i>	132
Book Review: An Experiment on the Word: Reading Alma 32 – <i>Kirk Caudle</i>	137
Book Review: In Heaven as It Is On Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death – <i>James D. Holt</i>	142
Book Review: One More River to Cross (Book One, Standing on the Promises, Trilogy) – <i>Fiona Smith</i>	145

Book Review: <i>The Mormonizing of America: How the Mormon Religion Became a Dominant Force in Politics, Entertainment, and Pop Culture</i> – <i>David M. Morris</i>	149
Book Review: Parley P. Pratt: <i>The Apostle Paul of Mormonism</i> – <i>Ronan James Head</i>	154
Article Contributors	158

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

IN SEARCH OF MORMON IDENTITY: MORMON CULTURE, GOSPEL CULTURE, AND AN AMERICAN WORLDWIDE CHURCH¹

Wilfried Decoo

Abstract: In Mormon parlance, both ‘Mormon culture’ and ‘gospel culture’ are used to define Mormon identity. Outside lies the ‘culture of the world’, which was once highly valued by Mormons, until its meaning changed. This article traces how these terms relate to evolving perspectives. It leads to questions viewed in the international context. What makes a religious culture and how does Mormonism fit? How American is Mormon culture worldwide? How Mormon is gospel culture? How can members around the world define and live their relation with the surrounding non-Mormon culture? How feasible is it for converts to ‘Keep every good thing you have’ in the formation of their Mormon identity? How much room is there for local culture in the church? These reflections also reveal deeper concerns as to Mormon identity: too much contrast with the world – the antonymy factor – may lead to increasing exclusivism within the church, causing distress among other members, if not disengagement from Mormonism. It is true Mormon identity must be distinct but, in view of the problem of retention, it must be viable also.

INTRODUCTION

Mormon identity has been the focus of numerous studies.² One of the terms used to define a global identity pertaining to members of the

¹ I wrote a preliminary version of this text in 2007. I used portions as posts on *Times and Seasons*, which generated valuable comments. A few sections yielded material for the chapter on Europe in the upcoming *Oxford Handbook to Mormonism* and for a paper given at the Claremont Conference ‘Beyond the Mormon Moment: Directions for Mormon Studies in the New Century’ (2013). This present version, which has been reworked and updated, thus has some overlap with previously presented material. I wish to thank Lavina Fielding Anderson, James A. Toronto, and Armand L. Mauss for their valuable comments on the drafts of this present version.

² Most of these studies pertain to historical developments. For a focus on present-day identity, see, e.g., Michael R. Cope, ‘You Don’t Know Jack: The Dynamics of Mormon Religious/Ethnic Identity’ (unpublished master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 2009); Eric A. Eliason, ‘The Cultural Dynamics of Historical Self-Fashioning: LDS Pioneer Nostalgia, American Culture, and the International Church’, *Journal of Mormon History*, 28, no. 2 (2002), 140–

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is 'culture'. It appears in two idioms, 'Mormon culture' and 'gospel culture'. The first one is a familiar concept, about which much has been written for almost a century. The second, gospel culture, is a more recent and less-studied term. Both terms have various connotations, according to what is included or discarded. This article tries to better grasp this notional diversity, in particular for the newer 'gospel culture'. I am not equipped to conduct such analysis from an anthropological or sociological expertise, but my linguistic background can help in the history and in the disambiguation of meanings. I also relate this analysis to my personal experience as a Mormon, from half a century of church involvement in Europe, in order to consider implications in an international perspective. Some of these considerations may be equally applicable to Mormonism in the United States.

This article starts by chronicling various definitions and approaches, first of 'Mormon culture', second of 'gospel culture'. Perspectives of 'gospel culture' in relation to 'the other' are inventoried on a scale of six perspectives. The shift from 'Mormon' to 'gospel' in church parlance illustrates a movement of more emphasis on Christian identity and universality. Next I discuss a number of questions meant to better identify the concept of gospel culture. These pertain to the exclusivity of the concept, the nature of religious culture, the inclusion of Mormon lifestyle and of American elements, and the definition of what is (in)compatible with gospel culture. A final part expands the reflections to the so-called antonymy factor: could it be that the more gospel culture

173; Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Armand L. Mauss, 'Identity and Boundary Maintenance: International Prospects for Mormonism at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century', in *Mormon Identities in Transition*, ed. by Douglas J. Davies (London and New York: Cassell, 1996), pp. 9–19; Armand L. Mauss, 'Refuge and Retrenchment: The Mormon Quest for Identity', in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. by Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton and Lawrence A. Young (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. 24–42; Armand L. Mauss, 'The Mormon Struggle with Identity', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 27, no. 1 (1994), 129–149; Rick Phillips and Ryan T. Cragun, *Mormons in the United States 1990–2008: Socio-demographic Trends and Regional Differences. A Report Based on the American Religious Identification Survey 2008* (Hartford, Connecticut: Trinity College, 2011); Ethan R. Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

is stressed as exclusive and isolating, the more members individually shift to fundamentalism or opt out?

Purposely I do not give a definition of culture, since our walk through the connotations is precisely meant to list a variety of approaches. It will appear that most of these connotations themselves remain more or less vague. My aim is not to elucidate them beyond their occurrence and general meaning. A certain degree of imprecision will therefore accompany the multiple uses of the word culture. As to other terms, 'church' refers to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 'Units' is used as a global geographical term for its branches, districts, wards, and stakes. 'International', 'foreign', and 'abroad' refer to realities outside of the United States. These words simplify, of course, an obvious complexity. Not only does the international church comprise disparate populations but also within the United States regional differences as well as social or ethnic characteristics of many Mormon units produce cultural variety.

One caveat: the analysis I attempt may leave an impression of insufficient positive highlighting of what the church achieves worldwide. I correct that impression from the outset: Mormonism brings much satisfaction and stability to hundreds of thousands of people in many countries. I have witnessed this impact over five decades in West Europe. But academic analysis broadens the picture. My aim is also to examine how past developments might augur future ones.

MORMON CULTURE: FACETS OF THE OUTWARDNESS

The creation of their own kind of society, 'a peculiar people' apart from the world, has been an essential part of the Mormons' history. Labeling this society a 'Mormon culture' comes only much later in the literature. Since there are multiple definitions of 'culture', 'Mormon culture' is also polysemic. However, one common element in nearly all studies up to the 1980s is location: Mormon culture belongs to a region, aptly called the 'Mormon Culture Region' in the American West.³ It is

³ Criteria to delineate the 'Mormon Culture Region' are found in Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, [1958] 1970); D. W. Meinig, 'The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847–1964', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 55, no. 2 (1965), 191–220; Samuel M. Otterstrom and Richard H. Jackson, 'The State of Deseret: The Creation of the Mormon

only more recently that ‘Mormon culture’ is applied to other parts of the world. The following enumeration follows the chronological order of sources that mention ‘Mormon culture’. These sources shape different (and overlapping) perceptions.

News: material accomplishments

In 1930 James H. Moyle defined ‘the culture “Mormonism”’ as accomplishments: health, education, the missionary system, unpaid clergy, and the charity system. He specified them for public relations and missionary purposes so that ‘the material benefits’ of this culture ‘arouse a desire to know why and from whence they come, and induce a study of the principles of the gospel’.⁴ Note the difference made between the tangible benefits, defined as ‘the culture’, and their higher source – ‘the gospel’. News about such accomplishments is found since the earliest church periodicals and in the semi-annual *Conference Reports*. The tradition to herald ‘the best of’ continues up to this day in church-related publications and websites to affirm identity, establish confidence within, and gain respectability outside. This stream of positive news thus spreads the image of a Mormon culture through the achievements of an effective organization bringing happiness to its members and the world.

Research: compound facets

Landscape in the Western U.S.’, in *Engineering Earth: The Impacts of Megaengineering Projects*, ed. by Stanley D. Brunn (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 1975–1995; Timothy James Scarlett, ‘Globalizing Flowscapes and the Historical Archaeology of the Mormon Domain’, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 10, no. 2 (2006), 109–134; Michael B. Toney, Chalon Keller and Lori M. Hunter, ‘Regional Cultures, Persistence and Change: A Case Study of the Mormon Culture Region’, *The Social Science Journal*, 40, no. 3 (2003), 431–445; and Yorgason, *Transformation*.

⁴ James H. Moyle, *Conference Report*, October 1930, pp. 126–127.

The term 'Mormon culture' emerged in sociological research in the 1930s, preceded by other terms, like 'Mormon group life',⁵ the 'Mormon social body',⁶ and 'Mormon community life'.⁷ In 1933 *The American Journal of Sociology* mentioned that Nels Anderson is working on 'a study of social change in a Mormon community'.⁸ A year later the journal noted that Kimball Young is working on 'Mormon culture',⁹ which is confirmed with the same term in the census of current research in the *American Sociological Review* in 1936. As in the news realm, there is a juxtaposition of the visible, outward Mormon culture with the inward religious realm. A 1940 review of a book on the 'Mormon society' concluded critically:

However, one who has followed this remarkable religion in all its factions, intricate doctrine, and endless revelation, cannot but feel that in this story of Mormon culture something is omitted. To understand Mormonism one must see it grow, change its beliefs, alter its practice! One might know all the rather commonplace details of external Mormon culture and yet never have been introduced to Mormonism.¹⁰

In 1952 the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters organized a 'Symposium on Mormon Culture'. The published papers covered widely differing topics, from 'A Community Portrait' of St George by Juanita Brooks, to 'Mormonism and Literature' by William Mulder, 'Trends in Mormon Economic Policy' by Leonard J. Arrington, and the 'Development of Mormon ethics' by Gaylon L. Caldwell.

⁵ Ephraim Edward Ericksen, *The Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1922).

⁶ Hamilton Gardner, 'Communism among the Mormons', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 37, no. 1 (1922), 134–174. For an economic study Gardner needed 'an estimate of the qualities of the Mormon social body' (p. 135).

⁷ Nels Anderson, 'Review of *Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire*, by Harry M. Beardsley, and *Zealots of Zion*, by Hoffman Birney', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 38, no. 2 (1932), 323–324. Note that Anderson concludes that 'both books fail to throw light on the nature of Mormon family or community life. These very significant subjects have rarely been touched upon except in caricature' (p. 324).

⁸ *American Journal of Sociology*, 39, no. 1 (July 1933), p. 107.

⁹ *American Journal of Sociology*, 40, no. 1 (July 1934), p. 113.

¹⁰ George B. Arbaugh, 'Review of W.J. McNiff. *Heaven on Earth: A Planned Mormon Society*', *The Journal of Religion*, 20, no. 4 (1940), 107–108 (p. 108).

Since then, Mormon and non-Mormon experts from various disciplines have been researching Mormon culture in its many facets. In 1957 Thomas O'Dea's *The Mormons*, as study of an 'ethnic minority', was an important step to validate this research outside of the church: a Jesuit sociologist taking Mormonism seriously.¹¹ Mormon journals like *BYU Studies* and *Dialogue* next offered their venue to emerging researchers. Armand Mauss provides excellent overviews of work done in this academic realm.¹²

Art: esthetic expression

In the 1960s the term 'Mormon culture' was also used as a call to arms to help strengthen the artistic realm. Conan E. Mathews asked how to make art more meaningful to the church and to the world since 'the artist in the Mormon culture constantly faces the question of how or if his art relates to his faith, religious service, and scripture'.¹³ Under the title 'Mormon culture', Stanley B. Kimball broke a lance for 'constructive criticism' to improve the work of Mormon writers and artists.¹⁴ Frequent in this context is also the term 'Mormon art', with the first annual 'BYU Festival of Mormon Art' in 1969. This art is seen as 'the expression of cultural values of an idealistic people dedicated to the service of God and His church'.¹⁵ Noteworthy: in a 1974 review of 'Mormon Arts', Richard G. Oman, then still a graduate student, criticized the narrow Western approach and the lack of a multinational and multicultural perspective. He pointed to 'the difficulty of trying to establish a single aesthetic broad

¹¹ Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

¹² Armand L. Mauss, 'Sociological Perspectives on the Mormon Subculture', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10 (1984), 437–60. Note his use of the term 'subculture' to position Mormonism as a species within a broader, dominant culture, in this case American, with which it shares a number of characteristics. See also Armand L. Mauss, 'Flowers, Weeds, and Thistles: The State of Social Science Literature on the Mormons', in Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker and James B. Allen, *Mormon History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. 153–197.

¹³ Conan E. Mathews, 'Art and the Church', *BYU Studies*, 3, no. 2 (1961), 3–7 (p. 3).

¹⁴ Stanley B. Kimball, 'Mormon Culture: A Letter to the Editor', *BYU Studies*, 5, no. 2 (1964), 125–128 (p. 126).

¹⁵ Dorothy J. Schimmelpfenning, 'Review of Mormon Arts Volume I, by Lorin F. Wheelwright and Lael J. Woodbury', *BYU Studies*, 13, no. 4 (1973), 588–590 (p. 589).

enough to fit a broad spectrum of artistic styles'.¹⁶ Years later, Oman's work, through the worldwide Mormon art competition by the Museum of Church History and Art, would contribute to the valuation of the international dimension of Mormon culture in the esthetic sense. In *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture*, Terryl Givens detailed the origin and manifestations of this fertile esthetic culture, including also the intellectual development as part of a Mormon 'habit of mind'.¹⁷ His approach of Mormon culture is thus broader than art and architecture as such, but smaller than the spectrum of all aspects of life.

Lifestyle: worldwide uniformity

In the 1970s the term 'Mormon culture' became a marker of distinctiveness and cohesion for 'lifestyle' in worldwide perspective. Its characteristics have been abundantly described.¹⁸ They include religiosity (faith in the doctrines, daily prayer, scripture study, fasting, church and temple attendance), morality (chastity, modesty, honesty), family (monogamy, focus on marriage and children, togetherness, fidelity, family home evening, food storage), health (no alcohol, tobacco, coffee, and tea), dedication and involvement (serving, tithing, going on a mission, doing genealogy), education (schooling, degrees, and diplomas), work (work ethic, professional advancement, economic success), material objects (book of remembrance, Mormon pictures in the home, recognition medallions), and its own lexicon. The negative look at the Mormon lifestyle includes critique of the social pressure to conform, the insularity toward non-Mormons, the distrust of feminism, and the condemning attitude toward homosexual behavior.

¹⁶ Richard G. Oman, 'A Second Review of Mormon Arts Volume 1', *BYU Studies*, 13, no. 4 (1974), 590–592 (p. 591).

¹⁷ Givens, *People of Paradox*.

¹⁸ See, for example, Tim B. Heaton, Stephen J. Bahr and Cardell K. Jacobson, *A Statistical Profile of Mormons: Health, Wealth, and Social Life* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004); Tim B. Heaton and Cardell K. Jacobson, 'The Social Life of Mormons', in *Oxford Handbook to Mormonism*, ed. by Terryl L. Givens and Philip L. Barlow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, in press); Loren Marks and Brent D. Beal, 'Preserving Peculiarity as a People: Mormon Distinctness in Lived Values and Internal Structure', in *Revisiting Thomas F. O'Dea's "The Mormons": Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Cardell K. Jacobson, John P. Hoffman and Tim B. Heaton (Salt Lake City: Utah University of Utah Press, 2008), pp. 258–285.

This lifestyle extends to all corners of the church. Jan Shippo noted that Mormons are ‘so separate and distinct that new converts must undergo a process of assimilation roughly comparable to that which has taken place when immigrants adopt a new and dissimilar nationality’.¹⁹ Shippo also pointed out that the standard building plans for chapels worldwide allowed the ‘sense of place’, which had long been tied to the Mormon Culture Region, to spread to other regions: ‘The very fact that these clearly identifiable LDS structures could be found in town after town and suburb after suburb cultivated among the Saints what might be called a Zionic sense, making the very LDS meetinghouses themselves agents of assimilation.’²⁰ Garth N. Jones remarked that for converts in non-Western societies, ‘it is not a question of socio-cultural accommodation – certainly this must take place – but one of actually “retooling” people into a new lifestyle’.²¹

The mechanisms to get converts ‘retooled’ to adopt this lifestyle include the commitments made when baptized, the example of missionaries and other members, the involvement in the local church unit, and the constant encouragement to be part of the lifestyle through lessons, talks, conferences, and home and visiting teaching.²² Uniformity is reinforced by the worldwide correlation since the 1960s, which ensures consistency in all church programs under the direction of the priesthood.

¹⁹ Jan Shippo, ‘The Mormons Looking Forward and Outward’, *The Christian Century*, 95 (1977), 761–766 (p. 765).

²⁰ Jan Shippo, ‘The Emergence of Mormonism on the American Landscape (1950–1965)’, in *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, ed. by S. Kent, S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon and Rich Jackson (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 152. See also Paul F. Starrs, ‘Meetinghouses in the Mormon Mind: Ideology, Architecture, and Turbulent Streams of an Expanding Church’, *Geographical Review*, 99, no. 3 (2009), 323–355.

²¹ Garth N. Jones, ‘Expanding LDS Church Abroad: Old Realities Compounded’, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 13, no. 1 (1980), 8–22.

²² An outsider analysis of the process of ‘mormonization’, including from an international perspective, is found in Sophie-Hélène Trigeaud’s extensive doctoral dissertation, ‘Conversion, Éducation, Communauté: Une Étude Socio-Anthropologique, Transnationale et Contemporaine, des Pratiques et Représentations des “Saints des Derniers Jours” ou “Mormons”’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2008). It was published in a revised form as *Devenir Mormon: La Fabrication Communautaire de l’Individu* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013).

It includes standardized training and lesson material, a streamlined church education system, a common worldwide magazine, identical planning of church meetings with fixed musical norms, and the standards for temple attendance. Current church policy to consolidate weak and scattered units in order to grow from centers of strength, where the church order is well established and where role models help new members to integrate, reinforces this trend toward a common lifestyle. Also slow developments that Armand Mauss identified in popular Mormon culture in America carry over to other parts of the world, such as the softening of doctrine into more emotional spirituality and the feminization of worship music.²³

The lifestyle even extends to physical appearance via dress and grooming standards. Strictly followed by the missionaries and stressed at church schools, these norms tend to be adopted by members at large, sometimes at the explicit request from local leaders. A white shirt and tie has become an expected Sunday dress for priesthood holders. Advice has been given as to tattoos, body piercings, and beards. A kind of ideal standard was promoted in Julie Beck's 2007 general conference address, in which even in Third World countries it is gratifying to see on Sunday 'daughters in clean and ironed dresses with hair brushed to perfection' and where 'sons wear white shirts and ties and have missionary haircuts'.²⁴ Contrary to occasional voices who plead for the maintenance of local customs, it seems that many members in foreign lands actually like to adopt this uniformity, as the outward manifestation of Mormon belonging. BYU's program 'Especially for Youth', now offered in many countries, seems to exert a strong influence in standardizing 'ideal' behavior among young Mormons. Of course, not all members conform to this lifestyle. But it is telling that anyone who deviates, even without breaking any commandment – like wearing piercings or not dressing up properly for Sunday meetings – catches the eye as 'peculiar' within the 'peculiar people'.

²³ Armand L. Mauss, 'Feelings, Faith, and Folkways: A Personal Essay on Mormon Popular Culture', in *Proving Contraries': A Collection of Writings in Honor of Eugene England*, ed. by Robert A. Rees (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2004), pp. 23–38. Surveys among older church members in foreign countries could verify my own experience of these developments.

²⁴ Julie B. Beck, 'Mothers Who Know', *Ensign*, October 2007, pp. 76–78. At the time, Beck was president of the Relief Society, the church's organization for women.

The other side: the (refined) 'culture of the world'

Mormon texts also speak of the 'culture of the world', outside the Mormon realm. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, the term pertains to the 'refinement and culture prevalent among the rich', in particular with reference to education, as Brigham Young praised it.²⁵ 'Culture' as a particular civilization also appears in many Mormon texts that mention the highly appreciated Aztec, Maya, Greek, or Italian cultures. In 1936 Preston Nibley lauded George Q. Cannon in these terms: 'He grew in knowledge, in ability, in strength of character; in his varied travels he absorbed the culture of the world.'²⁶ The May 1937 *Improvement Era* editorial extolled the pioneer Bowen family: 'Though living under pioneer conditions, they drank the culture of the world from books of classic merit.'²⁷ Note the openness toward this 'culture of the world'. The following period will radically change its meaning.

GOSPEL CULTURE: AN ASSERTIVE SHIFT IN APPROACH

In the 1970s the term 'gospel culture' enters Mormon parlance. The choice between 'Mormon culture' and 'gospel culture' signals a significant change in approach. 'Mormon culture' relates to general aspects of life, encompassing religious, social, economic, and educational facets, tied to the Mormon Culture Region and its past, with an emphasis on material accomplishments. 'Gospel culture' focuses on religious life as such, independent of place. The shift from 'Mormon' to 'gospel' thus reflects a movement away from local peculiarity and geographical separateness to the worldwide membership 'living the gospel'. As shown above, early occurrences of 'Mormon culture' already made that distinction between the material realm and a higher sphere. The shift marks also a distancing from the word 'Mormon' in order to stress Christian identity and universality. It seems to liberate the church from a complex and troubled past in a specific area – a past which the term 'Mormon' continues to evoke in the minds of many outsiders. The shift goes hand in hand with a greater emphasis on Jesus Christ since the 1980s and a

²⁵ Brigham Young, 8 August 1869. In *Journal of Discourses*, G. D. Watt, ed. (Liverpool: F.D. & S.W. Richards, 1869) vol. 14, p. 104. Brigham Young spoke in the context of raising the level of the saints from 'poverty and privation' in order to 'make ladies and gentlemen of them' through education.

²⁶ Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young, The Man and His Work* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1936), p. 352.

²⁷ 'Editorial', *The Improvement Era*, May 1937, p. 304.

call to the press to avoid the nickname ‘Mormon church’ in favor of the official name of the church.²⁸ The emphasis on ‘gospel’ can also be seen as a rather assertive move: Mormonism lays claim on the term ‘gospel’, which belongs to all Christians, as its own realm.

Before 1970 occurrences of ‘culture’ in this emphasized religious sense are rare and somewhat ambivalent. In 1862 Amasa M. Lyman stated that the development of the kingdom of God on earth depends ‘upon the culture of the feelings that rule the soul and that give character to the action of the creature’.²⁹ In 1867 Erastus Snow lamented that Mormon parents neglect to properly educate their children, which leads ‘to see the rising generation without that culture they so much need to develop within them a love of righteousness, truth, and every holy principle’.³⁰ In a 1947 conference talk, Spencer W. Kimball mentioned the responsibility ‘to bring the gospel with all its progress and culture to the Indian’.³¹

The worldwide expansion of the church in the 1970s triggered more attention to intercultural issues. The year 1976 in particular saw a number of interventions and publications dealing with culture-definitions in a worldwide gospel perspective, most being part of ‘The Expanding Church Symposium’ held at BYU or in the wake of that Symposium.³² It is here that the term ‘gospel culture’ cogently enters Mormon parlance. The implications are multifaceted.

²⁸ See the 1999 *Media Style Guide* of the church. The request was reiterated in the First Presidency letter of 23 February 2001, obviously related to the growing media attention for the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Afterwards, ‘Mormon’, as an inescapable international moniker, was kind of rehabilitated in church websites (www.mormon.org; mormonnewsroom.org) and in PR-initiatives (‘I’m a Mormon’ campaign). Some tension at the top around the use of the church’s name seems to remain. See M. Russell Ballard, ‘The Importance of a Name’, *Ensign*, November 2011, pp. 79–82. On the blog ‘Times and Seasons’, I commented on this in a post ‘Mormons without the Mormon Church’, timesandseasons.org/index.php/2011/10/mormons-without-the-mormon-church/

²⁹ Discourse by Elder Amasa M. Lyman, October 7, 1862. In *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10, p. 86.

³⁰ Remarks by Elder Erastus Snow, October 8, 1867. In *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 12, p. 177.

³¹ Spencer W. Kimball, *Conference Report*, October 1947, p. 15.

³² The texts of the symposium are in *Mormonism: A Faith for All Cultures*, ed. by F. LaMond Tullis (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978). Note that the *Ensign* of December 1976 brought a summary of the various

HOW TO VIEW ‘THE OTHER’: SIX PERSPECTIVES OF GOSPEL CULTURE

Identity is defined by boundaries. Without ‘the other’ – other nations, ethnicities, languages, social groups, religions, and more – one cannot fully delineate a certain entity. In order to be a ‘peculiar people’ Mormons have always been concerned with the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Those concerns shape the contours of disparate views of gospel culture. I propose to identify these views on a tentative antonymic scale³³ in six perspectives, moving from one extreme to the other in various grades. The order of the perspectives does not represent a chronology since they co-exist throughout church history. The in-between perspectives partly overlap in their flow from one to another.

First perspective: Antagonistic isolation from the other

In this perspective the gospel culture is seen as a hallowed, protective enclave away from the world. Literally leaving ‘Babylon’ in order to ‘gather to Zion’ was an essential part of nineteenth-century Mormonism. Transposed to the symbolic concept of ‘multiple Zions’ around the world, the idea of leaving the world to be part of a ‘stake of Zion’ has remained vibrant in Mormonism. In the 1976 Symposium, Noel B. Reynolds claims that ‘the world view of the gospel is essentially subversive of the world views perpetuated by the cultures of man’. Obedience to the gospel ‘takes priority over any requirements of a traditional culture’.³⁴ Likewise, in one of the first uses of the term ‘gospel culture’ in the context of internationalization, Arturo and Genevieve DeHoyos claim that a Latter-day Saint convert ‘cannot simply acquire a testimony of the gospel without almost entirely reevaluating and reorganizing his own personal

viewpoints in two articles: Lavina Fielding, ‘The Expanding Church’ and ‘Selected Remarks: Excerpts from “The Expanding Church” Symposium’.

³³ An antonymic scale contains two opposites, for example ‘tolerance – intolerance’, but language also provides words for a gradation wherein the two original words have a place: ‘broadmindedness – receptiveness – tolerance – neutrality – distrust – intolerance – fanaticism’. This very example is relevant for the perspectives discussed here.

³⁴ Noel B. Reynolds, ‘Cultural Diversity in the Universal Church’, in *Mormonism*, ed. Tullis, pp. 7–21.

value system so it can fit without major conflict within the gospel culture'.³⁵

Since the 1990s Mormon texts typically define gospel culture in these contrastive and separative terms. An oratory of repentance calls people to reject the 'culture of the world' – an expression which now takes on a diametrically opposed meaning compared to a few decades earlier. Cherry B. Silver of the Relief Society General Board phrases it in the known imagery of moving: 'We need to move from the culture of the world to the culture of the gospel. In the culture of the gospel we have the model of Jesus and of families striving to live in covenant relationships.'³⁶ Or in the words of Robert E. Parsons, who explains why the church could be 'under condemnation':

We insist upon following the culture of the world rather than having a pure style of our own. [...] We insist that we participate in the world's music, dance, literature, and entertainment. [...] Truly we are caught up in vanity – futile, worthless behavior in which we find excessive self-satisfaction in thinking that both God and the world are pleased with us.³⁷

This shift in connotation of 'culture of the world', from its positive meaning in the first half of the twentieth century to a negative one in the second half, could well be used as an illustration of the cycle of assimilation to retrenchment which Mauss has analyzed.³⁸ Through stricter control of the curriculum, the church's correlation movement contributes to this perspective of isolation and exclusivism: 'Don't use extraneous sources when teaching courses in the church. [...] The whole effort is to make a curriculum that can be used anywhere in the world,

³⁵ Arturo DeHoyos and Genevieve DeHoyos, 'The Universality of the Gospel', *Ensign*, August 1971, pp. 9–14. This article tried to compare and structure the value orientations between three cultural realms, celestial, Mormon, and Anglo-American.

³⁶ Cherry B. Silver in a 'Women's Conference Panel', *Church News*, 13 May 1995.

³⁷ Robert E. Parsons, 'I Have a Question', *Ensign*, February 1991, pp. 51–53.

³⁸ Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

under any cultural or political circumstance, so that the only culture we're bound by is the culture of the gospel.³⁹

The perspective of antagonistic isolation fosters deep distrust toward the world. The accompanying rhetoric is always two-tone. The positive tone stresses exceptionalism (a chosen generation, a select people, a kingdom of Priests) and exemplarism (a beacon on a hill, a light unto the world). The negative one paints the rest of the world as evil and threatening. Missionary work is seen as saving souls from Babylon and bringing them to the fold. This fundamentalist position is in essence very scriptural, both in ancient and modern holy writ, and many of the citations used in the dualistic discourse draw directly from these sources. It is also a recurring theme in Mormon hymns.

Second perspective: Exemplary impact on the other

In his comments on Reynold's talk, Hugh Nibley takes a less dichotomous stand.⁴⁰ He first defines 'a gospel culture' (note the indefinite article) starting from the idea of a gospel community or society, which is Zion, 'described as a city, an organized society, set apart from the world'. The most detailed example known is Israel, which, led by Moses out of Egypt, had to become a peculiar people, 'a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation'. The same injunction was given to the saints of early Christianity. The Restoration through Joseph Smith aimed at the same constitution of 'a single culture peculiar to Mormons' and at distancing itself geographically in a gathering place.

However, in contrast to an antagonistic perspective that excludes the rest of the world from anything valuable, Nibley stresses that in former times this 'single, central celestial culture' has served 'as a model for the greatest peaks of human civilization as a whole'. Religions and philosophies sprang forth from the model and as long as they continue to point to heaven they share in the original heritage, 'convinced that they were imitating the heavenly model and doing the best they could'. Nibley thus sees cultures in shades, with admiration for those which are more close to the original gospel culture. In the comparison with the ideal, this

³⁹ Elder Rex D. Pinegar, as quoted in Julie A. Dockstader, 'Curriculum: Helping Members Apply Gospel to Daily Lives', *Church News*, 29 December 1990.

⁴⁰ Hugh Nibley, 'Comments', in *Mormonism*, ed. Tullis, pp. 22–28. Republished as 'Some Notes on Cultural Diversity in the Universal Church', in *Temple and Cosmos, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, ed. by Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), XII, pp. 541–549.

construct is essentially successive: the model is lost, but from its demise much brilliance can still emerge.

This perspective also explains why Nibley does not define the present gospel culture as an enclave closed to external input, but as a society composed of ‘everything good’, with reference to the thirteenth Article of Faith, which he elaborates on: ‘Moreover, we *seek* after every good thing; we are in the market for everything good.’ This ‘good’ of others comes originally from a divine source. As such the gospel culture seems to come close to the ‘broad inclusion’-approach, which I will discuss in a moment, but Nibley’s outlook of Zion remains a distinct entity ‘set apart from the world’.

Third perspective: Selective appreciation in the other

The perspective laid out by Nibley is known in church doctrine as the historical pace of divinely sanctioned ‘dispensations’, each followed by a period of apostasy that corrupted the full truth, but that also maintained parts of it. Thus all religions contain also valuable elements. Talking about believers in other religions, Joseph Smith recognized that ‘they all have a little truth mixed with error’ and that ‘good and true principles’ could be gathered in the world.⁴¹ Still, during the rest of the nineteenth century, condemnation of other churches and sects was quite common in Mormon harangues. The persecutions endured at the hands of other Christians, the concept of the Restoration following the ‘Great Apostasy’, and an apocalyptic, millenarian world view contributed to this antagonism.⁴² After 1890, however, openness to the world and a spirit of

⁴¹ ‘Discourse’, 23 July 1843, in *History of the Church*, vol. 5 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, rpt. 1970), p. 517. At the same time, Joseph Smith had much contempt for the ‘creeds’ and the ‘professors of Christianity’ who are inspired by the ‘smooth, sophisticated influence of the devil, by which he deceives the whole world’ (Ibid., p. 218). It ties in with the First Vision account that ‘all their creeds were an abomination’ (Joseph Smith – *History in The Pearl of Great Price*, chapter 1, verse 19). In his own development, Joseph Smith moved from antagonism to more tolerance, according to the circumstances of his life. See Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), pp. 284–285, 377–378.

⁴² See Eric Dursteler, ‘Inheriting the Great Apostasy: The Evolution of Mormon Views on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance’, *Journal of Mormon History*, 28, no. 2 (2002), 23–59; Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Matthew J. Grow, ‘The Whore of Babylon and the Abomination of Abominations: Nineteenth-Century Catholic and Mormon Mutual Perceptions and Religious

conciliation with other churches became more prevalent. In 1906 B. H. Roberts explained the apparent awkwardness of the words that ‘all their creeds were an abomination’.⁴³ He clarified that this opposition had to be understood as the clash between good and evil, the church of the devil being ‘the whole empire of Satan’, with evil men who could be found in any church, even in the Mormon church. As to other churches, ‘so far as they have retained fragments of Christian truth – and each of them has some measure of truth – that far they are acceptable unto the Lord; and it would be poor policy for us to contend against them without discrimination’. They are all part of the ‘kingdom of righteousness’.⁴⁴ The difference with the second perspective, discussed above, is a less separatist stance.

This selective appreciation became widely accepted in Mormon thought – as can be found in texts by Joseph F. Smith, George Albert Smith, John A. Widstoe, Moses Thatcher, James E. Talmage, Joseph L. Wirthlin, and Ezra T. Benson, who speak with respect of ‘the great religious leaders of the world’. It ties in with the notion that any man can be enlightened by the Spirit of Christ. In 1978 the First Presidency issued a statement echoing many similar acknowledgments in the past:

The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals.⁴⁵

The Mormon position is still presented as superior, as it claims to possess the fullness, while others only have ‘a portion’. Missionary work can thus

Identity’, *Church History*, 73, no. 1 (2004), 139–167. Grow documents how Mormons also counted Protestant churches, and even the whole of American society, as part of the Whore of Babylon (pp. 146–148).

⁴³ *Joseph Smith – History in The Pearl of Great Price*, chapter 1, verse 19.

⁴⁴ Brigham H. Roberts, *Conference Report*, April 1906, pp. 14–15. Also published in B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, I (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1907), p. 34. For a discussion of the possible views that European Mormons harbor toward other religions, see Mauro Properzi, ‘The Religious “Other”: Reflecting upon Mormon Perceptions’, *International Journal of Mormon Studies*, 3 (2010), 41–55.

⁴⁵ ‘Statement of the First Presidency Regarding God’s Love for All Mankind’, 15 February 1978.

be phrased as a diplomatic invitation: since a foundation of truth is already present in the other religion, people can retain it. The dynamics of conversion can be expressed as an addendum, as George Albert Smith phrased it:

Keep all the glorious truths that you have acquired in your churches, [...] all the knowledge and truth that you have gained from every source. [...] That is all a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then let us sit down and share with you some of the things that have not yet come into your lives that have enriched our lives and made us happy.⁴⁶

Marion D. Hanks stated it similarly: ‘Keep every good thing you have, and then listen to the additional word of the Lord in our time.’⁴⁷ In a rhetorical address to members from Christian churches, Hartman Rector Jr. exclaimed: ‘We won’t take anything from you that you have that’s true; we will just add to what you have, and we will do it in love, with no compulsion, no force.’⁴⁸ This approach can make converts believe that they can keep most of their original religious culture, just supplementing it with what was lacking. Viewed from the Mormon perspective, the recognition of truths in other cultures consequentially means that these truths are included in the ‘gospel culture’.

Fourth perspective: Selective exclusion in the other

A reverse movement is first to define what a gospel culture is in Mormon perspective, invite converts to adopt it in full, and then ask them to erase from their original backgrounds what is incompatible. That approach is present in several talks by apostle Dallin H. Oaks. He defines gospel culture as ‘a set of values and expectations and practices common to all members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’. He explains that ‘this gospel way of life [...] is given expression in the way we raise our families and live our individual lives’. Converts thus ‘become part of the worldwide gospel culture of commandments and covenants

⁴⁶ George Albert Smith, *Sharing the Gospel with Others* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948), p. 201. The excerpt comes from a sermon delivered on November 4, 1945.

⁴⁷ Marion D. Hanks, ‘Without Prejudice, without Bigotry’, *BYU Devotional*, 30 March 1965.

⁴⁸ Hartman Rector Jr., ‘Our Witness to the World’, *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 64.

and ordinances and blessings'.⁴⁹ It is an encompassing definition, with a strong globalizing undertone and emphasis on religious living. As to the relation with the original cultures of converts, Elder Oaks adds: 'We have learned the importance of challenging members to abandon cultural traditions that are contrary to gospel commandments and covenants.' His examples mention the realms of chastity, of weekly attendance at church, of abstention from alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee, and of honesty.

The difference with the preceding approach – selective appreciation – is that the focus is placed on negative items in other cultures. It entails a double shift in perspective. First, the term 'cultural traditions', which conventionally has a positive meaning, is associated with behavior such as sexual transgressions and dishonesty. However, normally no 'culture', in its primordial meaning of carrier of values, would condone immorality as part of its time-honored customs. By tying the possibility of rejection to certain 'cultural traditions', any local habit can thus be made suspect. Second, in contrast to Okazaki's approach in the perspective I discuss next, no mention is made of positive examples that people could retain from their cultures, although this is obviously possible since only 'contrary' traditions have to be discarded.

Fifth perspective: Broad inclusion of the other

In terms of outcome, this fifth approach is similar to the previous one, but the rhetorical emphasis starts with a much more positive outlook toward others. In a 1971 talk about missionary work in Korea, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie conceded that 'whatever is appropriate and good we want to preserve'. Therefore, Korean people are allowed 'to preserve their culture, to keep their own dances and their own dress and their own mores and ways of life alive, as long as they are not inharmonious with gospel principles'.⁵⁰ Sorenson referred to this talk to defend a view where the 'core of Mormonism in its most basic expression' is found in the higher levels of ideology, values and knowledge – a common 'world view' –, but should be allowed to diversify into local cultural forms

⁴⁹ Dallin H. Oaks, 'Give Thanks in all Things', *Ensign*, May 2003, pp. 95–98. See also his talks 'Repentance and Change', *Ensign*, November 2003, pp. 37–40; 'The Gospel Culture', *Ensign*, March 2012, pp. 40–47; 'Truth and Tolerance', *Religious Educator*, 13, no. 2 (2012), 1–15.

⁵⁰ Quoted in *The Expanding Church*, ed. by Spencer J. Palmer (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1978), p. 147.

on the lower levels of physical realization, thus adapting 'living the gospel' to other patterns and customs than those in America's West.⁵¹

In 1976, Belgium born Charles Didier, of the First Quorum of Seventy, responds in the *Ensign* to a question dealing with the place of national feelings among church members. He answers:

When we speak of nationalism, or culture, there is in reality only one nation or one culture: the nation of God and the gospel culture, a vast amalgam of all the positive aspects of our cultures, histories, customs, and languages. The building of the kingdom of God is such an amalgam, and is the only place where these different values may and can coexist.⁵²

This view on gospel culture is broad and much-inclusive, with the perspective of a good deal of diversity in the kingdom of God.

Another 'foreign' church member, Chieko N. Okazaki, of Japanese ancestry and at one time counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, stresses that same understanding of broad inclusion: to build bridges between cultures, 'the greatest bridge of all is the culture of the gospel'. She defines the gospel as 'a culture based on the atonement of Christ and the restoration of his pure gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith'. In practice, it means: 'Faith, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, living together in a righteous community, and serving each other with love are all principles of that culture. These principles are true in any culture and among all peoples.'⁵³ Note the inclusion of gospel culture as 'principles' within other cultures. In another book, Okazaki describes the present-day desertion of specific scriptural rules (e.g., in the Bible, no eating of pork, women's hair covered): 'Instead of focusing on these rules that no longer make sense in our own culture, we focus on the principles behind them: eat healthy food and dress modestly.' Since principles of the gospel can exist in other cultures, Mormons can therefore respect them in the format of those cultures. As examples Okazaki mentions how the principle of prayer allows her to pray with her mother at the Buddhist household shrine, or how the principle of family unity

⁵¹ John L. Sorenson, 'Mormon World View and American culture', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 8, no. 2 (1973), 17–29.

⁵² Charles A. Didier, 'I Have a Question', *Ensign*, June 1976, p. 62.

⁵³ Chieko N. Okazaki, *Lighten Up! Finding Real Joy in Life* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1993), p. 7.

allows her to participate in fun Sunday afternoon activities with her extended non-Mormon family. Her conclusion: ‘Before you dismiss any cultural practice, think about the principle behind it, decide if this principle is one you also believe, and see if you can find a way to participate in it in a way that honors that principle.’⁵⁴

A comparable approach is found in a 1993 *Ensign* article on South Africa which, under the subtitle ‘A gospel culture’, quotes Elder Richard P. Lindsay, president of the Africa Area: ‘The answer to bridging different cultures is the gospel. What the church is doing is building a gospel culture that transcends all boundaries and barriers.’ The process is described as dynamic and tentative: ‘The final composition of that gospel culture yet awaits us for we are still in the process of building it.’ The idea is to define the essence of the gospel – ‘that unchangeable and unchanging center which you cannot adapt to other cultures’. Next, determine ‘which aspects of a particular culture, for example, are healthy and wholesome parts of a people’s identity and needn’t be changed’.⁵⁵ The article also cites Jan Hugo, president of the Benoni stake in South Africa, as he reflects on early missionary efforts to African cultures: ‘Some of the mistakes were that very often we tried to Americanize or South Africanize the people instead of ‘gospelize’ them. [...] It is the gospel, not any particular culture that changes people’s lives.’ The *Ensign* continued in the same vein with an article on the Polynesian Cultural Center: ‘The continuing internationalization of the church depends on members who understand and respect each other’s cultures and heritages. Within the gospel culture, we must be like a delicious fruit salad, made up of distinctive parts yet unified in our purpose.’⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Chieko N. Okazaki, *Disciples* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1998), pp. 147–149.

⁵⁵ Quoted in R. Val Johnson, ‘South Africa: Land of Good Hope’, *Ensign*, February 1993, p. 33.

⁵⁶ Alton L. Wade, ‘Laie – A Destiny Prophesied’, *Ensign*, July 1994, p. 68. Note that the Polynesian Cultural Center has also been criticized for its colonial folklorization of foreign cultures: ‘The racialization of the Native as primitive—always out of time in modernity—is what tourists buy at this “cultural park for ethnographic tourism”’: Hokulani K. Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai’i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), p. 140. See also an anthropological critique of the PCC by Vernadette V. Gonzalez, ‘Consuming “Polynesia”: Visual Spectacles of Native Bodies in Hawaiian Tourism’ in *Studies in*

Such optimistic projections are easy to make, until church leaders are confronted with specific situations of far-reaching cultural mixing. The historical examples show the challenges involved and how individual interpretations varied as to the allowed boundaries.⁵⁷

Sixth perspective: Sublimating universalism of it all

Again in the wake of the 1976 BYU Symposium, Gordon B. Hinckley, then a member of the Twelve, throws another light on the issue in a BYU devotional address. The thrust of his message is twofold: cultural differences hardly matter in missionary work and cultural differences are disappearing. For the first aspect, Elder Hinckley remarks that ‘these differences are of minor importance in comparison with the great burden of our responsibility to teach the gospel of the Master and that alone’. And: ‘The Spirit of the Lord will overcome the effect of any differences in culture or other situations between a missionary and those he teaches.’ For the second aspect, Elder Hinckley notes the ‘shrinking cultural barriers’ and the reasons for it: the ease of modern travel has ‘sublimating effects of such intercourse among nations insofar as cultural differences are concerned’; the rising educational levels in the world are ‘a concomitant factor of greater understanding of the ways and customs of other people’; and the ‘increasing knowledge of languages’ facilitates better mutual comprehension. Finally, Elder Hinckley mentions ‘the tremendous erosion of strong cultural patterns in many parts of the earth’. For him, ‘people are essentially the same everywhere, all over the earth’ in their love, appreciation for beauty, concern with suffering, a sense of right and wrong, ‘and the universal recognition of a higher power’.⁵⁸ That globalizing attitude toward the world became a leitmotif in many of Elder Hinckley’s conference talks when he spoke as church president: ‘We must be better Latter-day Saints. We cannot live a cloistered existence in this world. We are a part of the whole of humanity.’⁵⁹

Symbolic Interaction, ed. by Norman K. Denzin (Bingley, U.K.: Howard House, 2009), pp. 191–216.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Marjorie Newton, ‘From Tolerance to “House Cleaning”’: LDS Leadership Response to Maori Marriage Customs, 1890–1990’, *Journal of Mormon History*, 22, no. 2 (1996), 72–91; D. L. Turner, ‘Akimel Au-Authm, Xalychidom Piipaash, and the LDS Papago Ward’, *Journal of Mormon History*, 39, no. 1 (2013), 158–180.

⁵⁸ Gordon B. Hinckley, ‘Things are Getting Better’, Brigham Young University 1976 Speeches, 8 April 1976.

⁵⁹ Gordon B. Hinckley, ‘Look to the Future’, *Ensign*, November 1997, p. 67.

Evaluation

The six perspectives on this tentative antonymic scale, each advocated by faithful Latter-day Saints, reflect how different these authoritative voices, at least in their rhetoric, can be. Each chosen perspective discloses personality and identity. Taken at face value, the six perspectives make it arduous to classify Mormonism on the continuum between church and sect. Indeed, one criterion to assess religions is their degree of alignment with the surrounding society.⁶⁰ Groups completely aligned become viewed as socially and culturally integrated churches. At the other end are ‘sects’ that reject any alignment and claim their uniqueness as quintessential outsiders. In between are groups that claim to be part of a dominant religious tradition (like those Mormons who claim to be ‘a’ Christian church) or that otherwise pick and choose along the way. According to which Mormon voice speaks in favor of one of the six perspectives, Mormonism can thus be placed at will anywhere on this continuum between church and sect. This ambiguity also explains the disparate assessments by non-Mormons: has Mormonism become a conventional church, or is it still a cult, or something in between? According to the perception of more normalcy or more aberration, opinions vary. The church’s Public Affairs proclaims Mormons’ normalcy and societal integration, as in the ‘I’m a Mormon’ campaign, but the internal ecclesiastical message to the church’s own members typically stresses separation. In Terryl Givens’ terms, the dualism marks the Mormon paradox of exceptionalism versus eclecticism and universalism.⁶¹

In the construction of identity, what can the individual Mormon make of these six perspectives? On the one hand, all the perspectives proceed from the same underlying principle – the gospel shapes a desirable identity, broadly defined as a Christ-centered, virtuous life. Or it can be

⁶⁰ David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton, ‘Reconceptualizing Types of Religious Organization: Dominant, Sectarian, Alternative, and Emergent Tradition Groups’, *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 15:3 (2012), 4–28. Bromley and Melton build on Johnson’s tension model: Benton Johnson, ‘On Church and Sect’, *American Sociological Review*, 28, no. 4 (1963), 539–549.

⁶¹ Givens, *People of Paradox*, pp. 54 and 72. Note that the concept of ‘universalism’ versus ‘Israelite descent’ refers to a different direction, namely, that the restored gospel is universally applicable to save humankind, independent of privileges of lineage. See Arnold H. Green, ‘Gathering and Election: Israelite Descent and Universalism in Mormon Discourse’, *Journal of Mormon History*, 25, no. 1 (1999), 195–228.

more specifically circumscribed, as in Elder Oaks' terms, as 'a set of values and expectations and practices common to all members'. On the other hand, the differences in perspective invite the individual member or the potential convert to choose between different boundaries with 'the other' — from a resolute rupture with the world to a reassuring embrace of the world. The contradiction is, of course, faux: each approach is equally valid depending on its focus on good or on evil in the world, and on the audience and the objectives of the speaker — hence the word 'perspectives'. Individuals, however, easily adopt a dominant attitude. In their daily dealings and their own religious rhetoric, the uncompromising minds will tend to isolate themselves from the evil world, while the more indulgent will demonstrate confident openness toward a wonderful world. Missionaries and many local members usually stress separation from the world, thus sometimes placing on potential converts a burden of self-exclusion from their original culture. In their contact with other members, converts may experience other attitudes. They may become confused about what brand of identity change is expected. What does it mean, in terms of identity, to become a Mormon, to become part of the gospel culture? The next section seeks for answers.

GOSPEL CULTURE: SEVEN QUESTIONS RELATED TO IDENTITY

For decades the study of Mormon identity has focused on Mormons within the United States, with special attention, naturally, to the Mormon Culture Region in the American West, but also to comparisons with American members elsewhere in the United States.⁶² Relatively few studies extend to Mormon identity in foreign countries or cultures.⁶³ The

⁶² See, e.g., Cope, *You Don't Know Jack*; Mauss, *The Angel*, pp. 35–45 (for a comparison of California and Utah Mormons); Richard D. Phillips, 'Saints in Zion, Saints in Babylon: Religious Pluralism and the Transformation of American Mormonism' (unpublished dissertation, The State University of New Jersey, 2001); Susan Buhler Taber, *Mormon Lives: A Year in the Elkton Ward* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

⁶³ Examples include Ian Barber, 'Between Biculturalism and Assimilation: The Changing Place of Maori Culture in the Twentieth-Century New Zealand Mormon Church', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 29 (1995), 142–169; Wilfried Decoo, 'Mormonism in a European Catholic Country: Contribution to the Social Psychology of LDS Converts', *BYU Studies*, 24: Winter, (1984), 61–77; Jessie L. Embry, 'Ethnic Groups and the LDS Church', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 25 no 4 (1992) 81–96; Henri Gooren, 'Latter-day Saints under Siege: The Unique Experience of Nicaraguan Mormons', *Dialogue: A*

following questions are reflections which should also be read as suggestions for further research.

1 - 'The' or 'a' gospel culture?

Texts I have referred to use either the definite or the indefinite article: 'the' gospel culture or 'a' gospel culture. The former refers more to a unique construct. In the perspective of 'antagonistic isolation', the gospel culture is considered as an enduring, impregnable sanctuary which harbors 'light and truth'. In the 'broad inclusion' approach, there is also only one gospel culture, but it includes all the good and positive from any other culture.

'A gospel culture' refers more to a construct where several gospel cultures can exist after or next to each other. In subsequent 'dispensations', a gospel culture assumes changing forms, even if the core is similar. In Nibley's view, the city of Enoch, in its perfection, had a gospel culture different from that of ancient Israel under the Law of Moses, with its elaborate laws and rituals. The gospel culture that the early Christians developed struggled to free itself from that law and its traditions. The Restoration through Joseph Smith in the 1830s created its own gospel

Journal of Mormon Thought, 40 no 3 (2007), 134–155; Mark L. Grover, 'The Maturing of the Oak: The Dynamics of LDS Growth in Latin America', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 38 no 2 (2005), 79–104; John P. Hoffmann, *Japanese Saints: Mormons in the Land of the Rising Sun* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2007); David Clark Knowlton, 'Hands Raised Up: Power, and Context in Bolivian Mormonism', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 40, no. 4 (2007), 47–71; Dean R. Louder, 'Canadian Mormons in their North American Context: A Portrait', *Social Compass*, 40, no. 2 (1993), 271–290; Thomas W. Murphy, 'Reinventing Mormonism: Guatemala as Harbinger of the Future?', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 29 no 1 (1996), 177–192; Marjorie Newton, *Southern Cross Saints: The Mormons in Australia*. Mormons in the Pacific Series (Laie, Hawaii: Institute for Polynesian Studies, Brigham Young University-Hawaii, 1991); Jiro Numano, 'Perseverance amid Paradox: The Struggle of the LDS Church in Japan Today', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 39 no 4 (2006), 138–155; Bernadette Rigal-Cellard, 'Être Français dans une Église d'Origine Américaine: les Mormons de France', in *Les Mutations Transatlantiques des Religions*, ed. by Christian Lerat and Bernadette Rigal-Cellard (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2000), pp. 279–308; Grant Underwood, 'Mormonism, the Maori and Cultural Authenticity', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 35, no. 2 (2000), 133–146; Walter E. A. van Beek, 'Ethnization and Accommodation: Dutch Mormons in Twenty-First-Century Europe', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 29 no 1 (1996), 119–138.

culture, while restoring elements of previous ones. Also that culture can be seen to have evolved since its early manifestation.

In the perspective of ‘selective appreciation’, each Christian entity possesses its own gospel culture. The Mormon claim to its particular gospel culture does not exclude the existence of a Catholic gospel culture, a Southern Baptist one, or a Jehovah’s Witnesses’. Further refinements could discern the gospel culture of Opus Dei or of Malankara, and hundreds of others with their own characteristics. It implies that also within Mormonism different Mormon ‘gospel cultures’ could be distinguished.

2 - What makes a religious culture and how does Mormonism fit?

In simplified terms, a religion draws its identity from a combination of beliefs and practices. Beliefs refer to content – verbally expressed in doctrine, history, commandments, values, expectations, etc. Practices refer to acts – expressed in worship, rituals, liturgy, ceremonies, sacrifices, etc. Beliefs normally explain practice, and practices remind adherents of beliefs, such as the commemoration of events on a religious calendar or the ceremonies accompanying life’s hallmarks – birth, rites of passage to age groups, marriage, and burial. Beliefs and practices aim at experiencing transcendence and at impacting personal life. The more a religion is institutionalized, the more its beliefs and practices are codified and regulated in orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Both beliefs and practices evolve over time. Within a mother religion, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, or Judaism, they also vary according to internal branches. The relative weight of each main component, belief or practice, is different from religion to religion, and from individual to individual. When a religion has rituals as the main part of its religious service, with little or no verbal explanation, the emphasis is on practice. Religious services with long readings and sermons, appealing to reason, give more weight to content – hence to beliefs. Where does Mormonism stand in this balance?

In most traditional religions, the study of content is the domain of a limited contingent of theologians or clerics. For the mass of believers content is mostly limited to essentials related to practices. Even if content is voluminous and studied by many faithful, such as in Judaism or Islam, it forms a fixed package, settled in the past. In Mormonism, content is not only a major attribute, but it also is not definite: additional scriptures, the recent teachings of living prophets, and the general conference talks provide a stream of supplementary content. The principle of ‘continuing revelation’ promises more and can also alter past content. The discussion of this content, in numerous talks and lessons, is at least as dominant as

practices. The early decades of the twentieth century saw a vast intellectual substantiation of these Mormon beliefs in books by, in particular, James E. Talmage, John A. Widstoe, and B. H. Roberts. Translated into other languages, they formed a prime source of doctrinal and historical knowledge for thousands of converts. In Mormonism the excitement, which expansive doctrinal and historical information brings to personal study and to talks and lessons, functions as a kind of cognitive ritual to feed religiosity. In the middle of the twentieth century a more confrontational trend followed – with authors such as Joseph Fielding Smith, Bruce R. McConkie, Alvin R. Dyer, or W. Cleon Skousen. The church did not continue its support of that trend when the flaws of the harsher literature and the problems with personal interpretations became obvious. Correlation reduced church-sanctioned reading materials to selected essentials, safe and simplified, with an emphasis on moral precepts rather than intellectual insights. The entirety is still voluminous in the yearly curriculum for the various age groups. Anglophone members can, moreover, continue to enjoy a steady stream of Mormon books, now published outside the official channel: scores of apologetic, historical, exhortatory, or comforting material, for all levels, tastes, and needs, supplemented by independent journals and an abundance of internet sites. All by all, Mormonism remains very content-oriented.

As to practices, in many religions these imply rituals such as chanting, formulaic prayer, or physical movements; they often also incorporate sacral interiors, pilgrimages, religious attire, adoration or veneration of statues or symbols, incense, candles, and other paraphernalia. These distinctive acts impose, *by themselves*, an ingrained religious culture. Mormonism has no such ornate practices as it originated in an environment imbued with New England Puritan traditions. This origin explains the simplicity in worship, the form of the sacrament, fasting and testimony-giving, and strict observance of Sunday rest. ‘Service to others’ is a central concept in this pragmatic religion. Ordinances are quiet and short. None of the Jewish or Christian holy days, to which Mormons could also relate, knows an equivalent festive observance in Mormonism.⁶⁴ Even the temple ceremony, the most sacred of Mormon worship, is characterized by an egalitarian soberness without artificial means to

⁶⁴ Note that the pageants at the Hill Cumorah, in Manti, or Nauvoo, the weekly Mormon Tabernacle Choir broadcasts, or the Days of ‘47 parade, are too optional and place-bound to be considered part of a worldwide gospel culture. But they are part of the American character of the church.

stimulate a sense of the divine. The ceremony itself is geared at the transmission of content, in the form of instructions and restrained dramatization.

Still, Mormons have introduced some material symbols to sustain their religious identity. For Utah one such symbol is Pioneer Day — ‘one of the most important public expressions of Mormon identity’.⁶⁵ Many Mormons of pre-correlation days, also members abroad, remember with some nostalgia other material tokens of identity — dance festivals, sport tournaments, roadshows, Primary and MIA-symbols, medallions, or bandlos.⁶⁶ The yearning for such objects explains the continued success of Mormon gadgets such as figurines, temple statuettes, pins, CTR-rings, or necklaces, but which are ‘non-official’ and only reach a small part of the Mormon membership.

To what extent do these Mormon beliefs and practices contribute, *by themselves*, to the establishment of a peculiar worldwide religious culture? Beliefs seem to have lost part of their past salience. Correlation has simplified teachings to a common denominator acceptable for the whole world.⁶⁷ More daring doctrines of the past are being demoted, thus undermining distinctiveness.⁶⁸ ‘Extraneous sources’ are now to be avoided in lesson material. But as malaise spreads among members who

⁶⁵ Steven L. Olsen, ‘Celebrating Cultural Identity: Pioneer Day in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism’, *BYU Studies*, 36 no 5 (1996), 159–78 (p. 160).

⁶⁶ A bandlo is a ‘band of felt worn around the neck like a long collar, to which were affixed symbols made of felt, plastic, or glass, representing participation and achievement in the last three years of Primary’: Ardis A. Parshall, ‘A Bundle of Bandlos’, *The Keepatitchinin*, August 31, 2008, www.keepapitchinin.org/archives/a-bundle-of-bandlos/ [accessed 12 September 2013]. Parshall describes these treasured souvenirs of Mormon childhood. See also Connie Lamb, ‘LDS Symbols of the Relief Society’, *Mormon Historical Studies*, 14, no. 1 (2013), 111–129.

⁶⁷ Mauss (*Feelings*, pp. 28–29) describes how teaching material of the 1950s ‘placed more emphasis on reasoning’, such as the Anderson Plan for missionary work, or ‘Parley P. Pratt’s *A Voice of Warning*, a substantial and powerfully reasoned tract of more than 100 pages’.

⁶⁸ For example, in interviews with the press, President Hinckley caused concern among some of the members by downplaying Mormon doctrinal traditions such as the Lorenzo Snow couplet, which he seemed to trivialize. See Michael W. Fordham, ‘Does President Gordon B. Hinckley Understand LDS Doctrine?’, *FAIR*, no date www.fairlds.org/authors/fordham-michael/does_president_hinckley_understand_lds_doctrine [accessed 4 August 2013].

struggle with unsettled questions about doctrine and history, it seems church authorities continue their search for balance. For the individual Mormon much depends on personal interest to make use of information and resources outside of the official materials. Moreover, what is the effect of the wide divide between the amount available to Anglophone members and the rest of the world? Also for practices much depends on individual commitment, namely, a Mormon's personal initiative to give sacral meaning to the ordinary religious acts, such as family prayer, individual and family scripture study, family home evening, or fulfilling 'callings' to serve.⁶⁹ Mormon religiosity seems to be earned by personal action rather than by submission to age-old rituals, and by communal visibility rather than in private contemplation. In view of the massive problem of retention, could it be that this kind of gospel culture, hugely dependent on personal investment, does not grow deep enough roots *from itself*? Moreover, has correlation, by taking out of church life some of its distinctive content as well as colorful Mormon tokens of earlier years, undermined Mormon identity or, instead, has it brought Mormon identity to a higher level? More research could map the related data, also taking into account various personal variables in the international context.

3 - Does gospel culture imply Mormon culture and vice-versa?

Mormon culture, here defined as lifestyle, encompasses many external aspects – religious, social, educational, and physical –, while gospel culture highlights the religious life as such. To what extent can converts accept the gospel without adopting or having to adopt much of Mormon culture? Conversion to Mormonism entails observable behavioral changes, such as following the Word of Wisdom, paying tithing, and attending church. These can still be viewed as belonging to the essential gospel realm. But members are also expected to fulfill callings, attend

⁶⁹ In her experimental study of religious behavior among Latter-day saints, Cornwall found that 'belief and commitment variables are most strongly associated with religious behavior', more than social relationship variables and religious socialization. See Marie Cornwall, 'The Determinants of Religious Behavior: A Theoretical Model and Empirical Test', *Social Forces*, 68, no. 2 (1989), 572–592 (p. 583). See also Melvyn Hammarberg, *The Mormon Quest for Glory: The Religious World of the Latter-Day Saints* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Hui-Tzu Grace Chou, 'The Perceived Relationship between Life Events and Religiosity among Individuals Raised in a Mormon Community', *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 13, no. 5 (2010), 437–451.

related meetings, participate in activities, and serve as home and visiting teachers: ‘As they are baptized into a new faith, converts also come into a “gospel culture”. In this gospel culture, they encounter strict standards, strange words, and high expectations. They meet new people, go new places, and receive frightening responsibilities.’⁷⁰ Indicative in that respect is the standard question ‘Is (s)he active?’ to gauge good standing.

The concept of gospel culture implies therefore a large measure of Mormon culture as lifestyle. The relationship between the two facets can also be worded as the well-known contrast between ‘the gospel’ and ‘the church’, the latter being representative of ‘the culture’. In a 1984 general conference talk, Elder Ronald Poelman stressed that ‘significant distinction’ – the gospel being the essence. He stated that Mormonism should ‘accommodate a broad spectrum of individual uniqueness and cultural diversity’. By so doing ‘we become less dependent on church programs. Our lives become gospel centered.’ Afterwards Elder Poelman was asked to redo his conference talk in order to blur this distinction between gospel and church. Some authorities felt that the distinction could be misinterpreted as if people ‘converted to the gospel do not need the Church’.⁷¹

The question can also be turned around: does an external Mormon lifestyle imply ‘living the gospel’? Active participation is no guarantee of a personal religious life, in particular when social or family pressures are the main determinants for involvement.⁷² Ironically, although it was never an intended implication of the term ‘gospel culture’, adherents of ‘just the culture’ are the third type of members whom Albrecht identifies as ‘cultural saints [who] are generally high in terms of

⁷⁰ John L. Hart, ‘Strengthening New Members’, *Church News*, 29 November 1997. The article comments on the First Presidency letter of May 15, 1997, addressed to all Church members to fellowship and involve new converts. The accompanying instructions require that ‘new members are to be called and trained to serve in Church positions as soon as possible after they join the Church’.

⁷¹ See, also for the quotation, Peggy Fletcher, ‘Poelman Revises Conference Speech’, *Sunstone*, 10 (1985), 44–45.

⁷² Rick Phillips and Ryan Cragun discuss how this happens in ‘dense Mormon communities’: ‘Contemporary Mormon Religiosity and the Legacy of “Gathering”’, *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 16, no. 3 (2013), 77–94 (p. 85).

their communal identification [...] but reject those doctrines that generally define one as a believing Latter-day Saint'.⁷³ In that sense, a statement like 'I believe in the gospel culture' or 'I live the gospel culture' could be a far cry from 'I believe in the gospel' or 'I live the gospel'.⁷⁴

4 - How American is the gospel culture?

After the reversal of the gathering principle around 1900 and with permanent Mormon pockets in a number of countries, Mormon leaders started to stress the non-American character of the church. In 1937 J. Reuben Clark Jr. phrased it explicitly: 'This is not an American church. This is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its destiny as well as its mission is to fill the earth.'⁷⁵ Next grew the concern to de-Americanize the church's image and to cater to cultural differences. Since the 1960s correlation has been removing from church publications typical American lifestyle items. But the church cannot elude a number of American components. I would identify four which determine a socio-cultural atmosphere: historical location, authority, ideology, and behavior.

The historical location of the church's origin and main development is in the United States. There would be no Mormonism without its localized past, from the First Vision, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the founding of the church, the dramatic stages of its persecution, up to planting Zion's banner high on the mountains top – in Utah.

⁷³ Stan L. Albrecht, 'The Consequential Dimension of Mormon Religiosity', *BYU Studies*, 29 no 2 (1989), 57–108 (p. 82).

⁷⁴ The dichotomy is often expressed as 'belonging without believing' (with its opposite 'believing without belonging'). For the Mormon context of these contrasts, see Lori G. Beaman, 'Molly Mormons, Mormon Feminists and Moderates: Religious Diversity and the Latter-day Saints Church', *Sociology of Religion*, 62, no. 1 (2001), 65–86; Cope, 'You Don't Know Jack'; Michael McBride, 'Club Mormon: Free-Riders, Monitoring, and Exclusion in the LDS Church', *Rationality and Society*, 19, no. 4 (2007), 395–424. For a more general discussion, see Olav Aarts and others, 'Does Belonging Accompany Believing? Correlations and Trends in Western Europe and North America between 1981 and 2000', *Review of Religious Research*, 50, no. 1 (2008), 16–34; Vassilis Saroglou, 'Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42, no. 8 (2011), 1320–1340; Jason Wollschleger and Lindsey R. Beach, 'Religious Chameleons: Exploring the Social Context for Belonging without Believing', *Rationality and Society*, 25, no. 2 (2013), 178–197.

⁷⁵ J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Conference Report*, October 1937, p. 107.

The preservation and the retelling of that history are an intrinsic part of the message of the Restoration, including ‘Mormon historical tours’ with a sense of pilgrimage.⁷⁶ It contributes to the identity of a ‘home-grown American religion’ in which members worldwide are invited to partake. It ties in with America’s highlighting in the Book of Mormon and with the tenth Article of Faith – ‘the building of Zion on the American continent’. Many members abroad perceive Mormon Utah as an ideal society in America’s West, as idyllic as the Salt Lake Temple grounds and as majestic as the Conference center, home of the prophet and of tens of thousands of members. Twice a year the general conference broadcast reinforces those breathtaking images. Perception studies would reveal interesting things on how Mormons abroad view Mormon heartland and how the hope of a once-in-a-lifetime visit to Salt Lake City equals a Muslim’s intent to visit Mecca.

The second component is authority. The church is firmly managed by Americans. Non-Americans may slowly be added to the highest echelons but only, next to a flawless ecclesiastical curriculum, if they are sufficiently fluent in English and if their personality and background match the American corporate style of leadership. The regional headquarters around the world are staffed with enough Americans to ensure an American labor style in all endeavors. ‘Salt Lake’ controls all major aspects abroad, including financing, organizing missions and stakes, and building of temples and meeting houses. There remains a wide discrepancy between the Caucasian Mormon leaders in the top echelons and the substantial ethnic diversity in the membership.⁷⁷ Still, nearly all members abroad seem to accept this American leadership as a natural extension of the historical location in the United States and as part of a culture of compliance and respect.

Ideology as third component: apart from some limited communal experimentation in the nineteenth century, Mormonism has always been part of the evolving political and socio-economic realm of the

⁷⁶ See Sarah Bill Schott, ‘“Standing Where Your Heroes Stood”: Using Historical Tourism to Create American and Religious Identities’, *Journal of Mormon History*, 36, no. 4 (2010), 41–66.

⁷⁷ For a study of this discrepancy, see Devyn M. Smith, ‘The Diverse Sheep of Israel: Should the Shepherds Resemble Their Flock?’, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 38, no. 4 (2005), 56–74. An update of the comparison would probably show little change since 2005.

United States.⁷⁸ Overall American church leaders have been explicit in their sustaining of the ‘American way of life’ and the ‘American dream’ – the free opportunities for personal development and the pursuit of happiness, including economic success and prosperity as a result. Their approach connects to America’s messianic role in the world and to an abhorrence of socialism and communism. American ideology thus infuses the Mormon ethos with examples of self-actualization and entrepreneurial values. Members abroad, especially those called to leadership positions, naturally adopt the same view and rhetoric. This ideology can be perfectly justifiable but in many countries the traditional view of religion emphasizes abnegation and self-denial. Mormonism thus invites members to mentally reposition themselves vis-à-vis what religion encourages to ‘also’ achieve. In fact, the frequent assertion that ‘the gospel is the solution’ to the nations’ problems refers not only to individual values, but also implicitly to the political and economic model of the United States.⁷⁹

Finally, the American component of behavior pertains here to conduct in interpersonal relations. My approach of this topic is tentative and research could probe this aspect further. Wherever the church has been established, white middle-class Americans were (and often still are) the originators, organizers, and first leaders of church units. Thousands of Mormon American families living abroad, as well as older missionary couples, impart their behavioral patterns in local wards. Missionaries, including those from other nationalities, are shaped by the rules and interactions of the American work ethos. Visiting authorities, who are American or Americanized role models, transmit behavioral patterns in

⁷⁸ Underwood questions the stark contrast which analysts often make between a pre-1890 communal and polygamist Mormonism and a post-1890 mode of American assimilation. Even in the nineteenth century, he argues, most Mormons followed the prevailing American liberalism. Grant Underwood, ‘Re-visioning Mormon History’, *Pacific Historical Review*, 55, no. 3 (1986), 403–426.

⁷⁹ Cf. David Knowlton: ‘[The missionaries] frequently said that “the solution to Bolivia’s problems is the gospel”. By the gospel they tacitly meant the socioeconomic formation of the United States and Canada, as they understood it and as they sacralized it through their religion.’ David Knowlton, “Gringo Jeringo”: Anglo Mormon Missionary Culture in Bolivia’, in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. by Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton and Lawrence A. Young (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 218–236 (p. 228).

their interaction with local leaders and members. Church-produced media depict the same models. These patterns include informality in social contact between genders and between ages; the way to approach strangers and start a conversation; the firm and somewhat longer handshake, with a smile and a direct gaze in each other's eyes; the facial demonstration of assertiveness and commitment; eye contact during interviews and meetings; a certain jovial looseness in conducting meetings; the casual speaking style from the pulpit; the homogenizing dress and grooming standards (for women, conservative American modesty rules; for men and boys, the style of conservative American businessmen); the extolling of anyone as 'wonderful' and 'great people'; and the praising of children and youth as 'special'. Americans may find this topic trivial or irrelevant because they perceive such ingrained habits as natural. Sorenson notes that American Mormons are 'heavily influenced by U.S. patterns of thought and behavior' and that they 'in general seem unaware of the distinctions which do prevail between Mormon and American ways'.⁸⁰ But in most foreign countries it would suffice to go to the worship meeting of any other local, vested religion, or to any other kind of meeting for that matter, to understand the distance from behavioral patterns which have been adopted in a Mormon unit and which come, basically, from American conservative models. Of course, the patterns mentioned will be more contrasting in cultures that are more divergent from American habits. Because behavioral patterns help to form a community, they are significant in influencing the feeling of a worldwide gospel culture. Any 'culturally adapted' Mormon may thus feel immediately 'at home' in any church unit—in Singapore, Cape Town, Lima, or Helsinki.

Considering the four American components touched upon and the socio-cultural atmosphere they create, Mormonism, in its expansion to other parts of the world, could thus be called 'an American world religion'.⁸¹ Overall, members abroad appear to be quite accepting of these American components of the church, which does not mean they concur with other American aspects or with U.S. politics in the world.⁸²

⁸⁰ Sorenson, 'Mormon World View', p. 27.

⁸¹ As in this book title: *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion*, ed. by Eric A. Eliason (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

⁸² The fact of joining a clearly 'American' church is already an indication of 'American' acceptance. Forms and degrees of this acceptance by converts and members abroad have been studied by Rigal-Cellard, 'Être Français'; Alexina

5 - *What is (in)compatible with gospel culture?*

The perspectives of ‘selective appreciation’ and ‘selective exclusion’ allow converts to keep from their original culture all the good that is not incompatible with Mormonism or to discard what is not compatible. The counsel applies in particular to members – now the majority in the church – who live amidst a local, dominant culture, which I will call the ‘host culture’. Abiding by the counsel seems a simple matter. Since a host culture itself expects obedience to the law and to civic behavior, normally only a few explicitly Mormon traits will require special attention, in particular the law of chastity, the Word of Wisdom, and Sabbath observance.

However, many facets are not that clear cut. As mentioned, Okazaki defends the viewpoint that principles of the gospel are also found in other cultures. If a cultural practice reflects that principle, she deems participation acceptable, even if apparently deviating from usual Mormon standards. Her examples are worship at the Buddhist household shrine and participation in fun Sunday activities with non-Mormon family members. The rationale is to not offend non-Mormons and to be willing to contribute to their happiness. Quite a few examples of such principles can be given. What if the principle of welcoming guests includes offering a small alcoholic drink? In some cultures, refusing it would be equal to refusing to smoke the peace-pipe in the historic context of a negotiator in an Indian camp. What if the principle of filial service requires taking your old non-Mormon dad to the Sunday afternoon soccer match of his beloved local club and staying with him, joining in the cheering to make him happy? What if the rules of hospitality and etiquette, when inviting non-Mormon friends over for dinner, include serving wine? Stories in church magazines sometimes mention examples of similar ‘ethical’ choices: invariably the Mormon stands up for principles and refuses to break the Word of Wisdom or Sabbath observance. These examples, drawing on clear-cut lines, are proper for their purpose. Mormons seldom hear examples, set in more ambiguous situations, where the principles of

Delvaux, *Contribution à l'Étude des Saints des Derniers Jours en Belgique: Perspective Historique et Approche Sociologique* (Brussels: Université Libre de Bruxelles, Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 2012). I am not aware of similar specific studies applied to other parts of the world. The perception is likely somewhat different in Latin American countries, where the appeal of Mormonism is (also) tied to identification with the Book of Mormon world.

tact and tolerance require nuancing and where showing sensibleness can be more indicative of Christian charity.

Noteworthy in this context are different cultural norms for certain virtues or standards, which influence the assessment of compatibility. Modesty is a prime example. In a puritanical environment, nudity is associated with sex. Not so in Mormon wards in Finland where a priesthood sauna night is considered a great social activity.⁸³ In some African regions women perform joyful dances with naked breasts, perfectly acceptable in the culture. In some countries church members are naturists: they do not understand how their relaxing family vacation on the beach, in full harmony with nature, would be in violation of any gospel principle. In a ward in Belgium, the Relief Society sisters once choose as a weekday social activity to watch the film 'Calendar Girls' in the chapel. Their focus, culturally determined, was on the positive social message of the film and the fun scenario. It did not cross their minds that others would think of the film as dealing with female nudity and be offended over it. This item also raises the question of film ratings, which differ from country to country. Portrayed 'casual' killings, which so often occur in American action movies, and which children in the United States are allowed to watch under a G-rating, can, in another cultural setting, be considered more shocking and unsuited for children than brief soft-core nudity in a love scene, which would get an R-rating under CARA. The refusal of Brigham Young University to display *The Kiss* by Rodin is an incident that members abroad (as well as many in the United States) deem inconceivable, as they and their children grow up with a natural appreciation for nude art without sexual connotation.⁸⁴

How do these apparently more 'lenient' Mormons manage to reconcile their own cultural norms with general church norms in case of divergence? Sometimes Okazaki's 'principle criterion' is applied, usually without drawing attention. Christian Euvrard discovered that many French Mormons find a pragmatic balance between Mormon exigencies

⁸³ Norbert, 'High Priest Sauna Night', *By Common Consent*, 5 September 2007, www.bycommonconsent.com/2007/09/high-priest-sauna-night/ [accessed 11 January 2008].

⁸⁴ 'BYU Bans Rodin Nudes', *Sunstone*, November 1997, 76–77. Even if BYU allows the viewing of nude art in art classes and in study abroad programs, there is no display of 'normal' nude art in its public areas.

and their own cultural identity.⁸⁵ Knowlton observed that in Bolivia the ‘vibrant, active, syncretic [Bolivian] Mormonism generally passes unseen before the apparent uniformity of standardized chapels, routine meetings, and white shirts’.⁸⁶ Murphy confirms the same for Guatemala.⁸⁷ Van Beek answered the question ‘Mormon Europeans or European Mormons?’ by deciding on the former because ‘their national (and by extension European) identity comes first, sharing the values and norms of their society before those of the LDS Church’.⁸⁸ Carine Decoo came to the same conclusion from a study of attitudes among Mormon women in Europe: these women reflect the gender norms of their country’s culture, rather than ‘Victorian’ church traditions.⁸⁹ No doubt anywhere in the world, also in the United States, some Mormons play the accepted deferential role toward church authorities, while quietly doing some things ‘their own way’.

However, this guarded independence is certainly not representative for all the layers of Mormon membership abroad. Indeed, many members focus on religion as a set of restrictions affecting daily life. New converts often feel a need for precise answers in the determination of (in)compatibilities. Frequent queries have to do with the Word of Wisdom and Sabbath observance. These uncertainties often stem from situations hardly known on the Wasatch Front. For example, in many countries, as well as in other parts of the United States, Sunday is a prime time for wholesome recreation, as authorities offer free visits to museums and exhibitions, to art festivals, folklore happenings, concerts, and lectures. Sunday is the day for enhancing community life and cultural enrichment, with special emphasis on families, for whom many public

⁸⁵ Christian Euvrard, ‘Socio-Histoire du Mormonisme en France’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, École Pratique des Hautes Etudes, 2008), p. 497.

⁸⁶ Knowlton, ‘Gringo Jeringo’, p. 221.

⁸⁷ Thomas W. Murphy, ‘Guatemalan Hot/Cold Medicine and Mormon Words of Wisdom: Intercultural Negotiation of Meaning’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36 no 2 (1997), 297–308.

⁸⁸ Walter E. A. van Beek, ‘Mormon Europeans or European Mormons? An “Afro-European” View on Religious Colonization’, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 38 no 2 (2005), 3–36 (p. 20).

⁸⁹ Carine Decoo, ‘Mormon Women in Europe: A Look at Gender Norms’, paper given at the conference *Women and the LDS Church: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, University of Utah, 24–25 August 2012. Publication forthcoming in a reader with conference contributions.

activities are designed.⁹⁰ Mormon judgment tends toward rigor: better err on the safe side and not participate.

6 - *To what extent is inclusion of local culture possible and desirable?*

The preceding question dealt with ambiguities at the individual level and mainly when Mormons interact with non-Mormons. But what about introducing local culture in the bounds of church life? Such introductions – heeding the counsel ‘Keep every good thing you have’ – could differentiate gospel culture from place to place. In 1973, Sorenson thought that, through correlation, ‘required beliefs are reduced to the essential minimum, in part in recognition on the part of the authorities in Salt Lake City of the need for cross-cultural adaptation of the gospel message’.⁹¹ In an extreme interpretation of this approach, such cultural decentralization suggests discarding all Americanisms, defining only the ‘core’ of Mormonism, and then allowing regional or national Mormonisms – Pacific, Japanese, Siberian ... – to be built around the core according to their traditions.

There are drawbacks to such a proposition. First, what would be the common, essential core with still sufficient Mormon distinctiveness? As noted above, it seems that church authorities are still seeking that balance. Second, the proposal identifies local cultures from territorial stereotypes. Indeed, what would be ‘typically’ Polynesian, Brazilian, or Dutch? Any territory is further subdivided in smaller zones with their own identities, down to the level of city sections, neighborhoods, and social groupings. The fragmentation would be filled with contention over adaptations to local Mormonisms. Third, various forms of Mormonism would open a Pandora’s box as to who is more or less orthodox and who deserves not to be called Mormon anymore. Fourth, one central aim of the gospel is precisely to make divisive entities fade away. We do not want Tutsi versus Hutu Mormons, nor Kosovar versus Serb Mormons. Fifth,

⁹⁰ In fact this festive and entertaining function of Sunday comes from older Christian traditions. See Craig Harline, *Sunday: A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁹¹ Sorenson, ‘Mormon World View’, p. 24. See also Armand L. Mauss, ‘Can There Be a “Second Harvest”? : Controlling the Costs of Latter-day Saint Membership in Europe’, *International Journal of Mormon Studies*, 1 (2008), 1–59. Mauss discusses possibilities of selective adaptations (pp. 40–48). ‘Cross-cultural adaptation of the gospel message’ is a more incisive process than ‘transculturization’, which only asks to change settings in stories and examples.

through conversions among immigrants, in many countries the Mormon Church is already a melting pot. In fact it is in those multicultural wards and branches that a non-nationalistic, multiethnic Mormon society may be emerging without divisive orientations. Above all, as the church expands, church leaders are anxious about unity for fear of break-away groups and schisms. To maintain unity, uniformity and central control are considered prime conditions. The general effects of such an approach can be viewed as positive. 'The church is the same all over the world' is indeed a potent reassurance of belonging. As more people travel around the world and more immigrants disembark, the assurance of finding a standard Mormon meetinghouse where people and practices are familiar is heartening.

But correlation and uniformity can also lead to blandness and indistinctiveness. To what extent can local culture be allowed to add color to church life without endangering unity? Normally a local culture – with its way of life, manners, traditions, art, music, history, language, symbols, and interests – overwhelmingly contains good elements that provide cohesion and identity, safety and trust. In this encounter between the two so-called cultures – gospel and local –, many features of the local culture will simply be part of church members' lives without creating any conflict. But, again, at a certain point we enter a gray zone. Problematic items deal with 'good' customs that somehow penetrate the religious realm – meaningful traditions that cannot be called 'contrary to gospel principles', but which would raise eyebrows if followed by Mormons. Can former Catholics keep the family crucifix on display in their home? Can converts in the Orient keep an ancestral home shrine and its rituals? Can converts from Judaism keep a mezuzah on their front door and at Passover have the Seder ceremonial evening meal? These are questions for the privacy of their home. Things become more sensitive on church grounds. Can Latino members celebrate quinceañera – a girl's exceptionally festive fifteenth birthday – with an appropriate fireside-type service in the chapel (to approximate the special Catholic Mass at this occasion)? Can Congolese members conduct a funeral service with jazzy accompaniment and dancing – so vital for their sense of community in the face of death? Can former Catholics who long after the delight of the Midnight Mass organize a Mormon variant in their chapel? All of these examples can be tied to gospel principles according to Okazaki's 'principle criterion'.

From my experience, the tendency of most local leaders will be to prohibit such cultural incursions into Mormon territory, simply because these do not match predetermined standards of acceptability. Or, in case of hesitation, they find it safer to turn down requests. However, this tendency to enforce uniformity can lead to the prohibition of traditions that could be perfectly acceptable in the daily lives of members. A *Church News* article on Nigeria mentions that a challenge for leaders 'is that of helping new converts shed their tribal customs and traditions and bring their lives to conform with the culture of the gospel'. The article tells of members who, by giving up some (unidentified) traditions, create such a rift with their non-Mormon parents that these do not consider them their children anymore. The local church leader is quoted with the conclusion: 'That creates a lot of pain, but some members have decided to do that. It is really very hard. But the members are definitely blessed for this sacrifice, because they are free from bondage.'⁹² The problem with such information is that the reader has no idea which traditions were at stake here. In what respect were such traditions 'bondage'? Perhaps some could have been kept instead of tearing families apart?⁹³

There may indeed be reasons to be more lenient and to establish helpful criteria. First, for the individual and the family, a number of traditions belong to a cultural heritage that shapes fundamental identity within the local community. When such traditions are uplifting and have nothing detrimental in relation to the gospel, proscribing them could create voids that the church cannot fill. Among these traditions, next to examples given above, are communal festive events on historical remembrance dates. Can Mormons participate in these events when they occur on Sundays? A particular example would be forms of yearly 'children's days', which are celebrated in many countries in various forms and on divergent dates, connecting the community through their activities and excitement. Sometimes such festivities have a religious origin (e.g. Sinterklaas in Holland and Belgium, la Befana in Italy). Prohibiting

⁹² John L. Hart, 'Nigeria: Blessings of Gospel Lift a Prepared People', *Church News*, 14 March 1998.

⁹³ Assessing different cultural traditions is also complex. For example, Elder Oaks rejected as 'negative' the African tradition of the bride price because it often obliges young returned missionaries to postpone marriage until enough money is raised (Dallin H. Oaks, 'The Gospel Culture', *Ensign*, March 2012). But in many African regions the bride price provides economical balancing for the loss of a female working force, its negotiation rituals serve in-law families' bonding, and later on it serves as divorce disincentive.

Mormon children from participating in such events, not only can be socially upsetting to them, but it may also develop a rejecting, fundamentalist outlook toward society. In contrast, being both a 'good Mormon' and an integrated member of the local culture, without transgressing any norm of the church, will probably contribute to the development of a more balanced personality.

Second, having church members participate in local traditions can, certainly in critical situations, signal an important message to the host society and its leaders. The church wants good relations with civil authorities. But many governments look at 'foreign' religions with suspicion, in particular when these religions stress their separateness. For example, in many West- and especially East-European countries, Jehovah's Witnesses are viewed as a threatening cult, mainly because of their disengagement from the surrounding culture, as they refuse to celebrate days like Easter or Christmas, and even ban birthday parties. Such societal disconnection is interpreted as cultic behavior. Participation in the local culture, on the other hand, is viewed as commitment to broadly shared community values.

Third, taking into account the ethnic diversity of many Mormon units abroad, with their immigrant converts from various cultures, the introduction of these people to traditions of the host society can help them better integrate. Quite often these people have the Mormon unit as their only connection point with the host society. Integration of immigrants is high on the agenda of governments. A Mormon unit can contribute to that integration, but to do so, it needs to include components of the local culture among its activities.

A fourth argument, in some cases the most important, concerns non-Mormon family members. The conversion of a family member to a 'foreign' religion is, in many countries, sensed by the rest of the family as a betrayal of the deepest cultural heritage. The larger the breach in beliefs and practices between that heritage and the other religion, the more heartrending it can become. In cult investigations by legal authorities or anticult organizations, one of the characteristics for determining cult status is the degree to which it severs the believer from family and society traditions. So there is particular value in keeping certain local traditions alive in Mormon units abroad, at which non-Mormon family members can also feel at ease.

If the above arguments are convincing, some guidelines would probably be in order. The general statement that everything can be kept

that is ‘not incompatible with the gospel’ leaves much room for interpretation and hence for inconsistent decisions and disagreements. A first step in such guidelines could be protective, such as the maintenance of the worldwide standard meetings (e.g., no local liturgical additions) and the distinction between the official church realm and the sphere of temporarily and locally permitted practices of local culture. Next I can only suggest questions. Should each proposal be assessed on a one-by-one basis, to be approved on a multi-stake, national, or regional level for the sake of coherence? Should proposals pertain only to major cultural items that apply to large geographical entities in order to avoid fragmentation over little issues? Or should the whole matter be kept very local and casuistic, only sustained by an acknowledged greater tolerance at the top? Some will fear that guidelines lead to overregulation, others that too much freedom will lead to incongruent decisions and disarray. Whatever the viewpoint, the present lack of any parameter is not helpful either.

7 - Is ‘culture’ a good term to apply to the gospel?

At the 1976 Symposium, Sorenson took exception to the use of the term ‘culture’ as an identity marker related to the gospel. His wariness stems from the multiple meanings that can be given to the term ‘culture’ and from the fact that people have multiple cultures, pertaining to gender, family, age, profession, social level, region, and more. Such variety may lead, within groups, to ‘similarities in behavior, thoughts, and worldview’, but on an individual level these similarities will vary according to the circumstances. Sorenson concludes: ‘I do not think that culture, as that term is used by most social scientists, is the same thing as the gospel. I do not think there is a gospel culture as such. Ultimately, I believe culture will be transcended when men have the spirit of truth in its fullness’.⁹⁴

In other words, this perspective represents the most exclusive position: there is the gospel, and all the rest is culture, because the gospel by definition transcends all cultures which are human-made. As early as 1928 Elder Levi Edgar Young contrasted human cultures with the gospel, which he defined as a non-culture: ‘The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a scheme of culture or a system of philosophy; but a Religion, fulfilling the law and the prophets, enforcing the obligations of duty, and pointing to

⁹⁴ John L. Sorenson, ‘Comments on Reynolds “Cultural Diversity in the Universal Church”’, in *Mormonism*, ed. Tullis, pp. 28–32 (p. 31). See also Sorenson, ‘Mormon World View’, pp. 27–28.

the glory of the Cross.⁹⁵ In a 1979 Ensign article, Eric B. Shumway notes: ‘Gone are the days when we saw the gospel as a culture itself, usually characterized by Utah’s lifestyle and psychological references. We see now that the gospel embraces a set of spiritual values that transcends cultures’.⁹⁶

Such a view finds a parallel with how the Christian message had to unshackle itself from Jewish culture to become a-cultural:

For Paul, the Law of Moses was no longer a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, it was merely a sign of cultural identity for the Jewish Christians – and the implicit message of Paul’s teachings is that the separation between gospel and culture should be maintained when one takes the gospel to the world.⁹⁷

The question ‘What is the gospel?’ immediately evokes Christ’s message of salvation, hope, and love, with all the transcendence it entails – ‘our Heavenly Father’s plan for the happiness and salvation of His children’⁹⁸ or ‘a body of knowledge essential to man’s ultimate wellbeing’.⁹⁹ But does the question ‘What is the gospel culture?’ bring to mind the same awe-inspiring answers? Culture evokes applications and lifestyle. ‘Gospel culture’ thus tends to generate conceptual shifts in relation to the gospel itself. The term may be understood as a type of societal framework surrounding beliefs and practices – a framework of which the nature and the boundaries are open-ended, but which can also be narrowly defined at will. David Knowlton conveys this ambiguity by stating that the development of a Mormon ‘supranational’ identity ‘has involved an intense cultural project of separating, winnowing, what could be called the gospel from what could be called culture’. The gospel thus requires all members, in any place, ‘to leave behind their cultures for this new, more focused

⁹⁵ Levi Edgar Young, *Conference Report*, April 1928, p. 54.

⁹⁶ Eric B. Shumway, ‘Bridging Cultural Differences’, *Ensign*, July 1979, 67–71 (p. 70).

⁹⁷ Gaye Strathearn, ‘The Jewish and Gentile missions: Paul’s Role in the Transition’, in *The Apostle Paul, His Life and His Testimony: The 23rd Sperry Symposium on the New Testament* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1994), 188–203 (p. 202).

⁹⁸ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ* (2008), p. 3.

⁹⁹ Sorenson, ‘Mormon World View’, p. 22.

gospel culture, or to see it in tension with the ways of the Lord'.¹⁰⁰ For Knowlton the separation from culture is still a 'cultural project' and the result is still a culture. In short, 'gospel culture' is both evocative and elusive.

There are also translation problems with 'gospel culture', as the church offers the conference talks, such as those by Elder Oaks on the topic, in dozens of languages. Even in languages close to English, locutions such as 'die Kultur des Evangeliums', 'la culture de l'Évangile', 'een evangeliecultuur', or 'en evangelisk kultur' may evoke different connotations than in English. In German 'Kultur des Evangeliums' is a historical concept, the title of landmark studies by theologian Carl Albrecht Bernoulli. In distant languages the connotation can be even harder to render. Moreover, the religious sphere will remind some non-English speakers of the stem *cult* in *culture* — a root that can strongly surface when tied to 'gospel'. In its basic usage, the 'cult of a religion' is the body of its practices — etymologically the 'care' owed to the divine. English derived the word from French, and French has it from Latin's *cultus*, the way an individual cares, tends, *cultivates*. Nowadays in some languages the word 'cult' (in French *culte*, in German *Kultus*), refers not only to the worship services of any respectable religion, but also to the overall cultural dimension of such a religion, making it, for example in French, more plausible to translate 'gospel culture' by 'culte de l'Évangile' instead of 'culture de l'Évangile'. Christianity and Islam can thus be identified positively as global cults. The narrow and derogatory connotation of 'cult' appeared in nineteenth-century English, but that connotation is rendered as 'sect' in other languages.

Sorenson concludes somewhat resignedly: 'I just do not find culture to be a very useful term. Unfortunately, it has come into common usage, and we all suppose we know what it means'.¹⁰¹

THE ANTONYMY FACTOR: TOWARD FUNDAMENTALISM?

To review: launched in the 1970s, 'gospel culture' as a Mormon identity marker was given disparate meanings as it was juxtaposed to

¹⁰⁰ David Clark Knowlton, 'Go Ye to All the World: The LDS Church and the Organization of International Society', in *Revisiting Thomas F. O'Dea's "The Mormons": Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Cardell K. Jacobson, John P. Hoffman and Tim B. Heaton (Salt Lake City: Utah University of Utah Press, 2008), pp. 389–412 (p. 404).

¹⁰¹ Sorenson, 'Comments on Reynolds', p. 29.

boundary-making with other cultures. Since the 1990s its most emphasized connotation is one of contrast to the ‘culture of the world’, a meaning which counters its original Mormon usage of intellectual and artistic worth. Both idioms, ‘culture of the gospel’ and ‘culture of the world’, entered into the non-gradable antonymy of good versus evil. This is a significant development. In non-gradable antonymy words come in mutually exclusive pairs, for example, ‘alive – dead’ or ‘present – absent’. The negation implies the other: not alive is dead, not present is absent. In gradable antonymy, however, the words allow for a scale between the extremes. The antonymy ‘cold – warm’ can be expressed in gradation: ‘arctic – freezing – cold – chilly – temperate – tepid – warm – hot – scorching’. The negation does not necessarily imply the other: ‘not cold’ is not by definition ‘warm’.

Religious parlance, however, tends to present concepts in non-gradable antonymy, in line with the moral polarities: God and Satan, good and evil, virtue and vice.¹⁰² The deviation starts when this rhetoric of non-gradable antonymy, which is the easiest way to handle things, is also imposed on gradable concepts. For example, there is the view of only two kinds of members: active and inactive. In reality a wide range can be discerned, from ‘fervent followers’ to ‘apostates’.¹⁰³ Another example: the posing of happiness versus unhappiness – the former as the sure result of gospel living, the latter as the certain consequence of sin – leaves out a number of in-between feelings, often temporary, bound to circumstances, like ‘contentment’, ‘satisfaction’, ‘a dip’, ‘somewhat discouraged’, or ‘feeling overwhelmed’. Members may feel guilty or confused for not experiencing constant happiness, since the antonymy promises it as the natural outcome of their dedication.

The narrowing of the notion of gospel culture, from an amalgam of good aspects from other cultures to the stark contrast to a sinful world, exemplifies this inclination toward non-gradable antonymy. Such semantic reduction, with its concomitant increase of ambiguity intolerance,

¹⁰² The scriptural ‘So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth’ (Rev. 3:16) comes to mind. Or: ‘He that is not with me is against me’ (Matthew 12:30) and ‘For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things’ (2 Nephi 2:11).

¹⁰³ See, e.g., the nine types discerned by Albrecht, ‘The Consequential Dimension’, 57–108.

easily gravitates toward fundamentalism, here viewed as the militant imposition of strict boundaries based on claims of moral hegemony.¹⁰⁴ To obsessively contrast ‘gospel culture’ with ‘culture of the world’ has serious implications. Not only does it inhibit the ‘broad inclusion’-perspective, but it also shackles approaches that are open to the selective enclosure of cultural traditions of the host society. It further tends to ignore or dismiss societal improvements the world is making. In such an oppositional setting it becomes difficult to make suggestions for cultural mixing and to negotiate diversity. The ‘antagonistic isolation’-perspective wins, due to the now overriding antonymy factor in Mormon rhetoric. Carried to excess, the approach leads to clannishness and parochialism. Okazaki warns against this ‘tribalism of religious exclusivity based on our membership in the church’.¹⁰⁵ Another result is that the demonization of ‘the other’ spills over in political and social realms, leading to the rejection of ideological diversity and thus to intolerance.¹⁰⁶ This paradox in religious practice, brotherhood and bigotry combined, is a well-studied phenomenon in sociological research – ‘the trap that turns religious conviction into prejudice and in-group fellowship into out-group hostilities’.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Religious fundamentalism plays out on various fronts. I concentrate here on its cultural dimension, with its ‘focus on evil’ outside its own realm. See Walter E.A. van Beek, ‘Pathways of Fundamentalisation: The Peculiar Case of Mormonism’, in *The Freedom to Do God’s Will: Religious Fundamentalism and Social Change*, ed. by Gerrie ter Haar and James J. Busuttil (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 111–143 (p. 111). For a broader view of religious fundamentalism, see Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003); Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger, ‘Authoritarianism, Religious Fundamentalism, Quest, and Prejudice’, *Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 2, no. 2 (1992), 113–133; Michael O. Emerson and David Hartman, ‘The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 32 (2006), 127–144; Charles B. Strozier et al., *The Fundamentalist Mindset: Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁵ Okazaki, *Disciples*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁶ Such critique is addressed to far-right-wing Mormons in Utah and Idaho. See, e.g., Benjamin Borg, ‘The Hidden Moderate Utah: The Political History of the War within the Mormon/Republican Relationship’, *The Hinckley Journal of Politics*, 13 (2012), 35–42; Paul Rolly, ‘LDS Legislators Bend to Tough Master’, *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 July 2013.

¹⁰⁷ Harold Fallding, *The Sociology of Religion* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1974), p. 78.

Which factors seem to contribute to this kind of antonymic rhetoric and thus possibly to fundamentalization? I present the following arguments based on my personal impressions from years of observation.

One factor is the emphasis on repudiation as the main characteristic of a Mormon. The selected 'best answer' to the Yahoo question 'What are the characteristics of a Mormon?' is – given by a Mormon: 'We don't drink alcohol, coffee, or tea; we don't smoke; we don't chew tobacco: we don't use illegal drugs; we don't engage in pre-marital or extramarital sex; we don't view erotic material.'¹⁰⁸ In media interviews on their faith, it seems Mormons are prone to point to these prohibitions, rather than mentioning uniquely constructive aspects of their religion.¹⁰⁹ As correlation has been emphasizing generic Christian beliefs and moral principles shared by all, it seems to become more difficult for Mormons to state their distinctiveness affirmatively and transcendently. A recent Mormon children's book, 'The Not Even Once Club', exemplifies this fixation on prohibitions as each child is asked to pledge, before being allowed into the exclusive club and be rewarded with candy: 'I will never break the Word of Wisdom, lie, cheat, steal, do drugs, bully, dress immodestly, or break the law of chastity – Not. Even. Once.'¹¹⁰ The ethical appropriateness of repudiation as such is not at stake here – of course, pledging to obey commandments is commendable. Problematic is the sole emphasis on negations and on exclusiveness and the potential effect on the formation of identity and of social distance. Repudiation easily

¹⁰⁸ <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20091215150938AAEefyk> [accessed 10 September, 2013]. E-how gives a similar answer as to first characteristics of the Mormon lifestyle: 'They eschew caffeine-containing products, such as coffee, tea and chocolate. They stay away from pornography and financial debt. They discourage what they believe are metaphysical vices, such as cynicism and materialism. Devout Mormons also avoid alcohol and tobacco.' See www.ehow.com/info_8502362_characteristics-devout-mormon.html [accessed 10 September 2013].

¹⁰⁹ I became aware of this tendency in an overview of media reports related to the 'Mormon moment' in 2012. See Wilfried Decoo, 'The Mormon Moment Abroad: Thank You, Jim Dabakis', *Times and Seasons*, 13 December 2012. <http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2012/12/the-mormon-moment-abroad-thank-you-jim-dabakis/>.

¹¹⁰ Written by Wendy Watson Nelson, wife of Apostle Russell M. Nelson, and published by Deseret Book, the book drew mixed reactions, showing the divide between 'antonymic' Mormons and the more nuancing. The pledge is found on http://deseretbook.com/pdf/Not_Even_Once_Certificate.pdf [accessed 12 September 2013].

reduces religion to restrictions and implies the self-righteous ‘We don’t do what all the others do’ – hence elitism, antagonistic isolation, as well as condemnation of the other side.

In the international church, another likely factor of fundamentalization is the dominant voice of highly committed leaders in stakes and wards, as well as locally called area seventies, who are nearly always chosen from within strong Mormon families. The church sees much future in these dedicated, multigenerational families as natural incubators for growth and strength.¹¹¹ In any country where the church has been operating for several decades, such Mormon families, many of whom intermarry over various generations, start to resemble influential families of pioneer stock in Utah. Some of these members are recruited as church employees in administrative or Church Educational System functions, which require strict compliance. These ‘inbred’ Mormons, many of them fairly well-educated and relatively well-off, are those the church can always count on for callings and service. They are valuable resources in building the church abroad. This whole development is basically welcome. But the phenomenon also leads to the formation of close-knit circles and their dynasties of local and regional church leaders. The more lenient and liberal leaders are likely to be replaced over time by stricter ones, according to availability. It seems many of these ‘top layer’ members tend toward exclusivism as their intense church involvement makes all of their activities church-related and as their circle of friends narrows to like-minded fellow Mormons. They typically raise their children in a sphere of Mormon pride but also of complacency, with an embedded distrust of the non-Mormon environment. Their sermons and lessons often urge steadfastness by stressing enmity toward the ‘outer world’ and by cultivating fundamentalist attitudes. These firm leaders, who form a minority of the membership, naturally approach their congregations from their own exclusivist and full-Mormon-family perspective.¹¹² But they do not always seem to realize that the rest of the membership – in many cases the vast

¹¹¹ Bruce C. Hafen tells how Elder Maxwell got convinced, through international statistical data, of the ‘key to having a multigenerational church’ for retention and for children going on missions. Maxwell is quoted: ‘We seek successive generations of grandparents, parents, and children who are “grounded, rooted, settled”, (Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:23) and sealed in the holy temple.’ In *A Disciple’s Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 2002), chapter 45.

¹¹² I observe this as a general trend. Of course, there are also more lenient leaders as well as rank-and-file members who display fundamentalist attitudes.

majority – belong to part-member families who need to negotiate their daily Mormon existence outside of the church. These are women without priesthood holders in the home and men who will never baptize a child or ordain a son. Many are single without Mormon family support – unmarried, divorced, or widowed. Single mom families abound. Others live in partnerships, but which the church does not condone. Nearly all of these ‘middle layer’ members are converts with active ties to a pre-Mormon life and with pre-Mormon identity features. Among these are also the underprivileged, the physically limited, and the mentally unstable who are greatly dependent on outside services and support. Overall this broad middle layer needs a viable Mormon identity, harmoniously embedded in the non-Mormon environment, rather than antagonistic isolation. Research would have to verify my impressions in this area, e.g., by surveying the feelings of local leaders from strong Mormon families as to social distance, in-group prosociality, and out-group derogation, compared to rank-and-file Mormons who are not part of such families.¹¹³

A third social factor contributing to antagonism toward the world is the reaction to failure of missionary work. An analysis of missionary journals and reports, as well as of conclusions in articles and books on church history in various countries, show how the general failure to find converts at a certain time and place is often blamed on the ‘sins’ or ‘stiffness’ of the people, on the opposition of the ‘world’, on relativism, materialism, and secularism, and even on the lack of descendants of Israel.¹¹⁴ Van Orden blames the lack of missionary success in

¹¹³ For such research among religious groups, see Joanna Blogowska and Vassilis Saroglou, ‘Religious Fundamentalism and Limited Prosociality as a Function of the Target’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 50, no. 1 (2011), 44–60; Luke W. Galen and others, ‘Perceptions of Religious and Nonreligious Targets: Exploring the Effects of Perceivers’ Religious Fundamentalism’, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 41, no. 9 (2011), 2123–2143; Juliette Schaafsma and Kipling D. Williams, ‘Exclusion, Intergroup Hostility, and Religious Fundamentalism’, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48, no. 4 (2012), 829–837.

¹¹⁴ Examples of such laments are legion. See Michael A. Goodman, ‘Elam Luddington: First LDS Missionary to Thailand’, in *Go Ye into All the World: The Growth and Development of Mormon Missionary Work*, ed. by Reid L. Neilson and Fred E. Woods (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2012), pp. 241–259 (p. 252); Mark Grover, *A Land of Promise and Prophecy: Elder A. Theodore Tuttle in South America, 1960–1965* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2008), p. 110.

Europe on the ‘pornography, homosexuality, public nudity, prostitution, and general immorality’ prevailing in Europe.¹¹⁵ All such preposterous reasons deflect attention from the church’s own responsibility for failure. Research in various areas around the world could analyze whether there is a correlation between low missionary success and members’ levels of antagonism expressed toward the outside world.

The process of isolation can be mutually reinforcing. The less time members find to interact with the host society, because of high demands within the church, the less opportunity they have to be involved in outside social and cultural activities. The host society, in turn, may find Mormons isolated in their own world of activities, which also causes distrust. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the temple paradox: during a short time the church uses the building of a new temple and its concluding open house as a major opportunity for public relations purposes. But once the temple is dedicated, such communication ceases and the temple, closed to outsiders, becomes forever symbolic of Mormonism’s insularity and secretiveness.¹¹⁶

It seems these various factors make Mormon units increasingly self-centered, with an intense religious socialization among those of the same mentality, while alienating others. As Mauss remarks: ‘Converts and lifelong members of a fundamentalist bent will find the church increasingly comfortable, whereas those of a more expansive mentality will find it increasingly uncomfortable.’¹¹⁷

CONCLUSION

How do various concepts and factors contribute to what kind of Mormon identity?

The concept of gospel culture, as defined by Elder Oaks, tries to limit identity to the core of religious living – a ‘culture of commandments and covenants and ordinances and blessings’. Indeed, as a stand-alone

¹¹⁵ Bruce A. Van Orden, *Building Zion: The Latter-day Saints in Europe* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), pp. 316–317.

¹¹⁶ See also Walter E.A. van Beek, ‘The Temple and the Sacred: Dutch Temple Experiences’, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 45, no. 4 (2012), 27–52. Among the radical suggestions I would make is to repeat temple open houses at least once a year or even to have the temple open on a number of Sundays, where groups from interested associations can view presentations on Mormonism or Mormon Tabernacle Choir broadcasts, or where people can come to read Mormon texts and meditate.

¹¹⁷ Mauss, ‘The Mormon Struggle’, p. 148.

concept, gospel culture can be imagined as the sacred sphere wherein faithful Latter-day Saints apply gospel principles and reap the blessings thereof. That would be the essence of Mormonism as religion. The related individual identity would be feeling compliant with 'light and truth'. But do we then need an ambiguous term like 'culture' for what is basically 'living the gospel' in its most essential, a-cultural meaning?

'Culture' invites determinants. Pondering how a minimal gospel core would relate to a universal gospel culture or to pluricultural manifestations turns out to be a speculative exercise based on brittle definitions and delicate boundaries. The need for a clear physical and social framework for the gospel is unavoidable: that is what a church provides. Hence no gospel culture without a regulating church. For Joseph Smith, the restoration of the gospel implied the restoration of the church with its organization and practices. That church, founded in the United States and closely tied to its American roots, defines for its members worldwide a sense of place, a socio-cultural environment, a lifestyle, and boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. What is the present impact of each of those four determinants on Mormon identity?

The Mormon 'sense of place' is established by standard-plan chapels and well-recognizable temples. To whatever Mormon chapel or temple Mormons go in the world, the building gives them an immediate feeling of genuine belonging. These measured buildings, determined by 'Salt Lake', reflect the expectation of a uniform Mormon identity. Standardization has supplanted the architectural creativity and diversity of former times.¹¹⁸

As I discussed, the socio-cultural atmosphere remains determined by American components of historical location, authority, ideology, and behavior. In that sense, the Mormon Church is an 'American worldwide church' – not a world religion in diverse manifestations.¹¹⁹ This Americanness of the church is still inescapable. At the same time, asserting that 'This is not an American church' is

¹¹⁸ See Paul L. Anderson, 'Mormon Moderne: Latter-day Saint Architecture, 1925–1945', *Journal of Mormon History*, 9 (1982), 71–84; Martha Sonntag Bradley, 'The Cloning of Mormon Architecture', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 14, no. 1 (1981), 20–31; Martha Sonntag Bradley, 'The Mormon Steeple: A Symbol of What?', *Sunstone*, September 1992, pp. 39–48.

¹¹⁹ According to Phillips, 'Mormonism is a North American church with tendrils in other continents, and that calling Mormonism a "world religion" is premature.' Rick Phillips, 'Rethinking the International Expansion of Mormonism', *Nova Religio*, 10, no. 1 (2006), 52–68 (p. 52).

equally acceptable if the focus is on the universality of the gospel message. I believe we simply have to accept this dualism – innately American, prospectively universal – and bow to developments as they occur. It seems that most church members abroad are able to navigate between those two outlooks, with occasional tensions for individuals as they struggle to acclimatize to the dualism. Surveys should be able to pinpoint these tensions and their effects with precision.

The lifestyle expected from members is pervasive with its identical expressions of religiosity and activity, thus meaningfully contributing to identity. Overall, dedicated members find in this lifestyle stability, opportunities for progress, and happiness. Those positive effects, attested throughout the world, deserve to be highlighted. However, the social pressure to conform is ubiquitous, including trivia such as dress and grooming standards. At some point the external identity requirements and the activity expectations can become suffocating for the less normative.

This article focused in particular on the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. From the six perspectives of gospel culture versus ‘the other’, the easiest one to adopt, the antonymic form, which stresses isolation and fear of the world, now seems pervasive in its contribution to Mormon identity. As far as I have observed in Europe, dedicated local leaders, usually from strong, multigenerational Mormon families, tend to set that tone. But must gospel culture by necessity develop an identity which alienates Mormons from the host culture and, often, from their non-member families? Or can one of the broader perspectives of gospel culture, which would include some, many or most good features from other cultures, still lead to a ‘sufficient’ Mormon identity? I have no clear answers to these questions. But I believe it is important that new converts, in particular for their retention, can adopt a viable Mormon identity, which does not exhaust them nor put them on a collision course with their non-Mormon environment or, in the church, with members of a fundamentalist bent. The same observation seems valid for long-time members or young people born in the church who feel increasingly uneasy with the isolating and exclusivist aspects of the imposed identity.

True, the model of ‘optimum tension’ between the church and the world asks for a balance between two strains: ‘the strain toward greater assimilation and respectability, on the one hand, and that toward great separateness, peculiarity, and militance, on the other’.¹²⁰ But this

¹²⁰ Mauss, *The Angel*, p. 5.

same tension, independent of where the church stands at one point in history, also plays out on the individual level and is subject to personal, familial, and communal circumstances. On that level, the tension might become excessive, also because the costs of Mormon membership differ around the world.¹²¹ Moreover, the tension is often only viewed in relation to the outside world, but frictions between individual members and their Mormon haven might be more damaging because religion, deep emotions, and a strong social network are involved. The consequences of the combination of tensions are sobering: in the international church, the majority of the members – 70 to 80 % – are not active, in various degrees of disengagement.¹²² Any assessment of Mormon identity should also take into account those few millions of Latter-day Saints whom the church continues to count as members on its rolls. Among those, many have suffered or still suffer as they have become disillusioned, hurt, or confused within the church, or pressured or persecuted by their original milieu. Even many of the ones considered active face dilemmas and challenges and sometimes experience dramas related to their church membership. How do all these consider their Mormon identity?

To what extent are adaptations possible to improve viability and retention? As explained, I understand the need for worldwide uniformity in this still-early phase of Mormonism's existence. But for several reasons – familial, communal, political –, it may be commendable to allow aspects of the local culture a more visible presence in a non-official but still acceptable zone. In the more tolerant perspectives of gospel culture, church leaders have heralded cultural openness and acceptance of diversity. But when suggestions concretize, local leaders tend to withdraw into the antagonistic isolation model, mainly because they lack guidelines for allowable diversity. In particular where it affects relations with non-Mormon family members, there is a need for softer demarcations and more leniency, so that conversion and membership entail less discord and no tragic conflicts.

¹²¹ Mauss, 'Can there be'.

¹²² The 'inactives' thus form the broadest 'bottom layer' of a Mormon population pyramid. Above them is the middle layer of active members, many of whom do not belong to full Mormon families or are marginal in one way or another. The tiny top of the pyramid is formed by highly committed leaders chosen from within strong Mormon families. See Wilfried Decoo, 'Europe', *Oxford Handbook to Mormonism*, ed. by Terryl Givens and Phil Barlow (Oxford University Press, 2013, in press).

In the end it may be trivial whether we work with a concept such as gospel culture or not, or whether we succeed in neatly defining this culture or not. What matters are individuals and families. Indeed, in its worldwide expansion, a proselytizing church, which often disrupts families in the conversion process, has also an almost fiduciary responsibility to help ensure viability and happiness, for all concerned, in the construction of identity – or identities.

Armand Mauss summarizes it pointedly:

The success of twenty-first-century Mormonism as a ‘new world religion’ (Shipps, 1985; Stark, 1990) will depend largely on its ability to define for its adherents an identity that does not depend on borrowings either from the American civil religion or from Protestant fundamentalism. Some retrenchment toward authentic Mormon traditions might make an important contribution to the reconstruction of a truly Mormon special identity, but beyond that lies the risk of fundamentalist excess and a loss of the intellectual expansiveness necessary for a truly universal religion.¹²³

¹²³ Mauss, ‘Refuge’, p. 38. Citations are to Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985) and to Rodney Stark, ‘Modernization, Secularization, and Mormon Success’, in *In Gods We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism in America*, ed. by Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, 2nd edn. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1990), pp. 201–218.

FROM GALATIA TO GHANA: THE RACIAL DYNAMIC IN MORMON HISTORY¹

Armand L. Mauss

On December 9, 1978, the first Latter-day Saint missionaries (two senior couples) assigned to Ghana from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints entered that country and baptized 89 souls, many of them already converted through their own study of LDS literature.² By the end of the century, there were more than 20,000 members in Ghana, and ten times that many throughout Africa. In geographic terms, those first missionaries came all the way from Salt Lake City. However, in a spiritual and symbolic sense, we might say that the missionaries had arrived from Galatia, in Asia Minor, where the early Saints had once received a letter from the Apostle Paul instructing the Church that all are the children of God by faith in Christ; that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus . . . [and all] . . . Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”³ Acting thus on Paul’s injunction, the newly arrived Mormon missionaries were simply restoring the teachings of the Church, as understood originally by Paul and later by the founding LDS prophet Joseph Smith and his original disciples – and, indeed, as articulated in the *Book of Mormon* itself. Yet, until 1978, the Church did not include Africa in its otherwise universal proselytizing program (except for white South Africa); and its priesthood, otherwise available to all males in the Church, was not extended to persons of black African ancestry in any country. Why were the early Christian and early Mormon teachings about the universality of access to the gospel seemingly held in abeyance in the Church

¹ This is a revised version of a lecture I presented on September 26, 2008, as part of the annual “LDS Lecture Series” in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Wyoming. (See <http://www.uwyo.edu/relstds/guest-speakers/lds-lecture-series.html>, accessed August 29, 2013).

² *Deseret News 2001–2002 Church Almanac* (SLC: Deseret News, 2000), pp. 332–33. They actually entered from Nigeria, where they had been sent a month earlier to open LDS missions in West Africa.

³ Galatians 3:27–29.

for so long before 1978? To answer this question, we will need to recover some often forgotten history.⁴

THE WANDERING FROM GALATIA TO UTAH

For more than a century, the beliefs of the Latter-day Saints about black people had not come from Galatia. Nor were these beliefs ever unique, either in their inception or in their evolution. They had not developed in some kind of special Mormon vacuum or bubble. They began earlier than Mormonism itself, for they were directly and explicitly imported from the surrounding cultural and religious environment by the earliest Mormon converts. That environment itself was nearly 400 years in evolving, starting with the so-called Age of Exploration, when Europeans first began encountering peoples so different from themselves that they seriously considered theories about other creations, besides the one in the Book of Genesis, in order to explain how there could be so many different kinds of people on the earth.⁵ So when Joseph Smith and the early Saints spoke of black people as carrying the curse of Ham or of Cain or both, they were simply passing on biblical folklore that was generally believed by nearly all white Christians, at least in the Protestant

⁴ Perhaps needless to say, I recognize that there is no such thing as “history,” except as an abstract concept. What we encounter in accounts of the past are actually “histories,” in the plural, written from various viewpoints and theoretical premises. Different historical accounts tend to be based upon different selections of facts and guided by different theories about what those facts mean, even when the facts themselves can be reliably recovered and agreed upon. Sacred or divine histories tend to see the hand of Deity in their interpretations of historical facts; materialist histories tend to emphasize class interest in their interpretations; patriotic histories glorify national heroes and heroic movements in giving meaning to facts; and so on. Scholars who write histories sometimes make their explanatory theories explicit, but sometimes they don’t, and their theories must be inferred by their readers and critics. I am not exempting my own work from these generalizations. What I will have to say here will leave plenty of room for inferences of divine intervention in Mormon history but such inferences will have to be provided by the reader. My narrative will reflect mainly one or more theories about how Latter-day Saints, and their Church as an institution, have attempted to understand and explain the place of Africans and their descendants in terms both of religious history and of human history.

⁵ Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

world, until well into the twentieth century.⁶ Slavery was a different matter, however. By the time Mormonism came along, Joseph Smith and most of his followers were among those northern Americans who favored an end to slavery, though on a gradual basis, with black relocation to Africa. For white Americans of the nineteenth century, an all-white society was still preferred, with both blacks and indigenous American Indians relocated outside that society.

Considering that general historical context, no one should be surprised that the LDS Church once placed restrictions on participation for black people. Social equality for black people in those days was advocated by hardly anyone, not even by Abraham Lincoln.⁷ Among the Latter-day Saints, the first restriction actually occurred in 1833 while the Church was in Missouri, when leaders instructed Mormon missionaries and converts not to encourage free blacks to enter that state, as long as slavery was still permitted there.⁸ There was, however, *no restriction against bestowing the priesthood* on male converts of black or mixed ancestry, as long as they were not living in a slave state. Indeed, the priesthood was bestowed upon black men living in the north, starting with Elijah Abel in Kirtland, Ohio, as early as 1836, and clearly under the authority of Joseph Smith.⁹ Restrictions on the priesthood and associated temple ordinances came many years later, after the Saints had settled in Utah. The

⁶ David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse on Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); and Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁷ In recent years there has been some reassessment among African American scholars and journalists as to the actual feelings and motives of Abraham Lincoln in his policies toward slavery and toward racial equality more generally. See, e. g., Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 2000).

⁸ W. W. Phelps, "Free People of Color," *Evening and Morning Star* 2(14): 109 (July 1833).

⁹ Lester E. Bush, Jr., and Armand L. Mauss, eds., *Neither White nor Black: Mormon Scholars Confront the Race Issue in a Universal Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1984), pp. 60 and 102. Abel was ordained an Elder in March and a Seventy in December of 1836. See a more general account of Abel's career by Newell Bringhurst on pp. 130–49. Please note that this Bush and Mauss book consists mainly of a collection of essays published earlier by the editors themselves (respectively) in various issues of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, where these essays would be available to readers who don't have access to the Bush and Mauss collection cited here. In particular,

reasons for those restrictions were never explained, and no particular revelation or scriptural canon was cited by President Brigham Young (also territorial governor) when he declared flatly, in the name of Christ, that negroes were not entitled to the blessings of the priesthood, "and if no other prophet ever spake it before, I will say it now."¹⁰ This declaration came at the opening session of the Utah Territorial Legislature in February, 1852, the same session that passed laws enabling slavery to exist in the Utah territory, both for blacks and for Indians.¹¹

With no more explanation than that, it is hard to imagine why Brigham Young would have reversed a policy, in force during Joseph Smith's lifetime, affording black men the LDS priesthood. It is clear from the historical record that Young himself held deep personal prejudices against black people, as did most white Americans of the time, but he did not personally condone slavery.¹² We know also that during the late 1840s, some few LDS members began questioning access to the priesthood for black men. I would propose that Young's declaration about priesthood for black people was an effort simply to make church policy consistent with the emerging policy of the territorial legislature to permit slavery in Utah. Yet why would they decide to permit slavery, since most of the legislators themselves had originated from non-slave states and presumably had little sympathy for the institution of slavery?

I would offer two possible reasons that the territorial legislature and Governor Young would have passed those laws enabling and regulating slavery in 1852: (1) Mormon converts from the South were coming

Bush's ground-breaking analysis, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: A Historical Overview" (here on pp. 53–129), first appeared in *Dialogue* 8(1): 11–68 (1973).

¹⁰ See the quotation and discussion in Bush and Mauss, 65–67, and in Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 68–73. A rough version of Young's original speech can be found in "Brigham Young Addresses," Ms d 1234, Box 48, folder 3, LDS Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹¹ For an explanation of the reasons for including Indians in the slavery legislation, see Bush and Mauss, 67–69; and Sondra Jones, *The Trial of Don Pedro Leon Lujan: The Attack against Indian Slavery and Mexican Traders in Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000).

¹² Bush and Mauss, 66–67; Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves and Blacks*, 69, 112, 119–20; and John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), Chapter 8, esp. Note 35.

to Utah in increasing numbers, and some of them were bringing slaves with them; and (2) LDS leaders had already been pushing for statehood for their territory, which, under the congressional Compromises of 1820 and 1850, had to go alternately to free and to slave states in the new western territories. California had entered the Union as a free state in 1850, so if Utah were to be next, it would have to enter as a slave state. Even though Young and his apostolic colleagues would have preferred entry in the Union without slavery, they were apparently willing to enter as a slave state if that would allow Utah to be next (after California).¹³ This historical and political context suggests a plausible explanation for why the Utah territorial government in 1852 passed a law permitting slavery, and why Brigham Young, who was both governor of the federal territory and president of the Church, would have seen withholding of the priesthood from black people as simply a natural and necessary concomitant of slavery.¹⁴

Whatever the explanation, the official policy of the LDS Church, from 1852 on, withheld the priesthood and temple ordinances from members and converts of black African ancestry. Brigham Young lived another 25 years, and his immediate successors saw no reason to question his policy, especially with national U. S. political policy already transitioning from post-Civil War Reconstruction back toward the "Jim Crow"

¹³ Recently Charles B. Rich, Jr., in "The True Policy for Utah: Servitude, Slavery, and 'An Act in Relation to Service,'" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 80(1): 54–74 (2012), has argued (for example on p.55) that one of three main reasons for the 1852 legislation permitting slavery in Utah was to enhance the chances for early statehood by mollifying the southern states.

¹⁴ A decade ago I was conjecturing about the importance of this second (political) consideration (See my "Dispelling the Curse of Cain," *Sunstone*, October 2004), arguing in part that such an idea was consistent with the earlier discussions of Bringhurst, 70–72, and of Bush's historical overview in Bush and Mauss, 66–67. More recently I have become convinced that the whole question of slavery in Utah, whether in its civil or its ecclesiastical implications, was driven by the sense of urgency about getting statehood for Utah. The priesthood restriction would simply have been part of the campaign for that larger objective (and certainly in accord with Young's own prejudices). In order to appreciate this sense of urgency, it is necessary to remember that in the U. S. federal system of that time, statehood brought far more independence from federal control than is the case at present. This consideration (fending off federal control) always loomed large in Young's thinking, but never more so than in 1852, when he was contemplating going public with the practice of plural marriage.

laws and racial segregation that were to obtain until the middle of the twentieth century. During that era, hardly anyone, Mormon or non-Mormon, questioned the restrictive policy of the LDS Church. In the American social and political context between the Civil War and World War II, the Mormon policy seemed entirely natural. Indeed, even in denominations that did not have any racial restrictions on priesthood as a general policy, very few blacks were ever ordained in any denomination during this period (except, of course, in the segregated black churches themselves). By the time a second generation of apostles and prophets assumed leadership of the Church at the beginning of the twentieth century, no one could remember when church policy had been otherwise, and it was generally assumed that the policy had originated with founder Joseph Smith.¹⁵

Yet, if we are to make sense out of the discriminatory policy of the LDS Church during those years, there is much more we need to understand about the social and cultural context in the nation as a whole – and, indeed, in the Euro American world more generally. For example, we need to recall that the century starting approximately with the reign of Queen Victoria in 1837 was the century that gave rise in Europe and America to various ideologies of racial superiority, such as the “white man’s burden,” and “manifest destiny.” These ideologies justified and vindicated the imperial ambitions of Europeans and Americans who sought increasing dominance over the brown and black peoples in various parts of the world on the basis of a divine mandate, or of historical inevitability, ostensibly for the benefit of these subjected peoples. Invidious comparisons of different so-called “races” were embraced by prominent scientists, philosophers, scholars, and theologians. Theories abounded in Europe and in America about the glorious origins and destinies of the Anglo-Saxons and other peoples of ancient Germanic or Teutonic stock.¹⁶

¹⁵ LDS ecclesiastical developments pertaining to race during this period are reviewed in Bush and Mauss, *Neither White nor Black*, 76–91; and in Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), Chapters 20 and 21 (195–214).

¹⁶ The importance of such ideas in the ideological evolution of LDS thinking during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are discussed and documented in Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 1–40. Recall also the citations in notes 4 and 5, above.

One of these theories was the doctrine of British Israelism, according to which the British Isles, and much of northwestern Europe, were once settled by the migrating lost tribes of Israel, especially the tribe of Ephraim. This doctrine soon found its way to New England, of course, and it enjoyed growing popularity in both England and North America during the lifetimes of Joseph Smith and his earliest converts. For them, such a doctrine accorded well with what they had learned from the new *Book of Mormon* about the divine destinies of the descendants of Ephraim, Manasseh, Judah, and other ancient Israelite tribes. Later in the same century, the sermons of Brigham Young and others identified Ephraim's descendants as Anglo-Saxons and the Latter-day Saints as mainly of the same Israelite lineage. During 1870, the *Millennial Star*, the main official publication of the Church (though published in England), carried monthly articles by George Reynolds showing how such doctrines as British Israelism accorded with the LDS understanding of the scriptures.¹⁷ In 1880, the *Pearl of Great Price* was canonized as official LDS scripture, and sermons thereafter began to include references to the *Book of Abraham* to support claims that people chosen in a premortal existence for special missions in divine history were sent into mortality through special lineages, such as Israelite. The same idea was readily adapted to the argument that others had been chosen to come through cursed lineages such as those of Ham or Cain, so this claim about pre-existence was added to the "explanations" offered for the denial of the priesthood to the few black LDS members.¹⁸

So from the middle of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century, we have a cultural and ideological context, in Europe and in America, in which racial or ethnic differences are highlighted, with some so-called races widely considered superior and others inferior, not only in the mind of God, but also in the sweep of history. We have imperial regimes colonizing various parts of the world in the name of the "white man's burden" or (in America) "manifest destiny," only temporarily interrupted by the savage civil war in the U. S. over the spread of slavery. This "manifest destiny" included the divine right to control the inferior peoples of color within their midst, whether black or red.

¹⁷ Mauss, *Abraham's Children*, 17–19. See also Mauss, "In Search of Ephraim: Traditional Mormon Conceptions of Lineage and Race," *Journal of Mormon History* 25(1): 131–73 (1999).

¹⁸ Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, Chapter 8 (212–30). See also Bush and Mauss, 76–96.

Meanwhile, within the Mormon world specifically, we had a new religious movement seeking the security to pursue its own destiny in the face of unrelenting hostility and disrepute, subject to many regional and national political pressures which it could neither control nor fully escape. Try as it might, the Church could not avoid either the political or the ideological developments affecting the rest of America. Latter-day Saints could, however, interpret some of those developments in ways that might help them to see the divine hand in their own travails. What they came to understand was that they were literally an Israelite people, chosen in the pre-existence to build God's kingdom in these end times; that they were among the superior races of the modern world; and that the persecution and hostility against them from that world only confirmed their superiority – otherwise, why would the minions of the devil be constantly attempting to derail their divine mission?¹⁹ In the context of such assumptions in the world, the nation, and in Mormonism itself, why would any Church leaders have even wondered about the appropriateness of a policy withholding the priesthood from black people in those days? On the other hand, if these leaders were prophets, shouldn't they have known better? Shouldn't they have received revelations challenging such manifestly racist policies? Maybe so, and eventually they did; but they were, after all, products of a certain cultural heritage, as we all are, in which certain questions simply don't seem salient ~ or maybe the obvious answers to the questions can't break through the intellectual barriers of culture.

Indeed, one might see a parallel here in the New Testament allusions to the vexing predicament faced by Paul, the great apostle to the gentiles, who could not understand why Peter and the Judaizers among the early apostles continued to resist the baptism of gentiles, despite the epiphany that Peter had had in his vision of the "unclean meats."²⁰ Similarly, LDS leaders made the assumptions about the significance of racial or ethnic differences common in their culture throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From all we can learn, none of them even thought about seeking divine guidance in the matter until the 1950s. By that time, the LDS Church had travelled well along the path toward a kind of "racialized" understanding about which peoples were to receive the gospel, and in what order. This was spiritually and intellectually far

¹⁹ *All Abraham's Children*, 1–11.

²⁰ I have in mind here chiefly the second chapter of Galatians and the tenth chapter of Acts.

away from the original universalism of Joseph Smith's *Book of Mormon* (2 Ne.26:33), and of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians (3:7, 29), who were admonished: "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham . . . And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." So how did twentieth-century Mormonism finally discard its accumulated racist notions and travel back to Galatia and to the universalism of Paul and Joseph Smith?

THE LONG ROAD FROM UTAH BACK TO GALATIA

I tell that story in some detail in my book, *All Abraham's Children*. It is a story about how the Latter-day Saints eventually came to see all of humankind as the spiritual children of Abraham, without regard to racial or ethnic differences. To make a century-long story very short, the Saints and their leaders simply learned from the successes and setbacks of their own proselytizing efforts that receptivity to their gospel message did not depend on lineage or ancestry as they had once supposed. Mormons from the 1830s on had come to believe that the Jews and the North American aboriginal peoples were literal descendants of Israel, whose interest in the gospel was natural and could be taken for granted, since it was in their blood. Actual proselytizing experience, however, eventually taught them otherwise.

Similarly, the converts from the British Isles, Scandinavia, and Germany had seemed especially receptive for a while. Eventually they even outnumbered those converts born in America – offering convincing evidence that northwestern Europe too was rich in Israelite blood. Yet, these massive European conversions peaked and then greatly diminished before the end of the nineteenth century. Such a drastic change in missionary prospects caused some to wonder publicly whether the Israelite descendants in that part of Europe had pretty much been converted by then and had already emigrated to Utah!²¹ The Latter-day Saints and their leaders nevertheless continued conscientiously to follow the divine

²¹ Thus could the evolving lineage theory provide the explanation for both rapid increases and rapid declines in missionary success. See, e. g., Franklin D. Richards in *Conference Report*, October, 1898, 33; Frederick S. Buchanan, "The Ebb and Flow of Mormonism in Scotland, 1840–1900," *BYU Studies* 27(2):34 (Spring 1987); and Bruce A. Van Orden, "The Decline of Convert Baptisms and Member Emigration from the British Mission after 1870," *ibid.*, 97-105.

commission to take the gospel into all the world in search of scattered Israel. Indeed, the opening and closing of missions occurred in dozens of locations around the world during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sometimes in surprising locales like the Middle East – suggesting almost an "experimental" approach to missionizing. The aboriginal peoples throughout Polynesia unexpectedly flocked to the Church in such numbers that success had to be explained by an obscure passage in the *Book of Mormon* about a lost maritime expedition of Israelites.²² In the belief that Polynesian blood might have spread to Asia, a mission was opened in Japan in 1901 but had to be closed two decades later.²³ Missionary work in Mexico began in earnest also at the opening of the twentieth century and spread to much of Latin America during the next few decades with surprising success. Indeed, the contrast between conversion rates among North American Indians and those in Latin America eventually persuaded LDS leaders that far more children of Abraham and Lehi had survived in South America than in North America.²⁴

Thus, as Mormon missionaries and mission presidents visited peoples in various parts of the world during the twentieth century, they came to realize (however gradually) that there was no correlation between racial or ethnic origin, on the one hand, and receptivity to the gospel message, on the other. Earlier notions about special blood, or differential spiritual qualities based on race, which had seemed to explain so much in the nineteenth century, gradually disappeared from Mormon discourse. As the twentieth century was drawing to a close, Apostle and President Howard W. Hunter summed up the official LDS understanding operative by that time: "All men share an inheritance of divine light. God operates among his children in all nations, and those who seek God

²² Alma 63: 5–8. For a conventional LDS elaboration on this obscure scriptural passage, see (e. g.) Robert E. Parsons, "Hagoth and the Polynesians," in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: Alma, The Testimony of the Word*. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1992): 249–62.

²³ The 1901 dedicatory prayer, with which Apostle Heber J. Grant opened the Japan Mission, made explicit reference to the possible Lamanite and Nephite origins of the Japanese people. See the account by Elder Alma O. Taylor, one of three elders present with Grant for that dedication: Reid L. Neilson, *The Japanese Missionary Journals of Elder Alma O. Taylor, 1901–10* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2001), 48–49 (a published version of Neilson's BYU Master's thesis).

²⁴ Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, Chapter 5, esp. 136–38.

are entitled to further light and knowledge, regardless of their race, nationality, or cultural traditions. . . . [T]he validity, the power, of our faith is not bound by history, nationality, or culture. It is not the peculiar property of any one people or any one age. . . ." ²⁵

The process leading to the official change in the policy toward black people *specifically*, however, had begun many years earlier within the highest councils of the LDS Church, where remonstrances for change were already being received from nationally prominent church members. Even more important, as early as the 1950s, hundreds of West Africans, who had learned about Mormonism almost by accident, were petitioning Church headquarters for missionaries and literature.²⁶ This created an anguishing predicament for Church leaders, who were still convinced that it was God who was withholding the priesthood from people of African ancestry; and they didn't see how the Church could be established in West Africa without extending the priesthood to Africans on the same basis as everyone else. To understand how that predicament was finally resolved in 1978, we must look back again at the American historical context, where the Church suddenly found itself at odds with a burgeoning national Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.²⁷

It has been tempting for many commentators on that period of LDS history to offer the facile explanation that the Mormons, like everyone else, eventually succumbed to the political pressures generated by the Civil Rights Movement, and in 1978 finally ended its priesthood restriction under the "cover" of a divine revelation. There is no doubt that throughout the 1960s and 1970s the Mormon practice of denying the priesthood to its few black members created a public relations nightmare for the Church and its members in the United States.²⁸ This discriminatory policy, ironically, was made especially conspicuous by another

²⁵ Howard W. Hunter, "The Gospel -- A Global Faith," *Ensign*, November 1991.

²⁶ See the account in James B. Allen, "Would-Be Saints: West Africa before the 1978 Priesthood Revelation," *Journal of Mormon History* 17: 207–47 (1991); and Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 201–02, and Chapter 24 (236–45).

²⁷ Armand L. Mauss, "The Fading of the Pharaohs' Curse: The Decline and Fall of the Priesthood Ban against Blacks in the Mormon Church," pp. 149–92 in Bush and Mauss, *Neither White nor Black*, OR in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14(3): 10–45 (1981).

²⁸ Stephen W. Stathis and Dennis L. Lythgoe, "Mormonism in the Nineteen Seventies: The Popular Perception," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10(3):95–113 (1977); see especially 106–09.

Church policy that was unusually *universalistic* – namely that of a lay priesthood generally bestowed on all male members over the age of twelve. As an operational reality, very few black people had received clergy ordinations in any other Christian denominations either (except, of course, for the so-called black churches). Most denominations required seminary training for ordination, and the seminaries, like most professional schools until recent decades, admitted few, if any, black students; hence there were but few black men who ever became priests or ministers in most denominations. The LDS Church, lacking professional seminaries, couldn't use them as gate-keepers, so its denial of the priesthood to black members was up front and conspicuous.

National and regional public opinion polls of the 1960s, however, revealed that Mormons in Utah and elsewhere differed but little from other Americans in their attitudes toward such secular, civil rights issues as school or housing segregation, public accommodations, equal employment opportunities, and voting rights.²⁹ However, with respect to such Church policies as priesthood access, most Latter-day Saints believed that the racial restriction was entirely an internal matter that could be resolved only by divine revelation, not by political pressure. And pressure there surely was, as universities broke off athletic relationships with BYU, Tabernacle Choir performances around the nation were cancelled, picketing of LDS general conferences was threatened, and unfavorable media coverage became nearly universal.³⁰ For the first time, the stereotype "racist" seemed to displace the stereotype "polygamist" for Mormons in the popular mind. As the public pressure increased, the LDS leadership appeared to dig in its heels all the more, insisting that Church policy would be guided by revelation, not by political expediency. By the end of that decade, however, public pressure had diminished, as the nation seemed simply to give up on the obstinate Mormons, and the Viet Nam

²⁹ Angus Campbell, *White Attitudes toward Black People* (Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, 1971), esp. Chapter 7; Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), esp. p. 168, where there appears an extensive table on attitudes toward "Negroes"; Armand L. Mauss, "Mormonism and Secular Attitudes toward Negroes," *Pacific Sociological Review* 9 (Fall 1966), 91–99 (Later renamed *Sociological Perspectives*). Also, Bush and Mauss, *Neither White nor Black*, 1–8.

³⁰ *Bush and Mauss*, 154–60; OR Mauss, "Fading of the Pharaohs' Curse," 14–19.

War began to compete with Civil Rights as the most urgent national issue.

Then, quite unexpectedly, Church leaders announced, in early June, 1978, that the necessary revelation had been received, and that henceforth the priesthood and temple privileges would be accessible to all without regard to race or ethnicity. Unexpected as that development seemed to the outside world, it would have been less surprising to anyone aware of internal Church developments since the late 1960s. In fact, a number of harbingers of change had appeared without much public notice:

(1) Church leaders in the 1960s were already discussing the feasibility of bestowing at least the Aaronic or lesser priesthood on African converts and had tried to send missionaries to Nigeria in 1963, but the Nigerian government had refused them visas.³¹

(2) A rather rapid turnover had occurred in the leadership of the Church. President McKay had remained somewhat ambivalent about changing the priesthood restriction, despite the urging of his two main counselors, and he died in January, 1970, without having received the revelation he sought. His two immediate successors, both on record as strongly *opposing* change in the priesthood policy, also died within only four more years, bringing to office Spencer W. Kimball at the beginning of 1974. President Kimball had long been the chief advocate in the Church leadership for integrating the Native American Indian populations, especially in the West, and improving their conditions.³²

(3) In response to initiatives from members of the small black LDS community in Utah, the Church had established the Genesis Group in 1971 as a support group to supplement the participation of the black Saints in their regular wards, and to provide opportunities for them to socialize and discuss constructive ways of coping with the priesthood restriction while remaining faithful to the religion.³³

(4) Official Church statements on the reasons for the priesthood restriction had long since dropped all the theological folklore about marked and cursed lineages and claimed only that the restriction had

³¹ Allen, "Would-Be Saints."

³² Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 74, 82–84, 237.

³³ Bush and Mauss, *Neither White nor Black*, 163–64. See also the websites, <http://www.ldsgenesisgroup.org/> and <http://www.blacklds.org/> (accessed August 30, 2013).

been imposed “for reasons . . . known to God but which He has not made fully known to man.”³⁴

(5) The Church had grown so large in Brazil, especially among its black and mixed populations, that in 1974, President Kimball and the Twelve made the unprecedented decision to build a temple in Brazil (publicly announced in March, 1975). It seems very unlikely that such a decision would have been made without due consideration for its implications regarding priesthood access.³⁵ Indeed, when the priesthood restriction was finally dropped in 1978, Apostle LeGrand Richards explicitly gave, as one of the reasons, the faithfulness of the Brazilian Saints in providing so much of the funding and labor to build the new temple.³⁶

When the policy change was finally announced in mid-1978, it was attributed to an explicit revelation received collectively by the apostles and the First Presidency of the Church during a specific meeting in the Salt Lake Temple. Their comments on this revelatory event indicates that it was experienced as a powerful charismatic process, but no explicit text was issued for the actual content of the revelation.³⁷ Instead, President Kimball announced simply that the Lord “has confirmed” that the

³⁴ Statement of the First Presidency of the Church, December 15, 1969, widely published in, i. a., *Dialogue* 4(4): 102–3 (Winter 1969). For more about the immediate historical context, see Bush and Mauss, 156–58.

³⁵ Edward Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, devotes five chapters (20–24) to his father's engagement and deliberations in the process that eventually overturned the racial restrictions on priesthood and temple access. I found it strange that the decision to build the temple in Brazil was not mentioned anywhere in those chapters -- at least not in the printed text. However, the text is accompanied by (and usually sold with) a CD which contains, among other things, a much larger "working draft" of this book, and the predicament presented by the Brazil temple is mentioned in passing at the top of p. 2 of Chapter 22 in that CD version (like many other interesting details and footnotes omitted from the printed version!). See also, Bush and Mauss, *Neither White nor Black*, 165, 172.

³⁶ Mark L. Grover, "The Mormon Priesthood Revelation and the São Paulo, Brazil, Temple," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23(1): 39–53 (1990); see especially p. 48.

³⁷ The collective and strongly emotional nature of this revelatory experience for President Kimball and his colleagues is apparent from the public comments that he made about it. See Edward Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, Chapter 22 (215–24) and the corresponding sections of the "working draft" on CD. The president's remarks on the event are preserved also in video form in a *Mormon*

time has come for the priesthood to be extended to all peoples of the earth without regard to race or color.³⁸ Reactions from pundits and commentators outside the Church ranged from appreciation and congratulations to cynical dismissals about politically convenient revelations, as might have been expected. The cynicism would only have been more widespread had the revelation come a decade earlier, when the Church was still under considerable political pressure. Yet, as my references to Africa and Brazil have indicated, the most important pressures leading to the revelation came from *inside* the Church, and (perhaps ironically) from *outside* the United States.

In this connection, it is important to keep in mind how the process of revelation is understood in the LDS tradition: Mormon prophets do not sit around waiting for revelations. The process of revelation is highly dialogical. It is sometimes attributed to spontaneous divine initiative, but more often it begins with *human* initiative. A prophet, like any other person, takes a proposition to Deity in prayer and seeks confirmation for that proposition. Only when it is confirmed by an intensely positive feeling does the petitioner decide to act on it.³⁹ No matter how this process begins, it will, of course, likely be influenced, constrained, or even delayed by the assumptions, presuppositions, and cultural baggage possessed by the human petitioners. Latter-day Saint prophets, like people generally, are products of their own cultural heritage and sometimes victims of their own presuppositions. Remarkable things can happen when leaders break through all of those constraints to bring history-changing revelations to the Church and the world, but such breakthroughs are very rare in human history. So for Mormons, revelation is typically a *process*, rather than an event, and sometimes rather a long process involving much prayer and meditation, and often some re-education, as well. The end of that process is experienced as divine confirmation of a proposition, and it is significant that President Kimball used precisely that term (*confirmation*) when he announced the 1978 revelation.

Newsroom excerpt on You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13uvDGlcQ8o>.

³⁸ "Official Declaration 2," June 8, 1978 (bound with the *Doctrine and Covenants*). The operative passage reads: "Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color."

³⁹ One symptom of divine confirmation has been described as a "burning in the bosom" (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 9:8).

THE BAGGAGE DISCARDED ALONG THE ROUTE FROM UTAH TO GALATIA

The journey from Utah to Galatia has not been an easy one, for it has been encumbered by decades of accumulated baggage containing the racist conceptions and practices inherited from the European and American past, as well as from the Mormon past itself. Much of this baggage has been gradually abandoned along the route, especially (but not only) where black people are concerned. Yet a certain amount of nostalgia about the old racist teachings seems to remain in Mormon culture, at least in the U. S., causing occasional embarrassment for the public relations apparatus of the Church, and for much of the membership besides.⁴⁰ Especially visible in this connection has been the durability and recurrence of the traditional folklore once used (both by the folk and their leaders) to "explain" and justify the denial of the priesthood and temple privileges to people of African descent. I refer, of course, to doctrines about divine marks, curses, and premortal transgressions, which were so pervasive in the Church during the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite the efforts made by Church leaders and their spokesmen in Public Affairs to distance themselves from such folklore,⁴¹ they have never taken the step of officially and publicly repudiating it as false and pernicious doctrine.⁴² Since it remains in several authoritative books still sold under

⁴⁰ The BYU Religion faculty seems to have been a particular stronghold of such traditional ideas. Nearly to the end of the twentieth century, two prominent members of this faculty collaborated on a book rife with the traditional ideas about special lineages: Robert L. Millet and Joseph F. McConkie, *Our Destiny: The Call and Election of the House of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993).

⁴¹ As early as February 4, 1979, Elder Howard W. Hunter delivered a powerful message, entitled "All Are Alike Unto God," before the BYU student body, including the following passage: "As members of the Lord's church, we need to lift our vision beyond personal prejudices. We need to discover the supreme truth that indeed our Father is no respecter of persons. Sometimes we unduly offend brothers and sisters of other nations by assigning exclusiveness to one nationality of people over another." This address was eventually published in the June, 1979, official magazine *Ensign*.

⁴² The damage done by this racist folklore has been a topic of my concern since my very first article in *Dialogue*, "Mormonism and the Negro: Faith, Folklore, and Civil Rights," 2(4): 19-39 (Winter 1967), and for many others as well during the intervening years.

Church auspices, it can still be referenced by well-meaning but uninformed members – and, indeed, by critics and antagonists of the Church, as the 2012 Romney political campaign learned to its sorrow.⁴³

The standard Church response to questions and criticisms about this folklore has been simply to claim that "we don't know" why the Church began the practice of withholding the priesthood from people of African descent, and to deny that the racist folklore was ever official Church doctrine.⁴⁴ Yet the potential for damage from the continuing circulation of this folklore has become increasingly clear to Church leaders beginning at least as early as 1997 (two decades after the end of the priesthood restriction), when a leading member of the Seventy undertook to get an official and explicit repudiation of the folklore, an effort that was derailed by a leak to the press.⁴⁵ For decades, actually, LDS academics, commentators, and even some local priesthood leaders, have urged the Church leadership to issue such a repudiation, but it has not yet happened. On some occasions, it has seemed on the verge of occurring, such as in the Priesthood session of the 2006 April General Conference, when President Hinckley deplored the "racial slurs and denigrating remarks . . .

⁴³ For example, McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* (1966), a reference book popular among grass-roots Mormons, continued to be reprinted with its racist passages until 2010, when finally it was allowed to pass out of print. See, e. g., Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Landmark 'Mormon Doctrine' goes out of print," *Salt Lake Tribune* (Religion Section), May 21, 2010, p. 1. See also the article by John G. Turner (recent biographer of Brigham Young), "Why Race is Still a Problem for the Mormons," *New York Times Sunday Review*, August 18, 2012 (Opinion Pages): http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/19/opinion/sunday/racism-and-the-mormon-church.html?_r=0 (accessed August 29, 2013).

⁴⁴ Here is an example of the official statement normally offered: "The origins of priesthood availability are not entirely clear. Some explanations with respect to this matter were made in the absence of direct revelation and references to these explanations are sometimes cited in publications. These previous personal statements do not represent Church doctrine." *LDS Newsroom*, accessed August 28, 2013, at <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/race-church>. The newly written introduction to Official Declaration 2 in the *Doctrine and Covenants* includes this passage: "Church records offer no clear insights into the origins of this practice" (i. e. of denying the priesthood to blacks).

⁴⁵ See the detailed account of this episode in my memoir, Armand L. Mauss, *Shifting Borders and a Tattered Passport: Intellectual Journeys of a Mormon Academic* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012), 107–110. See the account also in Richard and Joan Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1999, 103–05).

. sometimes heard among us. I remind you that no man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ, nor can he consider himself to be in harmony with the Church of Christ. How can any man holding the Melchizedek Priesthood arrogantly assume that he is eligible for the priesthood, whereas another who lives a righteous life but whose skin is of a different color is ineligible?"⁴⁶ (One wonders if President Hinckley might have meant his rhetorical question to be retrospective as well: i. e., "was once ineligible?")

One later step along the path to a total and official repudiation was provoked, ironically, if also predictably, by a venerable professor of religion at BYU, who spouted all the old doctrinal folklore yet again during a February, 2012, interview with a reporter for the *Washington Post*. From there it reached a national audience, of course, in the midst of the Romney political campaign.⁴⁷ Widespread outrage and ridicule followed, and none was more immediate than the statement from *LDS Newsroom*, which took the unprecedented step of naming the BYU professor, deploring the ideas attributed to him, and insisting that those ideas "absolutely do not represent the teachings and doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. BYU faculty members do not speak for the Church." After another paragraph protesting any such resort to "speculation and opinion" about the unknown origins of the early priesthood restriction, the statement concluded, "We condemn racism, including any and all past racism by individuals both inside and outside the Church."⁴⁸ This is the closest that LDS Church officials or spokesmen have yet come to a repudiation of such "speculation and opinion" as actually false and pernicious. Yet, even on the thirty-fifth anniversary of the 1978 revelation, calls persisted, even among the faithful, for the Church to take that final step.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Priesthood Session, General Conference, 1 April 2006. See *Ensign*, May 2006, for the full statement, which is actually quite stern.

⁴⁷ Jason Horowitz, "Genesis of a church's stand on race," *Washington Post*, February 28, 2012, accessed August 28, 2013, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-genesis-of-a-churchs-stand-on-race/2012/02/22/gIQAQZYfR_story.html.

⁴⁸ *LDS Newsroom*, February 29, 2012, accessed August 30, 2013, at www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/racial-remarks-in-washington-post-article.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Concerns persist about history, explanations of ban," *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 7, 2013, at <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/lifestyle/56422550-80/church-lds-black->

However, if the Church has been reluctant to disavow fully the racial doctrines so authoritatively taught in the past, it has been far more forthcoming in practical worldly and political terms, with obvious efforts to make amends for past slights and offenses, at least to African Americans. These have included celebrations every five or ten years to commemorate the 1978 elimination of the racial restriction on priesthood (with the twenty-fifth and thirtieth anniversary events in the Salt Lake Tabernacle under official Church auspices); sponsorship by various LDS stakes of events celebrating Martin Luther King Day; special workshops and seminars under LDS auspices on African American genealogical research; and the erection of large new LDS Church buildings in the central sections of cities with heavy African American and other minority populations (such as New York and Philadelphia), well before the actual LDS membership growth in those areas would have justified such buildings. Since I have described and documented those outreach efforts quite extensively elsewhere, I will not prolong this essay by recounting them here.⁵⁰ As another anniversary came and went, some commentators were pointing to even more outreach efforts that might be appropriate⁵¹

FINALLY: ON TO GHANA AND AFRICA

Spiritually and intellectually, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has thus come full circle back to the teachings of the

god.html.csp; and (same author), "35 years later, priesthood ban is gone, but some pain still lingers for black Mormons," *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 7, 2013, at <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/lifestyle/56418444-80/black-church-says-lds.html.csp>, both accessed August 30, 2013.

⁵⁰ See details in my *All Abraham's Children*, Chapter 9, especially 241–55. See also the updating of that information in my essay "Mormonism and Race" (especially the second half, starting with the subheading, "Building Relationships with the African American Community"), in Richard Sherlock and Carl Mosser, editors, *The Mormon World*, a reference work in the series *Routledge Worlds* (New York and Abingdon, UK, forthcoming in 2013).

⁵¹ See, e. g., Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Ways to improve Mormon race relations," *Salt Lake Tribune* (Lifestyle Section), June 7, 2013, accessed August 30, 2013, at <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/lifestyle/56422575-80/black-church-mormon-race.html.csp>

Apostle Paul and of Joseph Smith, where it began. In a spiritual and intellectual sense, it has traveled from Utah to Galatia to rejoice anew in Paul's declaration to the Saints there that the gospel of Christ is for all humankind, and that those who can accept it are all the children of Abraham and of Abraham's God, irrespective of race or lineage. Having thus rediscovered Galatia, the Church was finally prepared, both spiritually and geographically, to travel on to Ghana, which it did within weeks of the change in priesthood policy. There, as in Nigeria and much of the rest of Africa, the Church found a pervasive receptivity that it had rarely seen since the 1840s in the British Isles.⁵² With so many West Africans having waited for LDS missionaries for at least two decades, the rapid growth of the Church there seemed to reflect a pent-up demand. Thirty-five years after the revelation to President Kimball, the LDS membership in Africa has exceeded 300,000, more than the entire membership of the Church a century ago.⁵³

Church growth in Africa has brought issues of its own, of course, mainly in the form of the logistical and organizational problems resulting from rapid growth, as well as from certain culture clashes. This is not the place to consider these problems but only to emphasize the radical significance of the unintended African destination in the journey of the LDS people and their religion from early Utah's preoccupation with race and lineage to the soteriological universalism of Pauline Christianity. Many developments outside the LDS world facilitated that journey considerably, not least the decline of Euro American colonialism and the movement for civil rights in the U. S. and elsewhere. Yet ultimately, it was the differential and shifting fortunes in the global LDS missionary program itself that freed Church leaders and members from their traditional preoccupation with race and lineage; and restored to the Church the fundamental gospel teaching that the race and lineage of one's birth has no salience whatever. Potentially we are all the children of Abraham and of Abraham's God in the only sense that really matters.

⁵² Allen, "Would-Be Saints."

⁵³ For a recent official overview of growth in Africa, see the *LDS Newsroom* release of February 22, 2011: <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/mormons-africa-bright-land-hope> (accessed August 29, 2013). For more historical information, see Allen, *op. cit.*, and Alexander B. Morrison, *The Dawning of a Brighter Day: The Church in Black Africa* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990).

SACRED SECRECY AND THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Douglas J. Davies

The place and role of emotions has, in recent years, become of considerable significance across a wide variety of academic disciplines, not least in relation to religion. I have explored a variety of issues connected with this development in my volume entitled *Emotions, Identity and Religion*.¹ Its subtitle, *Hope, Reciprocity, and Otherness*, is of particular interest because it highlights the entailments of emotion, and reflects my own sense that the study of emotion is more useful as a secondary aspect of interpretation than as its primary focus, indeed, each sub-title element could, quite properly, be explored in terms of either doctrinal or social organizational elements of LDS life. While 'hope' carries its general Christian resonance it also bears its distinctive LDS hope of glory; 'reciprocity' highlights the communal base of Mormon life in which ritual is made to work for each other, while 'otherness' highlights belief in and experience of the supernatural world of ancestors and the divine. It is with each of these three elements in mind, though not spelled out at each turn, that this paper considers the topic of 'sacred secrecy' as a component of Latter-day Saint spirituality.

The two ideas framing this brief discussion are, that ritual practices help express and foster the emotions favoured by a religious group, and that such fostered emotional clusters constitute a key-core for a group's spirituality. One could, of course, also show how preferred emotions relate to the ideological or doctrinal base of a group as my former doctoral student Mauro Properzi did in his study of LDS ideas of salvation.²

So, this brief and highly exploratory paper aims to sketch some of the dynamics of the notions of secret and secrecy within LDS culture. Because much Mormonism, most especially earlier nineteenth century Mormonism draws a considerable amount of its language and thought-forms from the Bible, it is to be expected that some aspects of the LDS

¹ Douglas J. Davies, *Emotion, Identity, and Religion: Hope, Reciprocity and Otherness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

² Mauro Properzi, 'Emotions in Mormon Canonical Texts' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Durham University, 2010).

secret and secrecy cluster of ideas will also be influenced by the biblical matrix. However, I do not simply want to draw textual parallels but to ask how secrecy plays a diversity of roles in LDS life. In particular, I am interested in the stark LDS distinction between highly positive and highly negative valuations of secrecy. In shorthand terms, my focus is on secrecy and LDS society. Many might imagine that the intention in adopting this theme is to explore the nature of secret temple ritual, since that often attracts attention, especially from non-Mormon commentators. While, in smallest measure, I will allude to that area, though certainly not in terms of exposé, itself an interesting theoretical corollary, but more in terms of the dynamics of LDS spirituality at large.

BACKGROUND: POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES

Beginning with the Book of Mormon as an LDS foundational source, we do not reach far into its text before secrets and secrecy emerge in words directly echoing the biblical book of Isaiah (45: 19) -‘I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth’. Accordingly, we find in 1 Nephi 20: 16 the prophet uttering the words of the Lord God who says, ‘Come ye near unto me; I have not spoken in secret’. God and divine revelation is established as open and available to those who approach and listen, an apt exhortation for a book announcing a new divine revelation and a new prophetic figure revealing it. Later, addressing believers, 3. Nephi 13: 6 directly echoes Matthew (6: 6) with its ‘pray to thy Father who is in secret’, and its alignment of a certain sincerity of religious purpose with non-public display of prayer. These and other texts mark the dual positive and negative potential valuation of the secrecy.

Strongly negative values of secrecy are very well known in the Book of Mormon’s warnings against ‘secret combinations’. In 2 Nephi 9: 9, for example, itself a synoptically remarkable chapter on doctrine, we encounter these ‘secret combinations’ that are ‘stirred up’ in humanity by the ‘devil’ himself. Such secret combinations involve ‘murder and all manner of secret works of darkness. This chapter offers one of the Book of Mormon’s clear references to the ‘merciful plan of the great Creator’ (9: 6), ‘great plan of our God’ (9:13), often known in LDS thought as The Plan of Salvation, a plan that derives from a whole series of divine attributes including, mercy, wisdom, grace, goodness, greatness, justice, righteous, and holiness. This chapter explains that without the divine provision of resurrection, human spirits would be ever subject to the devil, even become ‘angels to a devil’ , and even ‘become devils’.(9: 9).

This is precisely where the divine plan becomes a way of escape through the resurrection that unites spirits with bodies and brings that united self before divine judgment and its ensuing afterlife.

In specific terms, we are familiar, of course, with the extensive historical comments on the notion of 'secret combinations' as indirect references to Freemasonry and the promissory-oaths of Masons; familiar, too, with a popular association of Masonry with the infamous Morgan case of supposed murder due to the exposure of Masonic secrets.³ More relevant still is the familiar theme of the influence of Masonic thought and practice on Joseph Smith during his brief period as a Mason from March 1842, and on some similarities between Masonic ritual and the rites fostered by Joseph Smith, not least the covenantal-vows of secrecy aligned with temple endowment ceremonies. In this Masonic and Temple frame we see both the strong negative and positive valuation of secrecy, and also something of the way one group regards the secrecy of another. Indeed, for some groups, secrecy constitutes one characteristic feature of boundary maintenance. In this, secrecy resembles food rules or other ethical considerations of group membership.

Within groups, secrecy also often plays a significant role in terms of polity. It is likely that this was one factor in Joseph Smith and a small circle of early leaders engaging with the idea of plural or celestial marriage before the wider church membership was informed of its importance. In such a context, secrecy is a most interesting social phenomenon, aligned with the dictum that knowledge is power. Secrecy, not simply over an idea, but over a shared practice unknown to others is all the more significant precisely because ritual performance cannot be gainsaid: joint action forms a bond. Knowledge of shared action comes to involve power within a group and over members of a group. At its worst this can involve the potential for blackmail, betrayal, and hostility while at its best it engenders communal commitment, loyalty, and friendship. Certainly, Joseph Smith experienced both ends of this secrecy continuum in his own lifetime.

At this point it may be worth adding the briefest theological gloss on secrecy in two ways. First, the very notion of 'the Messianic Secret', is one that played a role in New Testament scholarship of the twentieth

³ David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1989).

century having been introduced by the German William Wrede in 1901.⁴ Issues involved whether Jesus claimed to be the Messiah or that this was a later belief of early Christianity written back into the gospel texts, most especially Mark's Gospel. Another kind of secret has a longer and liturgical use in the preparation of candidates for baptism and their not being admitted to participation in the elements of the Holy Eucharist until after their baptism; the very use of the term 'sacred mysteries' for this rite implicates the idea of a secret that is revealed. I mention this to highlight the role of ritual action and secrecy and not simply to link secrets with ideas.

SACRED SECRETS: FORCE, POWER, AND IDENTITY

But now, in coming to the central focus of my paper, I rehearse the notion of 'sacred secrecy' briefly introduced in a previous study.⁵ There I specifically qualified secrecy in terms of the sacred both to highlight its emotional significance to those engaged with it and to differentiate it from what has been described as 'private-life secrecy'.⁶ For though LDS sacred secrecy is an aspect of private-life it is not an idiosyncratic or person-focused secret. It is not about an individual's secret that must be kept from others for the protection of the self but is a secret whose keeping is allied with a social and group force of its own, one that is not least significant within a family circle.

Here I think the intellectual George Steiner has a valuable contribution to make when he argued that words dealing with intimacy lie 'near the deep springs of language', and identified 'verbal reticence' as something aligned with 'antique energies and sources of wonder'. For him the 'dim places of feeling' are preserved by not being wasted.⁷ To speak of a 'force' also allows us to think of something that can be wasted rather than being valuably retained within the dynamics of spirituality.

⁴ William Wrede. *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Cambridge: Clarke, [1901] 1971).

⁵ Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) pp. 80–82.

⁶ Stanton K. Tefft, *Secrecy: A Cross Cultural Perspective* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1980).

⁷ Steiner, *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, [1968] 1972), pp. 104, 97, respectively. See also Davies, *Emotion, Identity, and Religion*, 225–228.

For some people, the very possession of some knowledge or of some memory or event is a power in and of itself. A person knows that he knows, and that knowledge has become part of his or her foundation of life. The anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse, for example, has developed a theoretical approach to religion grounded in a notion something like this but focused much more on a theory of traumatic experience.⁸ People traumatized in religious initiation, he argued, can be understood in terms of what he calls the imagistic mode of religion: they are driven by images of a traumatic event and have flashbulb memories of it. This imagistic mode of religion he differentiates from the doctrinal mode where teachings are formally learned in non-traumatic settings and may be passed on accordingly when teaching or evangelizing others. This is an interesting distinction and might even find some application within the LDS temple initiation of at least some, perhaps few, individuals who do report a form of traumatic experience that carries subsequent repercussion on their form of church membership and temple adherence. But such a significant topic lies beyond the scope of this paper, for here my concern lies with the role of secrecy in the retention of significant positive experience and with the fostering of the 'force' experienced in ritual.

In widely acknowledged LDS terms, the power of the event is not dissipated by loose talk or prodigal gossip. In theoretical terms I would suggest that individual relationships as well as group relationships are empowered by such experiential retention. Outsiders to such a relationship or group tend to think of secrets in terms of ideas and an anti-Mormon view would probably want to pinpoint the ideas and words that are secret; indeed they might well want to 'expose' them by speaking them in public, with numerous online web-sites doing just that. To insiders, however, I suspect that it is not the words as such but the emotional dynamic of identity allied with them that counts. Words, actions and experience cohere within ritual events and ritual memory, and that is what comprises the power of 'sacred secrecy'.

Here, Steiner's 'sources of wonder' can also be understood in a very specific way in terms of gift or reciprocity theory. When its anthropological originator, Marcel Mauss, spoke of the distinction between alienable and inalienable gifts and the relationships they prompted and

⁸ Harvey Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity* (New York: Altamira Press, 2004).

sustained he pinpointed an important aspect of human life.⁹ Later scholars, myself included, have developed these themes, and here I would highlight the potential for identifying the sacred secrecy of temple rites with the inalienable aspect of ritual participation.¹⁰ The inalienable gift cannot be sold, it is priceless. It also links a person to their core values and to the source of their values. In this sense temple endowments can be seen as amongst Mormonism's prime inalienable gifts. And, such gifts cannot be squandered. This helps explain the nature of sacred secrecy within LDS spirituality.

SPIRITUALITY – INSPIRE IMAGINATION

Let me add a note on that very last word – spirituality: for 'spirituality' is now an increasingly common concept used in the study of religious and of non-religious or secular traditions. It was also a concept high on my own list of theoretical notions when, as long ago as 1987, I entitled my first LDS focused book, *Mormon Spirituality*, and opened it with the words that I consider as offering one definition-like account of 'spirituality'.

The life of faith is a life of inspired imagination. It brings to the ordinary world a sense of profound significance as passing moments are set within an immense sweep of divine purpose.¹¹

Certainly, aspects of LDS life engage with inspired imagination not just in terms of Joseph Smith's own religious innovations and formulations but in focused forms through temple activities and, for example, in gaining patriarchal blessings. Here Steiner's 'antique energies and sources of wonder' may be tapped and fostered with 'profound significance' being brought to 'passing moments' under the frame of the 'sweep of divine purpose' otherwise identifiable as the Plan of Salvation.

My reference to patriarchal blessings here is not arbitrary but quite intentional, for they offer another domain of sacred secrecy. While often given in public, in early Mormonism they have, with time and with

⁹ Marcel Mauss *The Gift, Forms and Function of Exchange in Archaic Society*, trans. by Ian Cunnison (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, [1925] 1966).

¹⁰ E.g. Maurice Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

¹¹ Douglas J. Davies, *Mormon Spirituality, Latter-day Saints in Wales and Zion* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham Series in Theology, 1987), p. 1.

the growth of numbers of the LDS church become more private, just as the number of formal patriarchs has grown. These blessings, believed to be given by direct inspiration of God through the patriarch are personal, directed to the one individual on whose head the patriarch's hands are laid. They are not public property: they are not to be gossiped abroad, but are personal and familial. Still, I suspect that they do not belong to 'private-life secrecy' as described above but to the inalienable domain of profound significance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I want to complement this emphasis on the individual and ritual with a comment on the wider church organization that provides for it. Certainly, the patriarch's relationship with an individual brings one aspect of the church's life and its value-system of individual revelation to bear upon a single person. In a many-million membership church the provision of many patriarchs, rather than its original single church patriarch, allows for the Church to authenticate itself to individual members through their own opportunity of a gained experience of blessing.

There are, of course, other avenues that we could pursue in explicating the complex interplay of secrets and the sacred in the LDS case. We might, for example, want to take the church as a bureaucratic organization and ask whether Max Weber's analysis of bureaucracies and 'official secrets' might shed light on it and its historical development. Weber thought that, 'the concept of the 'official secret' is the specific invention of bureaucracy' (1991: 233).¹² He also thought that secrecy is found especially where 'power interests towards *the outside*' are at stake. (1991: 233).

In conclusion, however, enough has been said to show that secrecy and its opposite of openness or even of revelation, have numerous dimensions that can be appreciated from a variety of theoretical perspectives. My intention has been simply to focus on how a group fosters that individual spirituality and the inspired imagination that brings to the ordinary world a sense of profound significance as passing moments set within an immense sweep of divine purpose.

¹²f From *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, ed. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 1991), III, , pp. 650–678.

TO INSINUATE ALL IDEAS AND INEVITABLY MISLEAD
HISTORICAL JUDGMENT: EPISTEMOLOGICAL METAPHOR IN
MORMON BIOGRAPHY

Alan Goff

Yet if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheats. – John Locke

When Canadian and American surveyors were mapping the boundary between the two countries to fix the border (so the story goes), they worked their way to a high mountain valley in the West. As they surveyed toward a ranch with a tall pole flying a maple leaf flag, they realized that the home would fall on the southern side of the border. With some trepidation they knocked on the door of the house and told the old rancher that his house was on the American, not the Canadian, side of the border. To their surprise he joyfully embraced them and proclaimed, ‘That’s good news. I don’t think I could have endured another of those Canadian winters’. Real changes are underway not only in history but within all academic disciplines. Those transformations usually go under the name of postmodernism, but they reflect a broader discontent with beliefs of modernity that have dominated intellectual analysis for hundreds of years. The old verities that used to guide the historical profession are no longer capable of performing that task; these alterations are not just changes in words and theories (although words have their impact) but are foundational revisions that affect events on the ground. Historiography (the story of how historians explain their approach to the past) is being revolutionized in a way that is quite literally taking the discipline of history back to its own past.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HISTORY

Whether one traces the beginnings of historical writing to the biblical writers or to Greek historians such as Herodotus or Thucydides, history has always been closely aligned with both literature and rhetoric.

Through the classical period and the Middle Ages rhetoric still served as the trunk with history and literature as two ramifying immediate relatives off that tree. In the modern period as the tremendous prestige of the natural sciences increased because of the advances wrought by science and technology, historians began to lament the rhetorical and literary alignment of history. First came changes in epistemology as Locke, the philosophes, Hume, and others proposed that empirical methodologies are the only valid ways to acquire knowledge. In the decades following the 1830s, Auguste Comte extended Enlightenment rationality, proposing that we didn't need religion and metaphysics anymore but humans had passed into a new adult age in which science was the only appropriate way to gain knowledge and build society. This philosophy became known as positivism. As positivism developed, it accumulated ideas that weren't part of Comte's epistemology (knowledge must be value free, one must clear one's mind of preconceptions, the researcher must be objective and free of all particularity). When this positivism was combined with von Ranke's archivally-oriented method in the 1880s at the same moment historians were emphasizing professionalism and method, historians wanted to divorce the discipline from its literary and rhetorical roots.

The twentieth century saw historians emphasizing more insistently the scientific foundations of the field. Scientific history had finally arrived, but was at the same time a delusion. One attitude toward the past is that held by the 'founders of professional history in the United States'. Noll variously calls this position positivistic, scientific, or scientific. For this version of history, knowledge of the past is derived from empirical and verificationist procedures adopted from the natural sciences. It was held by H. T. Buckle in England and 'flourished in America from the beginning of modern university study in the 1870s through the First World War as historians routinely promoted the idea that history should be a strictly empirical science'. George Burton Adams exemplified this philosophy of history in his 1908 American Historical Association Presidential Address when he exhorted historians to leave philosophy of history to those unscientific humanistic fields: 'Questions concerning "the philosophy of history" were wisely left to "poets, philosophers, and theologians"'.¹ The historian should restrict himself to facts.

¹ Mark Noll, 'Traditional Christianity and the Possibility of Historical Knowledge', in *Religious Advocacy and American History*, ed. Bruce Kuklick and D. G. Hart (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 37.

During the twentieth century positivism morphed into new shape and dominated all disciplines under the banner of Logical Positivism (which later changed its name to Logical Empiricism). The main idea of positivism is that any assertion that isn't either synthetic (that is, true by definition—such as 'a bachelor is an unmarried man') or based on empirically verifiable evidence is nonsense, non-sense, or nonsensory—worthless as far as producing true knowledge. But such a position discards religion, ethics, aesthetics, and many other approaches as incapable of producing knowledge or truth. Increasingly, this variety of positivism came under attack since the 1960s and has been almost totally abandoned in philosophy, yet positivism lingers not just as the dominant common sense in history, political science, economics, and virtually every other field of knowledge (philosophy is perhaps the one exception because most philosophers know that positivism has been too thoroughly undermined) and in quotidian society's common sense also. Most researchers don't study the philosophy of their disciplines (philosophy of history or its watered down version historiography, literary theory, philosophy of science, philosophy of the social sciences, anthropological theory, etc.) and aren't aware of the distance between their post-positivistic disciplinary philosophy and the commonsensical positivistic notions prevalent among practitioners. Positivism came under siege in the 1960s, just as the New Mormon History adopted positivistic and objectivistic claims to assert that this new approach to Mormon history produces more valid interpretation of the past than those preceding it. All of academic history follows the Freudian storyline of one generation trying to overthrow the previous generation's work to displace the father figure.

During the course of the twentieth century, historians strove to write in the plain style, free of all metaphorical adornment, for they viewed rhetoric and tropes as just that, decoration after the cake was already baked—likely to distract historians from producing objective history but not built into the substance of history. The most extreme defenders of empiricism, as the Locke epigram notes, viewed metaphor and rhetoric as deceptive uses of language likely to confound and mislead. Any use of literary elements obstructs the historian rather than helping understanding of the past. History was to be empirically based and scientific, not rhetorically based and literary.

Criticisms of positivism were late coming to historiography and only began to penetrate Mormon historiography in the 1990s; all varieties of the objectivity ideal were discarded by historians familiar with discussions about positivism, narrativity, and objectivity in philosophy,

literary criticism, anthropology, and other fields. First Hayden White (applying high modernity—structuralism, not post structuralism or post-modernism until the late 1980s) asserted in the 1970s that all history writing is essentially a poetic act and that very little separates fiction writing and history writing. Increasingly sophisticated historians developed White's ideas: Hans Kellner, Frank Ankersmit, Jerzy Topolski, Jörn Rüsen, and Stephen Bann, to name a few. Narrative theorists have emphasized during this time that all storytelling is of a piece, and historians are storytellers. Fiction writers and historians use the same narrative techniques to portray reality, to achieve a reality effect; this reality effect is a rhetorical manoeuvre, so the historian must conceal from him or herself and the reader the rhetorical tools used to make it appear that the historian is effaced. The Great Divorce between literature and history that became the conventional wisdom in nineteenth century historians' minds is now in the process of being reversed. The reconciled couple is getting together for a Great Reunion that may prove as permanent as intellectual history might suggest is possible.

METAPHOR DON'T GET NO RESPECT

From Plato and Aristotle to Locke and Hobbes, metaphor has been viewed as parasitic, a hindrance to genuine knowledge. The denigration of metaphor was strongest in the modern period in 'that [strain of philosophy] running from British empiricism through Vienna positivism, which has denied to metaphors and their study any philosophical seriousness of the first order'.² One strain of modernity asserted that researchers could do without metaphysics; we call this variety of modern thought positivism; the following assertion is quite common among historians who believe they only do empirical work, not philosophical analysis:

I am convinced that reality has dimensions far transcending human capacities to ascertain. Perhaps those dimensions impinge on human activity. It may even be, as Richard Lovelace has said, that history, viewed without allowance for spiritual forces, "is as confusing as a football game in which half the players are invisible." If those forces are discernible at all, though, the discernment must come through private intuitions, or the vision of prophets, or the inspiration of poets, of

² Ted Cohen, 'Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy', in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 1.

the speculations of metaphysicians. They are not discernible through the tools of historians, strictly speaking, whose more modest task is to deal with things visible. Prophets or metaphysicians may, of course, point to matters of history. However, they are not by that motion acting essentially as historians, but as something else.³

All historians are also metaphysicians, but most have never performed the theoretical work of uncovering their taken-for-granted positivism. Under the influence of positivism, historians and other researchers believed they no longer needed metaphysics but could comprehend reality as it really was without the intervention of metaphysical notions that philosophy traditionally calls epistemologies, ontologies, and views of human nature. Hilary Putnam notes that positivists have dismissed these metaphysical ideas as nonsense: 'According to positivists themselves, metaphysical sentences are cognitively meaningless for the same reason as ethical sentences: they are 'unverifiable in principle.' (So are poetic sentences, among others.)' Putnam then cites Vivian Walsh summarizing the positivistic position: to say that murder is wrong is not cognitively meaningful because it is neither empirically verifiable nor synthetic. 'The person who wished to make the moral judgement would not accept this, and was told that the disputed utterance was a "pseudo-proposition" like those of poets, theologians and metaphysicians'.⁴ Epistemologies— notions about how knowledge or truth is generated—aren't derived empirically, so the researcher must begin with metaphysical notions (even the idea that valid knowledge is derived only from empirical observation is a metaphysical assertion that can have no empirical basis). So also are ontologies—ideas about what is ultimate reality—and views of human nature, from which we derive our political and social prescriptions—metaphysical concepts that generate the interpretations of texts and the past that seem so self-evident to the researcher because he or she takes the metaphysical concepts for granted. We are all metaphysicians because we all accept some, often uncritical, epistemology and ontology.

³ Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. xvi–xvii.

⁴ Hilary Putnam, 'Objectivity and the Science-Ethics Debate', in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 143.

The idea empiricists in the modern period have advanced that we can have direct access to uninterrupted facts itself depends on an epistemology, so also the notion that metaphor distracts from true knowledge, and it largely has been the empiricist/positivist strain of modernity that has denied figuration any epistemological status or '(1) any capacity to contain or transmit knowledge; (2) any direct connection with facts; or (3) any genuine meaning. In what seems to me a peripheral consequence of the move away from classical positivism, this opinion about metaphor has been abandoned, and it is becoming common—almost customary—to credit metaphors with all three virtues'.⁵ Fortunately, positivism has also declined in historiography in the last half of the twentieth century, and now in the historical field and virtually every other intellectual discipline metaphor is no longer viewed as a barrier to knowledge but as an essential foundation to understanding the past.

Metaphor, or figuration, can't be dispensed with. Metaphors can narrow or widen our vision and the explanations we permit of a phenomenon. The better the metaphor, the deeper our understanding of the world: 'Better metaphors are depth-metaphors conveying true meaning and true cognitive content'. Impoverished tropes restrict understanding but 'depth-metaphors bring us closer to reality, not by narrowing things down but by opening things up'.⁶ The positivistic historian may cringe to know that he or she inevitably uses metaphor to understand the past, but such as reluctance doesn't change the necessity.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IN THE NEW MORMON HISTORY

In the 1960s—just as the positivistic orientation in American historiography that emphasized 'scientific', 'objective', "disinterested", 'detached' history free of ideology, particularity, and bias was beginning to crumble—the New Mormon History emerged and adopted the claims that were soon to be abandoned in the larger field of historiography. Receiving graduate degrees and being trained with a professionalizing ethic, these New Mormon Historians articulated their break with the previous version of Mormon history by emphasizing their detachment from ideology and freedom from ideological entanglements. One of the elements Paul Edwards claims New Mormon Historians share (that is, what makes them New Mormon Historians) is that they have broad training from a

⁵ Cohen, 'Metaphor', p. 3.

⁶ Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Paradise Misland: How We Lost Heaven and How We Can Regain It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 15.

number of fields, and therefore, 'very importantly, they are not bringing in a lot of preconceived ideas from their graduate professors'. Of these New Mormon Historians, according to Edwards, most 'have been educated in historical methodology at universities in America and in Europe which support the Germanic concepts of objective history'.⁷ Space won't permit here a full development of the many positivistic claims made by those who advocate the New Mormon History, but a few can be detailed here. Jim Clayton asserts against Louis Midgley's criticisms of objectivity:

This is not to say that the end justifies the means, but that religious history should be one-sided rather than neutral, immediately and directly faith-promoting rather than objective, and concerned with short-term consequences for orthodoxy more than long-term accumulations of wisdom.

Deliberately taking a one-sided approach to history violates, in my judgment, the very essence of the historical craft, which emphasizes honesty, objectivity, and a willingness to tell the truth. Being fair to all sides, being suspicious of religious cant, partisan polemic, and propaganda are values that are at the very heart of historical craftsmanship. I am not suggesting that historians should not have a point of view or that historians can ever achieve total objectivity.⁸

Even with the recognition that total objectivity is impossible, the aspiration to a more chastened partial or functional objectivity is harmful because it conceals from the historian his or her own ideological commitments. Clayton continues to assert that 'Subservience to a particular religion is therefore incompatible with honest inquiry, whether by historians or by anyone else'.⁹ These old commonplaces of positivism continue to be asserted while at the same time New Mormon Historians vehemently deny that they are positivists. Commitment to positivism is just an alternative version of commitment to a religion.

The closest an advocate of the New Mormon History has come to explicitly making a sharp distinction between history and literature based on a positivistic distinction has been Brent Metcalfe's assertion that

⁷ Paul M. Edwards, 'The New Mormon History', *Saints' Herald*, 133, no. 11 (November 1986), p. 14.

⁸ James L. Clayton, 'Does History Undermine Faith?' *Sunstone*, 7, no. 1 (March–April 1982), p. 34.

⁹ Clayton, 'Does', p. 34.

if the Book of Mormon exhibits literary features, it can't at the same time be a historical text. Brent Metcalfe believes that any literary element in a story negates its historical quality: 'Everything we know about the Jaredite ruler bears an analogue to the corrupt Nephite king. These mirrorings suggest that one narrative may depend on the other, and that only one, or perhaps neither, represents a factual account of historical events'. Metcalfe repeats this notion, apparently unaware that it is a positivistic assertion: 'Still, allowing for a literary device, questions regarding historicity remain since it is possible that Noah and Riplakish were actually monogamists but were portrayed as polygamists to accentuate their debauchery. If Noah and Riplakish existed anciently, the historicity of every detail of their biographical sketches is nonetheless uncertain'.¹⁰ Literary features are evidence of lack of historicity to a positivist. Similarly, Fawn Brodie in her biography of Joseph Smith asserts that Joseph Smith's mind couldn't distinguish between fiction and history the way her more disciplined mind can: 'It should not be forgotten, however, that for Joseph's vigorous and completely undisciplined imagination the line between truth and fiction was always blurred'.¹¹ Similarly, in more recent biography of Joseph Smith, Dan Vogel believes he can separate out the deceptive from the real in the Book of Mormon Story of Nephi and Laban:

The predicament in which Nephi found himself with his brothers and Zoram—momentarily caught between the false perceptions of his brothers and the true perception of Zoram—is similar to the moral dilemma Joseph created for himself. He, too, was caught between his assumed role as translator and prophet and the consequences of the truth. By putting on a false identity, he was able to advance God's will as well as reunite his family and obtain for himself the feeling of spirituality he wanted; without the subterfuge, his only remaining options were force and coercion.¹²

¹⁰ Brent Lee. Metcalfe, 'Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 26, no. 3 (Fall 1993), pp. 170–71.

¹¹ Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd edn (New York: Knopf, 1982), p. 84.

¹² Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), p. 134.

For Vogel, Smith is using fiction to make some true claim about the world. 'Perhaps, as a hint of self-perception it reflects Smith's belief that one could take on the role of a prophet and use the familiar language of scripture and yet feel that one is speaking the truth'.¹³ Vogel believes, like Brodie, he can separate the ontologically authentic material from the fictional claims Smith advanced.

One of the most important transformations in historiography, as positivism has expired among its more sophisticated theorists, is the recognition that history is much like literature in the construction of narrative.

The work of the historian and the work of the storyteller are not as far apart as positivism (which ignores the narrative dimension of historiography) would like to believe. There is more fiction in history than the classic historian will admit. In order to fashion a plot (from the Latin *fingere* , which has the same root as fiction), the historian works with fictional elements.¹⁴

A danger exists in too simply collapsing history into fiction, but a complex understanding of the relationship between the two must recognize that if one excluded the fictive elements in the writing of history, one would no longer have history. The return of literature to reside at the very heart of the historical enterprise requires a conversion in the way we think about the terms.

THE METAPHORICAL FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE

I live on the northern edge of the Sonoran Desert. Occasionally, especially during El Niño winters when the rain showers are spaced just right about two or three weeks apart, the Sonoran Desert will blossom with cactus flowers, poppies, lupine, marigold, and a range of other wildflowers. Similarly, we have lived in an intellectual desert about metaphor being led by guides such as Locke and the positivists. Only since the late 1970s have we seen the desert bloom with studies on metaphor. The overwhelming tenor of these inquiries is that metaphor is not merely ornamental in that they can be cut off the argument without any loss, but

¹³ Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 134.

¹⁴ Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 12.

metaphor is instead fundamental and foundational for our understanding. ‘You don’t have a choice as to whether to think metaphorically. Because metaphorical maps are part of our brains, we will think and speak metaphorically whether we want to or not. Since the mechanism of metaphor is largely unconscious, we will think and speak metaphorically, whether we know it or not’. The choice is not between using metaphors epistemologically or not but between being critically aware of our metaphors or being gullible and uncritical.¹⁵

Literary critics (I, myself, am a literary critic) have a natural interest in the possibility that literary tropes are somehow essential to human understanding, but the consequences are widespread for psychology, sociology, history, and every other field that articulates, or is founded on, an epistemology (that is, for all disciplines) and every discipline that uses language to express its ideas. Don Browning and Terry Cooper refer to foundational metaphors or metaphors of ultimacy, ones that are necessary to generate knowledge.”

Uncovering the foundational metaphors of any system of thought, including a psychological system, frequently entails searching for them in the nooks, crannies, and margins of a psychologist’s thinking or writing. For here, in these less formal precincts, the psychologist often reveals certain assumptions or postulates that are required to complete and make sense of the more formal and public aspects of his or her work. Psychologists, like everyone else, need to live in a unified world. . . . These more private worldviews are often expressed by the metaphors that they use, the unsaid implications of their sentences or lines of reasoning, and the general ethos and tone conveyed in their writings.¹⁶

Our metaphors are like lenses through which we see and understand the world—lenses without which we cannot see. When we understand tropes as necessary for understanding, metaphor is no longer just the domain of literary critics and orators but of all who understand, even historians.

Since the 1950s historians began shifting from the identification of their discipline with the sciences and transferred to the humanistic camp instead. ‘From the late sixties onward historians who considered

¹⁵ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003 [1983]), p. 257.

¹⁶ Don S. Browning and Terry D. Cooper, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), p. 72.

themselves social scientists rather than humanists were often among those who most forcefully distanced themselves from some of the key elements in the older positivistic and empiricist position' that dominated the historical profession to that point.¹⁷ The most radical of those rejecting the scientific, positivistic, objectivistic synthesis was Hayden White in his 'insistence that history was pre-eminently a branch of literature'. White insisted that neither method nor objectivity can deliver scientific history. Instead, 'it was the historian's poetic consciousness which was decisive'.¹⁸ In the eyes of traditionalist positivistic historians, 'the most sacred boundary of all was that between history and fiction, and nothing outraged historians more than White's blurring of that dividing line'.¹⁹ For White, all historical understanding of the past is essentially poetic and that poetic element is inextricably linked with ideological elements. White's approach is tropological, emphasizing the metaphors by which classical historians have constructed their interpretations of the past.

White is a working historian, but philosophers of history also emphasize that historians have only recently been made aware of this essentially literary act that historians perform. For the century-and-a-half during which historiography operated under scientific aspirations historians forgot the literary aspects of their writing and understanding. 'In the course of this process, the rhetoric and literary structure became more and more overlooked and suppressed'. But now historians are once again remembering and exploring this connection to fiction²⁰ and that re-examination is having profound impact on historiography. Hayden White began his attack on scientific history in the 1970s from within high modernism—structuralism, drawing upon Northrop Frye's literary criticism. White has long since made the passage across the border to postmodernism. White collapses the distinction between fictional stories and historical stories. 'All stories are fictions. Which means, of course, that they can be true only in a metaphorical sense and in the sense in

¹⁷ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 597.

¹⁸ Novick, *That Noble*, 599.

¹⁹ Novick, *That Noble*, 600.

²⁰ Jörn Rüsen, interviewed in Ewa Domanska, *Encounters: Philosophy of History after Postmodernism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), pp. 146–147.

which a figure of speech can be true'.²¹ The historian transforms the archival material in narrative form and its truth is thereafter figurative. 'The tropological theory of language, then, threatens history's centuries-long claim to deal in facts and therewith its status as an empirical discipline'.²² This approach doesn't deny truth, but it does contradict a positivistic notion of truth. One could add to Kant's transcendental aesthetic the tropological category of the mind. 'Tropological theory . . . appears to undermine the legitimacy of the claims to truth of the traditional mode of historical discourse, the narrative'.²³ The resulting narrative appears to be invented, not found. But these problems are dissolved if the historian relinquishes positivistic and empiricist theories of truth that can no longer garner theoretical support. For White figurative historical accounts are true not only because all historical narratives are tropological, but also because 'figurative language can be said to refer to reality quite as faithfully and much more effectively than any putatively literalist idiom or mode of discourse might do'. The binary opposition between metaphorical and literal no longer holds because each thoroughly penetrates the other.²⁴

History has a huge stake in these claims about human understanding's being ineluctably tropological because history has ignored the claims for so long that a huge gap has opened between what most historians recognize to be the case about historical interpretation and what tropological theory or other varieties of contemporary historiography assert.

METAPHOR IN JOSEPH SMITH BIOGRAPHY

Hayden White makes a second main point: all historical accounts are ideological—inevitably, ineluctably, inexorably. Our reasons for preferring one historical conclusion over another are primarily aesthetic and ideological rather than logical or evidentiary. In fact, the ideological commitment is inextricably bound up in the poetic. The historical tropes are often the point where ideological elements are inserted into the account without argumentation or support; the metaphor itself carries the argument. Following White's exploration of the metaphoric

²¹ Hayden White, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 9.

²² White, *Figural*, p. 15.

²³ White, *Figural*, p. 16.

²⁴ White, *Figural*, p. vii.

of history Richard Vann notes tropes fundamentally shape the historical narrative by excluding some possibilities and enabling others: 'Metaphors—it is not clear whether the historian should use one master metaphor or several—thus establish relevance and justify selectivity; and would be sufficiently powerful to inform an entire historical work'.²⁵ Mormon biography is a good case study for the influence of tropes on historical interpretation because the historical issues are disputed and the ideological gaps between biographers are so great.

FAWN BRODIE'S *NO MAN KNOWS MY HISTORY*

Some historians use one overarching metaphor throughout the account to make sense of the story, to provide narrative coherence and structural continuity. Most use a series of figurative images to serve local needs in the narrative. Among the latter group are those biographers or historians who often return to preferred metaphors. Fawn Brodie often resorts to three types of metaphors in her biography of Joseph Smith: psychological metaphors about the state of the subject's mental world (it is later in her more explicitly psychobiographical works—such as the Nixon biography—that Brodie more consistently uses the child-is-father-to-the-man trope; Brodie uses this figure that finds in childhood events typological prefiguration of adult actions in her more Freudian 1982 Supplement but infrequently in the 1945 version of the biography) literary metaphors (Brodie was not trained as a historian but—both studying for her B.A. at Weber College and her M.A. at the University of Chicago—as a literary critic or literature teacher) use simile or metaphor to compare Mormon scripture to novels, discuss symbolism, or relate how Smith uses fictional methods to build a narrative dramatic, imaginative, or acting metaphors to demonstrate how Smith fabricated a prophetic role or persona for himself.

These epistemological metaphors in Brodie's work are used throughout her Joseph Smith biography.

All three of these metaphors are used on the facing pages 84 and 85 in the revised edition of Brodie's biography. Assured that Joseph Smith consciously lied in the creation of the Book of Mormon, asserting it was an ancient document he found and translated, Brodie uses psychological metaphors. The larger conceptual background of Brodie's

²⁵ Richard T. Vann, 'Turning Linguistic: History and Theory and *History and Theory*, 1960–1975', in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 63.

assertions regarding the Book of Mormon and historiography is this: Brodie applies a positivistic distinction between history and fiction in order to downplay the claims of the Mormon scripture. Brodie asserts regarding Smith's imaginative capacities 'that for Joseph's vigorous and completely undisciplined imagination the line between truth and fiction was always blurred'.²⁶ The boundary between history and fiction in pre-modern societies such as the narratives given us by African folklore and oral literature, as Irele notes, 'in which the boundary between history and fiction is, for all intents and purposes, non-existent, or, indeed, inconceivable, a boundary that, when all is said and done, is ultimately a view of the analyzing, positivist mind intent on ascribing truth value to one and withholding it from the other'.²⁷ Contemporary philosophical, literary critical, and historiographical analysis agrees that the boundary between history and fiction is always and inevitably blurred (even for those with 20/20 vision, to use a common metaphor of sight that Brodie often resorts to²⁸ and Richard Rorty has analyzed in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*). So Brodie is applying a metaphor about blurring boundaries selectively to Smith in order to advance an ideological program. It is a positivistic fantasy that history is not imaginative:

This makes history, by definition, an over plotted genre, even outrageously so for one claiming a higher degree of verisimilitude than fiction. History's reality has no room for contingency, although we acknowledge that reality untouched by interpretation is nothing but. No amount of pontificating about facts and evidence, research, archives, or scientific methods can get around the central fictionality of history, which is its unrelenting meaningfulness. Nothing could be more unreal, more flagrantly fictional, or more necessary.²⁹

Brodie's trope of blurred lines between imagination and reality, fiction and history lead into her psychological metaphor about deception and mental balance. Without archival or any other evidence for what Smith thought on this point, Brodie nevertheless speculates about the impact of his 'deception': 'It is doubtful if he ever escaped the memory of the

²⁶ Brodie, *No Man*, p. 84.

²⁷ F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 102.

²⁸ Brodie, *No Man*, pp. 89, 101, 128, 405.

²⁹ Nancy F. Partner, 'Making Up Lost Time: Writing on the Writing of History', *Speculum*, 61, no. 1 (1986), p. 102.

conscious artifice that went into the Book of Mormon, but its phenomenal success must have stifled any troublesome qualms. And at an early period he seems to have reached an inner equilibrium that permitted him to pursue his career with a highly compensated but nevertheless very real sincerity. Certainly a persisting consciousness of guilt over the cunning and deception with which his prophetic career was launched would eventually have destroyed him'.³⁰ The metaphors here advance the speculation so Brodie can assume artifice or deceit in the absence of historical evidence. She must use artifice to produce a narrative about psychological balance by intuiting a state of mind and conscience.

Brodie also commonly uses literary metaphors to advance her understanding of Smith's mind and life. She tells a story she admits isn't true, is apocryphal: a story about a deceiver who claimed to walk on water but had built a wooden platform beneath the surface to walk on. But before being demonstrated, some neighbourhood pranksters had removed some planks and the prevaricator almost drowned. This story migrated from its original context to be told about Joseph Smith. 'Baseless though this story may be, it is nonetheless symbolic'.³¹ This is a curious notion that a story clearly manufactured and reported to diminish Smith's credibility is used to symbolically reveal the real mental life of a historical figure although it is false. The irony in addition to the ideology is that on the very same page that a fictional story about Smith is nevertheless asserted to be symbolically revealing and truthful, Brodie also insists that the Mormon prophet blurred 'the line between truth and fiction', as does Brodie in the act of asserting the distinction. Symbolism isn't solely a literary feature (for everyday life is full of symbolism) nor is the imagination ever present from historical writing, but these two facing pages of biography return so often to literary language to describe the events of Joseph Smith's religious life.

The psychological equilibrium Brodie will discuss in just a few paragraphs is foreshadowed with assertions about 'inner turmoil'. Brodie claims Smith soon developed from being a confidence man to being a prophet. Because Brodie has no historical evidence, she must use instead omniscient narration speculation: 'it is not easy to trace the steps by which Joseph assumed this role. Apparently he slipped into it with ease, without the inner turmoil that preceded the spiritual fervour of so many

³⁰ Brodie, *No Man*, pp. 84–85.

³¹ Brodie, *No Man*, p. 84.

of the great religious figures of the past'.³² That word *apparently* Brodie uses to drop this speculation into the argument without a diary entry, a witness who reported his discussion of the matter, or any of the evidence historians usually required to report a person's thoughts. Becoming a prophet was a matter of assuming the role and acting like one and moved Smith from 'inner turmoil' to 'inner equilibrium.' Only an omniscient narrator and God can divine the mind with non-existent textual evidence. Brodie is using a combination of literary and dramatic tropes to generate a particular conjectural thought process for her narrative.

After the return to mental balance that Brodie posits Smith must eventually have acquired after his frauds, she returns to discussion of his dramatic role and the audience who accepted that persona: 'Joseph's great dramatic talent found its first outlet in the cabalistic ritual of rural wizardry, then in the hocus-pocus of the Gold Bible mystery, and finally in the exacting and apparently immensely satisfying role of prophet of God. His talent, like that of many dramatic artists, was emotional rather than intellectual and was free from the tempering influence that a more critical audience would have exercised on it'.³³ The literary and dramatic tropes—combined with speculation about Smith's thought processes as if the biographer can read the distinction between emotional and intellectual free of archival evidence—permit Brodie to assemble an argument without the usual documentation and evidence historians are customarily required to produce.

RICHARD BUSHMAN'S *ROUGH STONE ROLLING*

A reader could hardly imagine a greater ideological chasm than that between Fawn Brodie and Richard Bushman. Brodie dismissed Smith's claims, the Book of Mormon, and the ideas propounded by Joseph Smith; Bushman accepts and believes in them and this belief informs his historical work just as much as Brodie's ideological commitments inform her interpretations. Her training in literature makes one suspect that she delves into historical explanation in much the same way a novelist might explore a character's thought by using limited (or perhaps even unlimited) omniscient narration. As an example of Brodie's omniscient narration, read how she develops the workings of Smith's mind using metaphors of moulding shapes and catechizing minds. His

³² Brodie, *No Man*, p. 84.

³³ Brodie, *No Man*, p. 85.

opportunistic use of Calvinism or Arminianism, among other concepts, shows

the facility with which profound theological arguments were handled is evidence of the unusual plasticity of Joseph's mind. But this facility was entirely verbal. The essence of the great spiritual and moral truths with which he dealt so agilely did not penetrate into his consciousness. Had it done so, there would have been no book. He knew these truths as intimately as a bright child knows his catechism, but his use of them was utterly opportunistic. The theology of the Book of Mormon, like its anthropology, was only a potpourri.³⁴

This is fairly subtle mind reading to know that Smith could use these ideas—and even use them subtly—without understanding them or even considering them. These ideas were verbal only, penetrating his words but not his thoughts. The ideas are profound and the Book of Mormon handles them agilely, but these are only surface uses because Smith didn't understand them. Brodie's use of metaphors works against each other, for how can you compliment someone for his profound use of deep ideas but castigate the thinker for throwing them off too facilely? If the only evidence Brodie has for this habit of mind is what she includes in her book, then her forays into mind reading are more seerlike than any religious figure's.

Bushman grants more influence to Joseph Smith's environment (especially his use of magic) than most Mormons would be comfortable with. For example, Bushman posits that the translation of the Book of Mormon was a natural development from Smith's treasure seeking activities: 'The boy who gazed into stones and saw treasure grew up to become a translator who looked in a stone and saw words'.³⁵ Just before this passage, Bushman incorporates one of his recurrent metaphors to understand Smith, the figure of prophetic evolution. Bushman posits that Book of Mormon translation 'evolved naturally out of his earlier treasure-seeking'.³⁶ This evolution from a spiritual activity that we recoil from (treasure hunting and other forms of magic) to one that Mormons celebrate (translation of ancient texts by the power of God) seems like an odd trajectory, but one that Bushman asks his reader to consider.

³⁴ Brodie, *No Man*, p. 70.

³⁵ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), p. 73.

³⁶ Bushman, *Joseph*, pp. 72–73.

Bushman posits that magical pursuits as a youth grew into prophetic activity as an adult. In this transformation, the year 1828 is crucial, for he took possession of the plates and beginning to translate; this year 'is a turning point in Joseph Smith's development'.³⁷ This trope of evolution to a higher form is crucial to Bushman's reconciliation of the magic enterprises with the prophetic roles. No longer 'entangled with the money-diggers' the 'treasure-seeking language has disappeared' for now Joseph Smith had 'found his prophetic voice'. The Mormon scripture had given 'language [that] was biblical rather than occult'.³⁸

Notice how much more restrained Bushman is in projecting his own understanding of Smith's mind than is Brodie, but he still uses psychological tools in this evolution of the subject from village scrier to prophet of God. 'With Joseph's realization of himself as a prophet, the rearrangement of memory began. When Joseph tells his history from 1828 on, his search for treasure as a boy became an irrelevant diversion of his youth. Treasure-seeking did not lead to the person he had become. His true history began with his search for a church and his plea for forgiveness'.³⁹ Bushman posits that Smith himself didn't see how an apprenticeship in magic had prepared Smith to be a seer: 'Magic had played its part and now could be cast aside'.⁴⁰

This notion of a prophetic identity not being established by God but by the particular evolution of the human's personality (perhaps under divine influence) is no doubt a new way to think about prophecy for most Mormons. But Bushman quite often refers to this progression concept: 'At a time when Joseph's prophetic identity was jelling . . .'⁴¹ is one example. Another time Bushman sees development of prophetic identity when Smith introduced the concept of priesthood (so the Book of Mormon experience was not the only crucial tipping point in prophetic development): Joseph Smith might have at first introduced a confused notion of priesthood because 'Joseph could no more grasp its meaning than he comprehended the full significance of the First Vision as a teenager. Although he understood such Church offices as teacher and elder, it took time to comprehend that the powers of priesthood were included

³⁷ Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 69.

³⁸ Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 69.

³⁹ Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 69.

⁴⁰ Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 69.

⁴¹ Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 66.

in the authority that went with those offices'.⁴² Smith's entire prophetic career is one of progression to higher and unexpected levels of thought and organization for "revelation overturned old ideas and was forever evolving"⁴³

One of Bushman's most common metaphors is the figure of divergence. Joseph Smith appears to conform to his own environment at first blush, but he and his intellectual products swerve radically from expectations. 'The accounts of the neighbors picture an unambitious, uneducated, treasure-seeking Joseph, who had never written anything and is not known to read anything but the Bible and perhaps the newspaper. None of the neighbors noted signs of learning or intellectual account for the disjuncture between the *Book of Mormon's* complexity and Joseph's history as an uneducated rural visionary'.⁴⁴ Between what an uneducated frontier rustic could be expected to produce and the writing in the *Book of Mormon* is a vast chasm.

The divergence between the anticipated Joseph Smith and the reality that emerges is a radical departure for 'blending was an issue for Joseph. His whole life divided between the ordinary and the strange. At times he appeared to be two persons. We can hardly recognize Joe Smith, the ignoramus and schemer of the Palmyra neighbors, in the writings of Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer. The writings and person seem to have lived in separate worlds'.⁴⁵ The same holds for other scripture produced by Smith because antebellum America saw a series of writers producing epics of scope and ambition, but Joseph Smith 'stepped out of his own time into antiquity in search of the origins of civilization'.⁴⁶ Where Brodie sees a common con man who produced wondrous but explicable writings and institutions, Bushman finds between the environment that produced Joseph Smith and the resulting worlds of scripture and prophecy a gap unbridgeable by any human engineering.

DAN VOGEL'S *THE MAKING OF A PROPHET*

Nowhere in Mormon biography is the ideological saturation of tropes more evident than in Dan Vogel's work. Like other biographers

⁴² Bushman, *Joseph*, pp. 158–59.

⁴³ Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 172.

⁴⁴ Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 72.

⁴⁵ Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 45.

⁴⁶ Bushman, *Joseph*, p. 290.

and most historians, Vogel uses metaphors to solve local problems of understanding. But he also returns consistently to the following preferred figurations: psychological metaphors—Vogel is doing psychobiography, so it is natural for him to use psychological metaphors, especially in his introduction and when he explicitly refers to psychological tools such as family systems theory, internal and external conflict, or stream of consciousness notions. Vogel notes that ‘in writing this biography, I did not want to provide a simple chronological narrative of Smith’s early life. Rather, I intended to consider the psychological implications of Smith’s early actions and beliefs and get as close to the man as possible’. This proximity trope, that one can get closer to the historical figure by using extensive psychological speculation about what the subject might have thought, is dubious. Guesswork is guesswork, especially when the psychobiographer has no psychological and or clinical training to restrain the ideological tendencies that can overtake the interpretation when psychological conjecture is driven by deep emotional needs. But these psychological figures of speech permit Vogel to engage in broad and uncontrolled speculation that goes far beyond historical evidence. Vogel continues equating interpretive biography with speculation: ‘Thus I have written an interpretive biography of an emotional and intellectual life. I will occasionally use qualifying verbs and adverbs to indicate where my analysis is speculative or conjectural, but my overall discussion and conclusions are firmly grounded in the primary source documents’.⁴⁷ Vogel’s resort to psychological speculation is anything but occasional; it is constant, overwhelming, and ideologically driven; the conjecture is often unmarked by a *maybe*, a *perhaps*, an *if*, a *probably*, or some other indicator of inference.⁴⁸ Addicts in denial view their use of drugs also to be occasional, under control.

⁴⁷ Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), p. xvii.

⁴⁸ For example, when Smith falls from exhaustion after his night-long interviews with Moroni, ‘it was here, midway between his father in the field and his mother in the house that Joseph decided to make his midnight musing reality. The transformation had not come easily. Joseph had suffered a great deal of anguish and struggle. He hesitated, knowing that he would be plunged into deception and fantasy but saw it as the only way’ (Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 45). It is through imaginative guessing that Vogel would know about anguish, about his thoughts ‘here, midway’, about the difficulty of this decision, about the consideration concerning deception and fantasy. These details provide a reality effect, but the reader must recognize them as Vogel’s thoughts, not Smith’s.

Vogel often uses acting tropes because he rejects Smith's claims to ontological status as a prophet called by God; Vogel's metaphysics rejects real divine intervention to raise common people to the level of prophet, so Vogel labels Smith's assertions to be a psychological role constructed by the first Mormon. The prophetic status is a role or a persona Smith put on like a costume. Similar to dramatic-role tropes are Vogel's literary tropes about narrative stance, about psychological alter egos much like the ones we might find in Conrad, and metaphors about storytelling.

Like Vogel's psychological analysis, Vogel's use of literary and dramatic terms betrays a superficial exposure to literary theory. For example, Vogel skates along the surface of Book of Mormon narrative without revealing its literary depth and profundity in order to use terminology such as flat characters and alter egos to produce a one-dimensional

This passage is both conjectural and speculative, yet it has no 'qualifying verbs or adverbs' marking it as such. Vogel's narration of Smith's thoughts is quite similar to, for example, what you would find in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Shandy narrates from a first person perspective (discussing events just before his birth, so this narrator couldn't have been present to evaluate the external evidence of thought or emotion) but still manages to penetrate the mind of his uncle. Obsessive about fortifications after being wounded in battle, Uncle Toby became as monomaniacal about battle maps as Vogel does about finding deception in the Joseph Smith story: 'The more my uncle Toby drank of this sweet fountain of science, the greater was the heat and impatience of his thirst, so that, before the first year of his confinement had well gone round, there was scarce a fortified town in Italy or Flanders, of which, by one means or another, he had not procured a plan, reading over as he got them, and carefully collating therewith the histories of their sieges, their demolitions, their improvements, and new works, all which he would read with that intense application and delight, that he would forget himself, his wound, his confinement, his dinner' (volume 2, chapter 3). Like Sterne, Vogel must impose his own construction of the character's thoughts on the characters. Notice how restrained Donna Hill is in recounting the episode of Joseph Smith after his night of visions with Moroni (p. 58) compared to Vogel. Similarly, Bushman is positively restrained in reading Joseph Smith's mind during this episode (Bushman, *Rough*, p. 45), merely suggesting a possible reason for Joseph Smith, Sr.'s reaction to his son. Similarly, Terryl L. Givens is content to summarize the historical sources for that morning of September 22, 1823 rather than imposing his own thoughts and constructions as Joseph Smith's (Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002]), p. 14.

analysis that merely finds superficial parallels between the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's biography.

Vogel's use of psychological speculation to find parallels between Smith's life and the Book of Mormon is one among many examples I could use. In particular, the Book of Mormon story of Abinadi is a working out of Smith's own fears and fantasies. I'll underline the language of guessing in the following passage to show how the saturation of conjecture works with the psychological figures and ideological striving. Abinadi is imprisoned and cross examined by King Noah and his henchmen:

Undoubtedly, Smith's claims drew similar cross examinations, not only during his 1826 trial but also from the residents of Harmony. In any case, Smith failed to confound his enemies. The story of Abinadi may reflect a psychological defense against failure and frustration, which Robert D. Anderson variously calls "omnipotent fantasy," "compensatory fantasy," "fantasy conquest," and "fantasy reversal." In other words, Smith could relieve feelings of frustration and humiliation through characters in this book accomplishing what he could not do in real life: to vanquish, powerfully and convincingly, his enemies. However, the price for doing so in Abinadi's case was death.⁴⁹

Vogel's novelistic tools of invention are able to generate this psychological analysis. Similarly, when Mormon discusses the depravity of both the Nephites and Lamanites toward each other in war, Vogel sees in this Smith's researches into crimes committed by and against Native Americans and psychological reaction to that violence:

They resemble the atrocities ascribed to Indians in Smith's day, as well as the violence that Anglos committed against Indians. On a deeper level, Mormon's words show how intense Smith's emotions over his own family situation were (Morm. 6–7). One is justified in seeking psychological meaning in Mormon's words, for they are laden with intense feeling and narrate the culmination of family strife that began with Nephi and his brothers. More poignantly, Mormon may point to the feared breakup of Smith's family, which Smith desperately

⁴⁹ Vogel, *Joseph*, pp. 179–180.

wants to avert. The language can be seen as a symbolic, unconscious window to the soul.⁵⁰

Vogel has made a whole series of prior speculations that this one is built upon: that the Book of Mormon reveals Smith's psychology that the book is a therapeutic novel by which the author works out his own stresses, that this kind of psychological analysis takes a reader deeper rather than more superficially into the book.

Even when Vogel is discussing Joseph Smith's life when not trying to make a comparison to the Book of Mormon, he resorts to psychological terms and metaphors in order to explore the character of Smith when ordinary historical evidence is absent. 'Joseph Jr.'s refusal to drink any alcohol during his 1813 surgery may be explained as an internalization of his mother's revulsion of alcoholism and for what it was doing to her family. If the son could undergo an operation without alcohol, he seems to have been saying to his father, then his father could go through life without it'.⁵¹ This omniscient narration explores thoughts Smith never expressed and ideas never articulated by his mother. These are fictionalizing techniques used to develop a particular form of characterization, they are Midrashim on psychological theories.

Vogel's introduction, like most introductions to biography, is where the writer feels freer to speak in the first person and reveal more, opening the ideological commitments of the writer; this shifting in narrative voice is often called enunciation in narrative theory. It is a natural place for Vogel to speak in the first person and articulate his psychological metaphors. For instance, Vogel links his conception of charlatans and magicians with Freudian concepts of children and parents: 'Magic is an escape from the real world to a simpler time of fantasy when our parents were all-powerful and we were immortal'.⁵² Vogel even mingles the psychological metaphors with his discussion of roles and personas resulting in mixed metaphors: 'We need not confuse Smith's inner, spiritual world with the image he projected to followers Historians must similarly distinguish between the public and private Smith and carefully unravel the many layers of his image, created in large measure to satisfy the demands of followers'.⁵³ *Unravel* is a nice metaphor that suggests this image

⁵⁰ Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 373.

⁵¹ Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 28; Vogel cites Anderson on this idea.

⁵² Vogel, *Joseph*, p. xiv.

⁵³ Vogel, *Joseph*, p. xviii.

has an independent reality, independent of Vogel's fabrication. Vogel never suggests the image is his own *invention*, but instead through the trope implies that it is a complex ontological knot that the psychobiographer must merely untie.

Vogel sees in the story of Nephi's obtaining the plates of brass from Laban a parallel between Smith himself and Nephi. Just as Nephi assumes a disguise to acquire the records, Smith too justifies his actions in 'putting on a false identity' in order to fulfill God's will.⁵⁴ Nephi breaks through this disguise to Zoram to assure his brothers of his identity and this 'reflects Smith's belief that one could take on the role of a prophet' and yet feel truthful in a disguise. The 'autobiographical tone' of Nephi's story reveals the character as Smith's alter ego.⁵⁵ Almost every time Vogel uses this metaphor of dressing in a certain role he reveals his ideological commitments by equating such an action with deception: 'Like the faith healer who uses confederates and deception to create a faith-promoting atmosphere in which "true" healing miracles can occur, Smith assumed the role of prophet, produced the Book of Mormon, and issued revelations to create a setting in which conversion experiences could take place'.⁵⁶

Tropes of storytelling or literary analysis are continuous with the metaphors about roles and personas. Since biographers are storytellers also, it might prove psychologically helpful to apply his own notions about narratives to his biography of Joseph Smith. I have suggested that Vogel uses his psychological images in order to assume the role of the novelist. This psychologizing of the psychobiographer seems valid because Vogel's close identification with Smith suggests the latter is Vogel's own alter ego. After finding a number of alter egos for Smith in the Book of Mormon, Vogel singles out Mormon as the alter ego 'closest to Smith's own self-perception'.⁵⁷ Using Mormon as his own voice in the story, allowed 'flexibility' to interject, to omit material, to pause and develop some passages. 'The effect was much like having an omniscient third-person narrator in a novel'.⁵⁸ Vogel seems to be working out his own psychological struggles in his psychobiography of Joseph Smith as he projects his own ideas on the character he is writing about.

⁵⁴ Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 134.

⁵⁵ Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 134.

⁵⁶ Vogel, *Joseph*, p. xxi.

⁵⁷ Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 118.

⁵⁸ Vogel, *Joseph*, p. 118.

DONNA HILL'S *JOSEPH SMITH: THE FIRST MORMON*

Mormon historians aren't the only ones who like to use the metaphor of middle ground to support their own position. Historians of all kinds like to say there are extremists to my right and radicals to my left, but I stand here in the moderate middle, in the center of the golden mean.

Donna Hill uses such spatial and landscape metaphors and is helped in this moderate middle by trying to avoid the most controversial issues in Mormon history. Hill wants to deflect discussion from issues of Book of Mormon historicity and the existence of plates because, as she states in her preface, 'to those questions there can be no answer that will satisfy everyone, and prolonged debate over them has, until lately, diverted attention from the important social and religious forces to which Joseph was responding and to which he contributed'.⁵⁹

In her interpretation of Smith, Hill arrays interpretations along a continuum between humility and pride, saint and charlatan.⁶⁰ She then locates interpretations along this continuum. Similarly Hill arranges views of Book of Mormon origins along a line from those who rejected Joseph Smith as author and as translator to believers in divine and ancient origins of the book such as Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery.⁶¹ The simple, two-dimensional view of history Hill later complicates with a three dimensional metaphor when it comes to discussing the motives of Smith regarding polygamy. Hill notes that the prophet's commitment to 'establish polygamy was complex' and can't be contained by simple explanations about sexual drives, Emma's physical frailty, the Old Testament pattern of polygamy, Puritan prohibitions against extramarital sex, or other inadequate interpretations. 'Account must be taken also of his enormous capacity to love He interpreted the Lord's plan for the salvation of men as progression to the state of godhood in an eternal family union'.⁶² The metaphor here is one of a complex, a web with various nodes, all of which need to be accounted for in their individuality and relationship. The metaphor is still spatial, but (unlike a continuum)

⁵⁹ Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 103–104.

⁶⁰ Hill, *Joseph*, p. 9.

⁶¹ Hill, *Joseph*, p. 103–104.

⁶² Hill, *Joseph*, p. 343.

is three dimensional. Donna Hill's biography is squeamish, attempting to avoid controversy. Her spatial metaphors reflect that commitment.

ROBERT REMINI'S *JOSEPH SMITH*

Robert Remini's biography of Joseph Smith is much more concise and less developed than the other biographers of this subject. Because he is a historian who in this book resorts to one dominant metaphor, I prefer to at least mention his work. I believe all times are periods of transition, but Remini thinks the antebellum period was more transitional than most eras. Remini's book, unsurprisingly for a historian, asserts that to understand Joseph Smith one must understand the background from which he comes 'because he was influenced by the intellectual milieu of his time'.⁶³ The success of Mormonism largely comes down to the ability of Smith to reflect the 'social, political, and intellectual dynamism of the Jacksonian age'.⁶⁴ This dynamism is the major metaphor in Remini's biography of Smith. Remini notes other massive changes occurring in antebellum America: romanticism in the shape of Transcendentalism,⁶⁵ religious transformations evident in the Second Great Awakening,⁶⁶ the expansion of democratic sentiments and institutions,⁶⁷ and communal experiments.⁶⁸ Remini notes just one element of the restoration that went against this American background—polygamy.⁶⁹ Remini cites several contemporary observers' claims that the entire Jacksonian period was a time of change, expansion, optimism, and growth and acquisitive scurrying: 'The age, agreed Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, "is full of excitement" and rapid change'.⁷⁰ Joseph Smith and his movement represent this ferment with radical challenges to church/state relations, migration across a continent, and new religious ideas.

⁶³ Robert V. Remini, *Joseph Smith* (New York: Viking, 2002), p. ix.

⁶⁴ Remini, *Joseph*, p. x.

⁶⁵ Remini, *Joseph*, pp. 4–5.

⁶⁶ Remini, *Joseph*, pp. 7–10.

⁶⁷ Remini, *Joseph*, pp. 75–81.

⁶⁸ Remini, *Joseph*, pp. 97–98.

⁶⁹ Remini, *Joseph*, p. 154.

⁷⁰ Remini, *Joseph*, p. 77.

CONCLUDING TROPES ABOUT LOOSE STRINGS

The historical discipline has recently returned to its historic and proper home—the humanities. The boundary between history and literature that historians have been patrolling so tirelessly for the past century has in recent years shifted dramatically, if one can find surveyors who can chart it at all; even if GPS units were to be used to mark the boundary, a metaphorical version of the uncertainty principle would apply: the more precise the historian attempts to be positive about the line, the more uncertain where to draw it. During the twentieth century historians have been telling us where the frontier is, but explorations by literary critics, philosophers, and historians have pointed to those lines as arbitrary maps on paper that don't reflect how historians construct their narratives. Now, after a hundred-year absence, literature has returned to history, unfurling her circus silks of metaphor and allegory, misprision and aporia, trace and sign, demanding that historians accept her mocking presence right at the heart of what they had once insisted was their own autonomous and truly scientific discipline.

The return of literature has plunged historical studies into an extended epistemological crisis. It has questioned our belief in a fixed and determinable past, compromised the possibility of historical representation, and undermined our ability to locate ourselves in time. The result of all this has been to reduce historical knowledge to a tissue of remnants and fabrications concealing, it is said, an essential absence.⁷¹

But history was always literary, even and especially during that time its practitioners mistakenly believed in objectivity; in detachment; in neutrality; in unbiased interpretation; in freedom from preconceptions, values, and ideologies; in reporting the past as it essentially was. Positivistic historians who still adhere to these notions warn that to accept the essential literariness of history is to descend into an abyss. History has always been in that abyss; these historians who warn us that exploring the essential literariness of writing historical stories just aren't aware that the abyss is not really a danger but just part of the inevitable rise and decline of the historiographical terrain (Keith Windshuttle has been the most straightforward about blaming the problems in contemporary historiography on literary theorists). This collapse of the border

⁷¹ David Harlan, 'Intellectual History and the Return of Literature', *American Historical Review*, 94, no. 3 (June 1989), p. 581.

between literature and history that has been taken for granted by historians for over a century has not sufficiently registered in the historical profession. 'Disciplines—history included—have boundaries. Scholars who are firmly within a discipline most often do not think about its boundaries. Instead, they feel its constraints as simply those of good scholarship generally'.⁷² Since the linguistic turn, historiography has begun to examine the use of historians' language. If thought is inextricably entwined with the metaphorical resources of language, then historical tropes are essential in examining the rhetoric of history. Not only is it time for the neighboring disciplines of history and literature to establish diplomatic embassies in each other's capitals, it is also time to acknowledge that those border crossing points historians have assiduously maintained are continuously bypassed by the heavy traffic that crosses the frontier on multitudes of superhighways, primary roads, secondary arteries, bike paths, and pedestrian walkways in every account of the past.

⁷² Allan Megill, "'Grand Narrative" and the Discipline of History', *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 151.

JOSEPH SMITH AND THE GIFT OF TRANSLATION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISCOURSE ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS DURING THE EARLY BOOK OF MORMON TRANSLATION PROCESS (1828–1829)¹

Kirk Caudle

The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* states, “The gift of the Holy Ghost is understood to be the key to all of the “spiritual gifts” found in the church, including the gifts of prophecy and revelation, of healing, of speaking in tongues, and of the translation and interpretation of tongues.”² Although Mormons currently understand spiritual gifts to be inseparably connected with the gift of the Holy Ghost that is not how Joseph Smith apparently understood them before his baptism. Smith’s understanding of the function of spiritual gifts and the reasons for which they were obtained shifted conceptually following his and Oliver Cowdery’s baptism on May 15, 1829. The 1833 *Book of Commandments* changed the original focus from “gifts” as relating exclusively to the gift of translation of the *Book of Mormon* to the more expansive spiritual gifts related to the gift of the Holy Ghost and the establishment of the church.

This essay focuses on the earliest ideas or concept of spiritual gifts as contained in the earliest revelations and translations of Joseph Smith from July 1828 through May 1829. In order to give the earliest possible readings of these texts, I have cited the 1833 *Book of Commandments* and the 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon* in parentheses, while putting the modern editions of *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Book of Mormon* references in brackets.

EARLY MORMONISM AND GIFTS

The practice of charismatic spiritual gifts by mainstream Christian churches, such as Methodists, was waning by the 1820s in New

¹ I gratefully acknowledge Chris Smith and Maxine Hanks for their invaluable input and editing skills as I composed this article.

² Bruce D. Porter, ‘Gift of the Holy Ghost,’ in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (Macmillan Publishing Company: New York, 1992). Available online at http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Gift_of_the_Holy_Ghost.

England, although they continued among some revivalist movements and folk visionary traditions. From perhaps 1822 to 1828, Joseph Smith semi-regularly attended the services of the Methodists, a sect historically associated with visions and spiritual gifts. By this time, however, Methodists rarely exercised the gifts and downplayed their importance.³ As Richard Bushman observes, the earliest converts to Mormonism were individuals who had “in common a sympathy for visionary religion.” With Methodist charisma waning, the more charismatic Protestants looked to upstart visionaries, seers and prophets like Mother Ann Lee and Joseph Smith.⁴

When Joseph Smith moved his fledgling church into Kirtland, Ohio in early 1831, he found that the churches there were much like they had been in New York. Not even Alexander Campbell, fellow Restorationist and one of Smith’s most hardened opponents, believed that spiritual gifts were needed in the modern church.⁵ Therefore, when Smith arrived in Kirtland many charismatically-inclined people involved in these congregations gravitated towards him. In terms of early converts, Bushman recounts, “The greatest hunger was for spiritual gifts like dreams, visions, tongues, miracles, and spiritual raptures, making the visionaries the natural audience for the Mormon missionaries and the new revelation.”⁶ They craved a visionary leader with a visionary gift.

Solomon Chamberlin, who ended up becoming one of the great missionaries of the early LDS church, was baptized days after the official organization of the church because he believed that Mormons were the true holders of the spiritual gifts. John Taylor records Chamberlin saying:

Somewhere about the time that Joseph Smith found the record of the Book of Mormon, I began to feel as though the time was nearly come, that had been made known to me by the angel. I made some inquires through the country if there

³ Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), p. 59.

⁴ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), p. 113.

⁵ The need for spiritual gifts in the modern church was a major point of contention between Alexander Campbell and Sidney Rigdon before the two men parted ways. Lloyd Knowles, ‘Sidney Rigdon: the Benedict Arnold of the Restoration Movement’, *Stone Campbell Journal*, 6, no. 1 (2003), pp. 3–25. See also, Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, pp. 146–149.

⁶ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 113.

was any strange work of God, such as had not been on the earth since the days of Christ . . . I soon arrived at the [Smith] house, and found Hyrum walking the floor; as I entered the room, I said peace be to this house; he looked at me and said 'I hope it will be peace.' I then said is there any one here that believes in visions and revelations. He said yes, we are a visionary house.⁷

Even though charismatic spiritual gifts became very important in early Mormonism, Joseph Smith seems to have been unaware of or unfocused on the role they would play ~ until after he and Oliver Cowdery were baptized and began translating the book of Moroni in May 1829. Before these events, Joseph was focused on visionary experiences and revelation; however, the only “gift” per se spoken of by Joseph Smith was his “gift of translation.”

JULY 1828 (THE DISCOVERY OF A GIFT)

From the earliest days of Joseph Smith’s prophetic career he saw himself as a visionary. The young Smith was a seer and believed in a God who could help him discover his potential. The first time Smith used the word gift in a revelation was on July 1828:

Behold thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou art not aware thou wilt fall, but remember God is merciful: Therefore, repent of that which thou hast done, and he will only cause thee to be afflicted for a season, and thou art still chosen, and wilt again be called to the work; and except thou do this, thou shalt be delivered up and become as other men, and have no more gift. (BOC 2:4 [D&C 3:10-11]; italics added)

This referred to Joseph Smith’s gift of translation and put him in the position of a chosen, but fallible prophet. Righteousness was what made Smith’s gift effective and transgression could cause that gift to be taken away.

What is most telling about this passage is that there is no indication that this gift was new. The text leads the reader to believe that Smith already held the gift before the revelation was received. This is evident

⁷ John Taylor, *Journal* (January 1845–September 1845), pp. 50–54, entry of April 1845, in possession of Brent Ashworth, Provo, Utah. Cited in *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols, ed. by Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), III, 40–43.

from the revelation's threat to revoke Smith's gift. It could not be revoked if he didn't already hold it. Given his reported visions of god and angels, and his working with seer stones to discover hidden things, it seems that Smith already felt that he had a gift from God for "seeing" and discovering other worldly things and translating or interpreting them—ever since he received his first seer stone via Sally Chase in 1819, which he ended up using in order to locate his own seer stones.⁸ In the intervening years Smith had acquired a minor fame as a seer by looking into his stones to locate lost objects, natural resources, and buried treasure, as well as acquiring infamy as a visionary seer or revealer of divine beings.⁹ Smith's July 1828 revelation about his own gift implies that his secular uses of divination had been misappropriations of an authentic spiritual gift whose divinely-intended use the young scribe hadn't been fully aware of. Henceforward, he was to use his gift solely in the way God intended.¹⁰

This 1828 revelation was given in the context of Joseph Smith and Martin Harris translating the first 116 pages of the *Book of Mormon*, or what became known as "the Book of Lehi." After some substantial deliberation on the matter, Smith allowed Harris permission to take the

⁸ Willam H. Kelly, 'The Hill Cumorah, and the *Book of Mormon*', *Saints' Herald*, 28 (1 June 1881), p. 165, as cited in *Early Mormon Documents*, II, pp. 105–106. See also D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), p. 43 and Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 48.

⁹ A newspaper report on this subject related that 'For several years preceding the appearance of his book, he [Joseph Smith] was about the country in the character of a glass-looker: pretending, by means of a certain stone, or glass, which he put in a hat, to be able to discover lost goods, hidden treasures, mines of gold and silver, &c. Although he constantly failed in his pretensions, still he had his dupes who put implicit confidence in all his words. In this town, a wealthy farmer, named Josiah Stowell, together with others, spent large sums of money in digging for hidden money, which this Smith pretended he could see, and told them where to dig; but they never found their treasure.' A.W.B., 'Mormonites', *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, 9 April 1831, p. 120.

¹⁰ Richard Bushman believes that 'After 1828, Joseph could no longer see that magic might have prepared him to believe in a revelation of gold plates and translation with a stone. It did not occur to him that without magic his family might have scoffed at his story of Moroni, as did the minister who rejected the First Vision. Magic had played its part and now could be cast aside.' *Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 69.

116-page transcription to New York to show to his wife Lucy, and perhaps others. Harris ended up losing the manuscript, or possibly having it stolen from him. As a consequence of this event, the angel took away the plates and the translating device from Smith, which his mother referred to as “precious gifts,”¹¹ because he had “wearied the Lord in asking for the privilege of letting Martin Harris take the writings which he lost by transgression.”¹² After Smith’s repentance for this transgression, the same angel that had taken the Urim and Thummim reappeared and returned the plates to Smith.¹³ This implied that the Urim and Thummim itself was the gift or medium of the gift of translation.

During this earliest period of Smith’s prophetic career, physical objects are inseparable from his gift of divine translation, while his personal revelations manifest his soul or mind. In fact, Smith understood the objects themselves to be the gift or medium of the gift of translation, which is why the physical objects were taken from Smith in accordance with the *Book of Commandments* prophecy that if he transgressed and failed to repent, he would “have no more gift.”¹⁴ Historian Christopher Smith has recognized that Joseph Smith was already referring to his seer stone, and other physical objects, as “keys” in the mid-1820s. Smith believed that the earth held many of these sorts of keys that allowed one to

¹¹ *Early Mormon Documents*, I, 220.

¹² *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, ed. by Dean C. Jessee, 2 vols (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–1992), I, 297.

¹³ Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p. 92. Other commentators on this event noted that, ‘When Joseph Delivered the 116 pages of the translation to Martin Harris, his Plates, his Interpreters, and his gift were taken from him for some two months. The Plates and gift of translation were returned to him, but not the Interpreters. He translated the entire *Book of Mormon* by the use of a little stone he had in his possession before he obtained the plates.’ John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, ‘The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information’, in *To All the World: The Book of Mormon Articles from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. by Daniel H. Ludlow, S. Kent Brown, John W. Welch (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986), p. 13.

¹⁴ Brigham Young believed that there was a seer stone for every righteous individual if they would seek it out. There was also the belief in 19th century Mormon history that the gift of seeing through a seer stone was disconnected from the priesthood. Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, p. 202.

see into the past, present, and future.¹⁵ In much the same way, Smith's gift of translation was apparently of no use without the interpreters or Urim and Thummim or seer stones – because the objects themselves were the “gift.”

MARCH 1829 (NO OTHER GIFTS)

Although one might conclude that Joseph Smith's “gift” was a physical object, it is hard to narrow down exactly all that Smith felt about his gift during this early period. Following the loss of the 116 pages, Smith did not receive additional recorded information concerning his gift until March 1829, a good eight months after his last revelation on the matter.

And now, behold, this shall you say unto him:—I the Lord am God, and I have given these things unto my servant Joseph, and I have commanded him that he should stand as a witness of these things, nevertheless I have caused him that he should enter into a covenant with me, that he should not show them except I command him, and he has no power over them except I grant it unto him; and he has a gift to translate the book, and I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift. (BOC 4:2 [D&C 5:2–4]; italics added)

Joseph Smith not only understood god to be telling him that his “gift” was to translate the *Book of Mormon*, but also that this was his only “gift.” From this point forward, he believed that he would receive no other gift other than this one. The *Book of Commandments*, quoted above, reads much differently than the modern edited version of the *Doctrine and Covenants*: “and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished” (italics added to indicate textual additions, 5:4). One could argue that this change in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* was for clarification purposes. However, even if this is the case, the original *Book of Commandments* transcription is more indicative of what Joseph Smith would have understood about his “gift” at the time he received this revelation. There is no indication at this juncture that Smith expected to possess any other

¹⁵ Christopher Smith, ‘Joseph Smith in Hermeneutical Crisis’, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 43, no. 2 (2010), 92–95.

“gifts,” and his gift is differentiated from his revelations, which come via an inner process

At the reception of this revelation (BOC 4), Smith was probably just finishing translating (interpreting via the “gift”) the book of Mosiah. After the loss of the first 116 pages, Joseph Smith moved ahead with translating Mosiah through Moroni, rather than starting over at the beginning with 1 Nephi, which waited to retranslate after finishing Moroni, then went back and re-translated 1Nephi through Words of Mormon.¹⁶ Emma Smith, working as scribe for a short time, later recalled that she “frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat with the stone in it and dictating hour after hour, with nothing between us.”¹⁷ Spiritual gifts are mentioned twice in the book of Mosiah and both of these instances are in reference to the gift of translation. After these two instances, the gift of translation is curiously absent from the rest of the *Book of Mormon* other than a passing reference to the idea in Alma. Chapter 5 of Mosiah in the 1830 *Book of Mormon* states:

Now Ammon saith unto him, I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records: for he hath wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters; and no man can look in them, except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he had not ought, and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer. And behold, the king of the people which is in the land of Zarahemla, is the man that is commanded to do these things, and which hath this high gift from God. And the king saith, That a seer is greater than a prophet. And Ammon saith, That a seer is a revelator, and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater, can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God. [Mosiah 8:13–16]

It is not difficult to read Joseph Smith into this text. This passage loosely describes his own role as a prophet, seer, revelator, and translator at the

¹⁶ References in this paper to the timeline of Book of Mormon translation are based on the unpublished work of Don Bradley, which he graciously shared with me.

¹⁷ *Early Mormon Documents*, I, 541.

exact time that he is writing it down. More importantly, Smith viewed these *Book of Mormon* activities as a model for his own self-understanding as a seer. Also interesting, this passage links translation and interpreters with being a seer and revelator, which is greater than a prophet. While this could erase a distinction between the “gift” of translation and personal revelation, Smith’s translation of the *Book of Mormon* verses his revelations in the *Book of Commandments*, imply two different processes.

Thus, the gift of translation is again expressly linked with a physical object, in this case, the interpreters. This pericope mirrors Smith’s first revelation concerning his gift, which warned him that transgression would equal the loss of the ability to translate ancient records (BOC 2:4 [D&C 3:10-11]).¹⁸ Since not everyone had this gift, the people sought out Ammon on this occasion for clarification as to who actually had this gift to translate. Smith was warned to only translate the *Book of Mormon* and “that he shall pretend to no other gift” (BOC 4:2 [D&C 5:2-4]).

It is not entirely clear what the revelation meant by the phrase “he shall pretend to no other gift,” but my sense is that it was an implicit repudiation of his earlier use of the seer stone for non-religious purposes. The verse implies that Joseph Smith may have “pretended” to have other gifts, or attempted to use his “gift” i.e. the stone in unjustifiable ways. This connects with the other mention of the gift in Mosiah 9 in the 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon*: “And now Limhi was again filled with joy, on learning from the mouth of Ammon that king Benjamin had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings; yea, and Ammon also did rejoice” [Mosiah 21:28]. While there is no explicit mention in this verse of a physical object, the gift mentioned here could very well refer to an “interpreter.” Indeed, this reference to King Benjamin’s “gift”

¹⁸ He also receives this warning as he is translating the book of Mosiah. During March 1829 Smith recorded, ‘behold I say unto you, Joseph, when thou hast translated a few more pages, thou shalt stop for a season, even until I command thee again: then thou mayest translate again. And except thou do this, behold thou shalt have no more gift, and I will take away the things which I have intrusted with thee’ (BOC 4:10 [D&C 5:30–31]). If the stone is the gift then it is the instrument of translation. Therefore, the seer stone is directly connected to the one gift that Joseph has, the gift of translation. Joseph Smith could only then use the stone for translating because if he used the stone for any other purpose (such as treasure digging) then he would be pretending to have a gift that he did not have. Therefore, it is the seer stone that is being threatened to be taken away here.

should probably be viewed in light of the earlier reference in Mosiah 8:13, where Benjamin's gift is explicitly described as a physical object.

APRIL 1829 (TRANSLATION TOWARDS SALVATION)

April 1829 marked the first appearance of the word "gift" used in connection with something other than translation. The following revelation was given from Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery:

Behold thou hast a gift, and blessed art thou because of thy gift. Remember it is sacred and cometh from above; and if thou wilt inquire, thou shalt know mysteries which are great and marvelous: therefore thou shalt exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries, that thou mayest bring many to the knowledge of the truth; yea, convince them of the error of their ways. Make not thy gift known unto any, save it be those which are of thy faith.— Trifle not with sacred things. If thou wilt do good, yea and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation. (BOC 5:5 [D&C 6:10–13]; italics added)

On April 7th, Oliver Cowdery took over scribal duties from Emma Smith, a process that he later described: "Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his [Smith's] mouth, as he translated with the Urim and Thummim, or, as the Nephites would have said, 'Interpreters.'"¹⁹ In this revelation, Smith told Cowdery two things. First, that Cowdery had a gift. Second, that there is no greater gift than salvation. It was not until the next verse of the *Book of Commandments*, 5:11 that Smith revealed the meaning of this gift to Cowdery: "And now behold, you have received a witness, for if I have told you things which no man knoweth, have you not received a witness? And behold I grant unto you a gift if you desire of me, to translate even as my servant Joseph" [D&C

¹⁹ Joseph Smith—History 1:71. Royal Skousen argues that before Oliver Cowdery there were only two other scribes, Martin Harris and Emma Smith. These two mostly worked on the lost 116-page manuscript and the first part of the book of Mosiah. Royal Skousen, 'Oliver Cowdery as *Book of Mormon Scribe*', in *Days Never to Be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery*, ed. by Alexander L. Baugh (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), para. 4–5. Accessed 22 June 2013 at <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/days-never-be-forgotten-oliver-cowdery/3-oliver-cowdery-book-mormon-scribe>.

6:22-25]. Suddenly, Oliver Cowdery discovered that he, like Joseph Smith, possessed the gift of translation.

To this point, the gift of translation was the only charismatic gift that had been given to either of the two men. Smith seemed to understand that he only had one gift and that now Cowdery also had that same single gift. They now also understood that the gift of translation ultimately led to the gift of salvation. Cowdery's gift of translation becomes more interesting later in the revelation: "Verily, verily I say unto you, that there are records which contain much of my gospel, which have been kept back because of the wickedness of the people; and now I command you, that if you have good desires, a desire to lay up treasures for yourself in heaven, then shall you assist in bringing to light, with your gift, those parts of my scriptures which have been hidden because of iniquity" (BOC 5:12 [D&C 6:26-27]).

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were translating the book of Alma during this time. Therefore, chapter 5 of the *Book of Commandments* [D&C 6] might be read in light of the following passage:

And now my son, these directors were prepared, that the word of God might be fulfilled, which he spake, saying: I will bring forth out of darkness unto light, all their secret works and their abominations; and except they repent, I will destroy them from off the face of the earth; and I will bring to light all their secrets and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land. (Alma 17 [Alma 37:24-25])

As Oliver Cowdery listened to the prophet dictate this *Book of Mormon* passage, he may have inferred that the purpose of his own gift was the same as the purpose of Alma's: not only to translate, but also to bring to light "secret works" and "abominations."²⁰ As the two men now understood it, this was one of the aspects of the gift of translation. Later *Book of Mormon* editors substituted the word "interpreters" for "directors." I believe that Cowdery related better to the word director. Just as Smith

²⁰ This passage talks about hidden 'secret works and abominations' of wicked, Gadianton-like people. Cowdery understands his gift through this lens, he probably wouldn't have understood it as a direct reference to translation, but to revelation more generally. For example, consider that Joseph Smith spoke of using his 'key' (seer stone) to learn when the local money-diggers were going to make attempts to steal the plates. In other words, Smith used his gift to divine secret combinations among his neighbors to get the plates. Cowdery might be thinking along the same lines.

discovered the golden plates, Cowdery now expected to be directed by his own gift to do some discovering of his own, even if that were just uncovering secrets contained on the golden plates. Now that the gift of translation was shared between Smith and Cowdery they could fulfill the prophecy that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established” (BOC 5:13 [D&C 6:28]).

Keeping in mind that Joseph Smith first translated the books of Mosiah through Moroni, and then worked on the books 1 Nephi through Words of Mormon, the “gift” references in Mosiah and Alma, during March and April of 1829, would have been the first that he encountered in the text. The phrase “Holy Ghost” never appeared in Mosiah, but it quickly appeared in Alma. The first two instances came in chapters 5 [7:10] and 6 [8:30], referring respectively to the birth of Jesus Christ and being filled with the Holy Ghost. Then an interesting usage of the phrase appeared in chapter 7 of the 1830 version:

after having had all things made known unto them, according to their desires, and their faith, and prayers, of that which has been, and which is, and which is to come; having been visited by the spirit of God; having conversed with angels, and having been spoken unto by the voice of the Lord; and having the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and also many gifts: the gift of speaking with tongues, and the gift of preaching, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the gift of translation. [Alma 9:21–22]

Although Mosiah described what the gift of translation looked like, this was the only time that the phrase “gift of translation” was used in the entire 1830 version of the *Book of Mormon*. How the gift of the translation and the gift of the Holy Ghost are separated in this passage is important for understanding Joseph Smith. Smith later stated that all spiritual gifts come following the reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost.²¹ However,

²¹ “We believe that the Holy Ghost is imparted by the laying on of hands of those in authority, and that the gift of tongues, and also the gift of prophecy, are gifts of the spirit, and are obtained through that medium; but then to say that men always prophesied and spoke in tongues when they had the imposition of hands, would be to state that which is untrue, contrary to the practice of the apostles, and at variance with holy writ; for Paul says, “to one is given the gift of tongues, to another the gift of prophecy, and to another the gift of healing”- and again, “do all prophecy? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” evidently shewing that all did not possess these several gifts; but that one received

at this early stage in the translation project Smith does not appear to have had such a simple or unified theology worked out. In this passage, the gift of the Holy Ghost was grouped along with all of the other spiritual gifts as one of them. The passage gave no indication that the other gifts listed come through the reception of the Holy Ghost. In fact, it appears to me that the gifts listed are totally independent from one another.

This passage is also interesting for two other reasons. First, it distinguished between “the spirit of” prophecy and revelation and the various “gifts.” Implicitly, revelation and prophecy come by some sort of independent spirit rather than through a personal gift.²² In fact, the *Book of Mormon* never mentions revelation as a gift at all in the entire book, while mentioning prophecy as such only once.²³ Second, the gift of the Holy Ghost was not the source of all of the other gifts, but it was a gift in itself. This is significant because it shows why Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery could exercise the gift of translation before receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost in 1829.

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery apparently saw the gift of the Holy Ghost as distinct from the gift of translation. If they did not see these as two distinct gifts, then they would have either already seen themselves as holding the gift of the Holy Ghost, or they would have seen themselves as not really having the gift of translation until they received the Holy Ghost. Given the circumstances, neither of these two options seems plausible. Additionally, the gift of translation is never mentioned thus not connected with the gift of the Holy Ghost in the Bible. The gift of translation was a uniquely *Book of Mormon* gift and was used by Smith and Cowdery in a uniquely *Book of Mormon* way. The gift is entirely absent from the Biblical text and thus is not listed among the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12.

one gift and another received another gift—all did not prophecy; all did not speak in tongues; all did not work miracles; but all did receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; sometimes they spoke in tongues and prophesied in the Apostles' days, and sometimes they did not. The same in [sic] the case with us also in our administration.' *Times and Seasons*, June 15, 1842, p. 822.

²² Exactly what the spirit of revelation means here is entirely unclear. Perhaps it refers to some kind of benevolent spirit possession? The text seems to indicate that the spirit of prophecy was something one could ‘have’ rather than something by which one was spoken to. I believe that Joseph Smith understood himself to be in some way indwelt by this ‘spirit.’

²³ This exception comes in Moroni 10 where it is listed in a long list of other gifts.

Understanding that revelation is disconnected from the gift of the Holy Ghost at this point in the *Book of Mormon* translation process is important as one moves further through the text. What exactly is and is not considered a spiritual gift in Joseph Smith's early theology is not entirely clear at this point and can be a little confusing. Oliver Cowdery is told, "Now, behold this is the Spirit of revelation:~behold this is the Spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red sea on dry ground: therefore, this is thy gift; apply unto it and blessed art thou, for it shall deliver you out of the hands of your enemies, when, if it were not so, they would slay you and bring your soul to destruction" (BOC 7:2 [D&C 8:3-4]; italics added). This passage is curious because all of a sudden the spirit of revelation is given as a gift to Cowdery and that seems to directly contradict the passage that the men just translated in Alma.

To make sense of this contrast, one could interpret the gift of prophecy given in the *Book of Commandments* as synonymous with the Biblical interpretation, which says that the "testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). This reading gives Cowdery the faith necessary to know that God will allow his gift of translation to work. However one takes this passage, though, it is still not given through the gift of Holy Ghost.²⁴ The gift, as it is given here, is still a gift that stands on its own, but is still only given for the benefit of translation.²⁵ Cowdery is then told:

O remember, these words and keep my commandments. Remember this is your gift. Now this is not all, for you have another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands, for it is the work of God; and therefore whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you,

²⁴I do recognize that a case can be made in this chapter for the spirit of revelation being equal to the gift of the Holy Ghost. From my reading of this chapter, the spirit of revelation is only the Holy Ghost working through Oliver Cowdery, but is not the gift itself.

²⁵It should also be noted that Oliver Cowdery is recorded as receiving an additional spiritual gift before Joseph Smith. It stands to reason that since Smith is already receiving revelations that he must already possess this spirit. However, the text itself never states this as the case, although I believe that that it is strongly inferred.

that you shall know. (BOC 7:3 [D&C 8:5]; italics added)

Just as Joseph Smith's gift of translation came in the form of a physical interpreter, so did Oliver Cowdery's gift of the spirit of revelation. Cowdery had a gift to receive revelation, but the revelation came only through working with the rod. Thus, as with the stones and interpreters, the medium of the gift was a physical object. However, just as in previous passages, the power to exercise the gift ultimately came from God. The power that operates the gift is not the gift itself.

The phrase "working with the rod" originally read "working with the sprout." *The Joseph Smith Papers* relates the following concerning this issue: "the phrase 'the gift of working with the sprout' appears, possibly describing Cowdery's use of a divining rod or similar 'thing of Nature.' The phrase was later revised to read 'the gift of working with the rod' in the 1833 *Book of Commandments* and 'the gift of Aaron' in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*."²⁶

Joseph Smith already viewed himself and Oliver Cowdery as modern-day versions of Moses and Aaron. Thus, providing Cowdery with the gift of the rod further reflected Smith's identification with the Old Testament prophets.²⁷ It was not long before this revelation that Cowdery read in the Book of Mosiah that "Doubtless, a great mystery is contained within these plates; and these interpreters was doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men" (Mosiah 5 [8:19]). Like its ancient *Book of Mormon* counterparts, Cowdery understood his rod to be his interpreter (or director) for unfolding such mysteries. Joseph Smith probably believed the same, as Brant Gardner points out in his book *The Gift and Power*: he "believed that his stone accessed the divine and that Oliver's rod would do the same. Just as Joseph had transferred his talent with a particular medium—the stone—to the task of translating, both young men understood that Oliver could transfer his talent with the rod to the task of translation."²⁸ Before their baptisms, both men were still equating their gifts with physical objects.

²⁶ Revelation, April 1829–B [D&C 8], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed 9 July 2013 at <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-april-1829-b-dc-8>.

²⁷ Smith, 'Joseph Smith in Hermeneutical Crisis', p. 94.

²⁸ Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2011), p. 313.

MAY 1829 (THE GIFT OF TRANSLATION AS A PROTECTIVE FORCE)

During this time Joseph Smith became concerned about whether or not it was necessary to retranslate the 116-page manuscript lost by Martin Harris. Chapter 9 of the *Book of Commandments*, [D&C 10] is a response to this conundrum.²⁹ Verse 1 reads:

Now, behold I say unto you, that because you delivered up so many writings, which you had power to translate, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them, and you also lost your gift at the same time, nevertheless it has been restored unto you again: therefore, see that you are faithful and go on unto the finishing of the remainder of the work as you have begun. Do not run faster than you have strength and means provided to translate, but be diligent unto the end, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer satan, and those that do uphold his work. [D&C 10:1–5; italics added]

Again, the gift spoken of in this verse refers to the physical object taken by the angel.

The lesson learned by Joseph Smith from this revelation is not only that his gift can be taken away, but also that his gift is not for him. He lost his gift only to have it restored for the express purpose of teaching him that the gift of translation (in the form of the interpreters) is given to further the process of translating the Book of Mormon.

This revelation reminded Joseph Smith that he was up against a very real demonic force and presented Satan as something that must be “conquered” as it was actively fighting against his gift. Smith believed himself to be engaged in a very real battle between good and evil, and because of this he feared that once he lost the gift of translation another individual (led by Satan) could pick up and pervert the work of translation (BOC 9:2 [D&C 6–13]).³⁰ From Smith’s perspective, his gift of

²⁹ There is much debate about whether or not this revelation came in 1828 or 1829. I have chosen to follow the dating of the *Joseph Smith Papers* and date this revelation May 1829. Given this, I fully recognize that not all readers will agree with my dating of this revelation.

³⁰ ‘Behold they have sought to destroy you; yea, even the man in whom you have trusted, and for this cause I said, that he is a wicked man, for he has sought to take away the things wherewith you have been intrusted; and he has also

translation was the only thing protecting the plates from being corrupted by demonic forces. To lose the gift of the interpreters meant that the plates lost their protection.

Verily I say unto you, that I will not suffer that satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing, for behold he has put it into their hearts to tempt the Lord their God; for behold they say in their hearts, We will see if God has given him power to translate, if so, he will also give him power again; and if God giveth him power again, or if he translate again, or in other words, if he bringeth forth the same words, behold we have the same with us, and we have altered them: Therefore, they will not agree, and we will say that he has lied in his words, and that he has no gift, and that he has no power: therefore, we will destroy him, and also the work, and we will do this that we may not be ashamed in the end, and that we may get glory of the world. (*italics added, BOC 9:3 [D&C 10:14–19]*)

This revelation offers an indication that the devil himself can give the gift of translation to his followers in order to destroy Joseph Smith's work of translation by denying that his gift exists.³¹ The evil people will say, "We will see if God has given him power to translate, if so, he will also give him power again" or in other words, "where is Joseph Smith's translation item, if he really has an object that lets him translate ancient records,

sought to destroy your gift, and because you have delivered the writings into his hands, behold they have taken them from you: therefore, you have delivered them up; yea, that which was sacred unto wickedness. And behold, satan has put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, which have gone out of your hands; and behold I say unto you, that because they have altered the words, they read contrary from that which you translated and caused to be written; and on this wise the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan, that he may destroy this work; for he has put it into their hearts to do this, that by lying they may say they have caught you in the words which you have pretended to translate.'

³¹ Smith is already somewhat familiar with demonic forces at this point. He later describes an encounter with an evil force during his 1838 account of the First Vision, 'I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me and had such astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction' (Joseph Smith–History 1:15). However, it is worth noting that Joseph Smith says nothing about this demonic encounter in his earliest account of the First Vision in 1832.

then God should return it to him so that we can see it and compare it with our own." Smith recognized this argument as a trap and understood that no matter what he produced the people would still claim to "have the same with us."

MAY 15, 1829 (THE BAPTISMAL EVENT AND THE IDEA OF A CHURCH)

When Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery reached 3 Nephi during their translation efforts, the idea of baptism started to weigh upon their minds. In one of the earliest accounts of the event, Oliver Cowdery recorded in 1834, "the qestion [sic] might be asked, have men authority to administer in the name of Christ, who deny revelations? when his testimony is no less than the spirit of prophecy? and his religion based, built, and sustained by immediate revelations in all ages of the world, when he has had a people on earth?"³² Buck's *Theological Dictionary*, a popular nineteenth-century Evangelical text, describes baptism as "consisting in the application of water to a person, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, by which he is initiated into the visible church . . . Baptism does not constitute a visible subject, but only recognizes one."³³ According to Buck, baptism does not make one love, but rather shows that one already does love. If this is extended to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery then we might conclude that they do not need to be baptized in order to receive spiritual gifts, but that their baptisms are a response to their faithfulness to the spiritual gifts that they already received. In other words, spiritual gifts lead to baptism, rather than baptism leading to spiritual gifts. This makes the gift of translation a precursor to the baptismal event. The gift of the translation kept Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery constantly in the text of the *Book of Mormon* searching for answers and direction. Another important theme mentioned in Buck's description of baptism is that it is the entrance into a visible church from an invisible church.

It is unknown when Joseph Smith conceived of organizing a visible church, whether relatively early on during the *Book of Mormon* translation process or toward the end, since the details pertaining this

³² Oliver Cowdery, *Messenger and Advocate*, October 1834, p. 15.

³³ Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary, Containing Definitions of All Religious Terms; a Comprehensive view of every Article in the System of Divinity an Impartial Account of all the Principal Denominations which have Subsisted in the Religious World from the Birth of Christ to the Present Day* (Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, Goldsmith's Hall Library Street, 1851), p. 40.

matter are very unclear. Dan Vogel believes that one reason Joseph Smith might not have considered the idea of baptism prior to translating 3 Nephi in May 1829 is that he “had not yet conceived of a church.”³⁴ David Whitmer cited August 1829—three months after Joseph and Oliver’s baptism in May, and eight months before the official founding in April 1830—as the date of the actual conception of an institutional church as “fully organized spiritually” and baptizing new members.³⁵

It is interesting also to note when the notion of a church first appears in LDS scripture. Like the gift of translation, the first mention of the word “church” during the translation of the *Book of Mormon* came in Mosiah 9 [18:17] translated in early April 1829. Church quickly became a major theme for the rest of that book. Likewise, the first canonized revelation using the word church came right around the same time in March 1829, two months before Smith and Cowdery’s baptism in May 1829 (BOC 9 [D&C 10]). Prior to the first establishment of an actual church in August 1829, Joseph Smith may have viewed the Book of Mormon as a document that reinforced the Old Testament covenants and the true church of God or existing “invisible” church of all Christian believers:

And now, behold, according to their faith in their prayers, will I bring this part of my gospel to the knowledge of my people. Behold, I do not bring it to destroy that which they have received, but to build it up. And for this cause have I said, if this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them. Now I do not say this to destroy my church, but I say this to build up my church: therefore, whosoever belongeth to my church need not fear, for such shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. (BOC 9:13-14 [D&C 10:52–55])

This revelation focused on the *Book of Mormon*, while referring to an already existing church. Given textual references in the *Book of Mormon*, Smith understood that an invisible church was already in place, but he

³⁴ Vogel, *The Making of a Prophet*, p. 161.

³⁵ ‘We preached, baptized and confirmed members into the Church of Christ, from August, 1829, until April 6th, 1830, being eight months in which time we had proceeded rightly; the offices in the church being Elders, Priests and Teachers . . . it was all a mistake about the church being organized on April 6, 1830 . . . We were as fully organized – spiritually – before April 6th as were on that that day.’ David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, August 1, 1887, pp. 32–33.

now understood that a visible church must be established. The revelation had a very ecumenical feel: those who are already part of the invisible church needn't fear the establishment of this visible church; it is as if they are already members.³⁶ The spiritual gift of translation possessed by Smith and Cowdery led to baptism and is what ultimately led to this invisible church becoming visible.

Joseph Smith recorded in this 1838 history that, "No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied . . . so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy . . . I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church."³⁷ Although Oliver Cowdery was baptized first and expressed the spirit of prophecy, he had already received this ability less than one month prior (BOC 7:2 [D&C 8:3–4]). This might have been seen as the promised fulfillment of that gift to Cowdery.

Also one month prior to this event, Joseph Smith learned that the gift of translation would ultimately lead to the gift of salvation (BOC 5:5 [D&C 6:10–13]). Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery both held the gift of translation and had access to the spirit of prophecy and thus "rejoiced in the God of our salvation."³⁸ The event of baptism, and the idea of establishing a church, led Joseph Smith to think more deeply about what it meant for one to receive spiritual gifts.

MAY 1829 (HYRUM SMITH AND MORONI 10)

After their momentous baptismal event, Joseph Smith became more concerned than ever with spiritual gifts. For the first time the focus now shifted to gifts outside of the gift of translation. Not long after Smith and Cowdery started translating the book of Moroni in May 1829, Smith received his first recorded revelation following his baptismal event, which revelation is found in *Book of Commandments* chapter 10 [D&C 11]. This is significant because the book of Moroni is full of references to spiritual gifts and it shows that the idea was on the minds of the two men. I believe

³⁶ One could read 'establish' as 'To enact or decree by authority and for permanence; to ordain; to appoint; as, to establish laws, regulations, institutions, rules, ordinances, &c.' 'establish,' 1828 edition of Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language, accessed 22 June 2013 at <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word,establish>.

³⁷ Joseph Smith–History 1:73.

³⁸ Joseph Smith–History 1:73.

that it is very possible that the events surrounding their baptisms may have influenced Smith's conceptualization or wording while translating Moroni.

Joseph Smith received a revelation about spiritual gifts which was directed to his brother Hyrum Smith, and contained in *Book of Commandments* chapter 10 [D&C 10]. Verse 5 of that chapter states:

Behold thou hast a gift, or thou shalt have a gift, if thou wilt desire of me in faith, with an honest heart, believing in the power of Jesus Christ, or in my power which speaketh unto thee: for behold it is I that speaketh: behold I am the light which shineth in darkness, and by my power I give these words unto thee. (D&C 11:10)

Again, *Book of Commandments* 10 [D&C 11] is probably given just as Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery are finishing their translation work on the book of Moroni in May. Given the prevalence of the gifts of the spirit in this revelation, combined with the corresponding gifts found in Moroni 10, this suggests a plausible overlap in dating. The gifts of the spirit in this revelation mirror Moroni 10 in many ways. The beginning of Moroni 10 [Moroni 10:5–17] can be read as Joseph Smith talking with Hyrum. This chapter in the *Book of Mormon* gives the most complete list of spiritual gifts to date at this point of the translation process as well as in Joseph's revelations. Some of the gifts mentioned in this chapter include faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues [Moroni 10:7–16]. Joseph Smith tells his brother that he has a gift, but at the same time, not yet.

At this early stage of the restoration, Hyrum has not yet gone through the ritual of baptism so he is still a part of the invisible church. Buck's and the *Book of Commandments* both support the notion of Hyrum receiving a gift, but not yet. There is a sense that the invisible church and the spiritual gifts are in one way like the keys described by Joseph Smith in the mid-1820s ~ in that they are already all around us, but always in potentiality as yet to be discovered or used.

Joseph Smith provides his brother with a way of unlocking his gift through faith in Jesus Christ as he goes on to tell Hyrum:

seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongues be loosed; then, if you desire you shall have my Spirit, and my word: Yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men: but now hold your peace; study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men;

and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men; or that which you are translating. (BOC 10:10 [D&C 11:21])

Although this verse does not specifically use the word “gift,” it nonetheless provide a clue to the identity of Hyrum Smith’s spiritual gift. Hyrum is told that after he obtains God’s “word,” then his tongue shall “be loosed.”³⁹ This might be an early reference to the gift of prophecy and/or revelation, or perhaps teaching or even tongues, although those do not really start happening until the Kirtland period. Just as the spiritual gift of translation led to the baptism of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, likewise spiritual gifts seem to have led to ordination. Moroni 3 records, “after this manner did they ordain priests and teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God” [3:4]. The *Book of Mormon* records people being ordained in the church “according to” the gifts that they already possessed. This is the same position that Hyrum is in during this time. The next verse (11), strengthens this reading:

Behold thou art Hyrum, my son; seek the kingdom of God and all things shall be added according to that which is just. Build upon my Rock, which is my gospel; deny not the spirit of revelation, nor the Spirit of prophecy, for wo unto him that denieth these things: therefore, treasure up in your hearts until the time which is in my wisdom, that you shall go forth: Behold I speak unto all who have good desires, and have thrust in their sickles to reap. (D&C 11:23–27)

Here Hyrum is explicitly warned against denying the possibility of receiving revelation or prophecy by the spirit. Again, the wording here is very close to what is found in Moroni 10, “deny not the power of god; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever, and again, I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many” [Moroni 10:7–8].

MAY 1829 (THE TITLE PAGE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON)

Probably still in May 1829, around the time that he translated the book of Moroni, Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon title

³⁹ The 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* changes the plural ‘tongues’ to the singular ‘tongue’.

page, which was “taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates.”⁴⁰ This portion of the record reads:

Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of Prophecy and of Revelation . . . to come forth by the gift and power of GOD, unto the interpretation thereof; sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the LORD, to come forth in due time by the way of Gentile; the interpretation thereof by the gift of GOD.⁴¹

The only thing that Joseph Smith refers to on the title page as a gift is the translation aspect, everything else is done by the “spirit of Prophecy and of Revelation.” Joseph Smith was very careful translating the word gift here. He might still have had in mind that he and Oliver Cowdery were the only ones who really held this one true gift of translation to bring forth the Book of Mormon. There was still no mention of anything being done by the Holy Ghost or by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

It could be that Smith was still viewing the gift of the Holy Ghost as just another gift that one might receive, but not as the channel by which all gifts are received (Alma 7 [Alma 9:21–22]). For Joseph Smith in 1829, he was still holding only the one gift that had so far been given to him. In the preface of the 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon*, Joseph Smith again reminded readers that he “would inform you that I translated, by the gift and power of God.”⁴²

CONCLUSION

The first time that Joseph Smith actually laid out a list of spiritual gifts, outside of the *Book of Mormon*, was on March 8, 1831 (BOC 49 [D&C 46]). This revelation mentioned that each member of the church can have at least one, but maybe only one, spiritual gift (BOC 49:12 [D&C 46:12]). This is the first time that the gifts of the spirit were undeniably linked with the gift of the Holy Ghost in a revelation. It was only at that point that Joseph Smith finally sat down and systematized the purpose of gifts and specifically said that spiritual gifts come “by the Holy Ghost” (BOC 49:13–16 [D&C 46:13–16]). Earlier while translating the book of Moroni, Joseph Smith said that spiritual gifts “come by the Spirit of Christ” (Moroni 10 [Moroni 10:17]). It is important to remember here

⁴⁰ *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, I, 300.

⁴¹ Title page of the 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon*.

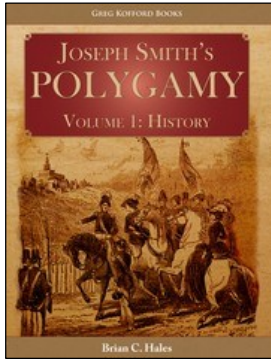
⁴² Preface of the 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon*.

that Joseph Smith translated Moroni in late May, after his baptism earlier that month. With this in mind, *Book of Commandments* 49 [D&C 46] would suggest that he slowly became more aware of spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost and the importance that they held in establishing the church.

Early in his prophetic career Joseph Smith believed that the gift of translation was connected to a physical object, and would be his one and only gift. Later, Oliver Cowdery also received this same gift. Since these gifts came in the form or through the medium of physical objects, they could be physically taken away or “lost.” During the early translation process of the *Book of Mormon* Joseph Smith only talked about “gifts” in relation to translation of the book. It was not until after his baptism that he conceived of establishing a church, and talked of gifts as associated with or coming through the medium of the Holy Ghost.

Thus, in the formative years of Mormonism during the translation of the *Book of Mormon*, Joseph Smith did not describe or deal with spiritual gifts in the way that most modern Mormons would conceive of them. This did not occur until after May 1829 when he started translating the book of Moroni and was baptized, and then finally much later in an 1831 when he received a specific revelation about spiritual gifts.

BOOK REVIEW: JOSEPH SMITH'S POLYGAMY, VOLUME 1 & 2:
HISTORY – *DAVID M. MORRIS*



Title: Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Volumes 1&2: History
Author: Brian C. Hales; Contributor: Don Bradley
Publisher: Greg Kofford Books
Year: 2013
Pages: (vol. 1) 623 & (vol. 2) 594
Binding: Hardback
ISBN-13: 978-15895818904
List Price: \$36.95

Regardless of the reader's religious or societal views, what Brian C. Hales has achieved, should be recognized as an audacious study. Perhaps it is too soon to declare it a definitive work, maybe what Richard Bushman's 'Rough Stone Rolling' did for the biography of Joseph Smith, so 'Joseph Smith's Polygamy' will do for Mormon polygamy. One of the endearing features of these volumes is how Hales, assisted by Don Bradley, has seemingly sought to find every reference, mention, or instance of polygamy and Joseph Smith. This is true to his goal of maintaining 'a firm commitment not to categorically reject any source of information. Antagonistic, apologetic, and neutral documents have all been given equal consideration and scrutiny.' (1:xi)

Brian C. Hales, is a board certified anaesthesiologist in Layton, Utah and this volume represents his seventh book, primarily on polygamy. His interest was roused by a close family member temporarily joining the Allred polygamous group in 1989, and has since spent years researching polygamy. Hales works from the premise that modern polygamous groups do not have genuine authority to practice plural marriage, and contends that the history points to Joseph Smith as the one with such a genuine authority. (1:ix).

That said, it is a very frank and empirical based study and is rarely devotional or confessional in tone. On the few occasions where the register does change, the author can be clearly identified as a believer in Mormonism. For example, early in Volume 1, Hales cites Daniel Bachman as to the early familiarity of the plural marriage doctrine, even as early as 1831, but precedes the statement with 'the Prophet learned of the correctness of plural marriage' (1:85, 91). The assumption of course that there is a correctness of plural marriage. However, this does not detract from the main thrust of these volumes. Already, it is a significant reference for primary and published sources, and with that in mind maybe Greg Kofford Books should also be credited for producing a three-volume set (two on history and one on theology) that perhaps other publishers might not have undertaken.

The first two volumes focus on the historicity and the dynamic and controversial relationships of Joseph Smith, et al. The first volume consists of 22 chapters (no index/bibliography) and volume 2 is the continuation with chapters 23 through to 33. Following these chapters are an extensive appendices and index for both volumes. It would have been preferable to include at least an index in the first volume as well, nevertheless, when combined with the second it is an excellent source of references and cataloguing of issues and narratives surrounding polygamy.

The early chapters engage with matters including the contextual morality of the time, 1820s to 1835, as well as first charges of immoral conduct between 1836 and 1842. Particularly in Chapter 3 Hales contends mainly over Fawn Brodie's assertions of Clarissa Reed Hancock as a plural wife of Joseph Smith (1:76) and calls on Andrew Jensen, D. Michael Quinn, H. Michael Marquardt, Todd Compton and George D. Smith for rebuttal. (1:77). On this matter the majority is agreed, but throughout the volumes, there is a great array of thought which makes for useful reading and assessment of the current theme.

Chapters 4-6 primarily examines Fanny Alger's relationship with Joseph Smith, perhaps this is the most familiar or earliest of Joseph's relationships but as Hales advises it 'can be interpreted differently as either a plural marriage, a friendship, or an adulterous union'. (1:124) Jeff Johnson, an LDS historian, who is described as having a middle-of-the-road perspective, contends that no historical evidence provides proof that 'Joseph Smith had any kind of relationship with Fanny Alger.' (1:124 fn66).

The evidence that Hales uses to support the notion of a relationship can be found in Volume 2, Appendix D. This is the pattern, an empirical approach with the expert weaving of commentary followed by opposing views in order to attempt an objective approach.

Maybe the genius of this new work is the re-evaluation of age-old assumptions of what some might consider a most difficult period of Mormonism. On occasion there are errors in dates or places, for example, the later marriage of Fanny Alger to Solomon Custer (a non-Mormon) in 1836 against Benjamin Johnson's recollection that it was sometime after 1837-1838. (1:123). There is also a family tradition that Brigham Young (post-1844), with Fanny Alger's brother, came to her to ask for her hand in marriage, prior to her marriage with Solomon Custer. Hales does not resolve that anomaly but merely makes note of it. (1:123 fn59, fn60). Whether it was earlier or later matters little, but it does demonstrate that Mormon history is often is complicated by inaccurate record keeping, the confusion /certainty of family traditions, lore, and hearsay.

Follow on from the post Alger affair, Chapters 6-10 considers the reactions of Oliver Cowdery, one of Joseph Smith's closest confidants and Book of Mormon scribe. Hales considers argument that Cowdery was an early polygamist by Daniel Bachman and Glen M. Leonard (1:127) and opposing views such as Richard van Wagoner contending it was impossible (1:129). Yet, prominent 19th century Mormons, Joseph F. Smith, alleged Cowdery was taking liberties without license' (1878) (1:129) and George Q Cannon, makes the charge of adultery. (1885) (1:129). It must be noted, however, that Cannon was not a first-hand witness to these event as he joined Mormonism in 1840. Interestingly, Hales makes it clear that Joseph Smith was only accused of adultery briefly but never accused of polygamy prior to 1841 (1:144-145). Moreover, it appears that no one publicly knew, neither Smith's religious or political critics, press nor local writers that such things were being practiced. (1:146-149).

Chapter 11 deals with sexuality within Joseph Smith's plural marriages. In fact, Hales ascertains that he has found no credible evidence or reliable documentation regarding some of the more salacious allegations of sexual relations, for example, sexual relations with two separate teenagers, non-married females and those who were experiencing conjugal relationships with their own legal husbands. (1:284-285). What is clear from reading these two volumes is that much that has been said

or alleged and generally is without proof, the more scandalous, the less evidence exists.

The thorny issue over polyandry is dealt with in depth throughout Chapters 12 to 16. Hales does not deny that polyandry existed, but argues against earlier writers such as Fawn Brodie (1:305) and D. Michael Quinn (1:307) that Joseph Smith practiced sexual polyandry (that is sexual relations while married to two men). Throughout these chapters, Hales again challenges former interpretations or assumptions. Clearly, he walks a very thin line while extracting as much of an angle as possible to prove his point, while at the same time curtailing nuances of bias supporting the opposing case.

Chapter 15 explores some of the ideas of marriage or unions/sealings that were for ‘time only’, ‘time and eternity’, and for ‘eternity only’. Those of ‘eternity only’, were not physically consummated but were for promised friendships in the hereafter. Those for ‘time only’ might be considered as traditional marital relationships. (1:413–415). The difficulties and complexities of marital and sexual union were more acute among those who were married for ‘time and eternity’. It is perhaps this group that most is written.

Chapters 18 through 22 provides quite a detailed portrayal of John C. Bennett, a contemporary and confidant of Joseph Smith, as one who was described as being completely involved in his own licentiousness (1:550) and was drawn to Joseph Smith’s plural marriage teachings to satisfy his own urges, while others argue he was following the revealed word on plural marriage. Hales argues, ‘authors seldom account for the fact that Bennett had been accused of sexual impropriety before arriving in Nauvoo...’including previous marital infidelity.’ (1:550–551). Robert Flanders argues therein that ‘Bennett, a promiscuous and lascivious man had stumbled across the developing religious principle’ and was attracted and distorted it (1:548). Conversely, Hales draws on a number of equally respected scholars, including Todd Compton (1:547–548), Gary Bergera (1:517, 549), Richard S. Van Wagoner (1:548), that locates Bennett as one of the closest confidants and friends of the Prophet, and that his awareness of plural marriage came from that source.

The remaining chapters 23–33 (volume 2) deal with the reaction of Emma Smith, Joseph’s legal wife as well as the fallout and the martyrdom of Joseph Smith at Carthage, Illinois in 1844. Culminating in Chapter 33 is a review of Joseph Smith’s wives. Often the thoughts and

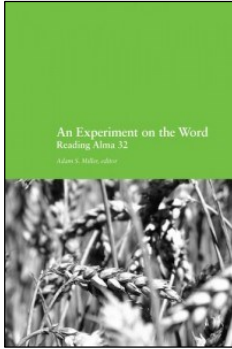
feelings of Emma Smith are overshadowed by all of the other characters involved in polygamy. Her accounts of bitterness and the early casting out of her home of Fanny Alger, and the report (probably fictional) of throwing Eliza Partridge down the stairs, but did send her away (2:109) highlights the plight she had. It is clear from these later chapters that by May 1843 she had come to terms with polygamy, and while the term 'accepted' is used (2:47, 2:113), perhaps 'tolerated' is closer. She participated in at least giving a further four wives to her husband. (2:47). To the credit of the character of Emma Smith, 'multiple evidences indicate that Emma tried to believe and obey' for many years. (2:128). Unfortunately Emma's part in the Utah Mormon narrative fades quite quickly after Nauvoo, where she chose to stay when the church moved westwards. Maybe Emma is the one wife that is overlooked most.

The following appendices, A-H consume nearly 150 pages, offering evidence of dates, places, chronology, as well databases dealing with polygamy at Nauvoo, Illinois. Combined with the bibliography the latter half of the second volume is a welcome resource for the empirical researcher.

In conclusion, there are some criticisms, that even with three volumes overflowing with references, that some of the nitty-gritty detail remains missing due to 'no contemporary evidence exists' (1:91), 'no contemporaneous evidence exists' (1:101), 'Little or no evidence exists' (1:277), clearly demonstrating that an intimate understanding still eludes even the hardest of researchers. Hales does not claim this to be the complete finished work, but hopes that perhaps smaller studies might pick up where he has left off. And no doubt there will be some. This is a very well researched and presented volume, and should be considered as a serious piece of scholarship that enlightens neglected areas of Mormon past.

BOOK REVIEW: AN EXPERIMENT ON THE WORD: READING

ALMA 32 – KIRK CAUDLE



Title: An Experiment on the Word: Reading Alma 32

Author: Adam S. Miller

Publisher: Worthy Publishing

Year: 2011

Pages: 112

Binding: Hardback

ISBN-13: 978-0983963606

List Price: \$19.95

An *Experiment on the Word: Reading Alma 32* is a collection of six papers presented at the first *Mormon Theological Seminar* (MTS). The *Mormon Theological Seminar* is a group of Mormon scholars who study scripture closely and charitably. This book does what other books in the field of Mormon studies are typically not doing, they are reading “Mormon scripture theologically rather than historically, doctrinally, or devotionally” (1). The *Mormon Theological Seminar* proves that Mormons can be theologians too. The authors introduced in *An Experiment on the Word* are proof that an individual can congruently be a faithful member of the Church and, at the same time, a theologian critically engaged in the reading of the *Book of Mormon*. I see the agenda of the book being to challenge the reader to do exactly what Alma 32 challenges its reader to do, to experiment upon the word. Adam Miller, editor and founder of the MTS, added that “to experiment upon the word is to experience the word” (15). I read the book with this phrase in mind because I believe that it encompasses the overall agenda of the collection.

The audience most suited for this book is one who has at least an elementary understanding of the *Book of Mormon*. An understanding of popular Mormon doctrines, and ideas, is not required. However, a mind already familiar with the text under discussion will have an easier time following the various presentations and their subtle nuances. With that said, whether an individual has read through the text once, twice, or

one-hundred times, that individual is sure to glean an additional understanding of The Book of Mormon and of faith in particular.

With the possible exception of James E. Faulconer, Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding at Brigham Young University, contributors to *An Experiment on the Word* are chiefly made up scholars unknown to the general membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Scholars contributing to this volume are not names that one will see popularly stacked on the shelves of Deseret Book. The curious reader should not let this lack of notoriety detour him or her from this book. These are each scholars with which the *Book of Mormon* connoisseur would do well to become more acquainted with.

The first essay, *Desiring to Believe: Wisdom and Political Power* is by James E. Faulconer. Faulconer sees the story of Alma and the Zoramites in Alma 32 and the story of Korihor in Alma 30 as stories which contrast opposite forms of desire. When Alma encounters the Zoramites they are experiencing a case of misplaced desire. Because of this misplaced desire, Faulconer teaches that the Zoramites “must give up the very form of worship in which they desire to participate; they must give up signs as the basis of belief” (26). The right form of humility creates a new desire. The Zoramites needed a desire which led them to faith, not knowledge.

‘You Must Needs Say that the Word is Good’, by the editor of this volume, Adam S. Miller, is the second essay. Although many questions are posed throughout this essay, one question looms throughout. Miller poses the question, “If we begin with the premise that humility is universally imposed, how might we read Alma’s discourse on faith” (32)? For Miller, Faith is knowing that the planted seed is good. This faith comes by humility. However, not just any type of humility, but humility that is free from compulsion. In fact, Miller actually defines faith as such, “faith is humility without compulsion” (35). In this way, faith is what arrives to supplement knowledge. Faith is not meant to replace knowledge. Miller shows that signs are always already there which add to one’s knowledge. We suffer from a lack of faith, not a lack of knowledge. As faith rids itself of sure knowledge that faith in turn finds perfection.

Jenny Webb, scholar of comparative literature, is next up with ‘It is Well that Ye are Cast Out: Alma 32 and Eden’. Webb notes, while citing Alma 32:10–11 that “private worship seems to have been either unknown, or at the very least, not legitimated” (43). This statement got

my mind moving. From the first page, Webb made me wonder if Mormons are more of a people concerned with private or with public worship. After all, Mormons attend church every Sunday, yet many of the most special experiences happen when people are alone. Webb argues that the casting out of the Zoramites, from their synagogues, was for the best. This is not a ground-breaking claim. However, she makes some fascinating connections between this casting out and the Adam and Eve Fall/Redemption story. I have not seen many these connections made elsewhere. Her novel connections are an outstanding addition to Book of Mormon scholarship.

Joe Spencer, who in my opinion is among the foremost Book of Mormon scholars today, provides the fourth essay, *Faith, Hope, and Charity: Alma and Joseph Smith*. Spencer provides two of the best definitions of faith and hope that I have ever read. He does this, in part, by showing that Alma 32:21 (the usual verse used to define these two terms) cannot be separated from the verses that follow, 22 and 23. From these three verses Spencer recognizes that “faith is a question of one’s actively believing the word to be true, hope is a question of one’s recognition of the possibilities that are opened by the word or name that has been delivered” (60). It seems to me that Spencer presents faith as truth and hope as the future possibilities of that truth. The close attention that Spencer gives to the text is, as always, spectacular. Joe Spencer is a philosopher, and he writes like one too. Although Spencer can be difficult for the average person to read, his essay should not be missed.

‘So Shall My Word Be: Reading Alma 32 through Isaiah 55’, by New Testament scholar Julie M. Smith, is the fifth essay. Honestly, out of all the essays, this essay had me the most skeptical going in. Smith intertextualizes Alma 32 and Isaiah 55, meaning that she reads Alma through the lenses of Isaiah. Her connections are both novel and inventive. What Smith does with Isaiah 55 is something that few Book of Mormon scholars have successfully attempted. In the end, Smith makes a very strong case that the two chapters are connected.

The fifth and final essay, ‘Faith and Commoditization’, comes from Robert Couch, professor of finance at Willamette University. Couch provides, hands down, the best introduction of any of the essays. In his introduction, Couch juxtaposes those who have a home grown garden and those who purchase produce from the supermarket. Couch relates “With the rise of globally-integrated markets . . . the fruit trade is

booming and it makes less and less economic sense to tend our own gardens and grow our own fruit. For much less effort, and usually less expense, we can pop into the local supermarket and have our pick from a wide selection of beautifully-presented fruit” (87). Couch goes on to describe the difference between being a consumer and being a producer of faith. Consumers are only into price, like those who shop at certain department stores, and do not care if “sweatshop labor was used in the production process” (89). In a spiritual sense, consumers demand knowledge and become sign seekers (D&C 46:10). When one comes to the realization of his or her own lack of knowledge then “religious consumers feel comfortable in terms of having ample and convenient access to knowledge, this supposed knowledge takes up the space that the true believer would otherwise fill with faith” (94). After reading this essay the message that I came away with was that being a righteous spiritual consumer means learning how to gain true faith no matter what the cost.

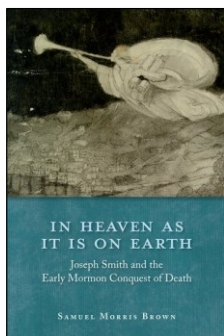
Multiple authors bring up the fact that chapters 30–35 in the Book of Alma are really one chapter in the original text of *The Book of Mormon*. This is extremely helpful information while reading through these six essays. Another common theme in many of these essays is that faith does not equal knowledge. Knowledge is always already there. It is faith, not perfect knowledge, which should be the desired destination.

Although this book is excellent, I have two problems pertaining to the layout of the book. Problem one, the book contains no scripture index. A scripture index at the back of the book is extremely helpful when doing personal scripture study and needing help with a particular scripture. The second criticism is related to the first criticism. The book sorely needs a general subject index. The book is available for preview on Amazon. However, many people go to the index while looking at a preview to see how much a specific issue might be covered. The lack of the inclusion of a general subject index is a major oversight in an otherwise outstanding work.

The major difference that I noticed between *An Experiment on the Word* from other works at popular Mormon bookstores pertaining to scripture is that it is not apologetic. According to my reading, the purpose is not to persuade the reader of the truthfulness of anything. *An Experiment on the Word* does not have a goal to convince the reader to believe something. The purpose of the book is not to take sides on particular

doctrinal issues. Rather, the purpose of this, and I am assuming subsequent Salt Press and MTS books, is to move readers to read scripture closely, charitably, and to act upon a belief. *An Experiment on the Word* is among the best books relating to Mormon scripture currently on the market. It is a must for any serious student of the *Book of Mormon*.

**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."

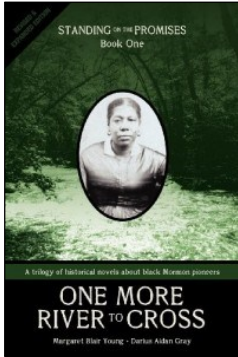
In saying all of this, Brown does not decry Joseph Smith as a prophet who opportunistically drew on the social and cultural context. Rather, he provides an image of a prophet who through his revelations was able to make them accessible to the community by speaking the language of the society in which 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.

**BOOK REVIEW: ONE MORE RIVER TO CROSS (BOOK ONE,
STANDING ON THE PROMISES, TRILOGY) – FIONA SMITH**



Title: *One More River to Cross* (Book One *Standing on the Promises*, Trilogy) Revised and Expanded.

Author: Margaret Blair Young / Darius Aidan Gray

Publisher: Zarahemla Books, Provo, Utah.

Year: 2013

Pages: 356

Binding: Paperback

ISBN-13: 978-0984360383

List Price: \$17.95

Standing on the Promises is a trilogy of historically based novels dedicated to the experiences of nineteenth-century black Mormon pioneers in the early period of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *One More River to Cross* is the first volume in the series and it would appear that the authors Margaret Blair Young and Darius Aidan Gray have themselves undertaken a journey by crossing from publishers Deseret Book in 2000 to Zarahemla Books in 2013. Their purpose: to give greater insight into the lives of individuals within the trilogy, particularly when descendants came forward with their own research that provided an expanded empirical basis for the writing. Indeed as the authors blend both real and fictional characters into the narrative the revised notes at the end of each chapter provide a factual context for the historical events amidst the fiction. Of course the nature of poetic license is to allow themes to develop within the genre of historical fiction, yet the authors attempt to give the reader a more accurate picture of historical events is a praiseworthy effort.

One More River to Cross is situated during the gradual emancipation period of slavery in nineteenth-century America, and primarily focuses on the journeys of two characters, Jane Manning James and Elijah

Abel, who are arguably the most documented of black pioneers in Mormon history. The novel begins with a list of characters that is not extensive in its detail, however, the book does in fact name dozens of figures, real and fictional, bond and free, converts to the LDS Church and those who are not. Some of these figures have whole chapters dedicated to their stories and others appear as supporting or incidental characters in the book. Black pioneers make appearances with well-known white Mormon leaders such as Joseph Smith Jr.—founder and Prophet of the LDS Church, his wife Emma Hale Smith, his parents—Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, and Brigham Young—Joseph’s closest confidant and second president of the Church. The stories of the principle characters are illustrated against the backdrop of the Mormon pioneer trek to Nauvoo, Illinois, with Jane being one of the few in the black community to continue west to Utah’s Salt Lake Valley with her husband and children.

The novel begins with a prologue in the narrative voice of the fictionalised great-great grand-daughter of Jane Manning James. As storyteller, her name is never revealed, nor is her voice distinct throughout the novel, yet she speaks in the first person of an encounter with her great grandmother, noting that among ‘several black Mormons Jane James was one of the earliest.’ Jane’s story in the novel begins in Wilton, Connecticut as she gives birth to a child conceived by rape from her white minister, Pastor Sylvester. Historically, Jane is said to have remained silent on the issue of rape and this view is supported in the authors’ notes at the end of the chapter. However, the authors make the unlikely choice of having Jane name her child Sylvester, after the offending priest. Of course a reader is always confronted with the believability in storytelling using their own discretion and experience with that of the author and it would appear in *One More River to Cross* that occasionally the author’s treatment of the principle characters can indeed be challenged on factual credibility.

The story proceeds with Mrs Fitch casting aspersions on Jane’s pregnancy, becoming further offended when Jane leaves the household to join the Mormon religion. Jane and a band of eight members of her family convert to the Church and heed the call given to pioneers across the globe to travel west to Nauvoo, Illinois. Upon reaching Buffalo, New York the family are denied boat passage, and subsequently set off on a journey of over eight hundred miles to Nauvoo, Illinois by foot. The dialogue that takes place between the family during their difficult crossings,

through river and snowy banks, is probably the liveliest portion of the book and gives a certain authenticity to the African American voice. Similarly, Jane's courtship later in the novel, with her husband Isaac James, contains humour that is an enjoyable read. The novel details the James family's arrival at the Mansion House, Joseph Smith's Nauvoo residence, and Jane's experiences with the Smiths as she takes up abode in housework. Jane's journey with her family continues, subsequent to Joseph Smith's martyrdom, when she migrates to the Salt Lake Valley following Brigham Young as head leader.

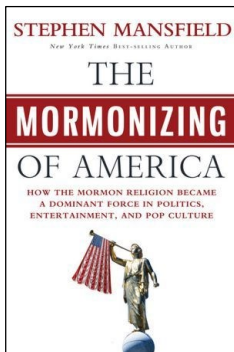
Though relatively unknown in the pioneer stories of contemporary Mormons, Jane is one of the most researched black pioneers and was undoubtedly one of the most popular female pioneers in her day. She is reported to have been known as the leader of the small, black Mormon pioneer community in the state of Illinois, during the 1840's, where most of the story takes place. Though her picture appears on the front cover of the novel Jane's story in the main is undertaken in the latter half of the novel and it is in fact Elijah Abel who is the main focus in the book. Elijah Abel was the first known black Church leader ordained to the priesthood by Joseph Smith and his presence dominates the book, not only due to the predominance of pages dedicated to his story but in his placement right at the beginning of the novel, his treatment in the middle, and finally his concluding presence at the end.

The story of Elijah Abel begins with his escape in the night from the slavery in his master's household, along with his family. This escape is led by his mother, Delilah who bears the name of Abel's real mother, as recorded in history, the brothers—Daniel and Jeremiah, however, are completely fictionalized. Their escape comes shortly after the death of the Master—known to the slaves as “Massa”—who gives Elijah his free papers prior to his passing away. Delilah, only too aware that as a result of Massa's death Elijah's free papers may hold no value to save him from slavery, organises an escape with her family but dies on the way. Following the death of his mother, Elijah is presented as a tragic figure, a fugitive wandering lost, who creates an imaginary friend to help ease his grief. This ‘friend’ is known as Joseph of the rainbow coat (or as recorded in the Bible's Old Testament, Joseph with the coat of many colours—sometimes referred to in the novel as “Ancient Joe”)—who Elijah has frequent conversations with, sometimes arguing with himself as he consoles his demons, wrestling with the world and his place within it. Elijah's place in society is multifarious, in history he was a carpenter who reportedly

worked on the construction of the Mormon temple at Kirtland, Ohio, as well as one of the official undertakers for the saints, and upon his conversion received an ordination that placed him in the high priesthood, third quorum of the Seventy in the Church. In the face of racial discrimination in and outside of the Church, Elijah was eventually counselled to limit his preaching to blacks when previously he was given the freedom to preach without a colour bar. The novel presents within him, the conflict of ambition for a better life, and his abasement in response to the harsh realities of the dangers presented in the life of a black man, and his high status during nineteenth-century society. However, the authors present him as acceding far too readily to submission without demonstrating in equal measure his obvious leadership qualities. Never finding his former companion and child, Elijah Abel eventually goes on to marry a young woman called Nancy, and pays a visit to Emma Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois. Emma by this time, (after the martyrdom of her husband in 1844), has remarried, but bares the heavy scars of the persecution endured in Nauvoo, where the main action in the novel occurs, and where she remained while the main Church under Brigham Young moved westward.

One More River to Cross is one of many books illustrating the pioneer experiences of Mormon saints where its uniqueness lies in the depiction of black pioneers often absent in mainstream Mormon culture. The simplicity in its storytelling belies the occasional didacticism of the black presence, particularly when referring to Africa's ancient presence in the Bible as depicted in characters such as Simon the Cyrene who carried the cross of Jesus, Moses and his Ethiopian wife, and Joseph of Old with his Egyptian wife. It is a story of black saints who joined a Church that extended their membership to all, regardless of race, yet wrestled, sometimes with scripture, in its administration of racial policies. Many black pioneers past and present maintain faith to withstand it all because it is a religion they believe in. In this regard *One More River to Cross* is a valuable contribution to the black Latter-day Saint experience in Mormon literature today.

BOOK REVIEW: THE MORMONIZING OF AMERICA: HOW THE MORMON RELIGION BECAME A DOMINANT FORCE IN POLITICS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND POP CULTURE – DAVID M. MORRIS



Title: The Mormonizing of America: How the Mormon Religion Became a Dominant Force in Politics, Entertainment, and Pop Culture

Author: Stephen Mansfield

Publisher: Worthy Publishing

Year: 2012

Pages: 288

Binding: Hardback

ISBN-13: 978-1617950785

List Price: \$22.95

In approaching this review I have endeavored to be open-minded, about the author's approach, and his knowledge of the matter at hand. Too often it is easy for a reviewer to dismiss a publication on account of whether it is considered 'outside' of a particular field or following a particular agenda. There is no doubt that Stephen Mansfield's style is easy to read and consume. This does not mean, however, he is convinced of Mormonism's argument which is easy to detect. I would also credit the author with his register and general tone providing a popular book for a larger audience. Personally, it matters little to me whether the writer is Mormon, Jew, Baptist etc. For me it is a legitimate endeavour to research and question without being part of the inner. So that Mansfield is not Mormon or even that this publication is Mormon orientated matters little to me the purpose is to assess, review and report.

That said, I was left with the overwhelming feeling that despite attempting to discuss the 'The Mormonizing of America', it seemed more like a thrashing of well-worn and aged arguments. Mansfield in his attempt to make sense of the foundations of Mormonism, assesses that the LDS Church is a product of the Jacksonian era. Occasionally, a flattering comment arises, but appears more of a cursory rather than part of any

advancing scholarly framework. This book, therefore, might be considered a rebuttal of Mormonism with a thinly veiled act of diplomacy, dusted with a little flattery.

The book itself, with its introduction, prologue, nine chapters, and two appendices, is oriented around what Mansfield argues as the four “engines” which drive Mormonism. In between individual chapters are interwoven small vignettes playing out Mormon and non-Mormon dialogues. However, I will discuss these later.

The first engine identified is that of belief, that this life is a test, and part of an eternal plan of progression leading to self-improvement and achievement. (32–34). Second, the emphasis on long-term family commitment creates a culture which reinforces Mormons’ commitment to their church and each other. (34–36). Third, the focus on education and development of leadership skills produces abilities that lead to success in non-church settings. (36–38). Finally, fourth, the Mormon emphasis on patriotism and a free market economy, combined with cautious views of government control, lead to active conservative political participation. (38–41). It is not unreasonable, in the author’s assessment, therefore, that this ascent has made Mormons “free market apostles”. (40)

In accepting such a four part model, in order to make sense of this dominant force in America, Mansfield does observe a further “spiritual appeal” of Mormonism. (41). He emphasizes that for Mormons, the concept of a caring Heavenly Father, rather than an abstract impersonal God, strengthens their resolve as well as the beliefs in their own personal spiritual experiences. He further argues that there is the notion of continuous heavenly revelation intended to guide the Church as well as its members.

Chapter One discusses how Mormons see themselves and their ‘unshakable belief’ in the priesthood, the restored authority to act in God’s Church. (57) Debatable, but nevertheless I’ll go with the flow. In fairness, the wider outlaying of the doctrinal assessment is somewhat fair, even though Mansfield does claim that doctrine is not primarily important (56), I think most Mormons would agree with that as being inaccurate. When Mansfield does get past considering Mormons a bit ‘squishy’ (64), he does suggest a page of valid questions that perhaps even Mormons should consider, and consider how they would respond, particularly regarding their relationship to other denominations, and

considerations of what priesthood actually means. (65) He draws the first chapter to an end by assuring that due to the Church's critical mass it should be 'worth considering for this reason alone.' (66). Helpfully, a chronology follows and generally is accurate, a few entries do need clarifying, for example, August 1835 was not a period when polygamy was even accused, let alone denied. See for example Brian C. Hales three volume set *Joseph Smith Polygamy: History & Theology* who argues it was not until post-1840 that any allegations were made. An entry referring to the RLDS Church might also be questioned as to when it was formed (1860), or when it first began to informally meet (1852). I had hoped that at least the research was more than a brief observation.

Chapter Two through Six addresses the contextual background for the Church's early beginnings and the Smith family. This is pretty much a thumbnail sketch of Richard Bushman's *Rough Stone Rolling*, perhaps the definitive biography of Joseph Smith. I have no real disagreement with the general historical context. I do have issue as to the extent that the author considers Fawn Brodie as an eminent (125) and gifted historian. Mansfield does not mention the issues or criticism that she received for her psychoanalytic approaches, or even in-house editor's criticism of making facts fit the theory rather than theory to the facts. Unfortunately the author uses few other historians to the extent of Brodie, who remains the primary scholar. "The truth is that when all of the research is considered, there is precious little scientific or historical evidence that *Book of Mormon* claims are historically true." (177) The same might be said of many aspects of religious feeling and responses within and without Mormonism. So why don't Mormons leave the faith? He says most Mormons are not primarily interested in scholarship as they are taught to seek a feeling of confirmation, an "inner knowing" that trumps objective evidence.

I found several historical and theological errors that could have been easily avoided if this draft had been reviewed by a scholar of Mormonism, not necessarily a Mormon scholar. He is clear of his disdain for the *Book of Mormon*, even using the outdated excuse of the Spaulding manuscript as a possible source for the book. (149) The author quotes members of Spaulding's family recalling *Book of Mormon* names that first appeared in Spaulding's *Manuscript Found*. One would think that the author would check a copy of Spaulding's book, easily available at the Internet Archive. If he had, he would have easily found a word search of

the document fails to uncover the names referenced. Additionally, if the author had made any effort at fairness, he would have shared some of the significant research that has been shown to disprove that theory. Furthermore in his seeking for evidence or accuracy the vignettes are curious.

Some of these vignettes do not seem authentic, particularly, the young men and boys being ordained as priests. At one point it is stated that boys at 13 were considered for the priesthood as a priest, in another place it is highlighted as 14 and 12 to be called a priest. (163). The actuality is that it is age 12, and that was to be ordained to a Deacon and at 14 to the office of Teacher, and finally at 16 to the office of Priest. This office of priest would generally only last two years before a young man is ordained to a higher priesthood such as the office of Elder or High Priest. If these dialogues had come from the Mormon experience as supposed – then this would be readily known. The same sentiment rests for some of the others.

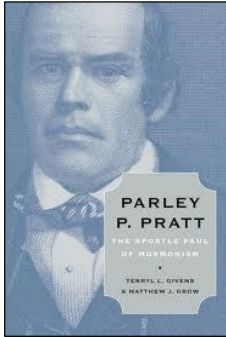
There are a number of further typos or errors including the contents and number of revelations in the *Doctrine of Covenants* (1835) (178), Smith's marriage date as January 18 1927, when it should be 1827 (111), moreover the report of mob violence cited as 1842 instead of 1832, (211).

Mormon Beliefs in Plain Language (157–161). While it is welcome that an author provides an overview of an organisation's articles, there are a number of inaccuracies concerning this section. For example: 5: Pre-made families, destinies determined, and assignment in life as Mormon/non-Mormon are incorrect; 13: The age at which boys receive the priesthood is 12 not 14; 19: Stating that women can now go on missions is a misnomer, it is not a recent phenomenon but one of the nineteenth century, 1897, and believed to be Inez Knight who went to Great Britain; 20: 'Some Latter-day Saints' is misleading, it is actually fundamentalist groups and not LDS who continue the practice. There are distinct subtleties between the names Latter-day Saint, Latter-Day Saints and Latter Day Saint.

In conclusion, this book remains an easy read and is intended for the popular audience. It provides little that is new or anything other than the rehashing of older publications. It has so much potential but lacks in-depth research causing inaccuracies and flawed outcomes. There is very little to do with the title or the process or personalities of Mormonizing America. For me this review is not a defense of Mormonism but a focus on the books research and outcomes. I would hope that a

second edition seriously considers more recent scholarly work, availability of resources, and the reading of the script by an academic dealing with Mormon studies.

BOOK REVIEW: PARLEY P. PRATT: THE APOSTLE PAUL OF
MORMONISM – *RONAN JAMES HEAD*



Title: Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism

Author: Terryl Givens and Matthew Grow

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Year: 2011

Pages: 592

Binding: Hardback

ISBN-13: 978-0195375732

List Price: £22.50

Mormon apostle and pioneer Parley P. Pratt is not the first Latter-day Saint to be called the “apostle Paul of Mormonism.” That honour has been given both to his brother Orson Pratt and to Brigham Young. Given that it is a striking subtitle of Givens and Grow’s book, it seems to be a reasonable point on which to begin this review of an important new work of Mormon biography.

Givens and Grow admit that there are important and obvious differences between Paul and Pratt: Paul was an educated Jew, Pratt a “self-taught back-woodsman”; Paul was a “champion of celibacy,” Pratt a “promulgator of polygamy” (5). For the authors, these basic differences do not have the weight of certain archetypal similarities, however. Givens and Grow believe both men had (5):

1. “[A] deep sense of the divine importance of their apostolic calling”;
2. “[A] bold, blunt, outspoken style that led to frequent controversies”;
3. Frequent clashes with their religious colleagues: “Paul clashed with Peter, Pratt dissented at times from both Smith and Young”;
4. A religious devotion before their conversion;
5. A deep commitment to their new cause, “driven by a belief in an oncoming millennium.”

The authors make this comparison, and indeed make it a subtitle to their book, for three stated reasons (5–8):

1. Paul and Pratt are responsible for systematising and popularising their founder's teachings. Both thus illustrate a "crucial stage of any new religious movement: the creation, explication, and popularization of a theological system."
2. Paul and Pratt were tireless proselytizers, contributing to the expansion of their new religions, their stories serving as "a window" onto the early expansion of their faiths and, in some ways, on the intersection of religion and the ordinary people they met.
3. Both Paul and Pratt "revelled in opposition and persecution," personifying the culture of persecution often present in new religions.

One could focus on where Paul and Pratt differ beyond what Givens and Grow already offer—certainly Paul has ended up being far more influential on human history than Pratt will almost certainly ever be, and Pratt did not offer so radical a turn away from his religion's founding as Paul did (the de-judaising of Christianity). However, as a frame for telling Pratt's story, I think it serves a useful purpose. In this biography we are not simply presented with a chronological description of Pratt's life. Instead, we are introduced to Pratt as writer, missionary, and martyr, three roles important to nascent Mormonism. Therein the book rises above Pratt's own autobiography. By incorporating Pratt's own primary observations and giving them narrative purpose, *Parley P. Pratt* becomes a first-rate work of historiography.

Given the venue of this review, we ought naturally to be drawn to Pratt's British missions and Pratt's place in Mormon missionary history. Susan Easton Black has noted the emphasis on the "American gospel hero" in the histories written about British Mormonism.¹ The story of the apostolic missions is generally told as the story of Heber C. Kimball, Joseph Fielding, Brigham Young, and Wilford Woodruff. Givens and Grow provide no exception, for the American Parley P. Pratt is here the "Apostle to the British." Theirs is a biography of Pratt, not a history of the British Mission, so this is unavoidable, but still, another mark is entered into the "American gospel hero" column in Mormon history.

Despite this unavoidable continuation of a type, we do find fresh insights along the way. The description of the “temperate” Joseph Fielding vs. Pratt the aggressive defender of Mormonism (186) offers a glimpse into the different personalities of the Mormon apostles who are too often—especially in hagiographic accounts—painted with the same somewhat two-dimensional brush. In Pratt we also get a view of evangelism that isn’t just the treading of the British countryside. Pratt’s role as a writer of tracts and editor of the *Millennial Star* is given ample and necessary attention, as is his importance as a hymnist (179–181).

David M. Morris has noted another bias in Mormon history: “Too frequently attempts by scholars to discuss British Mormonism results in publications that mainly deal with the periods 1837–1838 and 1840–1841 that corresponds with the first two apostolic missions. Subsequently, well-rehearsed and repeated accounts neglect a rich seam that is still waiting to be mined.”² The most interesting tale of Pratt the missionary is thus one that is relatively little known (not being part of the 1837–1838/1840–1841 missions): the scramble to secure the allegiance of the British Saints after the death of Joseph Smith. The 1845 mission to England and Scotland is given some attention, although I would have liked more.

One is voyeuristically drawn to the description of Pratt’s murder in Arkansas (Chapter 14). The writers avoid sensationalism and ably situate it in the wider culture of anti-Mormonism. Whatever Pratt’s innocence or guilt as a seducer of women (he would have vehemently denied the accusation but it is easy to see how Mormon missionary polygamists provoked such suspicion), the reaction of the American press in condoning the murder is remarkable and offers another view of Mormonism as “the most despised religion of nineteenth-century America” (p.390). The authors’ own ultimately favourable view of Pratt is no doubt influenced by their own Mormonism, but no effort is made here to sweep difficult issues under the carpet.

In the figure of Parley P. Pratt the tale of 19th century Mormonism is told and we are fortunate that Givens and Grow have proven to be such able biographers. Pick an issue—the Book of Mormon, polygamy, the European missions, the succession crisis, Utah Territory—and Pratt’s life has something interesting to say. Givens and Grow say it well.

¹ Susan Easton Black, 'A Profile of a British Saint 1837–1848', in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The British Isles*, ed. by Donald Q. Cannon (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History), p.103.

² David M. Morris, 'Book Review: *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History, Volume 7: The British Isles*,' in *IJMS*, 1 (2008), pp. 176–183.

ARTICLE CONTRIBUTORS

KIRK CAUDLE received his Master's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, with a concentration in Spiritual Traditions and Ethics, from Marylhurst University. He currently teaches on-line religion courses for BYU-Idaho and is the host of *The Mormon Book Review* Podcast. He also co-chairs of the "Mormon Studies" Special Topics Session of the Pacific Northwest Region of the American Academy of Religion. He resides in Portland, OR with his wife and four children.

DOUGLAS J. DAVIES is Professor in the Study of Religion at the Department of Theology & Religion, Durham University, UK. and Director of that University's Centre for Death and Life Studies. Previously he was Professor of Religious Studies at Nottingham University whose Ph.D. he holds for a thesis on salvation in relation to the sociology of knowledge. He was born and educated in South Wales, and at Durham University's Departments of Anthropology and of Theology, and at the Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford University whose M.Litt., and D. Litt. Degrees he holds. In 1998 the University of Uppsala conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Theology upon him. He has been a visiting research fellow at Oxford's Rothermere American Institute, at the Huntington Library in California as well as at Brigham Young University. He sits on the editorial boards of *Mortality (UK)* and *Thanatological Studies (Italy)*. He has taught course on death, ritual and belief for many years both at Nottingham and Durham Universities. He is also well-known for his research on Mormonism, Anglicanism and theoretical aspects of the anthropology and theology of religion.

WILFRIED DECOO was Professor of Applied Linguistics and Education at the University of Antwerp (Belgium) and at Brigham Young University. He retired in 2011. Besides books on linguistics, academic ethics, and education, he has also published various articles on international aspects of the Mormon Church. He blogs at Times and Seasons. {wilfried_decoo@byu.edu}

ALAN GOFF is Professor of Arts and Sciences at DeVry University-Phoenix. He holds Masters Degrees in English and Political Science from BYU and a Doctor of Arts in Humanistic Studies from the University at Albany.

ARMAND L. MAUSS is Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies Emeritus at Washington State University, USA; past editor of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*; and past President of the Mormon History Association (1997–98). He has published over 100 articles and reviews in academic journals and edited collections, including many in the journals of religious studies, such as the *Journal of Mormon History* and *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.