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Appropriating the Mormon Past: Faith, Intellect, and the Reformation of Mormon Identity

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Appropriating the Mormon Past: Faith, Intellect, and the Reformation of Mormon Identity[1]

At a private meeting of Utah State University religious studies students in November 2011, the now emeritus member of the Quorum of the Seventy, Marlin K. Jensen, created a small media stir from comments referencing a faith crisis currently overwhelming some LDS Church members. Jensen remarked, "Maybe since Kirtland, we never have had a period of…apostasy, like we're having right now"—an apostasy, Jensen confessed, bred by controversial issues in the church's past.[2] More recently, church area authority Hans Mattsson, in *a New York Times* article that garnered national attention, became the embodiment of a "wave of disillusionment" gripping the Mormon faith community as a result of little-discussed issues in church history.[3]

On the subject of a Mormon faith crisis, Gregory Prince, in this year's Leonard J. Arrington Lecture entitled "Faith and Doubt as Partners in Mormon History," recounted LDS Church historian Leonard Arrington's approach to faith, doubt, and issues in Mormon history. Arrington lamented the general retreat among younger scholars from an intellectual-based approach to a more scripturally-driven approach to Mormon history. In Arrington's estimation, "faith is compatible with intellect" and doubts can actually stimulate rather than destroy faith. Prince, using Arrington's paradigm of doubt as an avenue to faith, called for scholarship "doubting the status-quo" and addressing,

[2] Peter Henderson and Kristina Cooke, "Special Report—Mormonism Besieged by the Modern Age," *Reuters,* January 30, 2012, Accessed November 11, 2013, http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/01/30/uk-mormonchurch-idUKTRE80T1CP20120130.
[3] Laurie Goodstein, "Some Mormons Search the Web and Find Doubt," *NY Times,* July 20, 2013, Accessed November 11, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/us/some-mormons-search-the-web-and-find-doubt.html?_r=0.

instead, topics already receiving in-depth, and often unfavorable, treatment on the internet, including subjects like polygamy, the Book of Abraham, the Book of Mormon, and the First Vision.

The assertions of Prince, church leaders, and recent media stories collectively suggest an emerging identity crisis within the LDS Church as alternative historical narratives readily available to anyone with access to the internet tug at the perceived truthfulness of institutionally-rendered accounts of church history. If Prince's observations are correct, current Mormon culture favors conformity over skepticism and proclamations of faith over expressions of doubt; the intellectual retreat lamented by Arrington remains in force. However, Mormonism's own doctrine includes a theology of enlightenment, knowledge, and intelligence altogether different from the current correlated and conformed culture diagnosed in Mormonism.[4] Early Mormonism rather exhibited a comfortable tension between intellectual inquiry and spiritual truth. Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith, saw spirituality and the pursuit of intellect not as mutually exclusive endeavors, but complimentary components of the human quest for exaltation. This paper examines early Mormon conceptions of intelligence and suggests how theology might influence the adoption of a new Mormon identity that permits expressions of doubt from church members and a deeper, intellectual investigation of the Mormon faith.

Reconstituting Mormon Identity

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[4] Davis Bitton cautions that it would be irrational to see early Mormonism as a "thoroughly intellectual" religion. Still, early Mormonism exhibited a "greater compatibility" between reason, intellect, and faith. Davis Bitton, "Anti-Intellectualism in Mormon History," *Dialogue* 1 (1966): 119. It would also be irrational to suggest that modern Mormonism exhibits an aversion for secular education and intellectual endeavors. Mormons collectively are a highly educated people. Yet, a culture of conformity that devalues doubts and questions about faith and church history persists in modern Mormonism.

The historically contingent nature of Mormon identity is well-documented by historians.[5] J. Spencer Fluhman notes that two "discursive processes" in the nineteenth century, one decidedly anti-Mormon and one generated within the religious tradition, constructed Mormon "peculiarity" in divergent, yet not completely independent ways. Indeed, Mormons constructed an identity for themselves that proved to be both fluid and, as Fluhman suggests, interactive with outsider views. The "dynamic tension" that existed between Mormonism and its Protestant critics shaped religious identity and helped transform Mormonism by the 20th century.[6] A sense of the Mormon "self" as a salient identity has evolved over time; nonetheless, what it means to be a faithful "Mormon" continues to exert powerful influence over the Mormon community as a whole.

A nomenclature exists in Mormonism; labels and names carry power and meaning. The process of naming a thing or a place can reveal something about a group's perspective and background as well as their aspirations and fears.[7] Utah city names are a case study in Mormon nomenclature and toponymy: Zion, Brigham City, Orderville, Lehi, Nephi, and the Jordan River are place names tied to and shaped by Mormon collective memory.[8] Names reflexively suggest something about a culture, but can also transmit a discursive tradition or informed ideology. For example, as Philip Barlow makes evident, the Book of Mormon name for "honeybee," *Deseret,* acts as both a

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[5] Armand Mauss traces the construction of a Mormon identity in the nineteenth century based on ideas about lineage borrowed from Mormon scripture and the broader American culture. Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 8
[6] J. Spencer Fluhman, *A Peculiar People: Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 1–8.
[7] Philip Barlow, "Of Mormonish and Saintspeak," *OUP Blog,* July 24, 2013, Accessed November 25, 2013, http://blog.oup.com/2013/ 07/mormon-lingo-lds-words/.
[8] Ibid.

"symbol" and a "concept" that imbues Mormon culture with a sense of industry, thriftiness, and organization. While the name *Deseret* can be found in the title of a prominent Utah thrift store and newspaper today, the name connotes an ideology with a respective historicity that grants it power in Mormon culture.[9]

Similarly, Mormons label themselves as "active members" to describe their coherence to an expected orthodoxy outlined by prophetic counsel and scriptural dictates. Outsiders to the Mormon faith are referred to as "non-members." A bifurcated member/non-member status in Mormon culture goes beyond convenient linguistics— the terms represent a Mormon nomenclature that carries power and an expected identity. Ethan Yorgason, a cultural geographer, views the Mormon/non-Mormon dynamic as the primary transformational force that led to Mormonism's Americanization from 1880–1920. A salient "Mormon culture region" surrounding Utah adapted and changed based on conflict and comprise with economic, social, and political ideologies imported by outsiders to the Mormon culture region. Certainly, as Yorgason demonstrates, what it means to be an active member of the Mormon faith evolves with time, but also requires conformity to a constructed religious identity that is historically contingent. Mormons, by 1920, exhibited "a conformist-conservative trajectory" that moved critiques of the church hierarchy, practices, and policies increasingly out of the realm of acceptable behavior while rendering strict obedience normative.[10] Modern Mormonism (similar to other faith traditions) has a performativity

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ethan R. Yorgason, *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 8–9.

to it that demands demonstrated conformity to an identity as verification of "active member" status in the faith.[11]

The dynamism of Mormon identity in the past means that Mormonism's current normative identity could also be reconstituted or reformed. Spencer Fluhman rightly concludes that modern Mormons know little of the "theological world of the 1840s." [12] Current Mormon identity is formulated with 20th century Mormonism in mind and little of Mormon collective memory, as gauged by official discourse, remembers Mormonism's nineteenth-century distinctiveness. Most Mormons can recount Joseph Smith's supernatural experiences, but little of his polygamy. Most can recount the scriptural message of the Book of Abraham, but little of its problematic origins and original content. Modern Mormon collective memory amounts to what Spencer Fluhman has termed "a strategic forgetting" of past "cultural deviance" in favor of a modern, correlated and packaged narrative.[13] Yet, if a modern Mormon faith crisis exists, as Greg Prince and others suggest it does, it exists because academic historians, bloggers, and the internet will not let Mormonism forget its nineteenth-century cultural deviancy and related historical "baggage."

While it seems that the anti-intellectual tendencies exhibited by the LDS church hierarchy in the 1980s and 90s are waning in the 21st century, recent articles on the Mormon faith crisis make it clear that more work needs to be done in bringing intellectual depth and a more comprehensive study of Mormon doctrine and history to

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[11] For example, to gain access to Mormonism's highest rituals, contemporary Mormons must self-identify as compliant with a set of beliefs and practices seen by church leaders as fundamental to Mormonism.
[12] Fluhman, *Peculiar People,* 6
[13] Ibid., 6–7.

the Mormon laity who are now re-learning their past through online sources.[14]

Ironically, a deeper study of early Mormonism could provide one antidote for

Mormonism's current crisis. Early Mormonism incorporated a theology with an

accompanying identity more tolerant of intellect, intelligence, and knowledge.

Institutional Mormonism might newly frame their identity for the 21st century by

recycling a theological heritage still relevant to contemporary Mormonism, but obscured

by the amnesic tendencies of an institution casting for public appeal in the modern

world.

Intelligence and Knowledge in Early Mormonism

In the summer of 1830, when Joseph Smith commenced his new translation of

the Bible, his revision of the creation account acknowledged a form of spiritual creation:

God "created all things…spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the

earth." [15] Scholars disagree on what early usage of the term "spiritual" actually meant in

Smith's developing theology, but later revelations reprised this idea of an initial spiritual

creation. [16] Smith, however, gives little indication that he understood "spiritual" to mean

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[14] A commonly cited example of the anti-intellectual positions held by LDS leadership during the 1980s is Boyd K. Packer's, "The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect," CES Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History, Brigham Young University, 22 August 1981. For divergent perspectives on the excommunication of six scholars of the Mormon church in the early 1990s, nicknamed the "September Six," see Lavina Fielding Anderson, "The Church and its Scholars: Ten Years Later," *Sunstone* 128 (July 2003): 13–19; Armand L. Mauss, "Seeing the Church as a Human Institution," *Sunstone* 128 (July 2003): 20–23. Recent publications sponsored by the LDS church reveal a more balanced, scholarly approach to church history. See, for example, Ronald W. Walker, Glen M. Leonard, and Richard E. Turley, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) and publications from the Joseph Smith Papers Project.

[15] Joseph Smith began his dictation of Old Testament Manuscript 1 in June 1830. Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 63; Moses 3:5.

[16] Both Blake Ostler and Thomas Alexander find little evidence that Smith understood or advocated a concept of literal spirit creation in his early revelations. Charles Harrell, however, disagrees, suggesting that no "evidence" exists that Smith viewed spiritual creation "in any other

a *literal* creation of spirits, at least in his early revelations. Some scholars hypothesize

that Smith favored a meaning more in-line with contemporary usage of the term

"spiritual" as "not material," "incorporeal," or relating to that which is "mental," or

"intellectual."[17] Ontological arguments credited God's foreknowledge with mankind's

creation—human beings existed as intellectual or conceptual creations, not as literal

spirits.[18]

Smith's early theology on spirit ultimately lacked the radicalness of later Nauvoo-

era developments. His theology, instead, appropriated Protestant creationist and

perfectionist reasoning. For example, early doctrines did not challenge the notion of

creation *ex-nihilo* or the immateriality of the spirit.[19] In 1833, Smith received a

revelation situating man "in the beginning with God," but the revelation did not

expound upon the nature or substance of this existence.[20] It further defined intelligence

as "light and truth" and the "glory of God." Smith's revelation linked obedience to the

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way than as a spirit creation." See, Blake Ostler, "The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought," *Dialogue* 15 (Spring 1982): 60, 63; Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology," *Sunstone* 5 (Jul.–Aug. 1980): 33, fn. 23; Charles R. Harrell, "The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830-1844," *BYU Studies* 28 (Spring 1988): 80; See D&C 29:30-32; D&C 49:17; D&C 77:2.

[17] Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language,* "Spiritual."

[18] Ostler, "The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought," 60.

[19] The *Latter-Day Saint Evening and Morning Star*, in October 1832, published a piece by French theologian, Jacques Saurin, promoting a creationist perspective. "Comparison Between Heathenism and Christianity," *Latter-Day Saint Evening and Morning Star* (October 1832): 76–78; See also, Harrell, "The Development of the Doctrine of Pre-Existence," 81.

[20] D&C 93:29. Smith's revelation hints at a more materialist interpretation of the word 'spirit': "For man is spirit. The elements are eternal" (D&C 93:33). Smith would clarify his theology on the pre-existence and the materiality of the spirit by Nauvoo. As Bushman rightly concludes, this early revelation "suggests more than it precisely defines" Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 208. Even Platonic theologians were willing to concede that the divine was made of a substance, even if that substance was immaterial. See Stephen H. Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 269. Smith's theology, therefore, by hinting that Spirit was formed of an eternal element, landed somewhere between the strict immaterialism of Augustine and a new, more radical materialism.

acquisition of further light and truth until one is glorified and "knoweth all things."[21] His

theology channeled perfectionist thinking from the contemporary holiness movement

within Methodism.[22] Smith, however, rarely adopted established theology wholesale.

His revelatory creativity drew from his immediate surroundings, but this process

paralleled how Smith would later describe creation: God created the world not *ex nihilo*,

but by organizing materials from existing elements.[23] Smith tailored Protestant

perfectionism to meet the needs of his theology of enlightenment. Perfection was

achieved not just by adhering to a code of morality, but by attaining more light or

intelligence. Knowledge, therefore, became a crucial component of Smith's soteriology.[24]

 A revelation, received in December 1832 and January 1833, clarified the source

from which light, truth, and knowledge emanated from. Christ, as the "light of truth,"

was "in and through all things," including the sun, moon and stars. His light also was

the "law by which all things are governed, even the power of God." Smith's "olive leaf"

placed Christ at the center of the cosmos as the radiant energy that infused life into all of

God's creations. Christ, however, in Smith's Christ-centered cosmology also served as

the gatekeeper and distributor of Godly knowledge as the source that "quickeneth your

understandings." Smith's revelation, by defining the light of Christ as the source of

truth, established a Christology that ascribed both knowledge and matter as a portion of

the divine.[25] Even modern Mormon ritual, including the endowment, to a degree,

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[21] D&C 93:28–29, 36.
[22] Richard L. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 208
[23] This viewpoint is expressed by Philip Barlow in: Barlow, "To Mend a Fractured Reality: Joseph Smith's Project," *Journal of Mormon History* 38 (Summer 2012): 35.
[24] Ibid.
[25] D&C 88:6–13. The pervasiveness of the light of Christ for Smith paralleled very closely the doctrine of emanation associated with Plotinus. In fact, the similarities could have formed the basis for Smith's later shift towards materialism and his rejection of creation *ex nihilo*. Certainly, Parley P. Pratt's writings on the origins of the spirit had established parallels with

absorbed rhetoric pointing to a Godly enlightenment; "light," "truth," and "knowledge," are all key words that peal back the veil to reveal a celestial glory.

Smith's early theology used knowledge and intelligence somewhat interchangeably. By 1839, however, Smith utilized the word intelligence to unfold a more detailed concept of preexistence. His Nauvoo theology exemplified a degree of originality and expansiveness about the nature of spirit, matter, and intelligence unmatched by his earlier revelations. First, he increasingly defined intelligence as a pre-existent entity without distancing the term from previous connotations related to the pursuit of knowledge. He also discarded the concept of creation *ex nihilo* in favor of an ontology more compatible with his most revolutionary theological departure by Protestant standards—the eternal nature of matter, including material, self-existent spirits.

In a summer 1839 sermon, Smith discoursed on the eternal, uncreated nature of the spirit. "The Spirit of Man is not a created being," he contended. Spirits instead "existed from Eternity" and would continue to exist for eternity.[26] It is unclear whether Smith's preoccupation with the translation of papyri purported to be the Book of Abraham prompted him to publically declare a more eternal trajectory for human spirits. He began translating the papyri as early as 1835, but only completed a few

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emanation. See Harrell, "The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence," 84; Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God,* 41–46.

[26] Discourse, c. August 1839, in *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph,* edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980), 9-12; see also Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co.), 3:385-92. Smith's sermon amounted to an emphatic rejection of creation *ex nihilo* and an early endorsement for mankind's real, rather than imagined ontological origins. See Ostler, "The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought," 61.

chapters before church duties made a more extensive translation difficult.[27] Between

1835 and 1842, when the *Times and Seasons* first published a completed manuscript of

the Book of Abraham, Smith confronted the concept of uncreated, self-existent

intelligences.[28] Smith learned that intelligences existed "before the world was" and that

they were "organized," not created.[29] He also learned of a hierarchical structure of

intelligences with the "Lord thy God" being "more intelligent than they all."[30] In his later

sermons, Smith felt little need to differentiate between "spirit," "intelligence," or the

precise nature of uncreated, eternal substance.

　　Two possibilities exist for Smith's understanding of what comprises a preexistent

person in relation to embodiment and eventual mortality. One possibility suggests that

unembodied intelligences received a "spirit body" comprised of "refined matter" after

undergoing a spiritual birth initiated by a Heavenly Father.[31] A revelation received by

Smith in 1843 clarified that "immaterial matter" did not exist. A spirit, or spirit body,

therefore, was composed of "fine or pure" matter since "all spirit is matter."[32] The

second, and more likely option, suggests that Smith did not differentiate between

intelligence and spirit. Pre-mortal life was filled with "spirit-intelligences" from the

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[27] See Book of Abraham Manuscript, Kirtland, OH, ca. summer–fall 1835, Book of Abraham Manuscripts, ca. 1837–1841, CHL, Accessed Nov. 2013, http://josephsmithpapers.org; Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 27.
[28] *Times and Seasons,* 1 Mar. 1842, 15 Mar. 1842, 16 May 1842; The portion of the Book of Abraham containing teachings on pre-existent intelligence is now canonized as Abraham 3.
[29] Abraham 3:22
[30] Abraham 3:19
[31] Barlow, "To Mend a Fractured Reality," 46.
[32] D&C 131: 7-8. While Smith may have taught a form of spirit birth, his followers were still confused about the teaching after his death. Joseph Lee Robinson remarked in 1845: "The question arose then, How is God the Father of our spirits? I wondered, studied and prayed over it for I did want to know how it could be. I inquired of several of the brethren how that could be—a father and son and the son as old as the father. There was not a person that could or that would even try to explain that matter." Quoted in, Harrell, "The Development of the Doctrine of Pre-existence," 87. Teachings on spirit birth became more common after 1845. Ostler, "The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought," 68.

beginning as indivisible beings with "spirits" and "intelligences" serving as different terms for the same entities. Regardless, Smith joined fractured notions of spirit and intellect to make the two inseparable and essential to human existence.[33] Divine intelligences possessed free will and choice, a principle that structured their pre-existent state. "Spirits are eternal," he proclaimed in 1841. "At the first organization in heaven we were all present and saw the Savior chosen and appointed, and the plan of salvation made and we sanctioned it."[34] Intelligences, therefore, were not merely uncreated subjects imprisoned by divine will, but free-thinking entities with the capacity to choose.

Smith, with his evolving concept of organized intelligences, never replaced knowledge as an essential component of his soteriology. He reemphasized God as the source of knowledge in an 1842 discourse: "As far as we degenerate from God we desend to the devil & loose knowledge & without knowledge we cannot be saved."[35] A revelation in 1843 discussed how intelligence transcended mortality and made one's status in eternity contingent upon "knowledge and intelligence in this life."[36] Smith also endowed heavenly worlds with characteristics of knowledge. The earth, in Smith's eschatology, would serve in its sanctified state as "a great Urim and Thummim" where "all things" concerning lower kingdoms would be manifested to the earth's inhabitants.[37] He envisioned a cosmos where glory was conditional upon the acquisition of knowledge and heavenly worlds facilitated the further learning of knowledge unbound.[38]

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[33] See Barlow, "To Mend a Fractured Reality," 46.
[34] Discourse, Jan. 1841 in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 59– 61.
[35] Discourse, 10 Apr. 1842 in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 113–114.
[36] D&C 130:18–19.
[37] D&C 130: 7–10.
[38] In an 1843 discourse, Smith unfolded the two keys for salvation: "There are two Keys, one key knowledge. the other make you Calling & election sure, for if you do these things you shall never fall for so an entrance shall be administered unto you abudently into the everlasting Kingdom of

In a ritual reenactment of mankind's eternal destiny containing instructions on the priesthood, Smith also communicated or "endowed" practitioners with divine knowledge. When he introduced the endowment in 1842, Smith emphasized that the ordinance could "be received only by the Spiritual minded: and there was nothing made known to these men, but what will be made known to all <the> Saints of the last days."[39] Distributed keys provided the endowed with access to celestial glory if faithful, but also gifted them with the divine knowledge necessary to gain access to celestial realms. Without the endowment of knowledge and power, Saints would not be able to "abide in the presence of Eloheim in the Eternal worlds."[40] By 1842, Smith's theology and ritual were saturated with discourse about the acquisition of Godly knowledge as he weaved an eternal destiny for the Saints that extended from pre-earth intelligences to exalted and embodied souls endowed with perfected, eternal intelligence. Smith's teachings connected God's power to the scope of His knowledge, a concept that reprised ideas in Abraham 3, but also in some ways laid the foundation for Smith's most imaginative theological tenet yet: the ability for man to become like God.

Joseph Smith's "King Follett Sermon" set forth the prophet's theology on the eternal nature and destiny of man. While Smith had already rejected creation *ex nihilo* in earlier Nauvoo discourses, he explained the doctrinal reasons behind his shift away from creationism. The word *create,* Smith explained, "came from the word Baurau [*barâh*]." The word "means to organize—same as a man would use to build a ship— hence we infer that God had materials to organize from—chaos . . . ." Smith encountered

our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ." Discourse, 17 May 1843, in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 202.

[39] Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, vol. C-1, 1328, Accessed November 2013, http://josephsmithpapers.org; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 452.

[40] Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, vol. C-1, 1328, Accessed November 2013, http://josephsmithpapers.org.

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this biblical notion of "create," found in Genesis 1:1, when he studied Hebrew under the direction of Professor Joshua Seixas in Kirtland.[41] He now used the word to support a new concept of creation, one enveloped by a notion of preexistence that included the material and eternal nature of matter. Matter, as immortal as the spirits of men, could "never be destroyed."[42] Spirits were capable of "enlargement" with the ultimate "privilege" to "advance" like God.[43] The mind, or "intelligent part" was "coequal with God." The true imperative for mankind was to "learn how to be a god yourself."[44]

Smith's theology on the divinization of man required the perfection of matter as well as the gradual intellectual advancement of spirits until they approached God in spiritual completeness. Smith never abandoned his theology of enlightenment. Through his theological creativity, he instead envisioned a world where human striving, learning, and obedience would result in the partaking of all that God has. Mormon eternal identity, therefore, was governed by a quest for intelligence and knowledge: knowledge drew one to God and made one like God. Intelligence formed the substance of an eternal identity placed inside a corporeal body. In the theological world of early Mormonism, to suppress the pursuit of knowledge and intelligence, therefore, would be to deny the eternal nature of "self" and to impede progression towards partaking in the very nature of God.

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[41] Quotations come from the William Clayton account found in Ehat and Cook, The *Words of Joseph Smith,* 359; see also Philip Barlow, "Toward a Mormon Sense of Time," *Journal of Mormon History* 33 (Spring 2007): 12. Later in the sermon, Smith declared: "Intelligence exists upon a selfexistent principle—is a spirit from age to age & no creation about it." Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 360.

[42] Ibid., 359.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 357, 359. Smith's expansion of the eternal nature and destiny of man may have been inspired by an anthropomorphic conception of deity. Smith declared, "God that sits enthroned is a man like one of yourselves." Ibid., 357. See also Ether 3:1-17

Conclusion

Certainly, Joseph Smith at times, exhibited anti-intellectual tendencies, or sought to suppress opinions he deemed harmful to his fledgling movement.[45] Still, at the foundation of early Mormonism was a theology of enlightenment that valued knowledge and intelligence as components of the divine. A revealed divine identity became incorporated into a constructed Mormon identity that esteemed knowledge and intelligence as essential for human progression, but also as constituent parts of an eternal identity. How did Smith deal with doubt in his developing theology? Smith suggested that "Knowledge does away darkness, supense and doubt...where knowledge is there is no doubt...nor darkness...in knowledge there is power."[46] Knowledge fortified rather than destroyed faith in Smith's estimation and faith and intellect were mutually supportive. Mormons generations removed from the church's early decades currently find an altogether different tenor on matters of faith, intelligence, and church history.

If a collective "forgetting" of a troubled Mormon past has occurred, as scholars have suggested, then a collective remembering of Mormonism's historical past through intellectual inquiry might serve Mormonism well. Mormons in a sense have suppressed their early Mormon roots in an attempt to conform to more American social, economic, and political norms in the 20th and 21st centuries. In effect, Mormons assimilated, but as a byproduct, lost much of their ability to question, to doubt, and to explore intellectually their theology and history in the process. The anti-intellectual retreat that characterizes modern Mormonism has done nothing to mitigate the current faith crisis gripping the

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[45] For one example, see Smith's role in destroying the anti-Mormon periodical, the *Nauvoo Expositor,* in 1844. Robert Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 308–309; See also Dallin H. Oaks, "Suppression of the Nauvoo Expositor," *Utah Law Review* 9 (1965), 862–903; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 540–545.
[46] Discourse, 8 April 1843, in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 183.

religious tradition. But if history has shown anything about Mormonism as an institutional entity, it is that it is malleable and capable of absorbing change. The fluidness with which Mormons have constructed an identity for themselves historically bodes well for possible Mormon futures. Leonard Arrington, as described by Greg Prince, was perhaps ahead of his time in projecting one possible Mormon future—a combination of faith and intellect as a paradigm for approaching controversy in Mormonism's past. Functioning at the foundation of early Mormonism was an underlying theology of knowledge and intelligence. Perhaps, as Mormonism re-discovers its nineteenth century distinctiveness in the coming decades it will also recast a form of its early identity, an identity that placed intellectual investigation as a godly experience and knowledge, no matter the subject, as fundamental to an eternal past, present and future as a faithful, "active," Mormon.

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