

# SUNSTONE

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THREE DOLLARS

TOWARD A MORMON CONCEPT OF ORIGINAL SIN



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HISTORY 4 **RAINING PITCHFORKS: BRIGHAM YOUNG AS PREACHER** RONALD W. WALKER  
Nineteenth century pulpit oratory

26 **NO HIGHER GROUND** DAVID EARL BOHN  
Objective history is an illusive chimera

PERSONAL ESSAY 10 **THE WORSHIP OF HOUSEHOLD GODS** KIRA PRATT DAVIS  
An alien gospel in the halos of light from open fridges

33 **OBEDIENCE, INTEGRITY, AND THE PARADOX OF SELFHOOD** EUGENE ENGLAND  
What are the contemporary equivalents of Abraham's test?

RELIGION 12 **TOWARD A MORMON CONCEPT OF ORIGINAL SIN** JANICE M. ALLRED  
A doctrine may be false and yet important

19 **THE MEANING OF REVIVAL LANGUAGE IN THE BOOK OF MORMON** MARK THOMAS  
Joseph Smith moved from the borders of evangelical religion to a new revelation

FICTION 39 **IDA'S SABBATH** PHYLLIS BARBER

POETRY 44 **SCOLDING BRIDLE** ANITA TANNER  
44 **THE BURLAP YEARS** DIXIE L. PARTRIDGE

DEPARTMENTS 2 **READERS' FORUM** JAMES N. KIMBALL  
2 **J. GOLDEN NUGGETS** MARVIN RYTTING  
3 **PARADOXES AND PERPLEXITIES** RAY OWNBEY  
46 **OUTSIDE LOOKING IN** PAUL M. EDWARDS  
46 **THE NOUMENONIST** JAY S. BYBEE  
48 **THE LAW OF THE LAND**

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# Readers' Forum

## Editors' Note

The comments and reader profile are from a recent survey of Sunstone readers.

## 1983 Reader Profile

### AGE

78% of our readers are between 25 and 50 years of age

Average age: 40

### INCOME

70% of our readers earn over \$25,000 per year

44% earn over \$40,000 annually

### PROFESSION

70% are working professionals (lawyers, doctors, engineers, educators)

### EDUCATION

91% are college graduates

56% have graduate degrees

78% participate in Continuing Education Programs, special conferences, and workshops

### OWNERSHIP

78% own their own homes

56% own two or more cars

### ENTERTAINMENT

68% go to the movies regularly

57% attend plays regularly

53% attend the opera, symphony, and ballet regularly

39% attend art shows and visit galleries regularly

58% eat out 6 or more times per month

### FOOD STORAGE

78% maintain a food storage program at home.

### FAMILY STATUS

76% are married

60% have children under 18 living at home

SUNSTONE should be a proving ground for ideas, not a sanctuary. Anyone who uses it to promote his ideas must be willing to have them subjected to scrutiny. If the modernistic, somewhat liberal orientation that pervades much of SUNSTONE's writing (or, at least, the writing printed in SUNSTONE) is to be enthroned unquestioningly, it may crystalize into an orthodoxy that is just as tyrannical and dogmatic in its own way as the one for which it is meant as an alternative.

It appears that you publish more articles by non-Mormons, inactives with an axe to grind, and semi-actives who are way out in "left" field, than you do those written by strong faithful active members.

I read SUNSTONE to find out about other people's experiences in "being a Mormon."

For years I'd felt like a square peg in a round hole at church. I was just about ready to turn in my recommend when a friend turned me on to SUNSTONE. What a comfort to know that I'm not really such a misfit/malcontent/outcast (or at least I'm not the *only* one!). It makes it a lot easier to stay with it.

## J. Golden Nuggets

### ON THE SUBJECT OF POLITICS James N. Kimball

The Kimballs have always been Democrats, and Uncle Golden was no exception. Once he was invited to a Republican state convention. Reed Smoot, Utah's senior Senator and an Apostle, was conducting the convention. Much to Reed's amazement, he saw Golden Kimball sitting among the visitors. He summoned the convention to order, "I'm happy to see a fellow General Authority, Brother J. Golden Kimball here. I know this represents a change in party affiliation. In the absence of any other clergy we would like to call on him to give the opening prayer of this Republican state convention." Uncle Golden jumped up from where he was sitting, "Reed, if it's just the

SUNSTONE and the REVIEW would enjoy an increase in readership if it could be more sensitive to these delicate dimensions involved in controversial issues.

You are *desperately* needed by an increasing segment of the population!!!

Latest issues could have been published by Deseret Press—seemed too inclined to cater to orthodox Mormons. If this trend continues you will lose some of us.

SUNSTONE helps me survive in my Mormon world.

We read the copies avidly and talk a great deal between each other & among ourselves & our children. The Ward-Stake Community we live in is typified by us as at folk-thought level rather than intellectual—intellectual in terms of the humanities and social sciences, and we all tend to be lonely in that community. We love the SUNSTONE community.

Your contribution to Mormon culture is immense!

When everyone thinks the same nobody thinks much at all. We need a variety of voices in the Mormon community, *Ensign*, *Dialogue*, SUNSTONE, *Exponent II*, *BYU Studies*, etc.

same to you, I would just as soon the Lord didn't know I was here."

### On the Word of Wisdom

I heard a delightful story recently about a trip the Quorum of Twelve and the First Council of Seventy took to Denver, Colorado to organize the first stake there. In those days they all traveled together on the train for such an event. It was during the winter, and on the way back they all retired to the diner to eat. Golden had a bad cold. When the black waiter asked him what he would like to eat, Golden answered "Nothing. I'm under the weather; I've got a cold." "I have a new remedy that works," volunteered the waiter. "If you'd try it, it would make you feel better. You take a big glass, fill it half full of bourbon, half full of coffee. Drink it down and go

straight to bed. You'll feel better in the morning, sir; I can assure you." Everyone stopped eating and looked at Golden. You could have heard a pin drop. "Well, I can't do that," the reply finally came. "I just can't do that. I will have to pass." "Okay sir," and the waiter walked away from the table. Everyone went about their eating and ordering, but Golden caught the waiter's eye a minute longer. "Say, about that remedy, you couldn't make that half postum could you?"

#### The Subject of Wives

"My father never told me how many wives he had. But I did know I had 46 brothers and not a bastard among them either. Mother said he never told her either. My wife was named Jenny Knolton before I married her. She was a good woman and a good mother. I loved her. But I never loved her like I did my mother, I'll tell you that. When her sister died I spoke at her funeral. I told them she was the only Knolton I knew that was worth a damn—my wife being the only other exception. I mean I like women. But hell, I never liked them like my father did, I'll tell you that."

#### Every One

Hugh B. Brown told about a stake president over in the Sevier Stake named McKeen. Uncle Golden didn't know McKeen, but he had known his wife, Olive McKeen, as a young girl in the Bear River Valley. Sister McKeen chose not to go to one particularly long stake conference. She stayed home, like a lot of stake president's wives, cleaned up the house, and fixed a large, scrumptious meal. From experience, she knew that everyone would be hungry since they had been fasting. When they finally returned to the McKeen home, Uncle Golden came into the house and walked to the dining room where this meal was beautifully laid out. Sister McKeen was at one end of the table with Golden, the other visiting brethren and President McKeen at the other. Golden looked at the house, looked at the table, and said, "Olive, I want you to know something. If I were not a General Authority and a member of the First Council of Seventy, I would break every one of the Ten Commandments with you."

Because of J. Golden's swearing, President Grant one day began to insist that Golden write out his speeches. His secretary told me that one day he returned to the office with his speech still in his pocket. She asked him if he had ever gotten it out and used it. "Well, President Grant told me I had to write it," he replied, "but he didn't tell me I had to read it, so I didn't."

# P

## aradoxes and Perplexities

### CHANGING TIMES

Marvin Rytting

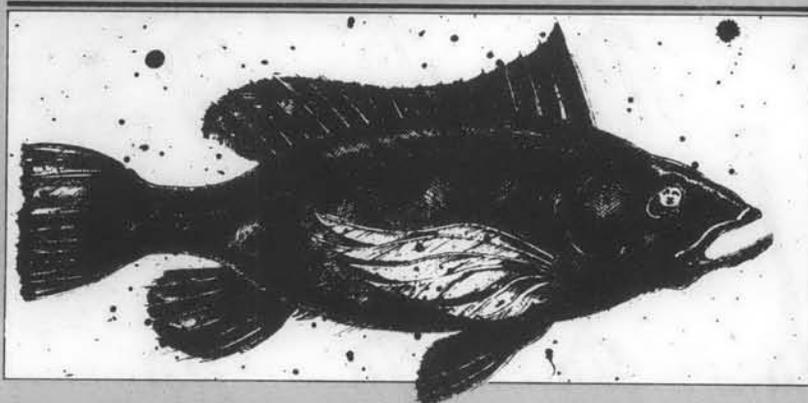
In the 1890s, the Indiana House of Representatives, unable to deal with the ambiguity of an unresolvable number and impatient with the inability of the academics to find a simple value for the number  $\pi$ , passed a bill declaring that in the state of Indiana,  $\pi$  is equal to 4.0. This example of legislative wisdom still captures the spirit of the Indiana legislature. Sometimes they seem to take an almost perverse pride in being out of step. I suspect that the reason

Indiana was the last state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment is that while everybody else was doing it, we wanted to be different. Once the tide had turned, however, we quite naturally ratified it—still to be different.

And it continues. Who would have guessed that the most controversial bill in the early days of the 1983 legislative session would be a proposal to finally join the rest of the nation and adopt Daylight Savings Time? And who would believe that this radical proposal would be defeated 46-

continued on page 45

## 1983 SUNSTONE THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM



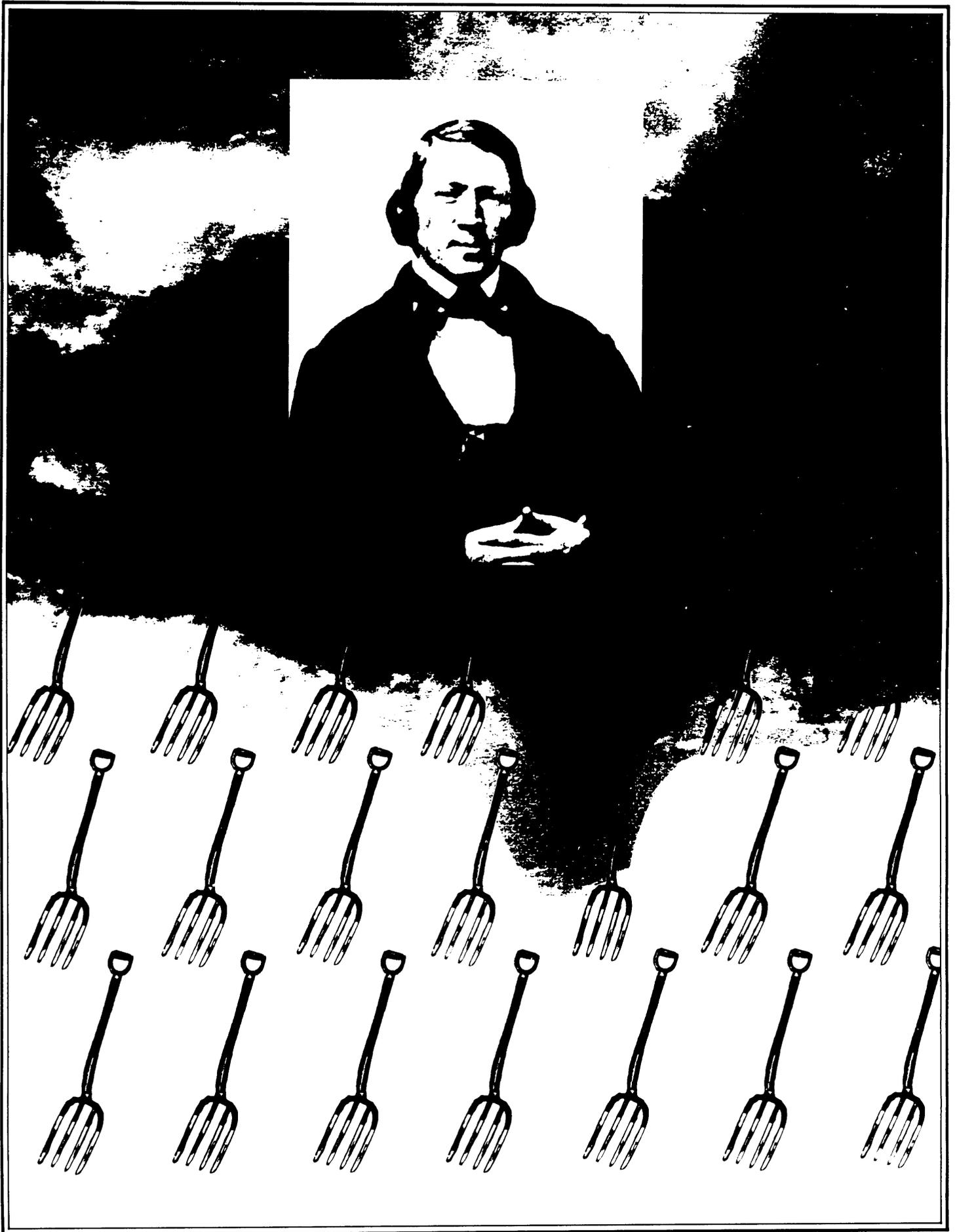
"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind . . ."

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# RAINING PITCHFORKS

## BRIGHAM YOUNG AS PREACHER

IN 1861 Hiram S. Rumfield, assistant treasurer of the Overland Mail Company, took a seat near the main entrance to the Mormons' Old Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. The box-like building, he thought, lacked artistic distinction—a reflection on the men and women who filled the building's closely crowded seats. The congregation, Rumfield believed, "exhibited a picture, . . . which no generous soul could contemplate except with feelings of mingled sorrow and disgust." In turn, President Brigham Young seemed no more impressive. He spoke a rambling homily on practical duty, ending with a severe denunciation of hypocrites and apostates that the Tiffin, Ohio, native found "filthy" and "profane." All in all, Rumfield was left incredulous. Mormonism "claims the power of working miracles," he concluded laconically. If Brigham can elevate "the descendants of his people to the high standards of moral, mental, and physical development which he says they are destined to attain, his posterity may justly associate his name with the most stupendous miracle the world has ever witnessed."<sup>1</sup>

Like many nineteenth century visitors, Rumfield overstated things. Yet Brigham himself would not have greatly argued with his conclusions. The Mormon net had gathered a rough-and-ready harvest that required strong preaching, a task that President Young did not shy away from. During his thirty-three year leadership, President Young delivered thousands of sermons. Of these, the texts of over eight hundred remain, nearly half printed in the early LDS series, *The Journal of Discourses*. Along with the letters and diaries of his followers and the travel accounts of Easterners visiting Utah, they leave a full picture of Young's teaching ministry.<sup>2</sup> Here was a man who, while often misunderstood by his enemies, thought seriously about the preacher's art, knew the power of motivating words, and sought to use them to improve his people.

When Young first joined Mormonism in the spring of 1832, no one could have forecast his coming fame for acid-tongued oratory. He was then almost thirty-one, a son of Vermont's austere soil and his parents' flint-hard religious enthusiasm. There was little chance for book learning. "In my youthful days," he later explained,

"instead of going to school, I had to chop logs, to sow and plant, to plow in the midst of roots barefooted, and if I had on a pair of pants that would cover me I did pretty well. Seeing that this was the way I was brought up they cannot expect from me the same etiquette and ceremony as if I had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel."<sup>3</sup>

Before his religious conversion, Young did little to distinguish himself beyond his local upstate New York neighborhood. There he was recognized as a hard-working and skilled artisan but hardly as a community leader. Part of the problem lay in his self-image. He was often unsure of himself, diffident to others, and inward to the point of being morose. No doubt, his psychology reflected the poverty of both his origins and his opportunities.

However, Mormonism challenged and excited him, provided a cause that made him reach beyond himself. It also gave him a chance to preach. "I wanted to thunder and roar out the Gospel to the nations," he recalled his excitement after being baptized. "I had to go out and preach, lest my bones should consume within me."<sup>4</sup> His first sermon lasted over an hour, with apparently no premeditation whatsoever. "I opened my mouth," he remembered, "and the Lord filled it."<sup>5</sup>

This and subsequent attempts came at great personal trial. "When I began to speak in public," he admitted, "I was about as destitute of language as a man could well be. . . . How I have had the headache, when I had ideas to lay before the people, and not words to express them; but I was so gritty that I always tried my best."<sup>6</sup>

During the next dozen years as he served as a missionary and Apostle, Young set the pattern for his later and more famous preaching. From the first, his pulpit presence must have been commanding. By all accounts his physique was magnificent. Somewhat over five feet eight inches tall (above average for the time), he carried himself with conscious presence. A light complexion and blue eyes set off his sandy, almost auburn, hair. Then there was his mouth. "His lips came together like the jaws of a bear trap," remembered an acquaintance. They seemed to convey "great mental energy and indomitable pluck." When speaking his words "slipped by the teeth, and [were] finally squeezed through the left half of the almost locked-up" mouth. All in all, as a California "Forty-Niner" later said: "He was . . . a very good looking fellow" who "looked every inch a

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commander."<sup>7</sup>

Despite his outward presence, he had to fight a deep-seated shyness when standing before an audience. "Although I have been a public speaker for thirty-seven years," he acknowledged later in his career, "it is seldom that I rise before a congregation without feeling a child-like timidity; if I live to the age of Methusaleh I do not know that I shall outgrow it."<sup>8</sup> His faith, however, sustained him. "Had it not been that I clearly saw and understood that the Lord Almighty would take the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, the wise, and the talented, there was nothing that could have induced me to have ever become a public speaker."<sup>9</sup>

His unschooled New England upbringing must have been obvious in his early efforts. Judging from his phonetically spelled notebooks and diaries, Yankee dialect and solecisms abounded in his preaching. Even in later years, Utah observers found him saying im-PEET-us for impetus, and such provincialisms as "leetle," "beyend," "disremember," "ain't you," and "they was."<sup>10</sup> Moreover, perhaps as compensation for his feelings of inadequacy, he felt compelled to use his resonant, bass voice to the fullest. "[During my first preaching], I could not satisfy my own feelings without talking with a loud voice," he recalled. Indeed, he believed that there was "thunder" in his early delivery.<sup>11</sup>

Young did not remain an awkward, backcountry speaker, though many of his first public speaking traits persisted. Upon assuming the Latter-day Saint presidency in 1844, he was already a veteran preacher of hundreds of sermons. His progress since his initial 1832 stammering was shown by Sir Richard Burton, author of pioneer Utah's most perceptive and piquant travel accounts. In 1860 Burton interviewed Young and later watched him at the pulpit:

The prophet . . . entered the tribune [a raised platform] . . . and sat down, apparently greeting those near him. A man in a fit was carried out pumpwards. Bishop Smoot concluded with informing us that we should live for God. Another hymn was sung. Then a great silence, which told us that something was about to happen: *that* old man held his cough; *that* old lady awoke with a start; *that* child ceased the squall. Mr. Brigham Young removed his hat, advanced to the end of the tribune, expectorated stooping over the spittoon, which was concealed from sight by the boarding, restored the balance of fluid by a glass of water from a well-filled decanter on the stand, and leaning slightly forwards upon both hands propped on the green baize of the tribune, addressed his followers.

The discourse began slowly, word crept titubantly after word and the opening phrases were hardly audible; but as the orator warmed, his voice rose high and sonorous, and a fluence so remarkable succeeded falter and hesitation, that—although the phenomenon is not rare in strong speakers the latter seemed almost to have been a work of art. The manner was pleasing and animated, and the matter fluent, impromptu, and well turned, spoken rather than preached: if it had a fault it was rather rambling and unconnected. . . . The gestures were easy and rounded, not without a certain grace, though evidently untaught. . . .<sup>12</sup>

Burton's description was confirmed by William H. Knight, a California emigrant uneasy about Mormon intentions after the Mountain Meadows tragedy. Seated

in a Tabernacle pew, Knight soon found himself completely disarmed by Young's speaking. "As he advanced to a railing in front of the pulpit, or altar, he leaned both hands quite heavily upon the rail, as though marshalling his thoughts, preceding delivery. At first he spoke low, but distinctly, then more loudly, but not violently, at the same time indulging in gestures." Before the discourse was ended, Knight concluded that Brigham was in fact "a remarkable man," reasoning not simply from his words but judging also from appearances. Young was "a fine-looking, intellectual sort of man, above average in stature . . . vibrant with energy, intelligence, [and] character." Knight noted how easily he held in his sway a congregation of two or three thousand.<sup>13</sup>

There were other witnesses as well. Territorial Secretary Amos Redd found Young to be "a very excellent speaker" with "uncommonly graceful" gestures. Ralph Waldo Emerson, while not overwhelmed with the Church leader's oratory, nevertheless saw in it a "certain homespun sense." In turn, Missouri businessman J.C. Hoagland described Young as fluent and compelling, "a powerfully strong reasoner . . . given to anecdote." Even religious rival Episcopal Bishop Daniel S. Tuttle praised Young's platform style as one of "conscious ease and strength." Young spoke effortlessly, Tuttle reported, "yet so clear was his tone, so well enunciated were his words, and so rapt was the people's attention, that he was easily heard by every one. . . . He speaks, not deliberately, but readily, almost rapidly, and in a businesslike, almost nonchalant way."<sup>14</sup>

By all accounts President Young had about him an easy, informal air. Once while speaking in the Bowery—a makeshift, open air meeting area on Temple Square—he briefly abandoned the rostrum to discipline several refractory children who had the misfortune to be playing too near the Prophet. On another occasion, he tried to stop a follower's harangue in midcourse with a hardy "Amen!" Failing to get his will, Young pulled the coat-tails of his recalcitrant disciple and assumed the pulpit himself.<sup>15</sup>

Nothing fostered informality more than President Young's impromptu manner. He called himself a "minute man" and claimed seldom to take forethought about what he might do or say at even the most important meetings. "I can truly say," he once asserted, "that I have fulfilled one of the sayings of the Savior tolerably well—to take no thought what ye shall say, for in the very hour or moment when you need it, it shall be given to you."<sup>16</sup> However, there was an occasional exception. When the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Schuyler Colfax, visited Utah at the end of the Civil War, Young took special care in preparing his Sunday discourse. The result was viewed by many Saints with humor. It was, they believed, "the worst sermon he had ever preached"—the price for putting on airs.<sup>17</sup>

There grew between the Mormon leader and his congregation a bond that permitted such irreverence. Brigham cast himself as the Saints' gruff but loving father, alternately scolding and befriending his flock. As lawgiver, he felt he should preach without compromise.

"I will tell you what this people need, with regard to preaching," he said. "You need, figuratively, to have it rain pitchforks, tines downwards. . . . Instead of the smooth, beautiful, sweet, still, silk-velvet-lipped preaching, you should have sermons like peals of thunder."<sup>18</sup>

True to his word, Brigham gave saints and sinners pitchforks aplenty. The latter might be especially hard hit if guilty of malicious anti-Mormonism. For instance, at Winter Quarters following the Mormons' expulsion from Nauvoo, he was apoplectic. "Brigham arose and [made] some pointed and appropriate remarks," a diary of the period records.

He called upon the Lord to bless this place for the good of the saints and curse every Gentile who should attempt to settle here with sickness, rottenness, and death. . . . that their flesh might consume away on their bones and their blood be turned into Maggots.<sup>19</sup>

He could be equally severe with the Saints. During the Mormon Reformation of 1856 he delivered what was described as "one of the strongest addresses that was ever delivered to this Church & Kingdom." Young denounced the Saints "for lying[,] steali[n]g, swaring, committing adultery, quarelli[n]g with Husbands wives & Children and many other evils[.] He spoke in the power of God & the demonstration of the Holy Ghost & his voice & words were like the Thunderings of Mount Sina."<sup>20</sup>

Over the years doctors, merchants, and lawyers especially drew his ire. The former appeared to him to be money-grubbers whose primary usefulness lay outside their profession—in raising grain or doing mechanical work. "I would rather have the sisters wait upon me in sickness," he claimed, "than many of those who profess to be physicians." Lacking licensing standards and such primary knowledge as germ theory and antiseptics, the Utah medical profession of the era probably deserved his scorn.<sup>21</sup>

He also thought merchants were generally of "extremely small calibre." Their trouble lay in their greed to maximize profits at the expense of the people. If "they had a chance to buy a widow's cow for ten cents on the dollar of her real value in cash, [they] would make the purchase and then thank the Lord that he had so blessed them."<sup>22</sup>

Lawyers, however, were a greater bane. Instead of allowing civil disputes to be settled amicably by local LDS bishops, the adversary system of law made "white black, and black white." "I feel about . . . [lawyers] as Peter of Russia is said to have felt when he was in England," he quipped. "He saw and heard the lawyers pleading at a great trial there, and he was asked his opinion concerning them. He replied that he had two lawyers in his empire, and when he got home he intended to hang one of them."<sup>23</sup>

Even the most lofty of the Saints had to be prepared to receive his barbs. When a member of Mormonism's Quorum of Twelve supplemented his income by working for a virulently anti-Mormon judge, Young declared that he should be cut off from both the Twelve and the Church. "He is no more fit to stand at the Head of the Quorum of the Twelve than a dog. . . . He is a stink in my nostrils."<sup>24</sup>

But his outbursts were the exception rather than the rule, and even when thundering he often softened his blows with humor. For example, he used both brimstone and mirth in his frequent damnations of "the ding-dong" of women's fashions. "The present custom of many," he held,

is such that I would as soon see a squaw go through the streets with a very little on, as to see clothing piled up until it reaches, perhaps, the top of the hedge or fence its wearer is passing. . . . In my feelings they are positively ridiculous, they are so useless and unbecoming. Do you recollect a fashion there was a few years ago, . . . when a woman could not walk through the streets without holding her clothes two feet in front of her if her arm was long enough? . . . Now it is on the other side, and I do not know but they will get two humps on their backs, they have one now, and if they get to be dromedaries it will be no wonder.

He conjectured that some women's dresses might conceal a six-horse team, with "a dozen dogs under the wagon."<sup>25</sup>

Young's denunciation of Almerin Grow remains one of his most classic combinations of wrath and wit. Grow, whose perjury had heavily injured the Saints during one of their struggles with the national government, wanted rebaptism. "He has been baptised into this church from twenty to fifty times," read the unlaundered report of Young's remarks.

and has been cut off from five to ten times. But I tell you that I can have no fellowship for any person that will take him into the waters of baptism . . . unless he does it as the Catholic priest did to the Jew that got into an ice hole and cried for help. The Catholic priest passing by at the time, hastened to his assistance. He asked the Jew if he believed in Jesus Christ. The Jew . . . not coming to the priestly terms was dipped under the ice for a while, and then permitted to come to terms again. After successive dipping, the Jew finally said that he believed, when the priest thanked God for another convert and there and then drowned him while he was in the faith. If you should take Almerin Grow to [the] Jordan [River, for baptism], save him while he is in the faith.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps no one could have gotten away with such preaching but Brigham himself. Far from rankling under his thrusts, the Mormon membership came to tolerate, expect, and even enjoy the show. Wilford Woodruff's reaction to an 1851 sermon was probably a common and frequent sentiment. "Attended meeting. Heard Brigham Young speak. Could have listened to him all day."<sup>27</sup>

One did not have to go far to find the keys to his speaking popularity. For one thing, his audience sensed that behind his strong words lay a genuine concern. "My heart yearns over [the Saints] . . . with all the emotions of tenderness, so that I could weep like a child," he said, "but I am careful to keep my tears to myself." He assured his people that he never intended malice. "There is not a soul I chasten but what I feel as though I could take them and put them in my bosom and carry them with me day by day."<sup>28</sup>

Brigham believed that his strong words had not separated him from his flock. "Although I may get up here and cuff . . . [the people] about, chastising them for their forgetfulness, their weakness and follies, yet I have not seen a moment when they did not love me. The

reason is, because I love them so well."<sup>29</sup> He had rebuked with caution, he thought, employing a primary rule: "When you have the chastening rod in your hands, ask God to give you wisdom to use it, that you may not use it to the destruction of an individual, but to his salvation."<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, the Saints who listened to him Sunday after Sunday knew what the occasional visitors at the Tabernacle did not: Young's preachings were often upbeat and liberal. Doctrines of depravity and damnation had no appeal for him. Humankind, he believed, was good.<sup>31</sup> He rejected out of hand the idea that his church monopolized good intentions or righteousness. At times, he praised the virtues of Jews, Protestants, Catholics, and even what his century called "benighted aborigines."<sup>32</sup> While Mormonism had higher truths, he concluded "there has been more or less virtue and righteousness upon the earth at all times, from the days of Adam until now."<sup>33</sup>

The Saints also understood that there was little bite to his celebrated bark. Young admitted as much. "I have had some people ask me how I manage and control the people," he once remarked. "I do it by telling them the truth and letting them do just as they have a mind to."<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, he claimed that his "best method of preaching" came not from the whip but from example. "I expect that if I should see a wagon in the mud, my shoulder would be first to the wheel to lift it out."<sup>35</sup> Such an informal policy extended even to enemies. "One of the nicest things in the world," he believed, "is to let an enemy alone entirely, . . . it mortifies him to death."<sup>36</sup>

Brigham's pulpit appeal involved more than his broad-gauged views and a general even-handed policy. Even more important, he understood public speaking's most basic rule—know your audience and speak to their level. Certainly, he had no illusions about the Saints' sophistication. "We have mostly come from the plough and the furrow," he admitted, "from the mechanic shops and the loom, from the spinning-jenny, the kitchen, and wash-room." These he realized were his gallery, and he called them "the poor and the ignorant from the dens and caves of the earth."<sup>37</sup>

Wilford H. Munro, a visitor who judged Brigham by the era's prevailing Victorianism, nevertheless understood how ably Young measured his followers and spoke to their understanding. "Often [Young] was ungrammatical, occasionally he was witty, sometimes he was slangy and profane, sometimes he was obscene," Munro observed. But "his sermons were always to the point. He had a message to put forth, and his language could always be understood by his people. He knew his audience."<sup>38</sup>

Jules Remy, an equally shrewd observer, noted that behind Young's strong words, humor, and unusual audience rapport lay a compelling message. The Prophet might employ "puns, jokes, [and] buffooneries," Remy noted. Or he might use

ridicule with point and readiness; he abounds in personalities, and with allusions which the public easily seize, inasmuch as he possesses remarkable talent as a mimic, and does not hesitate to imitate the gestures, voice, and language of those whom he desires to put upon the stage. But this is again another element of success with a popular audience. Besides, under forms

that are frequently grotesque, there lies a thoughtful, practical truth, which every man may turn to his profit. The comedian is, in fact, the auxiliary of the pontiff and the moralist.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, Young's words and platform manner were often calculated for effect. For a typical Tabernacle congregation, he thought normal and respectable words were like "wind," going "into the ear and . . . [soon] forgotten."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, he used stronger measures. "When you wish the people to feel what you say," he once said revealingly, "you have got to use language that they will remember, or else the ideas are lost to them. Consequently, in many instances we use language that we would rather not use."<sup>41</sup>

Of course, his rhetoric was not always conscious and deliberate. His celebrated temper also played a role. Once when incapacitated by a painful backache, he had a chair positioned in front of the Bower, from whence he spoke to the men of the priesthood. Becoming aroused by his own remarks, he stood and began to "roar out his feelings." He walked back and forth across the platform, vigorously gesturing with walking stick, his illness completely forgotten.<sup>42</sup> At the St. George Temple dedication, his temper and cane were once more manifested. So lame that three men carried him into the building on a chair, Brigham assumed the pulpit for thirty minutes, punctuating his last sentence by striking his hickory cane on the lower stand with such power that one observer claimed the indentation would last "for a generation."<sup>43</sup>

Usually, he was more composed. The Eastern travelers who visited him at his office often contrasted pulpit behavior with his plain and steady private manner (many said he bore the aspect of a New England farmer or London alderman).<sup>44</sup> The Saints themselves knew first hand the contrast between the public and private Brigham—the pulpit lawgiver, on the one hand, and the more genial, tolerant, human man they might meet on the street. It was, however, a difference that most Eastern newspapermen, hot after good copy, failed to report. As a result, they helped mold Brigham's rustic and iron-fisted image that persists to this day.

While paying a heavy cost in personal image and public relations, Young nevertheless was probably satisfied by his speaking efforts. From the moment he awkwardly assumed his first pulpit, he wanted to lift the Saints and transform them into an ideal society. Such talk was very much in the nineteenth century air, with over one hundred such schemes in America alone.<sup>45</sup> In part due to Brigham's ability to communicate and motivate, his Zion probably excelled any of them, especially when judged by the scale of its operation and by its success in transforming the lives of its people. Today's well-dressed, healthy, contented, middle-class Tabernacle congregation, so far from the rough folk that Hiram Rumfeld saw, strongly argues the case.

Perhaps if Rumfeld could again return to Salt Lake City's Temple Square, he would admit the reality of his unexpected miracle. However, at least one man who lived to see the Mormons' vast social change sensed that Brigham, himself, was one reason for the wonder. Fifty years after Young's death, President Heber J. Grant was asked to describe his predecessor's greatest

contribution. Grant, who had been a youthful member of Young's congregation, was certain of the verdict. It was, he thought, "his wonderful capacity to hold his audience and to inspire those who heard him preach on the principles of life and salvation."<sup>46</sup>

Toward the end of his life, Brigham's zest for the pulpit seemed to fade. For him, sermonizing had been arduous work, taxing both nerves and body. His enunciation and powerful voice, his informal and sometimes vigorous gestures, his commanding presence—such speaking traits required much mental and physical energy. "I very frequently feel that my talk is almost finished," he once said. "It is pretty much gone out of me." But with only a year to live, his spirits seemed to revive. On second thought, the old forensic warrior concluded he had lungs enough "to serve [for] a[nother] hundred years."<sup>47</sup>

#### Notes

1. Hiram S. Rumfield to Frank [?], 26 Dec. 1861, *Letters of an Overland Mail Agent in Utah*, ed. Archer B. Hulbert (Worcester, Massachusetts: American Antiquarian Society, 1929), pp. 33-34, 41. For earlier discussions of Young's public speaking, see Chester J. Myers, "A Critical Analysis and Appraisal of the Work of Brigham Young as a Public Speaker," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1940). This paper was delivered as part of the Sons of the Utah Pioneers lecture series "The Legacy of Brigham Young" and will appear in a forthcoming volume by that name. The author is indebted to his colleagues, Leonard J. Arrington, Ronald K. Esplin, and Dean C. Jessee for their useful contributions and suggestions.
2. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-86) [hereafter cited *JD*]. For the Gentile image of Young and his Mormonism, see Edwina Jo Snow, "Singular Saints: The Image of the Mormons in Book-Length Travel Accounts, 1847-1857" (M.A. Thesis, George Washington University, 1972) and Rebecca Cornwall and Leonard J. Arrington, "Men and Women of Letters Encounter Brigham Young, 1849-1877," forthcoming in *Brigham Young University Studies*.
3. *JD* 14:103. Ten years before his death when addressing a Sunday School in Salt Lake City, Young lectured the youth "to use the pronunciation of words correctly" and avoid "all errors and defects," for their educational opportunities far exceeded his own. Salt Lake Stake, Thirteenth Ward Sunday School Minutes, 26 April 1868, Church Archives.
4. *JD* 1:313-14.
5. *Ibid.*, 13:211.
6. *Ibid.*, 5:97.
7. Sketch by S.A. Kenner in *History of the Bench and Bar of Utah*, C.C. Goodwin (ed. and comp.) (Salt Lake City: Interstate Press Association, 1913), p. 12; *Chicago Times*, report filed 22 February 1871, in Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1936), p. 469; *New York Herald*, 12 August 1868; and "A 'Forty-Niner' Describes Brigham Young," in Le Roy R. and Ann W. Hafen, *Journals of Forty-Niners; Salt Lake to Los Angeles*, vol. 2 of *Far West and the Rockies* (Glendale, California: Arthur R. Clark Company, 1954), p. 276n.
8. *JD* 13:139. See also *ibid.*, 5:97; 6:93; 7:9; 9:291; and 13:170-71, 209-10.
9. *Ibid.*, 4:20-21.
10. Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California*, Fawn M. Brodie (ed.) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 265; *New York Tribune*, 21 July 1865; and Fitz Hugh Ludlow, *The Heart of the Continent: A Record of Travel Across the Plains and in Oregon, With an Examination of the Mormon Principle* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870), p. 368.
11. *JD* 6:298; 12:255.
12. Burton, *City of the Saints*, pp. 287-88.
13. Reminiscence of William H. Knight, LeRoy R. Hafen Collection, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
14. Read's comments are in W.W. Egan, "Brigham Young, An Historical Sketch," Manuscript, Library-Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah [hereafter cited Church Archives]. For Emerson's statement, James B. Thayer, "A Western Journey with Mr. Emerson," in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen (eds.) *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts By Contemporary Observers* (Lincoln: A Bison Book: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 384. The other statements are in J.C. Hoagland to J.B. Ward, 28 November 1859, Missouri Historical Society Collection, Church Archives and Daniel S. Tuttle, *Reminiscences of a Missionary Bishop* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1906), p. 345.
15. *JD*: For the coat-tail pulling anecdote, see A.K. McClure *Three Thousand Miles Through the Rocky Mountains* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1869), pp. 160, 173.
16. *JD* 1:264, 13:269, and 17:114.
17. Cornwall and Arrington, "Men and Women of Letters," see especially fn. number 81. Young's failure is recorded by Edward W. Tullidge, *The History of Salt Lake City and Its Founders* (Salt Lake City: By the Author, 1886), pp. 352-53.
18. *JD* 3:222-23.
19. Mary Haskin Parker Richards Journal, 14 May 1848, Church Archives.
20. Wilford Woodruff Diary, 14 September 1856.
21. *JD* 9:125, 13:34, 142; 14:109; 15:225-26.
22. *Ibid.*, 14:85; 15:224-26.
23. Wilford Woodruff Diary, 19 October 1856, Church Archives. Young's remarks were made at a meeting of his prayer circle.
24. Wilford Woodruff Diary, 19 October 1856, Church Archives.
25. *JD* 13:4, 15:132, 161.
26. Speech, nd, Miscellaneous Files, Brigham Young Papers, Church Archives.
27. Wilford Woodruff Diary, 24 October 1851 and 12 June 1858, Church Archives.
28. *JD* 1:49; 9:124-25; also 9:123; 11:113.
29. *Ibid.*, 1:33.
30. *Ibid.*, 9:124-25.
31. *Ibid.*, 10:189.
32. *Ibid.*, 6:193-94, 292; 11:279, 285; 15:121; 16:108-109.
33. *Ibid.*, 6:170.
34. *Ibid.*, 14:162-63.
35. *Ibid.*, 11:130, 12:271, 16:113.
36. *Ibid.*, 19:70.
37. *Ibid.*, 6:70-71; 12:256-57; and 14:192.
38. Wilfred H. Munro, "Among the Mormons in the Days of Brigham Young," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 36 (Boston: 20 October 1926): 219.
39. Jules Remy and Julius Brenchley, *A Journey to Great-Salt Lake City With a Sketch of the History, Religion, and Customs of the Mormons* 2 vols. (London: W. Jeffs, 1861), 1:498-99.
40. *JD* 15:62.
41. *Ibid.*, 12:298-99; also 14:193.
42. Heber C. Kimball to Joseph A. Young, 8 September 1855, Historian's Office Letterbook, 1:256.
43. Wilford Woodruff to Emma Smith Woodruff, 6 January 1877, Emma Smith Woodruff Papers, Church Archives.
44. For instance see William Chandless, *A Visit to Salt Lake, Being a Journey Across the Plains and a Residence in the Mormon Settlements at Utah* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1857), p. 189.
45. Ronald W. Walker, "Zion Within the Rockies: Brigham Young's Social Engineering," unpublished paper.
45. Mark Holloway, *Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America, 1680-1880*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc.), pp. 18-19.
46. Heber J. Grant to Susan Young Gates, 16 March 1927, Heber J. Grant Letterbook, 65:167-68, Heber J. Grant Papers, Church Archives.
47. *JD* 14:44, 115; 18:212.



# The Worship of Household Gods

*"My first aim will be to clean down (do you comprehend the full force of the expression?) to clean down Moor House from chamber to cellar; my next to rub it with beeswax, oil, and an indefinite number of cloths, till it glitters again; my third, to arrange every chair, table, bed, carpet, with mathematical precision; afterwards I shall go near to ruin you in coals and peat to keep good fires in every room; and lastly, the two days preceding that on which your sisters are expected, will be devoted by Hannah and me to such a beating of eggs, sorting of currants, grating of spices, compounding of Christmas cakes, chopping up of materials for mincepies, and solemnizing of other culinary rites, as words can convey but an inadequate notion of to the uninitiated like you."*

(Jane Eyre)

THE compelling thing about this quote is the underlying metaphor: housecleaning and general domesticity are a religion with certain rites to which one may be uninitiated. This is an alien gospel, a separate devotion, a barely conscious idolatry: the worship of the household gods—their rites, offerings, oblations, sacraments, and services, and in turn the communications, the revelations, the protections and blessings—all in mute wall tones and cool linoleum, the furnace hymning down the nights, and in the halos of light from open fridges in dark kitchens.

Household gods were once clay or wood or stone; but the images were broken long ago and the god-ghosts set free to dissipate into the general element, to vest themselves in couch, curtain, or condense behind a picture, or to breathe into any one or other household fixture and so incarnate themselves. The Cat, I think, inhaled some part of this household deity—the "yang" part, the voluptuous, the anti-matter, and the Perpetual Enigma. She picks her way over the tabletop, paw after paw carefully between the pots and papers; then she stretches down like a fat caterpillar to the chair a foot away and gathers herself in three circles and a neat yawn. The Cat guards the silences, issuing her purr into the element. Waking, she rules the birds with her eyes slitted and Egyptian, her body coiled and pointed at the cage where they flap and beep and fling themselves against the wicker bars.

Other gods seem lodged behind pictures and in flower-pots, in the hundred hopeful green faces turned upwards toward the window; they hum and whirr with the furnace and the outside rush of cars and in the refrigerator's orisons. They are watchful—somehow they sway us, gently demanding their proper rituals: the bed must be made or the bedrooms grimace all day; the kitchen whines and scowls when dishes lie sticky in the sink and dried pools of milk lie blue and fissured on the table; the living room pouts when piled coats loom over

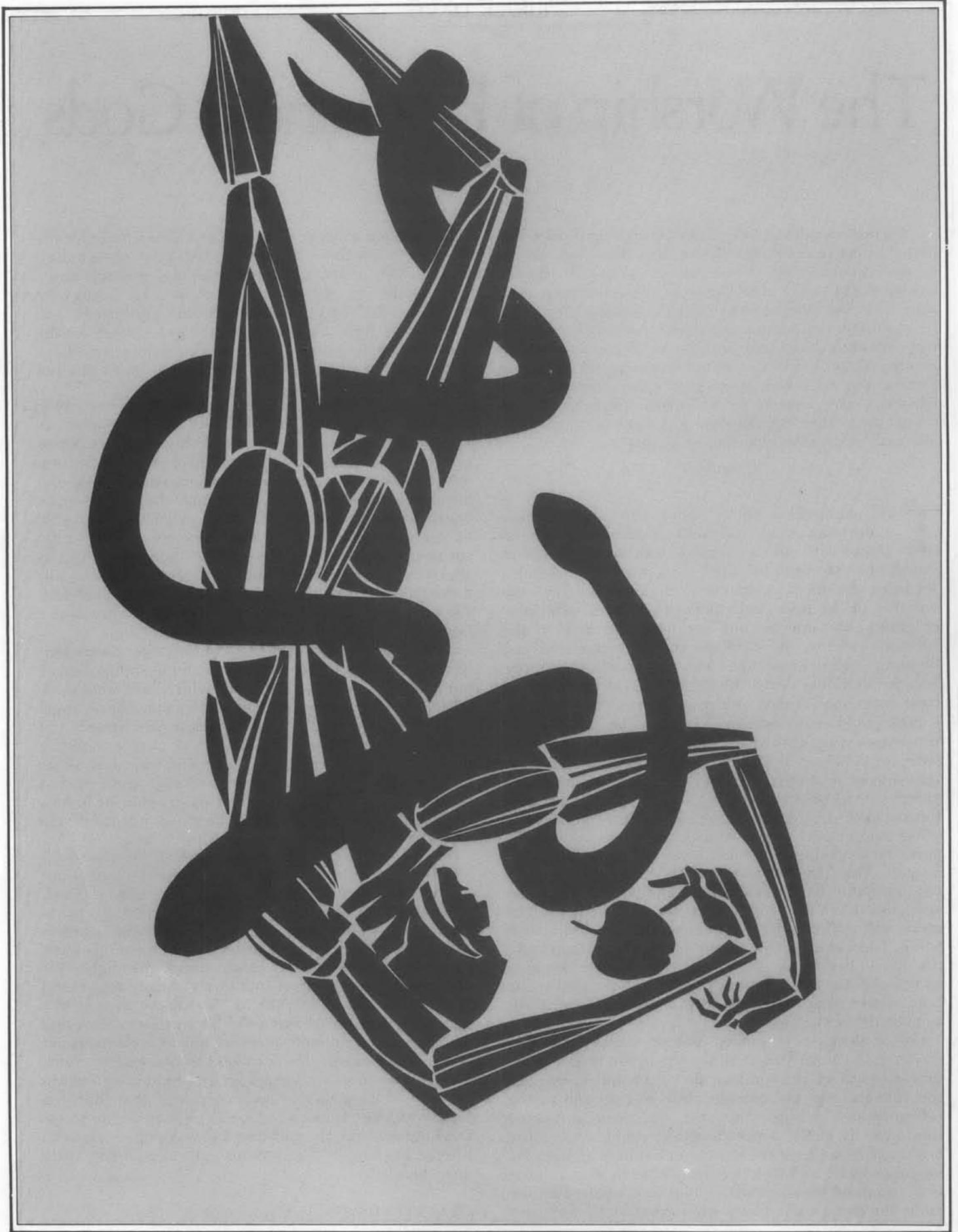
flung socks and stacks of miscellany. There is a joy in the household rituals—a hearty satisfaction in vacuuming a clean swath of straight-napped lintless triumph down the middle of the room; there is new vigour in tightsheeted, lumpless beds and slick cupboards, and integrity in having picked away the very cobs from the corners and the gurbelage from behind the stove; there is serenity in ironed shirts, redemption in an ordered drawer, glory in a file.

Beyond the outward performances of household worship, there are meditations, mild psalms of inattention, moments when we slip into the very house, caught in the hums and whirrs of furnace and fridge, the low rumble of the dryer with the occasional clink of a button on the metal drum, moments when we absently brush table tops and stare at window locks, of patterns of light on formica. Our devotions are in lull, in the softness of 3:30 afternoons and the light dissolving in shafts of dust from the window. Our particles filter down, sifting into sleep, and the mild gods preside—allowing the sun through the curtains one thread at a time, whirring, humming the afternoon long.

After the rites, after the meditations, after the patient testing of the hours come the communications: clanks, hums, drips, flickers of a bulb, whirrs and shudders, gusts up out of vents, an occasional spider like an angel from the Presences, hopping sideways, furred and knobby-legged, across the stove-top; once or twice a mouse, long-ring-ribbed tail dripping like a shoelace over the grill—a bright glance and then gone with a skitter into the closet, the rejected prophet of hollow walls and yellow mitts behind the stove, hunted by the slit-eyed Baal, the Cat-god under the house.

In the evenings the gods, pacified by the day's offerings, smile and call all things home, breathing out simmering onions, radio voices, and a blue clarinet, reflecting back warm lights and faces in black panes between the half-closed curtains. Babies sing out their last sleepy halloos, and wild trains come churning by and away, bleating long and lonely down the night. We exorcise the chaos, putting out the cat, heavy-bellied and clawing the air, and locking the door against the swarming darkness, where the Baal-priests meow and claw garbage can membranes and skitter in the wrapper heaps and pounce. The deadbolt clicks with a slight heave of the door, and we are sealed, sheltered, folded in the arms of the gods that own us in sleep, that chart the night away with fluorescent hands, that guide the house headlong through the galaxies, and waken us again with a fierce buzzing in the tenuous light to perform again their rituals.

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TOWARD A MORMON CONCEPT OF

# ORIGINAL SIN

**D**OESN'T Mormonism reject the traditional Christian concept of original sin? What possible reason could we have for developing one of our own when we have gained so much by eschewing the traditional doctrine? We cannot be accused of advocating the damnation of infants. We cannot be blamed for fostering a negative self image in our adherents. We escape the difficulties of reconciling the doctrine with a concept of free agency. We do not arouse the repugnance that modern man and many modern philosophies feel toward the doctrine. And we can avoid the unpopular authoritarian ideas of government and child rearing often associated with it. Besides all this, isn't it false? Doesn't it contradict some of our basic doctrines?

BEFORE we so easily dismiss this doctrine, however, we should consider the role it plays in traditional Christian theology. There is a distinction between the questions a doctrine attempts to answer or the concepts it seeks to clarify and the ways it does so; that is, a doctrine may be false and yet important. The central belief of Christianity is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, provided an atonement for mankind, that man may be redeemed through him. Redeemed from what? The doctrine of original sin answers the question. Who is in need of redemption? The doctrine of original sin supplies an answer. The central purpose of the doctrine is to describe the universality of sin and mankind's universal need of redemption. It poses the problem to which the atonement and the plan of salvation are the solution. Without a clear understanding of the problem, the solution cannot be appreciated.

Since the concepts of the atonement and the plan of salvation are also central to Mormon theology, the question can be asked: If Mormon theology simply does away with the concept of original sin, declaring it altogether false, how does it fill the gap? What concept does it have that describes the universality of sin and mankind's universal need of redemption? That these ideas are an important part of our beliefs can be shown by citing a few scriptures. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Ro. 3:23); . . . if there should be no atonement made all mankind must be lost (Jac. 7:12); . . . there must be an atonement made or all mankind must unavoidably perish (Al. 34:9); . . . thus all mankind were lost and behold, they would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed them from their lost and fallen state" (Mos. 16:4). I am not saying that these scriptures prove the doctrine of original sin or that given our belief in them we ought to embrace the doctrine of original sin in order to be consistent. The universality of sin and the universal need for redemption, rather, require an explanation or clarification, the traditional doctrine of original sin being but one possibility.

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## The Fall in Mormonism

Many Mormons would no doubt argue that our concept of the Fall provides such an explanation. Of course, the doctrine of original sin is based on the traditional interpretation of the Fall and because we can point out errors in this interpretation, we seem to think that we have refuted the doctrine of original sin. We see the Fall not as a disruption but as a necessary part of God's plan for us. Mortality has definite and necessary purposes, and the Fall was anticipated and provided for even before the foundation of the world was laid. Our interpretation raises the estimation of Adam over that of the traditional interpretation. Adam is not to be blamed but praised, for he made it possible for us to enter mortality and thus proceed on the path toward godhood.

From our conception of the Fall some Mormons conclude that Adam's and Eve's partaking of the forbidden fruit was not really a sin. They reason that since the Fall was part of the plan, Adam and Eve must have chosen according to God's will and surely to do so could not be a sin. Some have argued that Adam and Eve did not sin in partaking of the fruit because there was never a commandment against it. The prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was really a statement of the consequences that would follow the eating of the fruit: "If you eat the fruit, then you will die." Instead of a commandment with a prescribed punishment we have a statement of cause and effect. According to this view it was the eating of the fruit itself which corrupted the bodies of Adam and Eve, changing them into mortal bodies.

I can see several problems with these lines of reasoning. The first argument, that Adam and Eve could not have sinned because the Fall was necessary, obscures the distinction between "necessary" and "good," which can lead to the belief that whatever *is* is good and a denial of the reality of evil. The interpretation of the commandment not to partake of the fruit as a statement of cause and effect is not consistent with the scriptures. Sometime after leaving the Garden of Eden, Adam was told by God that he had forgiven him of his transgression in the Garden. If the transgression were not a sin but merely a choice with certain unpleasant consequences, why would forgiveness be necessary? God had said, "Thou shalt not eat of it" and "Remember that I forbid it." If this is not the logical form of a commandment, what is?

The idea that the Fall was not a punishment for a sin but rather a natural consequence of a conscious choice ignores the fact that an action may have both natural and legal consequences. Because we suffer natural consequences of breaking laws does not mean that we will not be called to account for doing so by the appropriate authority and receive the prescribed punishment. Because I break my arm and wreck my car while speeding does not mean that the law will fail to impose the penalties for a traffic violation. God's response to Adam's and Eve's breaking of his commandment was not, "You see what has happened to you. Well, I warned you about that." He called them to account for their deed. He told them what their punishment would be and effected it himself by driving them

out of the Garden of Eden. Perhaps the eating of the fruit brought about the temporal death of Adam and Eve, but God himself sent them out of his presence, thus, effecting a spiritual death.

My final objection to this softened interpretation is that by minimizing the spiritual effects of the Fall it fails to answer the central question answered by the doctrine of original sin: Why is it impossible for men to be sinless? Those following the softened interpretation point out that all will be resurrected because of the atonement of Christ. Mortality, that which we inherit from Adam, will be overcome by Christ because it is not just that we should pay for Adam's sin. Thus the individual is essentially unaffected by the Fall. He is free to work out his own salvation, to choose good or evil and then be judged according to his works. But what about spiritual death? Don't we inherit it? We know that spiritual death is being cut off from the presence of the Lord, but what effect does this have upon our spirits and their capacities? Christ may atone for this first spiritual death since everyone will be brought back into God's presence for judgment, but that does not mean spiritual death has no effects in mortality. Neither does the fact of universal resurrection mean that possessing a temporal body does not affect us while we are mortal.

## The Nature of Man

If our doctrine of the Fall is not a replacement for a concept of original sin then our ideas on the nature of man might seem to be. Usually the doctrine of original sin is thought of as defining the nature of man. Man after the Fall is evil in his very being, naturally inclined to do evil, incapable of meriting salvation, worthy only of damnation. Mormons are not comfortable with such characterizations. We prefer to emphasize the positive aspects of man's nature.

Since we believe that man's basic intelligence was uncreated, that his spirit is the offspring of God, and that he has the potential of becoming a god himself, some Mormons argue that man must be essentially good. This, of course, would mean that the Mormon doctrine of the nature of man is in direct contradiction with that defined by the doctrine of original sin.

However, our beliefs concerning the pre-mortal existence do not necessarily affirm man's essential goodness. To be uncreated is not necessarily to be essentially good. Indeed, if we believed that God had created our basic intelligences we would be in a better position to affirm our essential goodness, but in a worse position for affirming God's. Our teachings concerning pre-mortality indicate that as spirits we exercised agency and attained different degrees of intelligence or spiritual power or godliness. Satan and those who followed him were also sons of God, yet they rebelled against him, showing themselves capable of willing and choosing evil.

Neither does our belief that we can become gods affirm man's essential goodness. It seems to me that our concept of free agency makes the question of whether mankind in general is essentially good or essentially evil meaningless. Isn't part of the purpose of our mortal probation to answer the question for each individual? We are potential gods, but also potential devils and

potential terrestrial beings and potential celestial beings. Our choices will determine our essential being; we are now ongoing projects.

We should remember that other Christians, too, believe that man has a divine potential, certainly not the potential to become a god, but the potential to become sinless and live with God in glory. They also have a doctrine analogous to our doctrine of the pre-existence: the doctrine of original righteousness, which affirms that man as God created him was naturally good. This doctrine enables the orthodox Christians to affirm that God's original creation was good and place the responsibility for evil on man's choice. It also gives them a view of man's potentiality; some of them even use it to draw a distinction between man's essential nature and his sinful condition and to show how man is able to fulfill whatever requirements their particular doctrine of redemption sets for him. Yet these orthodox theologians still maintain some interpretation of the doctrine of original sin.

Some Mormons would not claim that man's nature is basically good but rather that man's nature is dualistic, the spiritual being the good part of it and the body being the evil. Either the spiritual part will bring the carnal part into subjection or the physical part will pervert and change the spiritual part. Although there is something to be gained in seeing man as a dualistic being, seeing the spirit as the good part and the body as the evil leads to difficulties. It tends to make us believe that the worst sins (or even the only sins) are physical—lust, gluttony, self-indulgence, sloth—and to forget the spiritual sins—pride, the will to dominate others, unbelief, mistrust, envy, hate. Certainly the body introduces some desires and appetites to the spirit, as well as enabling it to fulfill them, but it is the spirit itself which desires, wills, reasons, and chooses. All commandments are spiritual because they are addressed to the spirit.

This dualistic view of man purportedly escapes the doctrine of original sin by showing that man is not totally depraved because only part of him, the physical part, was affected by the Fall. Yet, in fact, this raises another problem: it obscures the Mormon belief in the basic goodness of the body. Part of the reason for entering mortality was to obtain a body. Man may sin by not keeping the appetites of the body within lawful bounds, but that would not be the fault of the body but of the spirit. Also this view assumes that the spirit is essentially good, but neither the pre-earth history nor the eternal potential of the spirit substantiates this. This view also assumes that the spirit is unaffected by its fall into mortality. Can we simply assume this?

### **A Mormon Concept of Original Sin**

Given such considerations, I think it is clear that the Mormon doctrines of the Fall and the pre-mortal nature and post-mortal potential of man do not rule out a doctrine like that of original sin. But what would be the content of a Mormon concept of original sin?

The traditional concept of original sin distinguishes between universal sin and personal sins. Personal sins are inevitable because man is inherently evil and thus he will inevitably commit actual sins. Mormons usually assume that all men have sinned or will sin, hence all men are in need of redemption through the atonement,

but usually no reason is given for the inevitability of sin. It is just regarded as an observed phenomenon, an obvious fact of life. But how can we know beforehand, for every individual, that he will sin? If we really believe in free agency and there is nothing in the nature of man that necessitates his doing evil, is there not a possibility that someone will completely avoid sin?

The essence of the doctrine of original sin, which I believe we must accept if we affirm the universal need for redemption, is that man must sin; because he is a man, he cannot avoid sinning. A Mormon concept of original sin, then, must explain why man cannot avoid sinning.

Before proceeding with this explanation, however, we need a working definition of sin. The story of the Fall illuminates the nature of sin. Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In doing so they sinned for they transgressed God's specific commandment to them. This is certainly a minimal definition of sin; to sin is to break a commandment of God. Satan had promised Eve that if she partook of the fruit she would become as the gods, knowing good and evil. That in this he did not promise falsely is shown by God's words to his Son, "Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil." The tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolizes the law, for it is through the law that we are able to distinguish good from evil, that is, the law defines good and evil. "And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall say there is no sin," Lehi taught (2 Ne. 2:13) and Paul wrote, ". . . for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Ro. 3:20). The nature of sin, then, depends on the nature of the law. The law need not be given as a set of revealed commandments. Men have the law by virtue of being reasonable beings, by possessing the light of Christ or the ability to understand truth. Can man meet the demands of the law? For Adam and Eve, to partake of the fruit (to know the law) was to sin. Can man avoid sin if he knows the law? If he cannot, then sin is inevitable.

I would like to suggest three reasons why sin is inevitable. They have to do primarily with the nature of our fallen world and the conditions to which it subjects man rather than with the nature of his inner being. In my discussion of the reasons for the inevitability of sin I will consider the situation of a man who desires to do right, of one who knows the law and has committed himself to keeping it. I will do this, not because I suppose that all men are thus, but because I want to analyze the most hopeful case for sinlessness and show that even for the best, sin is inevitable.

### **Commandments Conflict**

The story of the Fall symbolizes each of the three reasons I will give for the necessity of sin. When Eve confronted Adam with the fact that she had already partaken of the forbidden fruit, he was faced with the first moral dilemma: two commandments had been given him and it was logically impossible for him to keep both of them. He had every intention of keeping all God's commandments, but he found himself in a situation where it was logically impossible for him to do so. On the one hand, God had commanded him not to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. On the other hand, he had commanded Adam

and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth. Since Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit, she would be cast out of the Garden of Eden so it would be impossible for Adam to keep the commandment to multiply if he should choose not to partake of the fruit his wife offered him. Adam deliberately chose to enter a fallen world, sacrificing moral rectitude for love.

Adam's dilemma symbolizes a condition of our fallen world: commandments conflict; it becomes logically impossible to keep all of them. Such conflicts are not necessarily simple logical conflicts between any of the commandments. They usually arise because someone has sinned, but the sin is not always directly traceable to the one who faces the dilemma.

The classic example of the conflict between commandments involves the commandment to be obedient to those in authority over us. But what should we do if a legitimate authority commands us to do something wrong? Then, because of his sin, we face a moral dilemma. Some seek to resolve this dilemma by maintaining that in such a case we are no longer under obligation to obey him. Others would resolve it by claiming that in such an instance we ought to obey him, but he would have to assume the full responsibility for our actions in doing so. Both solutions resolve the dilemma by introducing a new law which tells us what to do in case of a conflict between two other laws, but they differ as to what they think the law should be. But would either solution really resolve it? The situation involves judgments on many different levels. How do we know that a conflict between two commandments really exists? What degree of authority does the leader in question really have over us? Is there another authority over us commanding an opposite action? How do we know that what he commands is wrong? Do we have the same amount of information and experience enabling us to judge the situation as he does? What if we know that he considers his directive to be absolutely right? What effect would our disobedience have on others? Which commandment is more important, the commandment to obey authority or the one that we should be breaking by doing so? But whatever we choose, if we face a dilemma, we will inevitably break a commandment and thus reap the natural, if not the legal consequences of our action. We ourselves, despite our best intentions, will have broken a commandment and have sinned.

It is, indeed, the man with the best intentions who is faced with moral dilemmas, the reflective man who sincerely strives to fulfill all his duties. The unreflective but morally sincere man sees only the commandment immediately before him. Lehi teaches that Adam and Eve could have had no children if they had not partaken of the fruit. But until Eve, who had her eyes opened with the knowledge of good and evil, had pointed it out to him, Adam had seen no conflict at all between the two commandments God had given him.

Does it seem unjust of God to have placed man in a situation where he would inevitably sin, no matter what he chose? Yes, it does and this aspect of the Fall must be faced. One of the great tasks of the theologian has always been to justify God to man, to show how God is not responsible for evil. The story of the Fall seems to implicate God heavily. He gave Adam and Eve two contradictory commandments; he placed a tempting tree

in full view; he allowed Satan, an opposing force, to enter the Garden of Eden. It almost seems as if the Fall was prearranged. Of course, our concept of the Fall regards it as part of the plan of salvation. But then weren't Adam and Eve following God's will in effecting it? And how can it be a sin to follow God's will?

But Adam and Eve did not partake of the fruit in a conscious effort to forward God's plan. Eve yielded to Satan's temptation and Adam partook of it in order to remain with Eve and father children. It was not until later when the plan of redemption was explained to them that they realized their choice had been the right one. "Yes, it was God's will." And if God wants us to come to a world where sin is inevitable then does he want us to sin, too? Of course, Adam and Eve chose freely both in the Garden of Eden and in the councils of heaven, for we believe that all of us chose to come here knowing the inevitability of sin and, to some degree, what it would require to return to God's presence. This helps to free God from the responsibility of sin, but if anyone should still accuse God we can remind him that God himself is willing to bear the responsibility for all our sins. If he wanted us to sin it was not in order to punish us because he is willing to pay the price for all of us.

### **Man's Finitude**

The second condition of mortality which I think makes sin inevitable is man's finitude. Finitude includes egocentricity and limitations in power and knowledge. In a sense, these do describe man's nature, but they are concerned with his capacities rather than his will and desires. These capacities seem to be affected by the physical laws of our world. I am not implying that our spirits before the Fall were not subject to some kind of finitude or claiming that finitude is itself a sin. I merely wish to show that in this world, given the nature of law and sin, our degree of finitude makes sin inevitable.

In the story of the Fall finitude is symbolized by nakedness. The one piece of knowledge that we are told Adam and Eve received from partaking of the fruit was the knowledge that they were naked. After partaking of the fruit they became ashamed of their nakedness and sought to hide it; they became self-conscious. Perhaps, then, our egocentricity is a result of the Fall. Egocentricity is the state of being directly limited to one's own feelings, thoughts, desires and will, being able to act only on one's own motives, and being naturally disposed to favor oneself and regard oneself as the most important. Because we are egocentric does not mean that we cannot empathize or learn about another's point of view or act unselfishly, but in order to do so we must exert imagination, will, and reason or spiritual power.

It is not difficult to see how egocentricity is the source of much sin. Who would injure another if he were forced to also feel the pain himself? But it requires an effort of the will and imagination to learn and remember that another is a self like oneself. It seems that in mortality it is impossible to completely overcome egocentricity. Even when the lesson has been learned and the commitment made to regard others as just as important as oneself and to try to empathize with them, the sheer numbers of people with whom any one person interacts makes it impossible for him to achieve empathetic

knowledge of each of them all the time.

Lack of power also leads to sin. I have said that being ashamed of nakedness symbolizes egocentricity. What does nakedness itself symbolize? Clothing can symbolize power and lack of clothing can symbolize a lack of power. What powers does man lack in this telestial state? To answer this question it is instructive to ask what powers man considers supernatural or what powers he seeks to gain through science, magic, religion, or reason. Man has some power over distance through his eyes and ears and feet, but he seeks extensions of these powers: the power to see or hear things far away or very small or very large, the power to be quickly where he is not. Man seeks power over time; his memory gives him some power over the past and his ability to plan and carry out his plans gives him some control of the future, but he seeks extensions of these powers. Man seeks power over natural objects and the elements. Through reason, science, and technology he has increased his control of natural objects, but this control is always reducible to matter acting upon matter. Man has some power over the animal and plant worlds, but it is not complete. Man also seeks to obtain power over others; there are, of course, ways of obtaining such power but it is always incomplete. Man even lacks complete power over himself. Disease, accident, congenital imperfections, and death exert their influence. Conflicting desires, failing memory, and other mental imperfections make man's power over himself incomplete. Limitations in power can prevent a benevolent man from accomplishing his good intentions though it is equally true that were man's powers increased some would probably be involved in greater sin than they are now. In addition a person often sins in attempting to gain these powers. It is not nakedness itself but knowing that he is naked that causes man to sin, for he seeks to cover his nakedness by grasping power and there are laws governing the use of power. In order to use power without sinning, man must already have achieved perfect knowledge and benevolence.

Nakedness can also symbolize a lack of knowledge. Incomplete knowledge also leads to sin. A man might seek a good goal but be ignorant of the means whereby the goal could be achieved. A man might want to do good to another person but lack the knowledge of that person's real needs and do him harm instead. A man might seek to do the right thing by considering the consequences of his actions, but it is impossible for him to know exactly what they will be or all the effects his actions will have.

Furthermore man has the capacity of thinking only one thing, of performing only one task at one particular moment. Thus, if he is fulfilling one duty he is probably neglecting another. To set up a hierarchy of duties or to establish priorities does not solve this problem. How can we be sure that the hierarchy is valid? How do we fit the duty to the time? Knowing that one duty is more important than another does not mean that that duty should always take precedence over the other; otherwise, the less important duty would never be accomplished. How do we know that a particular action fulfills a particular duty? Some duties, to love our neighbor, for example, are always incumbent upon us.

### **The Solidarity of Mankind**

The third condition which accounts for the inevitability of sin might be termed the solidarity of mankind. When God asked Adam, "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" Adam replied, "The woman thou gavest me and commandest that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat." When God asked Eve what she had done, she said, "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat." It is tempting to see Adam's and Eve's answers as excuses or rationalizations and this as the beginning of the reprehensible universal tendency to palm off guilt onto others, to dishonestly refuse to accept the responsibility for personal sin.

Were Adam and Eve really trying to escape responsibility? What does it mean to accept responsibility? Two things seem to be involved. To accept responsibility one must acknowledge himself as the cause of something; he must admit that his choice led to a particular event or chain of events. This implies that he recognizes that he could have done otherwise. He must also submit himself to any authority that may have jurisdiction over his act and accept whatever punishment is justly imposed. Did Adam and Eve refuse responsibility for their act, then? Not at all; they both admitted, "I did eat." They told God why they had done so, but neither of them suggested that the one who had influenced them should bear all the responsibility. Adam's answer indicates that he was pointing out the genuine dilemma he had faced. God had commanded him to remain with Eve, and he had chosen to keep that commandment rather than the one not to eat the fruit. Eve told God that the reason she had partaken of the fruit was that the serpent had deceived her; she had thought she was doing the right thing. God accepted their reasons; he didn't chastise them for failing to recognize their own guilt. Adam and Eve each received slightly different punishments because of their different degrees of culpability. And the serpent, who didn't partake of the fruit at all but only influenced Eve, was also punished, indicating that God considered him partially responsible for the act.

This points to another human dilemma: no one is ever totally responsible for what he does in the sense that his decision is the only causative factor in his choice. There are always reasons for a choice and many of these may be beyond the control of the principal agent. We cannot always choose our choices. "Men will be punished for their own sins," our article of faith declares. But might not a man be responsible for influencing another to sin and thus be to some degree responsible for that man's sins? And might not others in the same way be responsible to some degree for his sins? A great number of the commandments are concerned with our duties to our fellowmen. Through stewardship over them we may bear responsibility for their sins. This is not to say that those committing the sins are exonerated from all responsibility for them, but those influencing them and having stewardship responsibilities over them may share the guilt. Does this make your sin my sin or is my sin another one: failing to teach you or provoking you or putting a stumbling block in your path or teaching you falsely? Would it be possible thus to preserve the discreetness of sin, holding each man strictly

accountable only for his own sins? Surely it would be impossible to list all the sins that have ever been committed and then ascribe responsibility for each one to a particular person. It would be impossible, since such a list would certainly be infinite if only because it involves sins of omission. If it were possible to make such a list, then certainly there would be many possible ways of doing so. How many sins were involved in World War II? How many in the fight my children just had? Who is responsible for group sins, who for group failures? The revelation which states "But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin" indicates that all of us are in sin because we participate in unjust economic systems. Is it a sin for me to enjoy the riches of the earth and feed my children milk and honey while others starve? But how can I possibly avoid this sin? The phrase "the blood and sins of this generation" suggests that there are group sins. From my culture I will learn prejudices, false values, and distortions of reality, and I must necessarily participate in its social, economic and political systems, which, if they are not celestial, certainly involve some degree of sin. The Church is under commandment to build Zion, the holy city, with its celestial laws and systems. If we fail to do so, doesn't each of us bear the responsibility? Can we be perfect if those with whom we associate are not? What does the commandment that we become one mean? Can we fulfill our responsibilities if we are not united? How does God fulfill his?

### **The Status of Little Children**

Besides providing an explanation for the inevitability of sin a Mormon concept of original sin must account for two special cases, both of which the scriptures specifically declare to be sinless: little children and Christ. Does the sinlessness of little children or Christ mean that sin is not inevitable in a fallen world? Understanding why little children are considered sinless should make it clear that the Mormon concept of the status of little children does not conflict with, but rather supports the concept of original sin that I have been developing.

The question as to whether or not little children can sin usually arises in the context of baptism. Our rejection of infant baptism has been considered as sufficient reason for rejecting the doctrine of original sin inasmuch as that doctrine supplies the rationale: if a corrupt nature is inherited, then baptism is necessary for even the youngest infant. Mormon doctrine has been very clear on the subject of infant baptism. The prophet Mormon set forth the basic doctrine. Hearing disputations among the people concerning the baptism of little children, he inquired of the Lord and received this revelation:

Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; . . . (Mor. 8:8)

Mormon goes on to explain that little children need no repentance or baptism because "baptism is unto

repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins. But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world." Little children are not capable of sinning. Why not? They have been known to lie, to steal, to be disobedient to authority, to break the commandments. Why is this not sin? Christ says, "The curse of Adam is taken away from them in me." What is the curse of Adam? I have suggested that it is to be separated from God and made accountable to the demands of law. Twice Mormon declares that little children cannot repent; this is why they do not need baptism. Why can't they repent? Is it simply because they have no need to or because they lack the capacity? Mormon's words suggest that both are true and that perhaps the first is true because of the second. Since little children have no sins, they do not need to repent, but the reason they have no sins is that they are "alive in Christ" because of his mercy. "All they that are without the law" are also alive in Christ because "the power of the redemption cometh on all them that have no law." The mercies of Christ are given to little children because they are incapable of understanding the law. The curse of Adam has been taken from them because they have not yet partaken of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And not being able to understand the law, they certainly cannot repent, for repentance requires knowledge of a broken law and the demands of justice.

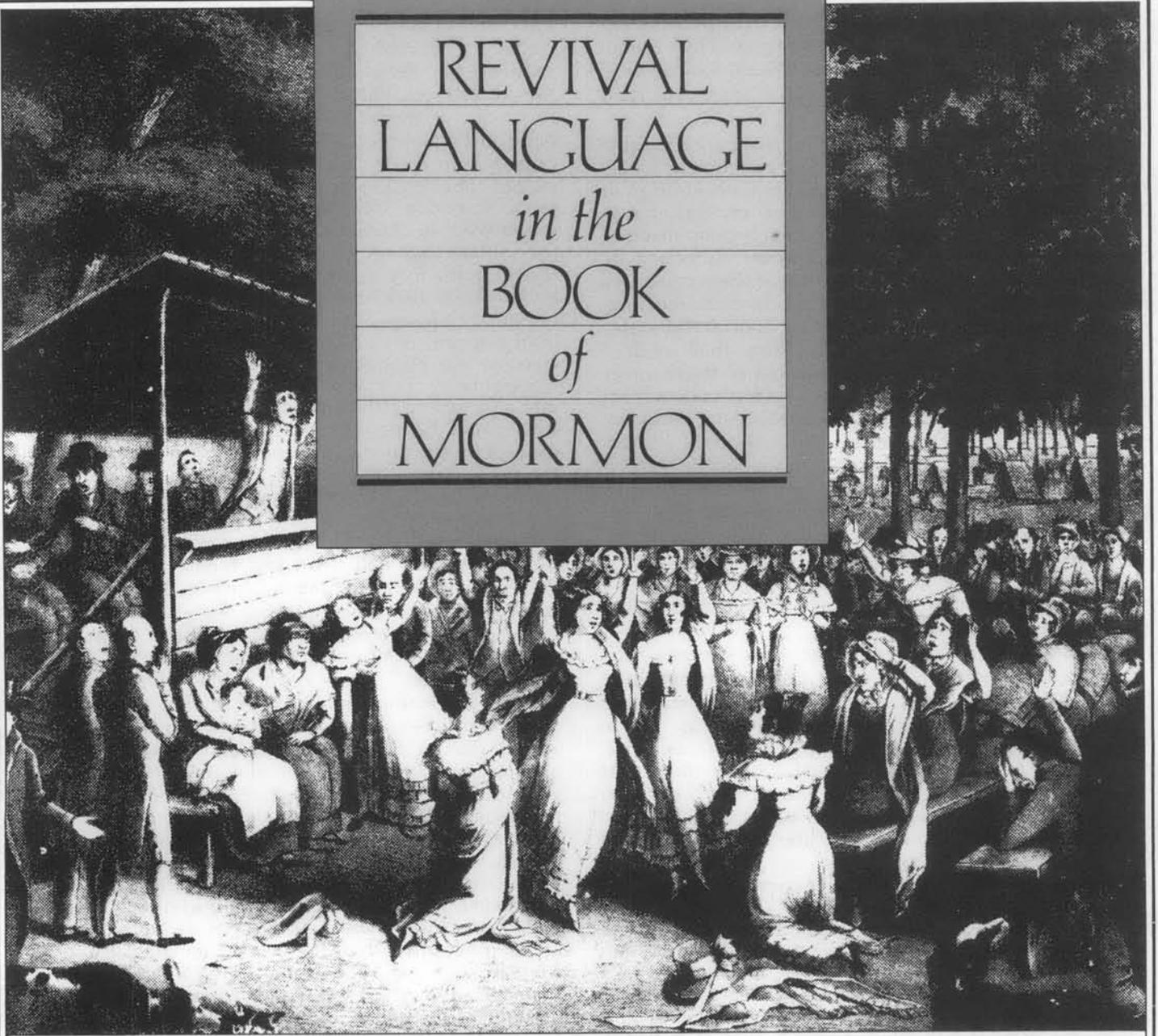
One thing seems clear from Mormon's words: little children are dependent upon the atonement of Christ for their salvation. They are saved because of their own merits. Those who teach that baptism is necessary for infants are correct in thinking that they are in need of mercy through the atonement but wrong in the way they think its effects are applied to them.

The sinlessness of Christ is more problematic. In the traditional doctrine he is exempted from original sin because of his divinity; his nature is divine rather than human. It is clear that Christ was not subject to the same degree of finitude that we are. He retained his powers of godhood or was given them gradually as he approached manhood. But it is not obvious that possessing a divine nature would enable Jesus to overcome the other conditions of a fallen world which have been shown to make sin inevitable. I cannot resolve this issue in this paper, but it is the revealed truth upon which our reasoning about the nature of sin is based. He could not have made an atonement for our sins if he had not been sinless; the scriptures testify that he did and that he was.

I think that the resolution of this theological problem lies in a careful consideration of Christ's relationship to the law. This suggests another direction that a concept of original sin might go and how such a concept can strengthen our theology. Having been developed to answer the questions posed by the doctrines of the universality of sin and the universal need for redemption, the concept of original sin itself gives rise to further questions: What is the nature of sin? How did Christ overcome the world? Is there a distinction between essential goodness and legal innocence? Although the revelations of the prophets should provide the truths from which we proceed in supplying answers to such questions, our own reasoning, or theologizing, is necessary if our answers are to be complete, harmonious, and coherent.

MARK THOMAS

# REVIVAL LANGUAGE *in the* BOOK *of* MORMON



*"The Church of Jesus' Christ of Latter-day Saints, for all its uniqueness, was very much a product of its time, but not in any simple or obvious way. Mormonism was undeniably the most original and persecuted religion of this period or of any period of American history. It defied as no other religion did both the orthodox and evangelical counter-culture. Yet at the same time it drew heavily on both these cultures."<sup>1</sup>*

**O**VER the years there have been a number of attempts to explain Joseph Smith and early Mormonism. It is not an easy task. Fawn Brodie tried to summarize them with the phrase "from magic to revelation." While magical traditions had some influence on Joseph Smith, I believe that a more useful and accurate explanation of the Prophet and the early Church comes from understanding his relationship to

revivalism: from revivalism to revelation. This perspective can lead us to a powerful new tool for interpreting the Book of Mormon. My concern here is not to determine when the book was written but rather to understand its message. Its message is expressed in the language of Joseph Smith's time.

The Book of Mormon contains revivalistic words and phrases that are not Hebraic. This revivalistic rhetoric is often in technical terms that can only be grasped in the historical and theological context of the early nineteenth century. In other words, a knowledge of the theological terminology of the original audience is necessary to understand certain passages in the Book of Mormon. But before we examine these passages we must understand Joseph Smith's relationship to revivalism.

### **Joseph Smith and the Churches**

Joseph Smith tells us that he first became seriously interested in religion in about 1818.<sup>2</sup> At that time the evangelical churches were the mainstream of

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nineteenth century religion, and *as such they served as Joseph Smith's primary exposure to institutional religion.* The Prophet stated that he had "an intimate acquaintance" with various revival religions and often attended their meetings.<sup>3</sup>

The camp meetings and revivals of that period became a rite of passage for sinners. The first phenomenological step was the existential confrontation with inner guilt and sin. This traumatic and "pungent" realization was called the state of "conviction." When a camp meeting preacher saw those in his audience under conviction, he would invite them to a bench in front of the pulpit called the "altar." The altar was the core of the camp meeting. Those who had been "awakened to their awful state" would come to the altar and ask, "What shall we do?" This phrase is such a common reaction of those under conviction that it must be seen as a formula taken from Acts 2:37 that only generally resembles the speakers' actual words. Sinners were helped to pray at the altar by converts. There, the sinner would "cry aloud for mercy." This prayer of the convicted was seen as conforming to the archetype of Jacob wrestling with God all night. Such protracted wrestling in prayer took place at the altar, in tents, in prayer circles, in forests and in caves—by groups or by individuals alone. Sometimes this state of conviction lasted for a short time. Sometimes it lasted for days.

Presbyterian revivals were relatively calm, as a rule. But the Methodist revivals and camp meetings were filled with displays of emotion. In Methodist meetings the most common manifestation of conviction, next to tears, was the "falling exercise." In this exercise, individuals or whole groups would fall "under the power of God as if they were dead." Sometimes the falling exercise was short lived. At other times, the convicted fell into trances at the meeting or later and saw visions of heaven or hell. In this state it was not uncommon to lie apparently powerless for days, sometimes for a week at a time, without food or drink. When they awoke, they would often speak of their vision, and prophesy to those around them. Other common signs of revival emotion were trembling and being "shocked."

The whole point of this wrestling in prayer was to obtain forgiveness of sin and to be born again. The passage from conviction to conversion was described in one of two ways: (1) A state of ecstatic joy replaced the agony of conviction. The new convert would shout praises to God such as "Glory to God!" or "Hallelujah!" The shouting of praises was not confined to converts but was a typical ecstatic expression among the more emotional evangelicals such as the Methodists. (2) Or the agony of conviction would be replaced by a state of relief and calm assurance. This was typically expressed with the evangelical formula, "The Lord spoke peace to my soul."<sup>4</sup>

Sometime in the early 1820s Joseph Smith experienced what is now called "the first vision." Visions of God and other heavenly beings were common accompaniments to the emotional revivals. After relating a revival vision not far from Albany, one Methodist author later stated that "this is a fair specimen of what occurred in many places during this interesting period . . . men and women, old and young, dreamed dreams, saw visions, and were filled with the

spirit of prophecy."<sup>5</sup> Other persons, in and out of revival circles, relegated latter-day visions to excessive enthusiasm. Peter Cartwright and Joseph Holdich ridiculed those who experienced modern visions and referred to them as "visionary" and "visionists."<sup>6</sup> Apparently George Lane, the Methodist minister who criticized Joseph's vision, did not believe in modern visions. The Prophet claimed that the first vision was the result of revival activity. And the early accounts of the vision itself (including D&C 20:5) contain the familiar revival language of "conviction," crying for mercy, and receiving the forgiveness of sin. But as the years passed by, the vision took on a larger theological significance in the mind of Joseph Smith. Finally, the revival language in the vision itself was dropped, and the primitivist element was strengthened. The developed first vision account bears the markings of a revival vision remodeled into a prophetic calling after later theological reflection. This could happen because Joseph Smith's dynamic concept of scripture and history placed less emphasis on the preservation of static texts than on flexibility and readiness to adapt them to changing circumstances and theological insights.

Joseph Smith stated that he was attracted to the Methodists and wished to join them.<sup>7</sup> The Prophet's Palmyra acquaintances said that he joined the Methodist class as a probationary member for a short time and exhorted in the evening class meetings.<sup>8</sup> The basic congregational unit in early American Methodism was called the "class." There was a six-month probation in the class before one could become a full member. One of the class offices was the office of exhorter. The exhorter would arise after the preacher and deliver a pointed application of the sermon to the audience. Exhorters were often new members—young men who wished to try preaching in hopes of someday becoming preachers.<sup>9</sup> But frequently exhortations would be given by one who did not hold the official position of exhorter.

In January 1827 Joseph married Emma Hale, a Methodist. We know he engaged his Methodist in-laws in religious discussion. Reliable sources (both Mormon and non-Mormon) state that Joseph Smith again joined a Methodist class in June 1828 in Harmony, Pennsylvania.<sup>10</sup> But he was soon forced to withdraw by local members who did not like his claims of visions and magic. Apparently the Prophet originally intended to bring forth the Book of Mormon through the Methodist church (perhaps through the central Methodist Book Concern).

Now we must ask ourselves: "If Joseph was told in his vision that the churches were corrupt, why did he join one?" Other members of the Smith family were members of the Presbyterian church until about September 1828.<sup>11</sup> It was probably in that year that Joseph Smith and his family decided that they should "join none of them." Prior to that time the Prophet would have held the primitivist belief of his mother: the churches are corrupt but not so corrupt that you wouldn't join them. The early accounts of the first vision stated that churches were corrupt. But not until the late 1838-1839 account did Joseph Smith report that he was told to join none of them. It seems likely he later mistakenly read his 1828 conclusion back into his vision. To believe otherwise is to say that neither the Smith family nor their Prophet son took his first vision

seriously.

Joseph's "intimate acquaintance" with revival religion apparently lasted from 1818 to 1828, to the time he worked on the Book of Mormon. But Joseph Smith was never a full-blooded revivalist, but rather on the border—one foot in and one foot out. From this position, Joseph could grasp the genius of revivalism and yet transcend it. The border is the creative and prophetic position. This is the genius of Joseph Smith and the power of early Mormonism. With the coming of the Book of Mormon, a view of revelation arose that was foreign to the revivalist. Unlike revival visions (which were often just imaginative ecstasy or a statement of forgiveness), revelation in Mormonism is the source of knowledge and an epistemological foundation more secure than the Bible.

The above transformation ("from revivalism to revelation") is important in understanding how revival phrases are used in the Book of Mormon. In expressing the ideas contained in the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith used the most formal and understandable language at his disposal. The two main sources for this language were the King James Bible and evangelical religion. But because the prophet was on the border of revivalism, the revival language itself was prophetically and creatively used by the prophet. *So we must first understand the inherited revival phrase and then see how Joseph Smith transforms it for his own purposes in the Book of Mormon.* By doing this, we shall come closer to understanding the intention of the Book of Mormon passage. In other words, an adequate interpretation must consider both the historical and textual context of the word or phrase.

Before examining these words and phrases, I must explain the extent and the assumptions of the research behind them. The evangelical churches of the early nineteenth century certainly engaged in more than revivals. But their religious language had the same meaning in a revival, a camp meeting, a love feast, or a journal. Hence, my research has investigated a variety of evangelical sources. Also, communications and transportation were extensive enough that there appears to be no real regional differences in the phrases presented here. However, my research tends to concentrate on western New York and on the writings from early American Methodism.

The collection presented here is part of a larger study. This larger study includes several dozen evangelical words and phrases. The phrases below I have included for two reasons: (1) I feel that I presently possess enough evidence to show that these terms were commonly used as I claim they were. (2) An understanding of these words and phrases illuminate a difficult passage or important theological point in the Book of Mormon.

### **Saved From Our Sins, Not In Them**

The first Universalist church in America was established in 1793 by John Murray. Shortly thereafter several independent groups set up Universalist organizations throughout the northern states. In 1819 they established a weekly newspaper, and by the 1830s they claimed 500 ministers. The central tenet of Universalism was that God intended to save every member of the human race. They often used biblical proof texts to convince their audience of the scriptural

origin of their doctrine. There were two brands of Universalism: those who believed in no hell or punishment in the next life and those who adopted the doctrine of restoration. The "restorationists" preached that unrepentant sinners would suffer limited punishment before they were restored to the good graces of God. It is the restorationist brand of Universalism that the Book of Mormon attacks most frequently.<sup>12</sup> Nephi prophesies that in the latter days

there shall be many which shall say, eat, drink, and be merry; . . . and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the Kingdom of God."<sup>13</sup>

The word "restoration" is used in the Universalist sense by Alma:

And now my son, I have somewhat to say concerning the restoration of which has been spoken. . . . Do not suppose, because it hath been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. . . . Wickedness never was happiness. . . . Is the meaning of the word restoration, to take a thing of a natural state, and place it in an unnatural state, or to place it in a state opposite to its nature? O, my son, this is not the case; but the meaning of the word restoration, is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish; good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous. . . . For that which ye do send out, shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore the word restoration, more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all.<sup>14</sup>

Universalism was preached throughout western New York in Joseph Smith's time; by 1826 there were nearly 20 preaching stations in the county of Ontario alone. *Lectures on the Prophecies* (a work by the influential Universalist Elhanan Winchester) was sold in the Palmyra bookstore near Joseph Smith's home. In this work, Winchester claimed that Matthew 2:21 was the foundation for understanding the atonement: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: For he shall save his people from their sins." Winchester interpreted this scripture as a proclamation of universal salvation. Evangelicals combated this biblical exegesis and, in so doing, they created a phrase which is used in the Book of Mormon.

The evangelical religions saw the doctrine of Universalism as an alarming heresy, and they attacked it consistently in sermons and various publications. A specific example can be found in a sermon delivered in about 1819 by Charles Marford of Victor, New York, which is nine miles from the Smith home:

Are all to be redeemed, and to be ransomed of the Lord. None but those that sincerely and truly repent of their Sins, and forsake them in this life, and return unto the Lord, will obtain the pardon of their sins. Christ is a Saviour to Save his people from their Sins, and not in them and those that think otherwise will be overthrown with that dreadful overthrow with which God overthrew Sodom and Gomorah.<sup>15</sup>

By stating that men can only be saved "from their Sins, and not in them," Marford was denying the Universalists' exegesis of Matthew 2:21. In 1835 Charles Finney stated that he had heard this familiar rebuttal used against Universalists.<sup>16</sup> Finney grew up in central New York. Following his 1821 conversion, he had extensive revival experience in western and central New

York well into the 1830s. So the phrase of “from and not in your sins” was probably familiar throughout western New York.

Amulek uses this same phrase in the city of Ammonihah: “The Lord surely shall come to redeem his people; but that He should not come to redeem them in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins.”<sup>17</sup> Several chapters later, we learn that the dead bodies of the slain Ammonihahites were called the “desolation of Nehors; for they were of the profession of Nehor.”<sup>18</sup> The Nehor movement believed, among other doctrines, that the Lord “had also redeemed all men; and in the end, all men should have eternal life.”<sup>19</sup> Hence we see that in the Book of Mormon, the doctrine of being “saved from our sins and not in them” is more than an exhortation to righteousness. It is a denunciation of Universalism and an interpretation of Matthew 2:21.

### Infinite Atonement

This phrase is used several times in the Book of Mormon, but only in the book of Alma do we get a feel for its meaning:

For according to the great plan of the Eternal God, there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen, and are lost, and must perish, except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made; for it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an Infinite and Eternal sacrifice. Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood, which will atone for the sins of another. Now if a man murdereth, behold, will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you Nay. But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; therefore there can nothing [sic] which is short of an Infinite atonement, which will suffice for the sins of the world; therefore it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; and then shall there be, or it is expedient there should be, a stop to the shedding of blood; then shall the law of Moses be fulfilled; yea, it shall be fulfilled; every jot and tit[t]le, and none shall have passed away. And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law; every whit a pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God; yea, Infinite and Eternal; and thus he shall bring salvation to all those who believe in his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exerciseth no faith unto repentance, is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice.<sup>20</sup>

The first thing we learn from Amulek about “infinite atonement” is that a human cannot offer it because he cannot vicariously pay for guilt. Also Amulek seems to be saying that the atonement is “infinite” in the sense that it must cover *every* sin of the world.

Before I was familiar with evangelical phrases, I always had a suspicion that there was something more behind “infinite atonement.” The latest Sunday School manual used by the Utah church in teaching the Book of Mormon evidently felt the same, because at the end of the lesson on Alma 34 there was a special section explaining the meaning of “infinite.” Webster’s

dictionary was used to explain that it means “subject to no limitation . . . immeasurably or inconceivably great or extensive.” This supports Amulek’s contention that the atonement must be “infinite” in the sense that it *extends to all sin*. Such an interpretation is a correct but incomplete understanding of this phrase, and it will lead us to misinterpret other passages in the Book of Mormon. To understand this term, we must briefly trace its history.

The concept of an infinite atonement was born in a famous theory of the atonement by Anselm of Canterbury in the twelfth century. Anselm believed that God was an infinite being, meaning that he was the ideal projection of every good human quality—God possesses infinite knowledge and wisdom, infinite holiness, and so forth. Humans, of course, are finite. But because our sins offend an infinite being, they are infinite sins. Therefore, atonement for sin must itself be infinite. No finite being is capable of such an atonement. Hence the central idea in the concept of “infinite atonement” is an atonement by an infinite being—which is by definition God. All of the nuances of infinite atonement come from this central idea from Anselm.

The concept of infinite atonement came to America in the writings of Jonathan Edwards. Edwards and his followers emphasized the infinite nature of sin in man in order to counter the optimistic anthropology of extreme Arminians and to show Universalists why man deserves infinite or eternal punishment in hell.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, in the early nineteenth century the famous Universalist Hosea Ballou argued that since man’s knowledge is finite, his sin and punishment can only be finite. And since God is infinite in goodness and power, Ballou argued, God would accomplish the universal salvation of all in a final state of happiness.

Among other purposes, evangelicals in Joseph Smith’s time continued to use the concept of “infinite atonement” to disprove Universalism and prove the essential divinity of Christ. Let us examine some representative examples from their writings:

Man has “infinitely offended God” because God’s authority has been “trampled under foot.” Only the mercy of an infinite atonement can “satisfy divine justice.” Mercy cannot suspend justice, but “mercy can overcome justice.” “Sin must be an inconceivable evil . . . when it required no less a sacrifice to make atonement for it, than that offered by God, manifested in the flesh. . . . As nothing less than this infinitely meritorious sacrifice could have been sufficient for the redemption of the world, we see it in the destructive nature of sin, and its . . . infinite demerit.”<sup>22</sup> Jesus “was man that he might have blood to shed; and God, that when shed, it might be of infinite value.”<sup>23</sup> “Nothing less than a sacrifice of infinite merit, can atone for the offences of the whole world.”<sup>24</sup> To deny “the necessity of an infinite atonement made by the death and suffering of Jesus Christ . . . goes to overturn the whole system of the gospel. . . .”<sup>25</sup> Old Testament prophecy and teaching are “all pointing to the great mediator.”<sup>26</sup> Because Jesus’ sacrifice was “offered upon the altar of his divinity, it acquired infinite value . . .”<sup>27</sup>

We find portions of the above statements throughout the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon has a unique perspective, but it does utilize traditional language and is in fact part of that tradition following Anselm.

The above quote from Alma leads us to believe that

the atonement is infinite in breadth—covering all sin. Yet early nineteenth century material clearly shows that the atonement is infinite in other ways—an expression of infinite love, power, and so forth. As Phoebus put it, Christ “by the infinite power of his divinity, raised up his human nature from the grave.”<sup>28</sup>

In this phrase the atonement is portrayed as infinite in its *depth of power* in overcoming death. II Nephi uses “infinite atonement” in the same way as Phoebus: “Save it should be an infinite atonement, this corruption could not put on incorruption.” But in Alma 34, the atonement is infinite in its breadth, in its ability to cover *all* the sins of the world. So Amulek’s explanation leads us to misinterpret the other less obvious instances of “infinite atonement” in the Book of Mormon because Amulek gives us only one aspect of the meaning of the phrase. The way to avoid this misinterpretation is to understand the historical use of the phrase.

### Zion

To the ancient Jew, Zion is a hill in Jerusalem; or figuratively, it is Jerusalem itself. But it is clear that the Book of Mormon doesn’t use “Zion” in this sense (except in Isaiah quotes and commentary). The Doctrine and Covenants is no greater help in understanding this term in the Book of Mormon. Because of an expanding theology in Mormonism, we find in the Doctrine and Covenants five different meanings for “Zion.”<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, the revivalists of Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon days quite consistently used the word Zion to signify the church and God’s work in the church.<sup>30</sup> To understand the use of this word in the Book of Mormon we must examine the view of the last days depicted there.<sup>31</sup> For the Book of Mormon, the great and beginning act of the last days is the coming forth of the book itself. This book will work a marvelous work and a wonder in converting Jew and Gentile to the truth. Then comes the great division among the people. The evil group will be called the whore of the earth or the great and abominable church. The righteous will be gathered and be called the church of Christ or Zion.<sup>32</sup> For the Book of Mormon, Zion means “church” but also something more. It is the restored church. It is always the gathered church in the latter-day division between good and evil. Zion is a symbol that evokes the vision of the latter-days. It is a symbol of righteousness in a corrupt world.

### The God of Nature Suffers

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. . . . And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.” (Matthew 27:45,51).

By the nineteenth century, two interpretations of these above events at Jesus’ crucifixion had arisen. One group of interpreters, including the Presbyterian Albert Barnes, believed the darkness mentioned was limited to Palestine. The other group believed that the darkness extended over the whole earth, and to prove their point ancient writers were quoted. Biblical commentaries used in evangelical churches mentioned the whole earth theory and quoted statements from Phlegon and Thallus that refer to earthquakes and darkness outside of Palestine during the crucifixion.

It was also argued that Dionysus had seen an

extraordinary eclipse in the same year as the crucifixion and exclaimed, “Either the God of nature suffers, or the frame of the world is dissolving.”<sup>33</sup> The evangelical audience of the Book of Mormon would have been familiar with this quote. The following Book of Mormon passage clearly espouses the idea that darkness and earthquakes occurred in more than just Palestine, and this prophecy subtly alludes to Dionysus’ quote at the time of the crucifixion, “The Lord God surely shall visit all the House of Israel at that day: some with his voice, because of their righteousness. . . . and others with thunderings and lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapour of darkness. . . . And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the Kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the spirit of God, to exclaim, the God of nature suffers.”<sup>34</sup> As in other Book of Mormon prophecy, this passage assumes a certain degree of historical knowledge, which in this case, most of us today do not possess.

### The Day of Grace Was Past

The most conspicuous and persistent theological debate among evangelicals was between the Calvinists and Arminians. It is difficult to describe the exact differences between these two theological schools since there were many types of Calvinism and several varieties of Arminianism, and both schools gradually became more liberal as the years passed. An encounter that represented popular opinions prior to 1830 was the debate between a Hopkinsian Calvinist (Seth Williston of the Presbyterian Church) and an Arminian (Nathan Bangs of the Methodist Church who preached in Palmyra in the 1826 Conference).<sup>35</sup>

Williston summarizes the Calvinist position well: (1) Strict Determinism—God is the cause of everything that happens. (2) Total Depravity—without the grace of God in conversion, the human heart is totally and continually under the domination of sin. (3) Predestination—God chooses some for salvation (called the doctrine of election) and some for damnation (called the doctrine of reprobation). Esau and Jacob are used by Williston as the archetypes of these two doctrines. (4) Sinful Imperfection—one cannot achieve perfection in this life. (5) Preserverance of the saints—the elect *will* be saved.

Arminians such as Bangs had an anti-Calvinist slogan: “Salvation is free.” By this they meant not only that salvation was a gift but, more important, that it was freely or universally given to all who sought it.<sup>36</sup> They agreed with Calvinists that “the natural man” (meaning human nature after the Fall) was *totally* corrupt, but they believed that grace was infused into all, and this grace put us in a position of freedom to choose. Bangs also believed in the possibility of a type or perfection in this life and in the possibility of falling from grace.

Both schools of thought often referred to earthly life as “a state of probation” because this life was (in their words) that “time allotted us to prepare for a never ending eternity.” There were several roughly equivalent terms used to symbolize one’s chance at salvation in this life: the day of visitation, the day of mercy, the day of grace, and the day of salvation. The phrase “*the day of grace was past*” was used especially in connection with the doctrine of reprobation to indicate that *one’s chance at*

salvation was lost. From an 1823 document we read, "My first thoughts under this new discovery of my awful sinfulness were, that my day of grace was past; for this doctrine was much talked of in those days; that time had been that I might have been saved [*sic*], but having past my day of grace, it was now too late."<sup>37</sup> And from Charles Marford: "The case of Esau was also urged very hard against me—and that I had sinned away my day of grace—and now, too late for me too [*sic*] seek salvation, for it would not be granted me."<sup>38</sup>

An old-school Calvinist would claim that God had granted a time for the sinner to repent knowing that he would not repent, because the unconverted heart was totally sinful. Therefore, God could predestinate the sinner to be damned, and yet the sinner (and not God) would be responsible for passing his day of grace. While the Methodists did not believe in this doctrine of reprobation, some of them (apparently an early minority) also preached that the "day of grace" was the short period of time after receiving one's chance at conversion. If the sinner did not take the opportunity to seek salvation during that time he would be damned.

Other Methodists (probably the majority) believed that the day of grace, or one's chance at salvation, would last until death. Any sinner could repent (or fall back into sin) anytime during his probation on earth. The state of the soul at death was the critical issue. Methodists chastised Calvinists for procrastinating repentance under the pretext that the day of grace had not yet arrived. With this background, let us turn to one of the phrases in the Book of Mormon.

Near the end of the Book of Mormon, the condition of the Nephites is described as follows, "I saw that the day of grace was past with them, both temporally and spiritually: for I saw thousands of them hewn down in open rebellion against God." (Mormon 2:15) The nineteenth century audience would have understood this to mean that the Nephites had *lost their chance at salvation* (and their chance to win the war). One could interpret this phrase as a Calvinist would. In that case, the Nephites would have been so sinful that they could not repent during this life or the next. This interpretation can only be made consistent with Book of Mormon theology if we believe that the Nephites committed the unpardonable sin. The concept of unpardonable sin is mentioned in other parts of the Book of Mormon. While there is some evidence for this Calvinist interpretation (Mormon 1:16; 2:13), it is rather a strained and highly improbable view.

I believe that the "day of grace" is used in the Book of Mormon in the way that the majority of Methodists would have used it. The day of grace had passed not because it was impossible to repent in this life but because they were about to be killed. The Nephites had lost their chance at salvation because they would die in their sins. This Methodist concept of the day of grace lasting until death matches the wording in Mormon 2:15, quoted above (the word "for" is understood as meaning "because"). This second understanding of the day of grace fits the Arminianism in the Book of Mormon, which is slightly more liberal than Methodist Arminianism; in the Book of Mormon the equivalent terms "day" and "salvation" last until death (Jacob 6:5; Alma 13:21, 27; 35:31-35; Helaman 13:38).

With "the day of grace" and the other phrases in this paper, we have been interpreting the Book of Mormon

by referring to the historical setting of early nineteenth century evangelical religion. This historical meaning of the text is an essential starting point to correct interpretation. But it is *only* a starting point. The final interpretive step is to discover the inner reality of the Book of Mormon wrapped in its nineteenth century theology and language. For the Book of Mormon is much more than a question and answer book for nineteenth century theology. It addresses, albeit in provincial nineteenth century terms, the issues fundamental to all modern religious life. For that and other reasons, the Book of Mormon is very relevant today. In the concept of "Zion" we see the symbol of a New Social Being in a world on the verge of self-destruction. In our age of nuclear weaponry I can think of no more relevant symbol. The Book of Mormon condemns the moral laxness inherent in religious fatalism (in the form of Calvinism) and in religious optimism (in the form of Universalism). It addresses the modern problems stemming from religious pluralism (such as religious certainty and authority), increasing secularization, and the tragic tendency in our time to ignore the non-rational half of our minds (the very source of revelation).

We must not only translate the essential meaning behind the nineteenth century phrases but also the essential meaning behind its social and psychological setting. The Book of Mormon can address the reader who is on a border similar to Joseph Smith's. Joseph Smith saw all of the existing churches as corrupt. Likewise, objective scholarship tends to place its disciples in a position in which they see all churches, all world views, and all value systems as fundamentally subjective. Both borders view religion and value statements as unauthoritative and as merely human inventions. For the person on the border, this is a position of alienation from the existing world view, a position of sorrow rather than pride. Joseph Smith used the symbol of "Apostasy" to describe the relationship of one on the border of his society. The Prophet moved from skepticism on the revival border to revelation. In a similar manner we must learn to move from the skepticism of scholarship to insight. We must learn to build or sustain existing spiritual worlds even though we may recognize that they are human inventions. We must learn from Joseph Smith's experience how to be constructive skeptics. It is on this border that Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon can offer their greatest contribution to a lone and barren world. Now as we open the Book of Mormon, we need not be afraid to redeem the essential meaning from the nineteenth century word.

#### Notes

1. Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism." *New York History* 61 (Oct. 1980): 379-380.

2. *BYU Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 279. We must keep in mind that Joseph Smith was not certain of the dates of his early religious experiences, so we take this date as only approximate. His first vision is an example of this problem. The 1832 account puts this vision "in the 16th year of my age," while the 1839 account states that he was "only fourteen and fifteen years of age or therabouts . . ." But we can place the beginning of the Prophet's involvement with revivalism no later than the 1824 Palmyra revival.

3. *Ibid.*, p.279,288.

4. The main concern in these summaries of the revival experience is to understand what the Prophet would have experienced prior to the restoration. The events and phrases cited herein are so common in revival accounts that no footnotes are multiplied. The reader is invited

to contact the author for specific phrases or incidents. Two important and readily available works that describe the revival experience are Bernard A. Weisberger's *They Gathered at the River* (Boston, 1958) and Peter Cartwright's *Autobiography* (New York, 1956 reprint). A secondary reason for recounting the revival experience is to demonstrate its influence on Book of Mormon language and conversion stories. Below is a brief list given, without interpretation, of some of the evangelical phrases discussed in the text (all references in these notes will list the page number of the 1830 edition followed by the versification of the current Utah edition, then the versification of the Authorized Version of the Reorganized Church. The wording of the quotes in the text of this paper are from the 1830 edition. Any versification in the text is from the current Utah edition): "What shall we do?" from the audience during a sermon (pp. 286, 313; Utah Alma 22:15; 32:5; Reorganized Alma 13:48-50; 16:125-126); crying aloud for mercy (pp. 162, 276, 279, 325, 331; Utah Mosiah 4:2; Utah Alma 18:41; 19:29; 36:18; 38:8; Reorganized Mosiah 2:2-4; Reorganized Alma 12:122, 167-8; 17:16; 18:9); "wrestling" in prayer (pp. 143, 243; Utah Enos 1:8; Utah Alma 8:10; Reorganized Enos 1:10-11; Reorganized Alma 6:11); the falling exercise (pp. 142, 162, 211-214, 273-286, 453; Utah Jacob 7:21; Utah Mosiah 4:1; 27; Utah Alma 18-19; 22; Utah III Nephi 1; Reorganized Jacob 5:36; Reorganized Mosiah 2:1; 11; Reorganized Alma 12:13; Reorganized III Nephi 1); trembling is common throughout the Book of Mormon; shouting praises to God (pp. 118, 293; Utah II Nephi 31:13; Utah Alma 24:23; Reorganized II Nephi 13:16-17; Reorganized Alma 14:51); "the Lord spoke peace to my soul" (pp. 331, 390; Utah Alma 38:8; 58:11; Reorganized Alma 18:9-10; 26:132); "visionary" as a title for those who experience visions (pp. 8, 14; Utah I Nephi 2:11; 5:2-4; Reorganized I Nephi 1:38-39; 146-149). While we find evangelical influence in the language, church organization and ritual of the Doctrine and Covenants and current Mormonism, its impact is never so strong as it was on the Book of Mormon.

5. George Peck, *Early Methodism Within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference From 1788 to 1828* (New York, 1860), p. 187. This particular vision was in 1800 in Brookfield, New York.

6. Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography* (New York, 1956 reprint), pp. 46-47, 189. This book is filled with Cartwright's first hand encounters with nineteenth century "visionaries." It is interesting to note that Cartwright himself had a vision in which he received forgiveness of sin (the most common type of nineteenth century vision). But it was those who experienced frequent or doctrinal visions that incurred his wrath. See also pages 156-157 of Joseph Holdich's *The Life of Wilbur Fisk, D.D.* written in 1842. For an example of a sermon opposing modern visions see Nathaniel William Taylor, *Practical Sermons* (New York, 1858), p.76. This sermon was delivered some time between 1812 and 1822.

7. *BYU Studies*, op. cit., p. 288.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 373-404. These assertions are made by two Palmyra friends of Joseph Smith. They have some good possibility of being accurate because they were close acquaintances of Joseph, and their statements match Joseph's known interest in Methodism and his early speaking ability (see *Improvement Era* [April 1966]: 277 ff). But we can only accept them as possibly or probably true because of some problems: They are both late and neither claims to be an eyewitness. In one of the accounts, Orsamus Turner's, it is stated that Joseph got his "spark of Methodism" in a camp meeting and exhorting experience after entering the Palmyra debating club. The debating club was not organized until January, 1822. Turner was a member of the debating club, but he left Palmyra in the summer of 1822. But 1822 is not a very likely year for a camp meeting of the first vision. It is also possible that the Prophet had his first vision after attending some kind of evangelical meeting other than a revival.

9. *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1813), pp. 90-92. Emory Stevens Bucke (editor), *The History of American Methodism 1* (Nashville, 1964), pp. 315-504.

10. The *Amboy Journal* (Amboy, Illinois) featured a number of members of this class in debate from April 30 to July 2, 1879. One of those debating was Edwin Cadwell, who had become an Elder in the Reorganized Church. The substance of the debate was the length of time that the Prophet remained in the class.

11. *BYU Studies* 10: 482-484.

12. Both Charles Marford (see footnote 15) and Alma charged that the Universalists had "wrested the scriptures." Book of Mormon p. 336 (Utah Alma 41:1; Reorganized Alma 19:62). The Book of Mormon original manuscript reads that they had "arrested the scriptures" but this was changed to "wrested" in the 1837 edition. This correction was an improvement since it was probably a spelling error by the scribe.

13. Book of Mormon p. 113 (Utah II Nephi 28:8; Reorganized II Nephi 12:10-11). See also pp. 166, 339.

14. Book of Mormon p. 336, 337 (Utah Alma 41:1, 10, 12-13, 15; Reorganized Alma 19: 62-63, 73-74, 76-77, 80). The word "restoration" does not occur in the King James Bible. The word "restore" appears, but with an entirely different meaning. One biblical usage is in the "restoring" of Israel after God's judgments. Universalists argued that this Judaic restoration was an analogy signifying the restoration of the wicked from hell.

15. This quote is from the original sermons of Charles Marford. These are in the possession of J. Sheldon Fisher of Fishers, New York. Those writings which do have dates range from 1818 to 1820.

16. Finney obviously didn't like this argument. "I have heard men preach against the idea that men are saved *in* their sins, and they supposed they were preaching down the Universalist doctrine. Universalists believe no such thing." Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*. 6th edition (New York, 1838), p.166. On another occasion, Finney taught that men could not be saved "in sin" only "from sin" (*Lectures to Professing Christians* pp. 362, 371-74). But he is here arguing against the tendency to antinomianism. So when we examine this phrase in the Book of Mormon, we must be careful to see its context in order to see which of the meanings it intends to convey.

17. Book of Mormon p. 253, 418 (Utah Alma 11:36-37; Utah Helaman 5:10; Reorganized Alma 8:90-92; Reorganized Helaman 2:72).

18. *Ibid.*, p. 267 (Utah Alma 16:11; Reorganized Alma 11:17-19).

19. *Ibid.*, p. 222 (Utah Alma 1:4; Reorganized Alma 1:7).

20. *Ibid.*, p. 319 (Utah Alma 34:9-16; Reorganized Alma 16:208-217).

21. Frank Hugh Foster, *A Genetic History of New England Theology* (New York, 1963) pp. 189 ff, 316 ff.

22. *Methodist Magazine* (1820): 90, 115.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

25. *Methodist Magazine* (1825): 82-85.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

28. William Phoebus, *An Essay on the Doctrine and Order of the Evangelical Church of America* (New York, 1817) p. 60.

29. Doctrine and Covenants (current Utah version) 6:6, 11:6, 12:6, 14:6 (the church?); 97:21 (pure in heart); 101:20 (Jackson County, Missouri); 113:9-10 (Israel as a people); 133:18 (the hill in Jerusalem).

30. In revival circles, biblical Zion was a type, symbol, or prophecy of the church. Ministers were "Zion's watchmen," and the waste places of Zion were built up by preaching. I have located a number of writings where "Zion" in Isaiah 52:7-8 is used to signify the church. In this connection, see Abinadi's exegesis of Isaiah 52:7-8 in the Book of Mormon (1830 edition) pp. 182-188 (Utah Mosiah 12:20-15: 31; Reorganized Mosiah 7:76-8:69).

31. The enemy of the whore is called alternatively Zion and the church of the Lamb of God. See Book of Mormon p. 33, 85 (Utah I Nephi 14:1013; Utah II Nephi 10:15-16; Reorganized I Nephi 3:220-229; Reorganized II Nephi 7:22-25). It is within a discussion of the corruption of the latter-day churches that we find the excuse for wickedness, "all is well in Zion": Book of Mormon 112-114 (Utah II Nephi 28:3-4, 12-13, 18-24; Reorganized II Nephi 12:3-7, 14-15, 2230). For "the laborers in Zion" as a term for the ministry see Book of Mormon p. 109 (Utah II Nephi 26:29-31; Reorganized II Nephi 11:106-107).

32. See Footnote 31. It is clear that the latter-day Zion is not merely a gathering place, because Zion is not to be set up among the converted Jews until after they have gathered; Book of Mormon p. 498,499 (Utah III Nephi 20:30-33; 21:1; Reorganized III Nephi 9:69-71, 86).

33. William Brown, *Antiquities of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1823) pp. 48-49.

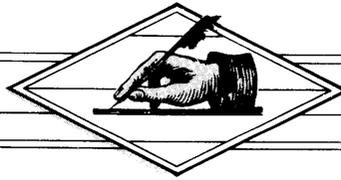
34. Book of Mormon p. 51 (Utah I Nephi 19:12; Reorganized I Nephi 5:248-250.)

35. Seth Williston, *A Vindication of Some of the Most Essential Doctrines of the Reformation* (Hudson, N.Y., 1817). Nathan Bangs, *Errors of Hopkinsianism Detected and Refuted* (New York, 1815).

36. See Book of Mormon p. 63, 108 (Utah II Nephi 2:4; 26:27 Reorganized II Nephi 1:64-66; 11: 148-153).

37. W.W. Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. 1, The Baptists* (New York, 1931) pp. 109-110.

38. See footnote 15 above.



# *No Higher Ground*

OBJECTIVE HISTORY IS AN ILLUSIVE CHIMERA

DAVID EARL BOHN

**O**PINIONS on the writing of religious history abound. Lawrence Foster recently offered his version in *SUNSTONE*, "New Perspectives in Mormon History."<sup>1</sup> Foster's article provides a useful summary of the arguments in support of what has been called the New Mormon History.

Foster begins with the familiar argument that ridiculous sectarian controversies have distracted the historians interested in Mormonism from their principal task—the pursuit of historical truth.<sup>2</sup> For disaffected Mormons and many Protestant critics, history is a weapon with which to attack the religious claims of the Church. Even "Fawn Brodie's path-breaking biography" suffers because, according to Foster, she "spent too much time carping that her Sunday School image of Joseph Smith hadn't been the full picture."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, for the Mormon church, history serves as an instrument of indoctrination with which to elicit the unquestioned acquiescence of its members. The Church desires edifying histories, "sanitized, saccharine accounts, treatments, which would best be characterized as 'propaganda' by an objective observer."<sup>4</sup>

As a result, otherwise "sober Mormon scholars" spend inordinate amounts of time trying to find evidence that Joseph Smith really saw angels. Foster sees this as being akin to the "debates of medieval scholastics over how many angels could dance on the head of a pin."<sup>5</sup> Foster finds histories written from this point of view to be "deadly dull and pointless." He asks himself how an otherwise interesting subject matter could be turned into such "pabulum."<sup>6</sup>

This is why, according to Foster, traditional Mormon scholarship is simply a "joke" to professional historians. It has produced little more than an enormous mass of "undigested data with no apparent organizing principle." Mormon historians have been unwilling to use theories from other disciplines, have ignored the broader social context, and on the whole have remained blind to the rich "complexity," "social vitality," and insights of the Mormon experience.<sup>7</sup>

Foster then lauds the New Mormon History as a way out of such sectarian squabbling and into the mainstream of American historical writing.<sup>8</sup> Foster repeatedly contrasts these objective historical accounts



with faith promoting ones; the former seem to stand for maturity, understanding, rigor, and truth while the latter inevitably reflect naivety, ignorance, inaccuracy, and error.<sup>9</sup>

Foster is concerned, however, that the official policy of the Church is moving against the New Mormon History, making the writing of objective accounts of the Mormon past more difficult. He warns that this would be short-sighted and not in the best interest of the Church. In his eyes, the type of history authorized by secular historians is clearly preferable. First, it is believable. It tells the "real" story about "the real people who struggled to create Mormondom" rather than the myths about "idealized paragons of virtue." Furthermore it is compatible with Mormon theology in its naturalistic and materialistic assumptions. Finally, it helps the Church meet constructively the new challenges of the future.<sup>10</sup>

The argument supporting such a New Mormon History is by no means original with Foster. Indeed his article is merely the latest version of an argument that has been made regularly for over twenty years. This is not to say that New Mormon Historians and their supporters such as Leonard J. Arrington, Robert Flanders, Thomas Alexander, Jan Shipps, Davis Bitton, Klaus Hansen, James Clayton, and Sterling McMurrin agree with Foster on every point. But they do mutually support the argument for a secular middle ground between the extremes of sectarian history.<sup>11</sup> In addition, many seem to agree with Foster that the questions addressed by traditional Mormon historians are not of genuine interest and that their approach is neither conceptual nor objective but compromised on every side by personal bias and *a priori* commitments.

The New Mormon Historians' call for a middle ground, on the other hand, is seen as a call for objectivity and neutrality. Arrington, for example, points to an "objective" history which will not reflect "the author's personal feelings and opinions, . . . and prejudices of the time."<sup>12</sup> Clayton celebrates the New Mormon Historians in their belief that "religious history . . . should be neutral . . . objective . . . and concerned with [the] consequences for . . . accumulations of wisdom." He sees historians as "objective and scholarly advocates of the truth . . . who respect objectivity more than orthodoxy."<sup>13</sup>

Objective research would appear to require a posture of neutrality by the researcher toward the object of inquiry. Neutrality assumes a certain transparency in the understanding of the past, a presuppositionless or objective vantage point—above passion and polemic—which allows the reality of the past to reappear as it was, uncolored or undistorted by personal bias. The "sectarian squabbles," as Foster calls them, that have generally characterized conflicting interpretations of the Mormon past deny the historian such neutral ground. Thus, in calling for a middle or neutral ground these New Mormon Historians are really calling for a movement to a "higher ground." From such heights, they might be tempted to claim that their versions of the past are merely objective reconstructions of what took

place based upon obvious judgments of fact. The facts themselves are discovered through exhaustive work with the source materials themselves.

The allusion to a higher ground is indeed seductive. But is it a chimera? Can secular historians claim that their interests and questions reflect a higher order of significance? Can they demonstrate that their approach to history is truly objective? Can they legitimately refer to their own brand of history as mature, accurate, and insightful as opposed to the inevitably "naive, narrow-minded, pollyannish" histories written by Mormon historians who take their own religious categories as a theme for the understanding of the Mormon past?<sup>14</sup>

Such questions must be answered because if the ideal of neutrality and objectivity cannot be approximated, then the historian's distinction between "good history" and "bad history" evaporates and the secular historian's claim that somehow his account is of a higher order can no longer hold. Clearly Foster's lecture to the Church on the advantages of "good" history, that is secular history, presupposes this distinction.<sup>15</sup>

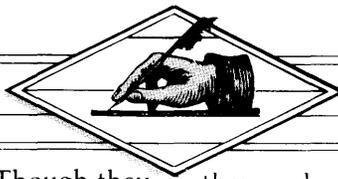
Such arguments are based on two assumptions: (1) that the historian can somehow be objective and neutral and (2) that the historical record is an independent and objective ground over against which historical explanations can be verified. It is exceedingly doubtful either assumption can stand up to careful and logical scrutiny.

### Objectivity and the Historian

By affirming objectivity and neutrality, the historian implies that in some way he can escape from his own historical condition. But in truth he cannot. He does not exist beyond time and space in some fourth dimension from which he can gaze upon the past objectively. Rather the historian can only encounter the past from within history *through his own time's way of understanding the past*. Each historian constructs his world view either in reaction to or in accord with prevailing categories of understanding. Either way, his ultimate conclusions bear the stamp of his own time. His consciousness of the past, his questions and interests, his methods and procedures may in a limited sense be authentically his own, but they are, at the same time, situated within the boundaries of his own epoch's way of understanding and discussing the past.

The situated character of all historical explanations involves more than a passive subjectivity—scholars with preferences. This would merely be admitting the obvious. Rather it entails, as well, an active subjectivity, where the very ideas of one's own time condition the way in which the historian has access to the past. Those ideas constitute the preunderstanding or historical prejudice that the historian inevitably brings to the historical record.

It is not possible in a short paper to treat in detail the nature of the prejudice of the professional historical establishment. What is more, whenever one attempts to generalize, he risks oversimplification. There is obviously a greater inner diversity of world view among secular historians in America. Yet keeping all of this in mind, one can detect in their language and method a



broad but ill-defined sort of positivism.<sup>16</sup> Though they may distance themselves from its more extreme manifestations, secular historians nevertheless depend upon its vocabulary and fundamental categories to justify their method and thus their conclusions. Like all ideologies, positivism furnishes a paradigm for the understanding of the world. It is based upon an intricate groundwork of naturalistic assumptions. In the case of history, it draws the materialist tenets of its understanding of the human past from the non-human sciences. They include empiricism, biological determinism, and environmentalism. The ultimate goal of positivist methodology is to provide causal explanations of human events. In the words of one New Mormon Historian:

It is far past the time when scholars can be satisfied with vague categories and glib generalization. Writers on complex topics like the development of important religious movements must be clear in their demonstration of causal connections between events.<sup>17</sup>

Sterling McMurrin refers to these methodological assumptions as naturalistic humanism with some flavor of positivism, and James Clayton asserts that the methodology of the inductive sciences is in principle appropriate for historical enquiry.<sup>18</sup>

Upon this rather ponderous substructure of unexamined assumption, the positivist erects his normative and empirical models of man and society. In order to give legitimacy to his creations, he surrounds them with the authority and mystery of scholarly language, repeating words such as rigorous, conceptual, objective, accurate, neutral, and empirical. But this act alone cannot compensate for the lack of a valid theory of verification nor can it shroud the many presuppositions and contradictions which permeate the whole of the ideology.

Such a positivist paradigm furnishes neither a neutral nor a higher ground. It is dogmatic like all ideologies. Its fundamental tenets cannot be proven but rather must be accepted in advance as an act of faith. Those who refuse to assent to the positivist ideology behind secularized history are not met with rational arguments but with the scorn of the faithful that is visited upon one who has abandoned a long held religion, has deserted the standard of "progress" and reverted to primitive superstitions.

### **Objectivity and the Record**

Faced with reservations about ever escaping his own historical condition and achieving neutrality, the secular historian might legitimately do an about face in order to sustain his objectivist position. He could assert that how one comes upon one's explanation of the past is not important. Rather what matters is whether the explanation proffered can be confirmed or disconfirmed. The objectivity of a historical explanation has little to do with the subjective commitments of the historian but rather depends upon its correspondence to the objective facts of history. Therefore the real question is whether the historical account holds up against evidence.

In general, when secular historians are challenged,

they make ready reference to facts, the evidence, the sources, or, in almost hallowed terms, the documents. The implication is that they are simply letting the "facts speak for themselves" or that any rational individual could hardly deduce different conclusions from the evidence. Foster furnishes an excellent example. "The Mormon past," he writes, "came even more vividly alive as I began to work closely in the printed and manuscript records." These brought to mind the "real men and women" of the Mormon past.<sup>19</sup> One is left to conclude that, if one could only get to the facts, the objective truth of the matter would be clear and apparent. This is what Foster believes the New Mormon History is doing—getting to the facts which, according to Sterling

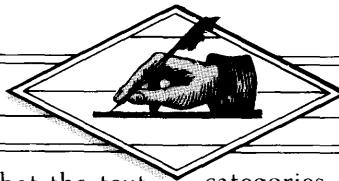
*THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE IS NOT  
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WORDS CAN BE DISPUTED.*

McMurrin, are precisely what the Church and orthodox Mormons don't want to face. Apparently for McMurrin, the self evidence of the facts is beyond question, and even to question the methodology of historians demonstrates bad faith.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the thoughtful person will want to examine these claims more closely. Indeed, what is the relationship between the historian and the facts which supposedly confirms his account of the past? In what way does the historian have access to the facts?

The facts themselves are contained in the historical record, which is the mass of inherited information, sources, and documents which the historian depends upon for the writing of his histories. The record consists of a variety of artifacts all of which can be read as a text and as text analogues. Some of the text comes in the form of "pictures" (physical artifacts which have somehow been passed on); the rest is in the form of language (which has somehow been written down). What all of these diverse text and text analogues have in common is that they survived.

The historian who approaches the record realizes that this text constitutes his only avenue of access to the past. Yet such a record is not necessarily accurate. Furthermore, he knows that it is incomplete and perhaps contains only part or none of what the historian considers important. He may lament that the information that he is looking for simply was not recorded or that what was recorded seems irrelevant to his concerns. Nor can the historian depend upon the record being a representative sample of what occurred in the past; much of it is random bits of information. In the end, the historian will simply have to flesh out his



account of the past from conjecture of what the text might have contained were it complete and accurate.

The historian's access to the past is not limited solely by the incompleteness of the record however. Access is also mediated by the character of language and by conceptual framework the historian brings to the record.

Language does not simply introduce a subjective dimension because the written text is a given individual's interpretation of the phenomena of the past in question. Language itself is not a neutral, transparent, or objective medium. Rather it packages the phenomena of the past in accordance with its own internal character. Language is more than a set of arbitrarily stipulated definitions. It is a total semantical structure, rooted in a way of life and a prevailing world view. A language constitutes the medium in which understanding is achieved and shared by the participants of a particular culture.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the use of any particular language must be understood as a cultural event.

Moreover, the meaning of language is not uniform over time and place. Even the formal meaning of words and statements can be disputed and naturally becomes much more distant over time. In a spoken dialogue, conversants often share a relatively common world view and way of life. They anticipate intended meaning and adjust and correct misunderstandings through further questions. Furthermore, much meaning is communicated with changes in intonation or by gesture. But the student of history can only come to language through the text and across the horizon of his own time, pregnant with its own meanings and proffering its own way of life. He can only approach the record through his

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own way of understanding language which may be far removed from that of the historical moment he wishes to understand.

In addition to the intervening character of language, the objective character of the historical record is mediated and thus compromised by even elementary ordering principles the historian uses to guide his research. These principles structure in advance his access to the meaning of the historical record and delimit the field of study.

To begin the historian will organize the contents of the record vertically according to time and horizontally according to subject. The nature of these divisions will reflect his own interest as well as the prevailing opinions of the history profession. The complexity of these

categories is bounded only by the imagination of the historian. For instance, the historian might be interested in the psychological character of the early Mormon pioneers who crossed the plains (which presupposes the legitimacy of this or that psychological model). Thus he creates pigeonholes into which to sort information on religious history, on the relevant time periods, on Mormons, on pioneers, on plaincrossers and on all other factors deemed important from a psychological perspective.

Few historians want to stop here. To write history is to tell a story. Historians seek to explain the past and not simply to do chronology or to archive information. To do this, historians must somehow recreate the historical period. They must draw in the background and then trace the flow of events. They must sketch the historical characters and then create a narrative which combines all of these elements into a drama.

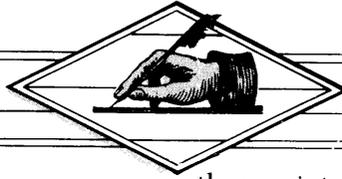
In the case of Mormon history, this involves weaving the disparate elements of the Mormon record into a whole with regard to a given question. To achieve this, the historian must specify the causes that link these elements into a story and give the narrative its plot. In brief, to write history the historian must inquire into the how and the why of the past. He will address himself to such questions as why the early Saints were driven out of Missouri. Why did they adopt the practice of polygamy? How did the Mormons come to believe in temples and associated ceremonies? Why did people join the Church in such large numbers in Great Britain? Why did persecution act to increase the fervor of many of the Saints?

If the historian is to answer these questions, he must go beyond establishing events and dates. Such questions demand explanation. This requires the positing of a theory and related hypotheses which can guide him in interpreting the text and selectively organizing its content. The theory assists the historian in sorting out the relevant facts and fitting them together into a coherent response. To further understand how the historian develops answers to such questions and creates historical narrative, it is necessary to explore in greater detail this relationship between fact and theory.

Most historians seem to use the word fact in at least two different ways without being consistent in what they mean. First it is used as a synonym for phenomena: facts are simply that which appears to the conscious mind—color, shape, and sequence, for example. Phenomena require no interpretation to be encountered; they are simply there. They have no meaning until one gives them an identity. For example, a house appears as merely a dimensional entity, a geometric form and color occupying time and space in the broader matrix of consciousness, until one has understood it in its function as a shelter.

Clearly were one able to encounter pure phenomena, one would be about as close as one could get to true objectivity, that is *uninterpreted reality, things as they present themselves or as they appear as themselves.*

Secular historians also use the word fact as a synonym for evidence—that which can prove or disprove a conjecture. But obviously not all facts (phenomena) are evidence. One need only think of the endless number of discrete events and objects present in any historical



moment to realize that only some can legitimately be considered evidence with regard to a given question. While still facts, the others were simply accidentally copresent. In short, the secular historian must decide which facts will count for him as evidence and which will not.

Karl Popper has shown that it is the researcher's theory that tells him which facts (phenomena) constitute the evidence.<sup>22</sup> Facts cannot be understood as a category of evidence until some hypothesized account has been posited. Obviously, only those facts which are relevant to this hypothesized account can count as evidence. But since this distinction is only achieved by processing (interpreting or identifying) the facts, they acquire the status of evidence only at the cost of losing their objective or phenomenal character. In sum,

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SUBSEQUENT GENERATION.*

phenomena may appear involuntarily to the conscious mind, but evidence does not; it is validated by argument.

For example, in seeking to give the how and why of Joseph Smith's prophetic claims, one might theorize that he was an epileptic and that his visions were the inevitable hallucinatory properties of his seizures. That thesis establishes in advance that information relevant to seizures, as they are presently understood, constitutes the factual evidence on this subject. The historian proceeds to sift through the record for data compatible with his hypothesis. The other information (facts) in the record would recede into the background.

Were one to assert that his visions were due to delusions of grandeur arising from basic psychological disorders, the information relating to epilepsy would become irrelevant, while the historian would piece together whatever in Joseph Smith's background might lend to psychoanalysis. Other theories would set into motion the same process.

But theory does more than simply furnish explanations and identify evidence. It often determines how to appropriately interpret the text, how to divide the record into periods, and how to develop categories for the collection and organization of information. These various aspects of historical research are not distinct, individual, and sequential; rather they are inter-defining, interconnected, and circular. The way in which

theory integrates the various aspects of historical research into a whole can be seen in how, for example, Marxist historians interpret the language and periodize the content of the historical record differently than economic liberals. Those divisions reflect their belief in Marx's theory of dialectical materialism. Upon the same basis, the Marxist historian uses such categories as class, repression, revolution, means of production, forces of production, capital, surplus value, alienation, to select out from the record those facts which are important and can be drawn upon in order to derive the evidence.

These theories are not found anywhere in the record, however. They are not a part of the thinking or the explanations that the people under investigation gave of themselves or of their time. They are foreign elements introduced by the historian to coordinate and give direction to his story of the past.

Furthermore, theorizing is subject to the caprice of fashion. Theories which once invoked great authority are abandoned and given the most derisive of treatment by a later generation only to be revived under new garb to widespread popularity by a subsequent generation.

And somehow each historical epoch believes its understanding of the past or at least its categories to be consummate, so much so that the image projected by these categories appears as reality, the world as it is. The categories themselves almost fade from view, the structure they have produced seems merely to be common sense. The conceptual structure fades from view precisely because of its very familiarity. The historian is like a man who has been wearing a set of comfortable glasses for so long that he is no longer aware that he is wearing them and that the vision he has of the world is the result of the curvature of the lenses.

In general then, the historian is inescapably faced with what some consider a vicious circle; no matter at what level he finds himself in, his research, the record only acquires a fuller meaning by the further imposition of the historian's categories and criteria are inevitably external to the phenomena themselves. Clearly then, the facts—the uninterpreted record—do not stand apart from the enterprise of interpretation and explanation as an objective standard against which our understanding of the past can be verified. A fact only becomes evidence if one accepts the theoretical framework which confers the status of evidence upon what is otherwise merely random data contained in the record.

This brings the discussion full circle, for the theoretical framework of the historian is not arrived at in a vacuum. It is part of the ideological baggage, the questions and interests, the multitude of categories and ordering principles, values, and commitments which constitute his world view. Nor is this world view plucked out of thin air, but as already noted, it is situated within the medium of his own time's way of understanding the past. *In this sense the historian has already come to his conclusion about the meaning of the historical record before having consulted it.*

### **Writing Mormon History**

In light of the foregoing discussion, the New Mormon Historian's criticism of traditional Mormon history is at



best misleading. When New Mormon Historians criticize the traditional Mormon historian for not being conceptual or willing to use ordering principles from other disciplines, they show a lack of understanding of the larger question. Indeed Mormon historians do use concepts to order their accounts of the Mormon past. It is impossible not to do such. What their critics really object to is that they do not use those authorized by the secular historian's world view.

Precisely because theories are not neutral, Mormon historians can legitimately take issue with secular explanation. Psychological, sociological, and economic explanations of visions, texts (such as the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, or the Doctrine and Covenants), and practices (such as temple work and polygamy) do not constitute a neutral or objective way of getting to the bottom of things. When a theory's very structure subtly denies *a priori* that the foregoing could authentically involve revelation, thoughtful Mormons have every right to ask further questions. Of course, the great danger is not that competing explanations are offered but that such explanations conceal their assumptions and masquerade as the truth or the facts pure and simple.

Again when Foster and others criticize Mormon historians for not borrowing theories from other disciplines, presumably anthropology, they reveal their positivist commitments. For quite obviously the theories borrowed from these disciplines are predicated upon historical assertions about man and society. Supposedly they are universally valid and can therefore be applied to all historically appropriate situations in order to reveal what really happened.

Then too it is ironic how theories borrowed from other disciplines, few of which can lay claim to much predictability and none of which can adequately explain the phenomena of the present, always appear to fit so much better when applied to the past. For example, the usefulness of psychoanalysis is hotly disputed in contemporary psychology. A large segment of the psychological profession rejects it outright. Yet for certain historians, it seems to be such a profound and uncontroversial source of insight for the understanding of Joseph Smith and his prophetic claims. More alarming is the fact that a modern psychoanalyst may cautiously venture a reconstruction of a patient's personality only after months of the most personal and intimate consultation, but somehow, with almost no such information and across more than a hundred years of history, Joseph Smith's underlying motivations and personality become transparent to the psychohistorian.

It is, therefore, disingenuous of a secular historian such as Foster to point an accusing finger at the traditional Mormon historian for being biased, untruthful, and cowardly, while the former pretends to approach the past from the sanctified higher ground of neutrality and objectivity. In many ways, the Mormon scholar is more honest. He does not try to hide his loyalties. Everything is up front. His questions are the questions of a man concerned about religious and spiritual experience. He assumes the reality of certain

primary events, the validity of certain primary texts, and the truth of certain primary teachings based upon personal spiritual confirmation. He does not pretend that somehow the historical record is capable of ultimately proving such things, although he finds it can shed light upon and give added depth to these concerns. While he may share some interests with the secular historian and may even find it useful to employ some of his methods, he does so without illusion.

Clearly then, it is not simply a question of New Mormon Historians who want to get to the facts and let them speak for themselves and traditional Mormon historians who want to manipulate the facts for their religious ends. To pretend that such is the case is simply to camouflage the mountain of positivist assumptions and theories which give structure to the New Mormon Historians' supposedly objective historical accounts. Since these assumptions are so difficult to justify, such historians simply assume that their interests and questions are inherently more significant. In so doing, they manifest themselves as insensitive and intolerant.

The New Mormon Historians might well respond that no reputable historians believe it is possible to be objective and therefore the arguments made in this paper attack a strawman. Perhaps, but aside from routine disclaimers about how perfect objectivity is unattainable, few New Mormon Historians seem to demonstrate a mastery of the relevant literature or even an awareness of the fundamental problems. They admit that objectivity is not possible but continue to offer it as a worthy ideal. Even those who refuse to take a position still use methods, evolve categories, and develop explanations that presuppose objectivity. In addition, objectivist vocabulary is ubiquitous, lending a false sense of legitimacy and rigor to historical accounts. All of this would lead one to conclude that there are many "close-set objectivists" among secular historians interested in the Mormon past. In any case, if Foster and other New Mormon Historians do reject the objectivist tradition, then it is incumbent upon them to provide a clear justification of the paradigm and related criteria they do

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PREVAILING CATEGORIES  
OF UNDERSTANDING.



use and not simply offer the reader a bundle of disclaimers.

Some might characterize my critique of the New Mormon History as cynical, skeptical, and nihilistic. They might claim that such an approach saves the Mormon historian's religious accounts of the past only by debasing all criteria and thus destroying the possibility for any legitimate rational account of the Mormon past. This is simply not the case. This paper was not written to justify any and all attempts to write Mormon history from a Mormon perspective but rather to demonstrate the failure of Foster and other New Mormon Historians to make a convincing case against the possibility of an honest and quality Mormon history that takes its own categories of belief as a theme. It is the positivist position which presupposes that reason sanctions only one approach to the understanding of the past. Here it is simply argued that there are desirable alternatives to a discredited and arrogant positivism. The key to the formulation of an alternative approach to the study of history has already been suggested by a number of scholars.<sup>23</sup> At a minimum it would involve abandoning Cartesian metaphysics and the subject-object distinction which it so amicably hosts. It is particularly important that the understanding of human history reflect the situated character of every historical account and taking that as a theme, elaborate a critical hermeneutic for the writing of a more self-conscious and dialectical history. True, such methods would not yield objective truth; they would not inevitably yield intellectual nihilism either. Rather they would produce a bounded relativism, a most appropriate position for the temporal character of human existence.

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#### Notes

1. Lawrence Foster, "New Perspectives on the Mormon Past," *SUNSTONE* 7(January-February 1982):41-45.
2. *Ibid.* p. 42.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.
11. I do not want to imply that New Mormon Historians agree on everything, nor do I desire in any way to impugn their religious commitments, since many New Mormon Historians are faithful, practicing members of the Church. My point throughout the paper is simply that beneath their differences exists a fundamental agreement on methodological postulates.
12. Leonard J. Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century," *Dialogue* (Spring 1966):17-18.
13. James L. Clayton, "Does History Undermine Faith?," *SUNSTONE* (March-April 1982):34-36.
14. Foster, p. 42.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
16. *Ibid.* Here again, I would like to avoid being accused of "lumping everyone together" under the rubric of positivism. Surely there are important differences which separate New Mormon Historians, but when it comes to their fundamental framework of analysis and methodological procedures, there seems to be substantial agreement. Those interested in investigating the problems of Positivism more extensively might begin with works listed under footnote 23. For a short treatment, read Joseph Bleicher, *The Hermeneutic Imagination* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), chapters one and two.
17. Thomas Alexander, "The Place of Joseph Smith in the Development of American Religion: A Historical Inquiry," *Journal of Mormon History* (1978):17.
18. Sterling McMurrin, "On Mormon Theology," *Dialogue* (Summer 1966):136. How such a position fits McMurrin's own way of understanding seems confused; see *Religion, Reason, and Truth* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982), pp. 1-19, especially 17-19; also note the reference in footnote 21. James L. Clayton, "Does History Undermine Faith?" p. 36.
19. Foster, p. 43.
20. Sterling McMurrin, "Religion and the Denial of History," *SUNSTONE* (March-April 1982):48-49. In this citation McMurrin seems to take a rather strong position on objective methodology, yet in other places he qualifies his position in such a way that it is difficult to imagine where he stands. Indeed given these many contradictions one wonders whether he could offer a coherent epistemological and ontological stand that could integrate them all.
21. W.V. Quine, *Words and Objects*, ed. D. Davidson and J. Hintikka (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1969), pp. 221 and 303-306. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 193-212. David Couzens Hoy, *The Critical Circle* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982), p. 20.
22. Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), pp. 97-120 and 175-248.
23. Admittedly the following titles constitute merely a beginning for the serious student of method, yet I think that it is clear from even this short list that the historian who is serious about understanding the presupposition of his method has little choice but to go outside of the narrow confines of his discipline and address himself to the broader literature found in the philosophy of science and social science. First, I think that one ought to have digested the general criticism leveled against objectivist science by analytic philosophers because their conclusions often hold for the social sciences and history. See, Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Harold Morick et. al., *Challenges to Empiricism* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1972); Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Frederick Suppe, *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974); Carl G. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Free Press, 1965); "Reason and Covering Laws in Historical Explanation"; Sidney Hook ed., *Philosophy and History* (New York: New York University Press, 1963); Ernst Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961); W.V. Quine and J.S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief* (New York: Random House, 1978). Then, it is my opinion that the most salient criticisms and alternative models can be found in the hermeneutical literature. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1975); *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969); Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston: Beacon, 1972); Adorno et al, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (New York: Harpe Torchbooks, 1976); R. Bubner et. al., *Herneuetik und Dialektik Ideologiekritik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971); Josef Bleicher, *Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); also note an excellent book which reformulates Collingwood's ideas in even more powerful form, Rex Martin, *Historical Explanation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

# OBEDIENCE INTEGRITY AND THE PARADOX OF SELFHOOD

THE TENSION SHOULD NOT BE RESOLVED IN FAVOR OF EITHER CONFLICTING VALUE

**I**N his presidential address for the Association of Mormon Letters in 1979, Richard Cummings spoke of "a creeping identity crisis which is gnawing at the very heart of Mormondom," what he called "the clash between institutional authority and individual integrity and between the imperative of blind obedience and the claims of reasoned belief." He spoke of a problem which is for many the most anguishing in Mormon experience—that is, the struggle to be true to self despite pressures to obey, to conform, or to overlook what seem to be "clear fallacies or even tyrannies in the strictly authoritarian pattern" and then to maintain our integrity in the face of misunderstanding, hostility, even ostracism from our brothers and sisters and disciplinary action from those in authority over us in the Church.

That issue is indeed central to Mormon experience and literature but in ways that are in my view less troubling and at the same time more challenging than Cummings suggested. He saw the problem, at least in terms of our own *decisions*, as essentially a simple one, though the consequences might be difficult and complex: Clearly we are to choose individually reasoned belief over blind obedience, the honor of self over the demands of the group.<sup>2</sup>

I sometimes wish the problem were that simple, with the enemies clearly identified and all lined up together and the main challenge being to attack or at least survive them. At other times I am grateful that, in fact, the issue is a genuine paradox, a difficult but fruitful condition of existence, a source of the struggle but also of the supreme joy of growth in this universe in which "there must needs be opposition in all things."

I believe the tension should not be resolved in favor of one or the other of those conflicting values. Rather, what Cummings called the Mormon identity crisis will, I hope, continue—successfully transcended, of course, by each of us in our own way but in ways which maintain both obedience and integrity as we work out our salvation in fear and trembling and as we try to write and appreciate Mormon literature. The following examples provide enduring images in the Mormon imagination, metaphors if you will, which may help us preserve the paradox as redemptive, rather than merely polarizing it

in favor of one limited value or the other.

In the early 1890s Elder B.H. Roberts, a member of the First Council of Seventy, and Apostle Moses Thatcher engaged in various political activities; they did so despite being counseled by the First Presidency that they should not (apparently because of concern about them neglecting their Church duties). As Truman Madsert tells us in his biography of B.H. Roberts, at one time the conflict was reported in the press, and as a result the two outspoken political activists and the First Presidency asked forgiveness of each other and were reconciled.<sup>3</sup> But when Elder Roberts was given Church encouragement in 1895 to serve as a delegate from Davis county to the Democratic state convention, he assumed he thus had permission to run for political office and accepted nomination as the Democrats' candidate for Congress. He then was surprised and offended when, at the October General Conference, Elder Joseph F. Smith, a senior Apostle and member of the First Presidency—and a Republican—publicly censured both him and Elder Thatcher, who was running for the U.S. Senate. The two Democrats saw the censure as politically motivated and stumped the state, openly decrying such "ecclesiastical interference." Much partisan feeling developed, and when Roberts lost the election by 900 votes, he was convinced (for the rest of his life) that the defeat was due solely to the criticism of himself and Elder Thatcher.<sup>4</sup>

After the election members of the Twelve discussed whether Elder Roberts should be disciplined because of some of his public statements, but action first was postponed until after statehood was conferred in January and then until February, when Roberts finally agreed to meet with the First Presidency and the Twelve. Heber J. Grant reports that that meeting was the most painful of his life. Elder Roberts was immovable in his position, feeling he had acted honestly and fairly, and was thus willing to be removed rather than recant. A meeting in early March produced the same result, and Roberts was suspended from his office

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and from acting in the priesthood. At this meeting, Elder Grant records with great admiration that Roberts “held all the brethren at bay”<sup>5</sup>—responding to each of the Apostles in turn, speaking without notes but with perfect memory and composure, thinking brilliantly on his feet. But despite his admiration Elder Grant was appalled at Elder Roberts’s adamant position. Grant and Francis Lyman were appointed to call on Roberts, and after they had talked briefly, Elder Grant noticed tears in Elder Roberts’s eyes and insisted on franker discussion. Until then Roberts had been unwilling to talk about three specific situations where he thought he had been intentionally maligned or slighted. With Grant’s prodding, he now brought these forward, and in each case Elder Grant had relevant personal knowledge which convinced Roberts that he had jumped to false conclusions.<sup>6</sup> He promised to think the matter over again and write the two Apostles in the morning, which he did. In the letter he submitted to “the authority of God in the brethren,” confessed that, though he had acted all along in good conscience, after this struggle he felt much better, and thanked them for their goodness. Not only Elder Roberts was changed by this experience. Elder Grant recorded in his journal his great joy at receiving Elder Roberts’s letter and how much he had learned himself, especially about the importance of a private talk versus a public arraignment before a council of the priesthood.

The story does not end there, however. Elder Roberts continued to resist the so-called “political manifesto,” a prohibition against General Authorities engaging in non-Church-related work, including political activity, without First Presidency approval. He and Elder Thatcher had previously refused to sign the document because they feared it could be used to discriminate against one party. Under a deadline at which Elder Roberts’s suspension was to become permanent, the First Presidency met with Elder Roberts late into the evening of March 25. He then walked the streets all night, thinking and praying. He returned in the morning ready to sign and found the First Presidency had also stayed all night in tears and prayer. In Conference the next week he confessed publicly that he had been wrong in his opposition. This action alienated him permanently from many political friends and backers. Elder Thatcher never signed the political manifesto, despite Elder Roberts’s long pleading with him, and he was removed from the Twelve and became estranged from the Church. Late in his life Elder Roberts described the paradox as he saw it *after* he had successfully transcended it: “Will I give up my pride or will I be taken out of this glorious work?”<sup>8</sup>

Earlier in Church history there was a similar case of such heroic though painful transcendence of the paradox. It is fairly easy now to know something of the differences, the apparent long-standing feud, between Brigham Young and Orson Pratt.<sup>9</sup> Brigham respected Elder Pratt’s intelligence, literary power, and vigorous faith, and hence called on him for such things as the first public defense of polygamy in 1852. But by early 1860 President Young felt their differences were serious enough to require formal action; he called the Apostles together on 27 January 1869 “to consider the doctrines

that Orson Pratt had advanced in his last Sermon.” They unanimously decided Orson was wrong and signed a unique bill of particulars.<sup>10</sup>

Elder Pratt called on the President the next day and “admitted he was excited; and for the future would omit such points of doctrine in his discourses that related to the Plurality of Gods, etc., but would confine himself to the first principles of the Gospel.”<sup>11</sup> A few days later he again called at the President’s office and confessed “he had a self-willed determination in him.” According to the office journal, kept by President Young’s secretary:

The President said he had never differed with him only on points of doctrine, and he never had any personal feelings, but he was anxious that correct doctrines should be taught for the benefit of the Church and the Nations of the earth. . . . President observed the brethren would have made it a matter of fellowship [but] he did not have it in his heart to disfellowship but merely to correct men in their views.

Pres. also remarked to Orson he had been willing to go on a Mission to any place at the drop of the Hat, and observed you might as well question my authority to send you on a Mission as to dispute my views in doctrine. Bro. Orson said he had never felt unwillingness in the discharge of his practical duties.<sup>12</sup>

Later that week President Young directed the *Deseret News* not to print Orson’s sermon, which he found too evasive and defensive in its retractions. By April there was some cause—whether because of continuing uncertainty in the Saints or in Orson or both—to again call the leaders together “to consider the Doctrines of Orson Pratt as taught in the *Seer* and other works.” The Apostles concluded that Elder Pratt ought to retract in very specific terms in a published sermon. As President Young expressed it, the earlier sermon of apology “represents me to the world as a tyrant trammelling them to believe as I do right or wrong; it is my calling . . . to see that right doctrines are taught.”<sup>13</sup> Orson, a man of fierce integrity, said he believed Brother Brigham was called by God to preside but, like other Prophets and leaders, could be in error on some points. According to the office journal, “[Elder Pratt] hardly felt he was competent to be an apostle and he left himself entirely in their hands, but he could not be hypocrite enough to retract his doctrines when he believed them, neither could he say he could receive doctrines that he could not believe; and if he was disfellowshipped he could not help it.” However Elder Pratt apparently decided that his truest integrity lay in his commitment to the Lord’s kingdom rather than to the speculations of his own philosophy. He came to a meeting of the Apostles the next night with a sermon of recantation prepared. President Young added a few remarks and accepted it.<sup>14</sup> The minutes from that April 5 meeting give perhaps the best glimpse of Brigham’s feelings and his understanding of the paradox:

This day I have seen the best spirit manifested. I have heard 15 or 16 men all running in the same stream. I was delighted. Tomorrow the Church will be 30 years old, about the age that Jesus was when he commenced his mission. We are improving and I just know it, my path is like the noon day sun, and I would cry out hallelujah Hallelujah Praise to God who has been merciful to us and conferred on us his Holy Spirit. . . . Bro. Orson I want you

to do just as you have done in your Apostleship, but when you want to teach new doctrine, to write those ideas, and submit them to me, and if they are correct, I will tell you—there is not a man's sermons that I [more] like to read, when you understand your subject—but you are not perfect, neither am I.<sup>15</sup>

Six months after that meeting, when it was reported to Brigham Young that Orson was still apparently being twitted by some for his public humiliation but bearing it well, a clerk reported, "The President remarked . . . if Bro. Orson was chopped up in inch pieces each piece would cry out Mormonism was true."<sup>16</sup>

But the story does not end so simply. After a while Orson again published views that Brigham felt undermined his authority as Prophet and his responsibility to preserve certain ideas taught by Joseph Smith. He was particularly concerned to keep the options open on matters such as the nature of God. These seemed threatened by Orson Pratt's biblical literalism and his absolutism about deity. On 23 August 1865 the General Authorities published in the *Deseret News* a summary of Orson Pratt's errors and the main reasons for opposing them, along with a reprint of Elder Pratt's earlier recantation. Elder Pratt followed up with another public confession and apology. But in the summer of 1868 he *again* found himself opposing President Young in discussions in the School of the Prophets about Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible. Old doctrinal differences were also discussed. But then a surprising thing happened. Right after these discussions, with no apparent coercion or pressure, Orson Pratt wrote a letter of abject apology to President Young saying, among other things:

I am deeply sensible that I have greatly sinned against you, and against my brethren of the school, and against God, in foolishly trying to justify myself in advocating ideas, opposed to those which have been introduced by the highest authorities of the Church, and adopted by the Saints. I humbly ask you and the school to forgive me. Hereafter, through the grace of God assisting me, I am determined to be one with you, and never be found opposing anything that comes through the legitimate order of the Priesthood, knowing that it is perfectly right for me to humbly submit, in all matters of doctrine and principle, my judgment to those whose right it is, by divine appointment, to receive revelation and guide the Church.<sup>17</sup>

Here we find none of the stubborn defensiveness and evasiveness of the earlier so-called recantations. The confession seems to come from Elder Pratt's deepest convictions. A few days later he spoke before the School of Prophets, apologizing for "opposing doctrine revealed" and confessing that "whenever he had done so and excused himself because of what was written [that is, by literally interpreting the scriptures] his mind became darkened and he felt bad."<sup>18</sup> We find no further examples of him opposing Brigham on doctrine.

My third example is not, as I believe the first two were, transcendent. It is more tragic than heroic, but it is thus a reminder of the truly tragic dimensions of the paradox of selfhood. Just as John D. Lee's participation in the Mountain Meadows Massacre is an apparent example of a clearly *wrong* choice for blind obedience, but one which,

I believe, on examination turns out to be somewhat more complex,<sup>19</sup> so Levi Savage's role in the Willie handcart disaster of 1856 is an apparent example of a clearly *right* choice for individual integrity, but one which, I believe, is also somewhat more complex. Elder Savage was captain of the second hundred, one of only four among that company of 400 emigrants who had been West before. He was also the only person who opposed going on to Utah that late in the season. According to John Chislett, a member of the company who left the Church after barely surviving the ordeal (and before writing his account), the other leaders, as well as G.D. Grant and William Kimball, Church agents at Florence, felt the company should proceed, prophesying in the name of God they would get through in safety, even that the weather would be arranged for their good:

But Levi Savage used his common sense and his knowledge of the country. He declared positively that to his certain knowledge we could not cross the mountains with a mixed company of aged people, women, and little children, so late in the season without much suffering, sickness, and death . . . but he was rebuked by the other elders for want of faith, one elder even declaring that he would guarantee to eat all the snow that fell on us between Florence and Salt Lake City.<sup>20</sup>

Brother Savage's counsel was ignored, and, indeed, a few weeks later, when the Apostle Franklin Richards, who had optimistically advocated the handcart plan in England, passed the Willie Company on his way to Salt Lake, he stopped for a night. Being advised of Brother Savage's earlier opposition, he "rebuked him very severely in open meeting for his lack of faith in God." According to Chislett, Elder Richards

gave us plenty of counsel to be faithful, prayerful, obedient to our leaders, etc., and wound up by prophesying in the name of Israel's God that "though it might storm on our right and on our left, the Lord would keep open our way before us and we should get to Zion in safety."<sup>21</sup>

Over 50 (1 in 8) of the Willie Company died in the storms that overtook them in Wyoming, over 150 (1 in 4) of the Martin Company that was two weeks behind them. Chislett points up the painful irony that, according to all the old settlers in Utah, "the fall storms of 1856 were earlier and more severe than were ever known before or since. Instead of the Mormons' prophecies being fulfilled and their prayers answered, it would almost seem that the elements were unusually severe that season, as a rebuke to their presumption."<sup>22</sup>

According to Chislett, "It was the stout hearts and strong hands of the noble fellows who came to our relief, the good teams, the flour, beef, potatoes, the warm clothing and bedding, and not prayers nor prophecies, that saved us from death." He, of course, had forgotten that it was the love and conviction built on prayers and prophecies that moved these "noble fellows." For example, G.D. Grant and William Kimball, the Church agents who had been partially responsible for the plight of the handcart pioneers, had traveled to Salt Lake with Elder Richards and then immediately volunteered for the dangerous rescue mission: "May God ever bless them for their generous, unselfish kindness and their

manly fortitude. . . . How noble, how faithfully, how bravely they worked to bring us safely to the Valley—to the Zion of our hopes,” wrote Chislett.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, William Kimball, who spent an entire day carrying women and children through floating ice on a crossing of the Sweetwater “staid so long in the water,” according to the journal of one of the survivors, “that he had to be taken out and packed to camp and he was a long time before he recovered as he was chil[le]d through and in after life he was always afflicted with rheumatism.”<sup>24</sup>

These originally over-zealous and now bravely self-sacrificing rescuers, I believe, understood the paradox of integrity and obedience better than the apostate Chislett did, and Brigham Young understood it better than Chislett or Elder Richards: He severely and publicly chastised the Apostle for not having had the common sense to stop the rear companies in Florence and for encouraging the emigrants to rely on miraculous intervention to protect them from needless folly—something Brother Brigham would never do.<sup>25</sup>

But perhaps Levi Savage understood best, from his own heroic experience, what it costs to be true both to self and to one’s community. According to Chislett’s narrative, after Savage was defeated in his lone opposition at the Florence meeting, he said to his fellow Saints;

Brethren and sisters, what I have said I know to be true; but, seeing you are to go forward, I will go with you, will help you all I can, will work with you, will rest with you, will suffer with you, and if necessary, I will die with you. May God in His mercy bless and preserve us. Amen.

[Chislett continues,] Brother Savage was true to his word; no man worked harder than he to alleviate the suffering which he had foreseen, when he had to endure it.<sup>26</sup>

Let me remind you of one more historical example of the struggle with the paradox—in some ways the most appalling. I will quote from Stanley Kimball’s biography of Heber C. Kimball:

During the summer of 1841, shortly after Heber’s return from England, he was introduced to the doctrine of plural marriage directly through a startling test—a sacrifice which shook his very being and challenged his faith to the ultimate. He had already sacrificed homes, possessions, friends, relatives, all worldly rewards, peace, and tranquility for the Restoration. Nothing was left to place on the altar save his life, his children, and his wife. Then came the Abrahamic test. Joseph demanded for himself what to Heber was unthinkable, his Vilate. Totally crushed spiritually and emotionally, Heber touched neither food nor water for three days and three nights and continually sought confirmation and comfort from God. On the evening of the third day, some kind of assurance came, and Heber took Vilate to the upper room of Joseph’s store on Water Street. The Prophet wept at this act of faith, devotion, and obedience. Joseph had never intended to take Vilate. It was all a test. Heber had passed the ordeal, as had Vilate. . . . Then and there Joseph sealed their marriage for time and eternity, perhaps the first sealing of this kind among the Mormons.<sup>27</sup>

This was indeed an “Abrahamic” test, and just as that biblical story offends me—the story of Abraham, who, also after three days struggle, agreed to obey God’s

command that he sacrifice his only son as a burnt offering—so the story of Heber and Vilate offends me. I can find no way to be at peace with either story, yet I believe that both are true and sacred stories and terribly important. It will not do, at least for me, to rationalize, to say that Abraham and Isaac were merely acting out a symbol, a type of God’s sacrifice of his only son, who would (in fact, through the lineage of Abraham and Isaac) come as a blessing to all the world. Nor will it do to merely repeat the cliché that a true witness comes only after a trial of faith. These particular trials are radically different from the daily ones that require that we give up our sins, our weaknesses, our pleasures, the *things* most dear to us or our mere *preferences*, for the Kingdom. Abraham and Heber were asked in the name of God to turn against, to in some sense deny, the very *ideas* that had brought them to God in the first place and to the higher ethical and spiritual vision to which God had called them—asked to prove loyalty to God (or his servant) by obeying the direction of God or his servant to *transgress* the very things God had taught them. It is a supreme trial, a paradox, a cross, a mystery. But it is, I believe, a cross that must be borne, not merely dismissed as blind obedience.

It will not do to say that Joseph or the author of Genesis—or God—made mistakes or that such tests are *unfair*. Unfair or not, the universe, I believe, reveals something crucial about itself in these stories. The images of Abraham and Isaac, of Heber and Vilate, must remain before us, not forgotten or rationalized away. Those images, if they had been remembered and imaginatively perceived, may have helped us deal better than we did with the modern Abrahamic test for Mormons, the denial of priesthood to the blacks. In that test God, through his servants, asked us not only to sacrifice our political and social ideals and the understanding and the good will of our colleagues and friends, but he seemed to ask us to sacrifice the very essence of his own teachings to us. To many it appeared necessary to deny our Mormon understanding of the divine potential of every human being and to compromise our higher ethical vision of possible exaltation for all people through unrestricted progression—concepts that are among the most attractive and vital features of our Mormon faith.

There were two groups who failed the test, I believe: There were those who thoughtlessly accepted the practice or rationalized the mystery away by finding some way to blame the *blacks* because of their supposed lineage or invented pre-existent mistakes. On the other hand, there were those who emotionally opted for their own personal vision, rejected the authority of the Church and loyalty to their community, and blamed Brigham Young or the current prophet or other supposedly racist Mormons, never themselves. My personal hero from that time is President Hugh B. Brown, who wrote the First Presidency message of 1969 that urged all Mormons to pray (and thus prepare) “that all of the blessings of the Gospel . . . become available to men of faith everywhere,”<sup>28</sup> which could only mean when blacks would be given the priesthood. Neither of the groups I mentioned that failed the test—whether conservatives or liberals—followed that suggestion to

pray for a change, and thus they did not find a resolution of the paradox of obedience and integrity through their personal preparation nor did they help God prepare us to live the higher law of priesthood for all.

If in our consideration of these examples of a central paradox from our heritage, we suppose there were simple solutions, if we imagine that *we* would have chosen easily and more wisely, I think we dishonor the great men and women who took part in these dramas and the full anguish with which they touched, and we must touch, the tragic heart of human experience. And, if we thus suppose there are easy solutions to the dilemma of personal integrity and social responsibility, we diminish drastically the potential of Mormon literature and, I think, ultimately endanger our own salvation.

Mormon literature, it seems to me, has achieved its greatest heights when it has been able to preserve and transcend the paradox rather than creating a battlefield and choosing sides. Our first generation writers, from 1830 to 1880, tended to exalt obedience and group values, but their best work asserted their individualism in tension against or beyond those values—as in Parley P. Pratt's *Autobiography* or Eliza R. Snow's "Trail Diary." Our second literary generation of writers, beginning in 1930, tended to exalt individualism against the values of what they saw as a declining culture and a deficient religion, but in their best work, such as Virginia Sorensen's *The Evening and the Morning* and Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua*, those traditional group values and covenants pronounced a judgment on the excesses of individualism. In our own generation our best writers, in their best work, struggle with the same paradox, with no simple compromises or side choosing: Clinton Larson's "Homestead in Idaho" and "Advent,"<sup>29</sup> Douglas Thayer's "Under the Cottonwoods" and "Red Tail Hawk,"<sup>30</sup> Eileen Kump's "The Willows" and "Sayso or Sense,"<sup>31</sup> Don Marshall's "A Sound of Drums" and "Fugues and Improvisations."<sup>32</sup> Dian Saderup's story published in the May-June 1979 *Sunstone* captures the painful paradox and its transcendence, without irony I believe, even in her title, "A Blessing of Duty," and Levi Peterson, whose *The Canyons of Grace*, a collection of excellent Mormon stories, was recently published by the University of Illinois press, makes the struggle central to all his work.<sup>33</sup>

Cummings's essay serves as an effective reminder of the constant danger individual integrity faces in any kind of powerful group—family, church, political party, or academic community. I only worry about the tendency to *simplify* that danger into a polarity. Cummings described "the theological and ecclesiastical dichotomy which has produced the identity crisis" in Mormons he knows as one between those who *lose* themselves in the Church and those who seek to *find* themselves there. The former are those who "refer their problems and worries to the 'sure voice of authority,'" who renounce "their autonomous identity through blind obedience and mindless activism," and the latter are those who "think for ourselves in working out our own individual salvation as we each separately see fit and according to our own lights." Notice the pronouns: *they* and *we*. Perhaps it would be well for us who are

tempted to "find" ourselves in the Church (and to separate ourselves from those who appear unthinkingly to "lose" themselves there) to remember Christ's ultimate statement of the paradox: He who would find his life, who *seeks* it, shall lose it, but he who will lose it shall find it. We all are startled and defeated a bit by the mystery in that, but I think we can respond to the imaginative and imaginable resolution there—one that will prevent us from being gored on either horn of the dilemma of loyalty to self or community.

The general resolution of the paradox of individual versus group, of integrity to conscience as opposed to obedience to law or commandment, is, I believe, found in covenants, of which literal eternal marriage is one form. A covenant is not, contrary to popular cliché, merely a *contract* between individuals—or God and the individual—with mutual benefits. It is, in the words of the fine Bible scholar, George Mendenhall, "[a] free, voluntary acceptance of ethical obligation on the basis of and as response to the past experience."<sup>34</sup> A covenant is a free, conscientious binding of the individual will to God, to an eternal partner, to a community and its land and history and sacred texts. It is not made blindly but out of gratitude and hope based in real experience. It turns neither the individual will nor the community into an idol that holds ultimate authority but rather reserves that ultimate authority to God, who is known and served both through the self and the community. One remains perfectly free to break the covenant but is bound in conscience to the reality of his experience with the divine, both as an individual and through the experiences made possible to him only in the community. And paradoxically this *binding* brings greater *freedom* than does individual autonomy.

This is how Michael Novak, speaking specifically of the covenant of marriage, describes that paradox of freedom found through binding oneself in meaningful promises:

Marriage is an assault upon the lonely, atomic ego. Marriage is a threat to the solitary individual. Marriage does impose grueling, humbling, baffling, and frustrating responsibilities. Yet if one supposes that precisely such things are the preconditions for all true liberation, marriage is not the enemy of moral development in adults. Quite the opposite . . . .<sup>35</sup>

Being married and having children has impressed on my mind certain lessons, for whose learning I cannot help being grateful. Most are lessons of difficulty and duress. Most of what I am forced to learn about myself is not pleasant. . . .

Seeing myself through the unblinking eyes of an intimate, intelligent other, an honest spouse, is humiliating beyond anticipation. Maintaining a familial steadiness whatever the state of my own emotions is a standard by which I stand daily condemned. A rational man, acting as I act? . . .

My dignity as a human being depends perhaps more on what sort of husband and parent I am, than on any professional work I am called upon to do. My bonds to them hold me back (and my wife even more) from many sorts of opportunities. And yet these do not feel like bonds. They are, I know, my liberation. They force me to be a *different* sort of human being, in a way in which I want and need to be forced.<sup>36</sup>

As Martin Luther put it, "Marriage is the school of love." I would add that, for many of the same reasons which Novak articulates, that is, those liberating confrontations with self and others which a covenant demands, "The Church also is the school of love."

B.F. Cummings, Richard Cummings's uncle, in his fine book, *The Eternal Individual Self*, gives a unique Mormon view of the paradox of selfhood and how it is best resolved: "The self is insubordinate, wandering, imperially aloof, solitary, lonely, withdrawn, unvisited, impenetrable"; it "cannot escape from existence nor can it escape from the awareness of its existence" nor from the "inevitable sense of solitude" that is "born of the very fact of individuality," of "being an eternally identical one."<sup>37</sup>

Ultimately exaltation rests in [the individual's] hands and depends upon his decisions and actions. [But] one of the conditions of his progress is his affiliation with others whose goal is the same as his own. Nothing that he can do is of avail to him without these affiliations. Through all eternity he remains an individual but through eternity he will remain a social individual. . . . This aspect of the doctrine . . . marks the fact of individuality and also that of association. These very affiliations augment the individual's stature as an individual. The whole concept of progress becomes one of associative progress, but this doctrine of affiliation opens up the way for each individual to develop to the fullest his individual powers. . . .<sup>38</sup>

The Church can provide a context for the resolution of the Mormon identity crisis if more of its members perceive that crisis not as a battle but as a paradox—and a potentially fruitful one for Mormon life and Mormon letters. Mormon literature of all kinds (and the growing community of those who read it, think about it, and respond to it) can and *does*, I think, provide what Cummings called "an appropriate setting in which to maintain one's integrity as an individual in a Mormon context."<sup>39</sup> I would suggest that it will achieve its full potential only if it can find ways not only to help individual members maintain, explore, and express their individuality but also by imaginatively challenging and helping them to endure in the struggle required to find their true selves in relationships, in the challenge of covenant making, in the true marriage of obedience and integrity.

**Editors' Note:** A version of this paper was delivered as the Presidential Address at the AML meetings in October 1980.

#### Notes

1. Richard J. Cummings, "Some Reflections on the Mormon Identity Crisis," Presidential Address to the Association for Mormon Letters, given 13 October 1979, printed in *Sunstone* (December 1979). The quotation is from page 27. The essay printed here in condensed form was originally given by Eugene England as the Presidential Address to the AML in October 1980 and appears in full in *Proceedings of the Association of Mormon Letters, 1980-82*.

2. *Ibid.*, p.29

3. Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1980), pp. 221-229.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

8. Madsen, p. 229.

9. See the short discussion in Eugene England, *Brother Brigham* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1980), p. 87, and the extended analysis in Gary James Bergera, "The Orson Pratt-Brigham Young Controversy," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Summer 1980):7-49.

10. Minutes, 27 January 1860, MS, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

11. Secretary's Journal, 28 January 1860. LDS Church Archives.

12. *Ibid.*, 31 January 1860.

13. *Ibid.* 4 April 1860.

14. *Ibid.*, 5 April 1860.

15. Miscellaneous Papers, 5 April 1860, MS, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

16. Secretary's Journal, 1 October 1860, LDS Church Archives.

17. Letter Book of Brigham Young, 1867-68, pp. 920-921, LDS Church Archives.

18. Church Historical Office Journal, 4 July 1868, LDS Church Archives.

19. See Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1950), and John Doyle Lee, *Zealot-Pioneer Builder-Scapegoat* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co, 1963 and [corrected new edition] 1972); Levi Peterson, "Juanita Brooks: Historian as Tragedian," *Journal of Mormon History* 3(1976):47-54; and especially John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (St. Louis, Bryan, Brand and Co.; New York: W.H. Stelle and Co., 1878), pp. 228-240.

20. The Chislett narrative is quoted in Thomas B. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), p. 317.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

24. The Journal of Patience Loader Archer, typescript of original, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, p. 87.

25. See President Young's sermon, 2 November 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints; Book Depot, 1854-86), 4:69.

26. In Stenhouse, p. 317.

27. Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), p. 93.

28. Issued 15 December 1969 and published in *The Church News* (10 January 1970):12, and in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Winter 1969):102-103.

29. *The Lord of Experience* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1967).

30. *Under the Cottonwoods and other Mormon Stories* (Provo: Frankson Books, 1977); "The Red Tail Hawk" in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Autumn 1969).

31. *Bread and Milk and Other Stories* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1979).

32. *The Rummage Sale* (Provo: Heirloom Publications, 1972; reprinted by Peregrine Smith, 1975), and *Frost in the Orchard* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977).

33. See my review of Peterson's book in *Brigham Young University Studies* (Winter 1983). For a comprehensive review of Mormon literature and the encouraging new directions it is taking, see my essay, "The Dawning of a Brighter Day: Mormon Literature After 150 Years," *BYU Studies* (Spring 1982).

34. George E. Mendenhall, in "Covenant," an article in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1979), 5:230.

35. Michael Novak, "The Family Out of Favor," *Harper's* (April 1976):39.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 42

37. B.F. Cummings, *The Eternal Individual Self* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Co, 1968), pp. 7, 69, 70.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

39. Richard Cummings, p. 32.



## Ida's Sabbath

PHYLLIS BARBER

IDA sat at the organ for the 1,039th Sunday (one week shy of twenty years) playing the prelude music and peering over her glasses at five patriarchal backs lining the front row, blue serge and grey pin stripes, and one freckled balding pate.

"Ida, how could you?" she asked herself as her trained feet picked out the bass line. "How could you have said that it didn't matter anymore when you did the wash last night?"

Out of habit, she flipped to a new page in "Quiet Music for the Church Organist" but didn't look at the music.

"Oh, Ida," she moaned as she started to play "In the Garden."

Except for three Sundays which she had had to miss because of emergencies and which her dutiful conscience had subtracted from the total, Ida had a perfect record—on time and in place (once she sliced her finger chopping onions for a meatloaf and had to sit out

### Editors' Note

*This story won second place in the 1983 D.K. Brown Memorial Fiction Contest.*

Sunday morning waiting for a doctor to stitch her back together; the second time, Ida's daughter Raylene had had her baby on Sunday morning and because her husband Jody was crawling around in Viet Nam, Ida had filled in; and Louis, Ida's ex-husband, had been responsible for her missing the third Sunday when he had been wheeled into the operating room with a bulging hernia, no less), Ida had a perfect record—on time and in place.

Ida always arrived fifteen minutes early and always posted the hymn numbers by sliding them into the wooden slots on the pine, gothic-shaped hymn board before Morris Sant, the chorister, came striding in with his real leather briefcase. And she always wore soft pastels because her friend, Milly, who learned about color coordination from her cousin in Salt Lake City, had told Ida that she was a "Spring" and looked best in soft greens, pinks, and blues.

Today Ida had worn pink and posted the hymn numbers, but she had also been ten minutes late. Of course, everyone else was late too, though Ida didn't notice. Nobody had time to pat babies or inquire about missionaries in Chile, New Jersey, and Taiwan who were out asking strangers what they knew about the Mormons.

When Bishop Jensen finally climbed the three stairs to the stand at 10:05 and sat on the row beneath the elevated Hammond organ without smiling or saying his usual "Hello Sister Rossiter" to Ida, she repeated "In the Garden," forgetting that she had already played it twice.

After a brief huddle with his two counselors, Bishop Jensen stood to start the meeting. He shook out the creases in the knees of his trousers, smoothed his hair, and walked to the pulpit. The first counselor pressed the button that raised the microphone to the correct height. Ida modulated quickly to the key of D, ending somewhere in the middle of the piece.

"Welcome, Brothers and Sisters," said Bishop Jensen. "Welcome to another Sabbath, though an unusual one. You probably saw our steeple, or what's left of it, as you came to church this morning. . . ."

Ida's attention darted to a tiny spider that dropped onto the first counselor's collar, springing back and forth between his shirt and blue suit jacket. Ida wished she could spin a magic thread like the spider. Then she could transport herself far away, weave new garments for herself, whatever she needed to do. The spider lifted off into mid-air, crabbing at the slender thread.

". . . and Brothers and Sisters, it seems that the Lord must be testing our faith. With that in mind, let's open our hymn books to page 98 and sing 'Let Us All Press On,' after which Brother Bill Parsons will open our meeting with prayer."

Ida, pre-occupied as she was with the spider, trying to forget the last twelve hours, still noticed that Bishop Clarence Jensen, the fifth bishop to serve during Ida's reign as organist, had forgotten to announce her name. He hadn't said, "Our hymn will be accompanied by Sister Rossiter at the organ." Ida wanted to say "Wait . . . you forgot something," but she thought better of it.

Pressing into the keyboard, she played her version of

the hymn, oblivious to Morris Sant, standing there, beating a different tempo. She proceeded at her own pace, added a few notes to the bass line, and poured extra volume into the "Fear nots." "But, Ida, you're a tradition," she said to herself, "almost a permanent fixture in this ward."

Ida was an essential but unobvious element of the Gardenville Ward. No one thought of the organ without thinking of her with her soft pastels, short honey brown permed hair, and trim figure. She didn't make dramatic entrances like her best friend Milly, the bishop's wife, who bought all of the latest styles at ZCMI in Salt Lake City and urged Ida to be more daring. (There was talk that once, before her husband had been called as bishop, Milly Jensen had been seen in a sleeveless dress at an election party for a county candidate. "She must have pinned up the sleeves of her temple garments so she could wear that dress," the talk went around. "Can you believe that anybody would do that?")

No, Ida wasn't dramatic or stylish (though Louis had suggested on occasion that she take some lessons from Milly). Music and God mattered most to Ida. "She's dependable. A good woman," people said of her, with the possible exception of Brother Bassett. "You're a real sleeper, woman," he told Ida once. "Pretty too. No telling what will happen to you." Ida had only blushed, not knowing what he meant, and found herself thereafter avoiding him. He was a little on the suspicious side anyway as he didn't say much in Sunday School class, and when he did, it was usually off base, not quite in line with the usual comments.

The song ended. Morris gave the cut-off signal. Ida, however, prolonged the swell of the final chord. She didn't even notice Morris or his glare. As Bill Parsons stood to pray, she folded her arms and bowed her head.

"Our Father, we thank thee for our many blessings."

Ida's feet began slipping off the organ bench railing onto the long wooden pedals below. Without a comfortable spot to rest her feet in between songs, her only option was to cross her ankles and rest the tips of her toes on the slender rail. Her feet weighed heavy and slipped toward the pedals below. The extra gravity, maybe the devil, pulled her navy shoes toward the big bass sound that would startle everyone in the congregation and ruin the prayer. Hopelessly uncomfortable, Ida picked up her right foot, then the left, and hung both in mid-air.

"And watch over all those who are not with us today," Brother Parsons prayed on, "that they may be blessed and comforted. . . ."

Ida's glasses slid down her nose, the back of her neck itched, and she finally put her feet to rest under the bench where they immediately began to slide again. She wished that this prayer would end and wished for the fiftieth time that she hadn't put all of her garments in the wash together, something she'd never done before. Last night, for the first time in her life, she had decided that if didn't matter if she took her garments off, at least for the hour it would take to wash and dry. How was she to know that they would get caught in the rinse cycle when the power went out?



She had tried to get them dry, wringing and squeezing the cotton; she had tried holding them over a candle flame, had even run through the house holding them over her head like a sail. Ida, not used to running, had collapsed onto her sofa after two laps through the kitchen and living room. She had finally given up and gone to bed, thinking she could use the dryer in the morning when the power would be on, but the outage had not ended until 9:45—fifteen minutes before church.

She could feel her thighs touching, her slipperiness underneath pink polyester, and blushed at the thought of near nudity. She wished she had some of that fancy lace underwear that Louis had always wanted her to buy “just for special occasions.” Anything but this. She wished that she had Louis. Why had he left just when she had bought the electric organ that she’d been saving for with her egg money. He never got to hear her play “Tico Tico” or the boogie woogie walking bass. She had learned some secular tunes just for him, to show him that she cared. But he never came back after Peach Days.

“And bless our missionaries in the field that the doors of the honest in heart might be opened to them. . . .”

“If God could put the power back on time for the church meeting,” Ida wondered, “why hadn’t he seen fit to put it back on one hour earlier so she could have gotten her garments dry, the next to her skin reminder of her promise to build up the kingdom of God here on earth, her holy garments that she had promised to always wear, night and day, without fail, when she and Louis had said ‘Yes’ to each other across the cushioned altar of the Salt Lake temple.”

With slit eyes that could pass for closed, Ida decided not to dwell on the past and to assess the congregation instead. Most people had their heads bowed, except for a few, and as always, Brother Bassett sat with wide-open eyes. Not in the seven years since his wife had died and since Ida had been monitoring him had Bassett closed his eyes, even blinked for that matter. He just stared. “He must have owl blood,” thought Ida.

The Hatch boy and the Hall girl, as usual, couldn’t keep their hands off each other. Ida could see them touching and grinning, even with their eyes shut.

Milly Jensen, dressed in a red quilted Chinese jacket with Pagoda point sleeves, glared sit-down-or-die eyes at her climbing two-year old who straddled the bench back, kicking.

After fifteen years of marriage, Louis had stopped going to church with Ida, started to lose weight and smoke the cigarettes he had given up when Ida had insisted on a temple marriage. He had sworn off beer, coffee, and cigarettes, all for the love of Ida. But his new leaf had aged, crinkled, and disintegrated.

“Why do you have to smoke, Louis?” Ida had cried for two days straight when she found out. “It violates your body. Your body is sacred.”

For a while, in deference to Ida, Louis had smoked behind the Lava Hot Springs billboard on the road out of town. Then he moved into the backyard for a month until he said he didn’t care what the neighbors would say and started to smoke on the front porch in the evenings.

“We can’t go to the temple anymore if you keep this up, Louis.”

“I don’t want to go to that sanctimonious booby hatch, Ida. I’ve had it.”

“Louis. This isn’t like you. The devil has gotten his hook in you. Let’s call the Bishop.”

“We aren’t calling anybody, Ida. This is my home, and we’re going to run it my way for a change, starting with you taking off those shapeless garments, at least at night. Why don’t you wear some real underwear for a change—a little colored lace, a little peek through. I want a woman who knows something about loving a man, not some far away God.”

“Maybe I wasn’t fair to Louis,” Ida thought, “but yet, how could he be so careless about sacred things?” Snatches of the opening prayer drifted in and out of her head: “And bless Brother Nelson that he will be protected in his time of illness.”

Ida repinched the slits of her eyes and wished that this prayer wasn’t so long. She looked at Morris, the music graduate who had gone down to the University of Utah and come back trying to reform the way Ida had run the music for almost twenty years. “Stuffy Morris,” she thought. “He might know music theory, but he doesn’t know about the spirit like I do. He detests ‘The Holy City’—says it’s cornball. He tells me not to use the vibrato so much—says it sounds like a funeral parlor. Oh Ida, listen to you being critical after what you’ve done.”

“And bless us that we may find the means to repair our steeple, and for these blessings we ask,” concluded Brother Parsons, “Amen.”

“The steeple! It’s all my fault,” thought Ida.

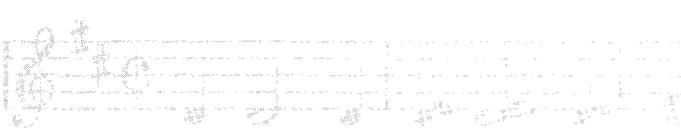
She adjusted her slippery glasses again with her right hand and pushed the diapason, dulciana, and 8’ flute stops with her left. Then she relaxed her legs into her work—the sacrament hymn: “There Is a Green Hill Far Away.”

Even though “Green Hill” ranked as one of Ida’s favorites, she couldn’t wrest emotion out of the song, not even with her usual flourishes—scale passages, arpeggios, and a few chromatics. Today, on her 1,039th Sunday, she could only think of that skeleton steeple, its shingles scattered over the roof and the lawn by God’s own lightning, its humiliation, and her own. She felt a tic in her eye, nervous tension crowding her spinal column, and her vision started to wobble. She looked out at the congregation and was surprised at a sea of singing guppies.

“Ida, get hold of yourself,” she begged from inside of her head and looked to her friend Milly for some human contact. But Milly and her Lancome red cheeks seemed to be sinking in the middle of five bouncing children.

Ida thought of her own daughter, Raylene. She didn’t have anybody, just a dusty picture of Jody in his fatigues. Raylene, Ida sighed. She won’t come out to church anymore, and darn that girl, she’s starting to look like a penguin. Won’t pay any attention to herself. Buys at least three of those chocolate-dipped cones at the Dairy Creme every night. My poor Raylene. I’m trying to help her. I pray every morning, every night.

The congregation was singing the second verse of the



sacrament hymn, "There was no other good enough . . ." when Ida's head began to fill with white light, a vacuous, ballooning light. She couldn't see anything, though she kept playing on the keys she knew so well. An eerie whistling penetrated her ears, like the whistling between the timbers of the stripped steeple. Ida shivered. "There is no other good enough . . . There is no other good enough." She played the line over and over again. Morris looked at her shocked.

The unearthly whistling shifted to a drum beat. Ida heard it—the snares, the two big bass drums of the Gardenville High School Band. Ida remembered the county-wide parade, the floats with the pretty girls, sun-tanned and moon-ripened. Opalescent smiles. Mascaraed winks. Mechanical waves to all the world as it looked up to see the Peach Day Queen and her court. Louis's gaze lasted longer than the float stayed in sight. Ida perspired in the sun, wiping her forehead and neck with the hankiechief that Raylene gave her for Mother's Day. Ida had nudged Louis.

"Those pretty little things aren't for you, Louis. Don't go hanging out your eyeballs." She had laughed. Louis had looked at her as he never had before, with a watery stare and wire-drawn lips.

"I'm going," he had said, his voice thinner than himself.

Ida's favorite band marched by.

"Oh Louis, the Pocatello High School Band. You can't go yet." The twirling batons, the fringed epaulets, the drum major with the tall furry hat that sat low on his brow. Ida clapped and yelled, "Hooray."

"Louis, don't you love it?" She turned to an empty space next to her, the space Louis had filled just a minute ago.

"Louis?" She scanned the crowd, balloons, and snocone eaters. No Louis. No more Louis at all.

When Ida played the same line for the tenth time, the backs of the patriarchal brethren changed to fronts, and everybody in the congregation turned to stare at Ida Rossiter, looking at her intently for maybe the first time in twenty years. Luckily, she pried herself loose from the "good enough" phrase. Everybody settled uncomfortably back to their hymn books until halfway into the third verse. Bishop Jensen leaned over to his first counselor, and Ida heard him ask, "Am I hearing things or is Sister Rossiter playing 'Ida Sweet as Apple Cider'?"

"I don't know," answered the first counselor. "I never heard of that song. It must have been before my time."

And suddenly, Ida thought she saw her fingers leave her hands and begin to play an arrangement of "Come Come Ye Saints" that no one had dreamed possible:

Come, come ye Saints, cha cha cha,  
No toil nor labor fear, cha cha cha, sis boom ba,  
But with joy, cha cha cha, do be do,  
Wend your way, ba ba bee, doo doo wah.

Ida watched herself leap up from the organ which continued to play. With an aerial maneuver, she landed on top of the walnut Baldwin and pulled ostrich plumes from the depths of her unshielded ample bosom. With a flip, she fluttered the fan and her eyelashes and began to

gyrate. The curtains over the exit door slowly fell to velvet thickness, covering the rain-spotted glass. The hanging lamps glowed pink as Ida pirouetted and leaped over the metal backs of the chairs, balancing expertly, arabesquing at row ends. Ida squeezed her eyes against the sight.

The floral arrangement above the sacrament table, arranged and delivered by Bill Parson's Nursery every Sunday morning, started to grow out of the hardwood as if from the richest compost heap ever. The gladiolas' trumpet faces opened wider and wider, their tendrils curling over the edge of the table and coiling their way to the feet of the seated brethren. Chrysanthemums puffed, and stems leaped to the ceiling with jungle vine vigor. Ida's pink dress shrank to a scanty leotard, and her hair sprouted twenty inches. She looked electrifyingly lovely in all of the pinkness.

Catching hold of the vines, she climbed to the starspangled ceiling of the chapel. "Twinkle, twinkle, little star," she sang as she scraped her newly grown, five inch fingernails across the rough surface to scratch through to the steeple. After clearing a hole big enough for her and the growing vine, she squeezed through insulation, picked her way through chunks of plaster, and finally swayed on top of the church's peaked roof. Wind swirled around her ankles, and she leaned against a rough timber that had supported the steeple's copper, shingles, and paint through the twenty years that the church had been standing. Ida patted the remaining boards. "You and me, steeple," she said. "We've been through a lot together these past years—you up here, a beacon for the house of the Lord, me below, playing the organ, a reminder to everybody to reverence the house of the Lord. And here we are both undressed. I didn't mean my undressing to affect yours."

Ida jumped as lightning flashed and thunder rumbled. She felt something next to her.

"Ida?"

Ida didn't respond at first. Nobody else would be out on the roof of the church in this weather, she thought.

"Ida?"

"Who are you?" she asked, afraid to look.

"Don't you know?"

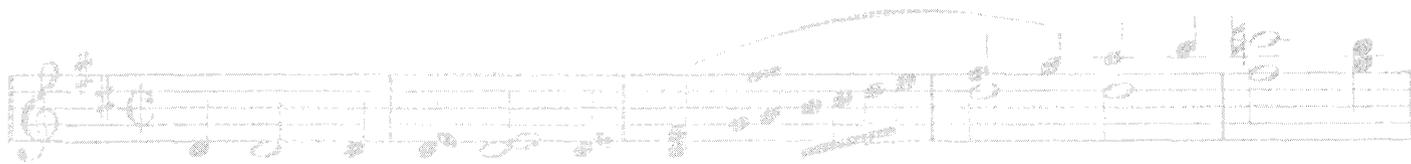
She turned her head slightly, enough to see a brilliant white glow and the hem of a fiery white robe. "You must be from Heaven above," she said. "How did you get here?"

"With faith like the grain of a mustard seed," the white-robed being said. "I can do anything, actually, but tell me Ida, why did you do what you did?"

"Me? Well I . . . It's like this. I know I did something wrong to wash my . . . well, you know . . . my garments all at the same time, leaving me without your, I mean without God's protection and breaking my promise. I've disobeyed but I've been good the rest of the time, real good. I've only missed three Sundays in twenty years, you know, when Raylene's baby was born, when the doctor was so slow in emergency, my finger, you know, and then when Louis had his hernia."

"According to scripture, No man is good save God. Don't you know that, Ida?"

"I know I did wrong, Go—, who are you anyway?"



The being with the glow didn't answer.

"Well, I'll call you Presence, since I'm not sure who you are." She thought of looking directly at the personage but remembered stories about Moses and the burning bush and other stories about God being too holy for man to be able to see him. Actually, the light was brighter than any she'd seen, even on this iron-grey day with ominous clouds and rain blocking out every inch of sunlight.

"You're right, Ida. You did do wrong. You have endured up until now, but you've given up. That's a sin."

Ida looked at her leotard and panicked. She tried to hide her bare legs and arms, but there wasn't enough pink. She stood awkwardly, hoping that her nipples weren't showing through the flimsy material. Ordinarily, tears would have come at a time like this, but Ida felt something else growing inside.

"You mean to say, Presence, that because of one slip up, my twenty years goes for nothing? I thought you'd be real proud of me for setting a record and all. I did it for you, I mean for God, I did. Every Sunday when I thought about sleeping in, I said, 'Nosiree, Ida . . . you give your time and talents. Understand? Forget your aches and whines and serve.' Now you're trying to tell me that I'm not good enough?"

"You're not alone, Ida. It's the same for every human."

"But Presence, when Louis left me, when he was seen once in town with one of the Peach Day princesses, even then I kept going. Even in the nights when I was lonely and wishing for somebody to keep me warm. Even Brother Bassett crossed my mind if you can believe that, but I said, 'Oh no. God wants me to keep my promises' and I just slept with Raylene's old teddy bear. I was cold."

"Can you comprehend that there is another sphere, another realm which is a mystery, which the human mind can't understand?"

"Can you understand about Raylene?" Ida asked. "What about her? She was a good girl, good as they come until Jody got blown to pieces in the army. And she just up and fell into pieces herself. How come if I kept all my promises you didn't answer my prayers about Raylene? And here she is now, just living on Cokes and fries and too much smoothie ice cream, sitting in the Dairy Creme parking lot every night, just waiting for something, heaven knows. I can understand that you didn't bring Louis back, I guess, but why didn't you help Raylene? She's my baby. She's my baby."

The last "baby" echoed through the streets of Gardenville, interspersed with rain drops, and fell to the grass. One gentle cow in the adjacent field took a bite while the two stood on the roof in silence.

Suddenly, Ida turned and faced the blinding light, shielding her eyes with her hands but peeking through the slits of her fingers. "As long as I'm at it and am no good anyway," she said, "I think I'll ask about little LuJean? She needs a better deal all the way around. A father. Something more than a mother who sits and stares through a Chevy windshield every night after work, up and down that darn Main Street."

"Depend not on thine own understanding, Sister Rossiter," the robed being said quietly before it flashed

off across the sky in the time it would have taken Ida to count to two.

"Why?" she yelled after the disappearing glow. "Why?" she whispered to herself.

Ida looked slightly to the left, less slightly to the right, and then pulled back her shoulders and head. She turned to the decimated steeple, patting it tenderly. "Well," she said, "you and me. Twenty years of service and what do we get?"

Without hammer or nails, Ida could do nothing to preserve the steeple's dignity, so she descended the vine, checked each branch to see if it would hold and stepped with care to prevent leaves from falling on the patriarchs and Morris below. To her surprise, Brother Bassett stood waiting at the base of the vine.

"What's he doing there, old Owl Eyes?" she wondered.

Then the enormity of Ida's rashness hit home. She remembered with a jolt that she hadn't made the twenty year mark yet, not until next Sunday, and here she had been presumptuous, even uppity, with the Presence or whoever it was. With Brother Bassett holding out his arms to catch Ida, with him blinking, even winking at her, and overcome by the full impact of her blunder, she tripped over a tendril and tumbled.

Ida found herself on the floor behind the organist's bench being fanned and tended by the Bishop, Morris Sant, Milly, and blinking Brother Bassett.

"It looks like she's all right," said Milly. "See her eyes are opening. You can't keep a good woman down."

"Ida is the only decent organist in a hundred mile radius," said Morris, "She had me worried."

"She had me worried too," said Brother Bassett.

Ida stared up at the huddle over her and at the redness of Milly's jacket. She clutched the handkerchief that had been tucked neatly in her pink pocket, that was covered with wet—water, perspiration, some blood.

"The steeple and now you, Sister Rossiter," said Bishop Jensen. "What next?"

"You've hurt your head, Ida," said Milly, bending over her and stroking Ida's cheek. "You must have hit it on the edge of the chair."

"I'm okay. I'm fine," she said, struggling to her feet. And then she remembered. She jerked her dress down around her knees and held its hem tight to her legs, praying that no one had discovered her, afraid to look into anyone's eyes.

"What's the closing song," asked Ida anxiously, still doubled over. "Do you have the page number, Bishop?"

"Ida," said the Bishop, who always depended on her to know those things, "you posted it on the hymn board. There it is. See?"

"Just tell me the page, please."

"But, Ida," said Morris, "it's page 48. You've never needed the book before, why now?"

"Please don't ask me, Morris," she said as she slid onto the organ bench, opened her blue hymnal and started to play the introduction to "God Moves in a Mysterious Way."

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## THE BURLAP YEARS

Memories back, I liked  
looking at our farm from burlaped slopes  
rising from its pastures;  
sun-up buttercup walks on rocky ridges;  
dimensions of silence when the only sound  
came crystal from the meadow lark.

But I knew the dark, plowed soil  
that looked velvet from the mountain  
was full of rock, a back-aching,  
dirty job to pick them out,  
horse-haul them in the creaking wagon.  
I knew the lush alfalfa fields  
seemed to invite barefoot running  
but were too spiny for even sitting in;  
that walking across those furrows  
turned your ankles a dozen times  
and filled your shoes with dirt.  
The fragrance of mown hay turned  
to dust in heaps to be pitched and sweated  
into stacks while your skin itched  
and your hair stuck grimy on your brow.

I knew my life would take me  
elsewhere, and was glad of that.

I still know all this.  
So why, now,  
do those burlap days  
seem satin?

*Dixie L. Partridge*

## SCOLDING BRIDLE

The somber form of leather and silver  
Withers down from a nail in the attic,  
Still nagging at him all these years.

"What's it for, Grandpa?  
What's it for?"

Tarnished silver studs set in cowhide  
Once curried for that someday ride, never taken  
Neigh back at him the railing  
He'd wreaked upon a son  
Who dared to sneak it out,  
Letting calves chew the reins.

"What's it for, Grandpa?  
What's it for?"

"It's for control;  
To keep the horse restrained. . .  
. . .No, the horse is gone."

All studs remain in place.  
Still he wishes for grass stains on the bit,  
Hair on the headpiece:  
Bridle become branks.  
But stiffened, cracked and corrugated reins,  
Once creamed supple,  
Hang down long and solemn while  
Rigid black blinders whinny.

*Anita Tanner*

continued from page 3

4? I still do not understand the public outcry. It has something to do with our cows. Wisconsin cows seem to handle the trauma, but apparently our cows are more delicate or less intelligent. Anyway, for the sake of our sensitive cows, we shall continue to stay on Eastern Standard Time during the entire year.

For most of you, it takes about two minutes to set your clocks and watches ahead or back one hour and then life goes on as usual. Some of you may need a few days to regulate your biological clocks and sleeping schedules. For those of us in Indiana, however, your minor change has momentous consequences. While officially we stay on Eastern Standard Time, for all practical purposes we switch to Central Daylight Savings Time and thus alter our temporal relationship to everyone else in the country.

Instead of being two hours ahead of Utah, we are only one. We are no longer the same time as Connecticut but are now the same time as Kansas. In the fall, it all goes the other way. Such calculations can become critical. They dictate our telephone habits, for example. To get the cheapest rates, half of the year we call my brother early in the morning—the other half, late at night.

Transportation schedules are also affected. Every six months, the airlines have to modify the arrival and departure times for all interstate travel beginning or ending in Indiana. If we buy our tickets early, we have to make sure that seasonal flipflops have been figured in. Driving to Chicago or Cincinnati, we have to ask "What time zone are we in this month?" to know how much time to allow.

Probably the most pervasive change is in the television schedules. Almost every program comes on at a different time. If we want to see the network news, we have to move the dinner hour. If we want to catch the late local news and weather, we have to stay up an extra hour in the winter. It is particularly crazy with our children's bedtime routine. In the summer when we would prefer having the shows later, they are on early; in the winter when it would be nice to have them on earlier because of school, they are on late. We end up not watching television very much.

Well, I have complained enough. The point of the lament is the paradox that it is sometimes more difficult to adjust if we do not change than if we do. This is also true in relationships between husband and wife, parents

and children, and church and society. One of the primary causes of conflict in marriage is that one of the partners changes and the other one does not. This is often a side effect of education. When people marry young and the woman stays home to raise children while the man continues his education, a gulf can grow between them. Or if a woman continues to grow and develop but her husband remains stagnant, he often cannot accept the differences which result.

And this is the shock which comes if such marriages end in divorce. People who find themselves suddenly single often experience trauma as they try to deal with adult relationships in the 1980s using teenage rules from the 50s or 60s. For someone who is 35 years old, single, and sexually experienced to approach intimacy with the behavior of a naive 18-year-old is not healthy. Psychologically, trying to live out a script that does not fit can cause severe stress and self-alienation.

Parent-child conflict—especially in the teen years—is often a result of the same failure to respond to change. The style of parenting that works very well with young children is totally inappropriate for teenagers. The challenge of parenthood is to be able to adapt to the changing needs of our children, particularly their increased need for independence and a separate identity.

The Church faces a similar dilemma because to a certain extent it plays a parental role. Through childhood and into adolescence, it is useful to have the Church provide directions for us, but when the Church continues to treat us as adolescents after we have matured and need a higher level of independence, it creates tension.

In addition to responding to the various chronological and emotional needs of its members, the Church needs to address the new technological, environmental, and social conditions which are part of the milieu for everyone. Any business (and increasingly, any person) that refuses to adapt to the computer age will soon not be competitive in the marketplace. It is ironic that the Church has been very astute in taking advantage of computers and other technological innovations but has been slow in acknowledging other shifts in our society. As the world changes and we do not, the discrepancy becomes greater as does the potential for conflict.

A trivial example of this failure to recognize societal changes is the Church's reaction to facial hair. Fifteen years ago, many men grew beards to make a political or social

statement which the Church found distasteful. For at least the past ten years, however, beards have not made a consistent statement about anything, and it is no longer possible to determine our political proclivities from our appearance. The Church ignores the new meanings—or lack of meaning—and expects us to conform to an anachronistic grooming standard. This not only causes conflict within the community of the Saints but makes it difficult for some of us to convince people that we really are Mormons.

More important examples of the failure to recognize social realities are the injunctions to women—particularly about having babies and not careers. With the opportunities to combine productivity with reproductivity (to create as well as procreate) so obvious in our society, it is discordant to continue promoting what is a minority choice even among Mormons.

I do not mean to imply that the Church does not change. After all, I teach Primary on Sunday morning in my two-piece garments (and a three-piece suit). The Church has also recognized that the meaning of the movie rating system had evolved and therefore adopted a more rational guide to movie selection than simply condemning "R-rated" films. The changes simply come slowly. When I was at BYU I concluded that the Mormon approach to the injunction to be "in the world but not of the world" is to be three years behind the world.

I am also not saying that we need to always give in. But we should analyze the costs and benefits of all alternatives. Then if we decide not to change, we need to find the best ways to adapt to the revolutions around us. Our time zone complications, for instance, are not serious because we are aware of the problem. If we ignored the fact that we are out of step, we would have problems making contact with the rest of the country because our timing would be off. The worst response is to pretend that things are not changing. Taken into account, our time change is merely a nuisance. We could, however, avoid even that if we would reset our clocks with everyone else—and at little cost other than a few discontented cows.

I do not like the hassles imposed by Indiana time. When I grew up I discarded those childhood clothes that were too small. Likewise, I sort through my childhood ideas and discard those which no longer fit while keeping those which do. I even retain some ideas—and clothes—

which are not fashionable but appeal to me. I can make these choices to fit my needs. But I cannot decide to go on Daylight Savings Time with the rest of you. That decision has been co-opted by some legislators. They have decreed that I should not reset my watch (unless I want to be at odds with my neighbors). Likewise, when the Church resists societal change and tells me that I must also resist if I

want to remain in good standing, I am forced into a dilemma. I can obey, stand with the Church, and be in conflict with society; or I can change and be in conflict with the Church. Either way, this pattern of having part of my life change while another part tries to hold firm creates tension—a tension which is even more bothersome than Indiana's scrambled time zones.

group to pray when they want to, but at secular events to which non-church members are invited, such public conversation with the Almighty seems out of place.

I can't help wondering where the line is drawn. Are BYU basketball games opened with prayer before the first whistle? How about car washes at the warehouse? Does the board of the Bonneville Corporation petition guidance from on high before voting a stock split? Maybe they do.

Public prayers have always seemed to me designed more to meet the needs of people rather than to develop a relationship with God. Public prayers can't help but be very aware of their mortal audience, and principles of oratory often become the guides in such a situation.

There is a long-standing tradition of public prayer in the Christian world, probably never inhibited by the biblical admonition to do one's praying in the closet. Public prayers are justified on the basis that they are reminders of our Christian heritage and beliefs. Such reminders may reassure the faithful, but I doubt that they convince the unbeliever. They are more likely to offend the different-believer.

The communion a group of like-believers feels at a public prayer by one of their members may well be important. But unless it is a religious occasion intended for their own members, such prayers would be better gotten out of the schools, theaters, and other public events. Let's get prayer back in the closet where it belongs.

## Outside Looking In

### PUTTING PRAYER IN ITS PLACE

**Ray Ownbey**

Growing up in the fifties, I got to know Gilbert and Sullivan operettas as a student in high school productions. I can still sing (with more nostalgia than skill) "A Wandering Minstrel I" or "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major General."

Imagine my delight upon returning to Utah to live some four years ago when I read that Promised Valley Playhouse was mounting a production of *HMS Pinafore*. I would have a chance to relive my role of Ralph Rackstraw of some 25 years before.

The night of the performance I arrived at the theater and took my seat with great anticipation. But before the houselights dimmed and the familiar overture started, the curtain parted and a dark-suited figure appeared on stage. Had one of the principals been taken ill? Was a patron whose generosity made the production possible going to have his ego massaged and his corporate identity laid bare? Were we going to be asked to deposit popcorn cartons in the receptacles?

None of the above. We were going to pray. And the chorus of "amens" which followed indicated that the majority of the attendees were Mormons.

Now as I understand it, Promised Valley Playhouse is run by the Mormon church, and I guess they can pray before a production of *HMS Pinafore* if they want to. Certainly the high school production I was in years before could have used some outside

help.

But, smart remarks aside, praying before such events is standard practice in Mormon-sponsored events. I went to a recital at a warehouse some months later, one where both Non-Mormon and Mormon musicians performed music that was probably more profane than sacred, and the event was both opened and closed with prayer.

I've since been told that all events in the church buildings are opened and closed in such a manner, and I guess that includes such secular events as boy scout meetings.

No one can argue the privilege of any

## The Noumenonist

### PUTTING PRAYER IN ITS PLACE

**Paul M. Edwards**

Recently I heard Richard Poll's excellent John Whitmer presentation where he up-dated his provocative 1968 article, "What the Church Means to People Like Me." In that article he described two categories of critical approach within the Church: "The Rod of Iron Saint" and the "Liahona Saint." The first "does not look for

questions but for answers, and in the gospel . . . finds or is confident that he can find the answers to every important question." The second is "preoccupied with questions . . . but finds in the gospel . . . answers to enough important questions so he can function purposefully without answers to the rest."

Like most persons in attendance I found myself reconsidering where, if

anywhere, I fit in. By orientation, if not by tradition, I have little inclination to be an Iron Rod of any variety. On the other hand, I am not interested in the variety of liberals who, as Earnest Hocking has suggested, "have become taxidermists to late principles." My suspicions were growing that the grass was equally brown on both sides of the fence. My brand of liberalism—if that is what it is—seems to be located in acceptance and understanding. I am seeking an inquiring temper that expresses a faith in intelligence and in the human ability to comprehend the tradition of a free market in the world of ideas. An attitude as willing to question answers as to answer questions.

I find such an attitude on the defensive everywhere. The tom-toms of convention and the bagpipes of Farwellian transcendentalism are growing more and more shrill. Men and women of good will defend the accumulation of human knowledge as if it were a social monster. No less a body than the MHA finds itself trying to justify the writing of honest Church history as if that were somehow questionable. I am not anxious to add my voice to this unfortunate situation, but it is my conviction that the human capacity for reflection is an expression of a person's self-transforming potential for change through growth. In the human situation, knowledge is not so much a matter of personal power as it is the ability to transform animals into persons: the reactor into the responder. The heart of such a transformation is woven into the fabric of every person's being. It has only to be released.

In the final analysis, I believe that the nature of this transformation is historical. I recognize that there are about as many definitions of history as there are historians, but I suspect that a good many would agree that history is the continuous state of interaction between the historian and the evidence. The value lies within the interaction. The outcome of historical involvement is not the end of something, like the final station on a long train journey, but the act of analysis. It would seem significant that if this is true, historians within the Mormon movement, for example, should not be so concerned with freeing themselves from their prejudices or their tendency to arrive at expected stations. Rather the reader should be protected from the limitations of these interpretations not by either restricted or official history, but by a multiplicity of views

being presented. If history is process, inquirers identify beauty and meaning as they pass through a continuous and ever-fresh landscape not by the character of their destination.

In my own stumbling and hesitant efforts, I am indebted to those who have heard me out when I wandered into new and poorly developed worlds. I was (as I am) unsure of myself, and the willingness of others to listen enabled me to hear myself more clearly. These persons have not necessarily bought my theories, and many have been free to be critical and paternal (or more often, maternal). But to a large extent those who have felt free to differ have felt free to let me inquire, and our dialogue has focused on the merit of our production, not the orthodoxy of our conclusions.

Some persons may prefer to stand alone, taking a perverse pleasure in being isolated. But for the most part, the peril of our truths and the significance of our doubts drives us to seek acceptance in our inquiry. Perhaps only presence is enough. But the burden of being born, and of giving birth, rests easier when shared with others who bear the mark of birth and creation. Our faith lies not only in our Creator, but in humankind and our capacity to

become fully human. Of this I feel certain—maybe even Iron Rod-ish—but my certainty is based on my own shared experience and not on submission to an authority. I could not have come to this conclusion had I not doubted with sincerity, searched with uncertainty, and remained open to understand again with each new person.

Assuming the above, I am amazed at the demands made by those who have determined a course of action, preferring the security of a traditional or newly popular position over the freedom of reconsideration. Whether they call themselves liberal or conservative, both have concluded that it is safer to teach persons to remember than it is to share an adventure. Such an appeal to authority does not require intelligence, nor common sense, nor faith, nor an understanding of the situation. It requires only a good memory.

I have a great fear of those who would lead and direct our institutions (as well as our inquiries) if they are persons who have never been in danger of doubt. I am afraid of those not aware that faith does not reside in the brain but in the structure of personality, and thus do not see that the "comfortable faith" is often

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inhuman. Faith confronts our existence at the point of our essential mystery. It does not eliminate the call for explanation; it cannot end all doubt. It is a gamble. To deny ourselves that gamble or to identify our grasping search as sin or faithlessness, forces us either to renounce ourselves or to renounce the community of doubters from which we are born.

Our inquiry, by its nature, means so much to us that we wish to share it, but sharing and imposing are far different. What we seek to share is the joy of the journey, the challenge of the goal, the warmth of new discovery. The tendency is often to

impose answers and solutions to "rescue" others as they say in the trade, but all we can do is share.

I am inclined to suggest that there are no such things as official truths—nor for that matter official histories—no soft or hard core to our approach to inquiry. There certainly is no ultimate understanding upon which to make a judgment about the appraisal of others. We, of all people, must not allow ourselves to be ignorant of, or ignorant about, the contemporary revelation of the human spirit that emerges as persons dialogue with their God, their world, and their peers. Perhaps such an approach places me in the category of a limp Liahona.

Suit for a psychiatrist's failure to warn is an unnecessary burden on a profession ill-suited to the exactness the law demands. Restak, quoting a report by Dr. John Monahan, points out that psychiatrists' predictions of violent behavior are "accurate at best in one of three" cases. In an age when the law seeks for greater precision and measurability, psychiatry cannot offer the certitude of the hard sciences. Forensic psychiatry surely is not the developed science that forensic engineering or toxicology are. Restak himself pleads that "[p]sychiatry is not a science like physics or chemistry, and it cannot and should not be judged according to standards appropriate to an exact discipline. Society has little to gain by holding psychiatrists to a standard of performance beyond the limits of their capabilities."

Despite disclaimers such as this, the law has increasingly thought of psychiatry as a science; but in the law's defense, it must be pointed out that psychiatry has perhaps encouraged this. More and more, mental problems are regarded and treated as if they are diseases, like mumps or measles. Christopher Lasch has written that in the first part of this century "social pathologists" such as "[e]ducators, psychiatrists, social workers, and penologists saw themselves as doctors to a sick society, and they demanded the broadest possible delegation of medical authority in order to heal it." If the psychiatrists themselves see their craft as science and not art, the law can hardly be blamed for agreeing.

Assessing blame at this point is not the solution to the immediate problem which threatens not only psychiatrists, but all counseling professions. If Hinckley's psychiatrist "knew or should have known" that Hinckley would attempt a political assassination, then couldn't John Hinckley himself have a cause of action? And what of others—school counselors, teachers, and ministers—who came in contact with Hinckley? Couldn't they also have foreseen what John Hinckley might do? Based on this kind of reasoning, the possibilities for suit are limitless.

Both the law and psychiatry must be faulted for the current trend. Psychiatry, like other arts (including the law itself), is an imprecise discipline which, at least to date, does not rise to the level of a science. Until it does, the law would do well to recognize psychiatry as a helping profession and not hold it to standards expected of more exact sciences.

## Law of the Land

### FREEDOM OF RECONSIDERATION

Jay S. Bybee

Since 1976 the courts have been increasingly willing to recognize a legal duty on the part of mental health personnel and institutions to warn others of the violent propensities of their patients. Beginning with the case of *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California*, the California courts have held that a psychiatrist has a duty to warn individuals who have been threatened with bodily harm by patients under the psychiatrist's care. At least in California this duty to warn has been limited to those who have been specifically threatened. Other jurisdictions, ostensibly following California's lead, have expanded the duty to warn to include other potential victims—even if not specifically threatened by the patient.

On 18 March 1983, Reagan's press secretary, James Brady, secret serviceman McCarthy, and D.C. police officer Delahanty filed suit against John Hinckley, Jr.'s psychiatrist for his alleged failure to warn officials that Hinckley might try an assassination; according to the suit, the psychiatrist "knew or should have known" that Hinckley would attempt a political assassination. The recognition in *Tarasoff* of a duty to warn and the attempt to extend that duty in suits

such as the one filed by Brady, McCarthy, and Delahanty will have serious ramifications for psychiatrists and other counselors and, perhaps even more serious in the long term, indicates an attitude towards the "science" of psychiatry which I believe psychiatry has not yet earned.

Successful suits against psychiatrists promise to cause serious problems for the profession. In a recent editorial, Georgetown University medical professor Richard Restak warned that the increase in suits might bring about an increase in dishonest record-keeping; by deliberately omitting threatened acts from the patient's history or record, psychiatrists can shield themselves from suit. Another possibility would be that a suit-paranoid psychiatrist would warn authorities and all others of the patient's threats—even if, in his opinion, the threats would not be carried out. This, unfortunately, might retard the patient's progress by stigmatizing him unnecessarily. It would restrict the patient's movements since the police would have a record of the psychiatrist's warning and might feel a duty to prevent the patient from harming someone else. In any case it would certainly erode the confidence with which patients would be willing to discuss their problems with a psychiatrist.

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