

# Joseph Smith Papers Conference

September 10, 2021

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

8:30–8:45 a.m.

### Welcome and Conference Introduction

**Jessica M. Nelson** Joseph Smith Papers

**Riley M. Lorimer** Joseph Smith Papers

8:45–10:00 a.m.

### Panel 1: Material Readings of Sacred Text

**Chair—Brett D. Dowdle** Joseph Smith Papers

**Elizabeth Fenton** *“Transcribing All Things Which Shall Be Given: Replication and the Sacred Text”*

**Robin Scott Jensen** *“Reading the Materiality of Sacred Text: A Documentary Editor’s Perspective”*

**Cathy Gilmore** *“‘Called upon God to Write’: Revelations and Translations as a Model of Sacred Record-Keeping among the Saints”*

10:15–11:30 a.m.

### Panel 2A: Focused Readings of Sacred Text

**Chair—Jennifer Reeder** Church History Department

**Steven L. Olsen** *“Doctrine and Covenants 59: Foundations of a Sacred Latter-day Saint Worldview”*

**John Christopher Thomas** *“The Significance of ‘Disciple/s’ and Capitalization in the Original Manuscript and the Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon”*

**Steven R. Hepworth** *“‘That You May Conquer Satan’: Diabolism and Joseph Smith’s Prophetic Identity”*

### Panel 2B: Sacred Text, Genre, and Canonicity

**Chair—Elizabeth A. Kuehn** Joseph Smith Papers

**John Thomas** *“Negotiating Canon during Joseph Smith’s Life”*

**Mark Thomas** *“Joseph Smith as Prophet, Poet, and Storyteller: Restoration Scripture as Literature”*

**Stephen O. Smoot** *“‘Sight and Power to Translate’: Revelatory Translation, Seership, and Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Productions”*

11:30 a.m.–1:15 p.m.

Lunch

1:30–2:45 p.m.

### Panel 3A: Sacred Text and Reception History

**Chair—Chase Kirkham** Joseph Smith Papers

**Melodie Jackson** *“Reverent Thought to the Mormons’: Japanese Internment, Topaz Relocation Center, and Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Claims and Access to Americanization and American Citizenship”*

**Janiece Johnson** *“Early Black Latter-day Saints and the Books: Jane Manning James, Samuel Chambers, and Their Relationship with New Scripture”*

**David W. Smith** *“Development of the Priesthood from Joseph Smith’s Translations and Revelations”*

### Panel 3B: Sacred Text and the Makings of a Prophet

**Chair—Claire Haynie** Church History Department

**Jarron Slater** *“Prophetic Rhetoric in Joseph Smith’s Revelations and Translations”*

**Daniel O. McClellan** *“Perfect Revelations and the Capacity of the People: Sacred Texts and Structuring Power in Early Nineteenth-Century Latter-day Saint Worldviews”*

**Nathaniel James** *“The Hieroglyphical Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America: Joseph Smith’s Translations in Light of Margaret Fuller’s Philosophy of Romantic Symbols”*

3:00–4:15 p.m.

### Session 4A: Connections between Sacred Texts

**Chair—Sharalyn D. Howcroft** Joseph Smith Papers

**Kevin Tolley** *“The Use of Isaiah’s Servant Songs”*

**Samuel Mitchell** *“Angels and the Ancients: Encountering the Epistle to the Hebrews in Joseph Smith’s Theological Texts and Teachings”*

**Christopher James Blythe** *“Joseph’s Revealed Questions and Answers on the Revelation of St. John”*

### Session 4B: Joseph Smith’s Approach to the Bible as Sacred Text

**Chair—Adam H. Petty** Joseph Smith Papers

**John G. Turner** *“Joseph Smith as Student and Scholar of the Bible”*

**Susan W. Staker** *“The First Patriarchs: An 1835 Backstory from Joseph Smith’s Egyptian Project and the Book of Patriarchal Blessings”*

**Jordan T. Watkins** *“Joseph Smith and the (De)Historicization of Sacred Texts”*

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JOSEPH SMITH  
PAPERS

# PARTICIPANT BIOS

**Christopher James Blythe** Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University

*“Joseph’s Revealed Questions and Answers on the Revelation of St. John”*

Christopher James Blythe is a research associate at the Neal A. Maxwell Institute at Brigham Young University. He is the author of *Terrible Revolution: Latter-day Saints and the American Apocalypse* and coeditor of three volumes of the Documents series of the Joseph Smith Papers. He is also coeditor on *Open Canon: Scriptures of the Latter Day Saint Tradition*, soon to be published by the University of Utah Press. Blythe received his PhD at Florida State University and also holds degrees from Utah State University and Texas A&M University.

**Elizabeth Fenton** University of Vermont

*“Transcribing All Things Which Shall Be Given’: Replication and the Sacred Text”*

Elizabeth Fenton is professor of English at the University of Vermont. She is the author of *Religious Liberties: Anti-Catholicism and Liberal Democracy in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture* (2011) and *Old Canaan in a New World: Native Americans and the Lost Tribes of Israel* (2020). She is also the coeditor, with Jared Hickman, of *Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon* (2019).

**Cathy Gilmore** Utah State University

*“Called upon God to Write’: Revelations and Translations as a Model of Sacred Record-Keeping among the Saints”*

A graduate student of history at Utah State University, Cathy Gilmore is a longtime family historian seeking to further the contribution of family records to historiographical conversations. She is the cofounder of Kindex, a collaborative archival software platform for families and societies. With a focus on women’s lived religion in the twentieth century, her aim is to bring family records to the forefront of history, imbue them with new life, and utilize them as a democratizing force in historical narrative.

**Steven R. Hepworth** Church History Library

*“That You May Conquer Satan’: Diabolism and Joseph Smith’s Prophetic Identity”*

Steven R. Hepworth is an archivist with the Church History Library. He received an MA in history from Utah State University. He recently published an essay in the edited volume *Joseph Smith and His First Vision: Context, Place, and Meaning*. He lives in Syracuse, Utah, with his wife and four children.

**Melodie Jackson** University of Maryland

*“Reverent Thought to the Mormons’: Japanese Internment, Topaz Relocation Center, and Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Claims and Access to Americanization and American Citizenship”*

Melodie Jackson is currently a PhD student in the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland. She graduated with a BA from Brigham Young University in American studies with minors in sociology and Portuguese. Her graduate studies interests include race, religion, women’s studies, transnationalism, material culture, Brazil, and Mormon studies. She plans to explore the processes of self, social, and theological identity-making among Black Brazilian LDS women through the intersections of material culture and religious worship.

**Nathaniel James** Independent Researcher

*“The Hieroglyphical Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America: Joseph Smith’s Translations in Light of Margaret Fuller’s Philosophy of Romantic Symbols”*

Nathaniel James grew up in San Jose, California, and Ann Arbor, Michigan. He received a BA in history at BYU in 2018, was an intern for the Joseph Smith Papers, and worked as a research assistant in BYU’s history and geography departments. He and his spouse, Cerena, live in Springville, Utah, and he works for Ancestry.com on geographical databases. His research focuses on the history of religions, including esotericism, mysticism, and Mormonism.

**Robin Scott Jensen** Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library

*“Reading the Materiality of Sacred Text: A Documentary Editor’s Perspective”*

Robin Scott Jensen is an associate managing historian for the Joseph Smith Papers and coedited the five volumes in the Revelations and Translations series (published 2009, 2011, 2015, 2018, and 2021). He is also a member of the Church History Department Editorial Board. In 2005 he earned an MA degree in American history from Brigham Young University, and in 2009 he earned a second MA in library and information science with an archival concentration from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. In 2019 he earned a PhD in history at the University of Utah.

**Janiece Johnson** Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University

*“Early Black Latter-day Saints and the Books: Jane Manning James, Samuel Chambers, and Their Relationship with New Scripture”*

Janiece Johnson has a master’s degree in American religious history from BYU, a master’s degree in theology from Vanderbilt University, and a doctorate from the University of Leicester in England. She is the general editor of *The Mountain Meadows Massacre: Complete Legal Papers* (University of Oklahoma Press) and coauthor of *The Witness of Women* (Deseret Book). She is currently the Laura F. Willes Faculty Research Associate at the Maxwell Institute at BYU, working on the early reception of the Book of Mormon.

**Daniel O. McClellan** Sacred Materials Translation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

*“Perfect Revelations and the Capacity of the People: Sacred Texts and Structuring Power in Early Nineteenth-Century Latter-day Saint Worldviews”*

Daniel O. McClellan is husband to Aleen and father to Aryn, Vivian, and Neke. He holds a PhD in theology and religion from the University of Exeter. A revised version of his dissertation, “Deity and Divine Agency in the Hebrew Bible,” will be published next year by SBL Press. Daniel has worked as a sacred materials translation supervisor for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since 2013.

**Samuel Mitchell** Graduate Student

*“Angels and the Ancients: Encountering the Epistle to the Hebrews in Joseph Smith’s Theological Texts and Teachings”*

Samuel Mitchell recently graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a master’s degree in early-Christian studies. He earned a bachelor’s at BYU in ancient Near Eastern studies. He is interested in intersections of history, texts, doctrine, and practice in biblical



and Mormon studies. Samuel's recent research includes work on the history of Latter-day Saint sacramental doctrine, as well as a published article on the "trickster" literary trope in the Book of Mormon. He is the proud husband of Kathryn and the father to three girls, who have red hair, just like him.

**Steven L. Olsen** Church History Department

*"Doctrine and Covenants 59: Foundations of a Sacred Latter-day Saint Worldview"*

Steven L. Olsen (BA, Brigham Young University, 1975; AM, PhD, University of Chicago, 1978, 1985) is master curator, Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where he has worked his entire career (four-plus decades) creating museum exhibits, restoring historic sites, and leading organizational change. He has also been president or board member of a variety of state, regional, and national professional service organizations. He publishes widely in the fields of Latter-day Saint studies and museums studies, and he frequently presents at scholarly and professional conferences.

**Jarron Slater** Brigham Young University

*"Prophetic Rhetoric in Joseph Smith's Revelations and Translations"*

Jarron Slater completed a PhD in rhetoric and scientific and technical communication from the University of Minnesota in 2018. Some of his research has been published in *Rhetoric Review*, the *Journal of Communication and Religion*, *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, and *Style and the Future of Composition Studies*. His presentation is part of a larger project about the relationships between faith and proof.

**David W. Smith** Independent Scholar

*"Development of the Priesthood from Joseph Smith's Translations and Revelations"*

David W. Smith received a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in philosophy, both from Brigham Young University. He has been published in *BYU Studies Quarterly*. He presented at the 2019 Joseph Smith Papers Conference and at many BYU Religious Education Student Symposiums.

**Stephen O. Smoot** Catholic University of America

*"Sight and Power to Translate": Revelatory Translation, Seership, and Joseph Smith's Scriptural Productions"*

Stephen O. Smoot is a doctoral student of Semitic and Egyptian languages and literature at the Catholic University of America. He previously earned a master's degree in Near and Middle Eastern civilizations from the University of Toronto and bachelor's degrees in ancient Near Eastern studies and German studies from Brigham Young University. His areas of academic interest include the Hebrew Bible, ancient Egypt, and Latter-day Saint scripture, theology, and history.

**Susan W. Staker** Independent Scholar

*"The First Patriarchs: An 1835 Backstory from Joseph Smith's Egyptian Project and the Book of Patriarchal Blessings"*

Susan Staker lives on Whidbey Island in Washington state, where she reads, writes, gardens, rides the ferry, and walks her dog. In past lives, she did editorial work for Adobe Systems, Signature Books, and *Sunstone* magazine and studied narrative theory at the University of Utah. Among other projects, she is coauthor of *Sisters and Little Saints* (a history of the children's Primary) and editor of *Waiting for World's End: The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff*. She is currently working on a book-length project, *A Book of Joseph*.

**John Thomas** Department of Religious Education, Brigham Young University-Idaho

*"Negotiating Canon during Joseph Smith's Life"*

John Thomas studied international relations at BYU and completed a PhD in political science at Indiana University. His interest in Latter-day Saint history prompted a career shift that took him to the Religious Education Department at Ricks College, now BYU-Idaho, where he has worked for over twenty years. Though teaching is his primary professional focus, he researches and writes about various aspects of Latter-day Saint history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. John is married to Maria, and they are the parents of three adult children.

**John Christopher Thomas** Pentecostal Theological Seminary, Cleveland; Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Bangor University, Wales

*"The Significance of 'Disciple/s' and Capitalization in the Original Manuscript and the Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon"*

John Christopher Thomas (PhD, University of Sheffield) is the author of *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* (CPT Press), inaugural president of the Book of Mormon Studies Association, an advisory board member for the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, a frequent research scholar at the Maxwell Institute, an elected member of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, and a guest lecturer on the Book of Mormon at a variety of institutions, including Brigham Young University, Claremont Graduate University, and Utah State University. Professor Thomas is the author of nine books and scores of articles and the recent recipient of a Festschrift written in his honor.

**Mark D. Thomas** Independent Researcher

*"Joseph Smith as Prophet, Poet, and Storyteller: Restoration Scripture as Literature"*

Mark D. Thomas is a former scriptural studies editor for *Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought*, served as a member of the Jesus Seminar, and was director of the 1999 Biblical Archaeology Symposium at the University of Utah. He has presented numerous papers on literary approaches to Restoration scripture and is the author of *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* (Signature Books, 1999). He is currently preparing a book-length work with Daniel McClellan and Marvin Sweeney on the history of Latter-day Saint readings of Isaiah.

**Kevin Tolley** Seminaries and Institutes, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

*"The Use of Isaiah's Servant Songs"*

Kevin Tolley earned a bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University in Near Eastern studies with a minor in Hebrew, a master's degree from the University of Notre Dame in theology with an emphasis in biblical studies, and a PhD in the Hebrew Bible from Claremont School of Theology. He has worked for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion for twenty years and is currently the director of the Institutes of Religion in Riverside, California.

**John G. Turner** George Mason University

*"Joseph Smith as Student and Scholar of the Bible"*

John G. Turner is a professor of religious studies at George Mason University and the author of *They Knew They Were Pilgrims: Plymouth Colony and the Contest for American Liberty* (Yale, 2020); *The Mormon Jesus: A Biography* (Harvard, 2016); and *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Harvard, 2012).

**Jordan T. Watkins** Department of Church History and  
Doctrine, Brigham Young University

*“Joseph Smith and the (De)Historicization of Sacred Texts”*

Jordan Watkins received a PhD in American history from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. His book, *Slavery and Sacred Texts: The Bible, the Constitution, and Antebellum Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), examines the ways in which antebellum biblical and constitutional debates over slavery brought awareness to the historical distances separating Americans from their hallowed biblical and founding-era pasts. Before joining the faculty at BYU, Jordan was a volume editor of the Documents series of the Joseph Smith Papers. He is a coeditor of volume 10 of that series.

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