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Review of The Bible, Mormon Scripture, and the Rhetoric of Allusivity, by Nicholas J. Frederick

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focus on polygamy and toward a bigger conversation about sexuality throughout Mormon history, as well as in other religious bodies.

Both texts are innovative and well written. They offer nonspecialists a way to update their teaching about Mormonism, bringing their labors in line with trends in the historiography of Mormonism, as well as with the teaching of American religions.

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IN THIS MONOGRAPH NICHOLAS FREDERICK tackles the directional literary relationship between canonical Mormon scripture and the King James Bible with a methodology more secure and transparent than has been applied in the past. He advances substantively the study of Latter-day Saint sacred texts by trying to get an analytical handle on what attentive readers detect easily, namely, that the rhetorical space created and occupied by Joseph Smith's canonized writings, produced in English, is inseparable from the English of the King James Bible in ways that complicate the question of historicity and translation. For Frederick, detecting and decoding allusion in LDS scripture allows the reader to investigate creative operations performed on the source text. He looks under the hood in sharper focus at the literary engines

that drove the new production of old scripture in the LDS tradition, concluding that in general these allusions spoke primarily to the nineteenth-century audiences with whom this literature needed to resonate to be recognizable as scripture.

Frederick brings to bear two main streams of scholarly work in framing the problem and moving forward: the literary-critical research into allusion and intertextuality and the investigation of biblical and postbiblical texts that are taken to be intertextual. He thereby reframes the old bugbear of historicity in studies of LDS scripture by casting Joseph Smith as heir to a long tradition of anachronistic revision-by-allusion that includes the authors of Second Isaiah (chapters 40–55) and Deuteronomy. For the heart of his study he restricts his examination of allusion to the distinctive language and theology of the Johannine Prologue (John 1:1–18, hereafter JP), and he centers on allusivity as the key strategy in the creation of authoritative rereadings of scripture by transforming old texts in ways that allowed new ideas to carry the familiar earmarks of tradition. He shows the rich comparative potential of ancient text production done in paradoxical homage with texts of elevated authority—paradoxical because the new text draws the authority from the older one while at the same time seeking to supplant or even invert it.

The subsequent four chapters take a closer look at different types of intertextual operations through close readings of texts that evoke the JP. Chapter 1 focuses on *echoes*, or readings that borrow language and therefore authority but not necessarily meaning from a source text (3 Nephi 9; 2 Nephi 9:24; D&C 42:52; 20:29). Chapter 2 treats *allusions*, which import context or meaning of the original in pointing to it, by examining six phrases, such as “light and life of the world” and “only begotten son.” In order to establish the import of meaning and context, Frederick slips into fairly detailed theological discussions of the JP, including Greek exegetical notes. This has important consequences for understanding Joseph Smith’s role as “author” who “restate[s] biblical language in a different setting” (p. 47). Chapter 3 deals with *expansion*, in which the textual resonance extends the meaning(s) of a source in

ways that go beyond its original usage. Frederick selects phrases (e.g., “grace for grace,” “become the sons of God”) and texts (e.g., D&C 45; 76) that integrate theological ideas not present in JP. Here he finds it “remarkable” to see the combination of Johannine ideas (“becoming sons of God”) with those not present in the Fourth Gospel (the word *faith*, p. 66). Chapter 4 examines allusive *inversions*—texts that overturn their sources. Frederick selects only one example (D&C 93) and argues that through this contrastive reading “Smith found the pieces necessary to construct a theological position that further distorted the borderlines between Christology and anthropology” (p. 97). This may be the strongest and most interesting of the chapters for LDS theology because it takes account of the vibrant dynamic that obtains between Smith and the Christian textual tradition.

The strengths of the volume are many. The most striking is perhaps located in the way Frederick casually pioneers a route through terrain often deemed too treacherous for faithful Latter-day Saints. Frederick does not neutralize or euphemize scholarship that has been seen as challenging (such as on Second Isaiah), he does not apologize for his use of it, and he does not often avoid potentially controversial conclusions. He points out more than once that the deployment of allusive strategies served primarily Smith’s contemporary, English-speaking context: “Joseph Smith infused Mormon scripture with allusions to the Bible as a way of gaining acceptance in nineteenth-century America[;] the examination of Johannine echo in Mormon scripture perhaps addresses this contention most clearly. In the case of the Book of Mormon, the use of biblical language (such as Alpha and Omega) that would have made little sense to a proposed Nephite audience suggests that a primary purpose for its inclusion was to provide a nineteenth-century audience with a text that sounded and read as biblical” (p. 131; compare p. 22).

Second, and more important, Frederick’s work consciously puts Joseph Smith’s intertextual production of scripture into conversation with ongoing work, especially in biblical studies, on texts that rework older authoritative material. “The myriad . . . ways in which Smith used the language of the Bible mirrored that of writers such as the author[s]

of Deuteronomy, Second and Third Isaiah, Matthew and Paul, men who relied upon the language of the established past to construct a realized present and a hopeful future” (p. 132). He shows the importance of Johannine texts in Smith’s emerging theology, especially with respect to deification. Frederick thus brings Smith’s prophetic self-understanding into dialogue with ancient interpreters in the way that they reread authoritative texts to produce new and sometimes radically different scripture. The issue of intertextuality surfaces in particular ways in an LDS tradition that challenges various Christian concepts of canon and provides an interesting case study for J. Z. Smith’s “redescription” that sees canons as dynamic and flexible precisely because of intertextual engagement with them.¹ It is maybe, and somewhat paradoxically, on this very point that Mormonism may speak with the interpretive traditions of Christianity and Judaism.²

Third, the book presents a model of engagement that strives for methodological clarity. Even when one disagrees with his analysis and conclusions, one finds that Frederick has advanced the study of intertextual relationships in Mormon scripture because of this transparency. Even in his more technical discussions, Frederick writes in an engaging style and is appropriately flexible in his readings and categorizations of allusive devices.

The main problems with the volume are no less instructive. First, as Frederick himself indicates (pp. 131–33), the lines between the categories are fundamentally subjective and cannot always be maintained, especially when such slippery determinations as “original meaning” are categorically definitive. The very notion of expansion, for example, must be identified by degree because every transfer of a biblical phrase to the

1. J. Z. Smith, “Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon,” in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 36–52.

2. Compare E. Clarke, “Intertextual Exegesis,” in *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 122–28; S. Fish, “What Makes an Interpretation Acceptable?,” in *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 338–55.

Book of Mormon is, by definition, expansive. More specifically, some texts seem to have been misidentified within the given definitions. For example, 3 Nephi 9, in which a disembodied voice identifies himself as Jesus just before his appearance and ministry in the Book of Mormon, seems a good candidate for allusion to or even expansion of the JP rather than being its mere echo.

Second, in order to measure the gap between LDS scripture and biblical source, Frederick often jumps from Smith's usage right to the details of Johannine theology (sprinkled with untransliterated Greek), skipping in the process the nuances of the development of the English Bible and—most crucially—the nineteenth-century context of Protestant discourse in English. To take one example, Frederick argues that the phrase “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, pp. 58–61) was transformed on the basis of Exodus 34:6 into “full of grace, mercy, and truth” (Alma 5:48). These three terms, however, are relatively common in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Protestant discourse—both as bare quotations and as extended discussions of the triad—which undercuts somewhat Frederick's exploration of theological motives for the change and complicates the intertextual picture.³ While the *ultimate* source of the phrases in question is the Fourth Gospel, what is its *proximate* source? In an absolute sense one may compare with profit the theology of Joseph Smith with the author of John, but it seems to me

3. In his well-known six-volume biblical commentary, M. Henry discussed the difference between “grace and truth” and “mercy and truth” in John 1; see his *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, first published in 1706 and expanded and reprinted well into the nineteenth century, including in 1811 (see 5.370) and 1827 (see 5.667). The triad is used in, among other sources, J. Rippon, *The Baptist Annual Register* 4 (1801–02): 632; Anon., *Anti-Jacobin Review* 41/163 (1812): 59; W. Mason, *The Christian's Companion for the Sabbath* (London: G. Sidney, 1817), 392; N. Bowen, *Sermons on Christian Doctrines and Duties* (Charleston, SC: A. E. Miller, 1842), 45, 76, 103; and H. W. Beecher, *Henry Ward Beecher's Statement before the Congregational Association of New York* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1882), 24. It is also possible that this triad formed under the influence of 2 John 1:3. My thanks to C. Townsend for bringing some of these references to my attention. Note also that the phrase “grace, equity, and truth” (Alma 9:26; 13:9, discussed in present volume at p. 60) occurs in I. Watts, *The Glory of Christ as God-Man Display'd* (London: J. Oswald, 1746), 90.

that the more pressing comparison—especially in light of Frederick’s conclusion—is between Joseph Smith and his contemporaries and more immediate predecessors. Frederick’s work has offered us a worthy investigation of the former but only irregularly engages the latter. Ignoring a discourse saturated with Bible talk leaves us without a control against which to gauge the employment of these phrases as allusions to the Bible and not to contemporary religious parlance that had also latched on to the gospel with the highest Christology.

Even in its shortcomings, then, this volume raises key issues in the practice of investigating the Mormon canon. The most obvious is perhaps the need for collaboration between biblical philologists and theologians and scholars of early American religious discourse. This kind of interdisciplinary work is rare but growing in Mormon studies; one hopes for the institutional support of such collaboration, such as at the Maxwell Institute, despite natural disciplinary pressures pushing toward isolation. This is necessary to maximize the increasingly powerful resources for textual analysis, which promises to help clarify the process by which these texts came to be.

Frederick’s monograph also shows that the allusive techniques discerned in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants are indistinguishable at the level of biblical intertextuality. That is, Frederick rightly makes no attempt to differentiate theologies and usage of different Book of Mormon authors because no such clear distinction can be made on the basis of his study. It exists instead at the level of Joseph Smith’s interaction with the biblical text and his own contemporary discursive practices. In this way Frederick’s work problematizes some of the so-called new Mormon theology and its reading of the Book of Mormon, which Frederick even cites at one point: “That Nephi feels comfortable weaving his own prophecies into the text of Isaiah is itself a telling thing. That he not only adds his own statements to the Isaianic text but also adjusts the ‘quoted’ scripture freely is still more telling.”⁴ I think it not trivial, either for a scholar or a lay Mormon, to determine

4. Citing (p. 58) Joseph M. Spencer and Jenny Webb, eds., *Reading Nephi Reading Isaiah: 2 Nephi 26–27* (Salem, UT: Salt Press, 2011), 10.

whether we are talking about Nephi's rereading of Isaiah or Joseph Smith's; and this indeterminacy troubles the extent to which one can safely bracket questions of authorship. If Frederick is correct that one of the main purposes in allusion is to create conceptual and linguistic familiarity for a nineteenth-century audience, the balance tilts toward Joseph Smith—and not Nephi—as author. This recognition is mirrored in the recent institutional weighting of the study of Mormon scripture toward modern historical and literary study rather than toward ancient studies.

This issue of authorship raises other questions that will have to be reconsidered in light of Frederick's work: First, is there any sort of qualitative difference between Smith's *quotation* of biblical passages (i.e., Isaiah in the Book of Mormon) and *allusive* appeals to the Bible in Mormon scripture? Second, given the increasingly abundant evidence that Smith knew a wide variety of biblical and nonbiblical texts, and given the common thread among them that he drew creatively on available textual resources in producing new scripture, does the *text* of the Book of Mormon represent a fundamentally different mode of production from Smith's other writings, or was it merely the first of many?⁵ As with all such observations, faithful and skeptic will make different historical sense of this possibility.

In sum, Frederick's approach is so unabashed and innovative compared to earlier apologetic attempts to deal with such phenomena that the reader will, I hope, overlook some of the residue of dissertation writing, with many dozens of typographic errors and infelicities of language that have not been entirely scrubbed for want of a more careful editorial process.⁶ If there are to be future editions, one hopes that, in addition to

5. See Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges, eds., *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013); Michael Hubbard MacKay, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Brian M. Hauglid, eds., *Creating Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects and the Making of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, forthcoming 2018).

6. The most egregious and unusually offensive is his use of the term *final solution* at the end of a discussion of the apocalyptic clash between light and dark (p. 42). I take

making the Greek accessible in transliteration to nonspecialists, an index of scriptural citations will not be left out, so as to maximize the utility of the volume. Above any shortcomings of the work, Frederick is to be commended for advancing the conversation in a concrete and deliberate way, and for setting a constructive tone for future intertextual research.

Cory Crawford (PhD, Harvard University) is assistant professor in the Department of Classics and World Religions, Ohio University. Among his publications are “The Struggle for Female Authority in Biblical and Mormon Theology” (*Dialogue* 48/2, 2015) and “Light and Space in Genesis 1” (*Vetus Testamentum*, forthcoming). He is currently finishing a book manuscript on imagery and memory in the first Jerusalem temple.

Darron T. Smith. *When Race, Religion, and Sport Collide: Black Athletes at BYU and Beyond*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. 2016.

Reviewed by Richard Kimball

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ON THE CUSP OF THE NCAA MEN’S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT in March 2011, Brigham Young University announced the suspension of star center Brandon Davies for violating the school’s honor code. Until that point in the season, the African American Davies had helped the Cougars to a number-three ranking in the national polls and had established himself as an outstanding sophomore center. The suspension became fodder for commentators on every side and spent a short time in the national spotlight. Davies’s reinstatement for the following season prompted

it as an unintentional oversight, but one that is exceedingly unfortunate, especially in a volume on intertextuality and allusion to the Gospel of John.