Joseph Smith as Occultural Bricoleur

By

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Abstract

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Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism), is arguably one of the most complicated and fascinating individuals to emerge out of the religious milieu of nineteenth century America. While, understandably, much confessional, not to say hagiographical literature has been produced about his life and work, as well as a number of largely biased studies by religious and secular detractors, there have been comparatively few objective, scholarly analyses. The most recent scholarly studies have contributed to our understanding of the social, cultural, and religious elements that influenced his religion building imagination. However, each has tended to focus on a particular feature of Smith's religious background. One of the areas in which this thesis is distinctive, is that it argues that Smith was fundamentally and methodologically eclectic in his approach. In order to develop this line of argument, it uses Christopher Partridge's theory of occulture to develop a thesis around the notion of Joseph Smith as 'occultural bricoleur.' Using the theory of occulture, we are able to see that Smith, rather than drawing on one or two features of the vibrant spiritual milieu of nineteenth century America, actually draws liberally from a range of sources. While it is argued that there were three foundational traditions that provided a loose framework for his early thought—Universalism, Swedenborgianism, and Freemasonry—it also argues that he incorporated a range of other popular folk and magical elements. As such the thesis provides a new theory of early Mormonism.

Declaration

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Signed

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Sheldon Kent

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Abbreviations

BYU	Brigham Young University
D&C	Doctrine and Covenants
JSH	Joseph Smith History

Introduction

In 1974, Jan Shipps noted, 'as is so often the case with controversial figures, Joseph Smith's adherents and detractors built up public images which they have been at pains to protect, leaving apparently irreconcilable interpretations of the Mormon leader's life.' Consequently, 'we must cope with the contradictory accounts found, on the one hand, in memoirs penned by apostates and in affidavits collected from Smith's neighbors, and, on the other, in the official *History of the Church*, a reconstruction of events compiled by diverse people including the prophet himself, which was commenced in 1838…' Shipps continues, explaining that 'all these difficulties notwithstanding, a continuing effort must be made to solve the mystery of Mormonism by coming to understand the enigma at its core. The image that now exists is fragmented and incomplete. The perspective must be lengthened through a consideration of the prophet in the context of the social, political, economic, and theological milieu from which he came.'[1]

More than forty years have passed since Shipps penned her observation, and while there have been various articles, essays and books published that have been dedicated to the study of Smith and early Mormonism, it is still widely recognised to be the case that we are no closer to solving the 'the Mystery of Mormonism'. The prevailing opinions are rather dogmatically divided over whether Smith was a prophet or a fraud. This is, perhaps, not surprising when we consider the fact that Mormonism is still a relatively young religion and that many of the voices being heard on the subject of early Mormon history are those of researchers that are either fully

[1] Jan Shipps, 'The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading Toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith' in Bryan Waterman (ed.) *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 28-29.

invested in the faith, or who have found issue with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) and have left it altogether. What follows in this thesis is a more nuanced, objective analysis of the evidence. The aim is to challenge the dominant theories about the character and motives of Smith, in order to provide a more holistic, rounded understanding of Smith as the founder of an important and influential religious tradition.

Key theories about Joseph Smith and Early Mormonism

One of the most common theories about Smith can be understood as the imposter/conman view. This is typically held by Mormonism's detractors, including those who were once members of the LDS Church, and those who see it as their role—as a result of their own personal religious convictions or commitment to 'countercult'[2] discourses—to monitor the LDS Church and to expose its founder as fraudulent. Alexander Campbell, founder of the Disciples of Christ—which is also known as the Stone-Campbell movement—is one of the earliest examples of a religious leader to publish a critique of Mormonism, and who Richard Bushman has claimed is 'the best informed of the early critics' because he had read 'enough of the *Book of Mormon* to offer a reasoned critique.'[3] He was, no doubt, fuelled by the fact that the Mormons had experienced significant success among the Disciples of Christ in Ohio in 1830, and the subsequent conversion of Sidney Rigdon, one of Campbell's most influential preachers.[4] Indeed, he wrote a well-known critique, in which he referred to Smith as an 'ignorant and impudent knave.'[5] Smith, he argued (on the basis of a conspicuous lack of evidence), is, not

[2] See, Douglas Cowan, 'The Christian Countercult Movement,' in J.R. Lewis and I.B. Tøllefsen (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, Volume 2 (Oxford University Press, 2016), 143-151.
[3] Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 89.
[4] Ibid., 89.
[5] Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon*, *With an Examination of its Internal and External Evidences, And a Refutation of its Pretences to Divine Authority* (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1832), 91-93.

only a religious imposter, but an 'atheist.' Moreover, the *Book of Mormon* is 'full of Smithisms' with 'not one good sentence in it.'[6]

Perhaps the most noteworthy critique of Smith and early Mormonism was that of Eber D. Howe, a newspaper editor and founder of the *Painesville Telegraph* in 1822, who gathered together affidavits from seventy-two of Smith's contemporaries from Doctor Philastus Hurlbut[7] and nine letters from Ezra Booth, both excommunicates from the LDS Church. He then published them in *Mormonism Unveiled* (1834). Again, the comments are in the form of personal attack, describing Smith as both ignorant and stupid. Having said that, as with early followers of a faith, they often view a lack of education at proof of the validity of the message revealed to them. Essentially, because they could not have produced the writings themselves, it must have been by divine intervention. To claim this, however, argues Howe, has always been 'the ward-robe of imposters.'[8] Howe was also the first to claim alternative authorship of the *Book of Mormon*. He argued that Solomon Spalding, a Congregationalist preacher and writer, between 1809 to 1812, worked on a historical fiction called *Manuscript, Found*. This previously unpublished book contained 'facts and data… sufficient at least to raise a strong presumption' that they were 'the leading features of the "Gold Bible"'.[9] The evidence again relies heavily upon affidavits, this time from Spalding's friends, family, and other associates. This has since developed into what is now known as the 'Spalding-Rigdon' theory and has been widely debated and contested.[10]

[6] Ibid., 95, 96.
[7] Hurlbut's parents were heavily influenced by the occulture of the time and named him 'Doctor' in accord with him being their seventh son as a result of the folklore surrounding it. See D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 122.
[8] Ibid., 12.
[9] Ibid., 278.
[10] See for example, Robert Patterson, *Who Wrote the Book of Mormon* (Philadelphia: L H Everts & CO, 1882); Wayne L Cowdery, Howard A Davis, Arthur Vanik, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Spalding Enigma* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005).

Likewise, Fawn McKay Brodie, niece to the ninth President of the LDS Church, David Oman McKay, in her 1945 biography of Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, portrayed Smith as someone whose 'imagination spilled over like a spring freshet'[11]—'freshet' being a term used to describe the thawing of ice during the onset of spring and the resultant heavy flow of rivers throughout North America. As with many biographers, although Brodie struggled to get to the bottom of Smith's character, she ultimately settled on the view that he was an imposter. She explained that 'there are evidences not only of unbridled fantasy but also of contrivance and seeming fraud' in what she describes as the 'fiercely controversial material from the critical years before 1830.'[12] Brodie does not, however, describe Smith as being an out-and-out conman, but instead she points to the *Book of Mormon* as evidence of where he was 'working out unconscious conflicts over his own identity.'[13] The *Book of Mormon* is, therefore, more than simply a religious text, but rather it was a book in which Smith subconsciously wrestled with 'what he really was and what he most desperately wanted be.'[14]

Concerning what might be termed 'psychological explanations' for Smith's experiences and behaviour, there have only been a handful of publications that have dealt with this aspect. In 1902, in one of the first pieces of literature to analyse Smith's mental state, Woodbridge Riley suggested that his visions were the result of alcoholism, depression, or epileptic seizures. (Of course, at the end of the nineteenth century, the relationship between religion and insanity was beginning to be discussed in a number of academic journals. Does it lead to madness? Is it the result of psychosis?)[15] Riley's argument identified a history of mental

[11] Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 27.
[12] Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 412.
[13] Ibid., 416.
[14] Ibid., 418.
[15] See, for example, John Gray, 'Insanity: Its Frequency and Some Preventable Causes', *American Journal of Insanity* 42 (1885), 1-45; George Savage, *Insanity and Allied Neuroses: Practical and Clinical* (Philadelphia: Henry C. Lea's Son & Co., 1881), 51-52.

illness within both the Smith and Mack families.[16] Speaking of Smith's parents, who Riley describes as being believers in magic, witchcraft, angels and demons, he explains that they were 'steeped in ignorance and superstition.' It was, therefore, 'not to be expected that the parents could diagnose the case' of the young Smith's epilepsy.[17] He argues that the mere fact Smith's angelic visitations took place either at night, or far from the family home, is 'cumulative evidence of true epileptic convulsions.'[18] Riley further refers to a list of various forms of epilepsy: 1. grand mal; 2. petit mal; 3. transitional; 4. irregular; 5. epileptoid or epileptiform. Of the five forms of epilepsy, he suggests that the evidence points to Smith suffering from transitional epilepsy, which he views as the most logical explanation for his visions. Indeed, he takes time to deconstruct Smith's early experiences in conversing with heavenly beings.

In a similar way, the psychiatrist, Robert Anderson has pointed to narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) as the more likely explanation for Smith's experiences and behaviour. While he relies heavily upon NPD as the most likely explanation in his analysis, he suggests the following four qualifications: 1. NPD must be combined with the anti-social personality type; 2. the closeness of NPD with Smith's willingness to deceive; 3. Smith's ability to believe his own fantasy; and 4. Projective identification by Smith's followers as an important psychological defence, and as the basis for charisma.[19] Both Riley and Anderson's attempts to provide a psychobiographical account of Smith and early Mormonism have proved popular amongst those seeking naturalistic explanations or, indeed, those who have become estranged from the faith.

[16] I. Woodbridge Riley, *The Founder of Mormonism: A Psychological Study of Joseph Smith, Jr* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1902).
[17] Ibid., 70.
[18] Ibid., 70-71.
[19] Robert D. Anderson, *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 217-219.

Along similar lines, but far more recently, Dan Vogel has developed a theory in which he claims that the most obvious answer to the question of who Smith was, is that he was either a pious deceiver or a sincere fraud.[20] This hypothesis has been highly influential amongst LDS critics. He suggests that 'Smith believed that he was called of God, yet occasionally engaged in fraudulent activities in order to preach God's word as effectively as possible',[21] though he is quick to note Smith's supposed fraudulent activities, pointing to and suggesting that he possibly constructed 'plates of tin' and questioning his claim that 'the *Book of Mormon* is a translation of an anciently engraved record' as evidence of those fraudulent activities.[22] Vogel's defence of the validity of Smith's spirituality as being a legitimate element of his personality has been appealing to those seeking a more balanced account of Smith's experiences and behaviour. In Vogel's view, then, 'Smith really believed he was called of God to preach repentance to a sinful world, but that he felt justified in using deception to accomplish his mission more fully.' Moreover, he cites evidence (albeit debateable evidence) in Smith's writings and revelations, that 'Smith believed that God sometimes inspires deception, that some sins are according to his will, or that occasionally it is necessary to break one commandment in order to fulfil a higher law.'[23]

A far more cogent analysis is that of Ann Taves, who has suggested that Smith's actions are those of someone who could be considered a sincere visionary or 'skilled perceiver'.[24] She compares Smith to a 'physician who prescribes a placebo knowing that it contains no pharmacologically active ingredients not to deceive his patient but because the physician knows that placebos can have a healing effect.'[25] Taves claims that, in order for her comparison

[20] Dan Vogel. *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet*, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004: viii - xviii
[21] Ibid., viii.
[22] Dan Vogel, '"The Prophet Puzzle" Revisited', in Waterman, *The Prophet Puzzle*, 50.
[23] Vogel, '"The Prophet Puzzle" Revisited', in Waterman, *The Prophet Puzzle*, 61-62.
[24] Ann Taves, 'History and the Claims of Revelation: Joseph Smith and the Materialization of the Golden Plates', *Numen*, Volume 61, Number 2-13, (March 2014), 182 – 207.
[25] Ibid., 202.

to make sense, there has to be an assumption that Smith sincerely believed that he was the recipient of revelation. Hence, she accepts, for the sake of argument, firstly, 'that there were no plates' and, secondly, that believers were convinced that Smith was not a fraud.[26] Hence, for Taves, it matters little if there were or were not any actual golden plates from which Smith translated the *Book of Mormon*. Rather, what matters is that Smith and his followers sincerely *believed* that there were. Unlike Vogel, who claims that Smith must have physically fabricated plates in order to *piously deceive* his followers, Taves proposes that we view Smith as a 'skilled perceiver' and that the visitation of the angel Moroni was a 'dream-vision' which 'facilitated the creation of both the revelator and the revelation.'[27]

One of the earliest individuals to recognise that there may have been some problems surrounding Mormonism's historical truth claims and Smith's role as a prophet, yet still holding strong beliefs, was Brigham Henry Roberts, leader in the LDS Church's First Council of the Seventy, Historian, and Democratic candidate for the House of Representatives. In a previously unpublished document titled *A Book of Mormon Study*, Roberts conducted a study into the literature available to Smith prior to publication of the *Book of Mormon*, and which may have been 'of any force in the supposition that such publications might have furnished the material from which the *Book of Mormon* was constructed, or its general outlines suggested.'[28] While others have sought to dismiss the content of Roberts's work on the *Book of Mormon* as 'anything but a careful presentation of Smith's thoughts',[29] it nevertheless displays a thoughtful critique of the origins and historicity of the book.

Any student of Mormonism will understand how unusual it would have been for someone of Roberts' standing in the LDS Church to question the validity of the *Book of*

[26] Ann Taves, *Revelatory Events: Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 51.
[27] Ibid., 186-187.
[28] Brigham Henry Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 151.
[29] Truman G. Madsen, 'B. H. Roberts and the Book of Mormon', *Brigham Young University Studies*, 19, (1979), 441.

Mormon. For the majority of LDS members, the *Book of Mormon* is the ultimate test of Smith's prophethood and, as such, should not be questioned. Yet, within the pages of his *A Book of Mormon Study* he seriously considers the literature available within Smith's environment that could have potentially been used as source material for the book, devoting eight chapters to Ethan Smith's (who was no relation to Joseph) *View of the Hebrews*. Roberts argument is that 'the material in Ethan Smith's book is of a character and quantity to make a ground plan for the *Book of Mormon*: It supplies a large amount of material respecting American antiquities—leading to the belief that civilized or semi-civilized nations in ancient times occupied the American continents' and furthermore 'pleads on every page for the Israelitish origins of the American Indians.'[30] In effect, therefore, Roberts's work questions the very foundations upon which the LDS Church is built, in that, again, the *Book of Mormon* is 'the keystone' of the religion.[31]

In the closing chapter of Part One of Roberts' book, he poses the question, 'was Joseph Smith possessed of a sufficiently vivid and creative imagination as to produce such a work as the *Book of Mormon* from such materials as… common knowledge as was extant in the communities where he lived… from the Bible, and more especially from the *View of the Hebrews*, by Ethan Smith?'[32] Surprisingly, Roberts answers this question by stating, 'that such power of imagination would have to be of a high order is conceded; that Joseph Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question.'[33] To repeat the point, this is a very unusual statement from someone occupying a position of leadership and authority in the higher echelons of the LDS Church.

[30] Roberts, *Studies in the Book of Mormon*, 240.
[31] Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Volume 4 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948), 461.
[32] Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, 243.
[33] Ibid., 243.

The significance of the role Smith has played in human history for Latter-day Saints cannot be downplayed or understated. It is claimed, in Latter-day Saint scripture, that Smith 'has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it' (D&C 135:3). This is quite a bold and remarkable claim. David Bitton further explains that Mormons do not view Smith as one of the 'relatively insignificant prophets' of the Old Testament, but instead he explains that they view him as being on the same level as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Enoch, Moses, John the Baptist, Paul, and Jesus.[34] Brigham Young, second President of the LDS Church, also said of Smith, 'I was as well acquainted with him as any man… and I am bold to say that, Jesus Christ excepted, no better man lived or does live upon the earth.'[35] In a speech given in 1859, Young spoke also of Smith's role as a postmortal judge: 'No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith.'[36] This quasi-deification of Smith is key to understanding the role he plays in Mormon doctrine and theology. One of Smith's emic biographers (although perhaps 'hagiographers' is a more accurate term) wrote, 'Like many of the prophets in ancient times, the prophet of the last dispensation was martyred for the Lord's cause… If we do not know them now, each of us will at some time come to know these twin truths: Jesus is the Christ, and Joseph is his Prophet.'[37] Such is the view among many insider scholars.

While the above theories and explanations of Smith's character, behaviour, and experiences have, to some extent, a certain amount of merit, and some have come closer to providing a more convincing explanation than others, the issue that remains is that they often focus only on the question of Smith's character. Theories that fall in line with the imposter/conman explanation, for example, tend to gloss over certain positive, religious aspects

[34] Ibid., 107.
[35] Journal of Discourses 9:332; John A. Widtsoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1941), 459-460.
[36] David Bitton, *Knowing Brother Joseph Again* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 109.
[37] Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith: The Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 126.

of Smith's character. Psychological accounts that attempt to explain Smith's character, behaviour, and experiences overly focus on mental illness or psychological disorders. These are, arguably, too reductive, in that they act as a blanket explanation for everything Smith said and did. The issue here is, of course, that, because we have to rely on the historical record, a true and accurate psychoanalytical portrayal of Smith is difficult to ascertain.

Vogel's view of Smith as a 'pious deceiver or sincere fraud,' is arguably more cogent because of his insistence on taking into consideration both aspects of Smith's character—the spiritual seeker and the conman. Yet, Shipps' identification of a lacuna in Mormon studies still stands. As she writes, 'all these difficulties notwithstanding, a continuing effort must be made to solve the mystery of Mormonism by coming to understand the enigma at its core. The image that now exists is fragmented and incomplete. The perspective must be lengthened through a consideration of the prophet in context of the social, political, economic, and theological milieu from which he came.'[38] While Vogel believes that he has provided the answer to Shipps' conundrum,[39] it is clear that his theory fails to take into consideration the broader socio-cultural influences that would have had an impact on both his character and the environment from which he drew inspiration in his creative religion-building activities. Taves, arguably, comes closest in her evaluation of Smith. That said, while it is a more balanced account, it does not provide a detailed explanation of his *modus operandi*. Much like Taves' work, however, this thesis will seek to 'highlight modes of religious thinking' and also 'take seriously believers' claim that Smith was not a fraud'.[40] The present thesis will focus on the available evidence and, at the same time, develop an understanding of Smith as a religious thinker who was very much a product of his environment, drawing upon what was available to him through various

[38] Shipps. 'The Prophet Puzzle', 28-29.
[39] Vogel, '"The Prophet Puzzle" Revisited', 49.
[40] Taves, *Revelatory Events*, 51.

religious and occult literature, his relationships with others, and the wider socio-religious climate.

It's worth noting here a number of important recent studies of early Mormonism. One of the best, D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, was published in 1987. It is the first scholarly work that attempts to understand the cultural milieu in which Smith was born and raised and its subsequent influence on his religion-building imagination. Quinn makes a strong argument for the prevalence of magic and the occult in Western civilization, travelling to America via European immigrants, and being widely practiced in colonial America, through to the early days of the Republic. He also discusses the use of magic by early Mormon converts, including Smith and his parents. His overall argument is that 'early Mormonism was filled with religious and intelligent believers who perceived reality from a magic view and often practiced various kinds of folk magic.'[41] Magic, he shows, had an every-day influence on the lives of Smith, his family, and many of the early Mormon converts.

Similarly, John L. Brooke's book, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*, first published in 1994, argues that both hermeticism and alchemy form the basis of all of Smith's creative thinking. He traces these ideas, in a comparable way to Quinn, from Europe to America. Overall, he seeks to capture the 'various fragments of sectarian and hermetic culture passing through Joseph Smith's youthful consciousness to shape the classical Mormon cosmology.' Furthermore, he notes 'the connections among magic, hermeticism, and radical religion in early modern Europe and early America, asking who were the people prepared for the Mormon message and what were the vectors of hermetic culture that they encountered.'[42] To some extent, Brooke argues that it was hermeticism that acted as

[41] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 321.
[42] John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), preface, xvi.

a foundation from which Smith could amalgamate other beliefs, and which led to the construction of Mormon cosmology within Smith's system.

While the ideas of Quinn and Brooke have been important contributions to scholarship with regard to early influences on Smith's religion-building, their focus on a singular aspect of the contemporary occult world, has led to a procrustean account of early Mormonism. Particular ideas are chopped or stretched into their narrow theories: magic for Quinn; hermeticism for Brooke. As such, the argument of this thesis is that they do not adequately explain the broad nature of Smith's eclecticism, nor do they sufficiently describe the culture from which he took them from. Other works have also focused on singular ideas as being the main, significant, or only influence on Smith. For example, Clyde Forsberg's *Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender, and American Culture* (2004), Michael W. Homer's *Joseph's Temples: The Dynamic Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism* (2014), and, most recently, *Method Infinite: Freemasonry and the Mormon Restoration* (2022), by Cheryl Bruno, Joe Steve Swick III, and Nicholas Literski, all identify Freemasonry as being the main set of ideas that contributed to Smith's creative endeavours.

Theory and Method

The fundamental problem with all of the above approaches is that they do not adequately capture the depth and breadth of the social, political, economic, and theological milieu from which Smith came or the complexities and nuances of his methodology. What they do well, however, especially in the case of Quinn and Brooke, is document the evidence of the transmission of particular types of ideas that travelled from the European continent to America. Yet, the mystery of Mormonism that Shipps identifies still evades us. Hence, again, this thesis will address this challenge by, firstly, attempting to understand why it is that the kinds of ideas that Smith drew upon continued to persist within his immediate environment. This will be done

by adapting Christopher Partridge's cultural sociological theory of 'occulture' as initially outlined in both volumes of *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture*.[43] While maintaining many of the central ideas of Partridge's occulture thesis—in particular the idea that a given culture is not static and immoveable—it has been adapted to portray a uniquely nineteenth century American occulture that reflects the various ideas, discourses, concepts and currents that were available to Smith as an 'occultural bricoleur.' Quite simply, this thesis argues, along with Partridge, that 'occulture itself is not a worldview, but rather a resource on which people draw, a reservoir of ideas, beliefs, practices, and symbols' and that 'consumers of occulture may be witting or unwitting; they may engage with it at a relatively superficial level or they may have strong religious commitments; they may themselves contribute to the pool of occultural knowledge or they may simply drink from it.'[44]

Secondly, and following on from the theory of occulture, an argument is made for understanding Smith's *modus operandi*, which can only be adequately understood by viewing him as an occultural bricoleur—someone who is deeply immersed in the social, political, economic and theological milieu of the time, borrowing heavily from it in their creative efforts to construct something meaningful for themselves and/or others. Attempting to pin one particular idea on Smith that supposedly informed the majority of his thinking (whether magic, hermeticism, or Freemasonry) ignores the constantly evolving nature of Smith's occultural bricolage.

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[43] Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture*, 2 vols (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2004, 2005). See also, Christopher Partridge, 'Occulture is Ordinary', in K. Granholm & E. Asprem (eds), *Contemporary Esotericism,* Gnostica: Texts and Interpretations (Equinox, 2013), 113-133; Christopher partridge, 'Occulture and Everyday Enchantment', in J.R. Lewis and I.B. Tøllefsen (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, Volume 2 (Oxford University Press, 2016), 315-332.

[44] Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture*, Vol 1 (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 84-85.

Overall, an interdisciplinary approach has been taken in conducting research for this thesis. Studies and methods that have been developed in history, religious studies, cultural studies, and the sociology of religion have been employed, which have largely involved the use of textual and archival research, while utilising sociological theory to inform the overall direction of the thesis. In particular, the archival research was required at the British Library, as well as the libraries at Swedenborg House, London, New-Church House, Manchester, and the United Grand Lodge of England. Also, I have found interviews and conversations with other scholars and experts in Mormon Studies enormously valuable. Generous help was also received from members and historians from Community of Christ[45] and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Because a large amount of research into early Mormon history has been either confessional or critical (from an ex-Mormon point of view), throughout, the aim of this thesis has been to take a balanced and academically critical approach to the subject, based on the available evidence. (As a result, the opinions contained within this thesis are the author's own and do not represent the views of any church or religious organisation.) In the final analysis, regardless of one's individual beliefs, Smith is a fascinating character who emerged from an equally fascinating occultural milieu.

Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of Partridge's theory occulture and how it will be used in this thesis. Of particular note is an overview of nineteenth century American print culture and how this helped to facilitate the transmission of occulture (beliefs and practices), ending with

[45] Community of Christ, formerly known as Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, was founded by Joseph Smith III, son of Joseph Smith, the subject of this thesis.

an examination of some of the more prevalent discourses that would have been available to Smith in his local environment.

Chapter 2 situates Smith with the social and occultural contexts discussed in the previous chapter, providing a more focused and detailed analysis of the religious dynamics of the Smith family. As such, it seeks to provide a firm understanding of Smith as an occultural bricoleur. The chapter, for example, carefully examines some of Smith's earliest recorded revelations, in order to display the influence of his local environment on his retelling of certain events.

From Chapter 3 onwards, the analysis turns to a more detailed examination of the specific discourses that Smith made use of in his occultural bricolage. In Chapter 3, the influence of his grandfather's Universalism is established as an important, yet widely overlooked, aspect of Smith's religious worldview. Chapter 4, in some respects, follows this analysis with a discussion of the influence of Emanuel Swedenborg's works. These are shown to be a particularly important feature of Smith's occultural bricolage. Having looked at the influence of Universalism and Swedenborgianism on Smith, Chapter 5 turns to Freemasonry. While this has been recognised as important by a number of recent scholars, the present thesis shows how any influence needs to be understood as part of the flow of occulture. That is to say, his use of it cannot be understood apart from the other occultural elements informing Smith's religion-building imagination. Smith creatively borrowed from it and blended it together with other discourses discussed throughout this thesis.

In the final analysis, it is argued that Smith and his creative efforts need to be understood from the perspective of occulture. As such, this research, at the very least, goes a long way to providing a satisfactory response to Shipps' challenge and, thus, helping to solve the mystery of Mormonism.

1

Nineteenth Century American Occulture

Before a discussion can take place about the various fields of discourse upon which Joseph Smith drew in creating what would become known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we need to explore the environment from which he gathered his sources. However, we begin with an introduction to the key aspects of the theory of occulture that will underpin this thesis and help to equip us with an understanding of the processes, themes, and concepts involved in establishing Smith as an occultural bricoleur.

The Cultic Milieu

The theory of the cultic milieu, as proposed by Colin Campbell in 1972,[1] has been valuable in aiding our understanding of contemporary alternative spirituality in the West.[2] Campbell described the cultic milieu as 'the cultural underground of society. Much broader, deeper and historically based than the contemporary movement known as *the* underground, it includes all deviant belief systems and their associated practices.'[3] Furthermore, the cultic milieu includes

[1] Colin Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization', in Michael Hill (ed.), *Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain 5* (Canterbury: SCM Press, 1972), 119-36. Also published in Jeffrey Kaplan & Heléne Lööw, *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization* (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2002), 12-25.

[2] Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture*, Vol 1 (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 66.

[3] Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization', 121. See also Kaplan and Lööw, *The Cultic Milieu,* 14.

the various means of transmission and production of these belief systems and practices—institutions, individuals, and media—including 'the worlds of the occult and the magical, of spiritualism and psychic phenomena, of mysticism and new thought, of alien intelligences and lost civilizations, of faith healing and nature cure.'[4] Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööw have developed the idea of the cultic milieu further, suggesting that it is 'oppositional by nature' and that

> The cultic milieu is a zone in which proscribed and/or forbidden knowledge is the coin of the realm, a place in which ideas, theories and speculations are to be found, exchanged, modified and, eventually, adopted or rejected by adherents of countless, primarily ephemeral groups whose leaders come and go and whose membership constitute a permanent class of seekers whose adherence to any particular leader or organization tends to be fleeting at best.[5]

While the cultic milieu can be considered oppositional by definition and the ideas contained within it tend to be fungible, some of the ideas it produces may go on to become mainstream.[6] Yet, as he has explained, there is an underlying theme that unifies all of the different groups and individuals, which is their heterodoxy—their questioning of dominant religious orthodoxies.[7] Moreover, due to the overlapping communication structures within the milieu, there is a 'marked tolerance and receptivity toward each other's beliefs'.[8] Eclecticism within the cultic milieu is also supported and strengthened by

[4] Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization', 121.
[5] Kaplan and Lööw, 'Introduction,' *The Cultic Milieu*, 4.
[6] Ibid., 5.
[7] Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization', 121.
[8] Ibid., 121.

> …the magazines, periodicals, books, pamphlets, lectures, demonstrations and informal meetings through which its beliefs and practices are discussed and disseminated. However, unlike the sectarian situation, these communication media are not bounded by the framework of the beliefs of a particular collectivity, but are generally open.[9]

Thus, as a direct consequence of this eclecticism and broadly syncretistic outlook, there is a milieu in which all forms of what James Webb famously referred to as 'rejected knowledge' is mutually supported through engaging with one another's literature and promoting each other's meetings. Therefore, individuals who participate in the cultic milieu tend to 'travel rapidly through a wide variety of movements and beliefs.'[10]

Campbell further suggests that the cultic milieu is strengthened by a 'common ideology of seekership which both arises from and in turn reinforces the consciousness of deviant status, the receptive and syncretistic orientation and the interpenetrative communication structure.'[11] This conceptualisation of "seekership" lies at the heart of Campbell's theory of the cultic milieu, as those who engage in it are often individual problem solvers who view traditional religious institutions (such as the Church) as inadequate, and therefore seek a more satisfactory, personally tailored spiritual path. This often entails following several paths in a quest for meaning. Such seekers are aware, as a result of their search, that they belong to a wider community of like-minded individuals. The "quest", according to Campbell, does not necessarily have to be a religious one, it can also apply to 'interpretation and explanations of

[9] Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization', 15.
[10] Ibid. See also Jean-François Mayer, 'The religious market in the cultic milieu', *Social Compass,* 53, 1 (2006) 97-108.
[11] Ibid.

non-religious phenomena' where there are no spiritual or religious manifestations or experiences.[12]

More importantly for this thesis, however, is that there was what might be described as a nineteenth century 'burned-over district cultic milieu.' In addition to 'orthodox' expressions of Christian religiosity, the burned-over district was home to a myriad of what Campbell refers to as 'deviant' belief systems. Indeed, as Whitney Cross has pointed out, the people who populated the areas within the burnt over district were 'extraordinarily given to unusual religious beliefs' and that they were also 'peculiarly devoted to crusades aimed at the perfection of mankind and the attainment of millennial happiness'.[13] A good example of this is the German Pietist and mystic, Johannes Kelpius. After being expelled from the Lutheran ministry for incorporating esoteric ideas into his teachings, he established a community of Christian Kabbalists and Rosicrucians on the Wisshickon Creek in what is now known as the German town section of Philadelphia.[14] Indeed, in 1732, another German mystic, Conrad Beissel, founded the first religious utopian community in Pennsylvania, known as the Ephrata Cloister.[15] Towards the latter part of the eighteenth century, he also established the Order of the Gold and Rosy Cross, a German Rosicrucian organisation that eventually established numerous lodges throughout the United States.[16] Other esoteric initiatory societies, such as Freemasonry and the Illuminated Theosophers—a para-masonic society patterned after

[12] Campbell, 'The Cult, The Cultic Milieu and Secularization', 122.
[13] Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 3.
[14] D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 16.
[15] For an interesting discussion on the Ephrata Cloister, see E. Gordon Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counterculture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985); Janet White, 'The Ephrata Cloister: Intersections of Architecture and Culture in an Eighteenth-Century Utopia.' *Utopian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2000).
[16] Arthur Versluis, 'The 'Occult' in Nineetenth-Century America', in Cathy Gutierrez (ed.), *The Occult in Nineteenth-Century America* (Aurora: The Davies Group, 2005), 5.

Swedenborgianism in 1783—also attracted interest within the burgeoning cultic milieu of eighteenth century America.[17]

The burned-over district was also home to a wide array of new religions, alternative spiritualities, and utopian and communitarian experiments, not to mention the continuation of European esoteric cosmological traditions. For example, in 1774, a small group of Shakers 'crossed the Atlantic from England' following their prophet and founder, Mother Ann Lee, to their new home in the Americas.[18] This particular group incorporated elements of 'communism, pre-millennialism, spiritualism, and perfectionism' into their religious worldview and 'may be considered a model for more eccentric developments of burned-over district history after 1825.'[19] The General Convention of the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgians/New Church) was also established as a united church in Philadelphia in 1817 and received support from the British Conference in the form of books and pamphlets, although they were always independent of their European roots.[20] The New Church also became linked with Mesmerism or "animal magnetism" in America, which found wide appeal as a 'religious or spiritual science.'[21]

The origin of the Universalist movement in America, a religion that grew out of the revivalist environment, can be traced to 1770 and the arrival of John Murray (1741-1815), an Englishman, in Massachusetts. Settling in Gloucester, Massachussetts, it was here that he became acquainted with a small group of James Relly's[22] converts, which he later organised

[17] Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, (New York: State of New York University Press, 1994), 79-80.
[18] Flo Morse, *The Shakers and the World's People* (University Press of New England, 1987), 1-30.
[19] Cross, *The Burned-Over District*, 32.
[20] Williams-Hogan, 'New Religious Movements in American History' in Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft (eds.), *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America: African Diaspora Traditions and Other American Innovations*, Vol. 5 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 15.
[21] Versluis, 'The "Occult" in Nineetenth-Century America', 15.
[22] For an overview of James Relly, see Wayne K. Clymer, 'The Life and Thought of James Relly', *Church History,* 11, 3 (1942), 193-216.

into America's first Universalist Church in 1779.[23] Universalism found favour amongst the common people and was much more successful in rural areas. Aside from a variety of new religions, however, the burnt-over district gave birth to a number of utopian and communitarian experiments, many of which were heavily influenced by Kabbalah and Rosicrucianism. Jemima Wilkinson (1752—1819) is thought to have established the first indigenous communitarian experiment in 1788. The Society of the Public Universal Friend, or simply "Universal Friends", were a settlement that began near the shores of Lake Seneca consisting of 260 followers.[24] Wilkinson claimed that in 1776 she had died as a result of a serious illness and that her body was now inhabited by another spirit—the Universal Friend. Tales of her ability to heal the sick, walk on water, and even raise the dead continue to persist in and around Rhode Island.[25] Her followers were instructed to avoid the influence of the world and practice celibacy, though this proved difficult to enforce when husbands and wives were allowed to live together.[26] In 1794, however, the society relocated to Keuka Lake, twelve miles west of Seneca Lake, founding what they understood to be the "New Jerusalem."[27]

By 1804, George Rapp had organised a community of six hundred of his followers in Harmony, Pennsylvania. A Pietist, who also claimed to be an alchemical philosopher and mystic, Rapp looked to America as a means to escape growing hostility towards his group in Germany and also the Napoleonic wars which were viewed as precursor to the millennium.[28] The Society practiced celibacy, held all things in common, were millennialists, wore simple

[23] Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), 298.
[24] See Paul B. Moyer, *The Public Universal Friend : Jemima Wilkinson and Religious Enthusiasm in Revolutionary America* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2015); Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 495.
[25] Wisbey, 'Portrait of a Prophetess: Jemima Wilkinson', 388.
[26] Ibid., 388.
[27] Ahsltrom, *Religious History*, 495; Moyer, *The Public Universal Friend*, 3.
[28] B. J. L. Berry, *America's Utopian Experiments: Communal Haves from Long-Wave Crises* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992), 44; Karl J. R. Arndt, 'George Rapp's Harmony Society' in Donald E. Pitzer and Paul S. Boyer (eds), *America's Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 73.

clothing, and rejected worldly indulgences such as tobacco.[29] Relocating to a tract of twenty-five thousand acres on the Wabash River in 1814, they founded a new settlement which they named New Harmony. After a decade, Rapp sold the property to philanthropist and social reformer, Robert Owen, and moved the community back to Pennsylvania where they founded a new settlement which they named Economy on the banks of the Ohio River.[30] Though membership in Rapp's communitarian experiment declined significantly after his death in 1847, 'more than a dozen direct-line, offshoot, and schismatic communities' were established due to his influence.[31]

After purchasing New Harmony in 1824, and retaining the name, Owen went about establishing his own utopian community after becoming convinced that America would be the home of his socialist experiment.[32] Based on Owen's own belief that humanity has the ability to create a 'new moral order grounded in economic cooperation and education' the community drew its membership from the working class as opposed to those from the privileged class whom Owen had originally believed would heed his call.[33] Owen's vision of a socialist utopia was, however, short-lived and by 1829 all of nine communities that had been established between 1825 and 1826 had been completely dissolved. Returning to England later that year, a disillusioned Owen resumed his work as a champion of the working class.[34]

John Humphrey Noyes is possibly one of the most well-known founders of an American communitarian experiment, rooted in Christian Perfectionism—which is essentially a particular understanding of 'entire sanctification.'[35] In 1848 he and his followers founded a

[29] Berry, *America's Utopian Experiments*, 45.
[30] Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States*, 340; Arndt, 'George Rapp's Harmony Society', 76.
[31] Berry, *America's Utopian Experiments*, 43.
[32] Ahsltrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 497; Donald E. Pitzer, 'The New Moral World of Robert Owen and New Harmony', in Pitzer and Boyer, *America's Communal Utopias*, 96.
[33] Fogarty, *Dictionary of American Communal and Utopian History*, Westport, 153-154.
[34] Berry, *America's Utopian Experiments*, 63.
[35] See Oneida Community, *Handbook of the Oneida Community* (Wallingford: Office of the Circular, Wallingford Community, 1867); Douglas Strong, *Perfectionist Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

community at Oneida where they practiced a form of socialism, sexual intercourse without ejaculation—as part of a commitment to disciplined male continence—and a combination of polygamy and polyandry.[36] The majority of decisions were made as a community, and they sustained themselves through farming, logging, and the production of silverware. In 1881, when the community disbanded, they formed the Oneida Corporation instead which continues till this day and still produces silverware.[37]

Indeed, even though the presence of a cultic milieu can be identified within the nineteenth century burned-over district, and while some of the aforementioned individuals, groups, religions, and organisations may fit within Campbell's categorisation, it does not adequately account for the breadth and quotidian nature of the socio-cultural environment within which Smith was born and raised. Furthermore, while Campbell's conception of "seekership" could ostensibly apply to Smith as someone who was an individualistic problem solver who identified problems within the established orthodoxies of the time, as will be discussed below, he is more accurately understood as an 'occultural bricoleur.' While there are overlaps between the theories of occulture and the cultic milieu, the former allows a much more adequate understanding of the various fields of discourse with which Smith was engaged, including the processes by which he constructed his own belief system.

Occulture

William Irwin Thompson was one of the first people to use this term in his 1976 book *Evil and World Order*.[38] Having said that, the late-Genesis P-Orridge began, independently, to use the term to describe the culture he was seeking to create in Thee Temple Ov Pyschick Youth

[36] Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 72-75; Lawrence Foster, 'Free Love and Community: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Perfectionists', in Pitzer and Boyer, *America's Communal Utopias*, 238.
[37] Versluis, 'The 'Occult' in Nineeteth-Century America', 20.
[38] See William Irwin Thompson, *Evil and World Order* (London: HarperCollins, 1980).

(TOPY), which blended together esotericism and art.[39] While there have been others who have used the term, mostly as a way to describe a culture of the occult,[40] it was not until Christopher Partridge developed it in his seminal work, *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, that it began to be used as a sociological theory.[41] According to Partridge, occulture

> …refers to the environment within which, and the social processes by which particular meanings relating, typically, to spiritual, esoteric, paranormal and conspiratorial ideas emerge, are disseminated, and become influential in societies and in the lives of individuals.[42]

As indicated above and as Partridge himself has acknowledged, there is some overlap between his conception of occulture and Colin Campbell's cultic milieu theory.[43] He has, however, explained that even though 'the use of the term "occult" in "occulture" suggests the hidden, the exotic, and the elite', it is the coupling of the term occult with "culture" (understood with reference to the work of the cultural theorist Raymond Williams) that 'opens up a very different perspective, signifying that which is everyday.'[44] Understanding the quotidian nature of occulture is essential to gaining a solid grasp of what it actually refers to and why it differs from Campbell's cultic milieu theory. Occulture is not limited to a specific group, subculture,

[39] See Genesis P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible Thee Apocryphal Scriptures of Genesis P-Orridge & Thee Third Mind* (San Francisco: Alecto Enterprises, 2006).
[40] See George McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties* (London: Verso, 1996); Carl Abrahamsson, *Occulture: The Unseen Forces That Drive Culture Forward* (Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 2018).
[41] See Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West*.
[42] Christopher Partridge, 'Occulture is Ordinary', in Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm (eds), *Contemporary Esotericism* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2013), 116.
[43] See Colin Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization'.
[44] Partridge. 'Occulture is Ordinary', 119.

or milieu. Instead, it is 'never absent' and is 'historically, a feature of all societies.'[45] To be more precise, Partridge has explained that

> occulture includes those often *hidden*, *rejected* and *oppositional* beliefs and practices associated with esotericism, theosophy, mysticism, New Age, Paganism, and a range of other subcultural beliefs and practices, many of which are identified… as belonging to the cultic/mythical milieu and… as belonging to occult subculture...[46]

For Partridge, occulture therefore seeks to account for a broadly 'spiritual' environment, an ambient free-floating range of ideas that influence people's commitments. It is not necessarily, then, a culture of "the occult", although it is, of course, an active ingredient in the occultural mix. Rather, it is instead a culture of metaphysical and paranormal discourses, many of which (but not all) are rejected by the dominant discourses of modernity (e.g. institutional religion and science). Furthermore, occulture can also be said to be

> more about the dissemination and construction of knowledge in everyday life: conversations with friends; overheard comments on the bus; urban legends; family stories and traditions; paranormal phenomena explored in popular television series and films; the patchwork of ideas circulated within music, from Wagner to black metal; the astrology columns in magazines; video game content; divination on the Internet, and so on. Engagement with occulture engenders an affective space within which non-secular meaning is formed and taken-for-granted reality is constructed.[47]

[45] Partridge, 'Occulture is Ordinary', 119.
[46] Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, 68-70. Emphasis in the original.
[47] Christopher Partridge, 'Occulture' in Egil Asprem (ed.), *Dictionary of Contemporary Esotericism*, (Leiden: BRILL, forthcoming).

Therefore, because of its mercurial and amorphous nature, occulture can be very difficult to chart or codify. It is constantly changing in response to various contemporary trends. A film or a television series, such as *Twilight*, *Harry Potter*, or *Game of Thrones*, can easily lead to the emergence of new occultural trajectories and currents, just as seances, or the writings of Swedenborg, or Perfectionism, or newspaper reports of anomalous events or new discoveries had an ambient impact within the burned over district. Such ideas, whether ancient or modern, may then become mixed with long established ideas drawn from religion and culture.

While Partridge has predominantly focused on occulture within a contemporary twentieth and twenty-first century context, it is, of course, not limited to this period. Indeed, this thesis focuses on occulture within a specifically American, nineteenth century context. The life and experiences of a farmer in nineteenth century New York who experiments with astrology and magical treasure digging, for example, will be altogether different from that of a twenty-first century retail assistant who engages in Pagan Druidry or Virtual Magic.[48] Yet, as Egil Asprem has shown in his own work,[49] the occultural processes remain largely the same—albeit viewed through different cultural lenses and constructed in dialogue with distinct fields of discourse.

At this point, it's worth briefly clarifying the meaning of 'discourse' in this context, particularly since it's a rather slippery term that, since the nineteenth century, has been used in many and often conflicting ways.[50] Of particular significance for the way it used in this thesis is the work of Koku von Stuckrad, who has described what he refers to as the 'discursive-historical approach.' This, he suggests, 'explores the development of discourses in changing

[48] Egil Asprem, 'Contemporary Ritual Magic' in Christopher Partridge (ed.), *The Occult World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 387-388.
[49] Egil Asprem, *Arguing with Angels: Enochian Magic and Modern Occulture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012).
[50] See Koku von Stuckrad, 'Discursive Study of Religion' in *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 25:1 (2013), 5-25.

socio-political and historical settings.'[51] He has also explained that 'the historicity of knowledge should not be misunderstood as arbitrariness' and that what 'a group of people in a given situation regards as accepted knowledge is by no means arbitrary; it is the result of discursive formations that critical scholarship can reconstruct and interpret.'[52] The advantage of adopting this approach is that the 'fields of discourse' to which Stuckrad refers[53]—those ideas, beliefs, practices, etc., that the occultural bricoleur draws upon in the creative process—can be unpacked, traced, and understood as elements that are combined to form something new, but not necessarily altogether different, yet are, nevertheless, utilised in the formation of particular identities. This thesis, of course, focuses on the construction of the Latter-day Saint movement (Mormonism) by Joseph Smith.

This brings us to 'bricolage,' a term borrowed from Claude Levi-Strauss, who 'originally used it as a metaphor to explain the ways in which mythological thought creates meaning and "fixes" myths by replacing missing or forgotten elements with residual components.'[54] Matt Rogers has explained that, for Levi-Strauss

> mythical meaning-making bricoleurs combine their imagination with whatever knowledge tools they have at-hand in their repertoire (e.g., ritual, observation, social practices) and with whatever artifacts are available in their given context (i.e., discourses, institutions, and dominant knowledges) to meet diverse knowledge-production tasks.[55]

[51] Kocku von Stuckrad, 'Secular Religion: A Discourse–historical Approach to Religion in Contemporary Western Europe,' in *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28:1 (2013), 4.
[52] Stuckrad. 'Discursive Study of Religion', 12.
[53] Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2005), 6.
[54] Véronique Altglas, *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logistics of Bricolage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.
[55] Matt Rogers, 'Contextualizing Theories and Practices of Bricolage Research.' in *The Qualitative Report*, 17:48 (2012), 1-17. See also Altglas, *From Yoga to Kabbalah*, 2.

In short, the bricoleur, as the term is used here, is someone who constructs a new meaning-making framework. Having said that, it is worth pointing out that bricoleurs are not simply free to create meaning from anything, but rather, they are limited by the occultural context, the fields of discourse, within which they live and work.

Véronique Altglas has also pointed out that sociologists of religion have originally used the term 'bricolage' in relation to individualism brought about by the privatisation of religion in advanced industrial societies.[56] Altglas further explains that sociologists of religion, such as Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, have understood bricolage (though they do not use the term themselves) in the context of 'detraditionalization,' which, she suggests, 'draws upon postmodern theories' that 'presuppose that we have entered a new era, characterized by the death of tradition and great narratives.'[57] Elsewhere Woodhead and Heelas have written that the 'key to the process of detraditionalization lies precisely with the internalization of authority, from '"without" to "within"' and that the 'change is from an authoritative realm which exists over and above the individual or whatever the individual might aspire to be, to the authority of the first hand spiritually-informed experience of the self.'[58] It is this 'internalization of authority' which lies at the very heart of religious bricolage.

As we will see, the detraditionalization of religion and the internalisation of authority were clearly evident in nineteenth century America, not least in the 'burned-over district' in which the Smith family lived. As Whitney Cross has discussed:

> these folk balanced a stubborn introspection in the fashioning of personal beliefs, which recognized no authority this side of Heaven. Frank curiosity, pride in independent

[56] Altglas, *From Yoga to Kabbalah*, 2.
[57] Ibid., 2-4.
[58] Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 342.

> thinking, a feeling that action should be motivated by sound logic and never by whimsy, a profound skepticism of any rationalization looking to less than the supposed ultimate good of society, and, once arrived at, an overweening confidence in one's own judgement… The mores of community must definitely be observed when established and agreed upon, but in practice they remained forever open to challenge and subject to revision. No apology was required for unorthodoxy dictated by conscience in conference with Scripture; rather, any difference from custom created a compelling obligation for the individual to press toward conformity with his own new light.[59]

It was within this environment that the right conditions existed to enable 'historical processes and cultural encounters' that gave rise to the construction of 'specific exotic religious resources.'[60] It is these exotic resources that were available to Smith and which are here analysed using Partridge's theory of occulture.

It's also worth noting that occulture, as theorised by Partridge, 'describes certain shared attitudes, values, and practices that characterize society… occulture is never absent. It is, historically, a feature of all societies… Occulture is… used to mean *both* a whole way of life *and* the special processes of discovery and creative effort.'[61] Partridge's comment that occulture is, historically, a feature of all societies is, as noted above, important, especially if we are to understand it within a nineteenth century American context. Occulture, then, seeks to account for a broadly 'spiritual/paranormal' ambient environment that has a formative impact on the construction of belief. Hence,

[59] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 81-82.
[60] Altglas, *From Yoga to Kabbalah*, 58.
[61] Partridge, 'Occulture is Ordinary', 119-122.

> …occulture itself is not a worldview, but rather a resource on which people draw, a reservoir of ideas, beliefs, practices, and symbols. Consumers of occulture may be witting or unwitting; they may engage with it at a relatively superficial level or they may have strong religious commitments; they may themselves contribute to the pool of occultural knowledge or they may simply drink from it.[62]

It can be said, then, that the occultural bricoleur constructs a belief system according to the fields of discourse with which he is engaged. There is no orthodoxy as such, until, of course, one is established as the construct begins to become fixed by the bricoleur as 'revelation', and then by followers who feel they need to protect it as sacred and to make sense of it as an authoritative religious tradition. Therefore, 'it is to be expected that people who are active in religious bricolage should be high in creativity: either they create new responses, ideas or rituals, or they proceed to a new structuring of pre-existing religious elements.'[63]

The Transmission and the Persistence of Rejected Knowledge in North America

The transmission of esoteric ideas in North America took place primarily through the printing and selling of books. Indeed, a commercial book trade was established by the first settlers.[64] Thousands of esoteric works entered into circulation, though it was predominantly books printed in, and imported from Europe.[65] Due to the concerns of local clergy who worried about the general population becoming polluted by 'ungodly literature', the authorities in the British, French, and Spanish colonies attempted to control the book trade in their territories.[66] Towards the end of the seventeenth century, however, 'cunning-folk' both owned and experimented with

[62] Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, 84-85.
[63] Vassilis Saroglou, 'Religious Bricolage as a Psychological Reality: Limits, Structures and Dynamics', in *Social Compass* (2006), 53:1, 109-115.
[64] Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 88.
[65] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 17.
[66] Davies, *Grimoires*, 88.

the ideas and practices discussed in books on astrology, magic, occult philosophy, and palmistry.[67] Yet, while it was relatively easy to control what the general populace were reading in the early days of European colonialism, it was almost impossible to regulate printed materials once the colonies were more established—and even more so after the American Revolutionary War.[68] Francis Bailey (1744-1817) of Philadelphia, a Revolutionary War printer, was the first to start printing Swedenborg's books and pamphlets in America, making his works much more accessible to the general public.[69]

There is evidence to suggest that during and after the war, the spread of esoteric ideas significantly increased by a variety of new contacts from Europe. French troops working with the Americans and Hessian troops serving with the British added to the possible channels for these ideas to spread, for example.[70] The arrival of a number of new and esoteric religions, such as the Swedenborgians, also greatly aided in the spread of esoteric ideas when they brought with them various publications from Europe, and it was 'the cities of the eastern half of the country that would… become the generators of numerous occult organizations and magical publications, with far reaching consequences.'[71]

German publications, such as *Der Freund in der Noth; oder, Geheime Sympathetische Wissenschaft* and *Der lang verborgene Freund* were popular charm books amongst the German immigrants, including *Himmelsbrief* and *Egyptische Geheimnisse*.[72] Quinn has painstakingly traced the publication, dissemination, and popularity of occult works in North America, suggesting that there was 'widespread access to books promoting magic.'[73] Quinn also notes the significance of what he refers to as 'itinerant book peddlers' that were highly influential in

[67] Davies, *Grimoires*, 139.
[68] Ibid., 88.
[69] Williams-Hogan, 'New Religious Movements in American History', 15.
[70] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 98.
[71] Davies, *Grimoires*, 190.
[72] Ibid., 191-192. See also Karl Herr, *Hex and Spellwork: The Magical Practice of the Pennsylvania Dutch* (Boston, MA: Weiser Books, 2002).
[73] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 21.

rural areas. These book peddlers filled a gap in the occult book market that local bookstores were often reluctant to fill.[74] Indeed, as Bradford Verter has argued, the history of Western magic is primarily one that persisted through the use of books.[75]

While a large section of nineteenth century American occulture was transmitted primarily through the publication and distribution of books, pamphlets, tracts and other similar materials, one of the main ways in which occulture spread was through the private acceptance of these ideas by individuals and families—which were then verbally communicated in everyday life. As noted above, although Partridge has spent over nearly two decades developing his theory of occulture, his focus has been primarily on 'the late modern period since the 1960's.'[76] This has meant that his description of how occultural currents spread has been interpreted and understood through a particular twentieth and twenty-first century lens. If the processes of occultural transmission are as 'ordinary' as Partridge suggests, then the theory needs to be adjusted in order to account for different socio-cultural contexts and historical periods. It must be said, of course, that this is not to dismiss those elements of Western culture that Partridge views as being important in understanding the climate *in* which and *through* which occultural currents are adopted, reimagined, and redistributed. The point is simply that, the theory of occulture will need to be modified a little to make sense of important elements of nineteenth century American culture.

Burned-over District Occulture

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed history of the various occultural currents present within the cultural landscape of the burned-over district in the nineteenth century and, as the focus of this thesis is on the environment that gave birth to Smith's

[74] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 21.
[75] Bradford J. M. Verter, *Dark Star Rising: The Emergence of Modern Occultism 1800-1950*, PhD Thesis (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1998). See also Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism*, 135-136.
[76] Partridge, 'Occulture is Ordinary', 113.

Restoration Movement, it is, as indicated above, more pertinent to outline the *main* components that constitute what von Stuckrad refers to as the 'fields of discourse.'[77] These are outlined below and serve to highlight some of the core elements of Smith's religious bricolage that will be discussed later in this thesis.

Neoplatonism and Hermeticism

As Wouter Hanegraaff has pointed out 'the influence of Neoplatonism upon the esoteric tradition is so pervasive that it is often not even explicitly mentioned.'[78] This is a very clear case of what Partridge discusses in terms of occultural influence. Indeed, sometimes influences such as Neoplatonism are simply absorbed as 'common sense'—everyday knowledge. Even scholars researching early Mormonism have largely failed to tease out its significance on, and presence within the religio-cultural climate of the nineteenth century. For example, Michael Quinn, generally considered to be the leading scholar on magical, occult, or esoteric influences on early Mormonism, only has one reference to Neoplatonism including only one other reference to Plato in his ground-breaking work *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*.[79] Understanding the ideas contained within Neoplatonic philosophy is, however, important in grasping how occultural currents interweave and gel with one another, highlighting especially how easy it is to overlook certain ideas contained within Smith's religion building imagination.

Neoplatonism is generally thought to have originated with the Egyptian-born philosopher, Plotinus (204-270 CE), who founded a school of philosophy in Rome in *c*.245 CE and developed ideas that incorporated elements of Plato's work, as well as drawing upon ideas found within Aristotelianism and Stoicism.[80] Developments such as particularly its adaptable philosophical approach to monotheistic conceptions of creation, which suggests that, rather

[77] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, 7.
[78] Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 388.
[79] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 10, 226.
[80] Pauliina Remes, *Neoplatonism* (London: Routledge Publishers, 2008), 1.

than the universe appearing *ex nihilo*, it is instead a spontaneous and eternal process, with humans burdened with the imperfections of corporeal existence that could nonetheless be perfected through disciplined adherence to a path that would return them to their divine origins. Again, the educated classes of the Roman Empire were particularly drawn to ideas such as the existence of spheres of being that were arranged into a complex arrangement of degrees of being.[81] Yet, it is not until the fifteenth century that we begin to see these ideas becoming incorporated within and disseminated by the esoteric tradition in the Florentine Platonic Academy founded by Cosimo de' Medici.[82]

In around 1460, a monk by the name of Leonardo da Pistoia made his way from Macedonia to Florence carrying with him a Greek manuscript containing writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, who, it was claimed, had become deified after receiving instruction from the divine intelligence, Poimandres. Excited by the manuscript's potential contribution to knowledge, Medici, weak and afflicted with poor health, instructed the young scholar, Marsilio Ficino, to halt his translation of Plato, in order to begin translating the *Corpus Hermeticum* into Latin so that he could read it before he died.[83] Being influenced by the work of Lactantius, the Christian Fathers, as well as various medieval speculations, Ficino believed that Hermes was a historical figure who lived at the same time as Moses, and outlined a theological genealogy (*prisca theologia*) in which he situated him as 'the first theologian who was followed by Orpheus, then Aglaophemus, then Pythagoras, who was the master of our divine Plato.'[84] Ficino, therefore, significantly contributed to the idea that there was a "golden chain" of Western sages in antiquity, which would become a common theme in esoteric works.[85]

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[81] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20-23.
[82] See Michael Allen, *Studies in the Platonism of Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017). See also Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 388-392.
[83] Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English translation, with notes and introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[84] György E. Szönyi, 'The Hermetic Revival in Italy' in Partridge, *The Occult World*, 52.
[85] Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism*, 76.

The *Corpus Hermeticum* united Christian theology and Platonic philosophy – both of which, of course, were believed to contain divine truth and wisdom. Indeed, the work articulated themes that appealed greatly to the Renaissance Neoplatonists in Florence, and subsequently influenced esoteric writings in such a way that, after Ficino, no longer contained a pure form of philosophical Platonism.[86] In order for a text to be considered as Hermetic, it must contain some of the following key themes as outlined by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke:

- "As above, so below." Nous instructs us to reflect the universe in our own mind and to grasp the divine essence in nature. This we are equipped and able to do because the human being possesses a divine intellect.
- There is an emphasis on will, both divine and human.
- The universe is a "book" to be "read." The Creator God is known by the contemplation of his creation.
- The universe is full of the manifestation of God, and with our divine intellect we can decipher the symbols it contains which point toward God. We should therefore be interested in everything that is in the world. The concrete and the particular are important, as incarnation and embodiment are the ways in which God makes himself manifest to our experience.
- There is an absence of dualism, since the world is recognized as being divine in origin. There is an acceptance of the world, even though there may be some pessimism or discouragement about the consequences of the Fall and the restraint of matter on spirit.

[86] Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 389. See also Brian P. Copenhaver, *Magic in Western Culture: From Antiquity to the Enlightenment*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

- The Hermetic project is one of transmutation of lower, baser, and more material into higher, finer, and more spiritual. There are clear parallels with alchemy, which also flourished alongside Hermeticism in Alexandria in late antiquity.
- Humanity is called to a regenerative work of reascension and reintegration with the divine.
- Our intellect can connect to intermediary spiritual intelligences and use them as ladders of ascent. An astrological cosmos of an ascending hierarchy of planetary spheres exist and is part of the initiatory process and spiritual ascent. The earth is part of the cosmos and is susceptible to improvement.
- Because humanity is connected both to the divine and to the earthly realms, it is able to help the earth to recover its former glorious state.
- Hermetic treatises present a guide or mentor figure who helps to raise souls by reawakening them to their divine nature, assisting in their spiritual transmutation, and leading them toward their heavenly destiny.[87]

From 1463 to 1497, Ficino produced a number of texts, commentaries, and introductions, including *The Symposium*, and translations of Plotinus, Dionysius, Iamblichus, Proclus, Porphyry, Psellos, Synesius, Xenocrates and others under the title of *De mysteriis et alia* (On the Mysteries and Other Subjects).[88] The dissemination of these Platonic and Neoplatonic texts solidifies Ficino as a key figure in the history of esotericism. As will be discussed later in this thesis, the ideas contained within Neoplatonic and Hermetic texts would eventually find their way from Europe to the Americas, which, as John Brooke has suggested, 'explains the more

[87] Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions*, 19.
[88] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, 54.

exotic features and inner logic of Mormon theology' and 'Joseph Smith's quest for hermetic divinity'.[89]

Magic, Astrology and Alchemy

Magical practices that travelled to North America from Europe were quotidian and occulturally ordinary.[90] Yet, this did not stop the attempts of Protestant and Roman Catholic authorities to snuff these practices out. While many viewed America as a safe haven for their divergent religious beliefs and believed there to be an acceptance of a wide array of occultural practices, mainstream churches viewed things rather differently. They were keen to purge and purify American Christian culture of 'contrary and disorderly voices'.[91] As Richard Godbeer has noted, 'clergymen were horrified by the popularity of magical techniques,'[92] a response that was largely due to their desire to have people accept the Christian tradition as the one and only legitimate conduit to the divine. Both Protestants and Catholic clergymen worked to convince the people that the God of the Bible was the only source of supernatural power and authority. Interestingly, their efforts met with little success. Christians did not doubt, however, that magic worked, but instead claimed that Satan was the source of its power.[93] That is to say, everything was interpreted within the context of a narrative of spiritual warfare, informed by Christian demonology.

This all-out attack on folk magic, led most notably by the Calvinist Protestants,[94] did little to dissuade the average New Englander from either practicing magic themselves, or from

[89] John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xvii.
[90] Catherine Rider, 'Common Magic' in Collins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 303.
[91] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 5.
[92] Richard Godbeer, 'Folk Magic in British North America' in Collins (ed.), *Magic and Witchcraft in the West*, 468.
[93] Ibid., 468.
[94] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 5.

seeking out those who did. Brooke and Quinn agree that 'four distinctly different spiritual authorities [were] competing for popular allegiance in this struggle: church reformers, utopian prophets, cunning folk, and Christian-hermetic *magi*' with Quinn suggesting that, additionally, 'rationalists encouraged devotion to reason above any religious authority or popular belief.'[95] While the mainstream churches saw success in gaining converts during periods of religious revival, the majority of early Americans did not regularly attend or affiliate themselves with a particular church.[96] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark have estimated that by 1810, only 18.2 percent of Americans claimed membership in a church.[97] This left space for the influence of everyday occulture and, consequently, the emergence of cultic milieux and alternative forms of belief.

Village wizards, or "cunning men" as they were more popularly known, filled the void in the absence of established clergy, providing a range of services such as fortune-telling, healing the sick, divination, and protection from evil and witchcraft.[98] One of the main ways in which cunning men established their authority in rural areas, was by their supposed ability to diagnose illnesses by claiming that the unwell were bewitched, or under the influence of an evil spirit, fairy, or intermediary being.[99] Techniques for diagnosing supernatural causes of a patient's illness or affliction varied. They would boil the victim's urine, burn thatch from a suspected witch's house, use a crystal ball, seer stone, or other likewise method.[100] It was often believed by common people that the power these cunning men possessed was a gift from God.[101]

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[95] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 8; Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 5. Italics in original.
[96] Ibid., 27.
[97] Roger Finke & Rodney Stark, *The churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, 2nd ed., (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 26-27.
[98] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 210; Godbeer, 'Folk Magic in British North America', 462.
[99] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 219.
[100] Ibid., 219-220.
[101] Ibid., 317.

The occultural context of divination, including magical treasure digging, has also often been overlooked by some historians, but was nevertheless a reality for many nineteenth century Americans. Among the 'rich and poor, educated and ignorant, beliefs in supernatural powers and malignant magic' flooded towns and villages across frontier America.[102] Tales of buried gold left behind by Native Americans or those escaping the Revolution gave hope to many who lived in poverty on the American frontier. When visiting New England in 1807 and 1808, Edward Augustus Kendall wrote that farmers would employ wise men or 'prophets' who claimed that they had the ability to locate the buried treasure with the aid of divining rods, 'grown in the mystic form.'[103] Over forty recorded accounts contained in local histories, journals and travel narratives of Northeast America, describe people employing 'occult techniques to seek buried treasure', with the majority coming from New York prior to 1830.[104] For those involved in early American treasure digging, it 'possessed a dual nature: functioning at once as a supernatural economy (as an alternative to a disappointing natural economy) and as a materialistic faith (an alternative to unsatisfactorily abstract religion).'[105]

The European practice of digging for buried treasure often involved entire families, a practice that changed very little in the Americas.[106] Coupled with folk magical practices of family prophets or wizards, such as drawing magic circles and brandishing magical books, daggers, staffs, swords and seer stones, individuals and families would seek to either appease the angel or demon protecting the treasure, or alternatively request their help in obtaining it. As Johannes Dillinger has explained, 'we cannot understand… treasure hunts if we fail to see

[102] Adam Joseph Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier* (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 113.
[103] Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown*, 113.
[104] Alan Taylor, 'The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780-1830' in *American Quarterly*, 38:1 (1986), 8.
[105] Ibid., 8.
[106] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 279; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 26.

that treasure was closely associated with the spirit world.'[107] In 1786, Silas Hamilton, a resident of Vermont, recorded the following in his notebook:

> A method to Tak up hid Treasure (viz.) Tak Nine Steel Rods about ten or twelve Inches in Length Sharp or Piked to Perce in the Erth, and let them be Besmeared with fresh blood from a hen mixed with hogdung. Then mak two Surkels [circles] Round the hid Treasure one of S[ai]d Surkels a Little Larger in surcumference than the hid Treasure lays in the Erth the other Surkel [circle] sum [some] Large still, and as the hid treasure is wont to move North or South East or west Place your Rods as is Discribed on the other side of this leaf.[108]

It was often believed that the treasure would move if the 'treasure guardian' was not properly bound/placated by ceremonial magic or otherwise offended, and some of the most famous accounts of treasure digging in nineteenth century America, of course, come from the Smith family. William Stafford, a neighbour of the Smith's, explained that

> Old Joseph and one of the boys came to me one day, and said that Joseph Jr. had discovered some very remarkable and valuable treasures, which could be procured only in that way. That way, was as follows:—That a black sheep should be taken on to the ground where the treasures were concealed—that after cutting its throat, it should be led around a circle while bleeding. This being done, the wrath of the evil spirit would

[107] Johannes Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America: A History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 61.
[108] Clark Jillson, *Green Leaves From Whittingham Vermont: A History of the Town* (Worcester, MA: Clark Jillson, 1894), 113-115; See also Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 26.

be appeased: the treasures could then be obtained, and my share of them was to be four fold.[109]

While it should be acknowledged that the rest of Stafford's account may be embellished somewhat, the account of magical rituals employed during the treasure quest is entirely consistent with other contemporary accounts, such as the aforementioned Silas Hamilton of Vermont who recorded in his notebook 'A method to Tak up hid Treasure'[110] and should not, therefore, be dismissed out of hand. Mormon scholars, such as Richard Bushman, have even accepted Smith's involvement in magical treasure hunting, going so far as to say that 'remnants of the magical culture stayed with Smith to the end.'[111]

Another important nineteenth century magical practice was astrology. There was, however, a considerable difference between, for example, the complex astrological magic as practiced by Renaissance scholars such as Ficino in *De vita libri tres* (*Three Books on Life*),[112] and the common, everyday astrology as practiced by New York farmers, which tended to involve tracking the progress of the moon in order to determine the most propitious days to perform certain agricultural activities such as planting crops.[113] For everyday utilitarian astrologers, their practice stood 'midway between magic and mysticism,' believing that, because 'the cosmos and humanity are the handiwork of God… astrological signs and symbols are written by the divine hand upon both of them.'[114] The main source of popular astrological

[109] Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 237-240; See also Dan Vogel, (ed.), *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol 2, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2010), 61.
[110] Jillson, *Green Leaves from Whittingham Vermont*, 119; Herbert Leventhal, *In the Shadow of the Enlightenment: Occultism and Renaissance Science in Eighteenth Century America*, (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 115.
[111] Richard Lyman Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism's Founder* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 51.
[112] Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life: A Critical Edition and Translation with Introduction and Notes*. Trans. Carol Kaske (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019).
[113] See Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 22; Peter Eisenstadt, 'Almanacs and the Disenchantment of Early America' in *Pennsylvania History*, 65:2 (1998), 143.
[114] Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism*, 96.

knowledge came in the form of almanacs, with publishers such as Nathaniel Ames and others dominating the trade during the eighteenth century, right up until the 1840's.[115] Far from being a subversive and profane activity in an otherwise Christian culture, the astrological almanac formed a substantial part of the early American occultural life. As, T. J. Tomlin has observed

> To the contrary, almanacs and their astrological formations complemented and even promoted Orthodox Christianity across eighteenth-century British America. Rooted in pan-Protestant ''essentials,'' early America's most widely distributed genre articulated an easily recognizable narrative and epistemological framework. This was the liturgy of early American popular culture.[116]

Magic and astrology were not the only occultural practices used in nineteenth century American society. For example, while there was a rich history of literary occultism amongst early American elites, particularly amongst authors of what Arthur Versluis has referred to as the "American Renaissance"—e.g. Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, and Margaret Fuller, all of which drew upon alchemy, astrology, theosophy, Swedenborgianism, Mesmerism, Rosicrucianism, and Freemasonry—the common men and women in early American society were much more interested in *practicing* than they were reading about and *theorising* these ideas intellectually.[117]

Alchemy was, therefore, another occultural practice that played an interesting role at the intersection of folk magic and folk religion, and alchemists could be found throughout seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century North America.[118] In these works we see

[115] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 22.
[116] T. J. Tomlin, '"Astrology's from Heaven not from Hell": The Religious Significance of Early American Almanacs' in *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 8:2 (2010), 289.
[117] Versluis, 'The 'Occult' in Nineteenth-Century America', 23.
[118] Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism*, 87.

> …invocations of ancient esoteric lineages that hark back to Moses and Hermes; we see visionary encounters and mysterious dream sequences; we see complex and strange laboratory instructions written in allusive symbolism; we see claims of great longevity or of eternal life, of the transmutation of metals, of universal healing; and we see consistent injunctions that prayer and devotion are essential for success, which depend on divine revelation.[119]

It is the more spiritual aspects of alchemy, or 'spiritual alchemy', that we see emphasised in the nineteenth century, with the Freemasons and Rosicrucians adopting alchemical symbolism with their rituals as part of the path of self-development.[120]

Swedenborgianism, Spiritualism, and Mesmerism

The General Convention of the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgians) was established in the United States of America in 1817. They were established as a united church in Philadelphia and received support from the British Conference in the form of books and pamphlets, although they were always independent of their European roots.[121] John Brooke has suggested that 'it would be difficult to argue that [Swedenborg's writings] were widely known among the rural peoples of the early Republic'.[122] However, Brooke fails to acknowledge the significance of the spread of Swedenborg's works internationally, as it is clear that they found their way into libraries and bookshops in cities, towns, and villages across America. A library in Manchester, not far from the Smith family home, stocked a well-known collection of books

[119] Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism*, 87.
[120] Georgiana D. Hedesan, 'Alchemy' in Partridge, *The Occult World*, 561.
[121] Williams-Hogan, 'New Religious Movements in American History', 15.
[122] Brooke, The Refiner's Fire, 99

on the subject of religion, including the *Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations* (1817), which contained Swedenborg's personal theophany: 'On a certain night, a man appeared to him in the midst of a strong shining light, and said, 'I am God the Lord, the Creator, and Redeemer.'[123] Swedenborg's account of his theophany was also printed on the front page of a newspaper in Canandaigua, in 1808, and in 1830 Palmyra's newspaper wrote that 'the Lord manifested himself to him by a personal appearance.'[124] The same newspaper in Canandaigua also advertised Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* for sale in 1826.[125]

While there is some question as to Swedenborgian influence in rural areas, there is evidence of the influence of his writings on a number of individuals and movements in the nineteenth century. Sydney Ahlstrom, for example, has shown that 'of all the unconventional currents streaming through the many levels of American religion during the antebellum half-century, none proved attractive to more diverse types of dissenters from established denominations than those which stemmed from Emanuel Swedenborg.'[126] Furthermore, those who were drawn to Swedenborgianism were 'artists, artisans, educators, entrepreneurs, merchants, and traders' who 'lived in old seaboard states and new states formed out of the Old Northwest Territory. Baltimore, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati were cities with large Swedenborgian congregations.'[127] In 1817, the first General Convention was held in Philadelphia, which reported a total of seventeen societies with 360 members in nine states.[128]

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[123] Hannah Adams, *A Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations*, *Jewish, Heathen, Mahometan, and Christian, Ancient and Modern* (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1817), 202; Robert Paul, 'Joseph Smith and the Manchester (New York) Library' in *BYU Studies*, 22 (1959), 347; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 14-15.
[124] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 15, 153.
[125] Ibid., 217.
[126] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 483.
[127] Williams-Hogan, 'New Religious Movements in American History', 15.
[128] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 485-486.

Hence, again, as indicated above, the far-reaching influence of Swedenborg's works on the religious climate of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century America is conspicuous. As Ahlstrom observes, 'His influence was seen everywhere: in Transcendentalism and at Brook Farm, in spiritualism and the free love movement, in the craze for the communitarian experiments, in faith healing, mesmerism, and a half-dozen medical cults; among great intellectuals, crude charlatans, and innumerable frontier quacks.'[129] Similarly, Robert Handy has argued that 'The Swedish thinker's works were… one of the forces that heightened interest in phenomena of the spirit in this period.'[130] Even William James is thought to have been influenced by Swedenborg through his father by adopting his frameworks and assumptions with regards to a belief in nature animated by the spirit, though he did not replicate his spirituality.[131] Furthermore, Bronson Alcott is said to have 'put Swedenborg in his hall of fame along with Plato, Plotinus, and Boehme.'[132]

Spiritualism, on the other hand, is generally thought to have begun in America with the Fox sisters, Katherine and Margaret, in their small two-roomed cottage in Hydesville, New York in 1848.[133] In the March of the same year, the family began to hear knockings from the walls and the sound of furniture being moved, realising that the sounds only occurred in the presence of the two girls, aged fifteen and eleven, who quickly developed a simple form of Morse code to interpret the sounds.[134] The answers that came seemed to indicate that the noises were being produced by the spirit of a dead person who had been buried in the basement. With

[129] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 483.
[130] Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 224.
[131] Paul Jerome Croce, 'Mankind's Own Providence: From Swedenborgian Philosophy of Use to William James's Pragmatism' in *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society*, Summer, 43:3, (2007), 490-508.
[132] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 483.
[133] The difference between earlier forms of Spiritualism, known as Spiritism, and the movement that sprouted from the fertile soil of nineteenth century America, is that earlier forms were often more secretive and limited to small groups or individuals, yet American Spiritualism was much more prevalent and publicly accepted.
[134] Adam Crabtree, 'Mesmerism and the Psychological Dimension of Mediumship' in Cathy Gutierrez, *Handbook of Spiritualism and Channeling* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 15-16.

the help of their elder brother, David, they constructed a way of communicating with the spirit by going through the alphabet to spell out words, having the spirit knock, or "rap" when the desired letter was reached. Though tedious, this form of communication has been used ever since.[135]

Communication with spirits, angels, and other-worldly beings is not, of course, limited to Spiritualism, but has instead a long history in both Europe and America.[136] Various texts, including Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (1651),[137] Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1665),[138] Ebenezer Sibly's *A New and Complete Illustration of the Celestial Science of Astrology* (1784),[139] and Francis Barrett's *The Magus* (1801),[140] all fed into a general climate of belief that communication with spirits was possible.[141] Indeed, the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries were replete with Western esoteric traditions that practiced communication with spirits.[142] 1848 is, however, as Cathy Gutierrez points out, 'generally agreed upon by scholars [as the starting point for Spiritualism] because it is the turning point at which people could self-identify as Spiritualists'.[143]

The Banner of Light[144] and *Spiritualist Telegraph*,[145] both Spiritualist newspapers, regularly published copious lists of those offering their services, and, according to estimates,

[135] Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 4.
[136] Versluis, 'The "Occult" in Nineeteenth-Century America', 12.
[137] Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (London: R. W. for Gregory Moule, 1651).
[138] Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, (London: Richard Cotes, 1651).
[139] Ebenezer Sibly, *A New and Complete Illustration of the Celestial Science of Astrology: or, The Art of Foretelling Future Events and Contingencies by the Aspects, Positions, and Influences of the Heavenly Bodies ... In Four Parts* (London, 1826).
[140] Francis Barrett, *The Magus: A Complete System of Occult Philosophy*, (London: Lackington, Allen & Co., 1801).
[141] See Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*; Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire.*
[142] Versluis, 'The "Occult" in Nineteenth-Century America', 12.
[143] Gutierrez, 'Spiritualism' in Partridge, *The Occult World*, 197.
[144] Luther Colby (ed.), *The Banner of Light: A Weekly Journal of Romance Literature and General Intelligence*, (Boston, MA: Isaac Rich and Luther Colby, 1857-1907).
[145] Samuel Byron Brittan (ed.), *The Spiritual Telegraph: Devoted to the Illustration of Spiritual Intercourse*, (New York: Charles Partridge, 1853).

millions of people engaged in Spiritualist activity in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.[146] Before long, 'there were countless other similar cases, as spirit-seers vied for public attention with fortune tellers and with the new efflorescence of psychic phenomena, including table-lifting, mysterious writing on slate, ectoplasmic manifestations, and marvels of clairvoyance.'[147]

Though having its origins in eighteenth century Germany, 'mesmerism' (originally called 'animal magnetism') also rose to prominence in America during the mid-nineteenth century. Developed by the German physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734—1815), mesmerism combined the use of hypnotism with theories about 'magnetic fluid' that supposedly could be found in all living things and throughout the universe.[148] When a person became sick or afflicted in some way, Mesmer proposed that this was due to blockages to the natural flow of magnetic fluid in the body, and that a person could be healed through a process of using the physician's own body to redirect the fluid through 'magnetic passes' or sweeping of the hands over the person's body. When the process was complete, the body could naturally heal itself.[149] Much like Spiritualism, however, it is important to note that Mesmerism most certainly had a prior history in Europe and America but found wider acceptance in America when it became linked with the New Church of the followers of Emanuel Swedenborg.[150] Of mesmerism and Spiritualism Hanegraaff has rightly observed

> That Swedenborgianism became popular among spiritualists is not surprising: it provided a convenient theoretical background for the practice of communicating with

[146] David K. Nartonis, 'The Rise of 19th-Century American Spiritualism' in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 49: 2 (2010), 361.
[147] Versluis, 'The "Occult" in Nineteenth Century America', 14.
[148] See Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).
[149] Crabtree, 'Animal Magnetism and Mesmerism', in Partridge, *The Occult World*, 188.
[150] Versluis, 'The 'Occult' in Nineteenth-Century America', 15.

> "the other world"… including descriptions of the other world sufficiently 'graphic and literal' for the matter-of-fact attituded of the time, [though] it was Mesmerism which stood at the foundation of spiritual *practice*.[151]

In the same way that clergy denounced the folk magical practices of early Americans, when mesmerism entered the public imagination they were likewise quick to denounce what they viewed as a dangerous delusion, criticising Mesmerism as an 'affront to civilized religion.'[152] Yet, when Charles Poyen St. Sauver (d.1844) began lecturing on animal magnetism, he inspired a wave of itinerant magnetisers accompanied by professional somnambulists who would travel from town to town, charging a fee for their diagnoses and remedies for various illnesses through the use of medical clairvoyant readings.[153]

Though it is true that Mesmer himself sought a rational, scientific explanation for his system and dismissed any occult interpretations, it was nonetheless reinterpreted by Mesmerists and occultists who developed their own ideas and explanations for Mesmer's conception of inner magnetic fluid.[154] Due to the wide dissemination of Mesmer's ideas, including their incorporation into Swedenborgianism and Spiritualism, it is, as Hanegraaff suggests, 'hardly possible to overestimate the relevance of Mesmerism for religious and cultural history after the end of the 18th century.'[155]

Kabbalah

The beginnings of Jewish Kabbalah—a form of Jewish mysticism—can be traced back to twelfth century France and Spain, which held to the notion that it preserved a secret oral

[151] Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 438.
[152] David Schmit, 'Re-Visioning Antebellum Psychology', in *History of Psychology*, 8:4 (2005), 405.
[153] Crabtree, 'Animal Magnetism and Mesmerism', 188.
[154] Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France*, 38.
[155] Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 435.

tradition or revelation that had been passed down over the generations, stretching as far back as Moses, Abraham, and Adam.[156] Although, it is its incorporation into Christian thought, and its subsequent reinterpretation in order to 'prove' the truthfulness of Christianity, that has had a significant influence on esoteric and occult traditions.[157]

Pico della Mirandola is generally considered to be the father of Christian Kabbalah through his study of Hebrew and Aramaic in order to study the Kabbalah and thus being the first to introduce Kabbalah into Christian circles. An Italian philosopher of the Neoplatonic school in Florence and a contemporary of Ficino, Pico drew upon the works of Abulafia, Azriel of Gerona, Recanati, including Jewish sources such as Joseph Gikatilla's *Gates of Justice* and the *Bahir*, as well as other kabbalistic works, to confirm the Christian religion.[158] Pico used his interpretation of the Kabbalah so that he could 'fuse a specifically Christian concept of the Divine act of redemption through Jesus with notions of creation and revelation common to both Judaism and Christianity', pointing to 'the relation between them and Platonism, between mysticism and magic.'[159]

For Pico, the Kabbalah acted as a parallel body of knowledge passed down by the Hebrew prophets which, when paired with the *Hermetica* of Hermes Trismegistus, acted as a reservoir of occultural knowledge that could be used in creating his synthetic blend of Hermetic-Kabbalistic magic, which he then used to critique Ficino's form of magic, suggesting that, unless it was combined with Kabbalah, it would be largely ineffective.[160] Goodrick-Clarke captured the essence of Pico's thought, when he explained that

[156] Peter Forshaw, 'Kabbalah', in Partridge, *The Occult World*, 541.
[157] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, 70-71.
[158] Forshaw, 'Kabbalah', 543.
[159] Ibid., 543-544.
[160] Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions*, 43-44.

> In his Cabalistic Conclusions and *Apology* (1487), Pico distinguishes between various forms of Cabala. "Speculative Cabala" he divides into four types: first, the mystical manipulation of letters, followed by the exploration of the three worlds—the sensible or terrestrial world, the celestial world of the stars, and the supercelestial world of the *sephiroth* and the angels.
>
> These latter categories were of Prime importance to Pico's magic. Pico asserts that this kind of Cabala is a "way of capturing the powers of superior things" and is "the supreme part of natural magic." Whereas natural magic aims no higher that the terrestrial world and the stars, Cabala can be used to operate beyond in the supercelestial spheres of angels, archangels, the *sephiroth* and God. Natural magic uses characters, but Cabala uses numbers through its use of letters. Natural magic uses only intermediary causes, the stars. Cabala goes straight to the first cause, God himself.[161]

It is, however, Pico's influence on figures such as the German humanist theologian Heinrich Agrippa, who is 'arguably most responsible for shaping the Western image of early modern Christian Kabbalah.'[162] His *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* became highly influential among occultists, especially in the American colonies, drawing heavily upon the work of Pico, and others. Originally in Latin, Agrippa's work was translated into English in 1651 and found its way, among other translations, to the Americas.[163] Perhaps more importantly was the availability of Barrett's *The Magus* which contained extensive plagiarisms of Agrippa's works, which was highly influential in revivals of magic in both Europe and America in the 1800's.[164]

[161] Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Tradition*, 44.
[162] Forshaw, 'Kabbalah', 546.
[163] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 11-12, 20.
[164] Ibid., 20; See also Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 75.

A New York magazine in 1828 noted: 'We find textbooks of Cabala, necromancy, astrology, magic, fortune telling…' amongst the esoteric and occult books circulated by European immigrants.[165]

Christian Kabbalah was also a main source of inspiration for many of America's utopian experiments, such as Kelpius's group in Germantown, Pennsylvania, the Chapter of Perfection, known by local German immigrants as *Das Weib in der Wuste* (The Woman in the Wilderness), a reference to Revelation 12:6.[166] Originally formed by Johan Jacob Zimmerman among Lutheran Pietists who was expelled from the clergy for introducing astrology, magic and kabbalah into his teachings,[167] under Kelpius the Chapter of Perfection drew upon Jacob Böehme's mysticism, Rosicrucianism, Lutheran liturgy, Kabbalah, and alchemy. After Kelpius died in 1708, the Chapter of Perfection began to fall apart, though it had a lasting influence on Pennsylvania Germans in their continued interest in universal restoration and the occult.[168]

As mentioned above, both eighteenth and nineteenth century Americans interested in Kabbalah had access to a wide range of material in the form of books, pamphlets, etc., that were widely distributed by various individuals and groups and the publications mentioned had a far-reaching influence, with many of them becoming sources of inspirations for Smith's religion building imagination as will be evidenced throughout this thesis.

Concluding Comments

The fields of discourse from which Smith drew inspiration are not, of course, limited to the themes mentioned above. As an occultural bricoleur, Smith borrowed from a wealth of sources present in the burned-over district of nineteenth century New York, and, as it has been shown,

[165] *The Anti-Masonic Review and Monthly Magazine*, Vol.1, 6, (Jun 1, 1828), 185; See also Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 21.
[166] Berry, *America's Utopian Experiments*, 4; Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 40; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 16.
[167] Op., cit., Quinn, 16.
[168] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 41; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 16.

he mainly encountered these in the form of books, pamphlets, tracts, and through his conversations with others. The aforementioned themes can, therefore, be understood as simply the main discourses that Smith would have encountered in his local environment. Furthermore, while the presence of a burned-over district cultic milieu—a 'cultural underground',[169] as Campbell refers to it—has been established, the ideas that were a formative influence on his thinking were not drawn solely from a range of underground and deviant belief systems. While some were, of course, many were, indeed, popular and quotidian, much as astrology columns and paranormal beliefs are in late-modern societies. This is why Campbell's theory of the cultic milieu, while helpful, ultimately lacks the scope to account for the socio-cultural environment that Smith drew inspiration from.

More specifically, we have also seen that 'occulture' should not be misunderstood as a worldview, but instead it is rather a sociological theory that refers to the environment and social processes by which non-secular ideas, themes, and meanings emerge and are disseminated in everyday life. While some of these ideas may be largely rejected by those within particular religious or scientific cultures (as profane or irrational), occulture is actually, as Partridge has argued, a far more pervasive influence in societies than is often acknowledged. The 'occultural bricoleur', as theorised in this thesis, is a creative individual, sensitive to occultural trends and able to construct new occultural trajectories. As we have seen, Joseph Smith is an excellent example of an occultural bricoleur. In the following chapters, we will unpack this theory, focussing on Smith, his religion-building imagination, and the construction of early Mormonism.

[169] Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization', 121. See also Kaplan and Lööw, *The Cultic Milieu,* 14.

2

Joseph Smith: Foundations of a Prophet

In the previous chapter, we focused on Smith's local environment and established that the theory of occulture is robust enough to explain the broad range of ideas (fields of discourse) that Smith would have had access to. We were also introduced to the concept of the occultural bricoleur as someone who creatively engages with their occultural context, drawing upon a wide range of discourses in the construction of novel occult/religious trajectories. This chapter focuses on Smith as an example of an occultural bricoleur and will explore the methods he used to create a new religion, focusing on some of his earliest visions.

Joseph Smith's Modus Operandi

The ideas, discourses, or currents that Smith would have encountered are to be found, of course, in his immediate socio-cultural environment. As was highlighted in the previous chapter, occulture in nineteenth-century America was altogether ordinary and mundane. It was a quotidian interest for many people.

As an occultural bricoleur, we know that Smith would not have disregarded any information in his quest to re-establish what he believed was the true order of religion.[1] For example, this was apparent during a sermon he gave on 9 July, 1843, wherein he stated: 'One

[1] Gordon B. Hinckley, *Truth Restored* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1979); Robert R. Millet, 'Joseph Smith and 'The Only True and Living Church,'' in Kent P. Jackson and Andrew C. Skinner (eds.), *A Witness for the Restoration: Essays in Honor of Robert J. Matthews* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), 201–31.

of the grand fundamental principles of "Mormonism" is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may.'[2] Shortly after, and during another sermon on 23 July, 1843 he explained that 'we should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true "Mormons".'[3] Furthermore, in a revelation given by Smith in 1832 and canonised in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, it states that the Latter-day Saints should 'seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.'[4] These statements by Smith serve as a good indicator of how he went about constructing Mormonism.

Having said that, there have been some who have been keen to deny that this notion of gathering up the 'good and true principles in the world' is indicative of Smith's revelations being influenced by his socio-cultural environment. For example, a typical response is that of J. B. Haws, an associate professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University (BYU), who has stated that when it comes to the question of whether or not Swedenborg, for example, was the source of Smith's conception of the three-tiered heaven—a subject we will return to later in this thesis—'questions like this almost never lend themselves to a clear-cut yes or no' and though 'certain similarities are intriguing, they do not necessarily require a direct connection between Swedenborg's writings and Joseph Smith's revelation.'[5] This statement highlights current issues in contemporary scholarship with regard to early Mormon history. In short, Mormon scholarship tends to be cynical in tone and even dismissive of anything that might be seen undermine the LDS church's historical truth claims. Yet, Haws does go on to admit that, even if it could be reasonably shown that Swedenborg's ideas did

[2] Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (American Fork: Covenant Communications, Inc., 2002), 324.
[3] Ibid, 327.
[4] D&C 88: 118.
[5] J. B. Haws, 'Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation', in Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman and Alonzo L. Gaskill (eds.), *The Doctrine and Covenants, Revelations in Context: The 37th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book, 2008), 142.

have an influence on Smith, 'Latter-day Saints likely would not view that as a threat to their understanding of the development of Mormonism.'[6]

Without wanting to be dismissive or sceptical, this thesis does contend that Smith was significantly influenced by, not only Swedenborg, but a whole range of occultural concepts, ideas, and writings. Indeed, we will see in proceeding chapters that it would have been odd had Smith, as an occultural bricoleur, not made use of Swedenborg's writings, such was their availability in nineteenth century America and their acceptance among the general population. However, the problem is much more complex than Haws is inclined to admit. The claim being made here is not that Smith simply copied from Swedenborg's or anyone else's writings wholesale (although in some cases this is entirely accurate), but that he was instead significantly influenced by them in such a way that, through a process of cross-pollination with other esoteric and occult currents, they were intricately woven into Smith's emerging religious framework, thus becoming something new and unique to the Mormon prophet, though not entirely dissimilar to their original source of inspiration.

The argument, then, is that Mormonism is Smith's own occultural project, which is constructed through a creative process involving his interaction with a culture that promoted a form of self-religiosity. That said, it should be noted that 'self-religiosity' is not the type of late-modern commitment discussed in recent sociological literature.[7] Rather it needs to be understood within the context of the nineteenth century burned-over district as outlined in the previous chapter. That is to say, individuals are much more likely to create new religious trajectories informed by their experiences of the religious tradition and the occultural environment within which they were raised, rather than subscribing to a highly individualised

[6] Haws, 'Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76', 143.
[7] For an interesting discussion on this, see Paul Heelas, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Wouter J. Hanegraaff *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

spirituality which, of course, is much more characteristic of late modern developments, such as the New Age movement.[8]

Religion and the Smith Family

Records indicate that Smith's great-great-grandfather, Samuel, accused one Mary Easty of witchcraft in Topsfield in 1687, and while not much else is known about his religious affiliations, it is known that Smith's accusations towards Easty contributed to her execution during the Salem Witch trials in 1692.[9] The Smith family continued to reside around the Topsfield area until Asael Smith (Smith Jnr's grandfather) was born in 1744, to Samuel Smith Jnr and Priscilla Gould, and who went on to marry Mary Duty in 1767. They subsequently moved to New Hampshire, returning briefly to Topsfield to clear his father's debts, but later moved their family to Tunbridge, Vermont where the family finally settled.

At first, Asael Smith was 'affiliated with the established religion in New England, the Congregationalists, but he later became skeptical of organized religion.'[10] In his view, that which was being taught by the established churches was not capable of being reconciled with either common sense or the scriptures. In a letter to his children, Smith counselled them to 'search the scriptures and consult with sound reason' in the formation of their religious opinions.[11] At some point during his time in Tunbridge, Smith became interested in Universalist doctrines, and he may have come into contact with Universalist ministers while he was growing up in Topsfield, with John Murray being located only fifteen miles away in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Being 'neither Boston-born nor Harvard bred' his teachings on the

[8] Heelas, *The Spiritual Revolution*; Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*.
[9] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 31.
[10] Church Educational System, *Church History in the Fulness of Times: The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989: 16.
[11] Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 26.

doctrine of universal salvation 'appealed mostly to common people.'[12] This is perhaps a reason why Smith found Universalism so appealing.

According to the *Tunbridge Town Record*, on 6 December 1797, Smith, with his two eldest sons, Jesse and Joseph, and thirteen others, signed a declaration of membership in the Tunbridge Universalist Society.[13] Bushman has indicated that

> Asael, like Murray, put his trust in salvation by grace alone… he tried to bring his children to the same conclusion. Consider, he said, "whether you can by outward forms, rites and ordinances save yourselves, or whether there is a necessity of your having help from any other hand than your own." …In Asael's opinion, and here he was on safe ground because it was the common Congregational belief, "[Christ] came to save sinners merely because they were such," not because of repentance. Having gone that far, Asael saw no reason why God should favor Vermont Christians over "the worst heathen in the darkest corner of Arabia."[14]

This particular Universalist society was a short-lived venture, though Smith adhered to the principle of universal salvation for the rest of his life and continued to try and persuade his family of its truthfulness. In another letter to his family, Smith wrote

> The soul is immortal… Do all to God in a serious manner. When you think of him, speak of him, pray to him, or in any way make your addresses to his great majesty, be in good earnest… And as to religion, study the nature of religion, and see whether it consists in outward formalities, or in the hidden man of the heart… Sure I am my

[12] Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006: 17.
[13] Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Volume 1 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 663.
[14] Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 27.

> Savior, Christ, is perfect, and never will fail in one circumstance. To him I commit your souls, bodies, estates, names, characters, lives, deaths and all—and myself, waiting when he shall change my vile body and make it like his own glorious body.[15]

According to his grandson, George A. Smith, he remembered his grandfather writing 'quires of paper on the doctrine of universal salvation' before his death in 1830.[16] As Bushman has pointed out, 'Universalism became an overlay on family religion.'[17] Furthermore, Smith's grandson has contributed somewhat to Mormon folklore by claiming that his grandfather predicted that 'God was going to raise up some branch of his family to be a great benefit to mankind', and that, prior to his death, he was confident that his grandson Joseph was the fulfilment of his prophecy, who had ushered in a new religious dispensation.[18] As mentioned above, Smith Snr. was initially involved in the short-lived Universalist Society in Tunbridge, Vermont, and while he may have flirted with Methodism, he maintained his beliefs in Universalism until the 1830's when he became convinced that his son had restored the Church of Christ.

Smith's maternal grandparents were not much different. His grandfather, Solomon Mack, was a universalist, though he later abandoned his belief in universal salvation and converted to the orthodox faith in about 1811.[19] Although, as Brooke has pointed out, largely as a result of being under the tutelage of a farm master who never spoke on the subject of religion, the excitement of the religious revivals during the Great Awakening seems to have passed him by.[20] Smith's grandmother, Lydia, a schoolteacher, was in contrast a firm and

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[15] Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971), 124-125.
[16] Ibid., 105; see also Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 29.
[17] Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 17.
[18] Church Educational System, *Church History in the Fulness of Times: The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 17.
[19] Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 25-26.
[20] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 83.

devoted Congregationalist who oversaw the religious instruction of their eight children,[21] among which was Smith Jnr's mother, Lucy.

Born on 8 July 1775, at Gilsum, New Hampshire, Lucy Mack was the youngest of Solomon and Lydia's children. On 24 January 1796, she married Smith's father, Joseph Smith Snr. While Lucy was raised by her mother with Congregationalist views, of which she explained 'I was indebted for the religious instructions as well as most of the educational priviledges [*sic*] which I had ever received.'[22] She remained uncommitted to any church—despite being baptised by a local minister in 1802—until she and three of her children (Hyrum, Samuel Harrison, and Sophronia) joined the Presbyterian church in Palmyra during the local religious revival in Palmyra, New York between 1824 and 1825.[23] Lucy's father, Solomon, on the other hand, was for some time a Universalist, a point on which he and Asael Smith agreed, though later came to denounce those views when he had an evangelical conversion experience while suffering from rheumatism at the age of seventy-seven in 1810.[24]

It is clear that the fractured and inconsistent religiosity of the Smith and Mack families is what formed the basis of Smith's early religious experience, and which led to him later declaring that 'so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was… to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.'[25] Yet, as we will see in the following chapter, Universalism would form a much more important part of Smith's religious bricolage than has been previously recognised.

[21] Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism*, 25-26.
[22] Dan Vogel (ed), *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol 1, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996: 273.
[23] Ibid., 213.
[24] Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977), 30.
[25] JSH 1:8.

Folk Magic

While religion played a significant role in people's lives in nineteenth-century America, organised religion did not. Between 1776 and 1850, which covered the periods of both the first and second great awakenings, religious adherence—meaning those who belonged to an organised religion—grew from only 17% to 34% of the population.[26] The majority of Americans were not, therefore, affiliated with any sect or denomination. The family unit itself was patriarchal, with the husband and father being the only person recognised by law. This meant that any rights surrounding the ownership of property, including a man's wife and children, were all registered and understood as belonging to him.[27] Unlike the religious observance of families in Europe, the American family was highly individualised on the subject of religion. Husbands, wives, and children followed their own conscience in choosing their affiliation with a particular church. While some families all attended the same church together, it was not uncommon to find members of the same family who all belonged to different sects and denominations. It was, however, strict observance of the Sabbath that was paramount.[28]

Given the fact that only a relatively small percentage of the population claimed membership in a church, and that the majority of Americans were instead "unchurched", it would be easy to deduce from the statistics available that this meant that there was a general sense of apathy towards things of a religious nature. This is, however, far from the case. Instead, these unchurched individuals and families participated in folk religion—a mixture of Christian beliefs, superstition, magical practices, folk cures, and magical healing.[29] Instead of eliciting the help of local clergy in combatting, in their view, the challenge presented by evil spirits, they employed the services of local sorcerers, village wizards, cunning men, and white witches.

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[26] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1850: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 16.
[27] Willystine Goodsell, 'The American Family in the Nineteenth Century' in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 160, The Modern American Family, March 1932: 13.
[28] Ibid., 18.
[29] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 27.

Indeed, such practitioners were consulted, not simply to exorcise spirits, but also to cure diseases, locate buried treasure, find lost personal items, and a range of other mundane services. This occultural approach to the management of everyday life was, of course, imported to the Americas from Europe.[30]

While the academic occult—as practiced by the scientists, theologians, and, in some instances clergymen—varied somewhat from that of the occultural practices of the average nineteenth-century American, the fundamental beliefs surrounding these practices were broadly the same. Magic was practiced to help individuals in a time of crisis, heal the sick and afflicted, appease, or ward off good and evil spirits, and draw closer to God either through direct communication or by knowledge gained by interacting with a heavenly being. One of the main ways in which early American families openly practiced the occult sciences was by tracing the daily progression of the moon.[31] As Quinn has noted, 'astrological guides specified which activities should be conducted or avoided with reference to the moon's phases and its daily position within the signs of the Zodiac.'[32] These guides came in the form of astrological almanacs that were consulted 'as a serious need, not a frivolous hobby.'[33]

These almanacs also contained the moon's sign for every day of the month, readers could then use the accompanying instructions to determine the best time to plant and harvest crops. Furthermore, information was not simply restricted to the position of the moon but extended to all the planets.[34] Interest in astrology was not simply the domain of the unchurched either, publications such as the *Clergyman's Almanac* (1809 – 1822), the *Christian Almanac*,

[30] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 252.
[31] Marion Barber Stowell, *Early American Almanacs ; the Colonial Weekday Bible* (New York: B. Franklin, 1977), 276; Robert Tolbert Sidwell, *The Colonial American Almanacs: A Study in Non-Institutional Education* (Educat.D. dissertation, Rutgers, New Brunswick, 1965), 271; Thomas A. Horrocks, *Rules, Remedies, and Regimens: Almanacs and Popular Medicine in Early America* (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 9, 196; Madeleine Hudson, *"Future Events We unto Thee Impart": A Transatlantic Examination of Almanacs in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Masters thesis, Tufts University, 2015), 54, 59.
[32] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 22.
[33] Ibid., 22. See also Tomlin, '"Astrology's from Heaven not from Hell"', 297.
[34] Ibid., Tomlin, 297-298.

and the *Methodist Almanac* were also widely available during the early to mid-1800s, all of which included what might be called 'folk magic.' For example, the *Clergyman's Almanac* contained instructions on the phases of the moon, eclipses, and the position of the planets,[35] and the 1828 edition of the *Christian Almanac* contained a section dedicated to the 'Influence of the Moon'.[36] Despite attempts to subjugate and diminish the influence of occultural beliefs and practices by some clergymen, they still found a broad appeal among the churched and unchurched alike. Again, occulture was part of everyday life.

Almanacs and books specifically on astrology were, of course, available to the Smiths in their local environment. While historians have largely ignored the influence of almanacs in early American society, they were instead the most read and used publications at the time.[37] The dependence on occultural almanacs as a source of vital information was not uncommon among New England farming families and the Smiths were certainly no exception. At least 155 known printings of almanacs took place between 1815 and 1831, all in close proximity to the Smith family home, and it is entirely possible that some of these were for sale through E. B. Grandin's bookstore in Palmyra.[38] Almanacs were also advertised in Palmyra's local newspaper.[39]

The Smith family's involvement with folk magic is now a well-established fact,[40] with the extent to which they were involved with folk magic being thoroughly explored and undeniably established in Quinn's ground-breaking work, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, which is considered by many to be the definitive work on the subject. Having said

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[35] *The Clergyman's Almanack; or, and Astronomical Diary; Serious Monitor, for the Year of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ 1811*, No. III. (Boston: Printed for the Author, 1810).
[36] *The Christian Almanac, For New-England. For the Year of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, 1828*, Vol. I No. VIII (Boston: Published by Lincoln & Edmands, 1827).
[37] David J. Whittaker, 'Almanacs in the New England Heritage of Mormonism' in *Brigham Young University Studies* 29, no. 4 (1989), 91. See also Tomlin, '"Astrology's from Heaven not from Hell".'
[38] Whittaker, 'Almanacs in the New England Heritage of Mormonism', 94.
[39] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 73.
[40] See for example, *The Book of Mormon Translation*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013: https://www.lds.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation?lang=eng accessed 09/01/2019.

that, in a number of areas his book raises more questions than it answers. For example, in relation to the Smith family's involvement with folk magic, Quinn explained, 'Magic and treasure-seeking were an integral part of the Smith family's religious quest.'[41] Some Mormon scholars, such as Stephen Ricks and Daniel Peterson, have taken issue with Quinn's thesis, criticising his use of the terms 'magic' and 'occult', including the extent to which these had a 'formative influence' on Smith's thought.[42] They suggested that his definitions of the terms were problematic, which appears to be a common critique among Mormon apologists.[43] While it is understandable that the influence of magic and the occult on Smith's religion-building imagination could be troubling for some, an accurate and reasonable understanding of the occultural context in which he was born and raised should facilitate a more sympathetic attitude towards the idea of what does and what does not constitute as 'influence' and why viewing Smith as an occultural bricoleur is much less problematic (see below).[44]

Nevertheless, others in the LDS scholarly community view/have viewed Smith's involvement with magic and the occult rather differently, such as Richard Bushman who suggested that while 'Magic… served its purpose in his life' it was instead a 'preparatory gospel' for the young Smith.[45] This means that it formed the training ground for Smith's future prophetic career. Brigham Henry Roberts, historian and a 'Seventy' within the LDS Church also wrote that '…it is scarcely conceivable how one could live in New England in those years and not have shared in such beliefs. To be credulous in such things was to be normal people.

[41] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 30
[42] Stephen D. Ricks and Daniel C. Peterson, 'The Mormon as Magus' in *Sunstone* (January, 1988), 38.
[43] See for example John Gee, 'Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob' in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 46-71; Stephen D. Ricks and Daniel C. Peterson, 'Joseph Smith and 'Magic': Methodological Reflections on the Use of a Term', in Robert L. Millet (ed.), *To Be Learned Is Good If* . . . (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 129-47; Ricks and Peterson, 'The Mormon as Magus', *Sunstone,* 38. See also William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and George L. Mitton, 'Mormon in the Fiery Furnace: Or, Loftes Tryk Goes to Cambridge', review of *The Refiner's Fire,* by John L. Brooke, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/2 (1994): 10-11; and William J. Hamblin, "Everything Is Everything': Was Joseph Smith Influenced by Kabbalah?' review of 'Joseph Smith and Kabbalah', by Lance Owens, *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 251-325.
[44] See also Chapter 1 for an understanding of how Occulture works.
[45] Bushman*, Rough Stone Rolling*, 54.

To have been incredulous in such matters in that age and locality, would have stamped them abnormal.'[46] Roberts' view is most certainly correct, as magic and philosophy, politics and religion were so incredibly intertwined that it would have been difficult for the frontiersman to separate one from another.[47] This understanding of magic and religion being intimately linked helps provide context to the Smith's involvement with magic as discussed below.

Smith's mother, Lucy, explained in her *Biographical Sketches* explained that even though the family were 'trying to win the faculty of Abrac, and drawing magic circles,' they never 'suffered one important interest to swallow up every other obligation but whilst they worked with their hands they endeavored to remember the service of & the welfare of their souls.'[48] Quinn has noted that by 'the early 1820's "Faculty of Abrac" was a well-known phrase linking magic and divinity and that 'Medieval and early modern magic manuscripts in England used "Abrac" and "Abraca" as one of the names of God in conjurations.'[49] For the Smith family, religion and magic were both legitimate and equal means whereby they could obtain salvation. Indeed, Lucy's interest in magical practices was well known, as one neighbour, Sally Payne, later recalled, 'She once came to my mother to get a stone the children had found, of curious shape. She wanted to use it as a peepstone.'[50] Payne's brother, John Stafford also explained to William Kelley in 1881, that 'My father… had a stone which some thought they could look through—and Old Mrs. S. came there for it but never got it.'[51] Orrin Porter

[46] B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1930), 1:26–27.
[47] Kurt Seligmann, *Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), 310.
[48] Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 1, 285.
[49] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 68.
[50] Clark Braden and E. L. Kelley, *Public Discussion of the Issues Between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ (Disciples) Held in Kirtland, Ohio, Beginning February 12, and Closing March 8, 1884 Between E. L. Kelley, of Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Clark Braden, of the Church of Christ* (St. Louis: Clark Braden, 1884), 350; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol 3, 173.
[51] William Kelley, 'Notebook, No. 5, 1-16', in *William H. Kelley Papers* (Independence, Missouri: RLDS Church Library-Archives), 13; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 2, 87.

Rockwell, controversial friend and bodyguard to Smith, is also said to have claimed that his mother would compare dreams with Lucy in their quest for buried treasure.[52]

While Smith's mother appears to have had some interest and involvement with magical practices, it was his father and brothers, including himself, who took a much deeper interest. Peter Ingersoll, a neighbour to the Smiths in Palmyra, stated in an 1833 interview that 'the general employment of the family, was digging for money' and that Smith Snr 'requested me to walk with him a short distance from his house, for the purpose of seeing whether a mineral rod would work in my hand'.[53] Ingersoll further mentions Smith Snr's use of a 'stone… in his hat', and claimed that Alvin Smith, Smith Snr's oldest son, also took part in the same practices.[54] Apologists, such as Milton Backman, are keen to dismiss accounts such as Ingersoll's, arguing that they are nothing more than 'belittling statements.'[55] Their overall aim, of course, is to reject arguments that folk magic had a significant influence, not only on the Smiths' daily activities, but more importantly on the religion-building imagination of Smith Jnr. Yet, the evidence is clear that the Smiths were heavily involved in the folk magical practices that were common at the time. Jesse Smith, Smith Snr's brother, wrote to Hyrum Smith in 1829 wherein he refers to Smith Snr's use of the 'rod' and 'many other things alike ridiculous' while trying to convince Hyrum of his error in believing the claims of his brother, Smith Jnr.[56]

The use of seer stones or "peepstones" and rods in locating buried treasure and other items are, of course, a form of divination and were part of the everyday occultural tools that

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[52] Norman R. Bowen and Mary Karen Bowen Solomon, (eds)., *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie, 1872-73: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 1995) 69-77; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 3, 407.
[53] Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed*, 232; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol 2, 40.
[54] Ibid., Vogel, 40.
[55] Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision: Confirming Evidences and Contemporary Accounts*, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980): 120.
[56] Jesse Smith to Hyrum Smith, *Joseph Smith Letterbook*, 17 June 1829, (1837-43); Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol 1, 553.

village wizards and cunning men would use.[57] Other notable examples include the use of mirrors, crystals, water and wine, stone, fingernails, wax, marks on the stomach, and any other reflective objects.[58] John Dee and Edward Kelley are, perhaps, two of the most famous individuals to have used occultural tools in magic circles and ritual spells, which included crystals and a black obsidian "shewstone" in their communications with angels who revealed the hidden secrets of nature.[59] While many of these practices had, to a certain extent, begun to decline in Europe,[60] they were nevertheless an important part of the occultural landscape of nineteenth century America. As we will see below, the use of seer stones in particular would play a significant role in Smith's telling of the translation process of the *Book of Mormon*.

Occultural Context of the First Vision

Any student familiar with the history of early nineteenth-century America, would recognise straightaway in Smith's account of his encounters with religion prior to the founding of the LDS Church, an unmistakable narrative of the general climate of the burned-over district. A term coined by Presbyterian Minister, Charles Grandison Finney (1792 – 1875), which he used to describe the 'localities between Lake Ontario and the Adirondacks', an area that had been a persistent target for evangelism. Indeed, according to Finney, there were no unconverted people

[57] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 256, 274.
[58] For an interesting discussion on these tools, see Theodore Besterman, *Crystal Gazing: A Study in the History, Distribution, Theory and Practice of Scrying* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 1995); Patrick Curry & Angela Voss, *Seeing with Different Eyes: Essays in Astrology and Divination* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007); Angela Voss, 'Scrying' in Partridge, *The Occult World*, 580-591; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*.
[59] Glyn Parry, *The Arch-Conjuror of England: John Dee* (New Haven and London, 2012), 10-21.
[60] See Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.

left.[61] This is misleading. As Cross has stated, 'no exact geographical sense can be assigned to the phrase' and it 'simply meant the place where enthusiasts flourished.'[62]

Smith explained of his experiences in Manchester, Ontario County, New York that 'there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion' suggesting that it began with the Methodists, 'but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country.'[63] The 1838 account from which this is taken has been challenged on the grounds that there was no significant revival in the Manchester area during the time in which Smith claims it to have happened.[64] Michael Marquardt and Wesley Walters have critiqued Smith's 1838 account, suggesting that the most likely date for the revivals was between 1824 and 1825, rather than 1820-21.[65] This, however, has been the subject of much debate,[66] which is due to some inconsistencies in the various accounts. The 1832 account is the earliest known first-hand account, and the only one that was hand-written by Smith himself, which places his age at sixteen, giving an approximate date of 1821-22.[67] Shortly after, in 1835, Warren Parrish who was at the time acting as Smith's scribe, recorded in Smith's journal another recounting of his early experiences, placing his age at fourteen, giving us the earliest recorded dating of between 1820 and 1821.[68] The well-known 1838 account, now recorded in the 'Joseph Smith—History' section of *The Pearl of Great Price*, also places Smith's age at

[61] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 3; Charles G. Finney, *Autobiography of Charles G. Finney*, (Minnesota: Bethany House, 1977), 78.
[62] Ibid., Cross, 4.
[63] Joseph Smith—History 1:5.
[64] See, for example, H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, *Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994); Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2016).
[65] Ibid., Marquardt and Walters, 17-18.
[66] D. Michael Quinn, 'Joseph Smith's Experience of a Methodist "Camp-Meeting" in 1820', *Dialogue Paperless*, E-Paper #3, December 20, (2006); Dan Vogel, 'What is a Revival?', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 41, No. 4, Winter 2008.
[67] Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee and Richard L. Jensen (eds.), *The Joseph Smith Papers: Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832-1844*, (Salt Lake City: The Church Historians Press, 2012), 2-23.
[68] Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, Richard L. Jensen (eds.), *The Joseph Smith Papers: Journals, Volume 1: 1832-1839*, (Salt Lake City: The Church Historians Press, 2008), 53-223.

fourteen.[69] Another account, written by Smith in response to a request made in 1842 by John Wentworth, owner and editor of the Chicago Democrat, asking for a history of the Latter-day Saints, which placed his age again at 'about fourteen'.[70] Other second-hand accounts seem to suggest that he was between the ages of fourteen and seventeen.[71]

Despite the inconsistencies in the various accounts, it is worth noting that the arguments that revolve around this issue simply ignore much of the historical evidence that documents what is known as 'The Second Great Awakening.' Regardless of Smith's age at the time and given the fact that the Smith family regularly moved from one town to another in search of profitable work, he would have most certainly had contact with revivalist meetings at some time or another. Richard Bushman has explained that, in the Palmyra area, four groups met within close vicinity to the Smith family home: 'Presbyterians had the largest congregation… and in 1820 the only meetinghouse. The Methodists, the next largest group, constructed a building of their own in 1822 and the Society of Friends one in 1823'. Close by, to the west, 'a large congregation of Baptists had met in a meetinghouse of their own since 1808' and to the east 'stood a second Presbyterian church'.[72]

While this may not seem like a large representation of churches in the area, as Cross has pointed out

> The lad who emigrated from these [New England] neighborhoods could hardly have escaped at least one such revival, whether he left his hillside home or valley hamlet as early as 1795 or as late as 1824… It mattered little whether he was nominally Congregational, Baptist, or Methodist. He might in the young country change affiliation

[69] JSH: 1-75.
[70] Davidson, *The Joseph Smith Papers: Histories,* Vol. 1, 489-501.
[71] 'Accounts of the First Vision', at *The Joseph Smith Papers*, (Salt Lake City: The Church Historians Press, 2018) Online, Available at: http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/site/accounts-of-the-first-vision [Accessed 12/01/2018].
[72] Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 51.

> several times as one sect or another held services nearby, or seemed to enjoy particular manifestations of heaven-born agitation. Had he perchance left the old home before the revivals of the nineties reached that vicinity… still he could scarcely evade a religious experience in New York. For ten years at most he might dwell in some isolated spot, but settlers inevitably arrived, churches formed, and revivals occurred.[73]

The fact that the New York area was in a constant state of religious flux means that it would be difficult to pin down exactly where and when Smith may have encountered a revivalist meeting, and it is here that Cross further explains that

> evidence concerning the development of Burned-over district churches before 1825 is unreliable, but it suffices to indicate similar patterns of growth among the several denominations [Baptist, Congregationalist, and Methodist]. In periods of awakening all increased rapidly; in times of quiet all grew slowly. Prior foundation in particular vicinities gave one or another sect special local strength, but in the region as a whole they appear to have maintained uniform patterns of expansion. Their history can be told as one tale.[74]

One of the defining characteristics of the revival meetings was the enthusiasm and emotionalism of the meetings, especially the falling down of participants and lying unconscious, sometimes for hours at a time (popularly referred to nowadays, within Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, as 'being slain in the spirit').[75] Finney took particular issue with these public displays of emotion, stating that they are 'purely involuntary states of mind' and

[73] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 6-7.
[74] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 9.
[75] Neil Meyer, 'Falling for the Lord: Shame, Revivalism, and the Origins of the Second Great Awakening', in *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 9, No.1, (Winter 2011), 143.

that they 'naturally and necessarily exist in the mind under certain circumstances calculated to excite them. But they can be controlled *indirectly*.'[76] Even though Finney was one of the architects of the Second Great Awakening, he believed that, while conversion/regeneration was itself the result of the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, certain manifestations of the experience could be accounted for in purely human terms. Indeed, for regeneration to have taken place and for the process of sanctification to have begun, there needed to be, he insisted, 'fruits of the Spirit,' which could be witnessed in, for example, social action following the individual's conversion.[77]

Neil Meyer has, however, argued that charismatic manifestations, such as falling over, were part of the 'spontaneous emotion' found at revival meetings,[78] and, interestingly enough, by Smith's own account, his own family experienced them, because 'mother Lucy; my brothers Hyrum and Samuel Harrison; and my sister Sophronia' all converted to the Presbyterian Church. Smith himself, however, 'became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect'.[79] While Smith was more conservative about his involvement with the Methodists in his official account, evidence shows that he joined his wife's Methodist Church in 1828, though local members took issue with his involvement as a result of his claims to have had heavenly visions.[80] Richard Bushman has noted that Smith attended Methodist meetings with Emma 'probably to placate her family' and while there is no evidence of attendance, Smith remained on the roll for six months.[81] One resident of Palmyra, Ontario County, New York, a town that shared a border with Manchester, claimed in an 1867 publication that 'at one time [Smith] joined the

[76] Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 39, emphasis in original.
[77] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 460.
[78] Meyer, 'Falling for the Lord', 146.
[79] JSH: 7-8.
[80] W. W. Wyl, *Mormon Portraits or the Truth About Mormon Leaders: From 1830 to 1886* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Company, 1886), 80.
[81] Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 69-70.

probationary class of the Methodist church in Palmyra, and made some active demonstrations of engagedness [*sic*],' though he lacked conviction and soon stopped attending.[82]

The Smith family's involvement with both the Methodists and Presbyterians is not, however, insignificant, and clearly had an influence on Smith's emerging religious worldview. For example, Smith described an experience that he had when working with his father, who 'discovered something wrong with me, and told me to go home… in attempting to cross the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me, and I fell helpless to the ground, and for a time was quite unconscious of anything.'[83] It is easy to suggest that this was due to exhaustion brought on by hard labour, but the wording is significant in that he was 'quite unconscious'. This is especially relevant when we consider the fact that it resulted in an angelic visitation, of which he claims that, 'the first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up, and beheld the [angel Moroni] standing over my head'.[84] Furthermore, falling or lying down unconscious as an outward manifestation of a spiritual experience can be found in the pages of the Book of Mormon, wherein the prophet Ammon, King Lamoni, the Queen, and all of their servants fall to the ground in a remarkably similar way to that of participants during revivalist meetings.[85] Grant Palmer has also noted, citing Mosiah 4:1-2, the presence of the falling exercise in the speech of the Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin.[86]

Furthermore, Clyde Ford has recognised nineteenth-century Methodist teachings within the pages of the Book of Mormon, stating that 'in 2 Nephi 2:13-14 the Book of Mormon presents logical proof that God's moral government must operate according to law' agreeing with contemporary Methodist teachings, and that 'better educated early nineteenth-century

[82] Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism,* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1867), 17; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 3, 94; Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism*, 29.
[83] JSH: 48.
[84] JSH: 49.
[85] Alma 19:6-31.
[86] Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins*, 100.

individuals would have recognized these formal arguments.'[87] Ford also suggests that the Book of Mormon agrees with nineteenth-century Methodism, as influenced by Arminian theology, on four separate questions: (1). Are humans free to act according to their own wills? (2). Is moral evil desirable? (3). Do infants commit sin? And (4). Are those who have never been exposed to Christian teachings accountable?[88] Palmer has also pointed to extensive Methodist themes within the Book of Mormon.[89]

Even though these teachings are contained within the Book of Mormon, and despite Smith's claims that the Book of Mormon was a translation of an actual historical record, Ford explains that 'the Book of Mormon does not present an organized systematic theology; thus, interpretation of scriptural passages may be ambiguous.'[90] This is clear evidence that the Book of Mormon represents Smith's religion-building imagination. He did not have the benefit of being tutored in a theological seminary, therefore the Book of Mormon shows a clear indication of being a bricolage of teachings that were found throughout the religious landscape of the burned-over district, which shall be discussed throughout this thesis.

John Matzko has, on the other hand, suggested that while 'Methodism served as the most significant Protestant influence on the young Joseph Smith,' Presbyterianism also 'played an important, if more negative, role in his religious development.'[91] Following the death of Smith's brother, Alvin on 19 November 1823, his mother Lucy and several of his siblings joined the Presbyterian Church and were active participants until September 1828.[92] Matzko has suggested that it was a result of a Presbyterian minister, Benjamin Stockton, who claimed

[87] Clyde D. Ford, 'Lehi on the Great Issues: Book of Mormon Theology in Early Nineteenth-Century Perspective', in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol.38, no.4, (Winter 2005), 85.
[88] Ford, 'Lehi on the Great Issues', 86-94.
[89] Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins*, 98-118.
[90] Ibid., 95.
[91] John Matzko, 'The Encounter of the Young Joseph Smith with Presbyterianism', in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol.40, no.3, (Fall 2007), 68.
[92] Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism*, 32.

that his brother had gone to hell during his funeral, that potentially ruined his relationship with Presbyterianism.[93] Theologically, however, and as Matzko has explained,

> the Book of Mormon seems to contradict all five points of Calvinism (often abbreviated with the acronym TULIP): Total depravity (an inherited sin nature), Unconditional election (God's choice and not the human being's), Limited atonement (only some are saved), Irresistible grace (humankind cannot resist the call of God), and the Perseverance of the saints (salvation cannot be lost). Nevertheless, it has also been argued that the Book of Mormon incorporates Calvinist doctrine as well.[94]

Moreover, this was not the most significant influence that Presbyterianism had on Smith's developing religious worldview. As Matzko states, Calvinism, as espoused by Presbyterians at the time, 'was as a fully developed theological system against which Smith could react' and that 'to such a creative intellect, Methodism could serve only as a temporizing way station, not even intermediate to the emphasis Smith began to place on the exaltation of humankind.'[95] The eclectic nature of Smith's religious bricolage often means, however, that he was not simply tackling one theological issue, but many, and from different viewpoints.

The First Vision

According to the official history of the church, the origins of the religion are to be found in the answer to a simple question asked by Joseph Smith, a young farm boy, during the spring of 1820 in Palmyra, New York. Smith claims that there was 'in the place where [he] lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion' and that 'the whole district of country seemed

[93] Matzko,'The Encounter of the Young Joseph Smith with Presbyterianism', 70.
[94] Ibid., 73.
[95] Ibid., 77.

affected by it'.[96] The excitement that Smith describes here is that which scholars now recognise to be a part of the religious revivals which took place during the Second Great Awakening. Smith continues by explaining that in 'the process of time [his] mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and [he] felt some desire to be united with them' but that 'so great were the confusion and strife among the denominations, that it was impossible for a person as young as [he] was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.'[97] Whitney Cross has explained that

> All Protestant churches united in condemning Catholics. All evangelical sects united, too, against Universalists and Unitarians. Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians could share their hatred of Christians. Baptists and Presbyterians co-operated in damning Methodists and Freewill Baptists. Presbyterians all too often proved disagreeably intolerant of Baptists. To cap the climax, both Baptists and Presbyterians, particularly the latter, maintained a constant and bitter strife between enthusiasts and conservatives in their own ranks.[98]

Smith claimed that, after serious consideration, he became determined to obtain an answer to his question of 'who was right and who was wrong' by retiring to a nearby grove of trees, not far from the Smith family home and offering up his question to God in prayer. Richard Bushman, a historian and committed Latter-day Saint (Mormon), explains that in 'the minds of Latter-day Saints today, the events of that morning marked the beginning of the restoration of the Gospel and the commencement of a new dispensation.'[99] The reason for this belief is rooted in the following claim by Smith:

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[96] JSH 1:5
[97] JSH 1:8.
[98] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 43.
[99] Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 56.

> I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. … When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is my Beloved Son. Hear Him!*[100]

For Latter-day Saints, this event sets their Church apart from other Christian traditions in the nineteenth century. It seeks to classify itself as a restorationist movement, and the church makes the claim that it has been given authority from God to re-establish or restore the Church of Jesus Christ as it was in ancient times. It does not claim any break from Catholicism or any Protestant denomination, but rather it is understood to be a divine restoration of the Primitive Church.

Visionary experiences were not, however, altogether unusual and were relatively commonplace between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in both Europe and America. For example, Catherine Hummer (1762),[101] Richard Brothers (1794),[102] David Brainerd (1812),[103] Benjamin Abbott (1813),[104] Lorenzo Dow (1814),[105] Norris Stearns (1815),[106] Elias

[100] JSH 1:16-17.
[101] J. Max Hark, *Chronicon Ephratense; A History of the Community of Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata, Lancaster County, Penn'a by Lemech and Agrippa* (Lancaster P.A.: S. H. Zahm & Co., 1889), 268-280.
[102] Richard Brothers, *A Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies + Times* (London: 1794), 29-35.
[103] John Styles, *The Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1812), 21-25.
[104] Benjamin Abbott, *The Experience and Gospel Labours of the Rev. Benjamin Abbott* (New York: Daniel Hitt & Thomas Warl, 1813), 19-40.
[105] Lorenzo Dow, *History of Cosmopolite; or the Four Volumes of Lorenzo's Journal* (Philadelphia: Joseph Rakestraw, 1815), 8-9.
[106] Norris Stearns, *The Religious Experience of Norris Stearns, Written by Divine Command* (Greenfield: The Herald Office, 1815), 11-14.

Smith (1816),[107] Benjamin Putnam (1821),[108] Asa Wild (1823),[109] Alexander Campbell (1824),[110] Billy Hibbard (1825),[111] and John Thompson (1826),[112] among others, all recorded similar experiences to Smith either prior to or during the time in which he was recording his various accounts of his first vision. Particularly noteworthy is Charles Grandison Finney's 1821 theophanic account, which bears a striking resemblance to Smith's 1842 account, as detailed below:

Joseph Smith (1842)[113]	Charles G. Finney (1821)[114]
While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*	When I read my Bible I learned what Christ has said in regard to prayer, and answers to prayer. He had said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." I read also what Christ affirms, that God is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask

[107] Elias Smith*, The Life Conversion, Preaching, Travels, and Sufferings of Elias Smith* (Portsmouth N.H.: Beck & Foster, 1816), 58-60.
[108] Benjamin Putnam, *A Sketch of the Life of Elder Benj. Putnam, Embracing His Christian Experience, Call to the Ministry, Together with An Account of the Religious Changes Through Which He Has Passed* (Woodstock, Vermont: David Watson, 1821), 15-19.
[109] Asa Wild, 'Remarkable Vision and Revelation: as seen and received by Asa Wild, of Amsterdam, (N. Y.)', in *Wayne Sentinel,* Vol. 1, Wednesday, October 22, Number 4, (Palmyra: 1823).
[110] Alexander Campbell (ed.), *The Christian Baptist*, Vol.17 (Cincinnati: D. S. Burnet, 1835), 8-9.
[111] Billy Hibbard, *Memoirs of the Life and Travels of B. Hibbard: Minister of the Gospel* (New York: Billy Hibbard, 1843), 24-26.
[112] John Samuel Thompson, *The Christian Guide to a Right Understanding of the Sacred Scriptures* (Utica, N.Y.: 1826), 76.
[113] JSH 1:1-20
[114] Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1821), 12-23.

	him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children.
At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to "ask of God," concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.	On a Sabbath evening in the autumn of 1821, I made up my mind that I would settle the question of my soul's salvation at once, that if it were possible I would make my peace with God… I therefore, then and there resolved, as far as possible, to avoid all business, and everything that might divert my attention, and give myself wholly to the work of securing the salvation of my soul.
So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.	North of the village, and over hill, lay a piece of woods in which I was in almost the daily habit of walking, more or less, when it was pleasant weather… I turned and bent my course towards the woods, feeling that I must be alone, and away from all human eyes and ears, so that I could pour out my prayer to God.
After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the	But when I attempted to pray I found that my heart would not pray… But lo! When I came to try, I was dumb; that is, I had nothing to say to God… In attempting to pray I would hear a

desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.	rustling of leaves, as I thought, and would stop to look up to see if somebody were not coming. This I did several times. Finally I found myself verging fast to despair… I began to feel deeply that it was too late; that it must be that I was given up of God and was past hope.
My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong… and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time.	I knew that it was God's word, and God's voice, as it were, that spoke to me… I told the Lord that I should take him at his word; that he could not lie. and that therefore I was sure that he heard my prayer, and that he would be found of me. He then gave me many other promises, both from the Old and the New Testament, especially some most precious promises respecting our Lord Jesus Christ. I never can, in words, make any human being understand how precious and true those promises appeared to me.

Comparatively speaking, nothing about Smith's theophanic accounts makes them inconsistent with other contemporaneous visionary experiences. For the time and place in which they were recorded, they all make perfect sense. Taken at face value, Smith's 1842 account could simply

be accepted as one among many similar accounts recorded by people during the same period. There are, however, several issues at play here: Firstly, it is easy to overlook the fact that, as early as 1829, newspapers in the local vicinity were reporting that Smith had claimed to have seen God, or that he recorded a version of his experience in 1832. The delay in publishing his account could, as Quinn has suggested, simply be due to echoing 'the actions of Protestant ministers of his time who waited decades to describe their personal visions of deity.'[115] A more plausible explanation is that Smith, with the help of others, retroactively restructured his first vision account in order for it to fit more comfortably with his evolving religious narrative with regard to claims about having received divine authority to restore the Church of Christ. As Quinn himself has noted,

> Significant changes have been made in the published texts of LDS scriptures and in church documents published by official histories. These changes retroactively introduced concepts, people, names, and structures that did not exist in the original revelations and historical documents… Beginning with Smith and Cowdery, church leaders regarded these retroactive changes as necessary because the original documents did not adequately anticipate Mormonism's later developments.[116]

More importantly, however, is the possibility that some of these changes were potentially made to move away from some of Smith's treasure-seeking past, especially with regard to his early theophanic experiences. The 1842 account of Smith's first vision seeks to establish him as God's chosen prophet and sets the tone for future revelations. Yet, in his 1832 handwritten account, he has an ecstatic experience as a direct result of seeking forgiveness of his sins

[115] D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 3.
[116] Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 5.

through prayer.[117] This account displays no divine calling, no requirement to preach, and no promise of future revelations.

The occultural context of Smith's original account is often overlooked. In the spring of 1820, around the same time that Smith reports having had his vision, he was actively engaged in the pursuit of buried treasure and was known to the local residents of Palmyra as "Peepstone Joe", due to his use of two stones that he would place in his hat while searching for hidden or buried treasure.[118] Treasure seekers were required to be 'a pure virgin, a youth who had not known a woman, or at least a person of irreproachable life and purity of manners' and had to take part in purification rituals so that they may be cleansed of any past sins or misdemeanours.[119] Visionary experiences were, therefore, the natural by-product of these rituals and, when viewed within its historical and occultural context, Smith's experience appears to be no exception. His seeking of forgiveness so that he may be a more effective treasure seeker does not gel with later narratives surrounding claims that he was instead searching for which church he should join, subsequently leading to his call as a prophet. We will return to the subject of treasure-seeking later in this thesis, but Smith's move away from his treasure-seeking past was simply due to the progression and evolution of his revelations and doctrinal innovations as he engaged with, and drew upon, the various religious and occultural ideas within his local environment.

[117] 'Letterbook 1', *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 3, accessed 29 April, 2021: https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letterbook-1/9.
[118] Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America,* 177.
[119] John Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, 3rd ed., 3 vols. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849), 3:60; Francis Grose, *A Provincial Glossary with a Collection of Local Proverbs, and Popular Superstitions* (London: S. Hopper: 1787), 35-36; see also Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 138.

Moroni the Treasure Guardian

In 1823, Joseph Smith claimed that he had a vision in which 'a personage' visited him one night while he was engaged in prayer.[120] Smith stated that the visitor explained to him that 'he was a messenger sent from the presence of God… and that his name was Moroni'.[121] The message included an instruction to Smith, guiding him to a nearby hill wherein he would find 'a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this [North American] continent'.[122] This is the book that Smith would eventually publish in 1830 with the title, *Book of Mormon*. The links between Smith's 1823 visitation by the Angel Moroni and nineteenth-century occultural influences may not be immediately apparent, especially if one considers the 'official' LDS narrative as the only authentic account of the event. Upon closer examination, however, it is evident that the occultural environment of the burned-over district shaped how the Smith family described the 1823 event.

Sometime around 1820 the Smith family became engaged in treasure digging, which was not unusual for New York farmers and was an activity in antebellum America that attracted a wide following.[123] Joshua Stafford, a resident of Manchester, who on occasion accompanied the young Smith on his treasure digging excursions, described his acquaintance with the family thus: 'They then were a labouring people, in low circumstances. A short time after this, they commenced digging for hidden treasures'.[124] William Stafford, a farmer and treasure seeker, also explained that '[a] great part of their time was devoted to digging for money' and Willard Chase, another local treasure seeker and Wesleyan minister, described his association with the Smith family in the following way: 'I became acquainted with the Smith family… in the year

[120] Joseph Smith—History 1:30.
[121] Ibid., 1:33.
[122] Ibid., 1:34.
[123] Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown*, 113.
[124] Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 2, 27; Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, Painesville, 258.

1820. At that time, they were engaged in the money digging business, which they followed until the latter part of the season of 1827.'[125]

It is evident, however, that both the Smith family's accounts and contemporaneous third-hand accounts show how the occultural landscape of the burned-over district shaped how the 1823 event was communicated to others. Tales of buried Spanish and pirate treasure excited the minds of the local population – Smith himself being well acquainted with stories of Captain Kidd who was said to have 'made a deep impression on him.'[126] Orrin Porter Rockwell, lifetime friend and bodyguard of Smith's, recounted his experiences of treasure digging to Elizabeth Kane, who wrote: 'the phantom treasures of Captain Kidd were sought for far and near, and even in places like Cumorah.'[127] The hill Cumorah being, of course, the location of Smith's gold plates, which was a hotbed of treasure-seeking activity in the early nineteenth century.[128]

Many of the accounts describe the appearance of a reptile or amphibian in the hole in which Smith reported to have found the plates, which was a common theme in magical treasure-seeking activities. For example, in Willard Chase's 1833 affidavit, he explained that Joseph Smith, Sen. had related to him Smith's account of going to obtain the golden plates. 'He… saw the book, and attempted to take it out, but was hindered.' He also 'saw in the box something like a toad, which soon assumed the appearance of a man, and struck him on the side of his head.'[129] In antebellum America, 'toads were believed to be dangerous' and simply seeing a toad was 'a bad omen and a real threat.'[130] Again, this is a belief that travelled over from Europe

[125] Ibid., Vogel, 60, 65; Ibid., Howe, 237, 240.
[126] James H. Kennedy*, Early Days of Mormonism: Palmyra, Kirtland and Nauvoo* (New York: Scribner's, 1888), 8, 13.
[127] Bowen and Bowen, *A Gentile Account of Life in Utah's Dixie, 1872-73*, 69-77; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol 3, 406-407.
[128] Grant H. Palmer, 'Joseph Smith, Captain Kidd, Cumorah, and Moroni' in *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Spring/Summer (2014), 51.
[129] Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed*, 241; Dan Vogel (ed.), *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 2, 458.
[130] Stephen Wilson, *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe* (London: Hambledon and London, 2000), 418.

to the Americas.[131] It is worth noting here, that in folk magic, it is explained that 'when they go to diggin' they say there's *always something in the hole*,' and 'Spirits [as treasure-guardians] frequently take the form of animals'.[132]

During the mid-1880s a historian from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS/Community of Christ) named William Kelley, travelled to New York to collect statements from the Smith's living neighbours.[133] Kelley interviewed Benjamin Saunders, a local carpenter and joiner, who related the following:

> I knew young Joseph just as well as I did my own brothers. went to the Same school with the younger boys… I heard Joe tell my Mother and Sister how he procured the plates. He said he was directed by an angel where it was. He went in the night to get the plates. When he took the plates there was something down near the box that looked some like a toad that rose up into a man which forbid him to take the plates. [sic][134]

In 1821 an article in the *North American Review* mentioned the association of reptiles and amphibians with a divine messenger, including an account by Emmanuel Swedenborg wherein he stated, 'I perceived a kind of mist about my eyes, and the floor of my chamber was covered in hideous reptiles. They soon disappeared, the darkness was dissipated, and I saw clearly in the midst of a brilliant light, a man.'[135] The magazine was also on sale near the Smith family

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[131] Elaine Breslaw (ed), *Witches of the Atlantic World: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 15, 148, 366, 477.
[132] Harry Middleton Hyatt, *Hoodoo-Conjuration-Witchcraft…*, 2 vols. (Hannibal, MO: Western Publishing, 1970), 1:118, no. 394; Gerard T. Hurley, 'Buried Treasure Tales in America', *Western Folklore Quarterly*, 10, July (1951), 200-201; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 148.
[133] The RLDS (now the Community of Christ since 2001) formed after the death of Joseph Smith in 1844 and regarded Joseph Smith III, Smith's eldest son, to be his legitimate successor.
[134] Benjamin Saunders, Interviewed by William H. Kelley, circa September 1884, 19-30, 'Miscellany,' (Independence, Missouri: RLDS Church Library-Archives); Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol 2, 137.
[135] 'Swedenborgianism', *North American Review*, 12, Jan. (1821): 89; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 153.

home in both Canandaigua and Palmyra.[136] It is entirely possible, however, that the two men were simply inspired by the same popular folklore. Swedenborg's account could have possibly been influenced by contemporaneous European tales of reptilian treasure guardians, and Smith would have also been aware of both eighteenth and nineteenth-century American and European accounts, which would have, of course, included Swedenborg's. For example, in 1814 eyewitnesses reported one Rochester resident exclaiming 'Damn me, I've found it!' after supposedly hitting a box of buried treasure while digging, after which came a sound 'like hissing serpents' and the treasure had vanished.[137] Similar tales can be found in the treasure-digging activities of pre-Modern Europe, some of which, again, made their way over to the newly formed American Republic.[138]

Other notable examples of treasure-seeking motifs are evident within the various accounts. In a letter to W. W. Phelps, Oliver Cowdery, one of Smith's earliest associates and original Latter-day Saint Apostle, stated that when Smith attempted to take the plates out of the hole 'a shock was produced upon his system, by an invisible power' and that when he made a second attempt 'was more sensibly shocked than before.'[139] According to Cowdery, Smith had 'heard of the power of enchantment, and a thousand like stories, which held the hidden treasures of the earth' and that, if he was to obtain the plates, only his strength and physical exertion would be enough to do it.[140] Smith then proceeded a third time, but 'his strength failed him more than at either of the former times'.[141] It is significant that Cowdery used the term 'enchantment' as this provides us with evidence that Smith had some knowledge of folk magic

[136] 'New Books', *Ontario Repository*, Canandaigua, NY, 12 Dec. (1820); 'Periodical Literature', *Palmyra Herald, and Canal Advertiser*, Palmyra, NY, 19 Feb. (1823); 'NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW', *Ontario Repository*, Canandaigua, NY, 15 Apr. (1823); Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 153.
[137] Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown,* 113.
[138] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 281; Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America*, 53-84.
[139] Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 2, 458.
[140] Ibid., 458-459.
[141] Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 2, 459.

prior to his prophetic career. More importantly, however, is the link between Smith's shocks and that of other accounts of treasure seekers, often they were 'instantaneously struck, without attaining their object, as with an electric shock.'[142]

Mark Ashurst-McGee, an LDS historian and member of the Joseph Smith Papers Project, has taken issue with the treasure seeker narrative, specifically with the claim that Smith originally viewed the angel Moroni as a treasure guardian instead of a divine messenger, or angel. He has suggested that 'it is *not* difficult for me to conceive that the young Joseph originally understood Moroni as a treasure guardian', though 'one must acknowledge the obvious shift toward profane treasure-guardian motifs in the accounts of Smith's antagonists'. For Ashurst-McGee, then, 'it is not difficult for me to conceive that Joseph originally understood Moroni as a divine messenger. An unbiased approach requires being open to both possibilities.'[143] Interestingly, he describes his methodology as 'unbiased', especially when we take into consideration that he has published articles through the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), a now-defunct organisation dedicated to faithful LDS scholarship, and a well-known resource for Mormon apologetics, which was recently absorbed into the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.[144] His work is clearly biased towards an apologetic defence of early Mormon history.

Ashurst-McGee's claim that Smith viewed Moroni as both an angel and treasure guardian is also problematic, as it is clear that Smith often reconstructed and revised his history to support his ever-evolving religious framework. Quinn has noted

[142] Ernest W. Baughman, *Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1966), 375; Robert Chambers, *The Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (Edinburgh: William Hunter, 1826), 58; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 148.
[143] Mark Ashurst-McGee, 'Moroni as Angel and as Treasure Guardian', *The Farms Review*, 18/1, (2006).
[144] http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/

> The evolution of authority, priesthood, ordained offices, and presiding quorums… is not obvious to those acquainted with official LDS doctrine and history. Significant changes have been made in the published texts of LDS scriptures and in church documents published by official histories. These changes retroactively introduced concepts, people, names, and structures which did not exist in the original revelations and historical documents. In some instances these unannounced changes altered or reversed the original meaning of the various statements.[145]

Accordingly, in 1887 David Whitmer wrote the following: 'In a few years they had gone away ahead of the written word, so that they had to change these revelations.'[146] For example, modern 'official' accounts of the beginnings of the Mormon priesthood when compared to early documents show that changes were made to construct a believable narrative of consistent and lineal progression. Four years after the organisation of the Church in 1830, Cowdery mentioned, for the first time, in a public discussion the conferral of 'the Holy Priesthood' under the hands of John the Baptist, which both he and Smith had seen in a vision in 1829.[147] Modern LDS historical records claim that it was the Aaronic, or lesser priesthood that was conferred in this vision, not the 'Holy Priesthood' as Cowdery first explained. Moreover, he does not include the account of the supposed visitation and of Peter, James and John and the conferral of the higher, or Melchizedek priesthood contained in all official church histories since 1834, and which is reported to have happened shortly after the 1829 visitation of John the Baptist. A version of the 1829 priesthood restoration is now contained in D&C section 13, which was first published in 1842. Upon closer examination, however, it appears that the central portion of the

[145] Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 5.
[146] David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO: By the Author, 1887), 59; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 5.
[147] Joseph Smith, *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate* 1, Oct. (1834), 15-16.

revelation was added much later.[148] In light of the evidence outlined above, Ashurst-McGee's claim that Smith saw Moroni as both an angel and treasure guardian is certainly doubtful. It is clear that Smith reconstructed important events, edited historical documents, and changed revelations to make them fit with his ever-changing occultural bricolage. Moreover, the original 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* contained a revelation which stated 'Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the book of Mormon', though a version of the same revelation contained in the 1833 *Book of Commandments* does not contain the same information.[149] This is further evidence to support the claim that changes were 'retroactively' introduced into the historical narrative and that Smith's accounts of his encounter with Moroni changed over time.

Concluding Comments

This chapter has aimed to trace some of the influences on the thinking of Joseph Smith. What has been shown is that Smith was deeply immersed in the occultural environment of the nineteenth-century burned-over district and, as such, borrowed from various fields of discourse available. The result was the occultural bricolage that would, eventually, become Smith's Church of Christ. In particular, this chapter has shown that a blend of folk magic, Methodism, and universalism helped to frame the ways in which Smith understood and communicated his early visionary experiences. Having provided an overview of this background, the following chapters will further unpack some of his ideas, as well as looking more closely at some of the core features of his theology.

[148] Quinn, *The Mormon* Hierarchy, 281; *Times and Seasons* 3, 1 Aug. (1842), 865-866; *History of the Church*, 1:39.

[149] D&C 50:2 (1835 edition) now 27:5 (current edition). See also Ronald V. Huggins, 'From Captain Kidd's Treasure Ghost to the Angel Moroni: Changing *Dramatis Personae* in Early Mormonism', in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 36, 4, Winter (2003), 19-20.

Universalism

According to the official history of the LDS church, its origins are to be found in the answer to a simple question asked in the spring of 1820 by Joseph Smith, when he was a young farm boy living in Palmyra, New York. The question was occasioned by what Smith referred to as 'an unusual excitement on the subject of religion,' which 'the whole district of country seemed affected by…'[1] The excitement that Smith described was a wave of Christian revivals that became known as 'the Second Great Awakening,'[2] which was characterised by multiday camp meetings, attended by thousands, who sang and listened to a series of sermons and exhortations. These were quickly accompanied by non-traditional forms of worship and religious practice, such as spontaneous lay preaching and physical manifestations of religious ecstasy, such as glossolalia.[3] Smith explained that in 'the process of time, [his] mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and [he] felt some desire to be united with them' but that 'so great were the confusion and strife among the denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as [he] was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.'[4] As Whitney Cross has noted,

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[1] JSH 1:5

[2] Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 1-22.

[3] Neil Meyer, 'Falling for the Lord: Shame, Revivalism, and the Origins of the Second Great Awakening', *Early American Studies*, Vol. 9, No.1 (Winter, 2011), 144-146; William G. McLoughlin*, Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959), 12-13.

[4] JSH 1:8

> All Protestant churches united in condemning Catholics. All evangelical sects united, too, against Universalists and Unitarians. Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians could share their hatred of Christians. Baptists and Presbyterians co-operated in damning Methodists and Freewill Baptists. Presbyterians all too often proved disagreeably intolerant of Baptists. To cap the climax, both Baptists and Presbyterians, particularly the latter, maintained a constant and bitter strife between enthusiasts and conservatives in their own ranks.[5]

After serious consideration, Smith became determined to discover 'who was right and who was wrong' by retiring to a nearby grove of trees, not far from the Smith family home and offering up his question to God in prayer, with Smith's theophanic account being the answer that he received. Richard Bushman has explained that in 'the minds of Latter-day Saints today, the events of that morning marked the beginning of the restoration of the Gospel and the commencement of a new dispensation.'[6] Understanding the religious, social, and occultural contexts of the first vision helps us to view it in a somewhat different light, as was discussed in the preceding chapter. LDS scholars have often placed an emphasis on Smith's statement that he kept himself 'aloof from all these parties, though I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit,'[7] yet have often glossed over or ignored the influence of his father's and grandfather's universalism.

This chapter focuses particularly on the influence of universalism on Smith's religion-building imagination and is one of the key fields of discourse from which Smith drew inspiration, and which formed a significant element of his occultural bricolage. While some

[5] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 43.
[6] Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 56.
[7] JSH 1:8.

scholars have acknowledged a connection between universalism and early Mormonism, generally speaking, LDS scholarship has been reluctant to explore the possible influences that it may have had on Smith's religious worldview. Grant Underwood of Brigham Young University has claimed that, even though 'Modern Mormons' may find the idea of universal salvation as taught by the Universalists to be appealing, the 'Early Saints' apparently did not react this way.[8] Instead, he explains, when 'a Universalist preacher came to Kirtland in 1835, Oliver Cowdery wrote an editorial on his teachings' that questioned 'how Universalists could claim there was no postmortal punishment when damnation was specifically provided for in Scripture.'[9]

Understandably, therefore, Underwood's dismissal of any connection between universalism and Mormonism is not uncommon among those sympathetic towards the faith, or among those who are unfamiliar with the complexities that surround the history of the Church. Certainly, statements such as those of Cowdery do indicate an anti-Universalist bias. However, as Clyde Ford has noted, 'The early evolution of these beliefs has not been extensively studied and is not without controversy.'[10] Hence, while recognising that the issue is a complex one, this chapter will explore the connection between universalism and its influences on Smith and early Mormonism.

American Universalism

The liberal Bostonian Congregationalist Charles Chauncy (1705 – 1787) is considered to be America's first proponent of universal salvation who prepared the way for its eventual spread

[8] Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 55.
[9] Ibid., 55.
[10] Clyde D. Ford, 'The Book of Mormon, the Early Nineteenth-Century Debates over Universalism, and the Development of the Novel Mormon Doctrines of Ultimate Rewards and Punishments', in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 47, No. 1 (Spring 2014), 1.

during the nineteenth century.[11] His 1783 sermon, *Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men*,[12] is thought to be the first instance in which he made a public confession of his conviction. Chauncy taught that all people would, in the end, be brought to salvation and that they were 'not guilty of Adam's transgression', but rather 'inherited mortality and a somewhat less perfect nature than was possessed by Adam.'[13] George deBenneville (1703-1793) of Oley, Pennsylvania, also taught the doctrine of universal salvation to local settlers. As for the roots of American universalism, these can be traced back to German pietist congregations, such as the Schwenkfelders in Pennsylvania, as well as to progressive Anglicans and Congregationalists in New England.[14]

Of particular significance, however, was the arrival of John Murray (1741-1815) in Massachusetts in 1770. An Englishman, Murray was of a high Calvinist background who converted to the Methodist movement as a result of the preaching of John Wesley in Cork, Ireland. He later became a member of George Whitefield's London Tabernacle after hearing him preach during a visit to Limerick.[15] Being a Calvinist, Murray was much closer, theologically, to Whitefield than to Wesley. According to Bonnie Hurd Smith, when Whitefield was out of town, the young Murray would fill 'the pulpits where Whitefield had been invited to preach—a high honor for such a young man.'[16] After reading James Relly's *Union, or, A Treatise of the Consanguinity and Affinity between Christ and His Church*,[17] Murray became

[11] James Ward Smith and Leland Jamison (eds.), *A Critical Bibliography of Religion in America*, Volume IV, Parts 1 and 2, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 212.
[12] Charles Chauncey, *Divine Glory Brought to View in the Final Salvation of All Men: A Letter to the Friend to Truth. By One Who Wishes Well to All Mankind* (Boston: T and J Fleet, 1783).
[13] Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States*, 190; for a more detailed account of Chauncy's views on universal salvation, and how they differed from John Murray's, refer to Edward M. Griffin, *Old Brick: Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705-1787* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).
[14] Ann Lee Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America, 1770-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14.
[15] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 482.
[16] Bonnie Hurd Smith, *John Murray: Preacher, Organizer, and Promulgator of Hope*, http://www.jsmsociety.com/John_Murray.html, 2008: [Accessed 11/02/2014]
[17] James Relly, *Union: or, a Treatise of the Consanguinity and Affinity Between Christ and His Church* (London, 1759).

convinced of its message, namely that Christ bore the burden of human sin and, therefore, that all men are redeemed from the effects of the Fall. Hence, he and his wife Eliza decided to attend one of Relly's sermons while he was in London preaching on the subject of universal salvation.[18] After hearing the sermon, Murray made the following comment:

> It was clear, as any testimony in divine revelation, that Christ Jesus, died for all, for the sins of the whole world, for every man, &c.; ... and that *everyone for whom Christ died must finally be saved* ... We now attended public worship, not only as a duty ... but it became our pleasure, our consolation, and our highest enjoyment. We began to feed upon the truth as it is in Jesus, and every discovery we made filled us with unutterable transport… I conceived, if I had an opportunity of conversing with the whole world, the whole world would be convinced. It might truly have been said, that we had a taste of heaven below.[19]

Unfortunately for Murray, his newfound conviction regarding the doctrine of universal salvation, and his desire to share it with those around him, ultimately led to his excommunication from Whitefield's London Tabernacle.[20] After a series of unfortunate events, including the death of both his infant son and his wife Eliza, Murray boarded a ship bound for New York. Arriving in the United States in 1770, he spent some time as an itinerant preacher traveling from state-to-state preaching to various congregations. Eventually, he settled in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and it was here that he became acquainted with a small group of Relly's converts, who, in 1779, he organised into America's first Universalist Church.[21]

[18] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 482.
[19] Smith, *John Murray* (emphasis added).
[20] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 482.
[21] Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States*, 298.

Another leading figure in the American Universalist movement, was Elhanan Winchester (1751-1797), of Brookline, Massachusetts. Born to a devout family who followed 'New Lights' teaching (which was primarily influenced by Whitefield's preaching and the revivalist theology of the New England theologian Jonathon Edwards), Winchester became an itinerant Baptist minister at the age of nineteen and spent some time preaching among a group of Calvinist Baptists in Welsh Neck, South Carolina.[22] Unlike Murray's rather spontaneous epiphany, Winchester's conversion to the doctrine of universal salvation was the result of a much more gradual process that began with his reading of Georg-Klein Nicolai of Friessdorf's *Everlasting Gospel*, which was published in 1753 under the pseudonym Paul Siegvolck. This was an important work that was highly influential in the spread of Universalist ideas throughout the mid-Atlantic regions of America.[23]

During a revival in 1779, Winchester is said to have converted 'not only … 150 white members to the church, but also converted 100 black slaves', which was an unusual event, as there is no record of any preacher sharing the gospel with slaves previously.[24] Following this success, he became a minister both to a white congregation and to a black congregation. Winchester was also acquainted with De Benneville and travelled throughout Pennsylvania and Virginia together as missionaries. Winchester would later publish De Benneville's *Life and Trance of Dr. George De Benneville*,[25] describing him as a 'humble, pious, loving man.'[26] He later relocated to Philadelphia in order to take up a position as a minister of the Baptist church of that city, where his beliefs in universal salvation were further developed and strengthened. Central to this development was his reading of *The Restitution of All Things* (1761) by Sir

[22] Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America, 1770-1880*, 15-16.
[23] Ibid., 16.
[24] Andrea Greenwood, Mark W. Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 65.
[25] George De Benneville, *Life and Trance of Dr. George De Benneville of Germantown, PA* (Schwenksville: N. Bertolet Grubb, 1882).
[26] Ibid., 65.

George Stonehouse—an English cleric who was a spiritual advisor to Charles Wesley—which ultimately led to his forming of the Society of Universal Baptists in 1781.[27] Both De Benneville and Murray were, however, 'relatively conservative Universalists,' who held to the belief that the reconciliation and redemption of humanity was to found in the atonement, death and resurrection of Christ, and who preached the 'ultimate salvation of all souls after a purgation'.[28] Modern Universalists, on the other hand, differed in that they preached universal salvation for all, with no emphasis on the necessity of purgation in this life or in the next.

It was not until 1790 that an attempt was made to gather together Universalists. This took place at 'The Philadelphia Convention' in order to formulate, it was hoped, general guidelines on doctrine, practice, and ordination. The meeting itself was unsuccessful, although a few years later, in 1793, the 'New England Convention,' which eventually developed into the U.S. Convention of Universalists (1833), met together to discuss the provision of legal authority for itinerant clergy. In 1800, the convention began ordaining preachers and, in 1803, a meeting of the convention at Winchester, New Hampshire, devised a Plan of General Association which was an attempt at giving the Universalist movement some form of legal organisation and unity.[29] At the same meeting a document known as the 'Winchester Profession' was drafted, which contained an outline of some of the basic beliefs held by Universalists. It stated the following:

> *Article I.* We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest and final destination of mankind.

[27] Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 16; among the prominent members of Winchester's Society of Universal Baptists was Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence.
[28] Smith and Jamison, *A Critical Bibliography of Religion in America*, 214.
[29] Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 33.

> *Article II.* We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.
>
> *Article III.* We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practice good works, for these things are good and profitable unto men.[30]

The Winchester Profession included a "liberty clause" as an appendage in order to allow differences in opinion which came as a result of the movement's attraction to a wide range of independent thinkers. In other words, it allowed individual churches or associations to make additions to basic universalist convictions, should they be felt necessary.[31]

Towards the end of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century, arguably Universalism's greatest proponent was Hosea Ballou (1771-1852). Born in Richmond, New Hampshire, Ballou, like many other Americans at the time, he was raised in a family of 'hardscrabble farmers.' His father was also a local Calvinist Baptist minister.[32] Ann Lee Bressler has provided a detailed account of Ballou's childhood, in which she has stated that

> With stripped birch bark for paper and coals for pencils, young Hosea had supposedly taught himself to read by a fore of flaming pine knots, as tallow candles were too great an expense. A Bible, an ancient dictionary, and an old scriptural pamphlet served as his

[30] Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 34.
[31] Russell Miller, *The Larger Hope* (Boston: 1979), 1:163; see also Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 34.
[32] Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 24.

> library. Materially deprived as a boy, lacking even shoes in the harsh New England winter, he nevertheless grew into a healthy, physically active young man, over six feet tall, with a ruddy complexion, dark hair, and sparkling blue eyes.[33]

Ballou began preaching on a Calvinistic basis in 1791 and, through his own reading of the Bible, became convinced that it contained the message of universal salvation. For example, passages such as Romans 5:18, he believed, revealed that, just as all people were condemned as a result of the sin of Adam, so all were redeemed through the atonement of Christ.[34] Influenced also by the liberal views of Boston Congregationalism, the preaching of leaders such as Charles Chauncy, and popular books such as Ethan Allen's *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, Ballou's faith in 'the doctrines of the trinity and the divinity of Christ, the infinity of sin, and the traditional views of the atonement'[35] was fundamentally challenged. As such, Ballou began to reconstruct his religious worldview. He quickly became the leading spokesperson for Universalism. Indeed, particularly influential was the 1805 publication of *A Treatise on the Atonement*, which departed from Murray's conservative, largely Trinitarian Universalism and shifted towards Unitarianism.[36]

Ballou served on the committee that oversaw the composition of the Winchester Profession, the first three lines of which became the Universalist declaration of faith throughout the nineteenth century. In 1817, he took up a post as a preacher in Boston where he remained for the next thirty-five years.[37] Universalism found favour in the early republic, being

[33] Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 24.
[34] Ernest Cassara, 'Hosea Ballou, Preacher of Universal Salvation' in *Church History*, Vol. 26, No. 4, (Dec., 1957), 382-383.
[35] Ibid., 382-383.
[36] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 482.
[37] Cassara, 'Hosea Ballou, Preacher of Universal Salvation', 383.

particularly successful in rural areas. By 1860, the universalists had 664 churches across the United States.[38]

Universalism and the Smith Family

With Murray preaching in Gloucester, he was located only fifteen miles away from Smith's grandfather, Asael, in Topsfield. Bushman has noted the impact of Universalism on Asael's beliefs, suggesting that his 'teachings to his children show… the influence of the Universalist John Murray.'[39] Having both fought in the revolutionary war and with Murray's teachings being accepted by a large number of New England farmers,[40] it is easy to see how Asael would have been exposed to his teachings. When Asael relocated to Tunbridge, Vermont in 1797, he set up a short-lived Universalist Society with his two oldest sons, Joseph and Jesse. The major tenet of the Society, in accordance with the Universalist Convention in New Hampshire in 1803, was a belief in 'one God, whose nature is love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of humankind to happiness.'[41] While the society did not last long, Asael continued to adhere to universalist principles for the rest of his life.

Following the universalist experiment in Tunbridge, Asael's son, Jesse, turned his back on universalism altogether, becoming an ardent believer in the Calvinist doctrine of election.[42] However, Joseph seems to have maintained an overall commitment to universalism as a theological and philosophical overlay for his personal beliefs, although there is no evidence that he attended any particular universalist congregation. As George A. Smith has argued,

[38] Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada*, 202.
[39] Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 27. See also Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003).
[40] Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 21-22.
[41] Miller, *The Larger Hope*, 45-46.
[42] Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 111, 207.

Asael was 'too liberal in his views to please his children, who were covenanters, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, with I think the single exception of his son Joseph.'[43]

A significant influence on Smith's religious background was, of course, his mother, Lucy Mack Smith. Her parents were often at odds with one another over the subject of religion, though her father, Solomon Mack, who had universalist tendencies for much of his life, showed little interest in religion until, in 1810, he experienced a remarkable conversion at the age of seventy-five, following which he denounced his former universalist beliefs as 'building on sand.'[44] Lucy's religious inclinations therefore stem from her mother, Lydia Gates Mack, whose family traced their roots back to some of the regions earliest settlers. The Gates family were regular attendees of the Millington church, a New Lights congregation—those who amongst the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians embraced the revivals that spread through the colonies. In raising her children, however, Lucy's mother taught them about religious faith, but did not give them a church.[45] Indeed, did not join a congregation until 1820 when she and several of her children began attending a local Presbyterian church.

Bearing in mind Smith's religious and philosophical eclecticism, what is interesting from the perspective of this thesis is that when universalism was experiencing the height of its influence in nineteenth century America, it coincided with his earliest revelations, the printing of the *Book of Mormon*, and the establishment of his Church of Christ. Indeed, many of the Church's earliest converts were universalists, including some of Smith's closest friends and family, such as Martin Harris, who not only acted as a scribe for Smith during the dictation process of the *Book of Mormon*, but was also a witness to the golden plates, and even mortgaged his farm to help finance the book's publication.[46] Again, the family of Joseph Knight, which is generally considered to be one of the most influential families to join Smith's Church, were

[43] Anderson, *Joseph Smith's New England Heritage*, 133-136.
[44] Ibid., 133-136.
[45] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 84.
[46] Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol.4 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 21.

also universalists.[47] There is little doubt, therefore, that with a universalist father and many universalist converts, Smith will have been very familiar with and almost certainly sympathetic to its teachings. Certainly, it is difficult understand why universalists would have joined his church if the basic tenets of their soteriology had been discouraged.

In 1825, from January through to March, John Samuel Thompson, a universalist minister, preached in Palmyra, not far from the Smith family home. In a striking similarity to Smith's own theophanic account, Thompson wrote: 'Before I left England, I dreamed Christ descended from the firmament, in a glare of brightness, exceeding tenfold the brilliancy of the meridian Sun, and that he came to me, saying: "I commission you to and tell mankind that I am come; and bid every man to shout victory."'[48] What would have been appealing to Smith, as an occultural bricoleur, would have been universalism's progressive and liberal approach to other religious and occultural beliefs and practices. For example, it is of some significance that many universalists were also, like Smith, treasure seekers. This is interesting because treasure seekers often sought to bring their spiritual beliefs into conformity with a commitment to rational enquiry and logical proof. As such, many, through a process of empirical experimentation, attempted to develop techniques for both understanding and exploiting the spirit world.[49] One historian has referred to those who mixed universalism, treasure seeking, and numerous other occultural beliefs and practices as 'supernatural rationalists.'[50] For example, M. T. Wooley, the first universalist minister in western New York, is known to have mixed "rodomancy" (dowsing, a type of divination used in locating water and other objects and materials) and treasure seeking with his preaching.[51] Likewise, Smith's scribe, Harris, a

[47] Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 4, 21.
[48] John Samuel Thompson, *The Christian Guide to a Right Understanding of the Sacred Scriptures* (Utica, N.Y.: 1826), 67, 71.
[49] Alan Taylor, 'The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780-1830', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring, 1986), 17.
[50] William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 100.
[51] Ibid., 23; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 27.

universalist, was also involved in the treasure quest, as was the Knight family.[52] In 1833, William Stafford, one of Palmyra's first settlers and one of the Smith family's neighbours, described Joseph Sr.'s use of magic circles, explaining that 'Joseph, Sen. first made a circle, twelve or fourteen feet in diameter. This circle, said he, contains the treasure. He then stuck in the ground a row of witch hazel sticks, around the said circle, for the purpose of keeping of the evil spirits.'[53] The point is that, within the occultural context of Palmyra, those who were attracted to beliefs and practices such as treasure seeking, were also, it seems, interested in universalism. It would be rather odd if Smith was an exception. Indeed, the evidence suggests that he was, at least, a sympathiser.

Joseph Smith and Universalism

Having said that, on the face of it, some of Smith's earliest published revelations show little indication that he was influenced by the doctrine of universal salvation.[54] For example, in a revelation received on April 7, 1829, a year before he organised his Church, he stated that, 'If thou wilt do good, yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God.'[55] The requirement for salvation in this instance seems to be obedient faith and works—which would have been a common belief within the conservative Christianity of the period—his emphasis on works betraying the influence of his brief interest in Methodism (as a result of his courtship with Emma Hale).[56] Furthermore, a number of Smith's early revelations repeat the same missiological verse, which

[52] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 54, 61, 97.
[53] Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed* (Painesville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), 237-238; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 2, 60-61.
[54] See, for example, Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 200; Palmer, *An Insiders View of Mormon Origins*, 126-129; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 173.
[55] D&C 6:13.
[56] Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 127-128; Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal, *Joseph Smith the Prophet, His Family, and His Friends* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1986), 80.

states that 'the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap let him thrust in his sickle with all his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God.'[57] Again, in a revelation dated June, 1829, the requirement of baptism is also added, wherein it states

> Behold, you have my gospel before you, and my rock, and my salvation. Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men. And if you have not faith, hope, and charity, you can do nothing. Contend against no church, save it be the church of the devil. Take upon you the name of Christ, and speak the truth in soberness. And as many as repent and are baptized in my name, which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved.[58]

It was not until the publication of the *Book of Mormon* in 1830 that we see elements of the doctrine of universal salvation beginning to have a formative influence on Smith. Early Mormon theology, along with various passages within the *Book of Mormon*, point, at least indirectly, to a belief in universalism. Examples of this can be found in passages such as 2 Nephi 9:6-12 which reads as follows:

> For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord. … Wherefore, the

[57] See D&C 4, 6, 11, 12 and 14.
[58] D&C 18:17-22.

> first judgement which came unto man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And, if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more. … O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body and also the death of the spirit. And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave. And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead.

It is interesting that this passage describes 'spiritual death' as being 'hell' and that hell is not referred to as a separate place from heaven, or indeed as a *place* at all. This is expanded upon further in Helaman 14:16 which states, 'All mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual.' Hell is, therefore, a spiritual state in which people find themselves as a result of Adam's transgression, 'cut off from the presence of the Lord' and, effectively, *spiritually* dead. Smith later explained this teaching:

> Knowledge saves a man; and in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge. So long as a man will not give heed to the commandments, he must abide without salvation. If a man has knowledge, he can be saved; although, if he has been guilty of great sins, he will be punished for them. But when he consents to obey the Gospel, whether here or in the world of spirits, he is saved. A man is his own tormenter and his own condemner. Hence the saying, 'They shall go into the lake that burns with

> fire and brimstone.' The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone. I say, so is the torment of man.[59]

Spiritual death, then, is a state of mind experienced by those who have not been obedient to God's commands—i.e. 'hell.' Another qualification for salvation is added here, being that 'knowledge' is all that is needed in order to be saved, which possibly explains the many passages in Smith's revelations that encourage those who 'have a desire to reap' to spread their knowledge of the gospel. Smith's views here echo those of the universal restorationist, Charles Hudson, who explained that 'We do not believe that men will consigned to any particular place of punishment, as such; but that punishment will arise from their own unholy feelings and disturbed minds. The remorse of conscience will be the punishment, and hell will be found within them.'[60]

Where Smith's views on universalism become somewhat blurred is in the book of Alma, one of the largest sections in the *Book of Mormon*. It begins with the teachings of a man named Nehor, whose preaching resembles that of a typical universalist. That is to say, he teaches that 'all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble… for the Lord had… redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.'[61] Nehor's doctrine then goes on to influence a whole subset of the *Book of Mormon*'s main groups, the Nephites, who in turn go on to create the Order of Nehors, who, Alma suggests, were only kept from lying, cheating, stealing, and committing murder because they feared the punishment of the law.[62] This example, including other similar examples in the *Book*

[59] Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 370.
[60] Charles Hudson, *A Series of Letters Addressed to Rev. Hosea Ballou, of Boston, Being a Vindication of the Doctrine of a Future Retribution, against the Principal Arguments Used by Him, Mr. Balfour, and Others* (Woodstock, Vt.: David Watson, 1827), 94.
[61] Alma 1:3-4.
[62] Alma 1: 17-18.

of Mormon, is often used to support the idea that it is decidedly anti-Universalist.[63] What many of the proponents of this view miss, of course, is the nuanced debates within universalism over whether or not there would be punishment for unresolved sin after death. Universalists who believed that there would were labelled "restorationists" and those who believed that there would not were labelled "moderns" or "ultra-Universalists".[64] Where the *Book of Mormon* draws a clear line is in its acceptance of the restorationist view, rather than the modern view. In other words, Smith does not reject universalism, but instead accepts that there would be punishment for sin after death. This is a clear example of how Smith attempted to settle the various arguments taking place in his local environment by weaving in his own particular take on universal salvation—the restorationist view—into the pages of the *Book of Mormon*. Bressler summed up the restorationist view as follows:

> Restorationists… sought to preserve God's omnipotence and to explain sin and evil by promising rectification in the afterlife. Yet restorationists were probably most concerned with the pragmatic implications of doctrine. Calvinism led to anxiety, they charged, but ultra-Universalism engendered apathy and vice; fear was undesirable but so was moral sloth. Restorationism, its adherents asserted, struck the proper balance by emphasizing individual accountability.[65]

Many of the *Book of Mormon'*s central arguments revolve around the idea that sin and evil will be answered for in the next life and that every individual is accountable for their own sins, beliefs, and good works. For example, Alma, in response to those who espoused modern

[63] See for example, Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004); Bushman, *Joseph Smith*; Clyde D. Ford, 'The Book of Mormon, the Early Nineteenth Century Debates over Universalism, and the Development of the Novel Doctrines of Ultimate Rewards and Punishments', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Spring, 2014), 1-23.
[64] Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 42-48.
[65] Ibid., 43-44.

universalist views in the *Book of Mormon*, explains that, 'concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection… the spirits who are righteous are received into a state of happiness… And then… the spirits of the wicked… shall be cast out into outer darkness' which shall last 'until the time of their resurrection.'[66]

Another example in the Mormon canon of scripture, is in the Book of Moses, a book which, according to Smith, he was inspired to write during his study of the book of Genesis in the summer of 1830.[67] In Chapters 6 and 7 of the book, the Old Testament prophet Enoch has a vision in which he describes Adam as having been 'after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity.'[68] Brooke has described the 'order' which is being referred to in this passage of scripture as 'the order of Melchizedek, as identified with Christ' and that 'this connection of Adam with Christ had long been an important dimension of radical universalism.'[69] The Old Testament priesthood of Melchizedek played an important occultural role in the theologies of many New England radical groups and individuals. Borrowing from the book of Hebrews which identified the Melchizedek priesthood with Christ, various groups, such as the Ephrata Cloister and Harmonist Society, derived mystical notions of a priesthood endowed with magus-like powers.[70] In the September of 1832, Smith received a revelation in which he traced the Melchizedek priesthood from the sons of Moses, back to 'Adam, who was the first man'[71], the same priesthood which Smith and Cowdery claimed they had received by ordination during a heavenly visitation from Christ's apostles, Peter, James, and John on the banks of the Susquehanna river in 1829.[72]

[66] Alma 40: 9-14.
[67] Church Educational System, *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 73.
[68] Moses 6:67.
[69] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire,* 195.
[70] See Hebrews 5; see also, Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 194-199.
[71] D&C 27:12.
[72] D&C 128:20.

While there are many other instances in which the influence of universal salvation can be found in both Mormon scripture and Smith's early revelations, perhaps the most significant is a revelation which was purportedly received by both Smith and Sidney Rigdon while in Hiram, Ohio, in February of 1832. Smith and Rigdon were working on a retranslation of the 'Book of John,' when they are reported to have been the recipients of a vision that would challenge orthodox views of salvation and the heavens. The vision is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants section 76 and is now referred to as the vision of the three degrees of glory.

According to this view of heaven, there is no hell. Instead, there are three kingdoms of glory, 'which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion.'[73] Smith used the same language from 1 Corinthians 15:41 in order to describe the degrees of glory, equating them with the sun, the moon, and the stars: 'for one star differeth from *another* star in glory' and so it was with the kingdoms of glory; the celestial differs in glory from the terrestrial, and the terrestrial differs in glory from the telestial. The telestial kingdom is considered to be the lowest of the three, in which those 'who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosever loves and makes a lie' shall dwell.[74] In the vision, Smith claims that those who inhabit the telestial kingdom shall be 'innumerable as the stars in the firmament of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore.'[75] Furthermore, those who inhabit the telestial kingdom will be cut off from the presence of God and Christ, but who shall receive 'the administering of angels who are appointed to minister for them.'[76]

The terrestrial kingdom is reserved for those 'who died without law' or, in other words, those who died without a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but who were still good and just while in the flesh. Drawing on 1 Peter 3:19 in the New Testament, he discusses 'the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they

[73] D&C 76:114.
[74] D&C 76:103.
[75] D&C 76:109.
[76] D&C 76: 88.

might be judged according to men in the flesh' and who were 'honorable men of the earth … blinded by the craftiness of men.'[77] The people who inhabit this kingdom of glory shall 'receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fullness of the father'[78]—meaning that Christ shall visit them from time-to-time, but they are cut off from the presence of God. The highest form of heaven is the celestial kingdom, where only those who are part of 'the church of the Firstborn' shall dwell.[79] This is where 'God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever' and those who dwell with him there are 'equal in power, and in might, and in dominion' with him.[80] This is, perhaps, the most controversial aspect of the revelation. That said, in an important statement, Lorenzo Snow, the fifth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, claimed that, 'As man now is, God once was; as God is now man may be.'[81] The belief that humans have the potential to become like God is one of the central teachings of Mormonism, and one which often causes tensions between Mormons and various Protestant denominations. Smith's revelation marked a distinct departure from mainstream Christianity and caused a fair amount of controversy within the early church itself. This is, however, an excellent example of Smith's occultural bricolage—creatively weaving together elements of universalism, Swedenborgian ideas of multiple heavens, and deification—making those ideas accessible to a nineteenth-century New England audience.

Fawn Brodie claimed that Smith 'had taken a long step toward universalism' with his vision of the three degrees, 'for even the "liars, sorcerers, adulterers and whoremongers" were granted telestial glory.'[82] Although, despite her careful research into the life of Smith, she seems unaware of the links between universalism and early Mormonism through both his father

[77] D&C 76: 73-75.
[78] D&C 76: 77.
[79] D&C 76: 94.
[80] D&C 76: 92-95.
[81] Lorenzo Snow, *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, Clyde Williams (ed.), (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012), 1.
[82] Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 118.

and grandfather and makes no mention of their involvement with the Universalist Society in Vermont. Having said that, while she has not examined the background to Smith's universalism or his early adoption of it, it is nevertheless significant that she has recognised the undertones of universalism in his revelations. Indeed, they are difficult to ignore. Even Brigham Young, successor to Smith following his death in 1844, struggled with the universalist content of the above revelation at first. He eventually accepted it and summarised its lesson as follows:

> He is compassionate to all the works of His hands, the plan of His redemption, and salvation, and mercy, is stretched out over all; and His plans are to gather up, and bring together, and save all the inhabitants of the earth, with the exception of those who have received the Holy Ghost, and sinned against it. With this exception, all the world besides shall be saved.—Is not this Universalism? It borders very close upon it.[83]

While the revelation of the three degrees of glory initially appears to save all of mankind, but only to varying degrees, it was understood by Smith and other early leaders that progression between all of the kingdoms would be provided for. As Smith once stated

> When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.[84]

[83] Journal of Discourses, 3:92
[84] Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 360.

Young, no doubt echoing what he had been taught by Smith, suggested that those in the lower kingdoms 'would eventually have the privilege of proving themselves worthy and advancing to a celestial glory, but it would be a slow process.'[85] In the early years of the twentieth century, James E. Talmage, an Apostle in LDS Church, claimed that 'in accordance with God's eternal plan of eternal progression, advancement within each of the three specified kingdoms will be provided for; though as to possible progress from one kingdom to another the scriptures make no positive affirmation.'[86] He also went on to explain that 'eternal advancement along different lines is conceivable' and that 'the essential feature of God's living purpose is its associated power of eternal increase.'[87]

It is here that we must disagree with those scholars who have not recognised universalism as being consistently present in Smith's religious bricolage. Quinn's assessment of the 1832 vision as being 'a theology of *nearly* universal salvation,'[88] in that Smith does not entirely embrace the doctrine of universal salvation, but, instead, restructures it to fit within his own emerging religious worldview, is not entirely convincing. It fails to take into consideration the historical and theological contexts of the fields of discourse from which Smith drew inspiration. Likewise, Bushman's assertion that the *Book of Mormon* is anti-Universalist and that Smith's later revelations constitute 'a perplexing reversal… that contradicted the book's firm stand'[89] displays an overall misunderstanding of both what Smith was trying to achieve and, again, the particular fields of discourse that he drew inspiration from. Furthermore,

[85] Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff Journals and Papers*, *1828-1898*; *Wilford Woodruff Journals*, *1833-1898*; *Wilford Woodruff Journal, 1854 January-1859 December*; Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/ed47e448-2936-4a1d-a4d8-4b5f96a8d1ac/0/72 [accessed: 21/07/2022].
[86] James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1990), 371.
[87] Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith*, 371.
[88] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 215 (emphasis added).
[89] Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 200.

Vogel's view that Smith 'privately aligned himself with the Universalists'[90] and that later revelations reverse the *Book of Mormon's* anti-Universalist position is also problematic, for as we have seen, a correct reading of the *Book of Mormon* and other revelations through the lens of Smith as an occultural bricoleur clearly show that his universalism was present throughout. Universalism was not something peripheral to his thought, it was an important part of his evolving theology.

Concluding Comments

Smith's revelation is a conspicuous departure from mainstream Christianity and also, to an extent, from that which was taught within Universalist circles—although, there was a much greater tolerance for a plurality of interpretations of doctrine. Nevertheless, there are clear links between the involvement of family members with the Universalist Society in Vermont, including the acceptance of the doctrine of universal salvation by Smith's grandfather, and the influence that this had on the religion-building imagination of the younger Smith. Griffiths has stated that, even though 'the ideals and doctrines of Universalism played an important role in the development of the [Smiths'] spirituality,' Universalism was simply a 'temporary shelter for the Smiths, while they sought the true Church of Christ.'[91] Griffiths has further argued that 'For all the comfort Universalism's doctrines may have given members of the family, only the true gospel could bring everlasting joy.'[92] Of course, this is typical of one who takes a confessional approach the study of Mormon history. However, as we have seen, understanding the historical, theological, and, more importantly, the occultural context of Smith's particular take on universalism helps us to understand that Smith did not depart from his initial universalist beliefs. Indeed, as we have seen, this is confirmed by a close reading of the *Book*

[90] Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, xix.
[91] Casey Paul Griffiths, 'Universalism and the Revelations of Joseph Smith', 187.
[92] Ibid., 187.

of Mormon and subsequent revelations. Instead, as an occultural bricoleur, he creatively engaged with the various discourses available to him in his local environment, melding, adapting, and reinterpreting them to fit within his emerging religious framework. By doing so, Smith's view of universal salvation was carefully woven into his revelatory works, most notably the *Book of Mormon* and his vision of the Three Degrees of Glory, thus making them more accessible to a mainstream New England population.

Finally, again, there may, of course, be a simple explanation for the origin of the revelations received by an occultural bricoleur such as Smith. As noted above, he had access to a wide range of books on the subject of religion, including those of a more esoteric nature. With this in mind, it is difficult to ignore the fact that Smith's vision of the three degrees of glory can be found in the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg. Hence, this will be the focus of analysis in the next chapter.

Swedenborgianism

Perhaps one of the most controversial claims for those involved in Mormon apologetics is that Emanuel Swedenborg should be considered one of the principle sources of inspiration for Joseph Smith's 1832 vision of the three degrees of glory, now contained in *Doctrine and Covenants* (D&C) section 76. A typical response is that of J. B. Haws, who has stated that, when it comes to the question of whether or not Swedenborg was the source of Smith's conception of the three-tiered heaven, 'Questions like this almost never lend themselves to a clear-cut yes or no' and though 'certain similarities are intriguing, they do not necessarily require a direct connection between Swedenborg's writings and Joseph Smith's revelation.'[1] While Haws' emic assertion is, of course, not an unreasonable one, he does take issue with those who 'are critical of Joseph Smith' and who 'sceptically look for the presumed "naturalistic origins" behind his writings to explain away his prophetic work.' He also further explains that, 'if a proposed connection to Swedenborg is intended to discredit the Prophet Joseph Smith—that is, intended to insinuate that an important doctrinal revelation was instead the wholesale and unacknowledged copy of another's writings—the question of influence bears more weight.'[2] This statement highlights current issues in contemporary scholarship with

[1] J. B. Haws, 'Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation', in Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman and Alonzo L. Gaskill (eds.), *The Doctrine and Covenants, Revelations in Context: The 37th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book, 2008), 142.
[2] Ibid., 143.

regard to early Mormon history. In short, scholarship tends to be cynical in tone and even dismissive of anything that might be seen undermine the LDS church's historical truth claims.

However, while recognising the importance of Smith as the architect of a global religious movement, this chapter does contend that, as with his construction of Mormon theology generally, he was an occultural bricoleur who was, directly or indirectly, significantly influenced by a range of ideas, including those of Swedenborg. Indeed, we will see that it would have been odd had Smith, as an occultural bricoleur, not made use of Swedenborg's writings, such was their availability in nineteenth century America and their acceptance among the general population. Indeed, the importance of establishing a link between Swedenborg and Smith cannot be overstated. The problem is also, of course, much more complex than Haws is inclined to admit. The claim being made here is not that Smith copied from Swedenborg's writings wholesale, but that he was instead formatively influenced by them in such a way that, through a process of cross-fertilization with other occultural discourses, they were intricately woven into Smith's emerging religious framework, thus becoming something new and unique to the Mormon prophet—though, we will see, not entirely dissimilar to their original source of inspiration.

Swedenborgian Influence in America

The General Convention of the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgians) was established in the United States of America in 1817. They were established as a united church in Philadelphia and received support from the British Conference in the form of books and pamphlets, although they were always independent of their European roots.[3] John Brooke has suggested that 'it would be difficult to argue that [Swedenborg's writings] were widely known

[3] Jane Williams-Hogan, 'New Religious Movements in American History' in Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft (eds.), *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America: African Diaspora Traditions and Other American Innovations*, Vol. 5 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 15.

among the rural peoples of the early Republic'.[4] However, Brooke fails to acknowledge the significance of the spread of Swedenborg's works internationally, as it is clear that they found their way into libraries and bookshops in cities, towns, and villages across America. A library in Manchester, not far from the Smith family home, stocked a well-known collection of books on the subject of religion, entitled *Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations* (1817), which contained Swedenborg's personal theophany: 'On a certain night, a man appeared to him in the midst of a strong shining light, and said, "I am God the Lord, the Creator, and Redeemer."'[5] Swedenborg's account of his theophany was also printed on the front page of a newspaper in Canandaigua, in 1808, and in 1830 Palmyra's newspaper wrote that 'the Lord manifested himself to him by a personal appearance.'[6] The same newspaper in Canandaigua also advertised Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* for sale in 1826.[7] Moreover, Michael Quinn has explained that an employee at the *Palmyra Register*, a local newspaper that advertised the sale of various occult handbooks, wrote that 'once a week [Smith] would stroll into the office of the old *Palmyra Register*, for his father's paper.'[8] Also, as Quinn and others have noted,

> Hermetic texts and ideas were part of the occult revival occurring in Europe and the United States from the 1780's to 1820's, as were astrology, alchemy, the Cabala and ritual magic. Joseph Smith lived in the midst of this occult resurgence which manifested

[4] John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 99.
[5] Hannah Adams, *Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations*, 4th ed., (New York: James Eastburn, 1817), 202; Robert Paul, 'Joseph Smith and the Manchester (New York) Library', *BYU Studies* 22 (Summer, 1982), 347; *National Union of Pre-1956 Imprints*, 3:431-32. Cited in D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 14-15.
[6] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 15, 153.
[7] Ibid., 217
[8] Orasmus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlements of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, and Morris Reserve* (Rochester, NY: Erastus Darrow, 1851), 214; See also, Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 179.

> itself in published works and oral history, among common people and privileged classes, among mainstream clergymen and sectarian leaders, among Mormons and non-Mormons.[9]

Furthermore, Smith was certainly well acquainted with Swedenborg's writings as, in 1839, he is reported to have met with a Swedenborgian convert to Mormonism named Edward Hunter, to whom he explained that 'Emanuel Swedenborg had a view of the world to come, but for daily food he perished.'[10] This suggests that Smith knew and understood Swedenborg's writings well enough to criticise them.

While there is some question as to the influence of Swedenborgianism in rural areas, there is evidence of its influence on a number of individuals and movements in the nineteenth century. Sydney Ahlstrom, for example, has shown that 'of all the unconventional currents streaming through the many levels of American religion during the antebellum half-century, none proved attractive to more diverse types of dissenters from established denominations than those which stemmed from Emanuel Swedenborg.'[11] Furthermore, those who were drawn to Swedenborgianism were 'artists, artisans, educators, entrepreneurs, merchants, and traders' who 'lived in old seaboard states and new states formed out of the Old Northwest Territory. Baltimore, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati were cities with large Swedenborgian congregations.'[12] Indeed, in 1817, the first General Convention was held in Philadelphia, which reported a total of seventeen societies with 360 members in nine states.[13]

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[9] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 187; See also, Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*; Clyde R. Forsberg, *Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[10] William E. Hunter, *Edward Hunter: Faithful Steward*, Janath Russell Cannon (ed.), (Salt Lake City: Mrs. William E. Hunter, 1970), 51.

[11] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 483.

[12] Williams-Hogan, 'New Religious Movements in American History', 15.

[13] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 485-486.

Hence, again, as indicated above, the far-reaching influence of Swedenborg's works on the religious climate of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century America is conspicuous. As Ahlstrom observes, 'His influence was seen everywhere: in Transcendentalism and at Brook Farm, in spiritualism and the free love movement, in the craze for the communitarian experiments, in faith healing, mesmerism, and a half-dozen medical cults; among great intellectuals, crude charlatans, and innumerable frontier quacks.'[14] Similarly, Robert Handy argues that 'The Swedish thinker's works were… one of the forces that heightened interest in phenomena of the spirit in this period.'[15] Even William James is thought to have been influenced by Swedenborg through his father, and Bronson Alcott is said to have 'put Swedenborg in his hall of fame along with Plato, Plotinus, and Boehme.'[16]

Swedenborg's works also had a significant influence on Rev. George Herbert Walker Bush, the great, great granduncle of 41st President of the United States, George Walker Bush.[17] Bush was born in Norwich, Vermont in 1796, only 22 miles (approx.) from the Smith family home in Tunbridge when Asael Smith moved his family there in 1791. Bush was later ordained a minister in the Presbyterian Church in 1823. A Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Literature at New York University, Bush's interpretations of the Bible as symbolic rather than literal would lead him to the writings of Swedenborg. Francesca McCrossan and James Lawrence have noted that it was during a lecture on spiritual resurrection in New York that Bush was made aware of Swedenborg's writings. Bush explains that 'a lady incidentally remarked to me that the views I had advanced bore a striking analogy to those of Swedenborg on the same theme, and intimating her impression that I must have been conversant with his works. The

[14] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 483.
[15] Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), 224.
[16] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 483.
[17] Francesca McCrossan and James F. Lawrence, 'The First George Bush: Philosopher, Minister, and Swedenborgian Ancestor of American Presidents', *Swedenborgian House of Studies*, Available at: http://www.shs.psr.edu/library/Bush_article.asp (accessed 26/07/22).

suggestion was unfounded; but my curiosity was excited, and I determined, at the first favorable opportunity, to acquit myself with the system, and thus apply a conscious desideratum in my knowledge.'[18] In 1845, Bush publicly renounced the Calvinistic ideas that originally informed his faith and subsequently announced his conversion to Swedenborgianism, later defending his new faith at the Boston Odeon on 9 December, 1845. This lecture fuelled a public debate between Bush and the Transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson, which brought Swedenborgian thought to the attention of both the wider public and to the critical attention of certain Protestant leaders.[19] Interestingly, some scholars have suggested the possible links between Transcendentalism and early Mormonism. For example, Benjamin Park has argued that both Transcendentalism and Mormonism 'encountered the same environment and shared many of the same critiques of their contemporary culture.'[20] While it is difficult to prove any direct link between Emerson and Smith, it is likely, with Smith's interest in the religious opinion of the day, that he had some knowledge of Emerson's works.

Francis Bailey (1744-1817) of Philadelphia, a Revolutionary War printer, was the first to start printing Swedenborg's books and pamphlets in America, making his works much more accessible to the general public.[21] While Bailey was located approximately 320 miles from the Smith's family home, it is not unreasonable to assume that his reprints were available to Smith, since they were made available throughout America. (They were even found in Ohio in the knapsack of the legendary evangelist, Johnny Appleseed.[22])

Of particular note is the influence of Swedenborg on the clairvoyant, theologian, and philosopher of nineteenth century Spiritualism in the United States, Andrew Jackson Davis—The Poughkeepsie Seer. Born in Blooming Grove, New York in 1826, Davis grew up in what

[18] McCrossan and Lawrence, 'The First George Bush'.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Benjamin E. Park, '"Build, Therefore, Your Own World": Ralph Waldo Emerson, Joseph Smith, and American Antebellum Thought', *Journal of Mormon History*, Vol. 36, 1 (Winter 2010), 47.
[21] Williams-Hogan, 'New Religious Movements in American History', 15.
[22] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 99; Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 341.

Phillip Charles Lucas describes as 'humble circumstances' and 'was deeply dissatisfied with the conventional Presbyterianism and Methodism of his time.'[23] It is interesting to note here the similarities between Davis and Smith's early lives, with Smith's family being 'proselyted in the Presbyterian faith' and with the young Smith being 'somewhat partial to the Methodist sect' but later explaining that 'In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?'[24]

After a number of relatively unsuccessful apprenticeships, Davis was recruited in 1843 by a tailor by the name of William Levingston, who persuaded him to take part in his experiments in mesmerism. According to Lucas, Davis 'proved to be a natural trance performer and reportedly travelled clairvoyantly to remote places, conversed with spirits, diagnosed physical ailments, and read from books while blindfolded.'[25] The following year in 1844, Davis claimed to have had a vision in which he communicated with both the Greek physician Galen and Swedenborg. In this vision, Galen is said to have given Davis a 'magical staff' and told him that his mission was to be 'a clairvoyant healer.' Swedenborg, on the other hand, told Davis that he would become a channel for a coming revelation to humanity.[26] Much of Swedenborg's influence on Davis can be found in the latter's 1847 work, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelation, and a Voice to Mankind, By and Through Andrew Jackson Davis, the "Poughkeepsie Seer" and "Clairvoyant"*, which helped underpin the emerging Spiritualist movement of the nineteenth century. Although it is unlikely that Davis had any real influence on Smith, the point in mentioning him is both to highlight the significant influence of Swedenborg on North American new religious thought generally and also, more particularly

[23] Phillip Charles Lucas, 'Davis, Andrew Jackson, * 11.8.1826 Blooming Grove, New York, † 13.1.1910 Watertown, Massachusetts', in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, Wouter Hanegraaff (ed.), (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 299.
[24] Joseph Smith—History 1:7,8,10.
[25] Lucas, 'Davis, Andrew Jackson', 299.
[26] Ibid., 300.

the way in which Swedenborgian ideas similarly influenced both Davis's Spiritualism and Smith's Mormonism.[27] Swedenborgian ideas were woven through nineteenth century American occulture.

While the influence on Spiritualism is significant in itself, more significant still is the work of Thomas Lake Harris (1823-1906), a Universalist minister of New York City, who, having been impressed by Davis, soon became a devotee of Swedenborg. Also influenced by the ideas of the Utopian theorists Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, by 1850, Harris had departed New York to organise a cooperative community in Mountain Cove, Virginia with the Rev. J. L. Scott.[28] The community was founded on land that one of the leaders would claim was the actual site of the biblical Garden of Eden.[29] Such ideas, which also seem to have been prominent in the occulture of the day, can also be found in early Mormonism, with Smith declaring a valley in northwest Missouri to be the place that Adam blessed his descendants after leaving the Garden of Eden.[30]

Harris's enterprise was, however, short lived and so he relocated to England where he preached Swedenborgian ideas to a London congregation for a number of years.[31] He then returned to New York, where he established an independent Christian spiritualist church and a periodical in order to disseminate Swedenborgian views. Though Harris revered Swedenborg and believed him to be his forerunner, in 1857 he criticised orthodox 'New Churchmen' (i.e. Swedenborgians) in his publication of *The Arcana of Christianity*, announcing that he had received a revelation proclaiming the spiritual and celestial meaning of scripture.[32]

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[27] For an interesting account of Swedenborg being the father of both Smith and Davis' ideas but restructured them in their own individual way, see Natalie Dollar, *A More Perfect Union: Swedenborgian Ideas of Love, Sex and Death in the Development of Mormon and Spiritualist Thought*', Religious Studies Research MA, (Universiteit van Amsterdam, 18 August, 2011).
[28] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 488.
[29] William A. Hinds, *American Communities and Cooperative Colonies*, (Chicago: Kerr, 1908), 423.
[30] D&C 107:53
[31] Hinds, *American Communities and Cooperative Colonies*, 424.
[32] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 488.

As indicated above, the aim of this section has simply been to show, not only how widespread Swedenborg's writings were, but also the diversity of those who accepted them, thus being intricately woven into the occultural fabric of the burned-over district. By establishing, to some extent, how influential Swedenborg was on the religious landscape of early nineteenth century America, we can now begin an exploration of his influence on early Mormonism, especially with regard to Smith's activities prior to the founding of the Church in 1830.

Swedenborgian Influence on those Close to Joseph Smith

When it came to the subject of religion, Smith was very well-informed and his knowledge of the religious opinion of the day was fairly extensive. Certainly, the orthodox LDS view that Smith was completely illiterate and incapable of reading or writing flies in the face of the evidence.[33] For example, Grant Palmer points out that one of Joseph Smith Snr's prior occupations was that of a School teacher, and when the family had settled in Manchester, they set up a school in their home from which the young Smith greatly benefited.[34] A list of books donated to the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute by Smith also display more than just a passing interest in the religious opinion of others. Some of the books donated by Smith include *Mosheim's Church History* (1842), *The Philosophy of a Future State* (1829) by Thomas Dick, *Lectures on Universalism* (1841) by Joel Parker, and *Sermons and Religious Tracts* (1746) by Philip Doddridge.[35] His interest in esoteric, occult, and mystical thinkers was also comparatively extensive, as is demonstrated throughout this thesis. If we are to fully understand how familiar Smith and his contemporaries were with the writings of Swedenborg, it will be

[33] Grant Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 46.
[34] Ibid., 43.
[35] Christopher C. Jones, 'The Complete Record of the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute', *Mormon Historical Studies*, Vol. 10, Issue 1 (March, 2009), 180.

useful to briefly highlight a few of those who were close to Smith and who also had a knowledge of Swedenborg.

One very important individual was Sarah Kingsley, who was one of Smith's polyandrous wives that joined the church in 1835. The date of her 'sealing' to Smith is unknown, though she continued to live with her non-LDS husband, who was a follower of Swedenborg, until Smith's death in 1844.[36] Emma Smith and her children are also believed to have resided with Kingsley and her husband after the Mormons were driven from Missouri in 1838.[37]

In a letter dated 24 July, 1839 Dr. Isaac Galland, who acted as an authorized agent for Smith in settling land transactions involving property exchanges by eastern Latter-day Saints moving to Nauvoo, wrote: 'I have had several very friendly tho' rather argumentative interviews with a Dr Carpenter of this city who seems entirely absorbed in the doctrines of Emanuel Swedenburg', he further explained that 'I have conceded to him, that it is not impossible but that the Lord did reveal those spiritual interpretations… but if so, it was certainly done to shame the metaphisical [*sic*] follies of the mother of harlots and her daughters who had as well in the age in which the Baron wrote his metaphisical [*sic*] theology.'[38] That Galland plainly admits in his letter that he is acquainted with Swedenborg's writings, and sees no reason why they were not revealed to him in order to disprove both Catholic (the mother of harlots) and Protestant (her daughters) theology, is further evidence that Swedenborg's works were much more widely known than previously thought. Not only that, but when we take into consideration that Galland's letter was addressed to Smith, Rigdon and other leading Mormon

[36] Brian C. Hales, 'SARAH KINGSLEY', *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2014. Available at: http://josephsmithspolygamy.org/history-2/plural-wives-overview/sarah-kingsley/ (accessed 26/07/22).
[37] *History of the Church*, 3:362.
[38] Isaac Galland, 'Letter, Chillocothe, OH, to JS, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, Vinson Knight, George W. Robinson, and others', in *JS Letterbook 2*, Commerce, IL, 24 (July 1839), 70-71. Available at: http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-from-isaac-galland-24-july-1839?p=1&highlight=Swedenborg#!/paperSummary/letter-from-isaac-galland-24-july-1839&p=1 (accessed 26/07/22).

figures, we can reasonably deduce that they too, were, at the very least, aware of Swedenborg's works.

Parley P. Pratt, one of Smith's original Apostles, was also aware of Swedenborg's writings. Pratt had a knowledge of Swedenborg by at least 1838 when he wrote 'I reject Swedenborg, because he mistifies [*sic*] the Scriptures, and does away the ordinances of the gospel.'[39] His later writings, however, exhibit a potential influence, especially with regard to the idea of *spiritual fluid*. Lars Bergquist has explained that, for Swedenborg, 'the secret of life was hidden' in the blood and that the 'finest blood-like fluid was to be found in the 'spirituous fluid' of the brain, that functioned as the vehicle for the divine inflow that has been streaming through man and his world ever since matter came into being.'[40] Similar ideas appear in some of Pratt's writings. For example, he writes that 'a person commissioned of Jesus Christ, and filled with this spiritual substance, can impart of the same to another, provided there is preparation of heart, and faith on the part of the receiver' and that a 'word spoken, a mandate issued, or even a handkerchief, apron or other garment, worn or touched by a person full of this Spirit… has… proved sufficient to communicate the spiritual fluid, between minds of strong and mutual faith.'[41] For Pratt, this 'spiritual fluid' is that power by which 'the worlds were framed' and 'this divine fluid went forth and executed the mandate, by controlling the elements in accordance with the will, pattern, or design formed in the mind of him that spake, and it that executed.'[42]

Pratt was intimately acquainted with Smith and was a part of the Kirtland School of the Prophets, a small group of Smith's closest friends who gathered together to study 'things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been; things which are;

[39] Parley P. Pratt, 'Mormonism Unveiled: Zion's Watchman Unmasked, and its Editor, Mr. L. R. Sunderland, Exposed; Truth Vindicated; The Devil Mad, and Priestcraft in Danger!', in Peter L. Crawley (ed.), *The Essential Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 19.
[40] Lars Bergquist, *A Biography: Swedenborg's Secret* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 2005), 149.
[41] Parley P. Pratt, *Spirituality: Key to the Science of Theology* (Springville: Cedar Fork, Inc., 2007), 70.
[42] Ibid., 71

things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home; things which are abroad; the wars and perplexities of the nations, and the judgements which are on the land; and a knowledge also of the countries and of kingdoms.'[43] Later, in Jackson County, Missouri, Pratt was asked to lead a school of elders, which was modelled on the earlier Kirtland School.[44] With Pratt being so closely involved with Smith, and considering the fact that there was a forum provided in which the religious opinion of the day could be debated, it is not unreasonable to assume that Swedenborg's writings may have been discussed openly amongst the leadership of the early church.

Perhaps the most influential figure to be closely associated with Smith, and who had a knowledge of Swedenborg's works, was Sidney Rigdon. Originally a Campbellite[45] minister, Rigdon joined the church in 1830, served for a time as Smith's confidant and scribe, and quickly rose to prominence within the Church by being appointed as a counsellor to Smith in the Presidency of the High Priesthood in 1831. This did not go unnoticed by Smith's former right-hand man, David Whitmer, who claimed that Rigdon 'soon worked himself deep into Brother Joseph's affections'.[46] Having said that, it has been argued by some that Rigdon was acquainted with Smith prior to the establishment of the Church in 1830 and that he played a major role in the formation of the *Book of Mormon*.[47] While this theory is not, of course, without its detractors,[48] it is likely that Rigdon's significance may have simply been edited out of the historical record to increase the historical importance of Smith. Certainly, it is clear that,

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[43] D&C 88:79.
[44] Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 59.
[45] A follower of Alexander Campbell, founder of the Disciples of Christ.
[46] David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Mo., 1887), 35; Brooke. *The Refiner's Fire,* 195.
[47] Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis & Donald R. Scales. *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon* (Santa Ana: Vision House Publishers, 1980); Michael R. Ash. *Shaken Faith Syndrome* (Salt Lake City: The Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR), 2008), 169-176.
[48] Matthew B. Brown, 'Solomon Spaulding and the Book of Mormon', *FAIRMORMON*. Available at: http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/publications/ask-the-apologist-solomon-spaulding-and-the-book-of-mormon (accessed 23/11/2016).

as Quinn has shown, Smith and his associates were not averse to *ad hoc* historical revisionism.[49] There is evidence of historical records and revelations being edited.

Rigdon brought to the fledgling church a wealth of knowledge and experience, especially of esoteric and occult thought, having an in-depth knowledge of George Rapp, an alchemical philosopher and leader of the Harmony Society, a German hermetic sect that had settled in Western Pennsylvania.[50] Rapp and his followers practiced a form of Esoteric Christianity, as well as celibacy, which they theorised as being morally superior to marriage. Rapp was also heavily influenced by the writings of Jakob Böhme, Philipp Jakob Spener, and, most importantly, Swedenborg. Other esoteric works held in the Harmony Society's library in Economy, Pennsylvania, included those authored by Gottfried Arnold, Thomas Bromley, Justinus Kerner, Jane Leade, Johann Scheible, Christoph Schütz, Paracelsus, and Georg von Welling.[51] In 1836, Jacob Zundel, whose family had spent three decades with Rapp's commune in Harmony, converted to Smith's fledgling church.[52] It is doubtful, however, that Zundel had any major influence on Smith's thinking.

The fact that Rigdon was associated with Campbell is also of particular importance, as Campbell is known to have made references to Swedenborg in a number of periodicals and in two instances both Rigdon and Swedenborg are mentioned in the same issue.[53] Moreover, when Rigdon arrived in 1830 ideas of temples, priesthood, and concepts of binding, purity, fullness, and sealing became incorporated, if somewhat subtly, into Smith's revelations.[54] Furthermore, it was after Rigdon's congregation was absorbed into Smith's that converts had visions of 'golden letters falling from the hands of angels' which was a suggestion that ideas about

[49] D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994).
[50] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 207.
[51] Ervin Reffiner. *The Esoteric Codex: The Alchemists*, (Lulu.com, 2015), 196-198; Quinn. *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 306-307.
[52] Ibid., Quinn, 306.
[53] Haws, 'Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation', 142-67.
[54] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 207.

Kabbalah may have been prominent among Rigdon's congregants.[55] Given Rigdon's exposure to Swedenborgian thought, it is plausible that he was one of Smith's primary sources of information on the subject.

It is clear, then, that Swedenborg's influence was indeed far-reaching and had an impact, not just on the formation of New Church congregations in America, but on a wide range of individuals, religious denominations, movements, various communal experiments, and early converts to Mormonism. Overall, the aim of this, and the previous section has simply been to show the influence of Swedenborg on the religious milieu of eighteenth and nineteenth century America, and it is, therefore, difficult to argue that Smith would not have encountered Swedenborg's works through one of a possible variety of mediums, given the fact that he had a deep interest in the religious opinion of the day. Having done that, we are now in a position to assess the impact of Swedenborg on the thought of Joseph Smith.

Swedenborg and the Book of Mormon

As an occultural bricoleur, Smith borrowed from many sources and weaved them into his emerging religious framework. The *Book of Mormon*, of course, is no exception. In the early 1920's, Brigham Henry Roberts, president of the First Council of Seventy, conducted research into the controversial question of whether Smith was capable of writing the *Book of Mormon*. He concluded that Smith had 'a vivid, and strong, and creative imagination' and that '…Smith possessed such a gift of mind there can be no question.'[56] Nevertheless, if Smith was the author of the *Book of Mormon*, his interest in a wide range of esoteric and religious literature would have certainly had an influence on the content. The 1830 edition of the *Book of Mormon* printed in Palmyra, New York credits Smith as the 'author and proprietor', and it wasn't until the

[55] Ibid., 207.
[56] B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 243, 247.

publication of the 1837 and subsequent editions that we see a change in Smith's role to that of the book's translator.[57] Mark Twain was unconvinced that the *Book of Mormon* was of divine origin. In his scathing review of the book, Twain remarked that

> The book seems to be merely a prosy detail of imaginary history, with the Old Testament for a model; followed by a tedious plagiarism of the New Testament. The author labored to give his words and phrases the quaint, old-fashioned sound and structure of our King James's translation of the Scriptures; and the result is a mongrel—half modern glibness, and half ancient simplicity and gravity. The latter is awkward and constrained; the former natural, but grotesque by the contrast. Whenever he found his speech growing too modern—which was about every sentence or two—he ladled in a few such Scriptural phrases as "exceeding sore," "and it came to pass," etc., and made things satisfactory again. "And it came to pass" was his pet. If he had left that out, his Bible would have been only a pamphlet.[58]

However, attempts to pin any one possible influence on the *Book of Mormon* is problematic and, I would argue, naïve and unwise. Nevertheless, there have been many attempts to do this. Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (1823) was one early source that some claimed was the principal inspiration for the *Book of Mormon*, even though we now known that Smith almost certainly did not have access to the work until later in his life.[59] There have also been many who have claimed a connection between the *Book of Mormon* and the writings of the Rev. Solomon Spalding (1761 – 1816). Spalding's unpublished historical romance, *Manuscript Found*, is thought to have been the key influence on the *Book of Mormon* and scholars such as

[57] KC Kern, *BookofMormonOnline.Net*, Available at: http://bookofmormononline.net/fax. (Accessed 15/10/14).
[58] Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, New York: New American Library, 1962: 102
[59] See, Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006: 96

Wayne Cowdrey, Howard Davis, and Donald Scales have gone to great lengths to establish this connection.[60] While again the evidence for this is weak, in the final analysis, as Matthew Roper has stated, 'whether one accepts the Spalding explanation or some other theory, one still has to explain not only *if*, but *how* Joseph Smith or any other candidate could write such a book, a point upon which critics have never agreed and probably never will agree' and that 'the *Book of Mormon* will always be an enigma for the unbeliever.'[61] For Roper, 'The Latter-day Saint, of course, already has an explanation that nicely circumvents that puzzle' and he suggests that, 'for those who are unwilling to believe Joseph Smith's explanation… some variation of the Spalding theory with its mythical "Manuscript Found" may be the best fiction they can contrive.'[62]

The authorship of the *Book of Mormon* is certainly a hotly debated topic, and it is doubtful that anyone will ever be able to truly answer the question without the existence of any concrete evidence. For the purpose of this discussion, however, it is worthwhile examining one clear influence on some of the content in the *Book of Mormon*—Swedenborg. It is likely that the Swedenborgian influence would have come through Smith's involvement with occultural discourses that were prevalent and highly influential in and around the area in which he lived at the time. Clyde Forsberg has pointed out that the Smith family 'were not mere Bible-believing Christians but recalcitrants who put much stock in their reading of sacred texts, arriving at conclusions… that took them well outside the pale of mainstream Christianity' and that 'a good number who joined the Mormon church in the early years were heretics, many of them Universalists.'[63] The fact that the Smith family had a history of affiliation with the

[60] Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis & Donald R. Scales, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon*, Santa Ana: Vision House Publishers, 1980.
[61] Review of Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis, and Arthur Vanick. *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Spalding Enigma.* St. Louis: Concordia, 2005. Also available at: http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1449&index=3. (Accessed 15/10/14)
[62] Ibid.
[63] Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 154.

Universalist movement and were also involved with esoteric thought and magical practices, places the origins of the *Book of Mormon* in a somewhat different context (see below).

Furthermore, Forsberg holds the view that 'a set of Swedenborgian-like ideas seems to drive the Book of Mormon discussion of end things' though there is 'no need to go so far as to claim descent from Swedenborg, especially since the *Book of Mormon* does not endorse a gnostic understanding of body and soul.'[64] A claim of 'descent', however, is not being made here. Instead, as an occultural bricoleur, Smith would have had access to, and been influenced by, multiple sources of religious and occultural thought. The *Book of Mormon* is, therefore, a bricolage not only of the various doctrines espoused by mainstream churches, but also of various types of unorthodox metaphysical knowledge contained in the wider socio-cultural environment (occulture).

The question of who wrote the *Book of Mormon* and what influenced its contents may never be answered in any satisfactory manner by those who do not take a confessional approach to its origins. What is interesting, however, is that traces of the cultic milieu in which Smith was raised are certainly evident within the pages of the *Book of Mormon*. Alexander Campbell, the founder of the Disciples of Christ, suggested that there were contemporary influences within the book when he wrote in 1831 that it answered almost every issue that had been

> discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies – infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who

[64] Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 158-159.

> may baptize, and even the question of freemasonry, republican government, and the rights of man. All these topics are repeatedly alluded to.[65]

There is a range of topics addressed here that would have been issues for many of the Protestant Christian denominations that were established in the eastern United States during the early nineteenth century. But the question of whether or not there are any Swedenborgian influences remains to be seen. Forsberg offers the following explanation:

> The important point is that Swedenborg offers a more likely theological frame of reference for the *Book of Mormon* discussion of the afterlife and Mormon doctrine than does orthodox Protestant theology. In fact, Swedenborgianism might be said to represent the latest manifestation of the perennial heresy known as Universalism in the long and variegated history of Christian thought. Locating Swedenborg along some intellectual Christian continuum is the first step in understanding precisely where early Mormonism and its unorthodox ideas regarding the future life really belong.[66]

There has been some debate, however, over the question of whether or not the *Book of Mormon* teaches universalism or if it contains an anti-universalistic view of salvation. The reason for this confusion is due to Smith's 1832 vision of the 'Three Degrees of Glory,' which, as we saw in the previous chapter, Quinn described as 'a theology of *nearly* universal salvation'.[67] Bushman has also stated that the revelation was a 'perplexing reversal' which 'contradicted the book's firm stand' and that the 'revelation said the phrase "endless torment" did not mean no

[65] Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon, With an Examination of its Internal and External Evidences, And a Refutation of its Pretences to Divine Authority* (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1832), 19.
[66] Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 159.
[67] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 215 (emphasis added).

end to torment, but that "Endless" was a name of God, and "endless punishment" meant God's punishment.'[68] Clyde Ford has offered some interesting insights into this controversial issue, he explained that 'The *Book of Mormon*'s relation to universalism is complex' and that 'the book could be placed alongside a number of works critical of the modern universalists that appeared in the 1820's and 30's before modern universalism went into decline.'[69] Ford does suggest, however, that 'the *Book of Mormon* is best seen as the initial step of an ongoing process of attempting to solve a number of problems of divine fairness.'[70] When viewed in light of the fact that Smith's prophetic career was characterised by an ongoing process of revelation, addition, and revision, Ford's assertion is a strong one.

Forsberg has added further to the discussion by suggesting that Swedenborg's universalism is 'darker… by comparison' and that where 'the Swedish bard and the Mormon prophet seem to agree most is their two-pronged, conservative universalist assault against Calvinism' in their 'belief in so-called spirit teaching.'[71] This is the idea that a person's works, whether good or bad, are imprinted on the person's 'spirit body' and that 'a man is known for exactly what he is. One's actions are all important; a naturally good agnostic will achieve a higher status than an uninspired but punctilious churchgoer. "Compensation" must be made for evil in the after-life, but there is no hell—it is a mental state. There is no upward limit to the progress of which the soul is capable, and which continues in the other world.'[72] This belief is echoed in the *Book of Mormon* by the prophet Alma, who states that 'there is a time appointed that *all* shall come forth from the dead' and there is 'a space between the time of death and the resurrection' wherein 'the spirits of *all* men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal

[68] Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 200.
[69] Ford, 'The Book of Mormon, the Early Nineteenth-Century Debates over Universalism, and the Development of the Novel Mormon Doctrines of Ultimate Rewards and Punishments', 18-19.
[70] Ibid., 19
[71] Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 162.
[72] Colin Wilson, *The Occult* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 277-278; Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 162.

body… whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life.'[73] Furthermore, Alma expounds upon this by stating that men are consigned to two states, 'the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness… And then… the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil… shall be cast into outer darkness.'[74] Alma then further explains that 'this much I say, that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be reunited, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works.'[75]

It is also interesting to note that in the first few pages of Swedenborg's *The Four Primary Doctrines of the New Church*, originally four separate works published in 1763, he quotes specific passages from the Old Testament book of Isaiah. These same excerpts from Isaiah also appear in the *Book of Mormon*, though often quoted in full. Swedenborg begins by quoting chapter two of Isaiah (verses 11, 12, 20), which reads as follows: 'And it shall come to pass in the *last days* that the mountain of the house of Jehovah shall be established in the top of the mountains.' 'Jehovah alone shall be exalted *in that day*.' '*The day* of Jehovah of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty.' '*In that day* a man shall cast his idols of silver and his idols of gold.'[76] This chapter is quoted in full in 2 Nephi 12 and is understood by Latter-day Saints to be a prophecy that was fulfilled with the building of a temple in the Salt Lake Valley after Brigham Young led an exodus of Latter-day Saints from Illinois following the death of Smith. LeGrand Richards, an apostle in the LDS Church from 1952 to 1983, once said concerning the prophecy of Isaiah and the *Book of Mormon*, 'How literally that has been fulfilled… in this very house of the God of Jacob right here on this block! This temple, more

[73] Alma 40: 4, 11.
[74] Alma 40: 12-13.
[75] Alma 40: 21.
[76] Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Four Primary Doctrines of the New Church: Signified by the New Jerusalem in the Revelation* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1876), 3.

than any other building of which we have any record, has brought people from every land to learn of his ways and walk in his paths.'[77]

Swedenborg also quotes from chapters 3, 4, 5, 7 and 10 – 13 in Isaiah.[78] These same chapters are quoted in full in the *Book of Mormon* in 2 Nephi 13 – 23 and in what is quite a striking coincidence is that both authors pass completely over chapter one. There are 55 identical verses in total that are used by Swedenborg which can also be found in the *Book of Mormon*. Furthermore, other identical Old Testament passages can be found in both Swedenborg's work and the *Book of Mormon* which includes 2 from Genesis, 2 from Exodus, 2 from Deuteronomy, 2 from Joel, 8 from Ezekiel, 5 from Psalms, and 3 from Jeremiah. The comparison, however, does not stop with the Old Testament. From the New Testament both Swedenborg and the *Book of Mormon* author(s) quote 36 verses from the book of Matthew, 7 from Mark, 17 from Luke, 23 from John, 1 from Galatians, 1 from Hebrews, and 11 from Revelation.[79]

Within both Swedenborg's works and the *Book of Mormon*, there are also some similarities in doctrinal content. In *Heaven and Hell* Swedenborg writes that 'The world of spirits is not heaven nor is it hell, but it is the intermediate place or state between the two, for it is the place into which man first comes after death.'[80] The *Book of Mormon* prophet Alma also suggests that there is 'a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth.'[81] This state is also a place where the 'righteous are received into a state of

[77] LeGrand Richards, 'In the Mountain of the Lord's House', *Ensign* (June 1971). Available at https://www.lds.org/ensign/1971/06/in-the-mountain-of-the-lords-house?lang=eng (Accessed 24/10/14).
[78] Swedenborg, *The Four Primary Doctrines of the New Church*, 3-5.
[79] For a more detailed analysis see Vernal Holley, *Swedenborg and the Book of Mormon* (Roy: Self-published, 1999), 10–12.
[80] Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and its Wonders, and Hell: From Things Heard & Seen* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1911), 216.
[81] Alma 40:21, see also Alma 12:24

happiness' and 'the spirits of the wicked… shall be cast into outer darkness.'[82] This view is echoed by Swedenborg, who explained that 'As soon as men after death come into the world of spirits, the Lord clearly differentiates between them. The evil are immediately attached to the infernal society with which they were united in the world' and those who were 'good are immediately attached to the heavenly society with which they were united in the world.'[83]

While it has been evidenced throughout this thesis that Smith was more than capable of being the sole architect of the *Book of Mormon* project, including his additional revelations and books of scripture, one should not dismiss the idea of Rigdon having had an influence on Smith earlier than has been previously thought. As Quinn has noted, 'significant changes have been made in the published texts of LDS scriptures and in church documents published by official histories' and, more importantly, 'these changes retroactively introduced concepts, people, names, and structures which did not exist in the original revelations and historical documents.'[84] Though there is evidence that changes were made following the death of Smith, and continue to be made in the present day, Quinn points to changes that were made by Smith himself, especially with regards to key dates, such as the restoration of the priesthood by angelic visitations which Smith later claimed occurred in the spring of 1829, though no evidence exists of this being mentioned by any early LDS leader, in any history, or in any document until 1834-1835.[85] With this in mind, the idea of Rigdon being involved with Smith earlier than he claimed should not be dismissed out of hand.

Furthermore, if Quinn's assertion is correct, then there would be evidence of Smith and Rigdon being acquainted with one another prior to Smith's claim that they first met in the December of 1830.[86] Abel D. Chase, a neighbour of the Smith family, later recalled that 'during

[82] Alma 40:11, 13
[83] Swedenborg, *Heaven and its Wonders, and Hell*, 217-218.
[84] Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, 5.
[85] Ibid., 15.
[86] Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948), 122-125.

some of my visits at the Smiths, I saw a stranger there who they said was Mr. Rigdon… it was in the year of 1827 when I first saw him there.'[87] Another neighbour of the Smiths, Lorenzo Saunders, also recalled seeing Smith with Rigdon in the spring of 1827, he wrote: 'I saw Sidney Rigdon in the spring of 1827, about the middle of March. I went to eat maple sugar, and I saw five or six men standing in a group… I asked Samuel Harrison Smith who he was and he said his name was Sidney Rigdon, a friend of Joseph's from Pennsylvania.'[88] A Mrs. S. F. Anderick, purportedly a friend of Smith's sister, Sophronia, also witnessed Rigdon at the Smith family home. She later explained that 'several times while I was visiting Sophronia Smith at old Jo's house, she told me that a stranger who I saw there… was Mr. Rigdon.'[89] Daniel Hendrix, a former resident of Palmyra, who left prior to the founding of Smith's church in 1830, gave a much more detailed account of Smith and Rigdon's relationship, he stated that

> I was a lad, or a very young man, in a store in Palmyra, N. Y., from 1822 until 1830… I remember Rigdon as a man of about 40 years, smooth, sleek and with some means. He had a wonderful quantity of assurance, and in these days would be a good broker or speculator. He was a man of energy of contrivance, and would make a good living anywhere in any business… He and Joe Smith feel in with each other and were cronies for several months. It was after Rigdon and Smith were so intimate that the divine part of finding the golden plates began to be spread abroad… while Joe Smith was a true prophet of the Lord, to whom it was given to publish among men.

[87] Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal, *Joseph Smith, the Prophet, His Family and His Friends* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1886), 230; Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000), 137.
[88] Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Co., 1914), 134-135; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 3, 176-177.
[89] *Naked Truths About Mormonism* (January 1888), 2; Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 208.

> Rigdon, who, from his first appearance, was regarded as the 'brains' of the movement, seemed satisfied to be the power behind the throne… meetings were held at the Smith house and in the barns on the adjoining farms, which were addressed by Smith and Rigdon, and an active canvass for converts was inaugurated.[90]

If the above accounts are indeed accurate and correct, and Smith was well acquainted with Rigdon prior to the publishing of the *Book of Mormon* in 1830, then it is reasonable to assume that Rigdon may have had a formative influence on the content of the book, which would potentially explain some of the Swedenborgian themes found throughout.

From the evidence outlined above, it is evident that there are similarities between Swedenborg's works and the *Book of Mormon*. However, it needs to be borne in mind that, just because there are similarities, it does not necessarily mean that there is any direct correlation between the two. It is likely that, if there were Swedenborgian influences on the *Book of Mormon*, then they came as a result of indirect influence from Smith's wider sociocultural environment, rather than as a direct reworking of Swedenborg's thought into the book's narrative. That said, as we have seen and as we will now unpack in more detail, there is compelling evidence that Swedenborgian thought influenced Smith, namely his 1832 vision known as the 'Three Degrees of Glory.'

Heaven and Hell

In the January and February of 1832, Smith was engaged in the work of revising the Bible, and upon returning home from a conference at Amherst, Lorain County, Smith and Sidney Rigdon are said to have had a vision of the Three Degrees of Glory on 16 February. In the Preface of

[90] Daniel Hendrix, 'Origin of Mormonism. Joe Smith and His Early Habits. How He Found the Golden Plates. A Contemporary of the Prophet Relates Some Interesting Facts', *San Francisco Chronicle* (14 May, 1893), 12; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 3, 211-214.

his record of the vision which can be found in Smith's own seven volume *History of the Church*, Smith wrote: 'From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of man, had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled' and that 'It appeared self-evident from what truths were left, that… the term "Heaven," as intended for the Saints' eternal home must include more kingdoms than one.'[91] This idea was not, however, unique to early Mormonism and given Smith's interest in occult thought, he would have been acutely aware of the various conceptions of multiple heavens present in the occultural milieu of nineteenth century America.

For example, Agrippa outlines a universe divided into three worlds: the elemental, the celestial and the intellectual.[92] Of Agrippa's conception of the three worlds Frances Yates has stated that 'Each world receives influences from the one above it; so that the virtue of the Creator descends through the angels in the intellectual world, to the stars in the celestial world, and thence to the elements and all things composed of them in the terrestrial world.'[93] The likelihood of Agrippa's works falling into Smith's possession is, at the very least, a plausibility as they were available in rural America during the nineteenth century.[94] Furthermore, in 1828 Palmyra's newspaper printed a story respectful of Agrippa called 'The Magician's Visiter [*sic*]', referring to him as 'the philosopher' and 'dealer in wonders'.[95]

The vision of the three degrees of glory was received in front of an audience at the home of a member of the Church, John Johnson. Philo Dibble, an eyewitness to Smith and Rigdon's revelation wrote the following account:

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[91] Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. 1, 245.
[92] Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy or Magic* (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2007), 33.
[93] Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge Classics, 2001), 53.
[94] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 100.
[95] 'The Magicians Visiter', *Wayne Sentinel*, Palmyra, NY, 7 Mar. 1828, [4]; D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, Revised and Enlarged, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998: 100.

> …during the time that Joseph and Sidney were in the spirit and saw the heavens open, there were other men in the room, perhaps twelve, among whom I was one during a part of the time… I saw the glory and felt the power, *but did not see the vision*… Joseph would, at intervals, say: 'What do I see?' as one might say while looking out the window and beholding what all in the room could not see. Then he would relate what he had seen or what he was looking at. Then Sidney replied, 'I see the same.' Presently Sidney would say 'what do I see?' and would repeat what he had seen or was seeing, and Joseph would reply, 'I see the same.'… Not a sound nor motion made by anyone but Joseph and Sidney, and it seemed to me that they never moved a joint or limb during the time I was there, which I think was over an hour, and to the end of the vision. Joseph sat firmly and calmly all the time in the midst of a magnificent glory, but Sidney sat limp and pale, apparently as limber as a rag, observing which, Joseph remarked, smilingly, 'Sidney is not used to it as I am.'[96]

When the vision was first revealed to members of the Church, some of them struggled at first to accept it. Brigham Young explained that 'It was a new doctrine to this generation, and many stumbled at it.'[97] He also stated that 'My traditions were such, that when the Vision came first to me, it was directly contrary and opposed to my former education', though he would later embrace the vision wholeheartedly.[98] Young's brother Joseph, a former Methodist minister, recalled: 'Then when I came to read the vision of the different glories of the eternal world, and of the sufferings of the wicked, I could not believe it at first. Why, the Lord was going to save every body!'[99] In the diaries of Orson Pratt and John Murdock, they noted that they attempted

[96] George Q. Cannon, *Juvenile Instructor,* May (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1892), 303–304.
[97] John A. Widstoe (ed.), *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1941), 391.
[98] *Journal of Discourses*, 6:281
[99] 'DISCOURSE By Prest. Joseph Young, Tabernacle, p.m., of March 8, 1857', *Deseret News*, (18 Mar. 1857), 11; Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson, 1901-36), 1:187; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 216.

to reassure Latter-day Saints who questioned the 1832 vision and both described the excommunication of members who publicly denounced the revelation.[100]

It is more than noteworthy that Rigdon was present and took part in the 1832 vision. A former Campbellite minister and biblical scholar, Rigdon had a significant influence on the younger Smith, especially with regard to the formation of doctrines concerning life after death. While there were most certainly beliefs in multiple heavens to be found in antebellum America, it is almost certainly Rigdon, as Smith's first real intellectual convert and confidant, that introduced these ideas to the young prophet. Bushman has described Smith and Rigdon's relationship as one where Smith would often defer to Rigdon on public occasions, as he was the more eloquent speaker, who remembered everything he read, but it was Smith who, 'by his nature took the lead'.[101]

William Hamblin, Daniel Peterson and George Mitton, polemicists for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, now the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, have critiqued the opinion that Smith's vision of the Three Degrees of Glory may have been influenced by contemporary esoteric/occult sources by explaining that 'the obvious antecedent [is] Paul (1 Corinthians 15:40-42), which is extensively paraphrased in Doctrine and Covenants 76.'[102] The prospective candidate for influence upon Smith and Rigdon's 1832 vision is, however, Swedenborg. By Smith's own statement (see above), he was certainly well acquainted with Swedenborg's work, and it was his 1784 publication *Heaven and its Wonders, and Hell*, that we shall take as the primary source of inspiration for the 1832 vision.[103]

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[100] D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 216; Eden J. Watson (ed.), *The Orson Pratt Journals* (Salt Lake City: Eden J. Watson, 1975), 29.
[101] Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 171.
[102] William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and George L. Mitton, 'Mormon in the Fiery Furnace Or, Loftes Tryk Goes to Cambridge', *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, 6, (1994), 2:40; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 216.
[103] For an interesting discussion on Swedenborg's conception of Heaven and Hell, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Swedenborg, Oetinger, Kant: Three Perspectives on the Secrets of Heaven* (West Chester: The Swedenborg Foundation, 2007).

It should be noted here, however, that a claim is not being made for the direct, word-for-word, plagiarism of Swedenborg's work, but instead, it acts as an *influence* with similarities in structure, themes, and content—forming a significant element of Smith's occultural bricolage. It is here that Haws correctly points out that, 'would Latter-day Saints even be troubled if it could be determined that Swedenborgian ideas did influence Joseph Smith? In Mormon thought, revelation is often seen as resulting from specific questions.'[104] Furthermore, Haws explains that many of Smith's revelations came as a result of engaging with the religious opinions of the day. For example, in Doctrine and Covenants (hereafter D&C) section 49, Smith addresses the teachings of Ann Lee and the Shakers, in D&C section 42 discusses New Testament-type communal living, and D&C section 130 addresses sectarian notions of the Godhead. Smith once explained that 'One of the grand fundamental principles of "Mormonism" is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may.'[105] He also stated 'We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true "Mormons".'[106]

Though they differ theologically, both Smith's vision and Swedenborg's account begin with a description of who God *is*. Swedenborg describes the God of heaven as being 'none other… than the Lord alone' and that 'He is one with the Father; that the Father is in Him, and He in the Father; and everything that is holy proceedeth from Him.'[107] Similarly, Smith states that 'the Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior.'[108] Robert Woodford has suggested that, even though Swedenborg had 'parallel beliefs' to Smith, he did not call his three divisions

[104] Haws, 'Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation', 142-67.
[105] Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (American Fork: Covenant Communications, 2002), 324.
[106] Ibid., 327; Haws, 'Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation', 142-67.
[107] Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and its Wonders, and Hell: From Things Heard and Seen* (London and New York: J. M. Dent & Sons/E. P. Dutton & Co., 1911), 3.
[108] D&C 76:1

of heaven telestial, terrestrial, and celestial.[109] While there is no mention of the telestial or terrestrial, there is certainly mention of the celestial. Swedenborg states that the highest, or third heaven is 'divided into two kingdoms, one which is called the Celestial Kingdom and the other the Spiritual Kingdom.'[110] Here Smith does draw upon Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians, by stating that 'the glory of the celestial is one, even as the glory of the sun is one.'[111] Smith also later explained that, in his conception of the degrees of glory, instead of there being two divisions, 'In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees'.[112] Swedenborg further explains that

> Since the angels of the inmost heaven have their inner minds opened to the third degree, their perfection immensely exceeds that of the angels in the middle heaven whose inner minds are opened to the second degree. So likewise the perfection of the angels of the middle heaven exceeds that of the angels of the lowest heaven.
>
> On account of this distinction an angel of one heaven cannot associate with angels of another heaven; that is, no one can ascend from a lower heaven nor descend from a higher heaven…. I have seen others who were permitted to descend from a higher heaven… Although the heavens are so distinct that the angels of one heaven cannon associate with the angels of another, still the Lord unites all the heavens by the direct and indirect operation of His Divine influence.[113]

[109] Robert J. Woodford, '1832, Joseph Smith and "The Vision"', in Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson, (eds.), *Joseph Smith: The Prophet & Seer* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2012), 112.
[110] Swedenborg, *Heaven and its Wonders, and Hell*, 11.
[111] D&C 76:96.
[112] Smith,*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, American Fork, 324; Documented History of the Church 5:391-392.
[113] Swedenborg, *Heaven and its Wonders, and Hell*, 15-17.

In Smith's vision, those who dwell in telestial glory 'receive not of [God's] fullness in the eternal world, but of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial' and those who are in the terrestrial 'receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fullness of the Father' with those in the celestial 'dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.'[114] Smith also stated that God had reserved a ministry for the Old Testament prophet, Enoch, 'unto terrestrial bodies' and that he is 'a ministering angel, to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation.'[115] He also explained that those of the 'terrestrial order' will be 'ministering angels unto many planets.'[116]

While Haws asserts that 'Latter-day Saints readily accept that individuals outside their tradition have been given special, revealed insight into heavenly truths, and thus the points of convergence in Swedenborgianism and Mormonism could reflect accurate, though independent, descriptions of true Christian eschatology'[117] which would explain Smith's inclusion in the vision of his statement that 'Nevertheless, I, the Lord, show it by vision unto many.'[118] It is much more likely that Smith, with his penchant for reconstructing history and revelations, read Swedenborg's works and creatively introduced his concepts into early Mormon doctrine, creating a bricolage of borrowed occultural discourses and radical ideas of universal salvation.

Concluding Comments

The wide-ranging, though often subtle, influence of Swedenborgian thought is an important element of nineteenth century American occulture that, while often overlooked by historians, was nonetheless a significant discourse from which many individuals, social experiments, and

[114] D&C 76:62, 77, 86.
[115] Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 324; Documented History of the Church 5:173
[116] Ibid., 174.
[117] Haws, 'Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation', 142-67.
[118] D&C 76:47.

new religious movements borrowed. As we have seen Ahlstrom argue, Swedenborg's ideas were clearly influential on those who were immersed in the occultural landscape of nineteenth century America, and Smith was no exception.[119] Not only were they attractive and influential, but, as has been displayed above, they were readily available due to a thriving print culture that was present throughout the America's in the nineteenth century.

Though Swedenborg's teachings and charismatic experiences were a radical departure from the received tradition of Christianity, they were nonetheless rational.[120] It was likely the rational nature of Swedenborgian thought that was appealing Smith, due to his grandfather's influence from universalism.[121] With Swedenborgian concepts of multiple heavens being a logical and rational extension of universal salvation. In fact, Swedenborg's declaration of the death of the 'old' church and the coming of the 'new'[122] may have been an attractive aspect of Swedenborg's thought for Smith. The potential influence of Rigdon as a potential collaborator on the content of the *Book of Mormon*, but also on other revelations where he played a clear and active role, such as the Three Degrees of Glory, should not be understated. Establishing Rigdon as a key component and resource for Smith as an emerging burned-over district prophet is essential in understanding how Smith would have come into contact with Swedenborg's ideas, and, perhaps, helps to explain the Swedenborgian content within the *Book of Mormon*.

It is essential that, at this point, the nature of Smith's occultural bricolage must again be stressed, and it is here that we can agree with Forsberg's assessment that that there is no need to claim direct descent from Swedenborg in Smith's revelations.[123] Smith's overall modus operandi was, of course, the cross-fertilization of multiple occultural and religious discourses.

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[119] Ahsltrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 487.
[120] Jane Williams-Hogan, 'Emanuel Swedenborg', in Christopher Partridge (ed.), *The Occult World*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 153.
[121] See Chapter 3.
[122] For an in-depth view of Swedenborg's thought on this subject, see Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, 2 Volumes (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 2010).
[123] Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 159.

It was not a simple cut-and-paste plagiarism of ideas, instead, it was elements of folk magic, universalism, methodism, Swedenborgianism, and as we shall in the proceeding chapter the creative weaving together of these discourses with those from freemasonry, most notably in Mormon temple rituals, amongst many other occultural discourses that were present and available to nineteenth century New York farming communities that Smith made more accessible to that particular audience through his reinterpretation, reimagining, and restructuring in his occultural bricolage that would become The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

5

Freemasonry

Samuel Morris Brown has rightly noted that the masonic influence on Joseph Smith and early Mormonism 'has been obfuscated by both apologists and critics' and that the limited number of 'scholars who have engaged the topic have noted similarities in hermetic spirit between the Latter-day Saint and masonic movements.'[1] The main focus of these scholars tends to be on Mormon temple ceremonies, which will be discussed below, along with the clear and obvious links that they have to masonic rituals. The masonic influence does, of course, go much deeper than temple ceremonies and, as Brown has stated, scholars have, unfortunately, 'failed to acknowledge the wide dissemination of hermetic-sounding ideas in American culture or to investigate the broader contexts of Smith's system.'[2] This chapter will, therefore, examine and unfold these influences so that the extent of the masonic influence on Smith's religion-building imagination and its role as an integral part of Smith's occultural bricolage can be more fully understood and appreciated.

Freemasonry in America: A Brief Historical Overview

It is not known when Freemasonry appeared in America, though it is thought to have arrived sometime after the founding of the Grand Lodge of London, England, in 1717, and most likely

[1] Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven As it is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173.
[2] Ibid., 173.

originated with Freemasons who emigrated from Britain to the colonies.[3] David Stevenson has, however, claimed that it was John Forbes and John Skene, both Quakers, who emigrated to New Jersey in the 1680's, that were the first "known" Freemasons in America.[4] Also, in 1730, Daniel Coxe is thought to have been appointed as the first Provincial Grand Master of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, by the Grand Lodge of London, and in 1731 was toasted as the Provincial Grand Master of North America.[5] Having said that, exact dates that point to the first Freemasons in America are difficult to determine.[6]

Freemasonry was not only accepted by the educated elites, but also found high participation from those across a broad spectrum of American society, including the formation of African American Lodges amongst emancipated slaves.[7] Many of the founding fathers were also involved in various masonic lodges and masonic-related organisations. For example, after visiting London for eighteen months between 1724 and 1726, Benjamin Franklin recognised the 'importance and influence of the Freemasons' and not long after joined the St. John's Lodge in Philadelphia in 1727.[8] Franklin's involvement with Freemasonry lasted for the rest of his life. In 1731, he published the first American copy of Anderson's *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons*[9] and, by 1734, he was Provincial Grand Master in the State of Pennsylvania. Furthermore, according to the *Fraternitas Rosae Crucis* in 1774, he was a member of the 'Council of Three' of the American Rosicrucians.[10] Furthermore, Franklin used his position as

[3] Angel Millar, *Freemasonry: A History* (London: Greenwich Editions, 2005), 198.
[4] David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 203-204.
[5] Michael W. Homer, *Joseph's Temples: The Dynamic Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), 29; See also John Hamill, *The Craft: A History of English Freemasonry* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1986); Allan E. Roberts, *Freemasonry in American History* (Richmond: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply, 1985).
[6] Millar, *Freemasonry*, 198.
[7] Cécile Révauger, 'Freemasonry and Blacks' in Bogdan, H., and J. A. M. Snoek, (eds.), *Handbook of Freemasonry* (Leiden: BRILL, 2014), 422-438; David G. Hackett, *That Religion in Which All Men Agree: Freemasonry in American Culture* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2014), 155-178.
[8] Ronald W. Clark, *Benjamin Franklin: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 43.
[9] James Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons: Containing the History, Charges, Regulations, &c. of that Most Ancient and Right Worshipful Fraternity* (London: William Hunter for John Senex at the Globe, 1723).
[10] David V. Barrett, *Secret Societies: From the Ancient and Arcane to the Modern and Clandestine* (London: Blandford, 1999), 83.

both a Freemason and politician to secure the support of Freemasons in France during the Revolutionary War.[11]

By the time of Franklin's funeral in 1790, however, Philadelphia's masonic lodges chose to ignore the event due to various social and institutional transformations during the sixty years that he had been a member, which led to him being considered the wrong sort of Freemason for the Philadelphia lodges. In 1757, when Franklin left for England, a new set of members had taken over the leadership of the Philadelphia lodges. Calling themselves "Ancients" they sought to distinguish themselves from previous lodges who, they claimed, had profaned the fraternity's sacred traditions. Referring to the earlier lodges as "Moderns" they attempted to establish their authority as the correct form of Freemasonry.[12] While Franklin's lodges—the Moderns—had brought together men of a high social standing and those who could afford the lodges' high membership fees, the new Ancient lodges were much more popular amongst those who lacked monetary wealth, political power, and social distinction.[13] By 1792, the Ancients had spread successfully throughout America, including in the rapidly expanding interior states. On 18th September, 1793, and dressed in full masonic regalia, President George Washington dedicated the United States Capitol. Accompanied by fellow Masons, Washington proceeded to consecrate the building with corn, oil, and wine as what Thomas Jefferson would argue represented 'the first temple dedicated to the sovereignty of the people.'[14]

[11] Millar, *Freemasonry*, 199.
[12] Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
[13] See Roberts, *Freemasonry in American History*; Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*.
[14] Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh, (eds.), *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 20 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1903), XIII, 179.

The William Morgan Affair and the Rise of Anti-Masonry

During the September of 1826, New York State became the centre of anti-masonic sentiment after William Morgan, a stonemason who also wrote for the *Republican Advocate*,[15] disappeared following the publication of his book, *Illustrations of Masonry*,[16] which outlined the rituals of the Royal Arch Degree.[17] As a result of publishing his exposé, it was believed by some, especially among anti-Masons, that Morgan had been both kidnapped and murdered by the Masons.

It is thought that Morgan joined the Masons in Rochester in 1823, but it is unknown exactly where or when he was initiated into the fraternity. That said, we do know that he was a visitor of the Wells Lodge, No. 282, at Batavia, New York, and most certainly received the Royal Arch degree at LeRoy, New York, on 31st May, 1825.[18] The exact details of what transpired between Morgan and the Masons of Batavia is unknown. At some point, however, he found himself excluded from participating in their rituals, thus fuelling his desire to publish an exposé containing their secrets in the *Republican Advocate*.[19] By doing this, of course, Morgan had broken the oath that he and all other Masons agree to at their initiation into the first degree of Freemasonry as an Entered Apprentice:

> …I will always hail, ever conceal, and never reveal any part or parts, art or arts, point or points of the secrets, arts and mysteries of ancient Free Masonry… Furthermore, do I promise and swear that I will not write, print, stamp, stain, hew, cut, carve, indent, paint, or engrave it on anything moveable or immovable, under the whole canopy of

[15] Bogdan and Snoek, *Handbook of Freemasonry*, 308.
[16] William Morgan, *Illustrations of Masonry By One of the Fraternity* (Batavia: William Morgan, 1826).
[17] Paul Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic: Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826-1836* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 202.
[18] Peter Ross, *A Standard History of Freemasonry in the State of New York*, Vol 1, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1899), 310.
[19] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 114.

> heaven, whereby, or whereon the least letter, figure, character, mark, stain, shadow, or resemblance of the same may become legible or intelligible to myself or any other person in the known world, whereby the secrets of Masonry may be unlawfully obtained through my unworthiness. To all which I do most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, without the least equivocation, mental reservation, or self-evasion of mind to me whatever; binding myself under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the roots, and my body buried in the rough sands of the sea, at low water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours.[20]

After news of Morgan's intentions were leaked, however, it sparked a series of strange events. The authorities firstly arrested him as a debtor, so that his home could be searched for the manuscript.[21] Masons also used local papers to tarnish Morgan's name, claiming that he was 'both a swindler and a danger to the Craft.'[22] A mob, thought to be Masons, set fire to the print shop, though local citizens thwarted their efforts by scattering the mob and putting out the fire.[23] However, a 'petty debt charge' saw Morgan arrested and placed in jail for a second time to await trial in Canandaigua on 11th September, 1826.[24] He was eventually released on 12th September, but when his wife, Lucinda, reached the jail in Canandaigua, he had disappeared. It is thought that, despite cries of murder, he was kidnapped on the street in broad daylight and transported to the Fort Niagara powder magazine—an abandoned gun powder factory—via a network of Masons across Western New York.[25] Whitney Cross has claimed that, while it is possible he 'may have been released across the Canadian border,' it is more likely that he was

[20] Morgan, *Illustrations of Masonry By One of the Fraternity*, 21.
[21] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 114.
[22] Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 53.
[23] Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic*, 3; Whitney R. Cross. *The Burned-over District*, 1965: 114.
[24] Kathleen Smith Kutolowski. 'Antimasonry Reexamined: Social Bases of the Grass-Roots Party', in *The Journal of American History*, Vol 71, No. 2 (Sep 1984), 271.
[25] Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic*, 3.

'tied in a weighted cable, rowed to the center of the Niagara River at its junction with Lake Ontario, and dropped overboard.'[26] These claims are, of course, entirely speculative in nature, as no evidence of Morgan's actual fate has ever materialised. Nevertheless, there was some excitement in 1881 when the *New York Times* published an article claiming that a skeleton had been discovered in a quarry in Pembroke, Genesee County, 11 miles west of Batavia. Upon the skeleton was found a ring, bearing the initials 'W.M.' (Morgan's initials) and a small tin box which contained a scrap of paper, whereupon the words "Masons", "Liar", "Prison", "Kill" and the name "Henry Brown" were purported to be written.[27] To confuse matters even further, one group of Masons claimed that they had paid Morgan $500 to disappear,[28] and it was also claimed that a badly decomposed body that washed up on the shores of Lake Ontario in 1827 was the body of Morgan, but was later found to be the body of one Timothy Monroe, a Canadian.[29]

Regardless of the nature Morgan's actual fate, his disappearance and supposed murder caused a significant backlash against the Masons, which resulted in the conviction of Eli Bruce, a Mason, for participating in Morgan's abduction. Bruce's conviction was to be only the beginning of a series of investigations that resulted in eighteen trials across five counties. Out of fear of prosecution, many Masons left the state. Anti-Masonic fervour increased, however, when a large number of the accused served brief jail sentences or escaped punishment altogether. There were many who suspected a cover-up by Masons serving on juries and the

[26] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 115.
[27] 'William Morgan's Bones', in *New York Times*, June 22, 1881. Available at: http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9F00E5DD103CEE3ABC4A51DFB066838A699FDE [Accessed 28/02/2017] Henry Brown was a lawyer and Mason in the area local to Morgan who published a book in 1829 entitled *A Narrative of the Antimasonick Excitement, in the Western part of the State of New-York, During the Years 1826-7-8, and a part of 1829*.
[28] Edward Sylvester Ellis, *Low Twelve: "By Their Deeds Ye Shall Know Them"* (New York: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co, 1920), 247.
[29] Clyde Forsberg, *Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), xv.

bench[30] and when local citizen's committee's petition to the state legislature to conduct a special investigation was rejected, the suspicion of a conspiracy was, for many, the only logical conclusion.[31] Michael Homer has noted that the intensity of anti-Masonic sentiment was akin to that of the revivalist sermons experienced during the First and Second Great Awakenings in the 'Burned-over District.' He has also commented on the fact that there was a clear divide between more orthodox, conservative types of religion, which became prominent within the anti-Masonic movement, such Methodists and Presbyterians. This would eventually give rise to the Anti-Masonic Party a year later. Having said that, many Freemasons found support with the Universalists, whose ideas surrounding universal salvation and rationalism harmonised better with masonry. [32]

Interestingly, some eighteen years after Morgan's disappearance, a non-Mormon journalist named B. W. Richmond visited Nauvoo to write a story on the Mormons and stumbled upon a rather controversial connection between Mormonism and Masonry. Living in Nauvoo was none other than Morgan's widow, Lucinda Morgan Harris.[33] A few days after Richmond's arrival, the Smith brothers were martyred in Carthage, Illinois, and when their bodies were returned home to Nauvoo, Richmond noted that not only were both Emma Smith and Mary Fielding Smith present, grieving over the death of their husbands, but so also was Harris, '…her face covered, and her whole frame convulsed with weeping.'[34] Unbeknown to Richmond, however, Harris was one of Smith's plural wives, who, it is thought, married Smith in a secret ceremony sometime in 1838.[35]

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[30] Goodman. *Towards a Christian Republic*, 4.
[31] Cross, *The Burned-over District*, 115.
[32] Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, 'Freemasonry and Community in the Early Republic', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (Winter, 1982), 552; see also Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 54.
[33] Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 43.
[34] B.W. Richmond. 'The Prophet's Death', in *Chicago Times*, repr. In *Deseret News*, Nov. 27, 1875: 2-3; See also Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 43.
[35] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 43-44.

The Smith Family and Freemasonry

According to John Brooke, 'from the 1790s, the Smith family was exposed to masonic influences. Indeed, Freemasonry formed an important link between… the Smiths and the Cowderies'.[36] This was largely due to the establishment of the Grand Lodge of Vermont in 1794, chartering its fifteenth lodge in Randolph in 1798, the town in which the Smiths settled in 1802. Smith Sr. may have joined this lodge, but if he did, no membership lists are available.[37] As it stands, there is currently no evidence to support the claim that Smith Snr. joined any lodge, although, in 1817, a "Joseph Smith"—not an uncommon name at the time—joined Ontario Lodge No.23 in Canandaigua, New York.[38] Homer has argued, however, that it 'is doubtful that this man was the father of the Mormon prophet since the family never lived in Canandaigua.'[39] It is also known that, sometime after the Morgan scandal, Smith Snr. spent a night in jail with one of Morgan's supposed abductors.[40] Although, it is highly unlikely that he would have gained a deep understanding of Freemasonry after just one night. Hyrum Smith, on the other hand, is most certainly known to have been a member of the Mount Moriah Lodge, No. 112 of Palmyra between 1827-28, a few short years before his younger brother founded the Church of Christ (LDS), and was one of Smith Jnr.'s closest confidents right up until their martyrdom in Carthage, Illinois, in 1844.[41] Smith Snr.'s brother-in-law, John C. Waller, was also the Senior Warden of the Federal Lodge in Randolph in 1804, along with a John Smith, possibly Smith Snr's brother, who served as Senior Warden in 1813.[42] It is also unsurprising that the Smith family was so heavily involved in Freemasonry, given its convergence with

[36] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 140.
[37] Ibid., 140.
[38] Ibid., 140.
[39] Michael W. Homer, '"Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry": The Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism', in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 27:3 (Fall 1994), 16.
[40] Brown, *In Heaven As it is on Earth*, 174.
[41] Grant H. Palmer. *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 75; Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 140; Brown, *In Heaven As it is on Earth*, 174; Bogdan and Snoek, *Handbook of Freemasonry*, 308.
[42] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 140.

Universalism during the early nineteenth century.[43] Indeed, within the Smith family's immediate locale in Ontario County, there were twenty-six lodges and seven Royal Arch chapters.[44]

As mentioned above, Brown has argued that Smith Jr 'enjoyed a rich and sustained encounter with Masonry' and has pointed out the lack of scholarship in this area.[45] From an emic perspective, this is more than likely due to prospective censorship and even the threat of possible excommunication.[46] From an etic viewpoint, however, those critical of the LDS Church tend to be disgruntled ex-members who have an axe to grind, sweeping over possible links and ignoring, often entirely, the creative blending together of various religious and occultural discourses at the heart of Smith's religion-building imagination.

Smith showed little, if any, real involvement with Freemasonry during his time in New York and Ohio, and is not known to have joined any lodge prior to his initiation in the Nauvoo Lodge in Illinois. That said, there is some evidence to suggest that he had, at the very least, an intellectual/theological interest in the fraternity and some scholars have gone so far as to claim that he was caught up in the anti-Masonic excitement during the time of Morgan's abduction, and that the *Book of Mormon* itself is anti-Masonic in nature.[47] The fact that one of Smith's earliest and closest associates, Martin Harris, once 'publickly declared that the "Golden Bible" is the Anti-Masonick Bible' and that he had also been an active participant in Palmyra's anti-Masonic conventions is often used to support this claim.[48] Quinn, however, has demonstrated

[43] Kutolowski, 'Freemasonry and Community in the Early Republic', 552-553.
[44] Charles T. McClenachan, *History of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Freemasonry in New York*, 2 vols. (New York, 1892); *Extracts of the Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of the State of New York, at its Annual Meeting, February, 5828* (Albany, 1828); Thomas S. Webb, *The Freemason's Monitor, or, Illustrations of Masonry ; in two parts* (New York, 1802); Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 157.
[45] Brown, *In Heaven as it is on Earth*, 173.
[46] Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 353; Bogdan and Snoek, *Handbook of Freemasonry*, 307-308.
[47] See for example Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004).
[48] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 202.

that 'Harris's interpretation may have not reflected Smith's view' and any interpretations of passages in the *Book of Mormon* as being anti-Masonic are purely superficial.[49]

To unpack this last point a little, it's worth noting that, as Homer has explained, 'Smith's writings, translations, and revelations contained markers of not only Christianity but also Masonry and anti-Masonry and demonstrate that he studied the Bible, Christian churches, and Freemasonry in order to understand the characteristics of the primitive church.'[50] As we have seen, because Smith was an enthusiastic occultural bricoleur, it would be odd if this was not the case. It is clear that Smith did not disregard any information in his quest to re-establish what he believed was the true order of religion. For example, in a sermon he gave on 9th July, 1843, he stated that 'One of the grand fundamental principles of "Mormonism" is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may.'[51] Shortly after, and during another sermon on 23rd July, 1843 he explained that '[we] should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true "Mormons".'[52] Such was Smith's *modus operandi*.

Both Smith and the Smith family are known to have read a wide range of literary subjects, not excluding Freemasonry.[53] Massimo Introvigne has claimed that Smith 'was familiar with Morgan's anti-Masonic classic', although it has to be said that there is no direct evidence to support this claim.[54] This is not to say, however, that Smith was not aware of Morgan's exposé, as Homer has pointed out,

[49] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World* View, 202-207.
[50] Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 65.
[51] Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (American Fork: Covenant Communications, Inc., 2002), 324.
[52] Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 327.
[53] Quinn. *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 1998: 66-97
[54] Massimo Introvigne, 'Freemasonry and New Religious Movements' in Bogdan and Snoek, *Handbook of Freemasonry*, 308.

> Masonic publications, including Masonic newspapers, transplanted English- or American-born commentaries, and exposes by those opposing the Craft, enabled initiates and students of Freemasonry to become familiar with the philosophy of Freemasonry and to discover a number of legends concerning temple building, ancient records, and key words preserved since the time of Adam which were intended to allow initiates access to the true knowledge of God.[55]

The availability of masonic texts in and around Smith's local environment has also been noted by Quinn, who, in his book *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, goes into painstaking detail about their availability and use by the Smiths.[56] Brooke has further explained that the 'Masonic fraternity was a dominant feature of the cultural landscape in… Smith's Ontario County' and that 'the thirty-six towns of old Ontario County… contained twenty-six lodges and seven Royal Arch chapters, one of each located in Canandaigua and Palmyra.'[57] Masonry was, therefore, an integral part of the American religious and intellectual landscape during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

While it is difficult to pin down the extent to which Freemasonry influenced Smith throughout the early stages of his prophetic career, it is known that he joined the fraternity during his time in Nauvoo, Illinois. This is acknowledged by Mormon and non-Mormon scholars alike. For example, Bushman acknowledges that Smith 'became an "Entered Apprentice" Mason on March 15, 1842' and that, within a few days, he was raised to the degrees of Fellow Craft and then Master Mason.[58] Likewise, Introvigne has suggested that 'Smith became persuaded that the original rituals of Freemasonry could be traced back to the pre-Christian Jewish rites of Solomon's Temple' and that Mormonism 'would restore also

[55] Homer, '"Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry"', 16.
[56] Op., cit., Quinn, 66-97.
[57] Brooke. *The Refiner's Fire*, 1994: 158
[58] Bushman. *Rough Stone Rolling*, 2006: 450

Freemasonry to its pristine, uncorrupted status.'[59] Forsberg has suggested, however, that it could be conceivable that 'Smith became a Mason in 1830 and kept it a secret', though he rightly points out that any record of an initiation prior to 1842 has not been found.[60] He does, however, go on to explain that there are reasons to assume that, when Smith was raised to the office of Master Mason, 'it was in the nature of a resumption of duties rather than an investiture.'[61] Other than referring to how quickly Smith was raised from Entered Apprentice to Master Mason (just two days), Forsberg offers no solid evidence to support his claim. That said, there are clear indications that Smith was influenced, at least to some degree, by Freemasonry prior to his initiation in Nauvoo (as will be discussed below).

Masonic Influences on the *Book of Mormon*

After the *Book of Mormon* was published in 1830, there were many who were quick to criticise its contents, with a number of them recognising the influence of Freemasonry within its pages. Alexander Campbell, founder of the Stone-Campbell or Campbellite movement, and former associate of Sidney Rigdon, explained that 'this prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles… decides all of the great controversies… even the question of Freemasonry.'[62] Likewise, Eber D. Howe, in his summary of the *Book of Mormon*, wrote 'Freemasonry is here introduced and… is spoken of in very reproachful terms, in consequence of the members [of the Church] having bound themselves by secret oaths to protect each other from the justice of the law' and that 'the Nephites are represented as being Anti-Masons and Christians, which carries with it some evidence that the writer foresaw the politics of New York in 1828-29.'[63] The early biographer of Smith, Fawn Brodie, noted that 'the last half of the book, however, possessed a

[59] Introvigne, 'Freemasonry and New Religious Movements', 309.
[60] Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 45.
[61] Ibid., 45
[62] Campbell, *Delusions*, 93.
[63] Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 81.

dramatic intensity utterly lacking in the first half… the remainder was charged with a crusading spirit that stemmed directly from the greatest murder mystery that ever stirred New York State.'[64] The murder mystery that Brodie refers to here is, of course, the Morgan affair (discussed above). According to Brodie's analysis, during a period when the Masons tended to be demonized (even being accused of a number of unsolved murders in New York), Smith 'quickly introduced into the book the theme of the Gadianton Band, a secret society whose oaths for fraternal protection were bald parallels of Masonic oaths, and whose avowed aim was the overthrow of the democratic Nephite government.'[65]

It's worth noting here a debate among Mormon apologists and critics about the actual meaning of the term "secret combinations" and whether or not the *Book of Mormon* reflects the anti-Masonic sentiment of the time or, indeed, any form of Freemasonry at all. As John-Charles Duffy has observed,

> Orthodox Mormon historians have resisted reading the *Book of Mormon*'s condemnation of secret combinations as reflecting nineteenth-century anti-Masonic rhetoric. This is not surprising, given the religious issues at stake. Anti-Masonic readings tend to assume that Smith is the author of the *Book of Mormon* (rather than the translator of an ancient record by the power of God); and since contemporary Mormons are not inclined to regard Masonry as a satanic conspiracy, they are naturally loathe to believe that their scripture presents it as such.[66]

Duffy sums up the issues well when it comes to Mormon scholarship, but this also extends in the other direction. Critics such as Vogel have leaned heavily on the anti-Masonic thesis

[64] Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: the Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Random House, 1995), 63.
[65] Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 65.
[66] John-Charles Duffy, 'Clyde Forsberg's Equal Rites and the Exoticizing of Mormonism', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 39, Issue 1 (Salt Lake City, Spring 2006), 7.

without exploring the complexities of Smith's religion-building imagination. Instead, and in Vogel's estimation, 'the *Book of Mormon*'s reflection of the cultural milieu of early nineteenth-century America, particularly the anti-Masonic controversy that pervaded New York during the late 1820s' is, quite simply, obvious.[67] While Vogel has gone to some lengths to try to prove his theory,[68] due to its supposed apparent nature, scholars such as Nathan Oman have rightly pointed out that critics are 'probably overplaying the linguistic influence of anti-Masonry' and that 'in the absence of specific evidence linking a use of the term to anti-Masonry, the best way of reading post-1826 uses of secret combination is probably to simply look at their contexts and take the plain meaning at face value.'[69] Though, this literalistic reading of Smith's revelations, including an inflexibility in allowing for Smith to draw upon more than a singular theme in the construction of his new religion, lies at the heart of the problems with current scholarship.

As we have seen, the argument of this, and what all of these scholar's miss, is that Smith was an occultural bricoleur whose thought was fundamentally and methodologically eclectic. Hence, it is unsurprising that he effectively borrowed from both Freemasonry *and* anti-Masonry, including other ideas, concepts, and themes that may, at face value, seem incompatible. This, of course, as we have seen, makes it difficult for scholars to reach a solid conclusion as to where Smith drew his inspiration from. As was discussed in Chapter Two, Smith was significantly influenced by a range of various and often conflicting ideas in such a way that, through a process of cross-pollination with other occultural discourses, they were intricately woven into his emerging religious framework. Smith did not discriminate between discourses in his quest to establish his Church as the one true religion. For example, and as we

[67] Dan Vogel, 'Echoes of Anti-Masonry: A Rejoinder to the Critics of the Anti-Masonic Thesis', in Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (eds.), *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 275.
[68] See Dan Vogel, 'Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonick Bible,'' *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 9 (1989): 17–30; Vogel, 'Echoes of Anti-Masonry', 275–320.
[69] Nathan Oman, '"Secret Combinations": A Legal Analysis', *FARMS Review*, 16:1, (2004), 70.

saw in Chapter Three, while the *Book of Mormon* comes across as decisively anti-universalist, the actual teaching is rather more complex and requires a knowledge of the particular type of universalism that the *Book of Mormon* seeks to address. Smith's *modus operandi* is, therefore, often misunderstood. Instead, the *Book of Mormon* appears to address theological and philosophical differences or nuances, rather than criticising an entire religion, group, denomination, or movement. While many historians acknowledge the anti-Masonic elements in the *Book of Mormon*, they cannot avoid the conclusion that Smith somehow changed his mind later in life and became a Mason in Nauvoo. Indeed, they ignore, not only the subtleties of Freemasonry's influence on Smith's system, but the depth and breadth of its influence throughout his prophetic career. Again, this is unsurprising, particularly when one recalls that (as discussed above) many of those closest to Smith were in fact Masons. His father and older brother, Hyrum Smith, were Masons. Heber C. Kimball, John Smith, Newell K. Whitney, John C. Bennett, George Miller, Lucius N. Scovil, Elijah Fordham, Austin Cowles, Noah Rogers, and James Adams were all Masons upon converting to Mormonism. Oliver Cowdery, *Book of Mormon* scribe and witness, was even a Royal Arch Mason.[70]

Masonic symbolism can be found in much of Smith's earliest revelations, including the *Book of Mormon* and Smith's explanations as to its origins. For example, the story of the discovery of the golden plates in a stone vault in the side of a hill, hidden by the prophet Moroni, displays an uncanny resemblance to the Royal Arch myth of Enoch, who, after being instructed in a vision, preserved the masonic mysteries by carving them onto golden plates and placing them in a stone vault marked with pillars, that would later be rediscovered by Solomon.[71] The way in which the story of Smith's golden plates was communicated would

[70] Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 45.
[71] Thomas Smith Webb, *The Freemasons Monitor; or Illustrations of Masonry: In Two Parts* (New York, 1802), 246-260; Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 157.

have been of particular interest to many Masons. For example, in 1839, Orson Pratt, one of Smith's original Twelve Apostles, explained that

> A hole of sufficient depth had been dug, and a flat stone laid in the bottom; then there were fore set erect, at the outer edges of the bottom stone, joined together by some kind of Cement, so as to form a Box. On the Bottom stone was laid a shield or Breastplate, from that arose three pillars formed of Cement, on the top of these pillars laid the Record, together with the "Urim and Thummim."[72]

Likewise, Smith's mother, Lucy, also described the discovery of the plates in a similar way when she related the angel Moroni's instructions to Smith, she wrote 'the record is on a side hill on the Hill of Cumorah 3 miles from this place remove the Grass and moss and you will find a large flat stone, pry that up and you will find the record under it laying on 4 pillars'.[73] The coupling of an ancient record with stone pillars would have suggested to Masons that it was of a divine nature. Smith Snr was much more explicit in his articulation of the *Book of Mormon*'s connections to Freemasonry. In 1830, he explained in an interview with Fayette Lapham that 'it consisted of a set of gold plates… They were in the form of a book… Under the first plate, or lid, he found a pair of spectacles… the eyes not of glass, but of diamond. On the next page were representations of all the masonic implements, as used by Masons at the present day.'[74]

In masonic mythology, the origins of Masonry can be traced back to the Grand Architect (God) who gave instructions to the first man (Adam) in the Garden of Eden.

[72] William I. Appleby, *Biography and Journal of William I. Appleby, Elder in the Church of Latter Day Saints* (1848), 33; Vogel, *Early Mormon Document*, Vol. 1, 148.
[73] Lucy Smith, *Preliminary Manuscript* (1845), 40; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 1, 290-291.
[74] Fayette Lapham, 'Interview with the Father of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, Forty Years Ago. His Account of the Finding of the Sacred Plates', *Historical Magazine*, 7 (May, 1870), 306; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, Vol. 1, 462.

Following the fall, these mysteries were then passed down to Adam's sons, including Cain, who took them with him when he was cursed, marked, and sent away following the murder of his brother, Abel. It is on the basis of this biblical narrative that Masonry is separated into two types: (a) Primitive Masonry, as practiced by Adam and his righteous posterity through Seth; (b) Operative Masonry, as practiced by Cain and his posterity, which becomes corrupt and impure (Spurious Masonry). Primitive Masonry, which was the knowledge that Adam retained once he lost his immortality following the fall, is preserved from the flood by Enoch, who inscribed them on golden plates and buried them in his stone vault. A form of this teaching was, it is believed, adopted by Noah, who was saved from the flood with his family. Noah instructs his sons in the masonic mysteries, but this becomes corrupted again with Ham. An impure form of Masonry is then passed down as various groups intermix between Noah and Solomon (who discovers Enoch's golden plates). Solomon then keeps the mysteries of Masonry secret and Primitive Masonry is passed down through masonic guilds. Operative Masonry, on the other hand, is believed to have survived in its corrupt and incomplete form through the ancient pagan mystery religions.[75]

These ideas and themes of masonic schism and corrupted mysteries that needed to be restored were clearly influential on Smith. The *Book of Mormon*'s overall theme is that of two warring factions, the Nephites and the Lamanites, whose story begins with a single family who leave their home near Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity of Israel and the destruction of Solomon's Temple. The family travels to the Americas, taking with them golden plates that contain both a patriarchal lineage and 'the fulness of the everlasting gospel.'[76] Not long after arriving in the Americas the family splits into the followers of Nephi—the

[75] George Oliver, *The Antiquities of Freemasonry: Comprising Illustrations of the Five Grand Periods of Masonry from the Creation of the World to the Dedication of King Solomon's Temple* (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1823); Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 165-166.
[76] Joseph Smith, *The Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013), Introduction.

Nephites—and the followers of his brother, Laman—the Lamanites. The golden plates and the everlasting gospel go with Nephi, while the followers of Laman descend become 'wild, ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness.'[77] At the close of the book, the last Nephite prophet seals up the golden plates in the side of Cumorah (also known as 'Mormon Hill')—a drumlin in Palmyra—also leaving there the Urim and Thummim (see Exodus 28:30).[78] Smith then effectively becomes a latter-day Solomon when he discovers the plates and begins the translation of them with the use of the Urim and Thummim, thus beginning the process of restoring the ancient mysteries that had become lost and corrupted over time. When placed next to the masonic story of Enoch and Solomon, the *Book of Mormon* could be understood as a retelling of the contest between Primitive and Operative or "spurious" Freemasonry.[79] With Smith siding decisively with Primitive Masonry.

The parallels may, of course, be simply coincidental. Though, as the faux-historical myths of Freemasonry were being popularised in the 1820's, it is easy to see how Smith may have used these as a foundation for the *Book of Mormon*. Furthermore, when Smith was restoring the Melchizedek Priesthood in the 1830's, he included the same masonic patriarchal lineage, from Adam to Enoch, in his revelations. In particular, in the September of 1832, Smith declared 'from Enoch to Abel, who was slain by the conspiracy of his brother, who received the priesthood by the commandments of God, by the hand of his father Adam, who was the first man.'[80] Cheryl L. Bruno has explained that the 'rich and mythic wisdom' of the character

[77] Enos 1:20.
[78] The Urim and Thummim were tools by which Smith claimed to translate the *Book of Mormon*, see Joseph Smith 'Church History', *Times and Seasons*, 3, 1 March (1842), 707; Michael Hubbard Mackay and Nicholas J. Frederick, *Joseph Smith's Seer Stones* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2016), 45-57.
[79] Albert G. Mackey, *The Symbolism of Freemasonry: Illustrating and Explaining Its Science and Philosophy, its Legends, Myths and Symbols* (New York: Clark and Maynard, 1869).
[80] D&C 84: 15-16.

of Enoch, which significantly influenced Royal Arch Freemasonry, 'in turn, informed early Mormonism's own scriptural account.'[81]

Masonic influences extend much deeper than simply informing the general story of the *Book of Mormon*. For example, in the past critics have pointed out the similarities between Smith Snr's early visions and Lehi's visions in the *Book of Mormon*.[82] Yet, they have often failed to point out the influence of Masonry of Smith Snr's visions and their subsequent adoption into the *Book of Mormon*. Smith Snr's dreams, Lehi's vision, and the journey of the Freemason in the world are intimately linked. As mentioned above, Smith Snr. is known to have been a Mason and his various dreams and visions bare remarkable similarities to masonic practices. Smith's mother, Lucy, later recounted one particular vision, in which Smith Snr. is said to explain that

> I was traveling in an open, desolate field, which appeared to be very barren. As I was this traveling, the thought suddenly came into my mind that I had better stop and reflect upon what I was doing, before I went any farther… The road was so broad and barren that I wondered why I should travel in it; for, I said to myself, 'Broad is the road, and wide is the gate that leads to death, and many there be that walk therein; but narrow is the way, and strait is the gate that leads to everlasting life, and few there be that go in thereat.' Traveling a short distance further, I came to a narrow path. This path I entered, and… I beheld a beautiful stream of water… as far as my eyes could extend I could see a rope, running along the bank of it… beyond me was a low, but very pleasant valley, in which stood a tree such I had never seen before… and it bore a kind of fruit… as white as snow… I drew near and began to eat of it, and I found it delicious beyond

[81] Cheryl L. Bruno, 'Congruence and Concatenation in Jewish Mystical Literature, American Freemasonry, and Mormon Enoch Writings', *Journal of Religion & Society*, Vol. 16, (2014), 1.
[82] See for example, Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 145, 162-163; Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 68-71; Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 131, 135.

> description… I went and brought my family… and we all commenced eating…. We were exceedingly happy, insomuch that our joy could not be easily expressed. While thus engaged, I beheld a spacious building… It was full of doors and windows, and they were all filled with people, who were finely dressed… they pointed the finger of scorn at us, and treated us with all manner of disrespect and contempt.[83]

In Smith Jnr's restructuring of his father's story, the *Book of Mormon* prophet, Lehi, sees in a vision a spacious field, a river of water, a rod of iron running along the bank of the river, a tree 'whose fruit was desirable to make one happy', and a 'great and spacious building' which was 'filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.'[84] More importantly, in Lehi's vision, he refers to a 'mist of darkness' that arises while people were holding onto the rod of iron, 'yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced their path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.'[85] Smith Snr's rope and Lehi's iron rod may be a creative reimaging of the initiation into the Royal Arch Degree, wherein they symbolically work through the 'process of exaltation,' which involved initiates being tied up with ropes, blindfolded, then 'two rows of companions formed a line, each linking hands with those on the opposite side. The initiates then crawled between the rows as knuckles, knees, and feet poked, prodded, and crushed them', crawling over a various debris and having to pass three times under an arch.[86] In a much more striking resemblance, in the Scottish Rite, a Mason must swim through a raging river, smoke obscures the vision of the initiate, a large castle appears

[83] Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, Lucy Mack Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 48-49.
[84] 1 Nephi 8:1-38.
[85] 1 Nephi 8:23.
[86] Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 270.

opposite a small grove of trees, in the middle of which stands an acacia tree bearing fruit similar to that in Lehi's dream.[87]

John Cook Bennett and Freemasonry in Nauvoo

The Nauvoo period of LDS Church history (1839-1846) is generally considered by scholars to be the point at which Freemasonry begins to have an influence on Smith's religion-building imagination. However, as we have seen above, the truth is much more complex. In the July of 1840, John Cook Bennett, who had briefly met Smith and Rigdon in Ohio in 1838 and was likely acquainted with Rigdon as early as 1830,[88] wrote a number of letters to Smith expressing an interest in Smith's growing religion, which numbered approximately 16,000 people in Nauvoo and its surrounding communities. Smith, of course, responded and Bennett made his way to Nauvoo, where he resided with the Smiths for at least eight months.[89] Bennett was, of course, a well-established Freemason. Having been initiated in Belmont Lodge No. 16, St. Clairsville, Ohio, in 1826, he subsequently became a member of Pickaway Lodge No. 23 in Circleville, Ohio, from 1828-1829, and then the Friendship Lodge No. 89 in Barnesville, Ohio, from 1830-1832. Bennett also served for a time as the Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Ohio. (This was possibly because he had been a Methodist preacher and a follower of Alexander Campbell.[90]) During this time, Bennett quickly became one of Smith's closest confidants, helping Smith to quickly secure a city charter in the December of 1840, being only one of six cities in Illinois at the time to do so. The charter allowed Smith to establish a city government, court, university and even a city militia.[91] By January 1841, Smith had received a

[87] Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 70-71; J. Blanchard, *Scotch Rite, Masonry Illustrated: The Complete Ritual of Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite* (1905).
[88] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 251.
[89] Michael W. Homer, *Joseph's Temples: The Dynamic Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), 142-143.
[90] Ibid., 142; See also, Andrew F. Smith, *Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 56.
[91] Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 143-144.

revelation to build a temple, and, as a reward for Bennett's help, Smith helped him to become Nauvoo's first mayor and major general of the Nauvoo legion, chancellor of Nauvoo University, Chief Justice of the Municipal Court, and a director of the cooperative Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing Association.[92] Then, on 8 April, 1841, Smith made Bennett an Assistant President of the Church, effectively replacing Rigdon as Smith's Chief Advisor. By the October of 1841, Bennett and other Masons in Nauvoo had successfully persuaded Columbus Lodge to recommend them to the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, who permitted them to form a lodge and work under dispensation—a temporary lodge that can 'make Masons' until it receives a charter from the Grand Lodge.[93]

Having satisfied the requirements to form a lodge, on 29 December, 1841, eighteen Masons met in the Hyrum Smith's office and organised a lodge. All of the Masons present were also, of course, Mormons. George D. Miller was elected Master of the Lodge, with Hyrum Smith as Senior Warden and Lucius Scovil as Junior Warden. Bennett would be the secretary. On 30 December, the lodge met and adopted bylaws that would help to govern the lodge, and Smith, Rigdon and forty other Mormons petitioned the lodge for membership.[94] On 15 March, 1842, the Nauvoo Lodge was officially installed by Grand Master Abraham Jonas of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in a grove of trees near the temple. During the evening, Smith and Rigdon were initiated as Entered Apprentices in the Red Brick Store.[95] The next day, they were passed as Fellow Craft and Raised as Master Masons. This unusual event, carried out by Grand Master

[92] Ibid., 144; Brook, *The Refiner's Fire*, 251.
[93] Albert G. Mackey, *The Principles of Masonic Law: A Treatise of the Constitutional Laws, Usages and Landmarks of Freemasonry* (New York: Jno. W. Leonard & Co., 1856), 77-80; Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 145-146.
[94] Mervin B. Hogan, *The Official Minutes of the Nauvoo Lodge* (Des Moines: Research Lodge No. 2, 1974); Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 148.
[95] Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* Volume 4 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948), 550, 556.

Jonas, is known as being made 'Masons at sight'.[96] Smith and Rigdon were, therefore, not required to memorise the Fellow Craft degree before receiving the degree of Master Mason.

Smith became heavily involved in the Nauvoo Lodge after being raised to the degree of Master Mason and Bennett continued to have significant influence on Nauvoo Mormonism. Bennett's eclectic interests—medicine, Freemasonry, restorationist religion—was likely appealing to Smith. His background in the magical culture of New England would have also made him somewhat of an occultural bricoleur, not uncommon amongst nineteenth century American farming communities. This was also appealing to the Mormon prophet.[97] Yet, Bennett's close association with Smith was not to last. During May, 1842, questions began to be raised about his character. Grand Master Jonas had written to Master Miller, explaining that 'Bennett is an expelled Mason having been expelled some time ago from a lodge at Fairfield Ohio—I have this from Dr. King of Decatur, who is a very worthy Mason, and was a member of the said lodge at Fairfield at the time of Bennett's expulsion.'[98] Jonas also informed Miller that Bennett was married to a woman in Ohio and not the bachelor that he claimed to be. He then he instructed Miller to correct these "irregularities" taking place in the Nauvoo Lodge. Jonas's letter was read at a special meeting of the Nauvoo Lodge, which was attended by Smith, Bennett, and other church leaders, wherein Bennett was removed from his office of Secretary of the lodge and Willard Richards was invited to take his place, *pro tem*. Bennett denied the accusations but was disfellowshipped from the Church two days later by Hyrum Smith and William Law.[99] What likely would have infuriated the Mormon prophet further, would have been when Bennett attempted to justify his behaviour by comparing it to Smith's extramarital exploits.[100] By June, 1842, Bennett had left Nauvoo.

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[96] Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 550, 556.
[97] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 251
[98] *Letter from Abraham Jonas to George Miller* (May 4, 1842); Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 151.
[99] Smith, *The Saintly Scoundrel*, 76; Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 152.
[100] Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. 4, 287, 295-296, 341.

Bennett's meteoric rise and rapid fall from grace are often the primary focus of those conducting research into the influence of Freemasonry on Smith's religion building imagination, due to its obvious and apparent nature. Bennett was most certainly highly influential in the establishment of the Nauvoo Lodge, which brought Freemasonry front and centre to Smith's occultural bricolage in the final years of his life. On 4 May, 1842, Smith gathered together nine of his closest family and friends in his office in the Red Brick store and introduced them to the temple endowment. It is not understood what took place between Smith and these men, though Brigham Young recorded in his journal that Smith 'taught the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days, and I received my washings, anointings, and endowments.'[101] (As we will see below, the endowment would become a source of contention between Smith and Illinois Masons.) The historical record is also replete with accounts from Smith's contemporaries who solidified the links between Freemasonry and Mormonism. Heber C. Kimball in writing to Parley Pratt explained that

> We have received some precious things through the Prophet on the Priesthood which would cause your soul to rejoice. I cannot give them to you on paper for they are not to be written so you must come and get them for yourself... There is a similarity of Priesthood in Masonry. Brother Joseph says Masonry was taken from Priesthood but has become degenerated. But many things are perfect.[102]

Many early Latter-day Saints understood the relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism in this way, which may have been a result of the masonic mythology surrounding the corrupted nature of Spurious Masonry (as discussed above). Joseph Fielding, writing during

[101] Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 102; also quoted in Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 248.
[102] *Letter from Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt* (June 17, 1842).

the Nauvoo period, explained that 'many have joined the Masonic institution. This seems to have been a stepping stone or preparation for something else, the true origin of Masonry.'[103] Nauvoo Lodge Secretary, Richards, also wrote 'Masonry had its origin in the Priesthood.'[104] Again, Benjamin F. Johnson told of his interactions with Smith, who explained to him that 'Freemasonry, as at present, was the apostate endowments, as sectarian religion was the apostate religion.'[105]

The fact that early Mormons understood Masonry in this way shows that, unlike many of Smith's other revelations, its influence on his thinking was much clearer and widely known—which is why, in the past, scholars have found it so easy to establish the links between Freemasonry and Mormonism. Smith was, therefore, explicit in his borrowing from Masonry, creating his own ritual and relying on the mythology of Masonry to legitimise his creative endeavours. Understood through this particular masonic lens, the pure Primitive Masonry of Adam which was passed down to Enoch had become corrupted and Smith was restoring the ancient order of things, the fulness of the priesthood, and the everlasting gospel.

Freemasonry and the Temple

Due to the sacred nature of Mormon temple ceremonies, many Mormon scholars are reluctant to speak in any detail about the relationship between Freemasonry and the rituals that take place within the temple. For example, Gordon Bitner Hinckley, fifteenth president of the LDS Church, explained that temples are 'special buildings dedicated to the Lord' and that members of the church go there 'to receive sacred ordinances and to make covenants with our Heavenly Father' which, he further explains are 'necessary for our salvation.'[106] Apologist and BYU

[103] Andrew F. Ehat, ''They Might Have Known That He Was Not a Fallen Prophet'—The Nauvoo Journal of Joseph Fielding', *BYU Studies*, 19, No. 2 (1979): 145, 147.
[104] Joseph Grant Stevenson (ed.), *Richards Family History* (Provo, UT: Stevenson's Genealogical Center, 1991), 3:90.
[105] Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Heber City, UT: Archive Publishers, 2001), 113.
[106] Gordon B. Hinckley, *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1979), 247.

scholar, Hugh Nibley, also wrote that 'The temple must be there. It is not just a myth, it is the core of all of our civilization… In the temple we are taught by symbols and examples'.[107] In Nibley's view, the temple and its ceremonies can be traced to 'the same class as the temples of the Egyptians' and that 'The ordinances of the Egyptian temple were essentially the same as those performed in ours… they have a common origin.'[108] Erik Hornung has labelled this type of thinking as "Egyptosophy", the idea that 'the land of the Nile was the fount of all wisdom and the stronghold of hermetic lore' and that it 'represents a hunger for hidden truths and deep, underlying relationships that is not satisfied by the scientific discipline [of Egyptology]'.[109] Furthermore, Hornung even recognised Mormonism as 'a modern religious community that seeks to connect itself with ancient Egypt.'[110]

Mormon historian, Richard Bushman, has sought to look beyond what he believes are *prima facie* interpretations of the endowment ceremony, suggesting that

> The resemblances of the temple rites to Masonic ritual have led some to *imagine* the endowment as an offshoot of the fraternal lodge movement… The lodges' success attested to the need for bonding among American males… But the spiritual core of the Nauvoo endowment was not male bonding. By 1843 women were sitting in the ordinance rooms and passing through the rituals. Adam and Eve, a male-female pair, were the representative figures rather than the Masonic her Hiram Abiff. The aim of the endowment was not male fraternity but the exaltation of husbands and wives.[111]

[107] Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond this Ignorant Present* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 25-26.
[108] Ibid., 26
[109] Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1.
[110] Ibid., 177
[111] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 451. Emphasis added.

Bushman's focus on the differences between the endowment and masonic rituals is not an uncommon argument among Mormon apologists. Furthermore, and much like Nibley, he seeks to situate Mormon temple ceremonies within an ancient historical and religious setting. He suggests that 'The Nauvoo endowment is more akin to aspects of Kabbalah… the fundamental trajectory of the endowment coincided with the passions and expectations of mystics for centuries past and especially with the Kabbalistic dream of conjunction with the divine.'[112] It is important to point out that Bushman recognised both masonic and kabbalistic influences within the endowment ceremony, which shows that he, perhaps unwittingly, recognised Smith's *modus operandi* as an occultural bricoleur.

Regardless, Smith clearly saw value in the rituals of Masonry and sought to incorporate them into his church. During the meeting that took place in his office above the Red Brick store in May, 1842, Smith wrote that he instructed them 'in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchisedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days…'[113] This is a conspicuous reimagining of Masonry. Smith originally intended for his endowment ceremony to be kept a secret, only to be revealed at certain places within the temple. Yet, and in a similar way that masonic exposés described the various rites and degrees within Freemasonry, so too both nineteenth and twentieth century Mormon exposés and commentaries would describe the LDS endowment ceremony.[114] What all of these suggest is that the endowment consists of a number of stages

[112] Bushman, *Rough Stone* Rolling, 451.
[113] Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Volume 5 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948), 2.
[114] Increase McGee Van Dusen, *The Sublime and Ridiculous Blended, called the Endowment: As was Acted by upwards of Twelve Thousand, in secret, in the Nauvoo Temple…* (New York, 1848), 6-11; John Hyde Jr., *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York, 1857), 89-101; William Jarman, 'Temple Endowment Ritual Ceremonies [1869]', Wesley M. Jones (ed.), *Hell upon Earth* (Berkeley: University of California, 1965); Mrs. S. G. R. 'Mysteries of the Endowment House', *Salt Lake City Tribune* (Sept. 24, 1879); William J. Whalen, *The Latter-day Saints in the Modern Day World: An Account of Contemporary Mormonism* (New York, 1964). 159-194; Gerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City, 1982), 462-473. See also Brodie, *No*

and themes that are remarkably similar to Masonry. These stages and themes, along with their masonic counterparts, are outlined as follows:

Masonic and Mormon Preparation

In Morgan's exposé, the candidate for the first degree of Freemasonry is instructed to remove all of his clothing and is 'furnished with a pair of drawers, kept in the Lodge for the use of candidates; he is then blindfolded, his left foot bare, his right in a slipper, his left breast and arm naked, and a rope, called a cable-tow, 'round his neck and left arm.'[115] The use of rope to guide the candidate being symbolic in Smith Snr's dreams and reimagined as the rod of iron in Lehi's dream, as seen above. In a similar fashion, the Mormon candidate is also instructed to remove their clothing and are given a garment that Smith adorned with masonic markings which were linked to various points throughout the endowment ceremony.[116] In both rituals, the candidates are washed, anointed with consecrated oils, and given new names. In Masonry the new name is simply 'CAUTION'.[117] In Smith's reconstruction the candidate is given an entirely new name, which s/he is instructed to 'always remember and… keep sacred and never reveal, except at a certain place that will be shown you hereafter.'[118] This new name would be presented at 'the veil,'[119] prior to being symbolically accepted into the Celestial Kingdom (a

Man Knows My History, 278-282; Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 248-249; Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 232-234; Cheryl L. Bruno, Joe Steve Swick III, Nicholas S. Literski, *Method Infinite: Freemasonry and the Mormon Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2022), 322-350.

[115] Morgan, *The Mysteries of Freemasonry*, 9.

[116] Bruno, Swick, Literski, *Method Infinite*, 326; David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 92-95.

[117] Morgan, *The Mysteries of Freemasonry*, 14.

[118] 'The Initiatory', *The LDS Endowment*, www.ldsendowment.org [accessed 09/10/22]; See also Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 280; Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 248-249; Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 232-234; Bruno, Swick, Literski, *Method Infinite*, 322-350.

[119] A large white sheet that symbolically represents the separation between God and man. At the climax of Smith's endowment ceremony, the initiate makes his/her way to the veil to 'converse with the Lord through the veil' before being allowed to enter the presence of the Lord in the Celestial Kingdom. See 'The Veil', *The LDS Endowment*, www.ldsendowment.org [accessed 09/10/22].

separate room in the temple). In doing this, Smith wove in Swedenborgian ideas of multiple heavens directly into the endowment ceremony.

Masonic and Mormon Creation Dramas

In eighteenth and early nineteenth century masonic rituals, themes of the creation played a significant part in the instruction of the new candidates. These creation narratives appeared to reject the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* and instead worked through six periods of creation from unorganised matter into an Earth populated with animals and people. The masonic creation narrative began by explaining

> Before he was pleased to command this vast world into existence, the elements and the materials of the creation lay blended without form or distinction. “Darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”; when the great Jehovah, as an example to man, that things of moment ought to be done with deliberation, was pleased to take SIX DAYS in periodically bringing it from chaos to perfection.
>
> The Supreme Architect shewed the first instance of his power, by commanding light; and seeing that it was good, he gave it his sacred approbation, and distinguished it by a new name, by calling the light day, and giving the appellation of night to darkness; and in order to keep new framed matter within just limits, the SECOND period was employed in laying the fermament, which was to keep the water above the clouds, and those below them asunder, and God called the firmament heaven. On the THIRD period, he commanded those waters to be restrained within due bounds, on the retreat of which dry land appeared, which he called "earth, and the gathering together of the

waters, called the seas." The earth being yet irregular and destitute of any kind of cultivation. God spake the word, and immediately it was covered with a most beautiful carpet of flowers, plants, trees, herbs, and shrubs of all sorts, in full growth and perfection.

On the FOURTH period, these two grand and bright luminaries, the sun and moon were created; the former to rule the day , and the latter to rule the night, and to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. Beside these two great lights, the omnipotent Architect was pleased to bespangle the ætherial concave with in numerable stars, so that man, whom he intended to create, might employ himself, at suitable periods, in contemplating his supereminent wisdom, and justly praising his divine majesty and glory.

On the FIFTH period, he created the birds, which fly in the air, so that man might please both his eyes and ears in being delighted with some for their beautiful plumage and uncommon instinct, and others for their melodious notes. He also commanded the waters to bring forth a variety of fish for our use; and in order to impress on our minds a reverential awe of his omnipotence, he created great whales and every living creature, that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly.

On the SIXTH period, he created the beasts of the field, and reptiles to crawl upon the earth. Here we may perceive the most evident manifestation of his goodness, wisdom and mercy in all his proceedings. He produced what effect he pleased without the help of natural causes; thus he gave light to the world before he created the sun and moon, and made the earth fruitful and to bring forth plants without the influence of the

> heavenly bodies. He did not create the beasts of the field until he had provided for them sufficient herbage; nor did he make man till he had prepared everything requisite for his comfort and pleasure. To dignify the work of his hand he made him after his own image, and gave him "dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Man came into the world with greater splendour than any of the creatures which preceded him, as they were brought into existence with no other ceremony than a Dixit Deus, i.e. God said, but in the creation of man there was a consultation of the adorable Trinity, saying, "Let us make man," and he was accordingly formed out of the dust of the earth, into his nostrils was breathed the breath of life, and he became a living soul. In this one creature, was concentrated everything , which was excellent in creation. He was made a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour To him, likewise, dominion was given over all other creatures, and he was formed after the image of GOD, so that he might the better be enabled to adore him, who had been graciously pleased to be stow on him the faculty of speech, the use of reason, and a soul, which may enjoy the most ecstatic bliss through all the ages of a never - ending eternity.[120]

This lengthy creation narrative formed a part of the Rite of Illumination in the Entered Apprentice Degree. Any initiate passing through the Mormon endowment ritual, and who was familiar with the masonic creation narrative above, would likely not have been phased by Smith's reworkings due to his openness about restoring it to its Primitive form. In 1847, one former Mormon recollected that

[120] James Hardie, *The New Freemason's Monitor; or, Masonic Guide* (New York: George Long, 1819), 111-113.

I am now placed in a certain position on the floor designed to represent a certain thing, and that is Adam in embryo. All is now silent for a while, the silence is at length broken by a rumbling noise, as from a distance, the noise terminates in a voice: "Let the light be divided from the darkness; let the light be called day, and the darkness night: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters; Let the firmament be called Heaven; let the waters under the firmament be gathered together in one place, and let the dry land appear; let the dry land be called earth; and the gathering together of the waters, seas; let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit, after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth; let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth, after their kind."

After the individual thus representing the Lord behind the curtain (as in the act of creation,) is supposed to have created the heavens and the earth, cattle, beasts, creeping things, fowls of the air, fish of the sea, &c., he continues his work farther and says, "Now let us go down and make man in our image, after our likeness." All this time I am in silence, hearing, but not seeing any thing, and knowing not what is to take place the next moment; for all is new and unexpected, from first to last, of this whole drama. When he says, "Let us go down and make man," I hear his footsteps approaching the room where I am; he comes in--comes to where I am--puts his hand to the floor, and then on me, as if fulfilling this scripture: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."[121]

[121] Increase McGee Van Dusen, *Positively True: A Dialogue between Adam and Eve, the Lord and the Devil, Called the Endowment* (Albany, NY: C. Killmer, 1847).

It is clear that, while the language of Smith's reconstruction might be somewhat different, the overall themes remain the same. In a similar way to Smith's reworking of Swedenborg's ideas and their incorporation into his revelations—in particular the three degrees of glory (terrestrial, telestial, and celestial kingdoms)—he simplified the themes present in Masonry and made them accessible to his converts.

It is worth noting here that Swedenborg had a significant impact on Freemasonry, particularly in the eighteenth century on the Rite of Perfection. This was composed of twenty-five degrees that were later expanded into thirty-three in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.[122] This important part of Smith's *modus operandi* is often overlooked, yet is nevertheless significant in understanding how he went about creating his new religion. Indeed, this is no doubt what he meant when he made the following statement: 'I stood alone… to combat the worldly wisdom and multiplied ignorance of eighteen centuries… which… would open the eyes of the world, and make 'plain the old paths.''[123]

Masonic and Mormon Signs, Tokens, and Penalties.

Signs, tokens, and penalties have long been understood to be a significant part of Freemasonry, by which fellow Masons understand to what degree another Mason has been raised. The tokens may, superficially, look like various handshakes. However, understood in its historical context, "token" simply means proof, clue, or symbol.[124] That said, the signs and tokens exchanged in Masonry are rarely used outside of a masonic lodge and, as such, are not usually a test of membership. They are instead used at particular points within masonic rituals where they might represent actions or stories of biblical characters. Smith reimagined and restructured these signs

[122] Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire*, 96-97; Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 97.
[123] Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. 6, 74.
[124] Angel Millar, *Freemasonry: A History* (London: Greenwich Editions, 2005), 9.

and tokens into his endowment ceremony and gave them new meaning as a result. To illustrate this point, a side-by-side comparison is provided below:

Entered Apprentice	First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood
Penalty Sign 'This is given by drawing your right hand across your throat, the thumb next to your throat, your arm as high as the elbow, in a horizontal position.'	**Penalty Sign** 'In executing the sign of the penalty, the right hand, palm downward, is drawn sharply across the throat, then dropped from the square to the side.'
Token 'The right hands are joined together as in shaking hands and each sticks his thumb nail into the third joint or upper end of the fore finger.'	**Token** 'The Grip -- Hands clasped, pressing the knuckle of the index finger with the thumb.'
Oath '...binding myself under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the roots…'[125]	**Oath** 'We and each of us, covenant and promise that we will not reveal any secrets of this... Should we do so, we agree that our throats be cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by their roots.' [126]

[125] Morgan, *The Mysteries of Freemasonry*, 13-15.
[126] *Temple Mormonism: Its Evolution, Ritual and Meaning* (New York: A. J. Montgomery, 1931), 18.

Fellow Craft	Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood
Oath To all which I do most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear… binding myself under no less penalty than to have my left breast torn open and my heart and vitals taken from thence and thrown over my left shoulder, and carried into the valley of Jehosaphat, there to become a prey to the wild beasts of the fields, and vultures of the air…'	**Oath** 'We and each of us do covenant and promise that we will not reveal the secrets of this, the Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign, grip or penalty. Should we do so, we agree to have our breasts cut open and our hearts and vitals torn from our bodies and given to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.'
Penalty Sign 'The sign is given by drawing your right hand flat, with the palm of it next to your breast from the left to the right side with some quickness, and dropping it down by your side.'	**Penalty Sign** 'The Sign is made by placing the left arm on the square at the level of the shoulder, placing the right hand across the chest with the thumb extended and the drawing it rapidly from the left to right and dropping it.'
Grip 'Take each other's hands as in ordinary hand-shaking and press the top of your thumb hard	**Grip**

against the space between the first and second knuckles of the right hand.'[127]	'The Grip is given by clasping the hand and pressing the thumb in the hollow between the first and second knuckle of the hand.'[128]
Master Mason	First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood
Sign 'The sign is given by raising both hands and arms to the elbows, perpendicular, one each side of the head, the elbows forming a square.'	**Sign** 'The sign is made by bringing both hands to the square, palms to the front.'
Penalty Sign 'The Penalty Sign is given by putting the right hand to the left side of the bowels, the hand open, with the thumb next to the belly, and letting it fall; this is done tolerably quick.'	**Penalty Sign** 'As the last words are spoken the hands are dropped till the thumbs are in the center of the stomach and drawn swiftly across the stomach to the hips, and then dropped to the sides.'
Oath 'binding myself under no less penalty than to have my body severed in two in the midst...	**Oath** 'We and each one of us do covenant and promise that we will not reveal any of the secrets of this... Should we do so, we agree

[127] Morgan, *The Mysteries of Freemasonry*, 39-41.
[128] *Temple Mormonism*, 20.

	that our bodies be cut asunder in the midst and all our bowels gush out.'
Grip 'Grasp each other's right hands very firmly, the spaces between the thumb and first finger being in interlocked and the tops of the fingers being pressed hard against each other's wrist where it joins the hand, the fingers of each being somewhat spread.'[129]	**Grip** 'The Grip is made by grasping the hand, the forefinger on center of the wrist and little fingers locked.'[130]

The clear and obvious links, here, between masonic signs and tokens and those contained with the LDS endowment ceremony may be problematic for those who take a faith-based approach to studying Mormon history. Though, understood within its context, the endowment ceremony represents an ongoing attempt by Smith to purify the religious and occultural discourses present within nineteenth century New England and restore them to their original form. Brigham Young later described the purpose of signs, tokens, and penalties within the Mormon endowment, explaining that were essential for the Saints to 'pass all the sentinels leading into the celestial kingdom and into the presence of God' and that they will 'possess the keys of the eternal Priesthood, that you may receive every word, sign, and token… and know how to pass from one degree to another, and enter fully into the joy of your Lord.'[131]

[129] Morgan, *The Mysteries of Freemasonry*, 54-55.
[130] *Temple Mormonism*, 22.
[131] Widstoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 395-396.

The Five Points of Fellowship

The endowment culminates in the initiate embracing God (an actor/officiator) face-to-face through a veil upon the five points of fellowship—a clear and distinct borrowing from masonic symbology.[132] In masonic ritual, the five points of fellowship is the final grip that a Mason must learn in order to become a Master Mason. This is linked to the allegory of Grand Master Hiram Abiff, Chief Architect for Solomon's Temple, murdered by fellow Masons for refusing to divulge the secrets of a Master Mason, and buried in a shallow grave outside the city. The initiate, representing the dead body of Abiff, is then raised by his fellow Master Masons using the five points of fellowship. They then separate and the Master utters the following explanation:

> Brother, foot to foot teaches you that you should, whenever asked, go on a brother' errand, if within length of your cable-tow, even if you should have to go barefoot and bareheaded. Knee to knee, that you should always remember a Master Mason in your devotion to Almighty God. Breast to breast, that you should keep the Master Mason's secrets, when given to you in charge as such, as secure and inviolable in your breast, as they were in his own, before communicated to you. Hand to back, that you should support a Master Mason behind his back, as well as before his face. Mouth to ear, that you should support his good name as well behind his back as before his face.[133]

This was simplified by Smith in the endowment ceremony, instead the initiate is presented at the veil upon which they are told, 'The five points of fellowship are given by putting the inside of the right foot to the inside of the Lord's, the inside of your knee to his, laying your breast

[132] The five points of fellowship, along with other clearly masonic symbolism, was removed from the endowment ceremony in 1990. Subsequent revisions have also removed parts of the endowment that could be construed as masonic. See Bruno, Swick, Literski, *Method Infinite*, 343.
[133] Morgan, *The Mysteries of Freemasonry*, 60.

close to his, your left hands on each other's backs, and each one putting his mouth to the other's ear....'[134] The five points of fellowship remained a part of LDS temple rituals until it was removed in 1990.[135] Smith's creative borrowing from masonry should not be misunderstood as a simple cut and paste form of plagiarism, instead in Smith's ritual, the restoring of Spurious Freemasonry to its Primitive and purest form involved a process of sacralising the masonic symbols, imbuing them with salvific power, and coupling them with Swedenborgian themes of multiple heavens, displaying, of course, Smith's creative capabilities as an occultural bricoleur.

At the same time that Smith was restructuring masonic rituals, he was also involved in the creation of a women's organisation that would later become known as the Female Relief Society. Smith invited twenty women to meet with him in the masonic hall in the Red Brick store on Water Street on 17 March, 1842. Sarah M. Kimball, Margaret Cook, and others enlisted the help of Eliza R. Snow, who would become one of Smith's plural wives in June, 1842. They drafted some ideas around forming an organisation that would help furnish clothes for the men working on the Nauvoo temple, including other charitable works. Although Smith did not approve of the proposals, he would go on to adopt the suggestion of the organisation regarding the provision of help towards the building of the temple. However, preferred to 'organise the women under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood',[136] which would include, of course, introducing females to his restructured masonic rituals.

Adoptive Rite Freemasonry and the Female Relief Society

When the Female Relief Society was organised, Smith originally appointed three men to be in charge: future President of the Church, John Taylor, would act as Chair, Willard Richards as

[134] *Temple Mormonism*, 22.
[135] Bruno, Swick, Literski, *Method Infinite*, 343.
[136] Sarah M. Kimball, 'Auto-biography', *Women's Exponent* (September 1, 1883), 51.

Secretary, with both reporting to Smith who would act a President. Later, the women would select their own presidency, with Emma Smith becoming the Society's first President, and Sarah Cleveland and Elizabeth Ann Whitney becoming her counselors.[137] At the commencement of the meeting, Richards would note that a Bible lay open with a scrap of paper on which were written the words of a Masonic prayer: 'O, Lord! help our widows, and fatherless children! So mote it be. Amen. With the sword, and the word of truth, defend thou them. So mote it be. Amen.'[138] This would signify that a masonic meeting was taking place. Despite Smith's instructions not to let the society grow "too fast",[139] by the time they had met for the sixth time on 28 April, 1842, its membership had grown to 229. Smith explained that the society should 'grow up by degrees', potentially echoing language employed in the instruction of an initiate in the Fellow Craft degree of Masonry.[140]

During this time, rumours began to circulate in Nauvoo that Smith had authorised men to have sexual relations with women outside the confines of marriage, but also including extramarital affairs. This was in large part due to the exploits of Smith's former confidant, the disgraced Bennett, who had himself been pursuing both married and unmarried young women in Nauvoo.[141] Bennett had told these women that illicit sexual intercourse was acceptable if kept a secret. Similarly, in May 1842, Chauncey Higbee was brought before the high council and charged with teaching 'the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women if it was kept secret &c and that Joseph had authorised him to practice these things.'[142] To make

[137] *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book* (March 17, 1842) 7-8. Also, the word 'counselor' is used within Mormonism to denote an individual's position in a presidency.
[138] Ibid., 4.
[139] Ibid., 6.
[140] Ibid., 22.
[141] Smith*, The Saintly Scoundrel*, 80-83.
[142] *Joseph Smith to Thomas Carlin* (June 24, 1842); *Joseph Smith to the Church* (June 23, 1842); *Nauvoo High Council Minutes* (May 20, 1842); See also Joseph Smith, *Journal* (May 24, 1842); Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 460.

matters worse, Bennett never denied the accusations, but instead charged Smith with taking part in the practices.

To refute these claims, Smith, Young, Hyrum Smith, Kimball, Richards, and Vinson Knight had Emma Smith read an article to the Relief Society sisters 'which would test the ability of members in keeping secrets'—an allusion to masonic vows of secrecy.[143] This article, while not explicit in its naming of those involved, addressed the rumours circulating that Smith had authorised men to engaged in illicit sexual intercourse with other women. The article then explained, in more explicit terms, that 'there may be some among you who are not sufficiently skill'd in Masonry as to keep a secret' and that 'this epistle be had as a private matter in your Society, and then we will learn whether you are good Masons.'[144] There were, however, two problems with this "epistle". Firstly, at the time, Smith was already married to at least eight other women: Lucinda Morgan, Louisa Beaman, Zina and Presendia Huntington, Agnes Coolbrith, Sylvia Lyon, Mary Lightner, and Patty Sessions.[145] A number of these women were present during Emma's reading of the article. Secondly, it shows that Smith had indeed begun to induct females into his reconstructed form of Masonry.

While females had largely been prohibited from joining masonic lodges, in large part due to James Anderson's *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons* (1723), there was, in fact, a historical precedent for their initiation into Freemasonry. Originating in England with a relatively unknown masonic tradition known as the Harodim,[146] Adoptive Rite Freemasonry—lodges that admitted women—travelled first to Paris and then spread across the European continent. Jan A. M. Snoek has explained that 'one of the best-documented Adoption lodges from the earliest period is the "Loge de Juste' of 1751", though earlier lodges do appear in the

[143] *A Book of Records* (March 30, 1842), 22-25.
[144] Ibid., 22-25.
[145] See Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2014).
[146] Bogdan and Snoek, *Handbook of Freemasonry*, 18.

historical record, such as the Sisters of Adoption which was a part of the lodge L'Anglaise in Bordeaux in 1746.[147] There were also two known lodges, one in Jena, Germany, the other in Copenhagen, Denmark, both founded by Wilhem Mathias Neergaard.[148] A number of French exposés were also published in 1744, which included *Le Secret des Francs-Maçons*, *Le Catéchisme des Francs-Maçons*, *La Franc-Maçonne*, and *Le Parfait Maçon*. It is generally accepted, Snoek notes, that the rituals contained in *Le Parfait Maçon* bear a strong correlation to those contained within the rituals of the Adoptive Rite.[149] The earliest known printed rituals of the Adoptive Rite in English were, however, contained in a booklet titled, *Women's Masonry or Masonry by Adoption* (1765).[150] The first American exposé was published in 1827.[151]

According to Snoek, there are only three degrees in Adoptive Rite Freemasonry: 'Apprentice,' 'Companion,' and 'Mistress.'[152] Interestingly, in the Apprentice degree, the 'walls of the lodge are covered in white curtains… behind and above the Grand Master, on a step, is an exterminating angel… holding a drawn sword in the right hand.'[153] Smith may have employed this imagery when he approached Zina Huntington and asked her to engage in what he called 'celestial marriage'. Huntington later recalled that Smith 'sent word to me by my brother, saying, "Tell Zina I put it off and put it off till an *angel with a drawn sword* stood by me and told me if I did not establish that principle upon the earth, I would lose my position and my life."'[154] During the ritual, the female apprentice also makes an oath that 'I promise and swear before the Creator of all things... to guard exactly the secret of the Lady Masons and of Masonry, on the penalty of being struck by the sword of the exterminating angel...'[155]

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[147] J. A. M. Snoek, *Initiating Women in Freemasonry: The Adoption Rite* (Leiden: BRILL, 2011), 4, 9-34; See also Homer, *Joseph's Temples,* 22-25; Bruno, Swick, Literski, *Method Infinite*, 276-278.
[148] Snoek, *Initiating Women in Freemasonry*, 23-24.
[149] Ibid., 27.
[150] Ibid., 11.
[151] *Illustration of the Four First Degrees of Female Masonry, as Practiced in Europe* (Boston, 1827).
[152] Snoek, *Initiating Women in Freemasonry*, 35.
[153] Ibid., 36.
[154] Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 80-81. Emphasis added.
[155] Snoek, *Initiating Women in Freemasonry*, 38.

Huntington was also present during the founding of the Relief Society and would have most certainly been involved with Smith's introduction of Masonry into the Society.

In the Companion degree, the initiated Sister finds herself in the same room as the Apprentice degree. This time, however, 'she is now led to the representation of the tree of knowledge of good and evil' and, in a fashion not dissimilar to Smith Snr and Lehi's dream, the tree is 'fed by a river.'[156] The Master then picks an apple from the tree and 'while offering the fruit to her he says: "Now receive the fruit from the tree which is in the midst of the garden of Eden; as soon as you will have tasted from it, you will become as one of us, knowing good from evil."'[157] It is here that Snoek makes a valuable observation: 'The message is clear: to eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was for Eve not at all an act of curiosity, but on the contrary a necessary sacrifice in order to save mankind.'[158] Smith also incorporated this view, including the Garden of Eden drama, into his endowment ceremony.[159] The Mistress degree is somewhat different, in that it focuses on (a) God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, (b) the Ark of Noah, and (c) the Tower of Babel. The initiated Sister then swears an oath 'to love and support my Brothers and Sisters at all occasions according to my possibilities.'[160]

Samuel Morris Brown mistakenly overlooks the history of Adoptive Rite Masonry in nineteenth century America in his argument that the inclusion of women 'was a rank heresy for American Masons.'[161] As we have seen, this is inaccurate. Forsberg is also mistaken in his claim that Mormonism was 'the first of its kind in the United States.'[162] By 1826, Adoptive

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[156] Ibid., 41.
[157] Ibid., 51-52.
[158] Ibid., 54.
[159] See Increase McGee Van Dusen, *Positively True: A Dialogue between Adam and Eve, the Lord and the Devil, Called the Endowment* (Albany, NY: C. Killmer, 1847); *The LDS Endowment*, www.ldsendowment.org [accessed 09/10/22].
[160] Snoek, *Initiating Women in Freemasonry*, 43.
[161] Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as it is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 188.
[162] Forsberg, *Equal Rites*, 96.

Rite Freemasonry had become well established throughout America and, indeed, was part of the fabric of nineteenth century American occulture.[163] As Bruno, Swick, and Literski have pointed out, women within these various lodges, in much the same way as Smith's endowment ceremony, 'participated in prayer circles, ritually experienced a "heavenly ascent" into the presence of a Grand Court or Council, and symbolically achieved exaltation.'[164] The similarities between Smith's rituals and those of the Adoption Rite, and in the absence of any concrete evidence linking Smith to the adoption rite, may just be coincidental. The similarities of the rituals and the availability for Smith to have at the very least been aware of the Adoption Rite, should not, however, be dismissed out of hand.

Despite being frequently reminded by Smith and other leaders about the importance of keeping a secret, there is no evidence to suggest that Relief Society sisters were required to do so through any ritual oaths or obligations. Smith did, however, begin to initiate women into his endowment ceremony where they were, in fact, required to keep a secret through ritual oath—oaths that were, as discussed above, reconstructed through his interactions with Masonry.

Between June 1842 and July 1844, the Relief Society's founding members and other officers were introduced to celestial marriage, with several becoming Smith's plural wives.[165] While Smith attempted to keep this practice secret, tensions began to mount as some of those closest to Smith became disaffected as his circle of wives became increasingly larger. Indeed, one of his chief opponents was his former counselor in the First Presidency, William Law.

[163] Bruno, Swick, Literski, *Method Infinite*, 277.
[164] Ibid., 277.
[165] Polygamy or "celestial marriage" in Nauvoo has been well documented. See, for example: Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*; Brian C. Hales and Laura H. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015); Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989); See also, Brodie, *Know Man Knows My History*; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*; Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977).

The Martyrdom of Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith

In the spring of 1844, Smith was experiencing the height of his success as prophet and President of his Restored Church. Among his accomplishments, he was a candidate for President of the United States, Mayor, Judge of the municipal court, Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion, steamboat owner, and husband to multiple women. Yet, his situation was increasingly precarious. Bennett, for example, was hard at work exposing Smith's plans to establish a "theodemocracy" in America. He also overexaggerated the extension of his reconstructed masonic rituals to women by suggesting that their induction was based on sexual favours, similar to other lodges (such as Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite).[166] Law, a once trusted friend and advisor to Smith, quickly turned against him upon learning about Smith's teaching of celestial marriage. Soon Law, along with other former Mormons—notably, Wilson Law, Robert and Charles Foster, Francis and Chauncey Higbee, and Charles Ivins—began publishing the *Nauvoo Expositor*, which outlined a long list of practices that Smith and the Mormons were engaged in, such as Smith's attempts to unite church and state, anointing himself King, and adultery through polygamous marriage.[167]

Beyond Smith's internal wranglings, Illinois Masons were becoming increasingly agitated over rumours that Smith had both exposed and corrupted the secrets of Freemasonry, thus breaking the oaths that he had made as a Mason. They were furious about Smith's refusal to send lodge records to Springfield for inspection. This resulted in all of the Mormon lodges throughout Nauvoo and Iowa being declared clandestine.[168] Despite this, Smith appeared undeterred. On 26 May, 1844, he declared

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[166] John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints, or, An Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842) 220; Patrick Q. Mason, 'God and the People: Theodemocracy in Nineteenth Century Mormonism', *Journal of Church and State*, Volume 53, Issue 3, Summer (2011), 355; Bruno, Swick, Literski, *Method Infinite*, 278.

[167] *Nauvoo Expositor*, Vol. 1, No. 1, June 7 (Nauvoo, 1844).

[168] *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Illinois, from its Organisation in 1840 to 1850 Inclusive* (Freeport, Illinois, 1892).

> I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force against religious bigotry, priestcraft, lawyer-craft, doctor-craft, lying editors, suborned judges and jurors, and the authority of perjured executives, backed by mobs, blasphemers, licentious and corrupt men and women—all hell knocking off a corner here and a corner there. Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty, who will give me dominion over all and every one of them, when their refuge of lies shall fail, and their hiding place shall be destroyed, while these smooth-polished stones with which I come in contact become marred.[169]

While not entirely explicit, Smith's use of the terms "lying editors" and "suborned judges and jurors" were no doubt references to his former friends and associates who published the *Nauvoo Expositor*, and who likewise got the grand jury in Carthage to indict him for polygamy. Although Smith's public persona was that of the resolute and unphased prophet of God, behind closed doors he was using his position as Mayor to rule against the *Nauvoo Expositor*. It was, he argued, a public nuisance. As such, he directed the city marshal to destroy the press. On Monday, 10 June 1844, the marshal and men of the Nauvoo legion removed the press, scattered the type, and burned the remaining copies of the newspaper.[170] The Smith brothers were then charged with both inciting a riot and also, more seriously, treason. Although they were acquitted, twice, in Nauvoo, these events ignited protests across Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri.

[169] Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, 401.
[170] See Dallin H. Oaks, 'The Suppression of the Nauvoo Expositor', *Utah Law Review,* vol. 9, no. 4 (Winter 1965), 862–903.

Governor Thomas Ford ordered the brothers to go to Carthage jail, where they awaited, what was hoped by Ford, an impartial trial.

On the evening of 27 June, 1844, a group of at least a hundred men with blackened faces stormed Carthage jail, where the Smith brothers, along with Taylor and Richards, were being kept. The mob comprised of various members of Illinois lodges,[171] who quickly overpowered the guards. Having pre-empted an attack, Cyrus Wheelock had the previous day smuggled in a six-shooter and John Fullmer a single-shot pistol to Smith.[172] As the mob ran up the stairs the four men jumped for their weapons and a brief firefight ensued. Hyrum Smith was the first to be killed, a musket ball striking him on the left side of the nose, followed by three more that hit him in the thigh, torso, and shin. John Taylor was struck in the thigh and, as he crawled under a bed, he was struck again in the hip. Joseph unloaded six shots into the hall, though it is unknown if he killed anyone in the process. He then rushed to the window where he raised his arms in the masonic signal of distress.[173] As he did so, he was struck in the hip and another shot from outside of the window struck him in the chest. As he fell out of the window, he cried 'O Lord my God!' at which point, another shot struck him through the heart and another his collarbone. Landing on the floor, he struggled to sit up, dying within seconds. Smith's final words were known as 'The Masonic Grand Hailing Sign of Distress' to nineteenth century Masons who had passed the Master Mason degree.[174] It was expected that, when a Mason used the distress signal, other Masons would come to their aid.

To the very end, however, Smith was, as has been discussed and evidenced throughout this thesis, an occultural bricoleur. His use of the masonic distress signal is simply a part of the protection he sought to invoke, for at the time of his death he carried in his pocket a Jupiter

[171] Bruno, Swick, Literski, *Method Infinite*, 402.
[172] Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 549.
[173] Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 2002),396-397; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 550; Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 416.
[174] Bruno, Swick, Literski, *Method Infinite*, 403; Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, 172-173.

talisman which he constructed himself according to the instructions of Barrett's *The Magus.*[175] On one side of the talisman it displays the astrological symbol of Jupiter, the magic seal of Jupiter, the magic sigil of the Intelligence of Jupiter and in Latin, *Confirmo O Deus potentissimus* ('O God make me all powerful'). On the other side, the astrological symbol of Jupiter, Jupiter's magic number, 136, a magic square containing Hebrew numbers that add up to 136, the Hebrew word "Abba" (father/God), and Barrett's name for Jupiter, "Jophiel".[176] Emma Smith is known to have said that the Jupiter talisman 'was in the Prophet's pocket when he was martyred at Carthage' and that she also 'prized this piece very highly on account of it being one the Prophet's intimate possessions.'[177] Interestingly, although it is impossible to verify, one disaffected Mormon would later explain that 'the only thing the Prophet believed in was astrology.'[178]

Concluding Comments

It is here that we must conclude that Smith was most certainly immersed in the masonic culture of nineteenth century America. His 'rich and sustained encounter with Masonry'[179] has been analysed throughout this chapter. The overt nature of this influence has, however, led to a plethora of misunderstandings and misinterpretations as to the *way* in which Smith borrowed from Masonry. The anti-Mason turned master Mason thesis, as employed by Vogel and others, does not stand up to scrutiny, though a *prima facie* interpretation is understandable due to Masonry's clear and wide-ranging influence on Smith's religion building imagination. This influence, of course, came in the form of familial-social relationships, such as his father,

[175] Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 82-83.
[176] Francis Barrett, *The Magus: A Complete System of Occult Philosophy* (London: Lackington, Allen & Co., 1801), 175; Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 83.
[177] *Charles E. Bidamon affidavit* (5 Jan. 1938); Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 82.
[178] Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal, *Mormon Portraits or the Truth About Mormon Leaders: From 1830 to 1886* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Company, 1886), 19.
[179] Brown, *In Heaven as it is on Earth*, 173.

brother, uncles, and cousins, including his closest friends and associates. Not only that, but the extensive influence of Freemasonry on the American cultural landscape of the time would have been unavoidable for Smith, especially with regards to the Morgan affair and the anti-masonic sentiment that followed.

Freemasonry's influence on the *Book of Mormon* on the other hand is complex. A close reading of the text displays a much more nuanced influence than has previously been argued by scholars. As evidence above, Smith appears to argue for a particular type of Freemasonry, siding with primitive Masonry as opposed to Spurious Masonry, which, as we have seen in the case of universalism, was his overall approach when deciding, as Campbell put it, 'all the great controversies'.[180] Smith's borrowing from his father's visions and reimagining them in the form of Lehi's dreams displays an indirect, second-hand, borrowing from Masonry due to his father's visions being symbolic of Royal Arch rituals. Prior focus by scholars on the Gadianton robbers as evidence of Smith's supposed anti-Masonry has also been shown to overlook evidence that convincingly indicates that he was arguing *against* Spurious Masonry and *for* Primitive Masonry.

Smith's later, and more apparent, borrowing from Freemasonry in Nauvoo clearly exhibits his propensity for creatively borrowing from the discourses that were directly available to him, weaving in doctrines, rituals, history and other elements that merged well with his occultural bricolage. Bennett's short, but profound influence on Smith cannot be overstated – an influence that would also feed into the rising anti-Mormon sentiment that spread across Illinois and culminated in the prophet's death. Smith's borrowing, reimagining and reconstructing of masonic rituals and blending them together with ideas of universal salvation and Swedenborgian concepts of multiple heavens into what his own endowment ceremony, and the creation of the female Relief Society, is also incontrovertible. All of which would have,

[180] Campbell, *Delusions*, 93.

of course, been appealing to nineteenth century New York farming communities who would have been familiar with those particular discourses. It must be said, then, at the time of his death, Smith was, clearly, and heavily, influenced by Freemasonry.

Conclusion

A cumulative argument has been made that Joseph Smith was, first and foremost, an occultural bricoleur. The overarching argument is essentially that Smith creatively borrowed from his immediate occultural environment—be that from his interactions with family, friends, close associates, or the dominant esoteric currents within the 'burned-over district.' In particular, this approach has shown that, while a range of religious and magical beliefs that fascinated Smith can be considered to have informed his thinking, the principal areas of influence identified are Universalism, Swedenborgianism, and Freemasonry. Of particular importance for understanding the argument presented in this thesis, is that, not only were a range of ideas intricately woven together within Smith's occultural bricolage, but, as such, each of the ideas were given new meaning. The very process of creating an occultural bricolage had a formative impact on the construction of early Mormonism.

This means, of course, that, while the thesis has been careful not to dismiss Smith's work or, indeed, the LDS Church more broadly, it has raised a number of questions about official Mormon accounts of its early history and culture. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the creative talent at the heart of his endeavours has been displayed, and that, as a result, Smith can be more fully understood as a one of the most significant religious figures to emerge from the socio-cultural milieu of nineteenth century America.

Understanding Smith in the way suggested in this thesis would not have been possible without firstly understanding the historical and occultural context in which he developed as a treasure seeker turned prophet. This was initially done by establishing the nature of burned-

over district occulture, in which ideas were transmitted through a thriving print culture. Books, pamphlets, and tracts were widely available and, we have seen, contributed significantly, not only to the popular culture of the time, but also to Smith's religion-building imagination. This broad understanding of Smith's socio-cultural environment has been shown to be significantly different from the narrow focus that previous scholarship has tended to favour. For example, we have seen that John Brooke argued that an underground, deviant, sub rosa 'hermetic culture' shaped classical Mormon cosmology.[1] Of course, it is not denied that certain occult current were important to Smith. However, while some of the ideas that Smith borrowed, or was influenced by could be considered deviant or underground, the majority were not. Instead, popular occulture acted as a conduit, in that it disseminated and remixed occult, esoteric, paranormal, spiritual, and religious ideas, enabling Smith, as someone who was sensitive to occultural trends, to absorb and make use of them within his own religious system. Smith's unique contribution, as has been detailed throughout this thesis, is that he took many of the ideas that were present in the nineteenth century occultural landscape which may have been largely inaccessible to New York farming communities who were largely undereducated and/or illiterate and made them accessible and easy to understand.

Smith, we have seen, was born and raised in a culture that promoted the kind of self-religiosity that provides fertile ground for the development of novel religious trajectories and social experiments. Indeed, he was, arguably, the most successful religious entrepreneur to emerge out of the burned-over district. Blending together theophanic accounts and folk magic in the creation of the narratives of his early visionary experiences, he managed to produce a widely read sacred text, the *Book of Mormon*, and a global religious movement, which clearly

[1] John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xvi.

contained Smith's particular take on the socio-religious discourses present the burned-over district.

In tracing Smith's occultural influences, we have been led into a number of significantly under-researched areas. For example, while a number of relatively recent theological studies have been made of, for example, Christian universalism,[2] and while there were a number of nineteenth century discussions,[3] universalism *per se* has suffered somewhat from a notable lack of scholarship. Indeed, while this thesis has made some contribution to the discussions in terms of early Mormonism, it is an area within which future research is required. Apart from anything else, the thesis has shown that it had a significant impact on at least one emergent religious tradition. Indeed, more needs to be done on the merging of universalism, prior to the Universalist denomination merging with Unitarianism in 1961. It appears that historians have largely bypassed universalism, often considered to be heretical by mainstream Christians, in their accounts of eighteenth and nineteenth century American religious history. Indeed, as Ann Lee Bressler has pointed out

> in the early nineteenth century Universalists were commonly lumped together with Unitarians as "liberal religionists" who refused to be constrained by the beliefs of the major evangelical bodies…. But the linking of the two groups has clouded examination of the very different origins and development of each. Universalism has probably suffered more; it has too often been regarded as simply Unitarianism's poor relation, finally acknowledged and taken in with the creation of Unitarian-Universalism… Yet

[2] See, for example, Robin Parry and Christopher Partridge (eds), *Universal Salvation: the Debate* (Granbd Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Robert Wild, *A Catholic Reading Guide to Universalism* (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2015).
[3] See, for example, Hosea Ballou, *Ancient History of Universalism* (Boston: Univeralist Publishing House, 1872).

> the study of Universalism opens a wide window on the American religious scene from the 1770s to the 1880s.[4]

What this thesis has done in terms of contributing to scholarship in the area, is to show, very clearly, its influence on Smith. The evidence is unambiguous that universalism was an important part of Smith's occultural bricolage, informing both early and later revelations, as well as providing a soteriological foundation for cross-fertilisation with other occultural discourses, such as Swedenborgianism. Indeed, in understanding Smith's indebtedness to the latter, the former needs to be properly appreciated. Again, one cannot simply focus on one aspect of his theology, but rather, in accordance with the theory of occulture, the breadth of influence needs to be taken into account. One set of ideas provides an interpretive framework for the other, and vice versa. As we have seen, ideas of universal salvation inherited from his father and grandfather formed an interpretative lens through which Smith understood Swedenborgian concepts of multiple heavens, which in turn went on to inform the way in which Smith engaged with masonic rituals and discourses that he wove into the pages of the *Book of Mormon* and his quasi-masonic temple rituals.

Concerning Swedenborg's influence on Smith, the subtleties have often been overlooked by scholars. Of particular note, we have seen, it is very likely that Sidney Rigdon, a co-author of many of Smith's early revelations, was the main source of inspiration for the Swedenborgian themes that run throughout his thought. Focussing on the occultural significance of Swedenborgian themes in nineteenth century America and, more particularly, their availability to Smith, the thesis examined the main instances where this influence was

[4] Ann Lee Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America, 1770-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7.

clear and apparent in his published revelations. It was established that it formed an important building block.

Finally, as several studies have shown, it is difficult to avoid the clear and wide-ranging influence of Freemasonry on Smith, and its place as an essential building block in his occultural bricolage. Although this thesis has taken a slightly different approach to Freemasonry's influence on Smith, nevertheless, that there was an influence has been categorically affirmed. However, where others have argued that Smith was a curious case of an 'anti-Mason' turned 'Master Mason,' I have shown that this theory is fundamentally flawed. Through an analysis of evidence within the pages of the *Book of Mormon*, this thesis clearly shows that Smith was arguing *for* a particular type of Freemasonry, that of 'Primitive Masonry,' and *against* 'Spurious' forms of the Craft.

Similarly, the thesis also departs significantly from current scholarship regarding the extent of Freemasonry's influence on Smith's endowment ceremony. For example, Michael Quinn has argued that 'Freemasonry's minor emphasis on the heavenly outcome of its rituals was a chasm between Freemasonry and the Mormon endowment.'[5] As discussed throughout this thesis, emphasising these minor differences does not provide a cogent argument against Smith's substantial borrowing from Freemasonry. While an argument is not made for the outright plagiarism of ideas, concepts, discourses, and rituals in an ad hoc and messy way by Smith, as consistently stated, the differences are a *result* of Smith's creative processes—the intricate weaving together of both similar and disparate ideas, with a touch of Smith's imaginative storytelling to fill in the gaps. It is here that I agree with Brigham Henry Roberts observation that 'there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged…

[5] D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 229.

would make it possible for him to create a book such as the *Book of Mormon* is.'[6] This also extends, of course, to the entire Mormon project (the LDS Church).

In summary, this thesis has convincingly provided an answer to Jan Shipps' call for scholars to 'solve the mystery of Mormonism by coming to understand the enigma at its core.'[7] This has been achieved by cutting through the various arguments and ideas about Smith that have persisted for the past forty years and coming to understand him, properly, in his socio-cultural and historical context. A presence of a uniquely nineteenth century American occulture has been firmly established, driven largely by popular culture, which involved a heavy reliance on the presence of a significant book or printing culture. Smith, as an occultural bricoleur, is someone who was attuned to the occultural currents present within his immediate environment and who responded to them creatively, reordering and recontextualising them to communicate fresh meanings.[8] In particular, the thesis has shown that there were three foundational building blocks that formed a part of his occultural bricolage, namely Universalism, Swedenborgianism, and Freemasonry. Each was a lens through which he interpreted each of the other building blocks, and together, as well as individually, they guided him in his choice of other available occultural elements. Their influence is present throughout his revelations and conspicuous within the endowment ceremony. Further to this, various nuances in Smith's revelations have been teased out, thus solving various misunderstandings, misconceptions, and overlooked aspects of his Mormon project.

This thesis, as well as achieving the above, has opened up other lines of enquiry. While this is not a discussion of the burned-over district *per se*, it has highlighted the need for further

[6] Brigham Henry Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 250.
[7] Jan Shipps, 'The Prophet Puzzle: Suggestions Leading toward a More Comprehensive Interpretation of Joseph Smith' in Bryan Waterman (ed.) *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 28.
[8] For an interesting discussion on these processes, see Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture*, 2 Vols (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2004, 2005).

work to be carried out in this area. In particular, the theory of occulture could provide valuable assistance here. Indeed, this can be broadened further to develop our understanding of the evolving nature of occulture within America during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, including its influence and impact on the First, Second, and Third Great Awakenings.

It's also worth noting that, viewing Smith through the fresh lens of an occultural bricoleur opens the door to new and creative interpretations of Smith's prophetic career. Taking this approach, will protest against overly reductive understandings of his thought, as well as opening it up to a more sophisticated and adequate analysis of its creativity.

As indicated above, far more work needs to be done in order to understand the significance of Universalism in nineteenth century America. This has been largely overlooked by scholars. Again, examining this from an occultural perspective, it is evident that there is little understanding of the reasons why it was that many universalists were also involved in folk magical practices, magical treasure digging, and occultural bricolage.

With the above in mind, I contend that this thesis, not only builds a bridge over the messy intellectual quagmire that has surrounded the question of Smith's prophetic career, but also helps us to understand how he went about constructing his new religion. With this new understanding of Smith as an occultural bricoleur, not only has Shipps' question at the beginning of the thesis been satisfactorily addressed, but a strong foundation has been laid upon which future scholarship can build.

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