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The brief history of Mormonism down to the Second World War can be described as the story of a highly parochial religious movement supported by an exclusive doctrine and institutionalized in an exclusive Church. It now appears that the Second War, with its immense impact on every facet of institutional life, was a major turning point in Mormon history, as it marked the beginning of a strong trend toward internationalism which, when taken with the 1978 revelation, has now become a promise of universalism. But promises involving established institutions and large populations are difficult to fulfill. I will call attention to some factors in Mormon experience, attitude, and thought that would seem to favor the possibility of achieving an authentic universalism, and others that may pose some difficulty.

There is some justification for describing Christianity as a universal religion—universal at least in the sense that it extends its invitation to all races and all nations, and universal in the sense that it makes its appeal to the generality of mankind independently of social, economic, intellectual, or moral conditions. The Christian universalism appears historically to be largely a product of the ethical monotheism of the prophetic religious tradition of Israel and Judah combined in the early centuries with the ecumenical attitudes of the Graeco-Roman world that had already affected the Judaism of the Dispersion. For three centuries the Stoic philosophy, affected by Alexander's attempt at a unified world, had moved toward a cosmopolitan ethical and political ideal. Now it provided a moral basis for Roman law and for the catholic sentiments of such

philosophers as the statesman Lucius Seneca, the Phrygian slave Epictetus, and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus with their sense not only of cosmic and political unity but also of personal identity with the generality of mankind. Certainly the teachings of Jesus played a role in the Christian universalism, and even more the reaching out to the gentiles of Paul of Tarsus, a center of Eastern Stoicism. But it was especially the Hellenistic and Roman philosophers who were the chief creators of the idea of the universe as a total entity which embraced the whole of the human race as a single humanity. Stoic thought and the legal and political policies and practices of the Empire for which it provided intellectual inspiration were the context of unity within which Christianity was able in its early centuries to institutionalize its universalizing sentiments.

On the matter of religious parochialism or universalism, the New Testament seems somewhat ambiguous. As reported there, apparently Jesus expressed the more or less typical attitudes of the Palestinian Judaism of his time, attitudes consonant with the Jewish tradition of being a holy people with a unique relation to God. Notwithstanding the fact that Jewish proselytism was at that time quite widespread and a large establishment of diaspora or Hellenistic Judaism had come into being outside Palestine, the Pharisaic religious tradition within which Jesus and his disciples were apparently reared was committed to a policy of Jewish purity and separatism that discouraged involvement with the world. It was probably among the less parochial Jews of the Dispersion that Christianity made its

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major inroads, but that was after the ministry of Jesus was finished. The *Gospel of Matthew* reports Jesus as instructing the apostles, "Do not take the road to gentile lands, and do not enter any Samaritan town; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (10:5-6, *The New English Bible*) Matthew reports that in his encounter with the Canaanite woman Jesus said, "I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and to them alone," and "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." (15:24-26) The same Gospel, however, has Jesus saying to his disciples after the resurrection, "Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples; baptize men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. . . ." (28:19) Similarly, the *Gospel of Mark* concludes with the resurrected Christ instructing his disciples to "Go forth to every part of the world, and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation. Those who believe it and receive baptism will find salvation; and those who do not believe will be condemned." (16:15-16)

As far as can be determined, the original Jewish Christians in Palestine considered their religion to be a fulfillment of the promises of the Jewish biblical faith, and the primitive Palestinian Christian community was essentially a parochial Jewish eschatological sect. It was especially the Apostle Paul, whose experience and education reached well into the Hellenistic culture, who led Christianity out of Palestine and into the larger world of the Empire. Paul's non-legalistic and non-Jewish form of Christianity brought him into conflict with the Christian leadership at Jerusalem, but it generated a powerful ecumenical drive and became the foundation of the religion that prevailed historically. Although by the second century Coptic Christianity was well-established in Egypt, where much of the Christian philosophy and theology was shaped, the primitive Jewish Christianity of the Palestinian Christians virtually disappeared from the stream of history following the destruction of Titus in 70.

Now I mention these matters pertaining to early Christianity because in Mormonism, in the past at least, there seems to have been an interesting admixture of the parochial and universalistic sentiments that appear both in the words attributed to Jesus in *Mark* and *Matthew* and in the tension between gentile or Hellenistic Christianity and Jewish or Palestinian Christianity in the early decades of the Christian movement. I refer to the fact that while the Mormons dispatched missionaries to other countries as early as 1837 and apparently had at a very early date the intention of pros-

elytizing broadly, their clear purpose was not to bring everyone into the faith, but rather to "call Israel out of the world," to bring to the Church those who were the "elect" of God, the descendants of Jacob or Israel. Believing that through the so-called lost tribes of Israel and other means the blood of Israel was scattered throughout the nations, at least to American Indians, Polynesians, and northern Europeans, the early Mormons were able, in a sense, to move in both directions—take the Gospel to all nations, but to do so in order to convert only those who were of the chosen few. This somewhat hidden parochialism was tempered by a theory of adoption which held that if an honest-to-goodness gentile were converted to Mormonism, he would at baptism and confirmation become an Israelite by adoption, a view which on occasion reached the exaggerated form of holding that such a convert would undergo a biological change that would in fact transmute him into a literal blood descendant of Israel.

Yet the basically parochial character of the Church position, which is well-attested not only in the Mormon scripture *The Doctrine and Covenants* but as well in respected Mormon writings, is obvious. It is the foundation of the important movement of the Mormons commonly referred to as the "gathering of the Saints." The "Saints," of course, were the chosen of God, Israel, and the gathering was first to Missouri but later to the Rocky Mountains, especially Utah, Arizona, and Southeastern Idaho, with some carefully selected parts of Wyoming and Nevada thrown in. Every Mormon knows that America was and is the Promised Land. The authoritative volume on Mormon doctrine, James E. Talmage's *The Articles of Faith*, in treating the matter of the gathering of Israel reads, "For, by world-wide dispersion the children of Israel have been mingled with the nations; and the blood of the covenant people has been sprinkled among the peoples. And now, in this day of gathering, when the Lord is again bringing this people together to honor and bless them above all that the world can give, every nation with the blood of Israel in the veins of its members will partake of the blessings." (p. 340)

Needless to say, the fortunes of Mormonism were well-served by this conception, as a successful gathering did take place over the second half of the last century, a gathering that did not come to an end until the Second World War when the physical process of calling the Saints out of the world seems to have been reversed to an encouragement for them to stay where



they are. That social and economic factors played a major role in this reversal, as in the "gathering" in the first place, should be entirely obvious. It has been during this very period since the Second War, of course, and especially over the last few years, that the missionary activity of the Church has increased at a phenomenal rate, both in the number of active missionaries and the extension of missions into new areas, especially parts of Latin America, Africa, and the Orient, and in the numbers of converts. But though the converts are not encouraged to come to Zion, now an obviously impractical course, they are still admonished to come out of the world morally and spiritually and create a Zion where they are. Temples built in what for old-guard Mormons are "foreign" lands and large regional conferences held on "foreign" soil, as well as ecclesiastical reorganization and appointments to accommodate the growing diverse populations, are indications that the Church is moving out to the world and abandoning its traditional Western American provincialism. They are evidence also that the Church is concerned with the difficult problem of achieving and maintaining a genuine unity in the presence of a rich cultural diversity. With the appearance of "foreign" temples, it is now possible for a convert in Germany, New Zealand, Japan, or Brazil to become a full-fledged Mormon without coming to America to become a bona fide "Utah Mormon." If this is not actually an achievement of a geographic universalism, it is at least a radical thrust toward it.

But there is here an authentic catholicity only if the missionaries are after all the souls that are out there in the wicked world and not just the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Of course, today the world doesn't appear to be quite so wicked to most Mormons because many of them have done rather well in it. Indeed, some seem to have become "super-saints" by staying in it. Moreover, I am frank to admit that I don't know whether the missionaries are after all the souls or not, though it does seem to me that they are after as many as they can get. Considering that there are far more Jews than Mormons in the world today, there must be an adequate supply of the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob around somewhere to keep the Church growing at its phenomenal rate for some time to come. It does seem to me, however, that there may be some problem about where those descendants are found—in Japan, the Fiji Islands, the heart of India and Africa, indeed, anywhere and of any race or color? But then when you are a member of a lost tribe, you may be

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really lost and may show up anywhere. Of course, even if there are some in the world today who are not descended from Jacob, there is always the adoption theory to fall back on, and in principle this can cover the rest of the human race—if they become genuine converts.

It would be interesting to observe the Mormon Church a century in the future to see whether or not the belief still obtains at that time that most of the members of the Church are descendants of Ephraim, or even of Abraham. If I were to speculate on this matter, I would hazard the belief that this intense tribalism, the theoretical base of Mormon parochialism to the present time, will be less and less important in the future. I hope that this will be the case. Even today it is probably true that most living Mormons are not acquainted with the view that was not uncommon in my youth that a genuine gentile convert actually undergoes a biological transformation to become a literal blood descendant of Jacob.* What I am driving at is that Mormonism, being still in its youth, has a remarkable degree of flexibility despite its absolutistic character, and fortunately in regard to some matters it has a rather short, or at least a convenient, memory. It is capable of change when change is indicated—witness the coming and going of polygamy and now the all-important 1978 revelation.

Since writing the first draft of this paper, including the foregoing paragraph, I have encountered interesting indications that the change which I have mentioned, the abandonment of the myth of Israelitish descent, may already be in process. Somewhat by accident I saw in the *Brigham Young University Studies*¹ a review by Professor Truman Madsen of a 1978 volume by Spencer J. Palmer, *The Expanding Church*. I had not been acquainted with this book before but have now read most of it and recommend it strongly to anyone interested in the problem of universalizing Mormonism. It provides a great deal of interesting information on the recent rapid expansion of the Mormon Church and describes the efforts of the Church to meet some of the problems created by that expansion. Palmer's book seems to confirm my own views on the subject of universalizing Mormonism, and I mention it here especially because it takes the position that "Latter-day Israel is not a community of blood; it is a community of faith." "Israel," says Palmer, "refers to those of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, who whole-heartedly respond to the will of God." (p. 28) Professor Palmer, who has extensive knowledge of

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Mormonism in the Orient and is director of the Center for International and Area Studies at the Brigham Young University, argues that it is through the universal fatherhood of God "that Latter-day Saints can best appreciate their relationship to other human beings and God's concern for them" because "Israel is not limited to a particular people or place." (p. 28) Professor Palmer states that "implicit in the gospel is a universal message of life that strikes squarely against all restrictive or stifling traditions based on race, language, place of origin, economic or political standing, educational rank, or cultural background." (p. 29) Finally, he says, "all latter-day Saints are of the same spiritual descent . . ." (p. 32)

Needless to say, I find Palmer's statement most commendable, and I hope that it prevails in the Church, as no doubt it will. If it does, the capacity of Mormonism for change in a good direction is once more indicated, as his position, despite all argument to the contrary, is clearly radically different from the accepted Mormon doctrine of the past, that modern Israel is indeed a community of blood. I am not sure whether or not Professor Madsen's review intends to refer to that well-established and cherished belief of the Mormons as a myth when he says, "Palmer patiently undercuts some confining myths: e.g., that the blood of Israel is Anglo-European, that Zion is 'at most' North America, that leadership in the Church is typed by nationality. Instead, as in the vision of early prophets, we know that the seed of Israel is everywhere (and anyway 'latter-day Israel is not a community of blood; it is a community of faith');² that Zion, as Joseph Smith said in 1831, is to fill 'the whole earth'; that leadership, its privileges and its burdens, will descend on all who fulfill the covenant."³ Professor Madsen is here⁴ and can speak on this for himself, but, in my opinion, he and his colleague Palmer have done a good work in exposing an old and certainly confining myth just when it needed to be exposed. It seems to me, however, that there is still the little problem of what they say to the 10th Article of Faith, "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the ten tribes; that Zion will be built upon this (the American) continent, etc." Obviously, there is much here for them to say, but my concern is whether in adopting a more universal base for the Mormonism of the present and future they mean to openly acknowledge the error of the past. Or was it a justifiable myth to bring us eventually to a higher form of religious belief. I am aware that myth has played and

perhaps on occasion should play an important role in religion, but in a society that values scientific intelligence, there is no place for this kind of myth unless everyone understands that he is being fed myth. It is immoral deception for an intellectual or leadership elite to keep the truth from the masses by a conscious employment of myths that are palmed off on them as literal truth. Though we can understand and perhaps justify their credulity, the literal "blood of Israel" matter was no myth to earlier generations of Mormons.

There is another side of Mormonism that contrasts sharply the excluding and, to use Madsen's felicitous term, "confining" beliefs to which I have referred. I refer here to elements in Mormon doctrine and ritual that are in principle universalistic in character. In their doctrine of the atonement, for instance, the Mormons hold that Christ atoned for the sins of all mankind and through his atonement all will share in the resurrection of the dead; indeed, virtually all will be saved, though with varying degrees of glory. It would actually come as a shocking surprise to many Mormons that some Christian theologians have held that the resurrection is only for a comparative few or that resurrection does not follow necessarily on the atonement or that most of mankind are among the damned or even that God created some souls for the purpose of inhabiting hell and that they never have a chance to end up elsewhere. When it comes to the doctrine of salvation, Mormonism is remarkably liberal and its spirit is truly universalistic. The Mormon theologians, or at least the good ones, want to save everyone. The souls of unbaptized infants, for instance, are not destined to hell, as in some forms of traditional Protestantism, nor are they in a limbo excluded from Paradise, as in Catholicism. Rather, for Mormons they are in the celestial kingdom, in the presence of God, for in Mormonism there is no original sin and punishment is for actual sin only. Even the primitives who die without access to the Gospel and the Church are saved. In Mormon teaching there is something like the Church Invisible, the idea that those who would have accepted the Gospel and baptism if they had had the opportunity to do so are among the blessed, as in the Catholic teaching on those who belong to the soul of the Church, or the Catholic doctrine of baptism by desire. And there is no need for a limbo for the Greek philosophers, as in Dante, to save them from the inferno because without baptism they cannot qualify for purgatory or paradise. The Mormon ideal is to save not only the philosophers, but all the rest of the pre-Christian Greeks as well, and everyone else,



everywhere, and at every time. Christ's blood, says the *Book of Mormon*, "atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned." (Mosiah 3:11-12) Even those who are assigned by their merits to the lowest glory, who are "thrust down to hell," unlike those who are in most Christian hells, are not consigned to an endless punishment. They eventually pay for their sins and in the fulness of times are redeemed. (D. & C. 76:84-5)

But like other Christian biblical fundamentalists, the Mormons take seriously the statement in *Mark* (16:16-17) that "Those who believe it (the Gospel) and receive baptism will find salvation; those who do not believe will be condemned." However, rather than follow those who have attempted to account for the salvation of such ancient unbaptized worthies as Moses and the prophets by such arrangements as having John the Baptist or Christ baptize them, the Mormons, at great cost of time and effort, adopted the practice of vicarious baptism for the dead which appears to have been an ancient Christian practice, in the hope of making salvation available to all who have ever lived, a rather large order that surely must entail insuperable practical difficulties. The temple, which may in a sense be taken as the symbol of the universal commitment of Mormonism, also includes among its vicarious rites the endowment ritual which symbolizes the sanctification of human life and which Mormons believe to be essential to the fullest achievement of salvation.

I have mentioned these factors in Mormon belief and practice that relate to the ideal of universality in the religion because they provide a kind of balance against the more restrictive elements of Mormonism that are tied especially to the conviction of the Mormon people that they are, with the Jews, the prime inheritors of the biblical promise and against also the provincial and parochial policies and practices that are so prominently exhibited in the past history of the Church.

Notwithstanding its commitment to carry its gospel to all people and its open policy and practice of baptism and confirmation, until very recently the Mormon Church seriously compromised its own moral idealism and its growing pretensions of universality by its long standing policy of denying full fellowship to persons having black African ancestry. In principle, at least, this was its only area of explicit, official racial discrimination, a discrimination which it justified on pre-

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sumed scriptural grounds and which was the cause of much speculation among Mormon theologians and pseudotheologians who searched in vain over many decades for an argument on which to defend the Church for its involvement in what was clearly a morally unjustifiable practice. Many attempted to provide a religious or theological vindication of the Church by grounding the matter in doctrine as well as scriptural precedent. The revelation of 1978, certainly the most important event in the history of the Church since its organization, wiped out in one stroke this barrier to genuine universality in the life of the Church. This action, which was the culmination of a moral struggle of the Church within itself lifted a great burden of guilt from the conscience of the Mormon people. It is to the everlasting credit of the leadership of the Church that the revelation was followed by explicit actions that witnessed the sincerity of their purpose, and it is to the great merit of the rank and file of the Mormon people that they accepted and acclaimed the revelation with admirable solidarity and a sense of moral relief.

The same may be said of the apparent enthusiasm with which the Mormon people, long accustomed to a more or less homogeneous society with a leadership drawn exclusively from Northern European ancestry, have responded not only to the addition to the Church of numerous converts from other races and cultures but even more to the appointment of American Indians, Blacks, Latin Americans, and Orientals to positions of high responsibility and authority in the Church. This is truly a new day for the Mormons. Anyone who simply follows the pictures in the Church Section of *The Deseret News* must realize that this is the beginning of a new era for the Church.

How different this is from the general attitude of old-guard Utah Mormons of the earlier era is indicated by the reaction of many to the call to the Apostleship of an Arizona Church leader, Spencer W. Kimball. For them, going to Arizona for an Apostle was like going to Poland for a Pope. Subsequent events have clearly shown that for both Mormons and Catholics these radical moves were strokes of inspired genius.

But this new era of a more universal Mormonism may very well have problems of its own, problems on a new level that may be even more difficult than those of the past. I refer, of course, to the matter of the assimilation of large numbers of converts from other cultures to the thought, attitudes, and practices of the Mormons, an assimilation that appears necessary to preserve the present character of the Church and its beliefs, liturgy,

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and basic practical policies. To incorporate persons from Oriental or Latin cultures into Church membership is one thing. Mormonism with its positive, life-affirming philosophy and its strong moral grounding and social structure can make an immediate appeal. It promises greater happiness and it usually pays off on that promise. But to face the problem of the possibility of an eventual development of an Oriental or Latin Mormonism is something else. We need not be linguists, anthropologists, or cultural historians to appreciate the great difficulty and frequent impossibility of transmitting meanings through translation or through the employment of non-linguistic symbols in art, ceremony, or ritual where cultural gaps exist. The Mormons have had much experience with the confusion that efforts at transcultural communication can produce. Even where westernization and Americanization are taking place, confusion and misunderstanding are often the end product. Despite its past experience, especially with American Indians, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and Polynesians, and notwithstanding the attempt of some Mormon scholars to pretend that in some mysterious way Mormonism transcends all cultural roots, mainstream Mormonism has been and basically still is an American religion, reflecting and expressing in its philosophy and in its doctrines, attitudes, and practices much of the typical American character. And by typical American character I mean something that came mainly from Protestant New England. At another level it is Northern European, but that is still to say Protestant. When the gathering was on and the typical Mormon convert was a Bible-believing Protestant from the United States, Canada, the British Isles, Scandinavia, or Germany, it was not a difficult thing to assimilate him to Utah-Idaho-Arizona Mormonism. He came from the basic cultural and religious stock, and this provided a ground for a more or less effective transformation.

Now I am not saying that converts from other cultures should be assimilated in this way. The very word "assimilation" has for me invidious overtones of meaning, as I regard diversity and plurality in cultures as having important intrinsic value. Cultural assimilation can be destructive of much that is good. But in the Mormon Church assimilation has been in the past both the norm and the practice, and here the Church has had much success, though sometimes with unfortunate consequences. I think, for instance, of the ill-fated transplanting by the Church at the turn of the century of native Hawaiians to the western desert of Utah to

create a ranching community in Skull Valley. The later building of a temple in Hawaii and creating a college there showed far greater wisdom and established a pattern that apparently is followed at the present time. Moreover, such a thing as the Church's delightful Polynesian Culture Center in Hawaii is a symbol of the present Mormon appreciation for native cultures.

I believe that this respect for diverse cultures is a growing element in the moral consciousness of the Mormons, as it is today for most people, but just here is where the problem becomes acute. Considering the rate at which converts are being made from other cultures, especially in Latin America, and considering also that now for the most part they stay where they are, often in what to traditional Mormonism is an alien culture, how is the Church to mold these people into the Mormon pattern, a pattern which is at important and sometimes crucial points foreign to their background, experience, education, and predispositions, and do this while at the same time protecting whatever in the native culture of the converts warrants preservation? Because molding persons into the standard format is what the Church has done in the past, and it has done this with remarkable success. The degree of standardization in the Mormon Church is beyond the belief of those who have not seen it for themselves—standardization in local Church policies and procedure, in artistic tastes, in reading and sermonizing, in thought and behavior, even in such mundane matters as the scheduling of meetings. The Church tends to move its people toward a common pattern that often destroys native diversity and creativity. Will it pursue that same goal as its membership is extended among Blacks of Africa, Hindus of India, Buddhists of Ceylon, or some of those of South America whose culture and religion are a strange hybrid of native animism and Catholicism? Who will determine what to tamper with and what to leave untouched? Will Dravidian congregations in India open Sunday School by singing "Utah, We Love Thee," as was not uncommon in some European missions in the past? Here is a suggestion of questions and problems that the Church must face in the future. The flexibility of the Mormons and their pragmatic propensities as a group will be their chief asset as these intellectual, social, and cultural difficulties arise. I have no serious doubt of the ability of the Church to in some way cope with them. The recent structural changes in the hierarchy and in the administration of the rapidly growing Mormon empire are evidence of its capacity to deal effectively with changing



circumstances. The Mormons are a race of natural-born organizers and administrators with a plethora of practical resources, and they may be expected to successfully mount on an organizational level whatever obstacles they confront. Solving problems is an important part of their religion. But the question remains of what the Church may be fifty, a hundred, or two hundred years from now if this extensive missionary incursion into the world's cultures continues, as no doubt it will.

In one sense this is an unfair question because no one has the answer. But it is an interesting question for Mormon watchers. Of course, one possible answer is: What difference does it make? Granted that a century ahead the Mormon Church may be very different from what it is now, the important thing is its meaning and value for the Mormons of that time, not what your standard Mormon of today would think of it if he could drop in on it. That is perhaps the best answer, but it is not very satisfying. The standard Mormon of today, with his absolutistic approach to religion, morals, and the Church, probably wants the Church a century from now to look very much like it is today. But I frankly suspect that if he were to return to another century, he would be due for some real shocks.

I realize, of course, that the authoritarian tradition of the Mormons and the hierarchical structure of the Church are strong factors for preserving the character of the institution, but this matter has never really been put to the test. To bring a few converts in from here and there and acclimate them to a Utah-dominated, American religious culture is quite a different matter from transforming the religious beliefs and moral patterns of large groups who remain in their native cultural habitats. Sending in a few regional representatives and holding regional conferences may in the long run make only a surface difference. Schools, of course, will do much more, and the Mormon educational system seems to be expanding at a phenomenal rate. But language, literature, philosophic tradition, economic and social practices, and geographic territory are formidable powers in preserving the basic elements of a religious culture.

To turn to the other side of the ledger, however, I must recognize that some native peoples have had an almost unbelievable capacity for cultural adaptation. The Japanese are the prime exhibit of this, not only in the profound transformation of their society since the outset of the Meiji era, but even more recently since the War and the American occupation. And further, I am reminded that the Mormon Church at the close of the

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twentieth century is not quite in the same predicament as the early Christian Church in the second, third or fourth centuries. Clearly today's world in real terms has become much smaller than the ancient world of the Mediterranean, and the Mormon Church is a highly sophisticated organization in its exploitation of the most advanced instruments for the communication of knowledge. Modern electronic technology has put us in a different world. This is a difference that should really count in the Church's efforts to establish unity in diversity.

The best model of success in matters of this kind, of course, is the Roman Catholic Church, the most universal and historically the most successful of all institutions. Nothing compares to its remarkable history of producing a strong solidarity in the presence of genuine diversity. Now the main point of my paper is to put this simple question: Are the Mormons willing to live with that kind of diversity in order to achieve universality? I rather think that most American Mormons would answer "No." Just outside Tucson, Arizona, in the San Xavier Mission, one can see Catholicism mixed with native animism in practices that typical urban Catholics would regard as crude superstition. A few minutes later in an environment of remarkable beauty one can see a pure form of Catholicism in a Shrine of Perpetual Adoration that will carry him back to Medieval Europe. This is the great genius of Catholicism. It learned long ago the secret of survival through accommodation to native cultures. As a matter of fact, the Church inherited this wisdom and practice from the legal and political forms of the Roman Empire as its organization gradually replaced the governmental structures of the Romans in especially the third and fourth Christian centuries. The secret lay in the Roman legal and governmental policy of "ius gentium," which provided the conquered peoples with the largest possible measure of governance under their own institutions compatible with the maintenance of unity, law and order, the effectiveness of the military, and the economic good of the Empire. It is no accident that the Church is called the *Roman* Catholic Church. As I have already pointed out, the imperialism of the Romans was one of the foundations of the Christian unity and universalism.

Now I do not suppose that the Mormons will follow the Catholic example in this matter. Institutions must live out their own lives under their own circumstances and guided by their own wisdom. Yet I do believe that there are some hard questions ahead and perhaps it is

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not too early to consider some of them. I say this even though I know very well that they are already being considered by the Church because I have the impression that there is a general feeling that of course these problems, like all others, will yield to treatment when the right attitudes are cultivated and appropriate managerial techniques are employed. But this may not suffice in confronting the creation of communities of Mormons in India where the communicants are drawn directly from a crude nature polytheism or possibly from a highly sophisticated mysticism or metaphysical monism, or in large areas of Asia, including India and China, where religion has traditionally been inclusive rather than exclusive, where a person may be an adherent of more than one religion, and where a new religion may simply be added to the old. Or in Africa where the potential converts may well be villages of illiterate or semi-literate animists. Is it possible that such things as adult literacy will become qualifying tests for membership?

I am sure that the Mormon leadership would not intentionally move in a direction that would encourage or allow the measure of diversity which not only exists in Catholic worship but which the Catholic Church apparently finds acceptable. Here, for instance, from a work by a Jesuit scholar, Father John A. Hardon, which carries the official imprimatur, is an excellent statement of the Catholic position. It reads almost as if it had been written for my purposes:

Catholicity also means unity amidst diversity, on several counts. The Church has never been a respecter of persons. Poor and rich alike, the learned and unlearned are equally welcome. All cultures and every stratum of society belong to the Church, and where this is not verified, the fault lies with those who have failed to combine 'both the universality of the Church and the diversity of the world's nations' in their preaching of the Gospel. Also within the Catholic Church are numerous rites, or different liturgical families that have flourished since the fourth century. Besides ritual differences, these families also reflect numerous cultural adaptations that the 'postconciliar' Church is encouraging as part of modern evangelization.

As a mark of orthodoxy, the Church's catholicity is part of that mysterious paradox whereby the same essential faith and worship are held and practiced by a bewildering variety of peoples, separated geographically across the



globe, culturally across the range of mankind, and historically across the centuries. This is absolutely unique among world religions, which seem incapable of transcending regional or even political interests. In fact, one of the lessons of Christian history is the inevitable rise of national churches whenever they separate from Roman Catholicism.⁵

Some Mormons will say, of course, that such diversity as is found in Catholicism could not develop in Mormonism; there is the great difference in numbers and the length of their histories, and besides, they insist, Mormonism has the truth and its leadership is under divine guidance. But already in its short and localized history there are schisms and internal divisions in Mormonism, with strange dissident groups around the fringes and even, as in Africa, what might be called an independent rite. The typical main-line Mormon simply smiles at this, or is mildly annoyed by the schismatics, who may practice polygamy, have a professional ministry, or take the sacrament with their left hands. But these may well be signs of more important things to come.

The internal divisions are probably of greater importance. I personally like plurality and diversity and dislike a solid block sameness in any institution. I believe that differences in religious and philosophical thought are good rather than bad, as I believe that no theology or philosophical system is the last word, and I am therefore not here expressing my personal judgments. With most Mormons, however, this is not the case. Though they allow a rather large area in religion for independent thought, when they come to what they call the *fundamentals* they expect agreement with official dogma. But actually the matter is not quite that simple. Too many things bearing on the fundamentals have never been adequately defined, and among those to whom the people look for guidance in these matters there is often no basic agreement and sometimes there is a surprising level of disagreement. Even among General Authorities and theologians at the Brigham Young University there are important divisions of opinion on basic Mormon doctrine. Fortunately, at my University we don't have theologians and we are not expected to know about these things.

Now let me say again that personally I find no objection to this situation. Besides, Mormonism is young and hasn't had much time to make up its mind about many theological problems. As a matter of fact, it has never even taken a serious look at some of the most



important of them. Perhaps much of its vitality is due to the fact that it is still in a comparatively raw stage in matters philosophical and theological. But the generality of Mormons see this thing quite differently. They believe that the answers are on hand and that their questions can be settled neatly and authoritatively. A part of the problem is due, of course, to the Mormon suspicion of anything like professionalism in religion and theology. The lay leadership floods the Mormon reading and listening market with books, articles, and sermons that are essentially anti-intellectualistic when problems relating to fundamental beliefs are concerned. There is even now among Mormon scholars and pseudo-scholars what I would call a cult of irrationalism that holds to such nonsensical notions as: Mormonism can be understood only if we abandon our attachment to the English language and western logic, substitute philology and mythology for philosophy and science, and treat religion on an esoteric plane rather than in terms of literal meaning and truth. This irrationalism and anti-intellectualism now engage a small but potentially influential group who apparently cannot meet Mormonism head on and defend it on logical grounds that make sense to the general run of literate intelligent Mormons and retreat therefore to their own "logics" and private meanings as a way of convincing themselves of its "truth." They help to make things interesting, but they are designing a serious deception of the generality of Mormons whose native preference is usually for common sense.⁶

Now I mention here the diversity of fundamental religious thought among Mormons because I think the present is a fair indication of what may be expected for the future. No doubt the Church will eventually refine its philosophical and theological position and define many things that are now ambiguous, with the result that it may sacrifice some of its potential intellectual vitality in favor of a standardization of thought that will more adequately serve to hold together its growing, far-flung empire. Today it relies on a common religious sentiment, the enthusiasm of testimonies, the zeal of youthful missionaries, social programs, religious fellowship, propagandistic education, and an authoritarian discipline to furnish a base for its unity. These are all powerful forces and their energies may be endlessly renewable. But I am inclined to believe that as the decades go by the Church may find that there is a very serious need for a much stronger intellectual foundation than it presently enjoys.

There are, of course, many approaches to the prob-

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lem of universality in Mormonism. I am sure, for instance, that the demand of women for more of the status traditionally enjoyed by men in the Church will increase rather than go away. And there is always the problem of the sinners, whom Christ supposedly came to save. Now an honest-to-goodness sinner stands a good chance of being excommunicated. And the Church has never known quite what to do with its intellectual dissidents, or even with its loyal critics, though excommunication is the fate of some of them. Here, it seems to me, there is much confusion.

But Rome wasn't built in a day, and it's not an easy thing to create and build a church. Mormonism has been the most successful American religious movement. Now that it is promising to become a world religion, it will encounter new and perhaps greater problems, but it has remarkable vitality and inventiveness and is capable of even radical adaptation and change. The Church has a powerful commitment and loyalty from its members and a strong tradition and habit of facing things head on. It will work its way through any problems which confront it and manage to achieve some degree of success. I do not share in the intense Mormon missionary commitment, but I have nothing but admiration and appreciation for the breakthrough toward universality which the Church has made in the last three decades. It would be interesting to be around here to see what is happening a century from now.

Footnotes

¹*BYU Studies*, (Winter, 1979) p. 19.

²Chapter 3, p. 28.

³*BYU Studies*, (Winter, 1979): 251f, p. 19.

⁴Professor Truman Madsen was the respondent to this paper when it was read as a lecture on October 10, 1979.

⁵*The Catholic Catechism*, pp. 218-19.

⁶For a prime example of this nonsense, see the essay, "Teaching Across Dispensations: A Comparative Religions Perspective on the Challenges of Being a Worldwide Church," by Gordon C. Thomason in *Mormonism: A Faith for All Cultures*, edited by F. LeMond Tullis, BYU Press, 1978.

⁷In referring to the impact of the Holy Ghost, Joseph Smith wrote, "for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence; while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost." Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Period I, Vol. III, p. 380. Edited by B. H. Roberts, 1974 printing.

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