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Sightings of the Mormon Sacroscape: Mormonism as a Test Case for Thomas Tweed's Theory of Religion.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Sean Soren Deitrick entitled "Sightings of the Mormon Sacroscape: Mormonism as a Test Case for Thomas Tweed's Theory of Religion.." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Philosophy.

Rosalind I. J. Hackett, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Rachelle M. Scott, Mark D. Hulsether

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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**SIGHTINGS OF THE MORMON SACROSCAPE: MORMONISM
AS A TEST CASE FOR THOMAS TWEED'S THEORY OF RELIGION**

**A THESIS
PRESENTED FOR THE
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
DEGREE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE**

**Sean Soren Deitrick
August 2009**

Abstract

This work explores Thomas Tweed's theory of religion as presented in *Crossing and Dwelling*, taking up the author's challenge to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses in his theoretical model by applying it to new cases. Mormonism is ideal as a case study in this context because of the visibility of Mormon mass migrations in the Nineteenth Century, the global significance of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century, and the distinctively spatial theology of Joseph Smith. The paper proceeds by (1) outlining Tweed's theory of religion, (2) applying a Tweedian "itinerary" to Mormon spatial practices, and (3) reflecting on critical themes in Mormon studies which are obscured by Tweed's theory. I hope this study can illuminate both the spatial theory of religion to which Tweed contributes and the field of Mormon studies in general.

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Introduction

The past half-decade has seen rapid growth in the study of religion in terms of its spatial practices, dimensions, and geography: a turn “from text to territory.”¹ The so-called “spatial turn” of the social sciences which began in the late Twentieth Century was spearheaded by Henri Lefebvre’s *La production de l’espace* and developed in the works of Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, Edward Soja, David Harvey and others. This powerfully impacted the academic study of religion, contributing to conversations that began with the older but also spatially-conscious theories of Gerardus Van der Leeuw, Mircea Eliade, and Jonathan Z. Smith.² The effect is that scholars of religion who once limited themselves to studying “sacred space” are now giving attention to sacred movement, and constructions of religion as static are being challenged by cases that prove to be dynamic. Thomas Tweed stands prominently among the 21st-century scholars of religion who have responded to the spatial turn by developing a theory of religion that highlights movement in terms of transnationalism, globalization, and migration.

In *Crossing and Dwelling*, Tweed presents a theory of religion based on a stipulative definition: “*Religions are confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries.*”³ Tweed suggests that his new theory is designed to illuminate facets of religion that are too often overlooked by those he studied as a young ethnographer; he intends to contribute a meaningful new way of exploring religions in the context of space, place, and movement. Tweed further suggests that like all theories, his needs to be tested against many cases to assess its interpretive

¹ Manuel Vásquez and Marie Marquardt, *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion across the Americas*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2003), 8.

² Kim Knott, “Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion,” 1.

³ Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006), 54.

value. As Tweed's theorization is driven by his interest in globalism and migration, I believe that Mormonism is an ideal case for this purpose: Mormon studies have been historically dominated by attention to the "spatial theology"⁴ of Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith, and his predecessor, Brigham Young. This paper is thus an attempt to see if Mormonism as a case supports or detracts from Tweed's increasingly influential theory of religion. I anticipate that the discursive "itinerary" Tweed proposed in *Crossing and Dwelling* will shed new light on Mormonism, just as the case of Mormonism is positioned to highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses in Tweed's theory itself.

It is impossible to put Tweed into dialogue with the academic study of Mormonism without both outlining Tweed's theory and also comparing it to other works on Mormonism specifically. In this paper I will 1) describe Tweed's theory of religion as outlined in *Crossing and Dwelling*, 2) apply Tweed's template of religion to Mormonism, relating my personal and academic "sightings" of Mormonism while following Tweed's methodological signposts, and 3) identify potential "blind spots" in Tweed's work that are highlighted by our survey. I suggest that Tweed is weak in three areas illuminated by this case study: power, individuals, and history, and use the work of some scholars in Mormon studies as resources for my own suggestions.

Tweed's focus on lived religions at the grassroots level challenges the biographies of "great men," institutional histories, and insider/outsider polemics that seem to fill the Mormon academic bookshelf. Although Tweed's theory spotlights religion as it is actually lived and practiced, creating a needed structure for talking about the spatial dimensions of religion—"chronotopes" and "crossings"—it is also inattentive to the workings of power in religion,

⁴ Philip Barlow, "Shifting Ground and the Third Transformation of Mormonism," in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture: a Reader*, Ed. Peter Williams (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 143.

especially power wielded by individuals and/or obscured by history.

Section I: Thomas Tweed's Theory of Religion

Thomas Tweed locates his theory by contextualizing its origin: While doing ethnographic research among Cuban exiles in Florida, Tweed observed that none of the definitions (and corresponding theories) of religion with which he was familiar—religion as “belief in spiritual beings,” “experience of the holy,” “ultimate concern,” “an institution of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings”—were sufficient to explain the ceremony he was watching. “I had a sense,” Tweed recollects, “that there seemed to be more to say than other theoretical lexicons allowed me to say.”⁵ Dissatisfied, he concluded: “I was looking for a theory of religion that made sense of the religious life of transnational migrants and addressed three themes—*movement*, *relation*, and *position*.” That young ethnographer’s wish list, along with a sense that theory should be both “dynamic” and “relational,”⁶ would result in his own *Crossing and Dwelling*.⁷ It is not enough to merely outline Tweed’s theory, however, because his unique views on what theory itself should mean deeply influence the way that his operates. Whereas many theories are intended to be explanatory models of their subjects, theory for Tweed is a set of talking-points, a travel itinerary prompted by a stipulative (and role-obligated) definition of the subject.

A Departure from Traditional Theory

Tweed makes strong methodological arguments about the very nature of *definitions* and *theory*; though Tweed contends that scholars should contribute to the ongoing conversation on theory, he does not merely contribute one more to the list. Even as he claims an affinity with

⁵ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 3-5.

⁶ Here Tweed means “reflexive” or “positional.”

⁷ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 6-7.

constructivism and social critical theory, Tweed openly rejects every type of theory that he outlines on the grounds that they presuppose that both the theorist and the theorized are *static*.⁸ Tweed's approach "begins with the assumption that all theorists are situated and all theories emerge from within categorical schemes and social contexts."

Drawing on the word *theory*'s Greek etymological ancestor *theōria* (θεωρία) for inspiration, Tweed proposes that we view theories simultaneously as proposed routes or "itineraries," positioned representations of a journey, and the embodied journey itself.⁹ In practice, Tweed's own deployment of these ideas follows this structure: a theory is first and foremost a set of talking-points, a series of connected themes for investigation. The product of that plotted investigation should be acknowledged as a narrative, experienced journey. This is because the events witnessed, the people studied, and the research itself are all located in time and place; the researcher, too, is located in a mortal human body with its own brain and history with corresponding physical, mental, and analytical limitations. "Theories, in the first sense of the word, are travels":¹⁰ Tweed's theory, thus, is not only an argument for the usefulness of a particular type of itinerary (one that explores the crossing and dwelling practices of religion) but is also an embedded argument that theory itself can never be viewed as *anything more* than an itinerary and a journey.

Tweed's Definition of Definition

Furthermore, Tweed draws a sharp distinction between definitions and theories:

⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 8.

⁹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 9.

¹⁰ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 9.

“definitions imply theories and employ tropes.”¹¹ In other words, a definition is a careful metaphor about what something *is* and *does*, and a theory is a plan to follow up on the implications of that definition (as well as execution of that plan and a record of the execution). Although Tweed is not the first theorist to find fault with the multiplicity of independently-celebrated but mutually-exclusive definitions of religion, he differs from many of his peers in that he does not use that as grounds for rejecting the entire enterprise. Tweed firmly asserts that “scholars have a role-specific obligation to define constitutive disciplinary terms” or risk being obsolete.¹² It cannot be overstated that Tweed’s work is simultaneously a defense of definitions and theory in general, an argument about a specific relationship between definition and theory, and a specific example of a definition and a theory that correspond to these arguments.

Tweed observes that the best criticisms of past definitions of religion either note that it is not a culturally universal phenomenon¹³ or find problems with the metaphors used to describe religion. The former is basically a post-colonial criticism of Eliade’s proposition that to be human is to be *Homo Religiosus*, to which many theorists have already responded. However, Tweed contends that “after reviewing the history of colonial productions and reproductions on contested frontiers, we might happily abandon *religion* as a term of analysis if we were not, as a result of that very history, stuck with them.”¹⁴ The sad fact is that in many cases the culturally imperial “damage is done” and the category is now taken for granted as it is in the West. Furthermore, Tweed repeatedly argues that religion does not have to be a truly *universal*

¹¹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 29.

¹² *Crossing and Dwelling*, 30.

¹³ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 37.

¹⁴ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 42; here Tweed quotes David Chidester.

phenomenon to be a *trans-cultural* one;¹⁵ one could talk about “religion” and simply limit the scope (to Western monotheisms, perhaps) without stepping on too many toes. Tweed suggests that one solution to this tentacled problem is to “re-imagine *culture* and other constitutive terms and cease to think of [them] as the name for a thing and come to view [them] instead as a *placeholder* for a set of inquiries—inquiries which may be destined never to be resolved.”¹⁶

“Exegetical Fussiness”

Tweed reduces the latter problem of metaphors to something he calls “exegetical fussiness”: the need for theorists to be pickier about the tropes they use,¹⁷ more conscious of the blind spots those tropes create,¹⁸ and more epistemologically honest about employing “self-consciously stipulative”—rather than empirical—definitions. Tweed’s role model in employing *operationalizing* definitions is William James, whose famous definition of religion is often quoted without the critical preface: “*for the purposes of these lectures, or out of the many meanings of the word, from choosing the one meaning in which I wish to interest you particularly, and proclaiming arbitrarily that when I say ‘religion,’ I mean that.*”¹⁹ In the end, Tweed concludes that “no constitutive disciplinary term is elastic enough to perform all the work that scholars demand of it. But that means we should continually refine and revise our understanding of the term for different purposes and contexts, not abandon it.”²⁰

¹⁵ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 78.

¹⁶ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 36.

¹⁷ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 53.

¹⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 46.

¹⁹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 33-35.

²⁰ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 39.

Tweed's Definition of Religion

*“Religions are confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries.”*²¹

After carefully prefacing his own definition of religion, Tweed breaks it down into its component parts to specify what he intends by his tropes in a tedious but arguably obligatory exercise in exegetical fussiness. Tweed chooses the word “religions” to specify that there is no such thing as religion-in-general...“there are only situated observers encountering particular practices performed by particular people in particular contexts.”²² By “confluences of organic-cultural flows” Tweed evokes Arjun Appadurai’s “global cultural flows”²³ to suggest something dynamic and relational; the aquatic trope suggests movement, change, and blending as opposed to the static terrain Tweed feels is conjured up by traditional terrestrial tropes such as “map” and “territory.”²⁴ By “organic-cultural,” Tweed acknowledges that “organic channels direct cultural currents”²⁵ on the most basic level even while leaving the biological details off the agenda. Tweed unpacks the relationship between the two using examples from his own research among Cuban immigrants at a shrine in the United States, who impute the story of their exile from Cuba and their hopes of a future return into a statue of the Virgin Mary that has, like them, washed ashore on a foreign land:²⁶ “Religions are processes in which social institutions (the shrine’s confraternity) bridge organic constraints (hippocampal neural pathways and episodic memory processes) and cultural mediations (the symbol of Mary and the metaphor of exile) to produce

²¹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 54.

²² *Crossing and Dwelling*, 55.

²³ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 57.

²⁴ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 55; Tweed grudgingly concedes that “*sacrosapes*” could be replace “flows” so long as one bears in mind that these are never static (*Crossing and Dwelling*, 61). I use the terms interchangeably.

²⁵ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 66.

²⁶ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 5.

reference frames (the Cuban American community as diaspora and the shrine as diasporic center) that orient devotees in time and space.”²⁷ When Tweed says that religions “intensify joy and confront suffering,” he explains that religions “provide the lexicon, rules, and expression for many different sorts of emotions, including those framed as most positive and most negative, most cherished and most condemned.”²⁸

The “crossings” Tweed describes—terrestrial, corporeal, and cosmic—may be enabled or constrained by religions, which “enforce socially constructed spatial codes.”²⁹ When Tweed refers to making homes, he specifies that this means situating followers in the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos.³⁰ Tweed devotes a large portion of *Crossing and Dwelling* to subcategorizing these two dynamic processes and giving examples—from his own research and from the research of others—that illustrate the ways in which religions mediate crossing and dwelling, suggesting thereby that these may be fruitful stops for other theorists to write into their own itineraries.

Tweed distinguishes between religion and other cultural trajectories with similar functions by specifying that these do not draw on suprahuman forces or map cosmic space—nor tell how to cross the ultimate horizon, that which lies even beyond death. I would add that two of these filters for religion, that they map cosmic space and that describe the ultimate horizons of human existence, are semantic and therefore somewhat arbitrary. The third, that it draws on *suprahuman* forces, does not finally distinguish religion from other cultural phenomena. If religion *is* that flow, as cultural-organic as any other, that concerns the suprahuman, then what

²⁷ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 67.

²⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 70.

²⁹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 75.

³⁰ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 76.

about other philosophies that posit impersonal but suprahuman forces? Almost every national ideology presupposes some transcendent principle of cause-and-effect that will carry the day—whether it is the rightness of local values like *liberty* and *justice* or *cran* or *Yamato-damashii*, or the Marxist *inevitable*. It is hard to say that Tweed’s *suprahuman* excludes any of these if it is also intended to be flexible enough to include, say, the matter-of-fact karmic laws of (atheistic) monastic Theravada Buddhism. I suggest that the borders of Tweed’s definition are still ultimately dependent on the lexical “religion” despite his exegetical fussiness, although that does not necessarily undermine his theory for our purposes.³¹

Dwelling

Religion, as Tweed puts it, is “about being in place as much as about moving across space.”³² Tweed compares religion-in-dwelling to a Muslim’s watch with a built-in compass—it is a tool that orients the user in both time and space.³³ He uses the word “chronotopes” to outline four general dwelling-places of religion because of their dual spatial and temporal dimensions: the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos.³⁴ He further distinguishes between autocentric (self-centered) and allocentric (object-centered) orientations.³⁵ Backing up these assertions with analogous findings in cognitive science and linguistics, Tweed suggests that religions both construct “absolute” models of these four concentric spaces and also locate the

³¹ Tweed comes closest to accepting the arbitrariness of his definition when he cites J. Z. Smith in his defense: “‘Religion’ is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define. It is a second-order, generic concept that plays the same role in establishing a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as ‘language’ plays in linguistics or ‘culture’ plays in anthropology. There can be no disciplined study of religion without such a horizon” (*Crossing and Dwelling*, 33).

³² *Crossing and Dwelling*, 80.

³³ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 97.

³⁴ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 123.

³⁵ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 93.

individual relative to those models.³⁶ As for the body, “Religions record, prescribe, and transmit figurative language and embodied practices about food, sex, health, drugs, dance, trance, gesture, and dress that position the body in time and space.”³⁷ Religions transmit myths about the origin and nature of the human body and describe “bodies as channels joining this world and another world.”³⁸ In his attention to the body and to the relationship between autocentric and allocentric reference frames, Tweed confirms Anttonen’s model of the body as the source of space and a natural border between *inside* and *outside*, the latter coextensive with place.³⁹ As for the home, religious practices sacralize domestic space and dictate how it is to be used or how it can be misused. Religions also imagine homelands—bordered territories or communities—and conceptualize an *outside* relative to that homeland. Finally, religions map the cosmos—those realms that extend beyond or exist beyond the material world. Tweed subcategorizes the cosmos into *geographies*, or “terrestrial space”;⁴⁰ *cosmographies*, “the structure of the entire universe”;⁴¹ *cosmogonies*, “representations of the origin of the universe”;⁴² and *teleographies*, the ultimate objects or aims of existence, the most distant and ultimate horizons of human life.

Crossing

Tweed explains, “Religions enable and constrain *terrestrial crossings*, as devotees traverse natural terrain and social space beyond the home and across the homeland; *corporeal crossings*, as the religious fix their attention on the limits of embodied existence; and *cosmic*

³⁶ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 94.

³⁷ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 99.

³⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 103.

³⁹ Kim Knott, “Space”, in *Revista de Estudos da Religião* 4 (2005), 111.

⁴⁰ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 113.

⁴¹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 115.

⁴² *Crossing and Dwelling*, 116.

crossings, as the pious imagine and cross the ultimate horizon of human life.”⁴³ In his discussion of crossing practices, Tweed emphasizes how religions and technology mediate crossings of all sorts: religions guide people across both natural and artificial corporeal thresholds through rites of passage, and, through the workings of power, alternately empower or cripple their adherents in social and terrestrial crossings. Finally, they promise to either transform people or transport them across the ultimate threshold of existence.

Positionality

Central to Tweed’s theory of religion is the underlying principle of “positionality.” This entails a recognition of the locatedness (and movement!) of both researcher and subject, in line with James Clifford’s assertion that “one is always a participant-observer some *where*.”⁴⁴ For theorists, this means an imperative of intellectual honesty to disclose to readers “as much as seems directly relevant—even if blind spots (and unwitting or principled resistance) will mean it will always be too much and not enough.”⁴⁵ “Coming clean” in this sense is for Tweed a major distinction between two types of theorists, asserting that “all theorists stand in a particular place. Every one of them. The difference? Some interpreters have said so.”⁴⁶ The problem is that theorists still control the kind and amount of information they reveal about themselves—suggesting, in fact, that they have “privileged information” about their own motives and creating another, deeper layer of the “god’s eye view” problem.⁴⁷ This self-bracketing, then, is subjective

⁴³ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 123.

⁴⁴ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997), 21.

⁴⁵ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 21-22.

⁴⁶ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 18.

⁴⁷ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 21.

even though it is essential.⁴⁸ As Jane Tompkins asserts, “you can’t argue that someone else’s facts are not facts *because they are only products of a perspective*, since this will be true of the facts that you perceive as well.”⁴⁹ The word “sightings” reflects the perspective inherent in Tweed’s understanding of theoretical observations.

Tweed openly confesses, “I have inherited questions, categories, and interlocutors from lineages in the academic study of religion and have tried to contribute to an ongoing conversation in my field.”⁵⁰ Following his own advice, Tweed recognizes that his own theory is culturally located. Not only is it a part of his life and his career, but it is also a consequence of living in an age that is seemingly defined by globalism, transnational migration, rapid flows of information, products, and people—in other words, movement, relation, and dynamism.

Tweed’s Challenge

“All theorists invite readers to see if their account illumines some regions of the religious world that other theories have obscured.”⁵¹ Tweed does this as well—he makes it clear from the beginning of *Crossing and Dwelling* that he hopes others will apply his work to see if it sheds new light on underdeveloped areas in the study of religion—especially those that relate to transnationalism, immigration, and movement. Indeed, Tweed argues that no theory of the sort that he proposes can really be assessed until it has been proven to “[meet] important professional obligations and relevant pragmatic standards.”⁵² Tweed asks of his theory:

⁴⁸ If also subject to a criticism of infinite regress.

⁴⁹ Jane Tompkins, “‘Indians’: Textualism, Morality, and the Problem of History,” in *Race, Writing, and Difference*, Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986), 76.

⁵⁰ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 24.

⁵¹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 19-20.

⁵² *Crossing and Dwelling*, 165.

“Does it mark the boundaries of religion, distinguishing it from other cultural trajectories and, thereby, helping scholars to meet their role-specific obligation to reflect on their field’s constitutive term? Does it nudge scholars to be more self-conscious about their own position and more modest about the claims they make on the basis of their positioned sightings? Does it encourage scholars to ask generative questions about the people and practices they study? Does it redirect scholars’ attention [sic] to themes and issues that had been obscured by other theories and, so, promote richer and more complicated accounts? In particular, does it encourage greater attention to the relational dynamics of religion in this era of transnational flows? Are those on the move—including migrants, pilgrims, and missionaries—easier to notice?...Does my discussion of forced and constrained crossings help to analyze some of the complex ways that power is at work in the practice of religion?...Finally, in my view, this theory will be useful if it sparks more conversations and generates other accounts—even, or especially, accounts that challenge this one.⁵³

To Tweed’s own questions, his peers have added, “Can it be used to distinguish ‘religion’ from ‘non-religion’? How does it fare for non-diasporic religion? Can it be applied to secular and post-secular spiritual cases? Does it do justice to issues of gender and power? Does it constitute a theory at all, or is it better described as a ‘poetics of religion’?⁵⁴

It is beyond the scope of this paper to give thorough attention to every one of these questions. However, many of them will be addressed in the following section, wherein I used Tweed’s template to survey Mormonism and demonstrate firsthand whether Tweed’s theory

⁵³ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 165-166.

⁵⁴ “Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion,” 14.

truly nudges aspiring academics such as myself to be “self-conscious,” to notice themes that have been overlooked by other theories, to give attention to the “relational dynamics” of transnational religion, to point out those religious who are “on the move,” and to do so with attention to the workings of power in religion. It is in its attentiveness to power wielded by individuals and obscured by history that I am most skeptical of Tweed’s theory of religion.

In any case, Tweed is right to say that “No final assessment of the theory’s interpretive reach seems possible in advance of scholars’ attempts to employ it in the study of the religious practices of women and men in varied cultural contexts.”⁵⁵ Taking Tweed’s assertion at face value, this paper constitutes one attempt to employ his theory in a different cultural context.

⁵⁵ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 166.

Section II: Some Sightings of Mormonism

Throughout *Crossing and Dwelling*, Tweed demonstrates how his own sightings—the Cuban community in Miami and the observation of their shrine’s ritual—influenced his theory and are retroactively illuminated thereby. To follow Tweed’s model means to use his definition of religion as a basis for organizing an itinerary of sightings, a series of stopping points for exploring Mormonism. Although ethnographic research on Tweed’s scale is beyond the scope of this project, my own Mormon itinerary will draw on personal experiences and my own travels “back and forth from the study” as Tweed’s did.⁵⁶ Tweed’s emphasis on “sightings,” however, though flexible enough to include library research, presupposes a focus on lived religions. Because of this I will “travel” through the Mormon practices of the late Twentieth and early Twenty-first Centuries which I have actually viewed and in which I have actually participated. My survey owes its structure to Tweed; however, my hesitations and departures will be noted and returned to in detail in Section III.

Note that throughout this paper, I say “Mormon” rather than “LDS.” Acknowledging the reasonable distinction made by LDS apostle Dallin H. Oaks, there is no such thing as “the Mormon Church.”⁵⁷ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the name of the institution, an organization which for my purposes is largely imaginary. To call a person a “Latter-day Saint” says nothing except that his or her name is recorded by this institution—and to understand that this has significance within LDS authorizing discourses. But no one is merely a Latter-day Saint. *Mormonism* is a culture of *Mormons*, a community of individuals who largely identify as LDS and who are engaged in practices which may be mandated or merely

⁵⁶ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 84.

⁵⁷ Dallin Oaks, “Another Testament of Jesus Christ”, in *Ensign* (March 1994), 60.

tolerated by the official discourses of the LDS church. In this sense, the LDS church cannot be “sighted”; Mormons can. Furthermore, there are many non-LDS sects who share heritage with the members of the LDS church, including the Community of Christ and the “Strangites,” as well as other Mormon fundamentalisms. These people, too, can be called “Mormons” even though LDS Mormons might disclaim them. Although the Mormons who worship at LDS-owned churches are the focus of this study, it is important for us as scholars to make sure we do not absentmindedly endorse the exclusivity preached by LDS authorities when we talk about trans-institutional cultural phenomena.

Tweed makes an analogous distinction between the religion of the clergy and that of the people in the case of his Cubans when he observes that “the confluence of tropes, artifacts, narratives, and institutions that produced the practices at the annual rite also led to the spiritual hybridity there, as devotion to *OṢ un* mixed with veneration of Mary and the centuries-old exchange between Afro-Cuban Santería and Spanish Roman Catholicism continued, even if the clerical officials and the sponsoring institution...tried to map the boundaries of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.”⁵⁸ This kind of tension surfaces periodically throughout our travel; although Mormonism does not contain such a distinctive subgroup like Santería, there is always an incongruity between the authoritative and perpetually image-conscious Temple Square leadership and the enthusiastic membership.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 167.

⁵⁹ Since the turn of the century, the LDS church has taken a “no-comment” stance towards complex doctrinal issues that leaves members to informally perpetuate or puzzle over some of the most controversial utterances of past leaders and prophets. For the purposes of apologetics, this means that unpleasant doctrines can be arbitrarily dismissed as “unofficial.” Since this paper is not invested in semantic hopscotch or proving LDS truth-claims, it will retain its focus on “sighted” beliefs and practices at the grassroots level, regardless of their official status.

Bracketing Myself

To position myself, I should acknowledge that I was born into a family of Mormons who go back at least three generations (including some pioneers and 19th-century convert immigrants from Europe). Like most Mormons in the U.S., I was white and lived in the suburbs; unlike most, I grew up in the South where Mormons are a minority under some level of scrutiny from their Protestant peers. True to expectations, I volunteered to serve a two-year mission and was sent to Japan. I returned, converted a wife, and was married in the temple. Ultimately disaffected with the church's inability to substantiate its empirical truth claims without recourse to subjective emotional states, I left the church. In that sense I am only nominally LDS (my name is still on the records); but on a certain level I am still inescapably "Mormon" in the same sense that Thomas Tweed is Catholic.⁶⁰ As Tweed observed, there is no correct way to determine how much information is too much: I have "sighted" Mormons claiming that only a person in grave sin would leave the church at my stage in life. It is popularly assumed (even loudly boasted) that only adultery, substance abuse, or utter spiritual laziness could explain defection from the true church. This kind of bracketing is potentially explosive in cases such as Mormonism and raises the stakes in Tweed's line-drawing exercise.

That is not to say that scholars should give up on the bracketing endeavor, however, but to illustrate that it is the audience who ultimately determines how a scholar's background will color his or her reception. Nothing prevents us from thinking critically about Freud and Weber's positionalities, after all, even though they were not self-bracketing—we do that for them and take their work with a grain of salt whether they want us to or not. In other words, although Tweed is

⁶⁰ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 18.

right to underscore the importance of bracketing and point out some of the pitfalls, all a scholar can really do is outline a starting point for his or her readers and try to steer them away from the most undesirable misunderstandings.

Defining Mormonism

Many of what Tweed would call “confluences of organic-cultural flows” have already been thoroughly explored in the context of Mormonism.⁶¹ The reason for this, of course, is that Mormon studies has its roots in the inquiry of Joseph Smith’s truth-claims, and identifying his cultural influences is one important part in explaining Smith in secular terms.⁶²

Mormonism was clearly influenced by Smith’s exposure to—and rejection of—New England frontier revivalism.⁶³ It incorporated the contemporary belief that “the reformation had failed to correct the corruptions of medieval Catholic doctrine, and...a restoration of Christianity as it had been lived in the time of the apostles [was called for].”⁶⁴ Furthermore, ideas of North America as a chosen land,⁶⁵ speculation about the Hebraic ancestry of Native Americans,⁶⁶

⁶¹ A remarkably thorough investigation of the 19th-century cultural flows that met in Mormonism was compiled as early as 1971 in Robert Flanders’ “To Transform History: Early Mormon Culture and the Concept of Time and Space.” His work is still an excellent resource on the topic.

⁶² “Shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon, Alexander Campbell attacked the work by claiming that it was a hodgepodge addressing all the major theological questions of the times: ‘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 may baptize, and even the question of freemasonry, republican government, and the rights of man.’ Joseph Smith biographer Fawn Brodie used such charges in support of her own environmental interpretation.” See Klaus Hansen, “Joseph Smith, American Culture, and the Origins of Mormonism,” in *Joseph Smith: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, Eds. Ried Nielson and Terryl Givens, (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), 32.

⁶³ Klaus Hansen, *Mormonism and the American Experience*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981), 52.

⁶⁴ Tripp Evans, *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination 1820-1915*, (Austin: U of Texas P, 2004), 93. The idea of worldwide Christian defection in the first few centuries C.E. is called “the Great Apostasy” by Mormons.

⁶⁵ Craig Campbell, *Images of the New Jerusalem: Latter-Day Saint Faction Interpretations of Independence, Missouri*, (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2004), 2.

⁶⁶ Reed Holmes, *Dreamers of Zion: Joseph Smith and George J. Adams*, (Brighton: Sussex, 2003), 34. See also

popular excitement over artifacts retrieved from pre-Columbian earthworks in New England,⁶⁷ and the discovery of ruins of Mesoamerica with their undecipherable pictographs⁶⁸ all played a role. At the very least, these factors contextualized and encouraged the reception of Smith's revelations. The Book of Mormon "echoed the Bible, though with enhanced geographic and temporal proximity for its readers."⁶⁹ Mormonism offers to connect the American past culturally as well as religiously by drawing connections between the Old Testament, "Indians," and the North American landscape.⁷⁰ The Mormon waterway thus drew on a powerful current of anti-European sentiment:⁷¹ "Owing nothing to the Old World, the Mormon Church would rise directly from the ashes of Cumorah itself."⁷²

Other flows that were formative to Mormonism include the massive 19th century European immigration to the United States, popular ideas about Manifest Destiny and the taming of the "Wild West," American Freemasonry, populism, the political furor over slavery, rationalism, frontier encounters between Euro-Americans and Native Americans. Even the intersecting flows that brought the Hebrew Bible across Europe and the Atlantic Ocean to the U.S. with a rhetoric of appropriating Israelitic identity played roles in early Mormonism that leave marks today. When looking at Mormonism's 20th-century developments other flows come into play, including models of American civil religion and declension, movements in 20th century Christianity, modernism, the Cold War, and the trajectory of the Republican Party since the LDS

Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008), 56.

⁶⁷ No fewer than 8 pre-Columbian mounds existed within a 12-mile radius of the Smith farm (Evans, 96).

⁶⁸ Evans, 91.

⁶⁹ Barlow, 142.

⁷⁰ Evans, 88.

⁷¹ Evans, 89.

⁷² Evans, 98.

church allied itself with it under the leadership of Joseph F. Smith.⁷³ Tweed does not give any guidelines for how far we should look back into the source-waters of religion; he only scratches the surface of past cultural trajectories in his own case study, suggesting an inattention to the complex weavings of history that is at once a natural part of Tweed's focus on lived religions and also one of its greatest weaknesses, one to which we will return.

Mormonism “intensif[ies] joy and confront[s] suffering” by challenging moral evil; in the time of Joseph Smith, that meant religious apostasy, political corruption and economic misery.⁷⁴ Today, Mormon theodicy presents a rationalized judgment in which eternal rewards are doled out relative to individual worthiness. Priesthood blessings help Mormons face physical illness and emotional distress. The endorphin rush of physical labor is endorsed by the mandate of God, oft-quoted by Mormon leaders, for “by the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.”⁷⁵ Mormon epistemology challenges existential insecurity and promises a peaceful afterlife. Family unity and happiness is intensified as it is considered eternal: the bittersweet loss-that-is-yet to come is obliterated in the sealing rooms of the temple. Because progeny and intelligence constitute the glory of God,⁷⁶ the joys of education and childbearing are magnified and the pains minimized. Friendship, in the context of Mormon brotherhood and sisterhood, is something that will be celebrated in the hereafter as the resurrected faithful rejoice in the strength they gave each other during life on earth: as Missionaries enthusiastically remind each other, “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;...And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying

⁷³ Kathleen Flake explores the origins of early 20th-century Mormon political alliances in “Re-Placing Memory: Latter-day Saint Use of Historical Monuments and Narrative in the Early Twentieth Century,” in *Religion and American Culture* 13.1 (2003): 69-109.

⁷⁴ Robert Flanders, “To Transform History: Early Mormon Culture and the Concept of Time and Space,” in *Church History* 40.1 (1971), 110.

⁷⁵ *Moses* 4:25, in *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996).

⁷⁶ *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:36 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996).

repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!”⁷⁷

When Mormons talk about “human and suprahuman forces,” the human element is constituted by the support and encouragement Mormons give each other to live a life ultimately worthy of exaltation. This is provided by friends, fellow Ward members, parents, siblings, spouses, church leaders, teachers, and missionaries. The priesthood, which in Mormonism refers not to a hierarchy but the “authority to act in God’s name” that authorizes that hierarchy, connects earth and heaven; Heavenly Father works by delegating authority to angels and men, blurring the line between human and suprahuman. Through the bodiless Holy Ghost—defined as a separate individual in the tripartite Mormon godhead—God guides man on a spiritual level that Mormons call “personal revelation.” Leaders such as the prophet Thomas S. Monson give divine guidance to the entire church through this same channel; past prophets, ancient and modern, used it to write inspired scriptures such as the *The Bible*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*. These books mediate prophetic revelation and connect the present church to the imagined past.

Mormon Bodies

Inasmuch as the function of religion is “to make homes and cross boundaries,” Mormon practices situate adherents in all four of Tweed’s chronotopes—body, home, homeland, and cosmos—as well as mediating terrestrial, corporeal, and cosmic crossings.

Tweed observes that religions “draw on analogical language about the corporeal form... ‘So God created humankind in his image.’ The likeness suggested here is not imagined as similar

⁷⁷ *Doctrine and Covenants* 18:10, 15.

physical appearance but as a parallel in relationship and role...⁷⁸ In Mormonism, this resemblance between God and man is no trope at all; rather, man is created in God's image because he is God's literal spirit offspring. The missionaries explain, "The body of our Heavenly Father is perfect and immortal,"⁷⁹ and that "We are children of our Father in Heaven. We are created in his image."⁸⁰ Joseph Smith taught that "It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God...He was once a man like us...God himself, the Father of all, dwelt on earth."⁸¹ The implication of these doctrines, sometimes squirmed away from by apologists, is nonetheless a firm popular belief in a God who once lived a human life and a human future of literally god-like potential and infinite spirit progeny.

Tweed writes, "Bodies are channels joining this world and another world."⁸² Mormon leaders say that "the body is a temple."⁸³ The "Law of Chastity" controls the body, and forbids masturbation and sexual contact outside of marriage to protect the god-like power of physical procreation. Furthermore, Mormons teach the "Word of Wisdom," a code of bodily health that is best known for forbidding the use of coffee, tea, tobacco, alcohol, and recreational drugs;⁸⁴ it is simultaneously a commandment with imagined long-term spiritual consequences, a standard for worthiness that is examined in bishopric interviews, and a social marker delineating between member and non-member, socially enforced between Mormons. Married Mormons wear

⁷⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 99.

⁷⁹ *The Gospel of Jesus Christ: Discussion 2*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986), Principle 2-6.

⁸⁰ *The Plan of Our Heavenly Father: Discussion 1*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986), Principle 1-4.

⁸¹ *Gospel Principles*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 305; quoting *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 348.

⁸² *Crossing and Dwelling*, 103.

⁸³ A derivation from *1 Corinthians* 3:16-17, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

⁸⁴ *Doctrine and Covenants* 89.

undergarments embroidered with symbols that remind them of the covenants they make in the temple, which they will see daily as they dress and undress.

These standards of modesty, chastity, and dietary purity are said to make the body worthy to be a vessel for revelations through the Holy Ghost in the same way that ritual purity sanctifies meetinghouses and temples. Lay sermons describe miraculous rewards such as the story of a young boy who refused an alcoholic “tonic” the night before the big game and outplayed all his team-mates. Or the story of a Vietnam veteran who prayed for the strength to carry his wounded 400-pound lieutenant away from an ambush and received it after reminding God that he had obeyed the Word of Wisdom his entire life. Pamphlets such as “For the Strength of Youth” recommend strict moral standards to help young Mormons distinguish themselves from their nonmember peers and avoid putting themselves in morally compromising situations. Through this kind of literature, the Church mediates bodily-dwelling practices and reminds members of where their own behaviors situate themselves relative to the larger cosmic map.⁸⁵ Tweed’s emphases help draw our attention to living details such as these that would be obscured in many other treatments of Mormonism.

Mormon Homes

The physical organization of domestic space in Mormonism is not doctrinally prescribed, but gender roles are clearly defined. These roles parallel those prescribed in other conservative Christian religions in the United States, but are reinforced by the rhetoric of revelation and modern prophetic guidance. As the priesthood-holder, the father is the inspired head of the

⁸⁵ *For the Strength of Youth: Fulfilling Our Duty to God*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001).

home; citing that authority, he ideally makes final decisions (in humility and in concert with the rest of the family) and may consecrate the home or bless distressed family members. The mother's role is to rear and teach her children. The duality in this Mormon value is artfully expressed in a primary hymn that many Mormon children learn to sing in parts: The boys solemnly boom, "I have a home where every hour/ is blessed by the strength of priesthood power/ with father and mother leading the way/ teaching us how to trust and obey.." while the girls decanter, "I see my mother kneeling with our family each day/ I hear the words she whispers as she bows her head to pray/ her plea to the father quiets all my fears..."⁸⁶ The steady rhythm of the boys' part sets the pace and establishes a sense of male leadership, potency, and confidence while the girls' part is gentle, complementing, and humble. Today, these roles are promulgated in such media as the pamphlet/document, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."⁸⁷ Mormons whose family structures cannot meet these expectations, although they are a majority in many places of the world, are often intimidated by the ideals that they can't seem to live up to. As Mormons are fond of reminding each other, "no amount of success can compensate for failure in the home."⁸⁸

Like the body, the home is compared to the temple in its capacity for conducting revelation by inviting the Holy Ghost. Like some iconophobic Protestant sects,⁸⁹ Mormons have a fondness for plainness in their places of worship that reflects LDS regulations regarding decorations in the chapel. However, it is commonplace to see religious statues and prints in the

⁸⁶ *Children's Songbook of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995), 190-191.

⁸⁷ *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997).

⁸⁸ This is popularly attributed to mid-20th century Mormon prophet David O. McKay.

⁸⁹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 108.

home, as well as crafts that are the product of relief society activities—usually quilts or other crafts with some element of pioneer nostalgia. While household decoration varies widely, of course, there is an unsystematized but identifiable Mormon cultural “taste”⁹⁰ that is socially enabling within the church and whose trademark artifacts and discourse can be easily identified by others who share that taste. Framed church documents such as the Proclamation on the Family⁹¹ reflect a sharp memory of past general conference addresses when church leaders recommended hanging them in the home. Pioneer historical fiction such as Gerald Lund’s mega-series “The Work and the Glory,” church media videos, Mormon Tabernacle choir CDs and armchair historical books on Mesoamerican archaeology all mark a member’s home who possesses this taste. Tweed would acknowledge that these artifacts delineate Mormon homes as different from the outside world; I would add that some homes are more “Mormon” than others, and that we would be negligent to ignore what that means in terms of intra-Mormon social stratification.

The Mormon Homeland

If any single umbrella term encompasses the Mormon concept of a homeland, it is *Zion*. Tweed observes that “...since the homeland is an imagined territory inhabited by an imagined community, a space and group continually figured and refigured in contact with others, its borders shift over time and across cultures.”⁹² The term “Zion” in Mormonism alternately refers to any place where members gather; the region around Independence, Missouri, which Joseph

⁹⁰ I use the term “taste” in Bourdieu’s sense; William Deal and Timothy Beal, “Pierre Bourdieu” in *Theory for Religious Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 64.

⁹¹ A vernacular reference to *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*.

⁹² *Crossing and Dwelling*, 110.

Smith identified as the location of the antediluvian Garden of Eden and the future New Jerusalem to which Jesus will descend at his Second Coming; The Salt Lake Basin in Utah; or to North America in general.

Tweed acknowledges that “sometimes one homeland displaces another.”⁹³ Just as Manifest Destiny “imposed a colonialist grid on another grid: the boundaries of the six nations of the Iroquois,” Nineteenth Century Mormon migrations and gatherings threatened delicate political balances in frontier states and displaced natives. As always, “sacred geographies are contested.”⁹⁴

Tweed further explains that “Religious homemaking...charts taxonomies of the people within and beyond its borders. In other words, it maps social space. It draws boundaries around *us* and *them*; it constructs collective identity and, concomitantly, imagines degrees of social distance.”⁹⁵ In terms of social organization, today’s deterritorialized Mormon Zion divides inhabitants into member and non-member, with a rough “inactive” category between the two to account for baptized Mormons who attend sacrament meeting less than once a month (including many who no longer self-identify as Mormons, such as the author).

Compared to other cases, perhaps, Mormonism’s homeland is complex: not only are lands contested between sects, but terms are contested within LDS Mormonism as well. Today, we are stunned by the multiplicity of meanings for the word—Missouri, Utah, America, “the Pure in Heart”—but these make sense when we see how conceptions of Zion have changed over the last 150 years. In 1838, Joseph Smith revealed the area around Independence, Missouri to be

⁹³ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 113.

⁹⁴ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 113.

⁹⁵ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 111.

“Zion,” the historical location of the Garden of Eden⁹⁶ and the future location of a ‘New Jerusalem’ that would be a counterpart to the Jerusalem of Palestine.⁹⁷ Unlike other pre-millennial charismatic leaders, Smith appointed a place—rather than a time—for the second coming.⁹⁸ After the early Mormons were forced to evacuate Missouri, members preferred to think of “Zion” in more general terms since, after all, it was anticipated that it would expand to fill the whole North American continent anyway.⁹⁹ The anticipated re-conquest of Missouri came into doubt over time, and Utah became the unchallenged homeland of Mormonism under Brigham Young.¹⁰⁰ “Zion” therefore became a trope for the gathering-place of Israel, a land that was defined by the gathering act itself (as opposed to the reverse, a gathering that was defined by its location). Eventually, the LDS church leadership of the early Twentieth Century encouraged members to stop emigrating and make every nation into a gathering-place: a “Zion” constituted by the pure in heart.¹⁰¹ Today, “Zion” refers eschatologically to the area around Independence, Missouri, culturally to the Salt Lake Valley, and theologically to any place where members live: the “stakes” of Zion.¹⁰² It is unfortunate that Tweed’s theory does not direct us to think more about the role that layered histories such as this play in present practices.

The Mormon Cosmos

Mormon geography is expansive enough to contain both the home and homeland. Like

⁹⁶ Thus assigning the entire antediluvian history of the Old Testament to the American continent. See *Mormonism and the American Experience*, 67.

⁹⁷ Holmes, vii.

⁹⁸ Holmes, 43-49.

⁹⁹ Campbell, 89.

¹⁰⁰ Campbell, 128.

¹⁰¹ Campbell, 192 and Barlow, 147 (this has its doctrinal basis in a reinterpretation of *Doctrine and Covenants* 97:21).

¹⁰² Small regional groups of Mormon congregations analogous to a diocese are called “stakes”, a trope that suggests they hold up an imaginary, world-spanning “tent of Zion”. See *Gospel Principles*, 112.

the land of Canaan dispensed to Abraham in the Old Testament, Mormons see America as a literal promised land: a “Palestine turned around,” a “territorial echo of mountainous Israel, with a river the settlers named Jordan flowing north from a fresh sea to a dead sea.”¹⁰³

If we look beyond the globe, however, Mormonism has a lot to say about outer space as well. According to the Book of Abraham in *Pearl of Great Price*, Earth is one of many planets created and peopled by God. God’s dwelling-place is near to the greatest star of all, called Kolob, suggesting a real location in the galactic core.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, when most Mormons repeat the liturgical phrase “worlds without end,” they do not mean “all possible worlds” in the classical theological/apologetic sense, but a literal infinity of populated planets.¹⁰⁵ Beyond this, there is the suggestion—hinted at, but never discussed over the pulpit—that there must be other gods with their own “worlds without end” somewhere else in an endless genealogy of gods. LDS orthodoxy dissuades members from overly engaging in many of these questions about the ultimate origins of the universe “redirect[ing] attention to other concerns” as Tweed notes many religions do.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, popular Mormon fascination at the depth of celestial time is most expressively articulated in the poem “If you could Hie to Kolob” by William W. Phelps, a companion of Joseph Smith:

“If you could hie to Kolob in the twinkling of an eye,
And then continue onward with that same speed to fly,
Do you think that you could ever, through all eternity,
Find out the generation where Gods began to be?”

¹⁰³ Barlow, 145.

¹⁰⁴ *Abraham* 3:1-3, in *The Pearl of Great Price*.

¹⁰⁵ In *Temple and Cosmos*, influential LDS apologist Hugh Nibley has taken the uncommon stance that Kolob ought to be understood metaphorically.

¹⁰⁶ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 118.

Or see the grand beginning, where space did not extend?
Or view the last creation, where Gods and matter end?
Methinks the Spirit whispers, "No man has found 'pure space,'
Nor seen the outside curtains, where nothing has a place."
The works of God continue, and worlds and lives abound;
Improvement and progression have one eternal round.
There is no end to matter; there is no end to space;
There is no end to spirit; there is no end to race.
There is no end to virtue; there is no end to might;
There is no end to wisdom; there is no end to light.
There is no end to union; there is no end to youth;
There is no end to priesthood; there is no end to truth.
There is no end to glory; there is no end to love;
There is no end to being; there is no death above.¹⁰⁷

Put to music and sung by a congregation, the rhythm and monotony of the last verses reflects the cyclical eternity of the Mormon cosmogony. Indeed, hymns such as this are especially reflective of popular Mormon sentiment because they are only approved by—not constructed by—church authorities. Both the pre-existent “disorganized matter” from which God formed the universe as we know it and God’s children themselves are understood to be eternal.¹⁰⁸ Counter to common Christian cosmogonies, Tweed states that “other myths do not simply assume the existence of the universe, but self-consciously imagine it as *enduring*: the

¹⁰⁷ *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1985), 284.

¹⁰⁸ *Abraham* 3:24.

world is eternal and time is cyclical. In these accounts there is no ultimate origin, but only the initiation of another cycle.”¹⁰⁹ In this sense, Mormonism has more in common with some Eastern religions than mainstream Christianity. Creation as we know it was formed by Jesus and Adam’s authority under God’s direction.¹¹⁰ Matter was ordered, presumably by command; our spirits, created by the celestial procreative process. That a Heavenly mother (or mothers) must accompany a Heavenly Father is a fairly obvious corollary of temple marriage and the concept of mankind as the spirit progeny of God; yet the public expression of this sentiment has been systematically censured by the Church even though it is popularly assumed by many Mormons.¹¹¹ This suggestion, however, found also in Eliza Snow’s “O My Father” slips through the net of orthodoxy (presumably because it describes Heavenly Mother only by inference, not authority):

“...I had learned to call thee Father,
Thru thy spirit from on high,
But, until the key of knowledge
Was restored, I knew not why.
In the heav’ns are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare!
Truth is reason; truth eternal
Tells me I’ve a mother there.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 119.

¹¹⁰ Adam’s role in the creation of the world is unclear in Mormon scripture, but explained in the temple endowment ceremony.

¹¹¹ For details on the so-called “September Six” intellectuals who were excommunicated in 1994 for teaching heterodox theology, including feminist speculation on “Heavenly Mother,” see Peggy Stack, “Exiles in Zion,” at <www.rickross.com/reference/mormon/mormon116.html>, accessed 20 April 2009.

¹¹² *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 292.

The “War in Heaven” is one of the central cosmogonic myths of Mormonism. According to *Gospel Principles*,¹¹³ God called a council together before our mortal existence to discuss sin and salvation. Satan challenged God’s plan and presumed to save all of humankind by revoking free agency; Jesus offered to fulfill God’s intentions, allowing us to choose good or evil for ourselves but offering to pay the price for all of our sins himself. Jesus’ plan was chosen and Satan rebelled along with one-third of God’s spirit children, who would be cast down to earth as malevolent disembodied spirits.¹¹⁴ Until the 1970’s, it was taught that the less-valiant “fence-sitters” of the war in heaven were those born with dark skin.¹¹⁵ Like many cosmogonies, this story accounts for both racial stratification and theodicy (based on freedom of choice and the influence of evil spirits in the world).

Whether the Mormon galactic map should be counted as a part of Mormon geography or cosmography is a difficult question, but one that does not need to be answered. Either way, Mormonism maps out realms of being that are not strictly territorial. These are temporal states of the soul, realms whose location and duration are never explicitly defined: the pre-existence before mortal life, the spirit prison and paradise that await the wicked and righteous as temporary resting places after death, and the three kingdoms of glory to which the resurrected will be assigned in the final judgment.¹¹⁶ There are points of correspondence between Mormonism’s galactic geography and its cosmography, but little orthodoxy (or apocryphal consensus) that pins it all down.

¹¹³ *Gospel Principles* is a manual used for teaching new members, analogous to a very streamlined catechism.

¹¹⁴ *Gospel Principles*, 21; This entire narrative is described in the Book of Abraham in the *Pearl of Great Price*.

¹¹⁵ The connection between racial blackness and cowardice in the War in Heaven is described in early editions of Bruce R. McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine* and paralleled in early editions of the *Book of Mormon* which described the dark skin of Native Americans as a curse.

¹¹⁶ There is a fourth destination without any glory that Mormons refer to as “Outer Darkness”, reserved for the few who knew the truth but willfully rejected it during their mortal lives. See *Gospel Principles*, 298.

Although Tweed includes teleographies, the ultimate aims of existence, in his discussion of cosmic chronotopes,¹¹⁷ they can as easily be described as cosmic crossings. In Mormonism, man's ultimate destiny is to become like God, as we will discuss below.

Terrestrial Crossings in Mormonism

“Terrestrial crossings,” Tweed points out, “vary according to the shifts in travel and communication technology.”¹¹⁸ He muses that religions can be discussed in terms of the modes of transportation available—biped, quadruped, galleon, steamship, railroad, and airplane religion.¹¹⁹ In this sense, the early Mormonism of Joseph Smith might be styled a canal religion,¹²⁰ then later a horse, oxcart, and steamship religion. With the completion of the trans-continental railroad near Payson Utah in 1869, it became a railroad religion.¹²¹ Over time it has become everything else—a sedan religion, perhaps, in the United States—but in its missionary crossings Mormonism is mediated by Doc Martens and mountain bikes.

“Gathering to Zion” in the early church was a one-way trip for members who followed Joseph Smith from state to state; as well as for those who followed Brigham Young across the plains or immigrated to the Church's center from outlying states and European countries. In 1849, Young organized the “Perpetual Emigration Fund,” to lend the money necessary for impoverished new converts in outlying areas to gather to Utah.¹²² Today members in the United States “gather” by car to their local meetinghouses and return home afterwards. A mission, too,

¹¹⁷ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 122.

¹¹⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 124.

¹¹⁹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 125.

¹²⁰ Hansen, “Joseph Smith, American Culture, and the Origins of Mormonism,” 46.

¹²¹ Ernest Taves, *This is the Place: Brigham Young and the New Zion*, (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1991), 251.

¹²² Taves, 118-120.

was a two-way trip for those who did not die from disease or violence in the early church, and it still is for missionaries today. Young men age 19 and older are sent by the Church to “dwell” in beyond the homeland’s borders, whether that is imagined as a territorial homeland, such as the inter-mountain West, or a homeland constituted by the society of other Mormons. After engaging in proselytizing activities (and presumably being transformed by their experiences), missionaries return, “bringing back” new converts who cross into their own local stake of Zion.

Trips to the temple for the ordinances of washing and anointing, endowment, and temple marriage are considered essential for individual salvation—they are prerequisites to exaltation in the celestial kingdom and the full realization of humanity’s potential. At times a journey such as this is taken at great sacrifice by members for whom the temple is too distant or the trip too costly to be more than a once-in-a-lifetime journey. Individuals who can, however, are expected to return and perform or accept these saving ordinances in proxy for the deceased (including baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the conferral of priesthood for men). These works for the dead are expected to enable them to make the same cosmic crossings that living Mormons make while their spirits await judgment in spirit prison. This creates a type of “fairness” in Mormon theodicy that responds to the perennial problem of why God would damn those who fail to hear the truth by accident of birth. Furthermore, by receiving ordinances in proxy, temple-going members reenact their own temple ordinances, reinforce their beliefs and are reminded of the covenants they made in the temple when they first went on their own behalf.

Many members also go on a pilgrimage of sorts to historical sites such as the “Sacred Grove” where Joseph Smith reported his first vision of God and Jesus; or to Nauvoo, Illinois, Kirtland, Ohio, or Independence, Missouri. A road trip such as this is a common summer event

for church youth. Although these visits play no salvific role in Mormonism, they are considered faith-affirming, and knowledge about or travel to such places inducts a person into a subculture of bookish Mormons. This is another example of how a “taste” for things spiritual while on vacation can be socially enabling in Mormonism.

Regarding such social space, the nearly unilateral conferral of the Aaronic priesthood to young men and the Melchizedek priesthood to adult Mormons creates a kind of baseline equality that is not paralleled in the outside world. Sometimes church callings even turn normal worldly statuses on their heads (my bishop in the Sterling, Alaska ward was an auto mechanic!). However, these very callings within the priesthood create a rigid hierarchy in the Church; though it fluctuates with the cycle of callings and releases, it still inevitably affected by “taste” and the prestige or responsibility of past callings. Furthermore, women may have callings that put them in authority positions over children and other women, but in the LDS church they are excluded from holding the priesthood entirely and never preside in mixed meetings except as teachers.

Corporeal Crossings in Mormonism

Tweed also describes how religions mediate corporeal crossings—using rites of passage through real and imagined embodied limits such as sickness, death, natural disasters, sex, and peak experiences.¹²³ Religions “provide tropes, narratives, codes, artifacts, rituals that mark those boundaries and clear paths across them...there are no culturally unmediated experiences.”¹²⁴

For many natural thresholds, however, Mormonism does not prescribe any particular

¹²³ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 136; Tweed refers to these peak experiences as “natural wonders.”

¹²⁴ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 138.

ritual or hold any sacrament dear. Birth is marked with a naming and a blessing, usually done by the father if he is a priesthood holder. But the event is low-key (usually performed in a sacrament meeting); it is neither essential for salvation nor significant in Mormon scriptures. Death, likewise, is not marked by an especially high-profile ordinance; often the burial ground is consecrated, the priesthood is invoked, and a short sermon given. In these cases, they are the scriptural narratives about the larger cosmic significance of birth and death that give those crossings meaning—in other words, they are not mediated through ritual so much as through discourse.

Baptism is an initiation into church membership; performed by immersion, it is a metaphor for spiritual death, burial, and rebirth. The age of eight years old is the minimum age; it is considered in the church to be the “age of accountability,” a scriptural placeholder for the youngest age at which a person can legitimately choose between right and wrong.¹²⁵ Thus baptism is seen as a “choice,” although we can see it as a constrained one since an 8-yr old Mormon has no real grounds on which to reject the ritual. In addition to this initiation, then, the age of 8 creates a distinguisher between a truly innocent child (for whom the grace of God is sufficient) and one who is morally accountable (and must therefore be baptized either in person or after death by proxy in order to qualify for salvation). Conferral of the gift of the Holy Ghost and confirmation as a member of the church is typically performed within a week of baptism.

While the conferral of the Aaronic priesthood on 12 year old males is a bestowal of responsibility that corresponds to puberty, sexual maturity itself plays no part in Mormon discourse and exists in natural tension with Mormon beliefs about abstinence before marriage—which seem to be followed with remarkable statistical results. The Melchizedek priesthood is

¹²⁵ See *Moroni 8* in the *Book of Mormon*, as well as *Doctrine and Covenants 137*.

often given at 18, before a man embarks on a mission. Young women attend Sunday school programs that roughly parallel the men's' priesthood meetings, but their ranks (beehive, mia maid,¹²⁶ and laurel) are only shadows of the priesthood offices (deacon, teacher, priest) from which they are withheld—they are encouraged to set and meet goals and are given awards, but these usually come across as consolations to skeptics and outsiders. Sexual maturity is consummated, of course, in temple marriage. Members are encouraged not to delay any marriage for any reason other than a mission (including education and the acquisition of stable employment), and they are encouraged to have families as soon as possible. As with other norms that are both official and unofficial, the members are self-regulating in encouraging each other to meet these expectations.

The two-year mission is the ubiquitous rite of passage for Mormon men: it exposes them to the workings of the Church, indoctrinates them and familiarizes them with the fundamentals of church doctrine, and gives them leadership experience as they take positions over other missionaries directing the work. It is also a social expectation—it is common for a young adult woman to insist on dating only an “RM” (returned missionary), as their interest is in finding a suitable husband. Ideally, this is a person who has served a mission as he ought to have and possesses the qualities (hard work, etc) that are supposed to be gained by serving for 2 years. For many young men, this is the first time they will have lived away from their parents. And can be a time of enlightening cultural encounters.

A mission, however, represents more than merely a corporeal crossing: it is a crossing-in-dwelling that does not fit perfectly into Tweed's categorization. Furthermore, as has been

¹²⁶ “MIA-maid” is derived from a previous name for the young women's program, called the “Mutual Improvement Association.”

observed by Laurie Maffly-Kipp, missionary work is always a *two-way* cultural encounter.¹²⁷ Missionaries in Japan like myself imagined ourselves approaching the locals with a fresh gospel message, never realizing that our listeners were self-selecting. Some of them, such as a Ford-driving, Levis-wearing old man I knew in Shiga Prefecture, knew about us long before we approached him and was as interested in our Americanness as he was in our religion. Tweed observes that “Religion is mixed with economic, political, and other factors—it affects them and is affected by them in ‘transfluvial currents.’”¹²⁸ The Mormon mission field is one such mixing-place, where to become Mormon is to become a little American, at least in identity;¹²⁹ local resistance to the United States dramatically affects baptismal rates.¹³⁰ The effects of missionary work, in any case, are manifold; entry into male Mormon adulthood is just the tip of the iceberg.

Another rite of passage is the patriarchal blessing; typically it is given during teenage years, although this may come later in the case of a convert (like the conferral of the priesthood and other rituals). In this once-in-a-lifetime pronouncement, the patriarch (a stake priesthood office typically filled by a grandfatherly man) places his hands on the head of the recipient and makes statements about the person’s pre-mortal history and destiny along with personal promises

¹²⁷ Maffly-Kipp tells the revealing tale of “Henry Obookiah” in “Eastward Ho! American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim,” reprinted in *Proclamation to the People: Nineteenth-century Mormonism and the Pacific Basin Frontier*, Eds. Laurie Maffly-Kipp and Reid Neilson (Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 2008), 21-50. “Obookiah” was taken as a model of a helpless native, and his “discovery” was the impetus for a protestant mission to Hawaii. The irony, of course, is that Obookiah (Opukahaia) had by that point traveled half the world and discovered Protestants long before these New Englanders “discovered” him.

¹²⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 168.

¹²⁹ This is especially true since the top-down LDS “Correlation” of the mid-20th century, a doctrinally homogenizing crusade that predictably favors white, middle-class Western American values. Philip Barlow’s work on Correlation is briefly outlined in Section III.

¹³⁰ During the 19th century, the opposite was sometimes true. When the Mormons were still suffering active persecution from the U.S. government, Pacific islanders often felt a measure of anti-imperialist camaraderie and welcomed the missionaries. See Reid Nielson and Laurie Maffly-Kipp, “Nineteenth-century Mormonism and the Pacific Basin Frontier: An Introduction” in *Proclamation to the People: Nineteenth-century Mormonism and the Pacific Basin Frontier*, Eds. Laurie Maffly-Kipp and Reid Neilson (Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 2008), 12.

and warnings that are supposed to serve as a kind of “personal scripture” for the individual. The patriarch also declares the hidden lineage of the recipient—this reveals which of the twelve tribes of Israel the person is descended from and recites the promises associated with that tribe. The blessing is always recorded and often referred to as if it were a scripture like the Bible.

Tweed himself discusses temple marriage, perhaps the most important Mormon corporeal crossing, in *Crossing and Dwelling*:

“The Latter Day Saints (LDS), who dedicated a temple in Tokyo in 1980 and have built more than sixty others outside the United States, affirm the eternity of marriage in another way. According to LDS doctrine, Adam and Eve were given to each other in the Garden of Eden, at the culmination of God’s creative process, and in a “celestial marriage” in the temple Mormon couples also make an eternal covenant with God, each other, and future generations, who will form a family in the celestial kingdom after the resurrection. The eternity of the couple’s bonds is vividly symbolized by the mirrors on the opposite sides of the temple’s celestial room: as they kneel to face each other across an altar in the middle of the room, the mirrors reflect an endless series of images of the couple, who will remain together after death.¹³¹

The doctrinal teachings on eternal marriage—which “intensify joy” by promising that it will be eternal—are reinforced in Mormon popular culture. The 1970’s Mormon musical “Saturday’s Warrior” depicts a family on earth juxtaposed with scenes from their pre-mortal life; the main couple anticipates meeting on earth in a fog-hogged heaven before they are born, singing, “The circle of our love extends beyond the reach of time/ beyond the span of days and

¹³¹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 147.

years it goes forever.”¹³² While the LDS church offers no justification for this image of pre-mortally determined marriages, it reflects popular Mormon feelings on the cosmic significance and eternity of marriage, and of family as something that transcends time.

The final goal of human existence, which we will discuss in the next section, is easily—and often—diagrammed in Sunday school lessons and SEDs (monthly Sunday Evening Discussion groups for the youth, usually led by a member of the bishopric). More than once, I have seen a line drawn on the board, from lower left to upper right: five marks on the line indicate the thresholds that must be crossed in order to reach exaltation. Collectively, the ordinances of Baptism, the Gift of the Holy Ghost, the conferral of the Melchizedek priesthood (for men), the Temple endowment and Temple marriage constitute these so-called “saving ordinances,” the thresholds that stand between the mortal human and exaltation. None of these except for marriage correspond to embodied thresholds, and even marriage is an artificial or social (not inherently biological) step between sexual maturity and procreation. Thus we could say that the corporeal crossings that Mormonism mediates are also thresholds that Mormonism sets up; Mormonism does not respond to, but creates, the limens under which it leads its adherents. Tweed is wise to the artificiality of some of the barriers religions create, but fails to recognize the extent to which religions such as Mormonism operate with almost no correspondence whatsoever to the actual physiological thresholds he sees as the basis for corporeal crossing practices.

Cosmic Crossings in Mormonism

Tweed gives attention in his own itinerary to “teleographies, representations of the

¹³² Douglas Stewart and Lex de Azevedo, *Saturday's Warrior* (Embryo Records, 1974).

ultimate horizon and the means of crossing it.”¹³³ “For many monotheists,” he observes, “it is the boundary between earth and heaven, however that celestial realm is imagined.”¹³⁴ In Tweed’s typology of teleographies, however, the Mormon cosmic crossing would be classified as a *transforming*, rather than a *transporting* teleography. Exaltation is change in condition; indeed, it is prophesied in the Doctrine and Covenants that the earth itself will become the future celestial kingdom, meaning that exaltation places the fully realized human at least metaphorically in the same place he lives now.¹³⁵ It is the exalted human’s condition—as well as the earth’s—that will change. Admittedly this is less clear in the case of the Telestial and Terrestrial kingdoms, those lesser degrees of glory to which the less-valiant will be relegated.

Like Eastern Orthodox Christianity’s doctrine of Apotheosis, Mormons believe that through their teachings they will become more like God; however, for Mormons that transformation is a complete metamorphosis, one that will begin in this life but continue eternally in a process of perpetual development and perfection called “eternal progression.” Exalted men will, like God, father spirit children with their wife (or wives) and create worlds.

Mormonism does not leave all of this to the imagined future, however. As in other religions Tweed describes, Mormons “travel vertically back and forth between transcendence and immanence. They bring the gods to earth and transport the faithful to the heavens.”¹³⁶ Faithful members are called “saints,” a trope that likens the members to traditional Catholic or biblical saints, but is supported doctrinally: Called “saviors on Mount Zion,” members, like Jesus, sacrifice their bodies by giving of their time to perform ordinances-in-proxy for the

¹³³ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 151.

¹³⁴ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 152.

¹³⁵ *Doctrine and Covenants* 77.

¹³⁶ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 158.

deceased. Mormons emulate Jesus when they perform saving work for those who cannot do so for themselves in temples. The endowed Mormon thus exists in an in-between state. Indeed, at the center of each temple is a “celestial room” analogous to the ancient Hebrew Holy of Holies, decorated in white and gold; only those who are worthy and dressed in the full temple regalia, pure white with a princely cap (or veil) are allowed inside, and they are instructed to speak only in whispers, only when necessary. The silent space, accessed through the “terrestrial room” (where the endowment ceremony takes place) brings the ultimate into reach, if only temporarily. Thus Mormons draw a parallel between their temples and the mountains on which ancient Hebrew prophets sacrificed. Like a high point from which one can see miles into the distance, the temple is like a mountain that provides a refuge from the world and a temporary glimpse of faraway heaven.

That is not to say that Mormon spatial conceptions are perfectly accounted for by Tweed’s template. Temples in particular, which are both a recognizable transcultural motif and a specific type of structure in Mormonism, do not fall perfectly into any of Tweed’s chronotopes. Their operation can be better explained in terms of Eliade’s “axis mundi,” joining the worlds of the living, the dead, and the heavens. Alternately, Temple-centered Mormon worship could be articulated as one of Jonathan Z. Smith’s “religions of *there*.”¹³⁷ Regardless, the idea of a sacred place to which one must travel does not fit perfectly into Tweed’s image of concentric,

¹³⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004), 325. Smith continues, “wherever one’s domicile, these...locales are someplace else, are ‘over there’ in relation to one’s homeplace. To some degree, access to such constructions is difficult, as expressed in the architectural language of walls and gates, of zones and nested interiors (328).” In the case of LDS temples, “going there”—whether it be migrating to Utah or traveling to the temple itself, involves overcoming multiple obstacles. There are literal gates, high walls with few (if any) windows, the requirement of a temple recommend (based on a worthiness interview) in order to gain entry, and correspondingly different levels of access to the baptistery, endowment rooms, and the celestial room. Even when Temples dot the homeland, they are unambiguously intended to be a place apart.

expanding chronotopes. A temple is not always located in some version of a homeland. When Tweed says, “Religions mark this place as unlike others. Religions say: take off your shoes before you enter here,”¹³⁸ it is in the context of concentric chronotopes. Religions of *there* take you away from your home to the realm of the surreal.

What Tweed Does Right

Tweed’s work is visibly responsive to “the directions taken by scholarship in the field over the last several decades, which have veered toward lived religion, popular practice, and non-institutional forms—in short, qualitative cultural studies.”¹³⁹ Looking back on the stops we have made through Mormonism using his itinerary, several strong points of Tweed’s theory stand out. His careful distinction between definition and theory was attentive to William Arnal’s work on the same subject and innovative in its treatment of both.¹⁴⁰ Tweed’s theory is furthermore responsive to the primacy of the body in positioned religion, both by its placement foremost among chronotopes, and also through his contrast between autocentric and allocentric reference frames. The body, home, homeland, cosmos, terrestrial, corporeal, and cosmic crossings Tweed encourages us to explore represent Mormonism uniquely and expansively, in a way that resonates with my own experiences and seems responsive to the demands of the global age and global religion. At the very least, Tweed has created a structure for talking about the dimensions of inhabited religious space and time that can be used in other academic endeavors. Furthermore, Tweed’s principle of “positionality” mandates a meaningfully reflexive angle on

¹³⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 75.

¹³⁹ Laurie Maffly-Kipp, “If It’s South Dakota You Must Be Episcopalian: Lies Truth-Telling, and the Mapping of U.S. Religion,” in *Church History* 71.1 (March 2002), 142.

¹⁴⁰ William Arnal, “Definition,” in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, Eds. Willi Braun and Russell McCutcheon, (London: Cassell, 2000), 21.

field research such as ethnography; suggesting that a theorist should be reporting “sightings” specifically (and not musing on “observations” generally) makes a case study more transparent.

Most of all, perhaps, Tweed’s theory covers a vast amount of territory in terms of *lived* religion. The field of Mormon studies, which has until been recently been plagued by an obsessive focus on “official” church leadership and history, has only produced a few handbooks on Mormonism comparable to what a book-length version of our survey would look like in breadth and focus. Claudia Bushman’s *Contemporary Mormonism*¹⁴¹ does much to explain Mormonism in practical (lived) terms, but lacks the spatial focus so central to Tweed’s theory. It also suffers from some insider bias.¹⁴² Richard and Joan Ostling’s *Mormon America* is an outsider’s take on Mormonism¹⁴³—it replaces Bushman’s naivety with a grain of journalistic cynicism,¹⁴⁴ but I highly recommend it as a primer on Mormonism precisely for its focus on actual “sighted” practices (never averting its eyes from the unseemly). Nevertheless, I know of no book-length survey on Mormonism that combines Tweed’s penchant for “sightable,” lived religion with his sensitivity to space, place, and movement.¹⁴⁵

As Tweed states at the outset, “This theory, like others, asks only: does this provide an illuminating angle of vision as you try to interpret religions in other eras and regions?”¹⁴⁶ The short answer in this case, then, is *yes*. Whether Tweed’s theory is as illuminating as it could

¹⁴¹ See Claudia Bushman, *Contemporary Mormonism: Latter-day Saints in Modern America*, (Westport: Praeger, 2006).

¹⁴² For example, Bushman calls the connection between racial blackness, the priesthood, and the War in Heaven the “pre-existence hypothesis,” downplaying the authority of leaders who taught it, the prophets who endorsed their messages, its presentation as doctrine proper (rather than theory) and its coherence within other Mormon discourses. She further suggests that it was only “hypothesized” from 1931 to 1949. See Bushman, 93.

¹⁴³ See Richard Ostling and Joan Ostling, *Mormon America: the Power and the Promise* (New York: HarperOne, 2007).

¹⁴⁴ One focus of *Mormon America* is the LDS church’s practice of financial obfuscation.

¹⁴⁵ Maffly-Kipp and Nielson’s *Proclamation to the People*, on the Nineteenth-century spread of Mormonism through the Pacific, may be the exception to this rule; however, it is a collection of mostly previously-published essays. It is also, of course, a history rather than a contemporary ethnography.

¹⁴⁶ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 27.

be—and whether it illuminates all it aspires to, especially in cases of power—are important questions we will address in the next section.

Section III: Blind Spots

Tweed uses the trope of “blind spots” to describe the limitations inherent in his principle of “positionality” as well as the weaknesses in his theory generally. He draws the image from a scene in Bashō’s *Narrow Road to the Deep North* in which the poet’s view is temporarily blocked by a cloud of dust, illustrating the way in which blind spots are both realistic and in a sense, artistic. Tweed is careful to address what he sees as the most problematic of his own blind spots: namely, that his discussion of religions as “flows” leaves the nature of these so-called “flows” underdeveloped and underexplored;¹⁴⁷ and second, that his theory does little to highlight individual “movers and shakers” in religion such as Mary Baker Eddy or Joseph Smith, although it could.¹⁴⁸ I go further and argue that it is *power*—wielded by individuals and obscured by history—which Tweed’s theory fails to highlight, but which is critically important in the case of Mormonism.

Power

Tweed does take care in *Crossing and Dwelling* to address “compelled passages and constrained crossings.”¹⁴⁹ While Tweed claims that his “view of theorizing takes seriously critical theory’s highlighting of power relations,”¹⁵⁰ I challenge whether or not Tweed’s theory incorporates the power relations in any way more than “taking it seriously”—with a very *serious* tip of the hat.

¹⁴⁷ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 171.

¹⁴⁸ Tweed only mentions individuals briefly, musing that “religious founders such as the originator of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, not only discovered crossing places but also generated new streams to cross. To take the metaphor further, they were eddies—pun intended—or divergent currents that, in turn, were swirled by transfluvial forces,” 176.

¹⁴⁹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 135.

¹⁵⁰ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 8.

Tweed muses that “most religions join Basho in inviting devotees to notice the flowers, to recognize perfections and enhance delight.”¹⁵¹ Thus Tweed finds religion generally positive, explaining that religions “intensify joy and confront suffering.” This presupposes that the joys and sufferings that religions confront preexist the religiously mediated means of confrontation. Of course in many cases this is true: the embodied limits of birth, puberty, sickness, disaster and death are not the fault of religion. Nor was the *Virgen Mambisa* complicit in the political exile of Tweed’s Cubans. However, we have already seen a lack of correspondence between Mormonism’s “5 saving ordinances” and Tweed’s embodied limits, suggesting that the problems Mormonism offers to solve for its followers are largely the problems that it proposes. In any case, when we define religion by the power it gives its adherents to overcome problems, we put a moral evaluation in front of the actual case; an evaluation that “normal” religions help people and which, Tweed’s vocal exceptions noted, still *suggests* a rose-colored itinerary if we follow Tweed’s assertions about the relationship between definition and theory.¹⁵²

The problem is that subtler forms of power (hegemony as opposed to overt domination) are difficult enough to perceive when we are looking for them. While it is true that Tweed’s lens helps us *notice* women and minorities, it does not highlight or explain the power dynamics that oppress them. Tweed did too little to encourage us to think critically about, for example, the ramifications of racial blackness as a sign of pre-mortal unworthiness in Mormon cosmogony, and nothing to suggest that we should push hegemonic elites on issues such as the subordination of Native American cultural identity into Mormonism’s own narrative,¹⁵³ the appropriation of

¹⁵¹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 142.

¹⁵² This also suggests that religions that fail to help people are “abnormal” or “unhealthy” religion.

¹⁵³ Farmer, 16; while this has the effect of emplacing Euro-American Mormons and connecting them to the American landscape, it has the opposite effect on Native Americans. It undermines native land claims,

Israelitic identity, the de facto class and career criteria for callings to the upper LDS hierarchy in the late-20th century church, the affixation of gender roles to eternal sexual identity;¹⁵⁴ and of course control over children, which is not unique to Mormonism (nor especially despicable) but which is easily overlooked. Other theorists, equally attentive to religious tropes, are still more cautious about “lending unconscious support and legitimacy to structures of authority.” While Tweed tells us to look for orienting metaphors, Graeme McQueen asks us, “Who do these metaphors function for?”¹⁵⁵

Individuals

The complex role of the individual remains one part of the power picture that Mormon studies cannot afford to ignore. It is true that Tweed muses briefly on the possibility of highlighting “individual agency and collective action in dwelling and crossing by talking about religious homemakers and ford-makers.”¹⁵⁶ However, even though this approach recognizes the roles individuals or collective actors play in creating and channeling flows, it fails to give attention to ways in which organic-cultural flows first influence those individuals, much less the uniqueness of any single man or woman (who may, like Smith, be rebellious rather than obedient relative to his or her social environment). Klaus Hansen argues of Smith that, “the necessary

suggesting that they, too are colonists, and that their sufferings are the just consequences of historical depravity and genocide against the Nephites. References in the Book of Mormon to Native American dark skin as a curse have been altered in 20th-century to appear less racist (see Farmer, 369).

¹⁵⁴ *The Proclamation on the Family* is explicit in this regard.

¹⁵⁵ Graeme MacQueen, Whose “Sacred History? Reflections on Myth and Dominance,” in *Studies in Religion* 17:2 (1988), 143-157. MacQueen continues, “Whatever moral position is taken as to the goodness or badness of dominant-subordinate relationships, either in general or in specific cases, they are important features of the world and should be made visible. This is not done as often as it should be,” 156.

¹⁵⁶ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 176.

antecedents do not add up to a sufficient explanation of [his] genius.”¹⁵⁷ Joseph Smith’s identity as an individual, as well as both product and source of cultural flows, is therefore a direction only half-prompted by, but never explored in, *Crossing and Dwelling*.

Biographies of Mormon leaders such as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young have long had a place in Mormon studies. Fawn Brodie’s psychobiography of Joseph Smith, entitled *No Man Knows my History* (1995), made waves when it suggested that by emphasizing his divine inspiration, Mormons failed to give Smith due credit for his intelligence and creativity;¹⁵⁸ responses to Brodie’s work and updated variations on the same theme are still being produced.¹⁵⁹ However, attempts to delve further into the brain of a controversial but long-dead religious figure have their inherent limitations as a consequence of finite source material. Historical biographies of Smith and Young continue to speculate less and compile more (in breadth of data), but walk a perpetual tightrope between being overly accommodating or overly critical of Smith. Dan Vogel’s *Joseph Smith: the Making of a Prophet* (2004) styles Smith as deceptive but not immoral, noting that theorists need not succumb to the false dichotomy between valorizing and vilifying Joseph Smith.¹⁶⁰ Most importantly for our purposes, Vogel is equally thorough in demonstrating how Smith’s cultural products (scriptures such as the *Book of Mormon*) were both cathartic metaphors for Smith’s own life and also mediations for his followers’ own crossings.

¹⁵⁷ Klaus Hansen, “Joseph Smith, American Culture, and the Origins of Mormonism,” 32. Hansen continues, “Nevertheless, even though their innermost thoughts and inspirations may not be determined solely by their environment, the historical context helps us understand more about the unique contributions of great individuals. Literary scholar Terryl Givens put it well by saying that ‘there is a dimension to ‘the Great Man’ and his influence that is to be understood historically.”

¹⁵⁸ Laurie Maffly-Kipp, “Tracking the Sincere Believer: ‘Authentic’ Religion and the Enduring Legacy of Joseph Smith Jr.,” in *Joseph Smith: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, Eds. Ried Nielson and Terryl Givens (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), 178.

¹⁵⁹ More recent psychobiographies include William D. Morain’s *The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr. and the Disassociated Mind* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric, 1998) and Robert D. Anderson’s *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1999).

¹⁶⁰ Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of an American Prophet*, (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2004), vii; the “prophet or devil” dilemma is one rhetorical tool in which LDS missionaries are trained.

Richard L. Bushman's more recent *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (2007) is also assiduous in outlining the influences upon Joseph Smith, painting the prophet as sincere but perhaps deluded: both have been well-received, if not unanimously.¹⁶¹ Laurie Maffly-Kipp has challenged the assumption that questions of Smith's sincerity or insincerity should be central at all to studies on Smith: in many ways it is an academic dead-end.¹⁶² Work on lay Mormons such as Todd Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness* (1997) and Bitton and Arrington's *Saints without Halos* (1982) are the exceptions to a rule that privileges LDS-authorized discourses and leaders over the practices, lives, and beliefs of the followers and those of splinter groups.¹⁶³ In summary, attention to the socio-cultural influences upon and personalities and life experiences of formative Mormon leaders such as Smith and Young are characteristic of this genre.¹⁶⁴

Tweed's theory of religion encourages us to look at lived religion in a way that highlights the people constituting a tradition instead of the heroes filling its hagiography: a much-needed influence in Mormon studies, to be certain. When he does talk about power, it is always "sighted"—the frowns, perhaps, of a priest as he passes a groups of Santería practitioners. Academic work on Mormonism, like that of most traditions, has unfortunately focused on leaders, men, and adults at the expense of the followers, women and children that are so easy to see using the model outlined in *Crossing and Dwelling*. Tweed is thus poised to complete a picture of Mormonism that has only been half-finished, under the influence of classic

¹⁶¹ "Tracking the Sincere Believer," 178-179; see Leonard J. Arrington's *Brigham Young : American Moses*, (New York : Knopf, 1985) for a nuanced biography of Young.

¹⁶² "Tracking the Sincere Believer," 176.

¹⁶³ "Tracking the Sincere Believer," 185.

¹⁶⁴ A thorough bibliography of primary and secondary sources on Smith can be found in David J. Whitaker, "Studying Joseph Smith Jr.: A Guide to the Sources," in *Joseph Smith: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, Eds. Ried Nielson and Terry Givens (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), 221-237.

sociological theories of religion such as Max Weber's.¹⁶⁵ Daniel Pals observes that "Weber is disposed...to think of the [religious] community as a mixed assemblage of individuals in which the many defer to the few, to those who by tradition, privilege, or personality claim the authority to lead them. They are the custodians of cultural values; they shape society as much as it shapes them and others." Inasmuch as Joseph Smith strikes the near-perfect image of a Weberian "prophet"—"a purely individual bearer of charisma"¹⁶⁶-- it is easy, perhaps, to be as drawn to Smith academically as those who knew him were spiritually.

Inquiry into the lives of religious founders is not merely a question of substantiating their sincerity or endorsing their status, however, but is a question of determining the role that they can and do play in determining the discourses, practices, and policies of the religions they create and affect. It is not an endeavor of simply recreating but also of deconstructing power. It is not enough to say that individuals create or channel cultural flows—but that would not be the whole story, as religious leaders are also people who can wield tremendous social influence through their followers, sometimes quite selfishly and sometimes even long after their deaths. As Ralph Waldo Emerson stated, sometimes "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."¹⁶⁷ To be clear, I do not argue that Tweed's theory excludes attention to individuals such as Smith so much as it gives them insufficient treatment relative to the role they truly play in Mormonism.

¹⁶⁵ Daniel Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion* (New York: Oxford UP, 2006), 155.

¹⁶⁶ Weber's term; a religious leader's talent for achieving extraordinary ecstatic states. Pals further explains that, "The prophet may appear at any time in a culture, acting on a powerful sense of mission, to proclaim for all a comprehensive "religious doctrine or divine commandment"...the center of his life is his mission: He has been specially called by either God or a vision of Truth to proclaim a life-altering message...His authority...anchors itself in the revolutionary power of his personality and message. It is clear that most of the great world religions trace their origin to a transforming prophetic figure whose charismatic life and compelling message revolutionized the world of his day," 166-167. The successful routinization of Smith's charisma is one of the great paradoxes of Mormonism.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Hansen, "Joseph Smith, American culture, and the Origins of Mormonism," 38.

History

Tweed is thorough in incorporating time into his theory: Like a watch and compass, he explains, religions orient us spatially and temporally.¹⁶⁸ A watch is a tool that we use to tell us where we are now—it locates the present within an agenda of before-and-after. Religion, as we have observed, does the same. History is not the same as the past (and future) time imagined by religions in a given moment, however, which are likely to imagine themselves as timeless and unchanging. “Doctrine may—or may not—stay the same over time and space, and, indeed, religious tradition is designed to connect people with their pasts in what *seems to be* an unbroken chain.”¹⁶⁹ Though Tweed brushes history, his methodology suggests that we work with religious discourses *about* time in the present.¹⁷⁰ If we follow Kim Knott’s distinction between the diachronic extensiveness (through/over time) and synchronic interconnectedness (across space, contemporaneous) of religion,¹⁷¹ we could say that Tweed is attentive to both within religious discourse, but only to synchronic interconnectedness from without. When religious discourses call on the past (origins) and imagine a future (destinies) for us, however, we have the resources as scholars to tell a different story—*history* is as likely to undermine as to support the Tweedian chronotopes we sight in religions.

Scholars who study Mormonism as a historical movement in terms of power, culture, and society, show how the LDS church and its constituents have negotiated social change and crisis over its history. The scale and focus of these histories have reflected trends in the larger

¹⁶⁸ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 97.

¹⁶⁹ Brian Wilson, “From the Lexical to the Polythetic: A Brief History of the Definition of Religion,” in *What is Religion? Origins, Definitions, and Explanations*. Eds. Thomas Idinopulos and Brian Wilson (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 250, emphasis added.

¹⁷⁰ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 64.

¹⁷¹ Kim Knott, “Space,” 111.

historical discipline, giving increasing attention to hegemony, gender, collective identity construction, and postmodern critiques of metanarrative. Thus the lens of historians has turned from the founding of the LDS church to its development over time, including attention to both generalized and micro-narratives based on the environment, practices, beliefs, and leadership of the LDS church through time and across space.¹⁷² Jared Farmer and Philip Barlow provide examples of postcolonial and social critical histories of Mormonism, respectively, which are representative of current work in the field and are also illuminative of the ways in which history can obscure the workings of power: an important question in Mormonism to which I think Tweed's theory is inattentive.

Jared Farmer's "On Zion's Mount" is a fair representative of postcolonial historical studies in Mormonism that uses Mount Timpanogos, a popular recreation spot looming over Utah Lake, as its starting point. Farmer demonstrates how over time Mormon settlers gave up on converting the "Lamanites," forced the natives off Utah Lake with government approval,¹⁷³ and slowly re-imagined the history of the once-contested lake (and the surrounding hot springs which were prized for their reputedly medicinal qualities).¹⁷⁴ The fertile Utah Lake where Mormon settlement actually began was deemphasized over time in favor of the forbidding Salt Lake, suggesting both more hardship for the settlers and a closer kinship with Dead Sea in Palestine. Brigham Young's Ute friend-cum-antagonist Walkara (called "Walker" by settlers) came to be remembered as a villain when he was in fact both a baptized Mormon and slave trader with an

¹⁷² Thomas Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930*. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1986), 308.

¹⁷³ Farmer, 2.

¹⁷⁴ Farmer, 50.

expansive white clientele.¹⁷⁵ The fish-eating natives were re-imagined as mountain dwellers, a slow change in collective memory facilitated by marketers that served to popularize Mount “Timp” as a tourist attraction, deflect from the contestation and violence that took place around Utah Lake, and conform better to Biblical prophecies about the “mountain of the Lord’s house, [which] shall be established in the tops of the mountains...and all nations shall flow unto it.”¹⁷⁶ The tragic but fanciful “legend of Mt. Timpanogos,” a pure fiction, is now taken for granted as a genuine Indian legend by locals, with the effect that the actual history of violence around Lake Utah is obscured by an air of doubt over the events of the mid-19th century.¹⁷⁷

Philip Barlow outlines his own observations about Mormonism with a scheme of four periods: “(1) the original Church of Christ founded in 1830 in New York state as the restoration of primitive Christianity, freshly complemented with a living prophet, the only legitimate priesthood, and the *Book of Mormon*; (2) the half-Hebraicized¹⁷⁸ church-kingdom that, after rapid evolutions in Ohio and Missouri in the 1830s, achieved full expression first at Nauvoo, Illinois, in the early 1840s, and then in spatially magnified form during the next half-century in Utah; (3) the still-Western, post-1890 church, almost become an ethnic identity unto itself through its past geographic and social isolation, but shorn of its officially theocratic character and striving for national respectability; and (4) the international “correlated” church that arose in

¹⁷⁵ Farmer, 30.

¹⁷⁶ *Isaiah* 2:2.

¹⁷⁷ Farmer, 363; white Mormon versions of Native American imagery abound in the culture of the Mormon West, and are most easily spotted in the archetypal characters of Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and its secret fraternity, the Order of the Arrow (OA); while these organizations are not uniquely Mormon, LDS troops constitute a majority in the BSA. The author personally remembers dressing in animal hides, face paint, and elaborate Plains Indian garb as a teenager to represent “Akela,” the wolf, to a group of terrified preteen OA initiates in the forest at night (“Akela” is made more complex because it is a reference to Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*). These characters are also noted by Farmer, 330.

¹⁷⁸ Note that this draws on Jan Shipps’ theory of the Hebraicization of Mormonism. See Rhys Williams, “Religion, Community, and Place: Locating the Transcendent,” in *Religion and American Culture* 12.2 (2002), 261.

the 1960s and began to come into its own as a new world religion in the latter decades of the Twentieth Century.”¹⁷⁹ What Barlow calls this “third transformation” represents a carefully-planned (top-down) program of reimagining what it meant to be Mormon after conflict with the US government forced the Mormons to give up their relative theocratic autonomy, as well as the doctrine of plural marriage which was the central principle by which members differentiated themselves in the late Nineteenth Century. In its place the Mormons began to identify themselves by adherence to dietary purity laws¹⁸⁰ and church and temple attendance,¹⁸¹ and the church leadership became increasingly image-conscious.¹⁸² This transformation was followed by explosive international growth and a greatly expanded horizontal geography.¹⁸³ “Correlation,” that is, Mormon prophet Harold B. Lee’s systematic streamlining, simplification, and corporatization of the LDS church’s bureaucracy and publications, expanded it vertically. “[Mormon] leaders imported highly efficient policies and styles from corporate America, and recruited into their ranks leaders experienced in such practices.”¹⁸⁴ Barlow summarizes the effect of Correlation as “incestuous, centralizing control at ever higher echelons of an already powerful hierarchy. General church authorities are drawn disproportionately from professionals trained in law or in business or educational administration, with the unsurprising result that the concept of ‘management,’ under various sacralized rubrics, holds an increasingly elevated stature in the Mormon worldview. Educational materials that are not only simplified but simplistic have displaced a more substantive curriculum common in the generation prior to 1960, a move that

¹⁷⁹ Barlow 141.

¹⁸⁰ Barlow, 148; Strict obedience to this so-called “Word of Wisdom,” described in *Doctrine and Covenants* 89, only became mandatory in the 20th-century.

¹⁸¹ Alexander, 307.

¹⁸² Anderson, xxii.

¹⁸³ Barlow, 149.

¹⁸⁴ Barlow, 150.

has facilitated the catechizing of converts while often boring a generation of long-term Saints...the vast church educational system has turned away from genuine inquiry and toward simple indoctrination... [and the] correlation of auxiliaries has further declined the power and visibility of women.”¹⁸⁵ Because Tweed does nothing to address directly the large-scale changes of religious worlds over time such as Barlow observes in his thesis, his theory is incapable of grasping consequences such as these. They are simply out of the scope of his snapshot-like “sightings.”

We briefly described above how sightings of the Mormon homeland as “Zion” exemplify practices which appear disorganized and chaotic in the present, but make sense of themselves if we look at a historical cross-section of the Mormon movement through time. The problem with power and history is just that sort of layering: it may seem ideal to look only at the surface of a lived tradition today, but we should be suspicious of hierarchs who actively manipulate and benefit from the dust-clouds of history.¹⁸⁶ These are “blind spots” from the perspective of the ethnographer, perhaps, but we need to draw on the resources that we have to look beyond them when we have reason to believe that they are artificial. The flows and the clouds are there, to be sure, but they are not always innocent.

Alternatives

After comparing the focal limitations of our survey with our samplings from Barlow,

¹⁸⁵ Barlow, 151.

¹⁸⁶ Thomas Tweed hardly needs a lecture on this subject; I am surprised that he is not more attentive to the snowballing social effects of unchecked ideological histories in *Crossing and Dwelling*, given his nuanced deconstructions of National history in the introduction of *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, Ed. Thomas Tweed (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997), 1-26. This suggests some intention on Tweed’s part. See Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995) for an alternate treatment of the problems encountered in nationalist history.

Farmer, and Smith's biographers, I maintain that Tweed's exhortations to be attentive to individuals, history, and power are his true blind spots. To all of these, Tweed gives a nod as he passes by, pointing out some crossovers and insisting that his theory does not disregard them. But Tweed does not incorporate these into his methodology either—there is nothing to keep our eyes wandering towards privileged groups and discourses, nothing to force us to look at hegemony and domination in the eye, nor to keep us from whitewashing the actions of individuals away as mere “current.” These may be products, but are nonetheless more than mere extensions of, Tweed's cultural flows. The operations of power, the changes through time, and influential players of Mormonism constitute a major and necessary part of Mormon studies that are insufficiently accounted for by the methodology in Tweed's *Crossing and Dwelling*. Tweed acknowledges in his self-bracketing that he is the inheritor of certain categories and emphases by virtue of his place in the academy, but does not address the likelihood that these legacies—and perhaps a bit of peer pressure—are the only things that keep power, gender, history, and media coming up in his “travels” when they intersect with his agenda. Instead, Tweed leaves it up to his reader-disciples to either mimic him or to luck into sharing his own intellectual heritage if they, too, will give sufficient attention to these socially-relevant, timely, and potentially explanatory aspects of religion.

I recommend that users of Tweed's methodology either *fully incorporate* or else *self-consciously exclude* power in his theory of religion. At the very least, full incorporation would mean adding a “vertical” or hierarchical element to Tweed's template of crossing and dwelling practices (“climbing” practices, perhaps, dealing with strictly social movement and/or oppression), a historical facet to his chronotopes (forcing religious conceptions of time into

dialogue with academic understandings of history to reveal incongruities and perhaps, their beneficiaries), and the development of his embryonic page-or-two on “ford-makers.” At the most, it would require a rewrite of his definition of religion itself to account for the agency of leaders and/or institutions, and the workings of religious discourse as a power-imbued media which may or may not function therapeutically in all cases.¹⁸⁷ The alternate strategy, exclusion, would mean admitting that Tweed’s theory has a lot to say about lived religion without pretending that it has anything to say at all about power. Because Tweed’s foci are not mutually exclusive with those of social critical theory, we could simply imagine them sitting side-by-side in the academy’s toolbox; there is no failure in choosing some task other than the deconstruction of power as one’s primary endeavor.¹⁸⁸

Let us remember that for Tweed, a theory is an itinerary prompted by a definition: a definition with no mention of individuals, power, or history, followed by a template Tweed uses to outline religions in terms of their crossing and dwelling practices. By mentioning things like gender, power, etc., in the text without really integrating them into his theory, Tweed does disservice rather than service to those themes. Tweed’s theory is structured in such a way that it can peacefully coexist with many theories, as one of several approaches to a subject with its own

¹⁸⁷ Bruce Lincoln proposes a “polythetic and flexible” four-part definition of religion that sets clearer boundaries than Tweed’s, and is more attentive to power (although it is unconcerned with dynamic and spatial religious practices): “1. A discourse whose concerns transcend the human, temporal, and contingent, and that claims for itself a similarly transcendent status,” “2. A set of practices whose goal is to produce a proper world and/or proper human subjects, as defined by a religious discourse to which these practices are connected,” “3. A community whose members construct their identity with reference to a religious discourse and its attendant practices,” and “4. An institution that regulates religious discourses, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendent value.” See Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion after September 11*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006), 5-7.

¹⁸⁸ James DiCenno argues in this vein: “Religion, as an umbrella term describing sets of highly differentiated and multi-faceted phenomena straddling psychology and culture across huge divides of time and space, simply cannot be embraced by a single interpretive approach, no matter how complex.” See James DiCenno, “Religion and the Psycho-Cultural Formulation of Ideals,” in *What is Religion? Origins, Definitions, and Explanations*, Eds. Thomas Idinopulos and Brian Wilson, (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 15.

ramifications and significance; Tweed would do better to either restructure his theory to truly incorporate the major themes of power and history or else acknowledge that they fall outside the purview of his theory and admit that he is not a hegemony theorist. What he does instead is patronizing, suggesting that these constitute a part of his theory when, structurally, they do not. This suggests that Tweed mentions them for political rather than methodological reasons.

Conclusion

Despite my hesitations, I believe Tweed's theory is a success in that it establishes an innovative scope for analyzing religion spatially; this scope is not ultimately incompatible with history and social critical theory and the conversations taking place in Mormon studies generally, even though I find that applying Tweed's theory of religion to Mormonism suggests it is insufficiently attentive to power exercised by individuals and obscured by history. Tweed's theory meets his own rubric of acceptability by being "internally coherent and contextually useful."¹⁸⁹ The value of Tweed's methodological exhortations about positionality, the novelty and transferability of exploring religion in terms of exhaustive and innovate chronotopes and crossings, and the depth of Tweed's reflections on theory in general in the Twenty-first Century academy are obvious, and the immediate applicability of his focus on "lived religion" to field research is clear. If the weaknesses in Tweed's theory are accounted for by incorporating more nuanced attention to power or using it alongside other methods it will, as Tweed hopes, continue to illuminate more than it obscures.

¹⁸⁹ *Crossing and Dwelling*, 17.

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