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READERS FORUM

JUDAS, OUR BROTHER

Alfred A. Blue's excellent article, "Judas Iscariot, Betrayer or Betrayed?--A Plea for Understanding and Compassion" (SUNSTONE, vol. 10 no. 11) contained a poignant plea for compassion but fell short of providing adequate understanding. By offering the excuse that we can "only speculate as to the motives," and then failing to suggest any he ignores the most lucrative arena for obtaining insight. In God's kingdom, the act is never taken in isolation; rather, motive is everything when assessing guilt, innocence or degree of culpability. Spencer W. Kimball felt justified in giving free rein to speculation, with ample "reading between the lines," in an attempt to absolve Peter of his denial in his address to BYU students, "Peter, my Brother."

Let us give Judas the benefit of the doubt and consider an admittedly fanciful scenario for his betrayal—if indeed, that is what it was. We know that Judas was the only Judean among the Twelve; could he also have been a Zealot, a fanatical partisan of the revolutionary sect which bitterly opposed Roman domination? The Zealots were as passionately devoted to the Messiah as they were patriotic. What if Judas had truly accepted Jesus as the long awaited Messiah and then after waiting three long years for the inevitable overthrow of the hated status quo had grown impatient? The Messiah would have to declare himself first to the Jewish leadership before taking on the Roman Empire. If Judas could only orchestrate a key confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees so as to force a revelation from Jesus and acceptance of him by the Sanhedrin, his dream could be realized. Had Jesus been anyone else but the Messiah, such a set-up would have been most imprudent and extremely dangerous. But Judas had double insurance: he knew that Jesus was the Messiah and he had witnessed on more than one occasion Jesus' power to escape unscathed from a hostile crowd. He thought he had no need to worry about the safety of his Master no matter if they accepted or rejected Him. He simply did not allow for the third and worst alternative.

What of the 30 pieces of silver? Judas was the one who "held the purse" for the quorum. What an unexpected source of revenue to help defray expenses! If the blind Sanhedrin

wanted to give him their money when it was they who were playing into his hands, they who were doing him the favor, why not let them part with their silver? They could certainly afford it and it was a motivation they could understand.

The stage was now set, the players all knew their parts, Judas was the catalyst to set the play in motion. Under this version, Judas' only error was one of naive judgement and miscalculation of cosmic proportion, his only sin was failing to counsel with his Master about this unauthorized maneuver. This view accounts for the profound remorse he felt when events took such an unanticipated turn and he not only saw his careful plan go awry, but lead to the worst possible outcome.

The point of view of those describing an incident is of the utmost importance as demonstrated in the case of Saul of Taurus, regarded by some as the worst of turncoats. Adam has a terrible reputation among most non-LDS Christians for his heinous, selfish act. He and his monumental, dastardly deed have become the scapegoat for most human ills. We Mormons are his only defenders. With such understanding, we can forebear also with Judas and practice forgiveness rather than condemnation or judgement. These belong to the Lord.

*Richard C. Russell
Salt Lake City, UT*

QUANTUM COSMOLOGY

As a Ph.D theoretical chemist who makes his living doing research in quantum mechanics and as a Latter-day Saint who finds Mormon theology beautiful and fascinating, I must respond to Keith Norman's essay, "Mormon Cosmology" (SUNSTONE, vol. 10, no. 9), to assure Brother Norman and any concerned readers that Mormon cosmology need not be dismissed as "a relic of the nineteenth century" or relegated to the status of "a powerful religious myth." Modern physics leaves one free to accept it as a powerful religious truth. However, that requires knowing some things not contained in the essay, as its author seems better grounded in Catholic-Protestant theology than in either science or Mormon theology. Indeed, the essay is an excellent example of

the old adage, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

Let us begin with a few items from modern physics. Because the essay presents no specific problems arising from quantum mechanics but seems mostly worried about its strangeness, I will try to resist the temptation to lecture on quantum theory and simply note that although its wave nature produces effects such as interference that seem unfamiliar at first, quantum mechanics is not, as the essay claims, capricious. Wave functions are smooth functions, and quantum behavior is often smoother than classical mechanics. Any tendency for a particle to "jump around" is not inherent, but is due to the disturbance and localization caused by attempts to measure its position. Next, the term "particle" is appropriately used to describe both quantum and classical particles because they all obey quantum mechanics. The motion of a baseball, for example, is accurately described by quantum mechanics; it just happens that its large mass makes its wave properties more difficult to resolve than those of an electron or photon. Finally, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle may make someone uncomfortable who desires the determinism of the orthodox Catholic-Protestant theology, but, as Henry Eyring was fond of pointing out, it leaves Mormons room for free agency.

Let us next consider relativity. In classical Newtonian mechanics and in nonrelativistic quantum mechanics, the mass and energy of an isolated system are separately conserved. In special and general relativity theory, they are not separately conserved, but a combination of them, which we will call mass-energy, is still conserved. This was not mentioned in the essay but will be important in the discussion which follows. In passing, I note relative to the essay's comments on the "twin paradox" that it is acceleration rather than velocity which is important. But the author is quite correct in noting that neither space nor time is absolute, and that is worth remembering.

Now, what is the universe? The universe is everything that can be physically observed, and it should be taken to be neither more nor less than this. I note that it does include those things which in principle can be physically observed but in practice have not yet been. It indeed appears that the universe is expanding from a Big Bang, but the laws of physics under extreme conditions are not known well enough to extrapolate back to before the Big Bang, so that one cannot say what there was before it. However, at the earliest instant about which one can talk, the universe was an enormous

singularity containing all the mass-energy it presently has. It was certainly not *nothing*. Indeed, *everything* would be a better word. Any attempt to justify *ex nihilo* creation from the Big Bang is simply an attempt to justify a preconceived notion and not physics. Incidentally, the question of whether the universe is open (will expand forever) or closed (will eventually contract) is still a very open question. Current attempts to determine whether neutrinos have a non-zero rest mass may answer that question.

However, the essay has fallen into a common trap regarding the second law of thermodynamics. The law states that the entropy of an isolated system increases in any spontaneous process. The entropy is a measure of the disorder of a system; it is also a measure of the missing information, that is, of what one does not know about the system. That means that if one person knows more about a given system than another the entropy he calculates or measures will be lower than that obtained by the other. The implications of that concept when one of the persons is God (Abraham 3:19; Moses 1:27) will be left to the reader. Also, the second law is an empirical law; how universal it is is not known. It is observed to hold in our part of the universe for any system which we isolate as best we can from the rest of the universe. However, from Mach's Principle, it is known there is no such thing as a truly isolated system, and the behavior observed on earth depends on the rest of the universe. It is not at all clear that the second law holds for systems falling into a black hole. More importantly, the second law is *not* expected to hold in a contracting universe; it may hold locally, but the

entropy of a contracting universe as a whole is a *decreasing* function of time!

Now, let us discuss Mormon cosmology. Because the Church insists on doctrinal uniformity on only a few points, individual Mormons have great freedom in using creative thought to develop their own individual cosmologies. However, real Mormon cosmology should be based on a synthesis of all the ancient and modern revelations, not on an attachment to one idea and an abandonment of all the rest. The "Mormon" God of the essay is the most simplistic stereotyped caricature I have ever encountered anywhere except in anti-Mormon literature. The God of the essay clearly has contingent being in contrast to the standard Mormon doctrine which asserts that both God and man have necessary being (D&C 93:29-30, Abraham 3:18, DHC 6:310-311, etc.). The essay assures the reader repeatedly but without documentation that "God is also a natural being and exists within the universe of time and space, not outside or above it." It is clear that God *can* operate within time and space, but is he trapped by it? If God were part of the universe, then he would be physically observable; He could be observed whether he wished to be or not! That is ridiculous and contrary to a whole host of scriptures (cf. Moses 1:5, 11, and many similar passages). The resurrected Christ who appears with a flesh and bone body inside a locked room (Luke 24:36-43, John 20:26-30) has clearly transcended the limitations of space as has the God who says, "all things are present with me" (Moses 1:6, 27-28). Also, it appears that a more important concept in Abraham 3 than which



planet of our “same order” is nearest the throne of God is that *time is not absolute*. Furthermore, Alma 40:8 says that “all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men.” Therefore, the Mormon God is *not* part of our universe, and He is apparently not limited by either space or time. This may be why Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie repeatedly emphasized that any personal progress of God must be along directions that we can know nothing about.

Now, did Joseph Smith claim that mass and energy are separately conserved? I doubt it. The elements spoken of in D&C 93:33 are not those of the periodic table, most of which were not known in 1833, but the essentials from which our universe was created. Taking a little more from the King Follett discourse than was quoted in the original essay, we read, “God had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter, which is element, and *in which dwells all the glory*. Element had an existence from the time he had. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed” (DHC 6:308, italics mine). Something “in which dwells all the glory” is hardly simply mass and sounds suspiciously like relativity theory—long before Einstein! However, Joseph Smith goes even further. Not only does he allow for mass and energy to be equivalent on some level, but he says that there is a level on which mass-energy and spirit (intelligence, glory, the Light of Truth) are equivalent. Is that equivalence part of our universe? He says, “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; we cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter” (D&C 131:7-8). Now, *purier* hardly means having a better spectrometer; the equivalence of mass-energy and spirit is not part of our physical universe.

Does the above discussion mean that I am approaching the orthodox Catholic-Protestant concept of God? Not at all. With most Mormons I believe that, like Christ the Son, God the Father was once a man—but not in our present universe. When he says that his creations “cannot be numbered unto man” (Moses 1:35-37), I don’t think he is talking about a hundred billion billion or challenging us to improve our number system, but He has creations outside our universe. Furthermore, when He created the universe, He not only used mass-energy, but He put some intelligence (spirit, Light of Truth, see D&C 88 and 93) into it, and that is important to me. It is also important to know that, regardless of any physical laws, God is

constrained by such uncreated principles as justice and mercy (Alma 42:13-25) which also implies that good and evil are uncreated. I could never worship the Absolute God of the orthodox Catholic-Protestant theology who cannot answer prayers and is responsible for all the evil in the world (cf. Ostler, *Dialogue* 17, no. 2, 1984). My God is good, and He loves and helps me.

In conclusion, Norman’s essay is a collection of red herrings. I know many Mormons who are professional physical scientists, but don’t know any of them who are troubled by the questions raised by the essay, and I write this letter only because such essays cause some young Mormons to turn away from the sciences and thus miss out on a marvelous life of fascinating learning. Whether the universe runs down or contracts to another Big Bang, I intend to be there observing. And I have a few Schroedinger equations I want to get Him to show me how to solve.

Russell T. Pack
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LOOKING OUR ROOTS IN THE FACE

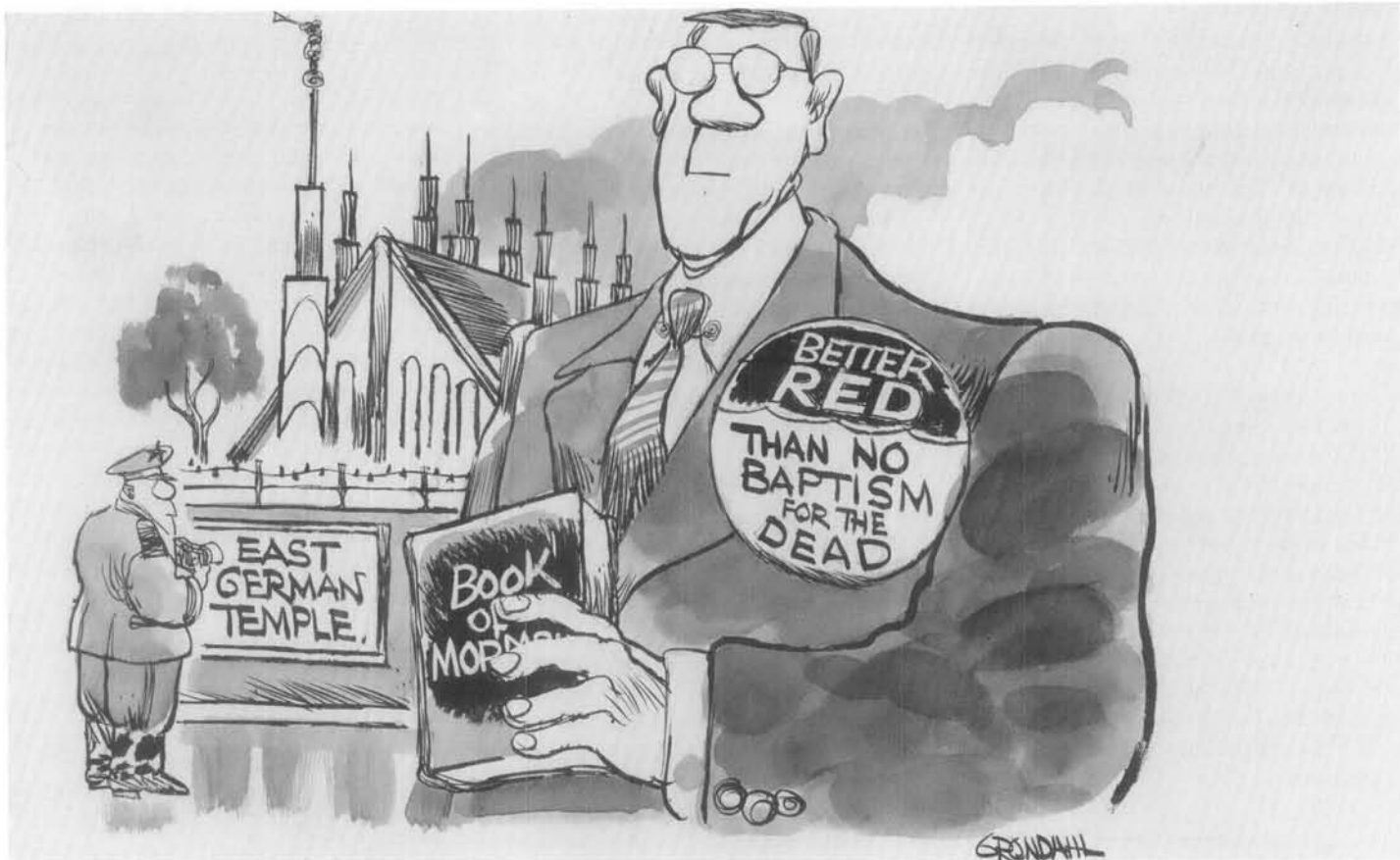
Anthony Hutchinson’s suggestion (“Grace Unto the Gentiles,” *SUNSTONE*, vol. 10 no. 7) that God would reveal himself to a practicing folk-magician in a form that would suit that person’s expectations is laughable, but the rest of his article has merit. Mr. Hutchinson seems to be taking upon himself the burden of working through these new voices from the dust so as to allow the rest of us to go on being faithful and active without skipping a beat. He offers a way to rationalize the new and to accept all of the old as before, so for many the problem ends there. However, what if God purposely raised these voices from the dust to do just the opposite?

What if the intent of these “revelations” from the past is to stop the trend throughout the Church toward a cult of the personality? The current trend toward pseudo-canonizing the somewhat trivial and usually superficial word changes by Joseph Smith in the Inspired Translation of the Bible, for example, coupled with the suggestion by a late apostle that this is all the new light we should expect on the subject until Joseph returns, may be one that bothers even God. This trend effectively lowers spiritual expectations of prophets and removes the need for spiritual struggle in members, since

pat answers are given to some obvious textual problems in the Bible, and anything problematical left untouched by Joseph Smith is taken to be as correct as we can currently handle.

On a less speculative note, there is much evidence to suggest that all was not as well in the formative years of Zion as Mr. Hutchinson seems to believe. For example, one significant piece of evidence Mr. Hutchinson leaves out is the change that was made in a revelation which had been received by Joseph Smith on behalf of Oliver Cowdery. In the Book of Commandments, this revelation tells Oliver his ability to work with the rod is a gift from God whereby he may obtain revelation: “behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands,...” (A Book of Commandments, VII:3, p. 19, 1833, as in Wilford C. Wood, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work*, Vol. II, 1962). In the Book of Doctrine and Covenants a couple years later this revelation has been changed to indicate that Oliver has the gift of Aaron: “behold there is no other power save the power of God that can cause this gift of Aaron to be with you; therefore doubt not, for it is the gift of God, and you shall hold it in your hands, and do marvelous works;” (Doctrine and Covenants, XXXIV:3, 1835, as in Wood, *ibid.*, and also D&C 8:7-8). This has been interpreted as meaning that Oliver was Joseph Smith’s spokesperson. This change shows, however, that there was a transition from interpreting out-of-the-ordinary abilities, occurrences and manifestation from a folk-magic/occult viewpoint to re-interpreting them from a more normative, albeit still radical, Christian viewpoint. In this particular instance, it is Joseph Smith that is helping Oliver Cowdery to understand that the operating force behind his talents with the rod of nature is God.

An example of the mixing of magic and Christianity that can be compared with the early Mormon experience is found in *The Magus* by Francis Barrett, available as a reprint of the 1811 edition (Citadel, Secaucus, 1967). For example, in Book II, Part I, pp.47-48 of this volume, the origin of evil spirits is given. Evil spirits were the allies of the angels who became “an apostate,” and who “persuaded many of the angels to fall with him.” These were “cast out of heaven” into “this valley of misery,” and among them are some who inhabit “the earth, and terrify earthly things, and invade those who dig well and metals, cause the gaping of the earth,... some being content with laughter and delusion only, do contrive to the length of a giant’s body and again shrinking themselves down to the



into different forms, to disturb men with vain fear;...." The scriptures are duly quoted in support of this material.

This information supports Mr. Hutchinson's position regarding the likely re-interpretation of events that probably took place as spiritual maturity was gained, and also regarding the easy mixing of folk magic and Christianity in the early 19th century.

In the matter of similar charges having been laid at the feet of the ancient saints, both Mr. Hutchinson and the charges seem to be correct, as witnessed by the fact that folk magic devotees such as Barrett found the Bible a useful textbook on the existence, attributes and control of a wide range of good and evil intelligences, spirits, principalities, and powers. The study *Jesus the Magician* by Morton Smith (Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1978) shows Jesus to be nearly indistinguishable from the itinerant magicians of his time, a thought-provoking even if not particularly comforting parallel to the present Mormon historical difficulty.

However, Mr. Hutchinson's interpretations fail to mention that there were obviously a number of persons who first interpreted the early experiences of Joseph Smith from a folk-

magic perspective, not just Joseph himself. Meetings must have taken place where this transition was discussed, and agreement must have been reached to do away with the old interpretations of events. What took place was a conspiracy, wherein the conspirators must have agreed to keep silent or even to actively deny the magical interpretations Joseph, his family and friends had at first made of the subject events. At least that's what the reactions to the publication of the affidavits regarding Joseph's folk-magic connections seems to suggest. The official version where Joseph confesses to doing some money digging for Josiah Stowell does not seem reassuringly open, candid, or particularly honest. The way Brigham Young handled the history written by Lucy Mack Smith also suggests a continuing, concerted effort to keep the lid on the miraculous and magical underpinnings of Mormon beginnings, as does the present situation regarding the Oliver Cowdery history. Grace, perhaps, is the answer, but I would sure feel better about a lot of things if the Church leadership would be more open, candid, and honest in their dealings with their fellow man, especially their fellow "gentile" saints.

Abe Van Luik
Richland, WA

TITHING VS. PAYING YOUR DUES

I WONDER WHETHER the gentleman who wrote in complaining about the difference in the way the tithes are computed for self-employed people and wage earners isn't a little confused? There are several different ways of computing income: gross income, net income before taxes, net income after taxes. For the wage earner, gross income and net income before taxes are effectively the same. But for the self-employed person they are not.

To use an analogy: a grocery store takes in, as gross income, all the money that is paid to it by people buying groceries. But nobody in his or her right mind would actually consider that to be the store's income; obviously, the store's real income—its net income before taxes—is what the people pay, less the amount paid to suppliers, utilities, building lease, employee's salaries, and so forth.

Well, the self-employed person is in the same boat. I am a writer. My *income*—analogous to the hourly employee's paycheck—is

royalties less the cost of my typewriter and typewriter paper, postage, copying, and other office supplies. To an employee not used to looking at the costs of such things the assumption may be that these are negligible costs. After all, how much can one woman sitting in one room spend? The fact is that I often pay as much as \$2000 or more on such things by the end of the year. And my business is *not* capital-intensive; if I were a farmer, or a small merchant, my expenses in relation to my income would be far greater.

What I am saying is that a farmer might take in \$80,000. To the wage-earner making \$15,000 a year, he certainly looks rich. Look at him; he has all that income, and all that land and all those cows, and all those tractors! But the fact usually is that the land, and cattle, and equipment are mortgaged to the hilt, and of that \$80,000 the farmer takes in, he is likely to turn right around and pay out \$75,000 for equipment, fertilizer, seeds, fuel to run the tractor, vet bills, and so forth. These days he might even spend \$85,000, which would leave him in very serious financial trouble despite the appearance of prosperity.

We are enjoined to pay tithe on our increase. But the farmer's \$80,000, or my \$2,500 on a novel, *are not* increase. After the expenses of producing the work are taken off, *what remains* is increase. That is what we pay taxes on, and that is what we pay tithing on.

And the reason self-employed people often say they didn't find out until they made out their tax return that they had overpaid their tithing has nothing to do with the amount of tax paid. It is this: many self-employed people—myself included—do not keep running totals of income versus expenses. We just toss the receipts and cancelled checks for expenses into a drawer and write a check for tithing whenever a chunk of money comes in, either vaguely guessing at the amount of money used to produce that gross income or else not even thinking of it at all and just writing a check for a tenth of the total amount. Two of the last three years I thought, until tax time, that I had *not* paid a full tithing, only to find out at the end of the year that I paid a full tithing, only to find out at the end of the year that I had in fact overpaid. The second—last year—I so felt so bad about it that I actually returned my temple recommend to the bishop, only to find out at tax time that although I had accurately remembered the amount of my of my gross income, I had severely underestimated the money I had spent to produce that income, and in fact had

overpaid my tithes by almost \$300. And I repeat, the tithing was based on my before tax income, *not* my after-tax income.

When I am earning a wage, I often pay tithing on more than the taxable amount; for example, when the amount the company pays on my medical insurance is mentioned on the check stub then I consider that to be tithable income even though it is not taxable income. Ditto the money paid to me for a scholarship or fellowship, and the money I receive from a life insurance policy (but not medical or car insurance, because those amounts are limited to reimbursement of direct expenditures).

But I pay tithing on my increase, and friends, the money I paid for my typewriter to type my books on is no more increase to me than the money the company you work for paid for the equipment you use at work is increase to you.

I would assume, then, that a mechanic required to use his own tool chest at work could, and indeed should, deduct the cost of his tools. That is not increase to him. The cost of the nurse's uniform is not increase to her. But with the exception of that type of thing, *in general* all the money paid to the wage-earner is increase; but not all the money paid to the self-employed is increase.

I hope this makes a little sense. I've been on both sides of the fence—wage-earner and self-employed, and very often both—and I had to work it out for myself with a lot of help from one of my bishops in Texas.

Anne Wingate
Salt Lake City, UT

GOD IN HISTORY, NOT HISTORY BOOKS

MR. DAVID BOHN'S letter ("The Burden of Proof," *SUNSTONE* vol. 10 no. 6) includes a misinterpretation of a letter which I wrote to Sunstone several years ago ("Whose God in History?" *Sunstone*, vol. 8 no. 6), which is of such a nature that I cannot allow it to go unanswered.

The purpose of my letter was to distinguish between academic history and insider religious history. I had hoped that when the limitations of academic history were under-

stood, individuals like Bohn would be less threatened by it. I noted that academic history,

like science, has limited its universe of discourse to sense data. God and his action in history, being non-sensible, therefore, do not fall within the bounds of that universe of discourse. I further pointed out that behind this limitation of subject matter was an attempt to facilitate communication among historians. If only sense data is accepted, historians can evaluate their theories according to agreed on rules for interpreting such evidence. Were historians to accept revelations and other metaphysical data, communication would be greatly hindered because individuals from different religious traditions could not agree on which revelations were to be accepted or rejected. This potential for confusion was the inspiration (no pun intended) for my title "Whose God in History.?"

Mr. Bohn in his reaction to what he terms the "new Mormon history" attacks me for asserting "that God cannot act in history." I made no such statement. I wrote only that "academic history cannot consider God as a causal factor." Mr. Bohn further accuses me of making "sense data the final arbiter of all truth." From my letter it is clear that I do not consider sense data the arbiter of truth. I wrote that "[t]houghtful scientists and historians see their branches of learning not so much as a search for truth as systems of rules which allow theories to be evaluated in terms of sense data." How Mr. Bohn could construe my statement as establishing sense data as the arbiter of truth eludes me.

Mr. Bohn seems intent on discrediting academic studies of Mormonism because they threaten the faith. It was my intent to represent those studies as outsider attempts to explain Mormonism which have no relevance to the faithful unless they (the faithful) chose to make them relevant. I stated that "absolute knowledge therefore does not reside in the tentative, plausible explanations of the academic historian, but rather in the 'divinely inspired' insider histories of the faithful." To those of us who practice academic history, there is no "new Mormon history." We just write history from a secular, sense data perspective. If this offends Mr. Bohn, we owe him no apology. Should he seek evidence of God's action in history, let him turn to his faith, for academic history can never provide proof for something which its methodology excludes.

Michael T. Walton
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