

We hope that the exploration of why we like being Mormon will lead to better understanding of the breadth of the soul of our faith—the larger the soul, the stronger the soul; the more inclusive the soul, the more enduring it will be. Great institutions endure by dealing well with paradox, by encouraging multiple souls without being schizophrenic.

THE SOUL OF FAITH: WHY I LIKE BEING A MORMON

By J. B. Ritchie and Dave Ulrich

WHY ASK WHY?

Most Mormons focus on doing more, not thinking more.

A FRIEND RECENTLY OVERHEARD US CASUALLY discussing some observations about the Church—the lack of the Spirit in many meetings, the tendency of some leaders to “exercise unrighteous dominion” by imposing their personal political, social, or theological bias on others, policies that may limit rather than encourage honest dialogue, the insidious process of judging by “labeling” (right wing, liberal, feminist, intellectual, etc.), the insensitivity of many individuals/leaders to the feelings of those who feel alienated, and the stress on statistics over the Spirit. In the midst of our discussion, our friend commented, “You must really dislike the Church. Given everything you see as wrong with the Church, why do you continue being a Mormon?”

Thinking about why we remain strongly committed Mormons when we don't agree with all programs, policies, and procedures in the Church has led us on an interesting and complex journey, the end of which is a much simpler thing than the journey itself. On our journey to answer our friend's question, we felt like someone who had prepared for a special musical recital or an important talk, but who found the event itself anticlimactic.

Our answer seemed almost too simple, too trite, and too easy: “I like being a Mormon.” However, behind this anticlimactic answer lies the resolution of the paradox of not liking everything about being a Mormon but still liking being a

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Mormon. The resolution of this paradox has led us on an intellectual inquest that helps us understand what Paul calls, being of “one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32).

Catholic priest and noted author Andrew Greeley talks about a similar challenge in *The Catholic Myth*. Recounting his appearance on Phil Donahue's TV talk show, Greeley tries to describe the logic structure of someone who is a converted Catholic while disagreeing with certain things about Catholicism:

“Now, Father Greeley,” Phil Donahue leaned forward eagerly, a snow leopard about to pounce on a victim. “Don't you think it would be better if all these dissenting Catholics left the Church? Wouldn't it be better for everyone if only those who agreed with the pope remained Catholic?”

“Who would pay the heat and light bills?” I asked, impatient . . . ?

“Shouldn't all good Catholics agree in everything with the pope—birth control, celibacy, abortion, the ordination of women?” . . .

“Why should I leave?” I tried to parry his lunge.

“Because you can't be a good Catholic unless you agree with the pope, can you?”

“You stop being a Catholic,” I replied, “only when you formally leave and join another denomination.”

“Why don't they just leave?” Donahue demanded impatiently.

“Because, they like being Catholic.”

He threw up his hands in disgust. “What does liking have to do with it?”

“Everything.”¹

Greeley concluded that the “imagery” of the Catholic Church enriched his life, helped him imagine God, understand eternity, and identify with his faith.

The idea of “love it or leave it” is a popular and very shallow

response to those who have disagreements with organizational practices and need love and understanding more than condemnation. Part of the problem comes from the assumption that “loving” a person or organization implies absolute and total agreement with all they are and do. The power of love and commitment is that they transcend differences rather than force uniformity.

We feel that many Mormons get caught in an “activity trap.” Action may be a substitute for real loving or thinking. The imperative to act may result in limited spiritual imagination. Many Mormons have limited spiritual imagination. We often focus on *doing* more (attending meetings, planning events), not *thinking* more (reflecting, pondering, and clarifying our faith). LDS Church President Joseph F. Smith said, “The difficulty is not in getting the Latter-day Saints to do right, but in getting them to comprehend what is right.”² We often participate in the rituals automatically, going through physical motions without having our souls and minds touched or affected. Why ask why? We think it is helpful to explicitly wrestle with the simple question “Why do I like being a Mormon?” to help clarify and illuminate the soul of our faith.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A SOUL

*People and organizations
have bodies and spirits*

THE scriptures teach us the importance of individual “souls.” When God created the world, on the seventh day, man was formed and “became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7; Moses 3:7). Abraham learned that in the pre-mortal life God saw the “souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them” (Abr. 3:23). When Moses was given a vision of the whole earth, “there was not a soul which he beheld not” (Moses 1:28). We learn that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15) and that the “soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul” (Alma 40:23) in the resurrection. Christ warned: “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26). Paul, in an effort to encourage those in Thessalonians, concluded his first epistle to them, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless” (1 Thes. 5:23). These passages from each of the standard works teach the importance of the soul as the nucleus or essence of the body and spirit. Our individual souls represent the spiritual

fingerprints by which we are known to God.

We believe that an organization also has a soul. While the individual soul represents one’s personal body and spirit, an organization’s soul represents the collective mindset or shared image of the organization. Organizational souls often come from what the “organization is known for by its internal members and external stakeholders.”³ The soul of an organization represents the integration of beliefs, values, policies, and practices that give an organization its unique handprint. Organizational souls exist at many levels. Wards have souls. Some wards have souls that are energized, exciting, and enlightening—as evidenced by a ward culture that encourages creative discussion and high commitment to sensitive service. Other wards have souls that are in conflict—when member disagreements overwhelm a sense of unity, for example. Families have souls. Families may be known for and by their creativity and energy at one extreme or their insensitivity and traumas at the other.

The Church as a whole also has a soul. Just as a person’s soul is both the “spirit and the body” (D&C 88:15), the soul of Mormonism is both the Church (body) and the gospel (spirit). As Eugene England points out, the Church and the gospel, while different, are also similar.⁴ Their similarity evolves from a common soul, or set of core beliefs, philosophies, and practices. Psychologists point out that we carry in our heads cognitive maps, or mental images, of how activities occur and relate to each other. Likewise, we believe that the Church as an or-

ganization has created in each of us a map that tells us how to interpret our relationship to the soul of the Church.

By answering the simple question “Why do I like being a Mormon?” we define the soul of our faith (the essential ingredients that give meaning to the institution of Mormonism), clarify the basic imagery of Mormonism, and commit to the Church while understanding that organizations are made up of imperfect humans.

THE ROOTS OF OUR SOUL

Doctrine, family image, community, and fruits

TO find the essence of our faith, we had to move beyond the feeling of “I like being a Mormon” to an intellectual bedrock of *why*. In doing so, we arrived at what we see as the soul of Mormonism. We base our answer on four factors: doctrine, family image, community, and fruits.

IT IS BOTH EASY

and hard to understand LDS

doctrines; they are sensible on

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and complex faith.

*The richness of the doctrine
(theology and philosophy)*

SOMETIMES, we are so close to the rituals and beliefs of the Church that we lose sight of the uniqueness and excitement of our doctrine. An LDS friend of ours was in a neighborhood Bible study group with no other LDS members. She began to talk about some of our beliefs about God, Christ, and modern-day revelation and was shocked to see how foreign her familiar beliefs were to other faithful Christians.

The LDS church is not founded on thoughtless theology. It comprises a set of doctrines that receive far too little attention and might be taken too much for granted. Our theology confronts and deals with great theological inquiries. These inquiries help us approach eternal truths. We appreciate Parker Palmer's definition that "truth is an eternal conversation about the great things of life conducted with passion and discipline."⁵ Truth may be not the definitive answer to questions, but the eternal conversation that leads to increased knowledge. The LDS church has not sidestepped but stepped up to some alluring theological issues that provide intellectual and spiritual insight. Below, we review only a few of the distinctive Mormon tenets that augment theological inquiry.

The nature and image of God. Many people say they believe in God. Good and bad acts alike have been performed in the name of God. Unlike many, Mormons believe that we can come to know God personally; "this is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God" (D&C 132:24). We are encouraged to "ask the Father . . . in faith, believing that you shall receive" (D&C 18:18) and to "fall down and worship the Father" (D&C 18:40). We address our prayers to our Heavenly Father, who "organize[d] man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them" (Abr. 4:27; D&C 20:18).

Our ability to approach God as an intimate heavenly parent is strengthened by our belief that "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (D&C 130:22). The image of God as a literal being helps us know, approach, and serve him. As we serve him and keep our covenants, we come closer to God: "every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am" (D&C 93:1). We have been instructed to "enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days" (Mosiah 5:5). King Benjamin was told to "take the names of all those who had entered into a covenant with God to keep his commandments" (Mosiah 6:1). Those who left with Alma and escaped King Noah "entered into a covenant with God to serve him and keep his commandments" (Mosiah 21:31).

Our image of God is paradoxically both pluralistic and monotheistic. We believe that our world is one of many "worlds without number" (Moses 1:33) that God has created. In the creation of this world, God (plural) worked through the six days of creation, culminating in the sixth day when "the

Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them" (Abr. 4:27; D&C 20:18). Scripture promises that those who live worthily "shall be Gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them" (D&C 132:20).

The above images of God are more embedded than examined doctrine; they are dramatic shifts from traditional Christian beliefs. The belief that "as God is, man may become and as man is, God once was"⁵ summarizes our understanding of and relationship with God. He is both omnipresent and omnipotent; "He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him" (D&C 88:41). Yet he is personally available to us to answer our prayers, as the First Vision shows. These images imply a personal responsibility to be worthy of "worlds without end"; they clarify relationships with God; and they stretch our imagination about who we are and who God is.

Our Mormon image of God raises questions that have been and will continue to be central to Mormon theology:

- How can one become a god? How do we reconcile this potentially arrogant and self-serving belief with the need to be humble and obedient and to honor God as omnipotent?
- How can an anthropomorphic God build a personal relationship with each of us but still be housed in a physical body?
- How can we reconcile a belief in an omniscient God with a belief in the free (moral) agency of the individual?

Eternal progression. Seeing our daily lives in the context of eternity helps us to reframe our purposes in life. We are taught that the Lord has noble goals for us: "this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). To help us understand eternal progression, Mormon doctrine informs us about both the duration of eternity and the principles for progression.

Eternity means endless. It means that we have no beginning or end. From the "foundation of the world" (Alma 12:30, 13:3), we were "with the Father" (D&C 93:23). Abraham was shown this pre-mortal life where "the intelligences . . . were organized before the world was" (Abr. 3:22) and where we as intelligences agreed to the creation of an earth where we could "prove them herewith to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abr. 3:25).

The knowledge that we exercised agency and chose to help create this world, where we could make choices to demonstrate our commitment to ourselves and God gives us purpose in this world. All intelligences who chose in the pre-mortal life to come to this world will experience salvation, or immortality. Those intelligences who choose to honor God in this life by obeying his law and keeping his covenants will be not only immortal, but exalted, the blessing scripture describes as "the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto

all the obedient" (Moses 5:11).

The doctrine of eternal life is both encompassing and demanding. It ensures a redemption for all who chose to come to this earth. Through the mercy of Christ, every individual is able to experience the mystery of the Atonement and live forever in a state of glory. Everyone has the privilege of being immortal. Those who obey, however, anticipate the joyful prospect of eternal life, in which they can "dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever. . . . whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all" (D&C 76:62, 70).

Beyond duration, our doctrine helps us understand the principles upon which eternal progression is based. As revealed to Abraham, "the intelligences . . . were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones" (Abr. 3:22). From this passage, we learn that (1) intelligence is an eternal principle, and (2) that, as spirits, we had individual intelligences. The centrality of intelligence, or knowledge, is reinforced: "The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth" (D&C 93:36). Truth is the knowledge of "things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24). We are encouraged to teach our children "light and truth, according to the commandments" (D&C 93:42). We are promised that "if thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal" (D&C 42:61). More directly, we are taught that the "keys of the kingdom . . . consist in the key of knowledge" (D&C 128:14). In fact, we are promised that "whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come" (D&C 130:18–19).

While *eternal* implies everlasting duration, *progression* implies on-going learning. If our spirits are formed from intelligence, if knowledge is the essence of truth, and if we are commanded to gain more knowledge and intelligence in this life, then the primary principle of progression is knowledge. This theological position is exciting. It implies that learning is the essence of eternal life. Eternal progression is an on-going process of acquiring new ideas, insights, and intelligence. Our

purpose—before this life, during this life, and after this life—is to accumulate knowledge through personal experience and through the making and keeping of covenants. The two primary attributes we maintain from pre-mortal life to eternity are (1) knowledge and the capacity to develop intelligence, and (2) relationships and the capacity to form and maintain relationships.

These beliefs about eternal progression raise further questions:

- How can we learn how to learn? How should our learning be focused to best serve us through eternity?
- How can the Atonement simultaneously be for everyone and exclusively for the righteous?
- How can acts performed on earth constrain or serve us for eternity?

Continuous revelation. "We

believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (ninth article of faith). This article of faith shows that God not only lives in heaven and in our hearts, but that he also continues to communicate to us. We seem to have three avenues for revelation.

First, revelation comes through a deeper understanding of "the holy scriptures, or the revelations of God which come shall come hereafter by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost" (D&C 20:35). We are told to be "devoted to the studying of the scriptures" (D&C 26:1), which are "given of

me for your instruction" (D&C 33:16) and as a foundation for the "law to govern my [Christ's] church" (D&C 42:59). As scriptures are applied to our current problems, we receive revelation.

Second, revelation comes through Church leaders: "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38). "The president of the church . . . is appointed by revelation, and acknowledged in his administration by the voice of the church" (D&C 102:9). From Church leaders come both personal and organizational advice through experience and prophetic revelation, as documented in the official declarations of the Church.

Third, and most profound, we may receive personal revelation. The ability for personal revelation comes as prophets of yesterday and today "saw God face to face, and he talked with him" (Moses 1:2). While not prophets to the whole Church, we have all received the same promise: "Be thou humble; and

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 and faith.

the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers" (D&C 112:10). Personal revelation in the Church may come through blessings when we are set apart to fill callings (see D&C 42:31), through healing blessings when we are anointed with consecrated oil, through patriarchal blessings, or through priesthood blessings for comfort. Each of these blessings becomes a means of receiving personal revelation where God can communicate directly to us.

In addition, personal revelation comes from answers to prayers: "Deny not the spirit of revelation, nor the spirit of prophecy" (D&C 11:25); "your prayers have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded with this seal and testament—the Lord hath sworn and decreed that they shall be granted" (D&C 98:2). Personal revelation may be focused on general feelings of affirmation, love, and value, or be specific counsel on questions about lifestyle and life choices.

Personal revelation has vast theological significance. It implies that God knows me personally, that my name is recognized, that my needs are important, and that my requests will be answered with revelation. Developing a personal, daily relationship with God builds confidence to change. Confidence comes through knowing that we can turn to God for comfort and answers to our prayers. Change comes as we rely on revelation to give us not only direction for our lives but help in shaping them.

Paradoxical questions also arise because of continuous revelation:

- How can God be the same yesterday, today, and forever, but still continue to reveal his word? Why would his word change?
- How do we reconcile the intersection of institutional and personal revelation? What if my personal revelation does not coincide with institutional truths? When do institutional requirements dictate and confine personal revelation? When does personal revelation take precedence over institutional revelation?
- How can we differentiate personal revelation from personal desire? When do we know that our feelings are inspiration rather than aspiration?

These questions raise issues that have been and will continue to be central to dialogue in Mormon theology. Our purpose is

not to resolve these paradoxes, but to suggest that their existence is healthy because they raise issues that enrich our spiritual conversation and well-being.

The nature of God, eternal progression, and continuous revelation are not the only unique and exciting doctrines of our faith, but they illustrate the richness of our theology. Each of these issues provides us room for fertile discussion and inquiry. Each may be thought of simply and clearly (when I thought as a child) or complexly and enigmatically (when I put away childish things; 1 Cor. 13:11). I can have the simple faith in God, in eternal revelation through prophets, in eternal progression through celestial ideals, and through authority to act in God's name. Each of these simple issues, however, can be perceived in more complex and demanding ways. It is simultaneously easy and hard to understand LDS doctrines; they are sensible on face value but challenging upon further inquiry. We find this further inquiry enlightening and enriching. It is legitimate to have both simple and complex faith.

Many of these issues continue to be mysteries in that we don't fully understand them. The exploration of these issues yields discussion of spiritual imagery unlike those in most Christian faiths. We like being Mormon because of on-going exploration. We believe this exploration leads to the identification and comprehension of paradoxes that inspire our intellect and renew our

souls. Even members who leave the Church feel drawn to these issues. These intellectual tenets make the Church a magnet.

*The centrality of the family as
an integrating image of our faith*

A DOMINANT image of the LDS church is family. We are told that the primary unit of the Church is the family. Families will be together forever. Our family units are eternal (see D&C 132:19) and exist after we die. We focus enormous resources to help build the family. Programs like Family Home Evening, slogans like "No other success can compensate for failure in the home," and public relations efforts like the Home Front public service announcements illustrate the centrality of the family in the Church. The ultimate

WE SEE IN GOD

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temple covenant is the new and everlasting covenant, in which we bond as families for eternity (D&C 131). Through temple work, we pay attention to inter-generational family unity, seeking to offer salvation to earlier generations.

Our commitment to families pervades wards, where the bishop is the father of the ward and the ward is the extended family to the extent that we call adult members “brother” and “sister.” As an extended family, the ward offers members with unfavorable nuclear family experiences the opportunity to feel the acceptance and love of a family unit. Within wards, the increasing diversity of families (single adults, couples without children, couples with children, single parents) can be dealt with in a community where individual needs can be met.

The image of family extends beyond ward boundaries to relationships with God. We recognize a Heavenly Father and Mother. We honor Christ both as Messiah and Savior, but also as Elder Brother. We are literally spirit children of God. We are told that as we behave in a child-like way—with inquisitiveness, energy, and faith—we can draw closer to God.

Images are important. They focus attention and highlight values. The image of our faith as a family can instill within each of us a sense of security and peace. In a family, personal differences are accepted and each family member is safe. We believe that the family metaphor should make the Church a safe haven for individual differences. Just as families honor all children, the Church family functions best when it nurtures, adopts, and embraces members from all walks of life. We like being Mormon, in part, because the family model offers us acceptance, peace, and emotional safety in a world where most institutions cannot be trusted.

*The importance of the unique
community of Saints we have formed*

IN addition to the image of family, we have built within the Church a community of Saints. Our church community serves multiple needs. Within the Church we find a therapeutic community—a setting for love, acceptance, intimacy, and support. While not all emotional needs can be met within the Church, and betrayal is always a possibility, the Church community lays a foundation for unity and harmony. Our defined Church mission (to perfect the Saints, redeem the dead, and preach the gospel) is accomplished, in part, through the business community. We have structures and processes that help accomplish noble ends. As a civic community, the Church serves a broader audience. Willing to support the needy through welfare, to be available in time of crisis, to donate services through the Relief Society and priesthood quorums, the Church performs a vital civic role. Each of these communities accomplishes the multiple roles of the Church.

In addition, the Church has a philosophy of participation that helps individuals develop talents. We have a lay clergy in which all members serve. We are a member-centered, not leader-centered, organization. From children giving talks to youth serving as class presidents to adults working as clerks, teachers, and administrators, members are constantly given

opportunities to serve. Through this service, combined individual talent becomes community competency. As a lay church, we enrich the lives of our members.

We like being Mormon because of what the community does for Mormons. It enables each member to embellish talents through callings. The community of Saints does not have to be comprised of people who agree with each other. But it is made up of people who honor the same things—virtue, commitment, Christ, love, and faith. Such shared honor enables the community to be more than a collection of individuals.

The fruits of our faith

MANY statements can be made about the fruits of Mormonism. Within the faith, the principles we teach lead to a distinctive lifestyle. The Mormon lifestyle contains a work ethic in which we make and keep commitments. Our lifestyle encourages healthy habits—from Word of Wisdom teachings to sports activities. These positive health habits bear positive fruit: lower incidence of cancer and other diseases among active Mormons. The Mormon lifestyle encourages financial discipline through tithing and offerings, where we learn to budget financial resources. Our lifestyle keeps us so busy doing good for others through meetings, activities, and programs that we have little time to lament and feel sorrow. We are an active and involved church, and the fruits of our faith are many and practical.

Another fruit of LDS faith is a constant message of joy. Throughout the Book of Mormon, we are taught that joy will be the outcome of righteous living. Lehi partook of the fruit of eternal life and “it filled [his] soul with exceedingly great joy” (1 Ne. 8:12). King Benjamin promised that “your hearts should be filled with joy” (Mosiah 4:20). Alma talks of “being filled with great joy because of the resurrection of the dead” (Alma 4:14), feeling joy that his brethren (the sons of Mosiah) were still faithful (see Alma 17:2), and the joy of being “an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance” (Alma 29:9). King Lamoni’s father desired to be “filled with joy . . . that I may receive this great joy” of conversion (Alma 22:15). When Christ visited the Americas, he said, “Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full” (3 Ne. 17:20). The multitude with him also experienced great joy and was overcome by his visit (see 3 Ne. 17:18).

In brief, a fruit of our faith is joy: “For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy” (D&C 93:33). On learning of his transgression, Adam blessed the earth, saying, “Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy . . . and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto the obedient” (Moses 5:10–11).

We like being Mormon because we like the fruits of our faith. We like the lifestyle, which enriches and supports, and we like the attitude and desire to find joy. We are an affirming church, both in how we act and how we think.

IMPORTANCE OF MULTIPLE MAPS

WHEN we began our journey, we worried about two questions:

Question: Why do you stay emotionally, intellectually, and physically committed to the LDS church even if you disagree with some of its practices?

Answer: I like being a Mormon.

Question: Why do you like being a Mormon?

Answer: Because of the Church's doctrine, image (of family), community, and fruits.

Having wrestled with these two questions, we discovered the third and most important question: *How inclusive is the soul of Mormonism? Are our answers to the question about why we like being a Mormon the only answers? We strongly believe not. We believe that the soul of our faith is expansive, not exclusive, that different people will answer differently, and that in these different answers comes the ultimate strength of our faith—we can differ on the bases for our faith but still share the essence of our commitment: we like being Mormon.*

Reasonable people have legitimately different answers to "Why I like being a Mormon." We hope that the exploration of this question will lead to better understanding of the breadth of the soul of our faith. We believe that the larger the soul, the stronger the soul; the more inclusive the soul, the more enduring it will be. We believe that great institutions endure by dealing well with paradox, by encouraging and honoring multiple souls without being schizophrenic.

Within the Mormon community, there may be a variety of believers who represent a range of answers to our *why* question:

True Believers: Some may "like being a Mormon" because it offers them "the iron rod." The "invariable" answers to questions may define truth to the true believer, who questions less and acts more.

Social Believers: Some may "like being a Mormon" because of the social ambiance within the Church. The extended family feeling, social events, and friends within the Church are the primary appeal to social believers.

Spiritual Believers: Some may "like being a Mormon" because of deep, personal religious experiences. These metaphysical experiences are often difficult to describe as events but have profound effects on feelings and attitudes.

Issue Believers: Some may "like being a Mormon" because of an affinity for a particular issue, such as welfare, Scouting, food storage, or genealogy. These members become intricately involved and committed to single issues within the Church.

Tradition Believers: Some may "like being a Mormon" because they have never not been a Mormon. They have been raised within the faith, and their comfort in the traditions reinforces their faithfulness.

Is there one answer to why we like being Mormons? We hope not. By recognizing and accepting a diversity of answers, we appreciate the breadth of God's capacity to know us as individuals. We see in our God the infinite capacity to connect with us in ways we choose. If we choose to interact with God

through the Church's formal programs, we can. If we choose to interact with God through religious inquiry, we can. As God accepts our different efforts to connect, so should we value the multiple paths to the soul of our faith. We acknowledge the strength of an institution that can reflect this capacity to embrace differences and to respect individuals as agents unto themselves (see D&C 29:35).

CONCLUSION

WE are told to "remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). We believe that this applies not only to individual souls, but also to the organizational soul. Exploring the soul of our faith may help deepen our understanding of why "I like being a Mormon." 

NOTES

1. Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Myth*, 1–2.
2. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 81.
3. See the concept in Dave Ulrich and Dale Lake. *Organization Capability* (New York: Viking, 1990). See the application in General Electric's 1994 annual report.
4. Eugene England, "Why the Church Is as True as the Gospel," *SUNSTONE* 10:10, 30–36, also in *Why the Church Is as True as the Gospel: Personal Essays on Mormon Experience* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 1–16.
5. Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*.
6. Lorenzo Snow, in *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow* comp. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), 1.



ON THE BUFFALO NATIONAL GRASSLAND

Who would ever think it would be this easy
to get lost in grass no higher than my knees,
wild parsley, flowers like open umbrellas
against a rain that announces but never arrives.

Behind me, telephone poles, thin and small
as pencils, disappear behind each shallow ridge,
and the far-off sandhills loom dark with flocks
of restless cranes trying to find their spring way home.

Grandfather said that one could never truly be lost;
just look where sky's brightest along the horizon:
that would reflect the nearest water,
and there one could always find life.

I stop to hear the dry scrapings of his voice
carried on winds that never tire or quit,
see the mirage of his eyes in quivering clouds,
and walk away from a bitter sun.

—RICHARD LUFTIG