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Essays

Mormonism and Anthropology: On Ways of Knowing

Fenella Cannell

What will happen to me when I die? What will occur tomorrow? next week? in a thousand years? How did everything begin? How will it all end? We all want to know more than we can know. . . . Religion gives order to people's emotions and meaning to their lives. The way any religion does so raises problems even as it solves others. This is the nature of a dynamic system. Normal procedures have unsettling by-products.—William A. Christian Jr.¹

If I have a spiritual gift it is perhaps an immense capacity for doubt.—Terryl Givens²

WHEN WILLIAM CHRISTIAN, that exemplary historian and anthropologist of Christian practice, suggested that, through its “normal procedures,” “any religion . . . raises problems even as it solves others,” he was writing not about Latter-day Saints but about Roman Catholics. Specifically, he was describing popular visions of the Virgin Mary, often centering on

1. William A. Christian Jr., *Visionaries: The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 392–93.

2. Mormon Scholars Testify, <http://mormonscholarstestify.org/1904/terryl-l-givens>.

child visionaries, that commanded the rapt attention of vast outdoor crowds in the Basque regions of Northern Spain in the early 1930s.

Given that most Latter-day Saints would draw a strong contrast between their own church and Roman Catholicism, Christian's remarks might seem an unexpected starting point for a discussion of present-day Mormonism. But anthropologists, like many historians, are committed to exploring comparisons.

To a visiting ethnographer with previous experience of fieldwork in local Catholic settings,³ parallels between these two great institutional churches necessarily suggest themselves. Mormonism, it sometimes seems, combines Catholicism's focus on sacramental efficacy with Protestantism's attention to sincere interiority and personal agency, although doing so of course in its own unprecedented way.⁴ This is one context, among others, in which it is possible to consider both the joys and the difficulties that Latter-day Saints describe in the practice of their faith.

I first became interested in research with Latter-day Saints because Mormonism's famous distinctiveness allowed me to question some of my own discipline's theoretical claims about what religion in general, and Christianity in particular, is like and how it is supposed to work.⁵ When I was asked by the editors of this journal to write a short piece on Mormon anthropology, it seemed to me that two kinds of task were implied: first, to provide some indicative references to the

3. Fenella Cannell, *Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

4. Fenella Cannell, "How Does Ritual Matter?," in *Questions of Anthropology*, LSE Monographs on Social Anthropology, ed. Rita Astuti, Jonathan Parry, and Charles Stafford (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 105–37.

5. Fenella Cannell, "The Christianity of Anthropology," Malinowski Memorial Lecture, 2004, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, n.s., 11 (2005): 335–56; Cannell, ed., *The Anthropology of Christianity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Cannell, "How Does Ritual Matter?," 105–37; Cannell, "The Re-enchantment of Kinship," in *Vital Relations: Modernity and the Persistent Life of Kinship*, ed. Susie McKinnon and Fenella Cannell (Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2013), 217–40; Cannell, "The Blood of Abraham: Mormon Redemptive Physicality and American Idioms of Kinship," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (May 2013): 77–94.

anthropology written about Latter-day Saints, which Ann Taves⁶ has said is less familiar to scholars of religion including herself; and second, more broadly, to offer a brief account of what a comparative, plural, and perspective-sensitive approach to Mormonism—now also being called for by scholars in other fields, notably in a key issue of *Mormon Studies Review*⁷—might look like from the point of view of an anthropologist. Another way of putting this second task would be to ask what the object “Mormonism” might look like from the viewpoint of anthropology and what the object “anthropology” might look like from the viewpoint of Mormonism, and so to begin to imagine the kinds of conversation that could take place between people involved in these two practices.

The distinctive analytic process anthropologists⁸ use is dialectical; on the one hand, we are interested in questions about human society at a very general, even a universal, level. We ask why gift giving seems to be important all over the world, for example, or whether all human groups have marriage, or whether there is any such thing as society without hierarchy. On the other hand, anthropology is always committed to recording, through ethnographic writing, what is unique and particular about human social life in any given time and place encountered by the researcher. Ethnographic writing is classically based on long-term, participant-observation fieldwork in which the anthropologist, as far as possible, shares the daily lives of her interlocutors⁹ in the attempt to gain a more contextualized understanding of what they say. By doing as

6. Ann Taves and J. Spencer Fluhman, “Mormon Studies in the Academy: A Conversation between Ann Taves and Spencer Fluhman,” *Mormon Studies Review* 1 (2014): 9–16.

7. Kristine Haglund, “We’ll Find the Place: Situating Mormon Studies,” *Mormon Studies Review* 1 (2014): 96–102; Taves and Fluhman, “Mormon Studies in the Academy”; Thomas Tweed, “Beyond ‘Surreptitious Staring’: Migration, Missions, and the Generativity of Mormonism for the Comparative and Translocative Study of Religion,” *Mormon Studies Review* 1 (2014): 17–28.

8. I speak here of anthropology as I understand it; other views of the discipline, of course, are possible.

9. There is an important critical literature on the limitations and difficulties of ethnography that I will not cover here; my own view is that such criticisms should refine but not negate the value of ethnography.

well as by asking, the ethnographer seeks to understand how it feels to build a canoe or plant rice or pray daily at dawn. Ethnographic inquiry is imperfect, as are all forms of research, but it is a way of asking about the world that (for me) continues to have a value and often to yield more empathetic insights than standard modes of inquiry such as surveys. For my discipline, one value of ethnographic description is, or should be, that it checks the tendency toward easy theoretical generalization; another is that it keeps concrete and complex human experience to the fore, against reductive abstraction. We should always begin, as anthropology's most distinctive theorist Marcel Mauss advised, with the particular and reason inductively. Anthropologists also begin with the everyday lives of ordinary people and count these as significant as the acts of political elites. Good ethnography should therefore also offer one kind of counterweight to the repetition of stereotypes and misrepresentations of particular social groups—or so it is hoped. Finally, my discipline tends to look at traditions, including religious traditions, as they are practiced, rather than working from theological or other in-principle accounts in isolation.

While most authors now publishing anthropology on Mormonism would describe themselves as professional anthropologists, some colleagues in other disciplines also draw on anthropology's toolkit, including ethnographic specificity.

Colleen McDannell writes from a department of religious studies and uses both ethnographic and historical approaches. Her work is wide-rangingly comparative, across topics in Mormonism, Protestantism, and Catholicism. *Material Christianity*¹⁰ is a seminal study arguing that the religious practices of ordinary American people across different churches share some important features. In particular, she proposes that—in contrast to theoretical accounts of religion concerned with the transcendent or the supramaterial—American Christians are generally comfortable with religious objects and see no tension between the validity of religious concepts and their material expressions. Mormonism's material culture (here explored through an essay on temple garments)

10. Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

is considered alongside aspects of Catholic and Protestant Evangelical material practice. McDannell is currently writing on the changing role of LDS women and Relief Society.¹¹ Both explicitly and implicitly comparative, her work has challenged other scholars to formulate their arguments in a way that includes and relates to Mormonism rather than consigning it to an exceptionalist enclave.

Janet Bennion writes as a scholar of LDS upbringing who has chosen to focus on present-day fundamentalist polygyny. *Women of Principle*¹² gives a fascinating account of the daily lives and religious logic of members of the Allredite group, based on Bennion's fieldwork in Montana, and argues that some women actively choose to convert to polygynous groups from mainstream American culture since plurality offers them substantial relative advantages. Women who have been disappointed in the search for a lasting marriage in the mainstream may value the sacred basis of contemporary polygamy, sociality among sister wives, and opportunities to share limited financial resources and childcare. *Desert Patriarchy*¹³ explores the relationship between desert ecology and polygynous communities' kinship dynamics. Many young men resort to cohort labour migration because their access to marriage partners is rationed by male elders and priesthood leaders. *Polygamy in Primetime*¹⁴ places contemporary plural marriage in the context of public policy, legal and policing responses and feminist assessments, and the media interest in the topic of polygamy, which has seen large audiences for both fictionalized and reality-TV depictions of polygamy. Bennion offers a balanced assessment of arguments about harm to individuals and personal freedom in relation to American polygyny, and she explores the ways in which plural marriage may appeal to

11. Colleen McDannell, *The New Mormon Woman: From Polygamy to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

12. Janet Bennion, *Women of Principle: Female Networking in Contemporary Mormon Polygamy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

13. Janet Bennion, *Desert Patriarchy: Mormon and Mennonite Communities in the Chihuahuan Valley* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004).

14. Janet Bennion, *Polygamy in Primetime: Media, Gender and Politics in Mormon Fundamentalism* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

diverse constituencies including religious feminists and advocates of gay marriage in the United States. The legal and welfare issues are further explored in a full-length study of four polygamous groups, *Evaluating the Effects of Polygamy on Women and Children*.¹⁵

Douglas Davies, one of the most knowledgeable and prolific writers on Mormonism, theology, and anthropology, has also nurtured new Mormon scholarship among his students. Davies draws on decades of firsthand research and long knowledge of Utah Mormonism but does not usually choose to present his work as time-and-space-specific ethnographic case studies of the particularities of Mormon lifeworlds. Whereas Bennion gives us the Apostolic United Brethren in Montana in the 1990s, Davies gives us thematic explorations within the sweep of mainstream LDS Church development as a whole. An exception is his study of Welsh Mormonism,¹⁶ but this is primarily historical. In addition to an authoritative introduction to Mormonism,¹⁷ an edited volume on Mormon identities in transition,¹⁸ and numerous articles, Davies's *Mormon Culture of Salvation*¹⁹ offers an important discussion of the distinctiveness of LDS teachings on death. Anticipating some of the arguments of Samuel Morris Brown's fascinating *In Heaven as It Is on Earth*,²⁰ Davies proposes (drawing on ritual theory by anthropologist Maurice Bloch) that Mormonism goes beyond the prospect of salvation offered in other forms of Christianity to a position of "death conquest," which takes mere postmortem survival as read and so focuses rather

15. Janet Bennion, *Evaluating the Effects of Polygamy on Women and Children in Four American Mormon Fundamentalist Groups: An Anthropological Study* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).

16. Douglas Davies, *Mormon Spirituality: Latter-day Saints in Wales and Zion* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1987).

17. Douglas Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

18. Douglas Davies, ed., *Mormon Identities in Transition* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002).

19. Douglas Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation: Force, Grace, and Glory* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2000).

20. Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

on the attainment of graduated levels of resurrected life. *Joseph Smith, Jesus, and Satanic Opposition*²¹ considers the historical development of the plan of salvation, LDS teachings on the nature of evil and Mormon Christology, suggesting that the plan of salvation is the fulcrum of developing and reviving Mormon theology and a counterpart to Trinitarian theology in other Christian churches.

For space reasons, I will mention other important anthropologists more briefly than their work merits. David Knowlton is an insightful commentator on Mormonism in Latin America and among Latino Americans.²² Hildi Mitchell has published astute accounts of British Mormonism, emphasizing the intersection of text, body, and place for the maintenance of a stable experience of LDS belief.²³ Gary and Gordon Shepherd combine anthropology and sociology, notably in their book on mission.²⁴ Tamar Gordon (Rensselaer) has work in progress on Tongan Latter-day Saints and Polynesian heritage culture, Jon Bialescki (Edinburgh) has work in progress on Mormon evolutionary science, and Aiwha Ong has included an account of conversion to Mormonism as a mode of Americanization (sometimes by hypergamy) in her discussion of new American citizens of Asian origins.²⁵

21. Douglas Davies, *Joseph Smith, Jesus, and Satanic Opposition: Atonement, Evil, and the Mormon Vision* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2010).

22. See, for example, David Knowlton, "Hands Raised Up: Power and Context in Bolivian Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Winter 2007): 47–71; and Knowlton, "Mormonism in Latin America" in *The Mormon World*, ed. Carl Mosser and Richard Sherlock (London: Routledge, 2012).

23. Hildi Mitchell, "'Being there': British Mormons and the History Trail," *Anthropology Today* 17/2 (April 2001): 9–14; Mitchell, "Postcards from the Edge of History: Narrative and the Sacralisation of Mormon Historical Sites," in *Pilgrim Voices: Narrative and Authorship in Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. Simon Coleman and Jon Elsner (London: Berghahn, 2003), 133–58; Jon Mitchell and Hildi Mitchell, "For Belief: Embodiment and Immanence in Catholicism and Mormonism," *Social Analysis* 52/1 (2008): 79–94.

24. Gary Shepherd and Gordon Shepherd, *Mormon Passage: A Missionary Chronicle* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

25. Aiwha Ong, *Buddha Is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

I carried out my own fieldwork both in Utah and in upstate New York, and the question of the relationship between Mormonism and Catholicism with which I began was of personal interest to some of my interlocutors. The New York ward I visited had many members whose families joined the church in its earliest years, but a significant proportion were established first- and second-generation converts; some, from the postindustrial cities of northern New York State, had been born into traditional American Catholic families.²⁶ A number of people who shared conversion stories with me told me they felt that Mormonism offered real access to sacred knowledge while Catholicism's priestly hierarchy frustrated lay piety. Several people mentioned growing up in Catholic neighbourhoods with priests who would reply to all their questions with "It's a mystery." While one can imagine that reply being intended to convey humility, to these particular listeners it felt like evasion. By contrast, Mormonism with its lay priesthood confronts the largest questions of human life directly, notably in the plan of salvation, to which potential converts are often deeply drawn. "Where do I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going after this life?"—these and other mighty questions on the nature and purpose of good and evil in the universe are asked explicitly in Mormon teaching and mission, and any inquirer can look up the LDS Church's answers to them on the Internet.²⁷ Conversion stories often pivoted on the sense of an unfolding horizon of extraordinary knowledge that opened before the eyes of those who were newly encountering Mormonism—the prospect that now, finally, the real meaning of human existence would be made plain. Further, there was the sense of *recognition* that people reported, that these dizzying vistas of knowledge were also, somehow, already

26. One or two were former Catholics of Mexican origin, but the ward I visited did not have a significant Latino-American population. On the culture of European American Roman Catholicism, see the work of Robert Orsi (e.g., 2005). On the transnational ethos of Latin American Catholicism, see Valentina Napolitano, *Migrant Hearts and the Atlantic Return: Transnationalism and the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016).

27. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2014/04/using-the-plan-of-salvation-to-answer-questions>.

familiar to them. As people engaged themselves with LDS teaching, these responses took shape within the distinctive Mormon framing of human-divine time, and converts came to understand their sense of recognition as an experiential confirmation of the reality of the premortal life, and thus as a form of both recovered memory and communication between persons and beings in mortality, before it and beyond it.²⁸

A commitment to these forms of knowing is one central aspect of LDS experience, and inevitably this complicates—although it can also enrich—conversations in Mormon Studies that engage with comparative disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. On what shared basis are we having such conversations, and what forms of knowing are we each reaching for or claiming? While serving as LDS Church historian, Elder Marlin K. Jensen expressed this same idea when he was kind enough to give me some advice at the beginning of my fieldwork:

If you think about the epistemology of religion, and how you do come to know things—if you try in your study of Mormonism to apply the scientific method and to try to find the explanation for why Mormons do what they do and feel the way they feel, you'll never make it.

Elder Jensen was referring, if I understood him correctly, to certain kinds of reductive claims that social science sometimes has made about religion—or, rather, about an objectified category of “religion”—considered as supposedly irrational and possibly “primitive” conduct needing to be explained away with reference to other kinds of human concerns, motivations, and causes. Religious matters, in such paradigms, are always really about something else—economics, perhaps, or demography or the evolutionary adaptation of the human brain, or very often some cause that can be presented as more real in the sense of being material and thus natural. He was referring to an expectation or perception that the social sciences, including my own subject of anthropology,

28. Although memories of the premortal existence are largely lost during mortality, glimpses between these lives are highly prized by Latter-day Saints, as are liftings of the veil between mortality and the life to come.

might be intrinsically atheistic (even perhaps hostile to religious topics) in their theoretical foundations and methods. Behind this concern lies a tendency to assume that religion and the secular are opposed forces at war in the modern world, an assumption that shapes the way that most of us think.

It is true that the foundational period in the social sciences was marked by an attempt to situate the analysis of the social aspects of human life in a way that was independent of the natural sciences, on the one hand, and of theology, on the other, creating a new analytic space. An arm's-length approach to truth claims about the divine was therefore a constitutive feature of their making. It is also true that at a later period, after a disciplinary division had arisen between anthropology and sociology, both subjects and especially the second were sometimes associated with strong theoretical claims (known as "secularization theory") that the modern world was taking a unitary direction of change in which religion would be left behind in favor of a secular worldview. My own view, and that of many other anthropologists presently writing, is that these two developments are not equivalent to each other. "Secularization theory" came in many forms, and some of these were hostile to religion, casting it as an immature phase of social development.²⁹ It therefore constituted part of a set of claims or myths about the "inevitable" directions the modern world would take, one aspect of which was to polarize concepts of what the "religious" and the "secular" might mean.³⁰ From this polarization also derive, as LDS historians will immediately recognize, many strands of anti-Mormonism, and it is implicated in a wider oppositional cultural politics and in the opposition between social progressivism and biblical literalism in the United States.³¹

29. On the attribution of immaturity to faith positions in writers such as Richard Dawkins, and its philosophical roots in Nietzsche, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

30. Fenella Cannell, "The Anthropology of Secularism," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (October 2010): 85–100; Susie McKinnon and Fenella Cannell, eds., *Vital Relations: Modernity and the Persistent Life of Kinship* (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2013).

31. Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

The earlier attempt in anthropology and sociology to create a space to think about human social life as such has (to my mind) more diverse potentialities than secularization theory. Foundational theorists including Durkheim and Weber took a complex approach to religious life; for Durkheim, moral values could be seen as humanly derived rather than given by God. At the same time, however, he argued that all human morality was necessarily founded in collective ritual (“religion”), including in the modern West. Neither Durkheim nor Weber took a triumphalist approach to the loss of personal faith in the modern world, including in their own lives, which they rather regarded with grave ambivalence. For some important commentators, such as John Milbank,³² the social sciences were a doomed intellectual enterprise from the beginning because they were nontheistic, and specifically because they committed themselves, in his view, to the supposed reality of “the secular.” For me and others, however, the social sciences do not require this commitment, but instead make possible what Robert Orsi has called the analytic space of “in-betweenness,” a space, as he says, difficult to sustain and from which, however, it may be possible to look at how we define what “religion” is in contemporary life without immediately assuming the role of the person of faith or his enemy, the skeptic.³³ Interestingly, within a generation there was an important and highly creative minority in Anglophone anthropology who wrote professionally about religion but were also personally religious (largely adult converts to Catholicism).³⁴ Further, the ethnographic project in anthropology, with which Milbank does not engage in his critique, is incompatible with a dismissive account of religious practice, in that it requires a sustained attention to the specifics of what ordinary people find important in a given time and place. Ethnography, properly conducted, cannot be reductive.

32. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

33. Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious World People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 177.

34. Timothy Larsen, *The Slain God: Anthropologists and the Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

In its most explicit forms, this project of description from a position of “in-betweenness” asks anthropologists to step back from a hardening of categories and to look at the “secular/religious” divide as itself a historical feature of contemporary thought, philosophy, and politics.³⁵ While not proposing an answer to the ultimate, theological questions of the truth of the existence of God, such an anthropological method does suggest an intermediate mode of proceeding in which any actually antireligious position would also be unanthropological.

Anti-Mormon prejudice, like the stigmatization of Protestant fundamentalism described by Harding,³⁶ is connected to the historical development of polarized categories of “religion” and “secularism” in contemporary political and legal structures, as well as to the triumph of particular definitions of what acceptable kinds of modern religious practice might be.³⁷ Anthropology requires imaginative work in thinking of unfamiliar ways of life, including religions, as having profound human value. However, it is true that when I began my research with Latter-day Saints, I did sometimes encounter colleagues who found it more difficult to consider Mormonism this way.³⁸ At least initially, they tended to reproduce concerns and prejudices about the church widely found in nonacademic discourse. I was interested occasionally to hear colleagues remark, for instance, that Mormonism was not “really” Christianity. I was warned that I would likely come under great pressure to convert. Someone sent me newspaper clippings about the objections raised by Jewish people to the vicarious baptisms for the dead performed for those who had died in the Holocaust. But one of the most serious worries was expressed instead about my professional prospects; surely, some colleagues said to me, my project was doomed; there would be nothing for me to write about, working with Latter-day Saints, since people would all be likely to

35. Taylor, *Secular Age*; Harding, *Book of Jerry Falwell*.

36. Harding, *Book of Jerry Falwell*.

37. Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

38. Compare Harding, *Book of Jerry Falwell*.

tell me the same thing; that is, they would simply repeat orthodox views and statements as ratified by the central church leadership.

Viewed from one angle, the suggestion was a variation on the widely found anxiety expressed by the “I’m a Mormon” church publicity campaign (we might call it the “Mobot” anxiety): that becoming a member of the LDS Church involves an undue suppression of individuality. For members, the central commitment to human free agency is theoretically reconciled with the equally central commitment to the reality of revelation by the injunction to “choose the right”—but living this reconciliation may be difficult.

For anthropologists the topic of orthodoxy resonates in particular ways. In fact, I would suggest that although anthropology is not really confined inside hostility to the object of “religion,” my discipline does currently have a theoretical problem with the topic of orthodoxy, including but not limited to religious orthodoxy. In all the social sciences, as in philosophy, there is a general theoretical question about the possibility and limits of human autonomy. How can one try to describe social events in a way that takes account both of the agentive actions and responsibilities of human beings and of the numerous historical and cultural factors that constrain them? These questions were fundamental for Durkheim and the other founders of the discipline and have been often revisited, most recently in debates regarding “the anthropology of ethics.” The attempt in these debates has been to do justice to the capacity of human beings for conscious reflection on their own actions and to dispense with any tendency to imply that people simply follow cultural traditions (perhaps enforced by religious ritual) in an automatic fashion.

For some of my colleagues, such as James Laidlaw,³⁹ Durkheim in particular undertheorized the human potential for freedom and for reflection. For other colleagues, such as Michael Lambek,⁴⁰ the term *freedom* is unhelpful, not least in retaining too close a connection with

39. James Laidlaw, *The Subject of Virtue: An Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

40. Michael Lambek, *The Ethical Condition: Essays on Ethics, Person, and Value* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

aspects of the myths of modern life identified by Durkheim himself, such as strong claims about the naturalness of capitalism or the neutrality of economic freedom, and what Durkheim called “the cult of the individual” in modernity. For Lambek, “*the human condition is an ethical condition*,”⁴¹ and what is needed is not the language of freedom but an ethnographic attention to the ways in which all human action has a reflective dimension to it, whether in modern or traditional settings.

While both authors have much of value to say, I myself prefer to use Lambek’s approach, since to my mind it is more useful to an anthropologist of religion. Laidlaw’s description of religious orthodoxy is of a deliberately chosen moral incapacity: “freedom is exercised towards its own future curtailment.”⁴² Even though the incapacity concerned is the aim of making oneself unable to disobey God, for Laidlaw this is a departure from reflective self-regulation.

For reasons not immediately relevant here, Laidlaw (an expert on Jainism) is here relying mainly on examples taken from Sunni Islam. He argues, however, that this self-extinguishing freedom is widely found in salvationist religions. My own view is that this offers only an impoverished view of the various theologies of freedom and the will in religions, including Christianity (in Augustine’s theology, for instance, all unfallen human will is actually the desire for God).

In that case, one approach for anthropology might be to take up William Christian’s cue and think of religions—including Mormonism—as constantly generating both faith and uncertainty in the daily conduct of ordinary life. An element that is one generation’s heresy becomes another’s orthodoxy, and vice versa, even in religions of revelation that sustain many continuities. Orthodoxy, as I have observed its practice, is never a static or finished object, but a living creation of human beings requiring constant renewal, wide human participation, and, therefore, inevitable instability and variation, even when it most aims at the attainment of perfection.

41. Lambek, *Ethical Condition*, emphasis in original.

42. Laidlaw, *Subject of Virtue*, 154.

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Mormon Scholars and Mormon Families in Family Studies: A Brief Retrospective

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FAMILY STUDIES IS MORE AN INTERDISCIPLINARY HYBRID than a stand-alone discipline. Specifically, the field integrates research methods, approaches, and interests from sociology, psychology, human development, and marriage and family therapy—and (to lesser degrees) other fields, including history, economics, anthropology, public policy, and medicine. A defining feature of family studies is a focus in its research, theory, clinical practice, and educational efforts on relationships and processes between family members. Whereas sociology examines what happens in society and psychology focuses on what happens in the individual mind, family studies strives to capture families and family relationships in an ecological context.

This article begins with a historical sketch of Latter-day Saints who were foundational in establishing or elevating the field of family studies. After noting those significant contributions, we will highlight key findings about Mormon families that have emerged from empirical studies conducted by Mormon as well as non-Mormon social scientists.

Mormons in family studies

The inception of family studies as a discipline corresponded closely with the launch of the umbrella professional organization, the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), established in 1938. Regarding the early and formative years of family studies, Pam Monroe,¹ president of NCFR from 2004 to 2007, has quipped, “The three most important people in the history of family studies are Reuben Hill, Reuben Hill, and Reuben Hill.”² Hill served an LDS mission and then moved from a convictional to a cultural approach to Mormonism, yet his influence on family studies in both LDS and non-LDS spheres is difficult to overstate. He introduced foundational ideas including “family stress” and (with Evelyn Duvall) family development theory,³ which heavily influenced family studies. Hill had a long and distinguished career spanning the middle and latter half of the twentieth century, but even more important, he became the generative mentor and academic father/grandfather for a disproportionate number of prominent and productive family scholars,⁴ including many subsequent NCFR presidents.⁵

Of the first forty-nine presidents of the NCFR,⁶ at least five were active Latter-day Saints (Harold “Hal” Christensen,⁷ Blaine Porter,

1. Monroe (who is not LDS) was the longest-tenured president in NCFR history, serving for nearly four years due to the illness of the late Gay Kitson, who preceded Monroe in the presidency.

2. Pam Monroe, personal communication with Loren Marks, July 20, 2016. In an interview with the authors on July 15, 2016, Wes Burr shared the same perspective, referencing both Hill’s ideas and the legacy of his students who went on to prominence.

3. Wes Burr interview with the authors, July 15, 2016. Hill told Wes Burr, then Hill’s student, that the core ideas behind family development theory were stimulated by the Mormon theological concept of eternal progression.

4. Even today, many leading family scholars have intellectual genealogical indebtedness to Hill.

5. Hill never occupied the NCFR presidency himself but did serve as president of the (much larger) International Sociological Association from 1970 to 1974.

6. NCFR, Board and Governance, accessed September 15, 2016, <https://www.ncfr.org/about/board-and-governance/ncfr-board-directors/ncfr-past-presidents>.

7. Wes Burr identified Harold Christensen as a “substantial person” and as the early pioneer of Mormon family studies (MS thesis, 1936), preceding the era of Reuben

Carlfred Broderick, Wesley Burr, and Brent Miller). Thus more than 10 percent of NCFR presidents through the early 1990s were active Latter-day Saints, an overrepresentation by several-fold. Indeed, three LDS NCFR presidents were elected during the sixteen-year period from 1975 to 1991, an era identified by some as the peak of Mormon influence and engagement in NCFR. However, over the past twenty-four years, none of the last sixteen NCFR presidents have been Latter-day Saints.

In 2013, NCFR leadership issued a formal statement regarding same-sex marriage. This was a departure from previous practice since, while the field has always wrestled with definitions of the family and what impacts changing family structure have on individual and relational well-being, the NCFR had avoided position statements on political matters. Many LDS family scholars subsequently distanced themselves in the wake of perceptions of escalating advocacy. Though deeply rooted historically, the connection between the NCFR and LDS scholars is now viewed by many Mormon family scholars with whom we have spoken as somewhere between tenuous and irreparably damaged. Several Mormon family scholars who severed ties moved on and found replacement professional organizations, but others continue to mourn the loss of their first professional love and are pained by the schism. However, the growing distance from NCFR as a professional organization has not translated into LDS disengagement with the field as a whole. Brigham Young University's School of Family Life features, in terms of faculty size, one of the largest full-time family studies faculties in the world (at thirty-five). Further, in terms of productivity, BYU's School of Family Life faculty have averaged nearly one hundred peer-reviewed publications annually over the last three years,⁸ making it one of the most prolific research programs of its kind. Faculty include nationally renowned experts in marriage and family

Hill's ascension and prominence. Christensen taught briefly at BYU before spending most of his career at Purdue.

8. 2013–2015 data provided by Dean Busby, director of BYU's School of Family Life, August 26, 2016. In historical contrast, the BYU Family Studies program (then Child Development and Family Relations) had produced a mere handful of mainstream social science publications before 1973 (Wes Burr interview with authors, July 15, 2016). In 1973 BYU commenced its era of empirical publication with two articles published in

therapy, parenting, child development, mate selection, media influence, sexuality, work and family balance, addiction, religion, emerging adulthood, and other foci and subfields.

Historically, the Mormon family studies professorate was leavened among leading universities around the United States. Reuben Hill and all five Mormon scholars who served as presidents of NCFR studied or taught in prominent programs *away* from BYU at some point (i.e., Cornell, Harvard, Iowa State, Minnesota, North Carolina, Penn State, Purdue, and Wisconsin)—with three, including the late Carlfred Broderick (USC), spending their careers elsewhere. Indeed, Pam Monroe has posited that perhaps the greatest collective influence exerted by Mormon family studies scholars has been their willingness to mentor, train, and generatively invest in non-LDS scholars⁹ (typically away from BYU), thereby perpetuating the model of the field's exemplar, Reuben Hill. However, as the second decade of the twenty-first century winds down, there is no nationally recognized LDS family figure like Carlfred Broderick at the University of Southern California (or elsewhere on the West Coast). Further, there are virtually no Mormon family studies scholars in prominent eastern research universities.¹⁰ Reasons for this diminished dispersion are complex but include an apparent reluctance of many family studies departments to include active Latter-day Saints on their faculty, on the one hand,¹¹ and concerted efforts by BYU to

the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*—one by Boyd Rollins and one by Wes Burr—a focus that has intensified and risen exponentially over the subsequent four decades.

9. Pam Monroe, personal communication with Loren Marks, July 20, 2016.

10. There are a few LDS family scholars at leading midwestern universities, including Jerrica Mohlman Berge and Steven Harris at Minnesota, David Schramm at Missouri, and Cassandra Dorius and Clinton Gudmunson at Iowa State. There are also many throughout the South, but representation is scant on the East and West Coasts. It should be noted, however, that family studies programs (as an offshoot of the home economics field) were never as strong on the coasts as in the heartland of America.

11. Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," in *Latter-day Saint Social Life: Social Research on the LDS Church and Its Members*, ed. James T. Duke (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998), 21. As a leading social scientist of religion, Rodney Stark (who is not LDS), has denounced what he has identified as explicit anti-Mormon bias among many fellow social scientists.

gather (some have said “poach”) leading, actively LDS family scholars to the School of Family Life, on the other.

Family studies research on Mormons

We conducted two literature searches for the portion of this essay addressing research on Mormon families. Our first search focused on the frequency of publications about Mormons in major family studies journals compared with other major religions. We selected the following ten family studies journals for this section: *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Family Relations*, *Family Process*, *Journal of Family Psychology*, *Marriage and Family Review*, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, and *Family Perspective* (defunct). We used the EBSCO databases to search these journals. Our results from this search can be seen in table 1.

In June and July 2016 we conducted the second search with the intent to find and analyze all relevant social science studies on Mormon families. This search utilized the EBSCO databases as well but was not limited to family studies journals. References in those studies as well as Google Scholar’s “cited by” function led to additional relevant studies. We chose to include only articles published in social science journals and opted to exclude articles published in Mormon-centered

TABLE 1. Hits in EBSCO within 10 family life journals

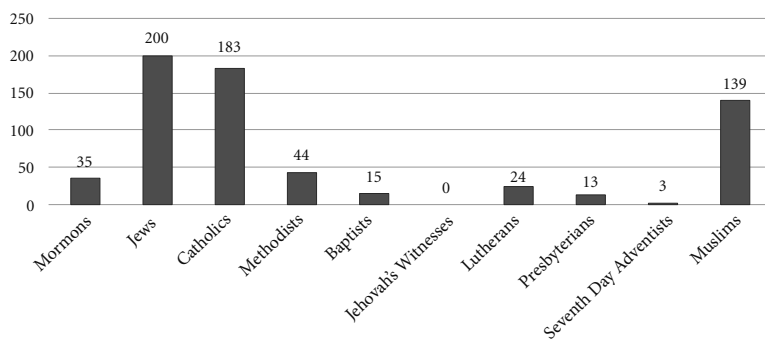
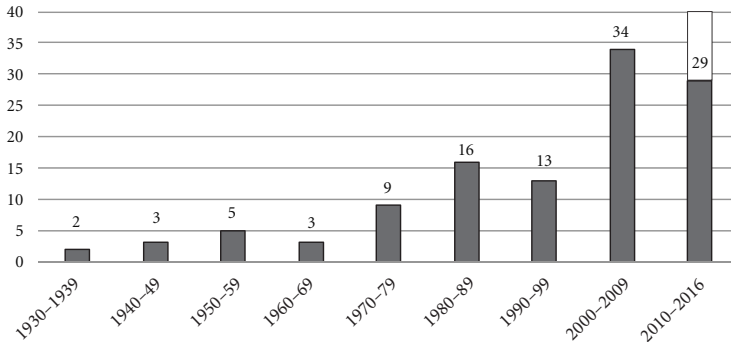


TABLE 2. Number of articles by publication date



outlets, such as *BYU Studies* and *Dialogue*. Our focus was contemporary empirical studies, not literature reviews or papers exploring Mormon families historically. While most of our sources were peer-reviewed journal articles, we did include several book chapters that featured original research and were published by respected academic presses.

Included in our search were articles dating to the 1930s, a period corresponding with the formation of the discipline. With these restrictions, we found and analyzed 114 documents. Table 2 depicts the number of articles found and reviewed by publication decade.¹²

Of the varied aspects of family life explored in the extant studies, we chose to focus on five: dating and courtship, marriage, fertility, parent-child relationships, and youth religious development in a family context. Given space limitations, we are able to provide only brief mention of a few of the more recent and relevant studies.¹³

In general, the findings indicate that active LDS couples, parents, families, and youth enjoy many of the same benefits that others of devout

12. As with any search of this scale, our results are not exhaustive. The bar on the far right represents only a portion of the current decade (2010–2016). The projection for the full decade is forty or more articles addressing Mormon families by 2019, the highest total ever.

13. Interested readers are welcome to contact the first author of this article for a full bibliography.

faith receive from religious involvement (e.g., greater marital stability and quality, increased health and longevity, closer parent-child relations, and numerous prosocial outcomes for youth, among many other benefits). Mormons experience several of the same stressors and challenges faced by other religious families who take their faith seriously (e.g., time and money costs, some degree of separation from secular society, struggles with feelings of guilt and inadequacy). Latter-day Saints also enjoy some distinctive benefits and challenges based on highly familial Mormon theology and culture.

While homosexual relationships and the LGBTQ community are of increasing importance to the broader field of family studies, our search did not yield any articles published in family studies or other social science journals that specifically addressed the intersection of LGBTQ and Mormon identities in relation to Mormon family life. A few articles address issues of sexual identity among Mormon individuals, but they do not provide empirical data that specifically address family relationship issues.¹⁴

Dating and courtship

While research on Mormon dating and courtship is limited, there are some empirical studies that examine dating during adolescence and emerging adulthood. We address both.

Dating during adolescence. The LDS Church strongly discourages dating before the age of sixteen. A primary purpose is to reduce opportunities for premarital sexual relations. Miller, McCoy, and Olson found that there was indeed a strong correlation between avoidance

14. Angie Dahl and Renee V. Galliher, "The Interplay of Sexual and Religious Identity Development in LGBTQ Adolescents and Young Adults: A Qualitative Inquiry," *Identity* 12/3 (2012): 217–46; John P. Dehlin et al., "Psychosocial Correlates of Religious Approaches to Same-Sex Attraction: A Mormon Perspective," *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health* 18/3 (July 2014): 284–311; John P. Dehlin et al., "Sexual Orientation Change Efforts among Current or Former LDS Church Members," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 62/2 (2015): 95–105; Jeanna Jacobsen and Rachel Wright, "Mental Health Implications in Mormon Women's Experiences with Same-Sex Attraction: A Qualitative Study," *Counseling Psychologist* 42/5 (2014): 664–96.

of premarital sex and the age that Mormons begin dating.¹⁵ Of the “late daters” (sixteen years or older), only 10 percent engaged in sexual intercourse, whereas 50 percent of the “early daters” (fourteen years or younger) engaged in sexual intercourse—a fivefold increase in premarital sexual activity. Overall, Mormon teens were significantly less likely to report having had sexual intercourse (18 percent) than non-Mormons (53 percent).¹⁶

Not only does their faith affect *when* they date, but, for Mormon youth, their faith may also affect *whom*. Markstrom-Adams found that 83 percent of Mormons in her sample reported that there were barriers to dating non-Mormons.¹⁷ The top two barriers reported were (1) “unacceptable beliefs, values, standards, and moral conduct of non-Mormons” and (2) the report that “many Mormons desire to marry within their faith.”¹⁸ This last value and other indicators seemed to show that Mormons, even as adolescents, view dating relatively seriously and as “a precursor to marriage.”¹⁹ Conversely, in a more recent national study on religious adolescents’ dating habits, Bartkowski, Xu, and Fondren did not find a significant LDS reluctance to date people of other faiths. This may be partially attributed to the lack of Mormon dating options outside highly populated Mormon areas.²⁰

Dating during emerging adulthood. Scott investigated a prominent dating site (ldsingles.com) for single LDS adults²¹ and found LDS values

15. Brent C. Miller, J. K. McCoy, and Terrance D. Olson, “Dating Age and Stage as Correlates of Adolescent Sexual Attitudes and Behavior,” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 1/3 (1986): 361–71.

16. Miller, McCoy, and Olson, “Dating Age,” 361–71.

17. Carol Markstrom-Adams, “Attitudes on Dating, Courtship, and Marriage: Perspectives on In-Group Versus Out-Group Relationships by Religious Minority and Majority Adolescents,” *Family Relations* 40/1 (1991): 91–96.

18. Markstrom-Adams, “Attitudes on Dating,” 93.

19. Markstrom-Adams, “Attitudes on Dating,” 95.

20. John P. Bartkowski, Xiaohe Xu, and Kristi M. Fondren, “Faith, Family, and Teen Dating: Examining the Effects of Personal and Household Religiosity on Adolescent Romantic Relationships,” *Review of Religious Research* 52/3 (2011): 248–65.

21. David W. Scott, “Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Find Me a Mate: A Cultural Examination of a Virtual Community of Single Mormons,” *Journal of Media and*

regarding relationships and marriage embedded into the core of the site. As part of their demographic profile, users were required to state how regularly they attended church, if they were temple worthy, and whether or not they had served an LDS mission.²²

In his study of newly married Christian couples, Uecker found that of all the Christian denominations, Mormons were reportedly the least likely to have engaged in premarital sex, with 43 percent of his sample waiting until marriage (a much different figure than Miller and colleagues' teen-based report twenty-two years earlier).²³ Of the Mormons who had engaged in premarital sex, they were far less likely to have had sex with someone other than their (future) spouse. With regard to premarital sex, it is also important to note that most Mormons do not cohabit, but rather transition directly from single life to marriage.²⁴

Marriage

In this section, we address empirical social science findings related to marital and family values, gender roles, LDS interfaith marriage, and marital processes.

Marital and family values. A frequently studied Mormon value has been the law of chastity, with studies across time indicating that Latter-day Saints have relatively traditional attitudes and behaviors concerning nonmarital sex.²⁵ In other examinations of LDS values, Bahr compared and contrasted 2,005 Utah Catholics, Protestants, and

Religion 1/4 (2002): 201–16.

22. Scott, "Matchmaker," 201–6.

23. Jeremy E. Uecker, "Religion, Pledging, and the Premarital Sexual Behavior of Married Young Adults," *Journal of Marriage & Family* 70/3 (2008): 728–44.

24. Daniel T. Lichter and Zhenchao Qian, "Serial Cohabitation and the Marital Life Course," *Journal of Marriage & Family* 70/4 (2008): 861–78.

25. Jason S. Carroll et al., "Marital and Family Orientations among Highly Religious Young Adults: Comparing Latter-Day Saints with Traditional Christians," *Review of Religious Research* 42/2 (2000): 193–205; David C. Dollahite and Loren D. Marks, "Teaching Correct Principles: Promoting Spiritual Strength in LDS Young People," in *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives from the World's Religious Traditions*, ed. Karen Marie Yust et al. (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 394–408; Thomas B. Holman and John R. Harding, "The Teachings of

Mormons and found Mormons to be less accepting of nontraditional family role definitions than non-Mormons.²⁶ Mormons also reported more “family centeredness” in their attitudes but did not differ in preferences about the division of family labor.²⁷ Another study of values comparing Catholic, Protestant, and LDS participants found that among the more than four thousand college students surveyed, the “highly religious” groups (from each denomination) reported less materialistic views, favored more traditional female roles in the family, and placed greater relative importance on marriage and children.²⁸

Gender roles. The twenty-first century has yielded a small but growing body of research examining perspectives on gender among Mormon women and men.²⁹ Beaman’s study entitled “Molly Mormons, Feminists and Moderates” was based on life history interviews with twenty-eight LDS women and found significant variation in how mothers navigated and negotiated boundaries involving participation in the paid labor force, relations within their families, and interaction with and perspectives on the church (and the priesthood), among other issues.³⁰ In a second study related to gender, Chen analyzed depictions of mothers in the LDS Church’s multimillion-dollar “I’m a Mormon” ad campaign and reported that the “ads reaffirm, not defy, the ‘traditional’ gender

Nonmarital Sexual Abstinence and Members’ Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors: The Case of Latter-Day Saints,” *Review of Religious Research* 38/1 (1996): 51.

26. Howard M. Bahr, “Religious Contrasts in Family Role Definitions and Performance: Utah Mormons, Catholics, Protestants, and Others,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21/3 (1982): 200–217.

27. Bahr, “Religious Contrasts,” 200–217.

28. Larry C. Jensen and Janet Jensen, “Family Values, Religiosity, and Gender,” *Psychological Reports* 73/2 (1993): 429–30.

29. Patti A. Freeman, Birgitta Baker, and Ramon B. Zabriskie, “Traditional Marriages, Non-Traditional Leisure: Leisure and Fathering in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” in *Fathering Through Sport and Leisure*, ed. Tess Kay (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 164–82; Joylin Namie and Hillary Timmons, “Faith and Feeding the Family: Latter-day Saint Fathers and Foodwork,” *Food & Foodways: History & Culture of Human Nourishment* 22/4 (October 2014): 247–67.

30. Lori G. Beaman, “Molly Mormons, Mormon Feminists and Moderates: Religious Diversity and the Latter Day Saints Church,” *Sociology of Religion* 62/1 (2001): 65–86.

roles for women as they emphasize (stay-at-home) motherhood above all other identities.”³¹ In another study, Lafkas utilized a qualitative approach and examined and conveyed the challenges faced by Mormon women with divorced parents as these women interfaced with LDS gender-role doctrines.³² Lafkas noted that “traditional gender roles are often upended with divorce, creating situations inconsistent with Mormon doctrinal ideals,” thereby creating cognitive dissonance.³³ Indeed, as noted elsewhere, “a key challenge for [many] American churches in the 21st century will be to find a balance between supporting the standard of marriage-based families that is idealized . . . [while simultaneously and sensitively] addressing the pluralistic family realities that confront them.”³⁴

LDS interfaith marriage. Same-faith marriages have been found to be significantly more stable than interfaith marriages across a variety of religions.³⁵ As early as the 1960s, social scientists were specifically examining LDS divorce rates and noting significant differences between temple and non-temple marriages in Utah.³⁶ Interestingly, Latter-day Saints provide examples of both the most stable *and* least stable marriages. Howard Bahr, with a Utah-based sample, found that “the divorce rate for

31. Chiung Hwang Chen, “Diverse Yet Hegemonic: Expressions of Motherhood in ‘I’m a Mormon’ Ads,” *Journal of Media and Religion* 13/1 (2014): 31.

32. Sara McPhee Lafkas, “Gender Role Perceptions of Mormon Women from Divorced Families: An Adult-Developmental Analysis,” *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research* 7/2 (2012): 80–97.

33. Lafkas, “Gender Role Perceptions,” 80.

34. David C. Dollahite, Loren D. Marks, and Michael A. Goodman, “Families and Religious Beliefs, Practices, and Communities,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Families: Considering the Past, Contemplating the Future*, ed. Marilyn Coleman and Lawrence H. Ganong (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 411–31.

35. Evelyn L. Lehrer, *Religion, Economics, and Demography: The Effects of Religion on Education, Work, and the Family* (London: Routledge, 2009); Jonathan R. Olson et al., “Shared Religious Beliefs, Prayer, and Forgiveness as Predictors of Marital Satisfaction,” *Family Relations* 64/4 (2015): 519–33; David G. Schramm et al., “Religiosity, Homogamy, and Marital Adjustment: An Examination of Newlyweds in First Marriages and Remarriages,” *Journal of Family Issues* 33/2 (2011): 246–68.

36. Harold T. Christensen and Kenneth L. Cannon, “Temple ‘Versus’ Nontemple Marriage in Utah: Some Demographic Considerations,” *Social Science* 39/1 (1964): 26–33.

certain interfaith combinations [was] as much as nine times higher than that for other combinations.”³⁷ The lowest divorce rates were recorded for Mormon same-faith marriages (same-faith Catholic marriages were very stable as well), but the highest divorce rates were for interfaith marriages involving Mormons.³⁸ The striking (up to ninefold) increase in divorce rate involving interfaith LDS marriages noted by Bahr was Utah-based and rightly caveated as such. However, research by prominent non-LDS demographer Evelyn Lehrer has since buttressed and nuanced Bahr’s 1980s findings. Lehrer found, based on a nationally representative data set (NSFH) of 9,643, that the five-year divorce rate in LDS-LDS couples was 13 percent, “the most stable” of the marriage combinations examined.³⁹ However, the five-year divorce rate among interfaith marriages with one LDS partner was more than triple that rate (40 percent)—one of the least stable combinations of marriage in the study.⁴⁰ We are left with the apparent reality that LDS marriage represents both the most stable and (one of the) least stable unions when studied nationally, depending on whether both spouses are LDS or not.

LDS marital processes. For decades, Mormons have typically had the highest rates of marriage and fertility when compared with Catholics, Protestants, and those without religious preferences.⁴¹ Nationally

37. Howard M. Bahr, “Religious Inter marriage and Divorce in Utah and the Mountain States,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20/3 (1981): 251.

38. Bahr, “Religious Inter marriage,” 251; Brent A. Barlow, “Notes on Mormon Interfaith Marriages,” *The Family Coordinator* 26/2 (April 1977): 143–50. In a small, nongeneralizable study in Florida, Barlow found that “about one-third” of non-Mormon spouses later converted to Mormonism. We suspect that this figure is well above current conversion rates.

39. Evelyn L. Lehrer, “Religion, Human Capital Investments, and the Family in the United States,” IZA Discussion Paper, no. 4279, Department of Economics, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2009, 23, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1434613.

40. Lehrer, “Religion, Human Capital Investments”; Evelyn L. Lehrer and Carmel U. Chiswick, “Religion as a Determinant of Marital Stability,” *Demography* 30/3 (1993): 385–404.

41. Tim B. Heaton and Kristen L. Goodman, “Religion and Family Formation,” *Review of Religious Research* 26/4 (1985): 343–59.

representative data also indicate that Mormons marry significantly younger than other religious groups, with the exception of conservative Protestants.⁴² Less, however, is known about the processes in LDS marriage after the wedding.⁴³

Some insights have been gained from the national American Families of Faith Project, based on in-depth, qualitative interviews with 201 highly religious families (26 of whom were LDS, none of those from Utah). The project has yielded more than fifty peer-reviewed works, almost all of which have included reports from LDS families as well as from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim families.⁴⁴ A few notable highlights related to marital processes from the project have included reports that (1) a “shared family vision” is vitally important in promoting marital quality, stability, and shared meaning; (2) it is important not only to marry someone of the same denomination, but to marry a spouse with a “matched faith” or similar level of religious commitment; (3) strong marriages find ways to unite during the challenges that inevitably arise; and (4) faith in general and prayer specifically can be a valuable resource for resolving conflict.⁴⁵ While the preceding findings are based on the broader 201-family sample, two findings from analyses of only the LDS families have included (1) the reported power of a belief in eternal marriage and eternal family,⁴⁶ and (2) the pervasiveness and influence of “couple prayer” in LDS marriage.⁴⁷

42. Xiaohe Xu, Clark D. Hudspeth, and John P. Bartkowski, “The Timing of First Marriage: Are there Religious Variations?” *Journal of Family Issues* 26/5 (2005): 584–618.

43. Michael A. Goodman et al., “Religious Faith and Transformational Processes in Marriage,” *Family Relations* 62/5 (2013): 808–23.

44. For additional findings, reports, and resources, see <https://americanfamiliesoffaith.byu.edu>.

45. Nathaniel M. Lambert and David C. Dollahite, “How Religiosity Helps Couples Prevent, Resolve, and Overcome Marital Conflict,” *Family Relations* 55/4 (2006): 439–49.

46. Michael A. Goodman, David C. Dollahite, and Loren Marks, “Exploring Transformational Processes and Meaning in LDS Marriages,” *Marriage & Family Review* 48/6 (2012): 555–82.

47. T. G. Hatch et al., “The Power of Prayer in Transforming Individuals and Marital Relationships: A Qualitative Examination of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim

Costs, challenges, and struggles related to involvement in the LDS faith have also been noted. The amount of time, energy, and money required by Mormon activity are substantial when compared with other faiths.⁴⁸ Yet, as sociologists Stark and Finke document, LDS persons “grade” their faith at a significantly higher level than most—seemingly indicating that the perceived benefits are worth the high costs.⁴⁹ These costs involve requested service in church callings, potentially including intensive service in the lay ministry.⁵⁰ A recent qualitative study examined LDS bishops and their wives and found that while bishops reported experiencing increased empathy towards their wives, there were also pronounced difficulties including (1) wives feeling “left behind” spiritually, (2) challenges of negotiating issues of confidentiality, and (3) a variety of stressors at both individual and marital levels.⁵¹

Fertility

There is a long-established and persisting link between religion and fertility patterns.⁵² Because pronatalism is an especially salient part of Mormon theology, many scholars have been particularly interested in the high fertility rates of Mormons. Numerous studies have investigated not only the number of children in Mormon families but also the reasons, perceptions, and pressures related to fertility in Mormon culture. In this

Families,” *Review of Religious Research* 58/1 (2016): 27–46.

48. Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999).

49. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

50. Loren Marks and Brent D. Beal, “Preserving Peculiarity as a People: Mormon Distinctiveness in Lived Values and Internal Structure,” in *Revisiting Thomas F. Odeas’ “The Mormons”: Persistent Themes and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Cardell K. Jacobson, John Patrick Hoffmann, and Tim B. Heaton (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008), 258–85.

51. Deena D. Strong, “Clergy Marriages: Couple Perceptions of Marital Adjustment as the Husband Serves as a Bishop in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 2010), <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/2442/>.

52. Heaton and Goodman, “Religion and Family Formation.”

section, we will briefly address Mormon fertility rates and the variables, both within and outside Mormon culture, that affect Mormon fertility.

Mormon fertility rates have consistently stayed above the average of nonreligious groups and above those of most other religious groups.⁵³ Although these rates remain well above the national average, they are gradually declining. Thornton noted that Utah fertility rates in 1970, while still high compared with those for the rest of the nation, were only 40 percent of what they had been in 1860.⁵⁴ While there are other factors that contribute to this statistic, such as the growing acceptance of birth control and the increase of non-Mormons in Utah over the years (approximately 30 percent by 1970 but 40 percent in 2010), the trend is still reflective of shrinking Mormon family size.⁵⁵ It is important to note that the number of children desired by young LDS women has stayed fairly constant at 4.6 children over the past seventy years, but the number of children born has greatly decreased, from 3.3 in 1985 to 2.6 in 2012 (still the nation's highest fertility rate).⁵⁶ We next discuss reasons why the desired number has not typically been realized.

Secular factors affecting Mormon fertility. Higher socioeconomic status has been associated with higher fertility rates among Mormons. Christensen found that finances were the number-one reason (LDS) students gave for limiting their desired family size.⁵⁷ Heaton found

53. Heaton and Goodman, "Religion and Family Formation"; Arland Thornton, "Religion and Fertility: The Case of Mormonism," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (1979): 131–42; Michael B. Toney, Banu Golesorkhi, and William F. Stinner, "Residence Exposure and Fertility Expectations of Young Mormon and Non-Mormon Women in Utah," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47/2 (1985): 459–65.

54. Thornton, "Religion and Fertility."

55. Thornton, "Religion and Fertility."

56. Harold T. Christensen, "Mormon Fertility: A Survey of Student Opinion," *American Journal of Sociology* 53 (1948): 270–75; Heaton, "Religion and Family Formation"; Pew Research Center, "Mormons and Family Life," accessed September 15, 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/01/12/mormons-in-america-family-life/>; Charles F. Westoff and Raymond H. Potvin, *College Women and Fertility Values* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

57. Harold T. Christensen, "Courtship Conduct as Viewed by Youth," *Journal of Home Economics* 40/4 (1948): 187–88.

higher income to have a positive effect on Mormon fertility, as did Stanford and Smith, who found that while increasing income was associated with fewer children for non-LDS women, it was “slightly positive” for inactive LDS women and “decidedly positive” for active LDS women.⁵⁸

In general, education has a negative effect on fertility. However, many studies have returned mixed results on the effect of education on Mormon fertility.⁵⁹ While it is difficult to definitively determine the effect of education on Mormon fertility, what is clear from these studies and others is that the variables that affect Mormon fertility vary across place and time.⁶⁰

Religious factors affecting Mormon fertility. The strong stance of the LDS Church against premarital sexual intercourse contributes to Mormons marrying significantly younger than the general population—and contributes to high LDS fertility.⁶¹ Much emphasis is also put on marrying within an LDS temple, a choice that scholars have linked with higher fertility. Heaton, the most prolific author on Mormon fertility, explains the effect of temple marriage on fertility by stating that temple marriages reflect a long and deeply held “acceptance of a pronatalist theology.”⁶² Temple marriages are also reflective of high religiosity and activity—and LDS faith-community involvement likely indirectly promotes fertility by providing couples with a reference group of families who also value the pronatalist teachings of the LDS Church. Indeed, continued

58. Tim B. Heaton, “How Does Religion Influence Fertility? The Case of Mormons,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25/2 (1986): 248–58; Joseph B. Stanford and Ken R. Smith, “Marital Fertility and Income: Moderating Effects of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Religion in Utah,” *Journal of Biosocial Science* 45/2 (2013): 245.

59. Heaton, “How Does Religion Influence Fertility?”; Lowry Nelson, “Education and the Changing Size of Mormon Families,” *Rural Sociology* 17/1 (1952): 335; Heaton, “Religion and Family Formation.”

60. Tim B. Heaton, “Religious Influences on Mormon Fertility: Cross-National Comparisons,” *Review of Religious Research* 30/4 (1989): 401–11; Brian L. Pitcher, Evan T. Peterson, and Phillip R. Kunz, “Residency Differentials in Mormon Fertility,” *Population Studies* 28/1 (1974): 143–51.

61. Xu, Hudspeth, and Bartowski, “Timing of First Marriage.”

62. Heaton, “How Does Religion Influence Fertility?” 256.

activity in the church and access to Mormon reference groups have perhaps the largest effect on Mormon fertility.⁶³ While LDS theology and involvement promotes bringing children into a family, these factors also seem to influence child-rearing styles and parent-child relationships.

Parent-child relationships

A good deal of research has explored various aspects of the parent-child relationship and parenting processes in Mormon families. A series of studies by Hui-Tzu Grace Chou and colleagues addressed different aspects of the parent-child relationship. In a study on the possible effect of birth order on religiosity, Chou and Elison found that earlier-born Mormon college students showed a higher level of religiosity than later-born children.⁶⁴ Chou, Esplin, and Ranquist found that frequency of prayer among LDS young adults was associated with the type of attachment to parents they reported (from their childhood), although other factors, such as general religious activity, were more influential.⁶⁵ Chou and Uata found that the image of God (as loving, forgiving, trustworthy, and available) held by Mormon male college students in the United States was influenced by the style of parenting they reported their parents practiced.⁶⁶

Two studies by Rachel Loser and colleagues addressed links between family and religious involvement for LDS families. In 2009 Loser, Hill, Klein, and Dollahite found that Mormon parents reported that their family religious rituals provided benefits including stronger relationships, more family togetherness and unity, increased communication, less

63. Heaton, "How does Religion Influence Fertility?"; Stanford and Smith, "Marital Fertility and Income"; Westoff and Potvin, "College Women and Fertility."

64. Hui-Tzu Grace Chou and Sanni Elison, "Impact of Birth Order on Religious Behaviors among College Students Raised by Highly Religious Mormon Parents," *Archive for the Psychology of Religions* 36/1 (2014): 105–17.

65. Hui-Tzu Grace Chou, Janell Esplin, and Shelby Ranquist, "Childhood Attachment to Parents and Frequency of Prayer during the College Years," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 16/8 (2013): 863–75.

66. Hui-Tzu Grace Chou and Dominique Uata, "The Impact of Parental Discipline on the Image of God," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 15/7 (2012): 677–88.

contention, more kindness, and better parenting.⁶⁷ In a different study, Loser, Klein, Hill, and Dollahite found that Mormon parents reported that their religion was integral to their familial, structural, and social systems and deeply integrated into their daily lives.⁶⁸

Merrill, Salazar, and Gardner found that parental positions of responsibility in the LDS Church and frequent family discussions about faith and religious practice were more potent predictors of avoidance of drug usage among Mormon young adults than other factors such as church attendance, discussions about doctrine, and fears about harming the family's reputation.⁶⁹ Marks and Dollahite studied Mormon parents alongside parents from other faiths and found that highly religious parents identified meaningful religious practices that involved both costs and benefits associated with them.⁷⁰

A number of studies have explored the challenges experienced by Mormon families that include a child with special needs (developmental and physical delays, disabilities, and illnesses). Marshall and colleagues found that despite the physical, emotional, financial, and relational challenges, many LDS parents of special needs children described this challenge as a profoundly spiritual experience.⁷¹ In a series of studies, Dollahite and colleagues explored the experiences of Mormon fathers of children with special needs. They reported a number of themes, including the conclusion that most of those fathers would not "change" their special needs child nor deny family members the kind of spiritual growth and

67. Rachel W. Loser et al., "Perceived Benefits of Religious Rituals in the Latter-day Saint Home," *Review of Religious Research* 50/3 (2009): 345–62.

68. Rachel W. Loser et al., "Religion and the Daily Lives of LDS Families: An Ecological Perspective," *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* 37/1 (2008): 52–70.

69. Ray M. Merrill, Richard D. Salazar, and Nicole W. Gardner, "Relationship between Family Religiosity and Drug Use Behavior among Youth," *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal* 29/4 (2001): 347–57.

70. Loren D. Marks and David C. Dollahite, "'Don't Forget Home': The Importance of Sacred Ritual in Families," in *Understanding Religious Rituals*, ed. J. Hoffman (New York: Routledge, 186–203).

71. Elaine Sorensen Marshall et al., "'This Is a Spiritual Experience': Perspectives of Latter-day Saint Families Living with a Child with Disabilities," *Qualitative Health Research* 13/1 (2003): 57–76.

compassion that reportedly developed as a result of their being in a family with a child with special needs.⁷² Additionally, the LDS faith community was a cherished and invaluable resource to these families—but conversely, when “brothers and sisters” in their ward family let them down, it was “disappointing and hurtful . . . [and] seemed to elicit greater frustration and pain than failures by secular [institutions].”⁷³ As with divorce rates, it seems that the LDS religion and family experience can often include highs and lows that vary both above and below typical experience.

Youth religious development in a family context

A number of studies have explored youth religious development in the context of religious family processes—and these studies often include LDS families with adolescents.

Agate, Zabriskie, and Eggett studied LDS parents and youth and found that both family religiosity and family leisure had a significant positive relationship with family functioning.⁷⁴ Chadwick and Top studied more than 2,100 LDS youth along the East Coast and found that religiosity was inversely related to delinquency but that peer influence had even greater impact on delinquency than family and religious factors.⁷⁵ Merrill, Folsom, and Christopherson studied the influence of

72. David C. Dollahite, “Fathering for Eternity: Generative Spirituality in Latter-day Saint Fathers of Children with Special Needs,” *Review of Religious Research* 44/3 (2003): 237–51; David C. Dollahite, Loren D. Marks, and Michael M. Olson, “Faithful Fathering in Trying Times: Religious Beliefs and Practices of Latter-day Saint Fathers of Children with Special Needs,” *Journal of Men’s Studies* 7/1 (Fall 1998): 71–93; David C. Dollahite, Loren D. Marks, and Michael M. Olson, “Fathering, Faith, and Family Therapy: Generative Narrative Therapy with Religious Fathers,” *Journal of Family Psychotherapy* 13/3 (2002): 259; Loren D. Marks and David C. Dollahite, “Religion, Relationships, and Responsible Fathering in Latter-day Saint Families of Children with Special Needs,” *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships* 18/5 (2001): 625–50.

73. Marks and Dollahite, “Religion, Relationships, and Responsible Fathering,” 636.

74. Sarah Taylor Agate, Ramon B. Zabriskie, and Dennis L. Eggett, “Praying, Playing, and Successful Families: An Examination of Family Religiosity, Family Leisure, and Family Functioning,” *Marriage & Family Review* 42/2 (2007): 51–75.

75. Bruce A. Chadwick and Brent L. Top, “Religiosity and Delinquency among LDS Adolescents,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 32 (March 1993): 51–67.

family religiosity on adolescent substance abuse and found that family church attendance and religiosity among parents during participants' adolescent years served as protective factors against substance use in LDS youth but not among youth in other religions or for those with no religious preference.⁷⁶

The American Families of Faith Project includes in-depth qualitative interviews with twenty-six Mormon families (all from outside Utah). As part of this project, Emily Layton and colleagues investigated how youth of various faiths, including Mormons, developed their religious and spiritual identity. The study focused on what anchored youth to their faith (e.g., connections with God, parents, religious leaders, and peers) and how they developed strong religious identity in childhood and adolescence.⁷⁷

From these data, Dollahite and colleagues investigated how youth from various faith communities (including the LDS community) engaged in religious conversations with parents, as well as the kinds of religious sacrifices Jewish, non-Mormon Christian, Muslim, and Mormon youth make for religious reasons.⁷⁸ These studies found that LDS youth are similar to youth from other faiths in many ways but that they also manifest differences. For example, in the study of sacrifices made by youth for religious reasons, Latter-day Saint youth made a broader range of sacrifices for religious reasons than most youth from other

76. Ray M. Merrill, Jeffrey A. Folsom, and Susan S. Christopherson, "The Influence of Family Religiosity on Adolescent Substance Use according to Religious Preference," *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal* 33/8 (2005): 821–35.

77. Emily Layton, David C. Dollahite, and Sam A. Hardy, "Anchors of Religious Commitment in Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 26/3 (2011): 381–413; Emily Layton, Sam A. Hardy, and David C. Dollahite, "Religious Exploration among Highly Religious American Adolescents," *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 12/2 (2012): 157–84.

78. David C. Dollahite and Jennifer Y. Thatcher, "Talking about Religion: How Highly Religious Youth and Parents Discuss Their Faith," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23/5 (2008): 611–41; David C. Dollahite et al., "Giving Up Something Good for Something Better: Sacred Sacrifices Made by Religious Youth," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 24/6 (2009): 691–725.

faiths. This is consistent with data reported from a national, mixed-method study of teenagers.

A number of non-LDS social scientists have written extensively about Mormon youth based on data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) conducted by Christian Smith. One study of 3,370 teens (including Mormon youth), conducted by sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, found that LDS youth were relatively highly involved with and committed to their faith.⁷⁹ The study compared youth from various faiths on a variety of spiritual and religious variables. Below is a summary of the findings from their book *Soul Searching*.

1. Mormon teens are the most likely among all US teens to hold religious beliefs similar to those of their parents (p.35).
2. Seventy-one percent of Mormon teens attend church at least weekly (p. 38).
3. Mormon teens rate the importance of their faith shaping daily life and major life decisions higher than other youth (p. 40).
4. Mormon and black conservative Protestants teens are the most likely to hold traditional, biblical religious beliefs (p. 44).
5. Mormon teens were highest in having a very moving or powerful spiritual experience and highest in reporting they had “ever experienced a definite answer to prayer or specific guidance from God” (p. 45).
6. Mormon teens were the most likely to report that they denied themselves something as a “spiritual discipline” (p. 46).
7. Mormon teens appear to pray the most often (p. 47).
8. Mormon teens reported being the most involved in religious youth groups and were the most likely to claim to be leaders in their youth groups (p. 53).

79. Christian R. Smith and Melinda L. Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

9. Families of Mormon teens appear to talk about religious and spiritual matters the most (p. 55).
10. Mormon, black Protestant, and conservative Protestant teens are most likely to pray with their parents (p. 55).
11. Mormon teens (23 percent) are most likely to frequently express their faith at school (p. 59).
12. Mormon and Jewish youth reported noticeably higher levels of pressure and teasing from peers than did non-Mormon Christian teens (p. 59).
13. The number of nonparent adults who played a meaningful role in a teenager's life was noticeably higher for Mormons (p. 61).
14. Mormon youth were the highest percentage (83 percent) reporting that they anticipated attending the same type of faith community when they were twenty-five years old and the lowest percentage (2 percent) to say they anticipated attending "a different kind of congregation" (p. 66).

In her book-length study *Almost Christian*, Kenda Creasy Dean, professor of youth, church, and culture at Princeton Theological Seminary (and an ordained Methodist minister), also examined data from the NSYR.⁸⁰ In her chapter "Mormon Envy: Sociological Tools for a Consequential Faith," she discussed the strength of LDS family life and faith communities in helping youth religious development. She concluded:

It may be difficult for a "gentile" or non-Mormon to read Mormon views on God, community, vocation, and eschatology without raising an eyebrow—but it is just as difficult to read the data on Mormon teenagers without feeling a hint of awe.⁸¹

80. Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

81. Dean, *Almost Christian*, 59.

Dean suggested that Mormonism provides LDS teens with “a consequential faith” characterized by a substantive doctrine of God, a community of consequence (which for Mormons is family), a morally significant universe, and being asked to contribute themselves to God’s ultimate transformation of the world. Dean explained:

Chief among these faith-promoting variables is the religiosity of Mormon parents. Since Mormons are known for tightly knit, intact, and religiously devoted families—and since we know that teenagers mirror their parents’ faith to a high degree—it stands to reason that Mormon communities would have higher-than-average rates of religious devotion among teenagers.⁸²

Dean went on to encourage pastors and youth ministers of all faiths to try to learn from the ways that the LDS faith—and LDS families in particular—work with their youth to help them develop deep religious and spiritual identities.

Conclusion

Respected University of Southern California scholar Vern Bengtson (not LDS) and colleagues have reported the following in their landmark, four-generation study of religion and family life:

The most successful programs fostering intergenerational connections and the nurturing of families have been instituted by Mormons, of which a prime example is their Family Home Evening [on] Monday nights. The LDS parents and bishops we spoke with attributed the success of their faith in religious transmission to activities such as this [Family Home Evening] that integrate family and faith and emphasize family growth and development. They have certainly been successful—in our sample . . . eight out of ten

82. Dean, *Almost Christian*, 59.

Mormon parents share with their young adult children affiliation with the Mormon faith. (pp. 202–3)⁸³

Bengtson's study found that the highly familial faith of Mormons provided a number of benefits for LDS individuals who embraced the faith, as well as challenges for family relationships resulting from inter-generational changes and differences in levels of faith involvement.

In connection with ongoing emic/etic and insider/outsider discussions in social science, it is noteworthy that although often portrayed as a "peculiar people" from the fringe, Mormon scholars have heavily influenced family studies from its inception to the present⁸⁴—as currently evidenced by the BYU School of Family Life's research productivity. Even so, it is non-Mormon "outsiders" who have given the empirical knowledge base its most valuable recent insights regarding Mormon families. A systematic and objective scholar would likely observe that the pervasively secular field of family studies has reaped much of worth from Mormon scholars, and that perceptive non-LDS scholars have offered Mormons many insights regarding their own families' strengths

83. Vern L. Bengtson, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down across Generations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 202–3.

84. The field of Mormon family studies has arrived at a place where non-LDS scholars regularly invite LDS scholars to write about Mormon families for edited collections that address family life in a variety of faiths. For example, David Dollahite and Loren Marks have been invited by various non-LDS editors to write chapters for edited volumes that focus on families from various faiths: David C. Dollahite, "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," in *Social History of the American Family*, ed. Marilyn Coleman and Lawrence Ganong (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014), 236–38; David C. Dollahite and Loren D. Marks, "The Mormon American Family," in *Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations*, 5th ed., ed. R. Wright et al. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2012), 461–86; David C. Dollahite, "Latter-day Saint Children and Youth in America," in *Children and Childhood in American Religions*, ed. D. S. Browning and B. Miller-McLemore (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 102–18; David C. Dollahite, "Latter-day Saint Marriage and Family Life in Modern America," in *American Religions and the Family: How Faith Traditions Cope with Modernization*, ed. Don S. Browning and David A. Clairmont (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 124–50; Dollahite and Marks, "Teaching Correct Principles," 394–408.

and weaknesses. Our hope is that in both the larger discipline of family studies and in the niche of Mormon family studies, the insider and outsider groups will be wise enough to realize that both groups are needed for optimal examination, discovery, learning, and progress.

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Loren D. Marks is professor of family life at Brigham Young University and codirector of the American Families of Faith national research project. From 2008 to 2015, he held the Kathryn Norwood and Claude Fussell Alumni Professorship and served as director of Louisiana State University's Child and Family Studies program (2001–2015) before moving to BYU in 2015. His research has centered on religion and family relationships, and he has more than eighty publications, including two coauthored books, *Religion and Families: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2016) and *Sacred Matters: Religion and Spirituality in Families* (Routledge, 2012).

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Review Essays

The Peculiar Mormon Paradox

Molly Worthen

Review of Randall Balmer and Jana Riess. *Mormonism and American Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016; Neil J. Young. *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016; David E. Campbell, John C. Green, and J. Quin Monson. *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

WHEN JOSEPH SMITH RAN FOR PRESIDENT IN 1844, he spoke like a radical democrat. “In the United States, the people are the government,” his campaign platform proclaimed. He enthusiastically endorsed popular sovereignty, offered a plan to abolish slavery by gradually buying out slaveholders with revenues from the sale of public lands, and proposed to pardon every convict, “blessing them as they go, and saying to them in the name of the Lord, go thy way and sin no more.”¹

Smith’s rhetoric reflected the high view of human nature that is a cornerstone of Mormon theology. “He thought humans bore the seeds of godhood within them, and in time could enjoy the fullness of godly

1. Quoted in Richard Lyman Bushman, “Joseph Smith’s Presidential Ambitions,” in Balmer and Riess, *Mormonism and American Politics*, 8, 11.

power,” writes Richard Bushman in his essay in *Mormonism and American Politics* (p. 12).

Yet Smith was no democrat. He believed in the rule of the Saints, and he ruled those Saints. Smith entered the presidential race after the other candidates failed to assure him that they would look out for the Mormon people—or, to put it more bluntly, that they would permit Mormons to practice polygamy and theocracy in peace.

Smith’s campaign was cut short by his brutal death that summer, at the hands of an anti-Mormon mob. Most modern Mormons dwell far more on his martyrdom than on his brief bid for president. Yet Smith’s campaign encapsulated his faith’s fundamental paradox: the tension between individual freedom and obedience at the heart of the Mormon religion. This paradox has had profound political consequences.

The tension between liberty and authority pervades all religious communities making their way through the modern world. And yet many scholars—and most Mormons—have long insisted that Mormons are, somehow, different. The usual word is *peculiar*. The books under review here—a bold reinterpretation of the rise of the Christian Right, a provocative collection of historical essays on Mormons and politics, and a data-driven sociological study of Mormon political culture—all affirm that peculiarity.

At the same time, they integrate the Mormon story into the broader narrative of American conservatism and the Christian Right, a burgeoning field that has often treated Mormons as an afterthought. Mormons have forged a unique theology and a powerful culture of institutional authority that help them negotiate secular modernity’s demands on their minds and bodies. The LDS experience both echoes and defies the broad patterns that scholars have observed in other conservative religious traditions. Mormons are—and yet sometimes are not—a peculiar people.

The authority problem

Early Mormons' battles with the federal government unfolded as evangelicals and Catholics struggled to reconcile their own ideas of religious authority with the demands of the wider culture. Two years after the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act criminalized plural marriage in US territories, Pius IX promulgated his Syllabus of Errors. The document decried autonomous human reason, religious freedom, the rule of civil law, and other features of Western modernity as abominable heresies. In 1870 the First Vatican Council proclaimed papal infallibility, declaring that God would protect the pope from error whenever he spoke *ex cathedra*.

In the years that followed, as Mormons' clashes with Washington accelerated, conservative Protestants at places like Princeton Theological Seminary waged a battle of their own. They sought to shore up the Bible's authority against the attacks of theological modernists who had reinterpreted scripture in light of the latest historical and scientific discoveries. Charles Hodge, the seminary's principal from 1851 to 1878, called the Bible a God-given "storehouse of facts" free of any error, even in matters of history and science.² Viewed from a certain angle, this doctrine of biblical inerrancy is the Protestant version of papal infallibility, and it provided the intellectual foundation of the twentieth-century fundamentalist movement.

At first glance, it may seem that Mormon battles to defend their right to practice polygamy and enjoy political independence had little to do with Protestant and Catholic fights over faith and reason. But this is to understand these conflicts too narrowly. All three were profound crises of authority. All three compelled church leaders to defend the prerogative of their institutions against the claims of the culture around them. In each case, esoteric theological debates intersected with broader questions of social boundaries and cultural change. And all three fights have cast long shadows across the twentieth century and beyond.

2. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1873; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 1:10.

Is polygamy really so important to the modern Mormon story? In the most provocative essay in *Mormonism and American Politics*, Mormon feminist Joanna Brooks declares that it is. “Polygamy is to Mormon experience as slavery is to American experience: defining, materially and ideologically constitutive, contradictory to some of its stated ideals, and lasting in its cultural consequences,” she writes (p. 195).

What does she mean? After all, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has waged a concerted effort to distance itself from plural marriage for more than a century. But the LDS leadership never repudiated Joseph Smith’s account of plural marriage as a gateway to the celestial kingdom. As Brooks puts it, the practice is still “on the books” in Mormon scripture and in some elements of temple ritual (p. 194). A divorced Mormon woman must seek a temple cancellation to unseal her from her ex-husband in order to remarry in a temple, but the same does not hold for men.³ There appears to be some room for plural marriage in the afterlife.

It can be hard to interpret such theological residue. Too many non-Mormons have wandered into the land of paranoid speculation about “secret” LDS teachings. The more pressing legacy of plural marriage is at once simpler and more profound. Perhaps the best analogy is not the aftermath of slavery, but the legacy of nineteenth-century battles with secular modernity among today’s Catholics and evangelical Protestants.

The Mormons’ great fight, their story of the church against the world, has left them with a keen sense that their church’s commitment to marriage sets them apart and has been attacked and misunderstood in the past; that defending the institution of marriage as their church defines it is essential not only to the preservation of civilization, but to salvation. No other Christian community holds quite the same view. Recently scholars such as Amy DeRogatis have stressed the theological importance of marriage, sex, and reproduction for conservative

3. Melvyn Hammarberg, *The Mormon Quest for Glory: The Religious World of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 43.

evangelicals, but they don't come close to Mormon beliefs.⁴ In Mormon theology, as Brooks writes, marriage is “an ordinance necessary to the eternal well-being of the soul” (p. 193).

Brooks sees the nineteenth-century Mormon “underground,” the social network that helped polygamous Mormons evade federal persecution, as a model for the church's modern approach to political conflict with the state: “a split between private or insider and public communication that manifests both in practices of social insularity as well as in the careful use of public speech as deflective action rather than communicative reason—the assumed speech norm of modern civic life” (p. 194). In other words, when the church hierarchy instructs members to invest in a controversial cause and trust only official LDS sources of information, Mormons fall into line—and become stealth culture warriors.

She dwells on the 2008 example of Mormon mobilization to support California's Proposition 8, the state constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. The church issued a letter to congregations urging members to “do all they could” to support the measure (p. 197). “It was communicated by priesthood leaders in Sunday meetings and widely believed by LDS Church members that the legalization of same-sex marriage would force the LDS Church to marry gay couples, and that the church would be forced to shut down its own temples rather than comply” (p. 201). Although Mormons make up only about 2 percent of California's population, they donated between 50 and 70 percent of the funds raised by the “Yes on 8” campaign (p. 198), funds funneled through “surrogate channels,” such as ProtectMarriage.com, to give the church “a layer of protection against public scrutiny” (p. 199).

It may be that Brooks draws too straight a line from nineteenth-century theology to the modern culture wars and that her account of Mormon political involvement is a shade too conspiratorial. Yet she puts her finger on something real: the way conservative churches' battles with modernity in centuries past have shaped their engagement with secular pluralism today.

4. Amy DeRogatis, *Saving Sex: Sexuality and Salvation in American Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Mormons and the Christian Right

By 2008, were not most Mormons comfortable members of the Christian Right, that amorphous collection of activists who seek to shore up the authority of conservative Christianity over American culture? Were their unique doctrines really all that relevant to politics? Theology does not figure prominently in most histories of the Christian Right. Scholars—and some activists—have implied that when Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and a few conservative Jews realized the magnitude of the threat posed by “secular humanists,” they set aside their squabbles about the authority of the pope, the inspiration of the Bible, or the divinity of Jesus. Ralph Reed, the first director of the Christian Coalition, sidestepped such debates by calling his diverse allies “people of faith.”⁵

The historian Neil Young explodes that diplomatic narrative in *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith Politics*. As the cultural authority of churches and white men declined precipitously in late twentieth-century America, conservative activists did indeed begin to seek new partners. But Young demonstrates that evangelical, Catholic, and Mormon interfaith relations were never exactly hunky-dory.

Most historians have located the immediate origins of the modern Christian Right in the 1960s, when some of the oldest sources of prejudice dividing evangelicals, Catholics, and Mormons waned and common enemies emerged. Racial prejudices against white “ethnic” Catholics had faded; the practice of polygamy was ancient history, at least among mainstream Mormons; and the Second Vatican Council had smoothed interfaith relations by deeming Protestants “separated brethren” instead of heretics, emphasizing the authority of the Bible, and permitting Mass in the vernacular. Mormons saw in the Vatican Council some affirmation of their own faith, particularly Vatican II’s declaration that official church pronouncements should be considered “revelations” (p. 62).

5. Ralph E. Reed, *Politically Incorrect: The Emerging Faith Factor in American Politics* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 11, 58, 263.

Yet many evangelicals remained cynical that the church of Pius IX could now truly affirm religious freedom and individual access to scripture. Mormons stood by their familiar critiques of Protestants and Catholics: “A reformation cannot lead them back, but this new revelation can,” Hugh Brown, first counselor in the LDS Church’s First Presidency, said in 1964 (p. 62).

At the same time, all three communities wrestled with internal debate and transformation: developments that followed the broad patterns set in the nineteenth century. Here Young’s account of the divisions between evangelicals, Catholics, and Mormons is slightly incomplete. In the mid-1960s, the first tremors of the “Battle for the Bible”—a titanic clash between conservatives and moderates over scripture’s authority—began to roil evangelical circles, as conservatives worked to ferret out colleagues they deemed “weak” on inerrancy. Vatican II threw Catholics in the West into turmoil. Conservatives lamented the reforms as a capitulation to modern materialism. Liberals complained the Second Vatican Council had not gone far enough and merely reasserted the First Vatican Council’s high-handed authoritarianism with a velvet glove.

The Mormons, on the other hand, were entering a period of consolidation, confidence, and insularity. Here, in the era of Correlation, we might trace the broad legacy of the underground: the church’s tradition of protecting and shepherding its own. Harold B. Lee, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, launched the internal reform movement in 1960. Lee began with the mandate to focus on “correlating” the church’s educational curricula and auxiliary activities to standardize LDS teaching ministries, but he “envisioned much more,” writes Matthew Bowman in *The Mormon People*.⁶ Lee sought to centralize authority in the priesthood quorums to yield hierarchical efficiency modeled on American corporations he admired.⁷ Elsewhere, Bowman has compared Correlation to the sixteenth-century Council of

6. Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith* (New York: Random House, 2012), 195.

7. Bowman, *Mormon People*, 196.

Trent, when the Catholic Church enacted reforms to ensure individual conformity to church teachings and strengthen hierarchical control.⁸

The “Battle for the Bible” and Vatican II struck evangelicals and Catholics with centrifugal force. Dissenters spun further away from the control of institutional authorities, while conservatives called for holy crusade. Many found a new source of authority—and another means to challenge secular modernity—in the charismatic renewal movement, a worldwide Pentecostal revival that began in the late 1950s and had left few evangelical and Catholic communities untouched (and encouraged them to respect each other’s piety) by the time it began to wind down twenty years later. All these developments hastened what the sociologist Robert Wuthnow called “the restructuring of American religion”: the division of Protestants and Catholics into conservative and liberal camps more willing to collaborate across confessional lines to advance a shared political agenda.⁹

The Mormon experience of the 1960s and 1970s was different. Correlation sprang from the same motivations that drove Catholic bishops to seek reform and evangelical inerrantists to hunt out doubters: all three movements were efforts to shore up traditional religious authority. But while Protestants and Catholics had more discord on their hands, Correlation helped Mormons reinforce the boundaries between their church and the rest of the world (it is not an accident that they seem to have been the only Christian community virtually untouched by charismatic revival). Correlation made possible the kind of mobilization and information control evident in the church’s response to Proposition 8.

Yet the 1960s and the 1970s also brought a wave of social and political change—the expansion of global communism; secularization and liberation movements at home—that left many evangelicals, Catholics, and Mormons on the same side of the emerging culture wars. If any issue promised to compel Mormons to leave their citadel and work

8. Bowman, “Saturday’s Warriors,” *Slate*, April 25, 2012, <http://www.slate.com/>.

9. Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

alongside Catholics and evangelicals, it was the fight to halt the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

The Equal Rights Amendment

The amendment, passed by Congress in 1972, declared that “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” To many conservative Christians, it defied the complementary gender roles set forth in scripture and church tradition. Historians such as Donald Critchlow, biographer of the prominent Catholic anti-ERA activist Phyllis Schlafly, have told the story of coffee klatches that blossomed into rallies and voting drives and halted the amendment just shy of the thirty-eight state ratifications needed.¹⁰ Neil Young builds on this narrative by identifying the anti-ERA movement as a key turning point in Mormon collaboration with the Christian Right.

The campaign attracted enthusiastic grassroots Mormon support—in no small part because the LDS hierarchy officially endorsed it. The First Presidency released an official statement opposing the amendment in 1976, warning that it would bring women “far more restraints and repressions.” “The ERA’s bid for a constitutionally protected equality of the sexes struck at the very core of Mormonism’s deepest beliefs about the gender-specific functions for men and women in life,” Young writes (p. 159).

The fight over the ERA proved to be the first mainstream culture war battle that Mormons entered with gusto, proving to themselves and to other Christian activists that Mormons were capable of methodical organization and dogged political action. Reluctant to collaborate too closely with other activists, the church created its own anti-ERA groups, “building, coordinating, and directing an internal movement against the amendment through its grassroots organizations” (pp. 159–60).

10. Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman’s Crusade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

In *Seeking the Promised Land*, a study of evolving Mormon political attitudes by the political scientists David E. Campbell, John C. Green, and J. Quin Monson, the authors note that most Utah Mormons initially agreed with the ERA's statement of gender equality. Yet the LDS hierarchy persuaded most of them to vote against the amendment, "notwithstanding their general support for women's rights" (p. 134). The church honed the methods of organization and internal communication that would prove so effective in supporting Proposition 8 decades later—while building on theological priorities and a powerful culture of top-down authority that their ancestors would have recognized.

Disorderly pro-lifers

Yet the campaign against the ERA did not play midwife to a harmonious Christian Right. The year after conservative Christians began their anti-ratification fight, the Supreme Court legalized abortion in all fifty states. Historians such as Daniel Williams have chronicled evangelicals' early ambivalence toward the largely Catholic pro-life campaign.¹¹ But Young reveals just how fractious the movement was.

Mormons did not embrace the pro-life cause as they did the defense of traditional marriage and gender roles. They had opposed abortion since the 1850s, but historically Mormons did not equate it with murder. LDS doctrine was ambiguous on the question of when life began. Brigham Young declared that it began at "quickening," the moment when the mother feels the fetus stir in her womb (this was the Catholic position until 1869, when Pius IX banned all abortion). David O. McKay, president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1951 until 1970, believed life began only with birth (p. 101). McKay's view seems to have been exceptional, but Young notes that the church never pursued the overturning of *Roe* with the zeal that it brought to the fight against the ERA.

11. Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 117ff.

Even committed pro-life activists remained divided over strategy and theology. Young recounts the story of dueling pro-life legislation in the early 1980s. Senator Orrin Hatch, a Mormon from Utah, proposed a constitutional amendment protecting the right of states to pass their own laws on abortion. The amendment would exploit federalism as a means to gradually reverse *Roe*. Jesse Helms, a Baptist from North Carolina, proposed a Human Life Bill that declared that life begins at conception and denied the courts jurisdiction over abortion. The two bills pitted pragmatists against pro-lifers of principle.

By the time both bills had failed in 1983, pro-life organizations remained divided along confessional and tactical lines. "We are a movement in disarray," said Paul Brown of the National Right to Life Committee (p. 215).

The central argument of *We Gather Together* is that Brown's assessment ought to apply to the Christian Right more generally. Not even at the apparent climax of their political power did Christian Right activists perceive themselves as a unified movement on the brink of reconquering American culture. Evangelicals had gradually warmed to the prospect of working alongside Catholics, but they grew even more wary of Mormons in the wake of LDS missionary gains in the Bible Belt. Leaders in all three communities believed they faced "a time of religious crisis that demanded clear messages that distinguished and promoted their particular faiths" (p. 177).

Peculiar nonetheless

If observers have exaggerated the unity of the Christian Right, if evangelicals and Catholics championed different priorities and worried about the costs of collaboration, then perhaps Mormons are not so peculiar. Yet it is a mistake to cast Mormons as interchangeable with other "family values" activists. "What makes a Methodist a Methodist differs from what makes a Mormon a Mormon," Campbell, Green, and Monson write in *Seeking the Promised Land* (p. 29).

The authors base most of their conclusions on two ambitious surveys of Mormons and Americans' opinions of Mormons: the Peculiar People Survey and the Mormon Perceptions Study. Mormons have defied Wuthnow's "restructuring of American religion" by remaining a fairly distinct "ethno-religious group" whose members seek shelter under a unique "sacred tabernacle" (p. 38). The term riffs on sociologist Peter Berger's notion of a "sacred canopy," a system of shared metaphysical beliefs that provides a sense of reality that all members of a community can take for granted.¹² A tabernacle is large and communal like a canopy—and not as individualistic as a "sacred umbrella," sociologist Christian Smith's appropriation of the Berger metaphor for modern evangelicals.¹³ But, like an umbrella, it's ready to pack up and go anywhere, "especially into hostile landscapes" (p. 38). (The authors have in mind something more like modest "tentlike structure" of the ancient Israelites and less like the imposing Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.) The sacred tabernacle is built of shared history, theology, culture, church institutions, and idioms, all of which have led many observers to see Mormons as a quasi-ethnic group. These are the practices and principles that allow Mormons to "create tight-knit communities wherever they are found" (p. 38). The Peculiar People Survey revealed that Mormons are remarkably homogeneous in their politics: today even more Mormons lean Republican—65 percent—than do evangelicals (p. 79).

Yet in 1896, 73 percent of Utah Mormons voted for the great populist crusader William Jennings Bryan. While *Seeking the Promised Land* sketches in broad strokes the historical development of Mormon politics, the essays in *Mormonism and American Politics* flesh out some of the most interesting transformations that divide the Mormons of Bryan's day from today's "Republican Party at prayer." They suggest that it may be Mormons' theory of human nature, as much as the political legacy of polygamy, that has carved the church's path through the twentieth century.

12. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

13. Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 106.

A peculiar anthropology

Joseph Smith's genius lay in turning the Puritans' dark vision of human depravity and predestination on its head while retaining a vision of theocratic authority that would have filled Cotton Mather with envy. He crafted "a modern Pelagianism in a Puritan religion," the Mormon philosopher Sterling McMurrin wrote.¹⁴

In one of the most fascinating essays in *Mormonism and American Politics*, Matthew Bowman explains how Mormons' exaltation of free will and the path to godhood found a certain harmony with the principles of the Progressive era. Church leaders such as John Widtsoe, James Talmage, and B. H. Roberts placed great faith in the potential of science and education to improve humanity's lot and propel the species toward godhood. Widtsoe's *Joseph Smith as Scientist* (1908) cast the prophet as a quintessential progressive who anticipated modern reformers' embrace of the scientific method to bring "applied Christianity" to the world. "The theology which rests upon the few basic laws of nature is unshakable; and the great theology of the future will be such a one," he wrote.¹⁵

In contrast to the protestations of many evangelicals and Catholics, Widtsoe and other Mormons endorsed Herbert Spencer's theory of evolution. The British scientist proved an unlikely guide who helped Mormon thinkers negotiate the church's transition into the mainstream after the Woodruff Manifesto renounced polygamy. Spencer's worldview persuaded Mormons that "they might think of their connection with God in terms of evolutionary, ontological inheritance rather than in the dynastic language of polygamy. . . . They began to think of 'eternal progression' as a function of Spencerian evolution—the cultivation of progress through struggle, refining personal character through education, confronting obstacles, and committing to the character-building work of their church," Bowman writes (p. 61). He suggests that the consonance between LDS theology and the secular Progressive worldview

14. Sterling M. McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000 [1965]), foreword.

15. John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith as Scientist: A Contribution to Mormon Philosophy* (Salt Lake City: Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations, 1908), 1.

helps explain why Mormons “so readily gave up their Zion in the desert, their marital radicalism, their economic communalism and instead made common cause with that very American society that had just spent a decade punishing them” (p. 56).

The embrace of “progress through struggle” is a key turn in Mormon thought, one that may have paved the way for the eventual Mormon embrace, not of progressive reforms, but of the brutalities of free market capitalism—that dimension of the contemporary conservative message that can seem contrary to the church’s communitarian ethos. Despite suffering alongside most other Americans during the Great Depression—and embracing the New Deal over the protests of LDS leaders—Mormons later emerged in the popular mind as paragons of economic buoyance and self-reliance.

Jan Shipp recounts the rise of this popular mythology, promoted by admiring accounts such as “Those Amazing Mormons,” a 1952 article in the magazine *Coronet* (a rival of *Reader’s Digest*). The article “provided a picture of a people with all the Boy and Girl Scout virtues who didn’t drink alcohol, didn’t smoke, kept a year’s larder full of foodstuffs, and, of the greatest importance, ‘took care of their own’” (p. 79). Mormons themselves came to forget the real story of the Great Depression and, under the guidance of zealous anti-Communist leaders like Ezra Taft Benson, endorsed the Cold War-era fusion of traditional Christianity and economic libertarianism that has come to form the bedrock of today’s Christian Right.

Other conservative churches suffered the same amnesia, as historian Alison Collis Greene explains in her recent book *No Depression in Heaven*, an account of Southern evangelical churches’ desperate acquiescence to the New Deal after their own resources ran dry.¹⁶ Mormons are not unique in their misplaced nostalgia for a pre-New Deal arcadia when church communities supposedly cared for their own until the federal government stomped into town. Was this mythology the logical

16. Alison Collis Greene, *No Depression in Heaven: The Great Depression, the New Deal, and the Transformation of Religion in the Delta* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

application of Mormonism's vision of gods in the making, freed by their Heavenly Father to thrive or fail—or its ultimate distortion?

Sterling McMurrin—who called himself a “good heretic”—once wrote that “the church doesn't do justice to its own theology.”¹⁷ Twentieth-century Mormons had permitted the “general framework of historic Christian fundamentalism” to flatten the most radical insights of their faith.¹⁸ (He tended to ignore the legacy of polygamy.)

The Pelagian Puritan; the theocratic freedom fighter: this is the paradox of Mormon peculiarity, the way American Mormons have become both insiders and outsiders at once. “While Mormons may have started down the path of assimilation, they did not go very far before veering off into another direction,” Campbell, Green, and Monson write (p. 258). They describe the posture of the modern LDS Church as neither acculturation nor separation, but “*engagement* with society. Mormons would not retreat from or surrender to it, but instead choose their battles carefully.” You can take the prophet out of the wilderness, perhaps, but you cannot take the wilderness out of the prophet.

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17. Quoted in McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (introduction by L. Jackson Newell), x, ix.

18. McMurrin, *Theological Foundations*, foreword.

Still the Seed of Abraham?

David A. Hollinger

Review of Terryl L. Givens and Philip L. Barlow, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

AN IRONY OF AMERICAN RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HISTORY is that the founding myths of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were for many decades mocked by millions of people who took seriously stories about a preacher who was born of a virgin, walked on water, fed a multitude with a handful of fish and loaves of bread, and, after being dead for a while, walked around visiting with his friends. He even claimed to be able to save people from the destruction of the world if only they quit their jobs and followed him around. Somehow Joseph Smith's revelations and claims seemed much more far-fetched. Perhaps this was because they were of such recent date and had not served as adhesives for a community over many centuries.

The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism opens with the sage observation of historian Jan Shipps that Mormons have become an ethnic group, held together in part by LDS lore and ideology. To the most educated of today's Mormons, the wild dreams of Joseph Smith can be appreciated for their functions in maintaining a wholesome community. The forty-one articles in this welcome compendium of knowledge and critical reflection enable the reader to understand how this process of

steady enlightenment is taking place. Just as countless Methodists and Presbyterians and Catholics and even some evangelicals recognize that religious doctrines need to be taken more or less seriously depending on the historical circumstances of the community that treasures them, so do many Mormons. Most of the authors here are rightly focused on Mormonism as a distinctive social presence in the world. If there is a single argumentative thread throughout the 656 pages, it is that Mormonism is now in the American club. Mormons are a group like many others, with its own peculiarities, but able to function well enough in a pluralistic nation and globe if others will cut them some slack.

This worldly wisdom is most true of the historically centered articles, which together constitute by far the strongest component of the volume. Daniel Walker Howe, Richard Lyman Bushman, Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, Sarah Barringer Gordon, and Noah Feldman join Shippis in providing readers with detailed and sophisticated accounts of the political, legal, intellectual, and social history of Mormonism. Similarly, the sociologically focused articles—especially a statistic-filled demographic portrait of the Mormon community by Tim B. Heaton and Cardell K. Jacobson—reveal the ways in which ancestry, geography, and shared historical experience promote and perpetuate certain social values and discredit others.

Another battery of articles devoted to issues in the Mormon belief system does not register quite as consistently the sense that Mormonism is now an ethnicity rather than an embodiment of divine instruction, full stop. But in those articles too, debates over doctrine and religious practice are shown to be worked out by Mormons acutely aware of their contemporary surroundings. Philip L. Barlow's illuminating essay, "Mind and Spirit in Mormon Thought," explains the emergence "since the 1960s" of a substantial "Mormon intelligentsia" made up of "well-educated and committed" intellectuals who reject the anti-intellectualism that long kept Mormons apart from other comparably educated and engaged Americans (p. 239). These essays on Mormon thought and practice would be better if they dealt more systematically with the reasons why ecumenical Protestants and secular thinkers find Mormon beliefs lacking in cognitive plausibility, but here one does find

clear and careful expositions of Mormon ideas about the atonement, theodicy, scriptural authority, and other theoretical questions. A great value of these articles is the substantive picture they present, in contrast to the popular culture images of Mormonism that continue to be dominated by the renegade polygamist groups in the remote deserts of southern Utah and northern Arizona. The *Handbook* should be in the personal library of every journalist who writes about Mormons. It could do much to counteract popular prejudices.

At the very end of the book, the evangelical leader Richard Mouw, whose constituency has been especially suspicious of Mormonism, concludes that the Mormons have “earned the right to be given an important role in interfaith conversations” (p. 633). That this symbolically freighted welcome to the club is offered by a former president of the resolutely evangelical Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena rather than by a former president of Union Theological Seminary in New York or the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley tells us much about the specific terms on which the Mormon community is being assimilated into modern America. Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid of Nevada may be a political liberal and still a Mormon, but *The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism* shows again and again that the America into which the Mormons are being the most comfortably accepted is decidedly and overwhelmingly conservative on virtually every political and religious spectrum.

Sixty-five percent of US Mormons say they are Republican, while only 22 percent say they are Democrat. Additional findings of survey researchers are even more revealing. While only 43 percent of Americans think that “abortion should be illegal in most or all cases,” 70 percent of Mormons do, a figure strikingly above the 61 percent for evangelicals. Mormons are much more likely than the average citizen to want government to enforce proper morals, and much less likely to want government to help needy Americans. When it comes to economic ideology and practice, the conservative tilt is unmistakable: the tradition of Mormon cooperation flourishes today “in robust church welfare, education, and humanitarian aid programs,” J. Spencer Fluhman summarizes in his discerning essay on Mormon communitarianism, but it

does so “firmly *within* the standing capitalist order” (p. 586, emphasis in original).

Only 24 percent of Americans and 36 percent of evangelicals think their own faith is the only one “true faith,” but a staggering 80 percent of Mormons declare this about their own religion. Although Mormons do not take the Bible as literally as most evangelicals do, on most other theological issues (e.g., absolute certainty of God’s existence and the belief that God is “personal”) Mormons share more with evangelicals than with other religiously defined segments of American society, including ecumenical or “mainline” Protestants. European ancestry, the most consistent demographic predictor for conservative culture and politics, is no longer as dominant in evangelical churches as it once was, but 85–90 percent of American Mormons are Anglo-Saxons. It was not until 1978 that the LDS Church ended its traditional ban on black people from the Mormon priesthood.

The particular division of the American club of which the Mormons are now an indisputable part is further clarified by the LDS position on women’s rights and same-sex relationships. Mormons in the 1970s and early 1980s “played a decisive role” in the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, notes Matthew J. Grow (p. 60). Yet the easily recognized claims to gender equality represented by the Equal Rights Amendment are not even mentioned in the single article in the *Handbook* where one would most expect those claims to be confronted. In “Mormon Doctrine on Gender,” Valerie Hudson argues that “the LDS faith is the most feminist of the Christianities” and is the one most fully committed to the equality of men and women. Hudson explains that “God” for Latter-day Saints means “an exalted man and an exalted woman united in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.” Since there is “a Heavenly Mother, who stands as an equal to our Heavenly Father,” Mormonism demands gender equality from the start. Hudson praises Mormons for “enduring great hardship”—meaning, apparently, their being criticized by other people—during their efforts to protect “the heterosexual definition of marriage” during the 2008 election in California. Proposition 8, backed by Mormon money and lobbying, overturned

a court ruling expanding access to civil marriage. To enter marriage “is to walk the path of divinity,” and “marriage has been defined by God as inherently heterosexual” (pp. 350–52, 361). The frankly theocratic Hudson displays no concern for the obligation of a pluralistic civil polity to respond to the beliefs of non-Mormons. That she quotes with ritual deference, and by name, no fewer than seven Mormon authorities in a span of ten pages (pp. 350–60) calls into question her intended audience. For Oxford’s scholarly readers, facile appeals to religious authority seem both out of place and an unintended echo of Hudson’s seeming dismissal of pluralistic realities.

A similar conservatism is revealed in yet another cluster of articles, those devoted to Mormon missions and the growth of LDS congregations beyond the United States. These essays are less tendentious than Hudson’s and are among the most valuable in the volume. Their authors convey a large amount of specific information about just when, where, and with what success Mormon missions developed abroad. What makes the takeaway impression so conservative is above all the Eurocentrism of the LDS missionary project. Mormons have been chiefly concerned to win converts within the Europe-centered West, where people who could most credibly be claimed as the descendants of Abraham could be found. In keeping with this unabashed genetic invidiousness, in the nineteenth century, 93 percent of Mormon missionaries worked in the North Atlantic domain. Not until World War II did LDS missionaries begin to work in Latin America on a large scale. Mission work in Korea did not begin until 1956 (pp. 190, 516, 563). “The Latter-Day Saints have historically focused on preaching Christ among Christian peoples,” Reid L. Nelson concludes in the most instructive of the articles on the international dimensions of Mormonism, “rather than exporting Christianity and Western culture to non-Western nations” (p. 192). The contrast to the missionary project of the major Protestant churches could not be more pronounced.

The Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Quakers, Disciples of Christ, and other denominations sent thousands of missionaries to China, India, and Japan, as well as to other areas

scattered throughout the Middle East, Africa, and the Pacific Islands. They were much quicker than the Mormons to understand service, rather than conversion, as central to the missionary endeavor. The enduring Mormon focus on conversion and church membership is a highly conservative disposition, placing a low priority on an indigenous community's own sense of what it needs from Western Christians. Moreover, the Protestant missionaries spent most of their lives abroad, sometimes for two and three generations, yielding a more extensive immersion in alterity than could be allowed by the two-year term of service normal for Mormon missionaries. Most Protestant congregations back home carried out correspondence with individual missionary families for decades, ensuring close contact with reports of the foreign. The results were cultural cross-fertilization and deprovincialization on a vast scale.

Missionary daughter Pearl Buck with her 1931 book, *The Good Earth*, did more to change Western perceptions of the Chinese people than anyone since Marco Polo. Countless ex-missionaries pushed their denominations in ecumenical directions altogether foreign to Mormon insularity. Missionary sons and daughters as scholars and professors developed the rigorous study of foreign societies in American universities, and as Foreign Service Officers and journalists advanced policies hostile to European colonialism and friendly to the nationalist aspirations of decolonizing peoples. Deep and long-term engagement with life in the villages of Siam or Lebanon or Korea made Protestants more cosmopolitan.

A striking omission in the *Handbook* is an inquiry into the effect on Mormon missionaries of the time they did spend abroad, even if only briefly and in Europe. Two years spent in Germany or Spain might be expected to broaden the perspective of the young males (and until recently they were mostly all males) who served as missionaries, but none of the contributors even ask the question. This is again a sign of the insularity of the Mormon community. The articles on Mormon converts residing in Africa, Mexico, and elsewhere—won mostly in the last seventy years—do mention the challenges of advancing a genuine LDS

faith in diverse cultural contexts, but there is precious little suggestion that the Mormons back in Utah or Idaho had anything to learn from other peoples. When the great Methodist missionary E. Stanley Jones wrote *The Christ of the Indian Road*, he was trying to get the faithful back home to recognize how much they had to learn from people like Gandhi. That was in 1925. If the Mormon missionaries advanced such views at home even in 2015, ninety years later, this volume does not make us aware of it. Since the missionary endeavor is an important part of Mormonism, the absence of an article on the impact of the experience on the missionaries is a missed opportunity for the *Handbook*.

Another missed opportunity concerns the history of Mormonism since World War II. The historical essays that impressively distinguish the *Handbook* are largely devoted to the nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries. Moreover, many of these essays encapsulate what the authors and others scholars have already published. Matthew J. Grow's "The Modern Mormon Church" devotes eight valuable pages (pp. 58–66) to this recent period, but his major contribution set forth an agenda of questions for future scholarship. Grow is surely correct to ask for "more and better studies of what it meant to be a Mormon at a particular time and place" and to insist that Mormon studies be carried out with greater engagement with "other scholarly contexts," especially studies of other varieties of Christianity in the United States and globally (pp. 64–66).

But what most matters about the *Handbook* is what it does achieve. This volume is cause for genuine rejoicing. There is no more efficient and authoritative guide to things Mormon. Designed for a readership of non-Mormons as well as Mormons, the *Handbook* is a striking step toward the more complete integration of the study of Mormonism into the study of American history, politics, society, and culture. Two insights are especially important as this integration proceeds. First, the mythology that provides social adhesives for the Mormon community is not so much weirder by prevailing standards than the mythologies of other Christian groups. Second, like other ethnic groups in the United States, the Mormons are caught up in the tension between roots and

wings, the conflicting claims of community maintenance on the one hand and of greater experience in the world on the other.

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The New Mormon Theology of Matter

Rosalynde Welch

Review of James E. Faulconer, *Faith, Philosophy, Scripture*. Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2010; Adam Miller, *Future Mormon: Essays in Mormon Theology*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016; Joseph M. Spencer, *For Zion: A Mormon Theology of Hope*. Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2014.

IN THE THIRD ISSUE OF THE *Mormon Studies Review*, Michelle Chaplin Sanchez suggests that the priority of elemental matter in Mormon cosmology may fundamentally define the nature of its theological language. Whereas other Christian theologies assume an ontological gap between a signifying God and a signified world, thereby structuring sacred language by means of analogy and diversion rather than by straightforward identity, she hypothesizes, Mormon theology may “function in an altogether different rhetorical sense.” That difference, she suggests, may be especially apparent in Mormon soteriology.¹

Sanchez’s perceptive observation is borne out by a new turn in Mormon theology, though perhaps not in the way she predicts. A recent harvest of Mormon theology examines the implications of Mormon

1. Michelle Chaplin Sanchez, “Wrestling with Language: Exploring the Impact of Mormon Metaphysics on Theological Pedagogy,” *Mormon Studies Review* 3 (2016): 105–16.

materialism—that is, the claims that all spirit is matter and that the cosmos is thus an ontological continuum—for models of language and law, and does so by way of sustained engagement with contemporary Continental philosophy.² Centered on a core group of three working philosophers—James Faulconer, Adam Miller, and Joseph Spencer—this movement deploys the tools of Continental philosophy in the service of Mormon teachings and texts. Over the past several years, their work for Mormon audiences has included highlights like Faulconer’s *Faith, Philosophy, Scripture* (2010), a collection of essays reexamining Mormon understandings of canon, revelation, and the meaning of theology itself; Miller’s *Rube Goldberg Machines* (2012), a collection exploring agency and existential grace, his *Letters to a Young Mormon* (2013), and *Future Mormon* (2016), another collection delving into soteriology, truth, and materialism; and Spencer’s *An Other Testament* (2012), a tour de force exegesis of typology in the Book of Mormon, and *For Zion* (2014), an examination of theological time, hope, and consecration.

For Miller and Spencer especially, these books represent only a portion of a larger project that aims at nothing less than the active production and promotion of the discipline of Mormon theology. Other endeavors include their former publishing imprint, Salt Press; the series *Groundwork: Studies in Theory and Scripture*, which they currently edit for the Maxwell Institute; and the Mormon Theology Seminar, which they operate in partnership with the Maxwell Institute’s Willes Center. Through these avenues, Miller and Spencer work to mentor potential contributors, publish new volumes of speculative theology, and develop a community of readers for these works.³ Characterized

2. The notion of “Continental” philosophy obviously betrays a North American perspective and is thus external to the tradition itself. Nevertheless, I use it here because it has become a useful category by which to distinguish this type of inquiry from analytic or classical approaches.

3. Salt Press was managed by Spencer and Miller together with Robert Couch and Jenny Webb. The press was dissolved in 2014, whereupon the Maxwell Institute republished its three previously published titles: two volumes from the Mormon Theology Seminar entitled *An Experiment on the Word: Reading Alma 32* and *Reading Nephi Reading Isaiah: 2 Nephi 26–27*; and Spencer’s *An Other Testament*.

by a collaborative method and a speculative approach, the seminar and the publications range widely in their topics yet retain a characteristic style inflected in part by their interest in critical theory.

This theology naturally shares much in common with—and freely employs the methods of—the exegetical and historical approaches that dominate the wider field of conventional Mormon theology, recently reinvigorated by thinkers like Blake Ostler, Terryl Givens, and Stephen Webb. Furthermore, the new school shares with fellow theologians of Mormonism a focus on the meaning of materialism, a central theme of several of the most important recent works in the category, including Givens’s *Wrestling the Angel* (2014) and Webb’s *Mormon Christianity* (2013). What distinguishes the new school is its turn toward a movement in contemporary Continental philosophy that calls into question the metaphysical basis of traditional Christian theology. To define what is at stake for this new school and what this joint project undertakes, to position it at a crossroads in the larger history of philosophy and religion, and to suggest the unique theological resources that Mormonism brings to this conversation are the aims of this review. To that end, I ask the reader to indulge a very short introduction to one small corner of Continental philosophy.

The relationship between the general and the particular has been the central question of Western philosophy since Plato divided the cosmos into ideal forms and inert matter.⁴ Over time, Western idealism, adopted by Christianity and informing its theological categories, developed a comprehensive account of God, nature, being, morality, and temporality: divine perfection, unchanging and unchangeable, dwells in eternity, while base matter, subject to decay and dissolution, occupies transient time. Moral goodness lies in humanity’s striving to apprehend and imitate the immaterial forms of divine perfection.

4. I rely here on a too-simple characterization of Plato’s metaphysics, which is embedded in a complex rhetorical and pedagogical project, as Sanchez notes. Nevertheless, I use “Plato” as an accessible shorthand for what is sometimes called the “hylomorphic model” of reality, the metaphysical theory that all being is composed of form and matter.

The advent of rational scientific inquiry in early modern Europe generated a competing model of reality in which matter was taken to be definitive in its own right, absent the governing meanings imposed by divine forms. If matter is all that exists, then reality must be reconceived as an ontological continuum, replacing the form-and-matter dualism of Plato. As modernity transformed the intellectual and social landscapes of Europe, influential movements including Darwinism, Marxism, and Freudianism brought materialist assumptions into social practice.

As the violent upheavals of the twentieth century forced a reassessment of the foundations of Western society, it became apparent to some that metaphysics had not kept pace with the technological and scientific advance of materialism. That is, while Marxism offered a revolutionary theory of history, it lacked a revolutionary theory of time; while Darwinism offered a revolutionary theory of life, it lacked a revolutionary theory of being. The absence of a materialist *metaphysics* impeded the ability of science and politics to critically self-reflect and self-correct; the expulsion of the supernatural seemed to leave the natural without a basis for ethical claims. Noting this void, several schools of Continental philosophy began to contest the ontologically binary, morally unitary basis of Platonism and in its place provide an account of the ontologically continuous, morally plural universe unfolding under modern inquiry—a metaphysics suitable for the modern age. It is in this project that the new Mormon theology finds its intellectual context.

To summarize the achievements of Continental philosophy would test the patience of any reader, so let me focus particularly on two threads relevant to our purposes: ethics and temporality. For Plato, the Good originates in the Forms, which impose a unified and consistent moral order on the material cosmos. One strand of Continental philosophy works to fracture the unitary foundation of the Good and establish the Gift (or givenness) in its place as the foundation of ethics. Among these thinkers are Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion, and Emmanuel Levinas, each of whom takes an original approach but all of whom recognize the moral status of the Other as the basis of the gift-giving ethic. The recognition of irreducible alterity fragments the ethical unity

of the Platonic Good: where there was the transcendent One, now there are the terrestrial many. This move underwrites an ethics grounded in difference, plurality, and process. The upshot is an immanent moral ordering of materiality that need not appeal to transcendent universals, an ethics that accounts for primordial plurality without abandoning moral commitments.

A second strand of Continental metaphysics probes the question of time: is ultimate reality eternal, or does it pass away? For Plato, as we've seen, the perfection of the Forms exists outside time, unchanging and unchangeable. Among the philosophers who grapple, contra Plato, with the transience of the material world is Walter Benjamin, who turns to Judeo-Christian messianic theology for a rich vein of philosophy on temporality, engaging as it does the future redemption of (past) history. From the messianic, Benjamin draws a model of time that is generative and dynamic: always passing away, yes, but always capable of reordering and redemption. Benjamin's model of time underlies the work of philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who, by way of a close reading of the Pauline epistles, develops a theory of law, language, and agency that accounts for both the structuring function of law *and* the irreducible difference introduced by human agency, without recourse to a premodern ontology of the ideal or its underlying set logic of part-and-whole. Agamben, in other words, describes a moral topography inherent in material reality.

These ideas are not beyond criticism, naturally, and they have attracted much. Nevertheless, their relevance to philosophers of contemporary religion should be clear: they suggest that a materialist metaphysics *can* respond to the challenge of reductive physical determinism with a model that grounds ethics and agency in the basic fabric of our reality, without requiring ultimate grounding in the transcendent. While this strand of Continental philosophy freely borrows theological concepts, it is framed in nontheistic language and undertakes no defense of traditional religion. Some of its practitioners hold personal religious commitments; others do not. For a person of faith in a secularizing world, however, open to claims both rational and religious and

looking for a warrant that accommodates both, this new metaphysics offers speculative possibilities worth careful attention.

This, at any rate, is the wager behind a burgeoning (though small) movement in academic philosophy known as the Continental philosophy of religion. This largely North American academic subfield recognizes the relevance of the Continental tradition for contemporary religion and draws on these sources to generate new insights about everything from the phenomenology of religious experience to Reformed hermeneutics.⁵ The Continental turn in Mormon theology can be seen in part as an extension of this movement within the larger discipline of philosophy of religion.

For theologians of Mormonism, however, the project is more than mere academic fad. Mormonism, distinctive among Christian traditions, is, precisely, a religious materialism that resonates strikingly with many of the central ideas of the Continental philosophy traced above. Chief among these is Joseph Smith's declaration that "all spirit is matter," an axiom that dissolves Platonic dualism in a stroke and opens the door to a metaphysics of pure matter. The revelation of God's corporeality confirms that the cosmos is ontologically continuous, with human and divine coexisting along the same plane, and that any conception of the good must find its footing within this material plane. Mormon teachings on God's progression and passibility suggest that ultimate reality is temporal, dynamic within time rather than unchanging or absolute. Mormon rejection of creation *ex nihilo* in favor of creation *ex materia*, out of preexisting intelligence and element, together with the corollary that matter is uncreated and coeternal with God, affirm that the primordial origin of being is plural, not singular. Irreducible plurality is the fundamental character of being. The Mormon teaching that the spirit world is coextensive with the physical world suggests the immanence of the divine and orients the theological imagination

5. For a brief assessment of this young field and recommendations for its further growth, see James K. A. Smith, "Continental Philosophy of Religion: Prescriptions for a Healthy Subdiscipline," *Faith and Philosophy* 6/4 (October 2009): 440–48, <http://www.calvin.edu/~jks4/churchandpomodocs/Smitharticle.pdf>.

toward the here and now rather than toward the transcendent. And Joseph Smith's great work of sealing and sacralizing family relationships grounds Mormonism's ultimate value in the mundane material existence of physical bodies.

To what end, then, does the new school of Mormon theology train the lens of Continental philosophy on the singularly compatible teachings of Mormonism? It is my suggestion that the central gesture of the new theology is to reframe agency, a key concept in Mormon thought, and to extend this new version, what we might call "prime agency," from ethics into the adjacent realms of ontology, epistemology, and logic. Mormon teaching typically frames moral agency as the human power to act for oneself, together with individual accountability for those choices. It is thus framed as a properly individual capacity, exercised independently by the subject; indeed, much Mormon discourse deploys choice and accountability to mark, precisely, the inviolable boundaries of the self. The new Mormon theology, however, situates prime agency not in the human personality but in Mormonism's plural ontology of intelligent matter; prime agency, in other words, is hardwired into the basic structure of reality.

In one interpretation of Mormon revelation, the origin of reality lies in the social interaction of uncreated intelligent matter, facilitated by God, through which self-directing elements combine, collaborate, connect, and otherwise engage through and with one another.⁶ Understood as prime agency, an element's power to act is guaranteed by the existential necessity of *interaction*: to act is always to act for and in behalf of others. Because the human soul—body and spirit—is a federation of intelligent elements, any subject's power to act is first and fundamentally an *interaction*. Prime agency is not a feature of the subject but of the *intersubjective*. In this new understanding, the individual

6. Mormon cosmology has no definitive interpretation, and the meaning of Joseph Smith's statements on intelligence, self-existence, and eternity has been the subject of debate and dispute by Mormon thinkers virtually since they were uttered. This summary is not intended to be tendentious, but unavoidably represents a particular point of view on those statements.

person's power to choose is a narrow (and relatively impoverished) manifestation of agency; prime agency itself describes a much broader, more complex social distribution of intelligent agents, including but not limited to human souls, agents who can no more escape their own power to act than they can escape other agents' power to act upon them. Prime agency enables individual choice but cannot be reduced to it. This means that agency is never autonomy and that the *unchosen*—that is, the Other's choice—is as fundamental to moral agency as choice itself.

Prime agency thus introduces openness, contingency, and vulnerability into the moral universe. Mormons embrace the risks of individual agency within the realm of ethics; indeed, the Mormon doctrine of a premortal war in heaven both celebrates and mourns precisely these risks. Prime agency suggests that the open contingency we accept in our ethics also extends to ontology, epistemology, and logic. Latter-day Saints may be slower to embrace the openness of reality, the fluidity of truth, and the immanence of grace, since Mormon discourse has generally borrowed from traditional Christian categories to express these doctrines. But other strands of Mormon studies have begun to produce similar insights into the contingent nature of reality. Writing in the *Mormon Studies Review*, for instance, Josh Probert summarizes the implications of material culture for lived religion. Religious objects, he argues, do far more than merely reflect external ideas: they possess a “nonsentient agency within a web of human-object relationships,” what I have here called prime agency. Objects themselves, then, “are social actors that, along with human actors, cocreate normativity.” Further, he argues, “they actively participate in the social construction of reality. In fact, they destabilize the autonomy of social actors by participating in that process themselves.”⁷ The study of material culture generally, and object-oriented ontology in particular, would seem to confirm what I see as the destabilizing gesture at the heart of the new Mormon theology. Like it or not, epistemology, ontology, and logic are exposed to the same existential risk that defines the Mormon ethics of personal agency.

7. Josh E. Probert, “The Materiality of Lived Mormonism,” *Mormon Studies Review* 3 (2016): 22, 26.

To be clear, this account of prime agency and its assignment to preeminence is my own interpretation of the new theology, and any member of the school may certainly disclaim that interpretation of Probert's work if he wishes. Nevertheless, I think such an interpretation does much to highlight what is at stake in each scholar's ideas. Faulconer's work, which comes closest to traditional theology, takes up questions of faith and scripture in light of philosophy's critique of absolute truth or pure reason, showing that both faith and scripture withstand the epistemological challenge. Because "*truth is part of the cosmos, perhaps as it is happening,*" he argues in *Faith, Philosophy, Scripture*, "we can reject the Enlightenment formulation of truth . . . without rejecting truth itself" (p. 117, emphasis added). Truth is conditioned by time and place, Faulconer shows, and like prime agency, truth is *enabled* by its entanglement with particularity, not invalidated by it. Spencer's work, minutely exegetical and historical, circles questions of time and messianic redemption in restoration scripture and in the historical Mormon project of Zion-building. Time, no less than human agency, is open to redemptive reordering rather than fixed in place by an inevitable providence. And Miller's work, which takes an existential and phenomenological approach, reorients conventional Mormon soteriology away from legalistic obedience and toward a concept of immanent grace arising from the overflowing givenness of the world itself. Grace is to be found in a reordered relationship to divine law, one that escapes the closed linguistic logic of subject and predicate.

Having summarized and situated the Continental turn in Mormon theology, I'd like to conclude with a brief critical assessment of its application. One way to begin such an appraisal is to consider the criticisms likely to be leveled at the school from the political left and right. From the perspective of some observers, philosophy of religion should be modeled on other ethically motivated academic disciplines, as an earnest and consequential kind of intellectual activism that prods its interpretive community toward greater justice and equality.⁸

8. A leading example of this approach to Mormon theology is Taylor G. Petrey. Petrey articulates his objections to the new Mormon theology in his article "Theorizing

Observers of this stripe are likely to be impatient with the new school's general ideological disengagement from overt social justice themes, in particular its silence on the forms of race-, sex-, and sexuality-based oppression in which religion has been complicit. The trio's engagement with Pauline scripture crystallizes the objection. Pauline theology has been central to the work of each—see Faulconer's *Life of Holiness*, Spencer's *For Zion*, and Miller's *Immanent Grace*—yet the epistles of Paul contain notoriously sexist and heterosexist teachings. For the most part, the trio does not explicitly grapple with these problems, preferring instead to focus affirmatively on Paul's teachings about grace, hope, or holiness in their complex, occasionally obscure styles. They do not openly repudiate Pauline patriarchy, nor do they enlist the Epistles in a direct struggle against illegitimate power relations. For readers embedded in directly political strands of Marx-descended Continental critical theory, this amounts to a disappointing political quietism.

These objections are not without basis. As noted above, the new school draws deeply on Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of givenness, a theory that radically prunes back the proper role of the human subjectivity in knowing, evaluating, and mastering the phenomena that populate experience. Marion argues that phenomena show themselves, *give* themselves to our experience, on their own initiative: life is given unconditionally, and it must be received unconditionally. It is the *givenness*, not the substance of the gift, that matters. This point yields two opposing political implications. On the one hand, the ideas of givenness and Gift disrupt the oppressive metaphysics of subject and object at the center of Western history, in which subject dominates and extracts meaning (or other resources) from object. On the other hand, the horizon of givenness provides no ready-made means of disrupting an oppressive sociopolitical order. If we must accept life's self-giving unconditionally, must we then simply accept the injustice and oppression we encounter?

Critical Mormon Biblical Studies: Romans 1:18–32,” forthcoming in the journal *Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology*. He practices his activist-oriented theology in his important article “Toward a Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 44/4 (Winter 2011): 106–41.

Not necessarily. Givenness is the unqualified self-giving of the present, which must be received unconditionally; givenness is not identical with the actual state of the sociopolitical order, which can be contested. But on what basis? Spencer's book *For Zion* can be seen as an extended engagement with that problem. If we must avoid imposing our own oppressively subjective view of the good on the world, how are we to envision a better future? Spencer answers those questions in a complex exegesis of Romans 8 in conversation with Agamben. For Agamben, messianic redemption lies in the *suspension* of every worldly ideal, not in the realization of the same. Therefore the work of building Zion may not be reduced to any specific political agenda, because messianic fulfillment does not dwell in an ideal future order. Messianic fulfillment has already arrived and is accessible as a new perspective on the present moment, one that sees beyond bare actuality to the dynamic ontology behind it, to the prime agency shimmering in potentiality. We can only grasp the present, in other words, by understanding it as if it were already redeemed—and precisely therein lies messianic redemption. As Mormons would put it, the spirit world is already all around us.

This messianic perspective transforms our relationship to law. We receive the law because it is given; we love it for its service in structuring the present and offering it to us moment by moment. But we no longer look to law for the establishment of an ideal order or for redemption personal or social, and we are no longer bound to it by a regime of compliance and penalty. As Paul puts it in Romans 7:6, "By dying to what once bound us [e.g., the law], we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code." The messianic cannot decide the questions that roil the political realm, because the messianic and the political occupy distinct, though intersecting, planes. The Christian, then, participates in the social world given to her out of loving care for the Other, but without attachment to particular legal or social ends: "means without ends" is her mantra. She regards social justice movements with benign indifference and little hope for the outcome, yet she willingly engages in the causes that enlist her for the sake of local, present care.

The new Mormon theology thus makes little comment on contemporary debates over social justice that dominate discourse on the left. This may seem to some like a convenient dodge, given the new theology's close institutional ties to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through BYU and the Maxwell Institute. I think this assessment is mistaken, but it is true that the Continental turn largely evades the terms of the political debates as they are presently framed in the United States. Whether this renders the new theology more or less persuasive to its academic and devotional audiences remains to be seen.

The same might be said for critiques leveled at the new theology from the right. Whereas the left is preoccupied with social justice, the right is concerned with questions of truth and relativism, most visibly at stake in the conflict between faith and secularism. Like their counterparts on the left, observers on the right would like to see the new Mormon theology serve the institution in a particular way.⁹ As traditional religious teachings on marriage, family, and sexuality have been forced to cede authority in American society during recent decades, some worry that LDS believers may lose intellectual confidence in the church's doctrines and in religious authority generally. They urge Mormon thinkers to challenge the leftward tilt of the academic humanities and produce intellectual breastwork to shelter Mormon doctrine from what they see as hostile secular winds. They caution against a blasé or unwary enthusiasm for secular academic movements and urge LDS scholars to take up the vanguard in opposing the progressive secular creep of the academy.

Ground zero in this encounter is nothing less than the nature of truth itself. In the idealist metaphysics that structures much traditionalist thought, truth is a fixed moral ordering of the world, authoritative for all times, places, and persons because it is rooted outside any time, place, or person, in eternal law or God's will. This order is susceptible

9. A leading voice for this approach is Ralph C. Hancock. See, for instance, his interchange with Spencer: "Between Materialism and the Metaphysics of Eternity: A Reply to Joseph M. Spencer's Review of *Responsibility of Reason*," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 54/2 (2015): 173–81.

to decay in the fallen world, and thus it is the responsibility of the institutional church to preserve and disseminate revealed truth. The logic is foundationalist and oriented toward a divine dispensation in the past—or better, beyond time entirely, toward the still corridors of eternity. Doctrine and Covenants 93 may be read as an exposition of eternal truth in this foundationalist mode:

Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth; and truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; and whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning. (vv. 23–25)

Proponents of this model resist the postmodern contention that all truth is situated and conditioned, arguing that this concession leads to an unacceptable moral relativism and erodes the grounds of an authoritative ethical order.

There is much to appreciate in this position, particularly its alertness to modernity's penchant for an amoral, technological rationalism, often violently imposed. Yet this model of truth, invoking as it does a singular, unchanging divine source, seems to run afoul of a robust Mormon materialism, with its plural ontology and dynamic temporalism. The new Mormon theology attempts to reconcile the conflict by conceding the postmodern critique of truth and then bearing down on Mormon materialism to arrive at a new model.

Adam Miller's book *Future Mormon* takes up the nature of truth as its central concern. For Miller, truth is not a set of representational essences, but a kind of relational action: not a crystallized *product* (of revelation or investigation or invention), as he puts it, but a dynamic *process* of interplay and feedback within the weave of prime agents that composes the Mormon cosmos. He argues that "truths are specialized processes that trace novel paths through the network, revealing inconsistencies and displaying overlooked constellations of meaning" (p. 85). Under this model, "eternal truth," a phrase that does not appear in scripture, is not a crystallized set of perfect ideas that endures forever (even if revealed

incrementally and distorted by human language), but a social process of connection, organization, persuasion, and long-suffering that never ceases. The collaborative method of the Mormon Theology Seminar, run by Miller and Spencer, enacts in miniature this model of truth-as-process: it is the active engagement itself that embodies truth, not the resulting bound volumes that, however valuable, are secondary byproducts of the project. It is in the *process*, the sociality, that normative value is invested, not in the ideological by-products that arise and recede from the ongoing process. “Truth-making is the work of creation,” Miller avers. “It is ontological rather than epistemological” (p. 105).

As a process, truth can be activated within any given perspective, even occupying opposed positions simultaneously. Miller writes, “All truths, in order to be truths, must be thinkable from the position of the enemy. . . . A truth that is small enough to be thinkable only from my position and only in opposition to my enemy is no truth at all” (p. 72). He proposes a model of truth-as-process that blithely contravenes (or anyway complicates) the law of noncontradiction, a staple of classical philosophy since Plato whereby two contradictory positions cannot be true at the same time and in the same sense. His model of truth can thus be seen as an extension of the new Mormon philosophy’s revision of Platonism, submitting logic as well as ontology, metaphysics, and ethics to a comprehensive overhaul.

For Miller, then, and for the new theology that he practices, the confrontation between religion and secularism is not a threat to truth but, on the contrary, an opportunity for new truths to emerge from the encounter of ideas and factions. The role of the LDS scholar and of Mormon thinking generally is not primarily to defend truth from its enemies, but to facilitate its unfolding by reconfiguring in novel ways the social and intellectual network from which truth arises. Likewise, the value of the institutional church and its leadership lies not primarily in its possession of and access to an exclusive truth, but in its midwifing of emergent, local truths through the forging of a covenant network of agents. “Rather than asking if the church is true,” Miller suggests,

ask something like: Is this the body of Christ? Is Christ manifest here? Does his blood flow in these veins? Does his spirit breathe in these lungs? Does forgiveness flourish here? Is faith strengthened? Is hope enlivened? Is charity practiced? Can I see, here, the body of Christ? (p. 114)

This approach is likely to thrill some readers and irritate others, who will see it as avoiding the central question of veridical authority. Miller insists that his approach is not a species of relativism, since the very concept of the relative implies a fixed external referent to which the object relates. There is no such fixed external referent in Miller's cosmos, which is purely immanent.

Whether he is getting at an epistemological relativism or a metaphysical realism, the kind of truth he describes is local, not universal. It is powerfully descriptive, but only weakly prescriptive: *Future Mormon*, ironically, offers little guidance on the direction future Mormonism should take. The book offers a compelling sacralization of social construction—in the broadest possible construal of that term, encompassing nonhuman agents within the social—and a redeeming lens on religious truth claims, which are chockablock with traces of human negotiation, contest, and agency. In this sense, the book is broadly apologetic, offering an appealing explanation for and defense of religion's imperfect earthbound habit. But the model of truth at its center is not well suited to provide a priori normative guidance or to adjudicate conflicts between competing claims. This is a problem because networks produce meaningless noise right alongside novel patterns and solutions. The mechanism Miller proposes to distinguish between the noise and the patterns is a kind of ontological populism: powerful patterns will enlist a large and durable coalition of agents, and the proof of truthfulness will lie in the stability of the alliance. Because prime agency arises not from humans alone but from *all* intelligent matter, including the elemental building blocks of the universe and every entity therein, the production of truth is not merely a popularity contest among human whims: truth will always be constrained by the cooperation or resistance of the elemental agents at work in reality. Nevertheless, in the current

political climate of global populist movements, Miller's ideas are likely to elicit mistrust together with enthusiasm.

The new Mormon theology, then, will fail to satisfy some readers on both the left and the right. It remains to be seen whether the materialist metaphysics and the novel account of agency that it proposes resonate widely among either its lay Mormon readership or its academic subdiscipline in the Continental philosophy of religion. Whatever else may be said of it, the school has already succeeded in exponentially enlarging the scope of Mormon thinking, and for that its architects earn this reader's praise and thanks.

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Review Panel

Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow, eds. *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-day Saint Women's History*. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016.

Reviewed by Dave Hall, Susanna Morrill, and Catherine A. Brekus

DAVE HALL: This work gathers in one useful volume documents pivotal to understanding the early history of Mormon women. Adding to its value is the wealth of knowledge contributed by its editorial team, headed by experienced scholars Jill Derr, Carol Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew Grow. Derr and Madsen in particular are true pioneers in the field of Mormon women's history who have mastered the sources and their import through decades of research. A team of skilled "contributors," "research specialists," "editorial staff" members, and others also left their mark. What results is an insightful and thought-provoking collection that illuminates and explains the high points of the first half century of the Relief Society.

The first thing that strikes one about this book is its heft. This is a substantial volume produced to the same high standards that we have come to expect from the Church Historian's Press. As such, it is a testimony to the seriousness with which the Church History Department now approaches the story of Mormon women. Each page reveals careful scholarship and thoughtful, nuanced interpretation. Footnotes are plentiful and addressed nearly all of my anticipated questions. A wide

range of archival sources are cited, while published sources drawn upon are of the highest order and are exhaustive or nearly so.

The volume, which begins with a general introduction explaining its scope and methodology, is divided into four main sections demarcated by natural milestones in the history of the society. Each section has its own introduction providing a framework for understanding the primary materials that follow, and each primary document is itself prefaced briefly with information providing context and setting.

The first section, covering the years 1830 and 1842–1845, begins with the “elect lady” revelation of 1830 and then moves to the developments of the Nauvoo period. The heart of this section is the full text of the “Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book,” where readers find the commission given to the society by Joseph Smith and see his portrayal of the organization as essential to the church’s structure. The Relief Society is shown in this section quickly moving to function in a variety of capacities, from assisting the poor to defending the church from its detractors. Especially helpful is the careful commentary leading the reader through the society’s relationship to the priesthood, questions of its autonomy, and women’s roles in exercising spiritual gifts. As the section draws toward its close, the subsection “The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo” illustrates tensions within the Relief Society over plural marriage and demonstrates Emma Smith’s efforts to undermine its practice. In the documents that follow, Brigham Young’s 1845 observations made in priesthood meetings reveal that he attributed the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith to the sentiments expressed in the previous selection. Consequently, he decisively terminated the Relief Society’s activities for the remainder of the Nauvoo period. A final entry in this section focuses on Eliza R. Snow’s poem “My Father in Heaven,” published in October 1845 in the *Times and Seasons*. This became the hymn “O My Father,” which preserved and popularized Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo teachings concerning a Mother in Heaven. Much of the material in this section is familiar to scholars, but it is useful to have it brought together in one place with helpful commentary and citations of relevant scholarship.

The second portion, covering the years 1854–1866, takes us into less familiar realms—the early moves toward reorganization in the West at the suggestion of Brigham Young. This is the shortest section, and it captures an interlude of scattered activity before the Relief Society’s formal reorganization. Included selections are limited and somewhat fragmentary: the “Great Salt Lake City Relief Society Minutes, January–June 1854,” for example, seems useful mostly to demonstrate that the organization existed and includes few details about the content of its meetings. Indeed, the lack of detail might challenge even those with Ulrichian abilities to give greater meaning to these minutes. Retrospective accounts of this period also provide important insight into the general activities of these short-lived societies and contribute to our understanding of efforts to conciliate Native Americans, the intense religiosity of the Mormon Reformation, and the events that led up to the Mormon War of 1857–1858. As to the war itself, we gain intriguing glimpses into the mindset of the women of southern Utah through two selections from the Cedar City Relief Society minutes written just before and a few months after the Mountain Meadows Massacre—glimpses that leave us wanting to know more. Perhaps the most interesting selection here is a portion from the History of Joseph Smith regarding the establishment of the Relief Society. Published in the *Deseret News* in September 1855 as part of an ongoing effort to complete what became known as *The Documentary History of the Church*, the material is based primarily on the Nauvoo Relief Society Minutes. Footnotes allow us to compare this version with the minutes themselves, revealing the subtle but significant rephrasing of Joseph’s words to fit the needs, concerns, and understandings of LDS Church leaders at the time in regard to the role of Relief Society women. It was here, for example, that “I now turn the key to you” became “I now turn the key in your behalf” (p. 207).

The third section takes us from 1867—the year Young called Eliza Snow to formally reorganize the Relief Society—to 1879. Here we see the society, guided by the Nauvoo experience (and its now sacred minutes), begin to systematically spread throughout the church. And here we follow the emergence of such familiar activities as retrenchment,

the promotion of home industry, grain storage, and sericulture. Also on view is the rise of the unofficial organ of the society: *The Woman's Exponent*. Mormon women again defended the church against its enemies, gained the vote, and then had to fight to retain it. The editors have made clear that by 1879, when the third section ends, the Relief Society had emerged as a "cohesive, visible, and permanent organization" seen as a vital part of the church's structure (p. 247). This section also reveals the feelings of unity and inclusiveness resulting from these developments. "There is no sister so isolated, and her sphere so narrow," Eliza Snow observed in August 1873, "but what she can do a great deal towards establishing the Kingdom of God on earth" (p. 384). That being said, the Nephi Ward Relief Society Minutes from 1870 remind us that great social and economic divides were coming to separate the sisters as well, with some spheres of action much narrower than others. Retrenchment, for example, necessitated greater adjustments for those living in the more prosperous and increasingly cosmopolitan Salt Lake City than it did in such hard-scrabble communities as Nephi.

The fourth section, covering the years 1880–1892, begins with the creation of a formal governing structure for the Relief Society through Eliza Snow's appointment by John Taylor as its second general president. It then leads us through the society's continued expansion throughout the church, its first general conference, the struggle to defend and then regain the vote for Utah women, and finally the Relief Society's jubilee celebration. An impressive (and largely still relevant) address in this section by Apostle Franklin D. Richards praises the contributions of Relief Society women while chastising men who "don't like to accord [women] anything that will raise them up and make their talents to shine forth" (p. 546). By the Relief Society's jubilee year of 1892, it is clear that the organization had grown so much in membership and its activities so broad in scope that the selections here can at best be seen merely as a general survey.

Rounding out the volume is a handy section containing reference material that includes a useful biographical directory of individuals mentioned in the text, a substantial bibliography, and a thorough index.

On the one level, this book can serve as a comprehensive guide to the uninitiated who wish to develop their expertise in Mormon women's history. But there is so much thought and nuance put into the choice of selections and into the editorial commentary that it also greatly rewards experienced scholars by providing not only a useful reference, but also substantial food for thought. Its biggest problem is that it leaves one wanting more. But of course that is also a potential strength. As the sisters in Nauvoo were encouraged to "provoke the brethren to good works" (p. 31), *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* will provoke both experienced and coming generations of scholars to add to the history of the organization as they closely probe its unpublished ward and stake minutes and search out additional diaries and journals documenting the activities of its members. Who knows what further gems of insight will emerge as a result?

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The history they [Relief Society leaders at the organization's jubilee] presented left out episodes of disconnection and conflict. Instead they emphasized strength, harmony, and continuity. There was a sacred worldview and their narrative of women's efforts told of the hand of God in their achievements. Although the following documents sometimes complicate the narrative of harmony and continuity, they also illuminate how this sacred worldview informed Mormon women's lives in diverse times and places. (*The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*, xxxviii)

SUSANNA MORRILL: With the above quotation, the editors wrap up the introduction to *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents*

in Latter-day Saint Women's History. Published by the LDS Church History Department, this volume is a laudable and impressive achievement. The editors have selected many important and illuminating documents from a rich goldmine of the Relief Society's historical records. They have written concise and clear introductory sections and footnotes that provide context and background information necessary to better understand the selected documents. In so doing, they effectively illuminate in high relief the institutional footprint that women made on the early church. Reading these documents, one gets a female, sometimes ground-level perspective on the constantly shifting terrain of the early LDS community, from the uproar over the suspected practice of polygamy in Nauvoo, to the adjustment to frontier life in the homelands of Native Americans, to the struggle to maintain a distinct identity in the face of cultural and legal pressures in the late nineteenth century. These documents make accessible details of women's roles in navigating, even sparking, these times of transition—and they speak to questions about the priesthood and revelation that today's church leaders and members are still wrestling with.

On the whole, the documents follow the historical narrative laid out by Relief Society leaders at the jubilee celebration of the group. They eloquently tell the institutional history of the Relief Society. The documents describe how the group was organized and later dissolved in Nauvoo, and also how it was reorganized on the local and then central level in Utah. They record the push for retrenchment and the accompanying creation of the YLMIA (later YWMIA). Also detailed are Relief Society members' work on silk production, grain storage, and suffrage, as well as how Relief Society leaders created the Primary Association and networked with national women's organizations. Because the documents follow this script, the first two sentences of the opening quotation aptly describe what the editors have accomplished in gathering and interpreting these documents: a compelling portrait of the strength and continuity of the early Relief Society. In many ways this collection serves as a reader for the monumental history of the Relief Society written by Jill Derr, Janath Cannon, and Maureen Beecher and published in

1992.¹ It offers primary-source depth and detail to the early institutional history of the society.

The editors of *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* introduce some documents that provide complication and counterpoint. They point out that the Nauvoo Relief Society was probably dissolved as a result of the group's work to oppose the introduction of polygamy (pp. 12–15). Included in the collection is a strongly worded statement by Brigham Young criticizing the Relief Society for its perceived interference and even suggesting that the women's opposition to polygamy led to the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith (pp. 168–71). The volume also contains minutes from Native American, Hawaiian, frontier, and foreign Relief Societies (pp. 483–86, 509–13, 553–56, 557–59), offsetting the official narrative with voices outside the Salt Lake City area. These complicating documents invite us to delve deeper into the lived messiness of Relief Society history. They give us hope that even more of these kinds of documents will be discovered, interpreted, and published by these skilled researchers. In these far-flung places, we see institutional ideals meeting reality and becoming the lived religion of Mormon women and men.

Messiness shows up again in documents about women and the priesthood. The editors indirectly address oft-cited passages from Joseph Smith's talks to the Nauvoo Relief Society about women and the priesthood. These are words that drive the debate in the contemporary church over women and the priesthood and that have been the subject of much historical disagreement.² Did Smith intend to give the priesthood to women through the Relief Society? Did he turn the key of the priesthood over to women and give them autonomous priesthood authority? The answers remain obscure, as they probably always will.

1. Jull Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Bok, 1992).

2. For an example of a scholar who argues that Joseph Smith intended to give women autonomous priesthood power, see D. Michael Quinn, "Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 365–409.

The editors suggest that Smith was utilizing the Relief Society for many purposes, but chiefly to prepare women for the revised temple rituals that he was introducing to members of his inner circle even before the Nauvoo Temple was completed. Thus, they argue, when Smith talked about turning the key of the priesthood during his Relief Society talks, he was referring to women obtaining priesthood through their endowed and sealed relationships with their husbands (pp. xxix–xxxi). In this assertion, the editors follow the line of explanation on women and the priesthood that was recently released by the church: all endowed members carry the priesthood power, but only men exercise the ecclesiastical office of the priesthood.³

These documents, and the discussion of women and the priesthood in particular, reinforce the importance of early LDS Church records in creating religious precedent (or, in Weberian terms, traditional authority) throughout the church's history and up to the present. The editors note repeatedly that the Nauvoo records of the Relief Society served as the foundational documents for the later iterations of the group (pp. xviii–xix). It is no surprise, then, that the Nauvoo records are presented in great detail, whereas the rest of the records are presented in much more selective fashion. The later documents, however, are equally revealing. They speak to a powerful, synergistic partnership between Eliza Snow and Brigham Young in creating today's institutional and historical infrastructure of the church. In particular, they illuminate how important Snow was to creating a sacred Mormon worldview among church members of this era. Snow generated the precedent-setting early records in her role as secretary of the Nauvoo Relief Society. More importantly, perhaps, she served as the authoritative keeper and then interpreter and propagator of these records as the Relief Society was dissolved and re-formed in fits and starts and then fully in Utah. As the nineteenth century neared its end, Snow was a walking and talking sacred story.

3. "Joseph Smith's Teachings about Priesthood, Temple, and Women," accessed September 1, 2016, <https://www.lds.org/topics/joseph-smiths-teachings-about-priesthood-temple-and-women>.

Snow's Nauvoo records highlight the long-standing tension within the Mormon community between the authority of foundational sacred experiences or records and the authority of continuing revelation. Should current practice depend mostly on Joseph Smith's statements and teachings? Or, following the belief in continuing revelation, should current practice be based on statements by later prophets of the church who, for instance, on the issue of women and the priesthood clearly stated that women had the priesthood through the marriage relationship with their husbands? In the balance of these two foundational principles of the church, which is more important? This creative tension allows the Mormon community to adjust to new times and circumstances, but it also generates confusion and questions. The church's recent statement on race and the priesthood expresses well this tensional, creative process.⁴ The statement claims Joseph Smith did not restrict men of African descent from the priesthood, and it uses his early practices and words as a model for a modern, inclusive church, dismissing later racist priesthood restrictions as influenced by the racism of American culture. Similarly, these Relief Society documents with their heavy emphasis on the Nauvoo records seem to throw the weight in favor of original experiences or practices as the most authoritative.

In the stories told by the documents, the issue gets even more complicated as the thorny question of interpretation weaves its way through the minutes and letters of the Relief Society. The volume begins with what women were saying and doing in the Nauvoo Relief Society and ends with how Mormon women remembered these early organizational moments fifty years later. We see the common pattern among religious groups of invisible, perhaps even unconscious, reinterpretation of authoritative stories. Fifty years hence, for instance, the internal conflict over polygamy that members of the Nauvoo Relief Society once had fanned—thereby opposing the revelatory authority of Joseph Smith—had, by the time of the Jubilee celebration of the Relief Society, disappeared in the telling of those who had personally witnessed those

4. "Race and the Priesthood," accessed September 1, 2016, <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood>.

tensions. Instead, they described a harmonious group of women faithful to the declarations of their prophet: the original experiences reread for a different time when the church was striving to erase the memory of polygamy and forget the disruptions it caused within the church and between the church and other Americans.

In these documents, then, we see a sacred Mormon worldview that was mutable and riven with tensions. We see worldviews that changed through time and that intersected in sometimes reinforcing and sometimes contentious ways. While these documents show some of these tensions—tensions that are the inevitable force of religious creativity—they do not resolve the questions for members or scholars about women and the priesthood, nor do they elucidate on which side the balance of religious interpretation should fall: original impulse or continuing revelation. These questions will remain for each new generation of leaders and members to work out. I suspect, however, that the documents in this volume will contribute mightily to current discussions about women's place in the contemporary church. As they escape the interpretive framing of Snow and their present-day editors, they will serve as fuel to the fire of these debates.

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CATHERINE BREKUS: This hefty, impressive volume is a collection of seventy-eight documents that tell the story of the Relief Society from its founding in 1842 to its fiftieth anniversary in 1892. Edited by four expert historians, the volume reprints a wide variety of texts—including the Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, letters, articles, diary entries, and official reports—that reveal the crucial importance of the Relief Society to the early history of the Latter-day Saints. The documents are fascinating, and the editors have done a marvelous job of annotating

them. In order to make the volume accessible to a popular readership, the editors have divided the book into four parts, each with its own introduction, and they have included clear, judicious headnotes to each document. They have also provided biographical sketches of the major characters as well as a comprehensive index.

The most riveting part of the book is part 1 (1830, 1842–1845), which reprints the Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book. To read these documents is to experience some of the inventiveness and excitement of early Mormon history. When Latter-day Saint women began making plans to create a benevolent society, they soon discovered that Joseph Smith had something more ambitious in mind. He wanted the Female Relief Society (as it was originally known) to be connected to his restoration of the priesthood and the temple.

Much of the drama of part 1 comes from Joseph's fervent sermons to the Relief Society and the tensions between him and Emma over polygamy. In 1842, when the Relief Society was formed, Joseph had already been sealed to several women, and he seems to have hoped that the Relief Society would ultimately defend his revelation about celestial marriage. When the apostate John Bennett attacked Joseph for teaching "spiritual wifery," several women of the Relief Society, including Emma, insisted that the rumors were false. By 1844, however, Emma was determined to resist polygamy, and she helped draft a declaration, "The Voice of Innocence," which censured "debauchees, vagabonds, and rakes" for "bringing woman, poor defenceless woman, to wretchedness and ruin" (p. 153). In response, Joseph blamed the Relief Society for inciting people against him, complaining that he "never had any fuss with these men until that Female Relief Society brought out the paper against adulterers and adulteresses" (p. 153).

Given the conflicts between Joseph and Emma, it is difficult to untangle his personal responses to her from his prophetic vision for the Relief Society. A particularly vexing question is whether he intended to give women the priesthood. This volume reprints six sermons that Joseph delivered to the Relief Society in 1842, and although they have been published before, they are especially powerful when read in the

context of the minute book. On March 31, 1842, Joseph told the society that it “should move according to the ancient priesthood,” and he “said he was going to make of this Society a kingdom of priests a[s] in Enoch’s day—as in Paul’s day” (p. 43). On April 28, after explaining that he wanted “to make observations respecting the Priesthood,” he argued that women as well as men could practice the spiritual gifts of “healing the sick, casting out devils &c” (pp. 53, 55). (According to a footnote in the volume, his scribe recorded that Joseph “gave a lecture on the pries[t]hood shewing how the Sisters would come in possession of the privileges & blessings & gifts of the priesthood—& that the signs should follow them, such as healing the sick casting out devils &c &c” [p. 53].) Using the word *ordained* in reference to women, Joseph “spoke of delivering the keys to this Society and to the church,” and he defended “the propriety of females administering to the sick by the laying on of hands” for healing (pp. 55–56, 59).

Joseph’s language is so dense and allusive that it can be interpreted in multiple ways, but as this volume makes clear, the future leaders of the church were determined to portray the priesthood as belonging to men alone. Blaming women for the murder of Joseph and his brother Hyrum, Brigham Young suppressed the Relief Society after becoming church president in 1844. In an impassioned speech to the high priests quorum, he asked, “What are relief societies for? To relieve us of our best men—They relieved us of Joseph and Hyrum—that is what they will lead to—I don’t (want) the advice or counsel of any woman—they would lead us down to hell.” Speaking to a meeting of the Seventies, he asserted that women “never can hold the keys of the Priesthood apart from their husband” (p. 171). After Young decided to reorganize the Relief Society ten years later, a group of male leaders (including George A. Smith) printed a revised version of Joseph’s sermons to the Relief Society. They made significant changes to Joseph’s language in order to minimize women’s religious authority. For example, the original records stated, “he spoke of delivering the keys to this Society and to the church,” but the male leaders changed this sentence to “he spoke of delivering the keys of the Priesthood to the church, and said the faithful

members of the Relief Society should receive them in connection with their husbands” (p. 204). In the revised version, the “keys” were delivered only to the church, not to the Relief Society, and women could receive them only through their husbands. The leaders also changed Joseph’s words “I now turn the key to you in the name of God” to “I now turn the key *in your behalf* in the name of the Lord” (emphasis added, p. 207).

One might imagine that LDS leaders would be reluctant to change the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Yet when Heber Kimball heard the new sermon read aloud, he stated that he “liked it better as revised” (p. 199). Since relatively few Mormons had access to the original manuscript, most assumed that Joseph had spoken the exact words that were published in the *Deseret News*. Future Mormon leaders, including Franklin D. Richards in 1888, continued to quote the revised version as if it were authoritative (p. 551).

Nineteenth-century LDS women never claimed to be “priests” in the same way as men, but they exercised significant religious authority. Besides giving charity and devoting themselves to home manufacturing, they spoke in tongues, anointed the sick, offered blessings before childbirth, and performed healings. According to Bathsheba W. Smith, Joseph had wanted to make women “a kingdom of priestesses” (p. xxviii). Eliza Snow was described as “a Priestess in the House of the Lord,” and at the first general conference of the Relief Society in 1889, Zina Young reminded her audience that Joseph had organized the society “after the pattern of the Holy Priesthood” (pp. xxxi, 565). Though LDS women (like men) seem to have been uncertain about Joseph’s understanding of the Relief Society, they treated it as a parallel priesthood, a separate sphere in which they had the authority to perform healings and blessings.

In contrast, male leaders repeatedly asserted that women did not have the priesthood. Following in the footsteps of Brigham Young, John Taylor explained in 1880 that when Joseph Smith “ordained” women, “the ordination then given did not mean the conferring of the Priesthood upon those sisters yet the sisters hold a portion of the

Priesthood in connection with their husbands” (p. 476). In the same year, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that when women administered to the sick by the laying on of hands or by anointing with oil, “they should administer in these sacred ordinances, not by virtue of the priesthood, but by virtue of their faith in Christ, and the promises made to believers” (p. 489). The volume is filled with statements like these, an indication that male leaders were uneasy about Joseph’s cryptic language. By the early twentieth century, only elders were expected to give blessings or anoint the sick.

Today the church continues to argue that Joseph did not ordain women to the priesthood. In a recent article, “Joseph Smith’s Teachings about Priesthood, Temple, and Women,” LDS leaders explain that women exert “priesthood authority” within the temple, but “they are not ordained to priesthood office.”⁵ Although the documents in this volume can be read in support of this conclusion, they can also be interpreted in more expansive ways. A key issue involves Joseph’s use of the word *ordain*, which the editors suggest he meant as a synonym for “set apart.” On one hand, most antebellum Americans used the word *ordain* to refer to ministerial ordination, which suggests that Joseph may have meant something stronger than merely being set apart. On the other hand, Joseph invested many words with new meanings, including *keys* and *sealings*.

Whatever Joseph’s intentions (and perhaps he was still in the midst of his own revelatory process), this volume makes it clear that Mormon leaders have been anxious about women and the priesthood ever since his death in 1844.

The women of the Relief Society believed that they had been called to build the kingdom of God on earth, and they administered charity, made their own clothing, collected grain for storage, and fought for women’s suffrage. They also strongly defended polygamy. Though modern-day readers may find it challenging to understand how early

5. “Joseph Smith’s Teachings about Priesthood, Temple, and Women,” accessed September 1, 2016, <https://www.lds.org/topics/joseph-smiths-teachings-about-priesthood-temple-and-women>.

Mormon women reconciled their belief in women's rights with their support of polygamy, this volume reveals that they truly believed in Joseph's revelation about celestial marriage and that they deeply resented critics who portrayed them as victims of an oppressive system. Persecution only strengthened their faith.

The editors of this collection should be commended for their painstaking labor in assembling such a treasure trove of documents. Although there have been many excellent studies of early Mormon women, this volume represents a major contribution to our understanding of the Relief Society, an essential Mormon institution and one of the oldest women's organizations in the United States.

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Review Panel

Joanna Brooks, Rachel Hunt Steenblick, and Hannah Wheelwright, eds. *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Reviewed by Anthea Butler, Martha Bradley-Evans, and Taylor G. Petrey

ANTHEA BUTLER: With Mormonism attracting greater academic and popular interest in America, there has never been a more appropriate time for the volume *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings*. It is an excellent, stand-alone volume that takes seriously the questions and work of Mormon women wrestling with their historical, current, and future roles in a denomination that offers the priesthood only to men, and only since 1978 to men of African descent. Like many women in other conservative religious groups, Mormon women are wrestling with their faith and reconciling their roles in the world within a religious tradition that limits their authority. So while this is a volume having to do with a rich history of primary documents and speeches on Mormon feminism in the last forty years, it is very important to place these documents in the context of a broader understanding of gender in religions that are focused on family and on God (or in this case, Heavenly Father) as male.

The editors state in the introduction that “a Mormon feminist is anyone who identifies both with the Mormon movement and with the centuries-old struggle for women’s equality, dignity, well-being, and full participation that we call feminism.” While this may seem to be a simple statement, it is loaded with profound significance. For many Mormon

women, the idea of being a Mormon as well as a feminist is unthinkable and incompatible with the faith. The authors take this issue seriously in the introduction to *Mormon Feminism* by linking Mormon feminism to four major issues: Mormon history, Mormon theology (specifically on the priesthood), the role of Heavenly Mother, and Mormon scriptures. Doing so helps set down the lines of the forty-plus years of discourse that they lay out convincingly, while taking into consideration the concerns and issues of those who disagree with feminism.

The organization of this volume, while chronological, spans the genesis of feminism in the LDS context and provides a helpful framework in which to engage the stages of Mormon women and feminism. They are “Foundations” (1970s), “Lived Contradictions” (1980s), “Defining Moments” (1990s), and “Resurgence” (2000 and beyond). These decade divisions define the specific stages in Mormon feminism and also indirectly show how the development of feminism within Mormonism raised serious questions about the history of the LDS Church and doctrinal pronouncements. It also gives academics a framework to pair Mormon women’s quest for feminism alongside women in other religious groups like Catholicism, Evangelicalism, and Islam.

The “Foundations” section begins with the “Pink Issue,” the 1971 issue of *Dialogue* centered on perspectives of Mormon women. This document provides a helpful anchor for understanding how Mormon women were facing a rapidly changing culture while attempting to reconcile their lives and roles within the church. The section also covers engagement with major historical issues both within and outside the church, most prominently the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). It may come as a surprise (as it did to me) that many Mormons were at first supportive of the ERA and that a heavily Mormon state, Idaho, voted for the amendment. In 1975, however, as the editors point out, the church announced its opposition to the amendment in the *Deseret News* in 1975. In a sense, this opposition would sharpen the tensions between Mormon women who had questions not only about their role within the church but also about doctrine. Sonia Johnson’s 1979 piece “Patriarchal Panic: Sexual Politics in the Mormon Church” was an especially

insightful addition that showed how the campaign in the Mormon community against the ERA divided the church between those who supported the ERA and also those who were against it. Johnson was excommunicated in December 1979 by church leaders. While the ERA would ultimately suffer defeat in 1983, it is interesting how the fight for its passage would illuminate the questions of Mormon women regarding their place in the church.

Two important doctrinal questions pervading each section of this volume involve the priesthood and Heavenly Mother. The priesthood is given to men only, and while God is commonly referred to in LDS doctrine as “Heavenly Father,” there is no explicit and detailed information about “Heavenly Mother” in official doctrine. Mormon feminists from the 1970s forward would discuss and question both doctrines. LDS women’s push for the priesthood could be understood in one sense as resembling the push for women’s ordination in other Christian religious traditions such as Catholicism, but it is more encompassing than that. In her 1991 essay “Women and the Priesthood” (pp. 119–24), Nadine McCombs Hansen lays out both scriptural and historical arguments for women receiving the priesthood, coupling it with the revelation for black men to ascend to the priesthood. “I wonder, if we had not been so adamantly certain that the Negro doctrine could never change,” she asks, “might it have changed sooner than it did? What part do we, the membership, play in change?” In 2014 the argument was carried forward by a Samoan woman, Lani Wendt Young, in “Rejoice in the Diversity of Our Sisterhood: A Samoan Mormon Feminist Voice on Ordain Women.” While Young does not desire the priesthood for herself, she relates the troubling stories of domestic abuse in both the Samoan and LDS context. The line “Men get the priesthood and women get motherhood” cuts to the core, especially when, as Young relates, it is said to a woman who cannot have children.

These stories, along with the primary documents, bring to the forefront a perhaps unintended but important consequence: *Mormon Feminism* not only questions the role of women in the church, it also chronicles a history of feminist women’s engagement with doctrine.

The two went hand in hand. One of the useful resources in the volume, “Suggested Readings by Topic,” lists nine separate texts dealing with “Mother in Heaven,” only one less than the ten dealing with Mormon feminism. These important inclusions show the historical genesis of LDS thinking on the concept of Heavenly Mother, the historical connections to beliefs and practices, and the ways in which women found comfort in thinking of not only Heavenly Father but also Heavenly Mother as part of their cherished beliefs.

As an outsider to Mormonism, I came to this volume with both excitement and trepidation—excitement to have the opportunity to read about Mormon women in their own words, unfiltered. *Mormon Feminism* helped me begin to understand the rich historical connections of Mormon women to other religious women in America. The trepidation on my part, as an outsider, is the realization of the fine line women walk, and often step over, as intellectuals and seekers who question the tenets of their faith. Like women in conservative Christian, Jewish, or Muslim traditions, Mormon women have had to negotiate the line between speaking up for themselves and maintaining social cohesion. Many times, other women create perilous situations for women who desire more freedom and autonomy. Many who disagree with the texts in this book are fellow Mormon women who see feminism as usurping their places within the church and as heresy. If the last segment of the book, “Resurgence,” is any indication, the topic of Mormon feminism will remain culturally and academically relevant for some time to come.

I am also very appreciative of the attention paid in the volume to diversity issues of Mormon women. The inclusion of not only Wendt Young’s article, but also Janan Graham Russell’s “Black Bodies in White Spaces” and Gina Colvin’s “Ordain Women, but . . . : A Womanist Perspective,” demonstrates the inclusive nature of this compilation. One of the current and historical issues in feminism has been the differences between white feminist and feminists of color. Engaging nonwhite Mormon women feminist thinking is an important step to counteracting some of the historical tensions and also understanding the contradictions that outsiders may believe Mormon women of color face in the LDS Church.

In spite of these tensions, *Mormon Feminism* is an in-depth, accessible resource for Mormon studies, religious studies, feminist studies, and gender studies. It is also accessible to the lay person who is not an academic, something that the editors paid close attention to. The well-organized wealth of resources includes a glossary of terms for those not familiar with Mormonism and lists of additional terms and suggested readings. The editors have also provided introductions addressing historical context for all of the primary documents included in the volume. For scholars and interested persons both inside and outside of the church, these are valuable resources for further study. *Mormon Feminism* is an excellent collection and, for the layperson and academic alike, an invaluable resource for understanding an important, but often muted, segment of LDS life.

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MARTHA BRADLEY-EVANS: The real power in this collection of writing by LDS women is the way it reveals the many ways of being Mormon and of thinking and practicing Mormonism. To be sure, one's ability to thrive while being Mormon and feminist is situational, depending greatly on the nature of a ward's culture or on the open-mindedness of a bishop. According to historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Mormon feminism "is a complex and multiple identity, capable of dynamism, independence, and resilience" (p. 193). *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings* demonstrates ways that women have found personal equilibrium or disequilibrium while interrogating gender in the LDS Church. My own work and experience in the church suggests a complex tapestry

of women struggling to understand where they belong, what they can contribute, and how to find meaning in their lives as spiritual beings.

There were many times in the reading of this volume that I wished I had read the words of Claudia Bushman, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, or Lisa Hawkins—three Mormon feminist contributors to this volume—at different moments in my life. This is probably true for other readers as well. Many Mormon feminists (or closet feminists) feel a profound sense of isolation or difference that separates them from the community offered by a congregation, perhaps what they most crave and value. But what some essays or poems in this book suggest is that there are many variations of Mormon women, that diversity actually strengthens the church. As is true of the variety of trees that make a forest, or biodiversity that guarantees greater sustainability for the system, this diversity of viewpoint and experience can potentially create greater resiliency for the church as an institution and create room for a greater variety of human beings to be welcomed into the mix. In the words of Chieko Okazaki, former member of the Relief Society general presidency, “it is the diversity in our circumstances that gives us compassionate hearts” (p. 275).

Some of these essays suggest an image of a time when women did not feel safe expressing their viewpoints or acting on their values or did not feel respected for their difference. Again, this is strikingly situational. The ideal would be the communion of a circle of friends like those who met to discuss their feminist views in Boston in the 1970s, or the connection that women feel in virtual communities formed through blogs, which isn’t all that different from the camaraderie that pioneer women felt talking across a quilt design as they shared their lives. But not all Mormon feminists have had this important experience or acceptance.

Hear the hope in the words of Joanna Brooks in her poem “Invocation/Benediction,” which reads in part:

Mother, Father, give me vision.
Give me strength to work hours past my daughters’ bedtime.
Give me an incandescent all-night garage

with a quorum of thimble-thumbed grandmothers sitting on
 borrowed folding chairs.

We will gather all the lost scraps and stitch them together:

A quilt big enough to warm all our generations:

all the lost, found, rich, poor, good, bad, in, out, old, new, country,
 city, dusty, shiny ones;

A quilt big enough to cover all the alfalfa fields in the Great Basin.

Bigger. We are piecing together a quilt with no edges.

God, make me brave enough to love my people.

How wonderful it is to have a people to love. (p. 247)

The editors of this collection seem to suggest it is women who must piece the “quilt with no edges,” a “quilt big enough to warm all our generations,” finding better ways to listen to the stories of others, to welcome home those who choose to move out and in, to remember how it was for others, to make meaning.

In the introduction, Joanna Brooks writes that while working on this volume, “I have felt the presence—sometimes palpable—of Mormon feminists, past, present, and future.” Rachel Hunt Steenblik writes similarly, “It was a gift to consciously and consistently turn my heart (and mind) to my spiritual foremothers and sisters. The work of remembering felt at times both harrowing and holy.” And, finally, Hannah Wheelwright says that she is thankful to her parents “for instilling in me a strong moral compass and a faith that inspires the courage to act on it.” There is much in these three simple comments that reveals the heart of this book—an acknowledgement of the continuity of story, the richness of connections to past women’s lives, and the inheritance of a moral way of living one’s life in part to honor those who have lived before. Writing the history of their lives, living our own in the context of the modern era, and trying to make sense of it all is a sort of moral imperative for these three women, and one that I share. The immense generosity of those who shared their work, their poetry, their essays, or other forms of writing in order to join with women who wrote and spoke in the early church and with those who continue to the present is at times profoundly moving, inspiring, and dismaying, and it never fails to provoke thought.

The authors have chosen to include key pieces from the early 1970s to the present that depict the lives of Mormon feminists and their efforts to find meaning in their experience as members of the LDS Church. They feature essays written about many of the critical issues and perceived inconsistencies in practice or belief that cause women to ask questions and that produce, in the authors' words, "a palpable tension that Mormon women process in a number of different ways." The authors suggest that "Mormon feminism is the name for the community where we can explore these questions openly and together." Importantly, and perhaps creating the most important rationale for this collection, they write:

Each Mormon feminist finds herself coming into these questions at a different moment in her life. This can be a disorienting experience, especially given the deep confidence many Mormons place in our faith's ability to answer most of life's challenges and questions. But Mormon feminism offers the welcome message that none of us is alone in our questions, nor are we the first to ask them. We can learn much from those who have been living, researching, and writing about these questions for the last forty years. (p. 8)

Mormon Feminism includes the range of approaches that Mormon feminists have taken in their work—from the examination of theology by Margaret Toscano, Janice Allred, or Maxine Hanks to historical work by Jill Derr, Claudia Bushman, or Linda Wilcox and poetry by Lisa Hawkins or Carol Lynn Pearson. These women have used their gifts for meaning-making, trying to understand their own lives and those of others.

Finally—and maybe it's the whole point—*Mormon Feminism* assumes that personal narratives create a sort of common ground with roots that run deep into the Mormon past and present and connect us to each other regardless of where we end up. It challenges readers, as author Neylan McBaine articulated, to "allow [themselves] for a moment to step into the shoes of someone who struggles with finding her place" (p. 259). Evoking a type of religious empathy, these stories show us that the world looks and feels different to each of us, and our own understanding of our life experience as Mormon women will be enriched by imagining that of

others. Kudos to the editors for making this important book happen; it is, in my estimation, essential reading, especially for Mormon women.

Martha Bradley-Evans is senior associate vice president of academic affairs, dean of undergraduate studies, and professor in the College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Utah. Her book *Pedestals and Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority and Equal Rights* details the LDS Church's fight against the Equal Rights Amendment.

TAYLOR G. PETREY: This critical volume presents a history that previously had only been scattered, passed on orally, and learned over decades. The book is a compilation of social commentary, scriptural analysis, personal essays, historical studies, poetry, blog posts, and theology. The editors introduce each entry with a short explanation about the author, the historical context of the piece, and some of its impact. For many of the entries, there is also a short bibliographic section with additional resources on the same topic.

The volume posits a fundamental compatibility between the principles of feminism and the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Mormon feminist project is, then, to identify points of inequality and rectify them in “the creation of a Zion community of equals.”¹ The editors repeat Claudia Bushman’s framework (pp. 36–39) for the founding principles of Mormon feminism—to strengthen the church and its women—in the introductory remarks throughout the volume. Guided by this perspective, the assemblage of documents is inspiring, heartbreaking, and ultimately optimistic about the future of Mormon feminism.

1. Joanna Brooks, “Mormon Feminism: An Introduction,” in *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings*, ed. Joanna Brooks, Rachel Hunt Steenblik, and Hannah Wheelwright (New York: Oxford University Press), 7.

As a reader, I am left with two major sets of questions, one about the past and another about the future. Concerning the past, I wonder what narratives scholars may explore in the historiography of Mormon feminism. The basic historical trajectory of this volume divides modern Mormon feminism into four periods that represent moments of growth, tension, or decline: the 1970s are “foundations,” the 1980s are “lived contradictions,” the 1990s are “defining moments,” and the 2000s are “resurgence.” These periods are largely, though not entirely, explained within the context of Mormon feminism’s own travails, especially as the movement came into direct conflict with church authority. The trajectory of this narrative represents similar themes of Mormon feminist views of history, such as the idea of contraction of the social and ecclesiastical roles for women over the course of the twentieth century. Some Mormon women felt the contraction in their own lives (such as the brief policy barring women from praying in church meetings), and others discovered the elimination of women’s past spiritual and ritual practices, such as healing, the role of women in church governance, and the loss of the Relief Society’s independence.

The longest section, “Foundations,” lays out the origins of Mormon feminism and the agenda that continues to dominate and define the movement: a focus on Heavenly Mother, on priesthood ordination and ordinances for women, and on unequal distribution of gender roles in the home and beyond. This early bubbling up is followed by conflicts with the LDS Church. The church’s opposition to the ERA, announced in 1975, strained the proposed compatibility between feminism and church teachings that many feminists were putting forward; it also exposed both the depth of the problem the church had with women’s equality in the home, church, and society and the risks that Mormon women activists faced.

The next section, “Lived Contradictions,” shows how conflict between the church and feminists produced divisions between Mormon feminists themselves. The early 1980s saw serious tension between those feminists who were content to work within the institution and those who were coming into conflict with it. This tension reflected a paradox

that is at the heart of how women have been shaped by the church and by the different kinds of Mormon feminist responses to the church. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich explains, "That the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints simultaneously enlarges and diminishes women should hardly be surprising since it was born and has grown to maturity in a larger society which does the same" (p. 115). Sometimes the enlarging felt greater, and sometimes the diminishing more acute.

In the 1990s Mormon feminism flourished and was followed by "defining moments"—that is, conflicts with the LDS Church over doctrine and practice. Then, over the next decade, there seems to have been a deafening silence of Mormon feminism, prompting Peggy Fletcher Stack to ask the famous question in the early 2000s, "Where have all the Mormon feminists gone?" The question itself seemed to anticipate a new rise of Mormon feminism beginning in the early 2000s. The era of what the editors term "resurgence" in Mormon feminism is associated with the rise of blogging and a new round of Mormon feminist organizations that continued to exhibit disagreement about how exactly to engage the church, culminating once again in open conflicts between feminists and church authorities. This is the moment in which Mormon feminism now finds itself, and it remains to be seen whether this pattern will continue to repeat.

This historical narrative of Mormon feminism's rise and fall raises a number of important historiographical questions. How does this structure contribute to our imagination of this movement? How does this structure correspond to cultural trends beyond the scope of Mormonism? While the book seems to occasionally locate Mormon feminism within the broader context of American feminist movements, it more often loses sight of this context, remaining within a local history of Mormon women talking to Mormons about Mormon history. What remains to be done is to think about how the history of Mormon feminism contributes to a history of American feminism. How do the various agendas of Mormon feminism participate in broader trends? For instance, how do academic movements for women's history shape Mormon feminism? How does the Mormon feminist appeal to Heavenly Mother compare to similar

goddess worship movements in feminist and New Age engagement with religion? What connections exist between the push for Mormon women's priesthood ordination and similar women's ordination movements in other traditions in the 1970s and 80s? How do different wings of Mormon feminism exhibit broader feminist debates about activism and theory? Further, how do the conservative responses to Mormon feminism fit within broader trends in American conservative movements?

So much for the questions about the past. What of the future? In the contemporary resurgence, the volume editors identify five "key questions" for the future of Mormon feminism, including "priesthood for women, women's role in temple rites, the doctrinal persistence of polygamy, the absence of Heavenly Mother from Mormon worship and practice, and the enfranchisement of women's voices in day-to-day LDS church decision-making." These are largely the same issues that emerged in Mormon feminism's foundational period four decades ago. For the future, the editors add to this list the "concerns raised by Mormon women of color" (p. 227). This final agenda item may be more profoundly transformative than just adding to the legacy list. With the promised attention on race, the actual attention remains strikingly thin. The first primary source to deal with this issue is referenced on page 267 (out of 292) and dates to 2013. Whether the split between Mormon feminist and womanist values will follow the same pattern as in other religious communities, or can learn from those tensions and adjust and accommodate for differences, is an open question. The recent firestorm over the release of the artwork titled *Black Eve* revealed significant disagreement between feminist and womanist reactions.²¹

Besides race, issues of gender and sexuality have posed another significant challenge to broader feminist movements. Going forward, I wonder how Mormon feminism will relate to same-sex marriage, trans topics, and queer critique. There is essentially no discussion of these topics in this volume. Perhaps this absence is expected, as feminist and

2. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Mormon Painting of a Black Eve Draws Fire, but Not for the Reasons You Might Think," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 17, 2016. Updated March 19, 2016, <http://www.sltrib.com/home/3672712-155/mormon-painting-of-a-black-eve>.

LGBT Mormon history have largely been considered separate areas of inquiry. Further, the anxiety Mormon feminists have had over the so-called lavender menace goes back to the 1970s, when Mormon and US culture first rejected women's liberation because of a perceived threat that it would lead to "homosexual marriage." Since then, Mormon feminists have often emphasized Mormon and feminine credentials as a basis of legitimacy and have eschewed their non-gender-conforming peers. No doubt written with some irony, Claudia Bushman domesticated Mormon feminism from the outset: "We benefit from outside interests (from the home) and can usually manage them without skimping on the baked goods" (p. 37).

In a 1979 letter quoted in *Mormon Feminism* from the members of the Alice Louise Reynolds Forum to LDS Church president Spencer W. Kimball, the writers lamented the plight Mormon feminists faced in the church: "In a classic example of guilt by association, Mormon feminists are being linked to the destruction of the family, homosexual marriages, and abortion." The relationship between the church's position on homosexuality and Mormon feminist views on homosexuality remains to be explored. The rise of gay and lesbian Mormon activism historically parallels Mormon feminist activism, but there is no existing treatment of the relationship between these two movements. How future Mormon feminists might engage issues of nonnormative gender and sexuality is a question that this volume leaves still unaddressed.

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Book Reviews

Kate Holbrook and Matthew Bowman, eds. *Women and Mormonism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016.

Reviewed by Amy Hoyt

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THIS COLLECTION OF TWENTY-ONE PAPERS given at the 2012 conference “Women and the LDS Church: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives” brings together some of the brightest scholars working in a variety of disciplines on the study of Mormon women. The contributors to the volume employ varied methodological and ideological approaches to the topic of Mormon women’s agency. Holbrook and Bowman have organized the book chronologically and methodologically, grouping the papers into four categories: historical methodology, historical narrative, contemporary social sciences, and contemporary personal perspectives. One of the volume’s strengths is that it assembles a wide range of voices to weigh in on Mormon women and agency. As such, it is one of the most diverse books on Mormon women to date.

The opening chapter by Catherine Brekus on the historical agency of Mormon women anchors what follows because nearly every subsequent contributor references her work on that topic. Brekus’s essay asks historians to include Mormon women in their work without portraying them as either “deluded, downtrodden slaves or fiercely independent matriarchs” (p. 16). Brekus makes an important critique here: reducing Mormon women to caricatures of their deeply complex lives is problematic. I also appreciate that Brekus attempts to reimagine historical

agency by suggesting seven aspects that a new definition of agency should have in order to understand a range of agentic practices in which Mormon women engage. Brekus encourages scholars to develop a nuanced portrait of individual and communal agency along a continuum of power bounded by structures. Brekus is correct in calling on scholars to offer complexity to the female Mormon living in the past and offers helpful suggestions on how to think of agency in less bipolar terms.

However, Brekus unintentionally replicates the very notion she is asking scholars to abandon. While she insists that all actions are agentic regardless of whether they sustain religious structures or break them down, she simultaneously critiques scholars of history for “exaggerating the agency of Mormon women.” Herein lies the problem: if agency actually constitutes actions that both affirm and oppose religious structures in individual and communal settings, it is impossible to exaggerate a person’s agency. Brekus writes that agency is “not limited to challenging social structures; it also includes reproducing them” (p. 29). If scholars highlight the positive benefits of women’s participation in polygamy without dealing with the less-than-ideal effects of the practice, it is not an exaggeration of agency but rather a myopic focus on what women gain within the polygamous marriage system. This may seem like a minute difference (one perhaps equally problematic), but it reveals just how deeply liberal and progressive politics have become naturalized within the study of gender in North America. This marriage of liberal politics with American feminism has resulted in American feminist scholars privileging autonomy over community and empowerment over cooperation, particularly for religious women practicing within a highly patriarchal environment.¹

Many contributors to the volume refer to Brekus’s definition of Mormon women’s agency, resulting in a type of “Brekusification” of the discussion surrounding that topic. While they utilize aspects of Brekus’s definition of agency that I also find helpful, by not examining the efficacy

1. Saba Mahmood, *Saba Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005).

of her entire construction of Mormon women's historical agency, they risk allowing her definition to stand as the definition of agency. Thus a key task for scholars of Mormon women is clarifying the theoretical category of agency. A useful definition of Mormon women's agency needs to include a discussion of the effects of practicing agency in both historical and contemporary methodologies and how agency is practiced (enacted). Scholars of Mormonism and gender should critically engage proposed definitions in order to refine them and push the category of agency toward a meaningful definition that best represents the women they study. This will take time and significant debate. Brekus has given us one definition; we must interrogate it with rigorous debate and propose many more definitions until we find one that usefully describes the women we seek to understand.

Brekus's unintentional oversight reveals a much larger problem in the field of religious studies: historians and theologians typically do not let their work inform one another. This is particularly true in the field of Mormon studies. The work that feminist theologians have done on the theoretical and theological category of agency is overlooked because of the disconnect between these two subfields.² This fractured relationship within Mormon studies stems partly from the risk involved with "doing" theology, particularly feminist theology, and has encouraged scholars of Mormon women to align themselves with a historical method. As scholars, our methodology should reflect the lives of the women we study; and, arguably, theology informs Mormon women's lives as much as, if not more than, historical practices. Mormon studies will never obtain an accurate picture of Mormon women if we do not include theology within the conversation.

Jonathan A. Stapley's chapter, "Women and Mormon Authority," offers an analysis of how women's authority has shifted over time and is certainly a nod to feminist theology. Stapley introduces the concept of different aspects of Mormon women's authority: liturgical, priestly, and ecclesiastical authority, which are all understood in relation to a

2. Amy Hoyt, "Beyond the Victim/Empowerment Paradigm: The Gendered Cosmology of Mormon Women," *Feminist Theology* 16/1 (2007).

cosmological priesthood. This is a helpful way of seeing how spiritual gifts were authorized for women in the early church; it is also helpful for understanding the changes that women's authority underwent over time.

The most compelling essays in this volume implore scholars to critically engage with Mormon women who are ethnically and racially diverse, as well as with those who live outside North America. These chapters remind readers that research that does not take into account the questions and realities of these women is merely replicating colonial structures by positioning scholars' realities as the dominant narrative of Mormon women.

Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye's outstanding essay, "Culture and Agency in Mormon Women's Lives," examines the relationship between culture and agency for LDS Asian immigrants living in North America and Canada. Inouye calls on scholars of Mormon women to resist placing American Mormon women at the center of all scholarship, since these women cannot and do not accurately represent the majority of Mormon women. I second Inouye's insistence that scholars reach beyond North America to frame their discussions, questions, and theories regarding Mormon women. Scholarship on North American Mormon women is inadequate for drawing general conclusions about Mormon women and is almost completely irrelevant to the majority of Mormon women.

Carine Decoo-Vanwelkenhuysen drives this point home by drawing on both her personal experience and extensive research to demonstrate that the feminist issues that seem essential to North American Mormon feminists are considered passé by Mormon women in Europe. By decentering Mormon women in North America, scholars will be able to more fully understand the lived reality of the majority of Mormon women, as well as the extent to which we risk placing our agenda onto unsuspecting women. As a feminist, I find the reluctance of some women to support feminism hard to come to terms with. As a scholar, I recognize that it is essential to separate my own political agenda from women that I research if I am to accurately reflect their lives and realities. Until feminist scholars allow for the possibility that feminism, particularly feminism based on North American notions

of the liberal human subject, may not adequately address the lives of Mormon women, our scholarship will be irrelevant for the majority of Mormon women who reside outside North America.

Another important chapter in the volume is “A Mormon Woman’s Journey in Sierra Leone,” by Mariama Kallon, with assistance from Riley M. Lorimer. Kallon recounts her experiences as a young woman living through the brutal violence of civil war, including gender-based violence. Kallon’s harrowing and poignant story demonstrates that, for some women, patriarchal religious structures can actually give them hope and a sense of empowerment. Kallon recounts her conversion to the LDS faith and her subsequent knowledge that as a daughter of God she did not need to settle for an abusive man in order to have worth, as many of her women friends in Sierra Leone have done. This is another example of what is at stake; if scholars rely only on a North American feminist model of empowerment, Kallon’s story would not fit the theoretical model.

Women and Mormonism helps orient scholars to the state of the field regarding the study of Mormon women across multiple disciplines and methodologies. It is an important volume and a needed update, offering a glance at the topics currently being grappled with. Holbrook and Bowman have truly helped scholars understand where the field is now situated. They also have encouraged scholars to recognize what is still missing and where we need to be focusing our efforts in order to round out our understanding of Mormon women. Our task now is to create space for scholars working with theological and historical methodologies to engage one another as we decenter North American Mormon women. If we can do this, surely our research will be more nuanced, complex, and interesting. Most importantly, it may be relevant.

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women in Rwanda and South Africa. Amy recently completed a longitudinal ethnographic study of American Latter-day Saint women and is preparing her findings for publication.

Martha Bradley-Evans. *Glorious in Persecution: Joseph Smith/American Prophet, 1839–1844*. Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2016.

Reviewed by Richard Lyman Bushman

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MARTHA BRADLEY-EVANS ENCAPSULATES ONE SALIENT THEME of her engaging account of Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo years in the title, *Glorious in Persecution*. Her Joseph is a storyteller, and one of his narratives is about prophethood emerging from persecution. The more he was battered by his enemies, the greater the glory of his calling. “Insults became badges of honor, confirmation that his life was playing out on a mythic stage of opposition” (p. x).

Persecution was not Joseph’s only story. The King Follett sermon, Joseph’s grand account of God and humankind, was another of his captivating tales. Wrapped in these marvelous narratives, people were transported to another realm. The city of Nauvoo became far more than a commercial entrepôt on the Mississippi. The city’s buildings—the temple, the Masonic hall, the Nauvoo Mansion—“became ritualized spaces in but not of the profane world” (pp. 603–4). *Glorious in Persecution* tries to re-create the spell cast by Joseph’s tales of himself and God, and through them, the elevation of the mundane to the spiritual and supernal.

In the preface, Bradley-Evans tells us that she has relied on the Nauvoo volumes of the classic seven-volume *History of the Church*, an unusual choice these days. The *History* has been discredited because it consists of a blend of many sources, including other diaries and letters, as if they were entries from Joseph Smith’s personal journal. In defense of the

History, Bradley-Evans notes that it “achieves the purpose of presenting Joseph’s prophet-narrative,” the stories that colored everything in Nauvoo (p. xix). But she has another reason for relying on these volumes. She anchors her story in the *History of the Church*’s chronology. In places, her account follows the *History* day by day, adding commentary and drawing on other sources to expand the *History*’s daily entries. When she departs from chronology to discuss polygamy, she calls the chapters an “Interlude.”

To tell her story, Bradley-Evans calls into service a host of eminent theorists from the social sciences, literature, and philosophy. The first footnote in the introduction is to Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*. From there the footnotes go on to R. G. Collingwood, Harold Bloom, Len Oakes, Max Weber, Peter Berger, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Victor Turner, just in the first twelve pages. The epilogue is partly a riff on Walter Benjamin and Italo Calvino. In between, we hear from Paul Ricoeur, Clifford Geertz, and R. Ruard Ganzevoort. Such notables are not commonly cited in histories of Mormonism. In Bradley-Evans’s account, they are vital to the analysis.

What the theorists add was not immediately clear to me at first. For one thing, there are so many of them. They offer such a flood of insights that one cannot decide what to hold on to as they come rushing by. Moreover, Bradley-Evans often follows a practice common in historical and literary works: gathering the theoretical references into a single, dense conglomeration preceding the historical narrative that follows. The result is that theory and the historical sources are separated from one another. We are not quite sure if the evidence supports the theory or what light theory sheds on the evidence. Turner and Berger arouse the reader, but when we go back to the sources themselves, the excitement dims. We come out from under the spell that the theorists cast and are not sure if Nauvoo was as magical as the theorists lead us to think.

As I tried to figure out how the book works, I fastened on the paintings of J. M. W. Turner, the proto-impressionist English painter famous for his dazzling seascapes, an efflorescence of foam, light, and clouds, with looming shapes of hulls and masts emerging from the din of color.

Atmosphere is more important to Turner than form. In Bradley-Evans's hands the theorists serve as dabs of paint blending into an evocation of the scene. No one is definitive; she is not giving a Peter Berger or a Walter Benjamin reading of the documents. But together they create an effect. Victor Turner and Paul Ricoeur help us to sense that more was happening in Nauvoo than a straight narration allows for, something powerful, elevating, and ominous. In Bradley-Evans's hands, we see things at Nauvoo that were never visible before. She explains herself quite explicitly in the opening pages: "I have written this account of Joseph's final years as if peering through a series of layers, struggling to see what is clearest on the surface, what is hidden behind the lines of propriety or privacy, and what is intentionally obscured" (pp. vi–vii). *Glorious in Persecution* uses the theorists to evoke a prophetic personality and a communal mood. Her aim is to uncover depths of meaning that a purely narrative history could not convey.

Lots of things in the Nauvoo story interest Bradley-Evans. She devotes many pages to plurality, as she terms polygamy. Joseph Smith's wives receive individual attention and are not just footnotes to the history. She does not give us a lustful Joseph driven by libido to capture young women. "More was at stake for him than boredom with his civil wife or a mid-life crisis that took the form of testing his virility with young women" (p. 217). She is more intrigued by the movement into a liminal space where ordinary restraints on sexual behavior were released. Joseph and his partners could step across boundaries others dared not cross. Of Joseph and Louisa Beaman, Bradley-Evans writes that their "plural marriage sealing . . . cast them forward beyond time and space, suspended them above the mundane tasks of domestic life and permitted them to glimpse heaven" (p. 118).

Certain points emerge sharply from the plurality story. For one, establishing polygamy led Joseph over and over again to outright deception. To figure out what was going on, his followers had to navigate "seas of lies" (p. 385). Another emphasis is on Emma's suffering, through which she somehow remained faithful. Joseph knew he had married a good woman. Both were confused and perplexed by this movement into forbidden territory. Around these central assertions rises up again

the Turnerian foam of light and motion. Bradley-Evans wishes to create atmosphere. Speaking of Nauvoo on the eve of plurality, she writes: “Underneath the surface of community-building and neighborly relations, however, ran an undercurrent of secrecy, power, and eroticism, ready to manifest in ritual” (p. 116). Or again: “Joseph’s movement into plurality created a new cosmos that transcended the ordinary space of human beings” (p. 219). The complexities, the layers, the potent mixture—these are what Bradley-Evans wishes to recover.

One method of portraying complexity is to move the reader through many layers of comment. On plurality, she gives us Joseph H. Jackson, William Law, William Clayton, Alexander Neibaur, Joseph Lee Robinson, Lucy Smith, and Heber Kimball, all of them offering differing accounts. She presents these one after the other without evaluation and with no effort to extract a single narrative line. We are left with impressions rather than firm conclusions. But this is exactly what she intends, for this is how she believes Joseph experienced the world. “For a human being who had experiences both of the earth and of heaven, who experienced the liminality and anomie that accompanies ritual, Joseph whirled through a kaleidoscope life promising infinite, divine potentialities” (p. 601).

She borrows the terms *liminality* and *anomie* from Victor Turner to explain why people would break away from commonsense, fact-based reason to accept rituals made up of “subtle secrets, codes, and subterfuges” (p. xvi). In a liminal state induced by ritual, ordinary rules do not apply. In the timeless world, plural marriage, the Council of Fifty, and Joseph’s anointing as a king all made sense. He wrapped the political kingdom, plurality, prayer circles, and the temple rituals in ever more layers of secrecy. The result was that “over time, a complex web of relationships and intrigues encased Joseph and his ritualized world of belief like a cocoon, impossible to unravel and understand in a single strand” (pp. 600–601). Those words apply generally to *Glorious in Persecution*. Readers are shown a many-layered world that cannot be unraveled and cannot be understood in a single strand.

Joseph Smith’s character fascinates Bradley-Evans. To a historian, she says, meaning herself, Smith is confusing and alienating. She thinks he was greedy for power, flirtatious, petty, irritable, and, when it came to

polygamy, an inveterate liar. On the whole, she puts herself on the side of those who have said Joseph Smith came off the rails in Nauvoo. He had himself ordained king and told people they could become gods. Adding to this common view, Bradley-Evans observes that he “he swung between exultation, defiance, and blood-spattered rhetoric at one extreme and despondency, despair and passivity at the other” (p. 598). In the final analysis, he brought the mob down on himself. His reckless destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* press after arguing the city council into it, she claims, sealed his fate. By the end, his rhetoric and his actions got out of hand. It was fortunate, she says, that he did not actually return to address the Saints before his final departure for Carthage. He would likely have lost control and inflamed his people into some desperate, suicidal act.

But to see Joseph simply as an unstable, out-of-control personality, Bradley-Evans insists, fails to do him justice. *Glorious in Persecution* offers readers a more subtle Joseph than the standard caricature of the crazed prophet. She believes that Joseph built his religion on illusion, to be sure, but she also believes he was sincere. “Desire for life with God, desire to walk always with God became Joseph’s master-passion, a hungry constancy that colored all he did” (p. 602). His prophethood was a burden and a puzzle. “Joseph’s desire to understand what God wanted of him as a prophet, his passion to live the life of a prophet—to explain to others what that meant—was the central occupation of his life” (p. 602). His story entranced his followers. Joseph’s revelation of life’s meaning was for them “as compelling as the most powerful addiction.” They “sensed and desired that same uniqueness but . . . glimpsed its glory only in furtive, blinding glances” (p. 603). In her stunning evocation of Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo, Bradley-Evans calls upon her readers to marvel at—or deplore—that blinding glory.

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Russell W. Stevenson. *For the Cause of Righteousness: A Global History of Blacks and Mormonism, 1830–2013*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014.

Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringhurst, eds. *The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Reviewed by Quincy D. Newell

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RUSSELL STEVENSON’S *For the Cause of Righteousness* and Matthew Harris and Newell Bringhurst’s *The Mormon Church and Blacks* each provide a history of the LDS Church’s dealings with people of African descent, both inside and outside the faith community. Stevenson provides a narrative history, followed by a selection of documents, while Harris and Bringhurst follow a more standard documentary reader format, with the focus on the primary sources and the editors’ interpretation provided in chapter introductions and document headnotes. Both books cover the period from 1830, when the church was founded, to 2013, the year the LDS Church issued a statement entitled “Race and the Priesthood.”

Scholars have established that in the nineteenth century an unknown number of African Americans joined the church and that during Joseph Smith’s lifetime at least a few black men were ordained to the LDS priesthood. At the same time, leaders of the church were actively working out the theological and social implications of race, drawing on scriptural texts; incorporating American and European ideas about racial origins and differences; and reacting to contemporary events and social pressures. As Paul Reeve has shown, Latter-day Saints worked through most of the nineteenth century to establish their own “white” racial identity—and part of this work was done in the way

they treated and talked about black people.¹ By 1852, Brigham Young had made clear that no more black men would be ordained, articulating what scholars now refer to as the “priesthood ban” or “priesthood restriction.” This state of affairs continued well into the twentieth century, even as the American racial climate changed dramatically. The LDS Church faced significant external social pressure to modify or end the priesthood restriction, but LDS leaders instead doubled down on it, making clear around the middle of the twentieth century that they considered the restriction to be doctrine (not just policy). At the same time, the church began complicating its own position by establishing missions in Latin America and Africa, where maintaining the “racial purity” of the priesthood was significantly more difficult. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, scholarly research on the priesthood restriction—notably Lester Bush’s 1973 article “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview”²—helped to unsettle the church’s position on ordination for black men, showing that the priesthood restriction did not originate with Joseph Smith. Finally, church leaders announced in June 1978 that a revelation had been received extending the priesthood to all worthy male members of the church. The lifting of the restriction provoked little overt resistance, but overcoming the racism that kept the restriction firmly in place for a century and a half has been a more difficult task. Most recently, the church has issued official statements condemning racism on the part of its members, acknowledging that the priesthood restriction did not exist under Joseph Smith, and discouraging church members from speculating about the causes of the restriction.

Both books include a variety of documents that are not well known, though only a relatively small number of them would be inaccessible to someone with an Internet connection and access to an academic library. By my count, seven documents (of a total fifty-nine) in *The Mormon*

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

2. Lester E. Bush Jr., “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8/1 (1973): 11–68.

Church and Blacks and twelve (of a total sixty-two) in *For the Cause of Righteousness* are not readily available online or through interlibrary loan. However, even many readers with easy access to these resources will find it useful to have these sources drawn together in one place.

Harris and Bringhurst state that *The Mormon Church and Blacks* “offers an important new perspective of [sic] LDS racial history through the lens of authoritative documents” (p. 5), but what constitutes an “authoritative” document is less than clear. The selection of documents runs the gamut, ranging from verses from LDS scripture and statements by the LDS Church’s First Presidency to private letters from lay members to church leaders and newspaper articles about the church by nonmembers. If the range of documents is wide, the focus of the book is narrow: Harris and Bringhurst’s work aims to provide a documentary basis for understanding the genesis, evolution, abolition, and aftermath of the priesthood restriction. The overall story is one of halting progress with pitfalls, and the narrative arc is not fully resolved by the end of the book. This strikes me as about right: yes, the Latter-day Saints have made progress on racial issues, yet much remains to be done. The editors’ prose is clear and straightforward, and their documentary selection and editing choices are generally sound, although, as I will discuss, the focus on the priesthood restriction results in a far less diverse group of sources than one might wish. There is not much that is new here, except perhaps the editors’ coverage of the twenty-first-century developments in this story and the convenience of having these sources brought together in one place. Otherwise, this history is well known to scholars.

Harris and Bringhurst begin with a chapter devoted to the scriptural underpinnings of the priesthood restriction, as set forth in several excerpts from the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrine and Covenants. These “documents” (some of which are only one verse long) are crucial pieces in Harris and Bringhurst’s story, but equally important is an understanding of how the Latter-day Saints’ readings of scripture changed over time, a piece that Harris and Bringhurst do not address directly. Diary entries, sermons, and other kinds of sources that might help readers understand how ordinary Mormons consumed

and interpreted these scriptures would make a welcome addition to this chapter.

Where Harris and Bringhurst focus narrowly on the priesthood restriction, Russell Stevenson aims to be much more comprehensive, announcing in his subtitle nothing less than “A Global History of Blacks and Mormonism.” Stevenson’s aspiration resonates with recent developments in scholarship—most notably, the emergence of the scholarly field known as “Africana Studies,” which seeks to understand the histories and cultures of Africa and the African diaspora, including those of black North Americans, in a global context; and the move in Mormon Studies to understand the LDS Church as a global religion rather than concentrating solely on the church’s US context.

While Stevenson’s global ambitions are admirable, they require much more organizational discipline and narrative skill than he musters. The narrative history sprawls through the first half of the book, often becoming confused and confusing. For example, after about two pages on South Africa (pp. 163–64), Stevenson has a paragraph on Mormons in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The next paragraph begins by discussing “the 1981 election” (p. 165) without specifying which nation was choosing a leader; only at the end of the paragraph does it become clear to the reader that Stevenson has turned his attention back to South Africa. With organizational lapses like this throughout the book, readers unfamiliar with the history Stevenson is discussing will struggle to follow his narration. In addition to improving the organization of the text, a stronger editorial hand might have toned down Stevenson’s penchant for florid prose. For example, at the beginning of his second chapter, Stevenson informs the reader that after Joseph Smith’s death “the Mormon community lay vulnerable to the ghosts of racism then brooding in the land” (p. 13) and, a page later, that those vying to be Smith’s successor “left behind Joseph Smith’s racial innovations in the blood spattered on the floors of the Prophet’s Carthage jail cell.” *For the Cause of Righteousness* reads like a book that was rushed into print: in addition to editorial failures like those I just described, the text suffers from numerous errors of fact, typography, and formatting.

Given his ambition to write a “global history,” one might expect Stevenson to delve into questions of colonialism and globalization, exploring the connections and disjunctions between the expansion of the LDS Church into Latin America and Africa, on the one hand, and the United States’ quest for economic and political power around the world, on the other. However, despite his wider perspective, the story Stevenson tells is not significantly different in scope or structure from that of Harris and Bringhurst. The cast of characters is larger, and the settings include more varied locales—but ultimately the narrative focuses on the United States and follows the priesthood restriction from its imposition through its aftermath. If anything, Stevenson’s is a slightly rosier version of this story, emphasizing at its conclusion the sincere efforts on the part of church leadership to move beyond the church’s racist past and paying somewhat less attention to the continuation of racist folklore among lay members of the church.

It seems that Stevenson wants to define the term *Mormonism* loosely, so as to include faith communities not officially connected with the Utah-based LDS Church. It is curious, then, that the Community of Christ—formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS)—makes no appearance in his narrative. It is also absent from *The Mormon Church and Blacks*, though that volume’s stated scope makes this editorial decision somewhat more understandable. The leader of the RLDS Church, Joseph Smith III, received a revelation in 1865 directing the church to “ordain priests . . . of every race,” including people of African descent.³ In part because of this revelation, the Community of Christ’s history on racial issues has been very different from that of the LDS Church, and the comparison is quite instructive. Its omission from both books is therefore unfortunate.

By now, it is well known among scholars that the vast majority of scholarship on race in the LDS Church has focused on church doctrine

3. Book of Doctrine and Covenants (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1970), section 116, quoted in Roger D. Launius, *Invisible Saints: A History of Black Americans in the Reorganized Church* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1988), 127.

and policy. In the case of scholarship on Mormonism and black people, that work has focused specifically on the priesthood restriction. Although these books provide readers access to the primary sources informing that scholarship, they do nothing to move the conversation in new directions. Focusing on priesthood obscures the experiences of women, who cannot hold the LDS priesthood. Likewise, focusing on doctrine and policy shines the spotlight on the people who promulgate doctrine and determine policy. In the history of the LDS Church, these have been white American men almost exclusively. A survey of the primary sources included in each book reveals these biases clearly: by my count, of the fifty-nine documents in Harris and Bringhurst's collection, only six documents (10 percent) represent the voices of women, and only eight documents (14 percent) represent the voices of African Americans. (All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.) Of thirty-five individual and corporate authors, only three (9 percent) are female and five (14 percent) are black. Stevenson's collection is very similar: of the sixty-two documents in his book, only five (8 percent) represent the voices of women and only ten (16 percent) represent the voices of people of African descent. Of forty-five individual and corporate authors, only three (7 percent) are female and seven (16 percent) are black. Jane Elizabeth Manning James is the only black woman to appear in Stevenson's collection of documents, and the same holds true for Harris and Bringhurst's book. It is also important to note that Stevenson's "global history" includes only two documents produced by non-Americans (one Ghanaian and one Nigerian), while Harris and Bringhurst include one document—a "lineage lesson"—from Brazil. It is appalling that fewer than one in five of the documents in each of these collections, which purport to represent the history of blacks and Mormonism, was created by a black person. In fact, these books would be more accurately described as documentary histories of white Latter-day Saints' thought about people of African descent.

Perhaps most troubling is that a simplistic understanding of blackness as uniform throughout space and time prevails in both of these books, even though scholars have long accepted that race is a social

construct. That is, societies categorize people based on a somewhat arbitrary set of physical characteristics like skin color, hair texture, and so on. They call these categories “races” (or its non-English translation). They then ascribe to these categories meaning that has little to do with the determining characteristics. The categories—what counts as “white,” “black,” “Moorish,” “Indian,” “Asian,” and so on—are not given in nature, but rather are decided *by the society*, so that “white” in one culture, at one point in history, means something very different than “white” in another culture, at another point in history. To be sure, Stevenson frequently addresses LDS attempts to “solidify” their “white Mormon identity” (p. 17), showing that he is familiar with this concept. However, he does not attend to the construction of blackness in any explicit way, and the idea that the social meaning of various skin tones (and other physical features) might be different in other societies never arises.

The book on blacks and Mormonism that I keep waiting for analyzes not only the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but also many other kinds of Mormonism, including the Community of Christ and other faith communities that trace their founding to Joseph Smith. It carefully considers the ways in which a history of American colonialism shaped LDS Church decisions to expand into countries with significant black populations. It pays close attention to the myriad ways in which societies around the world construct race and the ways those different constructions play out in contact with Mormonism. And finally, it employs an intersectional analysis to understand the ways race and gender mutually constitute one another for both white and black Mormons. Unfortunately, that book has not yet been written.

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Nathan Thatcher. *Paco*. New York: Mormon Artists Group, 2016.

Reviewed by Michael Hicks

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THE STORY OF MORMONISM BEGINS WITH the digging up of a lost work. This book is in that vein. Part memoir, part archaeology, part travelogue, part critique, it recounts the brief, catch-as-can journey of its author across the world to unearth—from closets and file drawers—the compositions of Francisco Estévez, nicknamed “Paco.” Paco was born a month before VE Day in that long-contested Moroccan region known as Spanish Sahara. To be precise, he was born on April 5, a point I note only because the magic of the following date, April 6, has haloed the Mormon calendar since 1830. And this is something of a magic man, an enigma as Thatcher portrays him, for his half-invisibility not only to the “main” body of Mormon composers, but in some ways to himself. That’s how Thatcher depicts him, at least: serious, contemplative, and sketchily prolific, but a touch oblivious to artistic careerism and far from diligent about maintaining his own archive of works. Thatcher assumes the role of part-time amanuensis.

He overtly likens his book to a pop-music precursor of his project, the documentary film *Searching for Sugar Man* (2012), which sets out to find an obscure 1970s pop musician around whom a cult reputation had arisen in South Africa and to convey the passion of his new fans. In *Paco* we have a composer clearly more admired outside Mormon artistic circles than inside (although *admired*, *Mormon*, and *artistic circles* remain terms admittedly ill-defined, especially when linked together as if they meant something tangible and cohesive). That makes this a book whose major aim is redemption, both from obscurity and doldrums. It’s a book of advocacy, in some ways, a letter of recommendation with a touch of coattail riding by its author, who is ultimately both the CEO and the junior partner in this project.

The book is handsomely designed and produced, well copyedited and proofed. Apparently based on a detailed and disciplined journal of Thatcher's pursuit of Paco in Spain, it is prosed out in an appealing, relaxed voice (though I blanch at occasional vernacular clichés such as “movers and shakers”). The present tense is fashionable, though cloying to some readers (I just raised my hand). But in giving the sense of journalistic immediacy, the tense has its place. Thatcher's narrative is thorough, well spoken, dignified yet musing and breezy, with just the right amount of detail. It divides into four sections (“parts” 1–4), each ostensibly framing different aspects of the journey or the subject and his work. Within each section, subsections dwell on particularities—Paco's aesthetics (pp. 85–90); his conversion to Mormonism (pp. 128–29); his stylistic shifts from, say, formalism to *Gebrauchsmusik* (pp. 48–49); the state of his archive (pp. 61–73); the difficulty of being an artist with a nuclear family; and even some encounters with composer Nico Muhly (pp. 22–27), to name a few. Some of my favorite moments were the detailed on-site descriptions of the subject's desk, photos, and manuscripts-as-artifacts. There is a lot of subtle exposition here—comforting to some of us—of how artists make poor archivists, let alone housekeepers.

Meanwhile, one of Thatcher's virtues as a chronicler is his wide and authoritative knowledge of other, non-Paco composers' styles and techniques. I've spent a lot of my life in the field and can be fussy about nuances of history or style. But each time I caught an allusion to another composer, I learned I could relax, confident in the surety of Thatcher's authorial voice. Trust me: in a world of composerly description steeped in hogwash, Thatcher's reliability is a pleasure.

Following the main sections of the book is a long addendum that catalogs (with annotations) the extant works of the composer. (Some works, performed or unperformed, remain lost.) Happily, the works list will soon be outdated, since the composer has been energized by the attention he's now getting to create new ones and has even been commissioned by BYU's Barlow Endowment for Music Composition. Thatcher gives good, accessible entrées into each work, ones difficult

to provide for a lay (i.e., musically untrained) reader. In doing so, he offers a slightly grand, if necessarily hurried, tour through the thicket of modernist styles, techniques, and attitudes.

Fortunately, a high-end adjunct to this book is the semiportable, limited-edition archive you can acquire with it. It contains the bed-rock documentation of Paco, scores you can view and recordings you can hear, all tucked in a casket-qua-breadbox. Libraries, especially, can acquire this archive, as can acquisitive patrons of Mormon music, of which there must be a handful. This archive in some ways mimics its original mother lode in Spain: it's motley, with scores in photocopy as well as imprints from vendors of varying quality and renown, one-off compact discs, and Paco's esoteric book *Acustica Musical*.

The works will baffle many listeners attuned to something they might deem "Mormon music." For, even when the works have titles like *Preludio a la Memoria del Ángel Moroni*, the musical vocabulary is solidly modernist, sometimes what many would call "avant-garde." The CDs in the archive give documentary evidence of the sound, though often with a meager fidelity and sometimes mid-level performances. Beyond objects of curiosity, the scores themselves will have been worth unearthing only if they lead to more performances and high-grade recordings. (Some of those have already happened, via Thatcher's ongoing championing of his new friend's music.) Even so, there is a kind of antiquarian aura that surrounds the objects themselves. I find it almost spiritual just handling the objects, or at least as good a facsimile of spiritual as to make it memorable in an era of virtual, digitally preserved "objects." The scores, heard or unheard, have the whiff of art.

I spoke of this as a memoir of Thatcher's Paco-bound hejira. It's also biography—of a sort. Boswell comes to mind. Or, more on point, Ferdinand Ries, who followed Beethoven and wrote down sayings and anecdotes. Ries gave us many of the founding myths and tales of Beethoven that scholars have spent years sorting out, sometimes debunking, other times qualifying or confirming outright. I doubt whether Paco will get much of that. But in this book Thatcher begins what may be his own longer-term role as spokesman, scribe, and entrepreneur of

Paco's music. If that fails to happen, no matter. This book already goes so far in its portrayal that asking for more might be gilding the lily.

The book offers Paco as a kind of Everyman who has these little curios on the side of his role as a father and avid religionist. So, one might ask, why focus on this particular composer? His work stands up, for one thing. It has charm, rigor, magnetism, and yet lack of pretense. Most Mormons would find its presumptive elitism and arcane idiom odd at best, vexing at worst. But one will have to trust the critical ear on this one. As one elitist to the rest of them, I can testify that this music is true.

Estévez may seem an outlier, but one virtue of this book is to question the notion of outlying. Is he more representative of Mormonism in the twenty-first century or less? From the Wasatch Front point of view, he may seem an eccentric. But from the wider vision of Mormonism's transmutation around the world (which I hope will keep diversifying), he represents Mormonism well, at least the Mormonism some of us borderline eccentrics believe it could and should be. Converts are always the future of real religion. So if Paco seems marginal to some Mormons from this quadrant of the planet, he actually is a current of the mainstream to come, if we trust Mormonism to do more than just survive. Still, Paco cuts the figure of an underdog, a hero with a secret identity, possibly one who guards lost treasures. All these mythic tropes interplay in Thatcher's narrative.

If anything, though, this book's subject is serendipity, about which good books seem deserved but always inadequate. Offhand events, curiosities, whims, and bits of luck—especially Paco's—those are what made this quest and its chronicle happen. Refresher courses in how things actually take shape always seem worthy to me. This book is in that curriculum.

Some adjectives are traps. *Scholarly* is one of them. The term is now so denatured and rigid that it's a kind of rigor mortis: a "scholarly" book has certain physical dimensions, verbal tone, and, of course, footnotes. But books like *Paco* make us revisit the adjective. There are works that one cannot deny are scholarly in some fundamental sense: catalogs,

indexes, list-bound and annotated handbooks. There are other works that skirt—or transcend—the adjective, books of speculation, or long-view summations, or even collections of interviews. There are also mid-ground works: memoirs, confessions, even propaganda with no pretense of objectivity, but that, like Wagner’s *My Life*, are the massive roots to which one must not lay the ax. For intimate but aerial knowledge, one needs all types.

Some might find this book not scholarly enough in its dimensions, feel, tone, point of view, and dearth of footnotes. And indeed it seems like a huge *New Yorker* profile written by and about two non-New Yorkers. But it navigates many domains of what I, at least, regard as scholarship in some of the best and broadest senses. Add the Mormon-ness that broods over the whole work and one must find it an apt object for the contemplation of Mormon studies reviewers.

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Terry L. Givens and Reid L. Neilson, eds. *The Columbia Sourcebook of Mormons in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

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IN 2009 THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS opened its new Church History Library (CHL). It is a huge building with a huge collection—230,000 square feet spread over five stories and home to 240,000 unpublished manuscripts along with countless published

materials and photographs. The size and the location of this building, directly across North Temple Street from the Church Office Building, signaled a new era in Mormon history, with ambitions to be more open to scholars working on dissertations and monographs and more open to family researchers filling out genealogical profiles with anecdotes culled from their ancestors' journals and photos clipped from pioneer-era family portraits.

The building is an archive made of Utah quartz monzonite and steel. The newly appointed assistant church historian and one of the church's most celebrated public intellectuals have compiled a book made of paper and ink—a Mormon archive that one can stuff in a backpack. As a portable repository of essential Mormon writings for the field of Mormon studies, which continues to grow outside the “Book of Mormon Belt,” Terry Givens and Reid Neilson's *Columbia Sourcebook of Mormons in the United States* meets expectations. In other words, the answer to the question of whether it could become the go-to primary sourcebook to serve the growing number of college courses on Mormonism is an easy yes. Yet the volume's selection of texts to represent Mormonism raises interrelated questions for which there are no easy answers. First, who can claim the moniker “Mormon”? And second, what is Mormon studies?

Before reflecting on what the volume might have to say in response to these questions, I'll explore some of its actual offerings. Not surprisingly, sources that date from the church's first fifty years are plentiful, as are sources authored by different Joseph Smiths. Sources from the most recent two decades are more rare. And despite Givens and Neilson's claims that they've included both “orthodox and heterodox Latter-day Saint voices” (p. xvi), dissenting but still “Mormon” voices are also rare. Still, the selections included in the volume capture the depth and breadth of Mormon history—from the church's founding as a millenarian “family church” born at the height of the antebellum Great Awakening to its twenty-first-century aspirations to become a multiethnic world religion. And Givens and Neilson do not shy away from the inherent tensions embedded in the documents that give shape to this evolving arc.

For example, the anthology's first of eight chapters, "Theology and Doctrine," includes records that give evidentiary support to the oft-repeated adage "The church's theology is its history" (p. 1). According to Givens and Neilson, the fact that the LDS Church does not have a formalized dogma that exists apart from historical experiences highlights how truly "Christian" the church is. In the Mormon imaginary that Givens and Neilson flesh out, Mormons share with other Christians belief in the historical claim that in AD 34 Christ was "crucified, died and was buried" and then, three days later, "rose again from the dead" (p. 1). But this belief is also coupled with the historical claim that in 1820 Christ appeared to the teenage Joseph Smith Jr. to warn him not to join any of the "religious denominations" that proliferated in his corner of upstate New York and to tell him that, in his words, "the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be made known to me" (Joseph Smith Jr., "Latter Day Saints," 1844, quoted on p. 66). Christ's resurrection marks the historical beginning of the Christian dispensation. For Latter-day Saints, Christ's appearance to Smith 1,786 years later marks the beginning of the end of this same dispensation as well as the restoration of primitive Christianity and its lay priesthood.

As much as Givens and Neilson seek to highlight the New Testament nature of Mormon history cum theology, what emerges from chapter 1's selections is a decidedly "Old Testament" covenantal theology of a Heavenly Father's particular favor for a chosen people, even a chosen family. Christ did not appear to just anybody. He appeared to Joseph Smith Jr., who first shared this message of restoration with his own family. Thus this volume moves from Smith's 1832 "Extract from the Prophecy of Enoch" (pp. 16–19)—his attempt to restore plain and precious things stripped from Genesis (including an explicit curse of blackness on the descendants of the fratricidal Cain)—to 1995's "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (pp. 47–49), in which the First Presidency explained that the "divine plan of happiness enables family relationships," but only heterosexual family relationships, "to be perpetuated beyond the grave" (p. 48). In doing so, this anthology suggests that, like the God of the Hebrew Bible's affection for the Israelites, Latter-day Saint leaders have taught that Heavenly Father has long

avored certain racial and gender-oriented families over others. Herein lies the dialectical tension at the heart of the Mormon people's history and identity: a people fiercely protective (even defensive) of its own peculiarity *and* a people with ambitions to be the global and universal Christian church, open to all, "rich and poor, bond and free, great and small" (Joseph Smith Jr., "King Follet Discourse," 1844, quoted on p. 39).

Instructors who include this anthology in their Mormon studies courses will find ample material related to the Mormon attempts to build a homeland safe for the gathering of a latter-day chosen people and fit to host Christ's imminent return (chap. 3, "Gathering of Zion"). The same goes for the Latter-day Saints' history of creating governmental systems with ambitions to exist apart from, offer correctives to, and assimilate with the greater American body politic (chap. 4, "Government and Politics"). My favorite chapter, "Education and Intellectualism" (chap. 7), includes selections that speak to how the particularly "Mormon" way of knowing is in conflict and conversation with the dictates of "modern" epistemological truth. For non-Mormon students and scholars who struggle to understand how otherwise educated and thoughtful people can integrate, for example, the patriarchal claims that God is still speaking to a set of octogenarian men living in Salt Lake City with their commitments to uphold secular standards of Ivy League history departments as well as foster a feminist consciousness, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's 2002 essay "A Pail of Cream" (pp. 381–85) will likely be a revelation. But perhaps so might be Givens and Neilson's decision not to include LDS apostle Boyd K. Packer's "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect." In a 1981 address, the apostle enumerated a list of "cautions" for Mormon educators, whom, he argued, should value the propagation of faith over the commitments to what Packer called "objective, impartial" scholarship.¹ Why not include this speech that, as Givens himself has noted, created an internecine battle between the

1. Boyd K. Packer, "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect," August 22, 1981, CES Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/mantle-far-far-greater-intellect>.

“Apostles” and the “Historians” and preceded if not produced the aborting of Leonard Arrington’s History Division and its emphasis on “new Mormon history” and the further channeling of “Mormon intellectual life . . . into polarized camps”?² (I’ll return to Packer’s speech, and how I see that his “cautions” might have shaped this volume—or at least my reception of it—below.)

I pose this question of omission sincerely, not rhetorically. And I do so because I find the volume otherwise to be successful as a whole and in its constituent parts. As such, and by design, individual chapters of this anthology could also be integrated into courses that are not strictly focused on Mormonism. An instructor teaching a course on “lived religion in America” would be well served to add “Contemporary Religious Life” (chap. 8) to her syllabus. The documents included in this chapter place the “official” meaning of rites like baptism and blessings—as well as the official responsibility of church service and leadership positions of missionaries, priesthood holders, bishops, and Relief Society presidents—into conversation with the Latter-day Saints’ actual experience of these fundamental performative acts of Mormon life. Likewise, “Race and Ethnicity” (chap. 5) and “Sexuality and Gender” (chap. 6) would make compelling additions to courses on race, gender, and religion in American history. These three chapters in particular strike the balance between the church hierarchy’s dictates on the behavioral, gendered, and racial boundaries of what it means to be a Mormon and the lived experiences of the “Mormon folk,” as they integrate, interpret, and sometimes reject the hierarchy’s demarcations.³

In their introduction, Givens and Neilson offer an invitation to critique their volume on how well they have provided documents

2. Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, 219–20).

3. To put it another way, these chapters pass what we might call the “Orsi test.” They invite students of Mormon life “to study religion dialectically on the levels of the self and culture,” as Robert Orsi explained in his introduction to his canonical *Madonna on 115th Street*, “tracking back and forth between structure and agency, tradition and act, imagination and reality.” Robert A. Orsi, *Madonna on 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, xli).

that answer such boundary questions, which can be summarized by asking, “Who is a Mormon?” They do so by acknowledging that they used Edward Curtis’s *Columbia Sourcebook of Muslims in the United States* (2008) as “the template” for their own. The structure of this new sourcebook, as well as the topics covered, follows the former (p. xvi). However, in limiting almost all the material to the LDS Church, Givens and Neilson do not capture the diversity of the “Mormon” movement that Curtis does for the “Islamic” movement. This volume conflates the “LDS Church” with “Mormon” identity (as the LDS Church has recently attempted to do itself, from the general conference pulpit as well as from the “I’m a Mormon” marketing offices in the Church Office Building—this despite the church’s sporadic efforts to shed or at least downplay the “Mormon” nickname).⁴ To be sure, the second chapter of the volume, “Scattering the Saints,” includes sources from some of the “myriad restorationist groups that claim descent from Joseph Smith’s teachings and authority” (p. 55); note that Givens and Neilson here do not describe these movements as “Mormon.” This chapter includes writings from Joseph Smith Jr. contemporaries and contenders to his mantle, including James J. Strange, William Smith, and David Whitmer, as well as writings by leaders of “self-described Mormon fundamentalists” (p. 89) and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now the Community of Christ). But these sources—and by extension the ways of being Mormon they represent—are walled off into their own section of the volume. This forecloses interaction between, say, the FLDS (which does have a great impact on shaping the “Mormon image in the American mind” and also has a sizable following) and the LDS Church on the topics in other chapters, including “Sexuality and Gender” and “Government and Politics,” to name just two. As he did in the October 2011 general conference, Mormon apostle M. Russell Ballard can proclaim that “no polygamist group, including those calling themselves fundamentalist Mormons or other derivatives of our name,

4. M. Russell Ballard, “The Importance of a Name,” October 2011 general conference, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2011/10/the-importance-of-a-name?lang=eng>.

has any affiliation with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”⁵ But these Mormon polygamists do have a historical and ongoing *relationship*—even if it’s an antagonistic one—with the LDS Church. And the volume, I believe, would have better lived up to its own promises by finding ways to acknowledge this reality.

Finally, by way of conclusion, let me reflect on how this volume speaks to the question, “What is Mormon studies?” At the CHL, (most) researchers can have access to everything that is accessible. Yet (most) researchers cannot access records that are extant—sitting in boxes in the building’s cavernous storage rooms—but are not accessible. I don’t mean this to be a tautology. Instead, I believe that it’s illustrative of a corporate church that is only beginning to recognize that openness about its past is not only better (church) business, but also might be existentially necessary. Hence the recent proliferation of “Gospel Topics” essays on controversial topics, including the origins of the Book of Mormon, the race-based priesthood restriction, and polygamy, that were written at the CHL and published on the church’s website.⁶ These essays serve as church-sanctioned responses to the innumerable and often anti-Mormon histories found all over the web—histories that have created faith crises for many devout Mormons searching for answers about their church’s past.

What are also readily available on the web are the scores of documents related to the most controversial subjects in Mormon history. Let me focus on the subject that I’m most familiar with: race. A Google search (or a trip to the University of Utah’s special collections) can produce, say, the contents of Jane Manning James’s 1894 “servant” sealing to Joseph Smith Jr. and a century’s worth of Quorum of the Twelve meeting minutes related to the “priesthood” restriction. At the CHL, I’ve asked to see these documents, if only to verify their authenticity. And I’ve been told that either they are too sacred (e.g., James’s sealing, since it pertains to the temple) or they are too corporate (e.g., the minutes of meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, since the

5. Ballard, “Importance of a Name.”

6. <https://www.lds.org/topics/essays>.

apostles are not just leaders of the church, but leaders of the church's many corporations, the operations of which are also discussed at such meetings).⁷ I think this volume would have been a perfect venue to publish some of these documents. And just as I (and many others) have appreciated how church historians have contextualized the issues raised in the Gospel Topics essays, I think scholars and students of Mormonism would have greatly benefitted from hearing how Givens and Neilson would contextualize such important primary documents from their (semiofficial) LDS Church perspective. And it's here where I see the shadows of the fourth and final of Elder Packer's now thirty-year-old "cautions." Packer rejected "the idea that so long as something is already in print, so long that it is available from another source, there is nothing out of order in using it in writing or speaking or teaching." He warned that for those "not mature enough for 'advanced history,'" access to such materials might "crush" a "testimony in seedling stage." "Do not spread disease germs!" the apostle warned, even if the disease germs are historical sources from the church itself.⁸

The implicit message that I take away from the decision not to include these types of documents is the same message I take when I'm denied access to documents at the CHL. The church still seeks to maintain some control over the boundaries of Mormon studies, even as Mormon studies moves out of Utah and plants itself—in the form of prestigious academic chairs and graduate programs—in East and West Coast universities.⁹

7. A CHL staffer offered the following comparison to me: "Would you expect to get access to Coca-Cola's board minutes, where they might discuss Coke's secret formula?"

8. Packer, "Mantle."

9. I recognize that such discussions over Mormon studies boundary maintenance are not the sole purview of the Church Historian's Office. The *Mormon Studies Review* was founded in part as a space where non-Mormon and Mormon scholars alike can participate in shaping and tracking the evolving field of Mormon studies. Likewise, we also must recognize that there are significant detractors to such evolutionary movements. See John Gee, "Wither Mormon Studies?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 93–130.

This is only natural. And Givens and Neilson's volume stands as a testimony to the fact that the church and its affiliates recognize the changing landscape of Mormon studies and seek to participate in shaping it productively and collaboratively. What's more, I can raise my (relatively small) concerns about this volume because of its overall strength and promised usefulness for students and scholars who seek an archival entrée into the rich and complicated history of the LDS Church. As such, the volume's limitations actually provide springboards to fruitful conversations—drawn from the carefully curated source material and the expertly crafted annotations—that will allow the many courses for which this volume will serve as the primary anthology to explore what it has historically meant to be a Mormon and what it means to study Mormonism today.

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John G. Turner. *The Mormon Jesus: A Biography*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Reviewed by Paul Harvey

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THIS BOOK IS NOT so much a biography of the Mormon Jesus as a full-length answer to the questions posed in the introduction concerning the relationship of Mormonism and Christianity:

How, then, should scholars classify Mormonism? Because Mormonism emerged within the context of American Protestantism, is it one of those many “species” of Protestantism? Or is Mormonism its own separate “genus” of Christianity? Or its own “order” within the larger framework of Abrahamic religions? Or, because Mormon scriptures speak of a plurality of gods and the possibility of human deification, is Mormonism its own “class” of religion?

Turner’s answer is that the LDS Church is “a new genus of Christianity rather than a new religious tradition or a new world religion.” It is not Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, but a new “Christian course” (p. 17). The Mormon connection to Christianity has been solidified in recent decades by the church’s increasingly visible allegiance to Jesus, or, to put it more technically, its Christocentrism.

At the same time, particular practices set Mormonism apart and give it some “ecclesiastical space” from other Christian churches, including “additional scriptures, ongoing revelation through current prophets; a belief that God the Father and Jesus Christ are two separate, material, embodied divine beings; the belief that certain rituals are required for human exaltation to godhood; and the performance of proxy rituals to save and exalt the dead” (p. 18). All of them have antecedents in Christianity, but nowhere do they come together as a group as they do in Mormonism, hence the place of Mormonism squarely within but distinctively set apart from other versions of the Christian tradition.

In short, this book might be titled something like “What Is the Relationship of Mormonism and Christianity in General, and What Do Mormon Ideas about Jesus Have to Do with That?” Or for those who don’t want their answers phrased in the form of a Jeopardy question, it might be called “Why Mormons Are Distinct from Other Branches of Christianity, but Why Mormonism Nonetheless Should Be Classed as a Branch of Christianity, and Why the Mormon Conception of and Faith in Jesus Clearly Point to Such a Classification.” That’s a subtitle or chapter descriptor that would have made any nineteenth-century reader happy.

The chapters follow a distinct and similar structure. Turner begins with a narrative or a notation about some distinctively Mormon story

or practice. He proceeds to examine the history of that belief, story, or practice within the *longue durée* of Christianity. He also looks at how that practice has developed (or in some cases effectively died out) in the first century or so of Mormon existence and then suggests how contemporary Mormons deal with this issue. The theme throughout is the constant theological and social invention of Mormon pioneers in the nineteenth century, and then the consolidation of Mormonism as a tradition with clear boundaries and orthodoxies in the early twentieth century. Some of the themes covered are obvious choices (polygamy, the place of the Book of Mormon and other sacred texts, and distinctive Mormon beliefs about the exalted family), while some get into the finer technical details of the history of Christian theology. Throughout, the voice is one of absolute calm and reasoned dialogue from someone who (as far as I can tell as a nonexpert) knows his stuff cold. Given that Turner is the author of the best full-length (and most certainly warts-and-all) biography of Brigham Young, that is not surprising.

An early example of Turner's careful historical method has to do with the plentiful Mormon visions of the nineteenth century and why they are relatively more absent or private in the more contemporary world. Early Mormons longed for visions but distrusted them, especially those of other people, as is the case with many other branches of Christianity. For who spoke the truth, and who was deluded? There's the rub, always. Brigham Young "echoed the concern of Martin Luther and Jonathan Edwards that it was difficult to differentiate between visions from God and deceptions of the devil." Yet Young himself had visions, including seeing Joseph Smith in dreams, and thus visions "remained important parts of mid-to-late-nineteenth-century Mormonism" (p. 80). Believers in the present day are encouraged to keep their visions private, if indeed they have any.

Turner places great stress on James E. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ*, a central text in the early twentieth century in terms of clarifying what would be officially approved LDS doctrine and what would remain speculative or outside the boundaries of orthodoxy. Talmage functions in this book as the Council of Nicea did for fourth-century Christians.

For example, while “the belief that humans are God’s spirit children who have the potential to become like their Heavenly Father” became part of Mormon belief and practice, other ideas of Joseph Smith gradually fell by the wayside. Talmage codified these doctrinal groundings.

During the early years of the faith, Turner argues, “Smith did more than ape Masonic rites. In his attempt to create new forms of earthly and heavenly society, the prophet Mormonized what he found attractive in Freemasonry” (p. 195). Later in the century, Brigham Young “democratized Smith’s endowment.” Achieving the full degree of glory “depended in large part on one’s participation in the newly introduced rituals. Men and women could not be exalted without sealing, with the endowment,” particularly in the spring of 1846 just before the departure from Illinois and the trek westward. By the early twentieth century, Turner argues throughout the book, “the LDS Church had firmly retethered itself to the Christian savior” (p. 180). And they had brought Jesus squarely into the most sacred ceremonies of the church.

Another of Turner’s most carefully laid-out chapters explores an interesting contrast: while American Christians generally stopped viewing “passages of ancient Jewish scripture as straightforward depictions of or prophecies about Jesus Christ,” Mormons moved in the opposite hermeneutical direction (p. 205). In Mormon writings, “it was Jesus Christ who appeared to Adam, Abraham, Jacob, and other ancient patriarchs.” Once again, Talmage’s 1915 *Jesus the Christ* helped to settle the welter of theological confusion and discussion that continued through the late nineteenth century. In doing so, Turner argues, Talmage resurrected “earlier Christian interpretations of the Hebrew scriptures” by arguing that Jesus “was the creator who revealed himself to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses.” God and Jesus were two separate divine and corporeal beings: “the postmortal, immortal, and exalted Father and the antemortal Jesus Christ” (p. 206). Over time, Brigham Young’s speculations on Adam as Jehovah diminished in importance, and the church “identified Jesus Christ as Jehovah. Going forward, Jesus-as-Jehovah became a clear point of Mormon doctrine.” Turner traces the growing importance of “Jehovah as the premortal Jesus Christ” in the endowment ceremony (p. 207).

A favorite chapter of mine was “The Great White God,” which appears late in the book. Here Turner draws from the work coauthored by Edward J. Blum and myself, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014) but expands (and improves) on it greatly. Perhaps most significantly, he shows that while in contemporary Christianity images of Jesus, once so ubiquitous, have declined in number and significance, they have retained a central and visible presence in Mormon “meetinghouses, visitor centers, homes, and temples,” reflecting the growing Christocentrism of contemporary Mormonism. The LDS Church’s *Gospel Art Book* from 2009 contains 137 images approved for use in Mormon settings, 50 of which depict Jesus. Because of the effective church process of correlation over many decades, “there is a uniformity of architecture, worship, and publications in Mormon meetinghouses across the United States and around the world. Visitors and worshippers see the same artwork, the same Jesus” (p. 248). Usually that Jesus is visibly male, white, and masculine, a consequence of a long-held concern among some Mormon leaders for what they saw as overly feminized images of Jesus Christ in art.

The conclusion reiterates that “the figure of Jesus Christ both inextricably connects the Latter-day Saints to broader and longer currents of Christian thought and practice and carves out a distinctively Mormon place within them” (p. 292). And in recent decades, church leaders have emphasized a more irenic vision than in earlier periods of Mormon history, stressing what they hold in common with other versions of the Christian faith, especially through the figure of Jesus. In a variety of ways, the church has taken a Christocentric turn over several decades. As another scholar has put it, “Christian Mormonism has largely superseded ‘Mormon Israel’” (p. 293). And thus for Turner, and contrary to well-known arguments by Jan Shipps and others, “Mormonism is a vibrant new branch of Christianity, one in which temples, ordinances and prophets have taken their place alongside a Jesus who is both utterly Christian and distinctively Mormon” (p. 294).

I can well imagine a “postscript” chapter to this book reflecting on Mormonism’s international future and more generally on the kinds of

Christianity that are attractive in the Global South (Pentecostalism and Mormonism being two notable examples) versus those which are not growing domestically or internationally (including much of mainstream American Protestantism, and even some conservative branches of Protestantism such as Southern Baptists). The most successful offshoots of Christianity abroad are full of the kinds of visions, apparitions of Jesus and the saints, and local prophets such as characterized early Mormonism, as well as ecstatic practices (faith healing, speaking in tongues, and others) such as pervaded early Pentecostalism. It certainly raises the question of how Mormonism's largely successful attempt to mainstream itself (continued sniping by some other Protestant groups aside) will or will not play in the Global South.

And for the longer-range future, the diversification of the Mormon body of believers surely will, one would assume, eventually result in the diversification of its leadership class, which at present remains a solid phalanx of older white men. If Turner is right, Mormonism appears poised to continue as a branch of Christianity, a sort of denomination on steroids. If that is the case, one may ask how that will play out in the areas (including the Global South) where it has experienced considerable growth? How much of Mormonism's distinctiveness will be muted, in a way that follows a pattern of many other denominations? And to what degree can the LDS Church's "correlation" effort continue to have its remarkable effect of enforcing such a uniformity of beliefs, rituals, buildings, hymns, and cultural practices? That would take another book, or twenty, to answer. For now, I am grateful for Turner's extraordinarily careful parsing of the questions he raises in this book.

Paul Harvey is professor of history at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs. He is the author, coauthor, or editor of eleven books, including most recently *Christianity and Race in the American South: A History* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Dave Hall. *A Faded Legacy: Amy Brown Lyman and Mormon Women's Activism, 1872–1959*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015.

Reviewed by Susan Sessions Rugh

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IN THIS LONG-AWAITED BIOGRAPHY OF AMY BROWN LYMAN, author Dave Hall capably sets her life in the context of what he calls the “Second Generation” of Mormon women, the daughters of the pioneers. Raised in the Victorian age, Lyman and her cohorts became progressives whose goal was to build up a church social service agency inside the Relief Society. Hall also contends that Lyman’s life is a case study of the rise and fall of Mormon women’s tradition of activism in the early twentieth century.

The book opens with a short essay, “Mormon Women in an American Context.” Then Hall sets the stage for the women’s emerging activism by tracing Lyman’s life from girlhood to marriage. Her education at Brigham Young University, early teaching career, and marriage to engineering professor Richard Lyman led her to be trained in the methods of the modern social work movement. Inspired by social work pioneers such as Jane Addams and Frances Perkins, Lyman and her cohorts envisioned the Relief Society as a vehicle for modern social work.

In Part 2 (chapters 3–5), Hall examines the rise of women’s activism by chronicling Lyman’s service to the Relief Society as board member and secretary to the president. Lyman and her friends adapted the methods of women’s club organizations to their work of promoting church charity work. The Smith-Lever Agricultural Extension Act in 1914 spurred the Relief Society to promote home economics activities, and in the wake of the Sheppard-Towner Act (1921), the Relief Society focused its efforts on improving infant and maternal health. A true progressive, Lyman successfully ran for the state legislature and was an active member of the National Council of Women and developed a national reputation in social work. The unexpected death of her son’s

wife from illness in 1925, followed by her son's own accidental death, left the care of their daughter in Lyman's hands. From that time forward, Amy Kathryn was raised by her grandparents.

In the final four chapters, Hall explains why the movement of Mormon women's social activism waned. Lyman's personal power within the Relief Society organization was diminished by serious health problems and changes in leadership to those who did not favor women's social activism. During the Depression, the LDS Church appropriated the social service workers to help with its welfare program, and Lyman's well-trained workers found jobs in state agencies. By April 1936 the church's welfare plan had displaced the Relief Society's program, and the women lost all control of poor relief to priesthood leadership committees. Lyman was removed from the scene in September 1936 when her apostle husband was abruptly called to be president of the British Mission and de facto leader of all non-US missions. She taught social work principles at mission leadership conferences and worked to adapt Utah-oriented curriculum to the European church. The Lymans, granddaughter in tow, had a chance to rub shoulders with British elites and tour the capitals of Europe.

The public image of this Mormon power couple jaunting about Europe disguised their troubled marriage. When Amy Lyman was called home in 1938 on the eve of World War II, her years of preparation culminated in her ascendancy to the long-coveted position of Relief Society president. Hall argues that although J. Reuben Clark's advocacy of domesticity and piety curtailed Lyman's ambitions, they were derailed as much by wartime conditions. The scandal of her husband's extramarital affair and excommunication in November 1943 further diluted her influence, and her term ended in April 1945. For Amy, it was a tragic fall from grace, the end of her ambitions, and, in Hall's view, a faded legacy.

As Hall intended, the biography of Lyman provides a window into the birth and stunted development of Mormon women's activism. Their ambitions were audacious, and that they never fully achieved autonomy should not distract us from recognizing all that they did accomplish in

furthering the health and welfare of women and children. In hindsight, the women's voluntary social programs were not robust enough to deal with the devastating effects of the Depression. Women's voluntary social work was being eclipsed by paid professionals and a federal state committed to a broad safety net for its citizens. Still, the loss of oversight of welfare work to priesthood committees remains a sore spot in Mormon women's history.

Beyond the book's significance as a biography, it contributes to the study of Mormon women's activism, the Relief Society, and the growth of the welfare state. Hall's work illuminates the history of the early twentieth-century church as it transitioned from its pioneer past to its future role as an American church in an era of global Christianity. The book is informative and well researched, but not all smooth sailing. The convoluted sentence structure tends to put the brakes on the narrative drive, and the book bears the marks of a dissertation as it labors to set Lyman's story into a wider context.

Underneath the public façade, the private life of Amy Brown Lyman still remains in the shadows. Hall relies extensively on interviews to ferret out the details of her private life, but the reader is not fully satisfied that we know why the marital disaster occurred. We have here only her side of the story, and that in fragments. In public the Lymans were modern, but in private they were constrained by her Victorian attitudes toward sex and his belief that polygamy justified his affair. Unfortunately, Hall does not explicitly solve this puzzle for us, in part because of his sympathy for his subject. Perhaps only when a full biography of Richard Lyman is written will we understand how the couple became so alienated from each other.

Finally, is "faded legacy" the right phrase to describe our view of Lyman? *Faded* implies that time has dimmed our view. Faded maybe, but it might be better to say that her legacy was tarnished by the stain of her husband's infidelity. The successful woman whose husband looks elsewhere for sexual solace is an enduring trope, and we must not be too quick to assign blame. Lyman may not have been a victim of patriarchy, but obviously the limits of her authority were sharply circumscribed by

her sex. Betrayed by her husband, her humanitarian ambitions stymied by powerful male church leaders, her life could be seen as modern tragedy. In any case, her efforts were heroic and deserving of the full history that Hall has written to revive her legacy.

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Ignacio M. García. *Chicano While Mormon: Activism, War, and Keeping the Faith*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015.

Reviewed by Rudy V. Busto

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THE *WHILE* IN THE TITLE OF IGNACIO GARCÍA'S MEMOIR is an interesting, if ambivalent, word choice. Written by an accomplished and well-regarded BYU professor of Western American and Latino history, *Chicano While Mormon* is the first installment of a planned series of self-disclosing volumes, the rare Chicano voice in the vast corpus of Mormon autobiography. Forgoing a more neutral "Chicano and Mormon" as his title, García intends *While* to convey the notion of simultaneity ("Chicano *and at the same time* Mormon"), although his story suggests a contrastive sense ("Chicano *even if* Mormon"). *Chicano While Mormon's* time span covers García's family roots on the Mexican

side of the US-Mexico border through his exit from his political activist years at Texas A&I, in Kingsville, Texas. Although his life story unfolds chronologically, García frequently interrupts the narrative with interesting bits of historical context, political opinion, and, on occasion, sharp sermonizing.

García's narrative is told in eighteen unevenly sized chapters (ranging from six to twenty-two pages) covering three formative time periods. Chapters 1–6 take us from his grandparents in Mexico to family life on the Mexican west side of San Antonio, Texas, and on through high school. García's army career as a medic, including his tour in Vietnam, is treated in chapters 7–11, while chapters 12–17 focus on García's college education and entry into Chicano activism, the period of his life that would influence his future career as an important historian of mid-twentieth-century Mexican American/Chicano politics. The last chapter, prosaically titled "Final Thoughts on This Phase of My Life," is a frank meditation on a life spent negotiating the shifting and rocky path of what it means to be Chicano and Mormon. Six pages of photographs with captions accompany the text.

The foreword by fellow historian, Latter-day Saint, and Chicano Eduardo Pagán helps frame García's narrative by providing a broad context for the overlapping struggles and minoritizing of both Mexican Americans and Mormons in the United States. Of particular interest is Pagán's view that *Chicano While Mormon* sits at the intersection of a long trajectory of Mormon autobiography and Mexican/Chicano self-disclosing narratives. But it is in this space where García's narrative gets trapped between his strong desire to demonstrate fidelity to Mormon authority and the need to assert the essential Chicano content of his life's story. I disagree with Pagán's assertion that "the role of the church or theology in Mexican and Mexican American autobiographies, if present at all, tends to serve more as context than anything else" (p. xiii) for claiming the uniqueness of García's narrative. In fact, two of the most popular and controversial Mexican American self-disclosing narratives, Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory* (1982) and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), locate the church and religion

as central factors in the forging of singular selves. In addition, Reies López Tijerina's allegorical *Mi lucha por la tierra* (1978) can be read as theology and is written as a kind of scripture. It would also be valuable to compare García's memoir with Antonio A. Feliz's mostly forgotten *Out of the Bishop's Closet* (1988), which recounts the writer's struggles with LDS Church authorities as a gay Mexican American Mormon. Both Feliz and García are rooted in immigrant Mexican communities and grew up as outsiders because of their Mormonism. Despite the vast distance between their relationships to the LDS Church today (Feliz was excommunicated in 1985 and founded the Restoration Church of Jesus Christ), both of them became politically aware in the 1970s, served as bishops and in numerous other positions in the church, and have much to say about the treatment of Latinos in the LDS Church.

García tells us in the prologue that he has "two audiences," Mormons and Chicanos (p. xxi). This goal is Olympian, and indeed the narrative's structure and tone reveal much about García's sometimes overlapping but usually divided allegiances. That is, García's careful, almost excruciating, attention to writing for both audiences forces him into a narrative strategy that hides as much as it reveals about him. For example, even as he affirms his devotion to both cultures, he nevertheless sets himself apart from them:

Being a Chicano Mormon intellectual makes me an incredibly rare breed of scholar that rarely fits in nicely anywhere or is fully understood by anyone. I'm a complicated Mexican, more "barrio" than my colleagues who write about it and less so than my friends who live in it. I am more liberal than my Mormon *hermanos* and more personally conservative than my "radical" *compañeros*. . . . I have, in the past, been treated with suspicion by Chicano scholars and Mexican American activists who can't believe that a Mormon would be as committed to positive change for his people as I am. While some Mormons believe that the commitment to my faith must be soft and secondary to a scholarly activism they deem outside the church's traditions. (p. xxi)

In order to communicate across his two target audiences, García is continually forced into providing contexts, and he rarely passes up the opportunity to offer his opinion on a wide variety of religious, political, and cultural topics. Readers will find these ruminations and digressions revealing of who García is today, but the downside to this running commentary is that we are given less information about the people closest to him in his story. The reader wants to know more about his father, Virgilio, and especially his involvement with Rosicrucianism, and it is surprising that we are given only a few impressions of García's wife, Alejandra.

Of course, every self-disclosing narrator chooses which events to tell and how to frame them, and so García's memoir is saddled with having to tack between his Mormon readers and his Chicano readers. For example, in chapter 14 he recounts his entry into the complicated world of Chicano politics. Addressing his LDS readers, García discusses nuances in Mexican American politics on and off the college campus, coalition politics, ideological partisanship, and regional race relations. Turning to his Chicano readers, García includes a fascinating reflection on how one of the first, and certainly most important, Chicano intellectuals, Octavio Romano, "provided a meaning to my Mexican Mormonism" (p. 172). It is Romano's arguments about Chicano peoplehood that sparks García's thinking, allowing him to make a crucial link between his political activism and Lamanite history in the Book of Mormon.

Still, despite the hooks he offers his readers to help them enter these different worlds, there is stiffness in the writing that I suggest is related to his profession as a historian. That is, while García is very good at giving us background and setting up how and why he moves in the world, a barrier remains between him and his readers. His dedication to clarity in how he presents history precludes, for the most part, a more lyrical and textured story. Note, for example, his invitation to Chicano activism through ethnic studies professor Jose Reyna at Texas A&I:

Reyna must have seen my passion for what I was learning because he took a particular liking to me and one evening he mentioned

that there were some students and community people involved in activism and asked me if I might be interested in meeting them. “Sure,” I said, though I’m not sure I knew exactly what he meant either by “activism” or “meeting them,” but a few days later he brought Raul Villarreal to speak to the class on La Raza Unida’s activities in Kingsville and also at the university. Afterward, Reyna introduced me to Raul and then left us to talk for about an hour after class, at which time Raul invited me over to his house across from the university where we spent another several hours discussing Chicanismo. (p. 173)

Now compare the above excerpt with an account of the same incident in his 1997 academic book, *Chicanismo*:

It was after an ethnic studies night class in the fall of 1974 that Reyna approached me. He knew I was a journalism major, and so he asked me to look into the university’s employment practices as they related to the maintenance workers, most of whom were Chicano. As an already-motivated student of his ethnic studies class, I jumped at the opportunity. He quickly referred me to the aforementioned house, and that night I spent hours listening to Raul Villarreal and Jorge Guerra talk about university employment practices, protest politics, Chicano history, the Mexican Revolution, and working-class culture. Much like many young people of my generation, I became fascinated by the new interpretation of Mexican American history, by the bold defiance, and by the excitement of embarking on a social movement.

The contrast between these two accounts is striking. The autobiography casts the young García as naive to the world of Chicano politics, with his introduction to activism functioning as a conversion moment. In contrast, the *Chicanismo* version, written for a Chicano reader, contains in one paragraph a wealth of additional details, feeling, and movement. Here we gain a better sense of a young, eager, “already-motivated” García. Other events in the memoir present a similarly callow Ignacio whose innocence and openness are either led by mentors into awareness and action or, faced by racist or rigid authority, are turned into anger

and confusion. For the most part, the reader is shut out of the young García's interior life. But this is neither García's failing memory nor his unwillingness to let us in. Rather, this "surface" portrait of the youthful Ignacio is characteristic of the memoir genre, in which the mature narrator's purpose is primarily a didactic one. Despite its focus on the first twenty or so years of his life, García's text forgoes autobiography's traditional *bildungsroman* motivation, allowing him to freely comment and render judgment on the state of Chicano politics and identity, church policy and culture, and university intrigue and administration.

And yet García's experience as an army medic in Vietnam is riveting. He is assigned to an airfield deep in the jungle where he encounters the tragedies of injury and death daily. Here García's restraint as a professional historian serves to balance the wildly shifting emotional ordeals of confronting field injuries, racial tension, and violence among the soldiers; Vietnamese civilian casualties; and an obligation to missionize for the church. Enduring the horrors of his tour, García finds solace and love with a Vietnamese woman working in the dispensary. The outcome of his relationship with Nguyen Kim Huong is a tragic and difficult episode in the book. García struggles, unsuccessfully, to convince his readers that he has yet to come to terms with what happened between them or that he has moved beyond regret.

Mormon autobiographies, according to Steven Sondrup, tend toward presenting lives as confident and "remarkably secure in their position." This description might adequately explain García's voice that, at times, transforms a well-earned self-confidence into moralizing, or what Sondrup calls "a tone of condescending stuffiness" (p. 76). However, the fact of García's identity as so fundamentally Chicano, *alongside* his skirmishes with LDS Church authorities, periods of spiritual anomie, and slights against him from white Saints, rescues *Chicano While Mormon* from self-righteous shrillness.

The Chicano reader will find much that is familiar here, from the nostalgia of the barrio to political awakening and the passion and exhaustion of identity politics. Chicanos will find the Mormon content compelling, if not at times puzzling, in its glimpse of the labyrinthine

and hierarchical character of LDS Church administration. I imagine that Mormon readers will be sobered by García's travails with the church but hopeful in the steely-eyed steadfastness of his love for the Mormon faith. And it is at this intersection—this magnetic pull toward divergent, at times contradicting, identities and allegiances—where *Chicano While Mormon* operates in the interstitial zone the Aztecs referred to as *nepantla*: the “middle place” that forces ongoing negotiation between distinct cultures, languages, religions, and selves.

Chicano While Mormon will help many readers understand the intersectional nature of American ethnic and religious identities, and García is to be applauded for sharing this necessarily complicated story. García's book is a welcome addition to the emergent literature by Latinos outside traditional religious (read Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal) affiliations. It is, therefore, all the more unfortunate that *Chicano While Mormon* is prohibitively priced (\$75 hardback), effectively putting it out of the reach of many of García's intended readers. The reader will also be surprised at more than a handful of typographical errors.

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Mark A. Scherer. *The Journey of a People: The Era of Restoration, 1820 to 1844*. Independence, MO: Community of Christ Seminary Press (2013); *The Journey of a People: The Era of Reorganization, 1844 to 1946* (2013); *The Journey of a People: The Era of Worldwide Community, 1946 to 2015* (2016).

Reviewed by Chrystal Vanel

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SURELY MARK A. SCHERER'S THREE VOLUMES on RLDS/Community of Christ¹ history were much awaited by many scholars working on Mormonisms,² especially those who have a special interest in RLDS/CofC history. Furthermore, as volumes 1 and 2 were published in 2013, the eagerness grew stronger because one had to wait for the publication of the third and final volume in 2016. But the wait was worthwhile!

Scherer served as Community of Christ World Church historian from 1995 until 2016 and taught CofC history at the Community of Christ Seminary (Graceland University). In his three-volume history, Scherer takes us through what he labels “The Era of Restoration, 1820 to 1844,” “The Era of Reorganization, 1844 to 1946,” and “The Era of Worldwide Community, 1946 to 2015.”

Whereas those chronological delimitations make sense (the RLDS Church organized itself around the leadership of Joseph Smith III following the 1844 succession crisis and, following World War II, experienced some dramatic changes leading to today's Community of Christ),

1. Where appropriate hereafter, the abbreviation *CofC* will refer to the Community of Christ.

2. As Mark Lyman Staker shows, the terms *Mormons*, *Mormonites*, and *Mormonism* originally referred to believers in the Book of Mormon (*Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* [Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2010], 72–73, 87). I thus argue that Mormonism exists wherever there is belief in the Book of Mormon. With many denominations claiming belief in the Book of Mormon, I argue there are many Mormonisms.

some of the terms used also speak volumes about how the institutional Community of Christ historian might want to distance the Community of Christ from Mormonism: the term *Era of Restoration* was chosen to refer to what many scholars of Mormonism might refer to as part of “Early Mormonism,” which in the field of Mormon studies often delineates the history of the church that Joseph Smith founded up until his death.³ One might wonder if Scherer’s preference for non-“Mormon” terms, including the neologism *Latter Day Saintism* (1:13, 19, 20, 26, 145, 146) and terms like *Restoration Era* (1:28, 460), even though they are still occasionally used (1:269), is an attempt to lessen CofC Mormon past. This would be in the same vein as Scherer’s predecessor Richard Howard, who seemed to have preferred the term *Restoration Movement* over the term *Mormonism*.⁴ But by using the term *Restoration*, Mark Scherer also puts early RLDS/CofC history in the wider context of the various “restorationists” who endeavored to “restore the primitive Christian church” (1:xix) in the nineteenth-century United States.

Indeed, Mark Scherer brilliantly puts early Mormonism in its context, having made great use of the most recent research and numerous primary sources he had access to at CofC archives in Independence, Missouri (see, for example pictures of seer stones, 1:17). Mark Scherer’s first volume could be used as a very useful textbook for any university class on Joseph Smith’s singular primitive brand of Christianity.

The second volume is most interesting to those who have a special interest in Mormon fissiparousness, because chapter 1 is partly devoted to the competing claimants to church leadership following Joseph Smith’s death. Given that recent research on Mormonism(s) has been devoted to the relationship to Freemasonry,⁵ an interesting aspect

3. See, for example, Trevor Alvord, “Certainty to Distrust: Conversion in Early Mormonism,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 30 (2010): 133–55; Benjamin Park, “‘Reasonings Sufficient’: Joseph Smith, Thomas Dick, and the Context(s) of Early Mormonism,” *Journal of Mormon History* 38/3 (2012): 210–24.

4. Richard Howard, *The Church through the Years, Volume 1: RLDS Beginnings to 1860* (Independence, MO: Herald, 1992), xix–x.

5. See, for example, Michael W. Homer, *Joseph’s Temples: The Dynamic Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press), 2014;

presented in volume 2 is the relationship between the RLDS Church and Freemasonry. Scherer presents the debates of the 1907 RLDS General Conference on “secret societies” (2:402–4) and writes on RLDS Church president Frederick M. Smith’s relationship with Freemasonry (2:530–34). Because some recent research seems to have a special interest in the globalization of Mormonism(s),⁶ chapters 15 and 16 on early efforts toward internationalization are of special interest: chapter 15 focuses on RLDS missions to the Pacific (Society Islands, Australia, Hawaii), and chapter 16 is devoted to missions to Europe (Scandinavia, Switzerland, Germany, the British Isles).

The history of the globalization of the RLDS Church/CofC continues in the third volume in chapters 10–12, where Scherer devotes considerable space to the birth and growth of the RLDS Church in Nigeria (3:198–206). Despite its subtitle (“The Era of Worldwide Community, 1946 to 2015”), the third volume also focuses on important changes occurring within the RLDS Church, which became the Community of Christ in 2001. Thus, chapter 13 is devoted to the doctrinal evolutions of the 1960s- and early 1970s-era RLDS Church as it revised its curriculum and some of its staff received theological training through seminaries. Chapter 17 deals with the opening of the priesthood to women and the “fundamentalist” reaction. Chapter 19 treats the installation of William Grant McMurray as successor to Wallace B. Smith in the RLDS presidency in 1996, thus ending the longtime RLDS tradition of linear presidency (3:502–4). Scholars on the LDS Church will surely enjoy reading chapter 3, which deals in part with RLDS president Israel A.

Chrystal Vanel, “Mormonismes et franc-maçonnerie,” paper presented at the seminar of the Groupe de Recherche et d’Étude des Mouvements Maçonnes et Ésotériques (GREMME), Université Libre de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, Belgium, December 13, 2011.

6. Bernadette Rigal-Cellard, “Être français dans une Église d’origine américaine,” in *Les mutations transatlantiques des religions*, ed. Christian Lerat and Bernadette Rigal-Cellard, 279–308 (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2000); Chrystal Vanel “Converting to Mormonisms in France: A Conversion Both Religious and Cultural?,” in *Religious Conversions in the Mediterranean World*, ed. Nadia Marzouki and Olivier Roy, 139–61 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Smith's visit to Utah in April 1951 and his cordial participation in the sustaining vote of LDS church president David O. McKay.

Needless to say, all three volumes are very interesting to read. They are well documented and make good use of oral histories for the most recent past (see the third volume). The writing is engaging, and there are many illustrations (readers might feel as though they are actually in the CofC archives) and beautiful maps, the latter created by John Hamer.

It is important to note that Scherer intends to write a history that is both "non-faith-promoting" and institutional. He makes it clear that he does neither "sanitized history" nor "official history" and that he departs from "early histories" that "made little attempt to be objective" and "whose accounts show only great people making great decisions" (3:xix). Yet, addressing "those who claim membership in today's Community of Christ," Scherer writes that his subject is "*our* story," which is "an amazing story of a people on a truly remarkable journey" (3:xix).

This "*our* story" Scherer has written sometimes still has a Manichean flavor, especially since the author uses but does not explain terms that sometimes have strong positive or negative connotations and whose meanings change through time. Such is the case with words like *fundamentalist*. Writing about the conflict between the institution and some of its most traditionalist members, Scherer calls the latter "fundamentalists" (briefly explaining the term in footnote 32, 3:329) but is shy to mention clearly that those fundamentalists tend to refer to themselves as "restorationists." Only one time is the word *restorationist* used to refer to traditionalist members—when Scherer quotes from a member opposing the RLDS protestantization in the 1970s (3:341). Maybe Scherer avoids the term in order to avoid the confusion with nineteenth-century restorationists. Even so, one is surprised he does not give voice to the restorationist/fundamentalist account of the conflict. In making use of oral histories, he could have interviewed restorationists/fundamentalists to take their perspectives into account. Thus we get only a one-sided view of the conflict, and that is the winners' view (because most fundamentalist/restorationist/conservative members—and those polysemous words need much more explanation—seem to have left CofC or to be on its margins, not in position of leadership).

True to the Community of Christ's current spirit, Scherer might sound easily critical of the Mormon/Joseph Smith past of CofC while verging on an apologetic tone when it comes to RLDS Church/CofC history. Although he underlines in the beginning of volume 1 that Joseph Smith was "a man of uncommon spirituality, but at the same time one of common humanity" (1:10), Scherer writes quite a lot in volume 3 about the "significant accomplishment," "progressive leadership," and "prophetic courage" of RLDS president Wallace B. Smith (3:499–500).

Scherer also sometimes seems to read the past in the lenses of today's CofC desire for a progressive identity. I was surprised to read that the RLDS Church participated in the "social Gospel movement" (2:198), which was part of the larger Progressive Movement.⁷ Scherer does not adequately explain the "social Gospel movement," which counted as its main representative the Baptist preacher Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918),⁸ and it is not clear whether the RLDS Church consciously took part in the movement. I was surprised to read that Becky Savage was chosen as counselor in the First Presidency because "the Church needed a voice and a physical presence as a reminder to be proactive in matters of gender and cultural bias that were still present in some areas" and that "women have been integrated at all levels of church leadership" (3:548). First, serious sociological research has shown that "masculine domination" is not only present in "some areas" but also in so-called modern societies,⁹ and even though women are present at all levels of CofC leadership, most of its top leaders are males (two of three in the First Presidency, seven among twelve apostles) and most of the leadership is still white American; thus there is still white, masculine, American domination in the CofC. Moreover, Scherer presents the CofC's enduring principles that were introduced in 2009, yet we read that "these all have shaped the church story for nearly two centuries" (3:570). The author here seems to read the past through the lenses of the present.

7. Klauspeter Blaser, *Le Christianisme social. Une approche théologique et historique* (Paris: Van Dieeren, 2003), 37–40.

8. Blaser, *Le Christianisme social*, 37–40.

9. Pierre Bourdieu, *La Domination masculine* (Paris: Seuil, 2002).

Although he is an institutional church historian, Scherer boldly and professionally tackles difficult historical issues: racism in the 1950s RLDS Church (3:64–74), the Mark Hofmann forgeries (3:454–60), and President Grant McMurray’s resignation from the CofC presidency in 2004 (3:528–32). In doing so, he makes good use of primary and secondary sources.

Scherer’s three volumes on RLDS/CofC already stand among the must-read books on Mormon studies, and his research on RLDS/CofC globalization and most recent history is often groundbreaking. Many sociologists of religion will surely agree with Scherer’s claim “Without awareness of an institutional past there can be no institutional future. . . . Institutional memory is required to maintain institutional viability” (3:574). Because the Community of Christ recently chose to limit access to its archives due to financial struggles and not to replace him following his retirement, Scherer’s books are precious to the CofC membership’s common identity. One might hope that the institution and its leadership will know how to make good uses of Scherer’s historical work.

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Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, eds. *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843–June 1844*. Vol. 3 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015.

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READING THE THIRD AND FINAL VOLUME of the journals of Joseph Smith is a lot like watching a documentary about the *Titanic*: you know how it ends, but you cannot help but be enthralled. From May 1843 to June 1844, the volume covers some of the most dramatic and consequential moments leading up to the murder of the Mormon prophet in an Illinois jailhouse. Also, like any good journal of the nineteenth century, it includes the minutiae of life in a frontier town complete with the latest gossip and daily weather reports. With the publication of *Journals, Volume 3*, editors Andrew Hedges, Alex Smith, and Brent Rogers offer readers the definitive transcript of the last fourteen months of Joseph Smith's life in and around Nauvoo as seen through the eyes of one of his closest followers.

Joseph Smith was not the author of the journals transcribed in volume 3. That distinction goes to Willard Richards, the prophet's private secretary and historian from late 1842 to Smith's death on June 27, 1844. Richards filled four small memorandum books with his personal observations, sometimes written in the person of Smith. The daily inputs are usually short, broken, and unrefined, but nonetheless honest and mostly accurate portrayals of many of Smith's words and actions. On October 10, 1843, for example, Richards simply wrote, "saw Joseph at dinner table said he would attend municipal court next morning 10 oclock" (p. 110). They could also be long and rambling, as was the case on March 7, 1844, when Richards spent sixteen pages trying to transcribe a speech delivered by Smith on the matter of building a temple in Nauvoo. For every daily entry in *Journals, Volume 3*, there is at

least one footnote that includes extensive descriptions, analyses, and references, making even the most cryptic passages decipherable. The overall length of the footnotes far exceeds that of the journal, a feature that should be of great usefulness to scholars of Mormonism.

Joseph Smith held several offices near the end of his life, including president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, mayor of Nauvoo, and lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion. These and other roles of Smith are on full display in the journal, as are key occurrences in the history of early Mormonism. Some of the more significant moments are Smith's sending of missionaries to England, his revelation on eternal marriage, his own plural marriage to Rhoda Richards (Willard's older sister), his multiple arrests, his nomination as a candidate for president of the United States, his conflicts with Missouri and Illinois authorities, his various business ventures, his troubles with building a temple, his King Follett discourse on the nature of God and humanity, his violent handling of an opposition newspaper, his military preparations against mob attack, and his decision to face the charge of treason in Carthage, Illinois. Among the more mundane but also curious activities of Smith include his meetings with a mesmerist, a phrenologist, and a Catholic priest, as well as his interest in forming a natural history museum.

There is a rawness to the journal, both in style as well as content, that results in a rather unvarnished image of Smith. He is a man under pressure, both from within the church and from outside opponents. There is a sense of paranoia about him, something that brings tension to the unfolding days. "I a rough stone," Richards recounts Smith saying during a Sunday sermon in June 1843. "the sound of the hammer & chisel was never hea[r]d on me, nor never will be" (p. 31).¹ Later that month, Smith denounced the "mobocrats" who sought to take away the liberties of Mormons. "I swear in the name of Almig[h]ty God," he told a crowd. "with uplifted hand the Legislatur shall never take away our rights I[']ll spill my hea[r]ts blood fi[r]st" (p. 47). During a Sunday sermon in July 1843, he boasted that "Mormons can testify whether I am willing to lay

1. The bracketed corrections in this transcription and those that follow are as they appear in *Journals, Volume 3*.

down my life for a mormon. . . . It is a love of libe[r]ty which inspires my soul. civil and religious liberty” (p. 55). The following week he warned of “a mans foes being they of his own house. such as having secret enemies in the city—intermingling with the saints &c” (p. 61). Words turned to deeds the following month when a resident of Carthage “gave me some abusive language” and “took up a stone to throw at me,” whereupon Smith “siezd him by the throat to choke him off” (p. 78). Fast-forward to December 1843, when Smith complained of the US government’s unwillingness to protect the liberties of Mormons: “if congress will not hear our petition,” he announced, “and grant us protection. they shall be broken up as a governme[n]t and God shall damn them, and there shall nothing be left of them, not even a grease spot” (p. 145). Not much had improved by April 1844, when Smith admitted to his followers, “You dont know me—you never will I dont blame you for not believe[n]g my histo[r]y had I not expeind [experienced] by it could not believe it myself” (p. 222). And in the weeks leading up to his murder, after he “ordered the marshal to dest[r]oy” the opposition newspaper *Nauvoo Expositor* (p. 277), Smith “told the people I was ready to fight if the mob would compel me to” (p. 278). The final journal entry is dated June 22, 1844, and includes notes on the military defenses of Nauvoo, a prophecy about the upcoming “sickly season,” plans to preach before the Nauvoo Legion, and negotiations with the Illinois governor over Smith’s impending arrest (p. 300). Two days later Smith departed Nauvoo for Carthage, joined by Willard Richards, Hyrum Smith, and Orrin Porter Rockwell. Richards left the journal behind.

In the appendix, excerpts from the personal journal of Willard Richards cover the remaining days of Smith’s life. His account is especially poignant for its hour-by-hour, sometimes minute-by-minute, countdown to the final shootout. At 3:15 on the afternoon of June 27, “Hyrum read from Josephus” while he and Smith’s small entourage sat in the Carthage prison. John Taylor, a member of the Council of Fifty and judge advocate for the Nauvoo Legion, sang the hymn “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief” (p. 326). Two hours later they paid the jailer to procure them a bottle of wine and some tobacco. Then the attack came.

Richards looked out the window and “saw a 100 ar[m]ed men arou[n]d the door.— . . . Josep spra[n]g to his coat for his 6. shooter, Hyrm for his single barrel. . . . the balls whist[l]ed up the stair way.” Hyrum took a ball “in the left side of his nose. fell back on the floor saying— I am a dead man.” In response, “Joseph discha[r]ged his 6 shooter” while “continual discha[r]ges came in the room” (pp. 327, 329). Taylor ran to the window, prepared to leap from the second floor, but was shot instead. And then the journal ends.

In addition to the Joseph Smith journal and appendixes, *Journals, Volume 3* contains almost three hundred pages of reference materials, including a chronology of events from May 1843 through June 1844; a geographical directory of Smith’s movements; maps; a biographical directory of people referenced in the journal; organizational charts for church, city, and militia officials; a glossary; an essay on sources; works cited; and an index. The careful and thorough work of the editors makes *Journals, Volume 3* a model for text transcription and accompanying scholarly analysis. Portions of the journal would suit undergraduate courses in Mormon and American religious history, while the entire volume could form the basis for any number of graduate courses on general historical methods and Mormon history. Those interested in the history of early Mormonism, both professional historians and informed lay readers, will find *Journals, Volume 3* to be an invaluable resource and an impressive compilation of information. Once again, the editorial staff of the Joseph Smith Papers Project delivers a top-quality scholarly edition of documents pertaining to the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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Royal Skousen and Robin Scott Jensen, eds. *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3, Part 1: Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1–Alma 35*. Facsimile edition. Part 1 of vol. 3 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015.

Royal Skousen and Robin Scott Jensen, eds. *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3, Part 2: Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Alma 36–Moroni 10*. Facsimile edition. Part 2 of vol. 3 of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015.

Reviewed by Paul Gutjahr

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IN 2008 THE CHURCH HISTORIAN'S PRESS OF SALT LAKE CITY released the first volume of a projected thirty-volume project entitled *The Joseph Smith Papers* (JSP). The Church Historian's Press was established in that year to publish works related to the origins and development of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *The Joseph Smith Papers* were the press's inaugural project, and its self-identified goal "is to present verbatim transcripts of Joseph Smith's papers in their entirety, making available the most essential sources of Smith's life and work and preserving the content of aging manuscripts from damage or loss" (p. xxix). The general editors of this project's first series, the Journals series, are the eminent Latter-day Saint historians Dean Jessee, Ronald Esplin, and Richard Bushman. If a single phrase might be used to describe this series, it would be "state of the art." Each published volume stands as a model both in terms of scholarly workmanship and bibliographic nuance. The series' volumes stand as a marker of what might be accomplished

in publishing stunning reproductions of original archival documents accompanied by high-quality scholarly commentary.

The latest two volumes to arrive are edited by Royal Skousen and Robin Jensen and present facsimile editions of the printer's manuscript for the entire 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. Between 1827 and 1830, Joseph Smith dictated what would eventually become the Book of Mormon text to a series of scribes, principal among them a former schoolteacher named Oliver Cowdery. (Cowdery transcribed a larger portion of the Book of Mormon manuscript than the combined output of all of Smith's other scribes.) Cowdery also made a second copy of the entire manuscript, which has come to be known as the printer's manuscript. This copy was used by E. B. Grandin's Palmyra, New York, print shop between August 1829 and March 1830 to set the type for the first edition of the book. While less than 30 percent of the original manuscript survives, the printer's manuscript is extant except for only three lines of text (p. xii). It is this printer's manuscript that serves as the focal point for the careful and thorough bibliographic and historical contextualization work of Skousen and Jensen in volume 3, parts 1 and 2, of *The Joseph Smith Papers*.

Royal Skousen, a linguistics and English language professor at Brigham Young University, is widely recognized as perhaps the world's leading bibliographic expert on early editions of the Book of Mormon. Beginning in the 1990s, Skousen began his decades-long Critical Text Project to study the early Book of Mormon manuscripts. The resulting works by Skousen have proved to be foundational in textual studies of the Book of Mormon. They include *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001); *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts*, 2 vols. (FARMS, 2001); *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (FARMS, 2004–2009); *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Grammatical Variation*, parts 1 and 2 of 6 projected parts (FARMS, 2016); and *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (Yale University Press, 2009).

Much of Skousen's earlier work can be found in the two volumes being reviewed here, but the JSP's presentation and commentary on the printer's manuscript differs from Skousen's earlier work in how it seeks to represent "the manuscript more liberally" by giving preference to rendering "the scribe's final intent," rather than privileging notations on every errant dot and ambiguous letter stroke found in the earliest manuscripts (p. xxx). Skousen and Jensen also decided to trim down much of the editorial and scholarly apparatus that came to define much of Skousen's earlier work on early Book of Mormon manuscripts. Even with this sparser scholarly presentation style, however, it is critical to note that the transcription of the printer's manuscript contained in these two volumes is markedly conservative "by historical documentary editing standards" and employs "an even more rigorous approach than that guiding most [*Joseph Smith*] *Papers* volumes" (p. xxx). Skousen and Jensen seek to render "every word letter-by-letter, as accurately as possible, preserving the exact text of the manuscript" (p. xxx).

What perhaps most readily strikes any reader of these two volumes of *The Joseph Smith Papers* is their magisterial presentation and rich composition. These large 12" x 9.25" folio-size volumes photographically reproduce each page of the printer's manuscript in full color, and each manuscript page is accompanied by a facing page with the carefully transcribed text along with textual notes, including color-coded marginal annotations identifying which portions were recorded by which scribes. In addition, the reader is given information concerning significant variants between the printer's manuscript and the first three editions of the Book of Mormon (1830, 1837, and 1840).

Part 1 begins with an extensive introduction that includes a time line, map, and photographs. The introduction offers a succinct historical narrative of Joseph Smith's early angelic visitations, his recovery of the golden plates from which he would translate the Book of Mormon, and then his translation of these plates and the publication process of Mormonism's namesake sacred text. The quality of the scholarly endeavor is seen throughout this introduction as its careful presentation with copious footnotes offers readers an admirably comprehensive and clear

account of Smith and the emergence of the book that would define (and for many, name) the religious tradition he founded.

In facsimile endeavors such as these volumes, there are three central components to creating successful scholarly textual editions. The first, and perhaps most central, component involves obtaining the highest possible expertise on the part of the editors who understand the complicated nuances of bibliographic, textual recovery work. Skousen's long history in such textual work puts him in an unrivaled position to carry forward the work of these two volumes, and Jensen, although a much younger scholar, has also begun work on a scholarly career of textual recovery and analysis. Just as important is an awareness by the editors of the limitations of facsimile photographs. It can never be forgotten that such photographs can approximate the presentation of the actual archival material artifact, but they cannot replace it. Often such photographs are incapable of capturing small details or certain physical features of the manuscript page they seek to reproduce. Worn edges, curled pages, and other variant features can obscure lines of the text. In the end, these photographs can approximate the pages for the reader, but they can never truly replace the experience of looking at the original manuscript page.

The second component involves the basic financial resources that are used to mount and execute facsimile editions such as this one. In this regard, it is clear that the Church Historian's Press has spared absolutely no expense when financing every aspect of this project. The volumes themselves are indicative of the financial investment that underwrites this entire project. In an age when hardcover books are now simply cardboard covered with a thicker grade of paper, volumes found in *The Joseph Smith Papers* project are still covered in actual cloth and printed on heavy, high-gloss paper with color images throughout. These are expensive volumes, yet they have been priced in such a way that an initial press run of 12,500 for the project's first volume in 2008 quickly sold out, and now over 50,000 copies of that initial volume have been sold. Other volumes have enjoyed similar popular success.

The final component links the first two and concerns the project's ability to gather an accomplished and highly respected national advisory

board. A well-financed editorial project such as this one can attract the best scholars to shepherd its work, and the national advisory board of *The Joseph Smith Papers* reads like a veritable *Who's Who* in American religious and sacred textual scholarship in today's academy. Leading lights among Mormon scholars such as Richard Lyman Bushman, Terryl Givens, and Dean Jessee join equally distinguished non-Mormon religious studies scholars such as Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Stephen Stein, and Harry Stout to provide scholarly expertise and perspective to every volume in the project.

Skousen and Jensen's editorial work on these two facsimile volumes of the printer's manuscript offer both scholars and lay readers alike wonderfully researched and beautifully executed volumes that make accessible each page of the handwritten manuscript that served as the source text for the earliest printed volumes of the Book of Mormon. While expensive at nearly \$90 a volume, if one pauses to contemplate the books' level of expertise and high-quality production values, their price seems reasonable indeed. These two facsimile volumes stand as absolute models of what it means to be able to present with great scholarly precision manuscript pages in codex form. These types of scholarly volumes make such manuscript pages (with vitally informative marginal commentary) accessible to a wider readership, a readership that reaches far beyond the specialist scholars who most often have sole access to such delicate and treasured archival material. In this sense, facsimile editions such as these volumes are a move toward democratizing knowledge, and there are few textual projects that make this move as well as *The Joseph Smith Papers*.

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Dan Vogel, ed. *History of Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. 8 vols. Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2015.

Reviewed by Robin Scott Jensen

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FOLLOWING THE INITIAL CREATION and publication of the History of Joseph Smith in the mid-nineteenth century,¹ each generation of Mormon scholars has grappled anew with its nuances, complexities, and relative value as a source for the early history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Cyclical attention indicates not only the history's lasting importance to the LDS Church, its members, and scholars, but the general unease scholars feel in relying too heavily on a narrative written generations previously (more on this later). Several scholars have analyzed the creation of the History of Joseph Smith and portions of the History of Brigham Young, including Dean C. Jessee and Howard Searle.² Dan Vogel's eight-volume publication, *History of Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, is the latest and, in many respects, the most comprehensive effort at achieving a documentary understanding of the History of Joseph Smith.

This multivolume work shows Vogel's care and strength in documentary editing and his nuanced understanding of the complexities of the document's creation and publication. First begun in 1838 in draft, the History of Joseph Smith was eventually copied into six large manuscript volumes (A-1 through F-1) from 1839 through 1856. The volumes underwent significant revision, and a partial secondary set of volumes

1. As used herein, "History of Joseph Smith" includes the first six volumes of the larger Manuscript History of the Church, also known as the Documentary History of the Church, which includes the Manuscript History of Brigham Young.

2. See, for example, Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971): 439–73; and Howard Searle, "Early Mormon Historiography: Writing the History of the Mormons, 1830–1858" (PhD diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1979).

was created incorporating many of those revisions. This second copy consists of five volumes (A-2 through E-2) created from 1845 through 1856. Vogel includes an introduction to each of his eight volumes that skillfully traces the creation, revision, and publication of specific portions of the history. He also provides a careful transcription of the History of Joseph Smith, which fills the first six volumes. Vogel chose as his source text the first publication as found in the LDS Church–owned *Times and Seasons* and *Deseret News* (1842–1846, 1851–1857). Two additional volumes incorporate transcriptions of rough drafts and other documents that relate to the creation of the History of Joseph Smith. Through annotation and other editorial matter, Vogel meticulously tracks the significant variation between the printed text, the earlier manuscript volumes, and the published *History of the Church*, edited by B. H. Roberts.³ Purists might argue, with some justification, for a priority of the manuscript itself over the first published iteration. Vogel's presentation, however, effectively allows users access to the content of three different versions of the history, which are all important to scholars asking questions of the sources. Perhaps most useful to scholars wishing to minimize their own dependency on the History of Joseph Smith or on *History of the Church*, Vogel, when possible, identifies the original sources from which the History of Joseph Smith was based.⁴

These volumes merit significant praise for myriad reasons. This short review allows but a few examples. The three charts at the beginning of the first volume provide an invaluable resource surveying the creation of the History of Joseph Smith. The first table presents the

3. Used throughout this review, *History of the Church* is shorthand for B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1902–1932), with a revised edition published 1946–1954.

4. This adds to the work already under way by the online publication of the History of Joseph Smith by the *Joseph Smith Papers*, which offers the full transcription of the Manuscript History of the Church with sources identified when possible. Though Vogel's references are more thorough, scholars would do well to double-check the *Joseph Smith Papers* material, because at least one unidentified source in Vogel's work is identified by the *Joseph Smith Papers* (Vogel, 1:299n4). (Full disclosure: this reviewer works on the Joseph Smith Papers Project.)

handwriting of the clerks who penned A-1 through F-1, the addenda, and the secondary copies A-2 through E-2. The second chart provides a detailed chronology “that attempts to reconstruct and document when material was entered into the Manuscript History books” (p. lxxxiii). For scholars needing to know when a particular clerk penned particular passages into the history volumes, this table is essential. Relying on sources such as Willard Richards’ personal journal, the Historian’s Office journal, and a deep analysis of the manuscript itself, Vogel has unraveled a significant number of difficult threads of the Gordian knot pertaining to the production of the History of Joseph Smith. Vogel’s third chart assembles data I have personally been needing for some time: a detailed schedule of the first publication of the Joseph Smith history. Vogel provides the issues of the *Times and Seasons* and *Deseret News* in which each portion of the history was published, where that portion is located in the History of Joseph Smith, and the volume and page number of where it appears in *History of the Church*. My only wish would have been an additional column giving the same information for the more widely available published history in the *Millennial Star*.

Vogel’s editorial apparatuses and annotation are as important as they are thorough. Vogel traces three major elements throughout his volumes: handwriting, the differences between manuscripts and various publications, and the sources used for particular passages of the history. As an example: the first significant textual change to the History of Joseph Smith is the introduction of young Joseph Smith’s leg operation. Clerks appended six paragraphs to the original manuscript describing Smith’s surgery. Vogel’s annotation explains that the information was found only in an addendum to the original volume, added by Willard Richards on December 1, 1842. Because of its late introduction to the manuscript, the anecdote was not included when this portion of the manuscript was published in the March 15, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons*. The paragraphs were, however, copied by Charles W. Wandell on April 4–5, 1845, into the version of the history as found in the secondary copy in volume A-2. Also indicated by Vogel is the fact that when B. H. Roberts edited his volumes, he bypassed these six

paragraphs for unknown reasons and did not include them in *History of the Church*. Vogel reproduces the paragraphs, but to show that they were added to the manuscript after publication, he places them in boldface type.⁵¹ One text, one footnote, and one editorial signal (bold text) relay a significant amount of information. Vogel is to be commended for this type of work on every page.

Understandably, no project is perfect, and additional review by himself, other scholars, and a good editor would have improved Vogel's work. First, the annotation is, at times, inconsistent. The way Vogel cites the *History of Joseph Smith* itself is varied. In footnote 7 of volume 1, he uses a truncated citation ("MSHiJS, Book A-1, 1"), but on the next page, footnote 11 drops the short citation and adds additional secondary sources ("Book A-1, 8 [EMD 1:69; PJS 1:284].") The addition of the references to Vogel's own *Early Mormon Documents* and Jessee's *Papers of Joseph Smith* creates some issues, mainly because both of these editions have been supplanted by the superior transcription produced in volume 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*. The additional citations also seem unnecessary because Vogel's own work in these *History of Joseph Smith* volumes supersedes the earlier works as well. Inconsistencies also exist in how Joseph Smith's journal is cited. Vogel sometimes cites Jessee's *Papers of Joseph Smith* and Scott H. Faulring's *American Prophet's Record*, while at other times he cites *The Joseph Smith Papers*.⁶²

A few other issues exist as well. Vogel largely considers the most important scholarly studies in his analysis of the creation of the history. But he could have also benefited from the work in the first volume of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*. Page xi of volume 1 mentions the rough draft created by Howard Coray and a Dr. Miller

5. This is one of three uses therein of boldface type, perhaps straining the utility of one editorial apparatus. The other two are to signal material that appeared in the first newspaper publication but was later dropped by Roberts in *History of the Church* and to provide material from an original source that was not included in the manuscript.

6. An unfortunate timing of the publication of these volumes and the final volume of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* did not allow Vogel to cite from volume 3 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*.

but overlooks the publication of a version of the Manuscript History in Howard Coray's handwriting presented in *The Joseph Smith Papers*.⁷ More confusing is the absence of the rough draft history created in 1839 by Mulholland and also found in volume 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*.⁸ Vogel acknowledges this source but indicates that he would not incorporate it into his "systematic comparison" (p. cxxiii). But he also fails to include it in volume 8, where other draft material is reproduced. He instead directs users to its transcription in Jessee's *Papers of Joseph Smith* and his own *Early Mormon Documents*. This is unfortunate because Vogel's transcription simply reproduces Jessee's transcription and the more recent presentation of the manuscript in the first volume of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* significantly improves the transcription. *The Joseph Smith Papers* webpage also offers digital images of this source, something that Vogel fails to acknowledge.

Some minor additions or changes would have strengthened the volumes. Vogel presents some illustrations of the manuscript, but these seem to mainly reproduce what was published in *Times and Seasons* or *Deseret News*. Additional illustrations would have clarified complexities of the manuscript itself. Vogel's use of descriptive chapter titles as running headers throughout the pages (e.g., "Revelations on Church Government") serves minimal purposes. Readers might have benefited more had he supplied dates or some other objective navigating marker, such as chapter numbers.

Finally, the price limits the availability of these volumes. The Smith-Pettit Foundation should be congratulated for promoting and making available Vogel's impressive work. The balance between marketing books (particularly to those who collect rare or limited-print books)

7. See Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2012), 187–465. This omission occurred despite Vogel's having cited and described this particular source in the "Sources Cited" section of the volume (p. clix).

8. See *JSP*, H1:187, 294–452.

and making available information benefitting scholars' own work can be challenging. I can only hope (and strongly encourage) that an electronic component will eventually disseminate Vogel's work, thereby allowing more scholars access to these impressive volumes.

The above complaints should not steer users away from the importance of this monumental project. Vogel's work will stand for at least a generation within Mormon studies. But the potential longevity of this project raises important questions about the use of the *History of Joseph Smith* within the larger Mormon studies field.

As scholars continue contextualizing the *History of Joseph Smith*, users of the history should proceed with caution. The Mormon historiographical trend has moved scholars both away from and toward the *History of Joseph Smith* as a primary source. The history is a critical source for scholars investigating Mormonism's first generation and their approach to their own recent past. In addition, scholars seeking a tool to research the life of Joseph Smith and his activities should still turn to the history as *one* source of many. But a heavy reliance on the history perpetuates prevailing myths about the Manuscript History itself and hinders the research process.

It is important to understand—as Vogel's eight volumes clearly demonstrate—that B. H. Roberts's edition of *History of the Church* is a selection of a selection of a selection of a selection of sources begun over 150 years ago. Because of this filtering lens, *History of the Church* and the manuscript history on which it is based are not an end-all narrative history of the early church. The selection of sources by Willard Richards and his contemporaries and by Roberts is certainly not the way current scholars would approach the archival record. Vogel's eight-volume treatment of the first eleven volumes of the seventy-plus volume Manuscript History of the Church is in itself a filtered approach.⁹ Aside from the mistakes that those compiling the *History of Joseph Smith* sometimes made, the *History* is also based almost solely on sources from

9. The bulk of the nineteenth-century creation of the manuscript history, which has yet to be fully explored by scholars, has been digitized and is available from the LDS Church History Library under the call number CR 100 102.

authoritative male figures in Mormon history. When scholars use the History, they are therefore ignoring the perspectives of women, “average” members of the church, and minorities. These scholars also chose to be influenced by the narrative structure, rhetoric, and scholarship (such as it was) of how the Mormon past was portrayed by the compilers of the Manuscript History during the mid-nineteenth century. Today’s scholars fail in their archival research when they turn solely to *History of the Church*, and they fail in their comprehensive research when they assume their job is simply to deconstruct *History of the Church* and trace it back to the original source they want to quote. Scholars who make the effort will find contemporary sources that are richer, more complex, and better suited to the questions that are being asked by modern historiography.

Unquestionably, Vogel’s eight-volume *History of Joseph Smith* offers scholars a chance to understand the deconstruction of the Manuscript of Joseph Smith and makes it nearly effortless. But this ease should lead scholars not to efficiency or laziness, but with more frequency to the voices ignored, theories unexplored, and sources awaiting contextualization.

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Richard Francaviglia. *The Mapmakers of New Zion: A Cartographic History of Mormonism*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press. 2015.

Reviewed by Craig S. Campbell

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THE MAPMAKERS OF NEW ZION is an ambitious book presenting a cartographic history of Mormons and Mormonism from the early 1800s to the present day. Its purpose is to show original maps made (or used) by Latter-day Saints and to discuss the geographic and religious interpretations associated with those maps. The result is a marvelous archival cartographic lesson on the LDS experience from its inception.

The book's introduction, "Mapping the Sacred," utilizes historical religious maps to show how past sacred territories have been envisioned graphically. Chapter 1 assesses the earliest town planning plats of the early Saints before their exodus to the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1846. Chapter 2 reviews cartography used as the Saints planned their move westward. Chapter 3 treats cartographic endeavors in the Mormon west, and chapter 4 brings to light the unique contributions of mapmaker James H. Martineau. Chapter 5 breaks with the historical time line in order to portray how Latter-day Saints have interpreted the Book of Mormon using maps. Chapter 6 discusses maps used by Latter-day Saints up to the present day.

I reiterate that the author's purpose is to show *original* maps. The book is not a modern-day thematic cartography that interprets earlier times in a modern light. I had to keep this in mind as I read the book and asked myself why certain maps were not shown or certain themes not addressed.

Anticipating this review, I preconceived some notions about what a work mapping the Mormon realm should ideally offer. First, the book should have viewpoints from both Mormons and non-Mormons. Second, the book should view mapping from the perspectives of leadership

and authority as well as from the vernacular perspectives of common members. The book matched my expectations well—intersections between Mormons and non-Mormons are often evident, and the contrasting views of leaders and rank-and-file members are examined.

The introduction shows how maps bridge reality and otherworldly religious perception. Maps like the ancient T-in-O (a Mediterranean Christ-on-the-cross *T* inside an oceanic *O*) combine geographic reality with spiritual vision (pp. 6–7) and become the jumping-off point for understanding the many maps featured in this book. I had never seen Orlando Ferguson’s “Square and Stationary Earth” map that makes the earth look like a slab of cement indented with a roulette wheel shape (pp. 8–9). It is important that scholars examine the meaning of such maps in which the real world intersects with believers’ perceptions. Although at first the T-in-O and other classic maps seemed old news, I soon developed an enthusiasm for how Francaviglia examined the thin line between a given place and the religious belief associated with it. In my book *Images of the New Jerusalem*, I discuss how the plat of Zion designed for Missouri was laid out without taking into account contemporary Independence, and also how Latter-day Saints (of all walks) today often remove the entirety of Kansas City from their perception of the millennial New Jerusalem (Wow! How will a city of 1.5 million people just disappear?). Similarly, Francaviglia includes a mosaic map from the floor of the Salt Lake City International Airport portraying spiritually prominent Jerusalem but not Tel-Aviv, which is nearly twice the size of Jerusalem (pp. 20, 37).

In this regard, chapter 5 is particularly captivating. The Book of Mormon has much cardinal direction identification indicating comparative locations of cities and other physical features, but it offers no maps. Many Latter-day Saints have proposed maps of Book of Mormon geography, and Francaviglia includes some of the earliest examples in his book. In some cases, though, I was confused as to why certain maps were shown while others were not mentioned. For example, a map used in BYU Book of Mormon course manuals and LDS seminary study guides for many years features a generalized lumpy hourglass shape

for the Americas with Book of Mormon cities and places marked. This map is made from internal comparison—that is, it is hypothetical, based strictly on distances and spatial relationships and related clues gleaned from the Book of Mormon narrative, and avoids any external correlations with present-day locations (Francaviglia does make this internal/external distinction in his book). I was puzzled why he would not include this commonly seen map. Given his emphasis on using original maps, perhaps he omitted it because he could not ascertain when this map was first used.

The span of the book is so great that disconcerting jumps are occasionally made through entire decades, suggesting that Mormon cartography was, at times, a bit thin. My feeling is that there is probably more out there to be discussed, but that material will wait for other outlets. Sometimes the influences of the groups we study become exaggerated, and this is the case with the Mormons in the West. Francaviglia does not ask why, if the Mormons were such a strong presence in the West, there are not more than five or six Book of Mormon place-names there (p. 179). In this vein, in chapter 2, there is an unexpected jump from F. D. Richards in 1855 to Millroy and Hayes in 1899 and then suddenly to Purcell's 2000 triptych (pp. 75–76). Sometimes maps are mentioned but not shown; this is troubling to the curious cartographer but understandable for an atlas-like endeavor where space cannot permit portrayal without sacrificing text. Occasionally an important work is not cited. For example, in the discussion of the Mormon “recapitulation” of biblical history in chapter 2, neither Jan Shipp's work nor my own is mentioned.¹

Still, there is so much archival material that has been seldom if ever seen before that results are impressive and these critiques become minor. This is evident in the chapter on Martineau in which the work of one person overlooked in the past now comes to light. A quibble is

1. Jan Shipp, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Craig Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem: Latter Day Saint Faction Interpretations of Independence, Missouri* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004).

the comparison of Martineau to the Roman administrator Cassiodorus, which seemed a stretch. Also, why not include the 1879 map that shows the peak named in Martineau's honor (p. 153)? But again, these complaints are minor in view of the overall accomplishment.

Occasionally the writing seems naive. For example, no mention is made that maps just like the online maps noted for LDS historical and sacred sites have been available in the popular "quad" compilation of LDS scripture since the mid-1980s, though now eclipsed perhaps by the use of digital editions of scripture.

Francaviglia continually and fruitfully asks why *this* particular map was significant or how *that* map was perceived. He persistently addresses the ways that maps communicate and the nature of map function among Latter-day Saints. Like many geographers, Francaviglia seems to be painfully aware of map illiteracy, particularly in the United States, and goes the extra mile to discuss why maps are important. This topic suits the largely popular audience for whom the book seems intended. According to Francaviglia, "although our culture appears to be fascinated by visual imagery, it has little understanding about how images work to inform or especially how images and words work together in . . . systems" (p. 229). Here, of course, it is the perusal of images that help us understand the Mormon "system."

The only part of the book that I thought rather weak was chapter 6, which concerns maps and the Mormon expansion. Although I liked the maps and the author's main points, two weaknesses are apparent. First, Francaviglia's archival approach made it appear that some of the maps had been selected at random. W. M. Gibson's story of self-promotion is fascinating, but it doesn't fit a logical framework (pp. 196–205). There is a sense that Francaviglia is saying, "I found this cool stuff, so I've got to put it in somewhere." Fortunately, the appeal of the material helps to offset the piecemeal structure of the chapter. Second, modern-day technology seems to blunt Francaviglia's archival approach, and he doesn't quite know how to handle the dilemma. Typing "Book of Mormon maps" into Google yields a proliferation of all kinds of images drawn by all kinds of people. How should these be discussed? Elsewhere, because Francaviglia does not

treat them; perhaps to delve into such would blunt the tone of *originality* of sources in this work. Also, Francaviglia shows administrative maps of missions and such (pp. 208–16), but what about those LDS.org ward and stake boundary maps with purple or blue outlines emphasizing the strictly geographic nature of LDS administration? Might such also be included as a form of LDS cartographic portrayal and meaning?

Along these lines, one issue I would like to have seen addressed is an analysis of how Temple Square in Salt Lake City has been shown in LDS maps over time. Two sacred blocks later were enhanced, and this LDS influence spread with the building of the Church History Museum to the west, the mammoth Conference Center and the new Church History Library to the north, and the church's involvement with the newer City Creek development to the south. Effectively, Temple Square today is at least five square blocks! How has the LDS Church portrayed core sacred space versus profane peripheral space over time, a theme famously treated by religious historian Mircea Eliade?² I expected at least minimal discussion of the mapping of Temple Square as the Mormon "core" but encountered only the stone world maps that appear on the LDS Church Office Building (p. 224).

In chapter 6 one gets the feeling that Francaviglia became bewildered by technology and publishing proliferation over the last century and has just barely scratched the surface. Indeed, he emphasizes that the scholarly treatment of LDS maps and mapping is not complete with the publication of his book.

The Mapmakers of New Zion has a respectful and egalitarian tone. The text is always positive and even reverent, never taunting or negatively tinged. Religion is viewed as an important and meaningful part of life. Francaviglia is also able to pull from his great expertise in other religions, particularly Islam, for comparisons.

So this work is enterprising and thought-provoking. Perhaps the continuity suffers slightly with the introduction of so much disparate

2. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987).

graphic material seldom seen publicly before, but the result is definitely worth it.

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Thomas Carter. *Building Zion: The Material World of Mormon Settlement*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Reviewed by Paul G. Monson

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MORMON CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES has recently become more inescapable than ever for non-Mormons, including the Catholic author of this review. Whether it be the crass satire of a Broadway musical, the presidential candidacy of an LDS member, or the acquaintance of a neighboring family, Americans confront Mormonism with both caricatures and curiosity. Through non-Mormon eyes, Mormon practice and culture are distinctly different and oddly familiar, yet the articulation of this paradox often escapes the observer. Carter, a non-Mormon scholar with an LDS family history, creatively offers a grammar for articulating and understanding this paradox, employing that which is most basic to the fabric of human society: material culture.

The subdiscipline of material culture found its voice in the 1990s, and in this sense the book advances a conversation that began two decades ago with the work of Colleen McDannell on Christianity in

general¹ and C. Mark Hamilton on Mormonism in particular.² Carter's work also complements renewed interest in the application of the genre to Mormon studies, as two recent dissertations by Eileen Ringnalda Barron (2009) and Rachel Gianni Abbott (2013) attest. However, Carter's research predates all of these studies. The fruit of diligent archival research and fieldwork conducted in the Sanpete Valley of central Utah as far back as the 1970s, his book reflects the gradual digestion of these original discoveries. For his analysis, Carter adopts Dell Upton's insight into a society's "constructing and construing" of its material existence (p. xxiv). Carter applies this template to the emergence of a distinctly Mormon landscape in the Sanpete Valley between 1850 and 1890. His twin lenses for viewing this landscape are its social and cultural planes (p. xxv), locating not only what Mormons built (or constructed) but also how they interpreted (or construed) their faith through these creations.

In this latter dimension of cultural construal, however, Carter does something distinctly different. The book goes beyond the physicality of material culture to wrestle with the development of a theological worldview behind the facade of homes, storefronts, meetinghouses, and temples. In this sense, Carter bridges the worlds of history and religious studies, adding theological insight to the world of material culture. He pinpoints three cultural "stories," or "myths," undergirding the Mormon project to build a biblical City of Zion in the unforgiving climate of Utah: "millennialism, continuing revelation, and agency," the latter of which he also terms the "Gospel of Works" (pp. xxviii, 277). He identifies the evolution of Mormon Zion-making as one gravitating from an undifferentiated arrangement (i.e., the unity of sacred and secular) to a differentiated reality (i.e., the separation of sacred and secular). From this realization, Carter charts Mormon development from its nascent "theoretical" zeal in the Midwest (1830–1841) to an "experiential" or experimental phase among pioneers in Utah (1847–1870) to a final

1. Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

2. C. Mark Hamilton, *Nineteenth-Century Mormon Architecture and City Planning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

“enduring” or permanent phase that definitely removed the temple from the secular axis of city life (1870–1890), culminating with the Mormon abolition of polygamy (pp. 11–17). The result is an intriguing thesis: the first sixty years of Mormon material culture manifest a gradual separation of the sacred and secular spheres, such that temples came to occupy the fringes of Utah cities and gradually signify Mormon “otherness,” while the homes, businesses, meetinghouses, and social halls of the city came to symbolize the Mormon assimilation of American orthodoxy and its republican ethos of individualistic capitalism (pp. xii, xxviii–xxix). In essence, Carter claims that Mormons became “reluctant revolutionaries” (p. xxx) and “moderate millenarians” (p. 276), creating a world that “was as much an invention as a restoration” (p. 278). With this argument, Carter sets out to disrupt narratives that delay Mormon assimilation of American values to 1870, showing rather how Mormon material culture embraced secular social patterns from the faith’s inception.

Carter employs eight chapters to support this thesis, and the book’s impressive attention to detail is both its greatest strength and weakness. The author begins with a primer chapter on the Mormon understanding of faith in relation to works, with the conclusion that nineteenth-century Mormons were not egalitarian communalists, as some stubborn narratives maintain. Encouraged by their faith’s principle of “works righteousness” (p. 19), Mormons rather manifested American materialism in their pursuit of private property and individual wealth (p. 22). The following two chapters on patterns of Mormon settlement and wealth distribution demonstrate this point through a stunning array of illustrations, maps, photos, diagrams, and stories. One of Carter’s most fascinating points is how early Mormon city planning borrowed William Penn’s layout of Philadelphia before it adopted a less centralized model (pp. 27–36). Likewise, the third chapter’s discussion of plot and water distribution supports the author’s primary point. But in the end, the point fades into the background as a wealth of information overwhelms the reader. What do the problems of corner lots (pp. 81–85), the choice of picket fence styles (pp. 86–87), or the mode of

barn construction (pp. 88–91) have to do with the author’s thesis? The point seems to be that Mormons mirrored American individualism and materialism in the variety of styles and forms that they embraced. If so, the point is interesting but overstated. A similar claim of “unmistakable worldliness” in home design and fashion among Mormons emerges in the next chapter, insisting that Mormons were “good consumers” long before the arrival of “Gentiles” and the railroad in 1870 (p. 133). Here again, however, the reader tends to get lost in a thicket of details, names, and dates, and once he or she finds the clearing at the end of the chapter, the conclusion lacks profundity. Again, the fifth chapter on the housing patterns of polygamous families would seem at first glance to be one of the more intriguing studies of the book. To be sure, Carter deftly remains fair and sympathetic to this controversial chapter of Mormon history, while nevertheless asserting with a critical eye that, in the end, “Zion was a man’s world” (p. 164). Yet the final verdict is that polygamous architecture and the halls of women’s Relief Societies were, well, normal. The point is certainly salient for non-Mormons who might presume that all polygamous pioneers built miniature “beehives” modeled after that of Brigham Young. However, the reader is so exhausted by the details that the point does not impress. This problem persists in the final three chapters, which examine civic and commercial spaces, meetinghouses, and temples, respectively. Once again, Carter provides ample evidence that Mormon form and style changed with the times, reflecting American values and taste as much as Mormon theology. These final chapters are the book’s best, and the last chapter’s exposition of how the development of Mormon theology and ritual informed the development of LDS temple building is particularly enlightening. In the end, the author certainly demonstrates his thesis with an abundance of examples and details. Nevertheless, the book simultaneously struggles to walk the reader through its evidence, underestimating that a wealth of empirical data may potentially test the patience of the reader. The risk is one of ostensible overgeneralization.

Despite these shortcomings, the work stands as an unparalleled investigation into Mormon material culture and its development. Carter

articulates a compelling argument and substantiates it with remarkable research and erudition. Scholars in history and religious studies will find in it an essential guide to the development of the Mormon worldview, and both Saint and Gentile will appreciate Carter's ability to craft a study that is respectful of Mormon culture while maintaining objectivity in its criticism. However, the book is one for the specialist or eager graduate student. Although several portions of the book explain some basics of Mormon history and theology, other sections presume a more initiated audience. Moreover, Catholics will question the book's simplistic correlation between their tradition and postmillennialism (p. 3), and Protestants may find the thread between Puritan values and Mormon "works righteousness" to be woefully thin (pp. 18–19). Nevertheless, the book also presents an opportunity for further dialogue between faith traditions. For instance, the work invites future scholars to place Carter's assessment of the Mormon experience in nineteenth-century Utah in conversation with those of other religious traditions in the rest of the nation. American Catholics, for instance, have a long history of navigating the tension between the "otherness" of their faith and its perennial accommodation to secular culture and values. The same could be said for many other religions in the nineteenth century and today, especially Islam. Overall, this element of dialogue confirms Carter's central thesis. Mormonism is both different and familiar, and its material culture remains an integral part of this reality.

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Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd. *A Kingdom Transformed: Early Mormonism and the Modern LDS Church*. Second edition. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press. 2016.

Reviewed by Brad Jones

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SHEPHERD AND SHEPHERD’S LATEST EDITION of their ambitious study of LDS Church leaders’ rhetoric is a significant scholarly achievement. The original study covered the period from 1830 to 1979 and offered the reader a sweeping account of the ways in which church leaders have adjusted their leadership strategy since the early days. The second edition of *A Kingdom Transformed* adds content addressing the period from 1980 to 2009.

This book offers an important perspective on the maturation of the LDS Church from the lens of the rhetoric of its highest leaders. In what could only have been a monumental task, the authors (incredibly without the aid of research assistants) hand-coded a random sample of general conference addresses to create quantitative measures of themes and trends in the topics addressed at church conferences. Shepherd and Shepherd have the data to show when and how church leaders changed their emphasis from distinctive and embattled religion at the margins of society to the mainstream religion of the twenty-first century that we see today. One of the most striking findings of their content analysis documents the dramatic decline of “utopian” rhetoric in general conference addresses from a high point in the early Utah period until the First Manifesto. The analysis shows that utopian themes in general conference almost entirely disappeared in the modern era. Their data also show that emphasis on more traditional themes increased during that same period. For example, compared with earlier eras, general conference addresses given in the last part of their data were much more likely to focus on Jesus Christ. This “mainstreaming” of the LDS Church

has been qualitatively described in other work,¹ but the authors' quantitative evidence is particularly compelling. During the same period that Mormon leaders were deemphasizing utopian themes there was a dramatic decline in worry about dissenters.

In addition to documenting important areas of change over the course of the church's history, the authors show that several themes remained relatively constant during the period under study. For example, their data do not show much shift in the emphasis on individualism through the years (although the accompanying decline in emphasis on social reformation means that in relative terms individualism is ascendant).

Methodological critiques

The process of translating unstructured, qualitative texts to quantitative measures is, as anyone who has attempted it can attest, fraught with challenges. In everything except for the latest update, this was done with human eyes reading the sermons and coding their content in accordance to some agreed-upon set of dimensions. For example, Shepherd and Shepherd document a decline in the proportion of talks over the general conference pulpit that emphasized utopian themes. This would have required human coders to recognize and agree upon certain cues in the text that correspond to these themes. The authors then take the mentions in each talk and use them to create scores² that can be tracked over time, so the main evidence that the reader is presented with in the text has been doubly abstracted from the sources. First was the process of translating the topics of the talk into categories, and second was the process of translating those topic mentions into quantitative indicators.

1. For example, Armand Mauss's classic *The Angel and the Beehive* (1994) or Thomas Alexander's *Mormonism in Transition* (1986), to name just two.

2. The authors rely upon "salience scores." These are numbers ranging from 0 to 1 derived by counting the number of paragraphs in a talk that mention a certain theme and dividing that count by the total number of paragraphs in the address.

I would have liked to see more discussion of the uncertainty associated with the measures given in the book.³ It was difficult for me to judge in places what was ‘signal’ and what might have been ‘noise.’ Uncertainty might have crept into the process at any point. First, the texts were sampled from the larger population of general conference addresses. Different samples would have produced slightly different measures. Second, there is plenty of opportunity for human error in a large-scale coding project like this one. Finally, the choices made in scale construction have consequences for the interpretation of the measures.

The second methodological critique deals with bridging the earlier part of the analysis with the additional analyses added for the second edition. The authors apply a new coding method to the last thirty years based on the LDS General Conference Corpus maintained at Brigham Young University. This corpus did not exist when the authors first conducted their study, but the complete digitization and indexing of general conference addresses into a scholarly linguistic corpus allowed Shepherd and Shepherd to bypass the need for human coders for the second part of their project. Using the insights gleaned from the first part of their study, the authors are able to extend the analysis forward with a greatly reduced labor cost.

The authors note that the new measures are not directly comparable to the older measures since both are based on different things. This is fine, but it seems that it would have been relatively straightforward to apply the same method they use on the last thirty years to the earlier parts of the corpus as well. This would permit us to see directly comparable measures between the newer and older parts of the data. It would also have had the effect of replicating the analysis performed in the original study. To the extent that their findings from this replication agreed with

3. This wouldn’t necessarily require any new data collection. Much could be done through bootstrapping—sampling with replacement from the original data—to quantify the expected level of uncertainty in the data. Sampling either from the codings provided by the researchers or from the documents selected (or perhaps some combination) should yield some measure of the potential variability that was a function of the particular selection of texts sampled.

the findings from the earlier part of the study, we could be relatively more confident that the patterns were genuine findings rather than statistical artifacts. To the extent that there were substantial differences, we might be led to question the validity of the corpus-derived measures.

Substantive critiques

In addition to my methodological quibbles, I also have some minor substantive complaints about the study. First, and perhaps as a consequence of the sampling strategy, the authors consistently treat the church leadership as a monolithic entity. This is fine for the broad patterns that Shepherd and Shepherd are interested in, but I consistently found myself asking *who* was responsible for the trends they demonstrate.⁴ Are new cohorts of General Authorities changing the overall distribution of topics addressed in general conference, or do we see changes in individual leaders' rhetoric? Church leaders generally have long tenures. Some quick calculations tell me that the average term of full-time church service of an LDS apostle hovers around thirty years, with a quarter of apostles serving more than forty years. This is long enough that we might expect to see generational differences within the highest leadership of the church. It also might be true that where a particular leader sits has some influence on the stands he takes in general conference addresses. It would be interesting to know if there are distinguishable differences between leaders' addresses based on their position (First Presidency, Seventy, etc.). It is also most likely the case that the context of the session might have some bearing on the content of the speeches made. For example, in the modern era (at least from my own experience), priesthood sessions contain different kinds of language than what is heard in the Sunday morning session.

4. The speaker-level analysis I am suggesting here would be much easier to carry out on the corpus that contains the universe of all general conference addresses that the authors use for their update.

Second, I would have liked to see a little more discussion of the reach and influence of general conference over the years. How has the meaning of general conference changed over time? The authors do give a brief history of the institution of general conference in the LDS Church, but they do not seem to go deep enough in exploring the implications that this history has for their study. I imagine that changes in the audience and reach of the conference itself are responsible for some of the changing trends that the authors demonstrate to be independent of actual changes in focus or leadership style from the leading brethren. There are some obvious differences in the freewheeling, relatively unconstrained conferences before the sessions were transmitted to a wider audience and stricter time limits were imposed. Within living memory, conference addresses were accessible to the general membership everywhere outside Salt Lake City only through their publication in church periodicals.

It would be fascinating to conduct a parallel analysis to the authors' study of general conference rhetoric with a corpus of local sermons. Even though this parallel study would be impossible, I would have liked to see some discussion of the extent to which the emphasis and direction on particular topics from top leaders affect the general membership in the pews and how this might have changed over time. Is the contemporary church more aligned with Salt Lake in terms of its general emphasis than were earlier generations of Latter-day Saints? How much of this increased alignment (if it has indeed increased) can be attributed to the accommodationist trend over the past 150 years? Such questions cannot be answered empirically in the same way, but thinking through the social and technological differences between the contemporary membership and the membership in earlier times might prove fruitful.

Third, there were points in the book where I was a bit overwhelmed with the sociological theories that were informing the scholarship. Shepherd and Shepherd rooted their work deeply in sociological theories of religion, and they have the citations to prove it. Coming from a different academic background, I found some of the theoretical background

interesting, but it is too thick in places and distracts from the overall flow of the study.

Concluding thoughts

In sum, this work is a valuable contribution to the study of the history of the church, and it would be a welcome addition to any Mormon studies scholars' libraries. The aims of the book are also more general than accounting for the history of the LDS Church. In addition to adding to our understanding of the development of the church, the authors go to lengths throughout the book to connect the evidence from the Mormon case study to broader theories of religious development and change. The end product is a carefully researched and rigorous account that places the LDS Church in context.

Shepherd and Shepherd have produced a remarkable piece of scholarship in *A Kingdom Transformed*. By zooming out and examining aggregate trends in emphasis over time, they have provided a real contribution to the study of the development of the church, and one can hope that the authors or others picking up their legacy will continue to update this important study going into the future.

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Letter to the Editor

Response to Review of Reaching the Nations

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WE APPRECIATE THE SELECTION OF OUR WORK, *Reaching the Nations: International Church Growth Almanac*, for review in the *Mormon Studies Review*,¹ and also the importance accorded by the editors to international LDS studies. We value the reviewers' recognition of our work as containing accurate and reliable data on the international LDS Church but wish to respond to what we view as inaccuracies in the review article.

The review claims that “*RTN* contains factual inaccuracies pertaining to LDS church units,” but this claim is not substantiated. Eustache Ilunga states that “the Kinshasa Mokali Stake was created in 2012, not 2013,” and alleges that *RTN* fails to mention branches in Uvira, DR Congo. *RTN* correctly specifies that “stakes have been organized in . . . Kinshasa Mokali (2012)”² and notes that “cities that had their first independent LDS congregations established after 2005 included . . . Uvira (2011).”

Marcello Jun de Oliveira alleges that “more updated data from the 2010 Brazilian Census are entirely ignored,” yet the release of full census data was “postponed . . . to 2013,”³ when *RTN* was in press. He claims

1. Charles Carter et al., review of *Reaching the Nations: International LDS Church Growth Almanac, 2014 Edition*, by David G. Stewart Jr. and Matthew Martinich, *Mormon Studies Review* 3 (2016): 147–62.

2. Stewart and Martinich, *Reaching the Nations*, 2:358.

3. “Calendar 2012,” Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, accessed 23 July 2016, <http://www.ibge.gov.br/english/estatistica/populacao/censo2010/calendario.shtm>. Census data at <http://censo2010.ibge.gov.br/apps/atlas/>.

that our demographic data for Brazil are “outdated and wrong,” as we reference 2012 US State Department data. Jun de Oliveira may not have noticed *RTN*’s 2013 publication date nor considered the logistics of publishing a work of nearly a million words.

Carter Charles queries the provenance of our ethnic data for France and claims that collecting such data is illegal. Yet the law cited refers to censuses, not surveys and polls,⁴ and exempts government agencies, including INSEE,⁵ which publishes data on the origins of first- and second-generation immigrants.

Gina Colvin advises that *Maori* is “always” written with a macron, yet the usage of *Maori* without a macron is standard in English outside New Zealand.⁶ *RTN* contains thousands of ethnic and place-names for which we have omitted diacritics per standard English for searching, editing, and portability.

Marcello Jun de Oliveira complains that more diverse resources should be cited for country data and claims that “other data mentioned, such as membership in other Christian denominations, are never sourced.” As mentioned in *RTN*’s introduction, these data are sourced in the bibliography at the end of each volume. Similar statistical data are best cited from consistent sources to avoid discrepancies. Other reviewers questioned some of the ethnicity and language statistics, which, as we have noted, derive from sources listed in the bibliography. *RTN* contains 4,715 footnotes, primarily on LDS history; most almanacs have few or none.

Although most reviewers made few or no claims of substantive error in *Reaching the Nations*, Wilfried Decoo disputed numerous items. Decoo alleges that we have “muddled” the title of an *LDS Church News* article, “The Church in Belgium: Membership has international

4. Michael Cosgrove, “How does France count its Muslim population?” *Le Figaro*, 4 July 2011, accessed 6 August 2016, <http://plus.lefigaro.fr/note/how-does-france-count-its-muslim-population-20110407-435643>.

5. Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques, accessed 26 July 2016, <http://www.insee.fr/>.

6. “Maori Language,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 7 January 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maori-language>.

flavor in Church version of United Nations,” and claims that the final six words are our invention. In fact, we have correctly cited the title.⁷ Decoo claims that “note 93 on page 65” is not correlated with the preceding sentences, yet there is no footnote 93 on page 65 of our printed book, PDF, ePub, or Kindle versions.

Mr. Decoo denies that Belgium colonized the Congo during the nineteenth century. Our section on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) notes: “The region became known as the Congo Free State in 1884, although in fact it was controlled by the King of Belgium. The Congo was annexed to Belgium in 1908 as the Belgian Congo.”⁸ Belgian King Leopold II was recognized as the sovereign of the Congo Free State, organized on the territory of the modern DRC,⁹ at the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884–85.¹⁰ The deaths of millions of Congolese have been attributed to nineteenth-century colonial atrocities brought to Western attention by Joseph Conrad’s 1899 novel *Heart of Darkness*. The Congo was primarily colonized by Belgians and was administered from Belgium in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, first by the Belgian Head of State and then by the Parliament. Decoo also disputes that Belgium fell under Spanish control in 1519, and he places the event with the ascension of Philip II in 1556. The relocation of the seat of power and hereditary title of the Burgundian lands to Spain, where Charles V appears to have spent most of his reign, under his personal union of the houses of Valois-Burgundy, Hapsburg, and Trastámara in

7. Chris Miasnik, “The Church in Belgium: Membership has international flavor in Church version of United Nations,” *LDS Church News*, 7 December 1996, accessed 26 July 2016, <http://www.ldschurchnewsarchive.com/articles/28181/The-Church-in-Belgium—Membership-has-international-flavor-in-Church-version-of-United-Nations.html>.

8. Stewart and Martinich, *Reaching the Nations*, 2:355.

9. Matthew G. Stanard, “Belgian Colonial Rule,” Oxford Bibliographies, accessed 7 January 2015, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846733/obo-9780199846733-0107.xml>; and “Leopold II, King of Belgium,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 7 January 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Leopold-II-king-of-Belgium>.

10. Congo Free State,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 9 July 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Congo-Free-State>.

1519,¹¹ is often taken as the date of Spanish control of Belgium, notwithstanding Charles's frequent visits and favor toward Flemish nobles.

Decoo denies that tobacco consumption rates are high in Belgium. The American Cancer Society cites 2014 tobacco use in Belgium as one of the highest rates in Europe, at 2,353 cigarettes smoked per person over age fifteen;¹² it also attributes many male deaths in Belgium to tobacco use.¹³ We have followed other sources in listing tobacco as a "major crop" of Belgium.¹⁴ Decoo claims that in the Ardennes "there are no real 'mountains.'" The Ardennes has long been designated by geologists as a mountain range, formed in the Givetian state of the Devonian period¹⁵ and older than the Alps and Rockies. Nowhere do we state that the Ardennes region constitutes a formal political division or nonoverlapping area with Wallonia. Decoo critiques our omission of Bruges among "several . . . large economic centers . . . towards the end of the Middle Ages," yet our text ("cities . . . such as") indicates that our examples are not comprehensive, and Bruges is less than half as populous as the smallest of the three cities listed. Our data on "speakers of other languages" is consistent with estimates in Omniglot.¹⁶ Estimates

11. "Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 7 January 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-V-Holy-Roman-emperor>.

12. Michael Eriksen et al., *The Tobacco Atlas*, fifth ed. (American Cancer Society, 2015). An interactive summary version is available at <http://www.tobaccoatlas.org/topic/cigarette-use-globally>, citing per capita cigarette consumption in Belgium at 2,353 in 2014 (accessed 6 December 2015).

13. Eriksen, *Tobacco Atlas*, 15, http://3pk43x313ggr4cy0lh3tctjh.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/TA5_2015_WEB.pdf (accessed 8 January 2016).

14. "Belgium: Economy," *Infoplease Almanac*, accessed 7 January 2016, <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/world/belgium-economy.html>. See also "Belgium," *CIA World Factbook*, accessed 7 January 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html>.

15. "Middle Rhine Highlands," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 7 January 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Middle-Rhine-Highlands>; and "Givetian Stage," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 3 July 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/science/Givetian-Stage>.

16. "Walloon," Omniglot.com, accessed 9 July 2016, <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/walloon.htm>.

vary widely for languages with few monolinguals in multilingual areas due to varying definitions¹⁷ and levels of proficiency, limited survey quality, and controversy in distinguishing between languages and dialects.¹⁸ We are aware of the continued decline of the Walloon language. We have made no claims regarding the speakers' proficiency and have opted toward the higher estimates to be inclusive. These data in *RTN* are all consistent with appropriate reference sources and within the range of mainstream scholarship. On none of these items have we introduced error through our own confusion or fabrication, as Decoo claims. Scholarship often involves different interpretations that can be supported by evidence and reasoning. We wish that we had space for expanded and nuanced discussions, yet our text is consistent with the style of an almanac.

We are unable to assess Decoo's remarkable claim that centuries-old Belgian tobacco cultivation "is to disappear," as his URLs are defunct and lack academic referencing. We agree with Decoo's critique that the administrative region of Wallonia includes southern as well as central Belgium. Although the annexation of Belgium by France in October 1795 is listed in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* under the heading "The Napoleonic Era,"¹⁹ we agree that this occurred before Napoleon's coup.²⁰ This leaves only two minor items as potentially valid out of Decoo's numerous allegations: one factual error (Belgium's annexation

17. "Limburgish," *Ethnologue.com*, accessed 9 July 2016, <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/lim>.

18. "The Limburgish language is officially recognized by the provincial government of Wallonia, but not by the Belgian national government. See "Limburgish (Limburgs)," *Omniglot.com*, accessed 9 July 2016, <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/limburgish.htm>.

19. "Belgium: The Napoleonic Era," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, accessed 10 July 2016, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02395a.htm>.

20. We differ with Decoo's assertion that Belgium was already "well-integrated" into France when Napoleon took power, as the leaders of the revolt against the French (termed the Peasants War or *Boerenkrijg*) that began in the Low Countries in October 1798 were executed in the summer of 1799, not long before Napoleon's November coup. See "Belgium: The Napoleonic Era" and "The Flemish Peasants War of 1798," accessed 10 July 2016, <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/military/napwars/boerenkrijg.html>.

by France occurred before Napoleon's rule) and one omission (Wallonia includes southern as well as central Belgium). Our actual error rate appears to be well below that of the reviewers, even on items they disputed. We believe that *RTN*'s accuracy meets or exceeds the standards of comparable works.

Some reviewers may not have understood the nature of our work. Gina Colvin implies that we did not engage local researchers because we spelled *Maori* without a macron. Taunalyn Rutherford claims that *Reaching the Nations* "should be seen as no more than what it is: an encyclopedic reference."²¹ Colvin and Rutherford's assumption that our work is a piece of library research compiled without local insight or input is inconsistent with vast original church-related data in *RTN* that reviewers have acknowledged as accurate. Although we turned to reference sources for country profile data and church histories, the core of our work consists of original church-growth research. Decoo dismisses our analysis without consideration, alleging that the scholarly basis for our analysis of factors associated with church growth is "extremely weak" because we have not cited interpretive historical scholarship published in eclectic journals that, he claims, would be referenced in "any serious approach." To Decoo, the fact that we have implemented a systematic research methodology, have conducted field work in over forty countries, have interviewed thousands of Latter-day Saints and current and former missionaries worldwide, have engaged an extensive network of local contacts, and have received over seven thousand completed surveys does not qualify our work as real scholarship. We believe that our findings add new insights to many topics.

As our analysis of church-growth issues for each country is the result of extensive original research, our findings do not depend on the citation of other authors for validity. We are obviously familiar with this literature, as David Stewart has cited Decoo's two essays ten

21. We appreciate her acknowledgment that *RTN* is more on par with an encyclopedia than with an almanac.

times in a prior publication,²² as well as numerous other authors. We have cited this literature abundantly in other academic publications we have contributed to on the international LDS Church.²³ As we compiled *RTN*, our survey of LDS-related scholarly journals suggested that this literature was too sparse to provide more than a few historical data points about a minority of the 219 countries and territories we covered. With few exceptions, this literature consists of historical or observational essays that lack formal study design, are uneven in coverage and content, and require further interrogation. Statistics on LDS member activity and convert retention are sparse, dated, and tentatively represented as “estimated” and “about.”²⁴ Decoo’s pieces, as the titles “Issues” and “Reflections”²⁵ announce, are interesting anecdotal-observational essays.

One of the few journal articles with formal research methodology reports a 25 percent response rate on a survey of two wards,²⁶ which the author acknowledges is “much too small to be more than barely suggestive of certain recurrent traits in these wards.”²⁷ With such works among the most rigorous studies available, the evidence for many claims in this literature is inconclusive. Exceptions might include practices like

22. David G. Stewart Jr., *The Law of the Harvest: Practical Principles of Effective Missionary Work* (Henderson, NV: Cumorah Foundation, 2007), 461.

23. See Seth L. Bryant, Henri Gooren, Rick Phillips, and David G. Stewart Jr., “Conversion and Retention in Mormonism,” in *Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 756–85. See also David G. Stewart Jr., “Growth, Retention and Internationalization,” in *Revisiting Thomas O’Dea’s The Mormons: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. C. Jacobson, J. Hoffman, and T. Heaton (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008), 328–61.

24. Wilfried Decoo, “Issues in Writing European History and in Building the Church in Europe,” *Journal of Mormon History* (Spring 1997): 164.

25. Wilfried Decoo, “Feeding the Fleeing Flock: Reflections on the Struggle to Retain Church Members in Europe,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29/1 (Spring 1996): 97–113.

26. Henri Gooren, “Analyzing LDS Growth in Guatemala: A Report from a Barrio,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43 (Summer 2000): 97–115.

27. Gooren, “Analyzing LDS Growth in Guatemala,” 99.

the rushed-baptism periods in the UK,²⁸ Australia,²⁹ and Japan;³⁰ *RTN* cites the latter two. Seeing a need for independent original research on church growth, we primarily cited sources presenting raw data rather than interpretive scholarship. Although additional items from this literature could be cited if we decide to pursue further editions, we believe that a large dose of humility is in order in describing extant scholarship on the international LDS Church and the scope and quality of evidence it provides. We believe that systematic, evidence-based research design and large-scale data collection are necessary to achieve findings of optimal rigor, and we hope to see increased utilization of such methods by other authors.

We appreciate the reviewers' time and effort in reviewing our work. We also thank the editors for their consideration of our work in *MSR* and for providing us the opportunity for us to respond.

—David G. Stewart Jr. and Matthew Martinich

28. D. Michael Quinn, "I-Thou vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon 'Baseball Baptism' Era," *Sunstone* 16/7 (December 1993): 30–44.

29. Marjorie Newton, "Towards 2000: Mormonism in Australia," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29/1 (Spring 1996): 193–206.

30. Jiro Numano, "Perseverance amid Paradox: The Struggle of the LDS Church in Japan Today," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39/4 (Winter 2006): 138–55.