

# SUNSTONE

Volume Six, Number Six

\$2.50



## THE DILEMMAS OF PLURALISM

By Peter Berger

# SUNSTONE

VOLUME SIX, NUMBER SIX

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1981

*Publisher/Editor*  
PEGGY FLETCHER  
*Managing Editor*  
SUSAN STAKER OMAN  
*Associate Editor*  
LORIE WINDER  
*Assistant Editor*  
NICOLE HOFFMAN

*Art Director*  
WARREN ARCHER II

*Department Editors*  
DENNIS CLARK, POETRY  
ANNE THIEME, ONE FOLD  
SCRIPTURAL COMMENTARY,  
STEVEN F. CHRISTENSEN

*Staff*

KERRY WILLIAM BATE  
LOUISE BROWN  
PAUL BROWN  
SUSAN KEENE  
L. JOHN LEWIS  
CHRIS THOMAS  
MARK THOMAS  
FINETTE WALKER

*Circulation/Promotion*  
REBECCA T. HARRIS  
RENEE HEPWORTH  
MARK JARDINE

*Business Manager*  
BRUCE BENNETT

*Financial Assistants*  
TOD K. CHRISTENSEN  
SHAWN GARCIA SCHOW

*National Correspondents*

James W. Lucas, **New York City**;  
George D. Smith, **San Francisco**;  
Bonnie M. Bodet  
and Charlotte Johnson, **Berkeley**;  
Joel C. Peterson, **Dallas**;  
Anne Castleton Busath, **Houston**;  
Kris Cassidy and Irene Bates, **Los Angeles**;  
Susan Sessions Rugh, **Chicago**;  
Janna Daniels Haynie, **Denver**;  
Allen Palmer, **Rexburg**;  
Anne Carroll P. Darger, **Boise**;  
Renee Tietjen, **Boston**;  
Curtis Burnett, **Washington, D.C.**;  
T. Eugene Shoemaker, **Sacramento**;  
Diane Bennion, **Seattle**;  
Kathryn F. Fowles, **Menlo Park**;  
Stephen Durrant, **Provo**;  
Thomas McAfee, **San Diego**;  
Marjorie Spencer, **Ogden**;  
Bellamy Brown, **Phoenix**;  
Roger Thomas, **Bloomington**.

*Sunstone* is published six times each year by the Sunstone Foundation, a non-profit corporation with no official connection to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Articles represent the attitudes of the writers only and not necessarily those of the editor/publisher or the editorial board.

Manuscripts for publication should be submitted in duplicate, typewritten and double-spaced, and should not exceed six thousand words. For increased readability, *Sunstone* discourages manuscripts with excessive footnoting.

Subscriptions are \$12 for one year, \$21 for two years, and \$30 for three years. One-year subscriptions are offered at a discount rate of \$9 for students, missionaries, and retired people. Overseas subscriptions are \$15 per year. *Sunstone* is mailed third class bulk and is not forwarded. Subscribers are responsible to notify the magazine at least one month in advance of address changes. *Sunstone* is not responsible for undelivered issues.

Send all correspondence and manuscripts to *Sunstone*, P.O. Box 2272, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110 (Phone 801-355-5926). Unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by sufficient return postage.

Copyright © 1981 by the Sunstone Foundation. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

- 38 THE DILEMMAS OF PLURALISM PETER BERGER  
Need we fear the religious uncertainty of modernity?  
MORMON WOMEN AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEFINITION  
An evening with the B.H. Roberts Society  
7 The Nineteenth Century Church CAROL CORNWALL MADSEN  
12 Contemporary Women LAVINA FIELDING ANDERSON  
17 What is the Church? FRANCINE RUSSELL BENNION

HISTORY

- 44 GROWING UP IN EARLY UTAH: THE WASATCH LITERARY ASSOCIATION, 1874-1878 RONALD W. WALKER  
A jaunty forerunner of the MIA  
21 ZION: THE STRUCTURE OF A THEOLOGICAL REVOLUTION STEVEN L. OLSEN  
History of an LDS idea  
55 THE MORMON PAST: REVEALED OR REVISITED? JAN SHIPPS  
Distinguishing between sacred and ordinary history

RELIGION

- 52 FINITIST THEOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL PETER C. APPELBY  
A lucid analysis of a knotty issue  
27 WHAT IS MORAL OBLIGATION WITHIN MORMON THEOLOGY? KIM MCCALL  
Searching for the source of ethical behavior

FICTION

- 32 SEPARATE PRAYERS ANN EDWARDS-CANNON

POETRY

- 58 Sanctuary DAWN BAKER BRIMLEY  
Two Poems on Entanglement DALE BJORK  
Guatama's Return SCOTT DENHALTER

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 READERS' FORUM  
6 ONE FOLD  
59 UPDATE  
60 FROM THE EDITORS  
61 MORMON MEDIA IMAGE  
62 SCRIPTURAL COMMENTARY

Sunstone, P.O. Box 2272, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110

# Readers' Forum

## Comfort in Church

I agree that the Church should teach us correct principles and then allow us to govern ourselves. I have always prided myself on being a free agent, able to come to my own conclusions.

However, I have neither the self-confidence or "ego" to stand firm on a decision when I am being assailed constantly on TV by opponents to my thinking who are more educated than I, far superior in their manner of expression, extremely persuasive in presenting their viewpoints, and almost hypnotic in their ability to sway opinions.

No matter how certain I am in a conviction, I find myself wondering, "Am I really old-fashioned? Am I becoming narrow-minded in my old age? Am I really just a puppet, following blindly the instructions of Church leadership?"

I agree that the Church leaders would lose their impact if they daily gave opinions on every aspect of daily living, economically and politically, but when an issue so vital to our society as ERA or abortion comes up, then I feel we need the strength of their statements to lend support as we are being bombarded on all sides by highly-paid, highly-sophisticated arguments in opposition to life-long standards.

There are areas where I do not agree 100 percent with statements of Church leaders, but I feel no sense of guilt nor do I feel compelled to strangle my own thoughts. I consider myself a free agent, in every sense of the word, but I look to Church leaders as I would to strong parents, to give me a feeling of security, of strength and of stability. I may not always take the advice of Church leaders, but it is very comforting to belong to the "family" where the strength is there.

Marie L. Sorensen  
Reno, Nevada

## Abortion and Church Doctrine

Instead of using Mormon doctrine to buttress one's political position on abortion, as do Richard Sherlock and Marvin Rytting (*Sunstone* 6:4), it would

perhaps be more helpful to attempt to understand Church guidelines in light of Church doctrine. One of the salient characteristics of God is his ability to create: His progression continues through the increasing numbers of His creations. He has given the divine trait in part to man, and that this is a privilege and a blessing is emphasized by His giving His most faithful servants the promise of countless posterity. Hence, creation, from sexual intercourse, through birth, through mortal life, is sacred. The sacred character of the process of creation is emphasized by the strict controls surrounding it and by the seriousness with which adultery and other violations of sexual commandments are viewed.

Within this context abortion may be seen as a grave interference with the sacred process of creation. This view is more consonant with Church guidelines, which allow for therapeutic abortions, than is Richard Sherlock's contention that: "The only way in which the Church's position on abortion makes any sense is on the assumption that the fetus is a human being." The logic of his position is that no abortion should ever be performed; yet, that the Church does allow therapeutic abortions indicates that abortions, at least in the early stages of development, do not destroy mortal souls (spirits united with bodies), but rather they are serious violations of the creative process and may therefore be performed only in limited and controlled circumstances.

This perspective leads easily to agreement with Rytting that the unborn should be given increasing rights over time. He is, however, mistaken in his assertion that this is what current policy does under *Roe v. Wade*. Though that decision does give the states power to increasingly regulate abortions in the latter stages of pregnancy, it gives the unborn no rights. It is a mockery of the word to describe current policy in Indiana as the "right" of the unborn, during the third to sixth months of their development, to be aborted in a hospital rather than in a clinic. Indeed,

*Wade* reversed previous precedents giving the unborn the right to receive compensation for injury and to be represented in court as a person (to have standing) for damages, even if stillborn. Since *Wade*, the Court has refused to rule on cases dealing with whether the unborn can have standing, even though ships and corporations do have standing in court. Because standing in court is not limited to human life, the arguments dividing people over abortion are not at issue here; yet, the Court has stripped the unborn of this right because of its refusal to balance the interests of the mother and the unborn.

Rytting would have us leave all the balancing of these interests to the mother alone. (In part, his argument is based on the doctrine of free agency, a concept which does not mean, as he sometimes implies, the right to choose for oneself what is right or wrong but rather that a person, knowing right from wrong, has the God-given ability to choose between them.) His optimism about the morality of his fellow humans is admirable, but one of the assumptions underlying law has never been that all humans are essentially moral—rather the opposite. Those who have a self-interest in a decision are not given sole power to balance their rights against those of another. Yet this is what current abortion policy does: it gives the woman alone power to exert her interests against those of the unborn. Thus current policy is as likely to prove the maxim that "Absolute power corrupts absolutely" as it is to lead to moral tension following Rytting's ideal.

Neither extreme political position—prohibiting all abortions or abortion on demand—can be justified by Church guidelines or Church doctrine. Perhaps a middle ground can be found whereby the unborn are given rights and whereby those rights may be protected by someone other than a self-interested person.

Kathryn M. Daynes  
Greencastle, Indiana

## The Morally Decisive Issue

The selection of essays on abortion was useful for a Mormon audience, and honest debate is always helpful. However, since my own essay was drafted in a different setting honesty compels me to respond to the critics of my position, especially Prof. Rytting. By training and temperament I am a philosopher concerned with coherent thinking regarding moral

and political issues. As such I believe that Rytting's article both obfuscates the central moral issues at stake and displays serious lapses in coherency as well.

First his statement of the "moral" issues is patently false. The true moral issue is the status of the fetus. We do not play off the rights of women against the right to life of the child in any other similar case (e.g. child abuse) nor did we play off the rights of slaveholders against the right of blacks to citizenship. If the fetus is a human being I see no reason (and Rytting provides none) for not adopting a similar position regarding abortion.

Unfortunately, on the question of the fetus itself Rytting's essay hovers between the confused and the morally preposterous. The developmental model to which he seems attached simply will not do as public policy. Either the fetus is to be protected at law or it isn't. Law has no in between categories. Rytting never once tells us explicitly where he thinks this point of protection should be. He does cite favorably the Supreme Court's decision where viability is held to be the crucial point. Yet he seems to ignore the fact that prior to viability the fetus has no legal rights at all, a

position which is not developmental in any sense.

Viability, however, is a point with no sustainable arguments in its favor (I challenge any reader to produce one). Viability is essentially the point where the utter biological dependence of the fetus on the biological mother need not obtain. Does this mean that it was permissible to kill the fetus when she was utterly dependent? That is what the use of viability as the point of protection means. This argument collapses when confronted with analogies. Consider elderly persons utterly dependent on a specific caretaker when no one else will assume care, or siamese twins. Would Rytting conclude that the caretaker or the twin has the right to bring about the death of the other person in behalf of his freedom? The result speaks for itself.

With the easy rhetoric of self confessed ignorance it is writers like Rytting and Seegers who ignore the morally decisive issue. We simply do not permit free agency regarding the killing of another human being and by analogy when a decision had to be made about blacks the issue was not left up to individuals to decide if blacks were human beings. I regard the ignoring of these elementary facts

about free agency by Rytting and Seegers to be nearly inexcusable. Thought out consistently the "pro choice" position is really pro abortion.

I believe that the most telling objection to those like Seegers and Rytting is to ask where they would have been in the slavery crisis of the 1850s. Every one of their arguments for dialogue would apply directly to the slavery case and were in fact made by leading politicians of the day. "Responsible" spokesmen accused the abolitionists of practicing one issue politics, of harming the common good, refusing to listen to opponents, etc. I put the question then to my opponents—when large numbers of Americans believed in the religiously justified slavery of blacks whom they regarded as animals where would you have been, confessing ignorance on the central question and pleading for dialogue and freedom of choice?

Richard Sherlock  
Memphis, Tennessee

#### Reincarnation not Pre-existence

I much appreciated Alan Keele's article on the pre-existence in Mormon and non-Mormon art forms. It delivered a well-deserved indictment of the triviality of much Mormon sentimental operetta and the level of

## A New Book by Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton

The Human Side of Mormon History

# SAINTS WITHOUT HALOS



Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton

Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton trace the development of the human side of Mormon history in seventeen biographical sketches from before the organization of the Church to modern times. These are Saints presented not as objects of veneration, but as "human beings who, like the rest of us, struggle to be worthy of the title Latter-day Saint."

- two apostles
- a personal friend of Joseph Smith
- missionaries and converts
- a plural wife, an Indian woman, a widowed immigrant
- pioneers and philosophers, bishops and blacksmiths

*Signature  
Books*

9 Exchange Place, Suite 319  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

\$10.95

sensitivity of its audience. I was both surprised and pleased to find such an article extolling the beauties of Strauss' delightful opera, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Brother Keele's treatment left, however, a decided misconception room to grow in the minds of his Mormon audience. We have often been accused of twisting Wordsworth to fit our ideas about the pre-existence, but he needs considerably less misinterpretation to fit Mormon doctrine than Hofmannsthal's text for the opera. At the end of the first act the watchmen very clearly state: "Ihr Gatten, die ihrt liebend euch in Armen liegt, ihr seid die Brücke, überm Abgrund ausgespannt, auf der die Toten wiederum ins Leben gehn!" You spouses who lie lovingly in one another's arms, you are the bridge stretched out over the chasm on which the dead come back into life again (my translation). Hofmannsthal has reincarnation in mind, not anything like the Mormon belief!

I sincerely hope that many of your readers will learn to know and love the opera for its own merits, which are many, but I hope we will be spared a spate of uses of Hofmannsthal as support of Mormon doctrine. It would only reinforce the common stereotype of Mormons as generally cultural ignoramuses.

Kathleen R. Snow  
Seattle, Washington

### Art as Blasphemy

In the last *Sunstone* Professor Alan Keele set out to wrest King Follett theology from the honeyed jaws of those Mormon musicals while also—and this not incidentally—reclaiming "high" art for the council of the elect. In so doing he joins an old movement latterly very restless to establish art in higher ideological repute among the Mormons. That Mr. Keele fails is "forgivable, since it is the fate of (all such) endeavors anyway." Marxist critics have, with growing sophistication, been failing at this same sort of task for nearly sixty years. It is, however, less forgivable that the article manages so little resistance to an overzealous stewardship of noble intention.

Unhappily, we are left to ponder why the tale of a zoologically ambiguous princess, daughter of a pagan god, whose mortal husband throws knives at obedient birds and then turns to stone over a missing shadow, belongs to a "higher" and "finer" range of the aesthetic spectrum than, say, the life and trials of a merely eccentric



**United Way**  
OF THE GREAT SALT  
LAKE AREA.

western American family? How is it, moreover, that five little fishies singing in a pan preserve "the unspeakable mysterium, esoteric and sacred," of premortal existence in a way that a "dixieland/charleston" cannot?

The truth is that Mr. Keele is comparing apples and kumquats, both of which have their following, though of substantially and, I suspect, inalterably differing magnitudes; and each of which deserves to be measured on its own ground, against its own kind.

If the Mormon musicals fail, they fail as entertainment, not as art, and certainly not as theology in violation of the dress code. The trite and saccharin may be in bad taste, but if they are also blasphemous, then legions of sacrament meeting speakers, missionaries, lesson manual writers, and certainly the creators of those national-magazine inserts have serious reason to tremble. One might even infer (and some will) that it is principally by blasphemy that the Church grows and the gospel is spread.

On the other hand it should give pause that *Newsweek* magazine's opera critic, who this past week enthusiastically reviewed the Metropolitan Opera's new production of *The Woman Without a Shadow*, was less than taken with the Hofmannsthal libretto which so inspires Mr. Keele. "The symbolic meanings," complains the reviewer, "are at best murkey (sic)... and at worst offensive." The author's characters are "so many lifeless props." And concerning the "final mystical chorus" which Mr. Keele quotes as exemplary: "With its tinselly chords and saccharin chorus offstage the opera's ending is meant to be an apotheosis of humanity. Instead it is the apotheosis of bad taste—Hollywood idea of loftiness."

No single judgement—on whatever side—is conclusive, but the

contradiction here suggests something we should all recognize, no matter how painful or impolitic: the finest, yes and most expensive, of materials are easily and, in fact, often invested in bad art. There is a truth that Goethe in his famous essay did not elaborate, but should have, namely, that some "sacred" architecture is frozen Muzak.

Fortunately, not even BYU professors can reduce the very complex form/content relationship in art (or entertainment) to a matter of decorum. The plots of some of the world's greatest dramatic operas are so silly it requires professional training to recount them with a straight face. The dramatic "masterworks" of Bertolt Brecht (to invoke the consensus within Mr. Keele's own field of study) often pit form against content with the subtlety of colliding metal garbage cans. And what of religious proprieties? In *Faust* Goethe charts his own way of the cross through black magic, seduction, murder, avarice, tyranny, pride, and pagan idolatry to name but a few stations. Dostoevsky generously grants redemption to an axe-murderer (compare D&C 42:18) and does so through the intercession of a golden-hearted prostitute. Michelangelo painted God on the ceiling of a sanctuary as a *nude*. And only recently, Albrecht Durer's artistic notion of Eden provoked the angry cancellation of *BYU Today* subscriptions. In fact, if after reading Mr. Keele's article there did not flicker in some rebellious heart the determined aspiration to create a holy and inspiring temple entirely of old Utah barn board, then art is truly dead—at least among Mormon architects. And if so, perhaps it is just as well.

Whatever is it that leads us to think our Father's church might reasonably become a mother to the arts? Certainly not history. Nor the observable behavior of either churches or of artists. To the restored church is given the overwhelming task of becoming an unapologetically institutional Kingdom of God on earth. Artists, though not always by their convictions, are by their natures and their very best instincts the natural enemies of institutions. This is true in part because they do not learn, or will not accept, that when lacking something positive to "express," it is sometimes best to "express" nothing at all. More importantly it is true because artists, even those who do not deny God, nor distort his works,

all openly and brazenly compete with Him.

If we must root out blasphemy at all, then let us at least refrain from committing straw-persons to the fire. In traditional theological definition, "blasphemy" is the crime of assuming to oneself the rights or qualities of God. Every serious artistic attempt to "get things right, to name them by their right names" supplants revealed orthodoxies and usurps prevailing authority. A strong work of art recreates the world, not in God's, but in the author's image. One need only read Hofmannsthal's *ad me ipsum* to discover that, if in places it touches upon the King Follett Discourse, it does so only in passing on to a marvelous, yet thoroughly idiosyncratic plan of salvation of the author's own private invention. Blasphemy is not trivial. It demands talent.

It is not given to the Church to embrace the alternative visions, kingdoms, or powers of this world. (Our own admonition is only to study them.) And no matter what her state of perfection, the Church cannot be expected to sow or to cultivate the thorns in her own side. These will accrue naturally, and it is enough that she tolerates and survives them, possibly growing stronger or wiser in the process. Let us be satisfied that God seems sometimes independently to grant aid and comfort to one or another of his competitors. Perhaps He, at least, finds them not so much rebellious as premature.

Neal C. Chandler  
Cleveland, Ohio

#### Natural Miscarriages Suspect?

If a "Right to Life" Constitutional amendment were passed, guaranteeing to the newly-conceived fetus full panoply of legal and human rights, it is theoretically possible that all natural miscarriages (abortions) will have to be investigated by criminal grand juries to determine grounds to bring murder charges against the aggrieved erstwhile mother. Let her explain, if she can, why she in any way contributed to the cause of the natural miscarriage of the fetus, *i. e.*, "took a human life."

Gerry Ensley  
Los Almitos, California

#### As Far as Translated Correctly

I am constantly amazed at the casual manner in which scholars like Williams and Firmage draw support from the Gospel portion of the Bible. Given that "We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is

translated correctly," and the lack of any Gospel source text attributed to the first century, one ought to exercise more caution when evaluating the Gospels for the sake of contemporary issues. The incident involving the tribute to Caesar and the general reputation of the Pharisees underscore my concern.

In the first case, dealing with the tribute coin, a silver dinar, Jesus drew attention to the image and inscription. The quotation used by Williams, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," provided a dramatic counterpoint to the title on the coin which read, "Tiberias Caesar Devei (Divine)." The answer issued by Jesus has been interpreted many ways, but at the time it exposed the true loyalty of the quisling coinholder, and challenged the Herodians and Sadducees, who had assimilated the various forms of Roman idolatry, to serve God. The ruling aristocracy reacted by indicting Jesus before Pilate with the charge: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ (the Messiah) a King" (Luke 23:2).

Where the Gospel records are relatively pacific, the historian Josephus describes how that same time period exploded with turmoil based upon these conflicting goals. One might be inclined to picture a transcendental Christ in this setting, but one can also realize how much Jesus must have clashed with those who chose to patronize a pagan Rome rather than serve God in the land of Israel.

Now, contrast the Roman collaborators with the notorious Pharisees. The word Pharisee (Perushim) literally means "separatists." They came to be called Pharisees, because they opposed the usurption of the priestly lineage by the monarchical Hasmonean dynasty. Some scholars feel Christian antipathy towards the Pharisees developed near the end of the first century, and these attitudes were then planted into the Gospel record. However the case may be, the term "pharasaical spirituality," as applied by Firmage, appears to be loaded with post-apostolic Christian feelings.

All Pharisees were not alike. The respected and humble sage, Hillel, who lived just before Jesus, best illustrated the pharasaic tradition with acts of patience and charity. The

## Season's Greetings from Westwater Press

THE GATHERING OF ZION: THE STORY  
OF THE MORMON TRAIL

by Wallace Stegner

The classic telling of the epic Mormon trek from Illinois to the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1846-47, by the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and novelist.

"The best single volume to appear on the Mormon migration westward."

—Ray Allen Billington

"...a compelling story of the epic Mormon migration to the West. His treatment of the ordeal of the handcart companies is especially moving."

—Leonard J. Arrington

368 pp., 8½" x 5½" illus., with a new four-color map of the Mormon Trail, from Piercy's *Route From Liverpool...*; \$15.95; \$7.95

THE DENVER AND RIO GRANDE PROJECT, 1870-1901: A HISTORY OF THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS OF THE DENVER AND RIO GRANDE RAILROAD

by O. Meredith Wilson

"This is a seminal study of an important phase of western transportation. It will continue to stand as a model of railroad construction history."

—Robert G. Athearn

144 pp., 8" x 10", illustrated, maps, \$19.99; \$10.00

JACOB HAMBLIN, MORMON APOSTLE TO THE INDIANS

by Juanita Brooks,

illustrated by Darrell Thomas

"A memorable venture into Utah history."

—The Deseret News

144 pp., 9" x 6", illus., maps, \$12.95; \$6.95

UNCERTAIN SANCTUARY: A STORY OF MORMON PIONEERING IN MEXICO

by Estelle Webb Thomas, with an introduction by Stewart and Ermalee Webb Udall

"Mrs. Thomas has portrayed the warmth of Mormon life in Mexico with a skill and style that far surpasses all previous efforts."—*The Journal of Arizona History* 160 pp., 9" x 6", illus., maps, \$11.95; \$6.95

Coming this March...

QUICKSAND AND CACTUS: THE MEMOIRS OF JUANITA BROOKS

"It is a book that no one can read without a renewed sense of the worth of human living, and it is at the same time a book to be read with delight."—Dale L. Morgan  
Available from bookstores or directly from the publisher.

Westwater Press

P.O. Box 6394

Salt Lake City, Utah 84106

Send one dollar for a beautiful letterpress four-color reproduction of the Mormon Trail map from Frederick Hawkins Piercy's *Route From Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley* (as reproduced in *The Gathering of Zion*).

Apostle Paul also called himself a Pharisee and certainly used his pharasaic training to magnify his apostleship.

Even if an author decides to latch onto the legalistic or ritualistic side of the Pharisees, I fail to understand how Firmage stretches his opposition of religious isolationism to include his polemics against the Pharisees. I suggest that the Essenes, the people

who lived in monastic Dead Sea communities better represent his emasculated church.

Everyone should feel free to pay tribute to Rome or knock the Pharisees, but I'm not certain of how this sanctifies the Gospels or helps us appreciate the dilemma of Church involvement in politics.

Raymond Soller  
Huntsville, Alabama

# One Fold

## Conversion Story

William J. Murray III, son of well-known atheist leader Madalyn Murray O'Hair, has signed a contract with a publisher for a book about his life and his conversion to Christianity.

Although he had been indoctrinated since childhood against capitalism, democracy, and religion, Murray converted to Christianity at the age of 33. He then renounced both his connections with his mother's ideology and his part as the plaintiff in the 1963 Supreme Court case that resulted in the banning of prayer in the public schools.

In the proposed publication, Murray will reveal his mother's alleged long-term association with socialism and communism, the details of her attempt to defect to the Soviet Union with her two sons, and his own involvement in drugs, smuggling, and leftwing causes.

## Counseling for the Clergy

A study conducted by the Rev. James Harnan, a Roman Catholic priest, has

uncovered some unique difficulties which may prevent members of the clergy from seeking needed help in their personal lives. Because they spend considerable time counseling others, clergy often find it difficult to seek assistance with their own problems. Over half were not seeking outside help, primarily because of two factors: guilt and the worry that they might lose credibility with their congregations.

Harnan also discovered that the lifestyle of clergy may predispose them to psychological problems. They are faced with a high degree of stress in a job that gives them no concrete way to evaluate their effectiveness. Striving for goals that are so all encompassing that there is no possibility for complete success, they often have difficulty justifying time off and also an inability to say no to the endless requests from individuals for whom they feel responsible. Loneliness, not only among the Catholic clergy who are forbidden to marry, but also among others who feel isolated by their religious

position, is another common problem.

Consequently, depression or "burn-out"—defined by Rev. Fred McGehee, a Southern Baptist guidance consultant, as "a state of fatigue and frustration brought about when devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship fails to produce the expected "reward"—is so common among religious individuals that it was once called "clergyman's disease."

## Underground Religion

Catholic women, disillusioned by their church's continuing policy against ordaining women to the priesthood and "sexist attitudes and liturgy in the church," have been participating in underground "alternative liturgy" services. Usually held in private homes and presided over by nuns, the services typically consist of scripture reading, prayer, discussions, and the blessing and distribution of bread and wine.

The unauthorized services, which have been compared to secret worship services held in the catacombs of Rome by early Christians, attract women who feel a desire to be ordained as priests or to see other women ordained. The groups include some who continue to attend traditional Masses as well as others who do not. While emphasizing that alternative services do not constitute a Mass because of the absence of an ordained priest, one nun was quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* as saying, "The question is, if no ordained priest is available and people want to worship, would God say no?"

## Ireland's Religious Conflict

Leaders of both Catholic and Protestant churches in Ireland have sent a delegation to America in order to correct what they claim to be a mistaken impression that the conflict in Northern Ireland is essentially religious and that the churches themselves are bitterly embroiled in the issues. Emphasizing both churches desire to see an end to the conflict, delegation members assert that Catholic and Protestant clergy are urging an end to the violence and asking their congregations to pray for peace. The basis of the conflict, they stress, is political and social with deep historical roots. Over the years, it has come to be defined as a religious rather than a political difference, and there is some feeling that the churches have been used by those behind the fighting factions to keep the conflict alive.



**CANYON HOUSE FOODS**

From Our House To Your Home

WHEAT HONEY SALT DRY MILK

**This Christmas give a gift of life. Give food storage!**

Headquarters for all your holiday baking and candy making needs.  
We accept Visa, Master Charge and Food Stamps  
2050 N Canyon Rd. Provo, Ut. 84604 : (801) 377-6500  
2 Blocks North of BYU Football Stadium

---

# Mormon Women and the Struggle for Definition

## The Nineteenth Century Church

---

*What is the collective legacy from our foremothers?*

---

Carol Cornwall Madsen

### Editors' Note

*The following three papers were delivered to a standing-room-only crowd at the B.H. Roberts Society lecture held at the University of Utah Art and Architecture Auditorium on 24 September 1981.*

**E**VER since I began studying and writing about the life of Emmeline B. Wells, which will be a life's work for me, I have felt her steady hand on my shoulder. I am reminded of the caution she once gave to those who shared their deepest confidences with one another:

How utterly unable we are, to judge one another, none of us being constituted exactly alike; how can we define each other's sentiments truly, how discriminate fairly and justly in those peculiarly nice points of distinction which are determined by the emotions agitating the human heart in its variety of phrases, or under, perhaps, exceptional circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

I am sensitive to that steady hand, particularly tonight as I attempt to identify and define what for an earlier generation of women identified and defined them as women—their relationship to the Church. The individual variables, including the level of commitment and the extent to which any individual allows an institution to affect his or her life, make generalizing difficult. Moreover, the deeply personal nature of religious conviction almost defies a corporate assessment. Nonetheless I will attempt to do just that, recognizing that the generalizations I make cannot possibly be all inconclusive. I hope they will at least be instructive.

I would like to concentrate on three aspects of the religious life of early Mormon women which I think

helped them define and understand themselves and their place within both the theology and the institution of Mormonism. All had their beginnings in the Nauvoo period where women first emerged as a visible, collective entity through the organization of the Relief Society. Most members today are familiar with what has become a symbol of that organization's beginning: Joseph giving the key to women. According to Eliza R. Snow's minutes, Joseph turned the key to women, not in behalf of women, as we generally hear, and told them that knowledge and intelligence would flow down from that time forth. "This," he said, "would be the beginning of better days for this society."<sup>2</sup>

For many, that symbolic gesture signaled the opening of a new dispensation for all women, not only Mormons. Summing up this interpretation of those significant words, Apostle Orson F. Whitney explained:

[The Prophet Joseph] taught that the sisters were to act with the brethren, to stand side by side with them, and to enjoy the benefits and blessings of the priesthood, the delegated authority of God.

The lifting of the women of Zion to that plane was the beginning of a work for the elevation of womankind through[out] the world. "I have turned the key," said the Prophet on that historic occasion, and from what has since taken place we are justified in believing that the words were big with fate. . . .

The turning of the key by the Prophet of God, and the setting up in this Church, of women's organizations, [were] signs of a new era, one of those sunbursts of light that proclaim the dawning of a new dispensation.<sup>3</sup>

While the organization of the Relief Society in Nauvoo marked the beginning of a specified collective role for

women in the Church, Mormon women in Kirtland had already informally organized to contribute in material ways to the building of the Kirtland Temple. Working unitedly with the brethren of the Church in that venture and receiving the Prophet Joseph's commendation for the liberality of their services, many were understandably disappointed to learn that they would not be permitted to participate in the ordinances performed in that temple. That privilege would come later in Nauvoo.

The organization of the Relief Society was an outgrowth of the voluntary efforts of women during the construction of the Nauvoo Temple. When Sarah Kimball suggested that a female benevolent society be created for this purpose, however, Joseph said that he had something better for them. Explaining that the Church was not fully organized until the women were, he told them that "he was glad to have the opportunity of organizing the women, as a part of the Priesthood belonged to them."<sup>4</sup>

Thus from the beginning, Relief Society members perceived their organization as distinctive from the ladies aid and benevolent societies that were flourishing elsewhere, and with which many women were familiar. Formed "after the pattern of the priesthood," it had been "organized according to the law of heaven," explained John Taylor, present at its inception.<sup>5</sup> In an address to the sisters, Elder Reynolds Cahoon elaborated this idea: "There are many Benevolent Societies abroad designed

to do good," he told them, "but not as this. Ours is according to the order of God, connected with the Priesthood, according to the same good principles. Knowledge will grow out of it."<sup>6</sup> Thus empowered, the women of Nauvoo assumed their assigned tasks to relieve the poor, watch over the morals of the community, and save souls. Membership burgeoned.

In the years that followed the re-establishment of the Relief Society in the Salt Lake Valley, its potential as a parallel force with the priesthood in building the Kingdom blossomed. Eliza R. Snow, by appointment of Brigham Young, directed the affairs of the society throughout the territory, organizing and assisting the various units to meet the needs of the community which Brigham Young had outlined. But while the impetus for organization this time originated with the Prophet, the women planned, developed, and implemented many of the specific economic, community, educational, and religious programs that came to be their share of kingdom building. There was wide latitude in their stewardship. And while the broad purposes were the same for all, no two units functioned exactly alike, each devising a meeting schedule, course of study, and economic and charitable programs that fit the needs and resources of its particular community. This provided ample room for innovation and leadership on both the local and general level in the initial stages of the Relief Society.

Conflicts between Relief Society programs and ward



plans were to be resolved according to the Bishop's wishes. "We will do as we are directed by the Priesthood," Eliza told one inquiring Relief Society president, this message becoming her major theme.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there were resources which women could employ in their behalf. As Eliza reminded a Relief Society in Cache Valley, "We are accredited with great persuasive powers and we can use them on the Brethren."<sup>8</sup>

With the exception of Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow was unique among women leaders in the Church. She not only held the position of "Presidentess of all Mormon women's organizations," indeed of all Mormon women, she was also the wife of the living prophet. As Maureen Beecher has described her, she was the "chief disseminator of the religion to the women of the Church," and conversely, we might add, their advocate with the prophet. No minutes exist of the conferences between Eliza and Brigham, but it is certain that Eliza's respect for the priesthood and her obedience to authority did not deter her from vigorously representing the interests of the women of Zion in that unique council of two. Always announcing new assignments or programs as having been advised or suggested by President Young (though we cannot be certain who originated them), she was able, by this means, to instruct women to yield the same obedience to authority she exemplified and also to provide an authoritative base to the programs she directed.

Such an interconnection of priesthood and Relief Society—first enunciated by the Prophet Joseph—was continually reinforced by later Church presidents. "Let male and female operate together in the one great common cause," John Taylor told a conference audience.<sup>9</sup> Wilford Woodruff confirmed this mutual labor: "The responsibilities of building up this Kingdom rest alike upon the man and the woman."<sup>10</sup> Lorenzo Snow exhorted the sisters to take an interest in their societies for they were "of great importance. Without them," he repeated, "the church could not be fully organized."<sup>11</sup> Presiding Bishop Edward Hunter expanded the words of Joseph to the sisters. "They have saved much suffering," he said, "and have been a great help to the Bishops. They have the Priesthood—a portion of the priesthood rests upon the sisters."<sup>12</sup> The Relief Society did not consider itself just a ladies auxiliary. Through it the women of the Church had been given a vehicle by which their voices could be heard, their capabilities utilized, their contributions valued.

In the process of organizing the women into the structure of the Church, Joseph opened other significant avenues of participation. At the April 28th meeting in 1842, he affirmed their right to use spiritual gifts, which were freely exercised in the early days of the Church. The gift of tongues had rested on many of the sisters of the Church since its beginning, and others had testified to receiving the power to rebuke evil spirits and to prophesy. At issue at this particular meeting in Nauvoo was the right of women to lay on hands for the purpose of healing. Some were ordained for this purpose, Joseph explained to the Relief Society women, but, he assured them, anybody could do it who had the faith or if the sick had the faith to be healed by that administration.<sup>13</sup> These were gifts of the spirit, he told them, designated

to follow all believers. They were gifts of faith given to the faithful, irrespective of gender or even age. One member of the General Retrenchment Association described her own healing at the hands of her young son whose "perfect and pure faith in the power and mercies of God had claimed for her the blessings which he asked in childish simplicity and trust."<sup>14</sup>

Again, Eliza was to lead out as the practice of blessing one another through laying on of hands and washing and anointing developed among the sisters. She not only encouraged the use of these spiritual activities but taught women the proper procedure for doing so. In a directive to the Relief Society in 1884 she reminded the sisters that no special setting apart was necessary for these administrations. "Any and all sisters," she said,

who honor their holy covenants, not only have the right, but should feel it a duty, whenever called upon, to administer to our sisters in these ordinances; and we testify that when administered and received in faith and humility they are accompanied with almighty power.<sup>15</sup>

---

IT WAS IN THE TEMPLE EXPERIENCE THAT  
MORMON WOMEN OF THE EARLY  
CHURCH MOST FULLY DEFINED  
THEMSELVES AND THEIR PLACE IN BOTH  
THE TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL  
KINGDOM.

---

While she connected their use to those who had received the temple endowment, President Joseph F. Smith in 1914 substantiated Joseph's original counsel that such administrations could be exercised by all members of the household of faith.<sup>16</sup>

Minutes of the women's organizations, (Relief Society, YLMIA, and Primary) personal diaries, and letters attest to the efficacy of these spiritual activities of the women, not only in healing the sick and bringing comfort and solace to women in childbirth but in strengthening the spiritual fibre of all who participated in them. Relief Society testimony meetings were punctuated with demonstrations of the gift of tongues and accounts of healings by the administration of sisters. Washing and anointing a woman about to be confined for childbirth became one of the most significant of these rituals, encouraged by their leaders and sought after by the sisters themselves. At a time when women continually faced the crushing burden of infant death as they gave birth year after year—or even their own death in so doing—such administrations by those who knew precisely the pangs of that burden had a deep and personal meaning. The women must have experienced a unique transmittal of energizing spiritual strength and support as they felt the knowing and comforting hands of kindred souls placed upon them. These religious practices became a source of spiritual bonding among the sisters of the Church. Looking back on a life time of sharing such experiences with other women, Emmeline Wells recalled the "beautiful little meetings" which the sisters often held in her home. She remembered the

“glorious testimonies born by Sister Isabella Horne and Eliza Snow. . . and the wonderful singing of Mother Elizabeth Ann Whitney [in tongues] with its beautiful interpretation by Aunt Zina.” These were women, she told a new generation of Mormon sisters, “whom I loved as much as if bound by kindred ties, closer, perhaps, because our faith and work were so in tune with our every day life.”<sup>17</sup> Access to this kind of spiritual power and union by both women and men gave meaning to the concept of building a community of saints.

It was in the temple experience, I believe, that Mormon women of the early Church most fully defined themselves and their place in both the temporal and eternal kingdom. Here they learned their relationship to priesthood in very personal and tangible ways, particularly those who received all of the temple ordinances. Joseph recorded, before meeting with the Relief Society at its sixth meeting, that he was going to give a lecture to the sisters on the priesthood, showing them how they would come in possession of its gifts, privileges, and blessings. Subsequent events indicate that he intended to prepare them, just as he had the brethren, to receive the fullness of the gospel, or the priesthood ordinances that were to be administered in the temple. Conscious that his time was limited, he introduced these ordinances to a selected group of men and later women before the completion of the Nauvoo Temple. When it was completed many of those who had received their endowment beforehand became the first temple officiators. “Woman,” Emmeline B. Wells remembered, “was called upon to take her part in administering therein, officiating in the character of priestess.”<sup>18</sup> This term was consistently applied to women who performed temple service. Eliza R. Snow, Zina D. H. Young, and Bathsheba W. Smith, who served, each in her own time, simultaneously as general president of the Relief Society and as temple matron (using a contemporary term) were frequently referred to as Presiding High Priestesses.

Once again women and men were called to unite their efforts in another aspect—the most important one—of their religious life. “Our sisters should be prepared to take their position in Zion,” John Taylor announced at a Relief Society conference. “They are really one with us, and when the brethren go into the temples to officiate for the males, the sisters will go for the females; we operate together for the good of the whole. . . . all acting mutually, through the ordinances of the Gospel, as saviours upon Mount Zion.”<sup>19</sup>

I believe it is impossible to overestimate the significance of temple work in the lives of early Mormon women. As both initiates and officiators they knew they were participating in the essential priesthood ordinances of the gospel in the same manner as their husbands, their fathers, or their brothers. Moreover, they knew it was a universal work for both the living and the dead and the appellation, “Saviours on Mount Zion,” was not just a poetic phrase. Nor was it merely hyperbole in the words of welcome given by the Kanab Relief Society officers when Eliza R. Snow and Zina D. H. Young visited:

We welcome sister Eliza and Zina as our Elect Lady and her counselor, and as Presidents of all the feminine

portion of the human race, although comparatively few recognize their right to this authority. Yet, we know they have been set apart as leading Priestesses of this dispensation. As such we honor them.<sup>20</sup>

Besides bringing women and men together to work as partners in performing priesthood ordinances, the temple also underscored their interdependence in the eternal plan. Marriage was an essential saving ordinance and, through marriage, women had access to priesthood. James E. Talmage, author of *The House of the Lord*, explains:

It is a precept of the Church that women of the Church share the authority of the priesthood with their husbands, actual or prospective; and therefore women, whether taking the endowment for themselves or for the dead, are not ordained to specific rank in the Priesthood. Nevertheless, there is no grade, rank, or phase of the temple endowment to which women are not eligible on an equality with man.<sup>21</sup>

Lucy Meserve Smith, wife of apostle George A. Smith, was one who expressed very clearly this perception of shared priesthood. Writing of a particularly frightful experience in which she felt the tangible presence of evil spirits, she recalled that

the holy spirit said to me they can do no harm where the name of Jesus is used with authority. I immediately rebuked them in [that name] and also by virtue of the Holy Priesthood conferred upon me in common with my companion in the Temple of our God.<sup>22</sup>

In a patriarchal blessing given to her at the death of her husband, Zina Y. Williams was also reminded of the particular power given to her in the Temple: “These blessings are yours, the blessings and the power according to the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood, you received in your endowments. . . .”<sup>23</sup>

Though the question of women and priesthood evoked a great deal of semantic volleying over whether they held or shared it, the effect of the precept, as expressed by Talmage, was the encouragement by Church leaders for women and men to use it jointly in blessing or administering to their children—or to others—as occasion arose. And they did. For example, in 1873 George A. Smith, then a member of the First Presidency, travelled with a party of Mormons, including Lorenzo Snow, his sister Eliza, Feramorz Little, and others, to the Holy Land. At a stopover in Bologna, Italy, he felt ill. “I became fatigued and dizzy,” he wrote in his diary. “I got into a carriage and returned

---

JOSEPH TURNED THE KEY TO WOMEN,  
NOT IN BEHALF OF WOMEN AS WE  
GENERALLY HEAR, AND PROMISED THAT  
KNOWLEDGE AND INTELLIGENCE WOULD  
FLOW DOWN FROM THAT TIME FORTH.

---

to the Hotel. On arriving at the hotel I found myself so unwell that I requested Bros. Snow & Little and Sister Eliza to lay hands on me.”<sup>24</sup> Children were encouraged to cultivate enough faith to be able, when afflicted, to call upon their parents or the Elders to lay hands upon them that they might recover.<sup>25</sup>

The ambivalence that seemed to follow the question of women and priesthood is noticeably evident in an



Carol Cornwall Madsen

answer Joseph F. Smith gave in 1907 in the *Improvement Era* to a question on the subject. No, he said, women do not hold the priesthood. Nevertheless, he continued, "if a woman is requested to lay hands on the sick with her husband or with any other officer holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, she may do so with perfect propriety."

It is no uncommon thing for a man and wife unitedly to administer to their children, and the husband being mouth, he may properly say out of courtesy, "By authority of the holy priesthood in us vested."<sup>26</sup>

While the debate continued concerning their precise relationship to priesthood, women went about with a knowledge that they did indeed have a claimable right, not just to its blessings but also to its gifts and privileges, as Joseph had promised. In their homes it was exercised jointly with their husbands, or alone in their husband's absence in behalf of themselves, their families, and often friends or neighbors. In their Church activities it bolstered the authority delegated to them to officiate in their various callings. In the temple it was utilized directly by women as they administered the priesthood ordinances to other women.

Thus through the sealing ordinances of the temple men and women became not only heirs to the blessings and privileges of priesthood but candidates for godhood, ultimately, according to Talmage, "administering in their respective stations, seeing and understanding alike, and co-operating to the full in the government of their family kingdom." Conscious of the inequities that unbalanced the relationships of men and women in this life, he added, "Then shall woman be recompensed in rich measure for all the injustice that womanhood has endured in mortality."<sup>27</sup>

So it was that from their membership in the Relief Society which they understood to be an essential part of Church organization, from their participation in

spiritual affairs through the exercise of spiritual gifts and their share in the uses of priesthood, and especially from the promise of godhood which awaited the faithful man and woman only together, Mormon women felt themselves to be an integral, viable force within the kingdom. Allowing for the extravagance of the zealot, and Eliza R. Snow was certainly that, there *was* a basis for her claim that Mormon women "occupied a more important position than was occupied by any other woman on earth, . . . associated as they are with apostles and prophets, sharing with them in the gifts and powers of the holy Priesthood, and participating in those sacred ordinances which would prepare them to once more dwell in the presence of the Holy One."<sup>28</sup> This is the legacy of Mormon women.



#### Notes

1. Blanche Beechwood, "About Letter Writing," *Woman's Exponent* 4 (1 July 1875): 24.
2. Minutes of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society, 28 April 1842, typescript copy, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited CA), p. 32.
3. *Young Woman's Journal* 17 (July 1906): 295-96.
4. *Woman's Exponent* 7 (1 July 1878): 18.
5. Relief Society Minutes, 17 March 1842, p. 8.
6. Relief Society Minutes, 13 August 1843, p. 91.
7. Eliza R. Snow to Wilmarth East, 23 April 1883, Eliza R. Snow Papers, CA.
8. Smithfield Ward, Cache Stake, Relief Society Minutes, 1868-78, 12 May 1878, p. 486, ms, CA.
9. *Journal of Discourses* 19 (21 October 1877): 246.
10. *Woman's Exponent* 9 (15 July 1880): 31.
11. Box elder Stake Relief Society Minutes 1875-1884, 10 December 1876, ms, CA.
12. *Woman's Exponent* 6 (1 December 1877): 102.
13. Relief Society Minutes, 28 April 1842, p. 29.
14. *Woman's Exponent* 1 (15 February 1873): 138.
15. *Woman's Exponent* 13 (15 September 1884): 91, and General Relief Society Handbook, 1902.
16. First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose) to Presidents of Stakes and Bishops of Wards, 3 October 1914, ms, CA.
17. *Relief Society Magazine* 3 (February 1916): 68.
18. Emmeline B. Wells, "Pen Sketch of an Illustrious Woman," *Woman's Exponent* 9 (15 October 1880): 74.
19. *Woman's Exponent* 8 (1 June 1879): 2.
20. *Woman's Exponent* 9 (1 April 1881): 165.
21. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1912), p. 94.
22. *Historical Record of Lucy M. Smith*, ms, CA, p. 52. (Record begins: "Salt Lake City June 12th 1889 Historical Sketches of My Great Grandfather.")
23. Zina Y. Card Papers, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.
24. George A. Smith, Diary, 9 January 1873, holograph, CA.
25. *Woman's Exponent* 1 (15 April 1873): 173.
26. *Improvement Era* 10 (February 1907): 308.
27. "The Eternity of Sex," *Young Woman's Journal* 25 (October 1914): 603.
28. "Positions and Duties," *Woman's Exponent* 3 (15 July 1874): 28.

CAROL CORNWALL MADSEN is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of Utah. She is associated with the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at BYU and author of numerous historical articles on Mormon women as well as coauthor of the book *Sisters and Little Saints* (Deseret Book).

---

# Mormon Women and the Struggle for Definition Contemporary Women

---

*A loss of certitude about where women fit*

---

Lavina Fielding Anderson

**I**F I were to characterize the relationship between Mormon women and the contemporary Church, I think that relationship would lack the certainty that Carol has described in her paper. The phrase “building the kingdom” which energized so many of the religious and social efforts of nineteenth-century women no longer means the same thing today. If contemporary women were asked to define it, more likely synonyms might be “serving in the Church” and “trying to be righteous.” But such characterizations do not have the immediacy of colonizing, building, planting, and seeing settlements grow, in part, by the literal labor of adding a baby every year or two.

I see two reasons for this loss of certitude about where women fit into the Church. One is the proliferation of bureaucracy and hierarchical levels that has tended to make nearly every step more difficult. On the ward level, a Relief Society teacher is called after the Relief Society president consults with the bishop; she receives her manual from the secretary, who ordered it through the ward clerk or on her own from a distribution center, where it arrived from Church Printing Services after spending at least two years being planned by a committee, evaluated by a committee, written by a committee, edited, and then correlated by a committee. While such a process may meet the personal needs of women today more directly, it’s a far cry from the experience of Hazel L. Peterson of Ovid, a Relief Society president in the Paris Idaho Stake for twenty-one years, whom I interviewed in 1975. Part of her assignment was “walking three miles carrying a baby and a basket. . . to collect the sisters’ contributions—a few eggs, a ball of yarn, a spool of thread, a few pennies.” (Lavina Fielding, “The Saints in Bear Lake Valley,” *Ensign*, July 1975, p. 39.)

On the general level, this proliferation and complexity means a complicated bureaucratic procedure. If Eliza R. Snow had a Relief Society matter to discuss with

Brigham Young, she could presumably do it at dinner where she sat on his left. Now the Relief Society president must take a concern to the auxiliary advisor, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, who can take it to the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, who may refer it to the executive committee of the Quorum of the Twelve, who might bring it up for discussion by the full Quorum of the Twelve, who could decide to pass the matter on to the First Presidency. Although such a system can be remarkably fast and efficient at times, the normal result is for most matters to move slowly and for some matters to be dropped altogether because one level chooses not to pass it on to another level.

The second reason for the loss of certitude about where women fit in the Church today may stem from the emphasis on the priesthood. (I offer this merely as a hypothesis because I have not done the research to support it.) But I suspect that as missionary work, genealogy, family home evening, etc. became “priesthood” responsibilities—in a possibly much-needed effort to teach men their responsibilities—the use of “men” and “priesthood” has become nearly synonymous. President Kimball has made missionary work the preeminent kingdom-building activity of his presidency, but women have not been encouraged to serve fulltime missions. It is a “priesthood responsibility.” Women are advised to “support” missionary efforts, but support activities remain uncertain and undefined, vague pious wishes and unfocused goodwill. Ironically, a sizeable number of Latter-day Saint women are literally supporting their missionary sons by working part-or-full-time to provide the funds to keep them in the mission field, but they must deal with the guilt of feeling that they disobey Church leaders’ counsel to stay home.

Of course, these two factors—bureaucratic proliferation and a tendency to separate male

contributions from female contributions and honor the male contributions as “priesthood responsibilities”—affect the whole Church, men as well as women, individuals, and families. It may have contributed to the rise of a game some Salt Lake Mormons play called China-watching the Church, an attempt to interpret inner workings of the Church from fragmentary external clues. Because the decision-making process in the Church is shrouded in silence and because the leaders are becoming increasingly remote from the members—both because of the expansion of the Church and because of the careful attention to public image recently—China-watching has developed in response to the natural human need to know not only the whats but the whys.

It’s based on the larger international game of China-watching, where you tell who is in favor this year by seeing who is standing next to whom at the May Day celebrations. The rules are simple: You announce, “Hey, did you know that . . . ?” After “that” has been thoroughly described, you end with the speculation, “Well, I wonder what it means?”

For a few minutes tonight, I’d like to China-watch the Church on women with you.

1. Hey, did you know that since October 1980, seating has been provided for General Boards at general conference, putting women visibly up front at that meeting?

2. At the Regional Representative Seminar on 29 September 1978, President Kimball announced that “the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve have determined that there is no scriptural prohibition against sisters offering prayers in sacrament meetings.” It was therefore determined that it is permissible for sisters to offer prayers in any meetings they attend, including sacrament meetings, Sunday School meetings, and Stake Conferences. Relief Society visiting teachers



Barbara B. Smith, President, LDS Church Relief Society

may offer prayers in homes that they enter in fulfilling visiting teaching assignments” (*Ensign*, November 1978, p. 100). However, the current *General Handbook of Instructions* (no. 21, 1976), had not specified that only men could pray in sacrament meetings.

---

*I THINK WE OFTEN POUR THE NEW WINE  
OF THE GOSPEL INTO THE OLD SKINS OF  
CULTURE, CUSTOM, AND THE  
TRADITIONS OF THE FATHERS.*

---

3. In October 1979, a friend of mine heard a letter read by his bishopric explaining that women could no longer be used in Sunday School presidencies. At the time four women were serving in such positions in his stake. He wrote to the Sunday School and received an answer from the executive secretary acknowledging that the question comes up frequently, “particularly where there is a lack of qualified priesthood leadership. Just recently we raised this question again with the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Presidency. They reaffirmed with us the same counsel they have previously given. We have been asked to discourage the use of women in Sunday School presidencies for basically two reasons. The first of which is a great concern with the General Authorities concerns the fact that members of a Sunday School presidency are required to meet together and travel together often in order to fulfill their responsibilities. The opportunities for indiscretion are so many that the Brethren have great concern about a mixed Sunday School presidency. The second reason concerns itself with the awkward position a sister is placed in as a member of a Sunday School presidency. The Brethren are aware that so often a sister in such a role is called upon to give direction and instruction to priesthood leaders that she finds it a difficult thing to do. Report from sisters who have served in such Sunday School positions bear out their concern in both of these areas.

“It is felt that there are ample opportunities for leadership experience in the Relief Society, Primary, and Young Women to fill the needs for such experience by qualified sisters.

“It is obvious that ability, enthusiasm, and other qualities for leadership are not a question . . .” (Barrie K. Marchant to Charles E. Mitchener draft and Charles E. Mitchener to Barrie K. Marchant, 12 October 1979, Church Archives.)

4. One of my former roommates, a woman, has served as assistant ward financial clerk. I went to the general handbooks to check on this position and discovered very little about women financial clerks but quite a bit about women assistant ward clerks. In 1908 (*General Handbook of Instructions*, no. 9, p. 21), a ward clerk is not required to hold the priesthood but his penmanship and “general fitness for the office” should be considered. At that time, the ward clerk was paid a modest stipend out of tithing funds. The next year, in 1909, the handbook was much more elaborate: “Whenever local conditions are such that the ward clerk is not able to perform all his duties

promptly and to the satisfaction of the bishopric of the ward, and a competent male deputy clerk is not available, the bishopric may engage the services of a woman deputy clerk, who should be assigned a certain class of the ward clerical work, and who should be allowed such a portion of the ward clerk's allowance as may be agreed upon by the interested parties; but the ward clerk himself must take minutes of all priesthood, bishop's, and acting teachers' meetings." (No. 10, p. 21.) With minor wording changes, the same paragraph stood in the 1910 edition.

By 1921, eleven years later, this paragraph had been amended to read that the ward clerk "should hold the priesthood, but, where circumstances may require it, he may be assisted by a woman" (No. 13, p. 32). There were no changes through the editions of 1923, 1928, and 1934.

In 1940, nineteen years later, there were substantial revisions. The ward clerk, it was specified, "should have some knowledge of accounting . . . and be a good penman. He should hold the priesthood and be exemplary. If circumstances warrant, he may be assisted by a woman" (No. 16, p. 13). This is the last year the word *woman* is used. In 1944, the ward clerk should "hold the priesthood . . . . In large wards, it may be advisable to appoint an assistant" whose sex, qualifications, and priesthood are not specified (No. 17, p. 41).

The next major revision did not occur for sixteen years. In 1960, the handbook specified that ward clerks "should hold the Melchizedek Priesthood" (No. 18, p. 40). In 1963, it stated in emphatic italics: "*They must hold The Melchizedek Priesthood*" (No. 19, p. 43). By 1971, bishops were counseled to appoint "ward or branch clerk[s] who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood . . . . wherever possible" and it is "also desirable" that assistants hold the Melchizedek Priesthood (*The Priesthood Bulletin*, February 1971, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 1). This position was softened still further in the 1976 *General Handbook of Instructions* (no. 21, p. 10), still in current use, which states, "When a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder is unavailable, a worthy, responsible Aaronic Priesthood holder may be called."

5. The 1982 Relief Society manual, the one that will be used next year, has 39 examples involving women as the protagonists (almost as many involving men—28). Only three of the examples were specific and personal, identifying the women by name. Only one of the three was a living woman. Furthermore, men were quoted 112 times. Women were, excluding those in the cultural refinement lessons, quoted nine times. Eliza R. Snow was quoted once. Barbara B. Smith was quoted once. Three of the women were not identified by name. Two were authors of books on child development and the remaining two were authors of articles in the *Ensign*. Works such as *Woman*, "Why Every Woman Needs Relief Society," "Relief Society—Its Promises and Potential," and "The Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters" were quoted extensively. All of them were written by men.

6. The Primary curriculum is being revised, but the current Blazer B and Merrie Miss manuals, which contain identical lessons on priesthood, make this statement: "When a boy or man receives the priesthood, . . . he becomes a worker in God's kingdom" (Merrie Miss B, p. 58; Blazer-B, p. 51). While this may be true, it raises some questions: was the boy *not* a worker in God's



Marian R. Boyer, First Counselor, LDS Church Relief Society

kingdom before? And can someone without the priesthood—for example, everyone in the girls' class including the teacher—be such a worker? How much difference does the priesthood really make? And should differences be emphasized, or even created, when they are not concerned with clearly relevant matters such as administration and ordinances?

Merrie Miss girls are encouraged to help their brothers or friends honor the priesthood—an important principle—by the following practices: they are to encourage deacons to attend meetings, not plan activities that would interfere with the boys' assignments, let brothers take charge of decision-making "under the direction of mother, when father is not present," leave him the bathroom on Sunday morning, press his clothes, shine his shoes, and help him memorize scriptures (Merrie Miss B Memo for lesson 11). The image is of a twelve-year-old deacon to whom everyone in the family, including the mother, defers, who expects the family schedule to revolve around him, who requires personal body service, who cannot study without an audience/tutor, and who will not carry out assignments and attend meetings unless he is "encouraged" to do so and has no competition from other activities. It also implies that women are in charge of the spiritual life of the family, must "manage" the boys and men in their spiritual responsibilities, must defer, and must provide actual physical services before their men will meet their obligations.

The manual gives no examples of girls striving for intellectual or scholastic achievement. There are no women missionaries. No girls play sports. No boys play musical instruments. Only boys earn money. Only boys save lives. Boys learn to read topographic maps and



Shirley W. Thomas, Second Counselor, LDS Church Relief Society

compasses and test their skills on hikes. Girls glue crushed aluminum foil and string in patterns on the backs of cardboard mirrors, which are to remind them to always have pleasant faces. In our urban society, being pleasant may actually be a more useful skill than reading a topographic map, but I wonder what the eventual impact on a girl becomes when she is told, overtly and covertly, that her most important job is to become pleasing and pretty.

7. The Young Women's curriculum defines femininity as "the tender qualities and attitudes not characteristic of men" and illustrates it with a list of essential feminine qualities that begin with hair, eyes, makeup, clothing, expression, and poise. (Laurel A, pp. 95-113.)

8. According to the 1974 Higley-Squire survey at BYU, only 40 percent of the young women who entered graduated with a four-year degree. Eighty percent of the young men who entered graduated. Nearly half of the women who did not graduate indicated that marriage was the reason. A follow-up study for 1974-1980 indicated that 64 percent of the men who graduated were married; only 26 percent of the women who graduated were married. A woman who marries as a freshman has a 5 percent chance of graduating; a sophomore has a 20 percent chance, a junior has a 75 percent chance, and a senior has a 99.5 percent chance. The author seriously proposes that women be encouraged not to marry until after age 21 (their junior year or later); but in the entire Primary and Young Women's curriculum, there was only one example of a woman who had graduated from college. (Brent A. Barlow, "Marriage, Education, or Both at BYU: Facts and Fantasies," address to ASBYU Women, 9 October 1980, manuscript.)

9. Utah women, and presumably LDS women, have sought employment in such numbers that one researcher has concluded that "there is no difference" between them and the national statistics. (Howard M. Bahr, "The Declining Distinctiveness of Utah's Working Women," *BYU Studies* 19 [Summer 1979]: 525-43.) Authoritative statements on the subject have varied from the very negative to the relatively positive, but without acknowledging either changes or differences of opinion. For example, in 1963 Spencer W. Kimball, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, queried: "How nearly perfect can a mother be who rushes in the morning to get everybody off and settled for the day, herself included, then returns weary after a hard day of employment to a tired husband. . . and to children and youth with problems, and then to her homemaking, cooking, cleaning, and . . . social calendar. From such homes come many conflicts, marital problems, and divorces, and delinquent children" ("Keep Mothers in the Home," *Improvement Era*, December 1963, p. 1072). Sixteen years later at the women's fireside, in October 1979, he said, now as president of the Church, "Some women, because of circumstances beyond their control, must work. We understand that. We understand further that as families are raised, the talents God has given you and blessed you with can often be put to effective use in additional service to mankind. Do not, however, make the mistake of being drawn off into secondary tasks which will cause the neglect of your eternal assignment such as giving birth to and rearing the spirit children of our Father in Heaven. Pray carefully over all your decisions." (*Ensign*, November 1979, p. 103.)

In March 1980, Barbara B. Smith said, "The decision of a mother to go to work outside her home is an individual matter. Some widowed and divorced mothers may find they have to work to support themselves and their children. For some women working is a right decision at a certain time; for others it is not." (*Relief Society Today: A Conversation with Barbara B. Smith*, *Ensign*, March 1980, p. 21; see also *Ensign*, November 1979, p. 108.)

This statement was published twelve months after President Ezra Taft Benson, speaking to a fourteen-stake fireside at BYU told the men in the audience, "You

---

TO THE EXTENT THAT CALLINGS  
REQUIRE US TO SERVE PROGRAMS  
RATHER THAN PEOPLE, I SUGGEST  
HUSBANDING OUR RESOURCES  
CAREFULLY.

---

are the provider and it takes the edge off your manliness when you have the mother of your children also be a provider." ("In His Steps," 1979 *Devotional Speeches of the Year* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University 1980], p. 64.)

Well, these nine examples are all *very* interesting, but what do they mean? By selecting nine other examples, of course, one could produce an entirely different conclusion about the relationship of women to the Church and how the Church seems to value women. As far as these examples go, they may be straws blowing in

the wind, but they tell us nothing about the wind itself. That answer must come from research that identifies not only what was said but who the major voices were, when they spoke, what events in the Church and in the world influenced their pronouncements, what sources of information they had access to, what they perceived as problems, and what they perceived as solutions. I have deliberately not tried to create that kind of context.

The conclusions that I wish to draw are fewer and simpler. China-watching is interesting in the short run but ultimately boring and confusing in the long run. It presupposes a unified policy on a given issue when the chances are that no such policy exists—or should exist. The joy of the gospel comes in studying its principles and finding individual ways of translating those principles into practice. To the extent that we look to the institutional church for a list of approved practices—how to have a good family home evening, how to spend Sundays now that we have the consolidated meeting schedule, how to have a good marriage—we are depriving ourselves of the joy of seeking and receiving individual revelation.

Let me expand on that last point. It is sometimes difficult to move from principle to practice. Leaders, members, and manual writers, in an effort to help others make that transfer, sometimes—perhaps even frequently—tell people how to live the gospel rather than encouraging them to find their own ways to do so. When they do, I think they often pour the new wine of the gospel into the old skins of culture, custom, and the traditions of the fathers, tainting the gospel and actually limiting its practice by their prescriptions.

In a Church that is led by men and where a majority of decisions are made in the absence of women or even in the absence of significant information provided by

women, I think it is almost inevitable that the role of women will be limited. Sometimes this will be because the capabilities of women are doubted or because individual women are mistrusted by those in positions of authority; but far more commonly, I believe, they are simply overlooked. This is a situation that has the potential for causing great pain to many individual women and limiting the growth of both men and women.

However, to the extent that women attack the institutional church directly as the problem and demand, wheedle, argue, or plead for acceptance and validation by the institution, they are making a mistake. And so are men. By focusing their attention on the institutional church, they are limiting themselves from exploring much more valuable aspects of the gospel.

My suggestion, based on whatever peace I have reached at this point in my life, is that we accept responsibilities and callings as they come to us and fulfill them intelligently, faithfully, and resourcefully to the extent that we are serving others. To the extent that those callings require us to serve programs rather than people, I suggest husbanding our resources carefully.

I also suggest that we beware of attempts to gain institutional power. To do that or to use what influence we have to gain more is to play bureaucratic games by a bureaucracy's amoral rules. Such a course of action will cut us off from the forces of heaven. Despite the current concern with institutional visibility, position, representation, and power for women, I deeply feel that there is only one form of power worth seeking, that of personal righteousness. It is the only form of power that will endure when the Lord receives and judges his Church. It is the only form of power that will enable us to accept and serve in positions at any level without being corrupted by the temptation to exercise unrighteous dominion.

Personal righteousness is based on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his redemptive sacrifice, a commitment to the never-ending process of change called repentance, increasing sensitivity to the Holy Ghost to the point where its companionship can be constant, and relationships with others governed by the law of charity. Whatever position one may be called to, whatever assignment, whatever calling will simply be yet another arena for the exercise of these qualities. And one's ecclesiastical position may be, I think, largely irrelevant to the quality of the life that fills it.

In a beautiful verse in the Doctrine and Covenants (5:14), the Lord speaks of the coming forth "of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." He gave that revelation in March 1829, over a year before the organization of the Church. We are still coming forth from the wilderness to meet our Lord—but I suspect that we will meet him not as wards, not as stakes, certainly not as central Church committees, departments, and divisions, but as individuals and possibly as families who have taken his name upon us and sought, in love and humility, to see his face. 

LAVINA FIELDING ANDERSON received her Ph.D. in American literature at the University of Washington. An editor with the *Ensign* from 1973-1981, she is currently managing an editing and writing business.



Lavina Fielding Anderson

---

# Mormon Women and the Struggle for Definition What Is the Church?

---

*Discerning God's hand in the institution*

---

Francine Bennion

**T**ONIGHT we have been asking how the LDS church defines *woman* and her roles. Implicit in that question is another: How do both men and women define *the Church*?

I don't think we all mean the same thing. When we attribute a particular policy, style, or teaching to "the Church," we may mean the organization, departments or positions in the organization, a single individual, a group, spoken or printed communications, a body of doctrine and ritual, or all of these, or none of them. What we are thinking of when we say "the Church" may have a lot to do with how we define ourselves or each other in response to one of its pronouncements or practices.

One of our sons is on a mission in Guatemala. In a letter last July, he mentioned the possibility of baptizing nine people the next day. However, he wrote, "The family Veliz may hold off (that's 5 of the 9) because one of the dear sisters blew up last week in Relief Society and said she wouldn't teach the 'fools' any more, which may have frightened sister Veliz out of her gourd, but still, they may yet pull through." I asked about the incident, and my son wrote back a month later, "Concerning the sister who blew up in Relief Society. One must remember that these people can be awful slow and stubborn, and it could drive many a good-willed soul crazy trying to teach their best and not being supported or even really listened to sometimes. Of course people paid her more attention when she let off some steam. People love to gossip, even my silly comp gossips like a rag apple haggit, so I'm sure everyone talked about what a jerk she was that whole week. The next week she gave her testimony during the fast meeting and then burst into tears and asked everyone to forgive her and whatnot. Personally, I feel people can be pretty dang intolerant, impatient, backbiting, nasty, and all the other rotten characteristics that go into being human. I guess having a church that is designed to help overly human

people to learn a bit of control, and to be more Christ-like, is necessarily vulnerable to occasional human outbursts by the slowly repenting members. I guess it's a matter of pride, insecurity, and fear. . . ." I wonder who and what "the Church" was for Hermana Veliz as she sat in one of its meetings.

A missionary in Thailand a few years ago worked in a village with a group of baptized converts, all women. Efforts to convert men, who could hold the priesthood and establish a self-sustaining branch, were unsuccessful, partly because men feared that baptism might mean loss of employment, respect in the community, and male associates. Because no men were baptized, the missionaries were transferred and not replaced. The faithful women continued to hold meetings and study the Book of Mormon together. They wrote down questions that came up, and representatives went to a district conference in Bangkok to ask priesthood leaders their questions about the gospel and also about music in meetings. What is "the Church" to these women, willing to take such initiative?

At a BYU Relief Society meeting a couple of weeks ago, the teacher (whose name, like mine, is Francine) opened with a story about her friend, a girl who got on drugs in her teens, got off them, met a man whom even her parents liked, married him with their approval, and was brutally beaten by him before the honeymoon was over. Ashamed to tell even her parents, she kept repeated beatings hidden until one day when her parents came to see her and interrupted one of his rages. The parents took her home, and she got a divorce and went to work. "Everybody thought I was some kind of low life or something," she told Francine. "I tried killing myself, but I hoped I wouldn't succeed because I didn't think God wanted me either."

Three years ago she heard that the Church was going to have a meeting just for women and told Francine she'd

like to go but had no one to go with. Francine told us, with commendable honesty, that her first thought was, "She has a terrible spirit, and she smokes and smells like it, and what would everyone think of me if I were sitting with her?" But Francine's friendship and missionary spirit prevailed, and she and the girl went to the meeting. Afterwards the girl said, "President Kimball is pretty terrific. He *cares*, and he said the Lord cares, not only about the married women but about the single, the widowed, the *divorced!*" Learning that God loved *her*, that President Kimball (whose name she hadn't known before the meeting) cared about her, was a revelation. She is now on a mission for "the Church." Some women felt that meeting was boring—"the same old boring stuff"; some didn't like certain things that were said. And then there was Francine's friend.

We are a diverse people, as Emmeline B. Wells and Carol have said so well, and to generalize about how women or men respond to Church pronouncements or practices can in no way be accurate. Hence the Church itself is necessarily diverse, despite its singular authority from God, its authorized scriptures, and its official *Handbook of Instructions*. It is a mistake to give to "the Church" the identity of individuals in it, even very powerful individuals, or to give to an individual the assumed identity of "the Church." We all do such lumping at times—it's hard to think otherwise—but at least we should be aware of traps in it.

---

CURRICULUM MATERIALS ARE THE  
PRODUCT OF PERSONS, BUT THESE  
PERSONS REMAIN UNIDENTIFIED AND  
UNADDRESSABLE.

---

Another problem for those of us who believe that the ultimate leadership of our church is divine and the delegated leadership human is the continuing struggle to distinguish God's hand in the pronouncements and productions of the institution. We sometimes want it simpler—everything divinely perfect, with justice, wisdom, and understanding (never mind whose identity gets lost in the process so long as it isn't our own), or everything only human so we can disregard what we don't like. But instead, those of us who are believing *and* observant must deal with human limitations in a divine church and divine absolutes and divinely delegated authority in a human church. As a result we are not as likely to define roles of men and women by every current "Church" practice and pronouncement as are those who see "the Church's way" as a consistently precise representation of God's ways.

One task of the Church which is both of Jesus Christ and also of the Latter-day Saints is to help us translate God's ways into our own. That is not always easy. None of us becomes God when we are called to serve in his Church: we do not lose our own identities and powers. Even as we become increasingly willing and able to serve him and as our abilities are enhanced by his help and direction, we are still us, not him. Nephi writes that God

speaks to us according to our own language, unto our own understanding (2 Nephi 31:3).

Both Lavina and Carol have given examples which illustrate such ambiguities. For example, women used to perform with Church sanction functions now either reserved exclusively for male priesthood holders or not done at all—blessing the sick, washing and anointing women about to labor in childbirth. Which are God's ways, those authorized by the Church *then* or those authorized by the Church *now*?

For some women, this question is important to their definition both of the Church and also of themselves. For others, the question is not pressing. For some women, participation in visible priesthood functions represents status in the eyes of God and men. And some men emphasize the seeming disparity. But other men and women are concerned not with status but with blessing and healing. For them, priesthood is power to serve not pride in a hierarchy. In my experience, fewer women suffer because of exclusion from priesthood functions than do because of the pride or insensitivity of a priesthood leader who failed to value or respect them. In other words from the misuse of power.

As for policy changes regarding women in Sunday School presidencies, I've heard more concern from bishops who lost women from their Sunday School than from women who wanted to be in a presidency and couldn't.

More dismaying to me than the policy change itself is the rationale for it expressed in the letter Lavina read from the executive secretary of the Sunday School. Such thinking (because a few might not prove trustworthy, none should be trusted) may indeed keep some safe from the specific temptations of a Sunday School presidency meeting. But such reasoning may also help both women and men to define themselves as more weak, helpless, and dependent on circumstance than God apparently thought them when he gave them life in this dangerous place. Warning people about specific temptations and circumstances is one thing. Basing policy on the assumption that none can or should try to handle them is another.

The other reason given for women's exclusion from Sunday School presidencies raises a host of questions: "so often a sister in such a role is called upon to give direction and instruction to priesthood leaders that she finds it difficult to do." What then are we to make of statements by Church leaders that difficulties bring strength, growth is good, and Church callings can help us to grow? Are we to learn and grow or aren't we? What might contribute to a sister's difficulties, if they occur—the priesthood leader's discomfort in taking direction or instruction from her or her own lack of experience in giving it? Should any such difficulties be perpetuated? What does *delegation* mean? Should priesthood leaders ever take counsel or direction from a woman?

It happens, officially or not, as we all know, and often for the great good of Church members. A couple of weeks ago, a stake president visited a ward to release the bishop and have a new one sustained. After the opening song and prayer, he took care of the business, and then proceeded with talks, calling first on the released bishop's wife, to be followed by her husband and others.

"But," she whispered to the stake president, "what about the sacrament? It hasn't been passed yet." The stake president had forgotten. Would it have been better for members to miss the sacrament than for them to see a woman "counsel" her priesthood leader? Apparently he was not the man to think so but rather appreciated the help.

However disconcerting such priesthood or leadership changes may be, many women I know seem even more disturbed about the way they see themselves described in Church curriculum and the talks of leaders. For many members, any material drawn from these sources becomes "the Church" viewpoint, not just the opinion of individual Church members.

At one time Church lessons were written by identified individuals who expressed faith and understanding which quite clearly came of their own work, thought, and prayer. Earlier still, as Carol mentioned, there was no uniform Church curriculum, no one to regulate before the fact what people would hear in any Church meeting. The Church survived the lack, leaders trusting members to seek their own help from God in speaking or teaching and in determining what was true or wasn't in others' pronouncements.

But today, in our larger and more diverse Church, the prime way of building the kingdom for both members and non-members seems to be formal instruction from relatively uniform curriculum materials. The primary Church activity for many of us is meetings and some home visiting, and the purpose of meetings and visits these days is often the message from the manual.

Lavina has briefly outlined how a series of committees produces what comes out as "the Church" manual. One person, approved by others, may be primarily responsible for what some will see as "the Church" policy, namely that a girl should give her brother the bathroom on Sunday mornings. Curriculum materials are still the products of persons, but today they remain unidentified and unaddressable. As a result many people take individual statements as "Church" statements and attribute divinity to them without weighing them.

---

*THE FORMAT OF CHURCH CURRICULUM  
OFTEN MAKES A STRONGER STATEMENT  
TO MEMBERS THAN DOES ANY  
CONTENT.*

---

In fact the *format* of Church curriculum often makes a stronger statement to members than does any *content*, partly because the format has remained consistent over months and years even though topics vary somewhat. Lessons rarely encourage the open-ended sharing of experience and understanding which leads to the "spiritual bonding" of which Carol spoke. On the contrary what some women learn best from Church classes is sweet passivity and thoughtless superficial repetition because that is what the *format* seems to expect of them, whatever the topic, if the teacher is following the manuals.



*Francine Russell Bennion*

Even a lesson intended to help women be better can make them feel worse or one intended to help them feel protected can make many feel attacked, especially if a woman finds her own challenges too different from what the speaker assumes. For many reasons, those who write these lessons usually hear little feedback. Thus they know much about what they intended to say but little about what their listeners actually heard.

Possible misunderstandings are further compounded by the fact that many teachers, whatever official manuals and leaders may say, continue to do a lot of their own thinking and presenting. Is that fortunate or unfortunate? The answer is *yes*. I didn't like it much the day I heard a Relief Society teacher tell us that we wouldn't get cancer if we ate the right things, and if we did get cancer we shouldn't go to physicians because they have a conspiracy to keep people from the marvelous cures available. But I did like personal initiative last Sunday, when a young teacher, instead of telling us we could grow from adversity, introduced us to her friend. The palsied friend walked with hip-wrenching effort to the front, turned, and consciously formed her mouth into words to say, with occasional great breaths, "Do you mind if I sit? It takes such effort to talk." A chair was provided, and she told us about her life, with intelligence, humor, vigor, and pain. Her words at times required our concentration for understanding, but her meaning was clear and powerful. We weren't just hearing about adversity and growth. We were seeing adversity and growing ourselves with recognition of our capacities for courage and richness because we saw hers.

Thus instruction in one Church meeting, whether

because of the materials or in spite of them, can occasionally do as much for members as all they see and hear and experience the rest of the week. This happens when speaker and hearer are touched by the Spirit and when the lesson provokes more than thoughtless head-nodding of one kind or another. Just this month I heard one young woman, thus moved, bear her testimony at the end of a lesson on forgiveness: "Before, every lesson I've ever heard on forgiveness really turned me off. I knew I wasn't mad at anyone—I had no one to forgive, and I didn't want to hear about the four steps, or five, or whatever. But today, as you were all talking about how not forgiving damaged *you* when you didn't, I started thinking. As long as I can remember, I've felt there was something wrong with me, some reason people wouldn't like me. Today I remembered the second grade. I was the teacher's pet, and I didn't think I could do any wrong either. Other kids in the class got together and decided to teach me a lesson, and they continued to teach me every day for several years. I couldn't figure out what I'd done wrong, why I was so awful that no one liked me. Until today, I've felt bad about myself, like something was wrong with me, that someone might not like me. I'd forgotten those kids. I don't have to feel bad any more. They hurt me, and I can forgive them and be free. I don't have to keep hurting. I can change it."

---

PRACTICES AND PRONOUNCEMENTS ARE GIVEN AND RECEIVED BY MEMBERS WHO EACH HAVE UNIQUE FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND EXPRESSION.

---

This experience reminded me again that practices and pronouncements are both given and received by members who each have unique frameworks for understanding and expression. Though Christ discussed the difficulties of putting new wine in old bottles, even he made his new wine in existing waterpots at Cana. Drops of truth we hear in Church do not fall on empty reservoirs. Neither are curriculum assignments or leadership positions in the Church given to empty puppets. This often accounts for problems which may surface, especially regarding women. For example, some men are considered for Church positions partly because of ability and success in such fields as business and administration, where they know women primarily as subordinates. The only other women they may consistently associate with are their wives, mothers, or daughters. How do men without richer experience learn to work with or understand women in roles other than those with which they already feel comfortable and competent? How do such men learn humility to see and hear and understand *anything* with which they are not already comfortable and competent? How do they put the new wine in old bottles, the ways of God with the experience of man? How do any of us in "the Church" do it? How much help can we use, and from whom?

I know that God gives help to us and our leaders, but I don't believe he gives more than he can without destroying agency. I believe he trusts us to make mistakes and to hurt from each others' mistakes and to help each other as we try to build his kingdom. I believe that he trusts us to learn to define ourselves, with his

help if we will take it.

In this process of self definition, Church messages about what it is to be a woman, perhaps *because* they are ambiguous and conflicting, have not been as central for me as scriptural messages about being a *person*, human in the middle of eternity. These messages have helped me make sense of myself as a single woman, a wife, mother, daughter, a friend, an old lady, hurting or happy in a complex world.

In our scriptures we rarely find teachings specifically for men or for women. Occasionally there are exceptions, like Alma's sermon from which the following verse is taken: "And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive" (Alma 7:23). Today these words sound like something from a Relief Society meeting, and indeed would be appropriate there, but in the preceding verse Alma specifically addressed them to "my beloved *brethren*."

But in general I think all of us in the Church have the same roles in this life: to learn who we want to be and to become more like God if that is our choice, following the example of his Son who is model for us all. We are all alike in some ways and different in others, but the principles Christ taught are equally valuable to us all. Our specific tasks differ and our circumstances differ, and thus some of what we need from the Church and give to the Church differs.

"The Church," in various manifestations and many ways, has led me to the scriptures and has provoked my going to God, thereby knowing him to a degree and wanting to be like him. The Church has provoked my discovering that I'm no captive of my past or present limitations, because Christ's gifts make me free to change. The Church has led me to care about what is real and what is good, in relationships and in being. The Church has been a means of finding sisters and brothers whom I love. Priesthood power has saved me from ill health. The Church, for me, is knowledge and power from God given to human souls who can live better with his continuing help than they can without it.

The last question asked by those who arranged for this discussion is, "Ultimately, how should brothers and sisters in the gospel relate to one another?" The answer of course is with love, but love means different things to different people, and it is a life-long task for most of us to learn how to give and take love. I think we should not assume that we know each other nor assume that any gift makes one of us less to be valued than another nor assume that any of us has no need of another. I think it well to *learn* to be humble, easy to be entreated, and full of patience, eager to discover and learn and understand and enjoy, able to deal with our own and others' pain with increasing largeness of soul. I'm glad we have life for it.



FRANCINE RUSSELL BENNION received an MA in English from Ohio State. As project head of the Utah State Board of Education program, "Help Yourself," she organized and conducted workshops state wide. She has served on the YWMA General Board and is presently a stake Relief Society president.

# ZION

## The Structure of a Theological Revolution

Steven L. Olsen

**An anthropologist traces the development of a key Mormon concept**

### Editors' Note

*The following paper was delivered at the 1981 Sunstone Theological Symposium.*

**T**HEORIES of theological development in Mormonism have fallen primarily into two opposing camps. The first and most orthodox explanation is evolutionary: Mormon doctrine has unfolded in a gradual, unilinear, and inevitable manner. External forces serve primarily as catalysts for a predetermined doctrinal progression. As a result, society, history, and nature possess little if any ultimate significance for theological understanding. In this context doctrine and beliefs are mythic, that is they are the sacred traditions of a people and are viewed as divine communications.<sup>1</sup>

The opposite explanation holds that theological development in Mormonism is primarily historical. Diffusion or the borrowing of doctrines from outside the original system of beliefs is the principal initiator of theological change. In this view the belief system is primarily a product of human interaction, a process without inevitable or intrinsic structure.

At first glance these two perspectives seem mutually exclusive. As a result the student of theology has been forced to make an absolute choice regarding the ultimate source of meaning in a theological system. Formulating the problem of theological understanding in such absolute terms is unsatisfactory to many students of Mormonism. Fortunately it may be possible to consider a third alternative which emphasizes both structure and process or, in other words, recognizes mythical as well as historical dimensions. Tracing the history of one central Mormon concept, that of Zion, can demonstrate the advantages of such an approach.

To understand the unique contours of the Mormon Zion it is necessary to examine the background of religious beliefs from which it emerged. Mormonism was founded in 1830 in the midst of America's primitive gospel movement. Popular with the common man from Revolutionary times until well into the nineteenth century, Christian primitivism was a reaction to the

revivalism, sectarian conflict, and Calvinist theology of many contemporary American religions. Characterized by belief in the final authority of the Bible, the restoration of Christ's ancient church, and an imminent millennium, Christian primitivism affected the religious thinking of not only Joseph Smith but also other early Mormons such as Wilford Woodruff, Newell Knight, John Taylor, Willard Richards, and Lorenzo Snow.<sup>2</sup>

The first tangible evidence of Smith's religious restoration was the Book of Mormon. Although this work extensively developed the theological principles which eventually characterized the Mormon kingdom, its primitivist passages were of primary concern to Smith at the time he founded the "Church of Christ." Important among the primitivist doctrines in the Book of Mormon were the need for a restoration of Christ's original gospel with Joseph Smith as its instigator, the purification and completion of the biblical canon, the evangelization of the American Indian, and the role of America in the Millennium.<sup>3</sup>

Smith's early revelations were also replete with primitivist concerns. The charter of his new church, issued 6 April 1830, addressed the topics of ecclesiastical organization, the Godhead, the operations of the Holy Ghost, the mission of Christ, baptism, justification and sanctification, communion, laying on of hands, the sanctity of the Sabbath Day, and excommunication. These issues were vital to New Testament churchmen as well as nineteenth century clergy.<sup>4</sup>

Although Christian primitivism constituted Mormonism's initial theological framework and influenced Smith's church throughout its formative years, additional doctrines emerged from Smith's revelations which came to distinguish Mormonism from other nineteenth century religions. The concept of Zion was central to this redefinition of Mormonism. The theology of Zion emerged during the first few years of the church's existence and both reinterpreted Mormonism's primitivist origins and generated remarkable theological innovations.

On the day the Church of Christ was formally organized, Smith issued a revelation which gave him a

title and indicated his role in the restored kingdom. He was to be known as "a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church. . ." and was to "move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good."<sup>5</sup> In subsequent revelations, he was directed to "devote all thy service in Zion" and was promised "thou shalt receive an inheritance in Zion." Smith also repeatedly used the formulaic "seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion" to inspire and unify his new following.<sup>7</sup> Although frequent, the imprecise usage of "Zion" in Smith's earliest sacred writings suggests that by mid-1830 the concept in Mormonism was nebulous at best.

By September 1830 "Zion" was beginning to acquire definite features. In response to some unauthorized revelations by Hyrum Page, Joseph Smith reasserted his exclusive right to "receive commandments and revelations in this church." In this revelation, Smith gave Zion an urban form and located it near the Indians on the American frontier.<sup>5</sup>

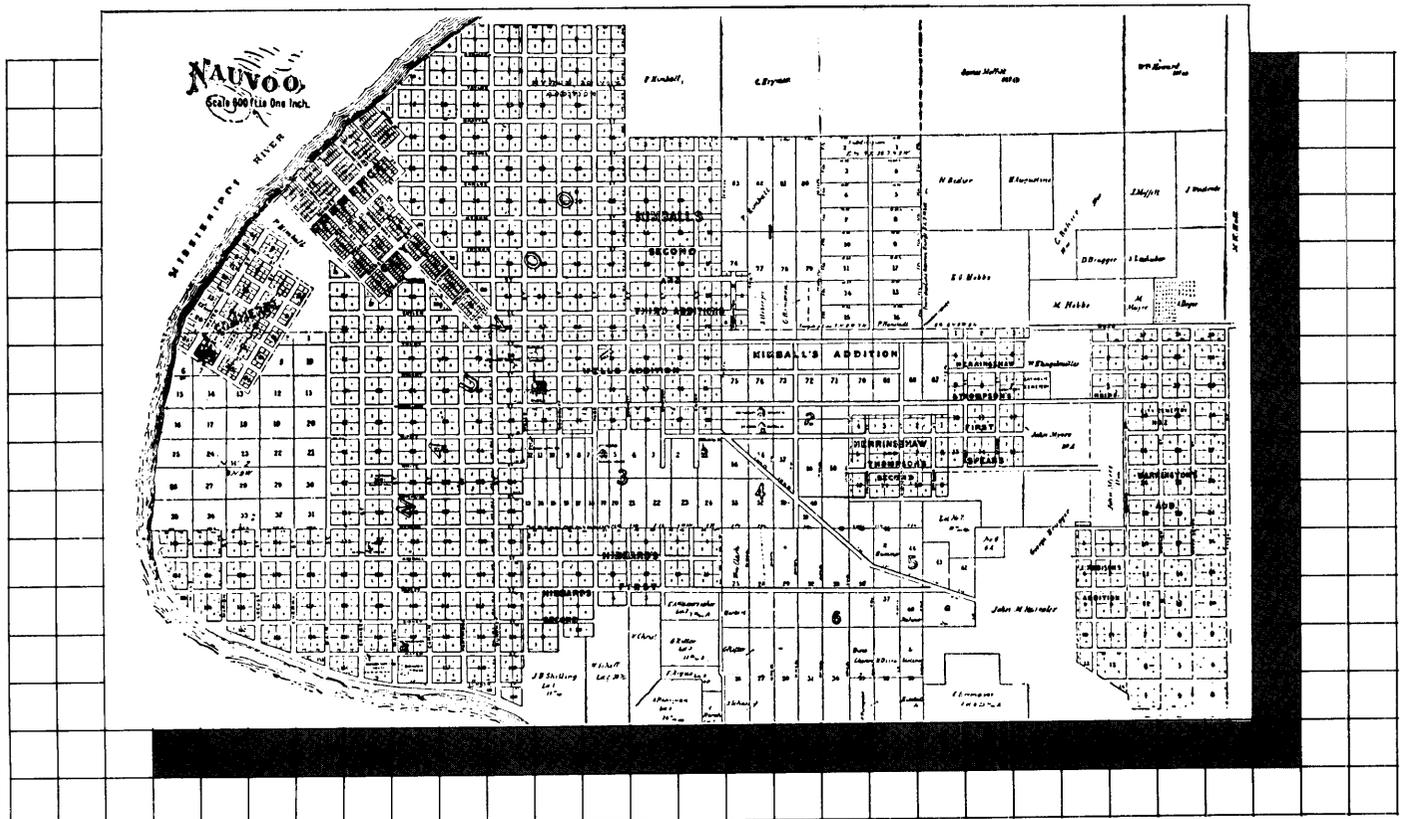
The promise to reveal the specific location of the city of Zion became, from that point on, the principal incentive for Smith's followers to obey his commandments. The promise was included in the commandments to the Church to move as a body from New York to Ohio, to live the social gospel of Smith's restoration, to proselytize the inhabitants of the trans-Appalachian West, and to convene a conference of Mormon leaders in "the land of Missouri." Each of these commandments specified further the territorial, social, and theological dimensions of Zion. By the end of July 1831, the Mormons knew that the city of Zion was destined for Jackson County, Missouri, with Independence as its "center place," that occupying the promised land would be the sign of a covenant by which

they would recognize themselves as God's chosen people, and that the city of Zion, with its temple, would hasten the millennial reign of the Messiah.<sup>9</sup> In view of these rising expectations, Joseph Smith later recorded in his journal, "the mission to Western Missouri and the gathering of the Saints to that place was the most important subject which then engrossed the attention of the church."<sup>10</sup>

As the Church increased in size and Zionic fervor, Smith further refined the social and territorial orders of the Mormon kingdom. On 25 June 1833, he issued the well-known "plat of the city of Zion." Zion, in this formulation, consisted of a consolidated agricultural settlement having well-defined concentric districts corresponding to Zion's principal social functions of civic regulation, residence, and subsistence. The layout of the city consisted of an orthogonal grid oriented to the cardinal compass directions. The projected population of this mile square settlement was from fifteen to twenty thousand Saints. Although modified in actual settlement attempts, the Zion plat inspired Mormon town planning throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

Zion, however, was more than a territorial order. It was also a theological system, a set of beliefs and practices which helped establish Mormon identity on a religious foundation and which demonstrates the integrative tendencies of early Mormon thought.

Zion's first major theological development was its association with the concept of the gathering, the idea of assembling the faithful to share a common set of religious experiences. The concept of the gathering, like that of Zion, was introduced into Mormonism without meaningful content. In conjunction with an 1828 revelation which detailed the goals Smith hoped to accomplish by publishing the Book of Mormon, Smith





The single most significant revelation to give sanction and definition to the Zion quest was Joseph Smith's vision of Enoch. The vision of Enoch was issued in December 1830 as part of Smith's revision of the Bible. His religious restoration not only adopted the general primitivist concern of righting contemporary religious errors but also assumed the task of bringing to light previously unrecorded or omitted events in the history of God's dealings with man.<sup>25</sup> The vision of Enoch was claimed as one such addition to the Bible. It expands the biblical account of Enoch from four to some one hundred twenty verses and stands as one of Mormonism's most

**The concept of Zion expressed early Mormonism's highest social ambitions and ultimate existential concerns.**

remarkable theological innovations. Although the subject of Enoch held little interest for American theologians and churchmen before the mid-nineteenth century, the "seventh from Adam" was the most oft mentioned Old Testament figure in early Mormonism.<sup>26</sup>

The vision tells the story of the son of Jared who was called by God to reform a degenerate society. Despite his perceived weaknesses, Enoch responded to the divine call and became such a powerful minister that his contemporaries called him a "wild man" of God. His faith was sufficient, according to the record, that he moved mountains, changed the course of rivers, and "walked with God." His efforts over three and one-half centuries enabled Enoch to establish a holy city, named Zion, whose inhabitants qualified themselves to be received by God into heaven where Zion became God's "abode forever."

The vision of Enoch contributed to Mormonism's Zion concept in three major ways. First of all, it helped define mormon eschatology. Early Mormon eschatology was considerably influenced by the Apocalypse of John.<sup>27</sup> Enoch's vision enabled Mormonism to reject the teleology of the Apocalypse in favor of an eschatology based on geographical contingencies. As William Mulder has observed, "while other millenarians set a time [for the Second Coming], the Mormons appointed a place."<sup>28</sup> Recognizing spatial, not temporal limitations enabled Mormonism's millennial fervor to survive America's primitive gospel movement and remain a vital force in Mormonism to the present day.<sup>29</sup>

The vision of Enoch painted paradise as the product of a strong prophet and his devoted followers living together in divine harmony. It also suggested that when earthly Zion perfected itself, heavenly Zion would descend with Christ at the Second Coming to restore paradise to earth. These events would consummate the express purpose of the gathering, namely the integration of heaven and earth. In the words of the vision,

righteousness and truth will I [God] cause to sweep the earth as with a flood to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we shall kiss each other;

And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be called Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest.<sup>30</sup>

The components of the Zion concept—namely, the city, the temple, the land, and the people of Zion, the gathering and the millennium—are all defined in terms of one another in this high point of Mormon religious rhetoric.

The vision of Enoch also helped define Zion's social order, which was called on occasion the "city" or "order of Enoch." Enoch's city came to be the divine model for the Mormons' earthly undertakings, the platonic essence, if you will, of Smith's subsequent commandments and revelations on the subject. According to this vision, Zion's ideal urban order would be permeated by religion. Religion, not politics, would ensure domestic tranquility. Religion, not the military, would provide for a common defense. Religion, not economics, would promote the general welfare. In the words of Enoch's vision,

the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

... And it came to pass, in his days, that [Enoch] built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion.

... and lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever.<sup>31</sup>

The communalism of Enoch's Zion enabled the Mormon Prophet to reject Sidney Rigdon's communitarianism following, "the Family."<sup>32</sup> In its place, Joseph Smith established the United Order or Order of Enoch. Based on the law of consecration and stewardship, this order sought to eliminate the power relations of politics and the competitive and individualizing tendencies of free market economics and private property.<sup>33</sup> Smith expected the Order of Enoch to unite Zion's inhabitants "in love" while providing for their material "wants and needs."<sup>34</sup> That the Mormon attempt has never realized Enoch's utopia does not reduce the significance of the vision in shaping early Mormon social planning. The concept of Zion expressed early Mormonism's highest social ambitions and ultimate existential concerns. Its ability to do so was, in large measure, dependent upon the theology of the vision of Enoch.

The third major contribution of the vision of Enoch to the Mormon concept of Zion concerns Joseph Smith's growing consciousness of his mission as prophet of the restoration. The first spiritual impressions Smith received regarding his mission had to do with his translating the Book of Mormon. Insights into his self-conscious mission from the Book of Mormon and his early revelations focus primarily on his "bringing

forth" the Nephite record to the "remnant of Israel" on the American continent.<sup>35</sup> On April 6, 1830 he assumed the ecclesiastical titles of "apostle of Jesus Christ and elder of the Church," with an additional major role to prophesy, see, and reveal the things of God.

In a July 1830 revelation, Joseph was told, "devote all thy service in Zion." Although this responsibility expanded his divine calling, Zion at this time was too nebulous to define a course of action for the Mormon prophet. As the Zion concept developed according to the pattern outlined above, Smith understood better his duties as prophet of the restoration. However, not until he received the vision of Enoch did he have a role model. After the vision, Smith had a clear mandate from heaven to mobilize the spiritual and material resources of his followers to restore to earth not only the primitive church but also the heavenly city. After December 1830, Joseph Smith saw himself as a latter-day Enoch called to fulfill the promises made to the ancient founder of Zion. The flurry of excitement and activity in the quest for Zion following the vision of Enoch indicates the importance with which Smith held the vision, for himself and his followers. Suggestive of the personal relevance of the vision is the fact that on several occasions Smith substituted Enoch's name for his when he wished to avoid specific personal reference in his revelations.<sup>36</sup>

The vision of Enoch gave theological, cosmological, eschatological, social, and personal sanction to the quest for Zion. Strains of these ideas had been present in Mormonism prior to the vision, but the vision integrated and energized them in a powerful and unmistakable manner. As section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants

became Mormonism's ecclesiastical charter, the vision of Enoch was the sacred charter of the quest for Zion.

That the early Mormons failed to realize the expectations of the vision makes the vision no less significant for the definition of the Mormon kingdom. In fact, when Joseph Smith became aware that he would not realize Enoch's vision, he altered the definition of Zion. After the Mormons in 1838 were forced to abandon their hopes of immediately establishing Zion's "center place," there was considerable concern as to the precise nature of the Mormon kingdom. In a speech on 19 July 1840, Joseph Smith reformulated the Zion concept: "... the land of Zion. . . consists of all N[orth] and S[outh] America but that any where the Saints gather is Zion. . . ." <sup>37</sup> Shortly before his martyrdom, Smith reissued this proclamation as a revelation which enabled the Saints to retain their identity as God's chosen people while acknowledging the collapse of their earthly paradise.<sup>38</sup> This revised concept of Zion accompanied the Mormons to the Great Basin and into the twentieth century.

From this brief study of early Mormon theology, we can tentatively suggest that the Mormon concept of Zion has followed a revolutionary process.<sup>39</sup> That is, neither evolution (gradual progression) nor diffusion (random borrowing) characterizes the development of the Mormon Zion. Rather the history of Zion seems to be divided into a series of conceptually distinct and chronologically specific states, or revolutions. While these theological revolutions manifest historical continuity and logical association, they do not determine one another in any absolute sense; thus they express formal and material but not final causality.<sup>40</sup>



Used with permission Utah State Historical Society.

The first revolution in the theology of Zion occurred as distinctive Mormon doctrines emerged from the initial primitive gospel orientation Mormonism shared with many nineteenth century religions. Joseph Smith was able gradually to integrate the disparate religious and social doctrines of the gathering, the temple, the millennium, and the city, land, and people of Zion into a distinctive theological system, "Zion." This system acquired absolute moral and doctrinal legitimacy from the vision of Enoch, an elegant and authoritative synthesis of these doctrines in a cosmic context. The vision of Enoch provided the ultimate justification for the Zion quest. Nevertheless, this initial formulation of the concept of Zion was weakened by the compelling data which could not be explained by the vision, namely the persistent imperfection of the Saints and their violent expulsion from the promised land of Missouri. Finally, the initial theological paradigm was reformulated as a revised concept of Zion became more compatible with Mormonism's changing historical and ideological contexts.

These theological revolutions have been influenced by the forces of diffusion and evolution. A diffusionary analysis emphasizes process at the expense of order and by itself cannot explain the distinct "Mormonness" of any changes. On the other hand, evolution tends to isolate any such changes from their historical context. In either case, the significance of the development is reduced by the inherent limitations of the perspective. A model of theological revolutions considers both the internal logic of a system and its environment; it suggests that theological development depends primarily upon the dynamic relationship between the two. A model of theological revolutions helps us realize that in religious systems, as in culture generally, change occurs for the most part within definite limits. In the end, discovering order in theological processes helps us better appreciate the innovations.



#### Notes

1. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 87-125, provides a lucid discussion of this concept of myth, while Karin B. Andriolo, "Myth and History: A General Model and its Application to the Bible," *American Anthropologist* 83 (June 1981): 261-284, summarize the theoretical literature in the relationship between myth and history. Her model varies somewhat from that proposed here.
2. Marvin S. Hill, "The Role of Christian Primitivism in the Origin and Development of the Mormon Kingdom, 1830-1844," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1968, 6-79.
3. *Ibid.*, 99-108.
4. Joseph Smith, Jr., *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), section 20, See I. Daniel Rupp, comp., *An Original History of the Religious Denominations as Present Existing in the United States* (Philadelphia: J.Y. Humphreys, 1844), for first hand accounts expressing many of these beliefs and concerns.
5. D&C 21:1,7.
6. *Ibid.*, 24:7; 25:2.
7. *Ibid.*, 6:6; 11:6; 12:6; 14:6.
8. *Ibid.*, 28:1-9; Richard H. Bushman, "New Jerusalem, U.S.A.: The Early Development of the Latter-day Saint Zion Concept on the American Frontier," Honors Thesis, Harvard College, 1955.
9. *Ibid.*, 38:13-33; 39:13-16; 42:4-69; 52:1-6, 42-44; 57:1-3.
10. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vol. 2nd rev. ed. by B.H. Roberts, (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1955), 1:182.
11. *Ibid.* 1:357-362. Joseph Smith's plat of Zion has been reproduced widely, perhaps most notably in the fine works of John W. Rees, *The*

*Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 467, and *Cities of the American West: A History of Frontier Urban Planning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 289. The original is in the Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

12. D&C 10:65.
13. *Ibid.* 27:13.
14. *Ibid.*, 29:7-8.
15. *Ibid.* 42:35-36.
16. *Ibid.*, 29:7-8.
17. *Ibid.* 35:7-27; 38:4-22; 39:13-24; 42:1-17; 43:24-35; 45; 63:20-37.
18. *Ibid.* 36:8.
19. *Ibid.* 42:35-36.
20. Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:199.
21. *Ibid.*, 1:359-362.
22. Subsequent Mormon temples have generally followed the lead of Zion's grand temple, being placed in the center of the city and on its most elevated plain and being oriented toward the cardinal compass directions. Departures from this pattern indicate a weakening of the original Zion concept.
23. Thomas F. O'Dea, "Mormonism and the Avoidance of Sectarian Stagnation: A Study in Church, Sect, and Incipient Nationality," *American Journal of Sociology* 60 (1954): 285-293; O'Dea, "Foreward," to Nels Anderson, *Deseret Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. xiv.
24. D&C 45:65-69.
25. See Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation": *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible, a History and Commentary* (Provo, Ut.: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), for a thorough study of Smith's "inspired revision" of the Bible.
26. Hugh W. Nibley, "A Strange Thing in the Land: The Return of the Book of Enoch, Part 2" *The Ensign* 5 (December 1975): 73-74; Gordon I. Irving, "Mormonism and the Bible, 1832-1838," Honors Thesis, University of Utah, 1972, p. 23.
27. D&C 29 and 45.
28. William F. Mulder, "Mormonism's 'Gathering': An American Doctrine with a Difference," *Church History* 23 (1954): 252.
29. On the decline of American millennialism, see Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), p. 287-357; and Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 181-201.
30. Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), Moses 7:62-64.
31. *Ibid.*, Moses 7:18-21.
32. See Robert Kent Fielding, "The Growth of the Mormon Church in Kirtland, Ohio," Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1957, 23-24.
33. D&C 42, 78; see also Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), pp. 15-40.
34. D&C 42:45; 51:3.
35. *Ibid.* 3-8; Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1950), 2 Nephi 3:11-15; 27:12-14.
36. *Ibid.*, 78:1, 4, 9; 96, heading.
37. Dean L. Jessee, "Joseph Smith's 19 July 1840 Discourse," *Brigham Young University Studies* 19 (1979): 392.
38. *History of the Church* 6:318-319. Brigham Young called Smith's reformulation "a perfect knock-down to the devil's kingdom," *ibid.*, p. 321.
39. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
40. "Causation," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967), 2:56-66.

STEVEN L. OLSEN is a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at the University of Chicago, presently living in Salt Lake City and researching nineteenth century Mormonism.

## Editors' Note

*This paper was delivered at the 1980 Sunstone Theological Symposium.*

RELIGION is often viewed functionally as performing two important roles in the life of a believer: first the *explanation* of the physical phenomena—interpreting the universe, man's existence, and the events of history and daily life; and second the *justification* of a way of life—providing both the grounds for belief in a moral code and the motivating reasons for obeying that code. My contention in this paper is that the Mormon view of God and his relationship to man eliminates God's ability to play a substantial part in this second functional role of religion, the provision and justification of a moral code. Morality, in Mormonism, is independent of the will and dictates of God.

### Basic Precepts of Mormon Theology

But first let me acknowledge that Mormon thinking on such questions as the natures of God and man and

existence. They are of equal (and infinite) antiquity. Both are subject to law, natural and moral. There are, of course, many important differences between God and man, but these do not concern the essence of either.<sup>1</sup>

It follows from this doctrine that God is not seen as creating the universe out of nothing but rather as "finding himself" in it.<sup>2</sup>

Another central doctrine concerns the purpose of earth life. God arranged for us to experience this life so that we might gain opportunities for moral development and progression. The nurturing of this moral growth—which will lead us to greater fulfillment, power, and happiness—is God's overriding purpose in dealing with us.

I think, and have argued elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> that this doctrine of God and man simplifies significantly the task of the Mormon apologist faced with such traditionally difficult problems for the orthodox theologian as the existence of evil and suffering in the universe of a god who is supposed to want to eliminate them. But here I wish to consider a problem which, in principle at least, most of

# What is Moral Obligation within Mormon Theology?

Kim McCall

WHAT MAKES RIGHT ACTS RIGHT AND WRONG ACTS WRONG?

their relationship to each other is not entirely univocal. I choose the central doctrines outlined here because I find them stimulating, internally cohesive, and consistent with the main body of latter-day revelation and because I feel that it is primarily by exploring those points at which Mormonism may differ from orthodox Christianity that a Mormon may hope to contribute to theological discussion.

One central precept in Mormon theology holds that God and man are the same type of being. Both are ontologically independent, i.e. self-existent, dependent on no other being for their origin and continued

Christianity appears to have solved quite neatly, but which may be more difficult for Mormonism.

### The Problem of Moral Justification

The problem concerns the justification of the grounds of moral obligation. How can there be moral laws? How can it be that some acts are right and some wrong, that there is a real moral obligation incumbent on us to act in some ways and to avoid others? Are there general, unifying principles behind whatever duties we may have? Can we say in some general way what makes right acts right and wrong acts wrong?

In orthodox thinking it is often said that such and such is wrong because God has declared it so. This is his universe and he makes the rules. While this may look at first like a fairly facile explanation of the grounds of moral obligation, we must keep in mind the orthodox view of the relationship between God and man. Man is wholly God's creature and utterly dependent (contingent) on him. He owns us. To refuse to

There is, however, a significant difference between our relationship to other persons and our relationship to God. We may not owe him our very existence, but it can hardly be denied within Mormon theology that we owe him a great deal. Perhaps we can make some argument similar to the one available to the orthodox theologian based on what we do owe him, such as our physical bodies and our earthly life with its peculiar opportunities

## We are essentially co-equal with God, and binding our wills by his is not one of his prerogatives.

acknowledge his moral sovereignty<sup>4</sup> is to set one's will in opposition to the grounds of its very being. Thus, man's moral status as subject is based on the firm ground of his ontological status as creature.

What defense of moral obligation can be made within Mormonism? The tactic of saying that God owns the universe and has, therefore, absolute authority over everything in it does not seem to be available to the Mormon theologian. In fact, a quick glance at the outlines of Mormon doctrine leaves one wondering how God could ever have authority over other self-existent beings in whose presence he found himself. It is, on the other hand, remarkable and perplexing that a religion which attributes to man essential independence from God should have schooled a people with such reverence for God's will that Sterling McMurrin could say that Mormons along with Puritans place a "profound emphasis of the moral sovereignty of God."<sup>5</sup>

Let us begin by inquiring after this alleged sovereignty. Might moral obligation, still, even for Mormons, be founded on our relationship to God? The Mormon rejects the contingency of man on God, so God's right to command will have to be based on some other ground. But we do not normally suppose that one person can, all other things being equal, either by the mere exercise of his will or by issuing a command or order, morally obligate another. Their souls would have to stand in some very special relationship (such as creator/creature) before such an exercise of will or such a command could have such a binding effect. In all of the earthly relationships where we might be inclined to say that such an obligating could occur, e.g. employer/employee, officer/private, the power of such a command to obligate the subject (if such power exists at all) seems to be based on a promise, explicit or implicit, ("I will do as I'm instructed") made by the moral subject (the employee or private). Furthermore, the promise and the relationship seem conditioned on each other. If the relationship were terminated, the promise would be void and the moral binding authority which rested on that promise would disappear. I delay briefly the consideration of obligations arising from promises. It is necessary here only to recognize that it seems that all earthly cases of one individual being able to morally obligate another by his mere will or command are based on such promises.

for progression. Might he not have the right to command how we use our bodies and the opportunities we are given here? An analogy may help to illuminate this question.

Suppose a young woman, to fulfill her desires for an education and for greater social development, needs a car. She is (we will stipulate) utterly incapable of providing a car for herself, but she wants one badly. A very rich and generous man sees her need and secretly gives her a car, which she finds in her driveway one morning, fully equipped with registration, license, keys, and an owner's certificate bearing her name. Amazed but delighted, she prepares to drive off, when a man walking down the street interrupts her to say, "By the way, I talked to a man who said he gave you that car, and he insists that you not ever use the right rear door." Surprised, she asks whether she must promise not to use that door as a condition of receiving the car. "No," he replies. "Would my using that door result in my losing the car?" Again, "No." "Would it have any effect on my prerogatives in driving the car?" Once more, "No." Baffled, she enters the car (probably by the left front door) and drives off.

Is the woman morally obligated never to use the right rear door? Could she be held to have committed an actual moral transgression if she did use it? I think the answer is no. No real moral obligation has been created. The woman made no promises, explicit or implicit, in accepting or operating the car, and there were no conditions at all to her receiving it.

It might be objected that one ought to feel a kind of gratitude upon receiving a gift which would prompt obedience to the wishes of the giver concerning at least the use of the gift. That is, it would be wrong not to feel a particular kind of gratitude upon receiving a gift. But in considering this objection, it is crucial to remember the level on which we are reasoning. We are trying to discover whether anything is morally right or wrong in general and in particular whether God can make things right or wrong. To cite this particular duty (i.e. the obligation to feel a gratitude entailing obedience) in the context of this argument is either to assume one of the things which was to be proven (if one assumes that such a duty is based on the will or commandment of God) or to exalt the obligation to feel this kind of gratitude to the status of the ultimate moral principle (at least so far as

earthly existence is concerned). But surely the alleged obligation to obey the wishes of the giver of a gift is at least as suspect and in need of defense as those obligations it is being used to defend. But without appeal to any such obligations of gratitude, respect, or obedience, it is hard to believe that the woman is really under a moral obligation to avoid using the right rear door of her own car. Now, so far as his ability to obligate us by the mere exercise of his will is concerned, our relationship to God is identical to the woman's relationship with the giver of the car. (God's commands are, to be sure, less arbitrary than that in the story, but this arbitrariness serves to isolate the source of the obligation in the will of the giver.) So I conclude that God's will or command is, by itself, insufficient to obligate us. We are *essentially* "co-equal"<sup>6</sup> with God, and binding our wills by his is not one of his prerogatives.

### Promises and Covenants

Since no other agent can morally bind my will to his, it is natural to ask whether I can do so myself through some vow of allegiance or obedience. There are within Mormonism at least two ways in which I could do this. The first is a premortal promise. There may, at some point in our eternal existence have come a time when there was some potential blessing so great that we promised God that we would obey him if he would give us that blessing. (A prime candidate for such a blessing is the opportunity to enter this mortal existence.)

as the ground for all others. The fact that it is wrong to break promises makes it wrong to disobey God. But we must then ask what makes it wrong to break promises. While I admit that promise-keeping has more of the flavor of a fundamental principle of morality than does obeying the wishes of a gift giver, the binding force of promises still stands in need of some justificatory basis independent of the will of God. If, then, all our obligations to obey God are based on further obligations which God has no role in creating and which we make binding on ourselves through our own volition, then once again, it seems, God lacks genuine moral sovereignty; right and wrong are essentially independent of the divine will or decree, and we may look elsewhere for the ultimate justification of moral obligation.

### A Direct Argument against Divine Sovereignty

Thus far, my argument for the independence of morality from the will of God has been an essentially negative one, trying to show that, within Mormonism, arguments in favor of the moral sovereignty of God are untenable. There may be a more direct argument from the nature of God and man to this same conclusion. One aspect of Mormonism's insistence on the essential similarity of God and man is the startling teaching that "as man is, God once was." Although it is hard to know just how literally to take this teaching, if it is true in any meaningful way, it entails the understanding that God's

## Right and wrong are essentially independent of the divine will or decree, and we must look elsewhere for the ultimate justification of moral obligation

But at least one of the necessary conditions for holding a person bound by his promises is that he knows (or at least believes) that he made the promise. But since we do not remember having made any such promise, such a promise, made by all persons before this life, could not serve as a grounds for God's right to command. I am left to conclude that, since neither God's will nor our own exercised in an unremembered past can obligate us to obey God's commands, there is no general defense, applicable to all persons, of the moral sovereignty of God.

But before I leave the consideration of obligations based on promises, I must examine one other sort of promise. It is noteworthy that within a church whose doctrine places so much emphasis on the moral independence of each person there should have reemerged such a strong emphasis on the making of covenants as is found in Mormonism. For current purposes, it is sufficient to stipulate that within Mormon theology a covenant includes a promise on the part of some person to obey God either in some specific set of commandments or in general. Might Mormons' strong feelings of the obedience they owe God be justified by the covenants they have made to obey him? Once again we seem to be invoking one moral principle

relationship to morality was once even as ours is now. There were duties, not of his own creation, that were as obligatory on him as any are on us.

Nowhere in Mormon theology does there exist the idea that anyone's (even God's) relationship to morality can change over time. It is, of course, assumed that it is no longer much of a struggle for God to do what's right, but this does not mean that he is not subject to the same moral imperatives we are. If he has no need for a moral sovereign to make them binding on him, then neither do we. So I conclude again that morality is independent of the will and word of God.

### Another Theory of Commandments

If, then, commandments are not pieces of moral legislation, they must be viewed as revelations in which God enlightens us concerning truths independent of himself. Perhaps there is some underlying reason why God reveals them as he does, and we can find in this reason the key to their obligatory force. Having such a rich conception of God's purpose in providing this life for us, Mormons have often sought in that purpose the explanation of God's commandments. From Joseph Smith's declaration that happiness "is the purpose and will be the end" of this life if we obey those principles

(the commandments) which lead to it,<sup>7</sup> through the humblest sacrament meeting talk, Mormon discourse is replete with the idea that God knows what will make us happy, and he gives commandments to guide us toward that end. There are, according to this view, quasi-natural laws which govern our ability to grow and be happy, e.g. "a person who forgives another is freed from a torment and hate which impede the development of the ability to love." Knowing these natural laws, God develops moral laws intended to promote growth and happiness, e.g. "Thou shalt forgive all men."<sup>8</sup>

This view of commandments I will call the "roadmap to happiness." I would like to discuss two problems with this view of moral law. The first is an especially acute version of a general problem with teleological ethics, i.e. ethics which judges the rightness of actions and personality traits according to the goodness of the results towards which they tend to lead. Let us assume this "roadmap to happiness" view of moral law and further assume that one of the things that will make us happiest is to be unselfish, to seek not our own. Now it seems reasonable to require a teleological (results oriented) ethical system that the results it seeks to maximize (on which it judges actions) may be held as the goals of worthy moral agents. Phrased another way, it may be a test of morally worthy people that they should have as their own ends those ends toward which teleological duties point. In the case of the "roadmap to happiness" view of morality, then, a righteous person would be seeking his own growth and happiness, his own benefit. But there is something paradoxical (and probably even contradictory) about being selfless in order to benefit yourself. So, while moral laws are aimed toward achieving one set of ends, in order to actually fulfill those ends, we must often refrain from being philosophers and must obey those laws as if they pointed at other ends or at no ends at all.

While this is a sad predicament for a moral theory, it may not be decisive against it. I hope my second objection is decisive. Consider what we are saying when we condemn someone for breaking a moral law. We are not merely saying, "See here, you've done something to hurt yourself, to limit your own growth and happiness." The problem is that the "roadmap to happiness" version of morality seems to reduce morally binding commandments to mere counsels of prudence (Kant's

to forgive others. But our general idea of moral law is that it is binding on all of us, irrespective of our desires. We don't get to decide for ourselves which laws apply to us.

Thus the commandment-as-good-advice aspect of the "roadmap to happiness" version of morality is inconsistent with our intuitions about the universal obligatory force of moral laws. Disobedience, we say, is sin not just imprudence. Thus, if we are looking for a theory of morality that can defend moral laws as binding on us, this view of the explanation of moral laws is inadequate, and we have still failed to isolate the source of our obligation to obey these laws.

But it should be pointed out that this does not necessarily disqualify this theory as an accurate account of morality, especially in the absence of any more compelling alternative. It may just be that there is nothing more to morality than hypothetical imperatives. Indeed, although it fails to account for some of our moral intuitions, this view seems to fit well with the relatively naturalistic Mormon view of the universe and the Mormon notion of the teleological purpose of life.

### A Sketch of a Positive Moral Theory

Having been mainly critical up to this point, I would like to present a hint at a direction we might explore for more insights into a constructive, synthetic approach to Mormon ethics. Since I am searching for some fundamental moral principle, I begin by investigating an apocryphal Mormon saying of some currency: Obedience is the first law of heaven.<sup>9</sup> I think that this saying, which I have long detested, admits of at least three possible interpretations. The first understands "obedience" as obedience to authority, primarily God. I hope that my discussion of the moral relationship between our eternal souls and God has shown at least that it cannot be our primary duty to submit ourselves to another's will. Such an interpretation is also inconsistent with the notion of moral development which includes, rather, increasing self-sufficiency and self-determination.

A second interpretation understands the "obedience" in "obedience is the first law of heaven" as obedience to laws in general, i.e. all the rest of the laws of heaven. This, however, is not a law in itself, but merely a restatement of the fact that the other laws *are* laws.

There is something paradoxical (and probably even contradictory) about being selfless in order to benefit yourself.

"hypothetical imperatives"). These have the form "if you want *x*, then do *y*." Part of the problem with hypothetical imperatives in ethics is that they have no more claim to govern our actions and tell us to do *y* than we have desire to obtain *x*. And when there is no moral obligation to obtain *x* we are free not to do *y*. Thus if you don't care about growing and being happy, you have no obligation

Obedience, in this sense, isn't a law but something you do to a law.

The third interpretation (and the one which I, despite my long-held contempt for this saying, intend to defend) holds that it is from the very *concept* of obedience to law that all the laws of heaven may be derived.<sup>10</sup>

What matters most in the Mormon universe is not so

much the moral worthiness of the actions that are performed as the moral worthiness of the agents who perform them. And what is crucial in determining the moral worthiness of an individual is not so much the actions that he performs as his reasons for performing them, i.e. the motivations or principles which govern him or by which he governs his actions. So, if in moral theory we are seeking a standard by which to judge actions, this standard will evaluate not the action itself but rather the reason it is being performed. Now the reason or subjective ground from which we are acting can always be expressed in the form of a rule, e.g. "if

moral sovereignty of God also robs God of the possibility of genuine moral decision making. Since whatever he wills is right, there is never a moral reason for him to desire one thing rather than another, and he can never discover what he *ought* to will or do. While this implication of the alleged moral sovereignty of God is very uncomfortable for orthodox religion, it would be disastrous for Mormonism, which insists that, in principle at least, the individual referred to by the title "God" can learn and discover truth and moral right. He is good in that he, too, learned obedience and conformed himself to the moral law.

## The roadmap to happiness version of morality reduces morally binding commandments to mere counsels of prudence.

you're going to be embarrassed by some situation, avoid that situation" or "always seek to make others happy." So it is these subjective rules by which we act which are the proper objects of moral evaluation. They have the form of laws and our actions are morally worthy if those subjective rules out of which they are performed accord with universal moral laws. But since this standard is being proposed as the *fundamental* criterion of the morality of actions, logically prior to the existence of any substantive moral laws, conformity of the rules behind our actions with moral laws can only mean that those rules are worthy to be made into moral laws themselves. So the agent, to act rightly, must examine the reasons for his actions and ask whether he can in full rationality and honesty will that they should be universal laws.

This is true obedience to law in the universal sense, and it becomes, through the personal moral struggle of individual moral agents, the mother of all the laws of heaven. Acting in accordance with this view of morality, we discover, and in some sense legislate, our own moral laws. This notion of morality involves the agent in determining for himself what is right through developing moral sensitivity and through *committing* himself to moral principles rather than *submitting* himself to a code or another will. This process enhances the self-realization and moral development which God purposed in providing this earthly existence.

### Conclusion

Let me conclude with a final defense of my belief that, as strange and initially uncomfortable as it may seem within a faithful religion, the view that the foundation of morality is completely independent of the will and dictates of God has much to recommend it.

First, even though the doctrine of the moral sovereignty of God seems to provide a strong foundation for morality, there are great dangers in this doctrine. This doctrine seems to run the risk of severely compromising what we mean by "right" and "good." It reduces the important religious assertion "God is good" to something like "God does whatever God decrees should be done" or "God's will is consistent with God's will." This is, it should be clear, hardly what we mean to say when we say "God is good." The doctrine of the

Finally, acknowledging that the ultimate responsibility for determining right and wrong lies with each individual seems more likely to lead to a rich, fertile moral life. We must work out our own salvation. Our progression consists in developing our moral intuitions and capacities. Rote obedience to another will or even to a prescribed code is severely limited in its ability to promote this end. It is best for our eternal happiness and progression that we develop our capacity to make moral discriminations and choices through personal moral effort and the development and refinement of our own moral faculties.



### Notes

1. Note that I am here using the term "God" as a name, not as a title. "God is perfect" is a necessary truth only when "God" is used as a title, i.e. perfection is essential to *Godhood*, but not to God himself.
2. Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1950), p. 354.
3. Kim McCall, "Mormonism and the Problem of Evil," *Century 2* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Provo, Ut.: BYU Press).
4. As this concept of the "moral sovereignty of God" constitutes a central focus of this paper, it should be defined clearly. It is the idea that God is a moral legislator. God is a moral sovereign if and only if whenever he wills (or perhaps decrees) that we should do *x*, he thereby, and solely because of his willing (or decreeing), morally obligates us to do *x*.
5. Sterling M. McMurrin, "The Religious Thought of E. E. Ericksen," an introductory essay to E. E. Ericksen, *The Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1975), p. vii.
6. *Teachings*, p. 353.
7. *Ibid.* p. 255-256.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 64:10.
9. It is difficult to discover the source of this saying, but it occurs as the first sentence under "Obedience" in Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (2nd ed.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 539. It has always perplexed me that such an idea could be maintained in the face of Jesus's own avowal, when asked the question directly, that Love was the greatest commandment in the Law.
10. At this point my indebtedness to Kant approaches plagiarism.

KIM MCCALL received a BA in philosophy from Stanford.

# Separate Prayers

A Story by Ann Edwards-Cannon

**Editors' Note** *This short story received an honorable mention in the 1981 Sunstone Fiction Contest.*

**W**HEN I look at the portrait hanging in my father's hallway, I have a hard time believing that the woman staring back through time there is my mother. She looks far too still, far too uncomfortable to be the one who shared impromptu tea-parties on the lawn with me, who left me little gifts of glass animals half-hidden about the house.

One day I found an exquisitely dainty horse tucked away in her drawer. I scooped it up and ran to the kitchen.

"Look what I found," I said in the sing-song voice we used together for our games.

She looked at it—the tiny horse, so life-like that it could have pawed my palm—and lifted a dark brow in half-amusement.

"That's not for you, Sweetheart." She knelt down and kissed me on the forehead before snatching the glass horse from me. Then with a little smile she said, "Your daddy likes surprises too—just like you."

It was as though my grandmother, who barged into our lives one month after Mother died, had made it a point to hang the one picture that least resembled her daughter-in-law: the rest were hidden.

But then, my grandmother never had been a subtle woman. The thought occurred to me again as I listened to her discussing me with Michael in the kitchen.

"She's in there on the couch," I heard her tell my husband. "I swear to heaven she's gone off her rocker."

Michael stood up and came into the living room. I didn't see him enter because my face was turned to the wall, but I could hear him breathing.

"Kathy?" he asked gently, fearfully.

I thought about answering, but I was just too tired—too tired to turn around and look at him. What a chore everything was.

I heard the wish-wish of sensible support hose rubbing against each other, and I knew my grandmother had entered the room.

The two of them dropped their voices. I suppose they thought I couldn't hear because I wasn't staring them directly in their faces.

"How long has she been lying there like that?" Michael asked.

"Since about ten minutes after I got here this morning to help her put up that basket of peaches you've been trying to get her to do. When I walked in I caught her trying to flush them down the toilet—pits and all!"

I couldn't tell if my grandmother was disgusted or impressed.

But *why* bother to pit them, I wondered. Why bother to peel them or slice them or stuff them into a row of Mason jars. Why even bother to flush them down the

toilet for that matter? Then I remembered. I was going to tell Michael that the peaches were all canned when he got home so that he wouldn't wear that little worried look when he asked me to tell him just what I'd accomplished that day. He was always asking me how I spent my time now.

"When I made her stop," I heard my grandmother's voice rattle on, "she just come out here and flopped over on the couch like a dead fish. Hasn't done nothin' else all mornin' long. Won't even answer me, will you, Miss."

I didn't answer.

"Kathy," Michael was trying to sound firm now. "Kathy, turn around and look at me!"

Roll over Body. Body refused.

Michael snorted, the way a pony does when it tosses its head high before cropping on grass growing up around old fence posts.

"This can't go on," I heard him say.

"My dead husband had a sister who went crazy once. Her name was Winnie," my grandmother said, as though that explained everything.

Silence.

I could feel both of them squinting through me as though I were a dirty plate glass window.

Michael sighed. "Call her father."

NO! I wanted to say. Not him.

## II

**M**Y father, a retired professor of history, still lived in the same small white house on the same two acres of land where I grew up. My grandmother, when she was living there, kept the house clean as bones. There wasn't a corner or cupboard she didn't invade in her daily forays on dirt. A fanatic about fuel costs, she also kept the house so cold that my teeth hurt. It was as though my grandmother had declared war on comfort.

My father was quiet after Mother's death and grew quieter still when Grandma moved in as our self-appointed caretaker. For a long time I regarded him as a silent ally against Grandma's intolerable intrusions. Those nights when she forced spinach on us, for example, I would try to catch his eye so that we could secretly communicate our mutual revulsion. But he rarely, if ever, returned my looks. He was anxious to be outside, alone with his garden and his animals.

While all the orchards and fields of grass belonging to the old neighbors were being relentlessly ingested by

developers, my father clung stubbornly to his property: the garden with its stalks of giant sunflowers, the fruit trees, the ramshackle barn with its elaborate store of junkyard finds, the delicate Shetland ponies with only a touch of Hackney in them. He stayed mostly to himself there on his land—taking his watering turns, feeding his ponies, ordering his rows of growing things, and repairing the surreys and tools and fences that never seemed to stay whole.

And I—I just watched him, as though through a window, always waiting for him to invite me.

When I was a senior in high school, my father asked to have his name removed from the records of the Church. He was tired of all the contradictions, he said. He was tired of trying to make things fit. He told my grandmother first, who took the news as a savage slap across the face. She left us that very day, moving across town to stay with her sister. He told me quietly one Sunday night in October.

Although I was stunned, my first impulse was to rally to his defense as I had done (without his knowledge) all those years he was publishing the articles that so troubled our bishop with the soft, self-satisfied face. I moved forward in my seat, ready to go to him, to comfort him, but then I saw how calmly he was taking the whole thing, as though he'd merely extricated himself from a book club that had become something of a nuisance. My father looked past me through the

darkening dining room window. He was listening with a serene little smile to his ponies rumble their night-noises in the barn. And it hit me that my father didn't even seem to know I was there.

I began to live the gospel relentlessly after that: I went to meetings on Sundays, attended MIA on weeknights, pulled weeds for stake projects, sang in the Christmas and Easter programs, and graduated from seminary in June. I didn't invite my father to come which didn't matter anyway: he had a watering turn that night.

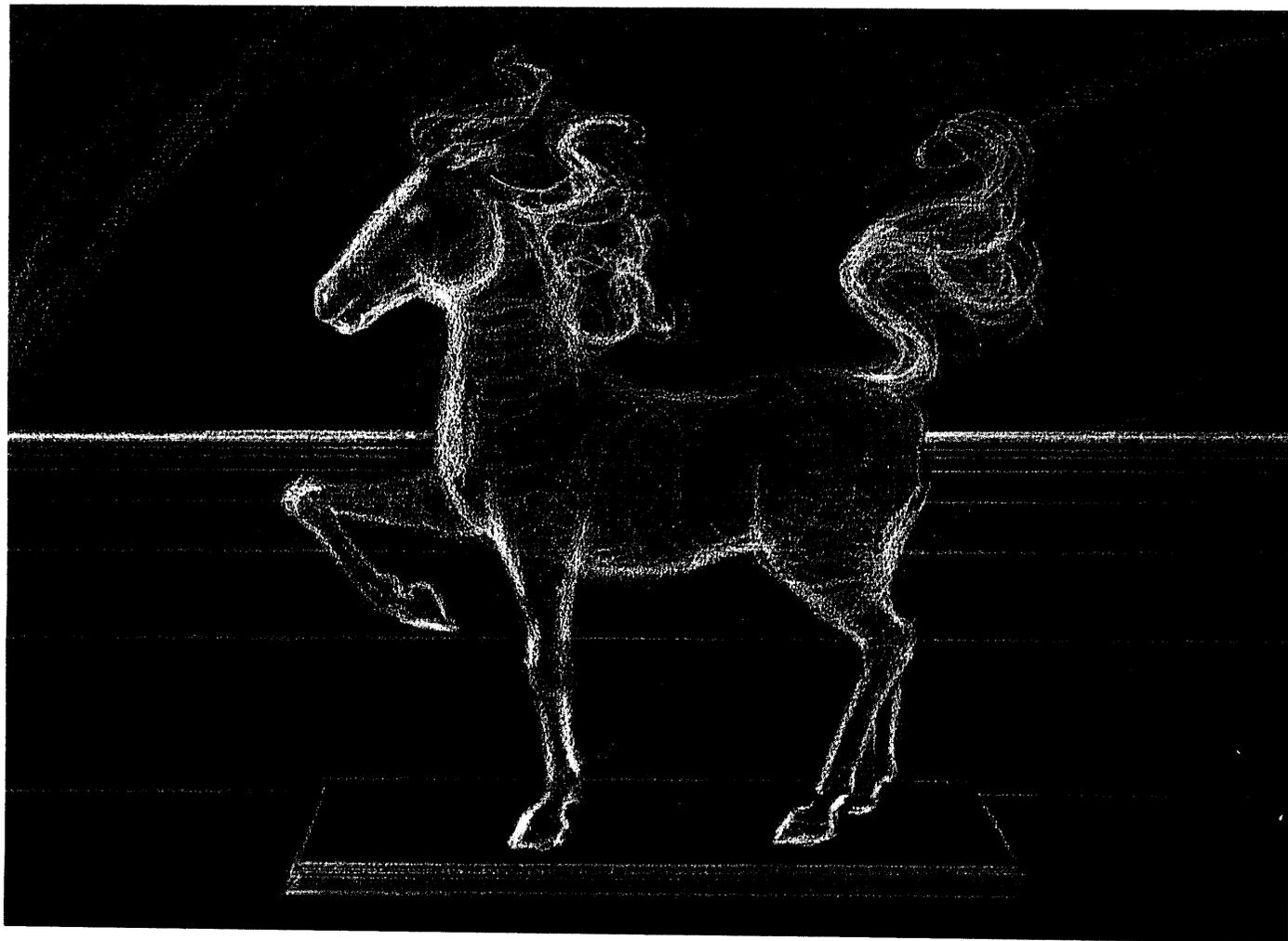
In the fall I went to the University, and though my father and I didn't live far from school, I found my own apartment downtown and moved out. I met Michael my sophomore year and eventually we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. The day of our wedding, when Michael and I walked outside with his parents into the brilliant white sunlight that dazzled crazily off the temple walls, I saw my father waiting in the gardens by himself. I supposed Michael had asked him to come.

My father came to our apartment.

I could hear him and Michael talk in the kitchen; my grandmother periodically punctuated their conversation with pronouncements from Sinai.

Michael's voice was low, deferential. Michael, who was nothing if not devout, had always liked my father. I couldn't understand it.

"Why?" I asked him once. "Why would somebody like you like my father?"



"Because," Michael said with an expression that brought back unexpected memories of my mother, "he reminds me of you."

I heard my first name, so of course I knew they were talking about me. Their crazy catechism jangled in my ears.

Father: How long has she not been acting like herself?

Michael: I guess to some extent she's been acting strangely for the last six months.

(Oh really? Please clarify.)

Father: What do you mean?

Michael: At first she was so wound up about everything that I thought she'd snap in two if I touched her. She got up early. She stayed up late. She cried all the time. She lost fifteen pounds in a hurry.

(Yes, and everybody told me how great I looked.)

Michael: But that was better than now. Now she just lies around doing nothing.

(The peaches. Kindly remember the peaches, damn you.)

Michael: The scariest part of all is when she tells me she doesn't feel anything, absolutely nothing.

Then Michael began to cry which would have frightened me ordinarily, but now it just bored me. I was bored and tired and sick to death of everything. My eyelids fluttered.

Later, my father, my grandmother, and Michael walked into the living room. I was still lying on the couch, but I had managed to turn over so I could see them through a shock of tumbled bangs: Michael looked miserable, my grandmother looked fierce, and my father appeared remote, as always.

Michael slipped to his knees by the side of the couch and took one of my dangling fish-hands clumsily into his. He tried to get me to focus on his face. His voice came distantly.

"Honey, Honey, we've called some friends and they've recommended that we take you to see someone. They say he's very good."

Good at what?

"Your dad will take you, Honey, since your appointment is in the morning."

My father and I stared at each other across the room. I hadn't seen him for months. I shut my eyes.

The next morning Michael made sure I was dressed before my father came to pick me up. I put on a gray double-knit skirt, a white turtle-neck, and a pair of loafers. My hose had runs in them up to my knees. Michael looked at me helplessly. He opened his mouth to say something, but then he popped it shut, just like he'd swallowed an insect.

We heard the doorbell ring.

"That must be your dad now," Michael said brightly, falsely.

I stayed quietly in the bedroom hoping my father would go away if I didn't go out to meet him.

"Kathy," Michael called. I didn't move. Michael finally came back into the bedroom.

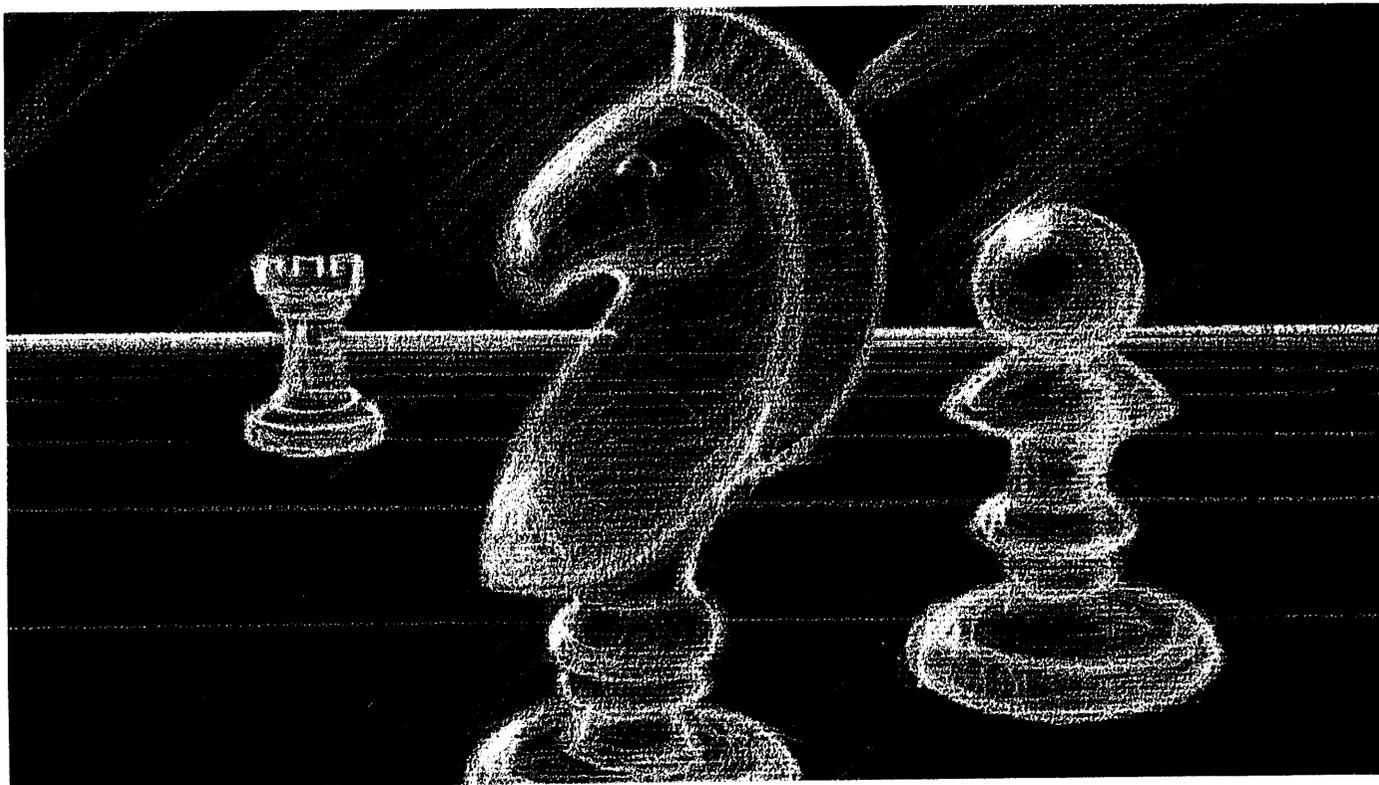
Together we walked slowly into the living room. My tongue felt swollen. If I opened my mouth, I thought, warped words would drop out like misshapen pearls.

My father was standing in the front room wearing a plaid flannel shirt and a pair of stiff levis. He held a JOHN DEERE hat in one thick, spotty-brown hand. My father hardly ever looked like anything but some old farmer these days.

"Are you ready to go, Kathy?" my father asked. Those were his first words to me.

No.

"Thatta girl!" Michael said nervously. Then he gave me a wet noisy kiss and patted me on the head as though I were his mother's cocker spaniel. I stared at him blankly



and looked out the window. Michael cleared his throat as he moved toward my father. He clapped his hand on my father's left shoulder. "Tell me how it goes," he said low, and then he was gone.

Neither my father nor I said anything for a moment. Finally he said in a still voice, "Let's go, Kathy." I hesitated for a moment then followed him out the door.

We drove downtown in my father's '63 Chevy pickup. He eventually stopped in front of a small, square, dingy-colored building that I'd never noticed before, guarded as it was by sentries of sycamores that lined the sidewalks.

My father told me he would wait for me, implying that I was on my own. Of course. So I left him there and stumbled into the building and found a receptionist who could show me where to go.

The office she took me to said GEORGE JORDAN, M.D. on the door that stood slightly ajar. From the open doorway I could see the office itself was filled with books and four or five chess sets. A large digital clock that flashed tenths and hundredths of a second in bold orange numbers dominated the south wall. It occurred to me, in some remote corner of my brain, that I could sit in there and watch that clock flash the mega-seconds of my life away: time killing me.

Dr. George Jordan himself sat in the middle of the office in a plush swivel blue chair. He looked like some silvery Buddha: short and plump and hoary-headed. He smiled at me pleasantly enough. I stared back through the oyster-layers enfolding me.

"Come in, come in," he said with a flourish of his toadish hand.

I walked in and sat down.

"So," he said in a hale and hearty voice, "things not clicking like they should?"

I slumped forward and stared at the onyx chess set by my right arm.

Silence.

"Your dad tells me you're not feeling like yourself."

No response.

Dr. Jordan shifted his weight. "You wanna bet on who's going to end up in the World Series this year?"

I stared at him in surprise. Why wasn't this little man asking me what he was supposed to: how did I feel about the quality of my toilet training experience? What were my sensations upon crawling the first time? Did my parents always give me a graham cracker when I needed one? Did I ever get the urge to stuff plump raisins in my ears?

Dr. Jordan stared back at me and smiled. "Ah ha! Got your attention, didn't I?"

Touche, you nasty little man. I looked away again.

"Well," he whistled, sinking back in his chair again. "I can see you're just dying to tell me all about yourself today, but before we talk, I want you to take a little test for me." He reached deep into his desk and produced a test booklet and answer sheet. He handed them both with a pencil to me.

I looked at the booklet.

Dr. Jordan disappeared, shutting the door behind him.

I opened the book and read the first question: "Sometimes I see people and animals that no one else sees." I could have laughed. What did they think I was? Crazy?

I saw Dr. Jordan again two days later. I went quietly

with my father in his pickup and walked into the office (by myself), looking like a load of dirty laundry. I sat heavily in the chair by the onyx chess set, knees apart.

"Well, Kid," said Dr. Jordan cheerfully, "I've got some news here you might find interesting." He pulled out a file that I knew had my name typed neatly across the top and flipped it open.

"You flunked the test."

What?

He placed the file in his lap and peered at me, and for the first time since we'd met he seemed serious.

"You went right off the scale. Twice. So what do you think?"

I just stared at the open file on his knees and then I began twisting, twisting, twisting my hands together. There. He'd said it, too. This guy who was supposed to know something and probably did. Like a mirage the chess set, the clock, Dr. Jordan, everything bleared, and I heard a hard wrenching noise fill the room. I realized I was crying.

Dr. Jordan sat back in his chair and watched me. He began nodding his approval, slowly, slowly.

"You're not that bad off after all." He snatched a box of Kleenex from his desk and handed it to me. "Crying is a good sign."

We sat together in his office, and through his window I watched the clouds roll by—angry gray ponies twisting against a charcoal sky.

The clock flashed our hour away. It was time to go. Before I left I asked Dr. Jordan a question.

"Do you think I can ever feel like myself again?" All my fears of the past six months flew out of my mouth like a cankerous spirit.

Dr. Jordan paused, pressing his palms together. "You really have a lot of things going for you, Kathy." Then he took a pad and pen from his desk and began scribbling a prescription. "Therefore, I predict that if you take the medication that I'm going to give you for as long as it is necessary, and if you'll remember whose problems are whose you'll mend."

After that I began seeing Dr. Jordan twice a week. Slowly convinced that he knew what he was talking about, I began living for those visits. The hard moments away from the office, I spent sleeping or thinking about the next visit.

Occasionally, however, past conversations, disembodied from their contexts, came floating back to me. I remembered one conversation I'd had with Michael in particular.

"Why don't you want children, Kathy?"

"I do want children. I just don't want them right now."

"Why?"

"I don't know why. Leave me alone."

"You and your father—you're so much alike."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that neither of you has a gift for intimacy."

Michael apologized before I had a chance to withdraw: it isn't within his nature to build walls.

Since Michael had to work and Dr. Jordan could only see me in the mornings, it was somehow agreed between Michael and my father that the latter would take me to my appointments. My father appeared quietly every Tuesday and Thursday morning for me and then he waited for me in the cab of his truck where he put things

(mostly old farm tools) back together. Sometimes the things he mended looked new; most of the time they didn't. But he was always working with his hands, trying to make things fit.

One morning Dr. Jordan looked at me and asked if there were anything I could do with my hands.

"Occupational therapy, right?" I asked.

He nodded. "Do you like to knit? crochet? paint by number on cheap velvet?"

I shook my head and laughed. The sound tinkled like broken egg shells in my ears.

Dr. Jordan squinted. "Your dad has a little piece of land, doesn't he?"

I nodded.

"So get him to give you something to do there."

I paused, remembering what Michael had said about my father and me, and then I said, "Dr. Jordan, my father and I have a strained relationship." Relationship. I hated the sound of that word, especially as it bounded off the walls of a psychiatrist's office.

Dr. Jordan shrugged. "That's your problem, not mine."

By that time I was so desperate to shatter the glass house that separated me from the rest of the world that I did what Dr. Jordan told me to do. I crawled into the cab of the pickup after my appointment and looked at my father.

"The doctor thinks keeping busier now would help me," I began helplessly. "Is there anything around your place that I could do?" I heard my voice fade, becoming flat and unreal. Thin wallpaper.

My father considered my question, and then with a strange edge to his voice he said, "I don't know. It's been a long time since you've been home. I'm not sure what you enjoy doing anymore."

His voice was at once proud and wary, and quite suddenly for the first time I wondered what he thought of me, a sick shadow of myself, tumbling back into his world.

I spoke again. "Could I brush down Andromache?" Andromache was my father's oldest and favorite Shetland. He used to show her when I was younger at all the county and state fairs where it was a foregone conclusion that she would win both the halter and roadster classes. Everyone agreed that no one knew how to get more from a pony than my father, in spite of the fact that he was just a history professor.

Slowly my father nodded. "Okay. I'll pick you up on Saturday morning."

Saturday morning I straggled out of bed and found Michael in the kitchen fixing breakfast. Michael always fixed breakfast now. Cooking, as Dr. Jordan said, is one of the first things to go for people in my condition.

Michael smiled at me as I sat down. "Your dad called and said he'd be over in half an hour." He paused. "Kathy, I think it's really great the way you and your dad are becoming friends again."

I stared at him, consciously trying to focus on the words coming out of his mouth. Friends? Just because we rode back and forth together in a pickup to a psychiatrist's office? But Michael seemed so pleased that I didn't say anything.

My father arrived when he said he would. He and I left Michael with a sinkful of dishes, which Michael didn't

seem to mind.

As we drove up in front of my father's house, I could see Andromache tethered to the spreading chestnut tree in the front yard. She was cropping at the lawn primly, her neck arched delicately—a real lady. I smiled at the picture.

As soon as the pickup came to a halt, I jumped out.

"Hey, girl," I spoke calmly as I slowly wobbled toward her.

Andromache stared at me with warm interested eyes as though she had been waiting for me all morning. She didn't flinch when I approached her. Tentatively, I pressed my palm like a kiss against her neck. It was warm and well-muscled, just the way I remembered.

My father walked up behind us. "Would you like to drive her?" he asked matter-of-factly.

I didn't answer. I didn't know if I could drive a pony anymore. It had been so long and now with the way the medication slowed down my reaction time—I saw myself endlessly dragged behind a racing pony as though it were a night-dream that had run away with me.

"No, I'd better not," I said, but my father was gone. When he reappeared he brought with him the lightweight ponycart and harness. Without saying a word to me, he untethered Andromache and gently slipped the harness about her. Then he hooked up the cart.

"Here," he said, handing me the reins and looking at me steadily.

I took the reins as though they were a gift and hoisted myself into the seat and positioned my feet.

"Giddyap," I said and flicked the reins lightly over Andromache's back.

In the cart I rattled through the yard, rounded the barn, and skirted the huge vegetable garden. I saw the edge of the garden was full of big fiery pumpkins, bursting through the earth like ripe bellies, waiting for the harvest. And soon Andromache and I were in the orchard. The trail there, pounded flat by years of toy hooves, was arched slightly by fruit trees on either side. As I trotted Andromache up and down, up and down, I felt the fall-dappled tree limbs overhead net the sunlight and then splash it warmly through my hair and over my shoulders.

Even there in the orchard with no judges fingering silk ribbons, Andromache's action was high. I had to rein her hard to keep her from breaking into a spirited, showy run. Her mane streamed behind her like a creamy banner.

As I turned the cart for the last time around the bend, I saw my father standing alone on the garden's edge.

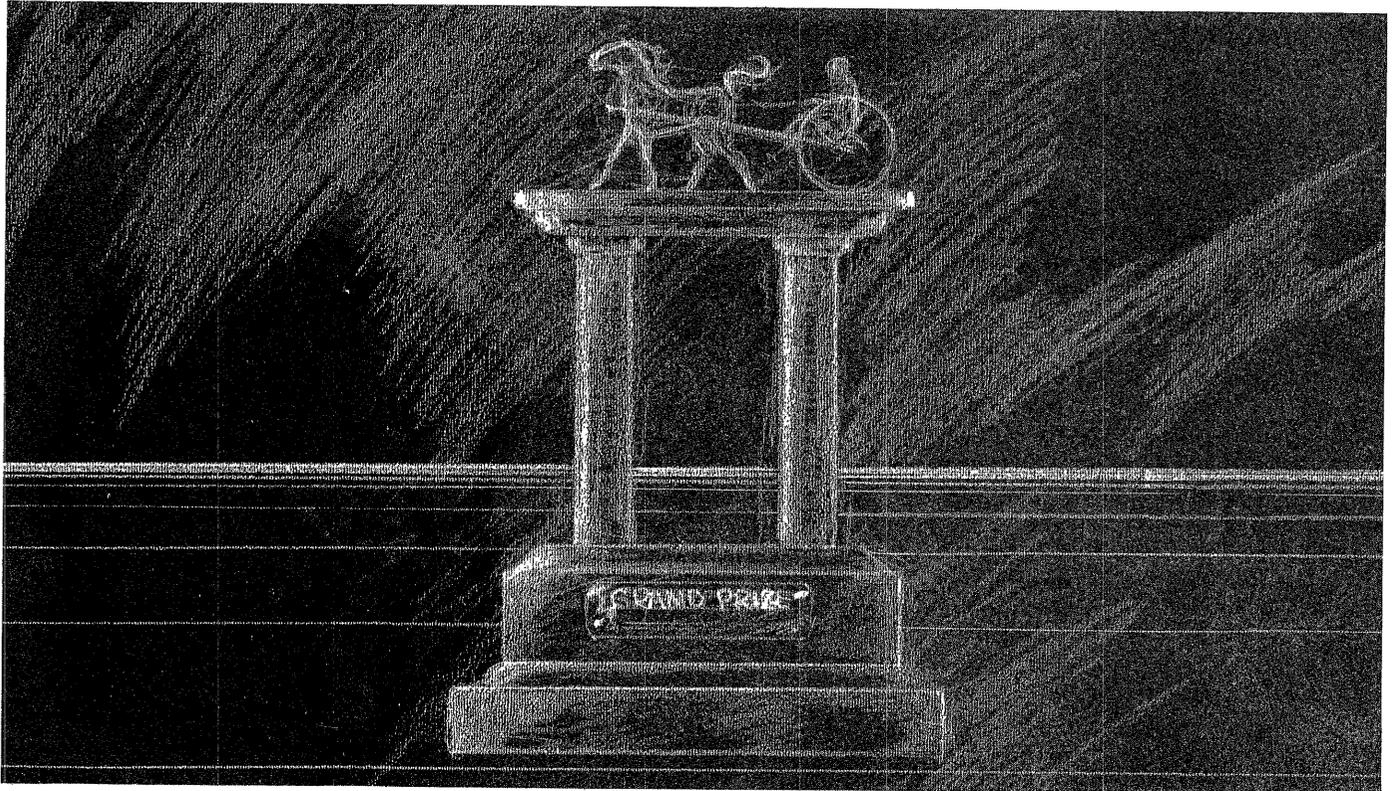
I let Andromache have full rein. She ran up to where my father stood, blowing hard. When she stopped, she threw her head for him.

There was a glimmer of a smile on my father's face, and I saw that it included me.

"I always thought that you had a way with these creatures," he said. And then he began to loosen Andromache. In my drugged sort of way, I tried to help.

Later that day while I was in the barn brushing down Andromache by myself in the shafts of light that magnified bits of whirling hay and dust, I had a memory.

I was six again, right after Mother died. I saw my father, his hair black, standing by the edge of the bed.



"Wake up, Kathy," he was saying.

I rubbed my eyes because it was still dark outside.

"I want to show you something." He slipped a jacket over my nightgown and hoisted me gently on his shoulders.

Half-awake, I grabbed fistfulls of his thick hair in terror. "Don't let me fall, Daddy!" I screeched at him.

He just laughed as though I had suggested the most absurd thing in the whole wide world.

We walked outside together, me perched like a fierce little raven on his shoulder.

"Look in there, Kathy," he said. I peeked over the stall's edge. Andromache was on her side, straining against the wall.

I was horrified. "Is she dying?" I whispered.

"Watch," he said, and there was comfort in his voice, so I knew our pony was going to be all right.

I saw my first colt born that night.

The next morning before I went to school, I saw the colt, tiny and perfect, standing upright on its peppermint-stick legs—all by itself—just as my father promised me she would. On the way to Mrs. Rigby's first grade class, I thought proudly that my father knew more than any grownup I'd ever known.

### III

**T**HE next morning burst through my window in one of those weird October lights. Its unremitting brightness made the curtains turgid and phosphorescent, awakening me from the first dream I'd had in months. It was the kind of dream that thumbs its nose at time—rudely throwing together people who couldn't know one another, willfully ignoring events that have gone on before.

I dreamed that I was alone, looking through the living

room window of my father's house, and I was vaguely surprised to see a fire burning in the fireplace. I squinted to get a better look at the person who was spreading dry pine boughs like fans across the flames: it was a woman—warm-eyed and smiling. My father and Michael entered the room, then, and joined her by the hearth. I stood outside watching them all, bowing and dipping their heads in close conversation. A minute or two passed before I realized the woman was my mother. When I did, the walls and the windows that had kept me apart fell away, and I was with them all near the fire where we—Michael, Mother, my father, and I—sat enjoying the wholeness of one another.

As the dream ebbed, I heard the sound of splashing bathwater in the next room, and I knew Michael was doing his best to silently prepare himself for church. He would groom himself very carefully and go worship with all those who were embarrassed by my absence. By himself in a hard pew he would bow his head and pray for me directly.

And at nearly the same moment, my father (I could picture him now in his faded jeans and flannel shirt) would be out by the side of the barn, sorting through all the week's things that needed mending: his prayer for me would be this private ritual, this ritual of making things complete.

He and I, we have no gift for intimacy. But Michael loves us, and my mother loved us, too.

They were the ones who looked past the absence of words.

At that moment lying in my bed I felt stronger than I had for months and than I was to feel for some time to follow.

ANN EDWARDS-CANNON is working on an MA in English literature at BYU. She has published in *Sunstone*, *Network*, *Exponent II*, *Teen*, *Co-Ed*, *The Friend*, and *New Era*.

# THE DILEMMAS OF PLURALISM

Peter Berger

## A prominent sociologist of religion describes the movement from fate to choice

### Editor's Note

*The following paper was delivered at the 1981 Sunstone Theological Symposium. Dr. Berger was one of several speakers who were funded in part by a grant from the Utah Endowment for the Humanities.*

**M**Y topic tonight is the contemporary possibilities of religion and of faith in an age of pluralism. What I mean by pluralism is nothing at all esoteric or technical but rather something very simple. We live in a society with a great variety of different worldviews, religious and other, existing side by side. The historical reasons for this are well known and do not need elaboration. What interests me is what this means to the religious faith of individuals and so of institutions.

When most people talk about the problems of religion in the modern world, whether they are sociologists or theologians or historians or what have you, they are very likely to talk about secularity or secularization. Separation of church and state, politically, is an example of this institutional change. Religious institutions no longer play the public role they used to play. But in the consciousness of a large number of people in the modern world, religious belief, religious symbol also seems to be less important than used to be the case.

I agree that there has been secularization, and I think that the reasons for it are not mysterious. They have to do with very visible structures of the modern world. However, in my opinion pluralism is as important as secularization in producing a very important challenge to religion as well as to morality in our society.

There is a distinction between the aspects of pluralism that is very obvious, namely the institutional aspect, and the other aspect which I think is much less obvious but ultimately more important: that aspect of pluralism which has to do with the consciousness of minds of individuals. In America the pluralism of institutions, at least religious institutions, has been successfully handled by this society for the most part. There are only a few continuing institutional problems, mostly

questions that have to do with the relations of church and state. One of these is, of course, the issue of prayer in public schools which has been haunting a lot of Americans since the Supreme Court decision which prohibited it. Another issue which I think is going to create a public problem is the question of tax credits for education. That raises the whole dilemma of public funds going to religious schools. So there are problems regarding the boundaries of church and state.

And there may be other problems concerning the relationships of religious institutions in this society. But if you look at the history as a whole, I think it is remarkable that in this country for quite a while—almost from the beginning of the republic—a very large number of highly diverse religious groups have coexisted with each other in a state of civic peace. That is historically unusual and something Americans can be very satisfied about.

But the aspect of religious pluralism that concerns the consciousness and minds of individuals is still, I think, not very well understood. And it is my thesis that if we understand what pluralism does within the consciousness of individuals, we come rather quickly to one of the core problems of modernity in general, not just religion.

Modernity or modernization can be defined in different ways, and since it is a very complex phenomenon, there is no single correct definition but rather many definitions which lead one to see different aspects of the phenomenon. One way to describe modernity is as a movement of human beings from fate to choice, from destiny to decisions, both in terms of the actions of people and in terms of the consciousness of people. Some aspects of this change from fate to choice involve material culture. In a premodern society the number of material artifacts that people have for their use is very limited. To perform a certain task one employs certain tools. In our fully developed modern society we have an incredible number of tools at our disposal. And in a capitalist society such as American society, in which large numbers of products compete

with each other on the market, we are bombarded with advertisements which tell us that one particular gadget is better than the others, that this machine is better than that machine. This provides an enormous expansion of choice.

I think the technological aspect of the movement from fate to choice is particularly important because technology really is the underlying engine of modernity; it keeps the whole thing moving. But much more important, there is also an explosion of choices that we have to do with every other area of human life.

Among critics of modern Western society, leftist critics or others generally antagonistic to our kind of society, there is often the notion that these aren't real choices but only seeming choices. I think that is a very hard position to defend once you look at facts. Take certain things that happen in the life of an individual. In our society almost everyone, not just the rich, has the following choices: they have the choice to live somewhere else from where their parents live; they may choose an occupation other than that of their fathers or mothers; they have the choice of whom to marry or whether they should marry at all; they have the choice of what kind of school they should send their children to. Modern Americans have many choices of this sort that during most of human history were no choices at all but those absolutely fixed by tradition, by the institutions in which an individual in a premodern society existed.

What does this have to do with religion? We can also make the choice as to what religious affiliation we are going to have. It is a choice which is first of all based in law; no one in the United States may be forced to belong to a certain religious group. No one can be prevented from leaving a certain religious group. No one can be forced to attend religious services. All of these are terribly basic things. But it is much more than law. It is something that has to do with the whole social dynamics of American society. And in this as in so many other things, language reflects very well what the social situation is.

I think there is one American phrase that more than any other expresses the underlying reality of religious pluralism in America, and that is the phrase "religious preference." That phrase struck me when I first heard it. I came to America as a very young man. And a few months after I came to America (I was eighteen years old), I registered for college. On the application of the Protestant college that I attended one question was, "What is your religious preference?" Although my English was fairly good at that point, I didn't understand the phrase.

It was so peculiarly American. Now, of course, I know that they meant denomination. But the word is a very interesting word because it comes from consumer language: I prefer this product over that product. Now what does the word preference mean? I think it means two things. First of all it means that I have a choice. If I prefer this, it means that I could have chosen the other. It also suggests that the choice is not a desperate one. It is a choice which one might make without necessarily wrenching one's life. Now please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that the choice for most Americans between one religious affiliation and another is comparable to the choice between consumer products. Nevertheless, it does suggest that one could make this

move without destroying one's social existence, which certainly would have been the case and is still the case in many parts of the world where religious pluralism of this sort does not exist.

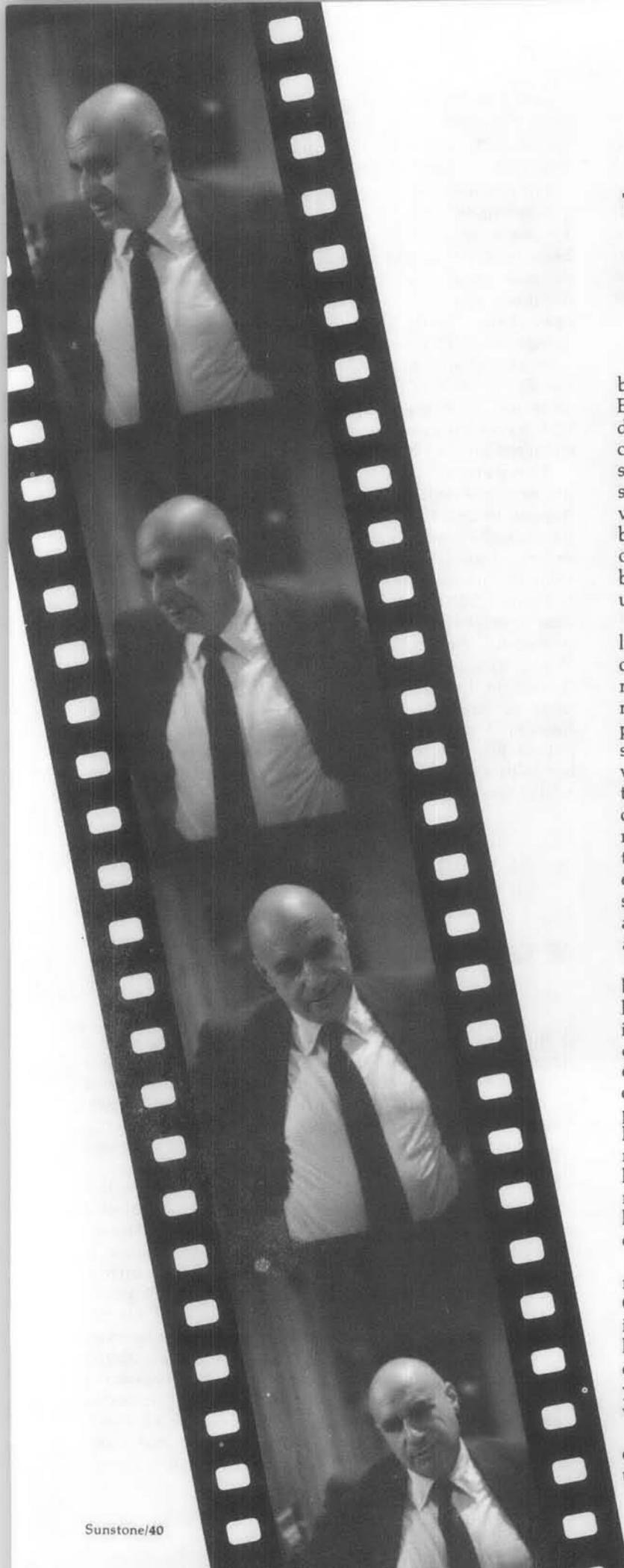
For example, the other day I saw an old friend of mine whom I hadn't seen in many years, a man from Pakistan. He converted from Islam to Christianity, and his life has been totally changed by that fact. His family refused to have any dealing of any sort with him from that point on. It was as if he were dead for them. For someone who goes through this kind of religious change, the term "religious preference" would not be appropriate. But for a Presbyterian who moves across town and finds that the Episcopal Church, for whatever reasons, is more congenial to him and his family than the Presbyterian and therefore joins the Episcopal Church, it is a very different kind of biographical step.

There are other American expressions which I think are very interesting. "I happen to be" is a very nice one. I happen to be a Catholic. What does that mean? I might be something else; I happen to be a Catholic. A more recent addition to this vocabulary (like so many innovations in our language, this one comes from California): "I am into." I am into Buddhism, which means that next year I might be out of it again. The implication of transience. Another one I get very often from students: "I am trying to find out what my faith is." I vividly remember the first time I heard this phrase. When I came to America, one of my first girlfriends was an Armenian girl born in the United States. She used that phrase. She told me that she was trying to find out what her faith was. She went to some classes that were being held in the Armenian church in New York. It struck me

## **IT IS MUCH EASIER TO BE A BELIEVER IF THE MATTER OF RELIGION IS FATE OR DESTINY.**

at the time that there is a logical contradiction in this statement. Either it is her faith, in which case she doesn't have to find out what it is; or if she has to find out what it is, how could it be her faith? It is a very typically American phrase that suggests this loose relationship that at least many Americans have with their religious affiliations.

For those of us who live in this pluralistic vortex, the effect can be described in a very simple way (although I assure you I could also describe it in an extremely complicated way). Pluralism produces for religion a decline in certainty; to put it in even simpler terms, certainty is harder to come by. Why? Human beings are social creatures. They are made that way. And, except for some of our most direct sense experiences, whatever we know about the world we can only be certain about because of other people. For example, I have hay fever. I would have a stuffed nose now regardless of the social context in which I found myself. And I don't think that I would need social confirmation of the fact that I am physically uncomfortable. Things of that sort, direct



**S**O FAR THE  
JUDEO-CHRISTIAN  
TRADITION HAS SERVED, EVEN IN ITS  
SECULARIZED FORM, TO FORM  
ENOUGH OF A CONSENSUS IN THE  
SOCIETY TO AVOID FUNDAMENTAL  
MORAL CONFLICTS.

bodily experiences, are unattached to social context. Everything else we know, or rather we think we know, depends upon other people for reassurance and confirmation. If any of us were suddenly torn out of our social context and put in a totally different context, separated from contact with those who affirm our values, our meaning, and our identity in our previous biographies, I assure you that within a very short period of time, everything we ever thought we were or knew or believed would become questionable. And unfortunately there are empirical data to prove this.

Through most of human history, most people have lived in situations in which everyone around them from cradle to grave shares at least the most important religious values and beliefs. And in such situations it is not difficult to have certainty as to one's beliefs. Let me put it graphically. Imagine an old type Catholic village in southern Europe, perhaps in Spain. There still are some villages even today where everybody is Catholic, where the church is at the center of life, where one knows, of course, that there are people who are not Catholic, there may even have been people who have crossed through that village who were not Catholic. But this is outside, exotic; it is not really relevant to one's life. In such a situation it is very easy to be a Catholic. In fact it is almost impossible not to be a Catholic for the aforementioned social and psychological reasons.

Now take somebody from that village and put him in a big city where there are all kinds of other people, all kinds of other values, beliefs, and religious systems, and in a very short time, this person—it is not even a question of being an intellectual, for this happens with even very simple and uneducated people—becomes less certain, perhaps very uncertain indeed. The person had previously accepted his religious faith as a fate, a destiny. He was a Catholic in the same way he was a Spaniard, a male, or five feet six inches tall or whatever qualities he had which were givens. Now to be a Catholic becomes a matter of decision. *I want* to be a Catholic. I am going to hold on to my faith or my tradition, which is a very different story.

However, while I would insist as a sociologist that religious pluralism undermines religious certainty, as a Christian I do not find this to be as much of a calamity as it might at first appear. Of course, the crucial question is how you feel about certainty in general. If you find that questioning any part of your beliefs is a serious threat to your own peace of mind or security, then I suppose this will be some type of calamity. But I don't think that at all.

If we look at Western history, the closest analogue we can find to our own kind of religious pluralism is undoubtedly the late Roman period, the Hellenistic

Greco-Roman period. If you read books, plays, philosophers of the second century era, you get a feeling of modernity. It was a very comparable situation to our own, the old religions coexisting with a mass of new cults and faiths and beliefs, many of them coming from the East, others springing up within those very heterogeneous urban agglomerations of the late Roman Empire. I think it was not an accident that it was this time that Christianity came into the world. This was the period of the great Christian enterprise, and all of the early church fathers had to face religious pluralism; to have faith, to be a Christian, to have religious beliefs at all was no longer a matter of fate but rather an act of choice. One could choose to be a Christian and no longer a worshiper of the gods of Rome or a Manichean devotee of Mithros.

Clearly, this kind of situation does create peculiar difficulties. It is much easier to be a believer if the matter of religion is fate or destiny. But the truth which comes as a result of an individual search, of individual doubt and questioning and even pain, is a truth to hold on to. I believe that this kind of process is more genuine and humanly valuable than a process in which one has a religion in the same way one has a particular color of eyes or a certain height, by the genes so to speak. Though our situation is difficult, it is also enormously challenging. It is a challenge to individual believers, to religious institutions, to religious thought, and to, in the Christian case, theology.

One very interesting thing has emerged in many religious milieus as a consequence of this pluralism; the lines between insiders and outsiders have become blurred. A few years ago I was in Iran, before the Iranian revolution of course, and I met a young man who wrote beautiful poetry based on the Sufi tradition in Muslim mystical poetry. There is a technical term in Islam about the boundary between the world of unbelievers, the boundary of war between faith and unbelief. In one poem this young man said, "Today that boundary runs through the heart of every Muslim." There is no longer an outside boundary; here are we believers and out there are the unbelievers. The boundary between belief and unbelief runs through the heart of every individual. It is as much true of Christians in a pluralistic situation as it is of Muslims. Insiders and outsiders seem to find themselves increasingly in the same situation. One can no longer talk to insiders without at the same time talking to outsiders. They're eavesdropping. Insiders must search out privacy in a kind of sectarian underworld. Usually there are these others who also listen and talk and have their own point of view.

Now I think that this is only debilitating if one associates religion with unwavering certitude about every aspect of one's own religious tradition. If one does not make that assumption then I think we face an immensely exciting situation, namely people all over the world with religious concerns engaged in a common quest for truth. In this situation there is a new possibility for dialogue between the great religions of the West and the religions that have in one way or another come out of the subcontinent of India, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism. These traditions have met before. In fact last summer at a symposium I listened to a German scholar talk about new archaeological discoveries in Central

Asia which show that for centuries a very intensive dialogue has been going on between Christianity and Buddhism. So this is not altogether new. But now the world is a smaller place; intercommunication between cultures has become common. People move around with much great ease, and there are massive migrations of human beings. As a result, the religions which for most of Western history have been "out there" somewhere (perhaps of interest to missionaries, colonial administrators, or even scholars, but for most people basically irrelevant—certainly for religious thinkers in the Christian world) have suddenly become much closer.

Of course, if there were a world war or if international tensions escalated so that nations increasingly shielded themselves off from each other or if there were massive economic disaster, this might not continue. But I think we have reason to be at least mildly optimistic that we are not heading for a total catastrophe. Hence, I think it is inevitable that this communication between religious traditions will increase and become, I think, more in earnest.

My thesis is that at least for Christian theology in the coming decades, this challenge from the East is likely to produce some most interesting reflections—about individuals and about traditions. One always discovers one's own by coming in touch with the "other." It is impossible to be a man without women. It is impossible to be conscious of oneself as an American unless one is conscious of non-Americans. Of course, it is not a hostile consciousness I am talking about; rather one sees and recognizes the other and then asks, "What is it that I am?"

This is also true of religion. For example, it was always in the encounter and contestation with others that Christian thought developed. The first other was the Greco-Roman world. That little Jewish sect came out of Palestine and confronted the massive and overwhelming power of the Hellenistic world and came to terms with it.

## **T**HE BOUNDARY BETWEEN BELIEF AND UNBELIEF RUNS THROUGH THE HEART OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL.

That was the birth of Christian theology. During the middle ages, the Greco-Roman world hit Christianity a second time in a very roundabout way through the Arabs, through Islam. Aristotle came to Europe. Scholasticism developed. In this case, the Aristotle brought to the West by Muslim scholars and Jewish scholars became the "other" and in contestation with that other, Christian thought made another enormous jump.

For the past few centuries the major other of Christian thought has been modernity, especially modern secularism. Most theological passion had to do with how to come to terms with modernity. It is my hunch that this particular dialogue has exhausted itself. Modernity itself is in crisis; I have alluded to some of the reasons. I don't think it has much challenge left to give to Christian thought, to give to religious thought in general. I don't think that the 567th attempt to make a

Christian interpretation of Marx or Freud is going to be any more interesting than the previous 566.

On the contrary, I think the real challenge, the real "other" is coming from another direction, particularly from Asia. What the outcome of that will be is very hard to predict, just as it was very difficult to predict what the outcomes of previous conflicts of this sort were going to be. I am sure only of two things. First, that truth reasserts itself, regardless of historical or social conditions. And the truth which is at the core of the Christian religious tradition has nothing to fear from any such encounter. It will prevail; it will reassert itself. At the same time I am very much convinced that no tradition and no individual can remain the same, having gone through this kind of confrontation. It is not possible to seriously entertain the idea that some of the key ideas of Hinduism and Buddhism contain truth and then to go on thinking as a Christian, the way one did before one entertained these ideas. That is impossible.

Let me tell one story to illustrate what happens. I was in India three years ago, a very important experience for me. In the course of my stay there I saw a number of funerals. The first funeral I saw was at Calcutta, a Hindu funeral. I was on my way to visit a Christian scholar who was interested in Hinduism. I came on this funeral and walked with them a couple of blocks. There was no coffin; the dead body was carried on a wooden platform and taken out to be burned. They were chanting. It was a stark sight. We are unaccustomed in the West to seeing dead bodies carried around the street. Later I was talking to my scholar acquaintance about it and asked him what they were chanting. At Hindu funerals, he said, they always chant a particular chapter of the Gita. And he started reciting it to me, first in Sanskrit and then in English. Then I returned to my hotel. Now in hotel rooms in India they provide not only a Gideon's Bible but also a Gideon's Gita. (Here at the Salt Lake Hilton I noticed that they have a Gideon's Bible and a Gideon's Book of Mormon.) Alone in my hotel room, I read this chapter in the Gita. And though I had read it before, in fact many times, I had never known before that it was chanted at funerals. It is a very beautiful passage. It's a hymn to the eternal self, which reads something like

**ONE ALWAYS  
DISCOVERS ONE'S OWN  
BY COMING IN TOUCH WITH THE  
OTHER.**

this: The true self passes from one migration to another. When a person is tired of old clothes, he throws them away. Just so when the true self is tired of a body; it throws that body away. Itself, the true self, can never be destroyed. Fire cannot burn it; wind cannot wither it; water cannot wet it. It is immutable, eternal, unchangeable. Therefore, knowing this do not sorrow.

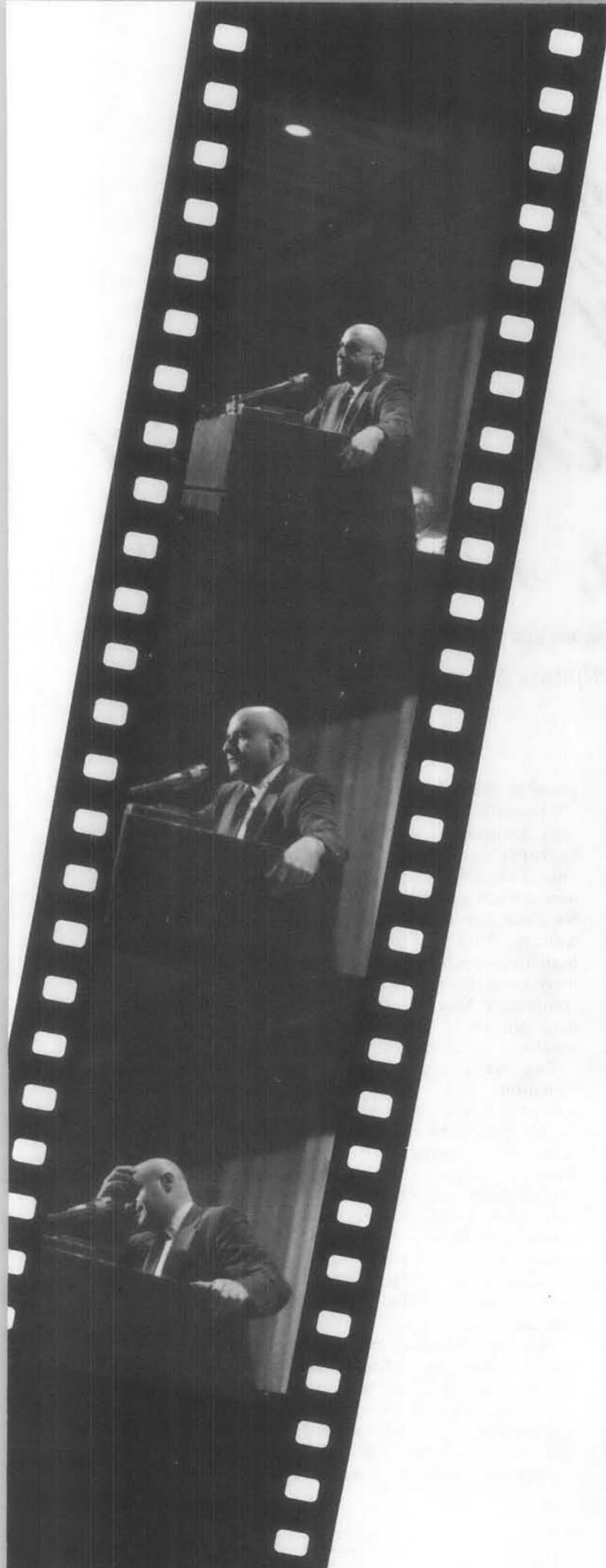
Reading this in my hotel room, I had an enormous sense of rebellion. Even if I believed that whole metaphysics, the metaphysics of reincarnation, I would not be consoled if I were following the corpse of someone I loved to the funeral pyre. Now why would I not be consoled? Then I remembered a Greek word from

**IT WAS ALWAYS  
IN THE ENCOUNTER  
AND CONTESTATION WITH OTHERS  
THAT CHRISTIAN THOUGHT  
DEVELOPED.**

the New Testament which means "once and for all." When I returned home, I looked it up in my New Testament concordance and found it always refers to Jesus's "once and for all" atonement. But I wasn't thinking of Jesus at all. I had been thinking of "once and for all" in a different sense, the basic Western experience that it is this world, this body, this life, which is of decisive importance. And you cannot throw it away as if it were an old bit of clothes and go on to something else. Thus there is a basic clash between us, not just of beliefs but of a sense of reality. We could simply say their view is a lot of nonsense. Westerners have done this with India for centuries, and they do it to us as well. An educated Hindu will say, "Westerners are like children. They don't understand." That is the easy way out. I don't think we can do that. We have to somehow find a way of understanding the world in which both of these traditions are seen as having access to truth. That acknowledgement will change us. If one is willing to accept the possibility that this whole Hindu idea of the stream of lives has reality to it, maybe not quite the way that Hinduism describes, but some reality, we will live in a different world.

This dialogue with other religions may help us clarify another problem which I see emerging—a fundamental crisis in this society because of increasing moral pluralism. While there has been enormous religious pluralism in America, the lucky thing has been that all the major religious traditions which were established on the North American continent basically shared very similar moral ideas. In other words they have shared what, though it is not an altogether satisfactory term, most people have called the Judeo-Christian ethical system basically derived from the biblical tradition. While this has been secularized and modified and diversified in various ways, it has still remained as a common moral substratum for the society. Think by contrast of India where centuries of clash between Hindu and Muslim civilizations finally split the country in half—not just totally different religious systems but also moral systems. This is a different kind of pluralism. So far, the Judeo-Christian tradition, despite all this plurality and all this diversity in religion, has served, even in its secularized form, to form enough of a consensus in the society to avoid fundamental moral conflicts. However, we can no longer live off the capital of previous generations when it comes to morality. This substratum, this moral foundation seems to have become shaky.

Let me just mention three areas which illustrate what I mean. All three are very much at the center of public attention these days. Perhaps the most central is the abortion issue. (I have no intention of telling you what my position is on the abortion issue, and it's irrelevant to



what I'm saying.) There is a fundamental clash on this issue, and according to public opinion polls the split is close to fifty-fifty. But this is not just some issue of public policy; it is one of the most basic issues of human life, namely what *is* a human life? About half the population feels that the fetus is essentially an appendage to the mother's body and the removal of that appendage raises no other moral issues than the privacy or the civil rights of the woman who bears the fetus. The other group feels that from the moment of conception the fetus is in fact a human being and that to kill it is, maybe not first degree murder, but certainly a homicidal act. Hence, the fetus is as entitled to the protection of the law as any other person. These divergent views point to a philosophical disagreement on the nature of human life. And it is very hard for me to imagine how the society will be able to function unless some sort of consensus is achieved.

Let me mention two other areas of moral pluralism. The first is the issue of national defense. When President Carter introduced registration for the draft, there were numerous anti-draft demonstrations. Most newspapers carried a photo of the Princeton University demonstration in which somebody carried a sign that said, "Nothing is worth dying for." (Again, let me not take a position here about what I think about the draft.) There seems to be within our society a sizeable portion of people who feel that this society is no longer worth defending, by force of arms if necessary. If that is true, the future of our society in the real world does not look very bright. It is a fundamental issue. Like the issue of patriotism, the issue of defense touches on the moral foundation of any society, not just this one.

The third conflict involves the theoretical limits of social conflicts between groups. Until very recently it was assumed that however violent the disagreement between a union and its employers, nothing would be done which fundamentally endangered human life. Now the air controller's strike was something different because they assumed that when they went on strike, everything would stop. But firefighters' strikes and nurses' strikes are another matter. Such a thing would have been unthinkable in this country twenty years ago (though thinking on this subject has gone much further in western Europe than in the United States). Not too long ago in Montreal the firemen went on strike. There were big fires. Pickets prevented volunteer people from stopping the fires, and a couple of deaths resulted. In other words, in an ordinary labor dispute, life was no longer a value to be protected at all cost. Only the other day I read of another strike, this one in the state of Massachusetts where I live. Nurses in several hospitals walked away from patients, including those in intensive care. If they died, they died. It was simply part of the ordinary labor dispute.

I would suggest that here we are touching on issues of moral pluralism which have to be resolved somehow if the society is to continue. In fact, I believe that the future of our society will depend on how we succeed in solving these problems of pluralism, but this time not only in the area of religion but also in the area of morality.

PETER BERGER is a professor of sociology at Boston College and author of numerous books including *The Sacred Canopy*, *A Rumor of Angels*, and *The Heretical Imperative*.

# Growing Up in Early Utah: The Wasatch Literary Association, 1874-1878

RONALD W. WALKER

*A high-spirited gang of future Mormon leaders*

ONE day in early February 1874 Jim Ferguson, admitting the forlorn hope of advancing his court with Minnie Horne, suggested to Ort Whitney and another of the boys that they organize a reading society. Ferguson "had heard, no doubt, of fond couples 'reading life's meaning in each others eyes,'" Whitney later mused, "and that was the kind of reading that most interested him." Since the seventeen-year-old Whitney found himself "in the same box with Ferguson on the girl question," the suggestion found a ready response. Whitney immediately invited those who "would make desirable members" to meet at the home of Sister Emmeline Wells, his motherly confidante. It was there on Salt Lake City's State Street that the Wasatch Literary Society was born.<sup>1</sup>

From such modest roots flowered one of territorial Utah's most lively and far-reaching adventures with culture. Whitney confessed that he and his friends had a longstanding interest in the highbrow. "As for essays, declamations, and musical renditions, we had been doing that all our lives." Prior to the Wasatch, they had drawn up constitutions for several cultural societies. Indeed, Whitney and a dozen of the subsequent "Wasatchers" had previously affiliated with the intellectually stimulating and controversial Zeta Gamma, Dr. John R. Park's debating society at the University of Utah and reputedly the first Greek-lettered group in the Intermountain West. Some also had joined the short-lived Delta Phi, a literary society which had flourished in 1873.<sup>2</sup>

The 1870s were ripe for such things. From the beginning the Mormon settlers had fostered as much culture as their theocracy and pioneer economy would

permit. They had sponsored the "Polysophical," "Philomathian," and "Universal Scientific" societies; they listened to the literary and scientific "Seventies' Lectures"; and they built the Social Hall and the Salt Lake Theatre to stage drama. In turn, the 1870s brought new wealth and a cosmopolitan spirit. The Union Pacific Railroad, the anti-Mormon Salt Lake *Tribune*, the Tintic Mining District, the 1,000-seat Godbeite Liberal Institute—each in its own way symbolized Utah's increasing diversity and prosperity. The result was significant. Mormon cultural traditions mixing with the new pluralism, the stage was set for unprecedented creativity and ferment.<sup>3</sup>

The Wasatch Literary Association drew from both Mormon and non-Mormon legacies. With few exceptions, the sixty who eventually came to enroll in the society were first generation, native-born Utahns. Many were scions with the bluest of Mormon blood. (Nearly one-sixth were Brigham Young's children, grandchildren, nephews, or nieces, while seven were sons and daughters of Daniel H. Wells, Brigham's counselor.) However, an appreciation of culture, not wealth or position, was the common denominator in the background of its members. Their parents were long-time mainstays of the territory's Chautauqua programs and amateur theater.<sup>4</sup>

The "Wasatchers" proved very much the children of their heritage. According to its constitution and by-laws, the Wasatch desired "the social advancement and the improvement of its members in general literature, music and drama"—no small task for unsupervised youth in a semirural community of less than 25,000. To fulfill its mission, the usual complement of officers was provided.

A president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and chairman of the program committee were elected at first monthly and then later every six weeks. A marshal and janitor were subsequently added to provide much needed decorum—and probably a touch of humor given the ignominy of such positions. The original ceiling of twenty-five active members was once raised to thirty-two, but all efforts to increase it still higher were soundly defeated. Finally, the by-laws called for the society to meet every Wednesday evening in one of the members' homes.<sup>5</sup>

The society, while dedicated to culture, had too much youth and wit in the group to admit either pretension or gravity. Most members entered the Wasatch when in their late teens or early twenties. While occasional leeway was extended to venerability, as in the brief membership of thirty-three-year-old Will Woods, exceptions were usually on the side of precocity. Hebe Wells was fifteen when he joined, Bud Whitney sixteen, and Dick Young just over seventeen.

With a "disposition to sacrifice everything for a laugh," the Wednesday evening programs were unpredictable. "[John] B. Read, *Janitor*, assumed the chair," one meeting's minutes began. "By overwhelming majority vote of those present, Mr. Read was fined 50¢ for this assumption of authority." Normally after the president—and not the janitor—had called for a quorum and approved the minutes, a general reading of literature began. Each member was required to participate. They studied the Mormons' favorite Wordsworth ode, "Intimations of Immortality," several times, and read the life or works of Byron, Goldsmith, Gray, Longfellow, Pope, Scott, and Shakespeare, often drawing the selections from school readers.<sup>6</sup>

Group reading proved too staid, however, so this portion of the weekly program was soon abandoned in favor of spelling matches and an expansion of individual cultural exercises. (The first was apparently based upon genuine need, for the secretary misspelled two words in the sentence recording the motion.) Individual exercises, in turn, were assigned to each member a week or two prior to the scheduled performance. These might include declamations, lectures, debates, and impromptu speaking; original essays, parodies, and poetry; vocal or instrumental renditions; and dialogue, dramatic readings, and even small scale theatrical productions.<sup>7</sup>

The best exercises were remembered as "ambitious and meritorious," a judgment which seems fully warranted at least on the first account. Without the light touch and quick humor of his friends, H. J. Grant twice lectured on "Insurance" and backed up his remarks with the solid credentials of owning, despite his youthful nineteen years, one of the territory's leading insurance agencies. The half sisters Emily and Emmiline Wells, known as "Little and Big Em of the Wasatch," once debated "which has had the more ground for complaint, the Indian or the Negro." Ort Whitney, also versatile with flute and guitar, whistled an obbligate to the "Poet and Peasant" overture as Lena Fobes "brilliantly" performed the piece on the piano. And Stan Clawson's violin butchered the "Crystal Schottische" with great finesse that the performance became an unforgettable memory.<sup>8</sup>

Bud Whitney's extended parody of "The Deserted

Village" also became a Wastach legend. Though subsequently lost, the text was partially reconstructed from collective memory and passed in later years from member to member like a Homeric epic. Telling of the hearth of Billy Dunbar and the mein of Emily Wells, his belle, it captured the meter and idyl of Goldsmith's original:

Removed from Brigham Street a league or two,  
The estate stands whereon our hero grew.  
Not large the lands, nor spacious are the halls,  
No costly chattels hang the simple walls.  
No shimmering font the sportive eye delights,  
No grassy lawn the travelers toil invites.  
Far far from these, the vain display of wealth  
Is here exchanged for free and rugged health.

Each Sunday morn to visit Mrs. Sears,  
The lovely form of little Em appears.  
Unconscious, half of all her blooming charms,  
Yet well inured to love and loves alarms.  
White gauzy skirts pinned backward hard and tight,  
Still other charms afford the eager sight.<sup>9</sup>

The spell of the gaslights seemed to excite members most of all. Their cultural exercises, filled with scenes and staging, soon required a new Wastach officer called "dramatic manager." Popular dramas became common. So did original productions that at times were directed to the intrigues of the society's current social situation. "The whole [of next weeks' program is] to conclude with a scene from the 'fowl' tragedy, *Waiting for the Verdict*—the *Court Scene*," the minutes read with apparent reference to an impending matrimonial decision "by Messrs R. W. Wells, O. F. Whitney, Rud Clawson, Stan Clawson, H. M. Wells, H. G. Whitney, Jno Horne, Lorenzo Young and Miss Cornelia Horne." The Wasatch's devotion to Shakespeare was more decorous. Dialogues and sometimes whole acts were performed from *Hamlet*, *Henry IV*, *Julius Caesar*, *King John*, the *Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *Richard III*.<sup>10</sup>

The quality of the cultural exercises varied widely, according to the society's candid minutes. "The regular exercises were . . . very poor," one entry declared. On another occasion they were "only tolerably well rendered." The members' busy schedules seemed to be the chief difficulty behind failures to prepare and sometimes to perform. However, the society's talent was sufficient to sponsor periodic public exhibitions at the Social Hall, which generally were well received. For example, assisted by the cultured school marm Ida Cook and the budding vocalist B. B. Young, an exhibition in February 1876 opened with the society's orchestra playing an overture. Wasatch President John Caine then



**FROM THE BEGINNING  
THE MORMON SETTLERS  
HAD FOSTERED AS MUCH  
CULTURE AS THEIR THEOCRACY AND  
PIONEER ECONOMY WOULD PERMIT.**



WITH A "DISPOSITION  
TO SACRIFICE EVERYTHING  
FOR A LAUGH," THE  
WEDNESDAY EVENING  
PROGRAMS WERE  
UNPREDICTABLE.

spoke. Next, Harry Culmer, May Wells, and Bud Whitney read essays. The Wasatch chorus sang "Joy! Joy!" after which Cornelia Clayton, Mattie Horne, Libbie Beatie, Bud Whitney, Harry Emery, and Mary Ferguson provided several musical numbers. The evening concluded with dialogue from the Second Act of Libbie's *Marble Heart*.<sup>11</sup>

This performance was an embarrassment, however, at least in the dour judgment of President Caine. "Our leader, the Grand, Infallible, John T. Caine, is dissatisfied with our last," Heber Wells reported to Dick Young, then teaching school in Manti. He "has willed that we *must* do something to redeem ourselves . . . . Of course, the girls all melted at the sight of their 'beau ideal,' and of course they all voted in the manner which 'Johntee' prescribed." Caine in fact called a special meeting of the Wasatch, insisting that a redeeming exhibition be scheduled, and with the girls voting as a block, secured the authority to manage the new production personally.<sup>12</sup>

No Wasatch gathering was ever complete without good-natured wrangling and practical joking. When the forgetful H. J. Grant asked one Wednesday where the society was meeting, Jim Ferguson sent him to Kittie Heywood's home high on a Salt Lake City hill. "It was a good joke on me walking so far for nothing," Grant admitted after the wild-goose chase, "and I think I shall try & get even with James for playing me so."<sup>13</sup>

Immediate recourse was always available through the society's celebrated "budget box," the *piece de resistance* of each monthly meeting. This was literally a box in which members could anonymously place any composition,

serious or most often otherwise. Edited and selected by a reader appointed at the previous meeting, the box's contents were read following the general culture exercises. The idea was not original. Will Woods, President Wells's Gentile nephew from Iowa, had suggested the society appropriate the plan from a club to which he had once belonged.<sup>14</sup>

The budget box "used to fairly scintillate with the brilliance of its articles," the Salt Lake *Herald* judged a decade after the Wasatch Literary Association's demise, "many of them—but for their rather personal character—would adorn the pages of any of our brightest periodicals of current literature." After a Wastacher memorized but badly executed the role of Claude Melnotte in Bulwer's *The Lady of Lyons*, the budget box began with what at first seemed a compliment:

Now Claude was well committed, too,  
And doubly done—ay, this is true;  
You first commit the part, to prove it,  
And then commit the murder of it.<sup>15</sup>

Spicy rumors of members' social lives were a budget box staple. Several squibs detailed an alleged hugging incident involving Rob Sloan and the popular and coquettish Emily Wells on her distinguished father's front porch. They graphically continued with the reactions of her distraught admirers, Ort Whitney and H. J. Grant threatening vengeance and Billy Dunbar suicide. "I would [have] given a dollar if you could have been there to hear them," Grant said when reporting the episode to a friend in the East. The budget box pieces "were too good for anything."<sup>16</sup>

On another occasion B. B. Young must have thought otherwise. Young apparently earned Wasatch displeasure by first affiliating with and then openly censuring the society. The budget box responded with a torrent of abuse. Bid Young, his half-brother, disclosed that B. B.'s "regular morning exercise was to run a chicken . . . until it sweat, so that he would extract an egg without much difficulty for his morning drink." Members refused to let the lampoon die. A week later they staged a mock trial, with B. B.'s chicken-running prosecuted as a crime with "malice prepense." Not understanding legal jargon, "the defendant denied chasing the chicken with 'a mallet prepense,' maintaining instead that 'it was a stick with a nail in the end of it.'" Rule Wells, the judge, swept the distinction aside and sentenced the criminal to death. Still later the society fired another fusillade. Responding to B. B.'s complaint that his calculus studies were "using him up," the budget box wondered if the problem did not lie more realistically in his "getting drunk."<sup>17</sup>

New members in particular were subject to attack. "Harry Culmer," Heber Wells reported to Dick Young, "is now a member and on the next evening he may prepare to be slandered, laughed at, abused, and culminated at the pleasure of the budget box writers." The eighteen-year-old Wells could hardly still his enthusiasm—nor keep his metaphors consistent:

He must go through the "kinks." I have, and you have, and why should he be exempt? Let us rally! and pour such hot words into his burning ears as will scorch his very inners, and make his blood run cold with fiery indignation. I will ransack the remotest corner of my cranium for wit, and coupling this with all the eloquence my soul possesses, I'll "let him have it," loud and long, egad I will!<sup>18</sup>

More and more, the budget box determined a meeting's success. The gathering at the Hornes' was "way up," one [of] the best (if not the best) we have ever had," reported one member. "There was nearly (if not quite) 50 budget box [pieces]." Contributions were vigorously solicited from out-of-town members ("Attack anybody, *me* if you like"). Other members hatched a budget box conspiracy. Using Emily Wells as amanuensis, signing themselves as Gax, Ginx, Iago, Pard, Uebec, and Yoric, and further disguising their trail by occasionally attacking themselves, they embroiled the society week after week not only with their calumnies but by the aura of mystery surrounding their true identities.<sup>19</sup>

While intended as "innocent merriment," the Wasatch



**THE SOCIETY, WHILE  
DEDICATED TO CULTURE,  
HAD TOO MUCH YOUTH  
AND WIT IN THE GROUP TO ADMIT  
EITHER PRETENSION OR GRAVITY.**

barbs occasionally inflicted wounds upon the sensitive. For example, H. J. Grant, a widow's son without the opportunity for formal schooling, remembered shedding "many bitter tears when my gramatical errors & other mistakes were laughed at" and at times felt "the least beloved and respected of any of the members of the Club." Unfortunately, many were not as resilient as Grant. After running the verbal gauntlet, probably a tenth of the society's incoming members quickly dropped out. Realizing their excesses, the fun-loving Wasatch old-timers finally adopted a formal resolution declaring "personalities" a misdemeanor and banned them, subject to fines, from all proceedings.<sup>20</sup>

However, the fines themselves became a source of amusement, a Wastach commonplace. Assessed each meeting after the budget box reading, the fines often touched most members' pockets, as the minutes of 21 October 1874 testify:

Fine of 5 cents were imposed of Kate Wells, R. S. Wells, and Kittie Heywood for not contributing to [the] B[udget] B[ox]. Fines of 20 cents were imposed on Kittie Heywood, H. G. Whitney, C. B. Swift, Jote Beatie, Emily Wells, Nellie Whitney, R. S. Wells[,] Emmie Wells & O. F. Whitney for disorder. It was moved and seconded that O. F. Whitney behave himself during the remainder of the evening. Mr. Swift was fined 25 cts for rudeness. Moved that Messr[s] Swift, H. G. and O. F. Whitney be fined for disrespect for president, 10¢. H. G. Whitney was fined 15¢ for disorder. Jote Beatie, Emily Wells & R. S. Wells were fined for whispering.

Moreover, the fines, added to the club's dues, proved an ample revenue source. During its four-year history, the society met expenses and maintained a burgeoning account at Zion's Savings Bank.<sup>21</sup>

The Wasatch's prosperity occasioned an alleged letter from John R. Winder, Salt Lake City's Collector of Taxes. Members had not realized that their money was apparently subject to levy. Concerned, the society appointed a committee of O. F. Whitney, J. B. Read, and D. C. Young to negotiate a settlement. Week after week passed with the committee temporizing or making partial reports. Finally Whitney admitted the truth. Realizing he could spin the matter out no further, he acknowledged his hoax.<sup>22</sup>

The critic's report, the final Wasatch agenda item, attempted to conclude meetings on a decorous note. Appointed weekly at the outset of each meeting, the critic judged both the culture exercises and budget box reading. His animadversions could be delivered "very sarcastically" and at times were "very plain and to the point." Once the budget box was judged to contain a number of meritorious pieces "but its wit and interest were not equivalent to its length." After the Wastach's burlesque of B. B. Young, critic Emma Wells so railed at the abuse of "our friends" that participants felt "like a Mexican dollar with seventy cents deducted." John Caine was equally scathing when ill-timed laughter marred a dramatic dialogue between Iago and Othello. "You who have laughed at these gentlemen and their commendable efforts to entertain us this evening," Caine opened, "have applauded worse acting upon the boards of the Salt Lake Theatre." Such a high-tone demeanor, however, was not always maintained. When John Read's critique was called for, he sardonically

refused any response—and was fined 25¢ for neglecting duty.<sup>23</sup>

Not surprisingly, given the society's impetus, socializing played an important role. Members might meet informally at the home of Emmeline Wells or at the popular Beaties, where the parlor bulged each Sunday evening with "the crowd." On weekdays, they pored apples or danced the slightly disreputable waltz. If the conversation lagged, Carl Young frequently played the William Tell Overture or Ort Whitney sang "Thoughts." With autograph albums the rage, swains vied to be sentimental and witty. Harry Emery, quoting Othello, wrote in Jote Beatie's album: "Excellent wench, but I do love thee/And when I love thee not, chaos has come again." But the charm was lost when he indelicately penned the same lines in rival albums.<sup>24</sup>

A year after its organization, the society officially started sponsoring social activities. There were weekend outings to City Creek Canyon, Wells's Farm, and Black Rock House on the Great Salt Lake. On one occasion, big, bluff Harry Emery swam from the beach house to Black Rock and back despite a raging storm—to the ladies' admiration but to the dismay of several men who nearly drowned trying to duplicate his feat. At Calder's Park, now Salt Lake City's Nibley Park, the Wasatchers alternately ice-skated or boated as the seasons permitted. One time Mary Jones's skiff capsized and she was rushed to the shore to dry out. As her teeth chattered and body quivered from coldness, Bud Whitney asked with more nervous sympathy than forethought if she cared for ice cream. "Her reply," a member recalled, "was an Arctic glance that 'froze the genial current of his soul.'" <sup>25</sup>

Members approved the proposed socializing only after "a lively and lengthy discussion," and there were times when their caution appeared wise. In January 1876 the young women, supported by their auxiliaries John Caine and Harry Emery, hoped to stage a grand ball at the Wasatch Hotel. The proposition had been approved and a committee on arrangements appointed when the men began to question the plan's feasibility. "The boys all know that we girls *want* to have a party and *we think* it is mean in them to predict that it will be a failure," an impassioned Mary Jones declaimed. "We know that if the boys *want* it to be a *failure* and do all they can to make *it* one of course it *will be one* . . ." Despite her forensics, the project was voted down on basically straight male-female lines. The matter did not end there. While men and women usually shared leadership positions in the Wasatch, at the next election of officers the women vigorously exercised their franchise. An entire distaff slate was elected—with four of the men receiving fines for disorderly conduct during the election.<sup>26</sup>

As the ladies' reaction indicated, socials were serious business—especially when directed toward courting. Victorian romance and sensibility exaggerated emotions and stylized behavior. Wasatch men openly pled their troths. In turn, the girls' flirtatious glances and carefully phrased letters dropped telltale hints of reciprocated affection. Final marital decisions brought extravagant misery. There was mock (and perhaps some real) fear that Bud Whitney was suicidal when Alice Young eloped with Charlie Hopkins. Luella Cobb plunged several Wasatch beaux into despair by becoming the fifth plural



**IN TRUTH, IN MATTERS  
OF BEHAVIOR AND  
RELIGION THE SOCIETY  
LEFT ITS MEMBERS  
LARGELY AS IT FOUND THEM.**

wife of middle-aged John W. Young. Some pains did not heal quickly. In after years when members recalled their Wasatch experience, memories of "heartaches" and "upsetting love affairs" remained to taint their otherwise happy nostalgia.<sup>27</sup>

Church leaders and parents understandably had some misgivings about the association. Its activities were unsupervised, and its spirit seemed too secular, carefree, and at times bruising. Too few men within the society accepted Mormon mission calls. Others, like Ort Whitney, appeared to postpone "real life" for prose and drama. Many members rejected polygamy, the nineteenth century's badge of total LDS commitment, and when they did marry, some chose spouses who were Gentiles or lapsed Mormons. When prominent Wasatcher John Read joined the staff of the Salt Lake *Tribune*, the Mormons' strident journalistic foe, the worst fears of the older generation seemed confirmed.<sup>28</sup>

"The Wasatch has already, through the gab and energy of certain mischief makers, attained in the eyes of our parents, the unenviable notoriety of an institution for the promotion of infidelity and sacriligiousness," Heber Wells noted. But he insisted parental concerns were overdrawn. Most of the Wasatch non-believers were "of that cast . . . before they were Wasatchers. It is simply absurd to think that an association where nothing of . . . [a religious nature] is discussed but where a few persons meet and go through exercises for literary culture, could be the means of turning out nothing but infidels . . ." <sup>29</sup>

In truth, in matters of behavior and religion the society left its members largely as it found them. Certainly there was little outward piety. When it was suggested that meetings be opened and closed with prayer, the motion evoked so little support it never came to a vote. Another suggestion that the society tithe its revenue met a similar fate. Yet there was no carping, anti-Mormonism among them either. For example, prior to Ort Whitney's planned departure for a New York dramatic career, the society staged a farewell benefit at the Social Hall. When a mission call intervened, they cheerfully gave Whitney another testimonial in the Fourteenth Ward Hall. For Rule Wells's mission, the group secured a private railroad car and traveled to Ogden to see him off on the Union Pacific.<sup>30</sup>

Whatever its religious failings, the Wasatch excited "the admiration and envy of the literary, dramatic and musical portions of the town" and presumably the young social set as well. Its imitators were numerous. Some youth organized a "reading association." Others formed the Azalia Society, a cultural group which

divided its membership into the "Democrats" and "Republicans" more than a decade before national political parties entered Utah. Each group then competed against the other in presenting cultural exercises. Still more imaginative was the all-male Decennial Philadelphian Society. It planned to meet each decade, "renewing and perpetuating the friendship of early life." Finally, the LDS-sponsored Mutual Improvement Associations began in the middle 1870s. Sensing an obvious vacuum and wishing to avoid the Wasatch's excesses, Brigham Young called Junius Wells to revitalize the previously organized youth Retrenchment Societies and commence church-wide M.I.A. activity.<sup>31</sup>

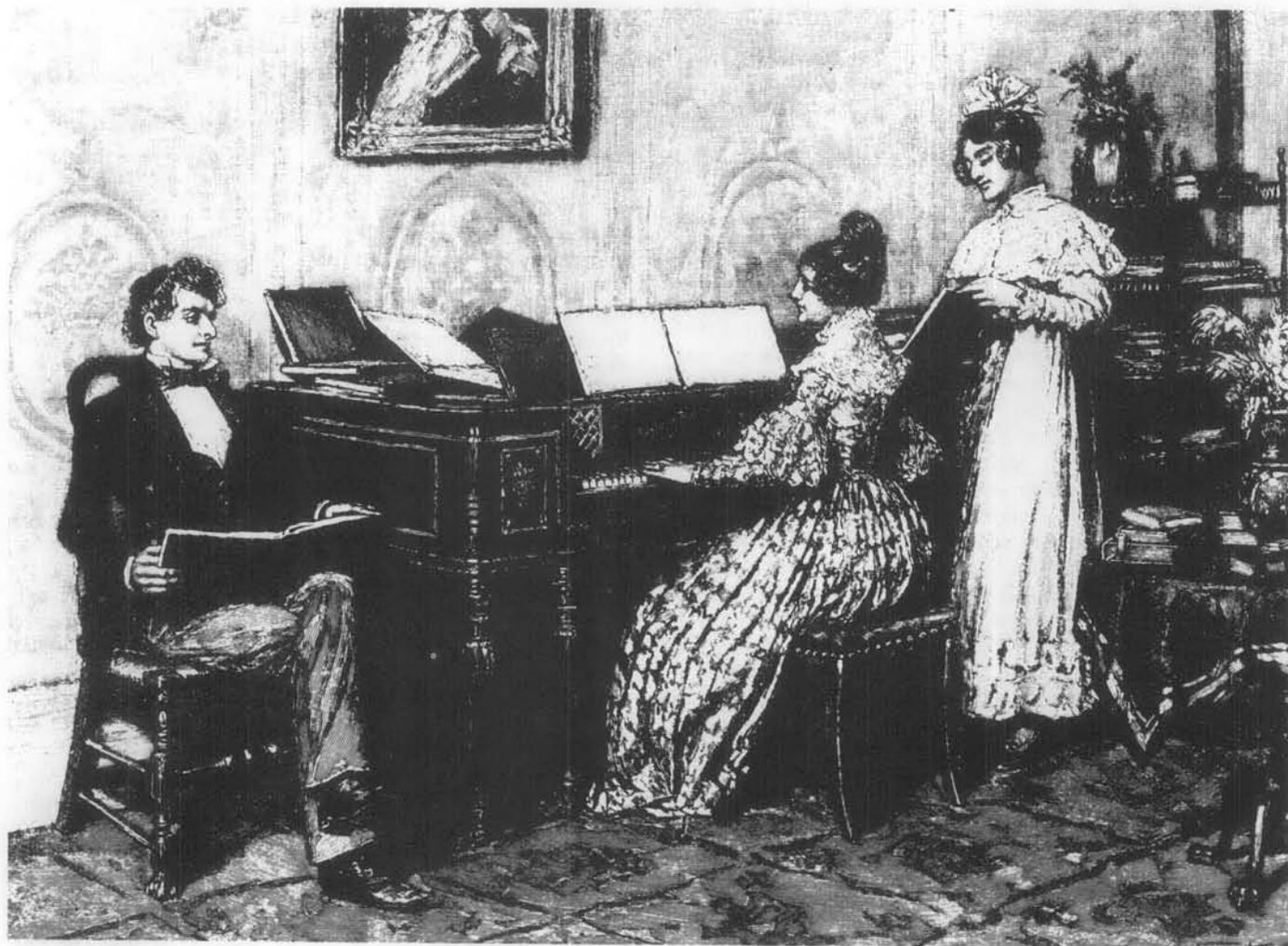
The organization of the M.I.A. was a death knell. With young Salt Lakers being drawn into Church youth activities, the Wasatch no longer had a pool of potential new members. For a time the two rivals existed side by side, but by the winter of 1877-78 the Wasatch was losing momentum. Meetings were abbreviated to make "Lasser Candy" or cancelled in lieu of the St. Mark's Cantata or the "Kellogg Cary Combination" appearing at the Salt Lake Theatre. As members married they resigned, and those who remained seemed changed by time and new experiences. When Ort Whitney returned from his mission, there was a new, unfamiliar gravity about him. "Yes, I have been down East for the past year and seven months and have not felt very well," he

typically replied to all inquiries with un-Wasatch seriousness, "but I hope soon with the help of Heaven and the mountain air to . . . regain my native health." This was not the stuff from which the society had been built and was a sign both of the members' growing maturity and of the Wasatch's consequent decline.<sup>32</sup>

For a time, the beleaguered association tried to regroup. Not having met for several months, members in the late spring of 1878 drafted a new constitution, pledged bi-weekly meetings, and elected new officers. Ort Whitney, who had been the first Wasatch president and, despite his several absences from Salt Lake City, its leading spirit, again assumed the chair. But old enthusiasms could not be relit. The final session of the Wasatch Literary Association met at the Wells's South Temple Street home on 29 May 1878.<sup>33</sup>

Yet, it was *not* the last meeting. Twelve years later, in June 1890, members held a reunion. Amid rose bowers, Chinese lanterns, refreshment-filled tables, and the wafting melodies of the band, the Wasatch met at a familiar gathering place, Frank and Kittie Heywood Kimball's home on Heywood Hill. The intervening years had not extinguished the Wasatch spirit. "It is to be hoped," read the ludicrously printed formal invitation that "the same rigid decorum which formed so conspicuous a feature of the Wasatch in other days will be observed at this meeting."<sup>34</sup>

Members were called to order by Ort Whitney. The





**THEIR EXAGGERATED  
WORDS AND  
CONSCIOUSNESS OF  
STYLE BECAME THE FOUNDATION FOR  
MANY MEMBERS' SUBSEQUENTLY  
ABLE PROSE.**

roll was called and the minutes of the 29 May 1878 meeting were read. Then Whitney imposed wide-ranging fines and introduced the general exercises which included Stanley Clawson's celebrated "Crystal Schottische." The budget box contained "a host of humorous skits, poems and allusions to the status of the members and their adventures, loves, courtships, etc., of a dozen years ago." Reportedly it was "immensely enjoyed by all—even those who were hardest hit." Sometime before 2:00 a.m. the party concluded and the Wasatch adjourned, *sine die*.<sup>35</sup>

The reunion must have occasioned moments of personal reverie and appraising. In the past lay their youthfulness exuberance, when their exaggerated words and consciousness of style had become the foundation for many members' subsequently able prose. Likewise, the Wasatchers must have realized that their amateur theatrics had borne fruit. Nine former Wasatch members had formed the core of the Home Dramatic Club, the stock company which contributed so largely to late nineteenth century Utah drama. Looking at the reunion's guest list, members must have also understood the importance of the association's socializing. Almost half of the society had married fellow Wasatchers.<sup>36</sup>

More dramatically, the Wasatch's legacy lay in the future lives of its members. Setting aside their youthful penchant for initials and nicknames (and realizing that most women of the time found fulfillment in their husband's careers), the list is impressive. *Art and architecture*: J. Willard Clawson, portraitist; H. L. A. Culmer, civic booster, editor, and especially landscape painter of the grandiose; and Don Carlos Young, LDS architect. *Public Affairs*: Heber M. Wells, Utah's first state governor and treasurer of the U. S. Shipping Board; William W. Woods, Idaho legislator and magistrate; and Richard W. Young, attorney, U. S. Commissioner of the Philippines, and Utah's first general of the U. S. Regular Army. *Education*: John T. Caine, Jr., proponent of "scientific" agriculture and Utah State College professor of history and English; and Joseph Toronto, University of Utah professor of mathematics and history. *Journalism*: John B. Read, editor of the Butte [Montana] *Miner*; Robert W. Sloan, Democratic State Chairman, broker, editor of the *Logan Journal*; and Horace G. Whitney, managing editor and nationally recognized dramatic and lyric editor of the *Deseret News*. *Salt Lake businessmen*: Charles S. Burton; Laron A. Cummings; James X. Ferguson; John F. Horne; Frank D. Kimball; and Herbert M. Pembroke.

In spite of their earlier unruly and profane reputation, Wasatch members made their most distinguished contribution in the field of religion. Kitty Heywood Kimball at last found a satisfying faith in Christian Science, becoming Salt Lake City's first practitioner and most forceful organizer. Wasatch *bete noire* Bicknell (B. B.) Young worked in the same movement on a broader scale. Abandoning a promising career as a baritone vocalist, Young delivered Christian Science lectures in Australia, England, and the United States, taught the denomination's prestigious Normal Class, and later served as First Reader of the Mother Church in Boston.<sup>37</sup>

Not surprisingly, "Mormon blood" ran thicker in the Wasatch veins than perhaps anyone, including themselves, foresaw. Cornelia Horne Clayton and Minnie Horne James served on the Primary and Relief Society General Boards. Martha Horne Tingey labored forty-nine years in the presidency of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association, twenty-four years as President. Richard W. Young and Brigham S. Young led respectively the Ensign Stake and the Northwest Mission. Four Wasatchers became General Authorities: Rulon S. Wells, Senior President of the First Council of Seventy; poet, historian Orson F. (Ort) Whitney, member of the Council of Twelve; Rudger Clawson, President of the Council of Twelve; and Heber J. Grant, twenty-seven years President of the Mormon Church.<sup>38</sup>

The Wasatch Literary Association obviously played a role, however modest, in the remarkable achievement of its members. Probably its members were ordained for "success" long before Jim Ferguson met Ort Whitney on a Salt Lake City street. But the society schooled them in culture and trained them in public speaking and writing. And during their careers, like the graduates of a British public school, Wasatchers often turned to each other for professional or financial help. In fact in later years the association became something of an Alma Mater, a halcyon time, "the happiest days of my life," wrote one Wasatch octogenarian. Heber Wells, who usually said things best albeit with his gift of hyperbole, admitted his Wasatch days touched his senses like "the almost forgotten fragrance of burning sagebrush." Or perhaps his memories were more like "the odor of the honeysuckles that used to grow in Uncle Brigham's upper garden."<sup>39</sup>



**Notes**

1. Orson F. Whitney, "The Wasatch Literary Association," *Improvement Era* 28 (September 1925):1017-19, and Orson F. Whitney to Heber J. Grant, 27 January 1912, General Correspondence, Heber J. Grant Papers, Library-Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter respectively cited HJG, Gen Cor, and Library-Archives). I am indebted to Ronald O. Barney of the LDS Historical Department. Having a long-time interest in the Wasatch Literary Association of his own, he nevertheless graciously made many useful suggestions which improved my essay.

2. Orson F. Whitney to HJG, 27 January 1921, *ibid*. The names of the first Zeta Gamma members can be found in the *Deseret News*, 4 January 1902, p. 9. The minutes of the Delta Phi are deposited at Western Americana, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

3. The impulse was manifold: the evangelical and private school movement; the historical writing of Edward Tullidge and T.B.H. Stenhouse; the increasingly public and active role of LDS women; the commencement of the publication of the *Woman's Exponent* and its male

counterpart, the *Contributor*; the LDS auxiliary movement; and the itinerant ministry of the free-thought spiritualists at the Liberal Institute are examples of these new cultural currents.

4. The minutes of the association suggest a little more than sixty members, although a listing prepared for the 1890 reunion has only fifty-six names. See the Wasatch Literary Association Minute Book (hereafter Wasatch Minutes), Library-Archives.

5. *Ibid.*, 29 May 1878, pp. 174-75. See also pp. 6, 17, 24, 36, and 47.

6. Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1019; Wasatch Minutes, 7 November 1877, p. 157, italics mine. For examples of the general reading exercises, 14 and 21 October, 11 November, 23 and 30 December 1874; 6, 20, and 27 January, 3 February, 7 and 21 April 1875; pp. 1, 2, 5, 11-12, 16-17, 19, 21, 32, and 35.

7. Marba C. Josephson, "President Grant and the Wasatch Literary Club," *Improvement Era* 44 (November 1941):659, 690 and Wasatch Minutes, 2 June 1875, p. 441.

8. H. J. Grant: Wasatch Minutes, 31 May 1876 and May 1877, pp. 44, 139. Wells's debate: *ibid.*, 21 March 1877, p. 134. Whitney: Orson F. Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls: The Life Story of Orson F. Whitney as Told By Himself* (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1930), p. 112. Stan Clawson: Wasatch Minutes, 31 May 1876, p. 99 and Emily Wells Grant to May Wells, 7 May 1890, Family Correspondence, HJG Papers. Clawson originally was accompanied by Bud Whitney on the flute and J. Willard Clawson on the guitar. Performed several times later, its inaugural "created an im[m]ense amount of laughter."

9. HJG to C. Bryon Whitney, 17 November 1920 and F. D. Kimball to HJG, 15 December 1937, Gen Cor, HJG Papers. Whitney's poem even became the object of literary criticism by Wasatch H. L. A. Culmer, Wasatch Minutes, 6 December 1876, p. 120.

10. Wasatch Minutes, 14 April 1875, p. 34 and Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1020.

11. Wasatch Minutes, 27 January and 10 March 1875; 2 February, 1 March, and 28 June 1876; pp. 19, 28, 78-79, 84, and 105.

12. Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, typescript, 4 March 1876, Richard W. Young Papers, Western Americana; Wasatch Minutes, 8 March 1876, p. 86.

13. HJG to Feramorz Young, 26 March 1876, Gen Cor, HJG Papers.

14. Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1019.

15. Orson F. Whitney was even more laudatory: "Some of the [budget box] sketches, by such writers as Horace G. Whitney, Heber M. Wells, and John B. Read—wits of the first water—rivaled Goldsmith, Dickens and Mark Twain. This is positively no exaggeration, and it constituted one of the main reasons for the society's popularity." Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1020-21; Salt Lake Herald, 22 June 1890, p. 5.

16. HJG to Feramorz Young, letter fragment of about 1876, Box 113, fd. 1, HJG Papers.

17. Lorenzo D. Young to Richard W. Young, 9 April [1876?], typescript, Box 113, fd 15, HJG Papers and Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1021.

18. Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, typescript, 18 December 1877, Richard W. Young Papers.

19. HJG to Feramorz Young, 25 September 1876, Box 33, fd. 17, HJG Papers; Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, 18 December 1877, typescript, Richard W. Young Papers; and Orson F. Whitney, "Verbatim Report of Funeral Services in Honor of Emily Wells Grant," 27 May 1908, Frank W. Otterstrom reporter, Library-Archives.

20. HJG to Heber M. Wells, 29 January 1892 and HJG to J. Golden Kimball, 29 January 1892 and 23 April 1903, HJG Letterpress Copybooks 12:170 and 36:83, HJG Papers; and Wasatch Minutes, 10 March 1875, p. 28.

21. Wasatch Minutes, 21 October 1874 and 12 May 1875, pp. 3 and 40.

22. *Ibid.*, 24 and 31 March; 7, 14, and 21 April 1875; pp. 30-31, 33, and 35.

23. *Ibid.*, 21 April and 29 December 1875; 12 January and 4 October 1876; pp. 36, 71, 75, 108. Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," pp. 1020-21.

24. Emmeline Wells Diary, 29 September and 8 November 1874, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and Heber M. Wells Reminiscence, n.d., Rulon S. Wells Papers, Library-Archives.

25. Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1022.

26. HJG to Richard W. Young, 20 January 1876, Gen Cor, HJG Papers and Wasatch Minutes, 30 June 1875; 12 and 26 January 1876, pp. 50, 74-75, and 77.

27. Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, 10 February 1876, typescript, Box 33, fd 1, HJG Papers; and John T. Caine to HJG, 3 May 1939, Gen Cor, HJG Papers.

28. The marriages of Alice Young-Charles Hopkins and Melvina Whitney-William Woods were examples of children of prominent LDS families finding spouses outside the Mormon faith. For information on Ort Whitney and John Read, see Orson F. Whitney to Richard W. Young, 13 February 1876, typescript, Box 113, fd 3, HJG Papers; and Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, 18 December 1877; Richard W. Young Papers. The Wasatch opposition to plural marriage is recorded in HJG Diary, 28 November 1881, HJG Papers.

29. Heber M. Wells to Richard W. Young, 18 December 1877, typescript, Richard W. Young Papers.

30. Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls*, pp. 67 and 72; HJG, Remarks read at the funeral of Rulon S. Wells, transcript, Box 113, fd 2, HJG Papers; HJG Typed Diary, 28 October 1935; and Whitney, "Wasatch Literary Association," p. 1021.

31. Salt Lake Herald, 22 June 1890, p. 5. Reading Association: Horace G. Whitney to Richard W. Young, 15 July 1874, typescript, Box 113, fd 3, HJG Papers. Azalia: HJG to Feramorz Young, 26 March 1876, Gen Cor, HJG Papers. Decennial Philadelphian Society: M. M. Young to Richard W. Young, 7 February 1876, typescript, Box 113, fd 3, HJG Papers. Early participants had little doubt that the Wasatch Literary Association had occasioned the Mutual Improvement Association movement. See Orson F. Whitney, "Verbatim Report of Funeral Services in Honor of Emily Wells Grant."

32. Wasatch Minutes, 29 October; 7 and 26 November 1877; and 30 January 1878; pp. 155, 158, 161, 169. Heber M. Wells to HJG, 4 December 1920, Gen Cor, HJG Papers.

33. Wasatch Minutes, 29 May 1878, pp. 174-75 and Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls*, p. 112.

34. Salt Lake Herald, 22 June 1890, p. 5. For a copy of the reunion program Wasatch Minutes, p. 179.

35. Wasatch Minutes, 18 June 1890, p. 175 and Salt Lake Herald, 22 June 1890, p. 5.

36. Wasatch Members participating in the Home Dramatic Club included Orson F. Whitney, Heber M. Wells, Laron A. Cummings, H. L. A. Culmer, Horace G. Whitney, Birdie Clawson Cummings, Brigham S. Young, Mary Jones Clawson, and Kittie Heywood Kimball. See Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls*, pp. 117-18 and Horace G. Whitney, *The Drama in Utah: The Story of the Salt Lake Theatre* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1915), pp. 38-39. I obtained marriage data by examining the obituaries of club members printed in Salt Lake City newspapers.

37. *Deseret News*, 24 February 1920, p. 2 and Mark Cannon III's forthcoming article on B. Bicknell Young in the *Utah Historical Quarterly*.

38. Other members of the association not listed in the last several paragraphs include Ellen Richardson and Hampden S. Beatie, Josephine Beatie Burton, Agnes Sharp and Albion Caine, Birdie Clawson Cummings, James L. Clayton, Mary Jones Clawson, Stanley H. Clawson, Belle Clayton, C. Q. U. Irwin De Vere, Harry Emery, Francis Fox, Emily Wells Grant, Joseph L. Heywood, Alice Young Hopkins, Mattie Hughes, A. B. [?] Kimball, Mary Ferguson Keith, Joseph Pitt, Carl D. B. Swift, Edna Clawson Tibbitts, Ned Wallin, Catherine Wells, Emmeline Wells, Elizabeth Beatie Wells, Susan Annette Wells, Rose Sipple Weighman, May Wells Whitney, Neil Woods, Alibio [Alice?] Young, Luella Cobb Young, Lorenzo D. Young. Those often attending meetings but not actually enrolled were Annie Wells Cannon, Martha Paul Hughes Cannon, William Dunbar, Fergus Ferguson, William A. Morton, George D. Pyper, John D. Spencer, Feramorz Young, and Mahonri M. Young.

39. Frank D. Kimball to HJG, March 1940; and Heber M. Wells to HJG, 3 October 1925, Gen Cor, HJG Papers. Even the staid Ruder Clawson found the Wasatch "more than justified its existence." See "Autobiography," manuscript, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

**RONALD W. WALKER is an associate professor of history at BYU and a senior historical associate of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History. He received an MA from Stanford and a Ph.D. from the University of Utah in history.**



---

# FINITIST THEOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

---

*A non-Mormon philosopher carefully dissects the traditional Christian doctrine*

---

Peter C. Appleby

## Editors' Note

*This paper was delivered at the 1981 Sunstone Theological Symposium.*

THE problem of evil is to justify the ways of God to man, to show that faith in a good and benevolent deity is not utterly irrational in a world replete with grotesque injustice, pointless suffering, and tragic death. The kingdom of the Lord rules over all, we are told, and the divine sovereign is plenteous in mercy, his providence extending even to the least of his creatures. Yet a child is brutally decapitated in Florida, his head left lying in a ditch to be discovered by recreating fishermen. A young girl is raped in Nevada and abandoned with her arms chopped off by her assailant. An old woman in Belfast is broiled in gasoline, the unintended victim of a terrorist's bomb. And nearly half the people on earth never see a full and satisfying meal, with tens of thousands dying each year of starvation and wasting diseases, and countless others suffering irreparable losses in those natural disasters ironically known as acts of God. Under these circumstances, if faith is not to be judged a naive and fatuous dream, some means must be found of reconciling the ubiquity and egregiousness of evil in the world with the compassion and justice religiously imputed to its divine governor. As Boethius asks, "If there be a God, from whence proceed so many evils?"

Reflective Christians of the great orthodox traditions have always found this question particularly troublesome, because their conception of God is one which makes him a party to every event in the universe, including all the evils which disfigure and destroy the lives of sentient beings. This is not because God is a perpetrator of evils (though he has been so regarded by some people), but rather because he knows of every evil occurrence (being omniscient), because he has the power to prevent or intercede in any evil sequence of events (being omnipotent), and because he bears unique responsibility for the overall structure and order of the

universe (being its sole creator and unrivaled sovereign). And since the divine nature admits of no significant limitations on knowledge and power, considerations which tend to exculpate ordinary persons, such as pleas of ignorance, incompetence or conflicting obligations, have no clear application. In every civilized system of morality and law, including those of Christian cultures, individuals who fail to render aid when they are able to do so are routinely regarded as accessories to the evils they allow to occur. Thus the divine character seems eminently impeachable under the commonplace principle that a moral agent is culpable in the occurrence of any evil of which he is aware, which he has the power to prevent or mitigate, and which he can prevent or mitigate without thereby precipitating a greater evil or seriously damaging his own legitimate interests.

Christian apologists have, of course, responded to this situation with an impressive variety of arguments: some refusing to negotiate the issue on theological grounds, others attempting to show that God has morally sufficient reasons for allowing all the evil there is in the world to occur, and still others modifying traditional teachings concerning the divine nature in order to accommodate the obvious facts of the case. The first group develops a line of thought suggested in the Book of Job to the effect that the ways of God are not the ways of men, that divine goodness is radically unlike human goodness, and for this reason, that the divine character can be neither comprehended nor evaluated by "merely human" minds. Just as the young child is unable to understand the motives of his parents, it is argued, human beings cannot comprehend the ways of a divine majesty which infinitely transcends their mortal capacities. And since we must accept, as an article of faith, that God is perfectly good, we may infer that he has praiseworthy reasons for what he does and permits, even though we cannot know what those reasons are.

On the surface, this reasoning has a certain plausibility, since the concerns and responsibilities of

Christianity's high God must far exceed those of any human agency and since honest reflection requires us to admit that our mortal wisdom is severely limited at best. But this plausibility is available only at a price which the faithful cannot consistently pay, that of total agnosticism with regard to the values of their God. In other contexts (in prayer and preaching, for example), Christians espouse quite definite beliefs about the divine character, enthusiastically imputing justice, mercy, and benevolence to a God whom they regard as superlatively worthy of love. If these practices are to make sense to them or anyone else, they must, as John Stuart Mill and others have shown, attribute to their deity exactly the same values that they accept themselves. For if the deity's goodness is radically different from human goodness, there is little reason for calling it goodness at all, and still less for praising and glorifying it, as faith is wont to do. The child who is totally ignorant of his parents' values has no reason for admiring them, and still less for trying to emulate them. Thus, the problem of evil cannot be evaded by pleas of ignorance concerning the content of God's goodness.

A second and more promising approach is developed by a prestigious series of writers, beginning with St. Augustine, who confront the issue directly, admitting its enormous gravity but arguing that God has morally sufficient reasons for creating a world susceptible to tragic evils and then allowing those evils to occur. Within this approach, the two most significant lines of thought are the free will defense and the eschatological theme, both of which are attempts to show that there are divine ends sufficiently valuable to justify the means necessary for their realization, including the construction of a world which is a vale of unrelieved tears for many of its inhabitants. The free will defense argues that it is a (or the) principal objective of the divine plan to develop a community of morally good persons, who live in love and peace with one another and with God. But moral worth, it is argued, can only emerge from the refining fires of real temptation and genuinely free choice. This means that God must allow people to make effective decisions between good and evil, even though he knows that many of them will choose the latter with calamitous consequences. Innocence could be maintained without freedom, since a person who is unable to choose can do no wrong. But innocence, it is claimed, is not valuable in the way that authentic goodness is. And if real moral worth is the goal, freedom and the risk of disaster are the logically inescapable price. For even omnipotence could not guarantee that freedom would always be used constructively without thereby destroying it. Thus, in order to develop the moral community which is his ultimate goal, God must allow human beings to decide freely despite the tragic consequences which eventuate from many of their choices.

The free will defense is complemented by the eschatological theme, which seeks to account for the manifestly unjust distribution of trials and suffering in this world by invoking a doctrine of heavenly rewards and compensations. Here, the theologian acknowledges that ours is a world in which innocence suffers and viciousness prospers and that the rain of accident, disease, and disaster falls indiscriminately upon the just

as well as the unjust. But he argues that all will be put to rights in the divine kingdom beyond the grave. There the righteous will be rewarded for their virtue, the innocent compensated for their grief, and the celestial community will be forever free from misery, travail, and death. On this showing, life in the moral sphere is a period of trial and testing, while life in the world to come sees the realization of justice, benevolence, and abundant compensation for undeserved suffering. And the goodness of God is putatively vindicated by the nobility of his purpose in the present world and the glory of its resolution in the next.

---

**AS BOETHIUS ASKS, "IF THERE BE A  
GOD, FROM WHENCE PROCEED SO  
MANY EVILS?"**

---

Once again, these considerations have a certain plausibility, but as soon as we recall that God is believed to be the architect and originator of the entire arrangement, it is no longer evident that either line of argument supports the claim that he is just. The eschatological theme portrays him as consummately generous with those who have suffered through no fault of their own, but it offers no justification for their being victimized in the first place. Nor does it suggest what could count as fair and just compensation for the more hideous and grotesque evils of this life. It does predict that the lion will finally lie down with the lamb, but it gives no hint as to how the lamb could find justice in that arrangement. If God allowed the victims to suffer in the first place, the fact that he rewarded them later might show him to be generous or ultimately compassionate, but it would not show him to be just and good throughout.

The free will defense portrays the creator as engaging in a noble experiment, setting human beings free to determine their own moral destinies and allowing them real opportunities for effective decision. But it does not show why it is necessary to allow free agents to commit horrendous crimes against their fellow humans, or to perpetuate gross injustices from generation to generation. Nor does it explain the obviously inequitable distribution of trials and temptations, which leaves some lives in relative peace and prosperity, while others are permanently scarred and disfigured. Christians sometimes say that the Lord requires no one to carry a cross which is heavier than he or she can bear. But even if that were true, as it seems clearly not to be, it would not be evident from anything in the free will defense why some crosses must be so much more burdensome than others or why some of the terrible crosses which are carried in this world must be borne at all. The ends of the divine experiment may thus be noble and elevating, but the means of their realization are in no sense just and good.

In view of all these difficulties, it appears that there is no real alternative to modifying the traditional teachings about the divine nature in order to accommodate the obvious facts of the case. If it is to be shown that God is just and good, it must be denied that he is responsible for

the specific conditions in which we work out our moral destinies, and it must not be admitted that he is a morally involved party to the evils endemic to human life. I would argue that theological finitism, the doctrine which substantially curtails orthodox claims concerning God's omnipotence, omniscience, and status as cosmic architect, can accomplish this objective, but only at the expense of denying (or "demythologizing") much that is said in the Bible and elsewhere about the activities of God. Finitism can, I believe, maintain a religiously venerable conception of deity, holding God to be the ultimate locus and exemplar of love and creative advance, but it can do this only by abandoning the stories of mighty acts and interventions which form much of the central core of orthodox tradition.

---

**PERHAPS WE MUST SACRIFICE DIVINE  
POWER IN ORDER TO DEFEND DIVINE  
GOODNESS.**

---

First, it must be denied that God is solely or primarily responsible for the design and creation of our world, since that world is so patently unjust and unmerciful to many, if not most, of its inhabitants. There are independent reasons for rejecting the notion of a divine architect, as Hume and others have shown. But if the idea of a designer were insisted upon, it might be held that God is one of a cluster of coeval powers responsible for the organization of the universe under conditions which precluded any one of the powers from achieving dominance over the others. In this way, the desirable features of the structure could be attributed to the deity, while the rest were laid at the doors of forces he could not control. Or, more plausibly, finitism might see God simply as the eternal and primal source of spirituality, selfless love, and intelligent creativity; and it might maintain that there are signs of his influence throughout the structure and history of the world, wherever positive values prevail over the forces of darkness and destruction. And here, with the literal doctrine of creation being given up, the ancient idea of the *imago dei* might be reinterpreted to mean that humans reflect the divine nature to the extent that they are capable of exhibiting intelligence, creativity, and love.

The second finitist move will be a drastic curtailment of the traditional claims made about divine power, not only denying the orthodox doctrine of omnipotence but also insisting that God has none of the miraculous powers ordinarily attributed to him in the religious literature. For the problem of evil is utterly intractable with regard to any deity possessing such powers. There are simply too many avoidable and unrelieved agonies in our world to allow it as a serious possibility that a just and benevolent God has the ability to intervene but refrains from doing so except on rare and unpredictable occasions. Accordingly, the finitist will argue that God has only those powers which are inherent in the perfect love and creative intelligence that are his essential characteristics. He will contend that the way of the divine is not that of forceful and dramatic moving and

shaking but rather that of subtle attraction and gentle persuasion. And he will insist that there is more than a little biblical support for the belief that loving non-resistance to evil is ultimately the greatest power in the world.

Finally, with respect to divine omniscience, the finitist will see no need to deny that God knows all that can be known, but he is likely to insist that the range of possible knowledge is rather more restricted than orthodoxy admits. Thus, he may well accept the idea that the divine intelligence is comprehensively aware of all that takes place in the world. But he will deny that God has infallible knowledge of every future occurrence, because that doctrine conflicts with the view that moral agents are free in their decisions. And he may well believe that God possesses a perfect understanding of the laws governing the behavior of everything which moves, changes, or acts. But he will reject the tendency to cast God in the role of a cosmic forecaster who could, and therefore should, warn potential victims of impending misfortunes. Whatever the content of the divine mind might be, and however that content might be assembled, its presence cannot be such as to admit direct access by human minds on pain of reintroducing the problem of evil. And it can't include full knowledge of the future, on pain of denying freedom. But if these qualifications are allowed, there is no reason for denying it the name of omniscience.

These revisions, of course, would have a very dramatic impact on familiar religious discourse. They would deny the traditional doctrine of creation in order to avoid the charge that God deliberately condemned half of humanity to misery as a means of teaching moral lessons to the other half. They would eliminate such stories as that of the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, because the power envisaged there breeds responsibility for such omissions as the failure to turn away the wrath of Adolf Hitler before the holocaust. And they would reject the view of the divine mind which sees it as a limitless repository of information to be dealt out at random intervals to a few individuals, since that idea of omniscience has no answer to the question why more than two dozen boys and young men had to die before the Atlanta police were able to find their murderer. In short, they would sacrifice divine power in order to defend divine goodness, revering the ancient vision which saw God as love.

I know of no theologians or philosophers who actually espouse the finitist doctrine I have proposed here. I have found suggestions of parts of it in the work of John Stuart Mill, E. S. Brightman, Paul Tillich, Charles Hartshorne, and Sterling McMurrin, and in an excellent paper on the problem of evil and Mormon theology, written as an undergraduate research project in my department by James R. Smith. The virtues I claim for it are just two: that it avoids the problem of evil and that it is responsive to some of the sensibilities of religious tradition. If we conceive of God as that being which is uniquely worthy of worship, it might well be worth considering how loyal we should remain to the adoration of sheer power.

 PETER C. APPLEBY is an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Utah. He received his Ph.D. at the University of Texas and studied a year of theology at Harvard Divinity School.

# The Mormon Past: Revealed or Revisited?

By Jan Shippo

In recent months a variety of persons and institutions, Mormon and non-Mormon, have focused increasingly sharp attention on the study and teaching of the Mormon past.

The institutional Church itself has promoted a number of history-related projects. The concrete walls of the new Museum of Church History and Art (scheduled to open in 1983) are slowly rising on the block west of Temple Square. The Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, formerly the History Division of the Historical Department, has been ensconcing itself at BYU. And employees of the Church Educational System have been gearing up to teach Church history to seminary and institute students when the new year begins. Accordingly, Elder Boyd K. Packer, member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and advisor to the Historical Department, addressed these teachers at the annual CES symposium last August, expressing his concern at some recent historical writing and outlining his belief that the purpose of teaching history is to build faith.

Louis C. Midgley, a professor of government at BYU, echoed Elder Packer's goals and sentiments to an audience at the Western History Association annual meetings in San Antonio, Texas, during October. He criticized what he termed the "New Mormon Apology," questioning the methodology as well as motivations of some Mormon historians.

Perhaps some of this concern is due to the proliferation of independent groups dealing with LDS history. Lectures chronicling certain aspects of the Mormon past have been sponsored by such varying groups as BYU (the history department, the Charles Redd Center, the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute), the Mormon History Association, the John Whitmer Historical Association (RLDS), the American Historical Association, the Utah Women's History Association, the Utah State Historical Society, and the Sunstone Foundation. Scores of books are being published in the regional press (including the soon to be released *Saints Without Haloes* by Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton). In addition, books on Mormonism such as Klaus Hansen's *Mormonism and the American Experience* (University of Chicago Press) and Larry Foster's *Religion and Sexuality* (Oxford University Press) have been sponsored by prestigious national publishers.

Not surprisingly, this flurry of activity has prompted a number of writers to re-examine the dead ends, contradictions, pains, and possibilities of the study of religious history in general and of Mormon history in particular.

Last spring, for example, Leonard J. Arrington addressed the topic "The Writing of Latter-day Saint History: Problems, Accomplishments, and Admonitions" for the Inaugural Lecture Series of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute (published in the Fall 1981 issue of *Dialogue*). A fine paper on Mormon biography was also written by Ronald W. Walker for the MHA meetings in Rexburg, Idaho. Walker read part of this paper (graciously substituting for Donna Hill, author of the nationally-published *Joseph Smith: A Biography, who was ill*) at a session of the 1981 Sunstone Theological Symposium entitled "Writing Religious

Biography from Within." Stephen Gottschalk, a Christian Scientist scholar, and Jonathan Butler, a Seventh Day Adventist scholar, also participated on the panel. Recently D. Michael Quinn presented a paper, "On Being a Mormon Historian" to a group of students at BYU. The B. H. Roberts Society has planned a session on the study of Mormon history for February. The list could go on.

Because the questions are so important and the interest in articulating these concerns seems broad, we at SUNSTONE have decided to run a series of articles on the general topic of religious history during the next few months. We hope to include a broad spectrum of representative points of view, from both Mormons and non-Mormons. We especially encourage responses and suggestions from our readers.

The following remarks by non-Mormon scholar Jan Shippo, delivered in response to Louis Midgley's paper at the Western History Association, provide a helpful introduction, since she sketches categories and definitions which begin to bring the complex issues involved into focus.

FOR the sake of convenience, the historiography of Mormonism may be divided into three segments. These are better described in terms of what was (and is) occurring than in precise temporal divisions. In an initial period of beginnings, extending roughly from the late 1820s through the mid-1860s, the fundamental Mormon story came forth, was written down, added to, corrected, rewritten, and much of it published by the Church, mainly in its own periodicals and in the form of tracts. At approximately the same time, the Mormon "counter-story" likewise came forth. It, too, was written down, added to, and published to the world in the form of expose.

Gradually this initial historiographical segment gave way to a period of pure polemic which operated entirely according to what, in logic, is called the law (or principle) of the excluded middle. Mormonism is or is not true; Joseph Smith was or was not a prophet. Readers had to choose to believe either the more or less codified Mormon story or its equally patterned opposite: Saints recounted the story of LDS beginnings, subsequent persecutions (mobbings, drivings) and accomplishments despite the persecutions, while Gentiles and former Saints, with apparently endless patience, worked and reworked the Eber D. Howe and John C. Bennett material. As time passed and persons whose first-hand knowledge of early Mormonism grew frail, both the Saints and their opponents moved to buttress their positions. Church Historian Andrew Jensen and his assistants made strenuous attempts to get what Mormons remembered about early Mormonism into the permanent record; Albert B. Deming and other Gentiles

## IN SACRED DRAMA THE DIVINE IS AN ACTOR IN THE DRAMA, A DIRECT PARTICIPANT NOT A SUPERNATURAL PRESENCE.

---

made no less strenuous efforts to get what non-Mormons remembered of early Mormonism written down as well. Faith promoting biographies of LDS readers were issued and apostate revelations published, all with the intent of making it absolutely clear that with regard to Mormonism no middle ground existed. Although this extreme situation was complicated by disagreement within the LDS circle itself about what happened near the end of Joseph Smith's life, about its beginning and the beginning of the faith, serious questions did not arise, standoff which started when the prophet told the story one way and his detractors told it another continued unabated.

The *modern period* in the historiography of Mormonism was slowly ushered in during the 1920s and 30s when accounts which did not fit either of the "pure types" of LDS history started to appear. Usually more concerned with the Saints in Utah than with Mormon beginnings, these works were generally written by historians who were neither in the employ of the LDS Church or any competing religious organization, nor engaged in procuring—I use the word deliberately—a livelihood through the sale of anti-Mormon literature. With conspicuous exceptions such as DeVoto, Stegner, and a "little LDS housewife from Dixie," Juanita Brooks, the authors of such works generally had graduate training; as examination of the chronological list of dissertations on Mormon history and culture in *Dialogue* (Volume One, Number One) reveals, that training was ever more likely to be in history as such studies were completed with accelerating frequency in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Often based on sources other than the records contained in the Church Archives—on LDS collections at Yale University, the Huntington Library, the New York Public Library, the Utah State Historical Society, the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, and even the Salt Lake City Public Library—these historical accounts were sometimes puzzling because they did not always fit securely into the traditional Mormon and anti-Mormon categories.

One of the signals that an ever-increasing number of professionals were engaging in the study of Mormon things was the formation and subsequent growth of the Mormon History Association. Another signal was a good deal of more or less corporate introspection within the community of LDS historians regarding methodology, professional standards, and the implications of doing research and writing according to acceptable canons of historical scholarship. Significant fruits of this consideration were articles by Leonard J.

Arrington, Paul Edwards, Robert Flanders, Davis Bitton, and Richard Bushman.

It was Bushman's "Faithful History" which set, I believe, the tone for what is more and more called the "golden age of Mormon history." That period opened with the more or less simultaneous appointment of the single most outstanding professional then writing Mormon history, Leonard J. Arrington, to the position of LDS Church Historian and the professionalization of the handling of the Church's enormous collection of source materials so that it could be used by scholars. These two related developments were obviously a part of the movement to professionalize the LDS administrative process and the Church's central support services. Still they would not have occurred if the ecclesiastical decision-makers had not been persuaded, on the one hand, that ultimately there were no real skeletons in the Mormon closet which might require the sort of protection the Mother Church gives Christian Science source materials and, on the other, that "faithful" professional history could be written.

The recent transformation of that extraordinary history division which Arrington put together at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City into the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, now based at Brigham Young University, should not be taken as evidence that the "Church" has lost this confidence. After all, the history division was not disbanded so much as transferred to a new—and I am convinced—more appropriate setting. But it does indicate that it has become more clear to the General Authorities than it was before that even "faithful" professional history does not merit an ecclesiastical imprimatur.

From the outside—and from the perspective of religious studies—the nature of history in religion is pointed up in bold relief, teaching us all something that might not have been absolutely clear before. According to the law of the excluded middle, the alternative to faithful history is unfaithful history. And this would seem, of course, to translate into a statement of equality so that "faithful" history equals pro-Mormon history and "unfaithful" history equals anti-Mormon history. But if the past ever demonstrates anything, it demonstrates that this statement of equality is a false one. This is an argument which directly counters some critics whose categories would, finally, call unfaithful even such outstanding examples of faithful history as Marvin Hill's *Church History* critique of Fawn Brodie's work and, possibly, even Tom Alexander's study of "Wilford Woodruff and the Changing Nature of

## ORDINARY HISTORY IS MARKED BY THE INCLUSION OF ALL THE AMBIGUITY AND COMPLEXITY OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Mormon Religious Experience.”

Things will be clarified if it is recognized, instead, that there are two separate and distinct kinds of history of any religious tradition—and that Mormonism is no exception. It has a *sacred history* and it has an *ordinary history* (profane, in Mircea Elaide’s nomenclature) and these are very different things.

In sacred history, the divine is an actor in the drama, a direct participant not a supernatural presence. Because the divine is a *natural* part of the process, sacred history inevitably takes on a mythic character which makes it “truer than true,” if by truth one means that which is established and verified according to the canons of historical scholarship. Sacred history has other characteristics as well. It is stripped down—in artistic terms, stylized—so that the story is told in blacks and whites, with no grays. The persecuted and persecutors, the people of God and the people of Satan, good and evil are locked in mortal combat in which compromise is out of the question. All the ambiguity and complexity of human existence is shorn away. Moreover, the context is left ambiguous enough to keep the narrative from being either time or culture bound; it functions as scripture and is constructed so that it may be reappropriated by persons of all times and all places. Mormonism’s sacred history, like all sacred history, is a part of the mythological dimension of this religion. By its very nature it can only be *retold* and defended; not reinvestigated; re-searched.

Ordinary history, however, does not operate in that fashion. It is marked by emphasis on context, by the inclusion of all the ambiguity and complexity of the human experience—by a recognition that there are two sides to any story. For example, to draw from the Old Testament account, the people of Jericho might have deserved some sympathy when Joshua “fit” that battle and the walls came tumbling down. As does all history, this type of Mormon history will (and must) be rewritten as Bushman said, every 30 or 40 years, because new Saints face new problems and have new concerns, which means that they seek different precedents from the past.

The appropriate categories to classify sacred history are, indeed, Mormon and anti-Mormon (and lest you think I jest, read any *Utah Evangel* or Modern Microfilm publication to get a taste of “sacred” anti-Mormon history). But Mormonism’s ordinary history is more properly classified in “faithful” and “non-faithful” terms, depending on whether the analytic categories are drawn from within or without the Mormon experience.

To show you what I mean, let me describe an example

of “unfaithful” and “faithful” history. When I was a beginning graduate student, nearly brand new to the study of Mormon history, I wrote a master’s thesis on the Mormons in politics during the Nauvoo period. Examining all the evidence I could find about Joseph Smith’s presidential bid, I concluded that the prophet became a candidate for president of the United States in order to avoid having to declare sides and, thus, alienate either the Whigs or the Democrats. This, from the outside, still appears to be a perfectly logical conclusion. The only problem is that it is probably wrong, as was made clear when Robert Flanders examined the very same evidence and came to a dramatically different conclusion. Instead of working within secular categories—politics, power, and so on—he drew on his knowledge of Mormonism from the inside and was able to make a convincing case that when the prophet ran for president he was not engaging in political strategy. He expected to win since he anticipated the imminent inauguration of the Kingdom of God. This was faithful history and, I am convinced, comes much closer than my “unfaithful” account to being history “as it actually was.”

Some have argued that the only acceptable Mormon history is sacred history and that Mormons who “really” are Mormon will be engaged in retelling and defending the sacred story, not in writing ordinary LDS history. This is a dangerous argument. There can be no doubt about that, since sacred history lends itself to measurement mainly on an orthodoxy-heresy dimension. Should Mormon history be written only in this fashion, it could prove tragically divisive within the LDS intellectual community. More frightening, I should think, from the Mormon perspective, is the fact that even if the doors to 50 East North Temple were locked shut and all the archival collection deposited, as it were, in a safe in the office of the First Presidency, ordinary Mormon history is going to be written; it is in the public domain. If Mormons who are also professional historians—to whom sophisticated methodology and objective history are not dirty words—do not write it, it will be written by outsiders. If that happens, all the complexity, ambiguity, cowardice, bravery, devotion or lack of it, confusion, internal dissension, and efforts to build the Kingdom will be set down inside a Gentile framework. The sacred story will remain, but the glory of Mormon history will disappear.



JAN SHIPPS is associate professor of history and religious studies and director of the Center for American Studies at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. She is a former president of the Mormon History Association.

## Gautama's Return

**I**  
The Dragon founders.  
Banished to an island horde  
Of transistor radios,  
His flame gutters in desire.  
Cooling blood gels.  
Smoke chokes the ancient heart.  
Armor, once golden, crimson.  
Learthern lamella soften,  
Curl, and cascade severally  
To waters pooling at his feet:  
Rose petal offerings  
On a sea of tears.

**II**  
Drink of these tears  
To see beauty in the beast,  
To love him as yourself.  
Drain dry this cup of sorrow  
To learn to love yourself.

**III**  
He stands in Namaste,  
Stranger from the western sky  
With wisdom in innocence  
Strong before the ancient one;  
Not as bodisattva, but as boy  
Palm cupping lotus cupping jewel.  
He, bearing the fourth basket,  
Speaks with ancestral voices,  
Anoints with oil the lidless eyes,  
And makes to dance before the beast  
Eidetic visions.

*Scot Denhalter*

## Sanctuary

Love can take on the  
qualities of religion. . .  
William Carlos Williams

(for Lindsey, age four)  
This morning, deeply  
morning, underneath  
the tamerisk boughs  
where you so often  
spread your sacrament,  
the weaverbirds diet  
on rain and white light.  
Perfectly patient,  
alive with grace, they  
lean, wet wing to wing.  
Invulnerable  
they watch, still certain  
you'll come running through  
the brightening day,  
with sun and summer  
held high in your hands.  
Replete, rounded as  
vowels by your care,  
yet they flutter, ex-  
plore each small kneeling  
there in the clean grass.  
trailing signs of life.  
This morning, deeply  
morning, weaverbirds  
wait to sing you home.

*Dawn Baker Brimley*

## Two Poems on Entanglement

**I**  
Calling from the waters,  
The singing came to me,  
And like some Jonah seeking sail,  
I rose and sought the sea.  
The singing sounded sweet as night,  
Dark wine to my dry soul,  
And like some David deep in love,  
I tipped and drank the bowl.  
O sweeter dreams I never dreamed  
Nor ever knew so well,  
How wide the sea, how deep the  
bowl,  
That empties into hell.

**2**  
The wind will whisper where it will,  
But never in the leaves.  
It whispers to the purer hearts,  
And when they fail, it grieves.  
I would hear the whispering wind  
From day to day to day.  
But when I linger in the leaves,  
It fades and slips away.  
If grief were here expressed in  
words,  
With summer gone to fall,  
It would seem to sound like buried  
birds,  
Or like no wind at all.

*Dale Bjork*

# Update

## McConkie Counsels Moderation

"Balancing the Saints" was the theme of an instructional address Elder Bruce R. McConkie gave to presidencies and bishops of the fourteen Brigham Young University student stakes on October 31. Elder McConkie led a retinue of general authorities to Provo to preside over a weekend of stake conferences on the BYU campus.

In his Saturday leadership meeting remarks, Elder McConkie spoke extemporaneously and casually, stopping occasionally to ask for questions. He counseled the local Church leaders that they were to help students to be well-rounded individuals and to find a balance between spiritual and intellectual concerns. "We don't want the pendulum to swing too far one way or the other," he said, noting that fanaticism or over-zealousness could end up doing more harm to an individual than good. He cautioned against religious fads and extremism in anything.

He reminded the local ecclesiastical leaders that students came to BYU to get an education, "not to attend a student ward or stake." Occasionally, he continued, circumstances might require a student to refuse a Church calling because of class load or study requirements. Using his own law school days at the University of Utah as an example, he said his stake president (who was Marion G. Romney) released him from a calling, saying that a law student was too busy to be an effective stake missionary. In such matters, he said, bishops and stake presidents should administer with temperance and not with excessive zeal.

He also told the leaders that they should not prohibit students from studying on Sunday. He called "extremism" in Sunday worship a sign of apostasy and said that students should use their own judgments in the matter. Elder McConkie diminished other practices he said he has noticed growing in the Church, including the giving of "special blessings."

Beyond patriarchal blessings, fathers blessing, and administration for the sick, he said that members should not often seek special blessings. These tend to encourage an unhealthy dependent relationship between the member and the priesthood holder, especially if they are not related, and to encourage undue reliance upon divine intervention in mundane matters.

He also discouraged the practice of young people praying on dates, saying this develops a relationship that should only exist between husbands and wives. Continuing in this vein, Elder McConkie said that, in his opinion, members should choose their marriage partners on the basis of personal judgment, not requiring a heavenly revelation in the matter. While young people should seek counsel and guidance from parents and Church leaders, he continued, good judgment and appropriate worthiness can lead them to marry someone equally worthy without the agony he often witnesses. Members should not ask the Lord to make such a decision for them, he concluded.

Too much emphasis has been placed on certain well-intentioned goals, Elder McConkie said, leading people to lose their "balance." One such fad going around in the Church, he said, is the goal of developing a personal relationship with Christ. Noting that it was difficult to preach against such a doctrine, he explained that Jesus taught his followers to worship the Father, in his name, through the Holy Ghost. Thus one who has the "mind of Christ" will do what he did. If a special relationship is needed, it should be with the Father.

He also attacked a prevalent idea that the Second Coming of Christ is so imminent that people need not make long range plans. He explained that some members are living day-to-day and are avoiding long range commitments like schooling, believing that there will be no use for it shortly. He said that in his opinion, Christ will not come in the lifetime of anyone present. "The Lord is not at the door as we measure time," he

emphasized. Asked about those whose patriarchal blessings promised they'd see the Lord's coming, he replied that many of these had also died and that he had no satisfactory explanation of the meaning of those promises. (Also asked if his audience might quote him on this subject, he admitted, "You will anyway.")

He counseled the bishops and stake presidents that in interviewing members, they should be very discreet and not plant any ideas in people's heads. Also, officers should avoid a witchhunting attitude when discussing which sins should be confessed to a bishop. The Church teaches that all sins should be confessed to the Lord, while only certain, more serious sins should be confessed to a bishop. He also said that sometimes long years of faithful Church service will wipe out an "ancient sin" that should not be dragged out from a person's past.

## Gay Rights Blocked

A gay rights referendum which proposed to ban discrimination in housing and employment on the basis of "sexual orientation" was recently on the ballot in Palo Alto, California. The campaign attracted national attention partly because of the unusual low-key opposition and avoidance of emotionally-charged moral and religious issues. A year and one-half earlier a bitterly-contested referendum on a similar county measure produced allegations of church-state interference by evangelical Christians, Mormons, and conservative Catholics. The earlier referendum resulted in a virtual tie vote in this liberal community adjacent to Stanford University.

During the latest campaign, proponents of the measure obtained the endorsements of such prominent figures as U.S. Senate hopefuls Pete McCloskey and Maureen Reagan and outspent the opposition by about 100 to 1. Opponents, headed by LDS attorney Ken Allen, conducted a grass roots campaign on a shoestring budget without support from outside of Palo Alto. The measure was defeated in a 58 percent to 42 percent upset.

"We said this was not an appropriate area for legislation, and the voters have upheld us," commented Allen. "We sincerely hope the public debate about gay rights is at an end."

Having misjudged the tolerant Northern California community, Steve Harris of the Palo Alto Coalition for Equal Rights said, "It

certainly shows that gay rights is going to be an uphill battle anywhere."

#### **Censorship at BYU?**

Recently a five-part series on censorship at Brigham Young University was published by the *Daily Universe*. The less than hard-hitting series was designed to probe the special problems which arise at the LDS church-owned institution with regard to the selection of speakers, publications, performers, and movies.

As a general rule, all unnecessarily violent, nude, or sexually explicit scenes are excised from campus films, along with any dialogue that contains highly sexual inferences or references to diety. (Thus, "Oh, God" was advertised on campus as "The George Burns Movie # 1). Although Special Events Director Scott Williams told the *Universe* that planning and booking acceptable popular music concerts is not as hard as people think it is, ASBYU Social Office will not consider a group whose music might be offensive to a BYU audience, such as the Rolling Stones or the Grateful Dead.

As to publications, the series revealed that "university publications are free to run stories on any subject in a professional manner without much worry of censorship from the administration," although pictures and advertising are more closely scrutinized. Most editors claim that they will not print material they find personally offensive or in conflict with university standards. Speakers, on the other hand, are intricately screened before they are invited to address BYU audiences, although their talks are not censored.

Harold B. Lee Library officials told the *Universe* that they carefully select and review books but do not censor them once purchased. Ironically, however, some students do. "These self-appointed censors mutilate and cut pages from books dealing with fields like literature, art, abnormal psychology, and political issues."

#### **LDS Oppose Religious Deprogramming**

The seizure of certain members of the Unification Church by family-hired deprogrammers has piqued a great deal of interest nationally and abroad. Auckland, New Zealand's *Civil Affairs Bulletin* recently published a series on religious deprogramming including an article about the LDS church's opposition to legislation which allows individuals to "reconstruct the personalities" of converts to new religions.

Oscar W. McConkie, partner in the law firm which represents the LDS church, told reporters in Auckland that abrupt changes in personality "were supposed to happen—that's what people are supposed to do when they give up worldly ways and accept the disciplines of Christ." He was commenting on a recently vetoed New York legislative bill that would have "created a loophole through which deprogrammers could have operated without prosecution."

"The bill would have made it very easy to have a guardian appointed for someone who changes his religion," said McConkie. "It tried to avoid the criminal laws on the statutes of kidnapping so that deprogrammers could lawfully go in and take a convert from a faith and hold him against his will and attempt to reconstruct his personality."

"The Latter-day Saints are opposed to this type of legislation," McConkie asserted. "We don't believe the State has any business in attempting to regulate that type of freedom of conscience."

McConkie met with legislators on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius to draft a bill establishing the Church there. He commented that he was impressed with the Mauritius constitution because of its explicit provision for the freedom of religion and the right to change religions. "I'm particularly interested in that aspect," noted McConkie, "because if The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is going to be established in a new area it means that people who are going to associate themselves with it are either un-churched or they are already an established religionist. In either circumstance there is going to be a change."

## From the Editors

### **No More Update**

Last summer we sensed the need for a periodical that would help our readers keep up with happenings in the expanding Mormon community. So we launched a new venture, THE SUNSTONE REVIEW, which collects and condenses articles and features about Mormons from dozens of national and local publications, reports Mormon-related events, and reviews significant Mormon and non-Mormon books as well as movies, plays, and other cultural events.

With three issues on the newstands, our idea seems to be working. And because the point of this new periodical is to keep you up to date, we have decided that beginning in January we will publish THE SUNSTONE REVIEW monthly instead of bimonthly. SUNSTONE magazine, however, will continue to be bimonthly (until we can afford to do otherwise). But there will be some changes. In order to avoid overlap, news features (including Update, One Fold, Mormon Association, Mormon Media Image, and People) will no longer be included in the magazine. All of this material will instead be available monthly in THE SUNSTONE REVIEW. With few exceptions, book reviews may also be dropped from the magazine since

reviews as well as short notices of all new LDS books will appear in THE REVIEW.

Reader's Forum, Give and Take, and Scriptural Commentary will continue to appear in the magazine as will an expanded interpretive column by The Rev. Anne Thieme, still called One Fold but no longer characterized by short news reports of events in other churches. In the future we will add other columns of opinion and features as they become available.

We realize that change can be traumatic. Keep in mind, though, that we simply want to serve your more comprehensively. Not only can we give you more of what you had before (through THE SUNSTONE REVIEW) but we can add new departments and more articles in the magazine. Still, we depend on your patience during the next few months of transition; as always we welcome your comments and suggestions.

One last bit of news. SUNSTONE has now published six complete volumes. During six years we have never increased the price; a subscription has always been \$12. And yet, our expenses have increased many fold. Therefore, we simply cannot maintain that price any longer. Beginning in January a subscription to the magazine will cost \$14 a year (THE

SUNSTONE REVIEW \$6). Until then it is still possible to renew your magazine (and REVIEW) at the old rates. And now would be a good time for any of you who have not already subscribed to THE SUNSTONE

REVIEW to do so. We would hate for you to miss any of the departments you have enjoyed in the magazine. Thank you for your continuing support. In many ways, *you* are what keeps us going.

constitutionality of the extension of the ratification period of the Equal Rights Amendment. Accordingly, we fail to see the connection between the case before Judge Callister and the argument raised in your motion. . . .

# Mormon Media Image



## Article Supports Judge Callister's Right to Rule

The disqualification of a federal judge from a proceeding in which he may reasonably appear to be biased was the subject of a lengthy article published this fall in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*. Authored by Jake Garn, senior U.S. Senator from Utah, and Lincoln Oliphant, his LDS legislative assistant, the article dealt particularly with the 1979 case of *Idaho v. Freeman* in which the U.S. Department of Justice sought to disqualify Judge Marion Callister, a former Regional Representative for the LDS church, from ruling on the constitutionality of Idaho's rescission of its ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and the extension of the ratification deadline for the controversial amendment. Judge Callister's impartiality had been challenged on the basis of his high position in the LDS Church, which had publicly opposed both the ratification of the ERA and the extension of the ratification deadline.

Garn and Oliphant argued that when the Department of Justice filed motion asking Judge Callister to disqualify himself, they cited novel, legally unsupportable arguments and inappropriate cases. Using cases they believed to be applicable and constructing an exhaustive legislative history, the authors attempted to show that disqualification is only warranted where bias surfaces through a personal association with the case or an interest (often financial) which could be affected by the outcome. In the case of Judge Callister, however, Garn and Oliphant argued that the bias which the Department of Justice found condemning was regarding the law—a bias which was specifically rejected for disqualification in the statutory ancestry.

The authors considered the new direction pernicious, even anathema to the religious freedoms guaranteed by

Article VI of the Constitution (which states that "No religious test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any office or public Trust under the United States") and the First Amendment guarantee regarding the free exercise of religion.

Quoting at length from a 1979 letter addressed to Benjamin Civiletti, former Attorney General, from six members of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, Garn and Oliphant ended their article with the following argument:

The Mormon church has taken an official stand against the ERA on its merits. The case before Judge Callister, however, involves only the question of the

**Catering Available**

**The Guadalupe Center  
346 West First South**

355-1541

11 am - 10 pm Mon. - Wed.  
11 am - 11 pm Thurs. - Sat.

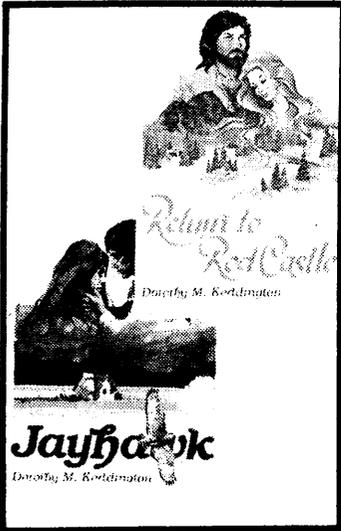
*Traditionally excellent for 35 years...*



*A Christmas Tradition  
you can start today*

**Maxfield Candy Company**

1050 So. 200 West, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110, 355-5321



## Give "A Keddington Christmas"

A well chosen gift for men, women and young adults, Dorothy Keddington's books *Jayhawk* and *Return to Red Castle* together, make a great gift package. Romantic, full of suspense, great writing, enjoyable reading, each book is so good you won't want to read one without the other.

The books are regularly \$8.95 each. Our special Christmas package offers both books together for \$15.95. Available only while supply lasts.

Ask for it already gift wrapped at your local bookstore or write Olympus Publishing, P.O. Box 9362, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84109 - (801) 583-3666.

Many institutions to which judges belong take official stands on issues which come before those judges' courts, and indeed every judge comes to the bench bearing the sum total of his life's experiences and beliefs. But this is certainly not to say that his past affiliation with some such institution, or his past experiences and beliefs, give rise to a reasonable question of impartiality. . . .

Does the Department take a similar position in cases involving, for example, abortion, by asking *Catholic* judges to recuse themselves? Or in cases involving civil rights of minorities, by asking *minority* judges to recuse themselves? Or, for that matter, were the judge in the instant case an active *Democrat*, would reason exist to request recusal because the Democratic Party has taken an official position favoring ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment?

### "Cookie Cutter Twins"

Mormon missionaries have been ridiculed for what one person described as "a cookie cutter look," because of "their squeaky clean and innocent good looks and their cut-from-the-same-cloth conservative business suits." Yet, "even their theological rivals admit that for dedication, drive, and commitment to their uniquely American brand of religion, Mormon missionaries have few equals," claimed *The Sacramento Bee* staff writer Robin Witt.

In her recent article, Witt profiled the LDS missionary life-style and included comments by Sacramento Elders Gary Turpen and Scott Varney. "Our message is simple," Turpen told Witt. "Our message is that Jesus Christ is alive today and that he has a physical body like us. If we live the teachings of the Bible and the Book of Mormon,

then we can live with him again. And we tell people that there is a living prophet who is like Moses and Abraham. He gives everyday guidance."

Varney and Turpen told Witt that only "about one contact in 20 may result in a convert." At other times, Mormon missionaries are sworn at,

have doors slammed in their faces, and "occasionally become the object of conversion attempts themselves," although they "try not to argue with people who have another faith."

"I learn an awful lot from other Christians who are committed to their faith," admitted Varney. "Of course, I think we have the true church."

# Scriptural Commentary

## The New Triple Combination

### Steven F. Christensen

THE 1981 EDITION of the Church's Triple Combination will have a major impact on the LDS market. I would like, therefore, to try to highlight some of the unique aspects of the new Triple as well as mention some other interesting resources now available.

#### A Checklist of Obvious Changes.

1. Because of extensive cross referencing the new Triple is somewhat longer than the old: BoM 522 pp. versus 531 pp.; D&C 257 pp. versus 294 pp.; Pof GP 60 pp. versus 61 pp.; and Indexes 103 pp. versus 416 pp.
2. Some historical maps have been added to assist in D&C/Church history.
3. Whereas the old page headings listed the book and chapter (or section) at the center top, the new edition lists the verses contained as

well. In addition the headings have been moved from the center top to the outside top of each page. (Old scripture chase speed records are sure to be broken now.)

4. The cross references and use of the Topical Guide are probably the most obvious change.

#### Less Obvious Changes

1. Official Declaration 2 as well as three excerpts from addresses by President Wilford Woodruff have been added.
2. The three facsimiles found in the 1981 edition of the Pearl of Great Price are significantly different from those in the 1921 editions and subsequent printings.
3. Joseph Smith 1 and 2 have now become Joseph Smith Matthew and Joseph Smith History.
4. Oliver's historical account found in small print prior to the Articles of

Faith now has an earlier reference. *Times and Seasons* 2:201 was changed to the earlier source *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834):14-16.

5. The Book of Moses is now referred to as "Selections From the Book of Moses."

6. The Pearl of Great Price now has an introductory note containing a brief history of the compilation. An interesting statement contained therein is: "In the present edition some changes have been made to bring the text into conformity with earlier documents."

7. The D&C now contains a "verse synopsis" at the beginning of each section. While these are helpful, not all of the work of studying and pondering has been removed from the shoulders of the student. As an example D&C 132:26-27 has the following summary: "Law given relative to blasphemy against Holy Ghost." However the section also mentions temple ordinances and calling and election, which are not referenced.

8. In some cases the dates and locations where revelations were received have been clarified. (See sections 13, 35-37 for examples of changes in location.)

9. A new pronunciation guide has also been provided for the Book of Mormon.

In addition to the new Triple another book will also be helpful to students of the D&C: Lyndon Cook's *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Seventy's Book Store: Provo, Utah, 1981). This is the finest historical commentary to appear on the D&C. In some instances its doctrinal comments are without peer. Some examples follow:

*High Priesthood vs. Melchizedek Priesthood*

6. The significance of these ordinations to the high priesthood can be appreciated only if one understands that for several years the office of high priest was recognized as the highest priesthood office in the Church (see Alma 13:5-18 which undoubtedly served as the basis for this idea). Joseph Smith and his associates did *not* equate high priesthood with Melchizedek Priesthood. Only high priests held the high priesthood; as such they were recognized as the elite of the priesthood. In January 1832 Joseph Smith was sustained as President of the High Priesthood (i.e., president of all the high priests), and two months later he appointed two counselors to assist him (see Historical Note for section 81). Section 84:63 (given to ten high priests) clearly identifies the early prominence of the high priests: "And as I said unto mine apostles, even so I say unto you, for you are mine apostles, even God's high priests; ye are they whom my Father hath given me; ye are my friends." The affairs of the Church were governed by two bodies of high priests, one in Kirtland and one in

Missouri, until the organization of the Church high councils in 1834, when a small number of high priests, with additional powers, were selected to administer and adjudicate Church matters. The quorum of the First Presidency grew out of the Presidency of the High Priesthood by 1834. Although it retained its supremacy as a presiding body, the title (First Presidency) more clearly identified the body as the supreme quorum over the whole Church rather than merely an organizational presidency. (Additionally, the title "Presidency of the High Priesthood" was considered obnoxious by some who feared elitism and authoritarianism.) Whereas the Quorum of Twelve Apostles would eventually assume greater authority than that of the high councils, this did not occur immediately following the appointments to the quorum in 1835, instead it developed gradually. By 1841 the Twelve had begun to take their place next to the First Presidency. Until at least 1841, elders, seventies, and apostles were recognized as "elders," and high priests were high priests—the elite. (See for example, *History of the Church*, 4:105.) Subsequently, priesthood supremacy was given to those who had received temple ordinances, because receiving all such ordinances extended to man the "fulness" of the priesthood. After the Prophet's death the significance began to diminish, and eventually the term *high priesthood* became synonymous with Melchizedek Priesthood and "higher priesthood." (See Heber C. Kimball Journal, 14 December 1845, Church Archives, where Brigham Young declared that a seventy can ordain high priests.) (D&C 52; Cook pp. 136-37.)

*Development of Making One's Calling and Election Sure*

Section 68 is the first latter-day revelation to address the notion of being sealed up unto eternal life (verse 12). This was a topic of considerable importance during the Prophet's life-time. Shortly after the Orange, Ohio, conference (25 October 1831) high priests began sealing the Saints to eternal life. These early priesthood sealings (1831-35) were not unimportant, but it was later determined that they were insufficient. Although the Prophet received the greater keys from Elijah in April 1836, he delayed administering the higher (temple) ordinances until the 1840s. The first priesthood (eternal) marriage was performed in April 1841, and the priesthood endowment was administered for the first time in May 1842. Having received these prerequisite ordinances, the faithful could continue on and receive the fullness of the priesthood wherein they were sealed up unto eternal. (The fullness of the priesthood began to be administered in September 1843.) Thus, a complete understanding of the nature of making one's calling and election sure (i.e., being sealed up unto eternal) developed over a ten-year period, and achieved its fullest expression during the Nauvoo period. (D&C 68; Cooke p. 145.)

*Emma's Eternal Sealing to Joseph*

Upon accepting the implications of the doctrine of plural marriage Emma Smith was eternally sealed to the Prophet (28 May 1843). The burden of section 132 was to inform Emma that although she had been eternally married to her husband (i.e., "according to my word"), the "new and

# The Diary

of Charles Lowell Walker



Reflects 50 years of the life of a Mormon convert, from 1854 to 1899 — one man's view of the Civil War, foreign affairs, church leaders and teachings, polygamy, and being sent on a mission to southern Utah.

The 2-volume set includes 891 pages of entries, a biographical appendix, and an index.

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies of *The Diary of Charles Lowell Walker* at \$30.00 per set. (Individuals must prepay.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Other books of interest:

<i>Emma Lee</i>	\$5.50
<i>Early Utah Furniture</i>	\$9.95
<i>The Gentile Comes to Cache Valley</i>	\$6.00
<i>Name Index to the Library of Congress Collection of Mormon Diaries (pa.)</i>	\$11.00
<i>Journal of the Southern Indian Mission (pa.)</i>	\$5.00

Utah State  
 University Press  
 UMC 95  
 Logan, Utah 84322  
 801-750-1362

everlasting covenant" of marriage must be "sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by whom who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of the priesthood" (see D&C 132:19 and 26). In other words, only by receiving the fulness of the priesthood could Emma Smith have claim on her husband in the eternities. Despite Emma's changing moods regarding this matter, ultimately she was administered the fulness of the priesthood, in connection with the Prophet (28 September 1843). (D&C 132; Cook p. 347.)

*Joseph and the Urim and Thummim*

It is interesting to note that the words "by the means of the Urim and Thummim" in verse 1 were not part of this verse in the *Book of Commandments*; nor was section 17, which also makes use of the term *Urim and Thummim*, printed in the *Book of Commandments*. Both section 17 and verse 1 of section 10, as we now have them, first appeared in the 1835 edition. While the retroactive placement of the term in section 10 has led to some speculation relative to the Prophet's having the instrument in his possession, a preponderance of evidence confirms the Prophet's own testimony: "With the records was found a curious instrument, which the ancients called 'Urim and Thummim,' which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow fastened to a breastplate" (*History of the Church*, 4:537). The problem here seems to be one of terminology, not whether or not the Prophet had possession of an ancient artifact. Until some time after the translation of the Book of Mormon, the sacred instruments may have been referred to as "Interpreters," or "spectacles." It is possible that Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Bible played some part in designating the translating instrument "Urim and Thummim." The earliest use of the term *Urim and Thummim* in Mormon literature is in the *Evening and Morning Star* (January 1833). An article on the Book of Mormon, undoubtedly authored by W.W. Phelps, stated, "It was translated by the gift and power of God, by an unlearned man, through the aid of a pair of Interpreters, or spectacles—(known, perhaps in ancient days as Teraphim, or Urim and Thummim)." See also Richard P. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1969). (D&C 10; Cook pp. 122-23.)

Also interesting is Cook's listing of 34 "Uncanonized Revelations Received by Joseph Smith (1831-44)." This is found as Appendix B in his work.

One of the more interesting changes in the new Triple Combination was that "white and deightsome" (2 Nephi 30:6) became "pure and deightsome." According to the *Ensign* (October 1981): 18 this returns the content to its intended meaning. Our purpose is not to dispute the change but rather to share a somewhat related piece of evidence.

In the new preface to section 132 it states: "Although the revelation was

recorded in 1843, it is evident from the historical records that the doctrines and principles involved in this revelation had been known by the Prophet since 1831." The D&C does not indicate what these historical records were. However, in Cook's commentary on the D&C he states the following: "Joseph Smith learned of the principle of plural marriage as early as July 1831, near Independence, on the border of Missouri and what later became Kansas" (p. 293).

This comment is further explained in his footnotes which state:

William W. Phelps to Brigham Young, 12 August 1861, Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives. This letter contains a revelation which alludes to plural marriage. The introduction to the letter follows: The Substance of a revelation by Joseph Smith Junr. given over the boundary, west of Jackson Co. Missouri, on Sunday morning July 17 1831, when seven Elders, Viz: Joseph Smith Jun. Oliver Cowdery, W.W. Phelps, Martin Harris, Joseph Coe, Ziba Peterson and Joshua Lewis, united their hearts in prayer, in a private place, to inquire of the Lord who should preach the first sermon to the remnants of the Lamanites and Nephites, and the people of that Section, that should assemble that day, in the Indian Country, to hear the gospel and the revelations according to the Book of Mormon.

Among the company there being neither pen, Ink, or paper, Joseph remarked that the Lord could preserve his words, as he had ever done, till the time appointed.

Unfortunately Cook only quotes Phelps introduction to the revelation and not the revelation itself. (He does list the 17 July 1831 revelation in his appendix B of uncanonized revelations received by Joseph Smith.) One published account of the revelation is found in Fred C. Collier's *Unpublished Revelations of the Prophets and Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* which was published privately in 1979 by the compiler. On pages 57-58 of this work we find the following:

*A Revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, west of Jackson County, Missouri, on July 17, 1831.*

1. Verily, Verily, saith the Lord, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ, the light and the life of the world ye cannot discern with your natural eyes, the design and the purpose of your Lord and your God, in bringing you thus far into the wilderness, for a trial of your faith—and to be especial witnesses to bear testimony of this land, upon which the Zion of God shall be built up in the last days, when it is redeemed.

2. Verily, inasmuch as ye are united in calling upon my name to know my will concerning who shall preach to the inhabitants that shall assemble this day to learn what new doctrine you have to teach them, you have done wisely—for so did the ancient Prophets, even Enoch, and Abraham, and others; and therefore, it is

my will that my servant Oliver Cowdery should open the meeting with prayer; that my servant W.W. Phelps should preach the discourse; and that my servants Joseph Coe and Ziba Peterson should bear testimony as they shall be moved by the Holy Spirit. This will be pleasing in the sight of your Lord.

3. Verily, I say unto you, ye are laying the foundation of a great work for the salvation of as many as will believe and repent, and obey the ordinances of the Gospel, and continue faithful to the end; For, as I live, saith the Lord, so shall they live.

4. Verily, I say unto you, that the wisdom of man in his fallen state, knoweth not the purposes and the privileges of my holy priesthood, but yet shall know when ye receive a fullness by reason of the anointing: For it is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, deightsome and just, for even now their females are more virtuous than the gentiles.

5. Gird up your loins and be prepared for the mighty work of the Lord—to prepare the world for my second coming—to meet the tribes of Israel, according to the predictions of all the holy prophets since the beginning; For the final desolation and decrees upon Babylon: For, as the Everlasting Gospel is carried from this land, in love for peace, to gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, for Zion—even so shall rebellion follow after, speedily, with hatred for war, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all the kingdoms and nations, that strive to govern themselves by the laws and precepts, and force and powers of men, under the curse of sin in all the world.

6. Verily, I say unto you, that the day of vexation and vengeance is nigh at the doors of this nation, when wicked, ungodly and daring men will rise up in wrath and might, and go forth in anger, like as the dust is driven by a terrible wind; and they will be the means of the destruction of the government and cause the death and misery of many souls; but the faithful among my people shall be preserved in holy places during all these tribulations.

7. Be patient therefore, possessing your souls in peace and love, and keep the faith that is now delivered unto you for the gathering of scattered Israel, and lo, I am with you, though you cannot see me, till I come: even so; Amen. (Letter from W.W. Phelps to Brigham Young, dated August 12, 1861, Joseph Smith Collection, Church Historians Office.)

Verse 4 indicates another way for the descendants of the Nephites and Lamanites to become "white and deightsome." This is especially interesting if it really is one of the first indications of plural marriage. It should be noted however, that there is a discrepancy between Cook and Collier as to what the original source really is—unless it is found in both places.

