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THE JEWISH JESUS
MICHAEL WALTON



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RELIGION 4	THE JEWISH JESUS Christ's life as a practising Jew in ancient Palestine	MICHAEL WALTON
25	THE DANGERS OF REVELATION A delicate, elusive, even tenuous phenomenon	SCOTT DUNN
30	THE LIMITS OF REVELATION A comprehension of the limitations will minimize many potential problems	KENT DUNFORD
HISTORY 10	HISTORY, FAITH, AND MYTH An RLDS scholar argues that the truth of myth does not refer to factual accuracy.	C. ROBERT MESLE
14	THE PUISSANT PROCREATOR Comic ridicule of Brigham Young	DOUGLAS MCKAY
CONTEMPORARY 18	THE RUSSIAN CHIMERA Our menacing stereotype of the Russians is inaccurate and self-serving	GARY L. BROWNING
49	CAN NATIONS LOVE THEIR ENEMIES? An LDS theology of peace	EUGENE ENGLAND
57	THE NATION STATE: IMMORALITY AND VIOLENCE So long as the nation-state exists peace will remain an unfulfilled ideal.	HOWARD BALL
PERSONAL ESSAY 40	WHOSE YOKE IS EASY? There are no shortcuts to wealth or culture.	MARDEN CLARK
47	THE MORMON MASSES Pop culture may be in poor taste. But immoral?	DOUGLAS D. ALDER
POETRY 34	JOSEPH	DALE BJORK
FICTION 34	BORDERLAND	LINDA SILLITOE
DEPARTMENTS 2	READERS' FORUM	
59	PARADOXES AND PERPLEXITIES	MARVIN RYTTING
61	ISSUES OF INTIMACY	MARYBETH RAYNES
62	OUTSIDE LOOKING IN	RAY OWNBEE
63	LAW OF THE LAND	JAY S. BYBEE

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Readers' Forum

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Latter-day Pharisees?

I strongly agree that far too much emphasis is placed on the observance of the Word of Wisdom as a measure of one's morality. However, I do not see this as being imposed upon us from the hierarchy of the Church. Instead, I feel that it is a self-inflicted, and rather over-estimated standard of spirituality applied by the whole of Mormon society. Why is it so popular as a yard-stick among us? Because a violation of these rules is the most visible of Mormon sins. It is far easier to detect the stale odor of cigarette smoke, than sins which reek in other, less obvious ways. Over-pious ranting about smoking and drinking can be very irritating to the ears of potential converts and, indeed, to those of upstanding and obedient members of the Church. We must remember that one wins friends with loving concern, not with loud criticism. However, it does seem to me that Brs. Kimball and Cox are attributing to the enforcement of the Word of Wisdom far more negative influence than it has, even when it is used like a weapon by narrow-minded, bigoted Latter-day Saints.

As a convert who had many struggles before allowing the Holy Spirit to wash me into the Church, I must say that the Word of Wisdom has never

been a problem for me. In fact, it has always been one of the more attractive facets of Mormonism. Long before I recognized it as anything more than a sensible rule for healthful living, I was able to put away my few "bad habits" and live the precepts of the 89th Section. This has never seemed a sacrifice to me. Though others may not like being preached to, they do recognize the standard and respect it for what it is.

Br. Kimball rightly points out the fact that the Word of Wisdom is a "near obsession" with us, as a people, but I fail to see why the standard should be adulterated merely because it is not always properly understood and applied with the necessary love. Frankly, I couldn't care less what documents have been misquoted or misrepresented. The point is that the Lord has offered loving counsel to us in a way that is difficult to misconstrue.

What is equally clear to me is that one who spreads malicious gossip, cheats his neighbor, or abuses his family, is a far greater sinner than one who has a taste for an occasional cup of coffee, or who sneaks out behind the garage for a cigarette. As for a Church leader whose employees labor on the Sabbath, God will judge. But let's not attack a standard we know to be valid because of others who abuse the rest of the commandments. To me, it makes no difference whether the Word of Wisdom was presented by way of "commandment" or by way of fatherly advice. What sane believer in God would regard His advice as less

valuable than His so called "real commandments"? Will we use our heads and hearts to recognize and obey the spirit of the law, or will we be Latter-day Pharisees, looking to the letter of the law?

Curtis Lee Zeitelhack
Los Angeles, California

Guilty on All Counts

L. Jackson Newell's article "Enlarging the Mormon View of Christian Ethics" brought several indictments against the Church and its people, but the jury is still out.

The major premise of the article is stated early on. It is that "... as a people, [Mormons] are relatively unconcerned about our natural environment, the arms race, human rights, and problems associated with population control, malnutrition and starvation." Though apparently intended to qualify this charge, the footnote at the end of this statement does little to soften the accusations.

It seems that Mr. Newell equates the problem of starvation with the need to control world population growth. First of all, let's be straightforward and admit that it is birth control that we are talking about. Now we can deal with the issue accordingly.

We must realize that the Lord has said "For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves." (Doctrine and Covenants 104:17.) This promise includes both food and other natural resources. Taking the Lord at his word, as I assume any faithful member of the Church would do, we must look to some other explanation for the shortages we experience from time to time.

The answer lies in the second statement just quoted. Having said that he prepared and gave to mankind the abundance of a full earth, the Lord then said he has given unto us to be agents unto ourselves. If you observe those countries and governments under which the people exist in abject poverty, you will instantly see that it is these governments that have stolen the agency, the freedom, and liberty with which people are able to produce in rich abundance.

Moving on to the issue of birth control, we must not ignore the first of the commandments given to mankind on this earth, which was the order to multiply and replenish the earth. This has never been rescinded or altered, to my knowledge.

Perhaps these are much more

plausible reasons for the lack of involvement of Latter-day Saints than those offered by Mr. Newell. Let no one be confused into believing that because we refuse to follow a doctrine of the Devil (birth control) we are unconcerned with the condition of our fellowman in other areas of the world. Righteousness and liberty will bring peace and plenty; nothing less will.

And is it really so baffling that the Church avoided the civil rights movement of the 50s and the 60s? The entire movement was heavily infiltrated and largely controlled by Socialist/Communist operatives like Jack O'dell and Stanley Levison, whose purpose was not to promote racial justice but rather to incite hatred and strife, sedition and mayhem. It is precisely because Mormons are concerned about human rights that they were not in league with this fabricated cause.

Latter-day Saints with true insight were and are involved in missionary work, including health services, relief volunteer work, and other humanitarian endeavors. The recent flooding in Idaho is a good example of concern for others. Food, clothing, shelter, and medical assistance were freely given by the Church to all in need, regardless of race, religion, or other qualifications.

When Mr. Newell states that Latter-day Saints "remain somewhat hostile to equal rights and opportunities for all men and women under the law," he must have the ERA in mind. Hostility is an understandable reaction to a proposal which would amount to a backward step for women by forcing women into combat duty and opening the intentionally vague wording of the statute to the arbitrary and capricious interpretations of collectivist judges.

Or perhaps it is the homosexuals who are mistreated by the Saints. Nevermind the scriptural reasons for understanding that this condition is ungodly and reversible.

Any other implications of the hostility claim are utterly foolish, unless of course you do not count the 134th

section of the Doctrine and Covenants as binding.

As for the SALT treaty, using the word "sincere" to describe the Soviets' bargaining efforts is a little like nominating one of Charlie's Angels for an Oscar. Both positions are woefully naive. It is not that members of the Church are apathetic about the arms race, it is that they know with whom we deal in SALT. Furthermore, the recent statement of the First Presidency concerning this very issue should put to rest this rumor.

Finally, with regard to environmental issues, we have already discussed the fact that the Lord knows our needs and provides technology to meet them. In addition, the very fact that the Mormons so faithfully store and preserve food, fuel, water, and other natural and man-made supplies is a testimony that they are keenly aware of the possibility of shortages.

This does not, however, mean that they subscribe to the doomsday theories of so many environmentalist groups. This earth was made for man, not the other way around. Although no one knows what the future holds, the faithful surely know who holds the future and consequently do not suffer from acute paranoia.

A thoughtful reading of the article leads to a strong feeling that the author is a proponent of the one-world movement, the idea that we all are interdependent and should renounce national and religious affinity, regardless of the distance between philosophies, the enmity between purposes. Such is the goal of groups like the Trilateralists and such has been the goal of him who is called the deceiver of the brethren in the Book of Revelations.

As a subscriber I am a juror, a member of the panel of readers, and I personally find, after a full consideration of the evidence, that the defendants are not guilty on all counts.

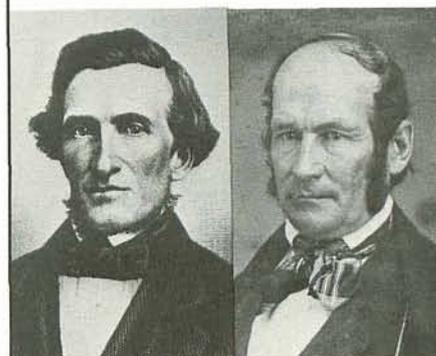
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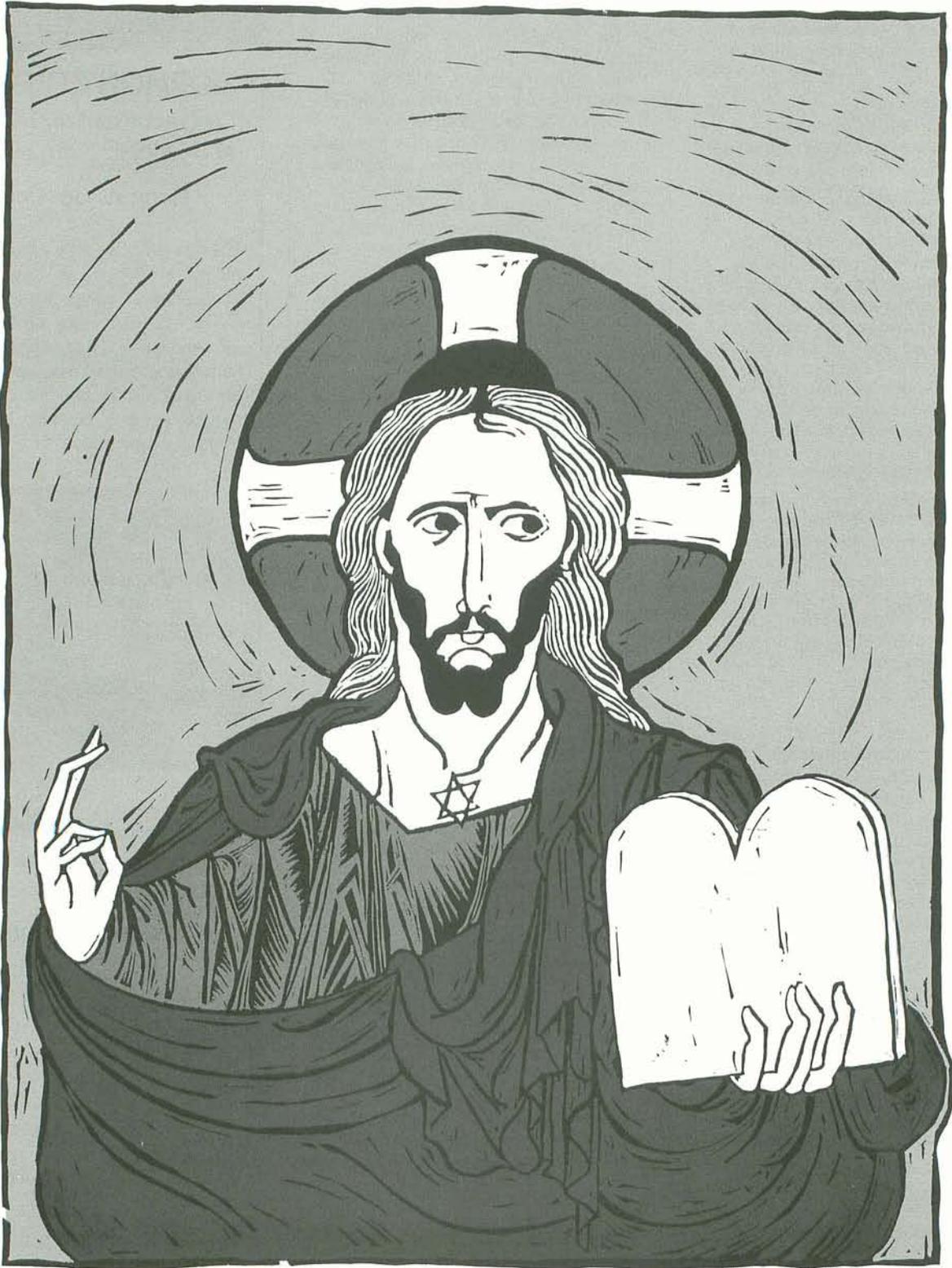


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MICHAEL WALTON

THE JEWISH JESUS

SEEING JESUS AS THE FOUNDER OF A NEW RELIGION TENDS TO BLUR HIS LIFE AS A PRACTICING JEW IN FIRST CENTURY PALESTINE.

JESUS of Nazareth is generally viewed as the first Christian, the founder of a new faith, not the reformer of an old one. Seeing Jesus this way, however, tends to blur his life as a practicing Jew in first century Palestine. Jesus worshiped and taught in the synagogues and in the Temple. He addressed the questions troubling the Jewish consciousness. He taught in parables (*mashal*) after the manner of the popular teachers of his people. Unlike Paul he made no attempt to contact non-Jews, declaring his ministry to be only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 25:24).

The early followers of Jesus were Jews, who saw his teachings not as the basis of a new religion but as an extension and completion of Judaism. They continued in the traditional forms of worship which their master had used. The major difference between these Judeo-Christians or *Minim*¹ (Hebrew, kind, genus) and their fellow Jews was their adherence to Jesus, the "Son of Man," and his teachings on the law and the prophets. The *Minim*, however, were not destined to become the leaders of the movement which Jesus had begun. The doctrines of Jesus as interpreted by men like Paul, Mark, and Luke quickly took root among the Gentiles as well. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, the Gentile Christians were left as the best organized and most numerous body to purvey the "Gospel." As a result, less than a century after Jesus' ministry his teachings were adapted to Gentile needs and usages. The story of his life was rendered into Greek. His was accepted by thousands as the *soter* of a rapidly growing mystery religion.² Yet examining the

Jewish context of Jesus' life and ministry can broaden our understanding of Jesus' life and ministry. In this task, I make no claim to originality, nor do I wish to imply a superiority of Judeo-Christianity over Gentile Christianity. Rather I wish to point out certain elements of Jesus' life and teachings as recorded in the Gospels and explore their relationship to Jewish worship c. 30 C.E. (Common Era).

Synagogue Worship

The capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the first Temple created a spiritual crisis in Judaism. Without the Temple and its ritual, how could Israel worship God? Among the deported Jews in Babylon, it became customary to gather together and pray for a speedy deliverance. In such gatherings the seeds for synagogue worship were sown. After the return from captivity, the rabbis who succeeded Ezra worked to establish the synagogue as a spiritual, ethical, legal and educational center for Jews. (The rebuilt Temple was never challenged, however, as the cultic center of the faith.)

In the town of Nazareth, Jesus was raised in the shadow of the synagogue. The synagogue was the place of his education, his family's worship and his introduction as an adult into the Jewish community. Luke 4:16 reports that it was Jesus' "custom" to go into the synagogue. Though it is difficult to know exactly what transpired in synagogues during the first half of the first century C.E., the *Mishnah* and other sources supply certain basic information.³ The adult male worshiper wore a *tallit* or prayer shawl bordered in blue with *tzizit*, ritual fringes (perhaps worn by Jesus, Matt. 9:20), tied on the corners as commanded in Numbers 15:38. So attired the men participated in the tripartite

Editors' Note: This paper was originally read at the 1981 Sunstone Theological Symposium.

liturgy, the *Shema*, the *Tefillah*, and the *Torah* service.

The service began with such benedictions as, "Praised art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe who formed light, created darkness, who makes peace and created all things." The purpose of such prayers was to prepare the worshiper for the *Shema*, the quintessential statement of Jewish monotheism and devotion to God. The *Shema* which consists of Deuteronomy 6:3-9 and 11:18 and 20, formed not only a part of the synagogue liturgy but was also included in the priests' morning



THE EARLY FOLLOWERS OF JESUS WERE JEWS, WHO SAW HIS TEACHINGS NOT AS THE BASIS OF A NEW RELIGION BUT AS AN EXTENSION AND COMPLETION OF JUDAISM.

service in the second Temple (perhaps it came to the Temple from the synagogue). It begins, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. And Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength."

After the *Shema* the service turned to a series of prayers, the *Tefillah*. Then preparations were made to remove the scroll of the Law, the *Torah*, from its ark or container. At the removal of the *Torah*, the *Shema* was recited again. The scroll was held up for the entire congregation to see just as Ezra had done after the return to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 8:5). Members of the congregation were then called to read from the Law. (From 70 C.E. to the present, the sections of the Law to be read on a given day have been fixed. There was no set order followed by all synagogues before that time.) The scroll was again shown to the congregation, then set aside while a scroll of the Prophets was introduced.

The reading of a passage from the Prophets (at the reader's discretion in Jesus' day but now fixed) with a sermon or commentary was seen as the completion, *Haftorah*, of the *Torah* service. Luke 4:16-30 presents Jesus reading the *Haftorah* in his home synagogue in Nazareth.⁴ His commentary was so extraordinary that his neighbors drove him from Nazareth. When Jesus taught in synagogues on the sabbath as in Luke 4:31, it is probable that it was often as a sermonizer on the

Haftorah.

It is against the background of synagogue worship and the *Shema's* centrality to the liturgy that Jesus' encounter with the scribe (Mark 12:28-34) can be best understood. When asked, "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus answered from the scribal tradition as found in the synagogue and Temple liturgy, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, . . ." Given Jesus' knowledgeable use of the *Shema*, it is no wonder that the scribe replied, "Well master, thou hast said the truth."

It is possible that the synagogue liturgy influenced other aspects of Jesus' life. The answers he gave during Satan's temptations were taken from Deuteronomy 6, Deuteronomy 8, and Psalm 91, all passages one would encounter in the synagogue. The "Lord's Prayer" is in essence an amalgamation of shortened versions of the third, fifth, sixth, ninth, and fifteenth benedictions used in daily worship. The synagogue was an essential element in the devout Jew's life during the first century C.E. It not only transformed Jesus' view of Judaism, but if he were to be effective in communicating with his brethren, he had to relate his style and teachings to the ideas and forms known to them. The Gospels indicate he did this.

Temple Ritual

Though the synagogue was the focus of local worship, the Temple was the religious center of Judaism at the time of Jesus. Only in the Temple could the priests and their Levite assistants offer the individual and national sacrifices prescribed in the *Torah*. All Israel looked to the Temple and sent funds to support it. Its ritual sacrifices united a dispersed nation in the service of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Devout Jews desired to visit the Temple at least once in their life, especially during one of the pilgrimage festivals like Passover and Tabernacles.

The heart of the Temple cult was the fulfillment of the sacrificial rituals prescribed in the *Law*. By the first century C.E., however, other elements had been added to the Temple service. At dawn after the priests had completed the day's initial sacrifice, they would meet in the "Chamber of Hewn Stones" for a prayer service. The brief liturgy recited there consisted of the Ten Commandments, three benedictions, and the *Shema*. The prayer service concluded, the priests returned to the morning sacrifices which ended with the priest's blessing on those who attended in the Temple Court. "The Lord bless, and keep you! The Lord make his face shine on you, and be gracious to you! The Lord lift up his countenance on you, and give you peace!" (Numbers 6:24-26.)

After the blessing, the Levite chorus would chant the psalms of the day. On festival days, the *Hallel* (Psalms 113-118) was sung. During the recitation of the last psalm of the *Hallel*, those present were allowed to participate by answering each verse with the words of the twenty fifth verse, "We beseech Thee, O Lord, save now! We beseech Thee, O Lord, make us now to prosper!" The congregation's participation was also allowed when the popular Psalm 136, the Great *Hallel*, was chanted during various processions and services. The congregation responded to each verse, "for His

mercy endureth forever." Many of the popular psalms used in the Temple were adapted to synagogue and home rituals and thus influenced worship outside of Jerusalem.

In addition to its sacrificial and liturgical functions, the Temple served as a meeting place for the Sanhedrin, Judaism's highest legislative body, and for those who wished to study and discuss *Torah*. Those who attended the Temple could see sacrifice, hear songs and prayer, observe the governing elders of Israel, and exercise their minds in the study of the Law. It was the religious center of Israel in the fullest sense of the word.

During his life time Jesus experienced each aspect of Judaism to be found in the Temple. After his birth, he was taken by his parents to the Temple (Luke 2:22-24) for presentation to the Lord as commanded in Exodus 13:2. Also at that time Joseph and Mary offered sacrifice for her purification in accordance with Leviticus 12:6-8. In keeping with their modest circumstances, their offering was two turtle doves rather than the more expensive offering of one lamb and a turtle dove suggested in the Mosaic Law (Jesus, like his parents, supported sacrifice by recommending it to a leper [Matthew 17:24, Mark 1:44]).

The next recorded appearance of Jesus in the Temple was during one of his parents' yearly visits during the Passover festival (Luke 2:40-50). The twelve year old Jesus became separated from his parents and was found discussing *Torah* with the masters who met in the holy place for that purpose. During his ministry Jesus seems not only to have paid his Temple tax (Matthew 17:24-27),⁵ but also taken every available opportunity to teach in the Temple while in Jerusalem. John 7:14 records that during the Feast of Tabernacles, "Jesus went up into the temple and taught." Luke 21:1, Matthew 21:23, and Mark 11:27 note that Jesus "taught the people in the Temple" before his last Passover.

The presence of Jesus in Jerusalem during pilgrimage festivals like Passover and Tabernacles reveals his commitment to the commandment (Deuteronomy 16:16) that "three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose." As the festivals were centered on the Temple, Jesus demonstrated by his attendance both piety and an acceptance of the communal sacrifice. Even when he led his disciples to believe that he would not attend Tabernacles (John 7:1-10), he went in secret to honor the Law and, perhaps, to fulfill his own religious inclinations. Jesus' purification of the Court of the Gentiles also indicates the reverence which he attached to his "Father's House."

Frequent temple attendance and synagogue study could only serve to make Jesus aware of the elements of the Temple liturgy and their traditional interpretation. That Jesus used that knowledge during his ministry is indicated by his use of the *Hallel* against the Pharisees and Temple leaders while teaching in the Temple (Matthew 21:23-42, Mark 12:1-11, Luke 20:1-19). When asked by some Pharisees by what authority he taught, Jesus answered with a parable of some gardeners who turned away their master's servants from his vineyard and killed the master's son. He followed this thinly veiled allusion to the leaders of the Jews who guard the Law

but deny the prophets and the "Son of Man" who give it life with a quotation from the *Hallel*, "Have ye not read this scripture, 'the stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner, this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'"

This citation of Psalm 118:22 and 23, to which the inhabitants of Jerusalem had so often chanted, "save now I beseech thee, O Lord. . .," was calculated to force the Pharisees and Temple leaders to reflect on their own authority. By their adherence to tradition and rejection

JESUS' POWER TO
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of contemporary charismatic prophets did the elders of Israel not stand marveling at the work of the Lord as did the sceptics mentioned in the Psalm? Those who heard Jesus understood and reacted negatively to the keepers of the Law. The ability of Jesus to challenge their position struck the Temple leaders so forcefully that "the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them."

Had Jesus not known the liturgy and the special role of the *Hallel*, he probably could not have caused such a reaction. His parable alone was not as damning to his interrogators as the citation and interpretation of the Psalm. Jesus' power to shape the traditional elements of Judaism to his purposes made him both a powerful teacher and a threat to the status quo.

Jesus' final contact with elements of the Temple liturgy was through the Passover Service which incorporated them. He and the disciples sang the *Hallel* at the conclusion of their Passover meal (Mark 14:26). According to the Pharisaical prescription, Jesus and the eleven did not leave the Passover table for revelry. Instead, they retired to a garden to pray. There Jesus was arrested. At that time, perhaps, he and the disciples recalled the last words of the *Hallel* which they had chanted together, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, For His mercy endureth for ever."

The Pharisees

Jesus' willing participation in synagogue and Temple worship indicates that he was personally committed to the central forms and practices of Judaism. Seen in the context of the first third of the first century C.E., Jesus was an interpreter of Judaism rather than the founder of a new religion. As an interpreter, however, his vision differed from others who attempted to direct Judaism and its traditions. How he differed from other Jewish leaders is, perhaps, best illustrated through his relationship with the Pharisees.

Though most readers of the Gospels see the Pharisees as hairsplitting "heavies" or as antagonistic observers of Jesus, they were generally honored and their teachings followed by the Jews of the period. At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees were only a small sect among the Jews.⁶ They had little political power, as the leadership of Judaism rested with the chief priests and Temple leaders who adhered to the equally small Sadducean sect. The impact of the Pharisees, like that of Jesus, came through the popular appeal of their knowledge of the Law and their ethical teachings.

Much has been written about the similarity between the ethics of the Pharisees and the ethics of Jesus. It is often pointed out that Rabbi Hillel formulated the Golden Rule during the reign of Herod the Great. But there was a fundamental difference in their teachings. The difference turned not on how each would have the Jews live, for Jesus said of the Pharisees, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not (Matthew 23:3)." It was, rather, a basic disagreement on the authority to interpret the law.

The Pharisees saw themselves as the heirs of Ezra and the quasi-mythical Great Synagogue who restructured Judaism after the return from Babylon. They believed that Ezra and the rabbis of the Great Synagogue passed on a tradition of interpreting the *Torah* which began with Moses. This "Oral Law," of similar authority to the written *Torah*, was the means by which the *Torah* was adapted to the ever changing environment in which the Jews found themselves. The Oral Law was codified in the *Mishnah* at the end of the second century C.E. The *Mishnah* clearly states the genealogy of the Oral Law: "Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue. They said three things: be deliberate in judgement, raise up many disciples, and make a fence around the Law." (*Aboth* 1:1.)

As the heirs of the authority and traditions of the Prophets and the Great Synagogue, the Pharisees applied themselves diligently to the study and implementation of the Law. They were especially zealous in building a "fence around the Law"—setting forth principles which would prevent the children of Israel from embarking on paths which could lead to breaking the precepts of the *Torah*. Establishing the limits of a Sabbath's journey was no more excessively legalistic to the Pharisees than applying the Word of Wisdom to cola drinks is for Latter-day Saints. In both cases, the fence about the Law prevents sin and the appearance of sin.

Jesus himself indulged in building a fence about the

Law in the Sermon on the Mount.⁸

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

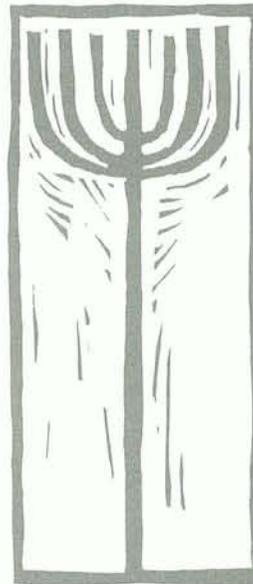
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart . . .

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

But I say unto you swear not at all: neither by heaven; . . . nor by the earth . . .

In each case, Jesus extended the Law to prevent a first step on the road to transgression.

If Jesus recommended the teachings of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:3) and even adopted the oral tradition's admonition to fence in the Law, why did he denounce the Pharisees and they him? The answer seems to come from the Pharisees' question to Jesus, "By what authority doest thou these things?" (Luke 20:2). The



THE DISTANCE OF THE GOSPEL WRITERS AND THEIR GENTILE AUDIENCE FROM THE JEWISH MILIEU HAS CLOUDED OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE JEWISH SECTS AND TRADITIONS

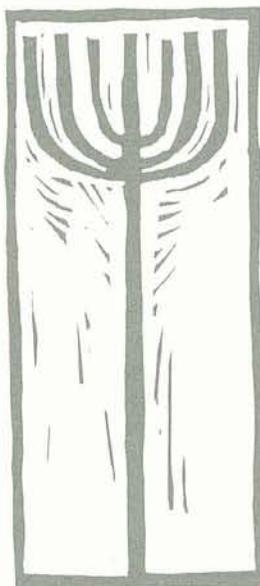
Pharisees knew the source of their authority: the tradition extending to the Great Synagogue and beyond. In part, they were asking, what was Jesus' relationship to that tradition? Jesus refused to answer, but Matthew explains that Jesus taught as "one having authority" (Matthew 7:29). In other words, Jesus did not act by virtue of an earthly tradition. He was a charismatic leader in the prophetic mold who acted by divine direction.⁹

One can scarcely imagine a greater ideological gulf than the one between the heirs of the traditions of the fathers and the prophetic teacher Jesus. No amount of similarity in form of worship or in substance of doctrine could bridge the chasm separating the righteous lawyers from the "Son of Man." Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees as blind teachers (Matthew 23) was not simply because there were insincere men among them. They were blind because they failed to see the hand of God in his actions. The very prophetic authority on which they based their faith and teachings they denied when it was in their midst. The Pharisees could not accept a new prophet led by God without the medium of the oral

tradition. Jesus' claim of direct divine authority and the power to heal by his own words struck the Pharisees as blasphemous. Jesus was not only a threat to their tradition but to the faith of Israel.

The distance of the Gospel writers and their Gentile audience from the Jewish milieu has clouded our understanding of the Jewish sects and traditions. Gentiles of the later first century C.E. probably cared little for distinctions between sects. A Jew was just a Jew, not a Pharisee, Sadducee, or Zealot. For example, a case of "sect lumping" seems to occur in Jesus' accusation that the Pharisees excused themselves from honoring their fathers and mothers by claiming *corban*, sacrifice (Mark 7:9-12). Given the Pharisees' genealogy of authority, punctilious living of the Law and high ethical standards, the charge hardly seems justifiable.¹⁰ Perhaps Jesus' charge was directed at the priestly, sacrificial-cult oriented Sadducees instead.

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The explanation of Pharisaical handwashing in Mark 7:1-4 demonstrates its author's limited knowledge of Jewish custom. The author of Mark felt a need to explain why the Pharisees faulted the disciples for not washing their hands. His explanation, however, was no explanation at all. He simply said, "They wash their hands oft. . . ." The ideas of cleanliness and purity so closely related to Christian baptism are not mentioned as possible sources for "the tradition of the elders." In attempting to show an acquaintance with Judaism the author of Mark indicated quite the opposite. Yet he and the other Gospel writers had access to enough genuine material on Jesus to pass on much of the Jewish context of Jesus' life, perhaps without knowing or trying.

The result of the Gospel writer's point of view was to create in the minds of their Gentile readers an image of the "perfidious Jews" who willingly committed deicide. (Perhaps the Barabbas story was invented to indict the entire Jewish people.) As heirs of the Pharisees, the Jews of the later Empire and Middle Ages were assigned the burden of guilt which belonged to their extinct enemies the Sadducees as the chief priests and rulers of the

people who arrested Jesus. As the "new Israel" the Gentile Christians felt justified in persecuting the fallen, guilty, and rejected Israel.

If the Christians forgot the essential Jewishness of Jesus and misunderstood the Jews, the rabbis were, perhaps, little better. The *Minim* were harassed by both Sadducees and Pharisees as apostates and potential traitors to the Jewish nation. They were also attacked by Gentile Christians for not being Christian. Though the *Minim* continued in the Law and were faithful in Temple and synagogue worship, they had to conceal their belief in the accuracy of Jesus' vision of Judaism. After the destruction of the Temple, the Sanhedrin passed into Pharisaical control and was moved to Yavneh by Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai. After Yohanan's death, the new head of the Sanhedrin Rabbi Gamaliel II moved to protect Judaism from the *Minim* by adding a benediction to the *Tefillah* of the synagogue liturgy. It besought God, among other things, to insure that "the *Minim* and heretics speedily perish."¹¹ Anyone who refused to recite the benediction or to uphold it with the word amen was expelled from the synagogue. Ironically, the *Minim* ceased to exist at about the same time that Paul and the Gentile converts to Christianity were transforming Jesus from an essentially Jewish figure into the first Christian.

NOTES

1. *Min*, plural *Minim*, is a term for heretical Jews. Though it is sometimes used in reference to groups other than Judeo-Christians, most scholars agree that by the end of the first century C.E. it usually meant only Judeo-Christians. See *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* vol 7. pp. 567-568.
 2. The development of Gentile Christianity is discussed in detail by Arthur Darby Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962). Many scholarly and popular works also note the development of Gentile Christianity. Among the most widely distributed texts is Michael Grant's *Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977).
 3. The best single volume dealing with the development of the Jewish liturgy is Abraham Millgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971). Most of the points regarding synagogue and Temple worship discussed below are touched on by Millgram.
 4. Bruce R. McConkie in *The Mortal Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), pp. 195 and 196 incorrectly attributes the incident to Capernaum. On p. 198, however, he makes a correct attribution.
 5. The story of the Widow's Mite deals with the Temple Tax (Mark 12:41-44).
 6. Josephus, *Antiquities* xvii, 2, 4 notes that the Pharisees numbered over 6000. This, of course, refers to their leaders, not to the laymen who followed their teachings.
 7. The classic study of the Pharisees is R. Travers Herford, *The Pharisees* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962).
 8. R. T. Herford discussed the teachings of Jesus as they relate to Jewish forms and ideas in an article in the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, volume 6, pp. 84-88.
 9. Herford, in *Pharisees*, pp. 201-204, makes this point as to the essential nature of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees.
 10. Herford in *Pharisees*, p. 205, uses the *Corban* incident to show that Jesus was not well versed in Pharisaical thought. In my opinion, given Jesus' apparently good Jewish upbringing, the importance of the Pharisees to Jewish life during his youth, and his frequent contacts with the Pharisees while teaching, it seems more reasonable to view the incident as misapplied by the Evangelist to the Pharisees.
 11. Talmud, Ber. 28b. The blessing was formulated by R. Samuel the Lesser.
- MICHAEL WALTON received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago.



History Faith and Myth

AN RLDS SCHOLAR ARGUES THAT THE HISTORIAN WITH FAITH IN A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY CAN HELP THAT COMMUNITY DEVELOP A MORE MATURE COMMITMENT.

C. Robert Mesle

MODERN historians live with uncertainty and ambiguity. The uncertainty and, to some extent, the ambiguity arise from a tension which modern historians confront and which philosophers have known at least since Socrates. We are committed to a search for truth according to rules which say we cannot ultimately find it. That is, we are striving to find an objective description of what actually happened using rules that assert only *interpretations* of what happened. The reasons are obvious. The past is never directly observable. What remains from past events is always partial. The very process of selecting which evidence is relevant and helpful is itself interpretative. And every observer and every historian has some point of view, a set of conscious or unconscious presuppositions and concerns that make it impossible to be fully objective.

This dilemma is especially acute for historians who are members of a community of faith. We want to know what really happened in the Exodus, but we cannot. We want to know if Jesus really said that the Kingdom would come within one generation, but we cannot. We want to know what Joseph Smith really experienced in his fifteenth or sixteenth year, but we cannot. Still we continually insist on doing what we insist we cannot do. And when we fail, as we must, to provide an absolutely safe historical foundation for our faith, we do not know whether to applaud our historical and theological sophistication or to weep for our lost souls.

As historical research gives us more adequate images of people and communities, historians become increasingly aware of the imperfections of those people

and communities and hence of the necessary ambiguity of all human commitments. And as the modern theologian has pointed out, we can escape neither uncertainty nor ambiguity by appeal to the divine; for we never deal with the divine apart from our humanity. Even if one believes that God brought a religious community into existence and directed it on how to structure itself, it is still a community of imperfect persons who have perceived and responded to that divine initiative. While God may never mislead us or make a mistake, we can never be absolutely certain that the human end of the connection is so reliable.

Because of this inherent ambiguity, the historian who is expected to use historical research to defend the community of faith, to write histories which support that faith, is forced into a difficult position. His or her dilemma is made far more intense by the prevalent idea that faith is a form of belief. Even more destructive is the idea that faith is belief without sufficient evidence, or even belief against the evidence. If faith is taken to mean belief without evidence, then it is logically impossible for a historian to be both faithful and scholarly.

The reason should be clear enough. When faith is understood as belief without evidence, one begins with a belief and uses it as a criterion by which to select evidence. Evidence which does not support the belief is suppressed or distorted or just ignored. An important expression of this position is found in Apostle Boyd Packer's recently published article, "The Mantle is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect."¹ Packer asserts that no one can properly write Mormon history unless they believe that "God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ personally appeared to the boy prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., in the year 1820" and that those heavenly beings "instructed [Joseph] according to the testimony that he

Editors' Note: This paper was delivered at 1982 MHA meetings in Ogden, Utah.



gave to the world in his published history."² Packer insists that historians of the Mormon church must presuppose that they have the truth and then select only that evidence for their histories which supports that truth. In such a view, there cannot be any genuine attempt to arrive at truth on the basis of evidence by means of scholarly inquiry. The historian seems forced to choose between the integrity of faith and the integrity of inquiry.

I do not believe that such a contradiction between faith and inquiry need exist, because I do not think that one needs to define faith as belief without evidence, or as any form of belief. Instead I intend to offer what logicians call a persuasive definition. I want to change the descriptive meaning of the word faith while keeping its positive emotional and value connotations. But I do not do so arbitrarily. I have two justifications. First, I believe the definition I wish to offer is truer to the traditional meaning of the word than is modern usage. Secondly, the traditional usage still has a strong place in our language and is almost always at least partially intended by the word.³

I propose that we abandon any use of the word faith as meaning belief and use the word faith only to indicate something like commitment, loyalty, concern, or even love: the experience of "being grasped" by something of ultimate concern.⁴ In order to emphasize this, I will use the word "faith" only in that manner or I will choose one of these synonyms or I will use a phrase like faithful commitment or faithful love.

I also propose that we shift the positive, virtuous connotations evoked by the word faith to this new meaning and try to develop a negative attitude toward belief without evidence. The former should be thought of as virtuous, the latter as non-virtuous.

This proposal is hardly original. The work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith⁵ increasingly persuades me that the equation of faith and belief is a modern Western heresy. I am therefore proposing a "restoration" of the meaning of faith in the Bible and the Christian tradition up to the last three centuries.

This restoration will immediately enable us to make great strides towards resolving our dilemma. There will no longer be any conflict between faith and inquiry for at least three reasons. First, since faith no longer designates belief, it does not tell us what factual claims we should presuppose. Second, if we are really committed to something, we will wish to discover the truth about it, so that we can act out our commitments more effectively. Third, we are enabled to see that faith can often survive and even be deepened by changes in belief.

Let me offer a simple comparison. Having faith is much like falling in love. We do not fall in love without having some beliefs about the person we love. But neither do we suffer from any confused idea that love is identical with belief. We want our beliefs to be accurate so that our love will be properly placed and so that we can express our love effectively. But our beliefs can certainly change without automatically destroying our love. Indeed, since people change, beliefs about them

must. A person who refuses to deal with the realities of a loved one is not admired by us. We see it as rather pitiful because that person seems to be in love with a dream, an ideal, rather than with a real person. What we admire is the ability to face reality and to love in the midst of the ambiguity of human existence.

The same is true for faith. And the historian who has faith in a particular community—is committed to, concerned about, grasped by, and in love with that community—is well equipped to help the members of that community to develop a more mature faith-commitment by helping them to recognize and live with the uncertainty and ambiguity of reality in general and especially with the real uncertainties and ambiguities which inevitably exist in the life and history of that particular community. For a concrete example of what I have been talking about, I would like to consider the ways in which LDS and RLDS historians may help their communities to deal with the uncertainties and ambiguities involved in our knowledge of Joseph's first vision.

The Problem of the First Vision

At the September 1977 meetings of the John Whitmer Historical Association, RLDS church historian Richard P. Howard presented a paper comparing "Six Contemporary Accounts of Joseph Smith Jr.'s, Early Visionary Experiences."⁶ Most of the paper was simply a direct comparison of six accounts of the first vision, all of which claimed either direct authorship by Joseph Smith or at least his editorial approval. There are certainly many important similarities between these accounts. One might therefore argue that even the most striking differences need not be logically incompatible, that Joseph might have been recounting different parts of the vision, which taken together give a more complete picture.

But despite this possible compatibility of some parts, there are clear differences among the different accounts. Chronologically the second account of his early experiences (the first published account) omits the first vision entirely. In this account Joseph (it is 1823 in his seventeenth year), who has been wondering about the existence of a Supreme being and seeking assurance that he has been accepted by such a being, is visited by an angel. This is the second vision of the traditional account. Note that the first vision was not simply skipped over. The text is clearly written as if there were no vision prior to 1823.

But the earliest account of his visions does include the usual first vision.⁷ This account is remarkably different from the 1842 account published in the *Times and Seasons* as the "History of Joseph Smith." The first account does not mention the grove, an experience of darkness, or a combat with the demonic powers. Nor does it single out the denominations, though Joseph says it was on his mind. He sees Jesus, who says, "Lo I come quickly as it was written of me." The most obvious incompatibility between the first account and all later accounts is that only one person appears—Christ. Three later accounts describe two unidentified personages.



One tells about many angels. Only the 1842 account says that the two personages were the Father and the Son.

It seems to me that there is a general progression in these accounts. From no mention of any difficulties, we move in subsequent accounts to difficulties in speaking and to the noise of someone walking toward him and then to a temptation by the powers of darkness. Finally he is seized by a power which binds his tongue and envelops him with thick darkness and a foreboding sense of destruction. First there is one personage—Christ. In subsequent retellings there are many angels, and then, perhaps because angels in any number are not sufficient, we see God the Father himself and his Son Jesus Christ. At first Joseph is concerned about the sinfulness of the world and the forgiveness of his own sins—a classic Protestant theme, which is omitted in the final account. Later accounts include statements that the denominations are believing incorrect doctrines and finally there are scathing condemnations of the denominational creeds and those who profess belief in them. We do not seem to be dealing here with mere differences of emphasis or with partial accounts that can be neatly *fitted together* to provide a complete picture. Rather we seem to have more or less intentional efforts to build up the miraculous character of the events and to buttress Joseph's position as he comes into increasing conflict with other denominations. One thing does seem certain: we cannot be certain about the First Vision. We cannot know that it occurred or, if it occurred, when or what Joseph experienced.

Such a situation should not surprise the historian. It is a common human tendency to build up the miraculous or heroic character of an event in the telling and retelling of it. And it is certainly common to gradually shape stories so that they illustrate or support some point of view. It happens in thousands of sermons every week. Furthermore, the Bible itself gives us a wealth of examples of just such a process, the multiple accounts of the Exodus, for example, or the four Gospels. All four Gospels clearly demonstrate that their authors are motivated by theological rather than modern historical interests. Who, for example, can deny the growth of the miraculous from Mark through John? In the same way Joseph Smith was simply telling and retelling his story.

But we moderns are uncomfortable with this approach. Our sense of history and the integrity of the historian are different. We may not condemn pre-

modern persons for their views and uses of history, but we do not share their freedom to alter accounts to fit our needs. And mostly I think this is to our advantage. Since I am one who happens to believe that reality always has the last word, I am convinced that the more adequately and honestly we can discover it the better off we will be.

What then can the faithful Mormon or RLDS historian say to the Church community about the First Vision and about Joseph's accounts of it?

THE TRUTH OF A MYTH DOES NOT REFER TO FACTUAL ACCURACY BUT TO THE ADEQUACY WITH WHICH IT EXPRESSES THE CONCERNS AND COMMITMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH.

The Idea of Myth

I was told once by a good friend, who is both philosopher and historian, that most books by modern theologians are like fairy tales with three parts. In the first part, we are told that the author has fallen into an infinitely wide and infinitely deep pit. The bulk of the text describes the horrors of the pit and all the reasons why it is absolutely inescapable. And then, in the last part, the hero or heroine climbs out of the infinitely wide and infinitely deep pit, leaps onto the white horse, and rides away with the beautiful young woman—or the handsome young man, whichever is appropriate. (Yes, I admit that I have taken liberties with his story. I can't after all, remember exactly what he said, and I like to avoid sexism.)

I agree that this is true of many texts. And it is certainly an accurate description of the first two-thirds of this one. But I hope that I shall not be guilty of such an ending. Instead, I want to ask, "Having fallen into this pit or rather having discovered that we have always been in it, what possibilities are there for creativity and faith?" I want us to find solutions that admit and accept the uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in any commitment to a historical community of faith and to find ways to tell our story that are faithful, so far as possible, to our communities, to our scholarly integrity, and to reality.

I believe it may be helpful and fruitful to introduce to our communities the concept of myth—or if that term is too threatening, faith story. To provide a context which can help to clarify the concept of myth I wish to offer, I will briefly summarize two sets of meanings for the words history, faith, and myth. First I will offer what I take to be the popular understandings of the terms and then the alternatives I am suggesting—noting that none of my definitions is original.⁸ I am only trying to bring them together for us.

POPULAR DEFINITIONS

WHEN WE FAIL TO PROVIDE A SAFE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION FOR OUR FAITH, WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER TO APPLAUD OUR HISTORICAL SOPHISTICATION OR TO WEEP FOR OUR LOST SOULS.



History: What actually happened or an account of what actually happened. History is true or false depending on whether it accurately reports the events.

Faith: Belief, often without or against the evidence. True belief. Historical faith would thus be beliefs about what actually happened.

Myth: False stories about the past. False or fanciful history. Myth is therefore in direct conflict with true historical faith.

ALTERNATIVE DEFINITIONS

History: Although something “actually happened” that acts as the focal point for honest historical inquiry, history as the account of events is inescapably interpretative. It always reflects someone’s perspective, interests, and concerns.

Faith: Commitment. Commitment involves belief but is not identical with belief. Historical faith is a commitment based on events as related in a community of faith.

Myth: Here is a progression of definitions: (1) Stories about the gods; (2) Stories about “the other side” (the Transcendent or Divine) told in terms of “this side” (Bultmann’s approach); (3) Insofar as these stories speak of the gods (or God) or the Transcendent as *symbols* of our faith commitments, myths become faith stories; (4) A myth is the narrative context which explains the meaning of one or more symbols for a particular community of faith. “Explain” should be taken in the sense of both expressing and sustaining and perhaps even of creating the meaning of the symbols, not of explaining them away.

Note that this last definition of myth does not make any judgment about the historical accuracy of a story. The “truth” of a myth, like the truth of a symbol, does not refer to factual accuracy but to the adequacy with which it expresses the living concerns and commitments of the community of faith. In evaluating myth we ask, “Does it really tell people what the event or symbols mean to us?” Myths are not proved or disproved as myths; instead they are born and die according to the faith of the community.

The relationship between myth and historical “reality” (what actually happened) is very complex. If our commitments really rest on a belief that a specific event occurred, then historical evidence refuting that belief may destroy our faith as well. But if the event is symbolic for us, expressing the content of our

commitments rather than our beliefs about history, refutation of the belief may still leave the symbol largely intact. Historical data that challenges the accuracy of a myth can only make the myth “false” by killing the faith commitment which the myth expresses.

Three examples will help to clarify this approach to myth.

The Jewish Passover is celebrated in part through the sharing of a special meal called the Seder. The meal consists of several specific and highly symbolic foods. The feast is structured around the reading of the story of the Exodus from Egypt. This story—The Haggade—answers four questions asked by people at the table. For example, the youngest child asks, “Why is this different from any other night?” By answering these questions about the meal, the Haggade explains the meaning of the symbols of the life of the community (the foods eaten) and tells the story of Israel. In this sense, the Haggade is a classic example of a myth, regardless of one’s historical view of the biblical account of the Exodus.

Like the Jewish Seder, the Christian celebration of the Lord’s Supper is a ritual myth. There too we tell the story which explains the meaning of the symbols central to our community of faith. Even though there are differing Gospel accounts of that event, the Eucharist expresses the basic commitments of the Christian community.

In the same way, the story of the First Vision of Joseph Smith, Jr., is a myth. The most well-known account includes several symbols which have great meaning for all Latter Day Saints: James 1:5, “If any of ye lack wisdom . . .”; The Grove; Pillar of Light; “Join none of them.” Regardless of one’s historical judgment about whether Joseph actually had a vision or one’s concern about multiple accounts of the vision, there can be no doubt that the story of that vision eventually (though apparently not originally) became a central means by which Joseph Smith, Jr., and Latter-day Saints have explained to themselves and others “who we are.” In telling this story, Joseph was acting not as historian but as myth maker. We should realize this and present his accounts of the First Vision as successive attempts to explain who he was, how he saw the world, and to what he was committed. In so doing, I believe we will be telling a more accurate truth about Joseph’s view of history and of himself and will thus be providing a more solid foundation for the faith of our communities.

We do not thereby deny the historical nature of faith. On the contrary, problems of historical faith are ignored and the historical character of faith is denied when we demand that faith be blind to the historical evidence and accept beliefs on authority. To claim that we (even prophets) can discover truth through some means which is immune to our humanness is to deny that we live, move, and have our being and our faith within history. This we cannot do.

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HISTORICAL DATA THAT CHALLENGES THE ACCURACY OF A MYTH CAN ONLY MAKE MYTH “FALSE” BY KILLING THE FAITH COMMITMENT WHICH THE MYTH EXPRESSES.



THE COMIC RIDICULE OF BRIGHAM YOUNG

THE PUISSANT PROCREATOR



CONTEMPORARY HUMORISTS MADE
MUCH OF THE MORMON PROPHET'S
NUMERICAL WIFERY.

DOUGLAS MCKAY

IN the closing chapter of his celebrated essay on laughter, Henri Bergson remarks that derisive humor is the universal corrective for deviancy in the social order. "By laughter society avenges itself for the liberties taken with it." The humor of malice, he says, has but one function, "to intimidate by humiliating."¹

The peculiar conduct of Mormon settlers in the Great Basin region invited such scorn. Henry James summed up in a dozen words the prevailing sentiment which some 100 anti-Mormon works of fiction and twice as many book-length travel accounts tried to capture: "Mormonism we know to be a humbug and a rather nasty one."²

Despite the prevalence of humorless invective, there was a segment of Gentile society which judged Mormonism as more ridiculous than wicked. Jocular ridicule, artistically confected by such notable humorists as Artemus Ward, Bill Nye, and Mark Twain, did much to channel anti-Mormon mockery on a more creative and conciliatory course.

The primary target for derision, understandably, was "that relic of barbarism by which woman is shamefully debased,"³ the practice of polygamy. While the Gentile world had scoffed at Joseph Smith's "peepstones" and visions, it centered its subsequent hostility on the gross licentiousness, imagined or real, underlying Brigham Young's affinity for a plurality of wives, or as one detractor labeled it, his "numerical wifery."⁴ Cartoonists had a hey-day with Brother Brigham: his massive caricature, drooling with sensuality, appeared frequently in such prestigious periodicals as the British

journal *Punch*, in illustrations for novels, and even found its way into the delightfully home-razored panoramas Artemus Ward used to illustrate his comic lectures. Brigham's nicknames elicited laughter everywhere: Uncle Brigham, Old Brig, Bigamy Young, King Brigham, The Tycoon of Utah, the Sultan of the Wasatch, The Mahomet of the West, The Great Marrier, The Mormon Bull, The Incestuous Saint, The Salt Lake Sodomite, The Sodom of the Occident, and The Puissant Procreator.⁵

Brigham was heralded "the husband to a multitude and father to a nation."⁶ Artemus Ward said of him that "he loved not wisely, but two hundred well....He is dreadfully married," said Ward, "he's the most married man I ever saw in my life!"⁷ Ward's humorous treatment of Brigham's polygamist capers established a climate of good-natured skepticism, playful irreverence, and sophisticated mirth which had a marked influence on the genial author of *Roughing It*. Ward was much quoted in the late 1860s; journalists repeated his witticisms much as we retell those of popular stand-up comedians today. "I saw plurality at its best," claimed Ward. Here are a few examples of his light touch:

The pretty girls in Utah mostly marry Young.
Brigham's religion is singular and his wives are plural.
Out in Utah they practice Bigamy, Trigamy, and Brigham.
Brigham got distracted and gave two of his children the same name.⁸

This last quip, twitting the Mormon leader for his enormous progeny and short memory, belongs to an

interesting joke cycle popular in the 1860s.

One version of 1864 went as follows:

Brigham has contracted hundreds of wives for eternity through the ordinance of sealing, many of whom he has forgotten, even as to names and faces. He thus looks forward to spending his first years in Heaven in a state of perpetual suspense and twitter at every new arrival from the earth, expecting to hear announced by the celestial usher: "Another Mrs. Young!"⁹

Of the same vintage is this popular story, one of many versions gathered by Austin Fife:

Brigham was walking down the street and met a young boy. "You're a fine lad," he said, patting the boy on the head, "and whose little boy are you?" "Yours," answered

BRIGHAM WAS HERALDED THE HUSBAND TO A MULTITUDE AND FATHER TO A NATION.



the boy.¹⁰

A similar Gentile joke illustrates the conditions of family relationships in the suburbs of Salt Lake City:

Riding in the outskirts of the city one day, Brigham Young came upon two boys fighting. Descending from his carriage, he boxed their ears, and asked them whose boys they were. "Mother says we're Brigham Young's," whimpered one of the boys.¹¹

This joke is especially poignant because the boys do not recognize their father nor does Brigham know his own sons. It delineates the serious social and family problems which Gentiles and Mormon anti-polygamists alike perceived in the system.

Another version of this same joke cycle, related to me years ago by my grandfather, whose own father was a polygamist many times over, concerns Brigham's encounter of a young boy swearing at his playmate:

"You go to hell, you son of a bitch." Brigham, exceedingly indignant, cuffed the youngster across the ear. "See here, young man, your father ought to be ashamed of you. Why, if I had a son like you, I'd... I'd..." "And just what would you do, father?" "Say, who in the hell are you, anyway?" "If you'd come around to see Ma a little more often you'd know. I'm your son Jonathan."¹²

A favorite theme of the Gentile press was Brigham's reputation for unbridled lust. One example concerns the arrival of a young single girl from the East. She was introduced to Brigham. "How pleased I am to meet you," said President Young. "Come in to my office, won't you?

I have a good bed there."¹³

Another story from the early 1860s tells of the visit of a Bishop Watt and his half-sister to Salt Lake.

Bishop Watt called on Brigham Young to know if he could marry his own half-sister. Brigham was not prepared to say; he had not received a revelation on those points. He wished to talk with Miss Watt on the subject. She came to see him, was young and pretty, a Scotch lassie, and Brigham concluded to marry her himself.¹⁴

Balladry and song also reflect the theme of concupiscence. The best known example is the popular folksong, "Sweet Betsie from Pike," in which one stanza focuses on Brigham's lust:

They stopped at Salt Lake to inquire the way,
When Brigham declared that Sweet Betsie should stay,
But Betsie was skeered, run 'round like a deer,
While Brigham stood pawin' the ground like a steer.¹⁵

Thomas Cheney offers this stanza as a variant:

They came down the mountain into old Salt Lake
Where Betsy met Brigham one evening quite late;
He asked her to stay, but Betsy said, "No";
Brigham said, "If you don't, to Hell you will go."¹⁶

Brigham's celebrated lustiness rubbed off on his consorts, as exemplified by this anecdote about a polygamous wife who, irritated by the lack of frequent conjugal attention, took the initiative:

Brigham tiptoed down the hallway marking bedroom doors with chalk to remind himself which wife he would sleep with that night. One enterprising member of his harem slipped quietly from her room, erased the mark on her neighbor's door, and placed it upon her own.¹⁷

This story, worthy of Boccaccio, may be of Mormon rather than Gentile origin, as Fife implies,¹⁸ but it contains the interesting motif of Brigham's faulty memory, popular to Gentile humor.

Other stories also depended on the general curiosity about Brigham's sleeping arrangements. He slept in a mammoth bed, so one story goes, with five wives on each side. Being a heavy man and given to thrashing at night, he decided to protect his more delicate consorts by placing an enormous gong at the head of the bed. This he would strike once every time he shifted to the left and twice to the right. Alas, one aged wife, nearly deaf, failed to hear the gong. The post-mortem read: "She neglected to turn with the tide."¹⁹

Artemus Ward, the celebrated American humorist, gained a first-hand acquaintance with the folklore of polygamy in his role as columnist and news editor before turning to stand-up comedy routines. About the time that Artemus Ward was putting together his joking repertory about Brigham Young, drawn principally from obvious gags of Gentile origin, the following anti-Mormon story was being retold by newspaper correspondents:

The Mormon apostle Orson Pratt was about to depart for a mission in Europe. Pratt left behind thirty-seven wives and 128 children. In order not to miss the Overland coach, he commenced kissing his family goodbye the day previous to that set for his departure.²⁰

Artemus Ward borrowed the thrust of that story and refashioned it for his delightful lecture before the Queen of England:

Brigham told me confidentially that he shouldn't get

married anymore. He says that all he wants now is to live in peace for the remainder of his days—and have his dying pillow soothed by the loving hands of his family. Well—that's all right—that's all right—I suppose—but if all his family soothe his dying pillow—he'll have to go out-doors to die.²¹

A common saying about Mormon polygamy, attributed by Gentile wags to Brigham Young, reads like a scriptural aphorism:

The first principle of Mormonism is, that women air a good thing; and the second principle is, that you cain't have too much of a good thing.²²

This brief overview of anti-Mormon mockery

A FAVORITE THEME OF THE GENTILE PRESS WAS BRIGHAM'S REPUTATION FOR UNBRIDLED LUST.



reaffirms the notion asserted in mid-Victorian imaginative literature that the Mormon polygamist was both a villain and a threat to human decency.²³ That the jokes are factually false should not be troubling. As William A. Wilson has said about folklore, they are "psychologically true."²⁴ Mormons were seen as a barbarous and wildly hedonistic people.²⁵

Society was angry because Brigham Young and his Mormons preached to the world approved labels of conduct (devotion, self-reliance, freedom of worship) while defying social norms (subjugation of women, plural marriage, lasciviousness). Thus hypocrisy looms as the central message behind anti-Mormon joking.²⁶

The comic ridicule of Brigham Young, "head of the State and Territory of Matrimony," thus illustrates Freud's contention that society can take vicarious pleasure in punishing and ridiculing and scolding. Indeed, mockery imposed from without binds the deriding group together. Fortunately, pleasantries often emerge from the embers of strife. Derisive humor did little, perhaps, to change the course of human events, but it gave its best run, as Bergson said, at intimidating deviancy through humiliation.

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Editors' Note

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Conference at Arizona State University, April, 1982. It is based on materials consulted at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, in conjunction with the NEH Summer Seminar, "Humor in Cross-cultural Perspectives," directed by Stanley Brandes, Berkeley.

Notes

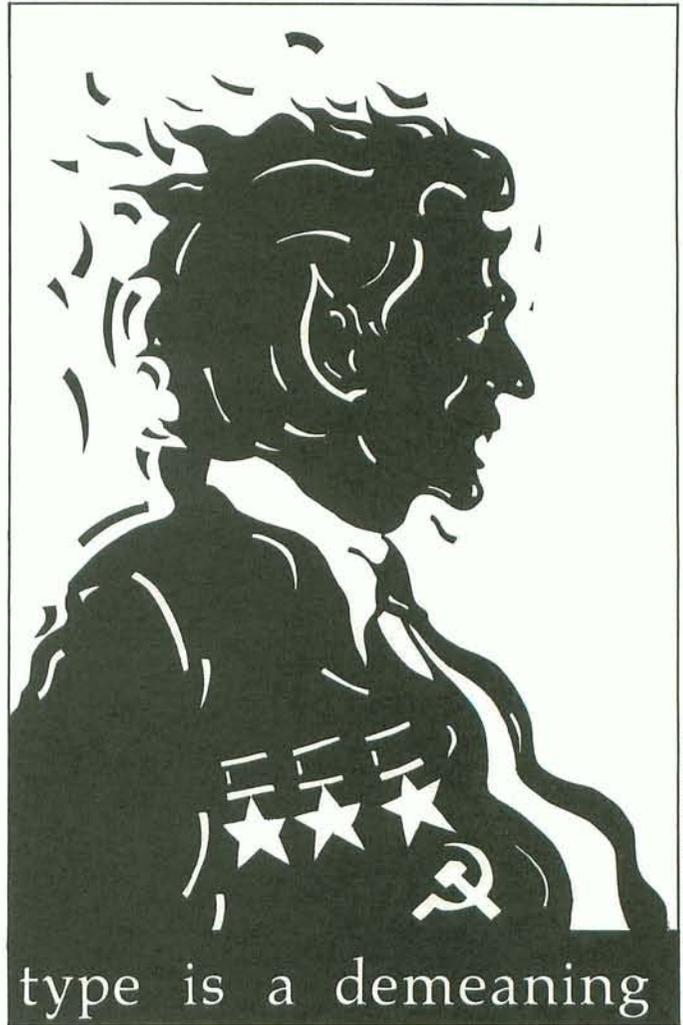
1. "Laughter," in *Comedy: Henri Bergson and George Meredith*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1956), pp. 187-88.
2. *Literary Reviews and Essays by Henry James*, ed. Albert Mordell (New Haven, 1957), p. 231.
3. *Bancroft Scraps*, UC Berkeley (newsclipping of 11 June 1965). Polygamy was bracketed with slavery as the "twin relic of barbarism" in the Republican platform of 1856. The expression thereafter appeared in numerous speeches, editorials, and inflammatory writings.
4. Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York: D. Appleton, 1867), p. 267.
5. Extracted from Bancroft Library newspaper collection, *Bancroft Scraps, Utah Miscellany II* (1850-1882).
6. "Saint Abe," in *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Buchanan* (London: Chatts and Windus, 1901), p. 377.
7. "Lecture in London's Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly" (November 13, 1866). See Edward P. Hingston, ed., *Artemus Ward's Lecture on the Mormons* (London: Chatts and Windus, 1882), pp. 43-4.
8. Miscellaneous comedy material attributed to Artemus Ward, extracted from various biographical and critical studies on the humorist.
9. "Reminiscences of an Overlander," 1864, in *Bancroft Scraps I*, p. 56.
10. USU Folklore Archives, courtesy of Dr. William A. Wilson.
11. "Letter from Salt Lake," Camp Douglas, Utah, December 27, 1862, in *Bancroft Scraps I*, p. 45.
12. Reminiscences of Heber Chase Smith, personal collection.
13. "The Gentiles and the Mormons," October 25, 1855, *Bancroft Scraps, Utah Miscellany I*, p. 39.
14. "An Outside View of Mormonism," by Carleton (pseud.), *Bancroft Scraps II*, p. 432.
15. Austin and Alta Fife, *Saints of Sage and Saddle* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1966), p. 118.
16. *Mormon Songs from the Rocky Mountains: A Compilation of Mormon Folksong* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 184.
17. Austin and Alta Fife, p. 118.
18. *Ibid.*
19. This is an example of Brigham Young jokelore of uncertain origin, available in diverse folklore archives (Berkeley, Brigham Young University, Utah State University). See also Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 120.
20. Fife, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
21. Hingston, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.
22. "A Keerful Shepherd," in *Bancroft Scraps I*, p. 26.
23. Apropos of this statement is the following comment from *The London Herald* of May 3, 1869: "There is not a week passes by but that the Mormons receive a castigation from the Western press, and they are looked on as fair sport for all kinds of misrepresentation and nonsense." See *Bancroft Scraps II*, p. 756.
24. "The Paradox of Mormon Folklore," in *Essays on the American West, 1974-75*, ed. Thomas G. Alexander. Charles Redd Monographs in Western History, No. 6 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), pp. 127-47.
25. In this connection, Arthur Koestler's assessment comes to mind, that the ridicule of a social group is easy to discharge when the group's deviation, self-willed alienation, and distinctive peculiarities make it excessively backwoodish. See *The Act of Creation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), pp. 74-75.
26. Leonard Feinberg states that much of the pleasure of such humor "presumably comes from our consciousness of our own imperfections: it is gratifying to learn that others are also guilty of inadequacy or hypocrisy." See *Introduction to Satire* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1967), p. 212.



THE RUSSIAN



Our menacing stereo-



type is a demeaning

ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN BEAN

LAST spring my family and I visited Arches National Park. While the older children and I unloaded the car, our youngest daughters explored their fascinating new surroundings. Katie Jane, aged two, soon came running back from a nearby water faucet where she had just seen her first live lizards. "Mommie," she shrieked, "come quick, I show you baby alligators!" Katie Jane, we would all agree, had made quite an error in identifying full-grown lizards as baby alligators. Yet, given her tender years, her naivete was entirely forgivable. The situation is much more serious, however, when we adults commit and stubbornly persist in error, when we ignore or distort common experience and our deepest feelings, or when we crush reality under the weighty pestle of our prejudices. In some important ways we have done this with the

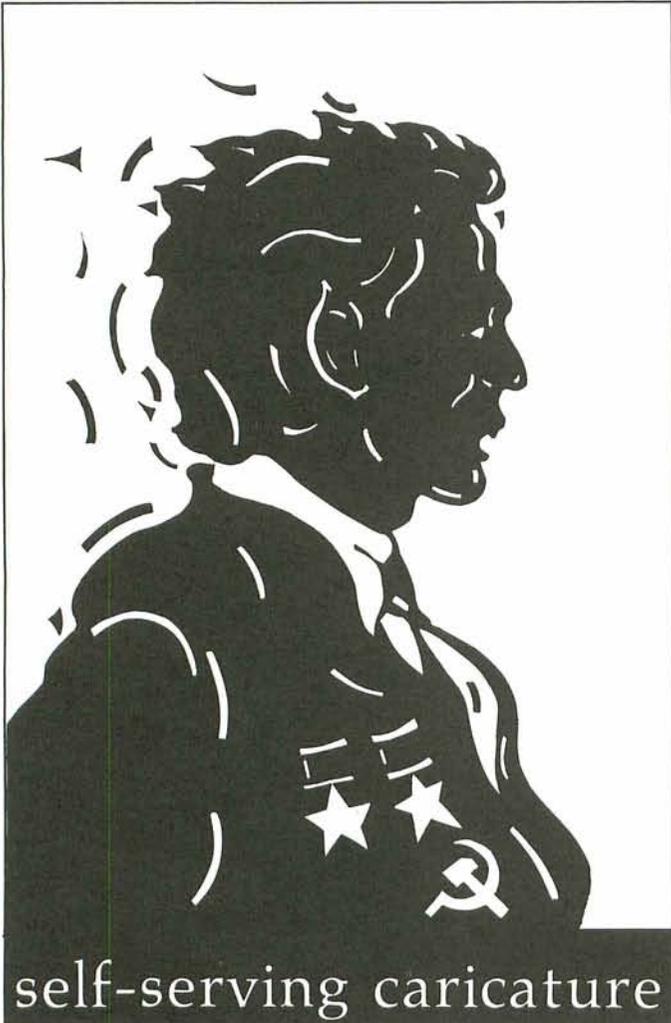
Editors' Note: An earlier version of this paper was delivered at a BYU Forum on 6 July 1982.

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Russians and have created out of a great and diverse nation "an impossible and foolish fancy,"¹ a chimera. In Greek mythology Chimera was a fire-breathing she-monster, often represented by a composite of a lion, a goat, and a serpent or dragon.² Like prejudices, a chimera arises not from enlightened observation of real life but from the imagination, from fantasy.

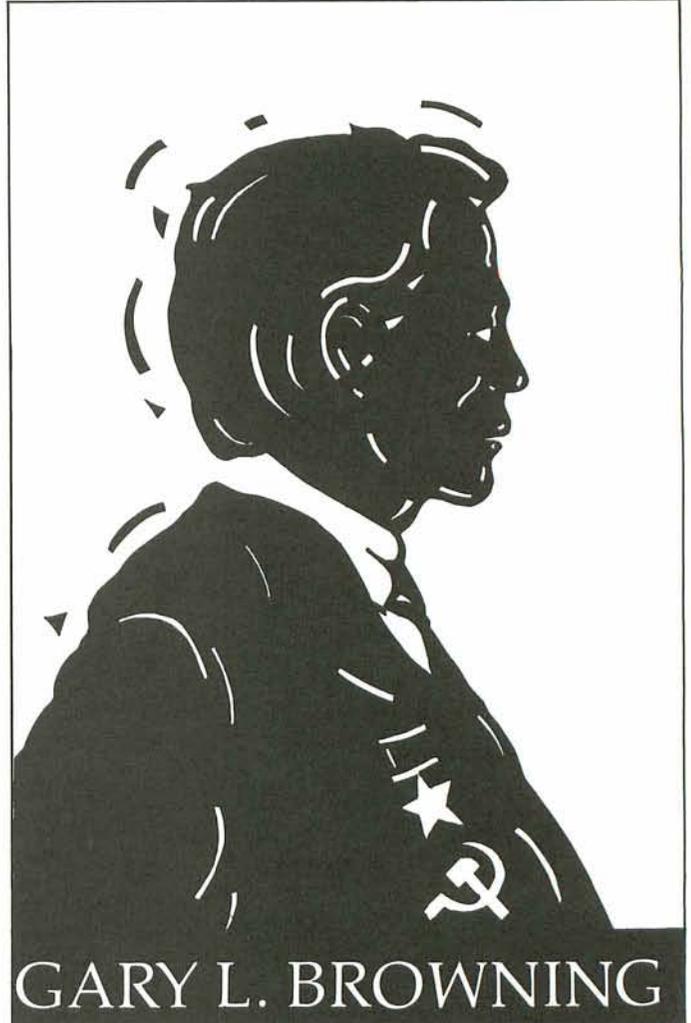
The Russian stereotype, a menacing chimera assailing the minds of many Americans, is a demeaning caricature of the Russian people. It alleges that Russians are ill-mannered and swaggering; bellicose and militaristic; dishonest, unreliable,³ deceitful, duplicitous, cunning, and atheistic; that they trample on all that is humane, on respect for the individual, on tolerance for dissent, on compassion for the suffering, on spiritual refinement; and that, like a bear, they are dull-witted but powerful and only respond to displays of vastly superior force, and even then with belligerent reluctance.

N CHIMERA ★



self-serving caricature

That there have been or are Russians who fit this mold is undeniable, as do some Germans, Italians, Japanese, and Americans. But I ask you whether a people embodying only these features could have produced their rich folklore; writers like Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Pasternak, and Solzhenitsyn; the composers Glinka, Balakirev, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, and Shostakovich; painters such as Ivanov, Perov, Repin, Surikov, Levitan, Serov, Vrubel, Kandinsky, and Chagall; and the ballet immortals Nijinsky, Plisetskaia, Nureyev, Barishnikov, Makarova, and Godunov, to name only a few? The answer must be that during the last two centuries Russian society, carefully considered, yields about the same ratio of talent and degeneracy or creative flight and obtuseness as any other. It may even be that the Russians have produced more than their share of great masters. And culture typically does not flourish in a vacuum. It



GARY L. BROWNING

requires the warmth of a great tradition, the air of a cultivated audience, and the light of sensitive criticism.

I have known a number of ordinary and some extraordinary Russians quite well; a few I have disliked, but most I have regarded highly. I have talked with them at length in their own language and have found my weaknesses and strengths mirrored in them. I will never forget Olga Dormidontovna, a hotel manager, who is part of a generation of millions of women who never had an opportunity to marry because relatively few men of her age survived the Second World War. Twenty million Soviets perished from 22 June 1941 to 2 September 1945. Nearly every family was scarred. By contrast, America has lost a third of *one* million lives in all the wars of this century, none of which has been fought on her soil. Olga was exceptionally kind to our two children and spends her vacations at a children's summer camp where she serves as a volunteer in search of that happiness she would like to have had with her own family.



The Soviets claim their intentions are misunderstood or blatantly distorted; that, for example, their vast military expenditures during detente were to catch up, to achieve parity, not superiority.

I will also remember Oleg, a Chechen by nationality whose home is the Caucasus, a student of Soviet literature, my colleague in 1973. He was born on a train when his family was forcibly exiled during Stalin's bloody terror. Yet today Oleg is a devoted Communist—a kind and gentle man, perhaps naive in his political idealism but a man of intelligence and good will. He treasured my old issues of *Time* magazine and helped me obtain the Soviet literary books I needed. Then there was Viktoria, an archivist, scholar, and dissident who longs for greater freedom of inquiry and expression but loves her Russian cultural heritage and people. At some risk to her position and with no apparent thought of reward she arranged for me to meet several people who proved particularly valuable to my research.

I also fondly recall our daughter's first-grade teacher in Moscow school number 37 in Gagarinsky District, who welcomed into her classroom an apprehensive but dogged American girl who knew not a sentence in Russian. This superb teacher patiently and masterfully worked with Debi until she learned both the language and her lessons. And I must also mention Aleksei, an underwater welder at the Leningrad shipyards, and a devoted Baptist. I grew spiritually from attending prayer meetings with him. While approximately thirteen million Soviet citizens are members of the Communist Party (others sympathize with the Party but have not formally joined), there are well over seventy-two million who are "regularly (not episodically) committed to a religious organization or faith": Russian Orthodox, Old Believers, Muslims, Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, and several others. Aleksei, because of his religious convictions, will never be a foreman at his plant, but he is at peace with himself and preparing his family for a greater kingdom.

The list is much longer and evokes memories of many who were thoughtful and stimulating hosts and acquaintances. The better I know them as individuals, as human beings, the more I respect and love these Russians and the less I agree with those who consider the Russian people evil and therefore expendable pawns in the Satanic nuclear chess game.

The rhetoric in the Soviet Union is consistently in support of peace and detente, against confrontation politics, and for arms limitation. The Soviets claim their intentions are misunderstood or blatantly distorted; that, for example, their vast military expenditures during detente were to catch up, to achieve parity, not superiority. At least some of this is disingenuous, surely. One fears that neither side is making sufficiently strenuous efforts to be fully honest and balanced in its thinking and arguments.

Let me share with you the Soviet stereotype of Americans. It is also inaccurate, demeaning, and self-serving. But with their wand of class-consciousness, the

Soviets tend to divide Americans into a large group of poor workers oppressed by a smaller clique of the evil wealthy, especially those financiers, manufacturers, and suppliers of armaments. The *capitalist* American is opportunistic, exploitative, and ruthless; permissive, apathetic, and narcissistic; he is intellectually shallow, irreverent toward his heritage, and obsessed with an amoral technology; and he is easily satisfied with the trivial and tawdry in the arts and uncritically swayed by charisma and rhetoric in politics. Most importantly, he is naive, inconstant, and thus dangerous in his behavior. That is, he is capable of unpredictable and illogical responses which, on the international plane, may well risk war and even the future of mankind to protect his position and ego. This image fits Americans little better than our Russian stereotype does their people, but both nonetheless underlie much thinking and decision making.

How do these unfortunate misperceptions arise among intelligent human beings, and how are they perpetuated? Of course the answer lies largely in inadequate, unreliable information. The Soviet media distort the truth, largely from ideological and chauvinistic motivations. The American media, though ostensibly free, are also influenced by powerful forces, some chauvinistic, some ideological, but mostly commercial. "What should the public know?" is too often superceded by "What will the public buy?" Frequently we are content to follow the wretched path of established prejudice rather than clearing the way of mental undergrowth obscuring true objectivity and lucid thinking. Certainly the United States offers its citizens a far broader range of viewpoints, but too many of us avail ourselves of only the most facilely written and trivially sensational newspapers, television and radio newscasts, and books. We are what we read, hear, and think, despite considerable access to information. Unless we conscientiously search for and demand the finest, we will remain comatose captives of vicious chimeras. An open society squanders a most precious resource if the minds of its citizens are closed.

I believe that among Russians and Americans there is roughly the same distribution of the capable and the weak, the compassionate and the barbaric, the moral and the unprincipled, and, in summary, the good and the evil. Are we not far more alike than we are different? Is it not time to demand of ourselves that we not caricature and dehumanize one another? At the same time can we not recognize and even respect *real* differences among us? I share the anguish of the nearly 80-year-old George F. Kennan, a former United States ambassador to the Soviet Union:

I find the view of the Soviet Union that prevails today in our governmental and journalistic establishments so extreme, so subjective, so far removed from what any



I believe that among Russians and Americans there is roughly the same distribution of the capable and the weak, the compassionate and the barbaric, the moral and the unprincipled, the good and the evil.

sober scrutiny of external reality would reveal, that it is not only ineffective but dangerous as a guide to political action. This endless series of distortions and oversimplifications; this systematic dehumanization of the leadership of another great country; this routine exaggeration of Moscow's military capabilities and of the supposed iniquity of its intentions; this daily misrepresentation of the nature and the attitudes of another great people—and a long suffering people at that, sorely tried by the vicissitudes of this past century; . . . this reckless application of the double standard to the judgment of Soviet conduct and our own; this failure to recognize the commonality of many of their problems and ours as we both move inexorably into the modern technological age . . . these, believe me, are not the marks of the maturity and realism one expects of the diplomacy of a great power.⁵

We can begin to bridge this huge gap, to escape these unfortunate chimeras by looking more closely at the Russians and at ourselves. One of the areas in which we and the Russians are alike yet distinct is our mutual love of freedom. Our concepts of freedom differ in certain important ways. And we tend, unfortunately, to see our respective peoples as the sole guardians of true freedom. Nevertheless, each perspective can contribute truth and enrich the other's appreciation of this fundamental birthright.

Americans approach the concept of freedom largely from the perspective of the individual. We extol the freedoms of religion, speech, the press, peaceable assembly, and the right to bear arms, although too many of us exercise those freedoms minimally.

You and I shudder when we hear of the gratuitous and brutal Soviet repression of dissident artists, writers, philosophers, and religious leaders seeking to express themselves according to their consciences. Many Russians join foreign critics in condemning this manifestation of official insecurity overlaid with insatiable lust for unanimity. Even so, most Russians view freedom somewhat differently. They are repulsed at the social *costs* of American freedom. They are aghast at our abuses of freedom seen especially in assassinations of political and other leaders, in our towering rate of violent crime, our pornographic license, our incidence of drug abuse, our apparent toleration for the Mafia, Ku Klux Klan, and fanatical, murderous cults, and our legal solicitude for the rights of criminals. Not a few Russians are more than willing to endure even a totalitarian government in order to be relatively free of this social anarchy.

For centuries Russians have valued freedom, first and foremost, not as it relates to the individual but to the group, to the collective. Today this is manifest in the abhorrence of social disorder, illiteracy, hunger, unemployment, and in an inability to obtain adequate basic health care, housing, and transportation. When we

Americans think of freedoms, these considerations seldom, if ever, come to mind, although their absence makes those we revere remote. The Soviet government has far from fully provided its citizenry with the material freedoms it officially lauds, although substantial progress has been made, and far more could have been, had it not been for vast military expenditures.

In reality both the Western and the Russian concepts of freedom are praiseworthy, and both manifestations of abuse of freedom are deplorable. Must it be considered ivory-tower utopianism to engender respect for one another's healthy perspectives, eager encouragement for each other's efforts to reduce the wasteful excesses, and even a climate that would foster the amalgamation of the best on each side? We have the choice of dwelling on each other's negative features or of building upon that which is laudable. What, really, do we have to gain by cultivating, even inadvertently, suspicion, fear, and hatred?

This brings us to a most compelling reason to seek common ground with the Russians. We have turned our respective attachments to freedom and our mutual distrust for the vicious chimeras which we believe reflect reality into an arms race that threatens to destroy tens of millions. But are *they* not naturally more militaristic than we? Do *they* not seek to enslave the world and deprive mankind of all meaningful freedoms? Did you know that the Russians honestly perceive *us* as being the committed militarists? From *their perspective*, for instance, our most perilous confrontation, the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, seems quite different than ours.

Khrushchev claimed that he intended to protect Cuba from another Bay of Pigs-type invasion and at the same time retaliate for the Americans' having placed missiles aimed at the USSR in the NATO countries of Turkey, Italy, and Great Britain. In fact our nuclear missiles in Turkey were as close to Moscow and Leningrad as his in Cuba would have been to Washington, D.C., and New York City. Khrushchev believed that Soviet weapons in Cuba would show us how his people felt.

Understandably, Americans were wroth, for we viewed the anti-Soviet emplacements in NATO countries as essentially unrelated to the Cuban problem. President Kennedy demanded that the Communist missiles be removed and threatened to use force if Khrushchev did not immediately comply. The United States and the Soviet Union teetered precariously on the brink of a superpower war.

Today in the magnificent John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Dorchester, Massachusetts, hangs a banner showing Kennedy and Khrushchev glowering at each other. The accompanying text is by Kennedy's Secretary of State, Dean Rusk: "We're



We have turned our respective attachments to freedom and our mutual distrust for the vicious chimeras which we believe reflect reality into an arms race that threatens to destroy tens of millions.

looking eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked." One's first inference might be that the United States was the more courageous, resolute, and called the Soviet bluff. But when one considers how close the world then was to nuclear war, one must ask in soberness who showed the greater courage? And whose stance was the more militaristic?

Americans are, after all, the ones who *twice* dropped the atomic bomb on civilian populations in 1945. And Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and most recently, Carter all seriously contemplated or threatened the use of nuclear weapons.⁶ We have our counter arguments ready in many areas. This year the government-appointed United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency released a report which claims that the Soviet Union has become "the world's largest arms exporter," with agreements to third world countries "more than double those of the U.S." President Reagan partially justifies his own increased arms production and sales as "an element of . . . global defense and an indispensable component of . . . foreign policy."⁷

Why do the Soviets consider this to be artful but devious propaganda? Because they are aware of other data. The Center for Defense Information (a Washington-based but non-partisan think tank) reports that when one considers, for example, military *aid* as well as arms sales and the most recent arms transfers from both sides, "the United States continues to be the World's No. 1 supplier of weapons to other nations. The U.S. and its allies supply far more weapons to the third world than does the Soviet Union and its allies." Another source has claimed that "of the fifty largest American industrial companies, thirty-two make or export arms."⁸ Surely our militarism is not insignificant when compared with that of the Soviets.

On both sides there is honest concern for legitimate defense from what one fears is a dangerous foe. Better than most, however, the Russians know what the evil word *war* means. Because of their horrible suffering from invading Nazis during World War II there is widespread determination to never again be militarily weaker than their opponents. This is a fundamental reason why they will endure great sacrifices to "keep up" in this world's bizarre arms race. But one wonders whether, on both sides, indolent thinking, political ineptitude, and greed for profits from the sale of weapons do not carry us beyond our legitimate "defense" concerns.

There are two more specific but representative chimeras which are, I feel, among those that contribute to the greatest misunderstanding of the Russians. The first is that Khrushchev threat "We will bury you!" which for us serves as a chilling verification of the Soviet craving for world military domination.

To understand this statement one must first consider

Khrushchev the man. He was a Russian commoner and spoke in a colorful, colloquial style. His language was interesting for its abundance of folk sayings: witty, expressive, often coarse. His gifted interpreter, a high ranking foreign service officer, frequently softened the impact of his chief's barbs when appearing before a Western audience. On one occasion in 1959 Khrushchev angrily responded to a reporter who had baited him with a question about Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956. Khrushchev's words (implying the battalion of U.S. marines sent to Lebanon in mid-1958) were translated as "We, for our part, could think of quite a few questions of similar character." But those in attendance who spoke Russian reported that Khrushchev literally said, "I can toss more than one dead cat your way, even fresher, you know, than questions about Hungary."⁹ The difference in denotative meaning is slight, but the expressive connotations are quite different.

Now to Khrushchev's famous outburst. He did not, as many Americans have come to believe, shout this while at the United Nations in his 1960 shoe-thumping public display of ill behavior. He apparently said this in mid-November, 1956, at the time of that same Hungarian uprising, during a private Kremlin reception for Western diplomats. That evening he raged over British and French response to Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal. Then, in commenting on peaceful coexistence, Khrushchev declared that "Communism did not have to resort to war to defeat capitalism: 'Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you.'"¹⁰ Since he specifically emphasized that war against capitalism was unnecessary, Khrushchev was quite evidently speaking *figuratively* about burying us. In his subsequent memoirs published in the West, Khrushchev claimed that "enemy propaganda picked up this slogan and blew it all out of proportion. . . . Our enemies were distorting and exploiting a phrase which I'd simply let drop." Khrushchev also explained that while people *can* live in peaceful coexistence, rival ideologies, each claiming a monopoly on truth, cannot placidly coexist, since both cannot be right; one must encompass truth, the other, falsehood. On an ideological plane, the two will struggle on until one emerges victorious, one outlives the other, one buries its foe, or attends its enemy's funeral.¹¹

Now I do not wish to condone Khrushchev's bombast. I am not entirely comforted to hear that he and others believe fervently that their ideology is vital and ours is moribund. For one thing, ideological conviction is too commonly expressed and imposed through the sword. But Khrushchev's bluster *is* far less threatening than our common interpretation of it.

The second issue which causes consternation in the West is Soviet intransigence in refusing to allow on-site



Let us begin to rid ourselves of the feelings of irrational hatred and vengeful resentment and start acting like we understand we are all God's children, brothers and sisters, East and West, for whom the gospel of Jesus is intended.

inspection of missile installations. Although satellite verification actually renders this concern less urgent, in fact it remains for many an incontrovertible example of their ill-will and duplicity. Although a difficult problem, it too, I believe, is many faceted. Ages-old Russian secretiveness and a nagging suspicion of inferiority partially masked by abrasive verbal chest-thumping have all made on-site inspection next to impossible. For these reasons I was startled when reading the recently published memoirs of Henry Kissinger. He convincingly demonstrated that what Soviet and other world leaders respond to best is not a show of brute force but intelligence, competence, fairness, and perseverance. At one point Henry Kissinger describes his 1973 and 1974 meetings with Leonid Brezhnev at the high water mark of East-West detente. Here we observe an American possessed of a sharp mind and good will struggling in an honest but cautious way to understand the Russian leader and his nation:

Upon arrival my colleagues and I were driven to Zavidovo, the Politburo hunting preserve—the Soviet Camp David—some 90 miles northeast of Moscow. This was intended as a great honor. No Western leader had ever been invited to Zavidovo; . . . Our hosts did their best to convey that good relations with the U.S. meant a great deal to them.

Was it a ruse to lull us while the Kremlin prepared a geopolitical offensive? Or were the Soviets sobered by Nixon's firmness into settling for restraint? Did they seek detente only as a tactical maneuver? Or was there a serious possibility for a long period of stability in U.S.-Soviet Relations?

We can never know. Within twelve months both Nixon's capacity to oppose Soviet expansion and his authority to negotiate realistically had been undermined by Watergate. Whether our East-West policy was doomed in any event by the dynamics of the Soviet system or by the inherent ambiguity of our conception will be debated for a long time. The issue became moot when the Executive power in the U.S. collapsed.¹²

After hunting together, Kissinger and Brezhnev converse, and Kissinger observes Brezhnev's "split personality—alternatively boastful and insecure, belligerent and mellow." After the Soviet leader had voiced his angry alarm over the nuclear arming of the People's Republic of China, Kissinger records:

Reflecting the duality of the national character and of his own personality, Brezhnev shifted suddenly from menace to sentimentality. He spoke of how his father had learned in World War I that peace was the noblest goal. Brezhnev reminisced about the human impact of World War II. He spoke gently, with none of the braggadocio so evident a few moments earlier.

Which was the real Brezhnev? The leader who spoke so threateningly of China or the old man who, with his slightly slurred and halting speech, recited his devotion

to peace? Probably both were genuine. Was the peace of which he spoke only the stillness of Soviet hegemony, or an acceptance of coexistence? Again, almost surely both. The Bolshevik believed in the prevalence of material and military factors; the aged leader was exhausted by the exactions of a pitiless system. Doubtless, no more than any other Soviet leader would Brezhnev resist a chance to alter the power balance; nothing can relieve us of the imperative of preparedness. . . .

But there was also in Brezhnev a strain of the elemental Russia, of a people that longs for a surcease from its travails and has never been permitted to fulfill its dream.¹³

Kissinger then reveals the following from the 1974 summit regarding on-site inspection:

During my visit to Moscow in March, Brezhnev proposed underground tests of nuclear weapons above a certain yield. . . . This opened up discussions on verification that represented a major advance. If we were to verify that tests were below the threshold, the Soviets would have to reveal their test sites. This—surprisingly—they agreed to do. The question of "peaceful nuclear explosion" then arose. We asked for on-site inspection, and after prolonged wrangling the Soviets agreed. Never before had they done so.¹⁴

Tragically, the United States, soon prostrate in the slime of Watergate, was unable to pursue this concession. Many of us, nearly a decade later, still believe the principal difficulty in arms control is on-site inspection.¹⁵ It is a formidable obstacle, but if we apparently overcame it once, could we not strive as diligently to recapture the spirit and recreate the circumstances that led to the earlier, missed opportunity?

By this point, I am sure, some of you feel that I am being unfair to the United States or blind to the "Red Menace." You may have decided that I am advocating compromise, accommodation, or even appeasement; or, at best, that I am overly idealistic and, hence, naive. What do you do, one may well ask after all my "sentimental gullibility," with their bloody revolution, civil war, forced collectivization, and Stalin's purges; their brutishness in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan, or their heavy-handed interference in Ethiopia, Angola, South Yemen, and Poland? And what about their massive military buildup?

I must reply that all this horrifies and depresses me. It represents their worst, not their best side. It demonstrates again the evil capacity of a totalitarian regime, be it Communist or anti-Communist. And I tire of their pointing in self-justification to Korea, Lebanon, Santo Domingo, Cuba, Chile, Vietnam, El Salvador, and Israel, and to our massive programs of arms development, stockpiling, and commerce. Such hypocritical posturing on both sides is so childish, yet so potentially lethal.



One wonders whether, on both sides, indolent thinking, political ineptitude, and greed for profits from the sale of weapons do not carry us beyond our legitimate defense.

Where the fate of the human race hangs in the balance, we must put away the childish and become men and women worthy of our divine origins and destiny. "If people would but understand that they are not the sons of some fatherland or other, nor of governments, but are sons of God and can therefore neither be slaves nor enemies one to another," wrote Leo Tolstoy in his tract on non-violence entitled "Patriotism and Government."¹⁶ President Spencer W. Kimball elaborates related sentiments in his inspired advice concerning "enemies":

We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of Gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan's counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior's teaching: "Love your enemies. . . ."

Our assignment is affirmative: to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.¹⁷

But is that not too idealistic? Dostoevsky's dreamer thought not. "In one day, in one hour," he exclaimed, "everything could be arranged at once! The main thing is to love your neighbor as yourself."¹⁸ If not in an hour, take a day, a year, or even a lifetime, but let us begin to rid ourselves of the feelings of irrational, unnatural hatred and of vengeful resentment for past affronts, and start acting like we truly understand that we are all God's children, brothers and sisters, East and West, for whom the gospel of Jesus is intended. We should focus on and accentuate the positive rather than the contrary in each other, demonstrate unfeigned good will and unassailable integrity, and move toward the ideal at the most rapid pace possible, consonant with *mutual* well-being and security. The main thing *for us* is to think of Russians as they are, as fellow humans, and not as we too often imagine them, as a ruthless chimera. In relating to them through their new leader Secretary-General Andropov we must be both wise as serpents and gentle as doves. We must discover how to become, in President Kimball's words, "peacemakers even though we live in a world filled with wars and rumors of war."¹⁹ Should we not lead the way in man's search for peace as we are in his search for happiness?

I close with perceptive counsel and a stirring challenge from the theologian and philosopher Thomas Merton:

Do not be too quick to assume your enemy is a savage just because he is *your* enemy. Perhaps he is your enemy because he thinks you are a savage. Or perhaps he is

afraid of you because he feels that you are afraid of him. And perhaps if he believed you were capable of loving him he would no longer be your enemy.

Do not be too quick to assume that your enemy is an enemy of God just because he is *your* enemy. Perhaps he is your enemy precisely because he can find nothing in you that gives glory to God. Perhaps he fears you because he can find nothing in you of God's love and God's kindness and God's patience and mercy and understanding of the weaknesses of men.

Do not be too quick to condemn the man who no longer believes in God: for it is perhaps your own coldness and avarice and mediocrity and materialism and sensuality and selfishness that have killed his faith. . . .²⁰

Let us not be guilty of further suffocating the faith of any of our fellow men but anxiously engaged in the good cause of quickening its resurgence. The power is in us.

Notes

1. *The American Heritage Dictionary*, ed. William Morris (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), p. 234.

2. *Ibid.*

3. On the question of Soviet reliability in treaties and agreements, see the excellent BYU Forum address by Dr. Richard M. Oveson entitled "Defense Policy in Western Europe: The Effect of Perceptions," delivered on 31 October 1978.

4. Christel Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978), pp. 223-24.

5. John E. Mack, "But What About the Russians," *Harvard Magazine* (March-April 1982): 53.

6. Richard J. Barnet, "Reporter At Large," *New Yorker*, 57 (27 April 1981): 62.

7. Brad Knickerbocker, "Arms Sales: Top Growth Industry," *The Christian Science Monitor* (29 April 1982): 1+.

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9. "Khrushchev's Outbursts and the Language Barrier," *U.S. News and World Report*, 47 (5 October 1959): 71.

10. Wells Hagen, "Pravda" Modifies Khrushchev Slur, *New York Times* (20 November 1956), 15c.

11. *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1970), p. 512.

12. "Years of Upheaval," *Time* (15 March 1982): 29. (See also former President Gerald Ford's similar response to Brezhnev in "What I Would Have Done," *Parade* [4 April 1982]: 5.)

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.* p. 40.

15. See, for example, the New York Times Service column by William Safire, "Now's the Time to Demand Arms Limit Inspections," *Salt Lake Tribune* (16 May 1982): A21, and William E. Griffith, "Tipping A-arms Balance," *Deseret News* (18 May 1982): A4.

16. Leo Tolstoy, *Selected Essays* (New York: The Modern Library, 1964), p. 155-77.

17. "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign* 6 (June 1976): 6.

18. "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man" in *Great Short Works of Fyodor Dostoevsky* (NY: Harper and Rowe, 1968) p. 737.

19. Spencer W. Kimball, "Remember the Mission of the Church," *Ensign* 12 (May 1982): 5.

20. Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions Books, 1949), p. 94.

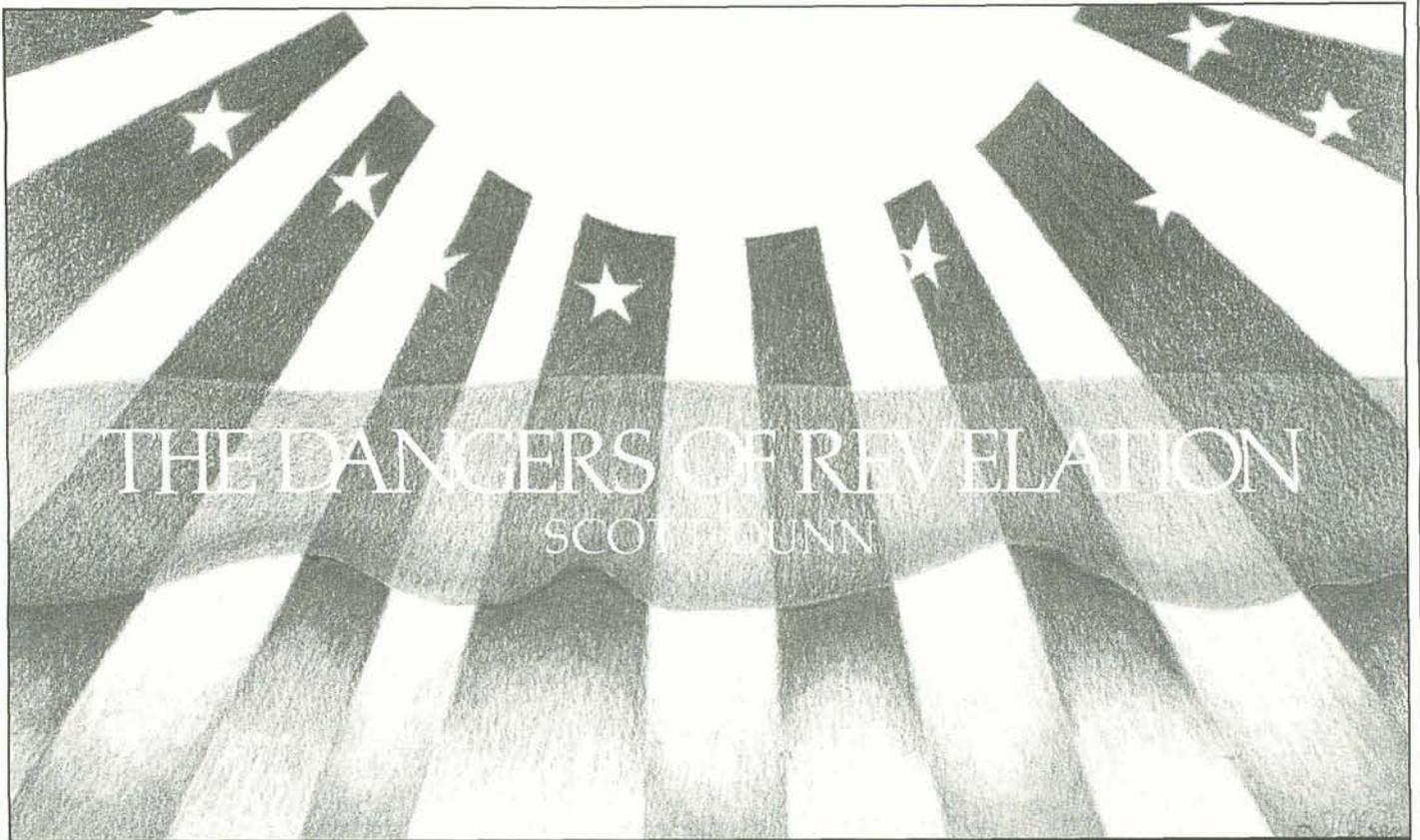


ILLUSTRATION BY DAN OLSEN

Because of the pitfalls of revelations, we must proceed with both faith and skepticism.

UNLIKE many faiths, the rock foundation of the Mormon religion is not the Bible but the continuous flow of divine revelation, not only to prophets and apostles, but even to the "least Saint."¹ Revelation, we believe, is a personal, intimate doorway to the sublime. In recalling the power of personal inspiration in my own life, I am led to affirm that no amount of rationality or logic could take the place of the undergirding insights, reassuring comfort, or sustaining resolve that has been mine through the power of prayer. Still, though revelation has been compared to a solid rock upon which the Church is built and against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail,² there are nevertheless numerous indications that it is a delicate, elusive, even tenuous phenomenon. Because of the complexities involved in recognizing revelation and discerning its source, I would like to discuss what I perceive as several important aspects of revelation— aspects which I shall refer to as the *dangers of revelation*.

DANGER NUMBER ONE: Revelation can be cause for intolerance and arrogance.

Because revelation is considered by some to be the last word on any subject, those who feel inspired on a particular topic are sometimes tempted to assert that their insight is superior. A good example is Norman Bloom, described by one writer as "a contemporary American who incidentally believes himself to be the

Second Coming of Jesus Christ." Bloom is convinced "that he has been chosen to reveal God's presence. [He] has been a fixture at some scientific meetings where he harangues the hurrying, preoccupied crowds moving from session to session." To those who fail to listen to his divine message, Bloom asserts that "though you reject me and scorn me, and deny me, YET ALL WILL BE BROUGHT ONLY BY ME. My will will be, because I have formed you out of nothingness. You are the Creation of My Hands. . . . I AM THAT I AM. I AM THE LORD THY GOD IN TRUTH." To Bloom, the scientists who have been either too busy or too uninterested to respond to his claims are nothing but "hypocrites and mockers."³ Obviously, this man's religious convictions have done little for his generosity towards and acceptance of those who disagree with him, not to mention his humility.

Since it is usually impossible to disprove a revelation, there mere *claim* of revelation has enabled many would-be leaders to manipulate obedient disciples. While some such manipulation of individuals has been relatively harmless, it is questionable how quickly this generation will forget the horror that resulted when hundreds of Americans chose to believe that the Reverend Jimmy Jones somehow acted with the authority of God.

But Bloom's arrogance is insignificant compared to other examples of religious intolerance. History is replete with devout religionists who have humiliated, ostracized, banished, jailed, tortured and even murdered those who would not believe as they do.⁴

Editors' Note: This paper and the following response were delivered at the 1982 Sunstone Theological Symposium.

It is easy enough to ignore such problems outside our own church, especially if we believe that such people have been influenced by something other than true revelation. But unfortunately, Mormons are not immune to such intolerance. I am ashamed when I reflect on the great number of members, particularly missionaries, whom I have heard make disparaging comments about Jehovah's Witnesses, Born-Again Christians, Catholics, or members of other religions. Who is exempt? What words, for example, came to mind when I described Norman Bloom? Crackpot? Looney? Weirdo? The assumption inherent in such intolerance is, I believe, "we are right and they are wrong." Why are we right? Because we have the "true revelation" from God.

Perhaps a little self-pride would be justifiable if it bound us together and gave our religion more internal unity. But personal revelation can become a source of intolerance even among members of the Church. I am informed, for example, that a translator preparing an early draft of one of the oriental editions of the Book of Mormon asserted he had been inspired by God; it was God's translation. When another Church translator attempted to correct glaring, confusing grammatical errors in his manuscript, he was extremely offended and went to an administrator to protest changes in his "inspired version."

Another example comes from a BYU professor who reports that after airing his views on a particular religious topic, he received a number of phone calls from individuals who opposed his belief. At least one caller berated him rather severely for saying things which did not agree with the revelations she had received.

DANGER NUMBER TWO: The emphasis on our leaders' receiving revelation to guide the Church can lead to an unhealthy devotion to Church administrators bordering on blind obedience.

Individuals in the Church, perhaps insecure about their own inspiration, have told me that they are more willing to trust the revelations of apostles and prophets than their own religious experiences. While it is easy to see wisdom and practicality in this approach, it is unfortunately also easy to see deep-seated self-doubts and flagging self-images.

The reason for this may be that when one begins with a belief in dramatic, obvious, undeniable, Cecil-B.-DeMille-Steven-Spielberg-George-Lucas type of revelations and then discovers that one's own experience with inspiration is far more subtle, it becomes easy to assume such dramatic manifestations are still experienced by our Church leaders who are probably somehow entitled to a better or more direct line to heaven.

I see two fallacies in this kind of thinking. First of all, in trusting other people's spiritual experiences more than our own, we make an assumption about their inspiration which is not necessarily founded in fact. Joseph F. Smith, for example, while president of the Church, explained before the United States Congress that while he had experienced impressions of the spirit just as any good Methodist or any other good church member might, he did not profess to have received any revelation, "except so far as God [had] shown to [him] that . . . Mormonism [was] God's divine truth."⁵

Second, while personal visitations of deity and other impressive displays may indeed occur on occasion, their

lack does not justify self-deprecation or waning self-confidence, especially if one believes, as Joseph Smith taught, that "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint . . . as fast as he is able to bear them."⁶

Moreover, trusting others' revelations more than our own can lead to a kind of unthinking obedience that hurts not only the individual, but also leaders, who may be in as much need of their followers' insight as they are of their own. Addressing this concern, Brigham Young made a statement which is now well-worn in fundamentalist propaganda:

I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by Him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way. Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the Spirit of God to themselves whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates, or not.⁷



TRUSTING OTHERS' REVELATIONS MORE THAN OUR OWN CAN LEAD TO UNTHINKING OBEDIENCE THAT HURTS NOT ONLY THE INDIVIDUAL BUT ALSO THE LEADERS.

Unfortunately, Brigham Young's solution to the problem leads to

DANGER NUMBER THREE: The emphasis on the necessity of members receiving revelations for themselves occasionally causes agonizing confusion for some.

The insistence that members can and will receive revelation from God depending on their faithfulness, sincerity, and readiness to receive is pervasive. It is in James' exhortation to ask of God (James 1:5) and Moroni's oft-quoted "promise of the Book of Mormon" (Moroni 10:4-5); it is in the writings of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other Church leaders. And it is ingrained in many of our missionary lessons and pamphlets. The result of such a thorough campaign is that when some individuals seek the promised revelation and then do not receive it, they often blame their own unworthiness. Such turmoil and confusion

can be extremely distressing, as Robert Elliot illustrated so well in his play, *Fires of the Mind*.

A similar problem was once common in Language Training Missions where missionaries were promised that *all* could learn the language and memorize the discussions if only they had the faith. Inevitably, many sincere, hard-working missionaries became extremely frustrated and began to question their standing before the Lord. While we have come a long way in resolving this problem for missionaries, I fear that in the case of personal revelation, there are still members of the Church who suffer similar anguish.

DANGER NUMBER FOUR: For others, the pressure for every member to receive personal revelation leads some individuals to become skilled in self-deception.

I am concerned that in encouraging members to get their own revelation by "noticing the first intimation of the spirit,"⁸ we sometimes unwittingly teach them to interpret almost any good feeling as revelation, whether that feeling comes from the spirit or from our own emotional yearnings. By so doing, we lead them down a path of self-deception until some individuals no doubt become very skilled at subconsciously concocting revelations of their own.

A poignant example is that of Kent and Mischel Walgren, a young Mormon couple who, after extensive study, fasting, and prayer, came to the painful conclusion that their spiritual experiences in the Church were mere fictions.⁹

DANGER NUMBER FIVE: While the notion of personal revelation may frighten some timid followers into blind obedience, it can also lead more confident persons into unrighteous dominion.

Since it is usually impossible to disprove a revelation, the mere *claim* of revelation has enabled many would-be leaders to manipulate obedient disciples. Some have been relatively harmless; others, such as the Reverend Jimmy Jones, have been unforgettably cruel.

Using divine revelation to control or lead other people has also been widespread among Mormons. Most of the problems with the gift of tongues in the early days of the Church, for example, arose because individuals assumed that their interpretations constituted divine revelations which must be obeyed. The gift of tongues and interpretations was invoked by some to question the authority of Joseph Smith, by others to call individuals to repentance, by small children to command adults, and even by some as testimony in Church courts.¹⁰

While most modern Mormons do not fall prey to schemes involving the gift of tongues or seer stones, the problem of using inspiration to manipulate others is with us still. Indeed, in Utah Valley stories of individuals who use tales of revelation to convince their sweethearts to marry them are so common they have become a local joke. It would almost be funny, if it weren't for the fact that such infringements on people's personal lives occasionally *do* happen.

DANGER NUMBER SIX: Revelation and religious conviction can produce feelings of satisfaction which impede the search for truth.

Too often, people have allowed their faith in the religious world to interfere with their investigation of the physical world. The progress of medicine, for example, was impeded for hundreds of years by the belief that disease was caused by spiritual or supernatural forces. Similarly, progress in the physical

sciences was effectively halted for generations by individuals who believed that to challenge Aristotle's views of the world was to challenge the inspiration of the highest religious authorities who supported those teachings.

Not only has revelation left some people with little or no desire to search for truth on their own, but in many cases it has also prompted them to forbid others to seek greater knowledge. As one writer has noted, "the aged Galileo was threatened by the Catholic hierarchy with torture because he proclaimed the earth to move. Spinoza was excommunicated by the Jewish hierarchy, and there is hardly an organized religion with a firm body of doctrine which has not at one time or another persecuted people for the crime of open inquiry."¹¹

Such prejudices also emerge in Mormonism. Members have been told to "leave the 'mysteries' alone,"¹² and "when our leaders speak, the thinking has been done."¹³ As Joseph Fielding Smith put it, "We should keep our feet on the ground and not get off in . . . the things which the Lord has not made plain."¹⁴

Typical of this attitude is this same leader's remarks concerning the exploration of space. Labeling the notion of space travel "foolish," he claimed man is destined to remain on earth, and "should be content to stay," not because of economical concerns or practical priorities, but merely because "there is no prophecy or edict ever given that mortals should seek dominions beyond this earth."¹⁶ It is staggering to think what primitive state we might still be living in if every scientist or inventor had believed that he or she had to wait for a divine edict before venturing into a new frontier.

Even at the Church-owned university, where one might expect a higher regard for the open exchange of ideas, professors have been harrassed by General Authorities and members of the university's Board of Trustees for expressing themselves on certain topics because such expressions are seen as challenging the finality of the word of God. Such leaders have, for example, expressed suspicion over or condemnation of such fields of study as the arts, hypnotism, organic evolution, certain management theories, and various economic, political, and psychological philosophies.

DANGER NUMBER SEVEN: There are indications that revelation and prophecy are not reliable forecasters of future events.

Joseph Smith, for example, incorrectly prophesied that Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery would be able to sell the Book of Mormon copyright in Canada;¹⁷ that the world should end within fifty-six years of the year 1835;¹⁸ that a temple would be built in Jackson County during the generation that lived in 1832;¹⁹ that many living on the earth in 1833 would see unparalleled bloodshed in the United States which would sweep the wicked of that generation off the earth and prepare for the return of the lost tribes of Israel from the north country;²⁰ that if the Congress of 1843 did not protect the Saints that they would be broken up and damned by God, and that there would be "nothing . . . left of them—not even a grease spot";²¹ and that within three years of 1839, the Saints "should march to Jackson County and there should not be a dog to open his mouth against them."²²

With equal accuracy, Parley P. Pratt asserted as a prophecy in 1838 that "there will not be an unbelieving

Gentile upon this continent 50 years hence; and if they are not greatly scourged, and in a great measure overthrown within five or ten years from this date, then the Book of Mormon will have proved itself false."²³

Numerous individuals no longer living, including Wilford Woodruff, Heber C. Kimball, William Smith, Orson Hyde and others, were told in priesthood blessings that they would be alive in mortality to witness the Second Coming of the Savior.²⁴ A great many other Church leaders have made prophecies concerning the return of the Saints to Jackson County and other subjects which simply did not come to pass as scheduled.²⁵

In light of the great number of prophecies that have failed, it is hardly surprising to discover revelatory predictions that have actually come to pass. Indeed, given the law of averages, it would be unusual *not* to be able to find at least some prophecies that were genuinely fulfilled.

A common explanation for unfulfilled prophecies and promises is that the individuals involved can render prophecy void by their unrighteousness. William McLellin, for example, never went south to preach to a large multitude nor heal the lame although Joseph Smith had seen a vision in which McLellin did those very things.²⁶ It is reasoned that since McLellin apostatized from the Church in Far West, he forfeited the possibility of this vision's coming to pass.

Other unfulfilled prophecies are explained by complicated reinterpretations of the original wording, such as assuming that the term "this generation" means something other than any normal, literate speaker of English thinks it means. This loophole makes it possible for almost any seemingly-failed prophecy to come true at some future date.

But such explanations render the gift of prophecy virtually useless. If prophecy depends on people's working to bring it to fulfillment, then revelation becomes little more than a statement of intent. And to suggest that revelations are given with such odd twists of semantics that they rarely mean what they say is tantamount to believing in a God who either can't or won't express himself clearly or doesn't really want us to know what's on His mind. Or else he has a very strange sense of humor.

The fallability of revelation would probably not be cause for concern at all if people viewed prophecy as an interesting phenomenon in which they made no investment. But such is simply not the case. Excessive devotion to revelatory predictions can result in shocking violations of common sense and even endanger life. A few years ago, for example, a young returned missionary suffered an injury when a falling beam crushed his arm. A priesthood holder, apparently acting under what he considered to be inspiration, blessed the young man and promised him that he would heal completely. When the arm did not respond to medical treatment, the boy was given another blessing, this time by a General Authority, who made the same pronouncement: the arm would be completely healed. But the arm turned gangrenous, and eventually the doctors (themselves active members of the Church) were forced to amputate. Because the boy and his parents had such faith in the fulfillment of the blessing,

they delayed the operation far longer than was wise. The delay nearly cost the boy his life as well as his arm.²⁷

Even more shocking is the recent incident in Logan in which a seminary teacher believed he was commanded by God to sacrifice his infant son and restore him again to life. Tragically, only the first part of the experiment worked.²⁸

DANGER NUMBER EIGHT: Revelation often emerges in great variety, resulting in conflicting doctrines and troubling inconsistency.

Conflicting teachings by men claiming inspiration is probably the leading cause for the proliferation in our century of so many so-called Mormon "fundamentalist cults." Such conflicts became a serious problem in the Church as early as 1830, when Hiram Page began receiving revelations through a seer stone which contradicted the revelations received by Joseph Smith. Fortunately for the survival of the Church, a solution was quickly arrived at whereby only the revelations of Joseph Smith were considered valid. Appropriately enough, this solution was given to the Church through the medium of inspiration.²⁹ Need I point out who received this revelation?



WHEN INDIVIDUALS SEEK PROMISED REVELATION AND THEN DO NOT RECEIVE IT, THEY OFTEN BLAME THEIR OWN UNWORTHINESS.

Obviously, any church can reduce the number of conflicting revelations by designating only one person as having authority to receive valid pronouncements from God. But such an action ignores the basic problem: Why should Joseph Smith's inspiration be considered superior to that of Ellen White? Or Mary Baker Eddy? Or Mohammed? Or Buddha? Or the Pope? Or for that matter, Hiram Page? The conflicts in the revelations of these religious leaders are not minor differences of emphasis. Indeed, as Carl Sagan has pointed out,

Human religions are mutually exclusive on such fundamental issues as one god versus many; the origin of evil; reincarnation; idolatry; magic and witchcraft; the role of women; dietary proscriptions; rites of passage; ritual sacrifice; direct or mediated access to deities; slavery; intolerance of other religions; and the community of beings to whom special ethical considerations are due. We do no service to any religion in general or any doctrine in particular if we paper over these differences.³⁰

To phrase the problem in Joseph Smith's words, "Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know?"³¹ His answer to these questions was obtained by revelation, a solution which isn't an objective solution at all, but only continues a vicious circle created by the fact of conflicting inspiration. Some have suggested that the test of any revelation is the fruit that it bears over time. If an ideology brings forth good results, it must have been a true revelation. But this is not a satisfactory explanation. A multitude of religious sects carry on practices and rituals which could not be said to be either truly good or truly bad. Too, it is possible to find some "good fruit" in almost any event, even in many tragedies. Moreover, if one must wait for long periods of time to discern the truth of revelation, then inspiration loses its immediate revelance and might as well be discarded in favor of the wisdom of experience.

In making these several observations about the limitations of revelation, my purpose has not been to suggest that we should completely discard revelation and mysticism, but only that we be extremely wary of its pitfalls. Brigham Young observed that the Mormon people and Church have never yet received a perfect revelation.²⁷ Until that revelation comes, we must proceed with both faith and skepticism. Revelation must never be an excuse for intolerance or manipulation of others. Instead, leadership ought to be maintained, "only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness and by love unfeigned."³³ The search for truth must be carried forward on not just one, but many fronts. While cosmological insights, for example, may come through inspiration, they must be tested by rigorous objective standards, for revelation must never be divorced from, as Joseph Smith said, "time and experience and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts."³⁴

Complete solutions to these problems will not, I suspect, come quickly. But until we do know more about the universe, the beings that occupy it, their modes of communication and the limits of human perception, we are forced to be content with the conditions described by the Apostle Paul:

Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For our knowledge is always incomplete and our prophecy is always incomplete, and when the complete comes, the incomplete shall be done away. . . . At present we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, [but] the time will come when we shall see reality whole and face to face. At present all I know is a little fraction of the truth, but the time will come when I shall know it as full as God has known me.³⁵

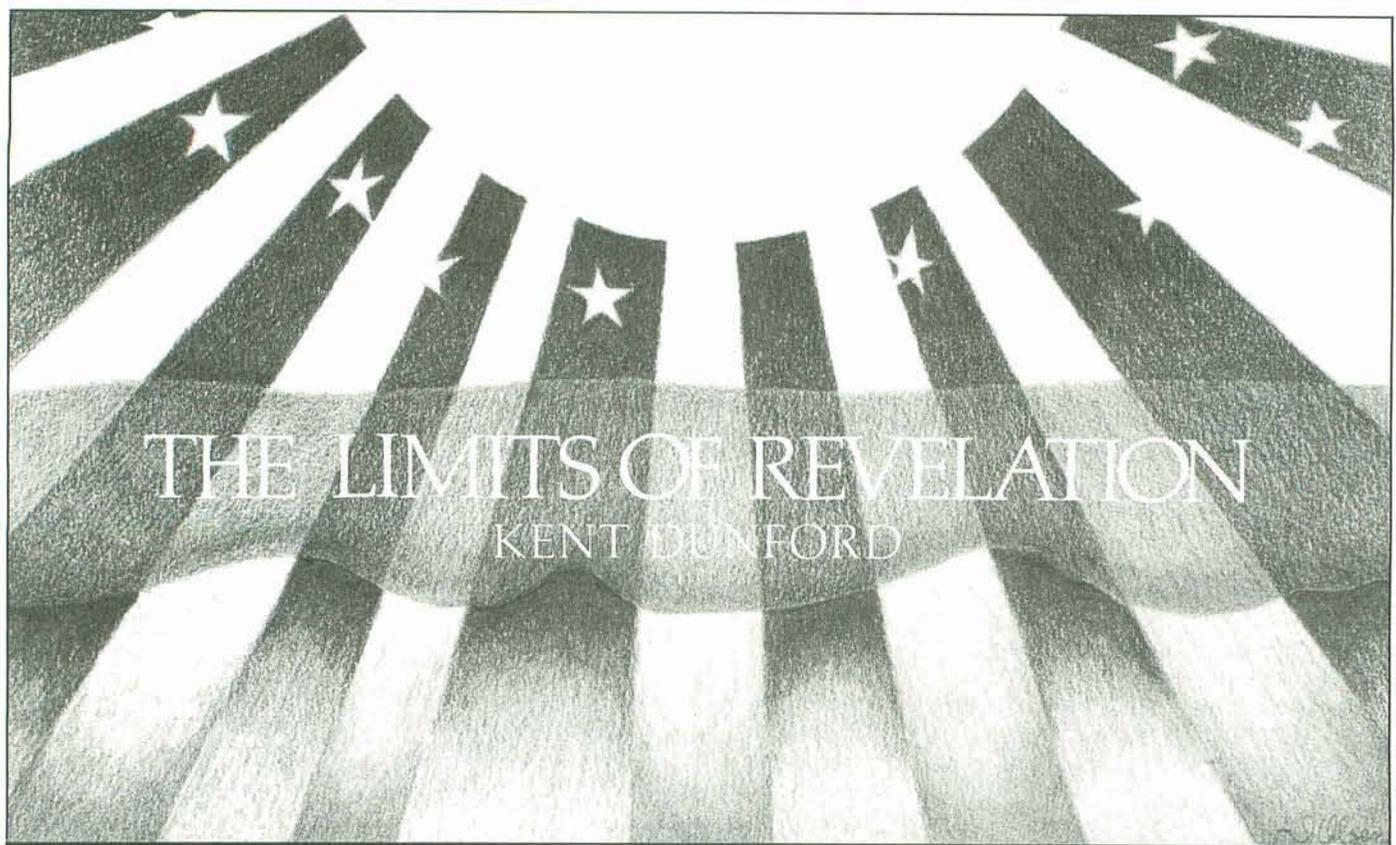
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3. Carl Sagan, *Broca's Brain: Reflections on the Romance of Science* (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 130-31. Sagan is careful to point out that

the capitalization conventions are Bloom's alone.

4. Perhaps the best-known cataloging of religious martyrs is *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, abridged from Milner's edition by Theodore Alois Buckley (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1864).
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7. Address by Brigham Young, 12 January 1862, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-1886), 9:150.
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22. [Reed Peck], *The Reed Peck Manuscript: An Important Document Written in 1839* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., n.d.), p. 3.
23. Parley P. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled: Zion's Watchman Unmasked; and its Editor, Mr. L.R. Sunderland, Exposed: Truth Vindicated: The Devil Mad & Priestcraft in Danger*, 2d ed. (Painesville, Ohio: Reprinted from Wm. D. Pratt, 1838), p. 15.
24. Wilford Woodruff Journal, 15 April 1837, Library-Archives of the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives); HC, 2:189; HC 2:191; "History of Joseph Smith," *Millennial Star*, 15:206; HC, 2:188.
25. Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., 1972), pp. 186-95.
26. HC, 2:381.
27. This story was related to me by a friend of the family.
28. "Man Faces Trial Over Stabbing Death of Baby," *Daily Herald* (Provo), 28 January 1982; "Plea of Insanity Accepted in Utah Murder Case," *Daily Herald* (Provo), 11 April 1982; "Baby Death Case Nears End," *Daily Herald* (Provo), 20 August 1982; "Woman Exonerated in Child Stabbing," *Daily Herald* (Provo), 22 August 1982.
29. Doctrine and Covenants, 28.
30. Sagan, *Broca's Brain*, p. 282.
31. Joseph Smith History, 1:10; HC 1:4.
32. Minutes and General Record of the First Council of Seventy 1847, p. 66 (10 February 1845), Church Archives.
33. Doctrine and Covenants, 121:45.
34. *Teachings*, p. 137.
35. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, 12. The translation here is my own mixture of the King James, New English, and J.B. Phillips translations.

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THE LIMITS OF REVELATION

KENT DUNFORD

Learning to expect less than perfection of prophets and revelation does not mean we cease to revere them.

HAVING lived and worked in an academic environment for over two decades, one thing has become abundantly clear to my mind—that is the limitation of man’s knowledge. Although I have great respect for what man has attained intellectually, I maintain that man’s knowledge has not given us solid answers to life’s ultimate questions and, what’s more, I believe that man’s knowledge is incapable of providing such answers. What branch of knowledge at the university can prove or disprove the existence of God? Can prove or disprove the possibility of life after death? Can tell man how he should live his life? Scientific knowledge is earth bound. It is limited to an examination and evaluation of physical phenomena. It has little to offer concerning the great philosophical and religious questions of the ages. Religion, on the other hand, has claimed a source of information that lies beyond the boundaries of science, namely revelation. Our only hope lies in the reality of revelation. If God has disclosed his will to mankind, then we have a substantial body of truth upon which to base our lives. If there is no such revelation, if all we possess is the limited, finite knowledge of human minds, then we are all groping aimlessly in a world of intellectual uncertainty.

The claim to revelation is thus the most essential proposition in Mormonism. Joseph Smith once wrote that it was the principal concept that distinguished his

religion from other Christian churches.¹ If revelation is non-existent in the Mormon church, it would have little more to offer than any other man-made religion.

Yet some have argued that there are *dangers* in relying on revelation. While I agree that such dangers ought to be considered, I do not agree that all are of sufficient gravity to cause consternation among the faithful. I believe these dangers exist primarily because of an inadequate understanding of the *limitations* of revelation. A comprehension of such limits will solve or at least minimize many potential problems.

For our purposes we will define divine revelation simply as “an experience in which communication with God takes place.” There are various types of revelation. Sometimes God has communicated in dreams and sometimes through actual appearances of heavenly messengers. Inspiration or mental enlightenment is by far the most common method of divine communication. An example of this method is found in these words of Joseph Smith: “By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God” (D&C 76:12). How definite and precise are the ideas revealed by this method? I believe that they are less than infallible.

There is, first of all, the problem of ascertaining whether the source of one’s revelation is divine. Inspiration may come from a demonic source as in the examples of Sherem (Jacob 7:18) and Korihor (Alma 30:53). The devil can appear as an angel of light (D&C 128:20); he can reveal false things (2 Nephi 28:20 f.). In

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1831 the Lord warned the Church "that there are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world" (D&C 50:2). The saints were counseled to "test the spirits."

To add to the difficulty, there is unquestionably another source of "revelation," namely, one's own psychic and emotional being. History is replete with examples of those who have claimed divine guidance and were in reality guided by their own illusions and hallucinations. There are numerous examples of this in our own Church history. One such story, although some question its historicity, is when Joseph Smith felt inspired to send a few of his associates to Canada to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon. According to David Whitmer, Joseph explained their failure by saying, "Some revelations are of God; some revelations are of man; and some revelations are of the devil."²

There is often a fine line between what we designate "religious experiences"—such as an inspirational service or an exalted feeling while reading or praying—and what we designate "revelation." How does one tell in such instances whether such feelings are coming from "beyond" or are generated by one's own physical and emotional organism? Joseph Smith declared that a person would profit by noticing the "first intimations" of the spirit of revelation. He stated it would give the individual "sudden strokes of ideas" and would be like having pure intelligence flowing through the mind.³ Joseph was here describing a divine communication, but have we not all had similar naturalistic experiences? How is one to know the difference? In the "Journal History of the Church" is found the following:

The Twelve met in their prayer circle room and began talking of the spirit of God. Pres. Orson Hyde said he had often found it difficult to discern between the dictation of the spirit of the Lord and his own desires in things which he wished accomplished.⁴

In a brilliant discourse on revelation, B.H. Roberts offered this counsel:

I take it to be one of the most important considerations that we make ourselves competent to distinguish between the promptings of our own human intelligence, to know when it is the spirit of the Lord that prompts, and when it is the adversary of men's souls who approaches us and whispers his counsels in our ears.⁵

It is probable that the competence mentioned by Roberts would take some time to acquire, and before that competence is developed, revelation would seem to be considerably less than an absolute guide.

Another common type of revelation in the Church is usually given the name of "spiritual confirmation." This occurs when an individual comes to his own conclusion and then asks God for some kind of feeling or indication that his decision is true, proper, or in harmony with God's will. The Lord's reply to Oliver Cowdery when he failed in translating is usually given as the best example of this method (see D&C 9:7-9). Knowing how emotion usually colors and distorts the thinking of human beings, this method seems especially risky. If a young man, to use a common example, is praying for the Lord to confirm his decision to marry the girl he loves, would he likely be unresponsive to a "no" answer? Could he mistake his biases and emotional propensities for the

divine answer?

Do not these conclusions force us to admit that the most common types of revelation are something less than an infallible guide and that there exists a possibility for confusion, error, and even deception in some revelatory experiences?

Other arguments corroborate this conclusion. Let us consider a few more; for instance, the fallibility of the revelatory receptor. When finite man experiences a heavenly vision, he may find it impossible to capture the totality of that experience in words or in print. Joseph Smith exulted over what he saw in the vision of the glories saying that they surpassed "all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion." He added that man was incapable of making these things known (D&C 76:114-116). A revelation from God and the written account of that experience are not synonymous. The record is not the revelation but an interpretation of the revelatory experience. John A. Widtsoe explained:

The message of the scripture is divine; the words in which it is clothed are human. Failure to make this distinction has led to much misunderstanding. Intelligent readers will separate the message of scripture from its form of presentation.⁶

The original writers of the Book of Mormon spoke of the inadequacy of their language in expressing the things of God. Moroni, for example, complained that

the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing, for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou has not made us mighty in writing....Wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words.⁷

Joseph Smith also struggled to interpret the ancient language of the Book of Mormon plates and express them in his own words. The most commonly accepted theory of the Book of Mormon translation is that it required Joseph to be in spiritual harmony with God, to study the ancient linguistic symbols in his mind and then express their meaning in his own language. This explains why the first edition of the Book of Mormon had numerous grammatical errors and a considerable amount of early nineteenth century terminology. Daniel H. Wells once stated that the Book of Mormon would probably be worded differently had Orson Pratt or John Taylor been the translator.⁸

Is it not then likely that the personality of the prophet somewhat colors the final form of the translation or the revelation? B.H. Roberts thought so:

When we have a communication made directly from the Lord himself there is no imperfection whatever in that revelation. But when the Almighty uses a man as an instrument through whom to communicate divine wisdom, the manner in which that revelation is imparted to men may receive a certain human coloring from the prophet through whom it comes.⁹

In summary, we can see that there may be a good deal of the human element appear in the completed revelatory product. Pure truth comes from the mind of God, is filtered through the finite mind of man, is written in his imperfect language, and is then read by another human mind. Could there not be in this process

a diminution of the truth that originated in the mind of God?

Another limiting factor to revelation is the often neglected teaching of Joseph Smith that a prophet is not always a prophet, but only "when acting as such."¹⁰ Apostle Bruce R. McConkie has admitted: "With all their inspiration and greatness, prophets are yet mortal men with imperfections common to mankind in general. They have their opinions and prejudices and are left to work out their problems without inspiration in many instances."¹¹ Doctrine and Covenants 68:4 defines scripture as words that men speak when "moved upon by the Holy Ghost." The statement implies that men of God may speak when they are not so "moved." How often are Church leaders speaking in their role as prophets? What percentage of their spoken words are inspired by the Holy Ghost? The answers vary. Some would argue that inspiration comes daily, and certainly this may be so if we are including every type of inspiration received by Church leaders. If, on the other hand, we are talking about significant, more definite types of revelation intended for the guidance of the Church, they may be relatively infrequent. B.H. Roberts even when so far as to say that this type of revelation is only an "occasional" phenomenon:

Now as to the third point, —about men being constantly under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so that all they say and do is an inspiration of God, even the answering of questions.

There is nothing in the doctrines of the Church which makes it necessary to believe that, even of men who are high officials of the Church. Cases exist where men have been excommunicated for their discourses. They were certainly then not inspired. When we consider the imperfections of men, their passions and prejudices, that mar the Spirit of God in them, happy is the man who can occasionally ascent to the spiritual heights of inspiration and commune with God! . . . I think it improper to assign every word and every act of a man to an inspiration from the Lord. Were that the case we would have to acknowledge ourselves as being wholly taken possession of by the Lord, being neither permitted to go to the right nor the left only as he guided us. There could then be no error made, nor blunder in judgment; free agency would be taken away, and the development of human intelligence prevented. Hence, I think a factor in the administration of the affairs of the Church; not even good men, no, not even though they be prophets or other high officials of the Church, are at all times and in all things inspired of God. It is only occasionally, and at need, that God comes to their aid.¹²

There are two final conditions that often lead to confusion and criticism with regard to revelation. It is true that revelations of the present can differ from revelations of the past. What a great contrast, for instance, exists between the religion of the New Testament and that of the Pentateuch. This often brings charges of inconsistency and falsehood. Secondly, revelations are sometimes altered to make them more applicable to contemporary needs. This may be perceived by some as tampering with and distorting the divine word. But I believe such circumstances can be in full harmony with God's method of dealing with his children. First, the scriptures clearly teach that God reveals a level of truth that is consistent to the capacity and worthiness of his subjects. Joseph Smith declared

that "the Lord deals with this people as a tender parent with a child, communicating light and intelligence and the knowledge of his ways as they can bear it."¹³ Secondly, revelation is usually given piecemeal—"line upon line, precept upon precept." Joseph Smith made many alternations in the Doctrine and Covenants as he learned greater truths and insights from heaven. Mormonism of the Kirtland period, for example, was considerably different doctrinally from the Mormonism of the Nauvoo period.

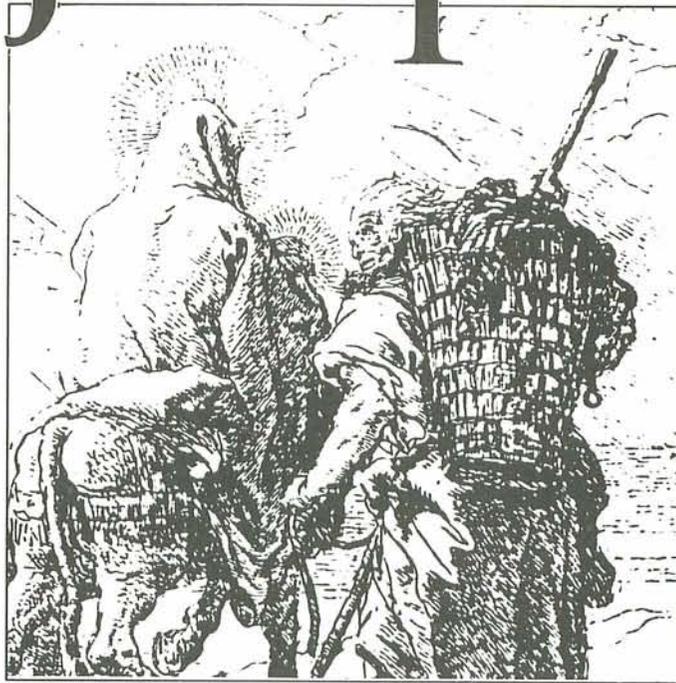
If one subscribes to the limitations of revelation discussed above, it would appear that the so-called "dangers" of revelation are either greatly minimized or nullified. How can we be "intolerant and arrogant" when we realize that the ground on which we stand is not so absolute and certain as we had thought? Would not a truer knowledge of the process of revelation greatly reduce the "blind and unhealthy devotion" to Church leaders and diminish the "self-deception" and "confusion" that often afflict Church members? An understanding of the foregoing conclusions should assist us in seeing the necessity of each conducting an individual quest for truth, in both the intellectual and spiritual spheres. Shouldn't we expect a prophet to sometimes be mistaken? Would diversity and inconsistency in the claims of revelations be anything different than we would expect?

Learning to expect less than perfection of prophets and revelation should not mean that we have ceased to revere their office and calling. Nor should it be concluded that because revelation is less than infallible that it is therefore useless as a source of knowledge. I have only hoped to help the dogmatic and unthinking to be wary of its limitations. I still believe that the accumulated total of all the recorded revelations of the ages give us a sure guide to truth. I reiterate my conviction stated at the beginning: If there is no such thing as revelation, we are lost without direction in a world of intellectual uncertainty.

Notes

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959-60), IV, 42. Hereafter referred to as *HC*.
2. B.H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), I, 162-163.
3. *HC*, III, p. 381.
4. Minutes in the Journal History of the Church, December 13, 1858. Located in LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.
5. B.H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith of the Saints*, (Deseret News: Salt Lake City, 1907), I, 507-532.
6. John A. Widtsoe, *Articles of Faith in Everyday Life*, p. 68.
7. Book of Mormon, Ether 12:23-25.
8. Minutes of the School of the Prophets, Salt Lake Stake, December 9, 1872, p. 3. Located in LDS Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.
9. B.H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith of the Saints*, I, 507-532.
10. *HC*, V, p. 265.
11. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), p. 547.
12. B.H. Roberts, "Revelation and Church Government," *Improvement Era*, March, 1905, pp. 358-370.
13. Alma Burton, *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Deseret Book: Salt Lake City, 1956), p. 158.

Joseph



Warned by an angel in words of a dream,
Joseph wrapped his wife for the road.
She wrapped her child in songs of sleep
While he tightened ropes and tested the load.
Winding down through Judean hills,
Skirting the rainless wilds of Zin,
He entered deserts where dust fills
Pools and streams, and mouths of men.
Fleeing Herod, a prince of blood,
He hid in the moon's pale fires at night,
In shadowed wadis when the searing flood
Of sun washed out his strength for flight.
Down through ancient, dry-lipped
Deserts, he leaned into each mile
And once, near noon, dreaming of Egypt
And cool waters in the godlike Nile,
He faltered under Sinai's arid gaze.
But he wiped his face, caught his breath,
And strode upon, as Galilean waves,
The evershifting, patient sands of death.

Dale Bjork

BORDERLAND

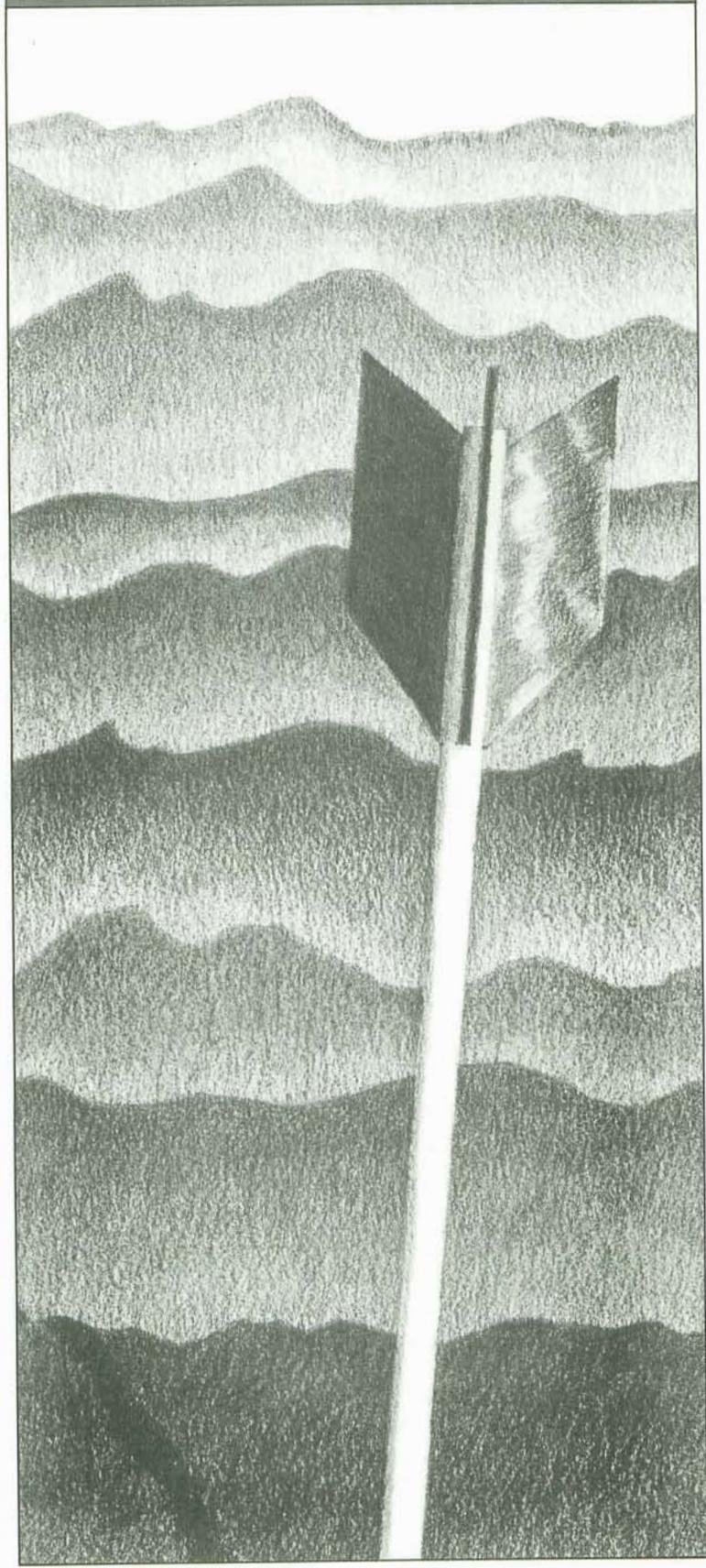


ILLUSTRATION BY DAN OLSEN

LINDA SILLITOE

THE dream was so trivial it seemed real when it edged into my mind the next day. I was sitting in the middle of a moving car, and I felt just as I did as a little kid sitting between my sister and brother, who didn't get along. I didn't mind much. I hate fighting.

But in my dream I was between Dan, my boyfriend, and Debby, my roommate. Dan was driving. Every time we turned a corner, I'd tip one way or the other. When I leaned against Dan, I'd get this charge rippling down my skin even in my sleep.

When I tipped toward Debby, I'd get this other feeling I can't name, but in the dream I knew it was supposed to be the Spirit. I can't actually say that it was, though.

I knew Dan was turning left a little faster than he turned right, so that I'd tip harder toward him. I knew and he knew I knew in the dream, but it seemed only fair since right turns are just naturally sharper.

So when I slid in beside Dan after my last class, the dream came back and for a second I was confused. I even glanced to my right, but of course Debby wasn't there. Dan's hard, shirt-sleeved arm around my shoulders woke me up.

"Hi," I said. There it was, that warm current spreading along my arms.

He didn't say anything but his arm tightened and he kissed me on the forehead just above my nose. It drives me crazy when he does that. It makes me want to turn and run my hands up and down those arms, feeling the curve of muscle under the smooth cloth, even though he's more intellectual than jock. Average build, I guess. He took his arm away and started the car.

I crossed my legs, scraping at a blob of mud on my jeans. "I got spattered by a ten-speed."

"Mmm," he said, turning right, away from campus.

Dan has glasses with gold frames. His hair is dark, almost black, and it's a little wavy. He has brown eyes. His nose is kind of short and his mouth curved and wide with thinnish lips. He's not all that handsome but still good-looking in a quiet way. He's very rational. The measuring way he looks at me as if I am one of his equations makes me want to draw my thumbs across his eyebrows.

"Tell me the dinner with Debby is off," he said, "and you can have any kind of pizza you want. In the park. To celebrate spring."

I sighed sympathetically and shut my eyes. A hint of a headache began at the base of my head.

"Carlie, I tell you I'm never going to make it," he said.

"I'll say something awful. I just can't get through a whole evening of Debby being womanly and glowing. What poor s.o.b. is it this time?"

I winced. "Sorry," he said.

"His name is Mark. He's in her New Testament class, and she's been sitting by him for four weeks. It's the end of the term. She might never see him again unless he starts asking her out."

He muttered something under his breath.

"Well, maybe," I said and stopped. He glanced at me.

"Well, maybe we could suggest something to do after dinner."

"A movie."

"No, that's no good, because then they won't be able to talk."

"He can talk to her all through dinner."

"Yeah. Okay. What's playing they'll want to see?"

He laughed shortly. The little knot at the back of my head tightened.

"I'm getting a headache."

His arm went around my shoulders and he drove lefthanded. "What if we just run away?" he said, his fingers tracing the bone at the top of my arm. "Just take off, and I'll have you back by midnight Sunday so you can get some sleep before your final."

"Okay," I said, "if we both want to flunk. Or shall we take our books with us and study all day Saturday?"

That time he sighed. "Then why, why, why are we wasting this evening with Debby and her prospect?"

I leaned my head back on his hand, which had left my shoulder, and closed my eyes. He knew why.

"Okay," he said, pulling his hand back so he could signal. "I'll behave."

"What if we're all through studying by Sunday?" I suggested.

"So you and Debby can go to church?"

"So maybe I'd skip."

"Deal," he said, and his quick hard look before he turned on to my street sealed it. Done. Debby wouldn't be able to talk me out of it no matter what.

Debby was quartering mushrooms in the kitchen when I came in.

"Hi Deb. Dan will be back in a couple of hours. I need a shower."

Debby's father owns the little house we live in. When he remarried and moved to Arizona, he told Debby she could live here rent-free if she could find a roommate. Even my parents could understand that meant me, since we've been best friends since junior high. Anyway, my parents live only a few blocks away. The kitchen-dining room and living room are downstairs, a fairly large bedroom and bathroom upstairs. Debby's mother died when Debby was fourteen, and Deb inherited all the household goods when her father moved. Between what she earns at the beauty salon and my scholarship and student loan, we get by.

Debby looked hot, standing in a patch of bright spring sunlight. She pushed her hair back off her neck. Her brightly printed mumu came just below her knees.

Debby's hair is strawberry blond, fine and curly. She

wears it shoulder length, the front pulled back in barrettes away from her face. She has blue eyes and rosy cheeks and a figure like Dolly Parton. You can see that she has to watch every ounce she eats and that once she's married she'll probably put on weight.

She flashed me her brightest smile. "Everything's under control, Carlie. Well, almost everything. Carlie, please hurry in the shower so you can keep an eye on the stroganoff while I set the table. And remember, we're doing it tonight in yellow and cornflower blue." She smiled again.

I thought longingly of a clean pair of jeans. With my yellow peasant blouse? No. I didn't even suggest it.

But I compromised. I wore my yellow peasant blouse with a soft, gathered blue skirt and sandals. No pantyhose. For once my hair fell into soft lines presentable enough to leave the curling iron in the drawer.

Debby's dress was spread out on her bed, a long blue print with yellow ruffles around the V-neck. On Debby it would be impressive. It's hard to accept her bosom in conjunction with her sweet, lighted face. She must know how her bustline affects guys, but if she does she never gives a hint that she even thinks about such things. Her happy nature and domestic skills should be enough, but looking at the dress I wondered if the V-neck was added insurance. I even felt a little sad for her, knowing that after the first impact, she comes across as more maternal than sexy. Oh well, I thought, maybe that's what Mark wants.

Then I added a narrow string of red and black Indian beads, even though I knew it wouldn't prevent Dan's ironic smile when he took in the table, Debby, and I, all color coordinated. "Ah, the gold dust twins," he'd say. Or think. And he'd know I knew.

I guess I spent too long looking at the necklace in the mirror, trying to decide whether it contrasted or just looked color blind. By the time I went downstairs, Debby had the table all arranged and the stroganoff was simmering on the stove.

"Just maintain," she said with no smile. "I'll be right back."

So I began the evening feeling guilty and inadequate, gazing at the blue candles among daffodils and tulips and the gleam of Debby's silverplate utensils. My skirt tickled the backs of my unstockinged knees.

It was midnight when Dan pulled up in front of the house after the movie. Ten minutes later he and Mark were gone, and I was curled on my bed in my favorite green nightgown. I let the headache come. Debby talked happily as she floated between the bedroom and the bathroom in her pink negligee.

She'd done her sit-ups, brushed her teeth, and flossed them by the time she switched on her lamp to read the scriptures. I didn't bother to fish out my Book of Mormon. My head hurt too much.

I felt the bed shift as she sat down, and I opened my eyes. "You did have a great time, didn't you Carlie?"

"Sure. The food was great."

"Did you like the movie?"

"It was okay."

"Do you like Mark?"

"He's nice, Debby. I just have a headache."

"Poor Carlie. I'll get you some aspirin and some juice."

"Oh, that's all right."

But she was gone and then back again with three aspirin and a small glass of apple juice. "Thanks for helping me, Carlie."

I nodded. She really is so good. "Did you like Mark? Tonight, I mean?"

She smiled and her face shone in the dim room. (I'd turned off my lamp when she went for aspirin, a hint that I wasn't going to read the scriptures.) "I do like him. You know I do. It's the strangest thing, Carlie."

"What?"

But she was silent a minute, and, in the silence, the feeling I had in my dream seeped into the room. I nearly reached for the lamp, but the pain behind my eyes stopped me.

"Well, we were sitting there eating dessert in the candlelight. You and I were just sipping our Seven-Up and waiting for the guys to finish. Outside it was beginning to get dark, so that the dusk matched the air inside. Do you know what I mean?"

I nodded. The feeling was getting stronger, the room a trifle darker. Was it the Spirit?

"And I looked at you and at Dan and Mark and I just had this feeling that it is all meant to be. It was such a good feeling, Carlie. A happiness because everything was going so well, but more than that." Her voice trembled a little and my stomach rumbled. I stretched my legs.

"There was kind of a hush in the room right then," she said. "Did you notice?"

I thought back. All I could remember was watching Dan scoop up the last of his cherry jubilee and wishing I was sitting by him in the dark theater with the movie already half finished. I shook my head, smiled, and shrugged.

"Anyway, I looked across the table at Mark and then out the picture window behind him. I looked at the gray air inside and outside. And just for a second—Carlie, promise you'll believe this!" She grasped my wrist. My skin prickled. I think I nodded.

"I saw the outline of the temple through the window. Just the outline, glowing against the gray. Like a line drawn with a candle."

There was a silence. "Maybe it was the candles playing tricks with your vision."

"It was like that, but so distinct. You see, the air was just the color of the temple granite. And then Mark's silhouette in front of it—and just the strongest feeling that maybe, well, you know. Maybe this is it."

There was a pause. I wrapped the bedspread around my shoulders.

Debby laughed softly. "Well, it was all gone in a second. Then we went to the movie and everything. But I'll always remember that moment. Are you sure you didn't feel it, Carlie?"

"Well, I just don't. . . . You know, I just don't have spiritual experiences. And Dan isn't likely to go through the temple. You know how bright he is. He's thought it all through, and he says it just doesn't hold water."

"Oh, but Dan has such good potential. He was raised in the Church. That's an advantage neither of us have. I don't see how anyone can change after that kind of background. I teach the little kids in my Primary class just as hard as I can, so they'll never lose what they have now."

"I know," I said.

"Well, it took me fifteen years to find the Church. And you were always sort of on the edge of it with your mom a member and your dad not."

I nodded. "My mom taught Primary for a year or two when I was little."

"Did she ever try to convert your dad so they could go to the temple?"

"I think maybe she did early in their marriage. I don't remember it, though. Sometimes I thought she disliked the Church more than my dad did, even though they sent us. Then sometimes she'd say things that really surprised me."

"Such as what?"

"Oh, I don't know. Well, one time—oh, you won't believe a word of this. It's so crazy."

"No, go ahead. Tell me."

"Well, my grandmother died. I was about thirteen, I guess. My dad's mother. My grandma and my mother never got along. They fought all the time."

"About the Church?"

"No, about everything."

"Oh."

"Well, the day after the funeral, we were sitting in the living room watching television, me and my mom and my dad and Randy, and this potted plant fell off the dining room table."

"What do you mean?"

"The plant was in the center of the table and it fell off."

"Did you see it fall?"

"No, we just heard the crash and looked up to see dirt and philodendron vines all over the carpet."

Debby stared at me.

"My dad said, that damn cat." Debby winced. "But the cat was outside crying to come in the front door. I let it in and it walked over, sniffed the plant on the floor and then howled this wierd, ghostly way it had never done before. It was strange."

"So what did you do?"

"First we just looked at each other. I started picking up pieces of the jar, and my mom scooped up the plant and the dirt, trying to save it. My dad was talking loud and swearing a little." My throat hurt. Maybe that was why my voice was a loud whisper. I swallowed, and tried to raise my voice to normal volume because I could see I was spooking Debby. I couldn't. "Then the phone rang," I said, and swallowed again.

Debby shivered. She grabbed the other end of the bedspread and wrapped up in it. "Who was it?"

"My aunt. She told my dad the weirdest thing had just happened. A plant fell off the middle of the buffet in her bedroom."

Debby screamed. I jumped. We laughed nervously and moved closer together.

"Then what?"

"When my dad hung up and told my mother, she snatched the broom and yelled, 'Get out of this house, you old witch! I hated you when you were alive and I don't want you hanging around now!'"

"Carlie!" Debby breathed. I tried to laugh, but the shivers were all over me now and I could feel Debby trembling beside me. I hate to talk about stuff like that.

"My dad said, 'Cut it out. I'm getting out of this madhouse!' And he walked over to the coat rack by the kitchen door. The coat rack fell right off the wall on to the floor."

"What did he do?"

"He picked up his parka off the floor and left. I ran upstairs to bed, and Mom slammed around some more, and then went to bed, too."

Debby thought it over, still shivering. "So you mean you were surprised that your mother yelled as if she really believes people exist after death?"

"No, not that. That was just ghost stuff. Not really religious."

"Well, what then?"

I managed to laugh. "It was the way she bragged about what I did to get rid of—whatever it was—the ghost."

"Carlie! What did you do?"

"About a week later, my folks were gone overnight. I was tending. Randy and Margie and I were all asleep. It must have been about two in the morning. I woke up all of a sudden, and I had to go to the bathroom, so I got out of bed and I tripped over something. I was so sleepy, I just walked around it and went into the bathroom. But when I came back, I tripped over it again. I was more awake then so I turned on the lamp. My dad's fishing boots were right in the middle of the floor between my bed and Margie's."

"Were you scared?"

"Petrified. I kept trying to tell myself it was ridiculous. I tried to think of a logical reason for them being there. But I couldn't laugh. In a way, I think I was most frightened because I didn't know what would be next. What if something came crashing down on one of the kids? Or someone pushed one of us down the stairs?"

"What did you do?" Debby's teeth chattered just a little.

"Come on Deb, don't," I said.

"Tell me!" she hissed.

"Well, all of a sudden I remembered this Sunday School teacher I had when I was eleven. She was talking about evil spirits every time we had a lesson on Moroni or some other angel. She said you should offer to shake hands. Well, I couldn't see anyone to offer my hand to, and I was too scared to just stick it out there, you know, into the air. She said you had to have the priesthood to get rid of evil spirits.

"But, I thought, my grandma isn't really evil. Maybe it wouldn't take the priesthood. So I took a deep breath and tightened up my stomach muscles and said as firmly as I could, 'Grandma, in the name of Jesus Christ, get out of this house and don't ever come back.'"

I stopped for a minute. I hadn't thought about that incident for years, and told, it seemed so strange. It didn't sound like me. I wondered if it had really happened.

"So what I meant about my mother was that the next time we visited my aunt I heard Mom bragging about what I'd done. As if it were really a good thing, and she really believed everything they said at church. Then other times it was as if she didn't even believe in God. Dad never talked about it, either way."

Debby was quiet. "Did it ever come back?"

"No."

She put her hand on my knee. "Carlie, that's the most amazing story I've ever heard. How can you say you don't have spiritual experiences? You were only thirteen, and you cast out an evil spirit."

Her voice was tight. "I just know—right this second I just feel—that with your spirituality and Dan's good upbringing, everything will work out for you."

I felt tears burning in my throat. I could only shake my head.

"I know how much you want a temple wedding," Debby said, "so that you'll have Dan—and your babies—forever and ever. I know how hard it's been for you to resist temptation. I really admire you, Carlie."

I squeezed her hand, and she went over to her bed and, humming, picked up her Book of Mormon. I slid down between the sheets and rolled close to the wall and tried to figure out why I was crying.

All the next day I studied upstairs, trying not to hear Debby singing as she cleaned the house. She knew the beauty school course wasn't quite like a university finals week, and she volunteered to do all the cleaning and grocery shopping so I could study.

So why did I sit there with my anthropology book blurring in front of my eyes? Because I kept hearing again what she said about me resisting temptation. It made me feel wormy. Was I a good resister just because Dan refused to seduce me?

One time when we were parked in our spot above the city, he slipped my blouse and bra off and kissed and touched my breasts. I couldn't breathe. I thought I would suffocate in the sensation that flared like an air-eating flame. His hands moved down to my jeans, his thumbs bruising my pelvic bones and his fingers around my hips. The flame flickered between his thumbs.

After he brought me home that night, it was a long time before I fell asleep. When I did, I dreamed about it.

But in my dream I was seeing instead of feeling—watching him love me. When he took his hands from my body, I saw that my breasts had turned black as if they'd been singed, and my nipples were cracking, crumbling like ashes. I woke up screaming and shaking, with Debby holding on to my arm, her faced scared.

I told Debby I couldn't remember what I had dreamed. So the next day when Dan came by, she innocently mentioned my screaming nightmare. Dan listened intently, then turned his slow, hard stare on me. I blushed so hard I had to walk into the kitchen for a drink of water. Somehow he knew.

After that he would never do it again, or anything much. He said, "You have to make a conscious decision, Carlie. I'm not going to take anything from you. You have to decide."

That drove me crazy. Other boys I'd dated were always going for inches, if not yards. If I wouldn't kiss Bill, for instance, he'd draw back and say with exaggerated courtesy, "Well, could I just touch your hand? Now that would be all right, wouldn't it, if I just kind of hold it like this?" And so on.

Finally, I'd feel such a fool saying no, no, no that I'd just give in a little bit. It was a tense game, and winning was not losing.

Dan and I both knew how much chance I had of resisting him. But he left me stranded with my own vivid thoughts. I could kiss him and hold him forever, but when would I manage to whisper yes, yes, between kisses?

So that Saturday I just sat there staring at my anthropology text, knowing I had to concentrate, but seeing his cheekbones under my thumbs, feeling his hands around my ribs and my bones silently snapping like peppermint sticks. And wondering if it would ever happen.

Sunday morning Dan came by for brunch. He was cheerful. His studying was all done. He stared at the circles under my eyes and said nothing.

"Too bad Carlie hasn't finished studying," Debby said, deftly setting a platter of steaming pancakes layered with blueberry syrup on the table. Dan immediately lifted his fork.

"I'm through," I said. "I'm not getting anywhere."

"Maybe you need a picnic," Dan suggested.

"Oh, but there's not much time before church," Debby said. "Or were you thinking of this evening?"

Dan didn't say anything. It would be hours before we could eat anything on a picnic after Debby's enormous brunch.

"I need a change," I said. "I'm going to skip church and get out in the fresh air today. Why don't you call Alison, and the two of you can sit together?"

"Oh. All right."

Debby and Dan ate with enthusiasm. I ate too, wondering why Debby made me feel so inadequate these days. I could cook. But I didn't have her knack for whipping up icy orange julius and fluffy blueberry pancakes without mussing a hair or missing a beat in the conversation. Her whole life was in the palm of her clean, soft hand.

I noticed that she was beaming at me. I didn't interpret the look soon enough to stop her.

"Maybe I shouldn't say this," Debby said so gently that Dan looked up from his sixth pancake. "But I hope Carlie

will tell you what she told me last night." She winked at me happily, then turned her smile on Dan. "She's a very special person with special gifts, Dan. You're so lucky."

I thought I would die right there with blueberry syrup sliding down my fourth finger and across my knuckle, as I stared at her and felt Dan's gaze burn my cheek.

Dan and I did the dishes. He had sense enough not to ask what Debby meant. Debby went outside to clip some tulips to take over to Alison's apartment when she picked her up for church. The picnic seemed hopeless now. I really wasn't up to it. I wondered how I could turn it all around and just go to church with Debby and Alison and let the organ music slide along my ragged nerves.

"Carlie," Dan said.

"What?" I didn't look up. I was trying to get the back of the plate I held under the stream of hot water absolutely soapless.

I felt his hand curl around the back of my neck. "Let's go," he said, his mouth near my ear.

My hand moved along the bottom of the dishpan, feeling for silverware. Then we heard Debby scream—and scream again.

Dan tripped over me as we both ran for the back door. Debby was standing by the little garden that ran through the center of the small plot of grass.

"What? Deb, what is it?"

Then we both saw the long arrow stuck in the ground before her, absolutely upright.

"Where did that come from?" I asked stupidly.

"Straight down from the sky," Dan said. "It must have been shot straight up."

He yanked it out of the earth with one sharp motion. He turned the point up and brushed the dirt away. It was razor edged.

He whistled. "If that hit someone it would go right through them," he said. "It's a hunting arrow. Did you see it land?"

"It was just there," Debby said. Her face was white.

"Might have been shot last night," Dan said.

"Or any time," I added. My brain felt dull and tired. "You'd think we'd have seen it before now."

"But Carlie," Debby said, "I was out here sunning all afternoon yesterday. You came out this morning before I was even up. What if—it could have—"

Dan slammed the arrow back into the ground. "Some damn fool," he muttered.

Suddenly the earth tipped and swung forward. I felt Dan and Debby each grab an arm to steady me. The earth tipped back again.

"It's almost time for church," Debby said softly. "Of all the days to want to be there!" She laughed softly. "Carlie?"

Dan's fingers tightened on my arm. I stood there between them and carefully tipped my head back to look into the broad forever of new spring sky that seemed so blank and unnoticing, and I wondered which way to run.

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MARDEN CLARK

Whose Yoke is Easy?

There are no shortcuts to wealth or education or culture or religion, no shortcuts to the sublime by way of the trivial.

SOME time ago my wife and I went to a performance of *Star Child*, sequel to *Saturday's Warrior*, and watched and listened with increasing distaste that finally became disgust. In contrast, I had listened, in the same deJong Concert Hall but alone except for Clayne Robison, to a recording of Robert Cundick's *Redeemer* and had responded with something close to spiritual rapture. I felt distress at the audience's too-easy appreciation, standing ovation and all, for the clichés of character, language, and music that make up *Star Child*. My response centered, though, on a statement by Alan Keele after he had made a devastating contrast between *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *My Turn on Earth*. You cannot, he said in effect, put sublime materials in trivial form and have anything but trivia left. In contrast to *Star Child*, Brother Cundick had taken similarly sublime materials and put them in sublime form, with the resulting sublimity of experience. At two o'clock, I awoke composing this paper.

What I remembered in that 2 a.m. session with myself was a series of experiences, conversations, reports, and perceptions which I sensed in the blackness of my bedroom were so closely related as to be all of a piece—and a very disturbing piece. *Star Child* was part of that series. The series began with a BYU student in our home congratulating himself on what he had just accomplished: he had been to a downtown bank where he had taken out a \$3500 student loan, interest free, and then had gone up the street to a brokerage firm and invested the money in a money-market fund that was paying around 14 percent interest. I of course knew that such things were going on, but I was rather shocked to

find someone close to me who was doing it, apparently with no sense of anything wrong. I don't know whether he had thought of the Utah taxpayers who would have to pay the interest on his loan (he could hardly have suspected that the bankers were themselves providing such loans simply out of love for California students), or whether he had thought of the Church's stand against accepting government subsidies, or thought of some truly needy student who would now not be able to get a loan (there is only so much money available for such things), or of any other of the moral implications of what he had done. I do know that he was very pleased with himself and with his BYU business professor who had told his class about such opportunities, himself apparently undisturbed by any moral implications of this working of the system.

More recently a young honors student told me that his salesmanship professor had told his class—repeatedly, I gathered, almost as a class motto—that excellence is measured at the cash-register. The student was shocked that I was shocked. It seemed to him a perfectly valid measure. He was financing his way through school, quite comfortably, by selling Bibles in the Bible Belt during his summers. He was an excellent salesman, one who really loved his product and his customers. He could see no real relationship between a motto like the one he had quoted and his own problems with writing poems and short stories. He dropped my class a couple of days later because, as he put it, he was not ready to pay the price yet.

I was talking about some of these things in a class the next week, and one young man came up afterwards, obviously troubled, and told me that his religion professor, in a Book of Mormon class for returned missionaries, had told the class—again more than once—

Editors' Note: This paper was delivered at the 1982 Sunstone Theological Symposium.

that if the young men in the class were not at BYU with a picture of a dollar sign in their heads they were wasting their time; if the young women, he said, were not there with the picture of a young man with a dollar sign in his head, they were wasting their time. I questioned him as I had questioned my honors student, very carefully, hoping that they were reporting wrongly or that the teacher had said such things with some kind of irony to arouse response and discussion. But no, they both insisted, there was no possibility of needling or undercutting irony. I still hope there might have been. Whatever, all three of these professors had communicated to the students a sense of values that the students felt was deeply held.

A few days later, I had spent an hour talking to a former student and good friend, Larry Thompson, now teaching at Ricks and working Saturdays at a private bookstore in Rexburg that sells largely Church books. He told me at some length of the problems they had keeping enough Shirley Sealy romances and other such "Mormon" fiction and poetry in stock, they sell so fast. He was feeling terrible at the level of taste such sales were revealing. By the standard of my student's professor these are marvelously excellent books.

In my deep-night vigil, I put these experiences together with reports I had repeatedly heard that Provo and Salt Lake City are the center—or at least a major center—of penny stock frauds in America and of gold and silver speculation frauds. In some ways more disturbing, they are also known, along with much of the rest of Utah, as the center of large-scale pyramid schemes. (I have to comment parenthetically on these schemes, in which some few on the top can get rich, but only at the expense of large numbers somewhere along the way who get nothing as the chain inevitably runs its course. In other words, those that promote and those that participate are knowingly trying to get rich without real effort on their part and at the expense of their brothers and sisters, the vast majority of whom will get little or nothing back from their "investment." No place along the way does the scheme really generate wealth. How a good Mormon can participate in such things is more than I can see.) As if all this were not enough, I was told, a few days after my vigil, that Utah also has the highest rate of personal bankruptcy in the nation. I suppose the new bankruptcy laws have a place. But it doesn't take much research to know that they are being heavily used as a device for financial manipulation: get as deep into debt as you can, transfer all property out of your name, and then declare bankruptcy—and go live off the proceeds or start over again in another name.

I realize that I have given extreme examples, that very few teachers I know at BYU share the values of the three my students talked about. But I fear that they are just that—extreme examples and profoundly symptomatic.

I wish I could find a way around what all this is saying about us as a people by arguing that all these financial shenanigans were being carried on by the non-Mormons among us. But I can't. It was Mormon professors and students that I was remembering, it is the center of Mormonism where the reputation—and the manipulation—exists. And I have had enough experience with the manipulators to know that they often trade on their Church affiliation to further their

schemes. And though I know there is a big difference between dishonest manipulation of money and just bad taste in popular art, I have also had enough experience with writers of best-selling Mormon novels and musicals to know that they trade on the predictable responses of their Mormon audience and enough experience with sentimentality to know it as the manipulation, conscious or not, of already built-in emotions.

No, my night vigil told me, it is our very Mormonness

The Church is too much a part of our personal lives, too deeply part of what distinguishes us as a culture, not to be part of any deep cultural problem.

that is involved; it told me that these things are all of a piece; and it forced me to ask, Is there something at the heart of our culture that generates what Hugh Nibley calls our insatiable appetite for kitsch?—and to broaden that question to, Is there something at the heart of our culture that generates the problems I have been outlining? I almost hate to ask that question because I can hear a cynical response: Of course—the Church. And to an extent the answer would have to be right: the Church is too much a part of our personal lives, too deeply part of what distinguishes us as a culture, not to be part of any deep cultural problem.

I've said that all these things are of a piece. If so, it should not be hard to find the piece. The key piece is, in fact, "easy." Everything I've been fretting about thus far has involved an easy version of life: of money, of education, of culture, or religion, of whatever. An interest-free student loan to buy money-market funds: easy money and easy manipulation of the system. A man with a dollar sign in his head: easy education for the sake of easy money. Excellence measured at the cash register: easy measure for easy culture. Stock fraud, gold and silver fraud, personal bankruptcy: easy money or easy ways out of tight problems. We have fallen to the lure of the easy. And if I am right about all this, then I am convinced that it constitutes the single most serious problem now facing us as a culture and perhaps even as a church—far more serious finally than the ERA or the sexual revolution or even drugs (themselves often just an easy answer to immediate problems).

It is tempting to see the problem as just our version of America's general emphasis on the easy, affluent life, epitomized in our TV/movie-centered world, where the easy is flashed before us in wearying repetition: easy money, easy goods, easy culture, easy love, easy religion, easy everything. We would hardly need look farther, except that that answer, placed in the perspective of who and what we claim to be, is no answer. It does nothing to

tell us why we, as Mormons at the very heart of our church, should succumb to and even exaggerate the weaknesses of our country, why Utah should be a center of fraud and manipulation, why we should see so many of the problems at the Church's university. If we look a little deeper, we can see not one force but a whole complex of forces helping to generate our grasping for the easy. Most turn out to be paradoxical.

I do want to blame as much as possible of our passion for money onto our succumbing to the general

I can't help wondering if some of the things we glory in most don't get twisted to support the easy-money hunger.

American passion. But we Mormons have our own peculiar version of it. Our emphasis on welfare, food storage, staying out of debt, sound finances, and so forth has made many of us hyper-conscious of the role of money in our lives. We have placed a great deal of emphasis on success, both monetary and otherwise. It is no accident that some of the best-known of the new breed of financial advisors are Mormons. All those hundreds of talks on success are both symptom and cause. So is our intense preoccupation with and honoring of the wealthy, the famous, the champion. We almost canonize our Willard Marriots, our Johnny Millers, our Danny Ainges, our Osmonds. We both canonize and follow our Howard Ruffs.

I can't help wondering if some of the things we glory in most don't get twisted to support the easy-money hunger. We are repeatedly exhorted to get out of debt and stay out. Do we look for the easy ways to do so? We are exhorted to pay our tithing (itself a kind of easy way, a substitute for the much more difficult but much more celestial law of consecration). Are we "paying" it, in what I call the mercantile relationship with God, to buy His blessings? Are we listening too hard to those promises about the windows of heaven—and translating them too literally into material blessings, the kind we keep hearing about in testimonies on tithing? Perhaps worse, do we use tithing as a measure of faithfulness, or, still worse, as evidence of prosperity which in turn is taken as evidence of the Lord's approval? This Mormon version of the old Puritan view of wealth as evidence of God's grace in one's life, of one's being of the Elect, provides us with a perfect rationale for getting rich the easy way. Do we see any of the same kind of twisting of values in our emphasis on welfare, which ought to express our most unselfish concern for each other but which we often think of, as we do of tithing, as our personal insurance policy?

We would hardly have to look beyond the Church magazines, with their long history of moral and spiritual lessons in the form of stories and poems, to explain something of our craving for easy culture. Even today, with some of the finest editors I can imagine, the tradition of the magazines as teaching tools dominates and hence subordinates imaginative excellence to content and to easy, "upbeat" tone and endings. I see evidence of upgrading but little evidence of real change in basic policy, except in one or two issues devoted primarily to the arts in the Church. But surely the magazines are symptom more than cause. Given the resources available to them, including the increasing flow of fine materials from Mormon writers, the magazines must be essentially what those who finally control them want them to be. Their primary function is to present and support Church programs and to promote faith and activity in the members. Where stories and poems can contribute to such a function, they can be and are used.

Underlying such a function of the magazines is a widespread conception of the arts as essentially utilitarian and hence a kind of impatience or even suspicion of art that has no apparent or immediate utility. And such suspicion is in turn a part of the rather deep suspicion of intellectual activity on almost any level beyond the ordinary. I don't like the label anti-intellectual, but it catches a large flavor of widespread attitudes in the Church—widespread enough and often-enough documented that I need only mention them in passing. The "dollar sign in his head" is only an extreme example of the attitude: Nothing else a university has to offer—since one can get a testimony anywhere—is worthy of the serious attention of the young Mormon. The more common version we hear repeatedly in our meetings: "I don't suppose this poem [or story or whatever] would be considered very good by the English Department but I like it and want to share it." The implicit attitude is that the English department is interested only in something that could not interest us ordinary people—and probably should not. In other words, they're snobs.

One other source of our desire for easy culture could well be our repeated emphasis on the plain and precious in the scriptures and the gospel generally. Such an attitude keeps many of us from looking with real energy at any but the familiar parts of Isaiah or Job or Ecclesiastes—and provides a built-in rationale for our dislike of complicated art.

The desire for easy culture is again both symptom and cause of the more general desire for easy education. Here I want only to suggest that the startling shift of enrollment away from languages (except as they are recognized as immediately practical) and other culture-centered courses and toward the immediately "practical" courses and majors—a shift that has characterized BYU at least as much as other American universities—has been largely a shift away from the intellectually demanding and expanding to the less demanding. For too many the life of the intellect has been swallowed by the life of the job.

I want to comment on only two qualities that may contribute greatly to our desire for easy religion. One is our most common metaphor for missionary work:

selling the gospel. I am always uncomfortable with the metaphor, even when I hear it from that marvelous and venerable salesman, Elder LeGrande Richards. My problem with the metaphor, other than its mercantilistic suggestions, is that it presents the gospel and the Church as products, something to be used, something complete, like a new car, that demands of us only that we buy it and drive it. In other words, it presents an essentially easy, undemanding gospel. The other quality is our emphasis on quick conversions. Such emphasis obviously produces results. But again, it means that new members can understand very little of what will be expected of them. The very idea that one can make such a momentous choice after only a week of exploration and testimony implies that both the choice and the life being chosen cannot be really difficult.

Such is at least part of the complex of forces that make us want the easy. Some of the forces are admittedly superficial; others are nearer the core of both our culture and our religion. I can perhaps sum them up by insisting that finally it is our interpretation—or misinterpretation—of the Gospel itself that we are going to have to look at. When Jesus promises rest to the heavy laden and peace to his followers, when he says, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light," He seems to be promising an easy life and easy religion. At the very least, He provides a rationale for seeking such a life. It is the rationale that makes so appealing the modern TV evangelists' invitation to come forward and leave all burdens with Christ. We usually smile condescendingly at such easy versions of the Gospel. But I fear that much of the rationale has somehow come to pervade many of our own attitudes toward the Gospel and the Church.

And yet He must have meant what He said: He always did. We spend all our lives learning that He meant what He said, and perhaps how He meant it. He could hardly have meant that the kind of life He held out to those who would take His yoke upon them would really be an easy one. He Himself must be the ultimate proof: bearing His own burden of ultimate suffering. Or we could cite the long string of martyred saints following His death. Or the near-public anguish of President Kimball as he took upon himself the burden of prophet and president. Jesus could not have meant that His burden would cause no pain, no suffering, no staggering under its load, no sacrifice from either His prophets or the least of His followers. The rest of this paper will explore what I think He must have meant and then what this must mean for students and faculty at BYU and for Mormons generally.

If we look carefully at what the Savior must have meant by His yoke being easy and His burden light, we can see directions in which our quest for truth and excellence might lead us. First note that it *is* a yoke and a burden. Next, note that He is speaking to those that are heavy laden, presumably with sin and sorrow, since He has just denounced the cities that rejected Him. His yoke and burden are easy and light, then, in comparison to the yoke and burden of sin and rejection. But repeatedly the scriptures testify of a differing sense, too, of easy and light. Even given the most intense pain and suffering and sin, if followed by repentance the yoke and burden are easy and light because they are borne as a team (at least one of the implications of "yoke"), with the Savior Himself lightening our burden because He sacrificed

Himself for us and because He is the source of Light. Probably more important for what I am saying, His yoke is easy because in taking it upon ourselves we discover or create in ourselves new capacities for compassion and sensitivity and love and joy in our service to one another and to Him. Such capacities surely explain the radiance we recognize in the faces of those who have taken most fully His yoke and burden upon them.

I am arguing, of course, that the quest for truth and excellence creates in us parallel capacities that make the yoke and burden of that quest easy and light. They can hardly be easy and light in any literal sense, any more than His can. I know of almost no real truth or excellence, religious or secular, that hasn't had to be earned in something equivalent to sweat, blood, and tears.

That price I am equating with the yoke and burden. the burden of commitment in time and energy and devotion, the yoke of involvement—we can get "hooked" on art or music or literature or religion just as we can on drugs or alcohol or coffee, but with the great difference that the one will destroy, the other create us. And it is just that process of creation in us that makes the yoke easy and the burden light. That is, as we come to

In art and culture mediocrity feeds upon itself. The shallow and sentimental cannot nourish any taste except that for the shallow and sentimental.

know the true and the excellent we create in ourselves new capacities for knowing and understanding and recognition and response and enjoyment, which in turn make possible higher levels of knowing and responding and enjoying. Even though the higher we reach the greater may be the yoke and the burden, the easier also will be the yoke and the lighter the burden.

I remember as a freshman at BYU playing a clarinet in Robert Sauer's concert band. Bobby, as we called him, was the composer of "Springtime in the Rockies," and most of the concerts we gave ended "by special request" with that song. But Bobby also had high aspirations for his band. I remember my complete confusion when he gave us the Overture to *Die Meistersinger von Nuernberg*. Nothing from my high school experience, even under a remarkable music leader, had prepared me for this. Some oldtimers in the band, like John Halliday, had little trouble with it. But I struggled—and struggled and struggled. And one day I found myself playing the

second clarinet part with some skill and a great deal of enjoyment. This on a small scale is the exact process I have been talking about. The process is an upward spiral as long as we continue with it. I didn't stay with the clarinet. I couldn't play a line of that overture now. But I never hear it or any part of it without feeling some of the old satisfaction, even joy: joy that makes the yoke easy and the burden light.

I want now to indicate the direction that our quest for the true and the excellent should take us if we are to counteract that suckering for the easy: easy money, easy education, easy culture, easy religion. We will find that for each of these the answer is itself remarkably easy. The doing is what will be complex and difficult. The answer to the easy lies in the genuine. The answer lies in everything that is implied in what we claim to be: sanctioned and led by Him who said His yoke is easy.

I speak with least assurance about money. I know there is something sadly and deeply wrong with manipulating the student loan system, with coming to a university or doing anything else with a dollar sign in one's head, with manipulating stocks and gold—or people through these—, with exploiting friends or church associates or anyone else through pyramid

In Mormonism there is a widespread conception of the arts as utilitarian and hence a kind of impatience or even suspicion of art that has no apparent or immediate utility.

schemes, with manipulating bankruptcy laws. But once I get beyond the obviously wrong, I find complex ambiguous questions and answers. Jesus' answers seem straight enough: He scorned wealth and those who sought it. The answers of the modern leaders, from Joseph Smith on, have been anything but straight in some ways. They have certainly scorned dishonesty, fraud, manipulation. In general, they have scorned, and warned us against, the easy. But there has been very little of the eulogizing of the poor that Jesus did, and a great deal of emphasis on success, both monetary and otherwise.

I can understand, and even sympathize with, some of the desperation with which we look for antidotes to it. Ever since Bri Jacobs pointed out what was happening to first my small ordinary-life insurance policy and then our small savings account because of the erosion of inflation, I have tried myself to outwit inflation—and been badly bitten by most of my early attempts, in both

mutual funds and penny-market stocks, even in limited-partnership real-estate ventures, and especially in gold mine stocks. So I know both the problems and the temptations. But that erosion from inflation is not a comfortable thing to contemplate when one is retiring.

Even so, the Savior's words again can save us: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Mormons remember this passage; we quote it often. But I can't help suspecting that we hear "so that" rather than "and these things shall be added unto you." But He had already warned that we cannot serve two masters. And "these things" are hardly wealth. Jesus was specific—as He nearly always is: What we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and Wherewithal we shall be clothed. These are the things we should take no thought of and that will be added unto us if we seek first the kingdom. The seeking of wealth for its own sake, the love of money that is the root of all evil, the quest for the power that money can confer—without primary concern for the good that it can do—these Jesus condemns unequivocally, and warns us to do so too. Somewhere in our teachings, or in our response to them, we have lost this most basic emphasis.

We can at least begin to counter the taste for the easy in education by reversing the move toward education as fundamentally preparation for earning a living. Not that vocational courses are necessarily easy but that they set up a goal for education that itself implies the easy, one that has little to do with breadth of curiosity and knowledge and experience. BYU has been trying for something of that reversal in its general education program. But the new program backfired. Taking its cue from the enemy, it set up GE as a series of "minimum competencies" to be passed off as a boy scout passes off his merit badges. *Minimum* is what the students sought—and bought—by finding the easiest ways around the requirements.

I remember vividly a contrasting vision. Eliot Butler, in a remarkable forum address, told the university community that education is not a process but a condition, that it isn't a product of so many years and so many credits but a condition of total self-motivated curiosity accompanied by total seeking and that it is as available to a freshman as to a Ph.D. Such a vision of education struck me then, and still strikes me, as the real answer to the easy as well as to the emphasis on money.

Such curiosity as he asks for implies a major shift in the direction of a university. It would probably take some form of surgery. But a university aimed toward the satisfaction of total, self-motivated curiosity about oneself, about one's world with its infinite varieties of the animate and inanimate, about its peoples and their histories, ideas, creative achievements, and about one's God—such a university would surely graduate people whose values could hardly permit the kinds of distorted emphases I have been worrying about. And there is a good deal of evidence that they would be even more successful in the world's work than those we now graduate.

I don't know how to counter that craze for the easy in culture. But I certainly know some of the directions our energies should take. I have real sympathies for the dilemma Harold Oaks faced in presenting *Star Child* at BYU. *Saturday's Warrior*, he tells me, had convinced him

that there is a large audience eager for specifically Mormon drama and music and he wants to do everything he can to provide for and develop that audience. So do I. But I still think it was a bad mistake for BYU to produce *Star Child*, especially for its premiere. Doing so bestows on it a quasi-official sanction from the university, even though we may deny that implication. And I'm afraid that in art and culture mediocrity feeds upon itself. Rather than raising taste, it simply feeds the taste for mediocrity. And the problem is intensified with *Star Child*, as shown by the enthusiastic response, because of its supposed Mormon message. To put it differently, the shallow and sentimental cannot nourish any taste except that for the shallow and sentimental. I know of no one beyond his teens who has ever learned to appreciate fine poems by nourishing his taste on sentimental ones. We do sometimes use bad ones to teach the good by contrast. But the only way one can learn to appreciate good poems is by reading good poems. The only way one can learn to appreciate good music and good art and good drama is by hearing and seeing and experiencing the good. I know of all those testimonials that tell of increased testimony and even conversion from *Saturday's Warrior*. I suppose I should be grateful for anything that increases testimony and conversion. But somehow I am more depressed than impressed. Both testimony and conversion should have a deeper source. I also know of Doug Stewart's supercilious letter to the editor in response to a series of letters that had followed an unfavorable review of *Star Child*. I winced at his condescending warning to "self-styled" intellectuals that those people out there (those he thanked for paying to see *Star Child*) were smarter than the intellectuals gave them credit for being.

The answer to *Star Child* is *The Redeemer*. The answer is the *Book of Mormon Oratorio* or *The Restoration*. The answer to the shoddy and sentimental—to the easy—is always the genuine. I wish we had much more of it around, especially of the explicitly Mormon. Yet, if I can trust my sense of what's happening, we are in the beginnings of a significant outpouring of art by and about and for Mormons. I don't know how far such an outpouring can go—how much of dry soil it can moisten and make productive—without a solid appreciative audience. In this general symbiotic relationship, audience and artist nourish each other—or can do so. And need to do so. These hands have need of each other.

I don't want to get caught in the perennial argument about whether there can be a "Mormon" art. On one level the question is already decided by the history of art, on another it is irrelevant. We can all recognize a peculiarly Christian art, a peculiarly Mohammedan art, a peculiarly Jewish art, a peculiarly American art, a peculiarly modern art, and peculiarly Southern art, a peculiarly Western art. Why not a peculiar art for a people who pride themselves on being peculiar? The one thing each of these others has in common is excellence—genuine quality. And that of course is what makes the question irrelevant. If Mormon artists produce genuine excellence, whether or not with specifically Mormon themes or settings or subjects, then we can hardly help producing a Mormon art—and a universal art at the same time.

If we could really generate a wide-spread and intense

quest for the true and excellent in our economic lives, in our education and in our culture, I suspect we would have gone a long way toward countering the easy in religion. This may be just a matter of blind faith and hope on my part. But the "right" attitudes toward money and education and culture—the ones I have been outlining—all seem to me profoundly Christian/Mormon attitudes. They embrace whatever is "virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy." But none of them suggest the easy yoke or the light burden, except in the complex sense that I have suggested—that our participation in the excellent eases the yoke and lightens the burden.

It is comparatively easy to follow our highly programmed religious lives: a three-hour block of time on Sunday, an hour a week for family home evening, a hour or so a month for home teaching or visiting teaching, perhaps some time in the garden and a few minutes a day for scripture study and prayer. Doing these, we are following the Prophet and therefore must be having a rich spiritual life. And all of them put together take only a small portion of our week. But one can do all these and still have an impoverished life of the spirit. The spirit begs for goods that the programs can do little more than open the storehouse to. The spirit is nourished by private meditation, prayer, heightened awareness, devotion, positive outward expression of love and concern, genuinely compassionate service, and all those other attitudes and actions the Savior commended. If I have prepared myself, I can be spiritually fed at Sacrament Meeting even if the speakers and music are mediocre. If I have not prepared myself, if I come only to absorb rather than to share and participate and give out, then I am almost certain to leave not even knowing that I am spiritually poor. Anyone who thinks the feeling and expressing of love is easy has forgotten even his first experiences with puppy love—both the misery and the exaltation. To really love all His children, as is required of us, means that we love not only those among us who are easy to love but also those who are almost unlovable. It means a constant expenditure of time and energy that is anything but easy but that is part of the burden He has placed upon us. And if this for love, the same for all those other virtues we are bidden to rise to, especially that most difficult one: that we lose ourselves for His sake.

Again, I know of no easy ways to bring these things about. I know of no shortcuts to wealth or education or culture or religion, no shortcuts to the sublime by way of the trivial—at least none that He would approve. What I do know is that He meant it—very literally though very paradoxically—when He said that His yoke is easy and His burden light. But to know that ease and that lightness, we have to go the heavy way. We may not have to carry His cross or even bathe His feet in any literal sense. But we must figuratively do both if we are really to bear His yoke and burden. The joy is that if we really do so we will be yoked with Him. And He has promised that He will make His yoke easy and His burden light.

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DOUGLAS ALDER

The Mormon Masses

Mormon pop or folk culture will not thwart the growth of literature and the fine arts.

THE heart of our campus is a 2,100 seat auditorium in an elegant Fine Arts Center. This is where our community meets for its serious moments—concerts, lectures, conventions, inaugurations. Though the basketball arena attracts more people and also fosters an invigorating togetherness, it is this auditorium that binds us together, that stretches our minds. It is our Roman Forum. Abba Eban, the Tabernacle Choir, Ralph Abernathy, county commissioners, high school poetry festivals, campus queens, and members of the British Parliament are among the people who regularly occupy this dias. The richness and diversity of this continuing fare, week after week, makes being in its environs a privilege, a chance for continual stimulation.

If one could attend every event, one would sample much of Western Civilization—from explanations of DNA to a barrage of concert jazz. And it would become obvious that quite different crowds are attracted by the various events. Most often those attending would be the “long hairs” who are attracted to academic lectures, classical music, and public issues. These are a tenaciously devoted group, dressed in suit and tie, who think the auditorium is exclusively theirs. But when they occupy the hall there is usually room for many more. Only on Utah Symphony nights do these concert goers come close to filling the seats.

Sometimes though there is “standing room only.” Every summer an incentive sales organization attracts agents from many states for a motivational convention. This is a wholly new audience. There is no overlap with the string quartet followers. Dressed in flashy colors and full of wild enthusiasm, these people shake the room with cheers and whistles. They pound their feet; they

Editors' Note: *This paper was delivered in response to the preceding article at the 1982 Sunstone Theological Symposium.*

sing; they applaud with stormy energy. By the time they leave they are rededicated to success motivation psychology. They are “turned on” by sales incentive strategies. Pouring forth from the auditorium they are prepared to sell a product to all America and to gain the personal wealth they envision.

A third group that takes over the auditorium on occasion is the lovers of Mormon pop music shows such as “Saturday’s Warrior,” “My Turn on Earth,” “It’s a Miracle.” With much more decorum but clear emotional vibrance, these people—particularly teenagers—gladly pay substantial entrance fees to hear tunes they can whistle and stories that reinforce their values. The music faculty avoids these performances assiduously but they are defenseless if they attend sacrament meetings where Lex deAzevedo long ago replaced Bach for special music numbers.

Of the three groups, the “long hairs,” the incentive sales reps, and the Mormon pop music clan, only the “long hairs” are likely to read *SUNSTONE*. So it is to this small audience who read poetry or enjoy string quartets or follow public issues or subscribe to *Science News* that this essay is addressed. The question is: how do we relate to the other groups?

My patience is the shortest with the group that worships success. Not always but too often they become enmeshed in pyramid sales systems, overpromised investment plans, or success formula packages that shortcut integrity on their way to profit. Recently the First Presidency aptly expressed a sadness, not so much that there are deceivers among us peddling get-rich schemes, but that many Mormons are so greedy and willing to ignore gospel principles by becoming involved in these schemes. Such people pursue personal advantage without admitting that others will be deceived, even ruined, as the price. This is a sad

commentary on our failure to weigh the moral implications of our acts. We Mormons are incensed when Marxists say that capitalism is driven by greed, yet we fail to be outraged when Utah becomes the gullibility capital for scams. Scams thrive on greed.

To argue that get-rich-quick schemes and deceptive business practices are a perversion of Christian morality is appropriate and necessary. But to extend the argument to the area of culture and artistic output is a confusion of logic.

Certainly some elements of Mormon popular culture are objectionable: trite and simplistic drama, the reducing of the Mormon message to a rock beat, pedestrian writing with its obligatory happy endings, functional rather than aesthetic architecture, illustration instead of art in Visitor's Centers. Such popularization is in poor taste. But immoral?

If it is immoral to wrap sublime messages in simplistic packages, then it is an entirely different brand of immorality than that of deliberate deception and fraudulent business dealings. To decry mediocre art, music, and drama with the same tone of moral outrage that we protest violations of morality in success motivation programs seems disproportionate.

We should do some serious reflective thinking before we go off shooting grapes against popular culture. An attitude of condescension flows too easily from the academic community. Our reaction to *Saturday's Warrior* and all of its cousins, to the invasion of sacrament meetings by pop songs, to the flood of Mormon books published to be given as gifts rather than to be read, to the swelling production of tapes with questionable faith-promoting stories needs some tempering.

May I illustrate with a personal example? My seventeen-year-old daughter loves "Saturday's Warrior." She knows I can't stand such productions. I grind my teeth and try to hold my tongue. On recent family trips we read Jack Weyland and George Durrant's books in the car. Frankly, I found them to be refreshing; not profound, but uplifting. That they have sold beyond 100,000 copies in comparison to the dozen or so people who have read my own essays gives me pause. My teenage children sensed that I preferred the novel I was reading, Marilyn Brown's *Earthkeepers*, but it is important that I did not lash out, that I allowed these teenage venturers to discover for themselves that there are degrees of quality.

For an Advanced Placement English class this year my daughter has to read five novels by one author. To my surprise she asked me for advice. After considering many authors she started with Chaim Potok. She was enthralled. She read three of his novels, then shifted to Hugo's *Les Miserables*. She finally settled on Dostoyevsky. Now into *Crime and Punishment*, she is finding herself thoroughly challenged. We are having more and more to talk about, partly because we didn't have a war over Jack Weyland or Blaine Yorgason.

Popular culture will always exist, nourished by profit-motivated semi-artistic productions or native crafts or the insatiable media market. Even in Europe, where there are state-supported opera companies, orchestras, and theaters in national as well as provincial capitals, they still have not been able to convert the masses.

State-controlled radio and television stations pipe fine arts into European homes but that has not thwarted the invasion of American rock music. If you know what Europe is really like, you will know that most of the people of Vienna, for example, have never been in the *Staatsoper*. You will know that the Social Democratic parties, who claim that the bourgeoisie has monopolized the culture, find it very hard to get the working class to accept free tickets to attend fine arts events.

Instead of decrying the growth of commercially-supported pop culture in Mormondom, I think we should redouble our efforts to produce and sell quality literature and fine arts. It is frustrating that our fine arts output as a people is so sparse. In comparison with the Jews, for example, we are but babes. Their culture, like ours, values applied subjects above arts and letters. Chaim Potok recently told a Salt Lake audience how his parents hoped he would be a brain surgeon. "Writing stories" was not considered acceptable. Yet despite such internal opposition Jews continue to produce Saul Bellows and Leonard Bernsteins. Mormonism, on the other hand, is still struggling to earn a reputation for its artists and writers equal to that of its engineers, agriculturalists, businessmen, and educators.

I would not be surprised to see the world-wide Mormon population equal the world Jewish population in my lifetime. I feel that we have an equally powerful subculture, despite their older heritage. We should strive to equal their artistic excellence.

There are encouraging signs. Leroy Robertson and Robert Cundick in music, for example. Marden Clark's poetry is published; I suspect it will be read after "Saturday's Warrior" dies its natural death. There are a couple of novels, a bit of drama, and quite a bit of art—a start. *SUNSTONE* magazine and its symposium are alive. Its subscription list is minuscule compared to the *Ensign*, but how it has changed the Mormon scene from what it was thirty years ago. Look at the Utah Opera Company. It takes my breath away. Their performances draw near-capacity crowds to the Capitol Theater's 3,500 seats. Yes, the season is short and the financing is shaky, but how far we have come. The Utah Symphony with its magnificent Symphony Hall is almost better than we deserve. The list goes on: *BYU Studies*, *Dialogue*, *Exponent II*, *Journal of Mormon History* and now *Literature and Belief*. There are a score of significant scholarly books. Yet taken as a whole it is still a modest product compared to the contemporary Jews.

We are living in the cultural awakening of Mormonism. We have the chance to avoid dwelling a whole lifetime on the "easy culture" in favor of a better option. That better option will attract an audience, but not all of the masses. Nevertheless, we do not need to decry the pop culture merely to promote better options. The folk culture of Europe did not thwart the growth of European literature and fine arts. Rock music has not displaced classical music in America. We must make sure that there is quality material available and effectively utilize our subsidized professional chairs to help Mormon youth experience and eventually produce that quality.

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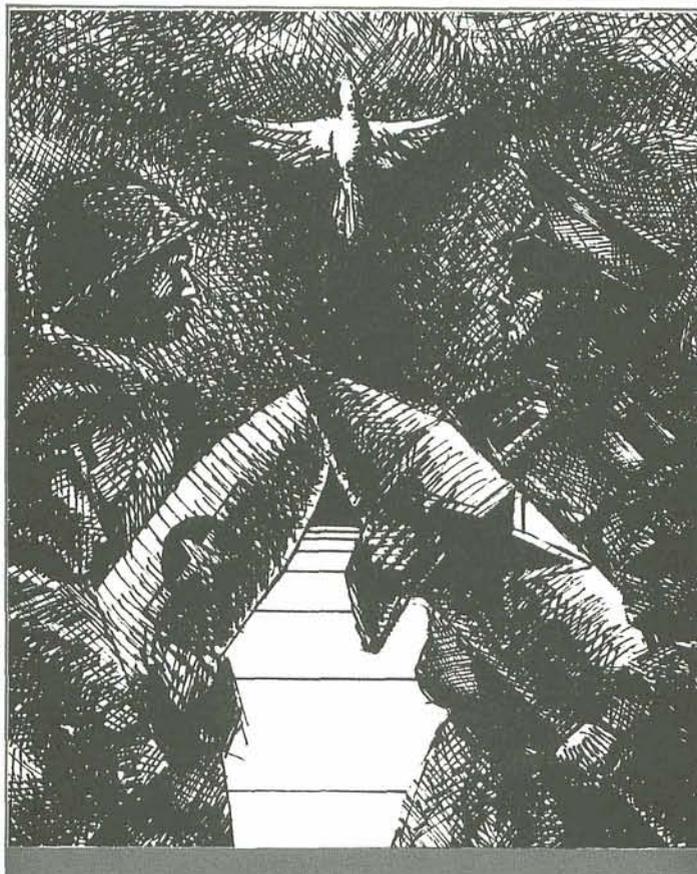
THE call of Christ is clear: "Love your enemies." But it is so difficult to do that, even in our own families and communities, that many have supposed that such a command could not possibly apply to *nations*—and few national leaders, Christian or not, have seriously tried to persuade their people to obey it. But Mormon leaders have insisted that the command fits every situation, that it is the only way to peace in any context. In their 1981 Christmas message the LDS First Presidency wrote:

To all who seek a resolution to conflict, be it a misunderstanding between individuals or an international difficulty among nations, we commend the counsel of the Prince of Peace, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45). This principle of loving one another as Jesus Christ loves us will bring peace to the individual, to the home and beyond, even to the nations and to the world.¹

That statement is part of a long LDS scriptural and prophetic tradition of response to the perennial human problem of war. Does that tradition provide a theology of peace, clear and consistent in theory and tested in practice, that could be useful to us in this violent time? I think so.

Much of the Book of Mormon deals with violence, and at first glance the various accounts may seem contradictory. There are the "people of Ammon," who provide the most impressive example of rigorous group pacifism I can find in history or literature: They make a covenant to die rather than shed blood,

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CAN NATIONS LOVE THEIR ENEMIES?

An LDS Theology of Peace

bury their weapons in the ground, and then allow themselves to be massacred rather than break their pledge. However, only 25 years later these same pacifists send 2000 of their sons to war, with a church leader turned military man at their head.

The great prophet Mormon, the editor of the book which bears his name, was a military leader from a very young age. Mormon even named his son, who also became a soldier, after Moroni, a general who had lived 400 years before. And Mormon includes, as the last 21 chapters of *Alma* (over 10 percent of the Book of Mormon), an extensively detailed and appreciative account of General Moroni's conduct of divinely approved warfare.

It is possible to make a list of LDS scriptures in which God allows war—and match it with another where conflict is forbidden. This may be confusing, but as Hugh Nibley has written:

The contradiction is only apparent, for if one examines the passages on both sides throughout the scriptures, they fall clearly into two categories: general principles and special instances. The verses forbidding conflict are

of a general and universal nature, while those which countenance it all refer to exceptional cases.²

Still, the example of the people of Ammon seems like a special case, precisely because it is so unparalleled, and it is clear elsewhere that in LDS theology what they do is not an automatic result or unqualified expectation for everyone after conversion. But an *ideal principle* is established, what I would term "effective pacifism": we are called to do whatever we can that will genuinely create peace, even sacrifice our lives. Mormon clearly views those conscientiously capable of the pacifist decision with great admiration, even as models. He writes, in his characteristic manner of teaching a lesson

to his readers, "Thus we see that when these Lamanites were brought to know the truth they were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin" (Alma 24:19). And he reports the judgment of Ammon, the Nephite missionary who had converted these people, that they had reached an ethical level superior to his own Nephites:

For behold, they had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of an enemy; and they have buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, because of their love towards their brethren.

And now behold I say unto you, has there been so great love in all the land? Behold I say unto you, Nay, there has not, even among the Nephites. (Alma 25:32,33.)

Without ignoring the high costs (over 1000 slain), the account also provides unique evidence that the pacifist ethic, which to most of us seems merely idealistic, actually works. When the attackers see that these former warlike associates "would not flee from the sword, neither would they turn aside . . . but that they would lie down and perish, and praised God even in the very act of perishing under the sword," they are moved to forbear and indeed many are themselves converted, "for they were stung for the murders which they had committed" (Alma 24:25).

The very principle of agency so endangered by Communism requires that we not make "an attempt to enforce a new order of government" against the majority will.

The Nephites, who do not have "so great love," take these pacifists under their protection and are later directed by God to take up arms against the Lamanites. The theological position developed is that known in Christian tradition as the doctrine of a "just war," which maintains that shedding the blood of an enemy can be justified by the rightness of one's cause and the moral restraint of one's methods. Early in the series of battles, Mormon reviews the specific conditions which justified the Nephites in going to war:

They were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church . . . the Lord said unto them, and also unto their fathers, that: Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye

shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies. (Alma 43:45-46).

The emphasis is on purely defensive war, carried to the point of consistent refusal to annihilate defeated Lamanite armies or even to insist on unconditional surrender. Again and again as soon as Moroni obtains some advantage in a battle he refuses to press it but sends the message, "We do not desire to slay you" (Alma 44:1 or "We will forbear shedding your blood" (Alma 52:34) and asks for surrender—but only the surrender involved in the Lamanites returning to their own lands and promising not to attack again.

The major constraint is against bloodthirstiness. From a divine perspective, certain of resurrection and immortality for all and thus most concerned for the state of the *soul*, it seems that shedding blood can be justified under certain conditions—but delighting in it never. Mormon's great admiration for Moroni is based in good part on the latter's ability to resist, amid all the passions of war that Mormon knew well, the bloodlust that seems to naturally afflict those who train for war and attack other human beings.

Mormon knew how quickly a whole people could be afflicted with the appetite for violence. He saw his own nation decline from being a "civil and delightsome people" until they became "without principle and past feeling; . . . [T]hey have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually" (Moroni 9:12,20,18,5) At one point Mormon leads his people to a great victory following many defeats. But when they then want to take the offensive and "avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies, Mormon refuses to participate and stands instead, under the Lord's direction, as "an idle witness" to his people's deserved destruction (Mormon 3:19).

This sounds like an entirely situational ethic. Do the examples cancel each other out? Is the one example of pacifism an aberration? I think not. The especially unified and religiously motivated people of Ammon were moved by their former experiences with violence to covenant upon conversion that under no circumstances, however just, would they shed blood again, and they were capable of enduring the price by allowing themselves to be slaughtered. But a generation later the whole Nephite nation was in danger of extermination—and with them the sacred records and spark of righteousness on the American continent that the Lord needed to save not only the Nephites but eventually their enemies the Lamanites and even modern people who would read their record. In this situation, and with a people not as unified and capable of disciplined pacifism as the people of Ammon, the Lord directed waging a just war, with severe constraints on methods and spirit.

But whatever specific response to the varied circumstances and the contrasting values—or the inspired direction of a prophet—may require in a particular situation, the underlying principles do not change: Ultimate concern must be for the character and salvation of those involved rather than apparent right or wrong or justice; revenge is never right, however

“justified”; vengeance and bloodthirstiness, very natural dangers, even in a just war, must be vigorously resisted, even at great risk, by fighting purely defensively and not insisting on unconditional surrender. As Nibley summarizes the principle, “In the end the most desperate military situation imaginable is still to be met with the spirit of peace and love.”

The prophet Joseph Smith, translator of the Book of Mormon, which was explicitly intended to provide essential lessons for modern man, understood this general principle well. In 1833, as recorded in D&C 98, the Lord taught Joseph a distinction between what is justified and what is best: Even in circumstances which would support waging a just war against our enemies, if we have sufficient courage and love to stay with general principles, there are special rewards, including the promise that the Lord will intervene on our behalf:

And again, if your enemy shall smite you the third time, and you bear it patiently, your reward shall be doubled unto you four-fold. . . . And then, if he shall come upon you or your children . . . I have delivered thine enemy into thine hands. And *then* if thou wilt spare him, thou shalt be rewarded for thy righteousness; and also thy children and thy children’s children. . . . (D&C 98:16-17; emphasis added.)

Such a vision has been held to consistently by LDS prophets for the subsequent 150 years: This is Brigham Young in 1859, speaking in a passionate satire of nationalistic propaganda that could be applied directly to *both sides* in the recent Falklands debacle and also in the Lebanon disaster:

Our traditions have been such that we are not apt to look upon war between two nations as murder; but suppose that one family should rise up against another and begin to slay them, would they not be taken up and tried for murder: And why not nations that rise up and slay each other in a scientific way be equally guilty of murder? “But observe the martial array—how splendid! See the furious war horses with the glittering trappings. Then the honour and the glory and pride of the reigning king must be sustained, and the strength and power and wealth of the nation displayed in some way; and what better way than to make war upon neighbouring nations under some slight pretext?” Does it justify the slaying of men, women, and children that otherwise would have remained at home in peace, because a great army is doing the work? No! The guilty will be damned for it.³

In the twentieth century the LDS version of a just war has been articulated in direct response to the two World Wars. In April 1917, right after the U.S. officially declared war on Germany, President Joseph F. Smith spoke in General Conference against the tendency of Americans to allow patriotism to lead them to madness in time of war, exhorting the Saints to retain their full sense of brotherhood with the Germans living in this country and admonishing those called to fight in the war to “do it with an eye single to the accomplishment of the good that is aimed to be accomplished, and not with a bloodthirsty desire to kill and to destroy.”⁴

Twenty-five years later, at the General Conference following Pearl Harbor, David O. McKay, of the First Presidency, outlined the conditions under which defensive war is justified, emphasizing carefully the

limitations:

Such a condition, however, is not a real or fancied insult given by one nation to another. When this occurs proper reparation may be made by mutual understanding, apology, or by arbitration . . . *nor is war justified in an attempt to enforce a new order of government, or even to impel others to a particular form of worship, however better the government or eternally true the principles of the enforced religion may be.*⁵

J. Reuben Clark read a statement of the First Presidency at that same conference which explored at great length the dilemma of those on various sides of a conflict who are called by their governments to fight and possibly shed blood. I sense the anguish the leaders felt as they tried to assuage the anguish of Mormon soldiers

Much of the Book of Mormon deals with violence, and at first glance the various accounts may seem contradictory.

serving opposing governments, even fighting each other. Yet they seem determined to make no compromise with the general principles we have been examining in the scriptures and to make clear that moral responsibility cannot be avoided:

The Church is and must be against war. . . . It cannot regard war as a righteous means of settling international disputes. . . .

But the Church membership are citizens or subjects of sovereignties over which the Church has no control. The Lord Himself has told us to befriend “that law which is the constitutional law of the land” (D&C 98:6).

. . . When, therefore, *constitutional law, obedient to these principles*, calls the manhood of the Church into the armed service of any country to which they owe allegiance, their highest civic duty requires that they meet that call. . . . It would be a cruel God that would punish His children as moral sinners for acts done by them as the *innocent instrumentalities* of a sovereign whom He had told them to obey and *whose will they were powerless to resist.*⁶

Those “powerless to resist” are innocent, but the First Presidency recognizes that to whatever degree any participant *is* able to be responsible—either as a leader who brings on the conflict or a soldier who can resist an unjust government or who indulges in hatred even in a just cause—he is accountable as a sinner:

There is an eternal law that rules war and those who engage in it. It was given when, Peter having struck off

the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, Jesus reproved him, saying: "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). The Savior thus laid down a general principle upon which He placed no limitations as to time, place, cause, or people involved. . . . This is a universal law, for force always begets force . . . it is the law of the unrighteous and wicked, but it operates against the righteous who may be involved. . . . That in their work of destruction [innocent participants in war] will be striking at their brethren will not be held against them. That sin, as Moroni of old said, is to the condemnation of those who sit in their places of power in a state of thoughtless stupor, those rulers in the world who in a frenzy of hate and lust for unrighteous power and dominion over their fellow men, have put into motion eternal forces they do not comprehend and cannot control.⁷

Unilateral disarmament and absolute pacifism, accompanied by massive efforts to extend intelligent, tough-minded but loving help to our enemies, are the ideal solutions. But since we are not capable of such unified love, a compromise solution must be worked out.

Mormon leaders did not hesitate to severely criticize leaders of the United States as well as those of other countries for ignoring such general principles and perpetrating the brutalities of the Second World War. This is J. Reuben Clark of the First Presidency speaking in General Conference just after the war:

As the crowning savagery of the war, we Americans wiped out hundreds of thousands of civilian population with the atom bomb in Japan, few if any of the ordinary civilians being any more responsible for the war than were we. . . . Military men are now saying that the atom bomb was a mistake. It was more than that; it was a world tragedy. . . . And the worst of this atomic bomb tragedy is not that not only did the people of the United States not rise up in protest against this savagery, not only did it not shock us to read of this wholesale destruction of men, women, and children, and cripples, but that it actually drew from the nation at large a general approval of this fiendish butchery.⁸

In much the same spirit, the First Presidency in December 1945 issued a letter to each member of the Utah Congressional delegation, outlining 17 reasons for

opposing the "compulsory universal military training" being proposed by the Truman administration. Such a law, they wrote, would "teach our sons not only the way to kill but also, in too many cases, the desire to kill, thereby increasing lawlessness and disorder." The ways of war, they argued, are "wholly un-American." The creation of a military caste would be a threat to the "equality and unity which always characterize the citizenry of a republic." An immense standing army, the "creation of a great war machine" would be a temptation to ambitious dictators intent on the destruction of freedom: "The possession of great military power always breeds thirst for domination, for empire, and for a rule by might not right." The First Presidency warned, in terms exactly prophetic of what has happened in the ensuing 40 years, that the building of "a huge armed establishment" would contradict any protestations of peace and in fact encourage other nations to follow a similar militaristic course,

so placing upon the peoples of the earth crushing burdens of taxation that with their present tax load will hardly be bearable, and that will gravely threaten our social, economic, and governmental systems. . . . We shall make of the whole earth one great military camp whose separate armies, headed by war-minded officers, will never rest till they are at one another's throats in what will be the most terrible contest the world has ever seen. . . . What this country needs and what the world needs, is a will for peace, not war.⁹

LDS leaders have not been content to rest on the doctrine of a just war and patriotic submission to authority that the World Wars seemed to require. There is clearly in their minds a higher law, which stands in judgment even on the most justifiable efforts of men to defend themselves with weapons. In 1948 Joseph Fielding Smith reviewed for Church members the "law of forgiveness and retribution" presented in D&C 98 and also the radical example of perfect pacifism of the people of Ammon in the Book of Mormon. Elder Smith insisted on direct applicability of those standards to present day nations. "This may to the ordinary human being be a hard law to follow," he wrote, "but nevertheless it is the word of the Lord. . . . Because [the people of Ammon] refused to take up arms to defend themselves, but would rather lay down their lives than shed blood in their own defense, they brought many of their enemies to repentance and to the kingdom of God. This is the doctrine of Jesus as taught in his Sermon on the Mount. If all peoples would accept this doctrine there could be no war."¹⁰

Of course, all people do not accept that doctrine, but LDS scriptures and prophets have insisted that the individual retains responsibility to live the doctrine, even unilaterally. The Declaration of Belief Regarding Governments and Laws (D&C 134), adopted by the Church in 1835, states that "governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man" and that God "holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them." Men are obliged to "sustain and uphold" their governments "while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights," first among those being "free exercise of conscience."

The commitment of LDS leaders to such principles of

individual responsibility was underscored during the Vietnam War. Some young Latter-day Saints, convinced that their government was asking them to participate in an unjust war, applied for exemption as conscientious objectors. These young men generally faced draft boards that assumed the Mormon emphasis on national loyalty precluded Mormons from conscientious objection. When these LDS men wrote to President McKay about their standing, they received this reply:

As the brethren understand, the existing law provides that men who have conscientious objection may be excused from combat service. There would seem to be no objection, therefore, to a man availing himself on a personal basis of the exemptions provided by law.¹¹

Though this certainly did not assume pacifism as *the Mormon position*, the First Presidency clearly placed individual agency to live by the general principle over specific national loyalty. And the letter successfully supported applications of Mormon conscientious objectors.

But the most specific and powerful call to Americans and Mormons to live by conscience and higher law was made in a remarkable prophetic address by President Spencer W. Kimball in 1976. The address was timed to coincide with the American Bicentennial celebrations, when patriotic fervor and national self-satisfaction were at a height. President Kimball accused Americans, specifically pointing to his own Mormon people, of worshiping the false gods of material possessions and pleasures and of relying on the arm of flesh, the carnal security of military armaments, rather than trusting the God of Israel and living his law:

We are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord. We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus in the manner of Satan's counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior's teaching [that we love our enemies].

We forget that if we are righteous the Lord will either not suffer our enemies to come upon us—and this is the special promise to the inhabitants of the land of the Americas (see 2 Nephi 1-7)—or he will fight our battles for us.¹²

President Kimball then articulated precisely the central pragmatic concept of the LDS theology of peace—that enemies cannot be defeated, they can only be changed into other than enemies by true principles of love, and God will provide the power to do that if we will trust him and pay the price of trying things his way:

What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative; to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.¹³

President Kimball has, of course, continued to preach this doctrine, notably in the message last Christmas

which insists that nations as well as individuals can learn to love their enemies and also in the earlier statement opposing basing of the MX missile system in the western United States.

Our fathers came to this western area to establish a base from which to carry the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth. It is ironic and a *denial of the very essence of that gospel*, that in this same general area there should be constructed a mammoth weapons system potentially capable of destroying much of civilization.¹¹

Let me now briefly apply this theology in judgment on some recent wars and suggest how it might guide us in the future decisions of our country and our individual consciences. In general, the extraordinary prevalence and horror of wars since 1914 seems to be a result of the combination of modern technology with mediocre or actually sinful leaders, those David O. McKay identified in 1942 as "rulers in the world who in a frenzy of hate and lust for unrighteous power and dominion over their fellow men, have put into motion eternal forces they do not comprehend and cannot control." Certainly in the

To whatever degree any participant is able to be responsible—either as a leader who brings on the conflict or a soldier who can resist an unjust government or who indulges in hatred even in a just cause—he is accountable as a sinner.

first World War, "the war no one wanted," mutual hate and miscalculation by inept leaders initiated the conflict, and lack of rational ability to adjust prolonged the horror: The Austrian, German, and Russian leaders, seeing themselves as honorable and superior and their opponents as inferior and diabolical, escalated their hostile behavior, ignored the reactions of those around them, and led their nations to destruction. French and English leaders reviled the "Huns," persisted in committing such follies as cavalry charges against machine guns, and destroyed a whole generation of their young manhood. Even after victory the peace settlement imposed at Versailles was a "victor's peace." Its vengeful humiliations rankled in the German spirit and added fuel to the post war economic disasters that helped bring Hitler to power (and which we—merrily dancing the

Charleston—did nothing to prevent as we had the good sense to do after the Second World War).

The main lesson of the “Great War” of the forties is that even a just war can be conducted immorally or ineffectively when judged by larger ends or higher principles than merely winning the war. The United States won the peace to some extent with the Marshall Plan, one of the few acts between belligerent nations in this century that (despite its inception in pragmatic anti-Communism) seems entirely consistent with Christ’s teachings. This effort brought an economic recovery to our former enemies that continues to have lasting benefits as they have now become our friends and helpful competitors—certainly one example of President Kimball’s injunction and promise “to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.” But we also brought great and prolonged suffering and created the specter of nuclear destruction that continues to haunt us, because we let the end justify the means and gradually accepted bombing of *civilian* populations as a weapon. Lewis Mumford has documented¹⁵ how we slowly surrendered to our own military leaders and turned from abhorrence of the German practice of such bombing at the beginning of the war to retaliation in kind, and finally to acceptance without a qualm of the obliteration of Dresden and Berlin and Hiroshima—a moral blindness President J. Reuben Clark so graphically denounced. And I am convinced that by our vengeful insistence on “unconditional surrender” we prolonged the war, created a situation that seemed to justify the atomic bomb, and helped ensure Russian dominance in Eastern Europe.

That same blindness to the costs and impermanence of a humiliateingly imposed victor’s peace or a devastating total defeat led to serious mistakes in Korea. I find John G. Stoessinger’s analysis in *Why Nations Go to War* convincing.¹⁶ The decision to repel aggression was justifiable and conducted with initial restraint. But when victory seemed assured, General MacArthur and then President Truman were tempted to offensive action—first the crossing of the 38th parallel into North Korea and then a drive toward the Yalu River border with China. Proceeding without respect for either the United Nations or Communist China, MacArthur provoked Chinese intervention that probably prolonged the war another 18 months and turned it into one of the bloodiest wars of this century: 34,000 Americans dead, perhaps 1.5 million Korean and another 1.5 million Chinese casualties. And the war that might have, with continued restraint, stopped an aggression without lasting bitterness and enhanced the United Nations, ended indecisively. Two Koreas emerged—both fully armed, hostile dictatorships—and the United Nations was seriously weakened as a neutral arbitrator by being drawn onto the side of the victim of aggression who in turn became the aggressor.

A similar temptation seems to be afflicting Israel: It has long been the *victim* of irrational hatred, terrorism, and aggression but now seems to lack the humility and courage to resist inflicting on others what has been inflicted on itself. All its heroic resistance and rolling back of its enemies has not bought Israel the security it

craves. In fact the one clear lesson seems to be that the victor’s peace imposed on Egypt in 1967, when Egypt lost the Sinai, continued to fester until a near *defeat* of Israel and then a more equitable ceasefire finally helped lead to negotiations and a peace treaty. And *that* required a unilateral act of courageous love to break the impasse, when Anwar Sadat risked everything to reach out to his enemies.

But the lesson seems lost, and Israel, in the name of avenging a few hundred of its people killed by Palestinian rockets and terrorism, has killed thousands of Lebanese as well as Palestinians and probably incurred the lasting enmity of entire new groups and a whole new generation. Even if it had completely destroyed the Palestinians in Beirut, hundreds of thousands of enemies will continue elsewhere until there is someone with the largeness of mind and heart to sacrifice Israeli-occupied land and temporarily risk Israeli security enough to provide a permanent solution to Palestinian homelessness and consequent resentment—to turn enemies into something else and thus bring the only real security and peace.

But we Americans cannot be proud of our own record, especially in Vietnam. That war is still too close to us perhaps to analyze sensibly, but let me risk a few judgments in the light of the theology I have described. On the basis of the evidence available,¹⁷ I believe that in Vietnam we not only failed to act in Christian love so as to turn enemies into friends but we turned potential friends into bitter enemies. Ho Chi Minh led his people as our ally against the Japanese and looked to us as an example and champion in his legitimate quest for independence from French colonialism—but in vain. And after he defeated the French, if we had sustained his efforts under the Geneva accords of 1954 to hold national elections that our own leaders admitted would have brought him legitimately to power, Vietnam could still have emerged as a united, certainly Communist, country, but probably as friendly to us and progressive as China is now. But our anti-Communist panic led us twice to betray Ho Chi Minh in favor of colonial or minority governments that we preferred. We became increasingly involved in the ensuing civil war and finally, directly contrary to the principles for a just war outlined

In the end the most desperate military situation imaginable is still to be met with the spirit of peace and love.

by David O. McKay, waged an offensive war, far from our borders, "in an attempt to enforce a new order of government," against the majority will, on the Vietnamese.

I feel certain that Communism is on balance a disaster for most of those brought under its sway, especially because of the massive curtailment of individual freedom (continuing defections from Vietnam indicate that even former Viet Cong are learning this), and it may well be that for many individuals it is better to be dead than to be Red. But the very principle of agency so endangered by Communism as to make that true requires that *we not make such a decision for other people*, as it seems we tried to do in Vietnam.

What, finally, of our failure in the long cold war with Russia, with its corollary nuclear escalation, that now costs hundreds of billions of dollars a year and seems to lead towards an abyss. The history of efforts to control

Even a just war can be conducted immorally when judged by higher principles than merely winning the war.

atomic weapons and then to disarm is one of irrational mistrust between the superpowers—continued unwillingness of each to exhibit the faith in the other that it demands the other to have in it. Even the farsighted Baruch plan, designed for international control in 1946 when the U.S. still had an atomic monopoly, insensitively placed Russia in an inferior position by denying it the right to continue its own research and by requiring its economic submission—to an international body it did not trust. There followed a long struggle between the U.S. and Russia over which would come first, disarmament or mechanisms for inspection and control. Stoessinger describes the dilemma:

Though both powers accepted the principle of simultaneous disarmament and control, they were unable to translate it into practice. Each side continued to postpone making the greater sacrifice, and instead encouraged the opponent to take the first step.¹⁷

The story is almost amusing, like one of little boys with fragile egos quarreling—except that this failure of imagination and courage not only now costs many times what it would take to solve world hunger and bring adequate medical care and education to all in the world who need it, but it has produced a world of potential nuclear accidents, of proliferation to nations (even terrorist groups) capable of nuclear blackmail, and of weapon building that gathers momentum in a way that

points only to catastrophe.

Beyond a radical critique of most of the conduct during conflict of most contemporary governments, including our own, LDS theology offers a guide to better conduct. I believe its fundamental message is that "effective pacifism," even unilateral disarmament if accompanied by massive efforts to extend intelligent, creative, tough-minded but loving help to other nations, particularly our chief "enemy" the Soviet Union, is the *ideal* solution—the only one that could make our enemies no longer enemies and that would make us fully worthy of God's assistance and protection. But since we are not, with our allies or even as a single nation, capable of such unified love of our enemies and faith in God rather than the arm of flesh, a compromise solution, based on the restraints of a purely defensive, just war must be worked out. That solution must be guided, however, by the principles inherent in the ideal solution, which stands in judgment on anything less.

A first step would be to work toward loving our enemies by knowing them as humans like ourselves, by resisting the usual mindless stereotyping of Russians as universally crude, deceitful monsters intent on our enslavement and ourselves as noble, generous saviors fit to release them from their enslavement. This means resisting the demagoguery of press and politicians. It means studying Russian and Chinese and Eastern European cultures and languages, visiting behind the Iron Curtain—but getting to know individual people in depth rather than superficially. If only five percent of our monstrous military budgets were spent on exchange of peoples between our nations for such study we could send a million persons each year (and as a result be motivated to find ways to reduce those budgets much more than five percent). It is likely that we can only gradually be weaned away from placing our faith in weapons and in an escalating balance of terror based only in paranoid actions and reactions. But we must try.

Loving our enemies means, I believe, that we would resist at every point the idea increasingly promoted by our present government that we should attempt to collapse the Russian (or Polish) economy as a means to bringing about revolution and a government more to our liking. In the first place, it is highly unlikely we could succeed, given the resilience of the peoples involved and the military power of their governments, and it is even more unlikely on the evidence of history that the chaos resulting from such a collapse would bring to power a less repressive government. We would be much better advised to look to our own economy, which may be in as great danger as the Russian—and to our basic principles, which call us to *help* not hurt our enemies, so they will no longer be our enemies.

Perhaps, given the realities of the cold war, we must work mainly through private people to people agencies to love our enemies. Some of us, mainly in Utah, conducted a campaign this past year called Food for Poland, cooperating closely with the Polish American Congress and Catholic Relief Services. Our success seems small compared to the need. But we did help send perhaps \$1 million in food and medicine (\$100,000 worth given by the LDS church and much of the rest by

Mormons), and in visits to the Polish community in Chicago and to Poland itself we felt the power of love changing people's hearts and saw that our efforts brought hope and courage to people far out of proportion to the physical help.

President Reagan cut off \$800 million in aid to Poland for 1982. Perhaps twice that much (less than one percent of our military budget), invested in 1981 in an imaginative, well-designed Marshall Plan for the economic recovery of Poland—and implemented through Solidarity and the Catholic Church—might well have obviated the need for martial law, bound us in friendship to that country, and provided the crucial resources for their remarkable 'renewal' to continue. We may soon have another chance to do something like that, as the suffering this winter worsens and the Polish government seeks help, but I wonder if our leaders are planning for such positive measures. If we could be willing to help build a *genuinely neutral, still socialist* but experimental and developing Poland, it might well be as acceptable to Russia as Finland is, and it would be a great example to other countries who might see how to develop greater freedoms without antagonizing Russia by seeming to threaten her national security—and thus could help to diversify the world from its present dangerous division.

To touch the heart of an enemy and heal division is difficult—among the most difficult and important of human duties. It requires risk, imaginative effort to overcome suspicion, hard-headed negotiation and calling to repentance at the right moment—followed by an increase of mercy and generosity. But each of us has had enough experience at the personal level to sense that it can be done and something of how it could be done between nations. For instance, it is impossible to judge precisely relative U.S.-Soviet strength: Which is better, our advantage in flexibility of delivery systems or their advantage in "throw weight"? In any event we each have sufficient power to destroy the other totally, many times over. And if the Soviets really have the nuclear superiority and the ambition to rule the world that some of our political leaders are claiming (as an excuse to escalate our own arms buildup), Russia would already have used that power to destroy or at least blackmail us. We should resist therefore the current obsession of our government to become exactly "equal" with Russia before we can seek a bilateral nuclear freeze or arms reduction. Both sides will *always* be able to use that argument—until doomsday. One side must have the courage to accept rough parity (such as I believe we now have), stop threatening and "catching up," then trust in the basic principles of reducing enmity we have reviewed, and act so as to entice the other side to do the same. Since we claim to be a Christian or at least morally superior nation, why shouldn't we be first? At the very least, we must resist any ambitions to "roll back" Communism through regaining nuclear superiority and threatening to launch a "winnable" nuclear war if the Soviets do not retreat. There is growing evidence that some in our government are pushing arms buildup because they have precisely those ambitions—a clear violation of President McKay's warning against

offensive war.

If we are individually to assist in finding solutions, we must replace thoughtless fear of Communism with faith in Christ's commandments—in President Kimball's phrase, leave being "anti-enemy" and become "pro-kingdom of God." President McKay helped us look beyond systems to people and to principles of peace:

No matter how excellent [Nazism, Fascism, Communism, or Capitalism] may seem in the minds of their advocates, none will ameliorate the ills of mankind unless its operation in government be impregnated with the basic principles promulgated by the Savior of Men. On the contrary, even a defective economic system will produce good results if the men who direct it will be guided by the spirit of Christ.

Actuated by that spirit, leaders will think more of men than of the success of a system. Kindness, mercy, and justice will be substituted for hatred, suspicion, and greed. There is no road to universal peace, which does not lead to the heart of humanity.¹⁹

All our experience shows that in the course of arguments about equality, former injuries and injustices, who *deserves* what, none of us will see peace between nations. LDS teachings witness that it is only in treating our enemies with the respect and justice we want for ourselves—and then in mercy rather than retribution, in "perfect love" that "casteth out fear"—that the forces of peace can be released.

Notes

1. *The Church News*, 19 December 1981, p. 2.
2. Hugh Nibley, "If There Must Needs Be Offense," *The Ensign* (July 1971):54.
3. *Journal of Discourses*, 16 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-86), 7:137.
4. Joseph F. Smith, *Eighty-seventh Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City, 1917), p. 4.
5. David O. McKay, *One Hundred and Twelfth Annual Conference*. . . (Salt Lake City, 1942), p. 72; emphasis added.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95. 7. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
8. J. Reuben Clark, *One Hundred and Sixteenth Semi-Annual Conference*. . . (Salt Lake City, 1946), p.
9. *The Improvement Era* (February 1946):76-77.
10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, Second Series (Salt Lake City, 1947), p. 193.
11. Letter signed by Joseph Anderson for the First Presidency, January 1968, reprinted in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Spring 1968):8.
12. Spencer W. Kimball, "First Presidency Message: The False Gods We Worship," *The Ensign* (June 1976):6.
13. *Ibid.*
14. "LDS Church Leaders Oppose MX," *The Daily Universe*, May 1981, p. 1; emphasis added.
15. Lewis Mumford, "The Morals of Extermination," *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 1959):38-44.
16. John G. Stoessinger, *Why Nations Go to War* (New York, 1982), pp. 55-80.
17. Analysis and bibliography is available in Ray C. Hillam, Eugene England, and John Sorenson, "Vietnam: A Roundtable," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Winter 1967):69-100 (reading suggestions on p. 80).
18. Stoessinger, p. 219-220; emphasis added.
19. David O. McKay, *One Hundred and Fourteenth Semi-Annual Conference* (Salt Lake City, 1944), p.

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A theology of peace is not a new concept; indeed, it has been a fundamental tenet of Jewish and Christian thought for centuries. As one who has been involved in the struggle for civil rights in the South, I bear testimony to the dynamism of the theory of non-violence practiced by southern blacks in the face of extremist hatred. As a Jew, as "one who belongs to the most vilified and persecuted minority in history" (Justice Felix Frankfurter, dissenting, *West Virginia vs. Barnette*, 1943), I am the continuation of a history replete with vigorous, and repetitious martyrdom on behalf of this historic theology of peace.

The Talmud states that "he who turns his enemy into a friend is the bravest hero." The essence of Judaism, according to Hillel, is to love the other person; all the rest of Jewish thought and writing is but commentary on that theme. The Christian perception is similar—love of enemy; converting him to friendship through the true principles of sacrificial love. Peace comes only when enemies' hearts

are touched by radical love. But can this individualistic ethic be elevated to the level of national policy? Can personal, sacrificial love be a model for the nation-state?

Of the activities of nation-states in the twentieth century, according to Eugene England, only one decision, made by the United States, parallels this radical theology—the Marshall Plan for Western Europe. Every other action has been, in effect, a rejection of it. World War I, War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Mid-East, the other hot wars, and the ongoing Cold War illustrate the failure

Editors' Note: This paper was delivered in response to the preceding article at the 1982 Sunstone Theological Symposium.



THE NATION STATE: IMMORALITY AND VIOLENCE

*Peace will remain an
unfulfilled ideal.*

of pacifism. Can it be any other way? I doubt it very much.

The nation-state system and ideology is antithetical to the concept of love of enemy and unilateral disarmament. The development of this system, with its emphasis on territoriality, political and social differences, ideological divergence, and on the object-ification of the enemy into a non-person has led to the development of what Jacobo Timmerman has called the "moral crime of silence" in the modern nation state.

Writes Timmerman of contemporary Argentina:

Entire families disappeared. The bodies were covered with cement and thrown to the bottom of the river . . . the corpses usually vanished forever. . . . Yet even amid victory the [government] discovered that everything was known. And that is the chief advantage they've handed the guerrillas and terrorism: an acknowledgement of terrorist irrationality as a policy, and the fact that their own irrationality exceeds that of their opponents. . . . What there was, from the start, was the great silence, which appears in every civilized country that passively accepts the inevitability of violence, and

then the fear that suddenly befalls it. That silence which can transform any nation into an accomplice. . . . Such silence begins in the channels of communication. Certain political leaders, institutions, and priests attempt to denounce what is happening, but are unable to establish contact with the population. . . . The silence begins with a strong odor. People sniff the suicides, but it eludes them. Then silence finds another ally: solitude. People fear suicides as they fear madmen. And the person who wants to fight senses his solitude and is frightened. Whereupon the silence reverts to patriotism. Fear finds its great moral revelation in patriotism, with its indubitable capacity for justification, its climate of glory and sacrifice. . . . It's best, therefore, to be a patriot and not remain solitary. To stay out of politics and stay alive.

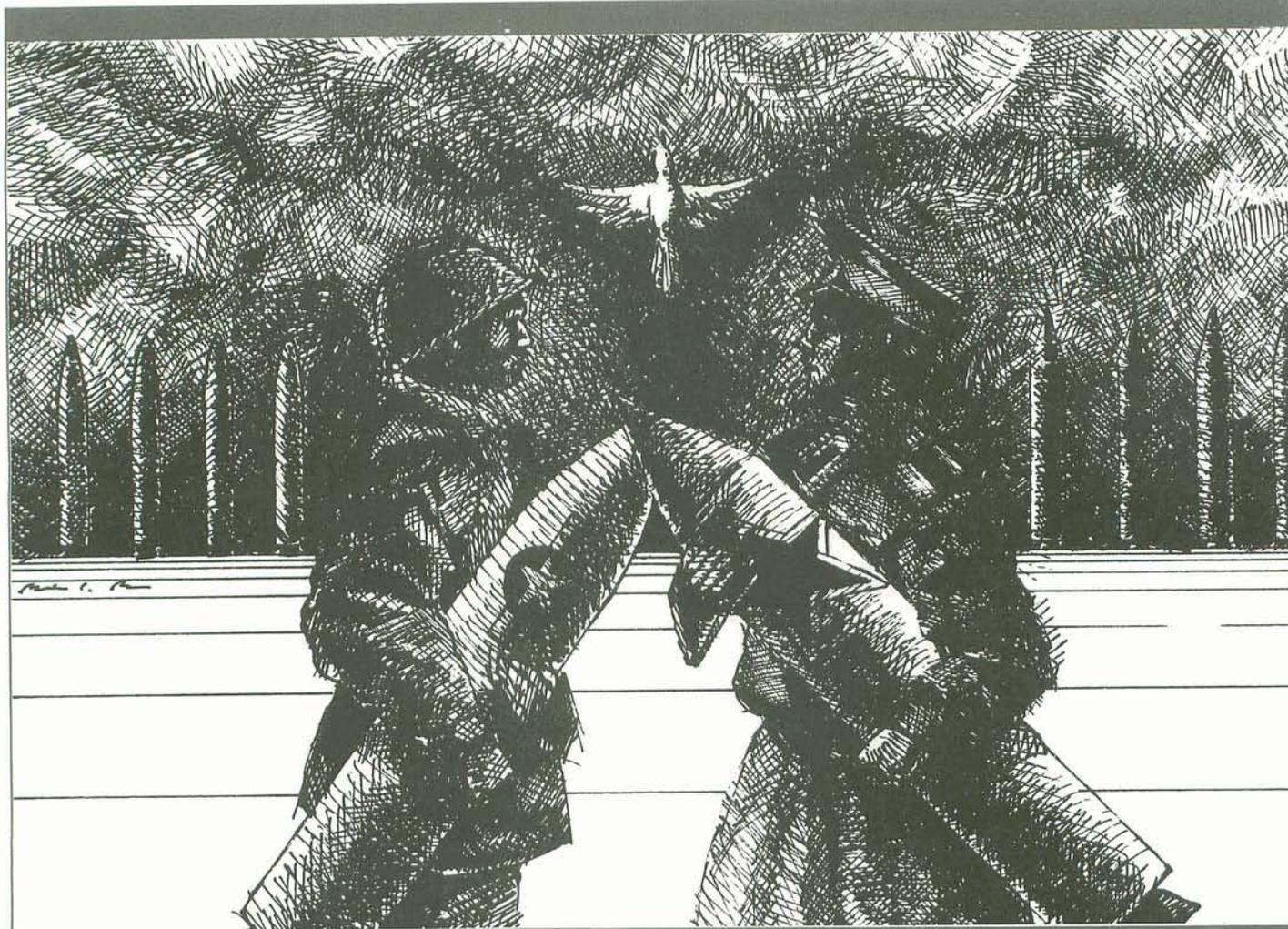


ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN BEAN

For England, there seem to be two responses to the irrationality and violence that result from the activities of the nation state: the moral outcry expressive of the radical ethic of love and the moral crime of silence disguised as patriotism.

Can a radical theology of peace change the irrationality of immoral national actions? Can the "Code of Better Conduct" move nation-states to unilateral disarmament, beating their swords into plowshares? No. Even the "children of light," to use Reinhold Niebuhr's language, have to adopt the techniques of the "children of darkness"—arming the nation, using all kinds of underhanded, undercover techniques in order to overcome the evil "children of darkness." So I reluctantly reject the attitude that there can be amazing transformation of the nation-state way of "doing business" based on the radical theology of peace, love, and abnegation.

For centuries Jews and Christians alike have martyred themselves on behalf of this radical ideal without successfully changing the character of the nation-state system. So long as the nation-state exists, a theology of peace at the macro-level is and will remain an unfilled idea. The ethic is, however, vital at the personal level, reflecting how an *individual* ought to act in the face of evil and irrationality in the nation-state.

The noted author Elie Wiesel tells the story of one of

the Just Men on Earth (in Sodom) who was

determined to save its inhabitants from sin and punishment. Night and day he walked the streets and markets preaching against greed and theft, falsehood and indifference. In the beginning, people listened and smiled ironically. Then they stopped listening; he no longer even amused them. The killers went on killing, the wise kept silent, as if there were no just man in their midst.

One day a child, moved by compassion for the unfortunate preacher, approached him with these words: "Poor stanger. You shout, you expend yourself body and soul; don't you see that it is helpless?" "Yes, I see," answered the Just Man. "Then why do you go on?" "I'll tell you why. In the beginning, I thought I could change man. Today, I know I cannot. If I still shout today, if I still scream, it is to prevent man from ultimately changing me."

I have a little more optimism than the Just Man. I believe it is possible for men and women who love justice and who do not remain silent to effect change. But it is serendipity if it succeeds; most of the time the cries and screams accomplish the same end experienced by the Just Man. And the nation-state will continue—until the world is blown up.

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P aradoxes and Perplexities

LOVE AND PAIN AND THE WHOLE DAMNED MISSION

Marvin Rytting

She stands in the door of the chapel staring into the blackness of a Saturday night. She's not beautiful, perhaps not even pretty. Yet, for some reason, she's extremely attractive. She's tall and stately and her long brown hair fits well. Her skirt would perhaps be condemned at BYU, but somehow on her it seems perfectly modest. Maybe her salient 'sweet spirit' makes everything she does and is seem right.

"Yet she so often has an air of sadness, of silent suffering. You sense that tonight as you watch her and you wonder what she's thinking. Is she

dreaming the dreams that 17-year-old girls dream? Does she realize how slim her chances are of having these dreams fulfilled? Saturday night is the night for romance. Does her heart long for the romance that she won't find at MIA? She comes into the chapel wearing that sad look that makes you ache with the desire to embrace her and kiss her and comfort her and make her smile. But, of course, you can't. You can't even talk to her. (Remember the rules, Elder.)

"During the MIA class she mentions that she wants to marry one who is worthy to go to the temple, that this is the quality she looks for. Your mind quickly reviews the possibilities. It doesn't take long, for all of the boys in the branch that are worthy are

spoken for. You think, 'Maybe in some other branch . . .' And then you remember other 17-year-old girls (and 22-year-old and 26 and 34) and you wonder in how many places and how many times this act is being repeated. And again you wonder what her chances are. (Where's your faith, Elder?)

"And of course you must teach the MIA lesson out of the book and tell them that they must not marry or even date boys outside of the Church. You very carefully describe the type of boy they ought to look for; and you chastise them severely when they think that they find the boy you describe in the person of a missionary. (Remember the rules, girls.) And thus, you put them in a nearly hopeless position.

"Maybe this girl will be lucky. Maybe at the next youth conference she will meet the one. But how many will be lucky? (Now, where's your faith, Elder?) Some will find a husband within the Church. Others will not find him but refusing to lower their standards, they will live their lives unfulfilled and will face the future as 'Millennium girls.' The majority will be charmed by a nonmember and will leave the Church. You sometimes wonder which is sadder. (What did you say, Elder?) You think of this as you look at her sad eyes and you want

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to cry. But then you ask, 'Where's your faith, Elder?'

This is a quote from my missionary journal, written about three months before I came home. I have resisted—with great difficulty—the urge to edit it because like most things in my journal, I am somewhat embarrassed by the style even while I recognize how real the feelings are. About two months after I returned home, I received a letter from the girl I wrote about in which she made a confession:

"While you were here, I grew to esteem you and consider you one of the best friends I've ever had, although our friendship was not very intimate and I didn't confide in you my sorrows. It's not that I think you look like a padre [actually, I did look like a padre at the time] but I want to confess some things in this letter. You may think it strange for me to say these things, but I don't want you to have a bad impression of me. . . .

"Since I was small, I learned that a Mormon girl should be an example and especially that she shouldn't date the missionaries but on the contrary should help them so that they can finish their missions with conviction that they have served our Heavenly Father. And I always fought against this temptation and I can say that

until last year I had never been in love with nor dated any Elder. I always treated them as friends and played with them, but that's all.

"But then I met Elder —; I don't know why, I think Satan helped a lot, but I fell in love with him. I fought to tear him from my heart, but it was all in vain. I tell you this because you were his companion and must have noticed that I liked him. I didn't date him, we all know that. When he left, I cried and resolved to forget him because I know that he is forbidden for me. I know that I love him with all my heart. They say that you can't control your heart and I think it is true; I want to force him out of my heart, but I don't succeed at all. I asked him to forgive me for having liked him because I know he is a missionary of the Lord.

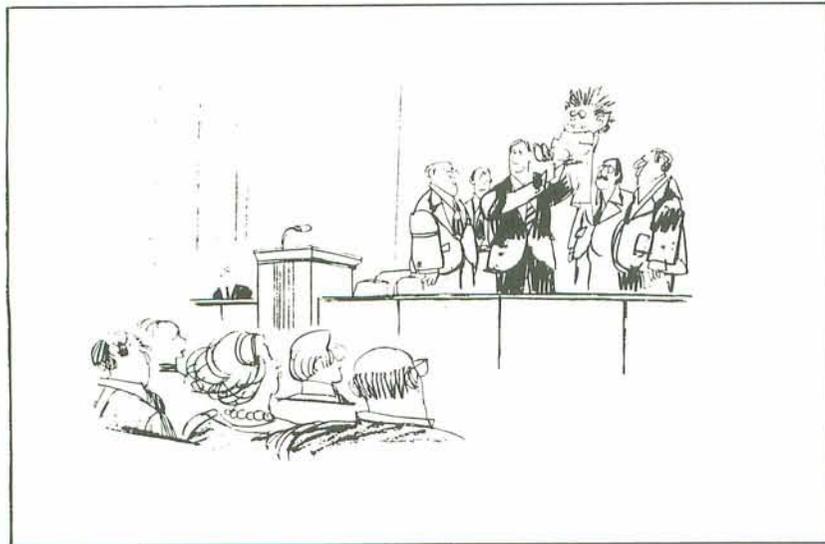
"I wanted to tell you all of this so you would understand why I acted the way I did while you were here as the leader. I was frank with you because I consider you a very dear friend who understands that we are subject to error. Pray for the Lord to help me. Forgive me for everything. This will be the first and only that I will love in my life. It will not happen again. I will never again even think about any Elder."

I was a little disappointed that it had

been my companion and not me for whom she had been pining, but I accepted the role of friend with grace. I do not know how widespread this dynamic between missionaries and young women in the missionfield is, but I know that I had trouble with some women during my entire mission. In Brazil fifteen years ago, there were several factors which contributed to romantic tensions. We were young American boys, and as such we were each seen as a potential Prince Charming. We were tickets to a better life in America, and there had been enough marriages between missionaries and local women to flame the fantasies. And we had little competition. In my last branch, we did a statistical audit, and I discovered that the most common convert was a 17-year-old girl. We were baptizing many young women (often converted to us, not to the Gospel), but there were few young men in the Church to complement them. So even those who were trying not to become involved with the missionaries found it difficult. These young women were in a real dilemma.

As missionaries, we faced a similar dilemma with many natural forces drawing us toward what was forbidden. For some of us it was more difficult than for others. For me, it was the crucible of my mission. I was

FREEWAY TO PERFECTION



HOT OFF THE PRESS—*Freeway to Perfection*, a collection of Mormon cartoons by Calvin Grondahl, political cartoonist for the *Deseret News*. Grondahl captures the fun in both historic and contemporary LDS situations. Since its creation in 1978, *Freeway to Perfection* has become a favorite of Latter-day Saints world wide. This new edition is just in time for Christmas. The perfect gift for missionaries, bishops, Relief Society presidents—in short, anyone who is immersed in LDS living and likes to laugh will love it.

shy, naive, religious and ugly—definitely not an experienced ladies' man. I had taken seriously the romantic notion popular at the time among the super-faithful that the best path to a happy marriage was to have the first kiss of your life across the altar, so my experience with girls had been completely platonic. All of a sudden I was thrust into a situation where it did not matter that I was ugly and shy—I was in demand. It was rather heady and difficult to resist.

A big part of my problem was that I was still operating from the platonic model of my youth. I was not bothered by sexual temptation at all (I was not quite sure what sexual temptation was—I probably would not have even recognized it). Therefore, it seemed silly to avoid women. I was sincerely trying to teach the Gospel of Christ, and I found that women were the most receptive. In the process of exploring the things of the spirit, we would discover an emotional and intellectual bond that felt an awful lot like love. But then there was no legitimate way to express it. Even though our hearts were pure, we had to deny the feelings of affection. In the midst of my despair, I waxed poetic (I knew it was poetry because the lines did not extend to the edge of the paper):

Someone could use me;
I could give much of my enjoyment
of life.
Together we could thrill to the joys
Of poetry, music, ideas, eternal
truths.
When two minds, running parallel,
meet,
They want to share, to forge the
way together,
To discover perhaps what only the
heart can know.
Yes, someone could use me;
I could help her find a fuller life—
But I'm a missionary.

Once while I was wrestling with this dilemma, Elder Kimball came to a conference and laid it on the line. The next day we had a branch picnic, and I retired to the woods to pray and try to find a resolution. The only thing that came of it was rumors started circulating that I was out with a girl from the branch who was not even at the picnic, but someone looked around and neither of us were there, so naturally everyone assumed. . . . In my journal I wrote, "I'm trying to be unfriendly and everyone thinks I'm mad, sad, or sick, and actually, I'm only miserable. I don't know."

That last phrase is a perfect summary. I do not know. I am not sure whether this dilemma is still a problem or if it

ever was for anyone except me. It is the sort of thing we do not talk about. I also have no solution. We cannot eliminate all restrictions from the missionaries. I only know that the system did not work for me. I felt

deeply and formed strong emotional attachments. It was frustrating not to be able to express what should have been not only acceptable, but laudable, feelings—if only I had not been a missionary.

Issues of Intimacy

A DOUBLE VISION OF SEXUALITY

Marybeth Raynes

Almost a year ago, I was asked to give a talk about "Expressing Sexuality Positively" to some university students who were members of the Church. Wanting the material to reach beyond the common list of what not to do before marriage in order to remain chaste and pure, I started by jotting down ideas about what we in the Church think about sex. Over the course of two weeks, as I wrote and rewrote my outline, it occurred to me that my difficulty in pinning it all down might be shared by others.

Although discovering our sexual identity is a difficult and universal task, as Mormons we may be additionally helped and/or hampered by messages we receive through Church channels. The premises about sex are sharply divided and closely related to the long debate over the nature of man. We are told "men are, that they might have joy" (2 Ne. 2:25), yet we are all "carnal, sensual, and devilish, by nature" (Alma 42:20). So with sex. Because it was ordained by God to ensure the continuation of mankind, sex is good. But sexual thoughts, feelings, and actions at the worst are seeded by the Devil and at best express our own carnal selves.

A number of sub-premises buttress this double vision. On the positive side we learn that the careful, proper honing of sexual urges and actions can add to the sweetness and richness of one's life, now, and by inference, everlastingly. Homer S. Ellsworth, in a November 1981 BYU fireside, quoted President Kimball as saying that what happens between a couple in their own bedroom, as long as both consent and are loving and caring, is

their own business.

This sounds encouraging but is partially countered by a recent First Presidency declaration that oral sex is an unholy practice. The implication then is that although sex may be freely explored in marriage, it should be done carefully, always with an eye out for the impure.

This unfortunately reinforces other negative admonitions about sex. Sexual urges, we are often told, are antithetical to righteous inclinations. We must control sexual thoughts, feelings, and urges by active righteousness, service, and prayer. Uncontrolled sexual thoughts, feelings, and fantasies will surely result in unrighteous sexual actions. An almost deterministic relationship between internal sexual occurrences and external sexual acts is described.

In addition, the effects of sexual wrongdoing are often portrayed as permanent. Although the repentance/nail-hole analogy has been denounced, standards nights still favor object lessons with wilted rose petals and bruised peaches, communicating that once you have done wrong, you simply cannot become whole again.

Sex then is a powerful force for good but with a sharp cutting edge. It is necessary but dangerous. A sharp distinction between good and evil, black and white, colors every discussion about sex.

Without trying to solve or discuss each of the above, I would like to add my own premises as counterpoint. First, I discriminate between the broad concept of sexuality (all of our feelings, thoughts, actions about being men and women, possessing sexual bodies, and having sexual potential)

and the narrower idea of sexual action (the behavioral expression of our sexuality). In my view, both are good.

Regarding sexuality: We are all sexual all of our lives. We are born sexual: both sexes evidence sexual response shortly after birth. We change and grow sexually without any conscious control on our part. Sexuality, therefore, is integral to all of our lives. It will be experienced differently by each person, with no one experience being "right" or "best."

Regarding sexual action: The "goodness" or "badness" of a sexual action comes not from that action but from *how* we interact, from *how* we treat ourselves and others while engaged in sexual activity. Some acts, such as rape or incest, are always wrong. But they are wrong primarily because they transgress important ethical principles of non-coercion, mutual consent, sensitivity to what is best for the other person, or generational and marital boundaries, not because they are sexual.

Moral transgression may be inappropriate, but it is rarely evil. People cross moral boundaries generally to satisfy a positive, legitimate need, such as closeness, security, or a need to feel alive. The acts may be wrong, but the person generally is good. Healing and positive discussion can help such a person become whole again.

Although sexual thoughts and feelings are preliminary to sexual action, they are not the final determinant of that behavior. People with sexually deviant behavior usually have deviant fantasy lives. Sexually healthy persons have positive, creative fantasies.

Sexual feelings, thoughts, and acts are compatible with spiritual feelings, thoughts, and acts. They can be experienced together or separately, depending on a person's orientation and skill. If all parts of us combine to make one pleasing whole, we can learn to mix and match all of our facets, experiencing all the diversity, collectiveness, complexity, and simplicity of ourselves.

Sex then is not NO at one time and YES at another. It always is. And it always is basically good.

Note: For a good profile of the sexually well person see Val MacMurray, "Sexual and Emotional Intimacy: A Need to Emphasize Principles," *Journal of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists* 1 (January 1982). For copies: Burton C. Kelly, Editor, *AMCAP Journal*, 149 SWKT, BYU, Provo, Utah 84602.

Outside Looking In

SISTER AND MISTER

Ray Ownbey

As a non-Mormon married to a Mormon, I am always assumed to be Mormon until I identify myself otherwise. In the same manner that most suburban, middle class communities find it hard to deal with single people, a Mormon community has trouble dealing with a couple where one is Mormon and the other is not.

I first became aware of this when the phone rang some weeks after we had moved in. A cheerful voice on the other end announced, "I'm your home teacher."

"I beg your pardon."

"I'm your home teacher."

"Oh, you must be my wife's home

teacher."

"Well, I'm your home teacher, and I'd like to drop by."

"I think you'd better talk to my wife."

A few months later there was another call, this one from another male ward member whose official position I've forgotten. After the usual greetings, inquiries about health, job, family, and the like we got down to business. It seems my wife was about to be asked to take a job in the Church, and before that request could be made, my permission was required.

In truth, I saw this as the opening of a whole new facet of our relationship, one in which all of her activities would be subject to my prior approval. I envisioned the Musicians' Union calling and asking me if she could

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perform on a specific night. I had brief fantasies about absolute power granting or denying permission for a lunch date, a clothing purchase.

However, with some effort I stifled these surprising manifestations of an obvious (though repressed) lust for power and responded to the caller with something like, "Well, you'll have to talk to her about that."

I know of no other organization where membership of one person puts such a strain on the non-member to join. Nobody in the Modern Language Association ever suggested that they wanted my wife to join so that she and I could both attend meetings. Even the National Geographic Society seems indifferent to the marital status or family arrangement of its members.

In the face of all this, I find myself constantly needing to identify myself as a non-Mormon. Whenever we are with a predominantly Mormon group and the conversation takes its inevitable turn toward Church activities, I bide my time for a chance to let the group know that I'm not one of them. Once my wife asked me why I always did that, and I blathered something about not wanting to be mistaken for a member of an organization whose beliefs and practices I disagreed with so strongly.

If I went to a meeting of the Freeman Institute, the PLO, or a party at the home of Madeline Murray O'Hare, I'd probably do the same thing.

I am making some inroads. Material still comes to the house addressed to Mr. and Mrs., but the Ward newsletter hasn't listed my name since "Mr. & Mrs. Ownbey" were identified as "new in the Ward."

At one point I considered going to the Post Office to get one of those forms that people use to have their names removed from pornographic mailing lists, but I thought better of it.

My wife, who is usually tolerant of my rages, asked once if I wanted them to address mail to Sister and Mister. It was a good line and in fact would suit me just fine.

Law of the Land

GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED NATIVITY SCENES: GETTING CHRIST OUT OF CHRISTMAS

Jay S. Bybee

State and local governments have long celebrated the Christmas season by erecting nativity scenes at government expense and, often, on government property. Typical of these

is the city of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, which for forty years has set up a Christmas display which in recent years has included carolers, a Santa, a village, lighted stars, a live Christmas tree, candy-striped poles, and a nativity scene. The nativity scene is the foreground of the display, which is put up each year by city employees in a private park in the heart of the

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shopping district. Like many other cities, Pawtucket has had a long-standing tradition of lighting the display by having Santa Claus arrive in a blaze of glory (in this case, a fire truck) and then distribute candy to the children gathered for the ceremony.

In 1980 several citizens of Pawtucket who were members of the local affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union brought suit against the city to claim that the city-sponsored display, specifically the nativity scene, violated the Establishment Clause of the Constitution. The Establishment Clause in the First Amendment reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." The Supreme Court has interpreted this clause to mean that a government-sponsored activity is permissible if (1) the action has a secular legislative purpose, (2) the action's primary effect neither advances nor inhibits religion, and (3) the action does not foster excessive government entanglement with religion. The plaintiffs claimed that Pawtucket's maintenance of the creche violated all three of these criteria.

The arguments made by the city of Pawtucket in order to show that the setting up of the nativity scene had a secular purpose which did not advance religion and would not excessively entangle the government with religion should be very disturbing to those

concerned with the trivialization of Christmas. To demonstrate that the nativity scene had a secular purpose and did not advance religion, the city witnesses testified that the scene's primary purpose was other than to remind the viewers of the birth of Christ. The Mayor of Pawtucket stated that the creche satisfied cultural and traditional, aesthetic, and economic needs and that the creche was incidental to the display. A professor of philosophy, testifying for the city, claimed that the scene put people into a festive mood where they would be more inclined to "let loose with their money." The professor maintained that because the scene was in a commercial area, as opposed to a church, it did not induce viewers to worship, but rather to buy.

These arguments were not new in the Pawtucket case. Similar arguments were made in cases out of Denver, Washington, D.C., and Sioux Falls. For example in Denver the city argued that the purpose of the nativity scene was "to promote goodwill and feelings of selflessness, to enhance Denver's national reputation, and to depict the historical origins of Christmas, a national legal holiday." Indeed, the city employee in charge of lighting the display stated that the scene had no religious significance to him. Similarly, an expert witness brought in by the city testified that the

nativity scene had become secularized and a common item of American folklore. An historian noted that the city of Denver was proud of its display because it had been featured in national magazines and on post cards.

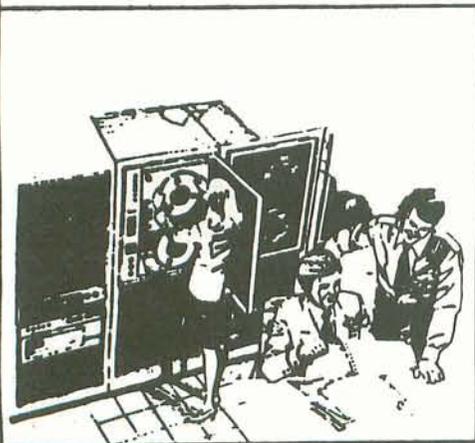
The irony in the arguments made by the municipalities should be obvious. The defendant cities, wanting to be able to put up their nativity scenes, have claimed the right to do so because the scene is no longer religious: the scenes have secular and commercial value which will promote peace, goodwill, fame, and money—anything but Christianity. In contrast, those seeking to have the scenes removed, such as the ACLU in the Pawtucket case, have maintained that the scenes are indeed a religious symbol of the divinity of Christ.

The results reached by the various courts are very different. Perhaps to its shame, Denver has won its suit so far as the city evidently has been able to convince the court that the creche was "a sign of the holiday season on a par with Santa and mistletoe." Similarly, in the Washington case, the city successfully proved that its lighting display had primarily cultural and historical value because it "symbolize[d] the celebration of Christmas, a national holiday."

Pawtucket, however, has not been so fortunate, as the court refused to accept that Pawtucket's citizens only saw the secular side of the nativity scene. In contrast to other decisions, the U.S. District Court in Rhode Island found that "the nativity scene remains firmly tied to its religious origins and continues to express a fundamentally theological message about the nature of the child whose birth is there depicted." Ironically, it was only the Rhode Island court, which ultimately prohibited the city from setting up its nativity scene, which did not find that the nativity scene trivialized the celebration of Christmas. The court was not unmindful of the frustrations of Christians who felt that creches were appropriate at Christmas; it was merely sensitive to the fact that under the First Amendment governments cannot establish religious symbols. As the court stated: "Although Christians may deplore the growth of secular dimension and deem it vital to retain the spiritual essence of Christmas as a religious observance of the birth of the Son of God, government may not assist in the fight to keep Christ in Christmas."

In light of the arguments advanced by the various municipal governments, it should be asked how much more assistance of this kind Christmas can stand.

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