Almost every culture has traditional mythologies—usually stories set in a primordial time of gods and heroes. Although in popular discourse the term “myth” typically refers only to fiction, literary critics and theologians use it to refer to any “existential” story—even a historical one. Myths explain how the world came to be, why it is the way it is, and toward what end it is headed. They explore the meaning of life and provide role models for people to imitate. They express deep psychological archetypes and instill a sense of wonder. In short, they answer the Big Questions of life and teach us how to live.

Due to modernization in recent centuries, the world has undergone radical changes. A new, scientific way of thinking has challenged traditional religious mythologies, especially in the West. The result is a sort of mythic deficit that leaves many people feeling disconnected and unfulfilled. New technologies have also raised new ethical questions that old myths often are not equipped to address. Thus, some people have turned to reactionary religious fundamentalisms while other, more “liberal” religious thinkers have sought to update their religious mythologies for the modern world.¹

Another response has been to construct entirely new myths, often in the form of fantasy and science fiction narratives. Fantasy is similar to fundamentalist religion in that it takes refuge from modernity in an idealized, “magical” past. Science fiction is similar to liberal religion in that it accepts the scientific worldview but infuses it with meaning, wonder, heroism, and sometimes even spirituality. These new myths are less vulnerable than the old mythologies because they make no claim to be literally, historically true. Their claim to truth is at a deeper, more visceral level.

Fantasy and science fiction can be used either to challenge and replace or to support and complement traditional religious mythologies. One author who has adopted the latter strategy is Mormon novelist Orson Scott Card. Literary critic Marek Oziewicz has found in Card’s fiction all the earmarks of a modern mythology. It has universal scope, creates continuity between past, present, and future, integrates emotion and morality with technology, and posits the interrelatedness of all existence.² Indeed, few science fiction and fantasy authors’ narratives feel as mythic as Card’s. However, nearly all his fiction builds on the work of another modern mythmaker: Mormonism’s founder Joseph Smith.

Card’s brand of mythmaking is deliberately and thoroughly Mormon in tone and tenor.

In some respects, Mormonism is a mythology well tailored for the Space and Information Age. Its deity is a man who progressed to godhood through the acquisition of knowledge and with the help of other advanced beings. This deity is said to live near a star called Kolob on one of what may be an infinite number of inhabited worlds. Smith taught a materialist ontology in which miracles obey the laws of nature and where spirit is a kind of matter.³ On the other hand, Mormonism also has spiritual and magical—one might even say fantastical—elements. Smith was a practitioner of folk magic, a believer in angels and devils, and a connoisseur of arcane rituals and artifacts.⁴ Card, an author of both science fiction and fantasy, has tapped into themes from both ends of the spectrum of Mormon thought. Indeed, almost all of Card’s fiction, whether specifically billed as “Mormon” or not, integrates concepts from Smith’s mythologies to create new myths and new stories that illustrate and explore the same principles.
Although Thomas S. Monson is the institutional successor to Joseph’s prophetic mantle, Card is undeniably Smith’s mythmaking heir. Just as the stories of Nephí, Alma, and Moroni have firmly established themselves in the imaginations of millions, so have those of Ender, Alvin Maker, and Lanik Mueller. This article will explore how Card’s works have established him not only as an expresser and defender of Mormonism but also as a reformer, pushing his faith community in new directions.

EXPRESSING MORMONISM

When I say that Card expresses Mormonism, I am not talking about his penchant for dropping superficial Mormon references into his writings as inside jokes that only Mormon readers will get. Certainly those are there, but they are not at the heart of his writing. In fact, Card has written that Mormons sometimes make the worst readers of his fiction, “because, having caught a Mormon reference (and knowing that I’m a Mormon) they think they’ve ‘got it.’ Often what they catch is merely a wink, or a note passed in class, nothing substantive; they miss the reason because they think the wink is all; they think the note is the book.”

The Mormon themes that Card really wants his readers to absorb are much richer and more deeply embedded in the fabric of his narratives. And they are not the sorts of things that only a Mormon will notice and understand. Although Card claims that he never proselytizes in his fiction, he has also said he intends to give readers “an emotionally moving [and] transformative experience that leads them to value the same virtues that I value—honor, sacrifice, kindness. But those readers may remain completely unaware that some aspects of what they respond to are ideas from the LDS Church.” In other words, his intent is not to make converts to Mormonism, but to instill Mormon values.

One of the most obvious and important recurring motifs in Card’s work is sacrifice. Probably the majority of Card’s works climax with the central character choosing to sacrifice for the greater good. Sometimes this sacrifice involves the physical death of the character, as in the short story “The Porcelain Salamander.” Here a white salamander gives its life to save a girl who is in imminent danger. In so doing, it releases the girl from a curse that had paralyzed her from birth. Similarly, the protagonist of the novel Hart’s Hope lifts the curse of the evil Queen Beauty, but only at the cost of his son’s life. These stories of course reflect the classic Christic pattern in which the curse of sin and death is defeated through the voluntary sacrifice of a sinless messiah. The pattern recurs in Lost Boys where a character named Stevie dies in order to contain the supernatural evil at work in his community. Whereas other characters in the book are unable to detect the evil because they have “good and evil mixed up” inside them, Stevie is able to sense it because he is completely innocent and pure.

But not all of the sacrifice in Card’s novels involves a character’s physical death. More often, his works climax with what could be called a moral sacrifice. This is the case in Ender’s Game. Here a child protagonist named Ender is manipulated by his adult teachers into annihilating an entire alien race that ostensibly threatens the survival of humankind. When Ender realizes what he has unwittingly done, he anonymously vilifies himself in a book called The Hive Queen so that humanity’s collective guilt for this mass-murder will be imputed to him, allowing humanity to make a moral recovery. Through Ender’s writings, humankind comes to understand that the aliens were simply misunderstood and did not really need to be destroyed. This understanding, however, requires Ender’s voluntary alienation from his own species. For the rest of his life, Ender carries a terrible burden of guilt for humanity’s crime.

Something similar occurs in the novel Treason. Here the main character, Lanik Mueller, must betray the trust of a personified earth by using its power to kill an entire nation of powerful and evil people. The earth’s anger is such that Lanik knows it might kill him, but he chooses to commit his crime anyway for the sake of the greater good. The earth’s wrath turns out not to be fatal after all, but its agonized screams ring in his ears forever. Eventually Lanik comes to suspect that “the ultimate sacrifice isn’t death after all; the ultimate sacrifice is willingly bearing the penalty for your own actions.”

In Card’s worlds, moral sacrifice has more weight than physical sacrifice does, echoing the Mormon teaching that Christ’s suffering in the garden of Gethsemane was more important than his death on the cross. As Card himself has summarized the doctrine, Christ’s real suffering was the anguish he felt as he bore the horror of complete spiritual separation from God—taking upon himself to an infinite degree the torment that is the natural spiritual consequence of sin. The remorse and despair we feel . . . because of our disobedience to or rejection of God, [Christ] felt so utterly that we cannot imagine it. In this context, what was done to his body was almost a distraction. Many people have borne as much.

Although some non-Mormon Christians might consider such a view heretical, the phenomenal success of Ender’s Game suggests that at the very least, the reading public finds moral sacrifice more compelling than the physical sacrifices depicted in some of Card’s other novels.

Card emphasizes sacrifice partly to make the point that communities are more important than individuals, and that for any civilization to survive, its members must be willing to make sacrifices for the community. A great many of Card’s stories are designed to model this moral imperative for his readers. As Michael Collings has written, “perhaps more than any other, the image of community forms the heart of Card’s fictions.”
In the Alvin Maker series, Card sets up a dualism between Making and Unmaking—Being and Nonbeing—and declares that it is more basic than all other dualisms. The series dramatizes how the good forces of Making overcome the evil forces of Unmaking, climaxing with Alvin's undertaking what Card considers to be the ultimate act of Making: the construction of an ideal community. Card has stated that one of his guiding moral and political principles is “to build and create against the entropy that has become the theme song of our society.” This imperative drives Card's much-criticized resistance to the legalization of gay marriage. Card has written that gay marriage and gay sexuality can lead only to the dissolution of American society, and that gays therefore have a sacred duty to sacrifice their own desires for the sake of civilization.

However, Card proves himself quite capable of sympathetically portraying homosexual life in his novel The Ships of Earth. He acknowledges that homosexuality has biological causes and that gays are often subject to humiliating and even violent discrimination. However, a gay character who believes his desires are unnatural follows Card's philosophy, marrying a woman and having children with her out of a sense of duty to propagate the community. The character discovers that becoming part of the web of life through reproduction gives him a sense of profound joy, even though the sexual act itself is not particularly pleasurable. Repeatedly throughout the Homecoming series, Card equates the Tree of Life with marriage and procreation. Presumably he believes that laws against homosexual activity will help gay people find true fulfillment and happiness through exercise of their reproductive powers.

The themes of sacrifice and community in Card's works are not isolated concepts. Quite frequently they are embedded in larger analogues of the LDS plan of salvation. Treason, for instance, is the story of the redemption and gradual deification of Lanik Mueller. At each stage of his journey, Lanik acquires new deific attributes while learning to use his powers responsibly. He completes his deification when he marries and decides to have children. The pattern is neater in Speaker for the Dead, where the males of the alien species called “piggies” have a three-stage life-cycle that quite clearly corresponds to pre-mortem, mortal, and post-mortem existence. In the final stage, they procreate more or less eternally. The sequel to Speaker for the Dead teaches something very similar to the LDS idea of eternal intelligences and even suggests a somewhat plausible physical basis for the doctrine by drawing on the insights of quantum physics.

Of course, the plan of salvation would not be possible without free will—a theme that pervades all of Card's works. In The Worthing Saga, the godlike protectors of humanity decide that they are compromising human free will and withdraw their protections. In the Homecoming series, both the godlike computer called the Oversoul and the godlike being called the Keeper of Earth restrict their interventions in human history so as never to interfere with human freedom or moral responsibility. Although Card's novels explore possible routes toward human deification and the perfection of society, they always make perfectly clear that humanity must choose its destiny freely without coercion or external manipulation of any kind.

When we put all of this together, we get an outline of Mormonism's major concepts: the work of the Savior, the importance of family and the faith community, and the origin and destiny of humankind. Likely these themes could be absorbed by any reader regardless of religious background. Thus, however much Card may claim not to be proselytizing his readers, his novels do compellingly express the plan of salvation in the language of myth and story.

DEFENDING MORONISM

When Card started his studies at BYU, he wanted to focus on Book of Mormon archaeology but abandoned this line of study when he discovered that it requires a lot of hard, hot, boring work. However, it seems that his interest in the subject has not flagged. His Homecoming series, a five-book science fiction Book of Mormon allegory, takes pains to make some sticky details in the Book of Mormon plausible.

For example, at one point in the first book of Nephi, an unnamed woman saves Nephi's life by pleading with Laman in the wilderness (1 Nephi 7:19–21). Card has noted that people often assume this woman is Nephi's wife-to-be, but Card believes that Laman would have been more likely to listen to his own betrothed. This interpretation finds its way into Card's allegory. In another episode from 1 Nephi (16:13–32), Lehi's family is traveling in the wilderness when their bows lose their spring and they run out of food. Lehi seems to doubt the wisdom of continuing, but Nephi takes the initiative and makes a new bow. He then goes to ask his father where to hunt. Card's novel shows that Volemak's (Lehi's corollary) claim to leadership of the party weakened when his faith faltered. Nafai's (Nephi's corollary) deference to Volemak in choosing a hunting ground helps reestablish Volemak's authority and preserve peace among the brothers. By constructing plausible motivations for Homecoming characters' actions, Card also lends plausibility to the Book of Mormon narrative.

In other passages, Card creates explanations for Book of Mormon anomalies. For example, when his Nephi character behheads the Laban character and then dons Laban's clothes (1 Nephi 4:18–19), Card explains that no blood soiled the clothes because of “the downhill slope of the street and the fact that the blood mostly poured upward out of the neck, away from the body.” In some cases he resolves difficulties with science fictional technology that obviously would not work from an apologetic perspective. For example, Card makes the Book of Mormon scene where Nephi tricks Laban's servant Zoram into believing that Nephi is Laban (1 Nephi 4:21) more plausible by having his Nephi character wear a holographic costume.
Card also defends the Book of Mormon by historically contextualizing its rather unequalitarian attitude toward gender. Card is feminist enough to be bothered by the fact that few women are mentioned in the Book of Mormon and only three are actually named. In the *Homecoming Saga*, Card enriches the Book of Mormon narrative by including many strong female characters but also seems to defend the male-centered worldview of the Book of Mormon by suggesting that the nomadic lifestyle his characters are living more or less necessitates male rule.

Card’s apologetic intentions are perhaps most explicitly signaled in his treatment of Book of Mormon geography. Card has his voyagers from the planet Harmony land their spaceships in Central America, on the Tehuantepec Peninsula.

The geography in Card’s novels follows all the major principles of the Tehuantepec Limited Geography Theory outlined by Book of Mormon apologist John Sorenson, even to the point of rotating the cardinal points ninety degrees so that the east and west seas are actually on the north and south. Card also includes a number of cultural Mayanisms in his novels, such as ball courts, the Mayan calendar, and the belief that the jaguar is a mischievous devil-figure. Similarly, his analogues of the Jaredites have a hieroglyphic written language with characteristics typical of Egyptian and Olmec writing. Presumably Card is signaling that he believes the historical Jaredites were Olmecs and the historical Nephites were Mayans.

Further, when Card’s Nephites arrive in the promised land, they assume that the land is uninhabited and only later learn they were mistaken. The land is inhabited by other sentient species as well as by a previous group of human colonists corresponding to the Book of Mormon’s Jaredites. Supporting Card’s belief that the Book of Mormon Mulekites were a native underclass who invented their supposed Hebrew ancestry for political reasons, the underclass of “Darakemba” in the *Homecoming* novels is similarly native to the region. The presence of non-Hebrew “others” in the land is of course a staple of the Limited Geography apologetic, even though the Book of Mormon text seems to indicate that the land was empty when Lehi and his family arrived (2 Nephi 1:5–9).

In addition to commenting on the text of the Book of Mormon, the *Homecoming* series has much to say about its translation. In the series, a godlike computer called the Oversoul communicates its will directly to the minds of gifted humans. Although this revelation is direct and objective, it comes as raw information and must be interpreted by the human brain as words and images. This creates a situation in which the content of revelation comes from “God,” but the precise shape and expression of it comes from the prophet to whom it is revealed. Card even suggests that sometimes it is difficult to tell which of our thoughts and impressions come from God and which come from ourselves. These ideas basically parallel Card’s view of Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Mormon, which contains anachronisms and grammatical deficiencies that Card attributes to Smith instead of to God.

Card’s apologetic efforts on other subjects are less elaborate than his sci-fi commentary on the Book of Mormon but perhaps no less significant. The Alvin Maker series, for example, is an allegory of the life of Joseph Smith set in an al-
ternate universe where folk magic really works. Here Alvin Maker, Card’s Joseph Smith analogue, has magical powers that he must choose to use for good instead of evil. On the surface, folk magic that really works seems to be merely a fictional device. However, the recent vogue in some apologetic circles is to suggest that using his magical seer stone, young Joseph Smith really could find treasures and lost objects and that Smith’s days of magical treasure digging served as a training ground for his activities as a prophet. It is at least possible, then, that part of Card’s motivation in constructing a universe where magic really works is to create openness to that possibility among inhabitants of our own universe.

In another book, The Worthing Saga, Card tackles the problem of suffering from a Mormon perspective. In this book the godlike inhabitants of the world of Worthing have taken on the role of humanity’s guardians by taking away everyone’s pain and suffering, erasing their memories of death, and preventing them from doing things that would harm themselves or others. Eventually the guardians decide that this sort of rigorous supervision takes all the meaning out of life, so they end their guardianship. Pain, they realize, makes joy richer and life better. This scenario reflects the Mormon principle of “opposition in all things”: without the bad things in life, we would never know how to appreciate the good.

For all the apologetics in his books, Card does not remain on the defensive. On several occasions, he actively polemicizes against two groups critical of Mormonism: atheists and Protestant Christians. In the Homecoming series, for example, one character argues that neither theism nor atheism has a clear evidentiary advantage over the other. Given the choice between two equivalent options, the character says, we should choose the one we want to believe—the one that makes life worth living. Later books in the same series point out that even though atheists claim to be unbiased, they are actually just as biased as theists are. In fact, atheists are worse off, because they’re unaware of their biases. Toward the end of the last book in the series, the rhetoric becomes more virulent. The story implies that pantheists and religious liberals are really just smooth-talking atheists attempting to deceive others, and that atheists actually know in their hearts that there is a God but are too prideful to admit it (cp. Alma 30:52–53).

Meanwhile, Protestants come in for harsh treatment in the first volume of the Alvin Maker series. Here the chief human villain is a prideful Presbyterian minister called Reverend Thrower. Periodically Thrower is visited by what he believes is an angel, but readers quickly recognize it as the devil in disguise—especially when Thrower attempts to shake the Visitor’s hand and encounters no substance (cp. D&C 129:4–9). The portrayal of a Protestant minister as being in league with the devil should come as no surprise to anyone who was endowed prior to 1990, but Card’s minister comes across as even more of a buffoon than the character in the old endowment ceremony. The minister is an arrogant, prideful, bigoted chauvinist who refuses to believe in miracles even when he sees one with his own eyes. He believes in a transcendent and immutable God but also in a devil with horns, claws, and hooves. When challenged by frontier folk wisdom, he is incapable of mounting any kind of defense of his views, and he readily agrees to kill Alvin when the devil asks him to. When Thrower fails to kill Alvin, the devil appears to him with characteristics of a cockroach and a worm, driving Thrower to attempt suicide. When his suicide is pre-
vented by a sincere parishioner, Thrower recruits the parishioner into the murder plot. In short, Card makes the orthodox Protestant ministry appear as despicable as possible, reinforcing the traditional Mormon antipathy to Christian orthodoxy.

**CHANGING MORMONISM**

While a proselytizer and defender of Mormonism, Card is also a reformer. His intentions in this direction are rarely made explicit, but they are a significant subtext in several stories.

In *Folk of the Fringe*, Card envisions a post-apocalyptic United States in which Utah has become an independent Mormon nation. Much of the book reflects very positively on Mormon society; but in a few respects, it suggests that Mormons have failed to retain divine favor. In one chapter, the Salt Lake Temple is nearly submerged beneath a swollen Great Salt Lake—hardly the glorious future that most Mormons envision for the temple. In another chapter, a Mormon named Sam Monson is coerced by a divine power to impregnate a Native American woman with a new Indian messiah. According to the story, the Mormon covenant has been forfeited and is being handed over to the Lamantines.

It sounded so close to what the old prophets in the Book of Mormon said would happen to America; close, but dangerously different. As if there was no hope for the Europeans anymore. As if their chance had already been lost, as if no repentance would be allowed . . . . Someone else would inherit. It made him sick at heart, to realize what the white man had lost, had thrown away, had torn up and destroyed.

The possibility that Mormons could forfeit their covenant is not one often entertained in LDS culture, but apparently Card believes it is worth thinking about.

Among the specific concepts Card may be trying to communicate to the Mormon community are gender egalitarianism, racial inclusivity, respect for the environment, and a critique of hypocrisy and false piety.

With respect to gender, Card seems to be a complementarian, meaning that he recognizes the differences between men and women and believes that each has complementary strengths and weaknesses. But Card does not use this view as an excuse to subjugate women. In several works, he advocates increased respect and dignity for women. In the *Homecoming* series, for example, the seers who hear from the Oversoul are almost all women. When advanced technology allows the protagonist Nafai to see into the hearts of others, he weeps as he realizes how much pain the women have felt when their husbands have treated them as something less than full friends and partners. Similarly, when in *Pastwatch*, a character from the future travels back in time to set himself up as a sort of high priest to the Mexican Indians, one of the very first things he does is make a slave girl his counselor—promptly laying the groundwork for egalitarian treatment of women. Clearly gender relations are an important subject for Card.

The same can be said of race. In the *Alvin Maker* series, a character named Cavil Planter invents an intricate theological justification for his doctrine that black blood is evil. In the words of Eugene England, “Card thus deconstructs for his Mormon readers the influential work of those few Mormon theologians who have provided a rationale for exclusion of blacks from the priesthood that would blame them rather than whites.” In contrast to Cavil Planter’s racism, Card’s protagonist Alvin Maker is a model of racial openness. He takes a black friend through a sort of endowment, after which the black man develops a prophetic gift. The deconstruction of racist Mormon folk doctrine continues when in a vision, Alvin is shown Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel, and all of them—not only Cain—are black. In *Folk of the Fringe*, Card depicts the future Mormon community as much more multi-ethnic and accepting of blacks than are other religious groups, perhaps depicting the Mormon Church he hopes for.

One of the most common recurring motifs in Card’s fiction is humanity’s responsibility to care for the environment. In several stories and novels, he actually personifies the land and places it in the role of deity. In the *Alvin Maker* series, the earth is presented as a sort of superorganism that endows those who live harmoniously with it with magical powers while rejecting those who exploit it. Caucasians, in fact, are rejected because of their failure to live sustainably. “Hack and cut and chop and burn,” a Native American character says, “that was the White man’s way. Take from the forest, take from the land, take from the river, but put nothing back.” Likewise in *Folk of the Fringe*, we learn that the reason Europeans came to dominate the continent in the first place was the land’s displeasure with the Native Americans when they “cut down the forests of Utah and Arizona and turned them into red-rock deserts.” The new European overlords unfortunately fare no better in the land’s eyes, because now “the land is suffering from a thousand different poisons.”

In *Pastwatch*, the situation is even more desperate. Two hundred years in the future, the Earth is depleted and broken beyond recovery. The topsoil is all but gone, the cloud cover is nearly continuous, and the oceans are empty from overfishing. The only choice left to humanity is to travel back in time and change history so that centuries of environmental exploitation will be averted. Eugene England observed that “Card, echoing his mentor Hugh Nibley, radically challenges our . . . . Mormon anti-environmentalism by letting a future scientist describe the world we seem hell-bent on producing.” Card of course should not be mistaken for the kind of radical environmentalist one might find hugging trees or lobbying for the Kyoto Protocols. In his non-fiction writings, he has made his disdain for that sort of environmen-
talism perfectly clear. He is rather an environmentally-conscious pragmatist—someone who believes that global warming is more a good thing than a bad thing, but who also recognizes that the earth's stores of natural resources are quickly running out and that if we continue to live as we are living now, there will be nothing left for future generations. While Card's environmentalism may be more muted than that found in some sectors of the political left, it is considerably more liberal than one might expect of the average American Mormon. One practical measure he has advocated is that the government adopt regulation to make most new housing developments "car-free, or at least pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly." 62

A final respect in which Card seems to be calling for change in the LDS Church is in its legalism and self-righteousness. In his novelette A War of Gifts, Card creates a Puritanical, hypocritical Christian sect that the reader is meant to find highly disagreeable. Oddly enough, Card places some fairly enlightened and even Mormon doctrines on these cultists' lips. They teach, for example, that women deserve respect because they suffer to bring souls into the world; that ministers should be unpaid and should work to earn their living; that discipline is important for children's souls; and even that Genesis was simply the best Moses could do in explaining Darwinian evolution to a pre-scientific culture. Yet by placing these doctrines on hypocrites' lips, Card is not polemicizing against the content of the teaching. Rather, he approves the doctrines but rejects the way they are flaunted in order to prove the superior holiness of the community. Card emphasizes the sin of the community when he has his protagonist proudly clarify that the cultists are "Puritans," not "fundamentalists." 63

The echoes of LDS doctrine that we hear in some of the Puritans' teachings may be intended to signal that Card wants Mormons to see themselves reflected in this fictional sect. Possibly his polemic is directed against self-righteousness and hypocrisy specifically within the Mormon community. Certainly when we are told that the protagonist's unhappy mother "always smiled when she knew people were looking . . . to show that the pure Christian life made one happy," the scene recalls a common complaint against Mormon culture. 64

In Folk of the Fringe we find a similar indictment of Mormon self-righteousness, here directed against Mormons' unfair ostracism of Gentiles. The narrative says of one character,

Sometimes Deaver wondered what would have happened if just once, some bishop had kept on being friendly even after Deaver told him he'd never get baptized. If maybe he might've felt different about Mormons if ever their friendship turned out to be real. But it never happened.

The tragic result of this character's alienation from his Mormon foster families and from the larger Mormon community is that he learns to disdain Mormons and never to be open or vulnerable with them. 65

In all of these respects, Card's fiction functions as an indictment. Because this critique is embedded within fictional narratives, however, readers often are not aware of just how radically they are being challenged. They are entertained and called to repentance at the same time.

I ADD A caveat in closing: I do not know that Card would accept the three roles in which I have cast him here—missionary, apologist, and reformer. Much less, I suspect, would he accept the larger role I have assigned him of prophetic mythmaker and successor to Joseph Smith. But then, Jonah denied his prophetic calling, too, and look what that got him. However much Card may deny it, and however much those who disapprove of his politics may dislike it, I am convinced that his fiction does function in the ways I have outlined. Certainly it has functioned in these ways for me. The focus on moral sacrifice in Ender's Game and Treason has given me a deep appreciation for LDS teachings concerning the significance of Gethsemane. The powerful theodicy presented in The Worthing Saga was my first exposure to the philosophical power of LDS teaching. The exploration of Book of Mormon characters' motives in the Homecoming series has impressed upon me the potential richness of the narrative. The pragmatic environmentalism of Pastwatch has moved me to take more seriously the imperative of sustainable living. In all these ways and others of which I'm not even aware, Card's fiction has moved and shaped and changed me. Although I have never passed through the waters of baptism, as I participate in Card's Mormon myths, I feel that I am in some small way a part of the Mormon community—and it is a part of me. ☎

NOTES

6. Ibid.


16. The same opposition occurs in the earlier Worthing Saga, though making and using things there do not have the same moral connotations Card gives them in *Alvin Maker*. Capitols unmaker Abner Doon is actually doing humanity a favor by destroying a dead and stagnant society in order to make way for new making. Orson Scott Card, *The Worthing Saga* (New York: Tor, 1990), 37.


24. Orson Scott Card, *Speaker for the Dead*, revised edition, (New York: Tor, 1991), 365–69. *Collins, In the Image of God*, 58. It may be significant that in order to enter the final stage of life, they must go through a crucifixion of sorts, which is reminiscent of the LDS folk-doctrine that before we are made gods, we will serve as saviors on other worlds.


30. Ibid., 311–20.


35. Ibid., 138–40.


42. Card, *Seventh Son*, 64.


49. One passage in fact appears to be deliberately modeled on a scene from the endowment. Ibid., 208–10.


52. Ibid., 209.


64. Ibid., 13.