
Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith's Narrative Canon*

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Luther nailed his complaints to the door and the church fathers countered with decrees of anathema. In such exchanges of creedal statement and dogmatic restatement, most of modern Christianity has formed and reformed itself. Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, wrote stories, however. Not surprisingly, then, it is a literary critic and not a theologian who labels Smith “an authentic religious genius . . . in the possession and expression of what could be called the religion-making imagination.” Indeed, Harold Bloom credits Mormonism’s very survival to “an immense power of the myth-making imagination.”¹ Of course, myth in the sense used here refers not to fiction as the opposite of fact but to highly symbolic narratives that attempt to account for existence by providing a history of divine and human interaction.² This article seeks to illuminate the relationship between Smith’s mythmaking and the nature of Mormonism as a radical adaptation of traditional Christianity.

Analysis of Smith’s writings is dominated by polemics between those within and those antagonistic to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Latter-day Saints), Smith’s largest institutional leg-

* A portion of this article was presented in 2003 to the Yale Conference on “God, Humanity, and Revelation: Perspectives from Mormon Philosophy and History.” I am grateful to Stephen Marini for his helpful comments as conference respondent and to many others who have contributed more informally to the article’s evolution. I thank the Vanderbilt University Divinity School for a teaching leave in support of this project.

¹ Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 96–97.

² Emphasizing as it does the “bond between man and what he considers sacred,” my definition of myth takes its cue from Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon, 1967), 5. For an introduction to the question of veracity and myth, including biblical myth, that is as insightful as it is brief, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1–7.

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0022-4189/2007/8704-0001\$10.00

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acy.³ Reasons vary, no doubt, for academic aversion to studying Smith's texts. Most obviously, they are numerous, including nearly eight hundred pages of published revelations that comprise the LDS scriptural canon.⁴ There is also Mark Twain's famous judgment that at least some of it is "chloroform in print."⁵ Scholars themselves are famous, however, for thriving on what bores others. The more probable barrier to academic interest in Smith's writings is the purported otherworldliness of their production. Golden plates, seer stones, Egyptian mummies, and a who's who of biblical and nonbiblical angelic messengers have a decidedly chilling effect on scholars of American religion, except as a lens for psychological analysis.⁶ The manner in which confessional function and mystical production merge in LDS canon is a further deterrent. The question of Smith's veracity as a prophet was, from the beginning, inseparable from his production of text.⁷

Whatever the cause, it remains the case that the academy tends to give Smith's writings short shrift, if not a wide berth, and to focus on Smith's personal history or thought world.⁸ Even Bloom's effort "to

³ A comprehensive bibliography of both sides of the polemic, as well as independent scholarship on the varieties of Mormonism, is found in James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker, *Studies in Mormon History, 1830–1997: An Indexed Bibliography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

⁴ The LDS Church's canon consists of (1) the King James Version of the Bible as edited by Smith; (2) the Book of Mormon; (3) The Pearl of Great Price, a collection of Smith's revelations, including the Book of Abraham and an account of Smith's early revelatory experiences; and (4) the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, a compilation of Smith's revelations concerned primarily with the organization of the church. The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Smith's most discursive scripture. Even so, it too suggests the importance of historical narrative to Mormonism by introducing each revelation with a paragraph concerning its historical context, including description of relevant persons and events that induced the revelation on a specified date.

⁵ Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing, 1872), 127: "The book [of Mormon] is a curiosity to me, it is such a pretentious affair, and yet so 'slow,' so sleepy, such an insipid mess of inspiration. It is chloroform in print."

⁶ First published in 1945, Fawn M. Brodie's *No Man Knows My History* remains the most popular psychobiography of Smith, as evidenced by Knopf's 1971 publication of an enlarged, second edition. For the most recent example of the genre, see Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2004). For an analysis of the genre, see D. Michael Quinn, "Biographers and the Mormon 'Prophet Puzzle': 1974–2004," *Journal of Mormon History* 32, no. 2 (2006): 226–45.

⁷ See Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 84, 86–87.

⁸ To the extent that the academy, usually through its historians, has considered Smith's writings, its attention has been limited to the content of the Book of Mormon. See, e.g., Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); and Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). The two exceptions to scholarship's exclusive focus on the Book of Mormon are Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: A New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); and Phillip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and are discussed below.

bring us closer to the workings of religious imagination” relies largely on an analysis of Smith’s personal charisma and the speculative concepts deducible from his narratives. For Bloom, “Joseph Smith, and his life, personality, and visions far transcended his talents at the composition of divine texts.”⁹ Given Smith’s dramatic life and death, there is reason to be interested in the man himself. Smith was twenty-four years old when, in 1830, he published the Book of Mormon and formally organized his followers into a church. Fourteen years, many thousands of believers, multiple wives, three cities, two temples, and one presidential campaign later, Smith was murdered in Illinois. Likewise, his theological concepts, including as they did plural marriage, premortal existence, and deification, to name a few, differed enough from Western Christian tradition to warrant attention. Ultimately, however, neither Smith’s life nor his speculative thought is sufficient to explain the nature or continuing vitality of either the LDS Church or its critics—at least, that is the argument of this article, which, presuming to begin where Bloom leaves off, looks to the mythos to explain the man, not vice versa.

By considering the narrative function of Smith’s writings, I hope to show the extent to which Smith’s reappropriation of the biblical story competed with traditional Christian theologies, offering his believing readers a particular-to-them sense of time and, consequently, a sense of what is real. My analysis begins, however, with the classic religious studies question: how may Smith’s writings be adequately understood independent of the faith claim they make upon believers? My approach relies upon Ricoeur’s hermeneutic of revelation, as well as his writings on time and narrative that provide a model for placing reason and revelation in conversation to “engender something like an understanding of faith.”¹⁰ Here, the “something like” is based on an analysis of Smith’s self-understanding as a translator and the relation of that self-understanding to the texts he produces.

The second portion of the article turns to the narrative content and style of these texts to demonstrate how they leverage the form, sub-

⁹ Bloom, *American Religion*, 82; see also 97, 104–8. For the most recent biography, see Richard Lyman Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005).

¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 73. My arguments throughout rely heavily on Ricoeur’s work distinguishing between philosophical and religious language. More specifically, I employ his concept that the revelatory capacity of religious narrative is not measured by its source but by its function. Thus, the question is not whether the author is inspired but, rather, does the text illuminate reality through the world it offers the reader and does it obtain a response in the lived experience of not merely an individual but a community of readers who find in the text a livable future. See, inter alia, Paul Ricoeur, “Philosophy and Religious Language,” in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 35–47.

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stance, and authority of the biblical myth to subvert definitive aspects of traditional Christianity.¹¹ My hypothesis is that Smith's religion-making success is related to his having deployed the formal attributes of narrative to challenge the Christian tradition in ways not possible through discursive debate or speculative theology. As myths that seek to explain human existence, the definitive function of Smith's stories is "one of cosmicization; of giving meaning and shape to the world; of stating what is really real, self-founded."¹² As such, Smith's narrative elaboration on Christian scripture constituted a competing myth that, true to its genre, "recalibrated categories and redistributed privilege."¹³

Specifically, I will attempt to show that Smith's biblically based narratives recalibrated traditional Christianity's theology of human creation, fall, and salvific potential, as it relates to the origin and end of evil. As such, Smith's new mythos overtly redistributed the privilege central to both Jewish and Christian biblical myth: the capacity to know God, as expressed most directly in Exodus 19 and John 17. To state these aspects of Smith's work discursively obscures the narrative forms in which they are communicated to and function among believing readers. Again, though necessitated at times by the analytical approach of the article, reducing Smith's event-driven narratives to propositional statements is alien to the religious system he created. Thus, I conclude with a discussion of the function of Smith's narratives in creating a livable future for his believing readers.

As with other myths that have founded a sense of peoplehood, Smith's narrative history of human and divine interaction is ultimately oriented to a future time that serves as a basis for acting in the present. Like much American religion, however, Mormonism did not seek to transcend time but to capture the eternal in time or, in religious terms, to build Zion. Smith's narratives provide, in the story of Enoch, the model of the Latter-day Saint version of this endeavor and convey the deep differences between LDS and traditional Christian theological anthropologies. Hence, a few words about Zion, as a realizable future, will be in order.

Necessarily brief, these comments on Mormonism's sense of time—or, more specifically, its sense of a history oriented to a future aeon—

¹¹ This will require me to deduce theology from narrative but only as a means to compare Latter-day Saint and traditional Christian thought. Otherwise, it would not be possible to compare the apples of Smith's stories with the oranges of traditional Christian philosophy.

¹² W. Taylor Stevenson, "Myth and the Crisis of Historical Consciousness," in *Myth and the Crisis of Historical Consciousness*, ed. L. W. Gibbs and W. T. Stevenson (Missoula: University of Montana and Scholars Press, 1975), 5.

¹³ Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 216.

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illustrate the way in which Smith's narratives contribute to the capacity of the Latter-day Saints to constitute and reconstitute themselves and their church in the face of changing circumstances, including the recent international composition of its membership. Ultimately, I argue that Smith's narratives provide a world of meaning by which his believing readers understood and continue to understand themselves existentially in terms of a global future and not merely their American past.

I. TRANSLATING TIME

"Recourse to documents signals a dividing line between history and fiction," observed Ricoeur when considering the difference between stories granted the status of depicting past fact and those deemed the exclusive product of human imagination.¹⁴ Joseph Smith's work clearly illustrates this elementary point in the extent to which he claims to translate from documentary sources, and his followers rely on these claims for their sense of the historicity of his work. It is just as clear, however, that Smith straddled this line and tested the already permeable boundaries between history and fiction, as well as their corollaries: translation and creation, reason and revelation.

The first and best known of Smith's publications was a narrative of epic scale and purportedly based on a record engraved on ancient metal plates. The record was translated by Smith, and the plates were then returned to the angel from whence they came. A nearly six-hundred-page story of a people's "bond with the sacred," the Book of Mormon begins with an account of an Israelite family's flight from sixth-century BCE Jerusalem and subsequent establishment of a civilization in the Western Hemisphere.¹⁵ The story climaxes in Christ's postresurrection appearance and organization of his church there. The story ends circa 400 CE with the destruction of the civilization through sin-induced warfare. Still the sine qua non of Smith's prophetic claims, more than 129 million copies of the Book of Mormon have been published in 105 languages since 1830.¹⁶

Smith published also an account of Abram's struggle against idolatry in Ur and his vision of the heavens that would make him Israel's pa-

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdés (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 346.

¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 5.

¹⁶ This figure is as of December 31, 2005, and accounts only for the LDS Church's dissemination of the book (<http://www.lds.org/newsroom/page/0,15606,4034-1-10-168,00.html>). Figures from the Community of Christ are not available. In 2003, the University of Illinois published a reader's edition for classroom use. The first trade edition of the Book of Mormon was published in 2004 by Doubleday.

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triarch and Pharaoh's astronomer. On its title page, the text is denominated "a Translation of some ancient Records . . . writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt."¹⁷ Thus, as with the Book of Mormon, the claim to a historical source was overt. In this case the documents resorted to were purchased by the church in 1835 from the estate of a European adventurer whose American heir brought four mummies and several papyri to Smith to see if he could, as rumor had it, translate hieroglyphs.¹⁸ First published in 1842, the Book of Abraham is today included in the LDS Church's canon and given equal status to the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

Finally, and most important for this analysis, Smith revised the Bible itself, producing what is most commonly called the "Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible" (JST). Begun in the summer of 1830 and occupying Smith's time as political and economic exigencies allowed, the "new translation," as he called it, was never published in its entirety during his lifetime and was arguably incomplete at his death in 1844.¹⁹ Smith's changes to the King James Version (KJV) were, however, numerous and ranged from simple grammatical modifications or modernization of archaic words to lengthy additions of new material. Approximately 3,400 verses in the KJV were affected, one-third of which were in the Old Testament and the remaining two-thirds in the New Testament. These changes were embedded directly into the text, not appended as marginalia.²⁰

¹⁷ The Book of Abraham, in *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 29.

¹⁸ A detailed account of the book's exotic history can be found in H. Donl Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1995).

¹⁹ Whether or not Smith completed the project has been a matter of debate among his followers. Compare Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation," *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), 207–14; and Richard P. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1995), 130–31. For a summary of the problem and its contemporary resolution, see Robert L. Millet, "Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: A Historical Overview," in *The Joseph Smith Translation: A Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, ed. M. S. Nyman and R. L. Millet (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1985), 22–49. Generally speaking, however, it is doubtful that Smith considered any of his works finished in the sense that he did not feel free to revisit them at a later date, including after publication. Smith explicitly rejected the notion of inerrancy. See, e.g., Book of Mormon, title page ("And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God.").

²⁰ Matthews (*Plainer Translation*, 253) summarizes these changes in three categories according to their effect: "restorative" of original biblical meaning or material, "inspired commentary," and "harmonization of doctrinal concepts" revealed to Smith. Barlow (*Mormons and the Bible*, 51–52) breaks these categories down further into six types, including the grammatical and commonsensical. For a detailed examination of Smith's approach to the KJV text, see

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Primacy of narrativized event over theological idea is characteristic of all of Smith's writings but is most striking when read in the context of an otherwise familiar biblical plot. In the words of one most familiar with it, the JST is an unabashed "recitation of events purporting to be actual historical occurrences. The obvious impression . . . is that the reader is being treated to a record of historic events lost from all other versions of the Bible."²¹ JST Mark's version of the institution narrative is typical. Additions to the KJV are indicated here in italics: "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. *And as oft as ye do this ordinance, ye will remember me in this hour that I was with you and drank with you of this cup, even the last time in my ministry.* Verily I say unto you, *Of this ye shall bear record; for I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine with you, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And now they were grieved and wept over him.*"²² While the theological implications of Smith's changes are profound, they are stylistically subordinated to the narrative event. No attempt is made to elucidate "this hour" for the reader, much less explain the shift of traditional emphasis from the impending cross to the instant meal table or the implication that Jesus may yet drink with others. Smith's focus is on events to the exclusion of explanation, but the result is no less theologically significant to Christian tradition.

Because of concerns over the reliability of available manuscripts for the JST, only Smith's revisions to the first six chapters of Genesis were given canonical status by the Latter-day Saints prior to the late twentieth century. These six chapters, as well as an introductory chapter of entirely new material, were printed in church periodicals during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Beginning in 1851, after being included with other of his revelations in a compendium titled *The Pearl of Great Price*, JST Genesis was widely circulated among church members. In 1880, these same chapters were formally canonized as "the Book of Moses" and printed in copies of LDS scriptures. Thus, like the Book of Mormon's Israelite exodus to America, the JST's creation narrative has always informed the LDS ethos.²³

K. P. Jackson and P. M. Jasinski, "The Process of Inspired Translation: Two Passages Translated Twice in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible," *Brigham Young University Studies* 42, no. 2 (2003): 35–64.

²¹ Matthews, *Plainer Translation*, 246.

²² Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the JST in this article are taken from Joseph Smith's "New Translation" of the Bible: *A Complete Parallel Column Comparison of the Inspired Version of the Holy Scriptures and the King James Authorized Version* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1970).

²³ Matthews, *Plainer Translation*, 177–206. In 1867, the Community of Christ, then known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day [*sic*] Saints, was the first to publish

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In contrast to their canonical status within Mormonism, Smith's texts pose insurmountable problems for those who would verify his claims to have translated them from historical sources. The Book of Mormon purports to be written in "Reformed Egyptian," a language particular to its subject community of exiles and otherwise unknown. Moreover, the absence of its source document makes impossible or at least contextual any scientific verification of its historicity.²⁴ Portions of the Book of Abraham papyri have been available since 1967, but the partial nature of their discovery only guarantees continuation of debate, especially since the discovered parts do not show a direct relation to Smith's translation. Moreover, the hieroglyphics included in Smith's text appear to be edited portions of the Egyptian Book of Breathings and bear interpretations unrelated to the original.²⁵ Thus, notwithstanding the retention of the subtitle "Translated from the papyrus, by Joseph Smith" in its canon, the LDS Church's explanation of the process by which the book was created is that "it was principally divine inspiration rather than his knowledge of languages that produced the English text of the Book of Abraham. His precise methodology remains unknown."²⁶

As for the JST, one need not look far for its source, nor be concerned with Smith's knowledge of ancient languages. It is true that, during a brief hiatus between internecine and external battles, Smith established a "school of the prophets" in the frontier town of Kirtland, Ohio, at which English and Hebrew grammar were studied; the latter because of the serendipitous proximity of Joshua Seixas, author of the 1833

the JST. Initially, its use of the JST was a marker of its claim to be the legitimate (versus the Utah-based LDS Church) heir to Joseph Smith's legacy. Today, the position of each is reversed. In 1981, the more significant portions of the JST, not already published in *The Pearl of Great Price*, were published as notes to the LDS edition of the KJV, resulting in the canonization of the JST nearly a century and a half after its production. A comparison of the evolving positions of the Community of Christ and the LDS Church is found in Thomas E. Sherry, "Changing Attitudes toward Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible," in *Plain and Precious Truths Restored*, ed. R. L. Millet and R. J. Matthews (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 187–212. For an account of the LDS Church's 1981 canonization of the JST, see Robert J. Matthews, "The New Publications of the Standard Works—1979, 1981," *Brigham Young University Studies* 22, no. 4 (1982): 287–424.

²⁴ For contemporary efforts to validate the historicity of Smith's texts, see the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies at Brigham Young University at <http://farms.byu.edu/>.

²⁵ For a description of the eleven fragments from the Lebolo papyri and their significance, see John A. Wilson, "A Summary Report," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 2 (1968): 68–85; and Klaus Baer, "The Breathing Permit of Hor: A Translation of the Apparent Source of the Book of Abraham," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 3 (1968): 109–33. For a more recent critical analysis of the text in light of the discovered papyri, see Stephen E. Thompson, "Egyptology and the Book of Abraham," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 28, no. 1 (1995): 143–60.

²⁶ *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), s.v. "Translation and Publication of The Book of Abraham" (by H. Donl Peterson).

Manual Hebrew Grammar for the Use of Beginners. Whatever mastery Smith achieved over his native tongue, the consensus is that his command of Hebrew was rudimentary. More to the point, his use of it has been deemed more imaginative than expert. “I simply do not think he cared to appear before the world as a meticulous Hebraist,” concluded a modern scholar. Rather, Smith “used the Hebrew as he chose, as an artist, inside his frame of reference, in accordance with his taste, according to the effect he wanted to produce, as a foundation for theological innovations.”²⁷ It is unnecessary to speculate on Smith’s linguistic capacities, however, because Smith’s translation of the Bible is based on an 1828 edition of the KJV, printed by H. and E. Phinney of Cooperstown, New York. As a source document for Smith’s translation, the Phinney edition was not only in Smith’s native tongue, but already cured of many obsolete words, as well as archaic spellings and pronouns.²⁸ Nevertheless, as indicated above, the JST was titled and uniformly referred to by Smith as a “translation of the scriptures.”²⁹ As such, the JST constitutes Smith’s most obvious transgression of the common understanding of what it means to translate.

Though in 1815, one could be directed to “a place near Monmouthstreet, where ‘they translate old shoes into new ones,’” it is doubtful that one could properly “renovate, turn, or cut down . . . or make new [Bibles] from the remains of (old ones).”³⁰ This was unthinkable at best, heresy at worst, and certainly not “translation.” Because religious diversity made heresy an elusive concept in early nineteenth-century America, most of his contemporaries had to settle for labeling Smith a fraud. Sensitive as he was to these charges and no doubt knowing the difference between shoes and Bibles, Smith’s stubbornly persistent use of “translation” to describe the process by which he created his texts invites analysis. Specifically, it invites consideration of what about the term Smith found pertinent to his experience, notwithstanding its obvious impertinences. Such an approach holds the possibility of getting past the tendency to polemics caused by taking Smith’s claim to translate at face value and, as I hope to show, reveals an instructive tension in Smith’s choice of the term. Staying in that tension and not seeking

²⁷ Louis C. Zucker, “Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 2 (1968): 41–55, 53.

²⁸ For details on the KJV edition used by Smith, see Kent P. Jackson, “Joseph Smith’s Cooperstown Bible,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 40, no. 1 (2001): 41–70.

²⁹ For Smith’s characterization of his task as a translation, see B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 1:238–39, 341. See also the Doctrine and Covenants 73:4, 76:15, 90:13, and 124:89.

³⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “translate.”

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quick release in claims of mendacity or prophecy provides reason some access to Smith's faith.

Contemporaneous sources indicate that Smith made his more extensive changes to KJV Genesis by employing the same methods as when working from records purportedly written in ancient languages. Smith is quoted as saying: "After I got through translating the Book of Mormon, I took up the Bible to read with the Urim and Thummim. I read the first chapter of Genesis, and I saw the things as they were done, I turned over the next and the next, and the whole passed before me like a grand panorama; and so on chapter after chapter until I read the whole of it. I saw it all!"³¹ A more authoritative account is provided by Smith himself in February 1832. "Upon my return from Amherst [Massachusetts] conference, I resumed the translation of the Scriptures. . . . While translating St. John's Gospel, myself and Elder Rigdon saw the following vision" of the resurrection of the dead.³² Finally, in an 1843 funeral sermon, probably alluding to the account in Matt. 27:52 of graves opening at the death of Jesus, Smith spoke of "the visions that roll like an overflowing surge, before my mind." More specifically, he said, "I saw the graves open & the saints as they arose took each other by the hand . . . while setting up."³³ Thus, although many emendations are editorial, the more radical of Smith's changes to the Bible were understood by him as a function of what he saw when reading it.

³¹ Joseph Smith, as quoted by Lorenzo Brown in "Sayings of Joseph, by Those Who Heard Him at Different Times," Joseph Smith Jr. Papers, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT. Brown's statement is based on his recollection in 1880 of a conversation that occurred in 1832. For questions concerning the reliability of this account, see Matthews, *Plainer Translation*, 25–26, n. 12. Referred to in Exod. 28:30 and Lev. 8:8 as an object placed in "the breastplate of judgment," *urim* and *thummim* are the transliterations of the Hebrew words for "light" and "perfection." For the only major study of the subject since 1824, see Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997). Van Dam (*Urim and Thummim*, 232) rejects the traditional view that the urim and thummim was a type of lot oracle and argues that it was a single gem, "a miraculous authenticating light," that shone to verify divine revelation to the high priest. Joseph Smith described his apparatus as "two transparent stones set in the rim of a [silver] bow fastened to a breast plate" that came into his possession with the golden plates for the purpose of translating the Book of Mormon; see *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (1842): 707. See also *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, s.v. "Urim and Thummim" (by Paul Y. Hoskisson). For a discussion of the role of divining instruments in Smith's production of the Book of Mormon, see D. Michael Quinn, *Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1998), 169–75. Later, Smith would say that, as he became more experienced at the process of translating, he no longer needed mechanical aids; see Matthews, *Plainer Translation*, 25, 40.

³² The specific verse in question was John 5:29. See Roberts, *History of the Church*, 1:245–52. See also Doctrine and Covenants 76.

³³ Joseph Smith, "Discourse" (April 16, 1843), in *Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Lyndon Cook and Andrew F. Ehat (Provo, UT: Grandin Book, 1991), 196, 198.

At least with respect to the JST, it appears that when he read he saw events, not words. What he saw, he verbalized to a scribe.³⁴

One of Smith's Book of Mormon scribes provided, in his own failed attempt to translate, the occasion for the most direct description of Smith's method. "You have not understood," God told Oliver Cowdery through Smith: "you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me. But . . . you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right and . . . you shall feel that it is right. But if it is not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget that thing which is wrong; therefore you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me."³⁵ Cowdery appears to have thought he could engage in the "inspired translation" of the Book of Mormon by parroting God's reading. In contrast, as implied by the above statement, Smith believed it necessary to determine independently how to represent what he read or saw. The appropriate question to God by the prophet-translator was whether his interpretation was correct, not what God's interpretation was.

Arguably, then, "translate" expressed Smith's experience of "study[ing] it out in [his] mind" or his sense of agency in front of the text. Smith did not think of himself as God's stenographer. Rather, he was an interpreting reader, and God the confirming authority. He did not experience revelation "as dictated, as something whispered in someone's ear" and, thus, provides a useful illustration of Ricoeur's argument that revelation is not propositional but "pluralistic, polysemic, and at most analogical in form."³⁶ Of equal significance, however, is the manner in which Smith's description of revelation communicates a sense of being limited by a text. It was possible to not "be right" in one's reading. Smith experienced revelation as an interpretive response to the text: not freely associated from, but bound by the "world of the text" in front of him, even if in an altered mental state or vision. In sum, Smith's use of "translate," for all its discursive weaknesses, conveyed his experience of creative agency before a text and,

³⁴ For a description of the experience from the scribe's point of view, see Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, September 7, 1834, in *The Improvement Era* 2, no. 3 (1899), and excerpted in "Joseph Smith—History: Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet," in *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 58 n.

³⁵ Oliver Cowdery, *Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, OH) 1, no. 1 (1834): 14, as quoted in *Doctrine and Covenants* 9:7–9.

³⁶ Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 74, 76.

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simultaneously, his sense of being bound by the text as an account of events or as history.³⁷ Taking the most obvious example, it can be said that, notwithstanding its English source, the JST asks to be understood as a translation, because it does not arise out of the infinite variations available to fiction but, rather, within the limits of an existing narrative of past events.

In Smith's usage, "translate" is best understood as a metaphor whose "clash between semantic fields" creates a third valence—"a pertinence within impertinence"—that illuminates Smith's method by contrasting the ways in which it was both like and not like translating.³⁸ His reading and writing of sacred text was like translating insofar as Smith was "study[ing] it out in [his] mind" in response to a source document. It is not like translating insofar as Smith made large additions to his sources and claimed for them the historicity of the original. In the contrast, another meaning arises that depends upon the recognition of the metaphor's incongruity, namely, Smith's claim of power as a prophet to rewrite the prophets. In other words, as with all metaphors, Smith's "translate" requires that one "continue to perceive the previous incompatibility through the new compatibility" of what Smith was signifying about both himself as prophet and his texts as scripture. For his believing readers, these contraries combine to express Smith's prophetic authority to divine the truth about God's past acts within the narrative limits of ancient, prophetic history. For the academic reader, these contraries suggest an imagination both governed by text and productive of it, reconfiguring the past to suggest what could be, to even create the possible and the real.

Each of Smith's works is an elaboration on climactic moments in the

³⁷ For another explanation of Smith's approach to the Bible, see Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, 57–61; my emphasis, however, is on the extent to which Smith felt bound by the text, even as he changed it (see *ibid.*, 61). Moreover, Barlow explains Smith's approach to the text largely in terms of contemporary practices that did not distinguish authors from editors, arguing that Smith used these conventions "creatively" and consistent with "prophetic writers of ancient times." My differences with this argument are slight and result primarily from my emphasis on those sections of the JST that are not merely editorial, but radical reformulations of the biblical narrative. I believe these additions are too extensive to be rationalized by nineteenth-century editorial conventions, especially given the Bible's near-fetishistic canonical status during this period. Finally, though I, too, consider ancient "bible writers" to be a useful analogy to Smith's production of new text, I do not ground the analogy in Smith's felt sense of "godly authority or insight" or "concern . . . with enlightening the world through revealed truth" (*ibid.*, 60–61). These are the elements of Smith's own story which I argue are not necessary to and can obscure the nature and effect of his reformulation of the biblical narrative.

³⁸ For a summary of his theories on the operation of metaphor and the excerpts used here, see Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," in Valdés, *Ricoeur Reader*, 124–25.

Bible story. The main characters in the Book of Mormon are refugees from Palestine immediately prior to the Babylonian assault who ensure the continuation of Israel's covenant by taking it to the Western hemisphere. Escaping foreign captivity and domestic colonization by successive imperial reigns and creating a parallel story to the Jewish diaspora and Christian synthesis, the Book of Mormon peoples received the resurrected Christ and the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. This same promise is the centerpiece of Smith's Book of Abraham and becomes the occasion to provide an alternative account of human origins in creation, as well as of Israel's origins in the Abrahamic covenant. Most aggressively, in the first six chapters of JST Genesis, Smith wrests the entire Christian narrative from its traditional moorings, giving it a new beginning and eliding differences between old and new covenants. Among the more audacious changes is the addition of a precreation event into the Genesis narrative and a new "Genesis 1" that ascribes a specific purpose to creation. These changes suggest another metaphor for understanding Smith's "translations."

Today, the Bible itself is believed to be largely the product of periodic manipulation of foundational texts. "Redaction" has become the preferred term for an invasive revision of a source that seamlessly inserts new material in an authoritative text in order to meet new exigencies. Though only a gleam in the eye of the academy at the time Smith was writing and still a source of concern for literalist readers, redaction has become the regnant explanation for the construction of the Bible as having "experienced change, accretions, and reinterpretations as it was being transmitted through centuries."³⁹ Of the Tanach's redactors, it has been said that "what Israel took over was not slavishly copied; Israel transformed what she borrowed by baptizing it into her own faith."⁴⁰ Israel's "baptism" is commonly understood to have been performed by the sixth-century BCE priestly "P" who, inter alia, Judaized his people's Babylonian-informed understanding of human origins.⁴¹ The next section of this article analyzes the JST as an

³⁹ Douglas A. Knight, "Cosmogony and Order in the Hebrew Tradition," in *Cosmogony and Ethical Order: New Studies in Comparative Ethics*, ed. Robin W. Lovin and Frank E. Reynolds (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 137.

⁴⁰ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos* (New York: Association Press, 1967), 26.

⁴¹ There are, of course, two creation accounts in the first chapters of Genesis: P's priestly fifth-century version in chap. 1 and J's (or the Yahwist's) ninth-century account in chap. 2. Hermann Gunkel's 1895 assessment of them remains authoritative: "Genesis 1 is related to the poetic recensions [from the Babylonian Marduk myth] somewhat like P in general relates to the parallel traditions in J or E: on the whole a strongly Judaicized reworking, sober prose in place of ancient poetry, at the same time a higher view of God replacing an earlier naïveté, and yet also individual features that are very ancient" ("The Influence of Babylonian Mythology

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analogous “baptism” of Genesis via Christianity into Mormonism. For purposes of comparison, I rely upon Ricoeur’s typology from *Symbolism of Evil* to identify not only the distinguishing features of P’s redaction but also Christian theologizing upon it.⁴² This allows analysis of Smith’s adaptation of Genesis in light of definitively Christian readings of the same text, namely, doctrines of creation ex nihilo and original sin and shows the means by which Mormonism’s alternative theological anthropology not only is grounded in scriptural authority but is also sustained by narrative devices.

In order to include, in a treatment of this limited page length, sufficient evidence from Smith’s virtually unknown adaptation of Genesis, I assume the reader’s general knowledge of the traditional biblical account and must generalize a Christian consensus regarding God’s sovereignty, human fault, and the origins of sin. I recognize that differences of opinion on these doctrines define many of Christianity’s distinctive denominations. For the purposes of this essay such differences may be treated as nuances in comparison to Smith’s contrary conclusions to certain generalizations shared by Roman, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians, namely, that (1) the world was created from nothing and constituted an expression of God’s absolute goodness; hence, (2) humans, as created beings, are ontologically unrelated to God and brought evil into being by their action.⁴³ The following section analyzes Smith’s redaction of Genesis as a subversion of these classic Christian propositions. The point of this analysis is, however, not to describe the subversion of meaning or the curious changes Smith makes in the Genesis story. Rather, Smith’s version of the story is told to illuminate the mode of his subversion: the manner in which he deploys myth to challenge or, in Lincoln’s terms, “recalibrate” the categories of thought and privileges inherent in the status quo of Christian theologizing on the divine-human relationship.⁴⁴ Subsequent sec-

upon the Biblical Creation Story,” in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 48).

⁴² Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 171–74.

⁴³ My argument presumes that Smith’s rejection of these precepts, without more, is sufficient to demonstrate Mormonism’s radical diversion from traditional Christian theology, though certainly it may be argued otherwise. See, e.g., the arguments made by Stephen E. Robinson in Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997). But see also the decision of the Society of Christian Philosophers to boycott Brigham Young University and the society’s related decision to establish guidelines for regional meetings, excluding “any institution professing to be Christian while at the same time subscribing to a doctrinal position directly contradicting the ecumenical creeds accepted by all branches of the Christian Church, Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant” (Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormon Christian Dialogue?” http://www.beliefnet.com/story/81/story_8179_1.html).

⁴⁴ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 216 n. 14.

tions consider the relation of Smith's narratives to Mormonism's viability as a livable alternative to the ethos of traditional Christianity.

II. SMITH'S NARRATIVE REBUTTAL TO TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANITY

As conveniently categorized by Ricoeur in his comparisons of pagan and Jewish creation myths, three aspects of Genesis are central to P's monotheistic challenge to his pagan neighbors: Adam's ancestral role as the first human, his defection from God by eating the forbidden fruit, and the subordination of Eve and the serpent to Adam's story.⁴⁵ Together these elements of the Genesis story distinguish it as an anthropomorphic myth that is motivated, Ricoeur argues, by the need to give meaning to the universal human experience of evil while simultaneously upholding Israel's faith in an ethical or good God whose creation is good (not tragic, like that of the Greeks) and good ipso facto (not ordered from chaos, like that of the Babylonians).⁴⁶ The narrative does not fully cooperate with P's argument for the absolute priority of good over evil, however. Both the snake, who appears with the offer of evil, and Eve, who responds to it, imply the existence of evil in creation and prior to human act. Thus, biblical scholarship has postulated that Eve and the snake are marginal figures in Adam's story, even residuals of pagan mythology. While the snake as a demon and Eve, its instrument, express the possibility of evil, they are not necessary to the story, merely adding "enigmatic depth" to the Israelite narrative of Adam's transgression.⁴⁷ Thus interpreted, these same three features of the Genesis account frame the traditional Christian doctrines of creation ex nihilo and original sin. Smith's narrative begins by enlarging the frame and, in doing so, makes ideological space for human participation in the divine nature.

In Smith's redaction of Genesis, people—as uncreated children of

⁴⁵ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 232–78.

⁴⁶ Too simply stated, the cosmologies of Israel's neighbors were characterized by gods who either struggled to create order out of chaos (the Babylonians) or disrupted order by tempting and blinding humans (the Greeks). For the former, evil is primordial and salvation from it comes through a "final victory of order over chaos" in creation. For the latter, humans have a tragic fate and their salvation "consists in a sort of aesthetic deliverance issuing from the tragic spectacle itself" (ibid., 172–75). Of course, elements of each these types may be found in the Bible. For example, KJV Rev. 12:7 refers to a "war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels." Similarly, the Book of Job depicts a kind of tragic spectacle precipitated by God's wager with Satan. What is distinctive about the Genesis creation narrative is, however, its abjuring such notions of evil—as either primeval chaos or tragic existence—in order to establish absolutely God's goodness notwithstanding the humanity's universal experience of the "not good."

⁴⁷ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 233–35.

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God—come first, and the world later. This reversal of events is made by adding to the established narrative an account of a precreation council comprised of spirit persons with form and agency, but not bodies of flesh. According to the JST, God called the council in order to present a plan for the governance of the yet-to-be-created earth, the site of the next progressive state of his gathered children. The positing of this event and its description of premortal existence inevitably contest traditional Christian theology. Imbedded as they are in a narrative, the theological principles at stake in the JST council must be inferred from its drama of a confrontation between God and Lucifer over how to obtain the successful return of earth's future inhabitants from their probationary state, as well as over who would be sent with the power to ensure that result. God had already offered a plan that would give primacy and "honor" to "my beloved Son, which was my beloved and chosen from the beginning." Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, begged to differ and presented himself as an alternative: "Behold I, send me, I will be thy Son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor."⁴⁸ Though other conversation is described in the council, these are actually the first words quoted from any character. First words are not a given; they are the chosen set point of a story's trajectory. These first words spoken in Smith's narrative stand in powerful contrast to the first words, both chronologically and literally, in traditional Christianity's cosmic history: "Let there be light," says God over a perfect creation, into which evil has yet to appear and, when it does, comes as a result of human action. These words communicate that God has power over evil because evil is subordinate to—or comes after and is foreign to—God's absolutely original and fundamentally good creation. In contrast, Smith's addition of the premortal council to the traditional Genesis narrative teaches that the option of evil existed, as did humans, primordially or prior to earthly creation.

The JST narrative implies three reasons for God's rejection of Lucifer's alternative. Most obviously, it constituted rebellion in its antagonism to God's plan and in its demand for "God's own power." There was also a third, more substantive problem, however. Lucifer's proposed means of ensuring that "not one soul would be lost" was meant to "[destroy] the agency of man." Since, in this cosmology, there is no existence without agency, Lucifer's plan would have made God's plan

⁴⁸ JST Gen. 3:2–3.

a nullity.⁴⁹ Thus, in Smith's cosmology evil as the possibility of defection from God is present from the beginning and prior to the world's creation. Of course, this means also that creation is not *ex nihilo*. As such, the myth recalibrates the created-uncreated dichotomy fundamental to the Christian tradition's definition of human unrelatedness to the divine. More will be said of this in a moment. For now, we return to the story.

Smith's recounting of the temptation of Eve and Adam in the garden is fairly traditional, but as a consequence of evil's role in the premortal council, the serpent's subtle nature and malicious intent is not a surprise to the reader. Or, to use Ricoeur's term, evil does not appear to "happen" to Eve and Adam. The serpent's invitation to rebellion is simply Lucifer pursuing his earlier, failed agenda. This point is impressed upon the reader by the fact that the JST story of the council is inserted into the traditional Genesis narrative immediately after the command to humans not to eat of the fruit and before the serpent makes his entrance. As such, the council story explains God's command and does so in the context of an additional instruction to Adam and Eve: "nevertheless thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it."⁵⁰ The narrative effect of this addition is to explain the serpent's existence in the garden and the KJV's characterization of it as "more subtle than any beast in the field which the Lord God had made."⁵¹ The inference of this observation is made explicit in the JST: evil precedes creation. This requires Smith's narrative to also confront directly the problem of the existence of evil in an otherwise good creation.

Among the options he does not take are the alternatives to the Priestly redactor: a cosmogonic or tragic ethos. The JST does not portray earth's creation as the "final victory of order over chaos" after a cosmic battle among the gods. Rather, the JST maintains the Bible's distinctive provision of a primordial ancestor "whose condition is homogeneous with ours."⁵² Adam, and in Smith's narrative one must also include Eve and the snake (as Lucifer), stood with the rest of future

⁴⁹ Smith would later elaborate discursively on these ideas first expressed narratively: "Man was also in the beginning with God. . . . not created or made. . . . independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light" (Doctrine and Covenants 93:29–31).

⁵⁰ KJV Gen. 2:17.

⁵¹ KJV Gen. 3:1.

⁵² Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 175.

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humanity, watched or participated in the debate and made their respective choices. As important, victory over evil is not final. Smith's god is not a Marduk who vanquished evil and, thereby, achieved order in the end (as creation). Smith's god is sovereign from the uncreated beginning: Lucifer is cast out of heaven summarily, as well as subject to God's adjudication of the parties to the fall. Moreover, notwithstanding its a priori existence, evil in the JST is not tragically "the very worldliness of the world . . . the state of being in the world, the misfortune of existing."⁵³ God's creative act remains radically separate from evil that is now "cast down" and must find a way back into relation with these beings in order to disrupt God's good work. Thus, in the JST, the struggle between good and evil is both cosmological and existential: it is, we shall see, considered constitutive of human agency. God's goodness and sovereignty is measured by the power to redeem human agents in extremis, not the power to create them ex nihilo.⁵⁴

Smith's redaction of Genesis continues to emphasize that choice is manifest and freedom is—temporally at least—absolute. Therefore, the terms under which Adam and Eve occupy the garden differ in the JST. While they are commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they are told also, in contrast to the KJV: "Nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but remember that I forbid it."⁵⁵ As with all narratives, this dialogue requires interpretation and at least two conclusions are possible. One is legalistic. If they "may" choose, then to choose is not disobedient, even when told not to choose. In the larger context of the operation of agency in Smith's cosmology, it is more likely that the "may" refers to a necessary condition of Adam and Eve's existence, not a license to do other than what they had been commanded. This view is supported by the fact that the story of the premortal council, with its emphasis on agency, is inserted in the narrative after God's instruction not to eat the fruit and, as indicated, prior to the serpent's offer of an alternative. Adam and Eve have a choice, but they have also been instructed in the right choice and given an example of the dangers of a wrong choice. Smith's Book of Abraham speaks more obliquely but to the same point and

⁵³ Paul Ricoeur, "'Original Sin': A Story in Meaning," in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 273.

⁵⁴ While in Mormon theology there is no existence without agency, the agency that operates in this world is conditioned by the gift of the atonement of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon, at 2 Nephi 2:26–27, provides: "because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day. . . . Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient."

⁵⁵ JST Gen. 2:21.

more broadly applied. There God says to the premortal assembly: “Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man. . . . And another answered. . . . And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.”⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, given its overt presence in the JST account of the garden, the nature of evil and its consequences is a large theme in Smith’s account of the world’s first family. Particular care is taken to reiterate Lucifer’s motives to implement his own plan at the expense of God’s. The reader is told that Lucifer, now the cast-down Satan, “sought also to beguile Eve, for he knew not the mind of God; wherefore he sought to destroy the world.”⁵⁷ Here, to Lucifer’s grandiosity and rebellion is added the additional problem of ignorance, that is, he knows not “the mind of God.” Thus, in the JST version of the garden, as at the council, Satan is displaying not only malice but also a fundamental misunderstanding of the way life works, when he prompts the serpent to argue, consistent with the KJV: “Ye shall not die . . . ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”⁵⁸ With the council narrative as background, the JST reader sees Satan’s approach has not changed and neither has the substance of his offer: death masquerading as power. Evil is rebellion against God’s plan and the embracing of its opposite: the voluntary or free adoption of an antiorder that seeks to destroy human freedom in order to obtain power as an end in itself. It is Lucifer, not the fallen Eve or Adam, who conveys the definition of sin and defines it in terms of rebellion as a lust for power obtained at the expense of agency and, thus, life itself. Stated as an abstract principle, it is obvious that this characterization of Satan and his goal are not original to the JST. As Ecclesiastes tells us, there is nothing new under the sun; particularly the religious sun. I do not dispute him. My point here is the manner in which this principle is historicized or realized for the reader by its conveyance through narrative and, more especially, the authorized biblical plot rather than a separate narrative.

Many of Smith’s subsequent additions to the KJV plot continue to elaborate by inference on this theology of evil. One more example must suffice: Smith’s version of the contest between Cain and Abel. The JST Cain, the firstborn, is introduced to the readers as a disappointment to his parents’ hopes that he will not “reject” the Lord, in contrast to his younger brother Abel, who “walked in holiness before the Lord.” Cain’s first words in the narrative are “Who is the Lord,

⁵⁶ Abraham 3:27–28.

⁵⁷ JST Gen. 3:7.

⁵⁸ JST Gen. 3:11.

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that I should know him.” Moreover, Cain’s offering of the first fruits of his field is depicted as a response to Satan’s command, not God’s. When the Lord rejected the offering and accepted Abel’s, Cain was “very wroth,” notes the KJV, and the JST adds: “Now Satan knew this, and it pleased him.”⁵⁹ The addition of the character of Satan to this story continues the theme of choice and agency. Indeed, it may be said that the character of Satan is a foil that offers his own and opposite bond in direct imitation of the sacred in each instance in which he appears to Cain. After the KJV warning that “sin lieth at the door,” the JST has the Lord say to Cain: “Satan desireth to have thee, and except thou shalt hearken unto my commandments, I will deliver thee up, and it shall be unto thee according to his desire.”⁶⁰

At this point in the story, Smith adds eight verses where the KJV makes do with one referencing Cain’s killing of Abel. Smith’s verses provide motive for the crime. Cain, we are told, “listened not any more to the voice of the Lord” and “loved Satan more than God.” As a consequence, Satan invites Cain to enter into a secret covenant “that he would do according to his [Satan’s] commands” and, in exchange, Satan promises “this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands.” The reversal implicit in this contract is made explicit when Cain rejoices: “Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain . . . and he gloried in his wickedness.” Later, he exults over the body of his brother: “I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands.” The exiled Cain will later teach his Satanic covenant to his sons whose “works were abominations, and began to spread among all.”⁶¹ But, always in Smith’s narrative, individuals are free and capacitated to choose, as is evidenced by the women who resist their husbands’ acceptance of Cain’s antiorder. The secrets of Cain’s order were not shared with the women in the family “because that Lamech [Cain’s fifth generation descendant] had spoken the secret unto his wives, and they rebelled against him, and declared these things abroad, and had not compassion. Wherefore Lamech was despised, and cast out, and came not among the sons of men, lest he should die.”⁶² Thus, for Smith, the potential for evil is coexistent with existence itself, but sin—the embracing of evil and antiorder—came into the world through Cain.

What, then, is Adam and Eve’s contribution to this myth of the origin of evil in the world? The JST account of God’s response to Adam and

⁵⁹ JST Gen. 5:4, 8, and 11.

⁶⁰ KJV Gen. 4:7 and JST Gen. 5:9.

⁶¹ JST Gen. 5: 11, 13–16, 18, and 38–39.

⁶² JST Gen. 5:40–41.

Eve's choice to eat the forbidden fruit is consistent in relevant detail to the KJV story. They are driven from the garden that brought forth its fruit spontaneously into a world that requires their labor to sustain them and the new life they will engender. At this point, however, the JST introduces sixteen verses to the KJV text. These verses emphasize that their exile was not only from ease and painlessness but also from God's presence. Now, instead of God calling upon them, they "called upon the name of the Lord and they heard the voice of the Lord, from the way toward the garden of Eden, speaking unto them. . . . And he gave unto them commandments." Here is the next major turn away from the KJV in the JST narrative, resulting in an addition of 600 words to the text. Exile from God's presence does not put them out of reach of his voice. In Smith's account, Adam and Eve are taught by heavenly messengers to worship God, offer sacrifice, "repent, and call upon God in the name of the Son for evermore." They are further told "as thou hast fallen, thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will."⁶³

Like the Book of Mormon, the JST places the knowledge of Christ and the offer of salvation prior to Jesus's birth. Explicitly, salvation is the plan from the beginning and atonement is God's anticipatory response to human defection. Hence, a BCE figure in the Book of Mormon will explain: "if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have . . . remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things."⁶⁴ What Adam and Eve originate for their progeny is not evil, but death: "by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death."⁶⁵ In the JST narrative, humans are by nature separate, not evil. "The Fall" is not a fall into evil, but into alienation. Adam and Eve's legacy is not to change human nature but, rather, to change the conditions under which that nature will be developed, that is, out of God's presence and in a world where "God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other," according to the Book of Mormon.⁶⁶

⁶³ JST Gen. 4:3–9.

⁶⁴ Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:26.

⁶⁵ JST Gen. 6:61.

⁶⁶ Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:16.

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Later in the JST Genesis narrative, God will mourn in vision to Enoch that the antediluvians have failed to “choose me their Father.”⁶⁷ This is the bond with the sacred described in the JST: humans with an uncorrupted but corruptible capacity to know good from evil, placed in an environment that requires them to choose between manifest options. The choice is one of affiliation, of whom to love in an environment that makes one free to choose. On the one hand, “the gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels, sent forth from the presence of God; and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam by an holy ordinance; and the gospel preached; and a decree sent forth that it should be in the world until the end thereof.”⁶⁸ On the other hand, “Satan came among them [the children of Adam and Eve], saying I am also a son of God, and he commanded them, saying Believe it [the gospel] not. And they believed it not; and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual and devilish.”⁶⁹ This is, using Ricoeur’s terms, the occasion for the “servile will, of the bad choice that binds itself.”⁷⁰ Or, as described in the Book of Mormon: “our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will.”⁷¹

Both literally and figuratively speaking, Smith’s narrative presents a dramatic departure from the traditional Adamic myth whose “intention is to set up a *radical* origin of evil distinct from the more *primordial* origin of goodness of things.”⁷² Mormonism’s evil is as uncreated and preexistent as is good. Both are always potential to the act, as choice, of the uncreated person. As the attendees to the counsel and, later, earth’s inhabitants, humans must choose between the two plans and their personal fate is decided by their choice. Implicit in this personal struggle is the notion that the power is in these persons not only to discern but also to vanquish evil. This, too, is a central dynamic in Smith’s challenge to traditional Christianity’s theological anthropology. In Smith’s completely original Genesis 1, Moses’s experience of the divine at the burning bush is followed by an assertion of his newly realized identity against Satan, who comes demanding to be worshipped: “Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the simil-

⁶⁷ JST Gen. 7:40.

⁶⁸ JST Gen. 5:44–45.

⁶⁹ JST Gen. 4:13.

⁷⁰ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 156.

⁷¹ Book of Mormon, Alma 42:7.

⁷² Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 233.

itude of his Only Begotten; and where is thy glory, that I should worship thee?” Moses then summarily dismisses him with the command “Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not.” Subject to Moses’s superior power, Satan must comply.⁷³ Thus, the agency and power of persons to effect their will, first manifested in the narrative of a heavenly council, characterizes earthly life as well.

The significance of human relatedness to God as *imago dei* and the extent of human access to divine power is made explicit in Moses’s second theophany. After being taught of “worlds without number” and shown the earth and all its inhabitants, Moses asks “why these things are so.” God answers: “this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”⁷⁴ With this reply, Smith rejected 1,500 years of Christian theological anthropology by making God ontologically related to creation. God is both defined as Father and glorified as God by the capacity and purpose to engender the divine life in humans. To Smith, “Father God” is not only a metaphor for expressing divine love, but is definitive of God and indicative of human possibility, even human capacity to receive the divine nature.

Thus, while JST Genesis appears to share with non-Christian creation dramas “a mode of thought according to which order comes at the end and not at the beginning,” Smith’s order is not “the last act of a drama that concerns the generation of the gods.”⁷⁵ Rather, human existence is part of a plan that does not have a beginning or an end. Existence is an ongoing process by which God engenders in human beings the quality of life that characterizes their divine Father. The ultimate purpose of this redemptive plan is to enable humans to engender life and, thereby, experience divine joy. Hence, Smith’s version of Eve, exiled from Eden and taught by angels the message of redemption, rejoiced to Adam: “were it not for our transgression, we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.”⁷⁶ “Eternal life” is comprised of being partakers of the divine nature or in possessing the capacity to engender in others the life one has received via the plan. The Book of Mormon states the full extent of LDS optimism: “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Moses 1:15–16, 22. The Herald House publication of the Joseph Smith Translation omits JST Gen. 1. It is included in the Latter-day Saint canon as “Moses 1” in the Book of Moses in *The Pearl of Great Price*. The Book of Moses contains JST Gen. 1–6.

⁷⁴ Moses 1:30, 39.

⁷⁵ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 233, 177.

⁷⁶ JST Gen. 4:11.

⁷⁷ Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:25.

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Nevertheless, “men” are in a serious predicament. While the JST does not permit the conclusion that, as a consequence of Adam’s sin, the human race is *massa peccati*, it does impute to Adam and Eve the cause of all humanity’s subjugation to death—cast out of God’s presence and destined for physical dissolution. The JST’s largest single addition to the KJV is an account of a people and, more particularly, their prophet Enoch, who overcame both alienation and dissolution and obtained for his posterity the promise of the same. In Smith’s elaboration on the figure of Enoch, Smith orients his Adamic myth toward a future that informs his believing readers’ sense of present meanings and possibilities. Enoch and his ideal city provide the type of Zion to which saints of the latter days are to aspire. For the instant analysis, it is equally important, however, that the promise of Zion is obtained by human petition, not divine fiat. This is the final example of Smith’s baptism of traditional Christianity into his restorationist project. It is possibly an even greater affront to tradition: giving humans a role in the preservation of the divine plan and, in so doing, constituting a means of their progressing toward the divine life itself.

III. URZEIT GLICHT ENDZEIT

Stories begin with a view to their end; just as types must take their bearings from antitypes. Both of these truisms meet in the Adamic myth’s orientation to a future that overcomes the breach occasioned by the fall and, for Christian readers, through one who will mediate a new covenant of salvation. Thus, unlike the Babylonian cosmogonic myth that was directed toward “cultural-ritual re-enactment” of a past event and the Greek tragic myth that explained the present “spectacle of Terror and Pity,” the Adamic myth was most essentially eschatological: it was oriented to the “man to come.”⁷⁸ This was for Christianity the “second-man,” the offer of “so much more” in Jesus Christ. Intermediate types were offered by the biblical narrative, however: figures that represented the promise of overcoming the fall and of ideal fulfillment of human potential as *imago dei*. In the traditional narrative, Abraham is the first and most fully drawn of such figures.⁷⁹ In the character of Enoch, Smith found an earlier figure to suggest another measure of human potential: theurgy, or the right to access heavenly powers and even to influence future events related to salvation.

After the JST describes the evolution of a godly order and rebellious

⁷⁸ Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 260.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 262.

antiorder among Adam and Eve's immediate progeny, the generations of the patriarchs are listed consistent with the KJV. While the KJV was able to tell Enoch's story in thirteen words—"And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him"—the *JST* required 4,600.⁸⁰ Smith's Enoch is the most representative of Mormonism's understanding of the divine-human relationship and its rejection of contemporary Christian anthropology. For the sake of brevity, two themes must suffice to make this point. First, in the *JST*, Enoch "built a city that was called the city of Holiness, even Zion."⁸¹ The people were also called Zion "because they were of one heart and of one mind and dwelt in righteousness and there were no poor among them." In short, the story of Enoch tells of a community that experienced the end of evil. This is made clear in their overcoming the separation from God occasioned by the fall: "Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion." They triumphed over their enemies because Enoch "spake in the word of the Lord," and, when he did, humans and nature "were turned out of their course." Ultimately, not only Enoch, as implied in the KJV, but also his city were taken up to heaven without experiencing death.⁸² Second, and most significant for the argument of this article, Smith's narrative depicts an extended theophany in which Enoch is portrayed as obtaining guarantees of redemption from God in virtue of Enoch's God-given right to access heavenly power and exercise it in temporal affairs. This is the final example of the way in which Smith's mythos "recalibrates" categories of thought and privilege inherent in the status quo of Christian theologizing on the divine human relationship.⁸³

The *JST* account of Enoch's theophany begins with God showing Enoch what will happen to the wicked among his grandson's (Noah's) generation. Their fate in this world and the afterlife not only causes the heavens to "weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains" but also moves God to weep. This mystifies Enoch, who asks, "How is it thou canst weep, seeing thou are holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?" The reply emphasizes God's relationship to the earth's inhabitants. Notwithstanding his "commandment, that they should love one another; and that they should choose me their Father . . . they are," God explains, "without affection, and they hate their

⁸⁰ KJV Gen. 5:24.

⁸¹ All quotations from the *JST* related to the Enoch narrative are from *JST* Gen. 7 and in the interest of space will not be individually referenced when quoted below, except where further elaboration is needed.

⁸² *JST* Gen. 7:27 ("Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever").

⁸³ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 216 n. 14.

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own blood.” After watching the devastation of the flood, Enoch’s attitude changes. In contrast to his initial shock that the Lord would mourn such as these, he now “wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens, I will refuse to be comforted.” Enoch petitions God to promise that he will never again destroy the earth by flood. The JST provides: “the Lord could not withhold; and he covenanted with Enoch, and sware unto him an oath.” The promise is the familiar one, though it contains an additional element. God not only swears that “he would stay the floods,” but also that “he would call upon the children of Noah.” This additional promise echoes Smith’s characterization of Adam and Eve after their fall: separated from God but not out of the range of his voice. According to the JST, “the gospel was preached [unto Adam and Eve after their expulsion]; and a decree sent forth that it should be in the world until the end thereof; and thus it was.”⁸⁴ In the JST, human cooperation is a necessary element in the performance of this decree. In Smith’s cosmology, human communication with the divine is not only a necessary constant, but its message is that humans must assume responsibility for the execution of God’s plan for human salvation. This is more plainly evidenced by Enoch’s next request.

After witnessing in vision Noah’s survival of the flood and the promised continuation of his progeny, Enoch is next shown the death of the Messiah. Even more appalled by this turn of events, Enoch again “wept and cried unto the Lord,” obtaining a second promise. His preface to the request is, however, an unusual one: “for inasmuch as thou art God, and I know thee, and thou has sworn unto me, and commanded me that I should ask in the name of thine Only Begotten; thou has made me, and given unto me a right to thy throne, and not of myself, but through thine own grace; wherefore I ask thee if thou wilt not come again on the earth?” This is probably the most dramatic example of the theurgic force of Smith’s revisions to Genesis and reveals another dimension of Smith’s rejection of the classic theological anthropology of Christianity. In the JST account, Enoch realized for himself and his people the hope of overcoming on earth the breach in the bond with the sacred through the establishment of Zion. In addition, by rights given to him by God, Enoch obtained from God the promise that he would continue to manifest himself to Enoch’s posterity and, through them, minister salvation to the world.⁸⁵ Though

⁸⁴ JST Gen. 5:45

⁸⁵ This is the clearest signal that, for Smith, Enoch represents an antecedent to the Abrahamic covenant that “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed

Enoch is portrayed as having obtained this promise “not of myself, but through . . . grace,” it is no less the case that Smith’s narrative contemplates that humans may influence the divine will. This is demonstrated in God’s response to Enoch’s assertion of right in conjunction with his petition that God not abandon Enoch’s progeny, notwithstanding the death of the Messiah. God swears, “Even as I live, even so will I come in the last days . . . to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you.”

Thus, in the figure of Enoch, Smith found a figure of covenantal hope earlier than Abraham, linked that hope directly to the coming of a messiah, and directed its fulfillment to an end times conditioned on human agency to call down the powers of heaven. The JST’s repetition of the covenant to Noah makes this more explicit. The KJV provides that the bow is a reminder of God’s everlasting covenant with “every living creature” to never again destroy the earth by flood. In contrast, the JST Noah is told the bow is a sign of the covenant with Enoch “that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth.”⁸⁶ Moreover, as with Enoch himself, those who would realize the promise of the covenant must contribute to its realization by obtaining heavenly powers on a temporal plane. They must “embrace the truth and look upward.” When they do “then shall Zion look downward . . . [and] shall come down out of heaven and possess the earth, and shall have place till the end come.” These are the terms of “the everlasting covenant” that effects the reconstitution of the bond with the sacred and holds the key to the end of evil. Though this promise of a latter-day Zion that would receive Enoch’s Zion, as well as partake of its theurgic powers, obtains from the past, as narrativized by Smith, it constitutes a sacred history that oriented the Latter-day Saints to a particular future. It provided an identity that carried them from New York to the Ohio frontier, through extermination orders in Missouri to exile from Illinois, and finally to the Rocky Mountains, building city after city in hope of Zion.⁸⁷

Though occupied with an ancient figure, the Enoch narrative directs

after thee” (see Genesis 17 and 22:15–18). For extension of the Abrahamic covenant to the Christian movement, see, e.g., Luke 16:22–23 (the righteous to rest in the bosom of Abraham) and Gal. 3:8 and 29 (through Christ, the Gentiles become the seed of Abraham and “heirs according to the promise”). For Smith’s elaboration on this covenant, see the Book of Abraham 2.

⁸⁶ JST Gen. 9:21–23; cf. KJV Gen. 9:16.

⁸⁷ Shipps (*Mormonism*, 47, 53, and 57) was the first to recognize this “pattern of reappropriation” of the Bible story that fueled the LDS reenactment on the American frontier of ancient Israel’s saga of gathering, exodus, and kingdom building. Relying largely on pioneer sources, she concluded that LDS reappropriation was, however, “an exterior story rather than an interior one.”

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faithful readers of the JST to a future project: the return of Zion in fulfillment of God's promise to Enoch and, through Enoch, to all the posterity of Noah. In the "last days," there would be "great tribulations . . . but my people will I preserve," God promised. Specifically, "righteousness will I send down out of heaven, and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten."⁸⁸ To Latter-day Saints, this is nothing less than the heavenly messengers sent to Smith and the unearthing the Book of Mormon's "golden plates," which constituted a second witness of Christ by restoring "many plain and precious things" lost from the Bible.⁸⁹ Smith's narratives weave Mormonism into biblical history, but not as an aspiration to "live ancient lives" so definitive of the Latter-day Saints' Puritan progenitors. Smith's followers did not believe their "commonwealth should subside into the routine of the communal covenant: a rhythm of declension and return with a basically static religious and social framework" modeled on a biblical past.⁹⁰ Rather, the Latter-day Saints aspired to become Enochs in their own right: walking and talking with God and exercising their own powers within a new Zion wherein God would make his millennial abode. In 1836, the Latter-day Saints' dedicated their first temple with a song that included the lyric:

The latter day glory begins to come forth;
The visions and blessings of old are returning;
The angels are coming to visit the earth. . . .
The knowledge and power of God are expanding.
The vail o'er the earth is beginning to burst.⁹¹

The Latter-day Saints understood themselves both as beneficiaries of God's grace and as God's agents for overcoming of the effects of the fall. The full eschatology of Smith's Adamic myth is found in the promise made to Enoch, like the promise made to Abraham "that his people would have a salvific relation with God is an inexhaustible promise . . . as such it opens up a history in which this promise can be repeated and reinterpreted over and over again."⁹²

The building of Zion remains the "future project" of the LDS Church and is "intimately related to the ways in which it remembers

⁸⁸ JST Gen. 7:67, 69.

⁸⁹ Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 13:28–29, 35, and 40.

⁹⁰ Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 345, 349.

⁹¹ "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning," in *Collection of Sacred Hymns, for the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (Kirtland, OH: F. G. Williams, 1835; repr., Independence, MO: Herald Heritage, 1973), hymn 90.

⁹² Paul Ricoeur, "Creativity in Language," in Valdés, *Ricoeur Reader*, 472.

itself.”⁹³ The promise of Zion still orders the experience of Smith’s faithful readers, providing them a beginning and an end between which they, as his readers—by means of their own heuristic powers of imagination—get their bearings to act. Their local ecclesiastical units are called “stakes,” symbolic of the stakes that anchor the tent of Zion, and are collectively referred to as “the stakes of Zion.” Thus, as with other myths that have founded a sense of peoplehood, Smith’s narrative history of human and divine interaction was ultimately oriented to a future time that served as a basis for acting in the present. It provided a world of meaning by which his believing readers understood themselves existentially, including their future and not merely their past. Most fundamentally, Smith’s writings give his believing readers a different sense of what was and what will be and, as a consequence, give significance to and a sense of what is real in the present. Just as the story of a realized messiah and the coming kingdom profoundly reoriented the Jews called “Christian,” Smith’s writings of the “fulness of times” provided a unique means by which the Latter-day Saints’ alterity has been maintained, even as they integrated with contemporary society.

IV. CONCLUSION

With respect to academic arguments over the New Testament’s historicity, philosopher Mary Warnock has argued that the debates “show a failure to understand the full part that imagination plays not only in religion but in literature, history and in life itself, lived as it is through time, yet demanding a constant effort to make sense of time, to turn events into stories.”⁹⁴ Analogously, it can be said that the nature and function of Smith’s texts can best be understood not in terms of historical veracity but as a means to “make sense of time,” specifically biblical time. Or, in terms of narrative theory, Smith’s mythmaking may be best understood in terms of its capacity to make “human time,” that combination of what is already (our past) with what is anticipated (our future) to comprise the reality out of which we act in the present.⁹⁵ Thus, by maintaining the narrative function of the Bible in his own writings, Smith made more than a claim to history. He gave his believing readers a sense of what was experientially real, not merely philosophically true. Wittgenstein’s observation about Christianity is equally

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Mary Warnock, “Religious Imagination,” in *Religious Imagination*, ed. James P. Mackey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 155–56.

⁹⁵ Ricoeur, “Narrated Time,” 354.

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true of Mormonism. “Christianity is not,” he said, “based on a historical truth; rather it offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to historical narrative, rather . . . make a quite different place in your life for it.”⁹⁶ Attention to narrative function furthers Wittgenstein’s point by positing that the believing reader’s commitment is not partial. The reader does not make “a place” for the narrative but enters—takes his or her life experience—into the narrative as a world of possibility.

This is not to argue against the kind of verification fundamental to scientific history, though it does side with Warnock’s observation that a positivist approach can miss the role of human imagination in not merely perceiving but also constructing reality. Rather, it is to argue for something besides the power of description at work in certain narratives, especially those that rise to the level of mythos and make a claim to religious authority. Smith’s narratives do not display fact to be assented to but draw the reader into a malleable reality by means of the malleable plots that traditionally provided the basis for Jewish and Christian ethos and ethic. It can be said that Smith was translating time, not text. Specifically, he translated biblical time in service to, he said, an “ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times . . . a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers . . . from the days of Adam even to the present time.”⁹⁷ Whatever his intention, the effect was to deploy the biblical text in a manner that radically subverted centuries of theologizing on who God is and how humans are to worship God.

Making room for a more poetic function at work between this reading-and-writing prophet and his confirming God allows that “truth,” as Ricoeur has said, “no longer means verification, but manifestation. . . . What shows itself is in each instance a proposed world, a world I may inhabit and wherein I can project my own most possibilities.”⁹⁸ This is the power to which Bloom credited Mormonism’s survival: not Smith’s history making but his “myth-making imagination at work to sustain so astonishing an innovation.”⁹⁹ It is the power to shape reality, not merely describe it. To the extent that self-consciousness can be ascribed to him, it is probably why Smith abjured theology for mythmaking. Re-

⁹⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright with Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 32e; quoted in Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), xxvii.

⁹⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.

⁹⁸ Ricoeur, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,” 102.

⁹⁹ Bloom, *American Religion*, 97.

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ardless, scholars who would understand the relative longevity and appeal of his project, especially as it has transcended its American milieu, can ill afford to ignore the capacity of Smith's narratives to make sense of time.