

# No Higher Ground

OBJECTIVE HISTORY IS AN ILLUSIVE CHIMERA

DAVID EARL BOHN

**O**PINIONS on the writing of religious history abound. Lawrence Foster recently offered his version in *SUNSTONE*, "New Perspectives in Mormon History."<sup>1</sup> Foster's article provides a useful summary of the arguments in support of what has been called the New Mormon History.

Foster begins with the familiar argument that ridiculous sectarian controversies have distracted the historians interested in Mormonism from their principal task—the pursuit of historical truth.<sup>2</sup> For disaffected Mormons and many Protestant critics, history is a weapon with which to attack the religious claims of the Church. Even "Fawn Brodie's path-breaking biography" suffers because, according to Foster, she "spent too much time carping that her Sunday School image of Joseph Smith hadn't been the full picture."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, for the Mormon church, history serves as an instrument of indoctrination with which to elicit the unquestioned acquiescence of its members. The Church desires edifying histories, "sanitized, saccharine accounts, treatments, which would best be characterized as 'propaganda' by an objective observer."<sup>4</sup>

As a result, otherwise "sober Mormon scholars" spend inordinate amounts of time trying to find evidence that Joseph Smith really saw angels. Foster sees this as being akin to the "debates of medieval scholastics over how many angels could dance on the head of a pin."<sup>5</sup> Foster finds histories written from this point of view to be "deadly dull and pointless." He asks himself how an otherwise interesting subject matter could be turned into such "pabulum."<sup>6</sup>

This is why, according to Foster, traditional Mormon scholarship is simply a "joke" to professional historians. It has produced little more than an enormous mass of "undigested data with no apparent organizing principle." Mormon historians have been unwilling to use theories from other disciplines, have ignored the broader social context, and on the whole have remained blind to the rich "complexity," "social vitality," and insights of the Mormon experience.<sup>7</sup>

Foster then lauds the New Mormon History as a way out of such sectarian squabbling and into the mainstream of American historical writing.<sup>8</sup> Foster repeatedly contrasts these objective historical accounts



with faith promoting ones; the former seem to stand for maturity, understanding, rigor, and truth while the latter inevitably reflect naivety, ignorance, inaccuracy, and error.<sup>9</sup>

Foster is concerned, however, that the official policy of the Church is moving against the New Mormon History, making the writing of objective accounts of the Mormon past more difficult. He warns that this would be short-sighted and not in the best interest of the Church. In his eyes, the type of history authorized by secular historians is clearly preferable. First, it is believable. It tells the "real" story about "the real people who struggled to create Mormondom" rather than the myths about "idealized paragons of virtue." Furthermore it is compatible with Mormon theology in its naturalistic and materialistic assumptions. Finally, it helps the Church meet constructively the new challenges of the future.<sup>10</sup>

The argument supporting such a New Mormon History is by no means original with Foster. Indeed his article is merely the latest version of an argument that has been made regularly for over twenty years. This is not to say that New Mormon Historians and their supporters such as Leonard J. Arrington, Robert Flanders, Thomas Alexander, Jan Shipps, Davis Bitton, Klaus Hansen, James Clayton, and Sterling McMurrin agree with Foster on every point. But they do mutually support the argument for a secular middle ground between the extremes of sectarian history.<sup>11</sup> In addition, many seem to agree with Foster that the questions addressed by traditional Mormon historians are not of genuine interest and that their approach is neither conceptual nor objective but compromised on every side by personal bias and *a priori* commitments.

The New Mormon Historians' call for a middle ground, on the other hand, is seen as a call for objectivity and neutrality. Arrington, for example, points to an "objective" history which will not reflect "the author's personal feelings and opinions, . . . and prejudices of the time."<sup>12</sup> Clayton celebrates the New Mormon Historians in their belief that "religious history . . . should be neutral . . . objective . . . and concerned with [the] consequences for . . . accumulations of wisdom." He sees historians as "objective and scholarly advocates of the truth . . . who respect objectivity more than orthodoxy."<sup>13</sup>

Objective research would appear to require a posture of neutrality by the researcher toward the object of inquiry. Neutrality assumes a certain transparency in the understanding of the past, a presuppositionless or objective vantage point—above passion and polemic—which allows the reality of the past to reappear as it was, uncolored or undistorted by personal bias. The "sectarian squabbles," as Foster calls them, that have generally characterized conflicting interpretations of the Mormon past deny the historian such neutral ground. Thus, in calling for a middle or neutral ground these New Mormon Historians are really calling for a movement to a "higher ground." From such heights, they might be tempted to claim that their versions of the past are merely objective reconstructions of what took

place based upon obvious judgments of fact. The facts themselves are discovered through exhaustive work with the source materials themselves.

The allusion to a higher ground is indeed seductive. But is it a chimera? Can secular historians claim that their interests and questions reflect a higher order of significance? Can they demonstrate that their approach to history is truly objective? Can they legitimately refer to their own brand of history as mature, accurate, and insightful as opposed to the inevitably "naive, narrow-minded, pollyannish" histories written by Mormon historians who take their own religious categories as a theme for the understanding of the Mormon past?<sup>14</sup>

Such questions must be answered because if the ideal of neutrality and objectivity cannot be approximated, then the historian's distinction between "good history" and "bad history" evaporates and the secular historian's claim that somehow his account is of a higher order can no longer hold. Clearly Foster's lecture to the Church on the advantages of "good" history, that is secular history, presupposes this distinction.<sup>15</sup>

Such arguments are based on two assumptions: (1) that the historian can somehow be objective and neutral and (2) that the historical record is an independent and objective ground over against which historical explanations can be verified. It is exceedingly doubtful either assumption can stand up to careful and logical scrutiny.

### Objectivity and the Historian

By affirming objectivity and neutrality, the historian implies that in some way he can escape from his own historical condition. But in truth he cannot. He does not exist beyond time and space in some fourth dimension from which he can gaze upon the past objectively. Rather the historian can only encounter the past from within history *through his own time's way of understanding the past*. Each historian constructs his world view either in reaction to or in accord with prevailing categories of understanding. Either way, his ultimate conclusions bear the stamp of his own time. His consciousness of the past, his questions and interests, his methods and procedures may in a limited sense be authentically his own, but they are, at the same time, situated within the boundaries of his own epoch's way of understanding and discussing the past.

The situated character of all historical explanations involves more than a passive subjectivity—scholars with preferences. This would merely be admitting the obvious. Rather it entails, as well, an active subjectivity, where the very ideas of one's own time condition the way in which the historian has access to the past. Those ideas constitute the preunderstanding or historical prejudice that the historian inevitably brings to the historical record.

It is not possible in a short paper to treat in detail the nature of the prejudice of the professional historical establishment. What is more, whenever one attempts to generalize, he risks oversimplification. There is obviously a greater inner diversity of world view among secular historians in America. Yet keeping all of this in mind, one can detect in their language and method a



broad but ill-defined sort of positivism.<sup>16</sup> Though they may distance themselves from its more extreme manifestations, secular historians nevertheless depend upon its vocabulary and fundamental categories to justify their method and thus their conclusions. Like all ideologies, positivism furnishes a paradigm for the understanding of the world. It is based upon an intricate groundwork of naturalistic assumptions. In the case of history, it draws the materialist tenets of its understanding of the human past from the non-human sciences. They include empiricism, biological determinism, and environmentalism. The ultimate goal of positivist methodology is to provide causal explanations of human events. In the words of one New Mormon Historian:

It is far past the time when scholars can be satisfied with vague categories and glib generalization. Writers on complex topics like the development of important religious movements must be clear in their demonstration of causal connections between events.<sup>17</sup>

Sterling McMurrin refers to these methodological assumptions as naturalistic humanism with some flavor of positivism, and James Clayton asserts that the methodology of the inductive sciences is in principle appropriate for historical enquiry.<sup>18</sup>

Upon this rather ponderous substructure of unexamined assumption, the positivist erects his normative and empirical models of man and society. In order to give legitimacy to his creations, he surrounds them with the authority and mystery of scholarly language, repeating words such as rigorous, conceptual, objective, accurate, neutral, and empirical. But this act alone cannot compensate for the lack of a valid theory of verification nor can it shroud the many presuppositions and contradictions which permeate the whole of the ideology.

Such a positivist paradigm furnishes neither a neutral nor a higher ground. It is dogmatic like all ideologies. Its fundamental tenets cannot be proven but rather must be accepted in advance as an act of faith. Those who refuse to assent to the positivist ideology behind secularized history are not met with rational arguments but with the scorn of the faithful that is visited upon one who has abandoned a long held religion, has deserted the standard of "progress" and reverted to primitive superstitions.

### **Objectivity and the Record**

Faced with reservations about ever escaping his own historical condition and achieving neutrality, the secular historian might legitimately do an about face in order to sustain his objectivist position. He could assert that how one comes upon one's explanation of the past is not important. Rather what matters is whether the explanation proffered can be confirmed or disconfirmed. The objectivity of a historical explanation has little to do with the subjective commitments of the historian but rather depends upon its correspondence to the objective facts of history. Therefore the real question is whether the historical account holds up against evidence.

In general, when secular historians are challenged,

they make ready reference to facts, the evidence, the sources, or, in almost hallowed terms, the documents. The implication is that they are simply letting the "facts speak for themselves" or that any rational individual could hardly deduce different conclusions from the evidence. Foster furnishes an excellent example. "The Mormon past," he writes, "came even more vividly alive as I began to work closely in the printed and manuscript records." These brought to mind the "real men and women" of the Mormon past.<sup>19</sup> One is left to conclude that, if one could only get to the facts, the objective truth of the matter would be clear and apparent. This is what Foster believes the New Mormon History is doing—getting to the facts which, according to Sterling

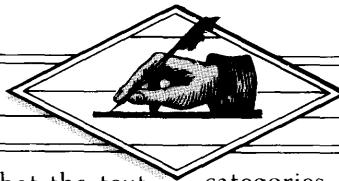
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McMurrin, are precisely what the Church and orthodox Mormons don't want to face. Apparently for McMurrin, the self evidence of the facts is beyond question, and even to question the methodology of historians demonstrates bad faith.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the thoughtful person will want to examine these claims more closely. Indeed, what is the relationship between the historian and the facts which supposedly confirms his account of the past? In what way does the historian have access to the facts?

The facts themselves are contained in the historical record, which is the mass of inherited information, sources, and documents which the historian depends upon for the writing of his histories. The record consists of a variety of artifacts all of which can be read as a text and as text analogues. Some of the text comes in the form of "pictures" (physical artifacts which have somehow been passed on); the rest is in the form of language (which has somehow been written down). What all of these diverse text and text analogues have in common is that they survived.

The historian who approaches the record realizes that this text constitutes his only avenue of access to the past. Yet such a record is not necessarily accurate. Furthermore, he knows that it is incomplete and perhaps contains only part or none of what the historian considers important. He may lament that the information that he is looking for simply was not recorded or that what was recorded seems irrelevant to his concerns. Nor can the historian depend upon the record being a representative sample of what occurred in the past; much of it is random bits of information. In the end, the historian will simply have to flesh out his



account of the past from conjecture of what the text might have contained were it complete and accurate.

The historian's access to the past is not limited solely by the incompleteness of the record however. Access is also mediated by the character of language and by conceptual framework the historian brings to the record.

Language does not simply introduce a subjective dimension because the written text is a given individual's interpretation of the phenomena of the past in question. Language itself is not a neutral, transparent, or objective medium. Rather it packages the phenomena of the past in accordance with its own internal character. Language is more than a set of arbitrarily stipulated definitions. It is a total semantical structure, rooted in a way of life and a prevailing world view. A language constitutes the medium in which understanding is achieved and shared by the participants of a particular culture.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the use of any particular language must be understood as a cultural event.

Moreover, the meaning of language is not uniform over time and place. Even the formal meaning of words and statements can be disputed and naturally becomes much more distant over time. In a spoken dialogue, conversants often share a relatively common world view and way of life. They anticipate intended meaning and adjust and correct misunderstandings through further questions. Furthermore, much meaning is communicated with changes in intonation or by gesture. But the student of history can only come to language through the text and across the horizon of his own time, pregnant with its own meanings and proffering its own way of life. He can only approach the record through his

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own way of understanding language which may be far removed from that of the historical moment he wishes to understand.

In addition to the intervening character of language, the objective character of the historical record is mediated and thus compromised by even elementary ordering principles the historian uses to guide his research. These principles structure in advance his access to the meaning of the historical record and delimit the field of study.

To begin the historian will organize the contents of the record vertically according to time and horizontally according to subject. The nature of these divisions will reflect his own interest as well as the prevailing opinions of the history profession. The complexity of these

categories is bounded only by the imagination of the historian. For instance, the historian might be interested in the psychological character of the early Mormon pioneers who crossed the plains (which presupposes the legitimacy of this or that psychological model). Thus he creates pigeonholes into which to sort information on religious history, on the relevant time periods, on Mormons, on pioneers, on plaincrossers and on all other factors deemed important from a psychological perspective.

Few historians want to stop here. To write history is to tell a story. Historians seek to explain the past and not simply to do chronology or to archive information. To do this, historians must somehow recreate the historical period. They must draw in the background and then trace the flow of events. They must sketch the historical characters and then create a narrative which combines all of these elements into a drama.

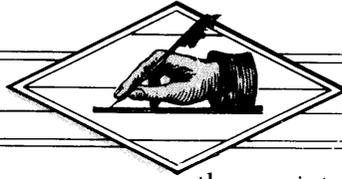
In the case of Mormon history, this involves weaving the disparate elements of the Mormon record into a whole with regard to a given question. To achieve this, the historian must specify the causes that link these elements into a story and give the narrative its plot. In brief, to write history the historian must inquire into the how and the why of the past. He will address himself to such questions as why the early Saints were driven out of Missouri. Why did they adopt the practice of polygamy? How did the Mormons come to believe in temples and associated ceremonies? Why did people join the Church in such large numbers in Great Britain? Why did persecution act to increase the fervor of many of the Saints?

If the historian is to answer these questions, he must go beyond establishing events and dates. Such questions demand explanation. This requires the positing of a theory and related hypotheses which can guide him in interpreting the text and selectively organizing its content. The theory assists the historian in sorting out the relevant facts and fitting them together into a coherent response. To further understand how the historian develops answers to such questions and creates historical narrative, it is necessary to explore in greater detail this relationship between fact and theory.

Most historians seem to use the word fact in at least two different ways without being consistent in what they mean. First it is used as a synonym for phenomena: facts are simply that which appears to the conscious mind—color, shape, and sequence, for example. Phenomena require no interpretation to be encountered; they are simply there. They have no meaning until one gives them an identity. For example, a house appears as merely a dimensional entity, a geometric form and color occupying time and space in the broader matrix of consciousness, until one has understood it in its function as a shelter.

Clearly were one able to encounter pure phenomena, one would be about as close as one could get to true objectivity, that is *uninterpreted reality, things as they present themselves or as they appear as themselves.*

Secular historians also use the word fact as a synonym for evidence—that which can prove or disprove a conjecture. But obviously not all facts (phenomena) are evidence. One need only think of the endless number of discrete events and objects present in any historical



moment to realize that only some can legitimately be considered evidence with regard to a given question. While still facts, the others were simply accidentally copresent. In short, the secular historian must decide which facts will count for him as evidence and which will not.

Karl Popper has shown that it is the researcher's theory that tells him which facts (phenomena) constitute the evidence.<sup>22</sup> Facts cannot be understood as a category of evidence until some hypothesized account has been posited. Obviously, only those facts which are relevant to this hypothesized account can count as evidence. But since this distinction is only achieved by processing (interpreting or identifying) the facts, they acquire the status of evidence only at the cost of losing their objective or phenomenal character. In sum,

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phenomena may appear involuntarily to the conscious mind, but evidence does not; it is validated by argument.

For example, in seeking to give the how and why of Joseph Smith's prophetic claims, one might theorize that he was an epileptic and that his visions were the inevitable hallucinatory properties of his seizures. That thesis establishes in advance that information relevant to seizures, as they are presently understood, constitutes the factual evidence on this subject. The historian proceeds to sift through the record for data compatible with his hypothesis. The other information (facts) in the record would recede into the background.

Were one to assert that his visions were due to delusions of grandeur arising from basic psychological disorders, the information relating to epilepsy would become irrelevant, while the historian would piece together whatever in Joseph Smith's background might lend to psychoanalysis. Other theories would set into motion the same process.

But theory does more than simply furnish explanations and identify evidence. It often determines how to appropriately interpret the text, how to divide the record into periods, and how to develop categories for the collection and organization of information. These various aspects of historical research are not distinct, individual, and sequential; rather they are inter-defining, interconnected, and circular. The way in which

theory integrates the various aspects of historical research into a whole can be seen in how, for example, Marxist historians interpret the language and periodize the content of the historical record differently than economic liberals. Those divisions reflect their belief in Marx's theory of dialectical materialism. Upon the same basis, the Marxist historian uses such categories as class, repression, revolution, means of production, forces of production, capital, surplus value, alienation, to select out from the record those facts which are important and can be drawn upon in order to derive the evidence.

These theories are not found anywhere in the record, however. They are not a part of the thinking or the explanations that the people under investigation gave of themselves or of their time. They are foreign elements introduced by the historian to coordinate and give direction to his story of the past.

Furthermore, theorizing is subject to the caprice of fashion. Theories which once invoked great authority are abandoned and given the most derisive of treatment by a later generation only to be revived under new garb to widespread popularity by a subsequent generation.

And somehow each historical epoch believes its understanding of the past or at least its categories to be consummate, so much so that the image projected by these categories appears as reality, the world as it is. The categories themselves almost fade from view, the structure they have produced seems merely to be common sense. The conceptual structure fades from view precisely because of its very familiarity. The historian is like a man who has been wearing a set of comfortable glasses for so long that he is no longer aware that he is wearing them and that the vision he has of the world is the result of the curvature of the lenses.

In general then, the historian is inescapably faced with what some consider a vicious circle; no matter at what level he finds himself in, his research, the record only acquires a fuller meaning by the further imposition of the historian's categories and criteria are inevitably external to the phenomena themselves. Clearly then, the facts—the uninterpreted record—do not stand apart from the enterprise of interpretation and explanation as an objective standard against which our understanding of the past can be verified. A fact only becomes evidence if one accepts the theoretical framework which confers the status of evidence upon what is otherwise merely random data contained in the record.

This brings the discussion full circle, for the theoretical framework of the historian is not arrived at in a vacuum. It is part of the ideological baggage, the questions and interests, the multitude of categories and ordering principles, values, and commitments which constitute his world view. Nor is this world view plucked out of thin air, but as already noted, it is situated within the medium of his own time's way of understanding the past. *In this sense the historian has already come to his conclusion about the meaning of the historical record before having consulted it.*

### **Writing Mormon History**

In light of the foregoing discussion, the New Mormon Historian's criticism of traditional Mormon history is at



best misleading. When New Mormon Historians criticize the traditional Mormon historian for not being conceptual or willing to use ordering principles from other disciplines, they show a lack of understanding of the larger question. Indeed Mormon historians do use concepts to order their accounts of the Mormon past. It is impossible not to do such. What their critics really object to is that they do not use those authorized by the secular historian's world view.

Precisely because theories are not neutral, Mormon historians can legitimately take issue with secular explanation. Psychological, sociological, and economic explanations of visions, texts (such as the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, or the Doctrine and Covenants), and practices (such as temple work and polygamy) do not constitute a neutral or objective way of getting to the bottom of things. When a theory's very structure subtly denies *a priori* that the foregoing could authentically involve revelation, thoughtful Mormons have every right to ask further questions. Of course, the great danger is not that competing explanations are offered but that such explanations conceal their assumptions and masquerade as the truth or the facts pure and simple.

Again when Foster and others criticize Mormon historians for not borrowing theories from other disciplines, presumably anthropology, they reveal their positivist commitments. For quite obviously the theories borrowed from these disciplines are predicated upon historical assertions about man and society. Supposedly they are universally valid and can therefore be applied to all historically appropriate situations in order to reveal what really happened.

Then too it is ironic how theories borrowed from other disciplines, few of which can lay claim to much predictability and none of which can adequately explain the phenomena of the present, always appear to fit so much better when applied to the past. For example, the usefulness of psychoanalysis is hotly disputed in contemporary psychology. A large segment of the psychological profession rejects it outright. Yet for certain historians, it seems to be such a profound and uncontroversial source of insight for the understanding of Joseph Smith and his prophetic claims. More alarming is the fact that a modern psychoanalyst may cautiously venture a reconstruction of a patient's personality only after months of the most personal and intimate consultation, but somehow, with almost no such information and across more than a hundred years of history, Joseph Smith's underlying motivations and personality become transparent to the psychohistorian.

It is, therefore, disingenuous of a secular historian such as Foster to point an accusing finger at the traditional Mormon historian for being biased, untruthful, and cowardly, while the former pretends to approach the past from the sanctified higher ground of neutrality and objectivity. In many ways, the Mormon scholar is more honest. He does not try to hide his loyalties. Everything is up front. His questions are the questions of a man concerned about religious and spiritual experience. He assumes the reality of certain

primary events, the validity of certain primary texts, and the truth of certain primary teachings based upon personal spiritual confirmation. He does not pretend that somehow the historical record is capable of ultimately proving such things, although he finds it can shed light upon and give added depth to these concerns. While he may share some interests with the secular historian and may even find it useful to employ some of his methods, he does so without illusion.

Clearly then, it is not simply a question of New Mormon Historians who want to get to the facts and let them speak for themselves and traditional Mormon historians who want to manipulate the facts for their religious ends. To pretend that such is the case is simply to camouflage the mountain of positivist assumptions and theories which give structure to the New Mormon Historians' supposedly objective historical accounts. Since these assumptions are so difficult to justify, such historians simply assume that their interests and questions are inherently more significant. In so doing, they manifest themselves as insensitive and intolerant.

The New Mormon Historians might well respond that no reputable historians believe it is possible to be objective and therefore the arguments made in this paper attack a strawman. Perhaps, but aside from routine disclaimers about how perfect objectivity is unattainable, few New Mormon Historians seem to demonstrate a mastery of the relevant literature or even an awareness of the fundamental problems. They admit that objectivity is not possible but continue to offer it as a worthy ideal. Even those who refuse to take a position still use methods, evolve categories, and develop explanations that presuppose objectivity. In addition, objectivist vocabulary is ubiquitous, lending a false sense of legitimacy and rigor to historical accounts. All of this would lead one to conclude that there are many "close-set objectivists" among secular historians interested in the Mormon past. In any case, if Foster and other New Mormon Historians do reject the objectivist tradition, then it is incumbent upon them to provide a clear justification of the paradigm and related criteria they do

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use and not simply offer the reader a bundle of disclaimers.

Some might characterize my critique of the New Mormon History as cynical, skeptical, and nihilistic. They might claim that such an approach saves the Mormon historian's religious accounts of the past only by debasing all criteria and thus destroying the possibility for any legitimate rational account of the Mormon past. This is simply not the case. This paper was not written to justify any and all attempts to write Mormon history from a Mormon perspective but rather to demonstrate the failure of Foster and other New Mormon Historians to make a convincing case against the possibility of an honest and quality Mormon history that takes its own categories of belief as a theme. It is the positivist position which presupposes that reason sanctions only one approach to the understanding of the past. Here it is simply argued that there are desirable alternatives to a discredited and arrogant positivism. The key to the formulation of an alternative approach to the study of history has already been suggested by a number of scholars.<sup>23</sup> At a minimum it would involve abandoning Cartesian metaphysics and the subject-object distinction which it so amicably hosts. It is particularly important that the understanding of human history reflect the situated character of every historical account and taking that as a theme, elaborate a critical hermeneutic for the writing of a more self-conscious and dialectical history. True, such methods would not yield objective truth; they would not inevitably yield intellectual nihilism either. Rather they would produce a bounded relativism, a most appropriate position for the temporal character of human existence.

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#### Notes

1. Lawrence Foster, "New Perspectives on the Mormon Past," *SUNSTONE* 7(January-February 1982):41-45.
2. *Ibid.* p. 42.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.
11. I do not want to imply that New Mormon Historians agree on everything, nor do I desire in any way to impugn their religious commitments, since many New Mormon Historians are faithful, practicing members of the Church. My point throughout the paper is simply that beneath their differences exists a fundamental agreement on methodological postulates.
12. Leonard J. Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century," *Dialogue* (Spring 1966):17-18.
13. James L. Clayton, "Does History Undermine Faith?," *SUNSTONE* (March-April 1982):34-36.
14. Foster, p. 42.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

16. *Ibid.* Here again, I would like to avoid being accused of "lumping everyone together" under the rubric of positivism. Surely there are important differences which separate New Mormon Historians, but when it comes to their fundamental framework of analysis and methodological procedures, there seems to be substantial agreement. Those interested in investigating the problems of Positivism more extensively might begin with works listed under footnote 23. For a short treatment, read Joseph Bleicher, *The Hermeneutic Imagination* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), chapters one and two.

17. Thomas Alexander, "The Place of Joseph Smith in the Development of American Religion: A Historical Inquiry," *Journal of Mormon History* (1978):17.

18. Sterling McMurrin, "On Mormon Theology," *Dialogue* (Summer 1966):136. How such a position fits McMurrin's own way of understanding seems confused; see *Religion, Reason, and Truth* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982), pp. 1-19, especially 17-19; also note the reference in footnote 21. James L. Clayton, "Does History Undermine Faith?" p. 36.

19. Foster, p. 43.

20. Sterling McMurrin, "Religion and the Denial of History," *SUNSTONE* (March-April 1982):48-49. In this citation McMurrin seems to take a rather strong position on objective methodology, yet in other places he qualifies his position in such a way that it is difficult to imagine where he stands. Indeed given these many contradictions one wonders whether he could offer a coherent epistemological and ontological stand that could integrate them all.

21. W.V. Quine, *Words and Objects*, ed. D. Davidson and J. Hintikka (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1969), pp. 221 and 303-306. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 193-212. David Couzens Hoy, *The Critical Circle* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982), p. 20.

22. Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), pp. 97-120 and 175-248.

23. Admittedly the following titles constitute merely a beginning for the serious student of method, yet I think that it is clear from even this short list that the historian who is serious about understanding the presupposition of his method has little choice but to go outside of the narrow confines of his discipline and address himself to the broader literature found in the philosophy of science and social science. First, I think that one ought to have digested the general criticism leveled against objectivist science by analytic philosophers because their conclusions often hold for the social sciences and history. See, Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Harold Morick et. al., *Challenges to Empiricism* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1972); Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Frederick Suppe, *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974); Carl G. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Free Press, 1965); "Reason and Covering Laws in Historical Explanation"; Sidney Hook ed., *Philosophy and History* (New York: New York University Press, 1963); Ernst Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961); W.V. Quine and J.S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief* (New York: Random House, 1978). Then, it is my opinion that the most salient criticisms and alternative models can be found in the hermeneutical literature. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1975); *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969); Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston: Beacon, 1972); Adorno et al, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1976); R. Bubner et. al., *Hermeneutik und Dialektik Ideologiekritik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971); Josef Bleicher, *Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); also note an excellent book which reformulates Collingwood's ideas in even more powerful form, Rex Martin, *Historical Explanation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).