

The Cosmopolitan Saint: Nephi Anderson's Scandinavian-American Mormon Identity

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ABSTRACT: Norwegian immigrant Nephi Anderson (1865-1923) was Mormonism's first popular author and wrote a regional bestseller that stayed in print over 100 years. Despite the fact that many of his works have Scandinavian characters and international settings, scholars have considered Anderson's texts primarily for their Mormonism and not in terms of his ethnic identity or portrayal of an international church. This parallels the scholarly reception of the Mormon Scandinavian immigration to the United States, which privileges American over Scandinavian and Mormon above American. In this article, I offer a critical reevaluation of Anderson's works to show their place in Scandinavian-American or "immigrant" literature, preserving Norwegian cultural heritage as it intersects Mormonism.

RÉSUMÉ : L'immigrant norvégien Nephi Anderson (1865-1923) fut le premier auteur populaire du mormonisme et écrivit un best-seller régional qui continua à être imprimé pendant plus de 100 ans. Bien que beaucoup de ses œuvres aient des personnages scandinaves et des cadres internationaux, les érudits ont principalement considéré les textes d'Anderson pour leur mormonisme et non en termes de son identité ethnique ou de sa représentation d'une église internationale. Cela correspond à la réception érudite de l'immigration mormone scandinave aux États-Unis, qui privilégie l'américain plutôt que le scandinave et le mormon plutôt que l'américain. Dans cet article, j'offre une réévaluation critique des œuvres d'Anderson pour montrer leur place dans la littérature scandinavo-américaine ou « immigrée », préservant le patrimoine culturel norvégien lorsqu'il croise le mormonisme.

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On October 28, 1906, the Scandinavian auxiliary organization of the Box Elder Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) held a conference in the Brigham City Tabernacle in northern Utah. The meeting was notable enough to make the front page of the local (English-language) newspaper, *Box Elder News*, a few days later on November 1. Local and visiting Mormon church authorities spoke on topics relating to their religion and ethnic identity. Greetings were brought from other Scandinavian groups in Utah and abroad. J.M. Sjødahl gave his approval for their regular Scandinavian meetings because he worried that some immigrants apostatized when they didn't hear the gospel preached in their native languages. Axel Olsen spoke of the hospitality of the Brigham City Scandinavian community and that the gospel was as dear to him in Utah as it had been when he first heard it in the old country. Nephi Anderson spoke of his recent trip to Scandinavia and of the corruption of the Scandinavian languages in America. The closing speaker, Andrew Jenson, spoke at first in English on the feelings of the Scandinavians towards their countries and their mother tongues and summed up saying "we love our native country dearly but for all that we love America none the less." He then finished in Danish remarking that "one who is ashamed of his nationality or attempts to deny it is not to be trusted because he has deserted his old friends and betrayed them and he may betray you." He also described Scandinavia geographically (grouping Sweden and Norway together) and ethnically (grouping together Norway and Denmark).

This meeting and the issues represent the results of over 50 years of interactions between Scandinavians and Mormons. The first Scandinavian converts to Mormonism were Norwegian immigrants in the Fox River settlements in Illinois, followed by similar groups in Iowa and Wisconsin, in the 1840s when the Mormon church was still led by Joseph Smith and based along the banks of the Mississippi River in Nauvoo, Illinois. Even after the assassination of their prophet in 1844 and their flight west in the following years under the leadership of Brigham Young, Mormons' vision of a global gospel persisted. These early Norwegian-American converts became some of the first missionaries to Denmark following the adoption of a liberal constitution protecting freedom of religion in that country in 1849. These Mormon missionaries found success in converting Danes to their "American" religion and continued on in the subsequent years to Sweden and Norway. As a part of the expansive theological imperative to gather the "Saints" to Zion, thousands of Mormon Scandinavians immigrated to the United States and settled throughout the Mormon cultural region (to borrow Ethan Yorgason's term) during the second half of the 19th century. So great were their numbers comparatively, that in 1900, 34% of the foreign-born population in Utah were from Scandinavia (or 16% of the total population). The immigration from Scandinavia peaked around 1900, but by then formal and informal

settlements, church groups, coops, organizations, etc., throughout the region had formed around their shared Scandinavian identity. These communities were made up not only of native Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians, but also 2nd- and 3rd-generation Scandinavian Americans.

The opening example of a Scandinavian church meeting highlights some of the tensions surrounding the Scandinavian Mormon experience, including immigration, pioneering, cultural preservation, missionary work, language maintenance, the specter of apostasy, assimilation in America, the benefits of pan-Scandinavian communities weighed against the tensions between the various groups. At the heart of these issues is the negotiation of Scandinavian, American, and Mormon identities. While this statement and these three components seem obvious, scholars have tended to elide various aspects. For some, Scandinavian-American Mormons assimilated too quickly into American culture compared to their Midwest counterparts, losing the Scandinavian out to the American. Others posit that the Mormon identity precluded an additional ethnic one, so that the Scandinavian immigrants became Mormons rather than Americans. And in either case the Scandinavian was unimportant.

One of the speakers at the Brigham City meeting was a prominent author who experienced firsthand identities of Norwegian, American, and Mormon. Christian Nephi Anderson was born in Oslo in 1865 to parents who had already converted to the Mormon church, hence his middle name and name he was known by, “Nephi,” from that faith’s new scripture *The Book of Mormon*. With his family, he emigrated in 1871 from Norway to Utah, where his father worked as a painter and paperhanger in Coalville and Ogden. Anderson attended the University of Utah and pursued a career in education in Weber and Box Elder counties. As was the custom then, he left his teaching post and his wife and young children to return to Norway as a Mormon missionary in 1892–1893. After this mission, he resumed teaching and began to write and publish works of fiction with Mormon themes, with his first (and most successful) novel *Added Upon* appearing in 1898. His talents as a writer were put to use more directly for the church in 1904 shortly after the death of his wife, when he was called on a second mission to England where he edited the church’s local newspaper, *The Millennial Star*. This began his second career working for the church. Back in Utah, he remarried and taught at LDS High School before he was sent in 1909 with his family on his last mission to Independence, Missouri, to edit the periodical *Liahona*. The next year he was recalled to Salt Lake City to become the editor of the *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* and there he also took an active role in general church leadership, serving on boards for youth and adult education and curriculum in addition to genealogy. He continued to write and publish until his untimely death from complications of an appendectomy in 1923 at the age of 57.

Anderson as an author was a part of the first Mormon literary movement, known as “home literature,” a blossoming of prose fiction in Utah roughly from

1880 to 1930 when, in contrast to earlier times, church leaders encouraged fiction writing and the material conditions allowed for a robust print culture. Although there were several prominent novelists in this movement, Anderson was the most successful at the time and is still considered Mormonism's most popular author. His most well-known and influential work, the utopian *Added Upon*, sold extremely well as regional fiction and enjoyed two editions in multiple printings continuing into the early 2000s. The novel originates the theological speculative theme of Mormonism known as the "pre-existence romance," which follows a pair of promised lovers from their premortal spirit existence into a mortal state where they must find each other. This Mormon take on soul mates has traces in a variety of Mormon works, most prominently the regionally successful musical of the 1970s *Saturday's Warrior* and the mega-bestsellers of the *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer.

Mormon literary scholars have considered Anderson's works primarily in terms of their defense of Mormonism and their place in the "home literature" movement, often with a touch of cultural cringe at his didactic and sentimental style.¹ Missing in most secondary literature is a consideration of his works in terms of ethnicity, despite Anderson's immigrant background and that *Added Upon* and other pieces have Norwegian main characters. For example, William Mulder doesn't include him at all in his monumental account of Scandinavian Mormonism, presumably because he published in English (although his works were translated into Danish and Swedish). He is also missing from scholarly accounts of Scandinavian-American literature. In the only relevant study, Ole Podhorny argues that Anderson doesn't count as an immigrant author because he is not "concerned with questions of Norwegian cultural heritage" and his "religious roots were deeper than his cultural roots" (78). Anderson does not have the "divided heart" (drawing on Dorothy Burton Skårdal) that Podhorny points out in Norwegian-American authors living in the Midwest, like Dorothea Dahl, Waldemar Ager, and Simon Johnson. Podhorny's analysis rests on two views: the first that Scandinavian converts assimilated within one generation in Utah and the second that the competition of old and new world identities is an essential feature of immigrant writing.

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in looking at Anderson as an important writer of the period considered Mormonism's transition. During the 50 years from 1880 to 1930, the Mormon church abandoned many of its idiosyncratic practices that separated it from the rest of the United States: polygamy was officially ended, the LDS political party disbanded, communitarian economics deemphasized. At the same time, it increasingly participated in American politics and culture: Mormons sent a delegation to the 1893 World's Fair, Utah gained statehood in 1896, Reed Smoot weathered the congressional hearings regarding his election and was finally seated in the senate in 1907. This process has been called "Americanization" or even "assimilation" because of the

way the Mormon cultural region came to conform to hegemonic economic, political, and social norms; nevertheless, the integration of the region into America was not an unequivocal development. Mormonism's doctrines and narrative had to be reinterpreted to harmonize the change from a separatist society to one accommodating the dominate cultural conventions.

Close readings of Anderson's works reveal the tensions and fissures that came with these changes. The recent critical edition of Anderson's final novel, *Dorian*, with accompanying scholarly essays, puts his work in this broader transformation of American Mormonism, but without tending to Anderson's ethnic or national identities. In his published work, American literature scholar Scott Hales considers transnational aspects of Anderson's novels, but privileges the American aspects, summarizing that "Anderson sought to reconcile disparate, post-utopian feelings of national belonging and alienation by portraying Mormonism as unique enough to be universally appealing and applicable but also fundamentally American" (2015, 3). In a later conference presentation, Hales develops this idea by proposing that Anderson is simultaneously asserting a "Mormon-American identity" while carving out space for a (generic?) global Mormonism through his international (i.e. Norwegian) characters (2016).

Hales accounts for the process of assimilation of Mormons into America but takes for granted the unambiguous assimilation of Scandinavians immigrants. Parallel to the pressures put on Mormons to "Americanize" during this time period, maintaining an ethnic identity in America's "melting pot" (to refer to the metaphor of the push to assimilate) was under scrutiny. Like their Midwestern counterparts, Scandinavian-Mormon immigrants and their communities faced questions of assimilation vs. cultural preservation. This had an added layer in Utah: the extreme conditions gave rise to a pan-Scandinavian movement among Mormon immigrants, where Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians celebrated holidays and other cultural practices together, shared religious meetings, belonged to the same ethnic organizations, for example, all under Danish custodianship. This alliance became more strained in the early twentieth century, particularly challenged by the influx of Swedish immigrants who preferred, often for linguistic reasons, to have their own organizations, meetings, etc. Missionary work, which challenged the families left at home without a provider, also gave Mormons an opportunity to return to their countries of origin to proselytize and helped enforce patterns of chain migration. In the Mormon cultural region, the spectre of excommunication worked to keep economically vulnerable colonies together across ethnic lines, although Scandinavians managed to establish predominance in some settlements, for example in Sanpete county. At the same time, the lure of fertile farms and established ethnic communities in the Midwest prompted a significant amount of "apostasy" as Scandinavians converts left Utah and Mormonism.

In contrast to Podhorny and Hales, I claim Anderson as a Norwegian-American immigrant author who is concerned with preserving Norwegian cultural heritage in America as it intersects with Mormonism. In this I follow recent scholars of Scandinavian Mormons, such as Julie Allen; Jennifer Eastman Attebery; Lynn Henrichsen and George Baily (2006, 2010); and Elizabeth Peterson and Claus Elhom Anderson, whose works have challenged the conventional view of Scandinavian-Mormon assimilation. I also draw on historians of immigration like Orm Øverland and Werner Sollors, who show how immigrants could accommodate their immigrant or ethnic identities with their Americanness and how the two even worked together. In this article, I will explore how Nephi Anderson harmonizes ethnic, national, and religious identities by foregrounding individual elements of this intersection of Norwegian, American, and Mormon to show how each is portrayed in his writings. To do this, I will be considering primarily the three novels with significant Scandinavian components, *Added Upon* (1898), *A Daughter of the North* (1915), and *The Castle Builder* (1909), and a few of his short stories.

To start with, Anderson clearly has a patriotic interest in Norway, perhaps most evident in *A Daughter of the North*. Facing the title page is a photograph titled “Norden.” The reader finds out later that this is a picture of the book’s heroine, Atelia Heldman and two other girls in Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish national costumes, representing the three Scandinavian nations. She is “supposed to be looking into [Norway]’s splendid future” (1915, 106). Atelia’s identification with Norway is extensive. She is often described by titular appellation as “a daughter of the north,” particularly when she wins the national regatta and later when she rescues the shipwrecked passengers in the midst of a storm. Her qualities are extensive and her virtue is inextricable from Norway, as the narrator explains that “a daughter of the north she had always been, and the wild sea of the coast, the still waters of the lakes and fjords, the pine-clad hills of her home-land had nourished her soul and helped to make her what she was” (1915, 31). There are frequent descriptions of the Norwegian landscape in these novels, reminiscent of travel literature, including Anderson’s journal accounts and published travelogues. These descriptions impress the reader with the grandeur and beauty of the archetypal Norway of fjords and mountains; at the same time, some similarities are drawn to the Rocky Mountains in Utah. The effect of both exoticizing and familiarizing the landscape parallels Atelia’s dual role as the ideal woman and the girl next door.

Norway’s history is also invoked in describing Atelia, such as comparing her to a character in a “Norsk Saga.” In the novel *The Castle Builder*, this Viking past is the dominant motif for the protagonist Harald Einersen. Near the beginning of the novel we find out that he is a descendant of Harald Haarfagre, the first king of a unified Norway in the 9th century, despite his family’s current poverty. Harald’s Viking ancestry becomes important in his conversion, which I will

examine later, and is also identified at the end of the novel by Thora as part of the reason that Harald has been so successful in life. The Viking past also played an important role in Norwegian nationalism of the time. For example, part of the Norwegian contribution to the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition was a replica of a Viking ship that was sailed from Bergen across the Atlantic to Newfoundland on to New York and the Erie Canal to the Great Lakes ending in Chicago. This was part of the “proof” of the Viking discovery of America, which was also an important touchstone for Norwegian Americans’ legitimation as Americans. Nephi Anderson saw the launch of the Viking ship in Norway during his mission and again later in Chicago at the world’s fair on his way home. Anderson’s newspaper clippings collection, a part of his literary estate, includes articles about Erik the Red, Leif Erickson, and the Viking exploration.

Their Viking heritage has political implications for Anderson’s characters and is essential in Harald’s political awakening. While fishing in Lofoton, his cousin Johan advises him to finish his schooling, study law, and be elected to the *stortinget*, Norway’s parliament. He then makes an argument for the establishment of a Norwegian republic based on their medieval progenitors. He says:

I tell you, my boy, this country of ours has a glorious future. We are not going to be lorded over by a king much longer. We’re going to be a republic, Harald, a free republic like the states in America. We are Norsemen, and we are going to be free in name as well as in fact. O, it makes my blood boil when I think of how we—sons of the Vikings of old, who made all Europe tremble—of how we sit quietly under the rule of a Frenchman! Of a Frenchman, think of it! We might tolerate one of Harald Haarfagre’s descendants, but a Frenchman—!
(1909, 75)

Written before the dissolution of the union of Sweden and Norway, the “Frenchman” here refers to the king of Sweden and Norway from the “French” House of Bernadotte, a legacy of Swedish political machinations during the Napoleonic era. Harald follows his cousin’s advice and was on his way to being elected to the *stortinget* when he meets a Mormon missionary.

In addition to history, Anderson also explores contemporary Norwegian culture. When he loses his teaching position because he won’t teach creation ex nihilo, Harald turns to Ibsen and “feels more keenly than ever this writer’s cynicism, irony, and resentment against the social orders of the day” (1909, 141). But it is Bjørnson who comforts Harald and who is praised as “a mighty giant, lifting his country up to greatness,” (1909, 141) with “Ja vi elsker dette landet,” Norway’s national anthem written by Bjørnson, quoted in English. Bjørnson’s *bondefortellinger* or peasant tales are the natural model for *The Castle Builder*, particularly *En glad gut* (1860) [*A Happy Boy* (1881)]. These stories elevate the Norwegian peasant class as the rightful heirs of their nation’s past as well as the

hope for its future. Anderson wasn't the only Norwegian American to draw on this tradition: Hans A. Foss's popular *Husmandsgutten* (1885) [*The Cotter's Son* (1963)] first serialized in the *Decorah-Posten*, a Norwegian-language newspaper in Iowa, takes Bjørnson's "rags to riches" stories and adds topical immigration to America. Bjørnson was an important cosmopolitan figure for Norway and Norwegians abroad, including those in the Midwest and Utah. After Bjørnson's death in 1910, the Norwegians in Salt Lake City organized a memorial service that was held in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square and presided over by the Danish church leader Anthon Lund.

Anderson's view of culture also encompasses a romantic view of Norwegian folk life. Halvor tells the Mormon missionary that "we Norwegians have not yet quite gotten out from under the influence of superstition. Our forefathers saw gods and demons and sprites and trolls in every wind and weather, and the supernatural is in the blood yet" (1915, 90-1). Gatherings with extended family bring opportunities to share "fairy tales." In *Daughter of the North* and *The Castle Builder*, the lovers have a local folk tale that defines their relationship and its narrative arc.

Anderson also intersperses his fiction with other kinds of ethnographic details of life in Norway, particularly peasant life. These include descriptions of food and cooking practices, farming and fishing, celebrations, dwelling-places, rural poverty, and differences in Nordland. This is even more pronounced in his travel narrative "Beyond the Arctic Circle" (1884-1885) and in the holiday-themed short story "Fisherman Knute's Christmas Gift" (1904). He also comments on the linguistic variety in Norway, especially when characters travel north where the dialect varied significantly from his own. And he even enters the *skarre-r* debate that was beginning because of increasing usage of a "foreign" uvular or guttural /r/ instead of the "native" rolled /r/. Anderson describes Harald's teacher as a man "who emphatically trilled his r's as every loyal Norwegian should" (1909, 33).

Throughout the Norwegian narratives, America is omnipresent. Many characters have relatives in the Midwest and speak in passing about whether they will emigrate too. One farmer expects the Scandinavian-American Mormon missionary "to know his brother-in-law in Minnesota and his son in Chicago" (1915, 78) and is disappointed when he doesn't. Even if naïve, it is clear that the Norwegians in Anderson's novels know about a cultural centre of Norwegian Americans in the Midwest, known as *Vesterheimen*. In *Added Upon*, Henrik Bogstad even visits his uncles in Minnesota's flourishing Scandinavian-American community. Anderson himself had relatives in Chicago, whom he visited on his way home from his mission in Norway.

America provides a political example for Norway, with remarks that the Norwegian constitution has much in common with the American and that someday Norway will have a republic patterned on America. All three male protagonists

from the novels initially converse with the Mormon missionaries in Norway on the economic and political conditions in America. The comparative example given by Atelia's father, Halvor, and Elder Larsen in an early conversation in *Daughter of the North* is illustrative. Captain Steen is content with the union with Sweden, commenting that "I have been in America, and know somewhat of conditions over there." Elder Larsen admits that they are not ideal. Halvor, however, reveals that he has "been studying the American constitution" and finds it "a wonderful document." Elder Larsen shows a complementary interest in Norwegian politics, remarking that "it speaks well for the Norwegian constitution that it has much in common with the American" (1915, 39).

Added Upon has the only description of the classic emigration process. To escape the romantic advances of Henrik (her family's landowner), Signe emigrates to America, what she calls "that haven of rest from old country oppressions" (1898, 67). She follows a typical pattern of chain migration, settling with the Jansons, a cousin with a Swedish husband. When the down-and-out Anglo-American Rupert meets her begging for food, she still speaks English with a foreign accent: "Vil you have a drink of varm milk?" (1898, 85). As the narrative progresses, so do her English skills, which she describes on a meta-linguistic level. With Rupert's knowledge of irrigation, the Jansons become successful, showing the fruits of inter-ethnic cooperation. This is fully realized when Rupert and Signe marry, the classic symbol of acceptance and assimilation in the American experience. Yet it is clear that an American identity need not preclude an ethnic American community: Signe befriends Rachel, Henrik's Minnesotan cousin, who comes to live with her after Rupert dies. After his Norwegian wife dies, Henrik marries a Danish-American woman.

A few of Anderson's characters are the product of the union of Scandinavian and Anglo Americans. The most prominent is Loner Nikolai Merton from the novella "Beyond Arsareth," serialized 1919–1920 in the *Relief Society Magazine*, a periodical for Mormon women. Lon was born in Chicago to an Anglo-American father and Norwegian mother. After his parents die, he runs the family farm for ten years until wanderlust possesses him. He travels back to Norway, where, on a whim, he joins a whaling ship headed for the Arctic Ocean. After some success, a storm turns their fortunes and they are frozen in, with the ice pushing them farther north. Captain Larsen guesses they are further north than anyone has been. The ship is eventually crushed from the pressure of the ice and Lon is separated from his companions. The narrative turns at this point from polar exploration to science fiction when, in his wandering, Lon discovers a hidden paradise populated with members of the Lost Ten Tribes. But up to this point, Lon has shown himself to be an exemplary Norwegian American, comfortable and capable in America and Norway. The arctic aspect of the story also resonates with Norwegian polar explorers Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen. Nansen's ship, the *Fram*, was built to survive being frozen in the ice, which allowed him

during his 1893–1896 expedition to reach the farthest north point at the time, although short of his goal of the North Pole. On his mission, Nephi Anderson visited the *Fram* while it was being constructed near Larvik and left a copy of a Mormon missionary pamphlet titled “The Articles of Faith” hidden on board in a crack in the wood. He later met Nansen and toured the completed *Fram* as it made its way up the Norwegian coast at the start of the expedition. The *Fram* was also the ship Roald Amundsen used for his 1911–1912 Antarctic expedition during which he became the first to reach the South Pole (beating the ill-fated British expedition led by Captain Robert Falcon Scott by 34 days). Amundsen visited Salt Lake City as a part of a lecture tour in 1908.

Similar to the polar adventurer Lon Merton, Anderson uses the Mormon missionaries in his narratives as transnational characters. They represent America, but are influenced by their ethnic Scandinavian background and their lived experiences in Norway. According to Reid Neilson, nearly 80% of the missionaries who served in the Scandinavian mission from 1850–1899 were born in Denmark, Sweden, or Norway, but the majority of missionaries were living in Utah at the time of their call and returned to their country of birth. Although both Elder Jensen in *A Daughter of the North* and Elder Olsen in *The Castle Builder* are American born or raised, they are likely heritage speakers of Norwegian (or another Scandinavian language) and are described as being more aware of language pragmatics than other missionaries. Occasionally they will complain about a practice that grates on their “Americanism” but will also remark on how Norway has changed them. Elder Jensen in particular is described as becoming more of a “gentleman” while on his mission and dreams of how he can incorporate certain aspects of Norwegian everyday living into his American home. Both Elders study Norwegian history or culture while there. The missionaries’ family life hints at multi-generational interactions with Scandinavia and America. We find out that Elder Jensen’s father also served a mission in Norway and that he grew up in the Scandinavian community in Sanpete County. The Mormon aspect is important here, in that second-generation or third-generation Scandinavian Americans could have the opportunity to temporarily return to Scandinavia as missionaries and have a very different experience than their immigrant forefathers: one that could potentially socialize them as Scandinavians and Mormons while also representing America.

While the missionaries most prominently represent Mormon identity, their Norwegian investigators aren’t shy about engaging in religious meaning-making. Mid-20th-century immigration commentators, such as Louis Adamic and Marcus Lee Hansen, affirmed in a display of filiopietism that the European immigrants “were Americans before they landed” in the United States. In a similar way, Anderson’s Norwegian converts were Mormons before they ever were baptized. For example, Elder Larsen loses a debate with Uncle Sande on the question of works and faith in Christianity. Shortly after he meets Johan Bonden who on their

first visit explicates this relationship in harmony with Mormon soteriology. Bonden later explains to Elder Larsen that the Vikings understood the embodied nature of God in Mormonism and the close ontological relationship of God to man through their pagan anthropomorphic gods. Harald's cousin Johan is also an "always already" Mormon. His radical monism parallels Joseph Smith's collapse of sacred distance between the divine and human. Similarly, Harald follows Johan's rejection of Lutheranism's monopoly on truth and instead insists on the gathering of truth from many sources, secular and religious. His cousin's early death as an unconfirmed "heathen" contributes to Harald's faith crisis. He dreams of his dead relatives, including a hoard of Vikings, who he discovers are his ancestors, "brave, noble, and virtuous" Norsemen and that "they lived according to the light which God gave to them, and that is all any of us can do" (1909, 118–9). Still, he worries that they are bound for hell. This question plagues him until he finally encounters Elder Olsen who is able to explain to Harald's satisfaction that the dead—including the pagan Vikings, Romans, Greeks, and even Chinese philosophers—can be saved through Christ.

Salvation for the dead is a concern for many of the Norwegians in Anderson's novels, such as Henrik, Atelia, Uncle Sande, and Harald. Henrik takes up the cause for his ancestors, gathering genealogical data and making trips from Norway to Utah to perform the necessary liturgical ordinances by proxy in the temple. He even provides for his Minnesotan cousin Rachel to move to Utah to continue the work when he must return to Europe. (Rachel conveniently had been already converted to Mormonism in Minnesota, which hints at the relationship between Midwest Scandinavians and Mormon Scandinavians, which did include Scandinavian-language missionaries.²) Norwegians explain Mormonism in their "vernacular" of storytelling. When Atelia visits her extended family, they spend their evenings sharing folk songs and "fairy tales." Atelia says she has a tale to tell, and begins with "on the 23rd day of December, 1805, a baby was born over the land of America" (1915, 202). The narrator continues that "Atelia told the wonderful story of the boy Prophet Joseph Smith, his vision of the Father and the Son, and his receiving of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. She told the story well, that evening, and it made its impression on her listeners" (1915, 202). The controversy of the tale's truth claims is hinted at, yet Atelia and other characters, like Harald and Thora, find a personal religious truth in other "untrue" folk tales and sagas.

But it's not just that Mormonism is portrayed as an anti-clerical lay religion. Anderson shows an Anglo-American religion that has been appropriated by these Scandinavians. Scandinavians or Scandinavian Americans have doctrinal authority in these works, with only a very few exceptions. In *Added Upon* the Anglo-American Rupert is converted by Signe who explains the gospel narrative in English despite her strong Norwegian accent. Harald in *The Castle Builder* teaches Thora's father the gospel through his ability "to remember his grandmother's teachings,

harmonize them with the words of the ‘Mormon’ elders and the scriptures, and make reference to thoughts that seemed to spring instantly into his mind” (1909, 197). The characters in these books who convert to Mormonism are transformed: Henrik grows more class-conscious, Atelia becomes more beautiful, Harald’s father gives up alcohol. But this transformation works both ways: Mormonism changes Harald’s priorities, but Harald changes Mormonism by harmonizing it with his grandmother’s wisdom and his own thoughts. The Mormonism advanced in these novels doesn’t rest on the truth claims of its Anglo-American origin (and in fact hardly ever mentions them). Rather, the Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American characters assert an expansive view of the religion and they use its cosmology to incorporate Scandinavia into its sacred narrative. Just as a “democratic” heritage and hopes for the future make Norwegians suitable Americans, folding Norway into Mormonism’s essence is a homemaking myth that reinvents identities as needed. The threat of American assimilation and the specter of a hegemonic Mormon identity are absent because Anderson shows their interdependence, that they intersect rather than compete. In this he constructs a transnational Mormon identity that can accommodate multiple cultural identifications.

In this transnational gesture, Nephi Anderson picks up on a contemporaneous discourse rejecting the idea of a “melting pot” that necessarily meant “Anglo-conformity” in favour of embracing immigrant and ethnic “hyphenated” Americans. One Norwegian-American example is Waldemar Ager’s *Paa Veien til Smeltepotten* (1917) [*On the Way to the Melting Pot* (1995)], which satirized the rush to “Americanize” among some Norwegian-American families, giving up traditional values and giving in to hostile forces of assimilation. More broadly, intellectual Randolph Bourne developed the term “transnational” specifically in response to the xenophobia building in the years leading up to and during the First World War in the United States. In his essay “Trans-national America” in *The Atlantic* (July 1916), he sees the multiplicity of ethnicities as one of America’s potential great strengths: “They are no longer masses of aliens, waiting to be ‘assimilated,’ waiting to be melted down into the indistinguishable dough of Anglo-Saxonism. They are rather threads of living and potent cultures, blindly striving to weave themselves into a novel international nation, the first the world has seen” (95). Bourne takes this weaving metaphor as a contrast to the “melting pot” further:

Only the American—and in this category I include the migratory alien who has lived with us and caught the pioneer spirit and a sense of new social vistas—has the chance to become that citizen of the world. America is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans-nationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors. Any movement which attempts to thwart this weaving, or to dye the fabric any one color, or disentangle the threads of the strands, is false to this cosmopolitan vision.

Bourne has an ideal view of America's potential that favours a cultural pluralism that supersedes ethnic chauvinism. In a similar way, Nephi Anderson's Norwegian characters aren't meant to assert a superiority of the Nordic races, but to show that Scandinavian, American, and Mormon identities are not mutually exclusive and can work together to better all three. His utopian view of this is perhaps best expressed in a scene in his Utah novel *Piney Ridge Cottage* (1912). In it, a Mormon congregation has gathered for a farewell party for a father leaving to England on a mission. British converts and immigrants have been giving the American advice on living in their native land. Anderson continues with his description of the gathering:

Thus the fun ran up and down, over and across; for in that company were Yankees from New England, Southerners from Florida, and those who had lived all their lives "in the wild and woolly West." There were Danes, Swedes, Germans, Irish, two from Australia, and one from far-off Iceland. Thus this mixture of races, strong and simple-lived men and women, were subduing the desert and being knit together into one great body by the opportunities of this land of liberty and the operations of the Spirit of God found in the Church to which they belonged. These and their children were becoming one nation on the mountains of Israel, faithful to the truth, strong in the defense of the right.
(1912, 135)

Like Bourne's weaving, Anderson's metaphor is textile: people from all over the world are "knit together" as they work with each other to build a civilization in their desert landscape. Anderson's view for America and for Mormonism is abundant and accommodating, one that values ethnic identity even as it builds a new nation and a new religion.

NOTES

1. See Cracroft for a representative, and most complete, example.
2. See Bjork.

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