

# SUNSTONE

Lyn Jacobs Interview:  
Discovering the  
Salamander  
Letter

Volume 114 Number 1 Fall 2001

ISSN 0047-3060

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*A Question of Means or Ends*

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# SUNSTONE

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United States subscriptions to SUNSTONE are \$27 for one year (12 issues). Outside the U.S. subscriptions are \$35 for one year by surface mail. Airmail subscriptions in the U.S. are \$27 for one year plus airmail postage charges. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Salt Lake City, Utah. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SUNSTONE, 59 West 100 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1507.

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## DIVINE SEXISM

The SUNSTONE articles "Priesthood Prescription for Women," by Shane B. Inglesby, and "Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go," by Karla S. Gunnell and Nicole T. Hoffman (vol. 10 no. 3) were of great interest to me because I have just finished a similar, but less detailed, survey of the adult manuals of the last few years (recently sent to another "Mormon" publication for consideration). A consistent pattern exists between the current sex stereotyping, as found in these manuals, nineteenth-century Mormon rhetoric and the content of certain ordinances that originated in the nineteenth century. In other words, the sex stereotyping evident in these manuals reflects "Mormon doctrine," which holds that the maintenance of separate spheres in this life is vital to one working for exaltation. Witness the following from "Foundations for Temple Marriage," published by the Church in 1979, p. 60: "In return for fulfilling our roles, according to the Lord's guidelines, both men and women will receive exaltation and continue in their roles for the eternities. Having received exaltation, man will continue to govern and control as our Father in Heaven does, and women will continue to be helpmates to their husbands and will have spirit offspring."

Godhood for men and women obviously does not mean that there is any sort of equality in authority to be assumed: one, the male, will be God, the other(s), female(s), will be god(s). This is confirmed by Orson Hyde's 1853 assertion that "the mother will borrow her glory from the father, it will come to her through that channel, and it is a legitimate one" (*Journal of Discourses*, 2:117).

This hierarchy of male over female, in this life as well as in the life to come, is necessitated by the doctrine of eternal polygyny, concerning which at least one modern Mormon spokesperson asserts: "Obviously the holy practice will commence again after the Second Coming of the Son of Man and the ushering in of the millennium."

What we seem to have here is a profoundly sexist God, if

"Mormon doctrine" reflects God's mind and will. On the other hand, perhaps Mormonism is a religion whose doctrines and scriptures consist of the philosophies of men mingled with God's mind and will. The problems with "Mormon doctrine" and practice regarding women cannot be resolved by revising Church manuals or practices: This is a moral issue. Tradition, past prophetic announcements, and even scriptures are not reliable guides on this issue; the mind and will of God must be obtained. Nothing less will do because the Spirit, as perceived by many, is presently striving with "the Church," and all the heated rhetoric in the world cannot change how persons feel the Spirit is moving them.

Abraham E. Van Luik  
 Richland, Washington

## THE PATRIARCHAL IMPERATIVE

Perhaps the real problem with the roles of men and women in the Church is not quite what Shane Inglesby imagines in "Priesthood Prescriptions" (SUNSTONE, vol. 10 no. 3). Perhaps it is more fundamental, not exclusively Mormon, nor even particularly Mormon.

It has to do with biology. Humans are a species of animal. My spirit—whatever part of me it is—rides an animal which has the same instinctual imperatives as any other living thing, viz., survival of self and survival of the species (I've heard some call it "production and reproduction"). Most of our behavior is a direct pursuit of these do-or-die imperatives. The rest of what we do is so impacted by these priorities as to be quite secondary.

In every species of animal, male and female perform different roles. They vary from species to species. Some are quite gender-similar, where male and female typically have similar temperaments, build the nest together—stick for stick, take turns incubating the eggs, feeding, protecting, teaching, and otherwise nurturing the young. They also typically look very similar. Some are at a gender-dissimilar extreme where the male has no more to do with offspring than breed, and spends his "domestically"-related time fighting for territory and harems.

These species typically have quite different physical appearance to match the differences in their survival competitions.

As I see it, humankind is at neither extreme, but is substantially in between. There is definitely a parameter of territory-and-harems in the human male, an urge to maximally bless the next generation with his own genes—even at the expense of others—especially at the expense of other males. And human males and females are obviously physically constructed for at least somewhat different survival roles. It would hardly be logical to assume they do not differ in temperament with the rest of the adaptation, as male and female do in other species.

I suggest that the “assignment” of priesthood to males only, and of males to “head” the family need be no more mysterious than a mechanism to channel into civilized behavior biological imperatives that are going to have their day anyway, one way or the other. Spreading the priesthood and family leadership out across a genderless, role-less, common-gray, Church scenario may actually seek to disenfranchise men. Where the rubber meets the road, the Church is already female-oriented, as I see it, and beneath the patriarchal priesthood crust it always has been.

Despite the update article in this same issue of *SUNSTONE*, which included statistics on relative activity of men and women in the LDS church, more women are active than men and active women are often more active than active men. In my 50-odd years in this Church—well over a dozen wards and stakes, missions and branches, and almost every position open to males—I’ve never been where general male activity very closely approached that of female, either in percentage or quality. Maybe I’ve just never lived anywhere near any of those strange, enlightened enclaves Heaton and Albrect discovered and polled. In my experience the ratio has at times been more like three-to-one for the women. Bruce McConkie, in a mission conference, way back in my missionary days, in comment-

ing on that obvious-to-the-most-casual-observer fact, opined that women are “better spirits.”

Now I have no input that inclines me to suppose “male” and “female” spirits differ in general quality from each other, and assuming equality something else must cause the difference in activity (which I insist does exist in the real world).

Ongoing, day-to-day, week-to-week Church activity focuses on the tender, innocent young. And after maturity we are turned right back again to tender loving care of the next generation of young. Even priesthood lessons “apply” the gospel to family for the benefit of our upcoming replacements. And that’s fine. It could hardly be otherwise. But if the immediate, feeding (nursing?), caressing, hugging, comforting, nurturing, etc., of those beautiful little children is a more genetically intense parameter in the human females than males, programs dealing in those terms will cater mostly to females. We are some distance from gender-similar and will not get identical application and response.

Maybe men’s biograms need an exclusive “priesthood” to balance things out. For some reason our part of the survival imperative seems to want us to joust around among each other for position and authority and advantage. We cause all the wars, don’t we?

Would desexitizing priesthood and family head disenfranchise men? We see the destructive effect of disenfranchisement of males in the naive political “solution” of the failing American welfare system—among blacks especially. If women had it all in the Church and men had only part, what would the imbalance do?

Personally, I don’t want to “rule and reign” over anyone—at least not in any way the world uses those terms. And I only want enough “dominion” to keep people out of my hair when push comes to shove here and there. Too, I would love to have the monkey of being expected to heal the sick transferred to the backs of the sisters. It’s a hassle.

And yet, from some deep-down stirring, I am thankful for a wife who has seemed more naturally drawn to those immediate aspects of TLC and nurture for the children she bore than I, who have been more naturally drawn to supporting and protecting her in her joy.

So, I suggest, again, that what we see in the Church patriarchal order is a description of (prescription for) the biological imperatives of the human species and not some superficial put-down of women by a bunch of chauvinistic men. There is even suggestion that it is an eternal imperative.

I suggest that if we are going to learn to walk on the water, we’d better first find out where the rocks are.

*Raeo Passey  
Salt Lake City, Utah*

## **GENDER-FREE TEENS**

After reading Gunnell and Hoffman’s paper on “Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go” (*SUNSTONE*, vol. 10 no. 3), I must admit that I remained confused as to what they were saying. Surely they are not implying that the complementary, though different, roles of male and female require identical courses of study. It is unthinking to me, that anyone could take offense from the lesson manuals as quoted and consider them demeaning or derogatory to our daughters. If so, I believe they are sadly lacking in understanding.

Since the manuals appear to teach the basic doctrine and theology of the Church, I wonder if they would also seek to change times and seasons.

I wonder if there were lessons addressed to each group on the proper attire for jogging if both priests and Laurels would be fitted out with a good athletic bra, as well as a proper fitting jockstrap? Tsk-tsk, much to do about nothing. Shame on *SUNSTONE* for wasting my (reading) time, as well as my subscription dollar on printing such a stupid paper.

*Max H. Rammell  
Rexburg, Idaho*



# A Mormon Concept of Armageddon

## Is Nuclear War Inevitable?

By Cole R. Capener

**A** fundamental theme of Mormon and other Christian eschatology—or the study of the last days—is the occurrence of one last great and horrible battle preliminary to the end of this earth's history. This momentous conflict, commonly associated with a series of events set to transpire before,



during, or after Christ's millennial rule, has been called by one Mormon author, "the most prophesied event in all scripture."

Repeatedly throughout history, a notion of the last days has captured the Christian imagination and has risen to the top of popular consciousness, with followers pointing to contemporary troubles as evidence of impending apocalyptic doom. Such ideas were rampant in the American religious environment at the time of Joseph Smith and throughout the pre-Utah era of the nineteenth-century Church. Similarly, in the past decade so-called popular eschatology has once again attracted a large following. With adherents drawn primarily from conservative fundamentalist Christians, these modern millennialists, like their nineteenth-century counterparts, have sounded a biblical warning cry and are predicting wholesale and unprecedented destruction to be wrought at the battle of Armageddon.

Hal Lindsay's book *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which describes the future plight of the earth based on the author's interpretation of biblical prophecy, has sales in excess of eighteen million copies, making it one of the best-selling books of the last decade. This and similar books figure prominently in the rise of popular eschatology. The movement itself can be credited, at least in

part, for rekindling interest in the Holy Bible as a source for predictions of the future and as a basis for formulating political positions concerning war generally and nuclear war in particular.

Since existing nuclear weaponry is apparently sufficient to destroy the world many times over, this is a concept we as Mormons cannot afford to overlook. Indeed, our own concept of Armageddon—its timetable, inevitability, and mutability—can have important implications for the way we approach our civil and moral responsibilities.

#### WHAT IS ARMAGEDDON?

The word *Armageddon*, found in Revelation 16:13, is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew "mountain of Megiddon," or Hill of Battles. Megiddo, an ancient city located approximately sixty miles northwest of Jerusalem, was the site of many great battles recorded in the Old Testament (Judg. 5:19, 2 Chr. 35:22).

According to eschatologists, both Mormon and otherwise, massive armies from all nations of the world will converge in the Valley of Megiddon to lay siege to Jerusalem (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 74; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:45). This belief is based on an interpretation of John's writing in Revelation 16:13-14, 16, which reads:

*And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*

From the writings of Ezekiel, eschatologists say that the commander of the attacking forces is to be "Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" (Ezek. 38:2) and ruler over the land of Magog. Nevertheless, while apparently referring to a particular individual and his army, "Gog and Magog," Elder Bruce R. McConkie writes, is the designation given to the combination of nations which is seeking to overthrow the remnant of the Lord's seed (*MD*, p. 325). Another LDS author, Cleon Skousen, writes that Gog will be a ruthless gentile dictator, governing a single gentile nation, the same nation foreseen by Daniel in his famous dream (Dan. 7:7). The nation will encompass all other gentile nations of Asia and Europe (*Prophecy and Modern Times*, p. 83). This Gog shall come from the North, accompanied, according to Ezekiel, by "Persia," "Ethiopia," "Gomer," and "Togarmah." LDS General Authority Alvin R. Dyer has said that "according to the Apostle John, this great besieging army will number two hundred million (Rev. 9:16) . . . and will have the peoples of other nations . . . by reason of their having been previously conquered and amalgamated into one vast empire. [Gog] will speak evil of the Lord, blaspheming his Holy name, and thus will be an anti-Christ" (Ezek. 38:15) ("The Process of the Second Coming,"

**The Mormon perspective lies somewhere in between the extreme literalism of the evangelicals and the allegorical view of the traditional scholars.**

address to the Salt Lake Institute of Religion, 16 October 1970, p. 7).

Mormon commentators agree that the writings of Ezekiel, Zechariah, St. John, and Joseph Smith teach that the invading armies of Gog initially will be successful. Zechariah prophesied that "Jerusalem will be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity" (Zech. 14:2). Even a portion of the temple to be built in Jerusalem will be overrun (Rev. 11:1-2). During this time, John foresaw that two prophets will be raised up in Jerusalem and will prophesy and testify to the House of Judah for three and a half years as the battle continues to rage on (Rev. 11:3-12, D&C 77:15). These two prophets will possess great powers sufficient to hold in check the army of Gog during the period of their ministry. Finally they will be killed in the conflict and lay unburied in the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days until their resurrection before "the very eyes of all Judah" (Dyer, "Process," p. 9).

Just as Israel appears doomed to destruction at the hands of the surrounding armies, a great earthquake will occur, and Christ will appear on the Mount of Olives, causing it to cleave in two and allowing an avenue of escape for the beleaguered Jews. The Doctrine and Covenants records that the Jews will look upon Christ and say: "What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet? Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the son of God." (D&C 45:51-52.)

After this miraculous appearance, the Jews will believe in Christ and, being thus revitalized, they will destroy the armies that are besieging them, thus ending the battle of Armageddon.

The battle, however, will take a heavy toll. Interpreting Zechariah 14:2 and Ezekiel 39:1-6, Mormon writers state that two-thirds of the people of Israel will be slain and over 165 million of the attacking army will perish in the battle. It will take seven months just to bury the dead, and seven years to burn the discarded weapons of war. (MD, p. 324.)

Although one Mormon author writes that Gog will perish in the great battle (Duane Crowther, *Prophetic Warnings*, p. 335), the alliance of Gog and Magog apparently will reunite after the Millennium—in numbers as numerous as the sands of the sea (Rev. 20:8)—to fight in what Joseph Smith called the Battle of Gog and Magog or the Battle of the Great God as is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 280, D&C 88:110-16). Once again the forces of good will triumph, and, as section 88 recites, "the devil and his armies shall be cast away into their own place, that they shall not have power over the saints any more at all"

(88:114).

Mormon writers generally seem reluctant to extrapolate from biblical text to provide further details concerning the battle of Armageddon. Even Duane Crowther, Mormonism's popular eschatologist and author of *Prophecy: Key to the Future and Prophetic Warnings to Modern America*, sees little value, for example, in trying to identify the participants in the battle because he believes that two world wars, greatly altering the boundaries and stature of the nations as we know them today, will transpire before the battle of Armageddon (*Prophetic Warnings*, p. 335, n. 2). Ironically, in one of the few references to Armageddon by early Church leaders, Joseph Smith reportedly identified one of the combatants. On 6 May 1843 in the unauthenticated "White Horse Prophecy," Joseph is said to have prophesied, "The last great struggle that Zion will have to contend with will be when the whole of America will be made the Zion of God. Those opposing will be called Gog and Magog. The nations of the world led by Russia and their power will be great but all opposition will be overcome and this land will then be the Zion of our God."

Some evangelical eschatologists have exhibited no similar qualms in describing with specificity Armageddon's participants. Thus, for example, in both Lindsay's best-selling book and fundamentalist author David Wilkerson's *Twenty-One Amazing Predictions*, the armies that will surround Israel are specifically identified as the Russians (from the north), and the Arabs and the Chinese (from the east). Wilkerson further notes that the United States will defend Israel from this attack by Russia and China.

Without examining all interpretations of this apocalyptic biblical scripture, it should be noted that the eschatological interpretations by both evangelical and Mormon writers largely ignore traditional biblical scholarship. Biblical scholars such as Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jurgen Moltmann, and Johannes Metz generally eschew these literal interpretations. Pannenberg, for example, contends that the imagery of Daniel, Revelation, and similar biblical scriptures should be seen not as depicting actual future events but as affirming the fact that God will eventually bring history to consummation and will reveal its meaning, which has been hidden from human wisdom.

Because such scholarship may seem to downplay if not disregard the role of prophecy, it is not well received among mainstream Mormon writers. In truth, the Mormon perspective seems to be somewhere in between the extreme literalism of the evangelicals and the purely allegorical view of the traditional scholars, albeit the Mormon view is probably closer to the evangelicals.

#### JUST AROUND THE CORNER?

Shortly before the bombing attack on the U.S. Marine headquarters in Beirut, President Reagan told a pro-Israel lobbyist, "You know, I turn back

to your ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if—if we're the generation that's going to see that come about. I don't know if you've noted any of those prophecies lately, but believe me, they certainly describe the times we're going through."

Like President Reagan's statement, the non-LDS evangelical writings seem to possess an air of great urgency. Lindsay speculates in *The Late Great Planet Earth* that the Israelis' attempt to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem on the site where the Dome of the Rock Mosque—sacred to Islam—now sits, will trigger an invasion of Israel, culminating in Armageddon. Such speculation may lead to a more imminent date based on news reports revealing that Zionist Jewish groups were recently arrested in an attempt to blow up the Mosque. Significantly, their attorneys' fees, somewhere in excess of fifty thousand dollars, were paid by fundamentalist Christian groups from the United States. Such groups also take interest in the election of Meir Kahane to the Knesset because Kahane favors moving the Mosque five hundred yards to allow the construction of the temple.

Contemporary Mormon commentators generally disagree with the President and various evangelicals on this point and tend to place the Battle of Armageddon further in the future. Elder McConkie, for example, told a group of students at Brigham Young University that he believed the Second Coming would not take place during his lifetime, nor the lifetime of his children and maybe not during the lifetime of his grandchildren. The Second Coming, and hence the Battle of Armageddon, is near in the Lord's perspective of time, Elder McConkie said, but as we measure time, it is a long way off.

Similarly, Crowther asserts that before the Battle of Armageddon, several events must occur including a third world war between the Soviet Union (and her allies) and the United States (and her allies), and even a fourth world war (*PW*, p. 337). Likewise, Elder McConkie writes that there will be a series of wars leading to a final great holocaust. (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:511).

Of course, Mormons believe that the actual time of the battle has not been nor will be revealed. This caused some Church members in the early 1940s to question whether World War II was the great war to precede the Second Coming of the Lord. In the *Church News*, 29 November 1941, Joseph Fielding Smith stated:

*We may answer this question by saying that we truly hope that it is; but the Lord very definitely informed his disciples that not even the angels in heaven knew the day nor the hour when he should make his appearance, but his Father only. . . . Let us hope and pray that it may be the last struggle before permanent peace and righteousness shall be sent down from heaven.*

## NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST

Is this great prophesied battle of Armageddon, a prelude to the Lord's return, the unthinkable nuclear holocaust of which so much is being written today? If Armageddon is to be a conventional war and not a nuclear war, is a pre-Armageddon nuclear war still possible? Fundamentalists authors generally answer these inquiries with a macabre portrayal of nuclear doom. Interpreting biblical scripture, Wilkerson writes that despite a powerful, worldwide peace movement which shall gain momentum (1 Thes. 5:3; Jer. 8:11, 15), the Mideast will explode into a cataclysmic nuclear war in which one-third of the earth's population will be destroyed. Wilkerson relies on several scriptures ostensibly portraying nuclear carnage: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10). And, "Their face shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongues shall consume away in their mouth" (Zech. 14:12). And finally, "by these three wars the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone" (Rev. 9:18).

Other evangelicals even insist that developing nuclear weapons is part of God's plan and that nuclear conflagration may well be the Lord's way of bringing history to an end for a people who stubbornly refuse to accept his will.

To the contrary, the Mormon concept of Armageddon seems to reject the notion that nuclear weapons and war are part of God's workings. Thus, Brigham Young taught, "Of one thing, I am sure; God never institutes wars: God is not the author of confusion or of war. They are the results of men's foolish acts of policy." (*Journal of Discourses*, 13:149.)

But the Mormon concept does not reject the possibility of nuclear war initiated by man. The First Presidency's statement on the MX missile noted that it is the sad experience of history that men have rarely failed to use the weapons that they develop. Crowther confidently writes that such weapons will surely be used in a third world war fought before Armageddon. Similarly, at a general conference of the Church in 1979, Elder McConkie said, "It may be, for instance, that nothing except the power of faith and the authority of the Priesthood can save individuals and congregations from the atomic holocaust that surely shall be" (Conference Report, Apr. 1979, p. 133).

However, other statements, such as the First Presidency's 1980 Christmas message, suggest that nuclear war may be avoidable. The Mormon concept of Armageddon, then, is uncertain on the question of nuclear involvement, and on the

**Unlike the evangelical view, the Mormon concept of Armageddon seems to reject the notion that nuclear weapons and war are part of God's workings.**

question of a pre-Armageddon nuclear war as well.

#### AN INEVITABLE EVENT

But is the Battle of Armageddon—nuclear or otherwise—inevitable? If so, what use are our efforts to prevent such a war? Why work for peace if war is a sign of Christ's coming? Why try to save the environment if its destiny is to be destroyed by nuclear war? The evangelical response seems to suggest that "you shouldn't" is the only appropriate response to these questions. Indeed, the proper action according to this view may be epitomized by a fundamentalist church in California which reportedly sent a \$250,000 contribution to Israel to help buy weapons of war.

The Mormon church leadership's approach to such questions is less disconcerting. Typically, Mormons are warned that bad or worse times will come, that the signs of the times leading up to the Lord's millennial rule, including Armageddon, must take place. That man is incapable of altering this inexorable process through secular means is often noted in Church addresses. For example, President Marion Romney said in the April 1977 conference, "Now all the acts of governments, all the armies of the nations, all the learning and the wisdom of man together cannot turn these calamities aside" (*Ensign*, May 1977, p. 53). As a result, heavy emphasis is placed on personal preparedness: "There is no security in any course except the course of obedience and conformity and righteousness," writes Elder McConkie (Conference Report, Apr. 1979, p. 133).

While this view is typical of many Mormon leaders and writers, others have responded with more optimism. David O. McKay, for example, taught that "man makes war—man can end war if he will" (*True to the Faith*, p. 276). Too, President Romney, despite his other comments, has stated that latter-day calamities *can* be averted by an acceptance of and conversion to the gospel. And Presiding Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone recently told those attending a Brigham Young University peace symposium that unified prayer by Church members can change scriptural predictions of increasing war and violence.

Perhaps the most significant statement on this question was given by the First Presidency of the Church in their 1980 Christmas message. While this statement expressed dismay over the build-up of nuclear arms, it also suggested that a nuclear Armageddon may be avoidable. The presidency declared that if men of good will will sit down and reason together in good faith to resolve their differences, they may save the world from a holocaust, the depth and breadth of which we can scarcely imagine.

In making these statements, LDS General Authorities seem to indicate that the fulfillment of prophecy is conditional upon our faith and actions. This doctrine is also taught in the scrip-

tures. Jonah, for example, in preaching to the wicked inhabitants of Nineveh, prophesied that their city would be overthrown. But when the Ninevites heeded the message of repentance and changed their ways, God spared them from destruction. (Jonah 3.) Thus, the apocalyptic scriptures foretelling wholesale destruction may be viewed more as a warning of what can occur if we do not act rather than what will occur regardless of our actions.

In this regard, the message of Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" is particularly illustrative. In this Dickens classic the antagonist, Ebenezer Scrooge, is visited by three spirits: the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future. During the third spirit's visit, Scrooge foresees his own death and other misery afflicting those about him. As Scrooge approaches the tombstone which bears his name, he implores the spirit to answer one question: "Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they the shadows of the things that may be, only?" he inquires. Then he adds: "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which if persevered in, they must lead. . . . But if the courses be departed the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!" In this story there is a change in behavior with a corresponding change in results.

#### ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Thus, Mormons need neither to be resigned to the fatalistic determination held by many of their evangelical brothers and sisters nor embrace their pessimistic views of prophetic scriptures. Such fatalism runs contrary to Mormonism's faith in humankind and in the capability of people to change and effect change. As the First Presidency has observed, when there is enough of a *desire* for peace and a *will* to bring it about, it is not beyond the possibility of attainment. This means that the prophesied Armageddon need not involve nuclear weaponry, or perhaps that it need not occur at all. It may also mean that a pre-Armageddon nuclear war, while possible, can be averted altogether.

President McKay taught that peace will come and be maintained if and when the "principles of peace triumph over the enemies of peace, which are hatred, ill-gotten gain, and the exercise of unrighteous domain" (*True to the Faith*, p. 227). Although the complete eradication of such ills may seem forlorn, I believe we are morally and physically responsible for earnestly striving for peace and making a difference in the world's final outcome. If, as Bishop Featherstone has taught, unified prayer may prevent a nuclear holocaust, then actions consistent with that prayer may also be efficacious. For if faith without works is dead, are not faith and prayer without works similarly lifeless?

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**LDS  
General  
Authorities  
seem to indicate  
that the fulfill-  
ment of  
prophecy is  
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faith and  
actions.**

# Stalking the Wild Document

An Interview with Lyn R. Jacobs



**L**yn Richard Jacobs is a man of many accomplishments. The son of Connie, a homemaker, and G. Richard, electrical engineer for the exhibits section of the LDS missionary department, Jacobs began developing his talents as a pianist, artist, taxidermist, and tailor while still in his teens. At twenty he entered the Canada Montreal Mission where he read copiously such Church writings as the twenty-six volume *Journal of Discourses*, the three-volume *Doctrines of Salvation*, and scores more. Upon his return, he worked at the LDS genealogical library in Salt Lake City, developing research materials that are still used there today. He graduated from the University of Utah in 1982 with two bachelor's degrees, one in French literature and another in philosophy. In 1985 he received his master's of theological studies from Harvard University. Conversant in French, German, Latin, Greek, and Coptic, Jacobs plans soon to pursue a doctoral degree in early Christian origins and Gnosticism.

This interview was conducted on January 15, 1986, nearly three weeks before Mark Hofmann was formally charged with two counts of murder and more than twenty counts of theft by deception and communications fraud (see story pp. 40-43). Jacobs agreed to be interviewed on the condition that he not discuss any of the documents which he understood were related to the bombing charges, especially the M'Lellin collection, *The Oath of the Free Man*, and *The Haunted Man*. However, several of the documents he was willing to discuss have now been listed as forgeries in the probable cause statement of the prosecuting attorneys. Because at the time of the interview there were only vague accusations, Jacobs's response to the forgery charges is general rather than specific. In spite of the impact of recent events, the editors feel this interview offers the insights of a close Hofmann associate. The views presented here are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily represent those of the editors.

**SUNSTONE:** When did you start collecting books?

**JACOBS:** As an undergraduate at the University of Utah. I did it as a hobby. I never intended making any money with it in the very beginning. I remember the very first book I bought. During an LDS institute

class, Reed Durham brought in a reprint of an early edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*, which is quite different from the editions used today. And I just thought it would be really neat—just out of the blue—to go see what a real one looked like. I went to Sam Weller's Zion's Bookstore, one of the first times

**Mark's success seems more spectacular simply because he has very little competition. Who else is running all over the country contacting antique dealers and document collectors?**

I'd ever been there (about eight or nine years ago). Of course I was just this dippy student, and Weller knew very well I probably had no money. Nonetheless, he showed me a second edition Pearl of Great Price. It was fifty dollars. I just couldn't believe a book could be that expensive. It was amazing to me, as it would be for most laypeople. Still, I did buy the book, although it took me about a week to dig up every little penny I had. It was my first book, the beginning of my collection.

From there, I became interested in the very rarest English Mormon books: for example, first editions



of the Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants, all the really expensive and rare items from Mormonism's earliest period. I have picked up some really choice gems, like a first edition of Emma Smith's hymnal, for example, which is worth about \$15,000. My primary interest, however, is in the foreign language publications of the Church, many of which are quite rare and possess great intrinsic value.

It took me almost two years to realize some of the books I had found in duplicate could be turned around for profit. And so I started trading many of them to obtain other things I wanted for my own collection.

**SUNSTONE:** Who were you trading with? Weller?

**JACOBS:** With Weller and others. I worked primarily with the Church archivist, Don Schmidt. The Church needed a certain number of things, specifically in the foreign language field, and they also had a lot of duplicates that had been piling up for years. I can only vaguely remember one time when I asked money from the Church. It was always easiest for me to trade since trading doesn't immediately involve any tax considerations.

**SUNSTONE:** You must have realized some cash from your book dealing.

**JACOBS:** Yes, some. But I have never made more than twenty-thousand dollars a year through the sale of books. Instead, I attempt to trade as much as I can. For example, I have a few extremely rare philosophical books. I have Descartes's *Discourse sur la Méthode*, the first edition of which was published in 1637. It's worth about \$14,000 to \$18,000. I own

Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*, as well. It is worth about \$9,000. I could not have acquired these books if it weren't for trading. I can't dig up that kind of cash.

Being in Boston over the last two years has facilitated acquiring philosophical works, since you really can't find that kind of literature around here. I've therefore made some good contacts from the East for my own private collection.

**SUNSTONE:** When did you meet Mark Hofmann?

**JACOBS:** I met him around 1979 or 1980. I

remember the occasion clearly. I visited Deseret Book early one day. Mark was there and I had never met him before. He had just spoken briefly with Mr. Scow, who was running the rare book section at that time. I spoke with Scow briefly as well and then looked over at Mark and said, "Well, it looks like we've got the same sort of interest. What exactly do you do?" With this I opened the conversation, and we talked a little about what he was doing. He'd come in that day with some Kirtland bills or something like that. I said, "Well, maybe we'll see each other around again." It was a very brief encounter. I'm sure we saw each other again soon and eventually just ended up going to lunch and continued from there.

We didn't really consider working together for some time. I knew practically nothing about documents. I was accustomed to looking specifically for books. Consequently, if I found a manuscript, I'd often call Mark up and have him take care of it.

**SUNSTONE:** Did you ever become business partners?

**JACOBS:** There has been a certain amount of misrepresentation on this account. When I was working with the Church archives, there were times when Mark and I combined forces as it were. Let's say, for example, that Mark didn't have time to bring some item into the Church archives. Often we agreed that if he gave it to me to deliver for him, I would receive whatever cut I wished in trade. Consequently, I would bring the document in and tell them, "This is what Mark wants, and this is what I want." We used to do this kind of deal all the time with the Church archives simply because it was so convenient. Most

of my business with the archives was my own, however. I have worked with the institution much more than Mark primarily because I had a rapport with the Church archives with respect to certain collecting areas that might have been a little more developed than Mark's.

At one point during my last year at Harvard, I felt I had to make enough money to continue to support myself. That meant I had to sell a certain number of the rare books in my personal collection. Mark and I made a temporary business arrangement to facilitate the sale of some of these volumes. Occasionally we sold some books that belonged to Mark as well. We sold things jointly like this for just one year, 1984. It was only for convenience sake.

Mark has no real business partners. A partnership would be impossible for Mark to conceive because he's basically autonomous. In the sense that many of his friends worked with him at various times, he had many "business associates," including me, Shannon Flynn, Alvin Rust, and others. I have never thought of myself as Mark's partner but as one of his best friends. The only document we ever worked with in tandem that has any real significance is the Martin Harris letter.

**SUNSTONE:** There has been a lot of curiosity and even suspicion about how collectors like you and Mark are able to find such sensational documents like the so-called "salamander letter." As Sheriff Pete Hayward put it, "I know for a fact that fifty of us couldn't find these papers in fifty years if we were looking for them. . . . But he keeps coming up with them." How do you respond to this?

**JACOBS:** There are several ways of answering this question. Perhaps the first thing to note is that Mark's success seems more spectacular simply because he has very little competition. Who else is running all over the country contacting antique dealers and document collectors? Certainly few of the Mormon collectors I know. Years ago, Wilford Wood, using money from his fur business, was able to spend the same sort of time Mark does now. Actually Wood spent more time because his children were all grown up. He uncovered magnificent documents and books for the Church, a countless number of items that have gone into the Church archives via Joseph Fielding Smith that we don't even know about or that few really recognize came from his labors because he didn't much advertise the fact. Besides, in those days, such things were not really newsworthy. David Martin used to do this sort of thing for a time as well.

Another reason for Mark's success is the sheer volume of material he handles. He had found several documents and books before his first major find, the Anthon transcript. These items were rather insignificant things and only rarely added to our knowledge of history. They were on the order of some land deed from Hyrum Smith, I.O.U. notes, mundane correspondence, and other such documents. They're all relatively important, at least for detailed historiography. Most are only two- or three-hundred

dollar items. But when you deal with scores of manuscripts like these, every once in a while you're bound to turn up three or four real juicy ones. It's that ratio people fail to realize. Because media attention focuses on the juicy finds, it appears to some people that Mark is simply picking up one or two documents a year—and always important finds. But that's not the case. Mark is busy every day of his life. And the odds of finding something really important are much greater when you're constantly fishing through piles of what Mark would often call "junk."

**SUNSTONE:** So how do you go about finding all these documents and rare books?

**JACOBS:** First of all, you have to make a lot of contacts and friends who are concerned about your personal interests. Once you've established such a network of contacts, you don't have to do all the looking yourself because these folks will notify you concerning available documents, various leads and will basically let you know what's going on.

**SUNSTONE:** How do you establish such a network?

**JACOBS:** Well, let's say you walk into an antique store in Independence, Missouri, for example. You'd probably tell the dealer you're looking for books, papers, manuscripts, or printed items from around the 1830s or 40s. The dealer might reply that he gets that kind of stuff periodically and would put you on a "want list." Often antique dealers don't have specific items in these areas, but most would probably suggest some place or individual whom you could visit who might be able to help. Mark is the kind of person who would attempt to contact every single one of these people. He leaves no stone unturned, no matter how inconvenient.

Collectors and dealers tend to hang out in the same sort of places. You meet a lot of contacts in bookstores, libraries, etc. That's how I met Mark and many other friends and associates. Actually when you meet another collector, you're also meeting a potential dealer, because many of these people sell on the side to finance their own collecting interest. Even when a collector won't sell you something from his personal collection, he's still a valuable contact because you can sometimes find out his sources.

Mark has met many people this way. He's been doing it for the past twelve years, so it's not surprising he has a network that is just incredible. Mark has friends all across the country and keeps in constant contact with most of them. That's why he had two home phones and a phone in each of his cars. Of course, this requires a lot of time, sometimes twelve to thirteen or more hours a day. It takes money, too. As a result, Mark reinvests a great deal of his profit right back into such business expenses as travel, hotels, lunches, and telephone calls.

That is the price you pay, and I know few who are willing to do it to such an extent. I'm really not prepared to work as hard as Mark does with my graduate program and career and all. So for me, selling books is only a part-time interest. I would rather collect than sell. But it's Mark's full-time profession.

**One advantage Mark has over some other collectors is that he usually has enough money to pay for things in one lump sum instead of spreading payments out.**

**Mark has guts, that's for sure. And he's been turned down an awful lot. Sometimes descendants don't want to bother with him or their heirlooms mean too much to them to show them off.**

One advantage Mark has over some other collectors is that he usually has enough money to pay for things in one lump sum instead of spreading payments out. This has made people a lot more amiable toward him or at least more cooperative. They would frequently offer him things first before offering them to someone else.

**SUNSTONE:** Is that unusual?

**JACOBS:** No, not really. Dealers and collectors usually like all their profits up front. If I were a dealer and somebody offered me instant cash instead of stretching out the payments, I'd probably offer books to him before anyone else.

**SUNSTONE:** So was it through this network that the Anthon transcript was located?

**JACOBS:** Yes. Interestingly, Mark told me that the Bible belonging to Joseph's sister which had the Anthon transcript in it originally came from a small antique store in the Midwest. The Bible made its way to Utah, where Mark acquired it. The complete genealogy of the Bible is in the hands of the Church archivist.

Mark bought the Bible instantly mostly because of its Smith family association. The Bible itself is of very little value. Mark figured he had a couple-of-hundred-dollar item there. It was only when he thumbed through it of course that he found the Anthon transcript stuck between some pages.

**SUNSTONE:** Wouldn't most dealers go through every page of a book before they bought it? If so, why didn't the person who sold it to Mark notice the transcript stuck between the pages?

**JACOBS:** Yes, if you're a book dealer, you go through every page. The primary reason for doing this is to make sure all the pages are there. Many antique dealers don't take old books seriously. I've gone into some antique stores and seen books stacked in a corner in complete disarray. To these dealers, the antiques are most important. They usually haven't got the time or inclination to go through books like a book seller would. On the other hand, I know book dealers who go into antique stores and thumb through every last page before they buy a book.

Mark bought the Bible for almost nothing. I don't know if the seller knew the significance of the Smith names in the Bible, but even if he did, that probably would not have given him sufficient reason to thumb through the book. Even Mark didn't look through it until he got home.

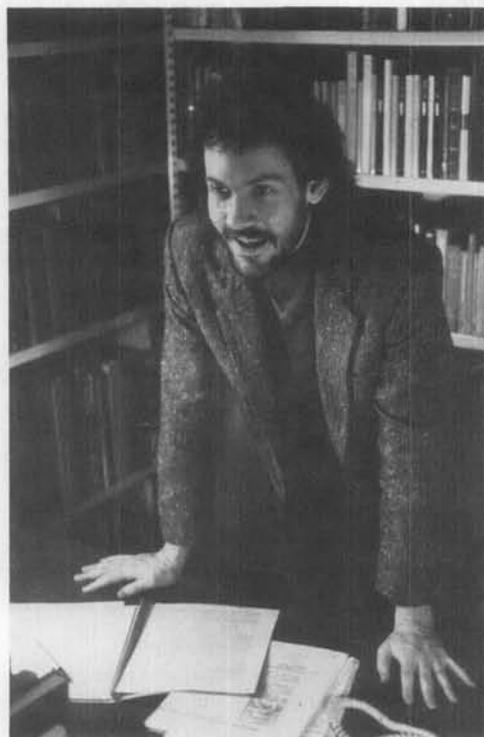
**SUNSTONE:** What did Mark do once he'd found the Anthon transcript?

**JACOBS:** I believe he showed it to A. J. Simmonds at Utah State and to an individual in the LDS institute there. Mark wasn't exactly sure what to do with it. He had never found anything of that calibre before. He apparently talked it over with his parents and the decision was made to offer it to the Church.

**SUNSTONE:** How much did he get for it?

**JACOBS:** He made some sort of trade. As far as I can remember, there was no monetary transaction at all. Dean Jessee looked at the handwriting on the back of

the document and felt that it was indeed Joseph Smith's. Dean is a remarkable individual. He is an extremely conservative handwriting expert. People tend to trust the ultra-conservative experts much more than those who just snap off a judgment. No one on this planet has worked with more Joseph Smith holographs than Dean Jessee, who compiled *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. I don't know anyone who deals in Mormon manuscripts who questions Dean's ability and judgement concerning Joseph Smith's handwriting.



**SUNSTONE:** You said before Mark operated largely on tips and leads that form his array of contacts.

**JACOBS:** That is his primary method. There are a couple of reasons Mark does so well, and that is the first one.

**SUNSTONE:** In other words, things come to him rather than him having a particular document in mind and then going out and searching for it.

**JACOBS:** That is the second method he uses: his own personal research. Some LDS historians have simply assumed many important documents have disappeared. Mark does not make that assumption. He assumes such documents may still exist somewhere in the hands of some living descendant. For example, with the M'Lellin collection, he would try to find out what happened to William M'Lellin and try to locate his living descendants.

Mark tracks down descendants through a process sometimes called "reverse genealogy." It's much more difficult than doing the usual kind of genealogical research which begins in the present and reaches backwards. Mark starts in the past and comes forward. Although Mark knows how to do genealogy, he usually hires genealogists to do the work for him.

Once he has a family tree, he then begins contact-

ing various descendants, by letter, telephone call, or visit—an incredibly expensive and time-consuming process. Many people presume if a collection is in private, family hands, it is useless to go after it. Mark doesn't make such an assumption. If he finds something, he asks to see it. Mark has guts, that's for sure. And by the way, he's been turned down an awful lot. Sometimes descendants just don't want to bother with him or their heirlooms mean too much to them personally to even consider showing them off. I would guess out of every five people who have something, only one is responsive. As a result, there is still an enormous amount of stuff out there Mark never acquires. Even so, you figure that if he contacts everyone, the odds are still about one in five he will acquire what he's after. So the amount of work he puts in eventually pays off.

**SUNSTONE:** Has he gone through Church history thoroughly and made a list of the twenty-five most important documents?

**JACOBS:** He may have some specific documents in mind, but he generally focuses on various important historical figures. He would, for example, consider who was recording Church history at various times, such as John Whitmer, Thomas Bullock, or William M'Lellin. Mark reasons if they were recording and collecting historical information, where is it?

**SUNSTONE:** Does he have a fairly good grasp of what is in the possession of the Church at this time and therefore what might be out there?

**JACOBS:** Generally, I would say that is the case.

**SUNSTONE:** He must have specific documents in mind. He told SUNSTONE in a 1982 interview that he believed the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript may exist, at least in part.

**JACOBS:** What Mark will say about the 116 pages—or any other document—is that anything *might* exist. I don't think there is any really convincing reason why we should believe they do. During the years Mark has had a couple of leads that suggest there may be references or perhaps even a transcript of portions of it somewhere, but it's my impression from my discussions with him that they probably don't exist in their original form. Recently there was a rumor of something in southern California supposedly having to do with the 116 pages. Mark decided not to attempt to go after the stuff when he found out exactly what it is. It may have something to do with a fictional account supposedly written in the nineteenth century by Sidney Rigdon called "The Book of Lehi." I suspect that's what it is. It is certainly not the 116 pages, or Mark would have gone after it. It's my opinion Mark's not actively looking for the 116 pages because he has so many doubts about it.

**SUNSTONE:** What documents have been uncovered through reverse genealogy?

**JACOBS:** The Joseph Smith III blessing is a good example. My understanding is that the collection in which it was found included many books and early newspapers as well as documents; it was a fairly

large collection that had come down through family hands.

My impression is that various people have known about this collection for years, but no one but Mark had the inclination to go after it. Mark was able to see the entire contents of it and determined some of the items were important. He eventually made an offer for the material and was able to acquire the blessing. Authentication of the blessing was rather simple because the Church has so many samples of Thomas Bullock's handwriting to compare it to.

**SUNSTONE:** You implied earlier that the M'Lellin collection was uncovered with this method. A great deal of rumor and controversy has surrounded this find. Did you work with Mark at all on the M'Lellin collection?

**JACOBS:** No, I didn't. Anything I have ever understood concerning the M'Lellin papers has simply been what Mark has told me about it in passing.

**SUNSTONE:** Have you seen any part of it?

**JACOBS:** No, not to my knowledge.

**SUNSTONE:** Do you believe it exists?

**JACOBS:** I have no reason to doubt the collection exists as Mark has described it to various individuals.

**SUNSTONE:** What about the Martin Harris "salamander letter"? Was there a different method for finding that?

**JACOBS:** Yes, and this brings us to another aspect of the document-hunting business. I think this is interesting because it concerns an area of collecting most Mormon collectors have never really pursued.

Mark became aware of the possibilities of this approach through his involvement in the Americana manuscript business. He has seen letters come up for auction that were penned by people like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abe Lincoln.

As a result, he realized something we often overlook: Prior to the invention of the telephone, if you wanted to contact someone you had to write a letter or pay a visit. He put it to me this way: Think of how many times you call someone each week—anyone, friends, business associates. Take all those occasions, divide that by five and that's about the number of letters a person in the nineteenth century might write each week. They could not write as often as we call people, but compared to today, the number of letters being written then was enormous. Of course a great number of those letters have been destroyed. But let's say for every thousand letters maybe three or four hundred could survive. That's still a massive amount.

Mark's reasoning is that with all the correspondence that probably went on among the early Saints, some letters must have survived whose historical content would make them valuable. It's reasonable to assume the Smiths and others wrote to their acquaintances concerning personal and local events, which would include those important to Mormon history. In fact, this is exactly the case with the 1829 letter from Lucy Mack Smith. My goodness, for all we know Lucy could have been writing a letter a

**Recently Mark investigated a rumor of something in southern California supposedly having to do with the lost 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon.**

For the last several years Mark has written to various dealers asking for oval-shaped Palmyra postmarks, say, from 1825 to 1835, the years the Mormons were there.

week telling friends and relatives about her family. It's simply fortunate that in the 1829 letter she happened to mention her son was translating gold plates. There could be letters about Alvin. There could be anything.

**SUNSTONE:** How and where have such letters survived?

**JACOBS:** A large number of letters simply accumulate in private estates. And when people die, there's often a pile of letters left. When estates are probated, many of these collections of letters go to major universities or historical societies. Others become available for purchase. For example, from what I understand there was a man in New York City who collected Joseph Smith holographs for the past fifty or sixty years. He died recently, and Mark purchased about ten or eleven letters from the estate. None of these documents has impressive historical content, but they were nice Joseph Smith holographs. Mark had known about them and luckily a bookstore that was working with the estate people was able to get them. They knew Mark was interested and notified him. An option was given to Mark, and he took it.

But aside from private collections most letters survive because people collect the stamps on them. The first American stamps that you lick and affix to an envelope were not really available generally until the 1830s or 40s. Consequently, when people wrote letters, they would write on a larger piece of paper and always leave one side blank. They would fold the thing up, and the blank portion would act as the cover or envelope. Envelopes were sometimes available but generally it was easier to create your own. This was especially true in some of the rural areas where paper was scarce anyway. These folded, self-covered letters are known as "covers" or "stampless covers." After it was sealed with wax, the folded letter was addressed and taken to whatever post office was closest. The postman would stamp it, not with a glue-on stamp like we use, but with a rubber stamp. Today we would call it a cancellation.

The stamp mark is what people are collecting. The post office of particular importance to Mormon historians is the Palmyra post office. It was one of the most popular post offices in the area, and as a result, a lot of covers still exist from that locale. Cover collecting is very popular in New England and other areas of the East simply because that's where most of the covers are. And they're very inexpensive. They'll usually run you five to twenty-five dollars a piece.

**SUNSTONE:** How do you go about looking for covers?

**JACOBS:** There are different ways. Fairs are held, like the antique fair that's regularly held in Salt Lake, where dealers get together and bring their wares into one large building and people can go through and talk to 150 dealers all at once. Fairs also give dealers a chance to see what their colleagues have and to dicker with them and try to make trades. A lot of covers are exchanged at these fairs.

Dealers also buy covers in bulk from auctions. They'll quickly categorize them according to area

and then just leave them. Often they don't look carefully at them. There are just too many. Certain people, Elwin Doubleday for example, represent major clearinghouses for a large number of covers. Doubleday buys extensively at auction, and many dealers buy from him and then mark the prices up.

Now if someone wants to be specific, like most serious collectors, they will write to various dealers and say, "I am looking for covers from such and such an area and period." There's nothing suspicious about it, because as with books, each collector may have a particular collecting interest and gaps in that area that he's trying to fill.

This has been Mark's approach: For the last several years he has written to various dealers asking for oval-shaped Palmyra postmarks, say, from 1825 to 1835, the period when the Mormons were there. Mark had a steady stream of these letters coming to him via the mail. And when he'd go back East, he'd check with the dealers in person. He used to order almost everything that said Palmyra on it. Mark has had to buy hundreds of Palmyra covers just to find three or four decent ones. That's what it takes, however. Many dealers will send you covers on approval. But if you look through what they send and return most of them, they're not going to continue sending much to you. You take a big risk, of course. But Mark's willing to take that risk, since it's proven to be fairly successful.

**SUNSTONE:** Are most people buying these covers only for the postmarks?

**JACOBS:** No, not everyone. I know some dealers who will look through their covers searching for the ultimate George Washington letter that everyone's trying to find. If somebody gets a letter that's dated during the Revolutionary War, he's going to open it instantly because it could be to or from somebody famous. If it's nothing, he'll just fold it back up and sell the thing for the stamp. This has been going on for several years.

**SUNSTONE:** So instead of looking for specific things, you would look at the postmark, because if Washington wrote the letter, his name would probably not appear on the outside.

**JACOBS:** That's correct; few of these stampless covers have return addresses on them. Now if the letter were addressed to him, his name would be on the outside and be recognized immediately. These cover dealers are not stupid. They know the important names in history, like Washington or Lincoln. But they can only know so much. So if someone comes along looking for a relatively unknown individual, say a secretary of Abe Lincoln, most dealers would not recognize the name. But that's the advantage manuscript dealers have over the cover dealers. And of course, very few cover dealers would recognize the important Mormon names like W. W. Phelps or Martin Harris, although they may have heard of Joseph Smith. And that's the advantage Mormon dealers like Mark have.

**SUNSTONE:** Would you say dealers are generally cagey people?

**JACOBS:** Well, there is an element of secrecy, but for a particular reason: Your clientele is essential to your fiscal welfare, and you don't want to give the names away to everybody or you may lose some customers. If you ask another dealer for a cover, you don't tell him who wants it or the dealer may make the sale himself. But you may let him know you're representing someone else and offer him a share of the profit from the sale. In that sense, there's a tremendous amount of trust and mutual back-scratching. You can keep names and sources secret, but misrepresenting the truth about the authenticity or integrity and so forth of any given document would not be tolerated.

**SUNSTONE:** Was it through this cover trading business that you found the Martin Harris letter?

**JACOBS:** Yes. Mark not only acquired the Martin Harris letter this way but also the Lucy Mack Smith letter, and others that have not received much media attention.

**SUNSTONE:** But aren't you the one who found the Martin Harris letter?

**JACOBS:** Unfortunately, my involvement in the discovery of the Martin Harris letter has been somewhat exaggerated during the past year, basically as a result of my desire to honor Mark's wishes in the matter. It must be clearly understood that although I technically located the letter, it was Mark who actually acquired it.

Let me explain. Mark considered moving to New York at one time so he could spend more time with his contacts and be closer to his sources. However, moving back there wasn't financially feasible for him and besides this is where his relatives live. Therefore, since I was going back for my graduate program at Harvard, Mark and I decided it might prove fruitful for me to take the names of some of his contacts and attempt to pursue them further.

Unfortunately, I didn't realize how time-consuming it was and was only able to contact a few people, mostly by mail. Through this list of people I found out that a dentist in Cortland, New York, had a little group of Palmyra letters dating from the 1830s that might be of historical interest. So I called Mark and gave him that tip. Soon afterwards Mark purchased the Martin Harris letter among other unimportant letters and immediately called to congratulate me for having located it. At that time we had a mutual understanding concerning our common ownership of the letter.

It was about the middle of December 1983 and I was about to come home for Christmas vacation, so we waited until I got to Utah to discuss what to do with it. He turned the letter over to me and told me he did not wish to become involved with the publicity he felt the letter would probably generate. Mark gave me full rights to do with it whatever I wished. Of course, I consulted with him on how to sell it, as I had no experience in selling such things. It was understood we were to share any profits that came from it.

Our first idea was to offer it to the Church. We

had previously shown a photocopied portion of the letter to Dean Jessee, who after examining it felt it was in Martin Harris's handwriting and therefore probably authentic. On that basis, I first showed it to Don Schmidt and to Elder G. Homer Durham, who was Church historian at the time. Because of the exceptional nature of the transaction, it was necessary to present the letter to President Hinckley. He read it, and although he seemed interested in the letter, he did not appear excited about its acquisition. He asked me some questions about what I would like for it. Among other things, I asked for a Mormon gold coin minted in Salt Lake in 1849. I knew the Church had more than one, but he declined. I also asked for one of their duplicate Book of Commandments but was turned down as well. In a sense I was just probing in the dark. He seemed to feel the price of documents was getting out of hand. The price I was asking may have been high. A Book of Commandments, after all, can be worth more than the amount we ultimately received for the letter. And in the end President Hinckley decided the Church did not want to purchase it.

We then decided to offer the document to Brent Ashworth. The letter was read to him, and he decided not to purchase it, although I don't exactly know why. It might have been because of the content, or perhaps the price we were asking. At that point, we speculated on whether we could sell it for \$30,000 or \$40,000. A few days later, Mark approached me and told me about Steve Christensen, who had some money to spend and had already made contributions to organizations such as SUNSTONE, for example. Steve was an attractive prospect because it appeared he would make the document the object of a significant research project. Arrangements were finally made, and I met Steve for the first time at Coordinated Financial Services. By that time, the sale contract had already been written and Mark and I signed it along with a few witnesses. It obligated Steve to pay \$40,000 at quarterly intervals in exchange for the document. That was the last time I ever saw the document. Later, Steve took it to have it authenticated and then planned to hire a couple of historians to produce a book presenting the letter in its historical context.

**SUNSTONE:** Recently the media have reported the involvement of Apostle Dallin Oaks and Seventy Hugh Pinnock in document dealing. Did you ever meet with either of these Church leaders?

**JACOBS:** No. President Hinckley and Elder Durham were the only General Authorities I have ever spoken with.

**SUNSTONE:** Why have you remained silent concerning the identity of the man who sold Mark the Martin Harris letter?

**JACOBS:** There are two reasons. First of all, as a dealer Mark did not want to give away this source and others since that can result in losing possible future items to a competing dealer. Second, this particular source is a very private person who is something of a recluse. Besides, I understand he sells

**President Hinckley read the letter, and though he seemed interested, he did not appear excited about its acquisition. He seemed to feel the price of documents was getting out of hand.**

In other words, it seems unlikely anyone could determine the pedigree of the Martin Harris letter beyond the person from whom we purchased it.

covers only as a hobby. He would not appreciate sensationalistic publicity; indeed, he usually doesn't even like to entertain people in his home. A major dealer like Doubleday might like the attention, but not this man.

**SUNSTONE:** If necessary, could you trace back the path the letter traveled before you found it?

**JACOBS:** Not effectively, no. The only time the origin of these letters becomes important is if they contain something valuable—and by then it's almost too late. It's difficult because often covers pass from hand to hand with nothing more than a receipt which mentions the quantity and geographic location of the postmarks. No specific record of the addressees on the covers or anything like that is mentioned. Therefore, it is possible to locate the last person from whom a particular letter was purchased but not usually any further back. As troubling as that may seem to some people, that's simply the nature of the cover business.

A TV report following the bombings broadcast Elwin Doubleday saying he had owned the Martin Harris letter at one time. The basis for that is this: He had previously bought a collection which contained some correspondence by an Oliver Phelps. It's my understanding this may have been a relative of W. W. Phelps, who apparently assumed possession of William's belongings, including various papers he left behind with his family when he went to Missouri. Much Phelps family material may have remained, but there's no proof the Oliver Phelps collection contained the Martin Harris letter. It does seem possible, however; so Doubleday may have indeed owned it at one time. No photograph or record was made of it, however, and so Doubleday can never be completely sure he had it.

**SUNSTONE:** How do you arrive at the prices on these documents?

**JACOBS:** Probably the most common way to establish price is through precedent. With books it's not particularly difficult to set a precedent since several copies of the same edition can be sold on different occasions. Once a book has sold for the first time, a precedent is set for the next copy.

With documents, setting a precedent is more difficult since each document is unique. A common solution to this problem is to put a document up for auction. You may have to arbitrarily attach a basic starting price, and whatever it goes for will set a precedent. Unfortunately, in the Mormon market there are really no auctions. Some people have suggested having Mormon auctions. I'd love to see that happen. In fact if I had to do it all over again, I would auction off the Martin Harris letter.

Some documents are not so difficult to price since some general precedents may exist on comparable items. For example, it's relatively easy to price some Joseph Smith holographs because so many have sold before. Now in the case of the Martin Harris letter, Mark had already sold a number of documents before and was starting to get a general idea of what certain individuals would be willing to pay for other

similar items.

**SUNSTONE:** How do you come to know what the market will yield on a particular document?

**JACOBS:** In that case, the concept of demand is essential.

**SUNSTONE:** And how is demand determined?

**JACOBS:** A good question. Why would someone be willing to pay the prices they do for the documents Mark has come up with? Actually there are many documents he can barely get rid of because they don't meet the criteria the buyers require of these documents. That's what we're talking about here: Why would someone want a Book of Mormon in French, a Book of Commandments, a Martin Harris letter, or the Lucy Mack Smith letter? Each collector has his own criteria. The Church generally has a comprehensive interest in acquiring everything. On the other hand, some private collectors such as Brent Ashworth seem to be more selective. I've never asked him why he bought the Lucy Mack Smith letter; I think it would be interesting if someone would ask him one of these days.

Some criteria, of course, are easy to surmise. Probably the most fundamental one is this: Does the document add to our knowledge of history? By this criterion, the Lucy Mack Smith letter was important because we have never had any verifiable notion of the contents of the 116 lost manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. The reference to the contents of the 116 pages made the letter incredibly important to many people.

**SUNSTONE:** Would you say the prices commanded by Mormon documents are abnormally high compared to other equally old documents? For example, I was astounded to find a Betsy Ross document going for comparatively little—around \$5,000—compared to the Martin Harris letter.

**JACOBS:** First of all, the Ross document might not have had any important historical significance. I mean if the document talked about Betsy sitting around stitching the flag all day long, it could go for ten times that amount.

A Joseph Smith holograph usually commands from \$5,000 to \$15,000 depending on the content. To command a high price, of course, the content must be very important. A dippy little five- or six-line note, like one Mark sold a few years ago, actually sold for under \$5,000. On the other hand, the 1825 letter to Josiah Stowell is considered more important historically.

**SUNSTONE:** How much did it sell for?

**JACOBS:** I don't remember exactly, but I believe it was just under twenty thousand. Here's another example. There is an Eliza R. Snow manuscript now available on the market from a dealer named Rick Grunder. I believe he's selling it on consignment for a private collector. It's selling for \$20,000 because it represents a Snow holograph of "Oh My Father," the most famous production she ever penned. Now that may be overpriced. I don't know how the price was arrived at, but who's to say it's too much? We're

accounting for the personal taste of the collector. If it sells, then the price was not too high for at least one individual. Another, less significant, Eliza R. Snow manuscript might sell for only a couple of hundred dollars.

**SUNSTONE:** So the prices in the Mormon market aren't exaggerated?

**JACOBS:** How can I say they're exaggerated when people are willing to pay them? This is how supply and demand works.

**SUNSTONE:** But aren't the prices higher compared to the non-Mormon market?

**JACOBS:** No. And this brings up another criterion which affects price: rarity—which is not always related to the age of a document. For example, there are certain collectors who want to acquire the signature—just the signature—of every single person who signed the Declaration of Independence. This is quite a challenge. A couple of the signers—one of them by the name of Button Gwinnett—wrote and signed very little apart from the Declaration of Independence. Gwinnett's signature alone can go for somewhere between \$80,000 and \$150,000. On the other hand, a signature of John Hancock can often be obtained for around \$100. That's because John Hancock signed everything in the world. Few would even care if Button Gwinnett existed if he hadn't put his little John Doe on the Declaration of Independence.

Let me give you another example. William Shake-

book is worth about \$4,000 to \$5,000 now.

**SUNSTONE:** Because of the increase in demand and the decline in the number of them available.

**JACOBS:** Exactly. And an important book like that already has intrinsic value because it's the first Mormon book. Of course inflation contributed to the rapid increase of its value. Precedent, too, had its effect. Around 1972 somebody arbitrarily stuck a \$4,000 price tag on the book and got it. The minute someone paid that price, the whole network suddenly raised their prices. If any buyer complained, the dealer would point out that another copy had already been sold for that amount. That's how precedent works. By the mid-seventies it reached \$5,000. It just skyrocketed. Everybody wanted a first edition Book of Mormon, and the stores could not come up with enough copies.

**SUNSTONE:** How does an institution like the Church decide how valuable a document is and therefore how much they are willing to pay?

**JACOBS:** Well, it depends on how badly they want it and for what specific reason. For example, I think they'd like to have the Lucy Mack Smith letter, but Brent's got it. That's just the way it goes. They may not be willing to pay the money for it. How they arrive at what they're willing to pay is beyond me. I've never completely understood why they would decide to pay a lot for one thing and scarcely anything for another.

**SUNSTONE:** With Mormon documents, doesn't the

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peare's signature is extremely rare. It's my understanding there are only about three examples in existence. Charles Hamilton, a manuscript dealer in New York, once commented if he ever found an authenticated William Shakespeare signature, he would pay a million dollars for it. A million dollars for one signature of one man! Compared to this, the Martin Harris letter price of \$40,000 is nothing.

So those three things—precedent, content, and rarity—all help establish price. It's like first editions of the Book of Mormon. In 1965 you could still buy one for under a hundred dollars. Smart people quickly bought several of them. I know a man who bought one for each one of his ten children. The

price sometimes depend on whether it confirms or contradicts traditional Mormon views?

**JACOBS:** I don't think that's really so. To begin with, trying to evaluate whether a document is negative or positive is so subjective. It may be negative to some and positive to others, for example. And since some may wish to pay more for a negative document and others more for a positive one, those criteria don't really work until you've found the buyer you're going to be dealing with.

**SUNSTONE:** Does the degree of controversy engendered in a document's content affect your selection of a buyer?

**JACOBS:** Sometimes. For example, I've never heard

**Some buyers might be willing to pay whatever they have to in order to guarantee their exclusive right to do what they deem necessary with it.**

Brent Ashworth say he would only buy a document if it's positive, but most of the documents he has bought have been relatively free of controversy. You might have to look for some other buyer if the letter talked about one of Joseph's plural wives.

**SUNSTONE:** What about when the buyer is the Church?

**JACOBS:** Whether a document is controversial or noncontroversial doesn't usually seem to affect their buying habits. That's because they're interested in everything so they can build up the archives. Now what they do with the documents once they've acquired them is another matter.

**SUNSTONE:** Would you say the Mormon market is dealt with more secretly than normal markets?

**JACOBS:** Some individuals will not buy a document if it has been shown around to everybody else. Consequently Mark will often go to these people first. Such individuals want to be the first and only people to be offered it so that they can then advertise or conceal it if they so choose. Also, some collectors are reticent about purchasing a document which has previously been owned and publicly advertised by a fellow competing collector. For example, I understood from the beginning Steve Christensen didn't want the Harris letter published or advertised by anyone else. He wanted first rights on it. And so he asked us all to remain silent about the contents of the document from the very beginning. Basically, neither Mark nor myself were allowed to discuss the actual contents of the thing with the media until Steve released it himself. And that's been the case with some of the other documents Mark has sold.

**SUNSTONE:** But doesn't the secrecy affect the pricing? In the Mormon market it seems to me a particular buyer doesn't have a chance to know what other potential buyers might pay, therefore increasing the prices by the lack of competition.

**JACOBS:** Well, I think your comment is rather misleading and at best overgeneralizing. First of all, as I have already mentioned, most documents located and peddled by Mark, including those of particular historical import, have been offered around to several individuals competitively before any sale was realized. This certainly includes the Harris letter as well as the Joseph Smith III document, which was offered to at least two parties in the negotiation process. Even in the rare case in which a document may be offered to a client without the knowledge of other possible buyers, the collector could be influenced to pay a high price based on what documents of similar import have sold for in the past. The implication here, I realize, is that some buyers might be willing to pay whatever they have to in order to guarantee their exclusive right to do what they deem necessary with a document.

**SUNSTONE:** How do you go about finding buyers?

**JACOBS:** In the non-Mormon market that is not too hard, because you have auctions, dealers, and a well-established network of collectors. With Mormon documents, it's a little more difficult. Some dealers,

like Sam Weller, have an advantage because his store is centrally located and people can come to him and be placed on a want list. He might have a card file of five or ten people who are looking for a first edition of the Book of Mormon. Since Mark has no "document store," he usually advertises by word of mouth and has to spend time cultivating a network of buyers. Within that network, he would know basically what certain people would pay for what they want.

**SUNSTONE:** Do you have a general sense of approximately how many buyers there are for Mormon documents?

**JACOBS:** It depends on what kind of documents you're referring to. I would say there are only a handful of people who would be willing to pay large sums of money for special documents. But there are hundreds of people and institutions who would be willing to purchase a lot of moderately priced documents.

**SUNSTONE:** Once you've found a buyer, how do you convince him or her that your wares are rare and valuable and therefore worth your price?

**JACOBS:** Well, for example, if I were selling a book to the Church, and there were no precedent for its value, I would take it to the archivist to discuss the matter. I would explain from my research how many were printed, its impact on some area in Church history, and so on. In this manner an unprecedented price could be set jointly by both parties involved. A lot of dickering goes on, however, particularly when an arbitrary price is being discussed. Often, if you are well known for placing fair and reasonable prices on things, some people won't question your figure.

**SUNSTONE:** As a result of the recent bombing tragedy, the Martin Harris letter and other documents have been suspected as forgeries. What efforts have been made to authenticate it?

**JACOBS:** Because of his superb talents in the area of handwriting authentication, Dean Jessee was asked to examine the letter. Anyone who heard his presentation at the 1985 Mormon History Association conference will know that his efforts to authenticate it were as extensive as they possibly could have been, based on the existing examples of Martin Harris's handwriting. In addition to Jessee's work, the document was given to Kenneth Rendell to perform various chemical tests. Rendell has worked with documents for many years and is internationally acclaimed as one of the finest authenticators and document dealers in the world.

**SUNSTONE:** Did Rendell do the tests himself or did he send it out to various laboratories?

**JACOBS:** I understand he did some work himself. I know he's capable of doing certain paper tests. He has to farm out the work for other complex processes, but he knows whom to contact for that. And it was his responsibility to get all of that done. He has pronounced it an early nineteenth-century production. And Dean Jessee is persuaded that it is in the handwriting of Martin Harris. The FBI has recently

done a second series of tests on the Martin Harris letter, and as far as I understand, the document has been declared authentic for a second time as a result of extremely complex and expensive tests in the East.

**SUNSTONE:** In your experience as a book dealer, do questions of authenticity arise as you're buying and selling and trading various volumes?

**JACOBS:** Rarely. That's because it would be very difficult to duplicate an entire book. Even a title page would be hard to duplicate because it would involve matching the type exactly. If it were made through photomechanical means, the subsequent loss of clarity would be detectable. It's too easy to spot, even with the unaided eye.

I do some conservation work on books whose cover might be damaged or its binding falling apart, and so forth. A book can be re sewn, and modern cloth can be used to fix holes in the cover. Missing leather can be replaced. If a page is missing it can be replaced with a photocopy. Dirty pages can be washed to get water stains out of them. But all of this is done to make the book more complete and presentable and is inevitably detectable. It doesn't fool anybody and isn't intended to. I always discuss my repair work with prospective buyers.

**SUNSTONE:** Because you only located the Martin Harris letter, you did not see it until Mark showed it to you. Is that correct?

**JACOBS:** Yes.

**SUNSTONE:** And the man he acquired it from probably hadn't read it either?

**JACOBS:** That is correct.

**SUNSTONE:** So as far as you know, no one living can claim to have read it before it came from Mark Hofmann's hands. You don't have any first-hand knowledge of its actual origins.

**JACOBS:** If you're suggesting Mark forged it, it is not possible. Mark Hofmann is not a forger. I don't think Mark even knows how. He's never discussed possible methods of document forgery with me. The tests have demonstrated that the ink has been on the paper of the Harris letter for a hundred years. If it's a forgery, then it's a forgery from the nineteenth century. The tests have definitively proven that it must be from that period at least.

I've never had even the slightest reason to doubt its authenticity or to doubt Mark's integrity. I have never heard a negative statement concerning Mark's integrity from any archivist or professional. If he were a forger, how could he have gone so long without a single slip? There is just no way he could cover up some sort of a forgery scheme and not be detected at least once.

**SUNSTONE:** Some have suggested that you might be a forger.

**JACOBS:** That's ridiculous. What is their definition of forgery, anyway? I would suggest a forgery is the production of a document which is represented whether in sale or trade as being something other

than it actually is. To my knowledge, such a thing has never been perpetrated either by Mark or myself. I did make a repair on the Martin Harris letter because there was a small tear on it. It's not a falsification; it's not a forgery; it's a repair.

**SUNSTONE:** How do you do that?

**JACOBS:** There's a special tissue you can buy that you just iron over the crack and it just seals it up. That kind of stuff is done all the time. Mark can do some simple conservation work, but any extensive repair work has been done through the Church archives or some other professional. Mark simply doesn't have the knowledge.

**SUNSTONE:** How do you suppose these questions of forgery arose?

**JACOBS:** The reasons for that are difficult for me to ascertain except that people just simply don't like certain documents. They feel they can discredit a document simply by claiming it's a forgery so no one takes it seriously anymore. It seems to me it's only when a document becomes particularly offensive to people or in any way controversial that people decide it's a forgery. What's the matter with everyone? Why is it simply the Martin Harris letter that's a problem here and not the Lucy Mack? Is it simply because the Lucy Mack is a "positive" letter and the other is a "negative" one? Well, it seems like that's the case; that's what's happening over and over again.

I think the criticisms leveled against the Harris document are utterly absurd since it is obvious those making these charges don't have the expertise to make any valid comment on its authenticity.

**SUNSTONE:** One of the most outspoken proponents of the forgery theory has been the Utah Lighthouse Ministry. One would think that with their anti-Mormon mission, they would not question the Martin Harris letter's authenticity without good reason, especially since it supposedly supports their case against the Church. What do they have to gain?

**JACOBS:** I've always wondered that. I think it may be one of two things (or maybe both). So often such documents get stashed away; nobody talks about them anymore, and they just sort of fizzle out of public attention. That's really what started happening to the Martin Harris. It was mentioned by a few people in the very beginning and since Steve retained the document for so long without publishing it, the public eye was off the document to a great extent. Everyone sort of lost track of it. Well the anti-Mormons may have wanted to keep the thing going by claiming it to be a forgery.

The other possibility is that because certain individuals were crying forgery from the beginning, the anti-Mormons may have become apprehensive about using a document in their ministry which might not be authentic. If it were a forgery, it would make them look like fools. I just hope that the ravings of amateurs won't discourage future collectors from searching out other important historical documents which could still exist somewhere out there.

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ILLUSTRATED BY MARK BUEHNER

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# A Question of Means or Ends

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## The Debate over Religious Education

By Donald D. Landon

**P**eriodically, a debate arises in the Religious Education Department over whether a given curriculum is “faithful” or “unfaithful” to the church: Will teaching materials be distinctively RLDS? Will the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Inspired Version of the Bible be included in the curriculum? Will it include, as one inquiry puts it, “the true doctrine given us by God or will it spend all its time on worldly concerns?” For the most part such debates center around the issue of “particularism”—whether or not the new curriculum will maintain a traditional image of the RLDS church as the one true church, served by a truly authorized priesthood, and possessing the fulness of the gospel through direct revelation.

In so doing, the church is apparently attempting to justify itself in the presence of many other churches by establishing beliefs and books, doctrines and distinctives, history and heritage, practices and procedures as the primary goal of religious education. Scriptures and doctrine are treated as guaranteed truths. Revelation and the record of revelation become fused, resulting in dogmatism about what is known. The purpose of

religion seems to be indoctrination in uniquely RLDS beliefs. Such tendencies are also apparent in the LDS church.

The statement of the issue in these terms captures a significant problem in the church’s thought: to what end are we educating? What is the goal of Christian nurture? The scriptures do not equivocate on this question. We are to be taught to be disciples—persons who can represent in their own lives the life of radical love set before them in Christ Jesus. This has to do with exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit, being agents of reconciliation among their fellows, taking responsibility for the lives of others, establishing justice, and evidencing a self-sacrificing concern for all men. This style of life called discipleship is the end or goal of faith.

The next question is, How is such a life nurtured? What resources do you bring to bear on it in order that it shall be loveable? It is in this discussion of means that beliefs, doctrines, scriptures, history, and heritage ought to become pressed into the service of discipleship. It is here they demonstrate their authority. For if they truly illuminate, illustrate, instruct, and motivate discipleship, their validity is functionally established. But if they are taught not as means but as ends in themselves, items to be mastered, propositions to be affirmed, beliefs to be assented to, then their power has been compromised and their authority undermined.

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### EDITORS NOTE

*An earlier version of this article appeared in Courage, a “journal of thought and action” published by members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the 1970s.*

## THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY

In a sense, this problem of confusing means and ends can be traced to the experience of Christ's disciples. In the Lord's presence and through his fellowship, the first followers discovered their lives changed. They found themselves forgiven and reconciled to God and each other. They sensed they had been incorporated into a new and divine community and had received a holy life. They knew all this happened through Christ. Because they experienced salvation in him, they began reflecting on the meaning of what had happened. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they formulated that meaning into ideas, doctrines, and beliefs which in the company of their own new lifestyle helped to communicate their faith and allow others to have the same experience. But the person and presence of Jesus continued to be known and felt among the people after his death; the words, statements, and teachings of the church were meant to point to that experience, not to take its place.

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Obviously, one of the imminent dangers confronting the church in all ages is the temptation to develop a fixation on the words and ideas that describe or interpret the faith experience and begin teaching them *as the faith itself*. We see this happening very early in the history of Christianity. Under the influence of Greek metaphysics and the pressure to establish a standard of belief which would protect the church from heresy, a doctrine of revelation arose which suggested that God communicated divinely guaranteed truths to the church. This promoted the feeling that Christianity was a set of truths superior to human knowledge available any place else. The experiential dimensions became secondary. Faith was less a whole-life response to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and more an assent to a set of divinely delivered truths. Faithfulness became more a matter of espousing the right beliefs than doing the will of God.

Thus, if we are to avoid falling into this same trap, we must begin our teaching in the awareness that the Christian faith is primarily experiential, not intellectual. Indeed, the focus of our faith, Jesus Christ, is not reduceable to propositions. Christ is not a belief; he is a living reality and seeks to be *known*, not just known *about*. Was it not Paul who said, "I know whom [not *what*] I have believed" (1 Tim. 1:2).

## DANGERS OF THE "TRUTH ETHIC"

This universal temptation toward creedalism is further aggravated, I suspect, by the pluralistic nature of Christianity in America. In the presence of other churches, one attempts to win a niche for himself on the grounds of having more truth, a more comprehensive base of belief, than others. The authority of such religions becomes predicated on the right doctrine they espouse. This is both understandable and in a sense valid.

The risk in this "truth ethic," however, is that in being preoccupied with building up a repository of correct doctrine, it almost appears more important to *believe* the right thing than to *do* the right thing. One comes to feel that the first commandment is to seek true doctrines, and in second place is the command to love his neighbor.

Our evangelism often communicates this image of faith. If we feel that the proper preparation for inviting someone to become part of the faith is to present them six or eight lectures setting forth correct beliefs on church organization, doctrine, apostasy, restoration, life after death, and the Book of Mormon, are we not really suggesting that the essence of faith is the assent to ideas?

Such creedalism runs contrary to the founding insight of Latter Day Saintism. The business of elevating beliefs and doctrines into the prime focus of faith was judged abominable and remains so for several reasons:

1. To base our faith on beliefs and doctrines is to establish a system whose foundation is weak indeed. The contemporary explosion of knowledge has revealed that its true shape is something like a pyramid. We have found the top, but the more we discover, the more aware we are of the breadth of that which is still unknown. From the time of the Enlightenment and Galileo's telescope, people with a fixation on the truth ethic and escalated opinions about the completeness and finality of their beliefs have been shaken to discover that many things they thought were true proved to be otherwise. Such revelations are bound to continue, and dogmatic religion will suffer the most.

We do well to remember that God has never guaranteed us that he will give us the true ideas or doctrines. What he has guaranteed us is himself and his love. Whereas we are repeatedly separated from ideas we once thought infallibly true, we can't be separated from God. The pursuit of understanding is an integral part of that relationship, to be sure, but it never supersedes it.

2. Not only is secular knowledge fallible, but theological formulations are also approximate. Indeed, the creation of any statement of doctrinal interpretation that suggests finality or inclusiveness is in violation of both the nature of faith and the nature of revelation. While such teachings are critically necessary to guide the development of our faith and point us to the reality they attempt to describe, they are all historically conditioned and provisional and become tyrannical if rendered absolute. The earliest Mormons, for example, most certainly interpreted Book of Mormon teachings on the oneness of the Father and the Son quite literally. But years later, Joseph Smith taught that the Godhead consists of three separate beings; his more flexible attitude toward doctrine and revelation allowed a dramatically different reading of these same verses. Thus, our belief in continuing reve-

lation ought to produce an awareness of the openness and tentativeness of the whole theological and doctrinal enterprise.

3. Our preoccupation with the truth ethic has produced considerable schism among religious educators and has left us with limited resources for reconciling these conflicts. Such disputes also occur in the LDS church. At the Church-owned Brigham Young University, for example, controversy repeatedly surfaces between religion and biology teachers over questions of evolution and the origin of life. The same university has also witnessed division over issues of Mormon history to the point that the religion faculty has recently formed a new historical organization as an alternative to the "heresies" of the Mormon History Association. Our current strategies for resolving these problems—including personal vilification, destruction of trust, and politicizing large segments of the church—are learned directly from the world. They demonstrate no Christian love, and they betray the fact that we prefer to teach abstract truths rather than to nurture disciples competent in interpersonal relations and in the reconciliation of conflicts.

4. Furthermore, it is altogether telling to see segments of both the RLDS and LDS churches claiming that the process of examining our interpretations of our faith is cutting at the jugular vein of the church or, as one LDS educator put it, is "challenging the foundations." Such hysteria shows that some have substituted a trust in tradition and teaching for a trust in God. That this fear is present is symptomatic of our confusing means and ends.

5. Not a few are concerned over the seeming inability of the church to bring together and deploy its resources to minister directly to the concrete human problems of the day. A great lethargy confronts us here. Studies done by the Education Commission, for example, reveal that among our membership the strongest consensus gathers around our understanding of who we are (the true church), but considerably less consensus exists regarding what we should be about. The truth ethic has tended to obscure the love ethic.

6. People informed by a strong truth ethic often believe that their very acceptability to God is a function of how right their ideas and doctrines are. Somehow they feel their spiritual life depends upon it, and in a way it does. But what we are called to acknowledge is that God loved us and died for us when we were deeply immersed in misunderstanding and error. Our security lies not in the fact we now have a final hold on truth (as if we ever could) but in the fact that we are in relationship to one whose sustains us in the conscientious search for truth and meaning.

Such an understanding trees us to accept the tentativeness of our understanding and liberates us to acknowledge and live with partial truths and limited perspectives. Moreover, it protects

us from the temptation to escalate any of our partial understandings into some sort of dogmatic total system.

Perhaps we could be helped in our feelings about truth and the way we go about discovering it if we were more aware of God's grace. Our relationship to him is a function of his goodness and not our merit, be it moral or intellectual. As Paul reminds us, He died for us while we were yet *in* our sin, which is Paul's way of declaring that our relationship with God is not earned or deserved but is a gift of his grace.

#### HERITAGE IN THE SERVICE OF DISCIPLESHIP

If we are discovering that the truth ethic has led us into problems, we may go back to the New Testament in the spirit of true restorationism and discover the primacy of the love ethic. The primary truth we are called to know is that God has entered our world in the person of Christ Jesus and is calling all men to a new and divine life of love. That we shall need beliefs and doctrines to guide us in the implementation of that new life is clear, but they shall be means and not ends. Our problem is the willingness to act radically on this premise, to put discipleship above belief, and to truly subject belief to the service of discipleship.

If we actually do this, then the questions we address to our educational leaders would tend to take this appearance:

1. Are you rigorous in searching the three standard books for insights, experiences, and examples which can truly foster discipleship in our people?

2. What are the resources available uniquely in the RLDS experience and tradition which can inform and sustain Christian life in the twentieth century?

3. How can the Book of Mormon be brought to bear as an enabling tool for discipleship? What are its unique insights that guide our expression of faith?

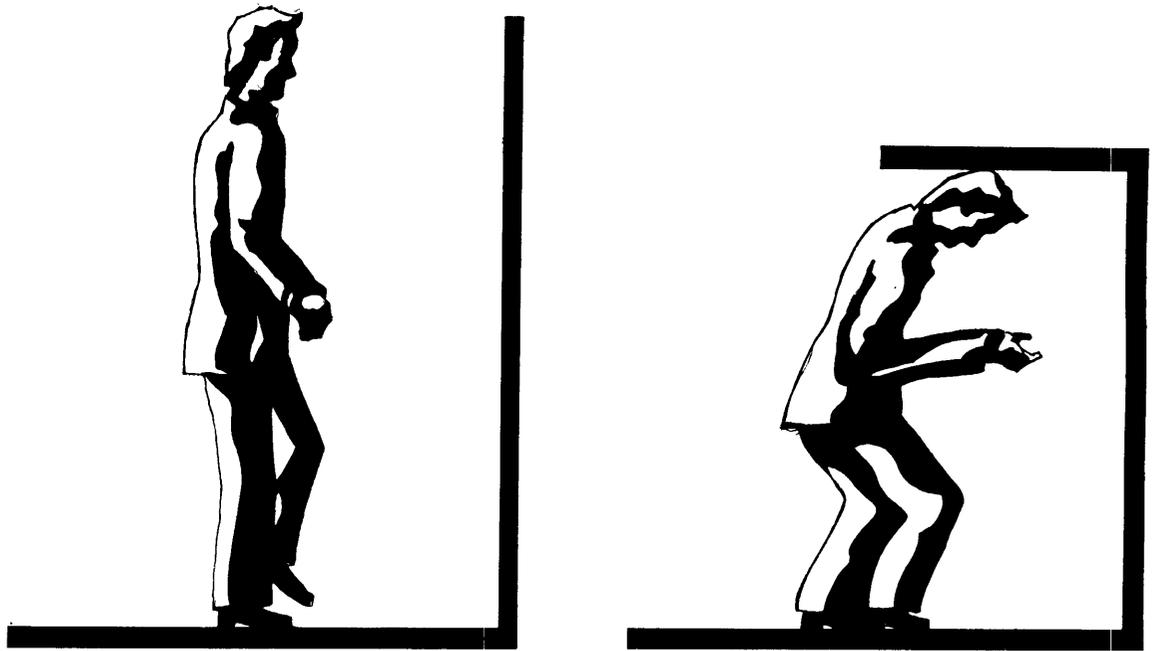
4. What in the tradition of our origins and founding experiences can be evoked as relevant guidance in living the witnessing life today?

5. What provision is being made for students to encounter the living reality to which the beliefs point and thereby call them to the task of interpretation?

We simply cannot be content to communicate canons of belief and feel we have served the faith. In fact, as our awareness of the goal becomes clearer, we will find ourselves thrust with new urgency into the task of creating additional means of accomplishment. The ongoing task of theological statement, doctrinal development, and scriptural development can be undertaken with new seriousness and a new freedom, and the authority of our work will be established by the disciples it bears.

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**We prefer to teach abstract truths rather than nurture disciples competent in reconciling conflicts.**



# Thought Reform and Totalism

## The Psychology of the LDS Church Missionary Training Program

By Scott D. Miller

**A**ttempts at human manipulation have occurred in virtually every society in history, from as far back as the early Mosaic ritual to today's secular self-help programs. In recent decades, however, dramatically new approaches to reeducation have appeared. These modern-day methods first received public attention in the 1950s, when American journalist Edward Hunter coined the term *brainwashing* to characterize indoctrination activities of the Communist party in Red China (see *Brainwashing in Red China*). Unlike earlier attempts at behavior control, these new approaches have, through advances in psychology, achieved a degree of sophistication that gives today's manipulators a better chance of succeeding where their predecessors may have failed.

Despite its historical image, brainwashing is not "an all powerful, irresistible, unfathomable, and magical method of achieving total control over the human mind" (Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, p. 4). Rather, it is an entirely real and nonmystical process aimed at either reforming or strengthening existing patterns of thought through a highly specialized and

focused program of reeducation. In other words, the term *brainwashing* represents the process through which some outside agent—be it therapist, communist, or religious leader—attempts to reform the thoughts of another. *Thought reformation*, then, is the essence of the brainwashing phenomenon.

In addition to thought reform, brainwashing also attempts to achieve ideological *totalism*, an all-or-nothing behavior change which replaces a person's normal ideological convictions with fanatic, exclusive, totalistic preoccupations with the controlling belief system. Individuals affected in this manner, for example, may be observed to adopt abruptly new, uncommon behavior, including shaving their heads, radically altering clothing or living arrangements, or severing long-time social and familial relationships.

Unlike normal education, then, brainwashing or thought reformation tends to seek totalitarian control over the person rather than enhancement of personal autonomy. Reason, critical thinking, and logic are usually placed in subservience to emotion, simplified thinking, and obedience—that is, if they are given any credence



ILLUSTRATED BY TOM FAIRCLOUGH

whatsoever. Likewise, access to available information vital to the decision-making process is either completely restricted from the person or befuddled in biased group rhetoric. (Richard Delgado, *Society*, March-April 1980, pp. 26, 28.) In sum, the educational process involved in the thought-reform environment is one of constriction.

Through his extensive studies on thought reform, Dr. Robert J. Lifton has outlined eight dominant psychological themes recurrent in the underlying educational processes in thought-reform environments. Those eight themes are: (1) milieu control; (2) mystical manipulation; (3) the demand for purity; (4) personal confession; (5) the acceptance of basic group dogma as sacred; (6) the constriction or "loading" of the language; (7) the subordination of person to doctrine; and (8) the dispensing of existence. According to Lifton, these themes may be used as "a set of criteria against which any environment may be judged" by considering first the total number of themes present in a given environment and second the degree to which that environment enforces each theme. (Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 420. In order to better fit the religious mode of thought reform, these themes have been modernized and altered according to J. T. Underleider and D. K. Wellisch, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, March 1979, p. 219.)

#### THE LDS MISSION EXPERIENCE

As part of its proselytizing program, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints prepares its missionary force through a highly sophisticated process of education. A central part of this process occurs during the missionaries' stay at the Missionary Training Center (hereafter referred to as the MTC). During a period that lasts from two to eight weeks at the center,

Mormon missionaries undergo intense training in a variety of areas such as proselytizing, language, spirituality, and etiquette. Interestingly, this training process embodies a number of significant parallels to the eight criteria of thought reform outlined by Dr. Lifton. A comparison of these eight themes with MTC methods provides insight into missionary training procedures and raises important ethical questions.

1. *Milieu Control*. This first criterion is defined as an attempt "to establish domain over not only the individual's communication with the outside (all that he sees and hears, reads and writes, experiences and expresses) but also . . . over what we may speak of as his communication with himself" (Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 240). Experts in the study of thought reform agree that this element is the most basic feature of the thought-reform environment (Delgado, *Society*, p. 27). Indeed, the control of stimuli impinging upon the individual creates the optimum psychological disposition for successful reform.

Milieu control disrupts the individual's normal balance between self and the outside world. Control of external, environmental input and internal, individual reflection deprives the individual of the ability to test the reality of his environment and to maintain an identity that is separate from it.

There appear to be a number of elements present in the MTC and mission field resembling this criterion of milieu control. Indeed, the rigid control and regulation of the Mormon missionary environment is perhaps the most basic characteristic of the MTC and mission field. One is hard-pressed to find an area of missionary life that is not governed by some regulation.

Both the MTC and the mission field have established rules regulating what is to be seen,

**Rules regulate what is to be seen, heard, read, written, experienced, expressed, and thought.**

heard, read, written, experienced, expressed, and thought. For example:

- Missionaries follow a rigid schedule of daily activities from 6:00 A.M. until 10:30 P.M., seven days a week. Deviation from the schedule is not tolerated. There are no vacations, and only a day of free time per week. This day is to be used for completion of "worldly" necessities. Often part or all of that free time is set aside in order to proselyte.
- Missionaries are always assigned to a same-sex companion whom they are required to "be with at all times" (*Missionary Handbook*, p. 19). Missionaries are never to be alone and are instructed always to address each other as either "elder" or "sister."
- The MTC and mission field employ an elaborate reporting system. Missionaries are encouraged to comment on their companions to various representatives in the mission leadership. Each missionary writes a weekly letter to the mission president and district leader. District leaders report to zone leaders, and they in turn to the assistants to the president. (cf. Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 421.)
- Missionaries are required to read *only* Church-published books and magazines. This is usually interpreted as including the LDS standard works, James E. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ* and *The Articles of Faith*, the *Ensign*, and the *Church News* (*Missionary Handbook*, p. 14).
- Missionaries are not allowed to watch television, listen to the radio or modern music, read newspapers, magazines, books, or other literature.
- Correspondence is regulated in various ways. There are no phone calls allowed to home or friends, and "no correspondence . . . within the mission boundaries" is allowed either (*Missionary Handbook*, p. 14).
- At times, tape recorders and tape recorded messages have been prohibited in the MTC.
- Missionaries are to "put out of [their] lives all thoughts and discussions of home, school, girl friends, and worldly things" (*Missionary Handbook*, p. 20). To this end, missionaries are often encouraged to devote every moment to missionary work. Time spent waiting in meal lines, for example, is considered a good opportunity to read the missionary pamphlets or memorize scriptures and discussions.

Space does not permit an elucidation of the many other examples of apparent regulation of the LDS missionary environment. The important thing to note is that milieu control does not consist of any *one* of these examples but is the result of their powerful combination in a single environment.

2. *Mystical Manipulation.* Following milieu control, the practitioner of thought reform attempts "to provoke specific patterns of behavior and emotion in such a way that [these patterns] will appear to have arisen spontaneously from the

environment" (Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 422). These manipulations are intended to enhance the validity and omniscience of the prevailing ideology and leadership through mystical experiences. However, such experiences are usually generated through entirely nonmystical processes, such as the direct manipulation of individual emotional variables and the extensive use of post-hoc reasoning (the fallacious assumption of a cause-effect relationship) or self-fulfilling prophecy (behavior influenced by an observer's expectations). According to experts, the more mystical or unprovable the supposed relationship between cause and effect or prophecy and fulfillment, the more omniscient and chosen the interpreters of that relationship appear to be.

The MTC and the mission field use such forms of mystical manipulation. The practices surrounding goal-setting in the MTC, for example, seem to involve direct manipulation of individual emotional variables:

- Within the first week's stay at the MTC, missionaries were at one time required to set goals for the number of discussions or proselytizing presentations (eight in all) that they would memorize during their eight-week stay. Immediately preceding a formal goal-setting session, the missionaries were shown the BYU production, *John Baker's Last Race*. Immediately thereafter, the missionaries were removed to their respective classrooms to set goals. Interestingly, research has shown that this film, which portrays a young man's struggle against cancer and revolves around a theme of persistence, instills in the audience a tendency to persist longer at problem-solving tasks for which no solution exists (Scott D. Miller, "The Effects of Positive Affective Modeling on Persistence-related Tasks," Unpublished paper, 1982).



More recent examples of mystical manipulation from the MTC are attributable to either the use of post-hoc reasoning or self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, one mission required that missionaries wear black derby hats during winter months. Missionaries reluctant to don the out-of-style hats were told that because they refused to participate, they, as well as their fellow missionaries, would not be able to find converts. Such predictions and explanations, sincere and uncomical, appear to be the rule in the missionary environment.

3. *Demand for Purity.* Here, the thought-reform environment attempts to polarize the world of the individual into the ideology's preconceived definitions of purity and impurity: "The good and the pure," observes Lifton, "are of course those ideas, feelings, and actions which are consistent with the totalist ideology" (Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 423). The criteria for purity are generally defined through the establishment of regulations extending into every aspect and domain of individual life. Further, absolute compliance with regulations is demanded in order that purity be maintained and the greater mission—always dependent upon the purity of the group—accomplished.

How does this result in thought reformation? Lifton explains: "By defining and manipulating the criteria for purity, and then by conducting an all-out war upon impurity the [controllers] create a narrow world of [individual] guilt and shame" (*Thought Reform*, p. 424). Such feelings of guilt and shame are then easily manipulated to achieve individual rededication and reformation.

As already demonstrated, the MTC and mission field are highly regulated environments. It also seems evident that these environments operate under high demand for purity as outlined by mission leadership and LDS church policy. For an example, one need look only to the stringent rules governing missionary sexual behavior or the constant emphasis on sexual purity found in the missionary environment (*Missionary Handbook*, pp. 13, 14, 15, 20).

4. *Personal Confession.* In the thought-reform environment, there is usually a great deal of personal confession, often occurring in combination with the theme of *demand for purity*. In this process, the environment enacts rigid and extensive regulation, follows those enactments with the demand that *all* regulations be observed, and concludes by insisting that each infraction be confessed to the appropriate authorities. In such a manner, where "sinfulness is artificially induced, . . . confession becomes a means of exploiting rather than offering solace for [personal] vulnerabilities" (Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 425).

Lifton describes such personal confession acts as "a means of maintaining a perpetual inner emptying or psychological purge of impurity, . . . self surrender, . . . and total exposure" (*Thought*

*Reform*, p. 425).

Personal confession appears to play an important role in the entire missionary process. For example:

- A candidate for missionary work is interviewed by his bishop with a series of questions concerning the candidate's worthiness. At this time, the prospective missionary is expected to confess any unrepented sins. Thereafter, the candidate is given another interview, this time by the stake president, who asks the same questions. In some cases, General Authorities or the First Presidency may be asked to interview a prospective missionary (Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, October 1974, pp. 2-14).
- Confession continues in the MTC with weekly interviews with the district leader and biweekly interviews with the branch president. Too, missionaries are constantly urged to clear away, through confession, any pending or new sins.

5. *Acceptance of Basic Group Dogma as Sacred.* The thought-reforming environment generally asserts that its basic dogma is sacred. Therefore, individuals are usually required to dispense with the "ordinary concerns of logic" and on faith accept the dogma as absolute truth. Lifton points out that these totalistic assertions of sacred dogma and concomitant rejections of ordinary logic are usually "evident in the prohibition (whether or not explicit) against the questioning of basic assumptions and in the reverence which is demanded for the originators of the Word, the present bearers of the Word, and the Word itself" (*Thought Reform*, pp. 427-28).

This aura of sacredness, prohibition against questioning, and required reverence of officials allows the individual to escape effectively the responsibility of making decisions. Over time, individuals learn to censor their own decisions and instead submit to the decisions of those in control. Erich Fromm has called this phenomenon of the totalitarian environment "escaping from freedom" (*Escape from Freedom*).

Here again, the MTC and mission field appear to use Lifton's criteria. For example, missionaries are frequently instructed that questioning the dogma or criticizing the leadership hinders the work of God. To this end, any thought or action which questions the sacredness of the dogma, the logic of the assumptions, or the dictates of the leaders brings immediate rebuke.

6. *Constriction or "Loading" of the Language.* In this process, language is "characterized by the thought-terminating cliché. [In other words,] the most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief, highly reductive, definitive-sounding phrases, easily memorized and easily expressed" (*Thought Reform*, p. 429). Such loading of the language works to constrict the verbal capabilities of the individual. Since the human experience of thought and feeling are

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dependent upon that capability, constriction of the language results in impaired intellectual functioning.

It is not difficult to find examples of language constriction in the MTC and mission field. Perhaps the most obvious occurrence of language-loading in these environments is the use of the standardized missionary discussions. In these discussions, complex issues are reduced into brief, authoritative-sounding statements to be memorized by the missionary. Indeed, recent revision has further reduced their length and complexity to levels compatible with a fifth-grade education. Furthermore, in the past even personal testimony has been rehearsed, with the discussions pointing out when the missionary was to bear testimony and what generally was to be said. Missionaries are directed to deliver the discussions either as outlined or word perfect to prospective converts.

Other examples of this criterion in the MTC and the mission field include:

- After three days' stay in the MTC, foreign-language missionaries are required to speak only in their mission language (the "Speak Your Language" or SYL program). Not surprisingly, the materials are highly loaded with vocabulary items specific to the LDS faith and missionary work.
- In many instances, missionaries are instructed to memorize the *Missionary Handbook* containing mission policy and regulations.

7. *Subordination of Person to Doctrine.* This criterion is imposed in the thought-reform environment in an attempt to create a schism between actual human experience and the interpretation of that experience by the prevailing ideology. Specifically, individuals are required to accept on faith the ideology's interpretation of past, present, and future events. Personal or outside interpretations of those same events are considered "unorthodox" and are to be disregarded. As a result, individuals are thrust further into the reforming influences present in their environment.

The MTC and the mission field clearly promote interpretations of life events consistent with their purpose. For example, one mission required missionaries to leave their residences to begin missionary work by 9:25 A.M. instead of by 9:30 A.M. as specified in the *Missionary Handbook* (p. 15). The extra five minutes, the missionaries were told, would prove to the Lord that the missionaries really wanted to baptize. Thereafter, missionaries not leaving their homes by 9:25 A.M. were criticized for hindering the work of God. The acceptance of such an interpretation acts to enhance the supposed orthodoxy of the missionary. The missionary environment contains many other examples of this practice.

8. *The Dispensing of Existence.* In this last criterion, "the conviction [is] that there is just one path to true existence, just one valid mode of being, and that all others are perforce invalid and fake." According to Lifton, the notion is conveyed to individuals in the thought-reform environment that the prevailing ideology is "the ultimate moral vision for the ordering of human existence" (*Thought Reform*, pp. 434, 427). In this manner, meaningful existence becomes equated with an individual's acceptance of group dogma. Such acceptance of basic dogma is also enhanced by the consensual validation offered the individual through the group. In other words, those who accept or rally the group ideology are themselves accepted and rallied. They become a part of the "good" or the "worthy," part of the all-encompassing mission. Simply put, they are granted existence or being. For those who are convinced in this manner, any question or serious logical contemplation of the ideology becomes a questioning of personal existence—a crisis of being versus nothingness. Such a technique effectively prevents individual question of group dogma.

For young LDS members, the *dispensing of existence* appears to begin much earlier than upon their arrival at the MTC as a missionary. From childhood, Mormons are taught that theirs is the "only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). Those who deny this faith and apostatize may become "sons of perdition," residing in "outer darkness." Such are "the only ones upon whom the second death shall have any power," and "it had been better for them never to have been born" (D&C 76:37, 32). Such teachings may explain in part the extraordinary devotion many Mormons give to their Church and mission leaders.

This theme is also found in the encouragement young Mormons receive to serve a mission. Recent leaders have begun advocating that every LDS male prepare to serve a mission. As a result, parents, Church teachers and leaders instruct Mormon males to anticipate and prepare for that day when they will leave to serve a mission. Such teaching and preparation appears to act as a predisposing influence, eliminating the possibility of a negative decision regarding mission service.

#### **ETHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS**

The preceding analysis indicates that the Mormon missionary environment uses a number of strategies similar to those operating in traditional thought-reform environments. Charges that the Church employs such an approach to achieve its goals demand careful consideration, particularly because of moral repugnance that resides in the notion of "brainwashing" and the ethical and theological issues it raises.

In defense of such methods, some have argued that thought reform already permeates most areas of human life. Television, advertising, mili-



tary training schools, alcohol and drug-abuse centers are often cited as examples of its practice. Generally, the use of such methods in these instances is looked upon favorably. After all, such practices appear to be motivated by a justifiable goal, the betterment of mankind. Too, the use of these processes in organizations such as the military, law-enforcement, and self-help programs tends to enhance their validity and acceptance. What harm, then, can there be in the LDS church utilizing this approach to convert the world to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

As an additional defense, it might be noted that the MTC merely employs a sophisticated, rapid, and apparently effective process of educating missionaries along such dimensions as language, culture, and proselyting techniques. Indeed, these accomplishments have been recognized as extremely successful by significant outside agencies, including the armed services, international businesses, language training experts, and others (Marvin K. Gardner, *Ensign*, October 1983, pp. 12-13). At every turn, the methods used to accomplish this work seem to be prompted by altruistic desires to further God's plan or practical considerations in managing the training of such a large and diverse body of young people.

Unfortunately, indications of effectiveness and piety of purpose overlook the fundamental ethical problem in thought-reform environments. The underlying processes involved in such indoctrination procedures, while useful in enforcing group cohesion, deter the expression of individuality. Indeed, when conformity, stereotyping, and group goals are placed above the worth of the individual, individuality ceases to exist. While secular organizations such as corporate entities, businesses, or the armed services may thrive in such sterile environments, it seems to me that the religious experience ought to remain a deeply personal, individual experience.

Additionally, the use of such educational methods raises an important theological issue. It should be remembered that the thought-reform milieu attempts to arrange the environment in such a manner that individual choice and careful consideration are eliminated. As a result, individuals are manipulated into adopting systems of belief and action which, under circumstances conducive to choice and consideration, might be completely different. Such forced choice (coercion) appears to conflict with basic LDS theology. Indeed, Joseph Fielding Smith remarks that it was "Satan's plan in the beginning . . . to compel" and that free agency "is a divine principle. . . the only principle upon which exaltation can come" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:70). LDS scripture and literature are replete with similar statements stressing the eternal verity of choice and free agency. Therefore, the existence of influences in the Mormon missionary environment detrimental to these doctrines seems not a little ironic.

At present, there appears to be little indication that the LDS leaders will revise the missionary training program in the near future. In fact, the Church's Evaluation Correlation Committee has hired a battery of social scientists and has appropriated an estimated half-million-dollar annual budget in order to identify the variables often present in religious conversion and missionary indoctrination. This study is intended to produce better institutionable, programmatic, and productive missionary programs.

Perhaps the entire issue of thought reform in the LDS missionary environment can be viewed as symptomatic of a larger concern. Erich Fromm illustrates how small organizations experiencing massive growth typically turn toward totalitarian methods in maintaining and controlling their membership (*Escape from Freedom*, p. 304-27). Similarly, as membership in the LDS church has grown at impressive rates over the last few decades, so has the tendency toward more centralized control and comprehensive management. As long as such tendencies persist, "liberty of thinking and believing as [one] please[s]" which Joseph Smith saw as characteristic of the Latter-day Saint religion, will be in jeopardy (*History of the Church*, 5:340; 5:215).

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**The entire issue of thought reform can be viewed as symptomatic of a larger concern.**

# Thought Reform or Rite of Passage?

A Response to Scott Miller



By C. Jess Groesbeck



**T**he LDS Missionary Training Center is well known for its rigorous schedule and systematized educational program. At times, this system has drawn fire from various commentators who feel that the young missionary candidates are subjected to harsh regimentation and even mind control. The most far-reaching of these criticisms equates Mormonism's missionary training activities with "thought reform," or brainwashing. While there are certain similarities and parallels, it seems to me that the model is too far-fetched and too different to make the best fit.

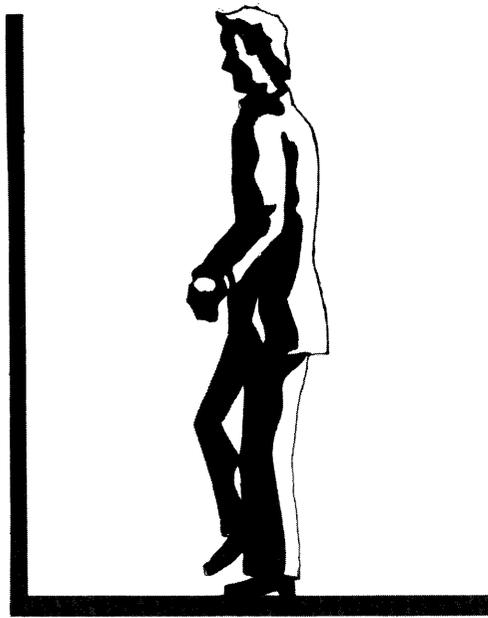
Thought reform, for example, is practiced in a coercive environment where the individual is thoroughly controlled. Political options are limited or nonexistent. The missionary training experience, on the other hand, is a voluntary one in which an individual chooses to go on a mission and either freely accepts the system or chooses to leave. There are innumerable cases of missionaries who enter the training program with its rigor and decide to go home—in some case rather abruptly, without even talking to officials. Those who do talk to leaders of the MTC still go home in many instances. Although this choice brings a certain amount of social humiliation, nevertheless many leave without a great deal of difficulty.

This is not to deny that the Missionary Training Center maintains careful control of its environment. But this is not total and in many ways is a far cry from absolute control. For example, thought reform typically demands the severing of long-time social or familial relationships. Although in a sense missionary service does require the disruption of long-time family relationships, this is not the usual case in missionary work. In fact, family ties are encouraged albeit in a very different way, namely, through communication

on a weekly basis by letter. (Probably more demanding and difficult for the individual is the lack of privacy during the missionary training experience. There is virtually no time in the day for the missionary to be alone with himself or apart from a companion. For introverted individuals, this becomes a very difficult experience.)

It is very easy for critics of the MTC to overstate the control exercised over its students. Scott Miller, for example, observes that missionaries are to "put out of their lives all thoughts and discussions of home, school, girlfriends, and worldly things." However, this is something that literally cannot be enforced in the missionary experience. Those trainees who actually do put these things behind them and concentrate on missionary work do so as a free choice.

The comparison of LDS missionary training experiences to thought-reform systems also relies too much on the assumption that the individual is passive and the gigantic organization is all controlling and all powerful. This is just not the case. What has been most striking to me in my life within the Church is that whenever one feels constricted and overpowered by institutional or group pressures, one can find alternate forms of experience *within* the established confines of the Church where individual needs and dimensions can be worked out and satisfied. In the early years of my life, for example, I had several profound experiences with a high-ranking General Authority who himself confessed great struggles and difficulties with group organization and pressures to perform. Hearing that this happened to such an individual and receiving his advice was indeed one of the most encouraging and uplifting experiences of my life. The expression of divergent views by different groups in the Church has produced a counterbalance to the dangerous trend toward group and collective



identification that one sees in Mormonism.

Other aspects of thought-reform environments which have been compared to the MTC include *mystical manipulation*, *demand for purity* (particularly sexual purity), *personal confession*, *constriction or loading of the language*, *subordination of person to doctrine*, and the *dispensing of existence*. Yet many of these elements do not serve the same purpose in the MTC as they do in thought-reform systems. For example, the overall effect of personal confession as practiced in the MTC is one of relief and tranquility. If there is anything detrimental in this practice, it is that the individual in the MTC is sometimes required to confess serious (e.g., sexual) transgressions to a number of different people before the problem can be resolved. The average Latter-day Saint, on the other hand, has to talk to only one or perhaps two people, i.e., the bishop or stake president.

Other such practices are simply not present to the same degree as their thought-reform counterparts. The *acceptance of basic group dogma*, for example, although important in the MTC, scarcely needs official encouragement since questioning occurs so rarely. One MTC branch president recently noted that in a year's time there were perhaps two serious questions about doctrinal issues concerning the Church message. On the other hand, the *dispensing of existence*—the view that there is only one valid path of belief—may be diminishing among members and missionaries. My conversation with Latter-day Saints suggests that a number of faithful Mormons have difficulty accepting the notion that they are the sole possessors of "truth." Indeed, though it is seldom a problem in the MTC, such doubts trouble some missionaries later in their missions.

Furthermore, most if not all of these practices occur not only in the MTC but in Mormonism generally and in many other religious and secular

institutions as well. *Mystical manipulation*, or attempts to show that specified patterns of behavior and emotion arise spontaneously, are central to all religious conversion experiences, no matter what the denomination. The importance of sexual restraint and the practice of confession are stressed by numerous religions. And most heavily doctrinal churches hold to basic principles of fundamental import or assert that their view of truth is somehow unique. Where the MTC merely reflects aspects of larger religious societies, it hardly seems valid to cite this as evidence of a thought-reform system. If any of these practices compromise individual freedom, then we need to reexamine them wherever they occur and not merely limit our discussion to the MTC.

A model which seems to apply more consistently to our Missionary Training Center is that of the rite of passage. Such rites resemble the mission experience in the expectation that the young person leave his family, experience sexual and nutritional restrictions, face careful indoctrination, and purify himself through personal confession. The number of affinities with the missionary training experience make this a fruitful area for future study. Indeed, it could be argued that the LDS experience is one of the only rites of passage left for modern American youth.

Certainly the LDS attempt to use powerful controlling techniques such as television and advertising raises a series of questions that need close attention. However, to limit those to the MTC seems less valid than to apply them to the whole Mormon experience and in some cases to religion generally.

C. JESS GROESBECK, a former branch president at the Missionary Training Center, is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist in private practice.

# One Scientist's Spiritual Autobiography

## Learning the Difference between Knowledge and Faith



By Robert C. Fletcher

In reflecting on my own spiritual odyssey, I am impressed with the highly individualized nature of that path. The course I have taken is not one I would recommend for anyone else. Each person must find his own testimony in the light of his experience, education, and capabilities. I find that the vast majority of Church members have arrived at their faith without struggling with the troublesome questions I have had. Since their faith is enabling them to lead a wholesome life under the influence of the gospel, I feel it is a mistake to disturb that faith with my doubts unless I feel I have satisfying answers. I tell my story with the hope that it will help someone who is having similar concerns and perhaps reassure others that science need not be feared as a destroyer of faith.

### EARLY LIFE

I'm a fourth generation Mormon, or more precisely a four-and-one-quarterth generation Mormon; that is, six of my eight great-grandparents were the first in their families to join the Church, and the other two were the children of

first members. My heritage came from those valiant pioneers who settled the West and established a unique culture in the Rocky Mountains. Yet my parents were pioneers in a different sense. They were in the vanguard of those who emigrated from the West with the reversal of the "gathering of the Saints," arriving in New York City in 1916. I was born in an apartment bedroom in Manhattan in 1921.

Although I was raised in the mission field and thus had mostly nonmember schoolmates and friends, the branch (and later ward) in which I resided provided a good part of my social life. From an early age I felt committed to the Church.

### SCIENCE

This sense of commitment remained with me, at least at first, as my studies led me to an interest in science. My first real excitement with school came with a course in plane geometry. Although all my schoolmates regarded the teacher as a severe, ill-humored taskmaster, to me she opened the way to the marvels of deductive reasoning. I

stood in awe as a whole book full of theorems on plane geometry was rigorously deduced from only a few axioms.

Significant involvement with science had to wait until I got to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In my freshman year there I was exposed to Newton's laws of motion. They seemed to explain so much of what I had always wondered about. At that time the courses in calculus and physics were synchronized so that we used the calculus to solve problems in physics and used the physics to illustrate the usefulness of calculus. I was impressed at how remarkable it was that mathematically expressed laws were actually obeyed in nature. This fascination with science led me to major in physics. After working at the MIT Radiation Laboratory during World War II, I went on to get a Ph.D. in physics and work in experimental research at the Bell Laboratories.

One aspect of science which I found to be particularly significant was the way "truth" can be extracted from experiment. For example, in the midst of investigating the effect of a magnetic field on the electrical properties of crushed silicon, a group of us discovered a magnetic resonance associated with the electrons in the silicon. Now what surprised us was that there were two resonances, not one. We speculated that these resonances might be due to a variety of causes having to do with the crushing of the silicon, e.g., dislocations, surface electrons, vacancies in the crystalline structure, etc. Then one of the group suggested that the two resonances might be caused by the magnetism of the phosphorus nucleus. Phosphorus is used in minute amounts to "dope" the silicon to give it its electrical properties. Its nucleus is known from other experiments to have only two possible orientations in a magnetic field. Maybe the electron whose resonance we were observing was associated with this phosphorus. At first thought, this hypothesis seemed unlikely since it didn't seem to have anything to do with the crushing. Nevertheless, it was straightforward to crush a silicon crystal which had been doped with arsenic instead of phosphorus and measure it. Arsenic has a nucleus with four possible orientations in a magnetic field. How exciting it was to find the four resonances when we did the experiment. We had moved the possibility of a hypothesis from about one chance in ten to a probability of maybe 99%.

Then we had the idea of trying antimony as a dopant. Antimony occurs naturally with two different nuclei (isotopes), one with six possible orientations in a magnetic field, and the other with eight. Sure enough we found all fourteen resonances, and in just the right magnitude to agree with their relative abundance and the right separation to agree with their magnetism. We now had a certainty of our hypothesis which must approach a 99.999999% probability of being

right. We might be justified in saying we "knew" that the number of resonances was associated with the nucleus of the dopant. Later, we found the resonances in uncrushed silicon, confirming that the crushing was not the cause of the resonances but only served to enhance our ability to detect them.

The danger in believing this high probability that our hypothesis was "true" was in extending it beyond where it was "proven." The high certainty applied only to a very narrow part of a possible hypothesis, namely that the electron whose resonance we were observing was associated with the doping impurity's nucleus. This suggested other hypotheses about the localization of the orbit of the electron around each atom of the impurity, and the amount of time the electron spent close to the nucleus so its resonance could be affected, and on and on. But these additional aspects of the hypothesis had different probabilities of being correct, being dependent on theoretical calculations and other measurements.

Conviction as to the truthfulness of a hypothesis can thus grow from a 10% probability to a 90% probability to a 99.999999% probability as one performs successive experiments. This comes pretty close to "knowledge" that the hypothesis is correct. I was fortunate to be a personal witness to the excitement of discovering new knowledge by this process.

This process is characteristic of scientific "truths." Some things we "know" with high certainty when a wide variety of experimental observations hang together to confirm them. But as scientists, we are not always careful to limit what we think we know to that which has been confirmed but instead tend to believe the whole body of scientific theory as proven, even beyond where it is confirmed. This point was to become very important to me.

#### KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CHURCH

While I was working at the MIT Radiation Lab during the Second World War, I shared an apartment with three other bachelors, all of whom were members of the Church working at the lab. They were all called to be missionaries in the Cambridge Branch. Although I wasn't called at the same time, I attended all their study groups and was pretty well enmeshed in the missionary environment. When the teacher who was leading the study group discovered I was not called as a missionary, she went to the district leader and insisted that I be called. (Perhaps this by-passing of inspiration is what led to my subsequent problems.)

After I was belatedly called and set apart, I tried to apply myself conscientiously to the calling. I had a very demanding weekly schedule of working fifty hours a week (including Saturday

**The words came to me as though spoken: "God does not expect you to believe anything but what is true."**

mornings), trying to keep a bachelor household, and spending several nights a week on missionary work. In addition I had a keen sensitivity to rejection, and rejection at that time was the norm in our missionary work. I kept thinking that the fault was mine, that somehow if I could bear a more fervent testimony I would be more successful. Yet I found this very difficult. I didn't feel I "knew" the gospel was true in the same way I could "know" the truth of a scientific hypothesis. The more I tried to be a good missionary the more this inner tension built up. I'm sure I prayed very hard during that period for guidance.

One day, as I was walking back to our bachelor apartment from MIT and contemplating this problem, I had an experience which hit me with such force that I can only describe it as a revelation. The words came to me as though spoken: "God does not expect you to believe anything but what is true. Nor does he expect you to say anything but what you believe to be true." As I contemplated this, I was impressed that the whole gospel was built on this principle. By insisting that we discover for ourselves its truth, the gospel had within it the seeds of its own destruction if it were false.

This revelation persuaded me that I didn't have enough of a testimony to continue saying that I "knew the Church was true" and therefore to continue serving as a missionary. As a result I was left with the difficult task of reconstructing a philosophy of life based on a firmer foundation of conviction. If God didn't make known to me his truth with the same kind of evidence as presented from scientific experiments, what was reasonable for him to expect of me? I decided he could expect me to order my life according to what I thought good even though I didn't have a perfect knowledge. Indeed, this seemed consistent with the teachings of the Church that all men were given a basic knowledge of right and wrong. By consistently following that which we deeply believe to be right, we will improve our discernment and be led to the kind of life that God desires of us.

I believed The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints led to a good life and, at least for me, was the best life that I knew. I resolved to be committed to that church until or unless I could find something which promised a better life or was closer to the truth. Although outwardly my activity in the Church did not change greatly, inwardly my whole perspective changed. I came to appreciate the significance of the scripture, "and the truth shall make you free." Internal tensions were relieved since I no longer felt the compulsion to use the word *know* in a way that was different than the way it was used in science. After this experience, I was still able to accept calls as Gospel Doctrine teacher and Sunday School superintendent, honestly answer the questions put to me in a temple interview and be married in the temple.

## FAMILY

Marriage had a profound effect on my life. I married a fine companion, Rosemary Bennett. Sharing a life with her gave life more meaning. Before I was married, *truth* was lonely, abstract, and academic. After I was married, *truth* was living a good life with companionship and love. My faith was strengthened by the steadfastness of my wife's belief in the gospel. My daughter Peggy says that my wife is conservative in her beliefs and liberal in her actions whereas I'm liberal in my beliefs but conservative in my actions. It makes an interesting life to couple opposites, not without its problems but also not without its rewards.

I'd also like to acknowledge a debt to my children. The act of caring for them and watching them mature also added great meaning to my life. Each of them has been outstanding in his or her own special way. They have taught me more than I have taught them, and they are still teaching me as they have grown to maturity.

## REALITY OF THE SPIRIT

The next major turning point in my spiritual development occurred in the second year of our marriage. We were walking with another young couple, themselves struggling graduate students. I can't remember the conversation that led to this particular experience, but I do remember we were crossing a road together. By the time we reached the other side, I had had another of those flashes of deep insight: "The principal evidence for the existence of the spirit is within yourself." Miracles may have been witnessed by others. Prophets may have conversed with God face-to-face. Others could testify that they had had spiritual experiences. But none of those had as much evidential weight as the observation I had of my own awareness and consciousness. This must have been very similar to the insight which Descartes had when he said, "I think therefore I am." The part of me that was aware and sensitive I had no difficulty identifying as my spirit.

By inference it then became easy to assume the reality of spirit within everyone. By further inference it was not difficult to believe in the independent existence of the spirit and hence immortality. With immortal spirits there must be a purpose for mortality and a Supreme Being (or Beings) who had such a purpose. This sequence of conclusions did not constitute a logical proof, but it was satisfying to me.

This greatly strengthened the basis for continued activity in the Church. In addition to a conviction of the goodness of the Church in the lives of its members, I had the basis for being convinced of its theology. I discovered Alma 32 as a logical way to get a testimony. Doctrine and Covenants 9 led me to believe that my way of approaching the gospel was consistent with Joseph Smith's; for personal guidance on a question in

my life I should study out of the best books, listen to people I regard as well informed, then work out the answer in my mind, pray about it, and then examine whether I get a good feeling about the answer I had formulated.

Continued activity further strengthened my faith. The Church provided a great source of support to me. I became grateful for the many dedicated teachers who provided instruction to my children and the church leaders who gave unstintingly of their time to lead us in the gospel. I came to tolerate the imperfections.

Prayer also became very meaningful to me. I came to appreciate that my prayers were being answered, not always in the way I had expected, but in the way that was good for me in the long run. I was able to accept calls as elders quorum president, as high counselor, and (a great surprise to me) as bishop. With time I learned in these calls to lean upon inner impressions ("burning of my bosom"?) which I do not feel too uncomfortable identifying with the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Indeed I believe that the process described in Alma 32 worked for me in my life. I had practiced the gospel in my life, and I "knew" I had an inner peace and enlargement of my soul that said it was good.

#### **PATRIARCH**

After I had been a bishop for a number of years, I experienced a strong impression that I would be called as a patriarch. My soul cried out that this was not the calling for me. I was a scientist. Yes, it is true that I had come to terms with the concept of the spirit. Yes, it is true that I had felt the influence of the Holy Spirit in my life. Yes, it is true that I had tried to use that influence as I pursued my responsibilities as bishop. But to have a calling whose whole activity demanded a constant influence of the Holy Spirit seemed inconsistent with the discipline of a scientist, whose training is to believe only in that which can be demonstrated by confirming evidence. I considered going to the stake president and saying that I didn't want my name presented to the Council of the Twelve as a possible patriarch. I discussed it with my wife, who is wise and practical. She pointed out that it was presumptuous on my part to even consider going to an authority since no one had yet spoken to me. Even when I was interviewed by Elder L. Tom Perry, he didn't indicate what I was being interviewed for, so I said nothing.

By the time the call came, I had become accustomed to the notion for a period of time. I decided it was up to the Lord to say whether to call me or not. He knew me better than anyone else, even than my wife. If he thought I could fill the call, I would do it to the best of my ability. So I, the skeptical scientist, am operating as a stake patriarch. I have even come to a peace of mind with respect to the call. Although I feel inadequate, I still feel it's up to the Lord to decide whether he

wants me to continue in this or some other calling.

#### **BOOK OF MORMON**

A final pillar of my faith is the Book of Mormon. In my forty-ninth year as a member of the Church, I read this volume of scripture all the way through again. But in all my life up to that time, I had never put the challenge of Moroni 10:4 to the test. So I decided to pray to have the Holy Ghost manifest the truth of it to me. After several prayers, I was prompted to read on in that chapter to verse six. I received a flood of internal confirmation when I read "and whatsoever thing is good is just and true." I recognized that I had had a lifetime of experience in seeing the good effects of the Book of Mormon in the lives of those who believed it and tried to live the gospel as preached in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Too, I had personally cherished the insights gleaned from the Book of Mormon. All of this was a testimony of the truth of the Book of Mormon.

#### **CONCLUSION**

As I reflect back on my hesitance to use the word *know* in describing how I feel about the Church, I still feel that my use of the word is consistent with that described by Alma in Alma 32. We can know with some certainty of the burning within, or the enlargement of our souls, and yet have only faith in the truths of the Church. But at the same time I'm not inclined to be critical of the culture in the Church which requires good members of the Church to say they know the Church is true. To me it reflects an indication of a strong degree of conviction about the Church. It's not too hard for me to translate "I know the Church is true" to "I know I have had a burning in my bosom which confirms the goodness of the Church and the truth of the principles which it teaches." This feeling can be so consuming as to eliminate all doubt.

Scientists can conclude many things with a high degree of confidence. They can indeed say they "know" those things. But there is a vast area of truth which they haven't yet touched. In particular I find the methods of science, which deal primarily with the material world, do not necessarily exclude the existence of a world of spirit. In fact I believe the two worlds together represent the totality of reality. The world of spirit gives value, meaning, and purpose to our lives.

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**The methods of science, which deal primarily with the material world, do not necessarily exclude a world of spirit.**

# REVISING THE GOLDEN RULE

Marybeth Raynes

**F**or some time I have felt that even if all people followed the golden rule to the letter (that is, do unto others as you would have them do unto you), we would still have difficult human relationships. Christmas giving provides a good example. In most respects, I think that people follow the golden rule when selecting presents. In my case, I love books and so I tend to give books to everyone I know. However, I have found that many recipients are ungrateful or even offended when I do this on a regular basis. I am following the golden rule. What is the matter?

Although I may be labeled a heretic, I have concluded that the golden rule needs to be revised. That is not to deny its validity or that it has stood both Christianity and Mormonism in good stead. In fact, most of us have not reached the ideal of treating others as well as we treat ourselves, whether it be in our private lives, our church activities, or politics.

Perhaps a restatement of the principle that Christ taught can help us see more clearly how truly to care about others and thereby improve our intimate relationships. My reformulation is: Do unto others as they would do unto themselves. That is, treat others as they would like to be treated.

Two examples may help to clarify this distinction. One of my clients often brought his wife surprises, love notes, or flowers. Repeatedly she would say, "Thanks, but that's not what I want. Please come home early one night a week so we can spend some time together and talk." On closer inspection, the husband really wanted his wife to give him love notes and surprises, and his mood dramatically lifted on the rare occasions when she did. For the wife's part, she talked to him all the time, in meetings, around kids, and during housework. He

reported feeling a little hounded by all the "chatter." Each was following the golden rule; each said they were trying hard to express love to the other. Neither got the message.

On the other hand, another male client told me, "I am not very romantic. I can never guess what my wife wants, so when special times or holidays come we plan it out and she picks out her gifts because then she gets just what she wants." The wife, who did not care about intimate surprises, described her husband as quite caring and as a friend who understood her well.

The point is we often miss the mark when trying to meet the needs of others from our own limited perspective. A close, mature relationship requires intimate knowledge of another person's needs and wishes. We must also value the other person enough to do it their way once in awhile. In short, love requires both observation and commitment.

Knowing another's needs requires a lot of observation with empathetic eyes, ears, and heart. It involves going beyond compiling lists of a person's quirks and behavior. It means turning the metaphor, "walking in another's mocassins" into reality. Recently, when I was talking to a bishop about a client who was trying to overcome some problems of the past, I was delighted to hear him say, "Well, this seems like something she need not be worrying about, but I can imagine that from her perspective it is still terrifying." Here is a Church authority who tries to keep two sets of glasses on his desk: a pair for himself and a pair for seeing through the eyes of others.

Unfortunately, some people are not good at giving clues to their needs. They do not speak up, or

else when they do, they seem vague or inconsistent. Worse, they may say one thing and yet mean another because they are not really aware of themselves or their own inner lives. Or for other reasons, we just do not get a clear picture of another person's wishes. In these cases, the genuine effort at observation and empathy takes longer. Trial and error is the method of choice with extra help from intuitive hunches to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of another person's needs.

When the bridge is built and a person realizes that his or her perspective is recognized and valued, an atmosphere of understanding is created—and that atmosphere gives the rule about loving others its golden quality. The relationship can be transformed and the quality of intimacy enhanced because the recipient feels the other is like him or her—or at least joined in a similar perspective. Even though it is possible to have intimate moments when someone is doing or saying something differently, most intimate occasions occur when engaged in a joint activity or when sharing a common set of ideas.

I do not mean that you have to agree with people in order to understand them or love them. To agree is to have similar or identical feelings or ideas as the other person. To understand is to try on another's experience, see it clearly, while still recognizing that it differs from your own position. I can *understand* quite clearly, for instance, why someone would spank a child, watch BYU football, or can fruit. But I do not *agree* since I object to the first, get bored by the second, and am burned out on the third.

But although empathy is difficult, the really tough part of the golden rule is the commitment implied in the phrase, "do unto others." This aspect of loving someone as they would like to be loved is hard not because the physical acts are in and of themselves difficult. It is hard because it may require us to transcend our normal ways of doing things. Family members who like well-planned family activities have a struggle giving time to the wishes of others who enjoy more spontaneous events. A friend who likes to be

constantly moving has a hard time keeping still while joining a sedentary friend in some quiet activity. One spouse may have a hard time cleaning the car to the other's specifications.

Even after we overcome these difficulties, problems remain. For example, any intimate relationship in which one party predominantly gives or takes is unbalanced and in my experience is likely to be manipulative or unloving. How do we decide when to give and when to take?

Another person may also want something that flies in the face of our moral or ethical beliefs. Telling a lie for others because they feel desperately that they need to get off the hook or avoid a confrontation could hardly be

construed as loving. Or, for myself, going to a violent movie because a friend really needs a night out and loves the thrill of such action does not wash away my resistance to "violence for sale."

Finally, there is a catch in the wording, "treat people as they would treat themselves." What if they treat themselves poorly or abuse themselves? Clearly, that does not justify treating them likewise. I guess I really want to say that we should treat people as the most loving parts of themselves would treat themselves—with their best needs in mind.

The new golden rule is so complex that it requires clarification itself. At this point, it would read: "Do unto others as they would do unto themselves, as long as it

meets their own best needs, achieves a balance with your own needs and is within your ethical standards." This further revision is too wordy to make it into the scriptures or through Correlation, but I think you get the idea. Once it is stated, any principle needs to be more clearly defined, illustrated, and then tailored to individual cases. Like other principles, this principle of love is never completely clear, never easy. There is no well-marked straight and narrow path of relationships.

But as long as we strive to enlarge the boundaries of our empathy for others and ourselves and search for better ways of loving and acting, we are at once moral and caring—and following the golden rule.

#### AESTHETICS AND NOETICS

## SWEET SAVOUR

Michael Hicks

**T**hough its aesthetic authority in everyday life is unquestionable, the sense of smell is an orphan among the arts. The eyes have given birth to a vast visual opus (even language—witness this page—has become a visual art); the ears have music; touch, the flesh-cum-nervous system, has ritual motion and dance; taste has cooking ("culinary art"), but more importantly, because of its connection with nourishment, has become a metaphor for all artistic reception. Smell takes a role in culinary art, of course, but beyond that goes almost functionless in high culture. Its powers remain undiscussed in dozens of important aesthetic treatises. But these powers are justly celebrated in books on magic and myth, for smell, the chemical entry to the soul, has dominated the human mind ever since God breathed into man's nostrils the breath and scent of life.

Plato thought human sense of smell crude, capable only of distinguishing between bitter and fragrant odors. Relatively speaking, he is right: human olfaction seems a dwindled, diminished trace of

other mammals' sense. But no man or woman who has long enjoyed health has failed to be startled by the power of a smell at some time. It may have been the first odor of chimney smoke on a late fall afternoon or the odor of sun against wet earth or so intimate as the fragrance of a lover's skin. Such smells can and often do send a tremor through the mind, unearthing some powerful yearning or remembrance. The hippocampus, a structure within the limbic system, is a preeminent seat of both smell and memory. (As has been documented in the scientific literature, an injury to the area just above the nostrils can provoke severe forgetfulness, loss of the ability to identify smells, and the suppression of sexual craving.) It is a matter of physiology: the smells that astonish us now and then function as passages through which nostalgia travels. By certain smells, stored and catalogued in the brain, groups of years become seasons, and the seasons become single everlasting days or nights, each literally with its own flavor.

Though man's olfactory system is shrunken next to that of most animals—partly, no doubt, by rea-

son of neglect—there remains to humans a rich symbolic pageantry of smell and an immense complexity to its language. This is so even though smell is the brother to silence, an enemy to the word. The scental order of things goes as deep as the marrow and yet, incapable of being stated in words, never rises to the lips. But human culture is enslaved, or at best betrothed, to the word. We consider that speech entitles us to our reign on earth. We named the beasts, and they are ours. So since the Fall we have cultivated dis-course and have led the beasts around by rings in their noses—the symbols of their power. They live by the skill of scent; we flout the sense of smell, repress its sensuousness in our arts and in our religion, confusing its meanings with cleansers and cosmetics.

Consider the basic functions of smell among animals en masse. The smell of a creature's own body (or body wastes) marks the boundary of self and nonself, likewise the line between one's own realm or territory and the outside world. Scent in this way provides a foundation for much of animal law—a system of rights,

possession, claims, jurisdiction. (Smell endows the wilderness with order.) The odor of a prey or of a predator sends the creature into flight to obtain food or to escape the hungry. The scent is the track of a beast in the air. The smallest scattering of odor-bearing molecules can cue, in some cases, a nose hundreds of yards away. (Smell provides a path through the wilderness.) And above all, scent provides the energy for the fierce, unreasoning sexual drive of one beast for another. There is something palpable to the natural odor of sexuality that can capture and compel every sort of animal, whether moth, or catfish, or ape. (Smell bestows a companion in the wilderness.)

Not surprisingly, since he is so concerned with order and pathways and companionship, the God of the beasts—and of mankind—seemed in ancient times preoccupied with smell. Jehovah was dependably appeased by the smell of cooking meat, perhaps recollecting the first scent of Adam's burning ox. He loved the constant tribute of spices, perfumes, and oils—pure aesthetic gifts. His high compliment to Israel was that they

were to him a "sweet savour." (Compare Isaac's blessing to Jacob: "The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.") And his cruelest rebuke to the wicked was to scorn them as "smoke in my nostrils."

Times have changed. God has aged, or his people have outgrown his delight in scent. Now, most often, what we offer to God and teach to one another are the principles not of natural scent but of its eradication. The sweat of the brow, if allowed to flow at all, must not stink. The breath must be chemically sweetened. The air in which humans congregate must be conditioned, freshened, deodorized. And the peculiar scent of folds of flesh that might incite a literal chemistry between two people must be suppressed—usually in the name of (the phrase is telling) "feminine hygiene." Our chief olfactory occupation is the obstruction of the smells we make.

Perhaps this is all because the smells in question are ugly, vestiges of the Fall itself. But if we believe so, we say that we know sweet smell from stench, that we have a common power of aesthetic

judgment. Why then have we no interest in forming and structuring smells into an art or ritual of scent? Because smell among the senses is primal, its unspeakable meanings emanating from so deep within the animal of ourselves that its merest allusion—that hint of its power we perceive in those startling moments of olfaction—terrifies us. You or I will not commit to the brotherhood (not to mention the descendancy) of beasts. Deliberately to use smell for worship or art, no matter how well conceived and integrated the structures created for it might be, is to confess something about ourselves, to cross a boundary we have marked for our nature. To step over the threshold of scent is to enter the common biology of all that lives, with all its impeccable wisdom and monstrous passion.

So, for now at least, the beasts will go on marking and tracking and mating, imprisoned or liberated, as the case may be, by their devotion to scent, while we, freed of their kinship, go on dreaming of becoming gods who, as the Psalmist bitterly wrote, have noses but smell not.

# Choose the Write!

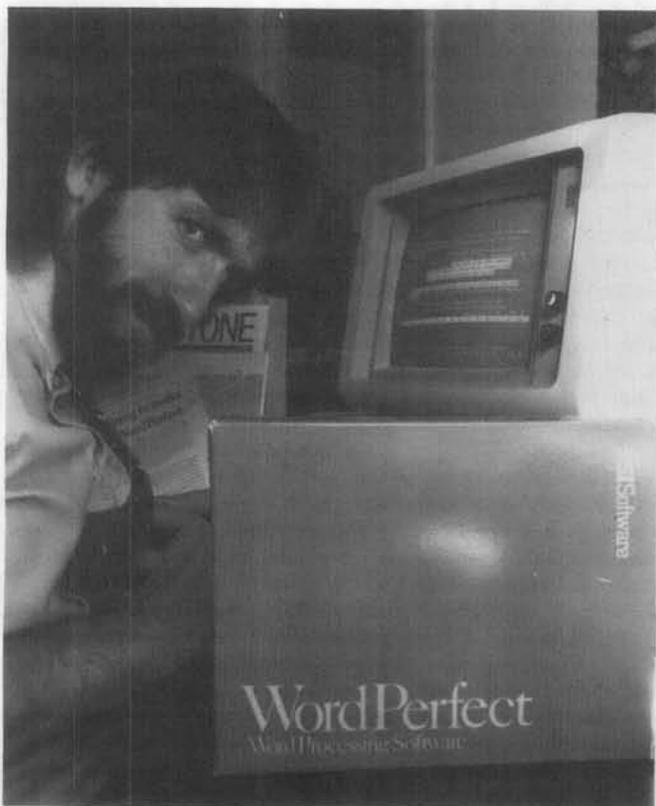
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2. Papers must be typewritten, double-spaced, on one side of 8½ by 11 inch paper (not onion skin). Since manuscripts will not be returned, contestants should keep a copy and send in the original. The stories should not exceed 28 double-spaced manuscript pages. One author may submit no more than three stories.
3. Each entry must be accompanied by a signed statement from the author attesting that it is the contestant's original work, that it is not being considered elsewhere for publication, that it has not won another contest, and that it will not be submitted elsewhere until the contest results have been announced.
4. Announcement of winning entries will be made at the 1986 annual Sunstone Theological Symposium and in the magazine. SUNSTONE reserves the right to publish at some time in the future all articles submitted but is not obligated to do so.
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# NEWS AND

## Questions Continue to Cloud Bombing Case, Document Deals

By Cecella Warner

The bombs which shook Salt Lake City last October may well have been heard around the world. The three explosions were followed by a barrage of media attention as reporters vied for tips which would unravel the story of the year. Feature stories, investigative pieces, talk shows, and interviews continue almost daily, but in spite of the charges recently filed by the Salt Lake County attorney's office, many still wonder: Who murdered Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets?

Both died on the morning of October 15, 1985, when they picked up motion-sensitive bombs. The brown paper wrapped box placed in the Sheets' driveway was apparently marked for Kathleen's husband, J. Gary Sheets, a former business partner of Christensen's.

The day of these murders, the police announced they were pursuing two possible connections between the intended victims. Sheets was chairman of the board of J. Gary Sheets and Associates. Christensen had recently resigned as executive vice-president and director of that company and its sister organization, Coordinated Financial Systems (CFS), a high-finance investment firm that had recently fallen on hard times. Police theorized perhaps one of the many investors who lost money planted the bombs out of revenge.

Police also initially noted that both Sheets and Christensen funded authentication tests and research into the background of the so-called "salamander letter," an 1830 document in which Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris presents an unusual account of Joseph Smith's acquisition of the gold plates. The manuscript also ties Joseph Smith to

treasure seeking. (See *SUNSTONE*, vol. 10 no. 1; vol. 10 no. 6.) The "salamander connection" was fueled by the fact that the *Deseret News* received a bizarre phone call the day of the first two bombings: An unidentified man threatened death to anyone who had touched the controversial letter.

This theory of a vengeful Mormon fanatic seemed to gain strength the following day when Mark W. Hofmann, a dealer in rare Mormon and American documents, was seriously injured as a bomb exploded in his car not far from Temple Square. Hofmann had sold the Harris letter to Christensen for \$40,000 the previous year.

Almost immediately after Hofmann's injury, however, investigators announced a new theory, one that culminated in the charges filed on February 4, 1986. In this scenario, Hofmann is both suspect and victim, accidentally injuring himself with a bomb meant for yet another target, so far unidentified. Recently, the *Salt Lake Tribune* outlined some of the grounds upon which the police seem to have based this case:

1. "Incriminating physical evidence" was said to have been located in Hofmann's car. Reportedly this included brown paper, a marking pen, pipe, and wire. Several documents were also found, as well as receipts for major cash transactions.

2. Two eyewitness accounts apparently place Hofmann in or near Steve Christensen's office building on the morning of October 15. One witness described a man wearing a green and white high-school letter jacket. Hofmann's wardrobe apparently contains such an item. It was confiscated by police.

3. While hospitalized, Hofmann

discussed the case with his attorney and was overheard by an attending nurse. She may have knowledge of Hofmann's guilt or innocence.

4. Hofmann's occasional business associate Shannon Flynn reportedly gave Hofmann two blasting caps several months ago.

In addition, Flynn is said to have purchased a copy of the *Anarchist's Cookbook* in the company of Hofmann. This book contains information on bomb construction.

Furthermore, Salt Lake City toy store owner, Mark Hammond claims he sold Hofmann at least forty feet of model rocket fuse about a week before the bombings.

However, this evidence has been criticized as weak and circumstantial. For example, the materials in Hofmann's car cannot be tied to the bombs. In addition, one eyewitness account could be invalid since a local television station may have prompted the identification by displaying a videotape of Hofmann while asking, "Is this the person you saw?" The other eyewitness described to police the man he saw carrying a package into Christensen's office building, but the composite drawing made by police artists does not closely resemble Hofmann.

Further, the Utah Supreme Court has ruled Hofmann's nurse cannot be interrogated by police for evidence. Moreover, no blasting caps were used in the bombs which killed Sheets and Christensen, and pipe bombs are not described in the *Anarchist's Cookbook*.

As far as the model rocket fuse is concerned, police have not found any unused fuses or detonators in Hofmann's house, though they have thoroughly searched it three times.

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# REVIEWS

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Finally, police have yet to locate where the bombs were manufactured or tested.

Hofmann's attorneys have touted the results of polygraph tests performed on Hofmann. Apparently the lie detector tests indicate Hofmann is telling the truth when he says he did not plant the bombs. Hofmann's wife, Dora Lee, also took a polygraph test indicating she was telling the truth when she said her husband was home with her the morning of the murders.

Such developments have caused public confidence in the police department to deteriorate. In their article on the bombings in *Utah Holiday's* January issue, Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin refer to "un-professional 'hang drying' of old documents," and "leaking of information and breaching confidentiality" on the part of investigators. In addition, *Tribune* reporter Mike Carter recently wrote, "The delay in filing charges and the seeming one-track mind of the police . . . has led to much speculation that Mr. Hofmann is a scapegoat for police, who are afraid to back off their hard-line stance taken early on in the investigation."

But the murders themselves are not the only focus of the police investigation. Authorities have also probed Hofmann's document and financial dealings. Hofmann was pursuing several such transactions at the time of the bombings. For example, Hofmann received money up front from investors for *The Haunted Man*, an original manuscript by Charles Dickens. However, sources say Hofmann told each group of investors they were his sole partners in the deal. Hofmann also sought investors to help buy a copy of *The Oath of a Free Man*, the first broadside or handbill printed in America, even though he had already purchased the document himself. Sources speculate Hofmann misled investors in order to secure ready cash for other deals. As he anticipated selling the *Oath* to the Library

of Congress for an estimated one million dollars, Hofmann may have expected to repay his debts with the investors none the wiser. The money did not come through as scheduled, however, and by the second week in October, Hofmann faced a host of past-due debts. Investigators believe the enormous financial pressure on Hofmann at this time is connected to the murders.

Authorities have also expressed suspicion over Hofmann's spectacular success in discovering a number of valuable historical documents. Indeed, police have identified forgery as yet another motive for the murders. Isn't it likely, they ask, Steve Christensen and Gary Sheets had discovered Hofmann's fraudulent schemes and were targeted for bombs before they could expose them?

In fact, immediately before the bombings, Hofmann and Christensen were attempting to sell a collection of Mormon documents, which may be a key to unlocking the murder mystery. Early in 1985, rumors began circulating which tied Hofmann to the documents purportedly assembled by early Mormon Apostle William E. M'Lellin, who later left the Church. Supposedly the collection contains manuscripts penned by a variety of figures significant to Mormon history. If authentic, it is sure to offer interesting new insights into the origins of Mormonism. However, details about where the collection originated, where it is presently located, what specific materials it contains, and who was to buy it remain sketchy.

Part of the attention focused on the collection stems from the rumor it contains fragments of Egyptian papyri, possibly "facsimile two" from the Book of Abraham, a work of LDS scripture translated by Joseph Smith. Ed Ashment, a Ph.D. candidate in Egyptology, claims Hofmann promised him photographs of four papyri fragments in the summer of 1985. Ashment recalls Hofmann described to him a hypocephalus (a circular figure like facsimile two) and three smaller pieces. Ashment "was led to

believe these were from Joseph Smith's Kirtland collection of Egyptian papyri" which presumably later fell into the hands of M'Lellin. Later, in September, Hofmann and his associate Brent Metcalfe showed Ashment one fragment and allowed Ashment to photograph it. However, Ashment recalls, the piece was not one of the four previously described to him. Hofmann again promised Ashment photographs of the four pieces of papyrus but was injured two days before the delivery date.

Ashment now says he can't know for sure whether the fragments described to him belonged to Joseph Smith. But one thing is certain: The piece Ashment saw probably originated not with the M'Lellin collection but with rare book dealer Kenneth Rendell. According to news reports, Rendell claims he gave Hofmann the entire papyrus on consignment and that Hofmann apparently cut the valuable document into several pieces.

Other rumors about facsimile two surfaced in early 1985 when renowned Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley reportedly told several individuals the Church had acquired it through Hofmann. Nibley now says he misunderstood the situation and believes he made an incorrect assumption.

The papyrus is not the only portion of the M'Lellin collection which has raised questions. Salt Lake coin dealer Alvin Rust reports he not only lent Hofmann money to acquire the documents, but he also sent his son Gaylen with Hofmann to New York in April to buy the collection and bring it back. While there, however, Hofmann told Gaylen he went ahead with the transaction and mailed the papers to Utah when the younger Rust was not present. Such occurrences have caused some to question whether the M'Lellin collection really exists.

Nevertheless, there appears to be at least one group of M'Lellin documents in the hands of H. Otis Traugher in Houston, Texas. In early December *Tribune* reporter Dawn Tracy located these documents

which had been passed down through Traugher's family. According to Tracy's story, the original M'Lellin collection has been scattered, and the portions she located were not the ones Hofmann was attempting to sell. In fact, Traugher had never heard of Mark Hofmann.

Questions regarding the elusive collection inevitably touched on the activities of the LDS church. On October 23, a week after the bombings, three top Church officials held an unprecedented open news conference to respond "to questions, speculations, and innuendos" surrounding the bombing tragedy. Participating were Gordon B. Hinckley, second counselor in the First Presidency; Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles; and Hugh W. Pinnock of the First Quorum of Seventy.

President Hinckley began by reading a prepared statement, which reported that through Mark Hofmann the Church had acquired "by purchase, donation, or trade forty-some documents." He also noted that Hofmann had approached him regarding the M'Lellin collection and said that the young dealer "wanted to donate the collection to the Church."

Elder Oaks, a former Utah Supreme Court justice, next spoke at length regarding Hofmann and the M'Lellin collection. "In June, Mark Hofmann and Steve Christensen told Elder Pinnock that Hofmann had an option to buy the McLellin collection from a man in Texas for about a hundred and eighty-five thousand," he recounted. When asked for his advice, the Apostle told Elder Pinnock that the Church would "emphatically not" lend Hofmann the money for the purchase as it would "simply fuel the then current speculation . . . that the Church . . . was trying to acquire [the collection] in order to suppress it." Elder Oaks did believe the Church "would be interested in receiving the collection as a gift. . . . at some future time, but in that event it had to be a genuine gift from a real donor." A buyer who wished to remain anonymous later phoned Elder Oaks, asked about the collection, and inquired "whether the Church would be interested in receiving it as a gift." Steve Christensen continued to be involved, apparently "because he was knowledgeable in early Mormon documents . . . [and could] verify its authenticity and value for the benefit of the purchaser."

Although the anonymous buyer arranged to purchase the collection through a lawyer, plans to close the

deal on October 15 were upset when Steve Christensen was killed. That afternoon, Hofmann called on Elder Oaks. According to the Apostle, "Hofmann said he thought the police would want to question him. He said he was worried about what he should say to them." Similarly, when Shannon Flynn came to the Church Office Building two days later, he told Elder Oaks, "I need to meet with the police quickly. I have questions to be answered before I go and speak to them so I will know what posture to take." And when Alvin Rust spoke to Elder Oaks the following day, he admitted knowing more than he had told police. In each case, Elder Oaks reported, he advised full and honest disclosures to the authorities.

Following Elder Oaks's comments, Elder Pinnock distributed a written statement explaining he helped Hofmann secure a loan from First Interstate Bank to purchase the M'Lellin papers. In another statement, Elder Pinnock observed, "I am convinced the bank would not have made the loan to Mr. Hofmann were it not for my assurance that it was a safe loan." Therefore, feeling "morally and ethically responsible," Elder Pinnock repaid the bank from personal funds when the note came due. All three Church leaders denied ever seeing the M'Lellin collection.

Though helpful in outlining general events, the news conference still left unanswered questions. Elder Oaks's statement, for example, reports that Hofmann secured loans both from Alvin Rust and First Interstate Bank to purchase the M'Lellin documents. Yet together these loans total nearly twice the \$185,000 needed to purchase the papers. When a reporter asked for a clarification, Elder Pinnock implied the Rust loan may have been intended to go toward "another collection." Yet media reports say that, like the loan obtained through Elder Pinnock, Rust thought his money would purchase M'Lellin papers.

Another curious contradiction arose when a KBYU reporter asked why the Church is so intent on acquiring historical memorabilia. Elder Oaks reiterated "that the Church was very intent on *not* getting" the M'Lellin collection, while President Hinckley followed up with the observation, "We are under mandate" from Church revelations "to keep the history of the Church, and we regard that very seriously."

Other issues were raised by *Tribune* reporter Dawn Tracy, who hinted the acquisition of the 1825

Joseph Smith letter had its questionable aspects. Why didn't President Hinckley, who purchased the document with personal funds for the Church consult archivist Don Schmidt? she asked. Why wasn't Dean Jessee, the LDS authority on Joseph Smith's handwriting, allowed to examine or authenticate the letter? "I don't know" was President Hinckley's response.

Little media attention has been paid to an interesting topic brought up in President Hinckley's statement. Referring to what may have been one of Hofmann's last business transactions with the LDS church, the First Presidency counselor alluded to a meeting regarding the "so-called Kinderhook plates."

These six bell-shaped metal plates covered with arcane symbols have long been suspected as fakes, a suspicion confirmed by laboratory tests in 1980. Ordinarily their historical value would be negligible. But in 1843 they were shown to Joseph Smith in an attempt to dupe him into translating the fraudulent records. No such translation has come to light. In fact, in a 1981 *Ensign* article, Mormon historian Stanley B. Kimball denies one was ever made. "There is no evidence that Joseph Smith ever concluded the plates were genuine," he writes, "other than conflicting statements from members who hoped that a translation would come forth—and in fact no evidence that the Prophet manifested real interest in the 'discovery' after his initial viewing of the plates." Nevertheless, the *Times and Seasons* quotes Joseph as saying, "I have translated a portion of them, and I find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the ruler of heaven and earth." Kimball rejects this as mere speculation on the part of William Clayton, whose journal was used by historians in compiling Joseph Smith's history. If authentic, such a "translation" of the Kinderhook plates would have important implications for the Mormon belief in Joseph Smith's prophetic ability to translate ancient records.

Hofmann associates now claim he approached President Hinckley offering to sell the Church a transcript of Joseph's translation. At the press conference, President Hinckley stated Hofmann offered to sell some of the Kinderhook plates to the Church. "My recollection of this episode of history was dim," commented President

Hinckley. "But I saw no reason why we should have them and so indicated." However, President Hinckley made no reference to the alleged translation.

It was against this background of controversy and rumor that Mark Hofmann faced formal charges on February 4, when he was surrendered by his attorneys. He was booked and charged with two counts of capital homicide along with twenty-three counts of theft by deception and communications fraud. Four separate complaints were filed along with a statement of probable cause.

The LDS church is named as the victim in seven counts of theft by deception in one complaint. Also named separately as victims are President Gordon B. Hinckley, Steven F. Christensen, J. Gary Sheets, Brent Ashworth, and Alvin Rust. The complaints assert Hofmann "exercised control over the property [of the victims] by deception, with the purpose to deprive the owner thereof."

More assertions of fraud are detailed by the probable cause statement prepared by the Salt Lake County attorney's office. According to the statement, Hofmann has sold the Church and others over a dozen unauthentic documents. This includes the Anthon Transcript, the Joseph Smith III blessing, four handwritten notes by Brigham Young, the Lucy

Mack Smith letter, the 1825 money-digging letter from Joseph Smith to Josiah Stowell, the E. B. Grandin Contract for printing the Book of Mormon, the Martin Harris salamander letter, the Nathan Harris Book of Common Prayer, a letter from Joseph Smith to General Dunham, a letter from David Whitmer to Walter Conrad, a letter from David and Peter Whitmer to Bithell Todd, and an 1807 Betsy Ross letter.

This conclusion is based on "extensive scientific analysis" performed by George Throckmorton, "an experienced questioned documents examiner formerly employed with the Utah State Crime Laboratory, presently employed by the Utah Attorney General Office."

Although Throckmorton is the only expert cited in the probable cause statement, police consulted at least three other other document authenticators. On January 31, investigators met with world renowned handwriting expert Kenneth Rendell of Newton, Massachusetts. Rendell examined twelve historical documents which had been sold by Hofmann and declared them all—with one exception—to be "obvious" forgeries. Rendell says the handwriting on nearly all of the documents appears shaky and uneven. He also suggested several documents may have been penned by the same person. Moreover, when he placed the

papers under ultraviolet light, each emanated a bright blue glow indicating they have been chemically treated in order to artificially age the paper.

The one exception, according to Rendell, is the 1830 Martin Harris letter. "I am not aware of any physical evidence that the 'salamander letter' is phony," says Rendell. "But the charges now put the salamander letter into a new context quite different from when I originally considered it." Rendell had authenticated the letter for Sheets and Christensen.

The statement of probable cause also accuses Hofmann of swindling hundreds of thousands of dollars from investors who put up money for *The Haunted Man* and *The Oath of a Free Man*. The report further cites Hofmann's dealings with the M'Lellin collection and papyrus fragments as examples of deception and fraud. Finally, it reaffirms the prosecutor's case of circumstantial evidence surrounding the murders themselves.

The indications of forgery as well as the bombings themselves have sent a ripple of fear and uncertainty through the normally self-assured Mormon historical and intellectual community. As historian Richard Bushman has observed, an already cautious community will now be even more demanding in their quest to authenticate documents and recover historical truth.

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# A Personal Response to Dialogue

## DIALOGUES WITH MYSELF

BY EUGENE ENGLAND

ORION BOOKS, 1984, 205 PP., \$7.95.

Reviewed by Susan Buhler Taber

It was with a sense of homecoming and rediscovery that I opened and read this collection of Eugene England's essays written between 1966 and 1983. For example, although his review of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* was published in a 1983 *BYU Studies*, I clearly remember the Institute class in which Brother England guided our exploration and discussion of LDS doctrines and the issues of God's power and goodness. The understanding I gained from that single class sustains me daily as I cope and try to help my other children cope with my daughter's battle with leukemia. "That They Might Not Suffer," an essay about the Atonement, was delivered in sacrament meeting nineteen years ago. The scriptures which developed the theme have been the touchstones of my understanding of Christ's mission ever since.

Ironically enough, it was Eugene England who made it possible for me even to attend Stanford University. Before my parents would agree to let me go, we made a weekend trip from Salt Lake City to Palo Alto, California, to make sure that I would not "lose my testimony" within three months of setting foot on the campus. When my father returned from priesthood meeting on Sunday morning, he happily related the details of a conversation he had had with a counselor in the bishopric of the Stanford Ward. I later learned it was Gene England. For me, the most impressive feature of the ward was its elders quorum, comprised of thirty-five active (and therefore eligible) elders.

I did indeed "lose my testimony" at Stanford. It began to crack when a boyfriend not only refused to attend a special Christmas service, but shot down my defense of the

Church's policy against Blacks holding the priesthood and in the process showed me my native arrogance. Two years later when I enrolled in the first of ten or so Institute classes I took from Gene England, I was ready for some answers to the hard questions which had bothered me even before I entered college.

The testimony of the gospel which I had at graduation owed a great deal to the exploration and discussions that took place at those Institute classes. When I left in 1970 I was even married, but not to one of those thirty-five elders.

My husband was a convert, who practically on the water's edge shied at joining a "racist church." After Institute class that night we went downstairs to England's office where he shared with two very upset students his personal experiences in trying to understand the existence of the policy and in praying for a change in it. Rereading "The Mormon Cross" again jolts me—not with its rejection of the theory of Black indecisiveness in premortal life, but with my memory of a man praying earnestly and trying to prepare himself for the day when a new revelation would come—an example of engagement and consecration of quite another quality than my own pallid acceptance of the Church's flaw along with the gospel I loved.

In the years since leaving Stanford I, far from both Utah and California, have followed through the pages of *Dialogue* Gene's odyssey from California to St. Olaf's College and then to BYU. I have been amused and touched by such essays as "Blessing the Chevrolet," "The Hosanna Shout in Washington, D.C." and "Going to Conference" which celebrate the deep sources of spiritual renewal and challenge inherent in our

religion—priesthood blessings, the temple, the examples and words of our prophet, and soul-expanding reunions with friends in sacred places.

The essays, collected from the pages of practically every official and nonofficial Church-related publication, are not arranged chronologically, but philosophically as explained in a foreword written for this volume. Two fairly recent essays which explore the paradoxical truths of the Latter-day Saint religion begin the volume. Paradox, indeed, is a prominent theme throughout. Essential to the teachings of Lehi and Joseph Smith, paradox requires the Mormon scholar to answer "both" when faced with the dichotomies which often threaten to split Saints into two opposing camps, variously categorized as Iron Rodders vs. Liahonas or Them vs. Us. Thus, England honors the claims of both individual conscience and ecclesiastical authority; great books and true religion are both essential to our spiritual and intellectual lives.

The opening essay, "Joseph Smith and the Tragic Quest," not only introduces the tensions that coexist in the universe of Mormonism; it gives a fresh image of Joseph Smith in his own words. The many quotations from the Prophet which are included in the body of the essay reveal not only England's perception of Joseph and his prophetic tragedy, but also what the life of Joseph Smith has meant in the life of Eugene England.

Throughout the essays England quotes liberally from many of the modern prophets, especially Brigham Young, David O. McKay, and Spencer W. Kimball. These quotations not only illuminate and clarify England's points, but they also lift out of the welter of dimly remembered speeches and sermons the golden threads of truth. I'm sure I must have read, or even heard, some of these sermons, but I never sensed their impact until I saw how they affected a fellow believer.

Despite the paradoxical nature of life and truth, in every essay the Mormon's quest for reason, for rational keys to the universe and a life that "makes sense" consist-

ently gives shape and direction to the dialogue.

Even though the earlier essays of the sixties bring me back to the time when England was my teacher, I find the essays of the eighties to be much more interesting. They have an immediacy, an openness, which the earlier ones do not. It is as if England has taken his own advice about the need for spiritual realism which he expresses in "We Need to Liberate Mormon Men."

"Enduring," the last essay of the book, as well as the most recent in the collection, reveals England still asking the hard questions, still thinking about them. In fact, the questions sometimes are not even asked outright in the essay but resound behind the examples which he presents—his mother-in-law undergoing chemotherapy on the strength of a hopeful priesthood blessing, and a young couple who had a second child after their first was born with the genetic defect Trisomy 13, because they had faith in another optimistic priesthood blessing. In light of the Chevrolets that have been blessed to find human help and repair, I ask myself, "How much will God permit us to intervene in the process of life and death?" "If a spirit could be given a less-damaged body as a result of medical intervention, might that intervention not be justified?" "Do we push too far into the processes of life or not far enough?" Paradox confronts us at every decision point.

It is the particular gift of Eugene England through his confrontations with experience and literature, both scriptural and secular, to provoke us to examine our own beliefs, experiences, and their meanings in our lives—to find our own questions and endure our own answers.

*SUSAN BUHLER received her master's degree from Stanford University and is a housewife and mother of six in Newark, Delaware. She is currently enmeshed in the Great Ward History Project of the Elkton Ward.*

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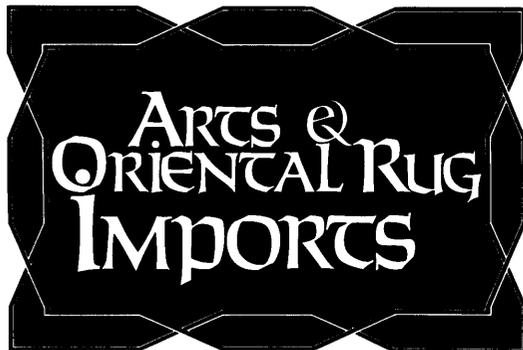
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