

PERVERSE ANTI-HAIR CRUSADE

It wasn't necessary to know the details of his years of spiritual and intellectual struggle (SUNSTONE 8:6) to see the bias in William Russell's article on the historicity of the Book of Mormon (7:5) and to point out that only a desire to believe a previously held conclusion would allow someone of Russell's depth to ignore alternative explanations and inconvenient evidence not fitting his hypothesis. I simply suggested that liberalism be tempered with a greater awareness of other views, that we recognize that some questions will never be resolved and are not decisive, and that we concentrate on the issues where conclusions are somewhat easier to arrive at or are more important. Blake Ostler's approach in his review of *Book of Mormon Authorship* (Dialogue 16:4) reflects a responsible position.

Richard Van Wagoner's essay on the history of beards was amusing but for some perverse reason the anti-hair crusade in the Church has taken on serious dimensions, unless the Osmonds and Merlin Olsen can salvage the image of those of us who prefer the ways of our ancestors. For those interested in further discussion of the implications of grooming standards I'd be happy to send a copy of an article I did for *Seventh East Press* on the subject.

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A HAIRY HISTORY

Though now committed to clean-shavenness, I appreciated Van Wagoner's trifle on bearddom. I forgive his failure to mention what I consider to be the pre-eminent beard of Mormonism—Orson Pratt's. But I wish to note that, notwithstanding his praise of the beard:

1. Facial hair has long been associated with sin. Gulielmus Durandus's *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (1459) notes that clerics must shave, "for cutting of the hair of the beard . . . denotes that we ought to cut away the vices and sins which are a superfluous growth in us." The shaven face is a symbol of innocence.

2. Du Cange, in his *Glossarium*, has an entry for *barbazatus*, a word taken from a document that suggests that Jews and Muslims for some time routinely shaved when becoming Christians—a sign of renunciation of their former heresies (haresies?).

3. There is a long Christian tradition, particularly before 1600, to the effect that Adam's beard sprouted only after the Fall. (As Lord Byron put it: "ever since the fall, man for his sin / Has had a beard entailed upon his chin.") To refute this doctrine, Giuseppe Valeriano de Vanetti wrote a remarkable tract, *Barbalogia ovvero ragionamento intorno all Barba* (1759), which attempts to prove that Adam was created with a beard, and that every man before the Flood had one too.

Finally, apropos Van Wagoner's title, "To Beard Or Not To Beard": he, perhaps unwittingly, has echoed a strange parody of the Hamlet soliloquy published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, 2 July 1845, which begins, "To shave or not to shave."

I recommend wetting the face well, applying whipped cream, and reading Reginald Reynold's book *Beards* (London, 1950).

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BAD GUYS AND BEARDS

"To Beard Or Not To Beard" (SUNSTONE 8:6) is a social, emotional, spiritual, physical, and intellectual problem not so much for the be-whiskered priesthood holder in the Church but for the general clean-shaven male and female leadership and membership.

My husband's greatest difficulties as a long-time bearded Mormon have centered around the "bad guy" attitudes directed at him. The following examples have been communicated through outright criticism, veiled suggestions, silent condemnation, employment edict, fatherly advice, and joking comradery:

Wearing a beard—

- 1. is a negative example to youth.
- 2. reveals flagrant disobedience

to Church dress and grooming standards.

- 3. shows excessive individualism.
 - 4. is an unhealthy practice akin to smoking.
 - 5. is a giant step on the road to apostasy.
 - 6. only promotes irritation and speculation on your worthiness, so why wear one?
 - 7. will prevent your getting ahead in the Church hierarchy.
 - 8. is not permitted at this Church-operated university/ cultural center/school facility so we cannot consider you for employment.
 - 9. hides your small chin, you say? Vanity, vanity!
 - 10. makes you look different from all the other Mormons; you know, peculiar.
 - 11. Today is different from the time of the Bible. They didn't have razors.
 - 12. makes you easy to spot in Church, Daddy.
 - 13. is a little unrighteous. You know what I mean?
 - 14. must bother your wife. [It doesn't.]
 - 15. must be taking all that hair from your bald head.
- My child came home from Church one Sunday and asked: "How come Daddy is the only one with a beard like Jesus?" You tell me.

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THE CROSS A VEHICLE TO SALVATION

I applaud Joyce Woodbury's effort to refocus our attention on Christianity's paramount symbol—the cross. It seems in our desire to disassociate ourselves with traditional Christian thought we have disaffirmed its significance. In addition to the ideas offered by Woodbury, I would like to suggest a couple others that might heighten our regard for the cross.

When carried over into Greek thought, the cross becomes the "golden mean," an aesthetical standard that has intrigued artists, philosophers, and mathematicians since antiquity. Going even further back in time we run into the *ankh*, a cross with a loop on the

top, meant by the Egyptians to represent eternal life. Of greater significance to many early Christians was the attitude of Christ's body as he hung on the cross. His outstretched hands (his "immortal pinions") became the attitude of prayer and worship ("His sign") whereby one could mount up to heaven. (See the *Odes of Solomon*.) This was the posture assumed by Moses when Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands the entire day to give Israel victory over the Amalekites. The cross also stands in contradistinction to Eden's Tree of Life as the Tree of Death which miraculously doubles back on itself to give us eternal life. Joseph the carpenter supposedly planted a branch of the Tree of Life in his garden from whose full-grown form the cross was fashioned and oil was extracted as an anointing for Christ's resurrection. (*Gospel of Phillip*.) The risen Savior gives us perhaps the best reason for taking the cross more seriously: "And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross . . . that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men, even so should men be lifted up by the Father" (3 Ne. 27:14). Nowhere is the deep paradox of the gospel better illustrated: Man in wrath and brutality lifted Christ up to death so that he might in mercy and love lift us up to life. The cross thus becomes a real vehicle to salvation for without it Christ could not have hung between earth and heaven and thereby become the Mediator between man and God.

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RESOLVING A DIVINE DILEMMA

In "The Atonement" (SUNSTONE 8:6), J. Clair Batty poses certain questions relative to this important concept: Why was payment, ransom, reconciliation, or sacrifice necessary? Who made the payment, ransom, or sacrifice? What did the payment or ransom consist of? To whom was the ransom or sacrifice made? What follows is one attempt to answer those questions and some others that arise in the process.

God the Father knows the thoughts, joys, miseries, pleasures, and pains of the premortal intelligences as fully and immediately as if they are his own (see Matt. 25:40). That they may know the joy that he knows, the Father prepared these intelligences to receive his knowledge and power by dividing a test or probation that will demonstrate whether they will do all things in harmony with his will.

Were it not for the Atonement, the consequence of sinning in any degree would be spiritual death, or separation from the Father and his influence (Hel. 14:15-18). Indeed, were it not for the Atonement, this would be the fate of all of the Father's children (except one), because they all sin (see Alma 42:7-11; Rom. 3:23).

Why must this be so? Perhaps the better question is, how could it be otherwise? Once we have shown ourselves to be willfully disobedient to the Father, causing pain to others and to him, why should he permit us to do so? Why should he not totally separate us from himself and his cognizance?

But, we may ask, is this reaction not extreme? Why could he not allow us time to change our ways, and, when we have changed sufficiently, grant us his fulness?

Those questions may be answered with other questions. Even assuming that we could change our ways, how long should he wait for us to do so? A day? A year? A thousand million years? Indefinitely into eternity? There must be an end to the evil that we do; otherwise, he would not be one to whom evil is intolerable (see D&C 1:31). For him to say, "Take as long as you like; commit as much evil as you choose; when you are ready to choose otherwise, I will just let bygones be bygones," would amount to saying, "It doesn't matter what you do." If it doesn't matter what we do, then there is no law; if there is no law, there is no governance in the universe; there is only chaos (see Alma 42:16-22). But it does matter to the Father what we do; and the consequence is that if we act contrary to his will, all that his nature logically permits him to do is to

protect himself from the sore of our contrariness by withdrawing himself from us. The Father's justice lies in the fact that it matters to him what we do; he does not act contrary to what he values (see Alma 42:17-22). Were he to do so, he would not be what he in fact is (see Alma 42:12-13).

How can he save us without contradicting his own nature? In other words, how can he extend mercy without denying justice? There has to be a consequence, but the very point is to protect us from the consequence. If we are not to suffer it, then who remains to do so but God himself?

Now a difficulty enters in here, because the ultimate consequence is spiritual death, the utter separation of the disobedient from the Father and all his influence. How can the Father separate himself from himself? He cannot, and so it is necessary that there be an intermediary—one who is fully equivalent to the Father, through whom the Father can suffer this death. The chosen intermediary was Jesus, who on the cross experienced in its fulness the terrible separation from the Father that is the spiritual death. If we are to take at face value the scriptural statements on the oneness of the Father and the Son (see D&C 93:3-4; Mosiah 14:2-5; John 17:22), then the Father *through* Christ also experienced the pain of that death.

At the same time, the death of Christ also resolved our separation from the body in physical death. As with the spiritual death, God the Father must have suffered it through the intermediation of God the Son.

Although this is not how the Atonement is normally understood by Latter-day Saints, it seems justified by the many scriptures about the oneness of the Father and the Son and the statement that "God himself" redeems his people (Mosiah 15:1).

The necessity for the Atonement can be understood as arising from God's own nature, and other explanations are but metaphors to help us grasp the all but inarticulate logic of a divine dilemma and of a truly amazing grace.

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