William Bickerton is the founding prophet of the third-largest Latter Day Saint denomination, known as the Church of Jesus Christ. Remarkably, his life has largely remained in the shadows. Bickerton immigrated to America in 1831 at the height of the Second Great Awakening. His life offers new and exciting perspectives for the historiographies of American revivalism, Christian Restorationism, millennialism, Mormonism, and biography. My articles, "The Rocky Road to Prophethood: William Bickerton’s Emergence as an American Prophet" (2017) and "Opening the Windows of Heaven: The Bickertonite Spiritual Revival 1856-1858" (2018), along with my book, William Bickerton: Forgotten Latter Day Prophet (2018), utilise an emic approach to examine Bickerton and his religious movement within the contexts of American culture and Mormonism. Following in the footsteps of scholars such as Richard Lyman Bushman (biographer of Joseph Smith), John G. Turner (biographer of Brigham Young), and Deborah Madden (biographer of Richard Brothers), the work submitted applies a sympathetic, yet critical approach to examine Bickerton. It shows that he promoted unique Christian Restorationist, revivalist, and millennialist beliefs during the American Civil War, Reconstruction, and afterward, and fostered progressive theological innovations within the Latter Day Saint movement. The commentary on these submissions expands upon these ideas and argues that the most fruitful approach to Bickerton’s religious movement is to begin with the man himself. He was not only the leader, but the prophet, who motivated his people with exceptional visionary power. While accepting that there are weaknesses to biography (especially as the academy continues to favour scholarship that explores trends and processes within the confines of social history and bottom-up studies), this thesis argues that it continues to be a valuable approach for historians of religion. In particular, the hierarchical elements of biography work well when studying radical prophets and offer a foundational approach for understanding prophetic leaders, the culture they interacted with, and the people who followed them.

Abstract
The life of the nineteenth-century American prophet, William Bickerton, was not explored comprehensively until 2017-2018 — two centuries after his birth. His life offers new and exciting perspectives for the historiographies of American revivalism, Christian Restorationism, millennialism, Mormonism, and biography. My articles, "The Rocky Road to Prophethood: William Bickerton’s Emergence as an American Prophet" (2017) and "Opening the Windows of Heaven: The Bickertonite Spiritual Revival 1856-1858" (2018), along with my book, William Bickerton: Forgotten Latter Day Prophet (2018), utilise an emic approach to examine Bickerton and his religious movement within the contexts of American culture and Mormonism. Following in the footsteps of scholars such as Richard Lyman Bushman (biographer of Joseph Smith), John G. Turner (biographer of Brigham Young), and Deborah Madden (biographer of Richard Brothers), the work submitted applies a sympathetic, yet critical approach to examine Bickerton. It shows that he promoted unique Christian Restorationist, revivalist, and millennialist beliefs during the American Civil War, Reconstruction, and afterward, and fostered progressive theological innovations within the Latter Day Saint movement. The commentary on these submissions expands upon these ideas and argues that the most fruitful approach to Bickerton’s religious movement is to begin with the man himself. He was not only the leader, but the prophet, who motivated his people with exceptional visionary power. While accepting that there are weaknesses to biography (especially as the academy continues to favour scholarship that explores trends and processes within the confines of social history and bottom-up studies), this thesis argues that it continues to be a valuable approach for historians of religion. In particular, the hierarchical elements of biography work well when studying radical prophets and offer a foundational approach for understanding prophetic leaders, the culture they interacted with, and the people who followed them.