

“. . . Rough Stone Rolling helped to **un-deify** Joseph Smith and show that God can use imperfect individuals to accomplish amazing purposes . . .”

- What does he mean by “un-deify”?
- Should Joseph Smith be un-deified?
- “God can use imperfect individuals to accomplish amazing purposes”
 - Is this true?
 - What does the author really mean?

What is the difference?

Bushman:

He was **not the luminous central figure** he is sometimes made out to be. Attention focused on his gift, **not his personality**. . . . **His own person was effaced.**

Brigham Young:

Who can justly say aught against Joseph Smith? I was as well acquainted with him, as any man. I do not believe that his father and mother knew him any better than I did. I do not think that a man lives on the earth that knew him any better than I did; and I am bold to say that, Jesus Christ excepted, **no better man ever lived or does live upon this earth.** I am his witness.

- “. . . Joseph Smith emerges as **neither hero** nor charlatan . . .”
 - What kind of a hero is Richard Bushman looking for?
- “strangely gifted yet thoroughly **believable product of his time and place**”
 - What does he mean “product of his time”?
 - What picture is being portrayed of Joseph Smith?
Strangely gifted?

- “Joseph Sr. was involved in **magical practices**, an unorthodox but not unusual way of connecting with the supernatural.”
 - When Richard Bushman says the Smith family is involved in magic, what does that mean? What is magic?
- “Magic had **served its purpose** in his life. In a sense, it was a **preparatory gospel**.”
 - If JS was involved in magic, what then was he participating in?
 - How do you feel about that?

More magic?

- It may have taken four years for Joseph to **purge** himself of his **treasure-seeking greed**. Joseph Jr. never repudiated the stones or denied their power to find treasure. Remnants of the magical culture **stayed with him to the end**.
- When he married Emma Hale in 1827, Joseph was on the **eve of realizing himself as a prophet**. He may **still have been involved in magic**, but he was sincere when he told Emma's father that his treasure-seeking days were over.
- Traces of a **treasure-seeking mentality** still appeared in the family's reactions to the angel. His parents admonished Joseph to be **rigorously obedient** to the messenger's instructions, just as exact compliance with **prescribed rituals** was required for **successful money-digging**.

More magic?

- Traces of a **treasure-seeking mentality** still appeared in the family's reactions to the angel. His parents admonished Joseph to be **rigorously obedient** to the messenger's instructions, just as exact compliance with **prescribed rituals** was required for **successful money-digging**.
- he **understood the experience [First Vision] in terms of the familiar**.

- Alvin may have taken the lead because his discouraged father **could not**. . . . Joseph Sr., worn down by setbacks, may have partially **abdicated family leadership**.
 - What does he mean by “abdicated family leadership”?
- Joseph Sr. was “**oft-defeated, unmoored father**.”
 - What does oft-defeated mean?
 - What does unmoored mean?

“aged servant Joseph Smith, Sen., . . . sitteth with Abraham at his right hand, and blessed and holy is he, for he is mine.” (D&C 124:19)

“Abraham . . . Isaac also and Jacob . . . have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.” (D&C 132:37)

- Does this sound unmoored to you?
- If Joseph Smith Sr. is unmoored, oft-defeated, what is Richard Bushman teaching about salvation? What standard do you need to live?

[Joseph Smith Sr.] **feared his sons' scornful laughter.**

. . . All the boys loved and honored their father, Joseph Jr. particularly, but their affection may have included **sympathy for a life blighted by shame.**

- How is he defaming Joseph, Hyrum, Samuel, Alvin, etc. here?
- Should the author be trusted if he has these ideals?

- “The visitation *she felt* she received from Smith after his death gave her determination to continue on.”
 - What does he mean “she felt”?
 - How does Todd Compton interpret miracles?
 - How is this attitude towards revelation and miracles seen in the Book of Mormon or other history?

“ . . . Mary Elizabeth entertained a mysterious old man whom she suspected of being one of the three Nephites- in Mormon folklore, the immortal, wandering Native American apostles from the time of Christ. After she gave him food, he commended her Christianity, then disappeared with no explanation. A Three Nephite story is a necessary part of any repertoire of the miraculous in early Mormonism.” – (In Sacred Loneliness, Todd Compton, pg. 217)

- How is the “Three Nephite” story portrayed?
- Again, that phrase “early Mormonism”. What is Compton saying?

Divine vengeance on persecutors of the Latter-day Saints is another persistent theme in Mormon folklore. Pg. 216

- What is folklore?
- What is Compton mocking?
- What do the scriptures teach about “divine vengeance”? Where do we see this in the Book of Mormon?
- Why is this ideology dangerous?

Miracle and prophecy were the neo-biblical psychic environment in which the early Mormons lived.

- What does “neo-biblical” mean?
 - What is their worldview?
- What does he mean “psychic environment”?
 - How is psychology directing this study?
 - What is this dangerous?
- How are they describing miracles, prophecy, the scriptures?

Question: Why are there not more “faith-promoting stories in Rough Stone Rolling?

Answer: There are so many reasons to exaggerate and distort that it complicates the writing terribly to enter all the qualifications necessary to evaluate these posthumous accounts. . . . I find inspiration in prophetic sorrow and defeat...

- Why the desire to eliminate miracles “faith-promoting” supernatural stories?
- What is Richard Bushman really saying?
- Why are they inspired by a defeated prophet?

“She [Eliza R. Snow Smith] was a complex, flesh-and-blooded individual with strengths and weaknesses, in many ways the product of her culture and the early Mormon worldview.” (In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith, Todd Compton, pg. 217)

- What is the “early Mormon worldview”? How is that supposedly different from the 21st century Mormon worldview?
- What does he mean “product of her culture”?

Revelation

The revelations were not God's diction, dialect, or native language. . . . Recognizing the pliability of the revealed words, Joseph **freely edited** the revelations "by the holy Spirit." . . . He thought of his revelations as imprinted on his mind, not graven in stone. With each edition, he patched pieces together and altered the words to clarify meaning. **The words were both his and God's.**

- Why do they want to understand the scriptures in this light?
- What happens then when the D&C teaches the world is six thousand years old?
- What happens when the Book of Mormon teaches the true patriarchal order?

What can we do about this?

Too controversial?

President Benson addressed how we should respond to controversial discussion in his excellent talk, *Not Commanded in All Things*. The context is politics, but the principles apply to every issue.

“‘You want to be loved by everyone,’ says the devil, ‘and this freedom battle is so controversial’ Some might even call the war in heaven . . . controversial. Yet the valiant entered it with Michael. Those who support only the popular principles of the gospel have their reward. And those who want to lead the quiet, retiring life but still expect to do their full duty can't have it both ways.

Said Elder John A. Widtsoe: ‘The troubles of the world may largely be laid at the doors of those who are neither hot nor cold; who always follow the line of least resistance; whose timid hearts flutter at taking sides for truth. As in the great Council in the heavens, so in the Church of Christ on earth, there can be no neutrality’.