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TRUE BELIEVER OR DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

Scott C. Dunn's article on spirit writing was fascinating and challenging. However, I do feel that there are major weaknesses in his argument that "There is not anything in the scriptural writings of Joseph Smith that has not been matched by those outside the Mormon tradition." The first thing to notice is that of the approximately 13 cited cases of automatic writing, only one (Pearl Curran) has any evidence at all in its favor. I would like to discuss the evidence Dunn cited for Curran, as well as his comments on evidence for the Book of Mormon.

The first evidence given in favor of Curran is that Curran used Anglo-Saxon words 90% of the time. Yet Dunn himself points out that we would have to go back to the 13th century to find a comparable percentage of Anglo-Saxon words. As Patience Worth was supposed to have lived in the 17th century, the linguistic mismatch is about 400 years. Dunn's own evidence contradicts the assertion that Patience Worth is an authentic 17th century person. It could be argued that an individual's word usage need not fit into a specific time period, which would undermine my objection, but this would simultaneously undermine the argument for Patience Worth as well. Either way this evidence does not support a miraculous origin for Curran's writings.

It may be admitted that Curran's writings and philological feats are rather amazing. Yet in several respects the evidence for the Book of Mormon as a testable miracle goes far beyond that cited by Dunn for Curran. For example, no person has yet tested the wordprints of Curran to see if they match with the wordprints of Patience Worth. Such a study ought to be done. It might tell us something about the Book of Mormon and would certainly tell us something about this case of automatic writing. But until such a study is done I see little hard linguistic evidence (such as we already have for the Book of Mormon) to support a theory of separate authorship for Patience Worth.

Dunn also claims that Curran produced writings which included words and knowledge which Curran was unlikely to have known. Yet the specific cases seemed very weak to me, especially in light of Dunn's discussion of the amazing ability of automatic writers to remember in detail and use information which they had never been consciously exposed to. How can anyone say, for example, that at some point in Curran's life she wasn't exposed (even unconsciously) to a few archaic English words? With automatic writing any knowlege which is already known to society makes suspect a "miracle" at best.

The same criticism may be applied to Curran's knowlege of the ancient Holy Land or of 17th century English society. If the information is available to scholars and English newspapers, why is it assumed to be impossible for Curran to have ever been exposed to it? Particularly curious is one critic's assertion that all the reading Curran could have done would have been inadequate to write such a true-to-life account of the Holy Land. I must wonder how the critic obtained the knowledge necessary to make such a judgment.

It is important to note that the evidence for the Book of Mormon outshines the evidence for Patience Worth on precisely this point. The most impressive evidence for the Book of Mormon centers on things which no person in 1830 knew about, not just on things which Joseph Smith would have been unlikely to have known. Examples include an accurate description of Arabian geography, the use of proper names which clearly belong to languages which were untranslated and untranslatable in 1830, accurate depictions of Judaic and nomadic life and customs in the desert which were unknown in 1830, and other linguistic and cultural aspects which have been vindicated by texts and archaeological discoveries made long after the Book of Mormon was published. Dunn does not cite equivalent evidence for the case of Patience Worth.

Another point along this line is existence of literary forms such as Egyptian colophon and the Hebrew chiasmus in the Book of Mormon which were unknown to

any person in 1830. Dunn might argue that Joseph Smith's unconscious mind recognized chiasmus in the Bible and then reproduced it in the Book of Mormon. Such speculation would seem weak, however, in view of the fact that there is no example of automatic writing which uses such unknown literary devices. It would also be difficult to account for the appearance of the colophon, given that Egyptian was not translatable in 1830.

In sum it seems to me that while automatic writers have done some amazing feats, none of these feats are any more amazing or miraculous than the more spectacular acts of hypnotized people. The Book of Mormon, however, ventures into evidential territory where no channelled text has ever gone.

Dunn also makes several criticisms of the Book of Mormon itself. His first point concerns a psychologist in 1917 who concludes that Patience Worth must be genuine because he was able to find some (unenumerated in Dunn's article) "linguistic similarities" between Curran's writings and some poems from Dorset, who yet asserts that the Book of Mormon must be false because he sees similar ideas and events in 19th century New England. The use of such a blatant double standard to judge the two sets of writings makes the bias of this psychologist very clear. The tactic of asserting that there are parallels to 19th century America and then dismissing the Book of Mormon would be funny if it weren't such a tiresomely common fallacy among Book of Mormon critics. If we are to fairly judge the Book of Mormon then we must place it in its claimed cultural and historical territory and examine possible 19th century parallels (and everything else in the book) in that light. Particular attention should be paid to the knowledge which has been gained since the publication of the text. This is precisely what has been done in the case of the Book of Mormon (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*), but few Book of Mormon critics seem willing to confront this sort of study. (No such comparable body of evidence exists in the case of Patience Worth. Dunn optimistically claims that "there are simply more people examining the Book of Mormon," but optimism is not a substitute for evidence.)

Likewise Dunn claims that "the Book of Mormon incorporates theological concepts . . . common in Joseph Smith's environment." Again, I personally have yet to see a single supposed 19th century idea in the Book of Mormon which does not fit into the context of an ancient Semitic society which had been given knowledge of Christ. Every such charge I have seen has been based on a very shallow understanding of what the Book of Mormon actually says on the subject or the cultural backgound of the Book of Mormon peoples. One outstanding example of this is the old charge that the Book of Mormon reflects 19th century New England politics. When Richard L. Bushman did his penetrating study of this subject, "The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution," (Eugene England, *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*), it became apparent that the politics of the Book of Mormon fit very well into ancient Hebrew society and very poorly into 19th century American society.

Dunn restates another common criticism of the Book of Mormon when he says that "the book capitalizes and expands on theories of the origin of the American Indian which were circulating in the 1820s but which have been rejected by anthropologists and ethnologists today." Again we see the too common tactic of drawing a superficial parallel and letting the matter rest there. Dunn seems unaware that a vocal minority of anthropologists and ethnologists (such as Thor Heyerdahl, James Bailey and others) have been very strongly advocating the probability of Semitic and Egyptian influence on New World civilization. While a detailed summary of the New World evidence for the Book of Mormon is inappropriate here, anyone who wishes to dismiss Book of Mormon claims should first deal with, for example, Prof. John Sorenson's "An Evaluation of the Smithsonian Institution's Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon," and his *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*.

Dunn also restates the old criticism that many of the biblical quotations in the Book of Mormon "occur in settings hundreds of years before the Biblical manuscripts were composed." I assume he is referring to the "Isaiah Problem," which is the theory of some scholars that part of Isaiah was written after the Babylonian capitivity. Again Dunn uses the tactic of invoking the authority of scholardom without recognizing that scholarly opinion is by no means unanimous on this idea. Many competent Bible scholars do not accept it. Dunn also does not deal with the Adams and Rencher wordprint study of Isaiah in Hebrew (*BYU Studies* Aut. 1974, "A Computer Analysis of the Isaiah Authorship Problem"), which establishes the linguistic unity of the quoted portions of Isaiah. In view of Dunn's willingness to accept far weaker linguistic evidence for Patience Worth, his unwillingness to discuss such evidence when it supports the Book of Mormon is puzzling.

Finally, I am nonplussed by the apparent naivete of the question, "On what basis do we designate a book [the Book of Mormon] as scripture?" As Bro. Dunn has an LDS background he should know the answer to this one. His string of questions here makes me wonder if his article was not written from a devil's advocate point of view and does not represent his own private conclusions at all. Of course I don't know the thoughts of Scott Dunn's heart. But I do know how I would answer this question as a scientist (Ph.D. candidate in physics) and as a believing Mormon.

As a scientist I am naturally fascinated by the empirical evidence concerning the Book of Mormon which has come to light in the last 30 years or so. My study of this evidence and critical appraisals of it has been a satisfying learning experience. It has increased my appreciation for the Book of Mormon and has deepened my understanding of it. My study has gladdened my heart and perhaps even deepened my faith.

But in the end I do not believe in the Book of Mormon as a sacred text because of the empirical and intellectual arguments of great LDS scholars such as Hugh Nibley, John Sorenson, John Welch and others, impressive as they are to me. Had these scholars never

done their studies, and even if the case for Patience Worth were convincing, I would still have a deep belief that the Book of Mormon is true and of God. Ultimately this knowlege comes by the testimony of the Spirit to the deepest parts of the soul or it does not come at all. This testimony is empirical and even intellectual in a way, but only in a personal manner which can never be debated by scholars in learned journals.

Marvin Vaun Frandsen
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CONSCIENTIOUS REFLECTION

D. Michael Quinn's excellent survey of official LDS attitudes toward conscientious objection (SUNSTONE, vol. 10 no. 3) did not mention two addresses given by Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., of the First Quorum of Seventy, at the height of the Vietnam controversy.

Elder Rector spoke to BYU students about war and military service on two occasions. In 1969, Elder Rector said that, "War is so great an evil that to engage in it without a clear necessity is a crime of the blackest hue," and emphasized in strong terms that only defensive battles are morally justifiable. In a 1970 address, Elder Rector said, "War is an instrument in the hands of the Lord in this time." Comparing Vietnam to Japan and Korea—where Mormon missionaries followed closely behind American soldiers—he said, "These nations must be redeemed by blood. In the economy of God, that's what it takes. In Vietnam, as in Japan and Korea, after the soldiers leave the missionaries will come in . . . and we'll go into other nations the same way." Elder Rector emphasized the appropriateness of military service, saying, "I feel it is our sacred honor and duty we are upholding when we serve the 'Stars and Stripes'."

On the other hand, Elder Rector did not condemn conscientious objection. He said, "The Church recognizes your legal right to be a conscientious objector, but you can't use the Church as your justification. . . . [and] we do not recommend it." He said, "I see nothing wrong with it [being a conscientious objector], but I'm glad everybody doesn't try it. I feel very strongly that service in the military is service to the Lord, but you may be able to serve in some other way." Elder Rector emphasized that conscientious objection must be an individual choice. "We're not trying to tell you what to do," he told his student audience, "you are a free agent."

Of those who "served the Lord" in Vietnam, some returned home bragging about how many "gooks" they had killed; others came home disillusioned and even bitter about military service and even about their religious faith; many more returned home with their spiritual tranquility permanently shattered.

We may again face the possibility that young LDS men will be called upon, in the name of duty to God and country, to machine-gun teenagers, women, and children in some remote jungle before returning home to mother, apple-pie and Monday Night Football. We must prepare now for the effort to dissuade them from so doing.

Mark A. Riddle
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LAW AND THE IMMORAL MAJORITY

Mark S. Lee ("Legislating Morality: *Reynolds* vs. *United States*," SUNSTONE vol. 10 no. 4) argues that *Reynolds* was rightly decided, and that a modern reversal of that decision case and its reasoning would be a blow to those who now espouse Mormon standards of morality. I found the argument provocative, but nevertheless wrong.

The premise of Mr. Lee's defense of *Reynolds* is that the burden of proof as to alleged social harm from nonconformist behavior is misallocated under current law: Government should not be required to prove the social harm of nonconformist practices, but instead the adherents of such practices should be required to prove absence of social harm. This turns the First Amendment on its head. The Bill of Rights was not enacted to entrench "traditional values" with which the majority is comfortable, but rather is designed to provide protection to nonconformist minorities. Whether majorities ever need protection from government in a properly functioning democracy is an open question; certainly, however, they need far less protection than minorities.

The issue is clarified if one moves away from moral judgments (such as the evil of pornography) with which Mormon culture is generally sympathetic. It is worth remembering that the majority of Americans have at various times countenanced (and in some respects still countenance) racial and religious bigotry and persecution, sexual discrimination, scientific superstition, alcohol abuse, obsessive devotion to career, neglect of family and exploitation of the poor and disadvantaged, none of which seem at first glance to be a value that Mormons would have a particular interest in adding to the body of moral judgments underlying the law. It is not difficult to imagine an American future in which the traditional American family includes two working parents, no religious beliefs, and children (if any) that are cared for at a state-run day care center. Should the majority ever attempt to mandate the conformance of all the people with such a lifestyle (on the theory that failure to conform is less productive and threatens the "traditional way of life"), would Mr. Lee feel comfortable proving that Mormon deviations from the norm are socially harmless? I, for one, would prefer to take my chances with the burden of proof on the government.

Moreover, whether it is constitutional or not, legislation of the morality espoused by Mr. Lee would be futile in any event. Mr. Lee believes he refutes the argument that government cannot legislate morality by repeating the truism that all law reflects moral judgments. This misses the point. No one will dispute that laws against "murder, theft, assault or rape" reflect moral judgments about the wrongness of such actions. These are the easy cases because there is overwhelming agreement among the members of society that such actions are morally wrong. Nevertheless, government cannot enforce a law if the moral judgment underlying that law is not subscribed to by the majority (perhaps the overwhelming majority) of citizens.

Could government enforce, if it were so inclined, a ban on alcoholic beverages? (Evidence of social harm is abundant here.) Marijuana? Extramarital sex? History demonstrates that the moral judgments underlying such laws were not enforceable because too many citizens disagreed with such judgments. Sadly, prostitution, pornography and similar activities flourish in our society, not because the government artificially is denied the tools or the evidence to eradicate such activities, but because too many of the people who elect and control government approve of such behavior (or, at least, do not disapprove). As Pogo Possum once said, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Believing that Mr. Lee intended to prescribe what the law should be (as opposed to describing what the law now is), I have not focused on the flaws of Mr. Lee's constitutional analysis under current law. There have, however, been several developments in constitutional law since 1878 which severely undercut the continuing vitality of *Reynolds*. Currently, when government action intrudes upon a so-called "fundamental" right such as the free exercise of religion or the right to marry, it is not enough for the government to assert in defense of the intruding law that it protects or promotes a vague and diffuse governmental interest such as "public morality"; the government instead must show that the law corrects a specific harm to an interest that is relatively high on the social hierarchy of values and that it does so in the least intrusive manner. See, e.g., *Loving* vs. *Virginia*, 388 U.S. (1967); *Murdock* vs. *Pennsylvania*, 319 U.S. 296 (1943); *Cantwell* vs. *Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296 (1940). Moreover, even laws that do not single out minority groups for discrimination may be found unconstitutional if there is evidence that the law does in fact harm such groups and that the government passed the law with an intent to discriminate. *Personnel Administration* vs. *Feeney*, 442 U.S. 256 (1979); *Village of Arlington Heights* vs. *Metro Housing Development Corp..*, 449 U.S. 252 (1978); *Yick Wo* vs. *Hopkins*, 118 U.S. 356 (1886). In view of the violence and persecution against the Mormons preceding passage of the antibigamy and disenfranchisement laws, as well as the relatively loose morals that generally prevailed on the American frontier, one can credibly argue that Congress was not so concerned with protecting "public morality" as it was with continuing to persecute a disfavored religious minority. If evidence of discriminatory intent could be adduced, current constitutional law would dictate that *Reynolds* be decided differently.

Frederick M. Gedicks
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WITHOUT WINDOWS OF HEAVEN

I want to comment on Robert Bohn's article on tithing (9:1), which was very interesting. I was, however, disappointed that he failed to suggest answers to some of the questions he raised such as whether we should pay tithing on gross, net or taxable income. Maybe, he just didn't have the energy to suggest answers, knowing they are difficult.

For myself, I am sick and tired of sacrament meetings and stake conferences where a wealthy Church leader preaches tithing as if it were a guaranteed program to riches. My personal experience in paying tithing is that it does not make me richer; it makes me poorer, at least financially. After all, it is a sacrifice! I pay tithing knowing that in doing it I sacrifice material goods that my neighbors are not sacrificing. But I do it because of my love, however weak or faltering, for the Lord and his Church.

So I would like just once to hear tithing taught without all of the "Windows of Heaven" and "Fire Insurance" get-rich promises. I suspect that for the average Latter-day Saint who is struggling financially, tithing has to be an act of deep devotion and religious sacrifice. I would like to see our rhetoric match that devotion.

Also, I have become aware of a widening gap between the way the middle class and the upper middle class in the Church pay tithing. The former, who don't have tax lawyers or accountants, tend to pay tithing on their gross salaries or wages, which ends up to be something like 15 to 20% of disposable income. (That is a real sacrifice!) The latter, who exert great efforts sometimes to decrease taxable income to avoid paying Uncle Sam, tend to pay tithing on their taxable income. Yet, their taxable income, by its very nature, cannot be a true representation of their income. In my ward, we even had a rather well-to-do and successful corporate manager get up in testimony meeting and say that after his tax accountant had done his taxes he found out that he had paid too much tithing based on his taxable income. Of course, this distressed him until he later received a huge bonus. His testimony was that he attributed the bonus to his overpayment of tithing as a reward for his righteousness.

Yet, how many wage-earners are paying tithing on true income, not taxable income, and not receiving bonuses or other financial windfalls. They just continue to struggle. (Do I dare ask: Is it possible the Lord seems to bless the rich more than the middle class? But I don't want to be cynical because that would make me hypocritical; I do want to write this letter in the spirit of love and faith.)

Maybe, the Church needs a little—gasp!—class consciousness—at least something to make us more sensitive to the differences between the way the different social and economic classes in the Church are paying tithing so that we can attempt to equalize them. After all, this Church was founded on the principle that material equality among the believers is a prerequisite for the spiritual greatness we must achieve before the Savior can return. (See D&C 78:5-6; 82:17-19.) In researching this topic, I have discovered that many of the well-to-do Mormons in my area pay much less tithing than would a wage earner who paid 10% tithing on gross income if his wages equaled the national average of about $26,000 a year. Frankly, I hope we do not let our inequitable taxing system which has created a two-tiered taxing for the middle class and one for the upper middle class and upper class—push us into a similar two-tiered tithing system.

Anthonie H. Woller
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What the Author Had in Mind

Text vs. Context in Mormon Scripture

By Kira Pratt Davis

My husband and I were sitting in our Sunday School class listening to our teacher, a Ph.D. candidate in New Testament studies at Catholic University, explicate John 5:39: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life."

"This does not mean what you think," he said. "Here Jesus is pointing out that the Jews are putting all their hopes for eternal life in outward performances. They think reading the scriptures is enough, while Jesus is actually . . ."

I elbowed my husband and whispered, "But if enough people *think* that this means Jesus wants us to study the scriptures, doesn't it eventually come to mean that?"

He smiled. "Do you really think it's all as relative as that?" I didn't know. I still don't.

This Sunday School teacher of ours (who also happens to be our good friend) insists that meaning is a stable and constant thing; the meaning of a text is the intention of the person who wrote it, refracted through that person like light through mottled glass, quirky and individual because of the writer's culture and personal idiosyncrasies. To discover the real meaning, our friend maintains, you have to look at the author's background, what was being said and done at the time the work was written. The real meaning, because it is the author's original intention, cannot change; it is permanent, inflexible, and "out there somewhere."

But looking at an author's intention, or at the author's personality, and in some way anchoring the meaning to the person who wrote the work, is just one of three general ways that people find meaning in a text. One can also look at texts themselves as the primary authority on what they have to say, or one can look at the readers of a text and take their conclusons as the real meaning of a text.

WHAT DID THE AUTHOR INTEND?

For a long time people studied and deciphered literature by looking at authors. They read Shakespeare's will and wondered about his "second best bed"; they tried to guess who the "dark woman" of the sonnets might be, and the identity of the mysterious young man. Wordsworth's letters and diaries were carefully searched for clues to his private system of symbols and for events in his personal life that gave greater signficance to certain of his poems than they would otherwise have deserved. The scribblings that Blake made in the margins of his Bible have been published and dissected, as if the real meaning of Blake's or of anyone's works lay not in the poetry, but was still somehow locked up in the author and had to be pried loose. With the advent of Freudian analysis an author's neuroses became part of the "meaning" of his works, and authors like Eliot, Pound, and Yeats began writing an intensely personal, obscure kind of poetry that counted on being solved almost as much as on being read. Poetry itself became almost a side issue, a vehicle for entering the life or the psyche of the poet.

But this type of criticism, this method of getting at the meaning of a work put quite a strain on readers. One had to study much more than the text in order to find its meaning. This approach is further limited by the fact that a poem can mean a great deal more than its author says it means; Coleridge, for example, claimed that the poem "Kubla Khan" was the artifact of a senseless opium dream.

We face many of the same problems when we try to base all the meaning in our scriptures on the person(s) who wrote them. We want the scriptures to be accessible, not requiring knowledge of ancient burial customs or Roman law in order to make sense of Sarah's death or Jesus' parables. And, just as in literature, we sometimes discover more meaning in a passage than its author likely intended. For example, we read Isaiah talking about the desert "blossoming as a rose" as if he not only saw the little band of pioneers setting up camp in Utah, but saw ZCMI and the Central Utah Water Project as well. Granted, it may be that God saw those things and inspired Isaiah to frame his thought in those

particular words so that we could understand it in our own way; but this brings up a whole new author and a whole new intention.

We Mormons have still other problems with anchoring the meaning of our scriptures to their human authors. Many of the passages in our sacred texts are identical (or nearly identical) but are cited in different contexts as the words of different people. Must we try to figure out what Isaiah had in mind in those Isaiah passages quoted in the Book of Mormon? Or must we try to work out the understanding Nephi had of those words, what *he* and not necessarily Isaiah thought they meant? Or must we look at Joseph Smith as the mind through which the Book of Mormon had to filter, perhaps collecting Joseph's own personal associations and ideas along the way? The same problem arises with the quotations from Paul in the Book of Mormon: does the "meaning" change from what Paul had in mind to what Mormon and Moroni were thinking there, on the brink of destruction, about faith, hope, and charity? A change in the perceived author can drastically alter the meaning of a text.

All anyone had to do was read carefully, and he or she would find the meaning, which lay in the words themselves and not in the author's hidden intention or underlying neuroses.

This point was vividly illustrated for me once when our Sunday School teacher passed around some survey sheets in class. The survey contained five rather thought-provoking quotes, attributed on half the surveys to General Authorities and on the other half to non-Mormons, anti-Mormons, sociologists, and psychologists. There was a space by each statement to respond *yes* or *no* to show whether we agreed or not. The teacher gently chided me for disagreeing with this statement, attributed to Mark Leone, "non-Mormon anthropologist and student of Mormonism":

Though general authorities are authorities in the sense of having power to administer church affairs, they may or may not be authorities in the sense of doctrinal knowledge, the intricacies of church procedures, or the receipt of the promptings of the Spirit. A call to an administrative position of itself adds little knowledge or power of discernment to an individual.

The statement was actually made by Bruce R. McConkie. The teacher said that we shouldn't let the authorship of a statement interfere with our judgment: "If a statement is true, it's true no matter who said it."

I felt uncomfortable with this approach as well, and eventually I figured out why I disagreed with the statement when it was made by Mark Leone and more or less agreed with it when Elder McConkie said it. When the statement came from an outsider who obviously didn't believe that the Church leaders got any "promptings of the Spirit" in the first place, it seemed to me a bit condescending and ironic, as if Mr. Leone was sure his audience would agree that these "authorities" were no authorities at all, and that the Mormons blundered along after them as best they could. Yet when I knew Bruce R. McConkie had said it, I knew that he meant added knowledge and inspiration don't come naturally to a newly called Church leader and that every leader has the responsibility of going out and earning that knowledge and inspiration. Changing who said it greatly affected what I thought was said. Yet the teacher insisted that we should be able to take these statements on their own merits, without the advantage (or the disadvantage) of a "historical" context.

Our teacher had changed his stance here. In the case of John 5:39 he insisted on an interpretation centered on the author's background and intention. I think he may have been stressing such a historical approach in order to counterbalance the popular interpretation of that scripture. He was educating the class, giving them a more academic look at an ancient text. He's probably right—a fact or two is cleansing once in a while. His approach with this little survey, on the other hand, was very text-oriented. There he was trying to pry the class opinion of these statements loose from the church-standings of the persons who made them—trying to get us to agree or not with them with our own minds, uninfluenced by Church authority. He changed his stance to fit what he wanted to teach, maintaining that it was important to know where ancient texts come from, but that it was important, also, to be able to make up our minds, independently, about what's true and what isn't. Both stances seem reasonable, but they imply very different assumptions about what is best to consider in deciphering meaning.

WHAT DOES THE WORK SAY?

There was a movement in literary criticism, a reaction against author and context-fixated criticism, which tried to take works of literature the way our teacher wanted us to take those statements (and *not* the way he wanted us to take John 5:39). This school, known as the New Critics, thought that a text should be its own best authority, that searching for "what porridge had John Keats" for example, was not the right way to arrive at the meaning of "Ode on a Grecian Urn." They wanted meaning to come directly from the text. These critics analyzed poetry as if the clues necessary to work out the meaning were all right there in the text. This was, at least, a democratic approach. Meaning was accessible, in theory, to any moderately well-informed reader. All anyone had to do was read carefully, and he or she would find the meaning, which lay in the words themselves, and not in the author's hidden intention or underlying neuroses.

This might also have been a nice way to look at scripture. It would be comforting to believe that everyone who reads the scriptures carefully will arrive at the same Real Meaning. Unfortunately, this isn't the case. It seems that readers bring along their own private associations and prejudices, their varying degrees of skill and imagina-

tion, and their own motives when they interpret a passage of scripture. Consequently, they arrive at different Real Meanings.

Another problem with simply studying the text is that it can take us very far from the author's original intention and whatever claim that intention has on the meaning. Quirky changes in customs and in language from time to time and from place to place can totally transform meaning. One of my favorite examples of this comes from an essay called "Shakespeare in the Bush" by Laura Bohannan, a woman who spent some time living with the Tiv tribes in West Africa. To pass the time one rainy day, she told them the story of *Hamlet*. The story made perfect sense to the tribesmen, but it was a sense that included general approval of Claudius's marrying Gertrude (mourning wasn't sensible—who would till the woman's fields?); bewitchment of Hamlet by one of his male relatives, most likely Claudius; Laertes's killing Ophelia to sell her body to the witches to get money for fines imposed on him for fighting; and Hamlet issuing a proper hunter's warning in his mother's room when he called out "a rat!" before stabbing Polonius. It is not hard to imagine a similar cultural gap existing between us and the writers of the Old Testament. I dare say Isaiah would be as taken aback by our understanding of the desert blossoming as the rose as Shakespeare would be by the Tiv understanding of *Hamlet*.

Gaps between cultures and times are not the only problems we face when we attempt to understand the scriptures through their words alone. Some texts inherently provoke our distrust. With the Bible we envision shadowy middlemen, scribes who miscopied or even purposely changed the text given by God. This seems to give us license to rearrange and reinterpret parts of the text according to our convictions of God's real intentions, as guided by latter-day revelation. Thus we read God's rebuke to Job not as a taunt at Job's foolishness and presumption, but as a hint of our premortal existence: "Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7.) In the same way, because we are sure Jesus wanted to tell us to read the scriptures, we read "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life" as an admonition and not as a rebuke or a step in a logical argument.

WHAT DO THE READERS BELIEVE?

Even when we're sure we have a "pure" text, such as the Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants, we do not make our interpretation based solely on the text. For example, the Book of Mormon warns against polygamy; it spends several pages talking about how harmful it is and includes only a verse or two of loophole for those special cases where God might command it. Yet our interpretation concentrates on that little loophole, and we see the passage as a general sanction of the principle. Obviously, we are consulting something else to find the meaning of our scriptures; namely, the interpretation our community as a whole makes of a piece of scripture. This is the third of the three ways of making sense of something written—going to informed readers, the "interpretive community," to find out what a text means.

The term *interpretive community* comes from Stanley Fish, a modern critic who says that the opinions of the educated make up the meaning of a text. These opinions exclude from the text's meaning things the reading community sees as ridiculous, far-fetched, or uninformed. Correct interpretation, according to this view, is simply an interpretation that a group of people in the know agree upon. This seems like a very relative, secular, and humanistic definition of true meaning, and yet this is our most common method for deciding what our scriptures mean.

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Critics like Fish say that the meaning of a text is the reader's own invention—a thought that can be at once both obvious and shocking: It's obvious that texts are human inventions made up of language, which is itself an invention, a set of tentative agreements about meaning that survives only because we all keep on agreeing, yet shocking to think that there is no absolute meaning apart from our agreement, no actual innate sense to a text. The only sense is the sense we make; it's all in the subtle contract between author and readers, and in the sense and order-loving faculties of our minds. We the readers build a sense to go with a passage, and the only thing that limits the meanings a passage can have is the agreement of the community .

Yet there are problems with this approach to meaning, both in literature and in scripture. The meaning attributed to a work by a group of readers may be very far from what the author originally intended. We must decide whether that matters. And the portion of "real meaning" agreed upon by all the members of a large reading community may be so small that it becomes trivial: Wordsworth enjoyed the daffodils on the hillside, and Jesus wants us to be good and love each other; but beyond these basic points, there is very little reader agreement on the meaning of Wordsworth's poem or Jesus' words. In addition, a reader may feel very well informed and skillful, yet still reach entirely different conclusions from the rest of the community.

The Mormon interpretive community is very strong. It announces its opinions in dictionaries and commentaries and sneaks them in through cross-references. So thorough is this effort that it becomes difficult to get past the official opinions to read the texts themselves without bias or to examine historical backgrounds with no preconceptions of what took place. Our interpretive community tells us what the scriptures mean,

and the meaning our community espouses becomes the meaning that acts in our minds. That's why I nudged my husband in Sunday School: "If enough people say this, doesn't it come to mean this?" The scriptures are, in a very practical way, not for private interpretation. They are for interpretation by our parents, primary teachers, seminary teachers, sacrament meeting speakers, mission presidents, General Authorities, and correlation committees. Our inspired texts are not left to be interpreted according to the whims of every reader; the play of meaning is limited by an official and, we hope, inspired paraphrase.

When it comes down to it, we on earth can only *feel* that we have hit on God's intention; we can never entirely overcome the limitations of "making sense."

However, this relative, reader-based way of making sense tends to leave the text itself and the author's intention dangling. After all, one feels just a bit strange going to a source outside of both the text and the author for the "true meaning" of a work. Perhaps we don't mind it so much becuse we feel that the real author of our scriptures is God, and that he will tell us by inspiration through the proper authorities what his words are supposed to mean. The peculiarities of context, history, and personality will slough off along with the author's original intent, as the Word assumes a new shape appropriate to our new needs. This view, of course, requires a great deal of faith; faith that God knew all of Joseph Smith's and our little idiosyncrasies and prefigured his turns of speech and accidental cultural baggage into our spiritual needs and our way of understanding. It seems to me a faith bordering on a belief in predestination.

In *The Silver Chair* C. S. Lewis has written a children's parable that illustrates the justification for this almost egocentric interpretation of random events as signs. The heroes of the story, two children and a Marshwiggle, are looking for the prince of Narnia, who has been kidnapped. Aslan, the Lion-God of Narnia, tells the children that when they reach the place where the prince is hidden they will see their instructions written there. They travel to a ruined city of the giants and find the words *UNDER ME* chiseled in huge letters on the street. They find an opening and enter a giant underground city. Later they argue with a young man (in reality the enchanted prince) about the significance of their sign:

"Those words meant nothing to your purpose. Had you but asked my Lady, she could have given you better counsel. For those words are all that is left of a longer script, which in ancient times, as she well remembers, expressed this verse:

Though under earth and throneless now I be,
Yet while I lived, all earth was under me.

From which it is plain that some great king of the ancient giants who lies buried there, caused this boast to be cut in the stone over his sepulchre; though the breaking up of some stones, and the carrying away of others for new buildings, and the filling up of the cuts with rubble has left only two words that can still be read. Is it not the merriest jest in the world that you should have thought they were written to you?"

This was like cold water down the back to Scrubb and Jill; for it seemed to them very likely that the words had nothing to do with their quest at all, and that they had been taken in by a mere accident.

"Don't you mind," said Puddleglum. "There are *no accidents. Our guide is Aslan; and he was there when the giant king caused the letters to be cut, and he knew already all things that would come of them; including* this."

It was an act of faith for Puddleglum to assume Aslan's involvement in the maneuvering of the words on the stones; it is even more an act of faith for us to assume God's involvement in the maneuvering of language and culture and history in our scriptures and the ways they become signficiant to us. Aslan, after all, told the children clearly, straightforwardly, and in person what to look for; the most we can hope for is a burning in the bosom. Lewis's story is a simple one and leaves out all the hard parts, the difficulties we find when we try to separate God's intentions from our own desires and our own natural tendencies to impute an order to things. When it comes down to it, we on earth can only *feel* that we have hit on God's intention; we can never overcome the limitations of "making sense."

CONCLUSION

In discussing John 5:39, my Sunday School teacher asserted that Jesus intended "to show the Jews that the point of all their scripture study was to learn of him, that scripture study by itself was getting them nowhere."

I wondered: did the scriptures testify of him then in the same strange ways that our scriptures testify now? Did the early disciples read with as much an ahistorical eye of faith as we do? Perhaps the quotes they chose to show that the prophets spoke of Christ were as coincidental and out of context as the quotes we love so well. Perhaps God has always meant us to read that way, likening all things to ourselves and using the scriptures like a Urim and Thummim floating down the ages, showing us different things at different times according to what we need. Can it all be that relative? Our teacher is sure it's not; for him, what the earthly author of an ancient text meant is the true meaning. My husband smiles at the idea of such fluidity in the scriptures; he finds the idea interesting, but a little mystical. As for me, it seems that relying on the community of informed readers for interpretation of scriptures takes a great, blind, trusting faith that God knows us very well and that our seemingly random ways of making sense of the scriptures were included in his intention when he caused the text to be written. Can we trust our own chance opinions so much? Perhaps we should recognize what our current approach to the scriptures says about our faith—or our egocentrism.

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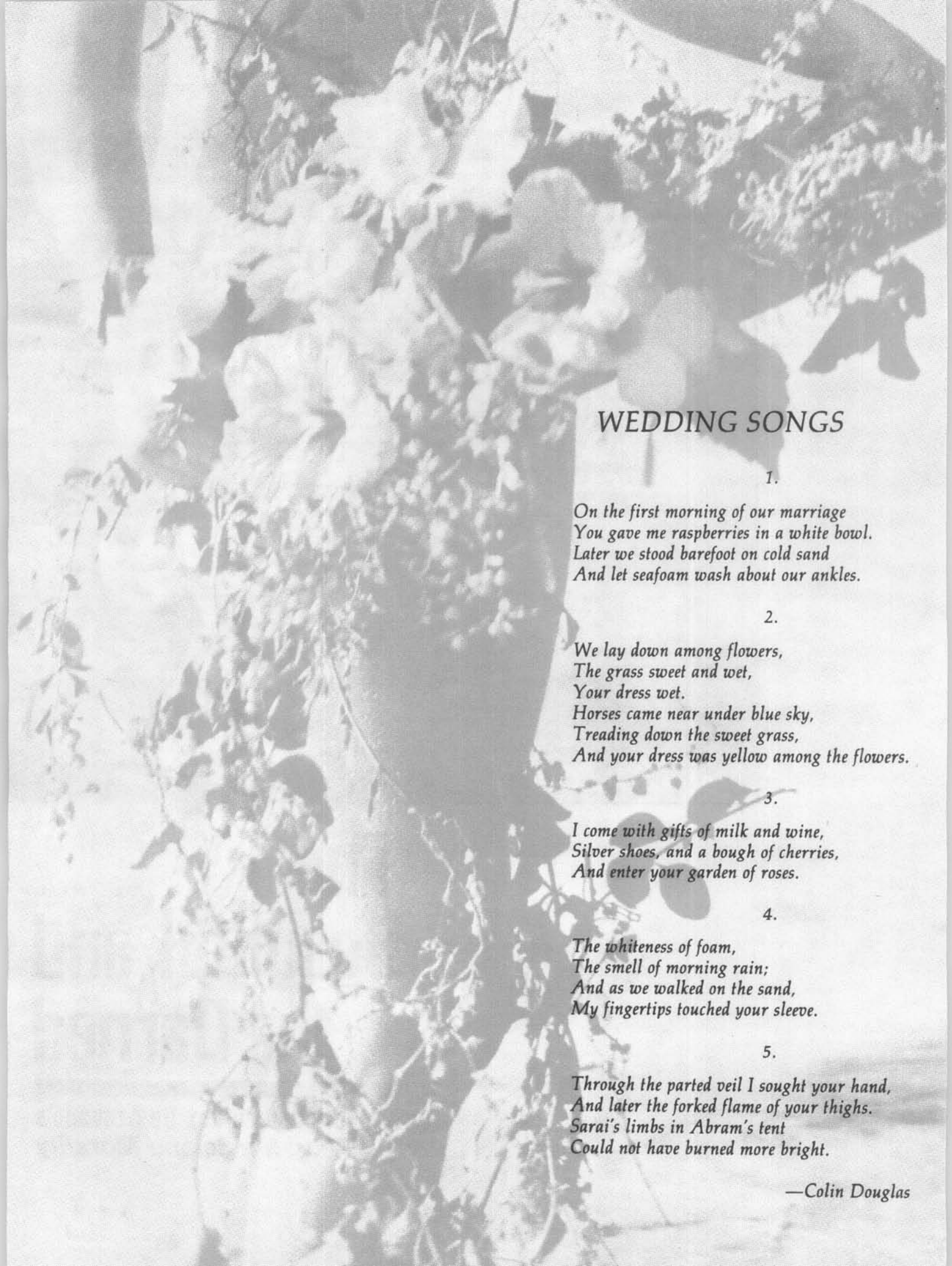


WEDDING SONGS

1.

On the first morning of our marriage
You gave me raspberries in a white bowl.
Later we stood barefoot on cold sand
And let seafoam wash about our ankles.

2.

We lay down among flowers,
The grass sweet and wet,
Your dress wet.
Horses came near under blue sky,
Treading down the sweet grass,
And your dress was yellow among the flowers.

3.

I come with gifts of milk and wine,
Silver shoes, and a bough of cherries,
And enter your garden of roses.

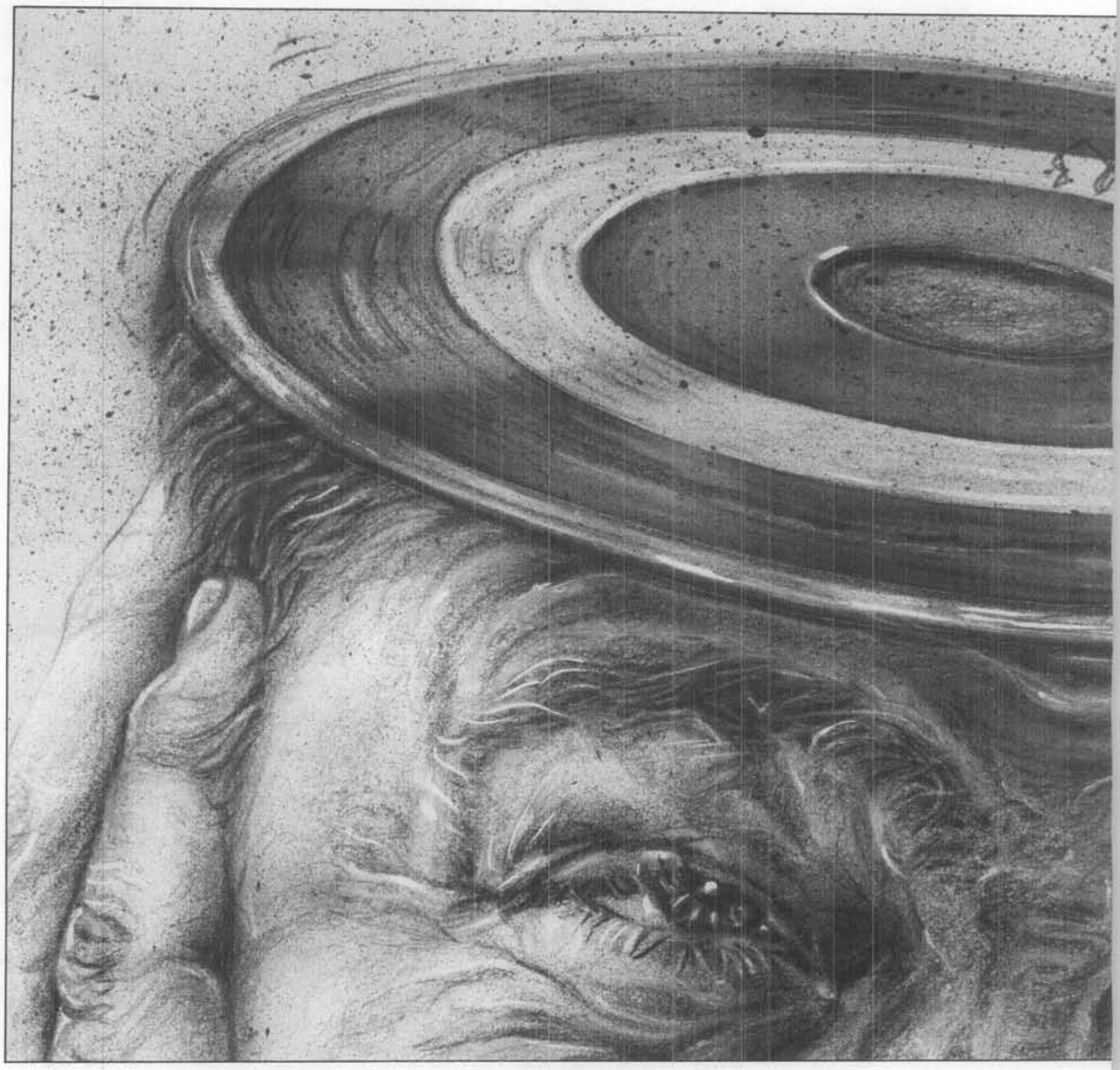
4.

The whiteness of foam,
The smell of morning rain;
And as we walked on the sand,
My fingertips touched your sleeve.

5.

Through the parted veil I sought your hand,
And later the forked flame of your thighs.
Sarai's limbs in Abram's tent
Could not have burned more bright.

—*Colin Douglas*



The Beautiful and the Darned

By Michael Hicks

A Meditation on Lex De Azevedo's *Pop Music and Morality*

They say that spring
Means just one thing
To little love birds;
We're not above birds —
Let's misbehave!
—"Let's Misbehave,"
Cole Porter, 1927.

There is nothing new under the sun, lamented Solomon. Surely *Pop Music and Morality* (North Hollywood: Embryo Books, 1982) by Lex De Azevedo, like the mischief it seeks to expose, is part of the nothing that is new. Yet it is a book that is not altogether unthoughtful, and it can help one think. Fortunately, like most gift books, it has good wide margins in which to inscribe one's thoughts. And like most gift books, between the margins it is a little book indeed. But it is a book that should not be dismissed lightly. It must be dismissed heavily. For this book is another ill-dispatched spear in the crusade against the life of the senses, a holy war that has gone on at least since the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

In this war De Azevedo clearly considers himself the unsung hero, devoting the first twenty-eight pages (one fifth of the book) to reflections on his own career. Trained in MOR (middle-of-the-road) commercial music, including work in movies and television, the author saw the light when he and Doug Stewart were impelled to create a "new art form"—the Mormon pop musical (p. 18). The anecdotes in this autobiographical section of the book give priceless insights into a man who has found in Mormon audiences a legitimate counterweight to tainted Hollywood money. And his commentary shows not only how mixed are his feelings toward commercial music—he is constantly repenting of it but never able to transcend it—but also how confused are the blueprints for the Mormon musical empire. Indeed, though De Azevedo gives himself credit for originating this "new art form" with *Saturday's Warrior*, he also claims, "I do not consider myself an 'artist'" (p. 27). By now our past should have taught us that art forms without artists are dangerous toys. In such art forms, which are always ultimately controlled by despots and clerics, music exists as an "effective means of indoctrination" (p. 41) because "music communicates feelings. . . . And it is our emotions and feelings which really govern our lives and our actions" (p. 37). Certainly music can be and has been used to indoctrinate and govern by emotional wooing. (As the young Napoleon slyly put it: "Of all the fine arts music is the one which has the greatest impact on the emotions, the one which legislators should encourage most.") But in the face of such manipulation the proper response is to resist action propelled by emotion in favor of action based on reason, covenant, or propriety. De Azevedo's response, in the best tradition of the propagandist, is to concoct more overtly emotional music, a flood of sound that will govern people better, more purposefully, more morally, more Mormonly. For, as he writes, "I have chosen music as my weapon" (p. 27).

But there is still this book—somebody had to write it. De Azevedo, the professional pop musician, felt the call. This book is his self-purgation for being part of the decadent pop scene (which, in a transfigured state, he now intends to erect in Mormondom.) Given the author's assumptions, the book proceeds quite logically and coherently to indict all abuses of the divine indoctrinator. The line he follows is this: Music powerfully affects the body, emotions, and mind; since it is so powerful it may be used to corrupt or ennoble; the words of today's popular songs reveal an increasingly evil intent; they should be shunned. As in many such treatises, two problems of method stand out.

First problem: De Azevedo forages for immoral, satanic, anarchic, and drug allusions in both well-

known and obscure songs from all categories of contemporary music. He lumps together lyrics from the Captain and Tennille, Bob Dylan, the Dead Kennedys, and the Oak Ridge Boys, as though they represented samples from a single uniform culture of decadence. (See his explicit rejection of taxonomy, p. xi.) But punk and country, to name just two examples, are relatively self-contained cultures; to indict the esoteric texts of one of these is hardly to indict a general "pop" culture. And De Azevedo feels that by bringing to light lyrics that are not generally known, he is exposing a peculiarly insidious influence. But the obscurity of some of his sources argues against the breadth of their influence, not for it. Clearly, some of the vicious popular music he cites is just not popular. (How many people do you know who have ever heard of China White? Hint: it's a popular group.) De Azevedo is a conspiracist. The less obvious things are, the more suspicious. The less evidence exists, the more devious the cover-up.

Marriage is not the triumph of love over lust but the amalgamation of "lust" into a broader conception of "love."

Second problem: The author clearly believes that immorality is in the heart of the perpetrator. Yet if the intent of a song is ambiguous, De Azevedo has the power to make it plain. For example, in recent lectures he has castigated the lithe, androgynous Jehovah's Witness Michael Jackson for "Beat It." Says De Azevedo, despite the song's preachy lyrics, its vivid anti-gang-war video, its use in Reagan's anti-dope campaign and, above all, the express testimony of Jackson himself, "Beat It" is a masturbation song (get it?). A bishop when the book was written, De Azevedo probably had an understandable fixation on "self-abuse." But here, as in so many places he judges intent against evidence. With a knowing guffaw, the author looks for (and "finds") double entendre in even the blandest lyrics. Whenever the pronoun *it* appears in a song, De Azevedo interprets it to mean one controlled substance or another: dope, a penis, sexual intercourse, or VD. And at the opposite extreme, if a singer sings lyrics from, say, the devil's point of view—as in the Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil"—De Azevedo cannot get past the mere words to uncover any deeper moral intent. So on the one hand the author cannot accept the lyrics as they are, on the other hand he fails to make more of some lyrics than what the words say. How does he decide when to read between the lines? The rule is simple: whatever allows him to detect and to purge. When intelligent criticism fails him, fault-finding becomes the method.

I could just as easily do the same with his book, combing through it lyric by lyric, title by title, song by song, critiquing his judgment of the message and the intent of each word. But that is a nice parlor game, one to indulge with friends after the book is read and the margins are full. The real burden for us now is to detect and critique De Azevedo's message and intent. For what this book delivers in its concept of morality is a classic of what I call *denatured Mormonism.*

In denatured Mormonism, Eros has not only been ousted from heaven, he has been banned on earth. Sexual desire is carnality, sensuousness is sensuality, devilishness. Sex overwhelms, embarrasses, and frustrates—it cannot be from God. When sexuality is transformed into words, music, or dance, veiling its face as it were, it teases all the more. In denatured Mormonism sex, its chemistry and its mystique, are just part of the devil's plot.

A favorite rhetorical implement of denatured Mormonism is the opposition of "love" to "lust." De Azevedo himself uses it: "The dividing line between noble, uplifting 'love' songs and degrading 'lust' songs can be very subtle at times" (p. 86). In the typical formulation "love" is a kind of holy concern, while "lust" is sexual desire. Love is compassion; lust is "mere" passion. So simply have love and lust been divided in denatured Mormonism.

Our whole system of marriage—the cultural sanction of sexual intercourse and its effects—shows contempt for the dichotomy of love and lust. Marital love must be preceded and accompanied by a strong sexual desire—a kind of lust for the partner (to use the denatured Mormon term). And sexual passion must be accompanied by care and respect. Marriage, perhaps Mormonism's highest value, is not the triumph of love over lust but the amalgamation of "lust" into a broader conception of "love." Marriage is, in part, a covenant to maintain that amalgamation and breadth of love with one's spouse. (If I may appeal to the Mormon-Masonic image of the compass, the idea is that appetites and passions, which are amoral at worst, must be kept within the bounds the Lord has set—the covenant.) Erotic sensations must not be repressed, but indulged with one's mate in the euphoria of intimacy and intercourse. The nuptial celebration itself, in which the couple is blessed by the community henceforth to enjoy one another bodily (and to create other bodies), is essentially an erotic ritual, not a reluctant concession to the devil.

Solomon wrote a huge erotic song about marriage and its pleasures, to celebrate the sexual relations he was (apparently) so adept at. Although some Mormons, including Joseph Smith, find the book "uninspired" (i.e., wish that more "plain and precious parts" had been expurgated), we have it in the canon—so far as it is translated correctly. But today, Carly Simon sings "Nobody Does It Better"—another of the "it" songs De Azevedo scorns—and we threaten to ban it. The difference in our attitudes may be accounted for in several ways. First, Solomon is older, hence more "sacred"; the weight of history and tradition tip the scales to his side. Second, Solomon is a man; a woman singing about sexual relations, however obliquely, stirs in the dominant male a

certain terror of his own love/hatred of Eve, the temptress who is "the mother of all living." Most importantly though, children listen to Carly Simon and never read Solomon. She sings openly, while Solomon sleeps between the pages of scripture. The popular song constitutes for denatured Mormons a far more dangerous eroticism, for it admits eros to the company of the unmarried (where in spirit he has always been).

If the Garden of Eden tale says anything, it is that what is forbidden becomes our obsession. And sure enough, the affections of mariage forbidden to the unmarried have always cropped up in popular music. Reading *Pop Music and Morality* I was struck by how tired many of the "daring" lyrics of today really are. The most flagrant "it" song of the twentieth centure is Cole Porter's 1928 "Let's Do It" (Birds do it / Bees do it / Even sentimental fleas do it . . ."). "Just a Gigolo," "Forbidden Fruit," "Love for Sale," and the astonishing "I Want To Be Raided by You" ("I'm a night club queen / And rather obscene / And I want to be raided by you") had all appeared by 1930. References to "making love," a long-standing double entendre, abound in the music of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Billy Joel's "Only the Good Die Young," which De Azevedo calls "a sermon for immorality" (p. 56), is hardly more blatant than "Let's Misbehave," a 1928 hit for Irving Aaronson and His Commanders.

Joel	**Aaronson**
Come out Virginia	*You could have a great career*
Don't let me wait	*And you should*
You Catholic girls	*Only one thing stops you dear—*
Start much too late	*You're too good*
But sooner or later	*If you want a future darling*
It comes down to fate	*Why don't you get a past*
I might as well be the one	*Cause that fatal moment's come at last.*

De Azevedo complains about Olivia Newton John's "Let's Get Physical" but apparently sees no connection between its sentiments and those of Ellington-Gaines's "Just Squeeze Me" (which De Azevedo's mother, Alyce King, recorded in 1947). The roaring twenties' Helen Kane popularized "I Want To Be Bad" ("When you're learning what lips are for / And it's naughty to ask for more / Let a lady confess / I want to be bad"); her mantle has lately fallen upon groups like Vanity 6 (a modern parody of the 1920s group The Three Girl Friends), in their "Do You Think I'm a Nasty Girl?"—though even the lascivious Kane could not approach the confessions of Vanity's lyrics ("I'm looking for a man who will do it anywhere / Even on the limousine floor").

The treble clef that adorns the dust jacket of *Pop Music and Morality* resembles an inverted question mark, an interrogative to which the first response is: "there is nothing new under the sun." When we, with Solomon, have stopped asking "what's new?" we might ask "what's wrong?"

Although I agree with De Azevedo that many modern lyrics promote or at least acquiesce to infidelity and extramarital indulgence—and this is true of lyrics going back to the origins of song itself—many erotically allusive song lyrics, if not most, are inherently neither promiscuous nor illicit. They celebrate love and desire, which in the abstract are intensely moral. (The issue of that enormous genre "pornography"—literally "prostitute writing"—I leave for another occasion, except to note that by definition pornography revels in two things: promiscuity and profit.) Permit me to cite Parley Pratt, who explained in unmistakeable terms the goodness of erotic desire:

In all these things man has mistaken the source of happiness; has been dissatisfied with the elements and attributes of his nature, and has tried, and sought, and prayed, in vain to make himself into a different being from what the Lord has wisely designed he should be. The fact is, God made man, male and female; he planted in their bosoms those affections which are calculated to promote their happiness and union. That by that union they might fulfill the first great commandment; viz: "To multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it." From this union of affection springs all other relationships, social joys and affections, diffused through every branch of human existence.

Sex becomes song and is released through that sensuous medium and not through its natural systems.

This statement by a man who aspired to the Solomonic order of marriage represents pure (forgive the pun) unadulterated Mormonism.

When the passions are indulged in song that is without immoral (i.e. covenant-breaking) intent, the passions themselves are transformed into another language, a code with a definite unique structure. Sex *becomes* song and is released through that sensuous medium and not through its natural systems. (This is as true of nineteenth-century art music as of modern pop. As one musician recently remarked to me, "In Tchaikovsky there's an orgasm every six minutes.") As such, erotic song becomes a useful counterpoint to marital relations and a legitimate vessel for the unconsummated passions of the unmarried. For in Mormonism the unmarried are wholly destined for marriage by their religion, either the reality or the fantasy of its consummation. To the extent that songs embody the "infinite longing" of romance and, specifically, romanticism, they corporealize the dreams of young Mormons, for whom marriage equals exaltation. For married Mormons they make flesh the continuing quest for youth, immortality, and, in godhood, fertility. Erotic songs add a layer of polyphony to the act of marital love; through recordings they confer an aural halo about the marriage bed, a veil, a canopy to the rites enacted there.

All of which brings us to the subject De Azevedo carefully avoids: pop *music*. He does talk about something he calls "music," an amorphous emotional power. Indeed he seems to feel that he

is penning a true aesthetics of music (as though a hermeneutics of song were not enough). His conclusions are scattered vagaries lifted from but bearing no relationship to a vast landscape of Western musical philosophy. Among them are: rhythm is music's real power—a point he makes first by effusion ("I love rhythm! It is much of the fun . . . of music," p. 32) then by citation of pop scientific studies, among whose conclusions are (1) anapestic meters weaken muscle tissue, and (2) Bach's B minor Mass "harmonize[s] with the natural vibrations of our bodies." One could quickly respond to these assertions by saying that (1) the characteristic anapestic meters of much martial music (not to mention the heroic anapests of the Greeks) seem rather to strengthen the muscles, and (2) our bodies do not consist of a uniform frequency—a "natural rhythm"—independent of will and changing chemical compositions.

Despite its name, "popular music" is only tenuously the people's, for it springs not from the people but from the merchants.

But these details are not near so important as De Azevedo's larger flawed conception. Not only does he treat meter, rhythm, and pulse as though they were all the same thing (a fault we try to correct in music fundamentals classes), but he fails to observe that pulse and pitch *are* essentially the same thing, their differences being only phenomenological, wholly contingent upon man's perceptive abilities. What we perceive as pitch is a pulse too fast to be comprehended as such; what we perceive as pulse is a pitch (frequency) too slow to be perceived as such. But because this book is, after all, a pop treatise, it will not do for its author to consider such things. It is more important to conclude his discussion of music's power with a platitude that seems to be drawn from the wells of pop religious cliche: "Music has found so many uses and purposes because of one simple fact. It can influence people's lives" (p. 35).

The author is what we call in aesthetics an emotionalist. To him "words communicate ideas; music communicates feelings" (p. 37). This dichotomy springs from one of those false dialectics of the "love vs. lust" variety. For words and music are not mutually exclusive in their effects. Both words and music depend on sonority and syntax—even De Azevedo defers to that old saying, "music is a universal *language*" (p. 37). Words, not just music, can communicate feelings, as poets all know; and music, as all musicians know, communicates ideas—not verbal ideas, of course, but musical ideas, which though they speak to a different region of the brain, are ideas nonetheless.

If music can communicate either ideas or feelings or both, then it is, as De Azevedo clumsily esteems it, a sacral power to be used only with the wisdom and grace of Solomon. Why then did the author choose pop music in particular as his "weapon" in the moral conflict of the ages? Because, as he believes, pop is "the language of the people" (p. 27). But despite its name, "popular music" is only tenuously the people's. For the style that De Azevedo trusts even to embody religious sentiment springs not from the people—in all the proletarian or folk senses of the term—but from the merchants. Pop music, if anything at all, is an industry, a product that is its own commercial. The music is manufactured by trained craftsmen to create specific effects. In folk art, people's art, techniques arise from necessity, forms emerge from the naive and simple visions of the folk consciousness. In popular art the techniques of aristocratic art are coopted into the domain of the middle and lower middle classes. The techniques, devoid of the weight of ideas that once necessitated them, are extrapolated and manipulated as pure "style." By technological media the masses are given an appetite for these glossy facsimiles of culture, then invited to consume (at "affordable prices"). When De Azevedo proclaims himself a musician of the people he tries to belie the very condescension by which he manipulates others through musical effects. The premise is: the people cannot indoctrinate themselves, someone must do it for them, that is, do it to them. De Azevedo uses pop music precisely because it was made to be *used*. It is not the music of the people, insofar as "people" constitutes a collection of persons, but of the mass. It is an art not created by them but for them—an art, indeed, that creates them.

Pop music does have moral consequences, but intrinsically, structurally, not really in the prattle of its lyrics (which function as music anyway, rarely as significant statements). If there is a coherent genus of music that can transcend the self-contained cultures of punk, country-western, and even *Saturday's Warrior*, its dominant trait is redundancy. This is not simply repetition, but needless, obnoxious, vain repetition. The catalog of pop technique is small indeed, and used to the uttermost: an emphasis on pulse (the essential redundancy), slow harmonic rhythm, indulgence in primary chords and chord progression formulae, endless strophism, and the ubiquitous, captivating refrain, known affectionately as "the hook." All this redundancy works catechismically, constraining thought into proven patterns, inducing a sense of predictability in the mind of the masses, a sense that may feel like prophecy. Pop music is the inverse of experimental music, that growing realm of art that seeks to widen perception, comprehension, and speculation. Pop is the art of the tried method. As such it can and should be useful as a healthy, occasional recuperation from thought. But at the moment it proceeds from antidote to steady diet it becomes for the listener true self-abuse.

This abuse can appeal to modern Mormons for several reasons. First, the tendency of pop music is to gravitate to the fundamental tones and to the rhythmic fundamental, pulse. This seems to symbolize the "recurrence to fundamentals" mentality, the constant urgings back to basics. Second, the notion of "orthodoxy," of holding to

standards of thought and of avoiding speculation, may be easily adopted as an aesthetic caveat, a premise whose dictates pop redundancy satisfies. Finally, redundancy itself has been redefined. That is, the needlessness of reiteration has been reinterpreted as necessity, according to the oft-repeated dictum, "we learn by repetition." Though we remember by repetition, we *learn* by perceiving. We may cross the familiar river a thousand times, but we learn when day breaks on the shore and we wrestle with angels. Learning requires constant exposure to the new, negating the bitter oppression of the routine. If I may paraphrase Ortega y Gasset, we arrive at each new truth with hands bloodstained from the slaughter of a thousand platitudes.

It is redundancy, not music per se, that is the most effective means of indoctrination, and which becomes so formidable a piece of De Azevedo's arsenal. The object of this weapon is the human mind. And it is De Azevedo's concept of the mind that is most frightening. In his universe the mind is a stage that sits silent and bare until its owner decorates and populates it with images. It is a near vestigial organ—static, blank, passive. It receives, it is something to be filled, not something to produce and act (p. 64). To the propagandist, in this book as elsewhere, it is messages which have moral consequences, not processes. That is, the means to shape the architecture of the mind are irrelevant, so long as the proper ends are accomplished, the proper content instilled. That redundancy deadens the mind's power to conceive for itself, if for no other reason than boredom, accounts for De Azevedo's ultimate faith in pop music. For his book is part of a now vast ideology that attempts to redesign the mind—not to mention the body—along utilitarian lines.

That ideology includes most of the pop industry itself. Both it and the author see music as a tool of indoctrination. And this in a way justifies De Azevedo's attempts to negate the preeminent messages of pop (without necessarily justifying his occasional hysteria). But between religion and pop more than a war of words is at hand. The chief conflict is between systems of authority. In any one of the separate subcultures that savor pop techniques, the cultural heroes—singers, mostly—dominate by the most primitive and hence potent essence: charisma. The crowds that have congregated around solitary figures like Sinatra and Elvis (consider how their names gain authority by being reduced to single words) or around groups ranging from the King Sisters to the Rolling Stones are following the impulses of charisma. Charisma draws the faithful into an essentially spiritual kingdom and governs by spiritual methods. Institutions, which tend to substitute routine for charisma, insisting that the office gives dignity and authority to the person and not the person to the office, are understandably jealous of pop stars. Musical idols seem effortlessly to master their followers while churches for example, go great lengths to sustain a far less energetic devotion.

Along with these conflicting systems of authority go conflicting myths: one, the myth of the pure, prophetic saint. Though the saint has had to suffer from his myth a reputation for a sort of vacuousness and dearth of passion, the artist, particularly the "popular" musician (taking Liszt and Paganini as prototypes), has had to endure a Faustian reputation and the perennial suspicion that his spiritual powers must be the devil's wages. The artist sells his soul to Satan, the saint sells his soul to God—though only in the artist's case does the loss seem notable. So goes the tale we have all been taught in our mother culture's lap.

Charisma draws the faithful into an essentially spiritual kingdom and governs by spiritual methods.

In a way the tale is true. The bureaucratic priest and the charismatic singer have both emptied themselves to attain something larger than individual being, both feeling that only by becoming elements in a larger system can they gain individual worth. Their souls consecrated to abstractions and their bodies consecrated to the media, they become living images of the fantasy of their followers: to escape from the body and from choice. The audience congregates for a vision of life devoid of the basic terror of aloneness, the fear of existing merely in a torso or a skull, distinct, separate from all else that exists, if it does exist. The content of the message, what the words mean, is a pretext, in popular religion as in popular musical life. The light that attracts like insects is the meaning of the system itself: largeness, comprehensiveness, absorption.

The author of *Pop Music and Morality* speaks in his quaint way of the desperation everyone feels, as well as the indecisiveness and the hypocrisy. His religious music—that "middle of the road pop sound"—and his treatment of secular pop articulates a peculiar doublemindedness: he is at once professional pop musician and persecutor of pop; composer for the people and servant of the industry; traditionalist and reformer; artist and non-artist. In his failure to face his professed subject, the music, he probably appeals to the evasive in all of us. For when confronted by all the real questions we may end up like Solomon, acquiring and lamenting, building up and destroying, writing and writing and writing only to conclude that all is vanity. De Azevedo's book symbolizes what so many of us achingly want to be: slim, casual, ambivalent, thoughtless, chaste. The book is one of the many manuals by which we learn to see the oneness of pop culture and pop cult. Each is a distinct antidote to being what a human is, yet each is a shadow of a larger, deeply human structure of bad faith. The provocation is mortality, the authority is feeling, the method is redundancy, the dream is extinction.

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The Spectrum of Belief

The Development of Religious Behavior in the Mormon Community

BY R. JAN STOUT

To the outside world, Mormons are often viewed as a cohesive group of people who share a common world view and adhere strongly to similar values and religious commitments. Despite this appearance of conformity and unity, a

wide spectrum of behaviors and beliefs exists in the Mormon community, from the Iron Rod (obedient conformist) and Liahona (questioning independent) Saints described by Richard Poll to the "Closet Doubters" identified by D. Jeff Burton. Other descriptive labels include cultural Mormons, Jack Mormons, intellectuals, fundamentalists, and active temple-goers.

Conversely, in spite of apparent differences both within and between religions, Latter-day Saints need to recognize the heritage we share with members of other faiths. In all successful religions, "being religious" involves an integration of belief, feeling, and practice. A body of beliefs and factual assertions must nourish the theologians and philosophers among us. Feelings of ecstasy, wonderment, and awe supply the mystical and transcendent needs. Rituals provide continuity, tradition, and solemnity for binding the intellect and emotions in a workable format. People obviously attach varying significance to these three factors, but all must be present to make for a widely accepted religion.

But even this observation does not go far enough. As M. Scott Peck has observed, "Since everyone has some understanding—some world view, no matter how limited or primitive or inaccurate—everyone has a religion" (*The Road Less Traveled*, p. 185). Specifically, our self-awareness forces all of us to struggle with questions of evil, death, ultimacy, and purpose. As a result, man, I contend, is of necessity a religious creature.

Fundamentally, then, we humans are far more alike than we are different. Yet dogmatic beliefs and behaviors keep us in contention. Why?

The formation of beliefs and religious practices is a highly complex and multi-factored phenomenon which is as poorly understood by Mormons as by anyone else. How do we reach the point where our beliefs acquire form and definition? Is that point only the product of complex psychological processes, cultural pressures, and dogmatic teachings? Or do God, the Holy Ghost, and Jesus Christ intervene to build testimonies for the faithful? Do we want our beliefs to reduce uncertainty and tension or to increase awareness, contingent knowledge, and existential anxiety?

Although it is not possible to explore all the components involved in the process of belief in a single paper, a limited conceptual approach may provide some insight. While these conceptual factors apply to all people, I will attempt to focus on their impact for the Latter-day Saint.

THE PROBLEM OF ANXIETY

The unconscious development of our various religious orientations is influenced by a number of factors. Role models, identification, pressure to conform, and other learning devices all contribute to the establishment of a theological position. In addition, provocative research in the area of sociobiology suggests that much of our behavior may be genetically determined. Studies of identical twins reared apart imply that even our religious activities may be influenced by powerful biological forces. Too, our religious beliefs can be profoundly influenced by specific individuals who "carry the word." Visionary prophets have the ability to touch the lives of countless followers by providing a meaningful focus for their religious experience.

While these influences are important, I nevertheless believe that a central factor in this process is the force of anxiety. This is not to suggest that conversion experiences are solely motivated by attempts to limit anxiety states. However, the need to belong, the escape from feelings of powerlessness, and the fresh infusion of meaning into converts' lives significantly augments the wish to be Mormon. But the "core religious experience" is perhaps, beyond the ultimate understanding of *any* psychological theory.

Anxiety has three basic forms, each of which confronts us with different developmental tasks. Psychiatrists refer to these types as "separation anxiety," "castration anxiety," and "existential anxiety." Fundamentally, each is inextricably interwoven into the shroud of our human dilemma: coping with death and the fear of personal extinction.

Separation anxiety can be described as the most primal tension-producing state. The infant's first encounter with this affect occurs when mother is no longer at his beck and call. He feels alone, vulnerable, and abandoned. The security of the womb has been lost and new, frightening perceptions are encountered. The breaking of the bond with the mother must be endured repeatedly and eventually numbed through denial and repression. Yet this original experience serves as a prototype for the anxiety state. It can be replayed countless times, and we must struggle to acquire defenses and solutions to its impact.

Castration anxiety does not necessarily mean literal anatomical dismemberment. It is the type of anxiety that accompanies the fear of punishment and retribution of any kind. We become aware of our lack of power and our need to seek support. We may have transgressed against a powerful perceived authority figure and desperately want to escape the inevitable wrath of his judgment. Joining a group can provide collective protection from this. Our fear and powerlessness are transformed into strength and security.

Existential anxiety arises when we are forced to confront the terror and uncertainty of a universe that seems awesome and overwhelming. We look beyond the safety of our family and predictable events to a world full of risks, dangers, and unknowns. There is no ready refuge from this awareness and dread. Traditional reassurances and answers will not fill

the void. In experiencing existential anxiety we look beyond them into a new and challenging frontier.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS TYPES

There are four groups of Mormons whose religious positions are determined to a significant extent by the interplay of these anxiety states, social forces, and life experiences. These are the "compliant-dependent," the "social-organizational," the "skeptic-individual" and the "transcendent-integrated."

Compliant-dependent (C-D) traits can arise in response to separation anxiety. These people retain their basic childhood orientation: a strong need to please, submit, and obey in order to avoid the dreaded fear of abandonment. C-Ds are adept at scanning the horizon for cues that keep them safely in the normative center. Belief can easily become subservient to personal comfort.

Kierkegaard warned: "To venture causes anxiety, but not to venture is to lose one's self."

Charles H. Monson refers to people he calls "habit-doers" and "God-gamblers" ("Religious Experience as an Argument for God" in *And More about God*, pp. 117-19). They live with their childhood habits, never bothering to ask significant questions; or they argue that God exists and religious activity is important, feeling that they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by believing, and conversely, nothing to gain and everything to lose by disbelief. These types easily fit into the C-D category, preferring not to risk being cut off from warm nurturing.

C-D types also experience a strong desire for unconditional love and place great emphasis on "people-pleasing." The syndrome described as the "Mother of Zion" seems to evolve largely from compliant-dependent behavior.

Many Mormons can recall the cozy satisfying memory of a star placed on the forehead in Junior Sunday School or the smile of approval from a pleased parent at the end of a two-and-a-half-minute talk. This is strong reinforcement stuff: Religious symbols and messages that promise us the chance of overcoming separation are highly prized. As Ernest Becker noted in *The Denial of Death*, "We obey our authority figures all our lives, as Freud showed, because of the anxiety of separation. Every time we try to do something other than what they wanted, we awaken the anxiety connected with them and their possible loss. To lose their powers and approval is thus to lose our very lives." (P. 212.) The strength of this drive for symbiotic comfort is rooted in our infancy and never completely leaves us. For C-Ds it remains the ultimate motivator for their religious life.

A note of caution: we should not take separation anxiety too lightly or view it simply as childlike and infantile. It is not reserved for compliant-dependent people alone. The feeling of intimacy, ecstasy, and unity with God may be essential to the transcendent religious experience described by Harris in his book, *I'm OK—You're OK* (p. 233). Certainly overcoming separation is the central message of the Atonement. However, to remain childlike and dependent is to deny our personal responsibility for attaining an integrated religious life. Kierkegaard warned, "To venture causes anxiety, but not to venture is to lose one's self."

Social-organizational (S-O) people value the group above all else. They gravitate toward authority and often seek positions of power. They can be rigid, legalistic, and obsessive-compulsive. They fear losing control and dealing with powerful emotions.

For S-Os the core anxiety problem revolves around punishment, loss of power, and impotence. This castration anxiety is an invention of the child, but it can consume the psychic life of adults. To a large extent, obedience to a strong, authoritarian religious body can help relieve this fear. Rituals and order become important, and attention to detail and proficiency in scriptural recall are highly coveted by these Mormons.

Social-organizational people are often greatly concerned with the "last days" and ultimate judgment. Love is considered conditional, and there is a strong patriarchal orientation; God is perceived as a loving father who rewards his children only when they have been dutiful, obedient, and faithful to the end. It is sometimes easier for them to follow the letter rather than the spirit of the law. The Iron Rod Saint described by Poll is perfectly at home in this category.

S-Os are Maslow's "non-peakers" and religious "bureaucrats" (*Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*, p. 25). Mormon S-Os find security in the organizational structure of the Church and often rise to levels of considerable authority through their hard work, loyalty, and obedience.

The *skeptic-individual* (S-I) has had to learn to deal with existential anxiety. The formulation that seemed to answer the religious questions of life earlier in childhood begins to falter. As one surveys the complexities and uncertainties of life, doubts can arise. "Does God really intervene and answer prayers regularly?" "Why was I born at this time and place in such favorable circumstances?" "What about God's other children who live in abject poverty and suffer miserable life situations?" Questions like these are not easily answered or ignored by the skeptic-individualistic person. They gnaw on his or her conscience and generate even further questioning.

As one's secular education increases, so does speculation. There is a growing sense of individual responsibility and less reliance on the Church to answer and resolve questions and doubts. For some this is a time of rebellion against authority. Skeptic-individualistic people often want to reject compliant-dependent and social-organizational Mormons, and they resent such traits in themselves.

Personal tragedies can suddenly catapult us into the S-I stance. Some Mormons find themselves bewildered, disillusioned, and betrayed by their previous religious orientation. This may lead to "falling away" into inactivity and cynicism. One may even angrily assert that "God doesn't exist and never did!" and reject all forms of active religious life. Or a cherished spiritual commitment may be quietly abandoned. Skepticism may appear in early adolescence; it may be brief—or it may last a lifetime.

Some S-Is evolve into "closet doubters" described by Burton. They do not want to abandon their religious ties, but they covertly struggle with questions and doubts. Others search for new ways to interpret the gospel and deal with life's mysteries.

There can be an exhilarating sense of freedom in learning to live with doubt, uncertainty, and questions. Existential anxiety can encourage growth and inspire the courage to explore new horizons. Yet there is always the danger of slipping into nihilism, cynicism, and meaninglessness. S-I Mormons often envy the certainty and security enjoyed by unquestioning Church members. They look back nostalgically to a time when life seemed more predictable and secure.

Some Mormons successfully compartmentalize their religious beliefs from their secular curiosity and growth. They stay safely in compliant-dependent or social-organizational stages. Although they may develop powerful intellectual insights and scientific knowledge, their intellectual growth doesn't seriously challenge their religious structure.

There are probably few *transcendent-integrated* (T-I) personalities among us. While many may have had brief tastes of this attitude, it is an elusive stage and difficult to maintain. The first three stages described are largely "egoic" in nature—that is, the individual's self-awareness and self-consciousness play a primary role. There is great concern with personal salvation, preservation of power, and awareness of one's intellectual life. The transcendent-integrated person has been able to move beyond these concerns. This state is available to all of us in those moments of spiritual enlightenment Maslow described as "peak-experiences." We become aware of feelings of ecstasy and wholeness and comprehend the unity of all things. Our concern for our fellow men transcends narrow self-interest.

At this level the integrated aspects of our personality become crucial. Lowell Bennion in his small and beautiful book *The Things that Matter Most* discusses the importance of integrity. He states, "There are two moral virtues which, I believe, encompass all others: integrity and love. If we would cultivate these two with an increasing understanding of their meaning we would fulfill our moral nature and find deep joy and great satisfaction." (P. 43.) In this stage we seek to integrate all those moral values which give deeper meaning to life. Existential anxiety is quieted and one comes to terms with one's being.

Many Mormons regard certain Church leaders and General Authorities as individuals who personify the transcendent-integrated personality. These people inspire and touch our lives in deep and significant ways. They seem to have found a way to reconcile all of the stages described thus far. They recognize these traits in themselves and can therefore love and accept a broad spectrum of Mormons who are struggling with their own spiritual lives.

These stages of spiritual development should not be viewed as fixed or stationary. Some individuals may be content to spend most of their lives in one such position while others will move through the stages in a continuum of growth. Under times of disillusionment or greater emotional stress, there may be regressions to a safer, more comfortable place. While the implication exists that higher stages are better than lower ones, we should acknowledge that people's needs and values vary widely. Basic personality styles may favor a specific type of religious orientation. For example, some individuals are naturally passive and noninquisitive; others are more exploratory and curious. Some may hunger for certainty, while others seek out mystery. It is also possible for us to experience these conflicts simultaneously.

We may readily see these traits in others; but I contend they exist, to some extent, in all of us. We all have experienced the same anxieties and struggled to resolve them. I believe the ultimate position we take will determine, to a great extent, the way in which we view God and our own place in the universe, as well as our concepts of reward, judgment, and exaltation.

Basic personality styles may favor a specific type of religious orientation.

CONCLUSION

I believe each of these groups has something important to contribute to the spiritual and religious life of the Mormon community. For that matter, they contribute to our own individual religious life. As religious beings, we humans are embarked upon a spiritual pilgrimage to discover meaning and purpose in our existence. Out of this journey has come a kaleidosope of religious approaches which seeks to give answers and direction to our quest. The compliant-dependent and social-organizational Latter-day Saints have discovered a solution to their anxiety problems through orthodoxy. In a complex and chaotic world, they have found a degree of certitude which gives meaning, clarity, and direction to their lives. The more liberal, skeptic-individual Mormon must be willing to live with tensions, ambiguity, and uncertainty. Though this position can easily disintegrate into a world view of cynicism, nihilism, and existential anguish, it can also become a place for new discovery and religious growth. But although the first three stages can partially fulfill our basic needs and wishes, they are all focused in the question, "What's in it for me?" Ultimate spiritual fulfillment beckons us toward the transcendent-integrated position. Short of this we remain locked in our egoic interests in a perpetual state of anxiety.

Perhaps the most succinct call to self-transcendence is found in St. Matthew: "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (10:39). This is the essence of overcoming the meaninglessness and emptiness of egoic pursuits. It is a unifying message, not only for Mormons but for all people seeking a life of spiritual growth.

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MORMON POETRY NOW

An editor examines the best of what Mormon poets are trying to publish.

Second in a Series

D. Marden Clark

For a Mormon, the distinction between family and church is one of scale. We talk of being children of God with Jesus our elder brother, of being sealed in eternal families, of being adopted into Israel. But we feel these concentric families much as a spider feels its home: through a network of lines and connections, of angles towards a center. Our distance from the center is more a matter of feeling than of lines of authority. We believe ourselves to be children of God, of loving parents—but as adults we often feel more like teenagers of God, tangled in a web of contradictory emotions, with responsibilities no one and nothing has prepared us for, facing an uncertain future dominated by parents we no longer fully trust.

"Hungry Sunday" reflects such anxieties. Tension develops from the difference between act and expectation, beginning with the title: "Hungry Sunday" is "Fast Sunday" by another name. This awareness is necessary to understanding the first stanza; the poem does not return to Fast Sunday until the eighth stanza.

The opening lines are a man's meditation on falseness and faithlessness. Centered on the girl, his thoughts range from the peccadillo of crackers in her purse through the breakup of their romance to the major failures of her first husband's

EDITORS NOTE

The poems in part one of this series, looking closely at the individual and his family—at times the same thing—may have induced claustrophobia in you as a reader. Recent American poetry has that effect. The poems in this article deal with a larger family—God's. You may find them a little more familiar; more of them are about you.

adultery, the apostasy of the polygamous missionary, and the girl's bankruptcy (although, in such a catalog of faithlessness, "belly-up" could mean more than bankruptcy). Even the falseness of a diseased tooth has major consequence in this reverie.

The eighth stanza returns to testimony meeting —and the crackers. Contrary to normal Mormon usage, the narrator does not use the word *fast* for the meeting or the day—because "most of the rest of us" don't fast, but are "lukewarm from first to last, barely able to bear it." Yet the speaker *does* bear his testimony (or is it "bare"?): "The Gospel is true, is true." With merciless clarity he says gospel, not Church. The people he has been thinking of are the Church, and they are included in the last line. Everything else in the world may be false, at one time or another, in one circumstance or the other. Both Peter and Judas were false to Jesus. The gospel alone is true.

Richard Tice pictures a different kind of truth in "Church Historical Library." He presents history as something *seen*. The poem is an image—in its purely visual treatment of subject, its idea of history as crucial event and aftermath, and its shape: an hourglass. Its neck is the verb of the poem, the action through which time is passed: "filled with." Above that neck, history is the physical setting of an exhibit. It is clear and concrete, each line with one noun linked skillfully by sound. Beneath, a similar parallelism occurs—until the third item, the "one word," is given the last two lines and finally becomes the base of the hourglass, the foundation on which our measured time rests.

The title is the top of the hourglass, and its other base. The Church Historical Library is pictured as a place where the artifacts of history accumulate, as sand accumulates in an hourglass, as time accumulates in the memory and bones of a man. One gets the impression, however, that this glass will never be turned. Time is captured in it, static: the poem does not contemplate change. For Tice, the sand is still running; this word is at the foundation of history, unchanging.

Gloria Tester's poem "Service" shares the clarity of Tice's small scale, but is nearly as abstract as his is concrete. Too, it is as generally Christian as his is specifically Mormon. A poem in praise of Christ, "Service" shows how it is that sinners can yet bear his comfort to others. A large part of its effectiveness is in the central metaphor, which is introduced with the word "buoyant." This word is normally associated with water, yet the imagery associates it with air: the individual as a balloon borne on the wind. (This kind of surprise

HUNGRY SUNDAY

I remember the girl
who brought crackers in her purse.

After we broke up, she married
a returned missionary (from France)

which lasted until she caught him
sleeping with one of the widows

of a polygamous French missionary apostate
who died (I'm told) of complications

arising from an abscessed tooth.
Later, as I vividly recall,

the girl with the crackers went belly-up
in Utah, and moved to Independence

with her second husband and eight children,
leaving me (and most of the rest of us),

devoured by the zeal of the Lord's house,
to drag myself to testimony meeting

on a full stomach, lukewarm from first
to last, barely able to bear it.

The Gospel is true, is true.
Everything else is anybody's guess

—R. A. Christmas

CHURCH HISTORICAL LIBRARY

Inside a cherrywood case
beneath a glass pane
lies a front page
of an old paper
filled with
one long ode
a long article,
and one word longer
and larger than any other:
Martyrdom.

—Richard Ellis Tice

SERVICE

Thy kindness kept me buoyant
above a world despairing.
Thy mercy gave me freedom
when all the world was bound:
not for myself, o Savior,
but as a pure wind, bearing
Thy health to those who suffer,
far as the need is found.

—Gloria Tester

AS SHADDAI DESCENDS

The grasses sing and the trees shout
as Shaddai descends to receive his bride.
The stones laugh and the rivers leap;
as he kisses her mouth the clouds rain wine.
In the meadows of Eden he lies with her,
and the issue of her womb is heavenly lights.

—Colin Douglas

ADONAI: COVER ME

Adonai: cover me with thy robe;
Let me rest against thee.
I have traveled in far places;
Where thou hast sent me, I have gone.
Among serpents I have laid my bed;
I have risen to go among wolves.
I have walked in dry places
Where the rocks held no water;
I have climbed high mountains
Where frost was my covering.
I have gone unshod;
My feet have bled.
I am weary;
I have found no rest.
Let me rest against thee.
Shelter me with thy robe.

—*Colin Douglas*

TWO POEMS IN HIEROGLYPHICS

1. The Breathing Permit

If, at last, bosom friends will mutter through linen screens
Not catching the faithful word,
Nor passing, yet wondering what passed—

Then the pressed soul presses on its bounds:
Expressed through linen pores
Is sweat like blood, supposed to speak
How ably to subtle bents of mind.
And yet the gag and the seamless gown
Absorb sound and sweat; statuelike, such a thing
Crumples at its knees, and weighs down rock, or prays
Like a ka, with upraised arms,
Forsworn, commanding, mute.

Some still say it was not an open agony
Hung on a cross, that died, that saved,
But a wrought-up one that
Could not cry through many mouths,
So bled through many pores.
But I only lived when he cried for thirst.

Only to actually speak is to actually save—
Silent shuffling in line will not do,
Nor such agony as oil painters imagine,
And manufacturers of cheap prints.
Yet they count each red dot
And suppose each an advantage.
Iron nails are true advantages,
Like lightning in clouds,
Sealing earth to heaven.

You hearers, if, as the Egyptians say,
An adze of meteoric metal can animate a corpse,
Search the desert rubble for such and such a stone,
Try it in the fire (which never proved metal yet)
And make a man.

Rouse him if he sleeps in the west,
And make him look on what he longs to see—
On men whose smiles direct their lives—
On the cliff-like face of an established creed;

Or let him call on Jesus Christ,
Who was bruised like a bay leaf,
Who was poured out like oil and wine.
Let him call on blessed Jesus, God's holy child.
When there is breath in his lungs—
When his mouth is open—
Then let him.

2. The Final Vignette, With Jubilation in the Temple of Wisdom

What will the souls construct
When all the souls are saved?
(The souls will never all be saved.)

Yet, I hear that the banner is unfurled,
The lamp lit, the assembly hushed.
And though I swore furiously
That I was an initiate,
As a match flares shortly,
With a dying hiss in the dark,
I was not believed by the seven Candlesticks,
Or by the stone with seven eyes
(The messengers of God).
They spoke to each other in tongues—
And they signed to each other below the frame,
Where I could not see.

As for passwords,
Who can trust these sibilants
My mouth betrays me with detested lisps,
Un-adamite;
And my finger bones
Won't accomodate
These unwonted
And uncertain shapes.

If this darkness is light to other eyes
Then the ecstatic pyramid of man
Sealed to Adam and each to each
May be spiraling upward,
Surmounted by the open eye,
Forever out of reach.
Then, the answer to my question is all too clear,
Like a silly tune of a glockenspiel,
Like the look on the lips of the Queen of Night.

—*Mark Solomon*

LTM

I become a burly girl,
Gnawing candy bars, muttering Dutch.
There's a feeling of marathon—that it can't go on, but it does, it does.
Every day the same bricks, the same windows, the steps, the lessons.
We stand in a circle and chant our offerings
Reciting the red pulp of our bones
In the ritual of the unlikely—the daily impossibility.
Some of us stare at the ceiling, some at our shoes;
We squint and clench and finger the lint in our pockets and grind
Out the lines.

I preach every night in a language I can't speak
To a wall that has heard it all before
And tells me again in the echo of my whispers
I know it perfectly well
With the finality of settling wings in an aerie,
A falcon nesting in the simple and bloodied cliffs.

—*Kira P. Davis*

makes poetry what it is—twists of word rather than plot, language reminding us of how much more we know than we normally use.) The blowing wind frees the speaker from the despair of the world to become a bearer of health. We think of service more as assigned labor than as a response to a need revealed by the Spirit. But "Service" is a poem about grace, Christ's aid freely given through us, from each according to ability, to each according to need.

Colin Douglas has in mind a different grace with "As Shaddai Descends": Christ's gift of an end to time. The neurosis of living in sin is absent from the world of this poem. It is purely a cry of joy, a love poem like "Service," but with flesh. Hebraic in its prosody, it makes the return of the Lord a little less familiar: The end will be a climax, not the butt of frayed endurance. In its erotic imagery the poem keeps faith with the scriptural image of the Church as Christ's bride, his love for it sexual (e.g., Matt. 9:14-17; Eph. 5:22-32).

Again emulating the poetry of the prophets, "Adonai: Cover Me" strengthens the Hebraic element with imagery familiar to us from the Psalm of Nephi: "O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness" (2 Ne. 4:33). It is familiar to any reader of the Old Testament. To keep his poems simple, Douglas uses contemporary English syntax, avoiding the dialect of the pseudobiblical. With accurate use of obsolete pronouns and inflections, he keeps the diction mildly archaic yet familiar. It is the Godspeak we know, transmuted to that "plainness" in which Nephi delighted (2 Ne. 24:4).

Mark Solomon offers no such help with "Two Poems in Hieroglyphics." We must interpret them in light of our own experience, including the esoteric: the temple endowment and the Gospels; Mozart and the Book of Abraham; the mysteries of the gospel and its doctrines.

Although all of these help in understanding the poem, none of it is necessary to grasp its mood, which is, in fact, the key to the poem's hidden meaning: regret. While the temple endowment provides the image which opens "The Breathing Permit," it is an image of despair, of one "not catching the faithful word, Nor passing." Though most of us do not picture ourselves being rejected at the veil, this one does. In the rest of this meditation on "what passed," he asks why—and gives us a warning.

This breathing permit joins a body of documents with, to use Hugh Nibley's words, "particular value to the dead *and the living* . . . as a textbook of vital instructions" as well as passport, letter of safe conduct, and guidebook through the underworld (*The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, p. 75). Its prime instruction, the last stanza, urges what the gowned and gagged soul of the second stanza can no longer do: "call on Jesus Christ." Three strands of imagery lead through the labyrinth to that instruction: the temple endowment, Egyptian funerary practice, and accounts of the passion of Christ.

The meditation gathers around the last, with the speaker asserting that it is Christ's "open agony" on the cross which offers salvation and not the "wrought-up" agony in the Gethsemane "of cheap prints." The latter is the agony of the gagged soul, "sweat like blood" of one who does not pass, the suffering of one who has undervalued and cheapened Christ's crucifixion. To skeptics he proposes a test: reanimate a corpse, as Christ reanimated Lazarus but using Egyptian magic (the "meteoric adze"), and let him look "on the cliff-like face of an established creed; Or let him call on Jesus Christ . . . When there is breath in his lungs . . . Then let him."

The second poem uses the same rhetorical strategy: In imagery derived from the same sources, an excluded one speaks to us of a similar understanding, too lately acquired. "The Final Vignette" plays off of our expectations of salvation. Drawing on hymns, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the temple endowment, and Egyptian and Masonic ritual, the speaker describes his exclusion from the assembly. The elaborate context emphasizes the pain of that exclusion while the third stanza defines it: atrophy. The atrophy has resulted in skepticism, which returns in the final stanza ("If this darkness . . ."). It conditionally precedes a vision of what may be, that pyramid surmounted by the open eye—seen on a dollar bill garnished by inscriptions reading ANNUIT COEPTIS ("he has favored our undertakings," an appropriate motto for a tomb) and NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM ("a new order of the ages"). Links connecting this symbolism, Freemasonry, and the decoration of the Salt Lake Temple are well known. Solomon closes the poem with a reference to Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, which is rife with Masonic symbolism expressing Masonry's emphasis on the improvement of mankind through moral action. Solomon does not try to rationalize the connections he finds among endowment, opera, and Freemasonry, but he points it out and asks us to notice it, to ponder what in our religion is cultural baggage, and what is truth.

Solomon's poem discusses an agony the missionaries fail to mention. Through aggressive reaching out, the Church has embraced many cultures and planted itself among their peoples. The fingers of that outreach return, at times dyed by the contact, at times crippled. But some knuckles get skinned even before the fingers do their walking, an agony Kira Davis writes about in "LTM" (the Language Training Mission, now the Missionary Training Center, which converts its trainees: "I become a burly girl").

The long lines of "LTM" are a departure from the other poems discussed here. Their grammar is straightforward and simple in contrast to the turmoil they record. The agony of "There's a

feeling of marathon—that it can't go on, but it does, it does" is heightened by the way the line stretches time. The diction of the poem is nearly as colorless as those bricks, windows, steps, lessons, walls. There are quiet pleasures, felicitous words like "burly" that we too often forget when groping for the right word; collocations like "gnawing candy bars, muttering Dutch." These do not shout. Then there is the line "Reciting the red pulp of our bones." It seems melodramatic, overdone, in the context of chanting memorized snatches of a foreign tongue.

But in the connection between it and the last stanza the poem achieves poetry. It takes an understated personification, the wall that talks back, and an unstated figure of speech, beating one's head against the wall, and combines them in the metaphor that ends the poem: The echo of the speaker's practice becomes the whisper of "settling wings in an aerie." The wings are those of a predator; the prey is the preaching sister and all her predecessors. The image of "the simple and bloodied cliffs" harks back to the earlier metaphor of "the red pulp of our bones": the LTM has become a bird of prey, rather than a brooding dove—a raptor, rather than a comforter.

In contrast to this pain at the mission's outset is the joy of coming home. Yet Dixie Lee Partridge, in "Release," does not gloss over the ambiguous nature of the mission. She presents it as a family experience (the departure of Jade, the poet's missionary brother, is the subject of her poem "The Call" [SUNSTONE, November-December 1980, p. 54]). But it is the family's part to wait—a role Partridge underlines by her reference to the concurrent release of the Iranian hostages "free in Wiesbaden." In small ways Jade acts like a released hostage: photographing the American flag on the grounds of the Seattle temple, hoping that "Mom won't cook rice." In addition, the family brings him a parka, protection from his new freedom.

But the mission is voluntary. The poem expresses joy that Jade arrives safely but it concerns "greeting Jade," the family's release from waiting, and their westward journey to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (the nickname "Sea-Tac" seems a deliberate metaphor). They travel through a drab, dun winter land devoid of wonder or fun, "ski-mountains oddly bare," to meet a "magenta marked" ferry from the tropics bearing Jade, who "gives us baby magenta orchids from Thailand." He comes almost as an alien, entering not at Customs but at Immigration. "A tropic brown has replaced the hayfield tan," and he wears "a batik tie." "Relieved there is no snow . . . he shivers into a parka."

These details are counterbalanced by Jade's acclimation (not acclimatization), which begins almost immediately. The vibrant colors of the tropics (airplane, tie, orchids, jade) pale, like the flag, "translucent against the albino winter sun." Jade arrives not as a harbinger of spring but as a refugee from it. The change begins immediately; the narrator watches him molt, taking on the winter of his native climate. "For this brief acclimation, he's ours." The poem is her acclamation, her welcome.

The next poems are about exile—from the garden. Each adopts Eve as voice, but the treatments are radically different. "For Thy Sake" establishes locale and identity early on. Collings's Eve is the gardener to Adam's plowman, raising the fruit to stand beside his wheat, "remembering Eden" as she works. That she remembers only the beauty of Eden fits the optimism of the poem. Eve has accepted the world of her exile and finds beauty in it. As a gardener she has tried to recreate Eden, imitating the work of God who planted the original, rather than living in bitterness for the past, or misery of the present.

While Collings looks on the bright side of the exile, Penny Allen, in her poem "Blackberry," shows the thorns close up, with the hunger for Eden a dominant theme. Until the last line, in fact, the plucker is not identified as Eve—and then only elliptically. This berry picker could be any woman. Moreover, the first two lines describing the berry are ambivalent, describing it as attractive and ripe as well as bloated and horrible, "sucking *darkness* into swollen lobes." The berry is doubly evil: Not only does it fail to satisfy her hunger, but the thorns which guard it also cause pain. Allen's heavy use of alliteration is like the pulse of pain in torn skin: the "ragged red rivulet on the wrist," the "thumb-pad pierced by a point in the process." Pain and hunger cause Eve to flinch "into the tangle" of canes and close-woven briars, "sighing 'Oh, Eden, Eden.'"

Pain of a different kind informs Donnel Hunter's "The Lure" (recently published in the poet's collection, *The Frog in Our Basement*, 1984). Hunter speculates on a common metaphor for missionary work, that of fishing for men. He ponders what it would feel like to be, not Peter nor a modern Apostle nor even a knot in the gospel net, but the lure on the end of the line. What if the Apostles were fly-fishing instead of seining? What if they wanted only certain fish, not any carp that swam by? And if the Apostles are the fishermen, what—or who—is the lure? And what is caught? A fish worth the wait, one the fisher has been hoping to draw from the shadows—one matched to the lure. Even the "casting and missing, missing and cursing" is part of the drama of fishing just before the sun is to drop "into the kingdom of darkness where stars refuse to shine."

"The Lure" is related to an old missionary joke: "The Church must be true. If it weren't, the missionaries would've destroyed it long ago." The poem expresses some of the frustration felt by anyone who is part of an established order: "the fish are right: anyone who would cast me out will never come up with the idea change is in

RELEASE: GREETING JADE BACK FROM THE INDONESIAN MISSION

"As the cold of snow in the time of harvest,
so is the faithful messenger to them that
sent him;
for he refresheth the soul. . . ." Proverbs 25:13

On the three-hour drive to Sea-Tac
we hear radio reports of the hostages,
free in Wiesbaden, close
to us as we move toward
another homecoming.
Snoqualmie Pass is dry, ski-
mountains oddly bare this January.
Magenta marked, the Thai 747 eases to the ramp.
We spot him first through glass,
down-escalator bringing him to Immigration:
we wave wildly, he returns
jubilation and that same easy smile.

A tropic brown has replaced the hayfield tan
(. . . seedtime and harvest shall not cease).
In white shirtsleeves, a batik tie,
thinner, he comes
through customs to our seven sets of arms
and a new nephew who touches his cheek
then hides his face on his father's shoulder.

Leaving Sea-Tac, he shivers into a parka
we brought him, says American air
smells different from the tropics,
is relieved there is no snow.
He gives us baby magenta orchids from Thailand.
We talk of eating
steak and french fries later.
("I hope Mom won't cook rice . . .")

Early tomorrow we will see him off,
home to Wyoming snow and twenty-below.
But for this brief acclimation,
he's ours.

Our first stop is the temple at Bellevue.
(Now then we are ambassadors for Christ . . .)
Just through the gates, he stops, raises
his camera to the flag unfurling
slowly, translucent
against an albino winter sun.

—*Dixie L. Partridge*

FOR THY SAKE

I spaded in the garden again today,
Adam being in the fields to husband wheat;
and I spaded in the garden, remembering
Eden: Roses twining glossy Ivy on

smooth Oak trunks, such massed perfumes
that I could scarcely stand. Or Apricots
and Peaches—gold and blush—bowing stiff-spined
branches earthward. I needed merely look
or pluck and eat, or smell.

And tomorrow, I shall spade again—for now
the apricots, the peaches, and the rose belong to me.

—*Michael R. Collings*

BLACKBERRY

Sucking darkness into swollen lobes,
It rides the cane over in its plumpness.
She wants it—enough to thead a careful hand
Through the thorns, etching a ragged red
Rivulet on the wrist and pricking tiny
Rubies where she wavers until her fingers
Lightly pluck it—thumb-pad pierced by a point
In the process. She pulls the berry back
Through close-woven briars; it stains startled
Fingers pinching at the pull of a thorny
Anchor. She plunks it into her wet mouth.
Delicious. More desirable than the first
Death she ate. Yet long after her tongue
Forgets the sweet, her throbbing thumb remembers
The pain, and still hungry, into the tangle
She flinches, sighing, "Oh, Eden, Eden."

—*Penny Allen*

THE LURE

The thread of my life is waxed,
ready to be wrapped on a hook, decorated
with fur and feathers, then flung in a pond.
The fish below—shiners, bluegills, pout—
will watch me floating, dangling helpless.
They will laugh themselves dizzy asking
what fisherman could be sucker enough
to fall for anything phony as that.
They will take turns swirling up through clear
water, at the last moment turn tail
and veer away. The man on the wrong end
of the line will see the ripple and twitch
back his pole. He will curse anxiety and luck,
make another cast. The fish will laugh again,
releasing bubbles of mirth.

This will go on
afternoon after afternoon. The sun will beat down
on the fisherman. He will keep casting and missing,
missing and cursing, cursing and—you may wonder
why doesn't he reach down into his tackle box
and try another lure? But the fish are right:
anyone who would cast me out will never come
up with the idea change is in order.

One day the pond will produce the fish who can match
wits with the fisherman: a long pike or heavy trout.
The others will scatter in panic, leaving him
to swim alone, under my shadow. Reflex will turn him,
slowly ascending, opening the dark cave
his jaws make when he holds his breath, gills slack,
tongue flat on the floor. He will feel the hook
tear flesh. His bones will tighten.
The reel will sing to the fisherman whose hands
will remember what to do. I will fall
in love with my captor. His pain will be mine
because he is the only one who ever wanted me.
Together we will rise just as the sun
drops into the kingdom of darkness
where stars refuse to shine.

—*Donnell Hunter*

IN MORMON HEAVEN

You get to make babies,
and God is the President.

There ain't no bad niggers,
homos, or hippies.

Everybody shaves and believes
in the same thing,

even B. Young and Port Rockwell
(your neighbors—just down the street).

And someday your wife's gonna let you
take those cute girls next door

to a Disney flick where you'll fall in love,
and after that you'll get married, and married,

and have zillions of kids who will always,
always obey.

—R. A. Christmas

SABBATH FLOWER

It is all grown quiet;
even
the last soft spadefallen soil
is settled, is quiet.

The congregated celebrants
in passing
from their own seed-time
germinate beneath their taken wind.

Let omen be the name of spirit:
the seed-place passes
in its time.

This is a street-corner funeral.
Behind the heavy plate-glass windows
lettered gold on black
mimicries, false shadows of letters,
the funerary audience masses,
drugged for sacrifice, withheld
among our bitter or our sweetened drinks
from gusts that flex the glass, quake
rampant at its barrier.
The victim
has named me master
of sacrifices, the priest. I am to know,
but bite the silence in my mouth.

II.
That bridge that is the work of hands
admits the stream beneath;
this bridge that is the work of hands
purports the traffic of our feet—
beneath the bridge, our flower-boats
and from the bridge false lovers watch
our sport of men.

This is a winter-bound island
and awning. People
here in meadows, hills, populations, streets, doorways,
solitudes
braid cables of their dawn and dusk of voices
coil the cables on the sidewalk
under the dripping awning.
There are no strangers in the neighborhood today—
there is no one to be recognized as strange.
A German shepherd on a leash has nuzzled
at the hands within his tether's range,
received no food;
sits by his mistress's leg.

III.
That bridge that is the work of time
is mark and pace-mark of the flow:

across the wooden arch across the stream
we gathered the flowers and we wove the garland
for the neck and shoulders of bronze
steadfast Buddha:
the shrine today is redwood benches, jasmine
tea and fortune cookies

and we watch the naked sparrows, just
beyond us, wet, and picking seeds.

Let omen be the name of flower.
Let veil be the name of smoke.
There is no shelter but these depths.

The batter of iron on iron sides,
the clatter of the anchor-chains
is the censer, diesel-smoke the incense,
garland and life-ring,
rescue of broke packing crates
and styrofoam cups near an oil slick.

IV.
Let flower be the name of seed-time,
seed the time.
The omen is the bird's blood-flashing wing.
The garden is the Buddha,
bronze the garden's child:

three
whirl-winds flank
an ornamental pond
on a cold,
haze-buried day.
That central walks the water
and grows white; those
flanking follow, right and left; they
lock their triangle
with that of glancing shadows in the pond.
Let the omen be the name of spirit.
Then

all is grown quiet, even
as the named immersion's prayer
is growing, still.

—Stephen Gould

order." This sounds more like despair than humility. Certainly there is a humiliation in being rejected by the shiners, bluegill, and pout that could make one desperate. And that would explain this speaker's almost neurotic response to success: "I will fall in love with my captor. His pain will be mine because he is the only one who ever wanted me." Not quite the same as "how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father"!

"In Mormon Heaven" offers a different view of joy in the kingdom that Mormon males inarticulately expect. This satire of our folklore about heaven gains force from Christmas's epic understatement—as in the title, which echoes the term "nigger heaven." It usually derides the aspirations of others. Here it's used to help us laugh at our own easy satisfactions.

With savage satire Christmas mocks only a few of our folk beliefs about exaltation: we'll all be there with the prophets and heroes; eternal increase means more, but easier, pregnancies; the American Republican political system is the model for celestial administration. What Christmas is satirizing, it seems to me, is our perversion of patriarchal order (defined in D&C 121 and Ephesians 5 as a heavy burden demanding sacrifice, conferring no power on males that love cannot claim). What do we make of beliefs which permit a man to be serially sealed in eternal marriage to more than one woman except the crude caricature of the last three stanzas? Nothing, if we are not prayerful—nothing, that is, but a target for the jeers of outsiders.

Yet Christmas is not an outsider. Despite its flip diction, there is too much pain in the satire—pain like that in the final denial of free agency, leaving us to ponder what we ask of our kids. I don't want to overly solemnize the poem, but I believe that its satire is just, that it probes some abscesses of our religion. It makes me wince.

In strong contrast to the clarity and sharpness of "In Mormon Heaven" is the mysticism of Stephen Gould's "Sabbath Flower." As the final blossom in this arrangement, it may seem a bit exotic: a Buddhist exercise in mystical comprehension of matters Christian, of wonder at worshipping a death. But try it on.

The first three stanzas seem to look at death from the other side, through the eyes of celebrants "passing from their own seed-time" as the seed-place will pass in its time. The fourth stanza sees the funeral from our side, held in a storefront chapel, "withheld from the wind." But "the funerary audience masses" seems to name our ways of celebrating the Eucharist, and the lines "the victim has named me master of sacrifices," though startling, are an accurate view of Christian ordination. It is as if the celebration of the Lord's Supper were a funeral.

Section II pictures an unnamed urban locale (where a storefront church would fit—say, San Francisco). Everything here suggests loneliness: voices as cables, the dripping awning, an unfed dog—a German shepherd with no flock, watching over a neighborhood where the only strangers are familiar ones. But the bridge is a puzzle. There are two bridges, or one seen doubly: the bridge that frames, places, defines the stream, and the bridge that "purports the traffic of our feet." *Purports* is a strange verb here. The root sense of the Latin, *proportare* ("to carry forth") fits, but the current meaning suggests that the bridge is a deception, an ornament, like the false shadows used to give letters depth.

Real or not, the bridge moves us to section III. Imagination moves across "that bridge that is the work of time," memory, towards an encounter at a Buddhist shrine. The garlanding of the Buddha has become a "mark and pace-mark" of the speaker's life. He travels back to it during a private sacrament of jasmine tea and fortune cookies, a communion not protected by plate glass nor awning, a communion sanctified by the incense of an ocean port: "Let omen be the name of flower. / Let veil be the name of smoke. / There is no shelter but these depths." If the flower here and at the beginning of section IV are the seed and flower of Alma's discourse on faith (Alma 32), then the seed-time and seed-place of the first and fourth sections are particles of faith. The sabbath flower of this meditation is the bloom of that faith.

Both sections I and IV include the line "Let omen be the name of spirit"—too strange an equation to be Christian, as *omen* is usually associated with the occult. But not so strange for Mormonism, considering the way we often talk of manifestations of the spirit. *Omen* serves as metaphor, a way of reading nature as God's will. These omens, "the bird's blood-flashing wing" and the whirlwind walking on water, seem to define two things: the Holy Ghost as a witness to Christ's blood and the effect of the named immersion, baptism, which stirs the water. Like his response to Job out of the whirlwind, the Lord answers the loneliness and isolation of this life with an omen, speaking in silence, "even as the named immersion's prayer is growing still."

This is an unusual testimony of Christ. Indeed, all these poems are a little unusual as contemporary American poetry, as much in their open avowal of faith as in their creation for an audience who share the authors' culture and beliefs. As Mormon poetry they're also unusual in their fight against sentimentality. The hardest task most poets face is avoiding sentimentality, for whether the sentiments are fashionable or not, using them to appeal to the reader's emotion is always easier than capturing emotion in words. The reader's task is to avoid being suckered by the poem. Read these poems again—do they succeed?

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Why The Church Is As True As The Gospel

Grappling Constructively With the Oppositions of Existence

By Eugene England

I was convinced when I was a boy that the most boring meeting in the Church, perhaps in the world, was a quarterly stake conference. In those days they were indeed held every three months and included at least two two-hour sessions on Sunday. The most interesting highlights to us children were the quavery songs literally "rendered" by the "Singing Mothers" and the sober sustaining of the stake No Liquor-Tobacco Committee.

But one conference was particularly memorable. I was twelve and sitting near the front because my father was being sustained as a high councilor in a newly formed stake. I had just turned around in my seat to tease my sister who was sitting behind me, when I felt something, vaguely familiar, burning at the center of my heart and bones and then almost physically turning me around to look at the transfigured face of Elder Harold B. Lee, the "visiting authority." He had suddenly interrupted his prepared sermon and was giving the new stake an apostolic blessing. And I became aware, for a second and confirming time in my life, of the presence of the Holy Ghost and the special witness of Jesus Christ. How many boring stake conferences would I attend to be even once in the presence of such grace? Thousands—all there are. That pearl is without price. And because I have since learned better what to look for and find there—not doctrinal revelation so much as understanding of and experience with the members of the Church—the conferences are no longer boring. Thus, one of the earliest and most important pillars of my faith came not through some great insight into the gospel but through an experience I could only have had because I was doing my duty in the Church, however immaturely.

Yet one cliche Mormons often repeat is that the *gospel* is true, even perfect, but the *Church* is, after all, a human instrument, historybound, and therefore understandably imperfect—something

to be endured for the sake of the gospel. Nevertheless, I am persuaded by experiences like that one at a stake conference and by my best thinking that, in fact, the Church is as "true," as effective, as sure an instrument of salvation as the system of doctrines we call the gospel—and that that is so in good part because of the very flaws, human exasperations, and historical problems that occasionally give us all some anguish.

I know that those who use the cliche about the gospel being more "true" than the Church want the term *gospel* to mean a perfect system of revealed commandments based in principles which infallibly express the natural laws of the universe. But even revelation is, in fact, merely the best understanding the Lord can give us of those things. And, as God himself has clearly insisted, that understanding is far from perfect. He reminds us in the first section of the Doctrine

and Covenants, "Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my sevants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding. And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known." (D&C 1:24-25.) This is a remarkably complete and sobering inventory of the problems involved in putting God's knowledge of the universe into human language and then having it understood. It should make us careful about claiming too much for "the gospel," which is not the perfect principles or natural laws themselves—or God's perfect knowledge of those things—but is merely the closest approximation that inspired but limited mortals can receive.

Even after a revelation is received and expressed by a prophet, it has to be understood, taught, translated into other languages, expressed in programs and manuals, sermons and essays—in a word, interpreted. And that means that at least one more set of limitations of language and world-view enters in. I always find it perplexing when someone asks a teacher or speaker if what he is saying is the pure gospel or merely his own interpretation. *Everything* anyone says is essentially an interpretation. Even simply reading the scriptures to others involves interpretation, in choosing both what to read in a particular circumstance and how to read it (tone and emphasis). Beyond that point, anything we do becomes less and less "authoritative" as we move into explication and application of the scriptures—that is, as we teach "the gospel."

Yes, I know that the Holy Ghost can give strokes of pure intelligence to the speaker and bear witness of truth to the hearer. I have experienced both of these lovely, reassuring gifts. But those gifts, which guarantee the overall guidance of the Church in the way the Lord intends and provide occasional remarkably clear guidance to individuals, still do not override individuality and agency. They are not exempt from those limitations of human language and moral perception which the Lord describes in the passage quoted above, and thus they cannot impose universal acceptance and understanding.

This problem is compounded by the fundamentally paradoxical nature of the universe itself and thus of the true laws and principles that the gospel uses to describe the universe. Lehi's law, "It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (1 Ne. 2:11), is perhaps the most provocative and profound statement of abstract theology in the scriptures, because it presumes to describe what is most ultimate in the universe—even beyond God. In context it clearly suggests that not only is contradiction and opposition a natural part of human experience, something God uses for his redemptive purposes, but that opposition is at the very heart of things; it is intrinsic to the two most fundamental realities—intelligence and matter, what Lehi calls "things to act and things to be acted upon." According to Lehi, opposition provides the universe with energy and meaning, even makes possible the existence of God and everything else: Without it "all things must have vanished away" (2:13).

We all know from experience the consequences for mortal life of this fundamental, eternal truth about reality. Throughout history the most important and productive ideas have been paradoxical; the energizing force in all art has been conflict and opposition; the basis for success in all economic, political, and other social development has been competition and dialogue. Think of our federal system of checks and balances and our two-party political system (which together make pluralistic democracy possible), Romanticism and Classicism, reason and emotion, freedom and order, individual and community, men and women (whose differences make eternal increase possible), justice and mercy (whose opposition makes our redemption through the "At Onement" possible). Life in this universe is full of polarities and is made full by them; we struggle with them, complain about them, even try sometimes to destroy them with dogmatism or self-righteousness or retreat into the innocence that is only ignorance, a return to the Garden of Eden where there is deceptive ease and clarity but no salvation. William Blake, the prophetic poet, taught that "without contraries is no existence" and warned that "whoever tries to reconcile [the contraries] seeks to destroy existence." Whatever it means that we will eventually see "face to face," *now* we can see only "through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12), and we had better make the best of it. So, as we know it in human terms, the "gospel" is not—and perhaps, given the paradoxical nature of the universe itself, cannot ever be—a simple and clear set of unequivocal propositions.

Church involvement teaches us compassion and patience as well as discipline and courage.

And that is where the Church comes in. I believe it is the best medium, apart from marriage (which it much resembles in this respect), for grappling constructively with the oppositions of existence. I believe that the better any church or organization is at such grappling, the "truer" it is. And I believe we can accurately call the Mormon church "the true Church" only if we mean it is the best organized method for doing that and is made and kept so by revelations that have come and continue to come from God, however "darkly" they of necessity emerge.

Martin Luther, with prophetic perception, wrote, "Marriage is the school of love"—that is, marriage is not the home or the result of love so much as the *school*. I believe that any good church is a school of love and that the Mormon church, for most people, perhaps all, is the best one, the "only true and living Church" (D&C 1:30)—not just because its doctrines teach and embody some of the great and central paradoxes but, more importantly, because the Church provides the best context for struggling with, working

Those who resist, desert, and attack the Church fail to see their own best interest.

through, enduring, and being redeemed by those paradoxes and oppositions that give energy and meaning to the universe. Just before his death Joseph Smith, also with prophetic perception, wrote, "By proving contraries, truth is made manifest" (*History of the Church*, 6:428). By "prove" he meant not only to demonstrate logically but to test, to struggle with, and to work out in practical experience. The Church is as true—as effective—as the gospel because it involves us directly in proving contraries, working constructively with the oppositions within ourselves and especially between people, struggling with paradoxes and polarities at an experiential level that can redeem us. The Church is true because it is concrete, not theoretical; in all its contradictions and problems, it is at least as productive of good as is the gospel.

Let us consider why this is so. In the life of the true Church, as in a good marriage, there are constant opportunities for all to serve, especially to learn to serve people we would not normally choose to serve—or posssibly even associate with—and thus opportunities to learn to love unconditionally. There is constant encouragement, even pressure, to be "active": to have a "calling" and thus to have to grapple with relationships and management, with other people's ideas and wishes, their feelings and failures; to attend classes and meetings and to have to listen other people's sometimes misinformed or prejudiced notions and to have to make some constructive response; to have leaders and occasionally to be hurt by their weakness and blindness, even unrighteous dominion; and then to be made a leader and find that you, too, with all the best intentions, can be weak and blind and unrighteous. Church involvement teaches us compassion and patience as well as courage and discipline. It makes us responsible for the personal and marital, physical and spiritual welfare of people we may not already love (or may even heartily dislike), and thus we learn to love them. It stretches and challenges us, though disappointed and exasperated, in ways we would not otherwise choose to be—and thus gives us a chance to be made better than we might choose to be, but ultimately need and want to be.

Michael Novak, the lay Catholic theologian, has made this same point concerning marriage. In a remarkable essay published in the April 1976 *Harper's*, he reviewed the increasing inclination of modern intellectuals to resist, desert, and even to attack marriage and argued that the main reason the family, which has traditionally been the main bulwark of economic and emotional security, is currently "out of favor" is that many modern opinion-makers are unwilling to take the risks and subject themselves to the disciplines that the school of marriage requires. But he then pointed out how such fears, though justified, keep them from meeting their own greatest *needs*. Similarly, I believe that those who resist, desert, and attack the Church fail, from a simple lack of perspective, to see their own best interest. As you read this passage from Novak, mentally substitute *the Church* for *marriage*:

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

Being married and having children [being active in the Church] has impressed on my mind certain lessons, for whose learning I cannot help being grateful. Most are lessons of difficulty and duress. Most of what I am forced to learn about myself is not pleasant. . . . My dignity as a human being depends perhaps more on what sort of husband and parent [Church member] I am, than on any professional work I am called on to do. My bonds to my family [my church] hold me back (and my wife even more) from many sorts of opportunities. And yet these do not feel like bonds. They are, I know, my liberation. They force me to be a different sort of human being, in a way in which I want and need to be forced.

I bear witness that the Church can do those same frustrating, humbling, but ultimately liberating

and redeeming things for us—*if* we can learn to see it as Novak does marriage, if we can see that its assaults on our lonely egos, its bonds and respnsibilities which we willingly accept, can push us toward new kinds of being in a way we most deeply want and need to be pushed.

Two keys to this paradoxical power in the Mormon church are first that it is, by revelation, a lay church and radically so—more than any other—and second that it organizes its congregations geographically, rather than by choice. I know that there are exceptions, but the basic Church experience of almost all Mormons brings them directly and constantly into powerful relationships with a range of people and problems in their assigned congregation that are not primarily of their own choosing but are profoundly redemptive in potential, in part *because* they are not consciously chosen. Yes, the ordinances performed through the Church are important, as are its scriptural texts and moral exhortations and spiritual conduits. But even these, in my experience, are powerful and redemptive because they embody profound, life-giving oppositions and work harmoniously with those oppositions through the Church structure to give truth and meaning to the religious life of Mormons.

Let me illustrate: In one of his very last messages, during the Saturday evening priesthood session, October 5, 1968, President David O. McKay gave a kind of final testament that was a bit shocking to many of us who are conditioned to expect that prophets have no trouble getting divine manifestations. He told how he struggled in vain all through his teen-age years to get God "to declare to me the truth of his revelation to Joseph Smith." He prayed "fervently and sincerely," in the hills and at home, but had to admit to himself constantly, "No spiritual manifestation has come to me." But he continued to seek truth and to serve others in the context of Mormonism, including going on a mission to Britain, mainly because of trust in his parents and the goodness of his own experience. Finally, as President McKay put it,

the spiritual manifestation for which I had prayed as a boy in in my teens came as a natural sequence to the performance of duty. For, as the apostle John declared, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

Following a series of meetings at the conference held in Glasgow, Scotland, was a most remarkable priesthood meeting. I remember, as if it were yesterday, the intensity of the inspiration of that occasion. Everybody felt the rich outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord. All present were truly of one heart and one mind. Never before had I experienced such an emotion. It was a manifestation for which as a doubting youth I had secretly prayed most earnestly on hillside and in meadow. . . .

During the progess of the meeting, an elder on his own initiative arose and said, "Brethren, there are angels in this room." Strange as it may seem, the announcement was not startling; indeed, it semed wholly proper, though it had not occurred to me that there were divine beings present. I only knew that I was overflowing with gratitude for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

I have had many confirmations of President McKay's prophetic witness in that sermon. Most of my profound spiritual manifestations, those that have provided the rock-bottom convictions I have about the reality of God and Christ and their divine work, as well as my most troubling, soul-searching moral struggles with the great human issues of personal integrity versus public responsibility, loyalty to self versus loyalty to community, redemptive freedom versus redemptive structure—all these have come, as President McKay affirms, "as a natural sequence to the performance of duty" in the Church.

I know God has been found by unusual people in unusual places—in a sudden vision in a grove or orchard or grotto, or on a mountain or in a closet, or through saintly service to African lepers or to Calcutta untouchables. But for most of us, most of the time, I am convinced he can be found most surely in "the natural sequence to the performance" of the duties he has given us that *all* of us (not just the unusual) can perform in our own homes and neighborhoods and that the Church, in its unique community, imposed as well as chosen, can best teach and empower us to perform.

The difficulties of involvement in a lay church are also powerful lessons in loving one another.

I have come to an overwhelming witness of the divinity of the Book of Mormon, such that the Spirit moves me, even to tears, whenever I read any part of it, and I came there by teaching it at church. I am convinced that book provides the most comprehensive "Christology"—or doctrine of how Christ saves us from sin—available to us on earth and that the internal evidences for the divinity of the book entirely overwhelm the evidences and arguments against it, however troubling. One Sunday last summer, as I tried to help a young woman who had attempted suicide a number of times, once just recently, and was feeling the deepest worthlessness and self-rejection, I was moved to read to her some passages from the Book of Mormon about Christ's At Onement. As I read those passages to that desperate young woman and bore witness of their truth and power in my own times of despair and sin, her lips began to tremble with new feelings and tears of hope formed in place of those of anguish.

In moments such as these, I was able, through my calling as a bishop, to apply the atoning blood of Christ, not in theory but in the truth of experience. In addition, I have come to know the ministering of angels because I have done my duty in temple attendance and have gone whenever possible to temple dedications. And I have found that we mortals do indeed have the power to bless our oxen and cars as well as people because I was a branch president and was pushed to the limits of

my faith by my sense of responsiblity to my branch.

Before I was a branch president, I served in the bishopric of the Stanford ward in the mid sixties and taught religion at the Institute to bright young students. At the same time, I was doing graduate work in English literature and trying to come to terms intellectually with modern skepticism and relativism and the moral dilemmas of the civil rights and anti-war movements and the eductional revolutions of the time. I tended to see religion very much in terms of large moral and philosophical issues that the gospel did or did not speak to. In 1970, I accepted a position as dean of academic affairs at St. Olaf, a Lutheran liberal arts college in the small town of Northfield, Minnesota, and within a week of arriving was called as president of the little Mormon branch in that area. I suddenly entered an entirely different world, one that tested me severely and taught me much about what "religion" is. At Stanford much of my religious life had been involved with understanding and defending the gospel—and had been idealistic, abstract, and critical. In Northfield, as branch president for twenty families scattered over seventy-five miles, ranging from Utah-born, hard-core inactives with devastating marital problems to bright-eyed converts with no jobs or with drunken fathers who beat them, I soon became involved in a religious life that was practical, specific, sacrificial, exasperating—and more satisfying. And I saw, more clearly than before, how true the Church is as an instrument for confronting all kinds of people with the processes of salvation, despite—even because of—its management by imperfect instruments like myself.

Being called as branch president taught me much about what "religion" really is.

I think of a young man in that branch who had been made a social cripple by some combination of mental and family problems: He was unable to speak a word in a group or to organize his life

productively. As we gave him increasing responsibilities in our branch, supported him with much love and patience while he struggled to work with others and express himself, I was able to see him grow into a fine leader and confident husband and father. I think of a woman whose husband made her life a hell of drunken abuse but who patiently took care of him, worked all week to support her family, and came to Church each Sunday in drab but jaunty finery and with uncomplaining determination. She found there, with our help, a little hope, some beauty and idealism, and strength not only to endure but to go on loving what was unlovable. The Church blesses us all by bringing us together.

During the five years I served them, there were, among those seventy to one hundred members, perhaps two or three whom I would normally have chosen for friends—and with whom I could have easily shared my most impassioned and "important" political and religious concerns and views, the ones that had so exercised me at Stanford. With inspiration far beyond my usual less-than-good sense, I did not begin my tenure as branch president by preaching about my ideas or promoting my crusades. I tried very hard to see what the immediate problems and concerns of my flock were and to be a good pastor, one who fed and protected them. And a remarkable thing happened. I traveled hundreds of miles and spent many hours—helping a couple who had hurt each other into absolute silence learn to talk to each other again; guiding a student through drug withdrawal; teaching an autocratic military man to work cooperatively with his counselors in the elders quorum presidency; blessing a terribly sick baby, aided by its father, who was weak in faith and frightened; comforting, at a hospital at four in the morning, parents whose son had just been killed by his brother driving drunk—and then helping the brother forgive himself. And after six months I found that my branch members, initially properly suspicious of an intellectual from California, had come to feel in their bones, from their direct experience, that indeed my faith and devotion to them was "stronger than the cords of death." And the result promised in the Doctrine and Covenants 121:44-46 followed: There flowed to me "without compulsory means" the power to talk about *any* of my concerns and passions and to be understood and trusted, even if not agreed with.

Now that may all sound a bit selfish, even obsessive about the Church's contribution to my own spiritual maturity. But what was happening to me was happening to others. A young couple came to the branch who had lived in Spain for a year right after the wife had joined the Church. Their Church experience, especially hers, had been essentially gospel-oriented, deeply felt and idealistic but abstract, involving very little service to others. She was a dignified and emotion-

ally reserved woman, bright, creative, and judgmental—and thus afraid of uncontrolled situations or emotional exposure. The husband was meticulous, intimidating, somewhat aloof. I called them—despite their resistance—into positions of increasing responsibility and direct involvement with people in the branch and saw them, with some pain and tears, develop into powerfully open, empathetic, vulnerable people, able to understand, serve, learn from, and be trusted by people very different from themselves. And I saw them learn that the very exposures, exasperations, troubles, sacrifices, and disappointments that characterize involvement in a lay church like Mormonism—and that are especially difficult for idealistic liberals to endure—are a main source of the Church's power to teach us to love. They are now teaching others what they have learned.

This lesson—that the Church's characteristic "problems" are among its strengths—has been continually confirmed as I have served as bishop of a ward of young married students at BYU. The two most direct, miraculous, and ultimately redemptive blessings the Lord gave us when the ward was organized three years ago were a spastic quadriplegic child in one family and seriously handicapped parents in another. I had known the crippled child's mother for nearly a year: After I had spoken on the Atonement at her sacrament meeting, she had come to me for counsel and help with her anger and guilt and loss of faith as she tried to understand this failure of hospital care that had made one of her twins into a desperate physical, emotional, and financial burden, one which had ended her husband's education and intended profession, severely tested their marriage and their faith as priesthood blessing seemed to fail, and left her close to breakdown and apostasy. Now, as I prayed for guidance in organizing a new ward, I felt as clearly as ever I have felt those "strokes of intelligence" Joseph Smith described telling me that I should, against all common sense, call her as my Relief Society president. I did, and despite being on the verge of moving away, she accepted. She became the main source of the unique spirit of honest communication and sense of genuine community our ward developed. She visited all the families and shared without reserve her feelings, struggles, successes and needs. Together with her husband she spoke openly in our meetings about her son, his problems, and hers, asked for help and accepted it, and all the while did her duty and endured. We have all learned from them how to be more open, vulnerable, gracious, persistent, to turn to each other for all kinds of help and not to judge.

The Church brings the divine and the human together through concrete activity.

I first met the handicapped couple wandering through the halls of our ward house on our first Sunday. They were not looking for our ward; in fact, they lived just outside our boundaries, but I am certain the Lord sent them. They have required a major expenditure of our ward resources—time, welfare aid, patience, tolerance—as we worked to get them employed, into decent housing, out of debt, capable of caring for their bright, energetic child, and tried to help them become less obtrusive in meetings and less offensive socially. And I have learned two lessons: First, the Church structure and resources (which are designed for voluntary, cooperative but disciplined effort with long-range, essentially spiritual goals) have been ideally suited to building the necessary support system for them, one which may yet succeed in keeping the family together and may even bless them with more progress. Second, the blessings have come to the ward as much as to them as we have learned to expand greatly our ideas about "acceptable" behavior and especially our own capacities to love and serve and learn from people we would otherwise never know. One woman called me to report on her efforts to teach the woman some housekeeping and mothering skills, confessed her earlier resentments and exasperations, and told me in tears how much her heart had softened and her proud neck bent as she had learned how to learn from this sister so different from herself.

These are examples, I believe of what Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 12, the great chapter on gifts, where he teaches that all the parts of the body of Christ—the Church—are needed for their separate gifts, in fact, that those with "less honorable" and "uncomely" gifts are *more* needed and more in need of attention and honor because the world will automatically honor and use the others. It is in the Church especially that those with the gifts of vulnerability, pain, handicap, need, ignorance, intellectual arrogance, social pride,

even prejudice and sin—those Paul calls the members which "seem to be more feeble"—can be accepted, learned from, helped, and made part of the body so that together we can all be blessed. It is there that those of us with the more comely and world-honored gifts of riches and intelligence can learn what we most need—to serve and love and patiently learn from those with other gifts.

But that is very hard for the "rich" and "wise" to do. And that is why those who have one of those dangerous gifts tend to misunderstand and sometimes disparage the Church—which, after all, is made up of the common and unclean, the middle-class, middle-brow, politically unsophisticated, even prejudiced, *average* members. And we all know how exasperating *they* can be! I am convinced that in the exasperation lies our salvation, *if* we can let the context which most brings it out—the Church—also be our school for unconditional love. But that requires a change of perspective, one I will now summarize.

If we evade the challenges of Church activity, we will never know the redeeming truth of the Gospel.

The Church is as true as—perhaps truer than—the gospel because it is where all can find fruitful opposition, where its revealed nature and inspired direction maintains an opposition between liberal and conservative values, between faith and doubt, secure authority and frightening freedom, individual integrity and public responsibility—and thus where there will be misery as well as holiness, bad as well as good. And if we cannot stand the misery and the struggle, if we would prefer that the Church be smooth and perfect and unchallenging rather than as it is, full of nagging human diversity and constant insistence that we perform ordinances and obey instructions and take seriously teachings that embody logically irresolvable paradoxes, if we refuse to lose ourselves whole-heartedly in such a school, then we will never know the redeeming truth of the Church. It is precisely in the struggle to be obedient while maintaining integrity, to have faith while being true to reason and evidence, to serve and love in the face of imperfections and even offenses, that we can gain the humility we need to allow divine power to enter our lives in transforming ways. Perhaps the most amazing paradox about the Church is that it literally brings together the divine and the human—through priesthood service, the ordinances, the gifts of the spirit—in concrete ways that no abstract systems of ideas ever could.

My purpose here has not been to ignore the very real problems of the Church or the power of the gospel truths. As I have tried to indicate all along, the Church's paradoxical strength derives from the truthful paradoxes of the gospel it embodies, contraries we need to struggle with more profoundly in the Church. And we must not merely accept the struggles and exasperations of the Church as redemptive but genuinely try to reach solutions where possible and reduce unnecessary exasperations. (Indeed, it is only when we grapple with the problems, not merely as intellectual exercises but as problems in need of solution, that they prove redemptive.)

But along with our sensitivity to problems, we must also, I believe, have more respect for the truth of action, of experience, that the Church uniquely exposes us to and respond with courage and creativity—be active, critical, faithful, believing, doubting, struggling, unified members of the body of Christ. To do so we must accept the Church as true in two very important senses: First, it is a repository of redemptive truths and of the authority to perform saving ordinances. Though those truths are difficult to pin down to simple propositions, taken together they motivate the willingness to serve that makes possible the redemptive schooling I have described. The Mormon concept of a nonabsolute, progressing God, for instance, though not reducible to a creed or even to systematic theology, is the most reasonable, emotionally challenging but satisfying ever revealed or devised. And even though that concept is not universally understood in the same way, it remains true, as a thoughtful friend once remarked to me, that "the idea of eternal progression is so engrained in our Church experience that no statement or even series of statements can root it out," which of course supports my main point about the primary truth of the Church. In addition, the power of ordinances, however true in form and divinely authorized, is limited by the quality of our preparation and participation. Like baptism of infants, being ordained, partaking the sacrament, and receiving our endowments can be merely what Moroni called "dead works," an offense to God and valueless unless they are genuine expressions of our solidarity with others living and dead and sincere responses to the communion of the Saints that is the Church.

But one essay cannot cover everything, and I have been emphasizing how the Church is true in a second way that is too much neglected: Besides being the repository of true principles and authority, it is the *instrument* provided by a loving God to help us become like him. It gives us schooling and experiences with each other that *can* bind us together in an honest but loving community, which is the essential nurturing place for salvation. If we cannot accept the Church and the challenges it offers with the openness and courage and humility they require, then I believe our historical studies and our theological enterprises are mainly a waste of time—and possibly destructive. We cannot understand the meaning of the history of Mormonism or judge the truth of Christ's restored gospel unless we appreciate—and act on—the truth of the Church.

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PRESIDENTIAL PONDERING

By Martha Bradley

Every year Mormon historians and interested supporters join together during the first week of May for the annual Mormon History Association meetings. These gatherings are held alternately in the East and the West near sites significant to Mormon history. One of the highlights of each conference is the presidential address which is different from a traditional historical study (although many have taken a historical approach). It is a more personal, often introspective essay, perhaps best described by a past president, Paul Edwards of Graceland College: "A presidential address is an essay of reflection. It is provided by an involved person who, at the culmination of his time in office, feels enough at home to speak freely to those he has come to know and to love." Whatever the form, the presidential essay is almost always worth savoring. Here are some of my favorites.

Paul Edwards, "The Secular Smiths." *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977): 3-17.

Paul Edwards addresses the central question, how did a secular people deal with a sacred event? The Smiths experienced a sacred event—a divine confrontation—while living their own secular history. The confusion in distinguishing between the two is in large measure perpetuated by historical studies which have confused Joseph Smith with Mormonism and Mormonism with the Mormon church—a basic confusion between the sacred and the secular.

The part of Mormonism that is sacred is the single moment of confrontation between man and God. The ways in which the Church organization tries to deal with the sacred event are not themselves sacred, but secular, however much they are imbued with an awareness or sense of the sacred event itself.

How then was the event transformed to myth, and how has the Church dealt with this important change? How did the present order of things originate?

The heritage given to the Church by the Smiths was, according to Edwards, "tragic"; it was a sacred burden laid upon the shoulders of a secular people. "The family must account for, and maintain, the sacred mantle; to wear the royal robes. But the robes of prophetic vision are not the common garment, even of prophets."

Edward's thesis rests on three central contentions. First, Joseph Smith Jr. was a mystic, a secular man who saw religion not as an isolated and climactic experience but as an essential and meaningful part of daily life. The mystical experience was not itself organizational, nor was it meaningful or significant in terms of function or position. Second, Mormonism is a "semi-systematic" set of theological arguments and concepts. Finally, Edwards distinguishes between Mormonism and the Mormon church and its programs. To Edwards, the institution seems little more than bureaucracy designed to sustain ritual conceived around the mystical experience.

Mormon theology attempts to portray the sacred event in such a way that it is meaningful to the people, that it helps them to understand themselves, their God, their universe, and the hereafter. The institution has failed in this objective in two basic ways: first, by ignoring the advantage of Joseph Smith's unique message and epistemology and, second, by failing to correctly assess how far the evolutionary development of the doctrines of the Church has gone. According to Edwards, the Church has used its history as theology and in so doing has denied the value of its theology and the heritage of an honest history.

Douglas D. Alder, "The Mormon Ward: Congregation or Community?" *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 61-78.

A Mormon ward is a religious community, and as such it is more than a congregation. Whereas a congregation is simply a group of people gathered for religious instruction or worship, a ward is also a social unit that offers chances for fellowship, communion, and association.

Like every community, many of the functions of the ward center on major events of the life cycle. The ward serves as a unit of socialization through which values are both sustained and transmitted through religious rites, rituals, ordinances, and their accompanying symbolic representation. The traditional reiteration and repetition of these expressions of belief as well as participation in ritual serve to reinforce values among ward members.

Ideally, every member is called upon to serve and participates in a variety of different types of activities—speaking in church services, teaching and visiting other members, and presiding as a leader over meetings. The business of the ward is conducted by local leaders who defer to the judgment of the central authority of the Church.

When combined, these two factors—lay leadership and mass involvement—act as a reminder that the ward is first of all a group of individual members. To grasp the significance of the ward as a social and ecclesiastical unit one must go beyond leaders and programs to the people themselves. The ward is, after all, primarily a set of human relationships not simply an organizational convenience: it is people.

The ward in the twentieth century is different than its nineteenth-century antecendent. Both share a common communal heritage through which Mormons have perpetuated a peculiar subculture. Often the Mormon ward was first a village—a geographically separate and distinct unit. The ward and the village were the same. This particular unit preceded the less tangible division into ecclesiastical units (in which

geography was still a factor) that were more expandable, largely suburban, and overwhelmingly pragmatic in both outlook and function.

The modern-day ward community is a more corporate model which administers streamlined, efficient, Churchwide programs that were designed at Church headquarters and that bind each ward to every other ward in the worldwide Church.

For the purpose of analysis, Alder proposes five general categories for studying the twentieth-century ward. Each category considers geography, leadership, ancestry, activity percentages, and implementation of programs. Alder calls the first category the "abundant" ward. It exhibits strength in every area which suggests the interrelatedness of the various elements. Strong leadership directs a full program with high percentages of both participation and priesthood membership. The "adequate" wards and the "limited" wards begin to show differences in the numbers and qualities of participants in activity and priesthood membership. Here, fewer members have fourth and fifth generation LDS ancestors, and the geographic boundaries of the ward themselves begin to expand. The "nascent" and "basic" wards are the most diverse. Their numbers are the smallest and their members are scattered geographically. There are no neighborhood wards in this category.

Alder concludes that it is in this local unit of the Church that we will see whether or not Mormonism has successfully met the challenges of the twentieth century and more importantly whether or not it continues to meet the needs of its members.

Melvin Smith, "Faithful History: Hazards and Limitations," *Journal of Mormon History* 9 (1982): 61-69.

Melvin Smith's presidential address focuses on the question: Is there a genre of faithful history? He suggests that faithful history might be defined as history that promotes faith in God and adds credence to the divinity of his leaders and institutions. But Smith also asks another question: Can history in fact do that?

This query is further complicated for the Mormon historian by the historic nature of Mormon doctrines and the Saints' daily dependence on the religion for answers of eternal import. For Latter-day Saints, religion explains everything.

The pattern taken by faithful historians of the Mormon church was established in the Church's first historical drama by its leading player, Joseph Smith, who set the rules for "witnessing the faith." Joseph's first witness was a spiritual, supernatural experience. In the second instance he chose to use historic witness to verify the divinity of his mission.

Melvin Smith separates faithful historians into three basic groups: The first, or dogmatic historians, see all issues as either black or white and assume that history verifies all of God's prophecies. The middle group, perhaps the safer position, is filled by those who choose to write of only the positive, uplifting stories that support and confirm the gospel message. The final division is less clear cut. Its members are more individualistic in both approach and mentality. They are the integrated, faithful historians who attempt to satisfy the demands of profesionalism as well as their own personal conviction that somewhere in the story lies the truth.

Perhaps the more important question is the validity of the presumption that somehow the study of the lives of mortal human beings can be a witness for God. In this sense faithful history, to some degree, presumes to prove or disprove the infinite, or at least some quality or attribute of it.

In answering this question, Smith proposes some other interesting questions for future consideration. He says simply that there are some kinds of truth that are not subject to empirical historical scrutiny and that the proper study of history is mankind not God. Finally, he observes, faithful history is not history; it is a use (even abuse) of history and should be treated as such.

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NEWS AND

UPDATE

BYU Racial Play

Again the question of interracial couples in theatrical productions has been raised. Like last year's episode at Promised Valley Playhouse with Carol Lynn Pearson's *The Dance* (see *Sunstone*, 10:9), a BYU coed was recently denied a role in the student production of *West Side Story* because she was black.

Michelle Harris, an undergraduate and dancer from Allentown, PA, was not given the role for which she auditioned because the part would require her to dance with a white man. The play implies that the couple is involved in a physical relationship. "Community members might have been upset at the implications," said the student director who denied Harris the role. Faculty members and administrators at BYU did not agree with the student director's action, saying that it went counter to the Church's anti-discrimination policies. The director was then admonished to make an effort at recompense, which she did by offering Harris the position of assistant to the director—a non-performing position—which Harris declined.

Harris is one of perhaps twenty black students among the 27,000 students at BYU. T.R. Reid, a reporter for the *Washington Post* quotes Harris as saying, "When I came out here from Allentown, I looked around and said, 'Hey, isn't there anybody black here?' Somebody told me there are some blacks in Salt lake City, but I guess I haven't been up there on the right days." The BYU-Harris situation is seen by some as evidence that despite the 1978 revelation allowing blacks an equal standing in the church, the acceptance of blacks into the Mormon culture has not changed much since a 1960's pamphlet called "Civil Rights—Tool of Communist Deception," written by Ezra Taft Benson and subsequently published by the Church. There are some BYU students who have openly criticized Harris for going public with her story; they feel it shows the University and the Church in a somewhat less-than-perfect perspective. An editorial in BYU's *Daily Universe* insisted that the whole matter is indicative of "an inherent public relations problem at BYU rather than a problem with discrimination." Regardless of interpretation, Michelle Harris will not be appearing in *West Side Story* at Brigham Young University.

Temple Open House Boycotted in Denver

Yet another controversy is brewing in Denver over the LDS temple. In March, both local papers, the*Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News*, reported the conflict. Evidently, a group of thirteen Protestant and Catholic clergymen circulated a letter to approximately 400 other ministers, asking them to decline invitations to participate in an open house for the Mormon church's new temple in Arapahoe County.

The letter says that Mormons are not Christian because "Their Jesus is but one of many gods." The letter goes on to refer to the endowment, a temple ritual. Terry Mattingly of *Rocky Mountain News* reported that "The letter does not contain quotations from the ritual, but says traditional Christian clergy are 'mocked and ridiculed.' " The Rev. Henry F. Fingerlin of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church called the ritual "an attack on all Christian clergy." Fingerlin was the driving force behind the boycott letter; the letter is written on his church's letterhead. He was aided in his efforts by Ex-Mormons for Jesus.

Elder Alfred L. Draney, Denver-area representative for the LDS church did not retract the invitation to the clergy. The *Denver Post* quotes him as saying, "We're interested in showing the edifice to our friends. We're just not in any mood to get into a quarrel over it."

Fingerlin stands by the boycott letter. He believes that any attempt to participate in the temple's open house would be seen as a public endorsement of Mormon doctrine. The Rev. Jack Van Ens of Arvada Presbyterian Church was a recipient of Fingerlin's letter. Van Ens felt the tone of the letter was too harsh, but maintained (according to the *News* story) that "If traditional Christians refuse to stand up and draw the line between what we believe and what Mormons believe, then we will lose our integrity."

No date for the temple's open house has yet been set, except to say that it will take place sometime this coming summer.

REVIEWS

Subliminal Ads

Utah state legislators have always taken seriously their duty to protect Utahans from the messages of worldly society, including liquor ads, cable television, and the covers of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. But when they begin trying to protect their constituents from messages they may never even have noticed, even the *Wall Street Journal* takes note.

A statewide ban on subliminal advertising being advocated by Terry Jessop, a Provo management consultant and ballroom-dancing instructor, was the subject of a recent story in the *WSJ*. Mr. Jessop is also director of the National Institute for Subliminal Research, which he says has more than 500 members nationwide. Jessop feels the problem of subliminal messages has not received the attention it deserves. "The average citizen is exposed three to five times a week to various forms of subliminal advertising," he charges. "That is significant exposure that merits a look at this kind of legislation."

Charges that advertisers embed hidden messages in their ads have been made since the 1950s, but advertisers seldom take the claim seriously. Utah Advertising Council lobbist Dale Zabriskie shows investigators a poster-sized blowup of ice cubes from a liquor ad that Mr. Jessop claims conceal subliminal messages. The poster's text agrees that subliminal messages may indeed be found. It also says that if you look hard enough, "you might find a portrait of Millard Fillmore, a stuffed pork chop and a 1947 Dodge."

Still, Utah is not alone in taking a hard look at possible subliminal messages. Similar legislation is being proposed in California, Idaho, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The Utah bill is being sponsored by State Representative Frances Merrill, who believes that subliminal messages must be controlled. "I don't want anything going into my mind," she says, "that I'm not aware of."

Are There Entrepreneurs in SLC?

In an ironic break with history Utah businesses have begun purposely seeking non-Mormons to fill management positions. According to an article in the January 1986 issue of *Inc.* magazine, by Greg Critser, "The insular Mormon culture that brought economic growth in years past is now a liability for many 1980s business owners."

Critser cites two major reasons for this search for non-Mormons to fill jobs along the Wasatch Front. First, the Mormon culture's philosophy of cooperatively working together runs counter to the philosophy of entrepreneurship, which reeks of individual, innovative thought. Mormons, in general, are most successful in corporate settings where the dynamics are hierarchical and already established, but seem to flounder if expected to think in ways that differ from standard business procedure. Critser quotes James Clayton, dean of the University of Utah's graduate school, as saying "Utah may be a good place to have a lot of docile workers, but it's not a place that encourages going against the grain, which is the essence of entrepreneurship."

Secondly, Critser acknowledges a shortage of capital within Utah and the Mormon culture. The high cost of raising large families, plus the added financial expense of paying 10% of the family's income to the Mormon church result in eliminating any money that might be saved for investing in new business ideas. In short, investment capital is not easily found in Utah, forcing businesses to look elsewhere for economic development. Critser is not shy to point out that "When Utahans do become creative with their capital, the result has often been disastrous." He is, of course, referring to such things as penny stock frauds, real estate frauds, and other investment scams which resulted in about 10,000 investors loosing an estimated $200 million, between 1980 and 1983. However, when Mormon businesses seek out non-Mormons for Utah jobs, there is a definite problem in terms of culture. Not many non-Mormons feel comfortable entering the predominantly Mormon culture which Utah has to offer. Unfortunately for Utahans who would like to find work in Utah—Mormon or non-Mormon—some businesses simply find the climate more conducive to business success elsewhere.

THE UNITED WAY IS A GIFT WE GIVE EACH OTHER FOR BEING HUMAN

Sometimes it's not easy being human. Medical libraries are filled with diseases of the body and mind.

And, as if that weren't enough, we humans tend to create many of our own problems.

Drugs. Child abuse. Family squabbles. The list goes on and on. Things we don't *mean* to do, but end up doing to each other and ourselves.

It's all part of being human, and all part of why there's a United Way.

The United Way is an organization devoted to making it easier to deal with the problems of being human. An organization dedicated to making humanity more *humane.* And since each of us is responsible for keeping the United Way successful, it's like a gift we give to each other for being human.

A gift in the best of human traditions: sharing. Thanks to you.

The House That Gordon Built

Mormons rarely grace the slick pages of *People* magazine; it takes a certain kind of person to accomplish that kind of feat. In the January 20, 1986 issue, Gordon Hall pulled it off. He was the subject of a three page profile, two pages of which were covered by photographs of his home.

Gordon Hall is a 32-year-old Mormon who lives in Paradise Valley, Arizona with his second wife. He is the owner of MGM, a real estate company. He is also a multimillionaire who seriously and freely admits to having the desire to become a trillionaire.

As evidence of Gordon Hall's wealth and ambition, one need only take note of his home—a 90 room mansion, built on six acres of prime land just outside Phoenix. The specifics: tennis court, racquetball court, exercise room, 14 car garage (with gas station), 16 bedrooms, 25 baths (the master bath contains a Jacuzzi for fourteen), six dining rooms, six kitchens, outdoor swimming pool, waterfall, and an ice rink. And, of course, there are almost fifty surveillance cameras to keep an eye on the premises. The house itself measures up to 52,800 square feet. There is no cherry on top, but there is a 44-foot-wide sign on the roof of the mansion which makes a simple statement, "Gordon Hall Mansion." Hall told *People* magazine that, "I want people to know who lives here."

The house was purchased for $2 million from Walker McCune, an Arizona investor. Hall—who laid the foundation for his fortune by building a successful health club chain called 24 Hour Nautilus—spent another $1 million on the tennis and racquetball courts and the workout room

Hall didn't just find all this money out in the desert. He grew up in a tract house in San Diego, worked as a fisherman, joined the Army, then worked his way up the management ladder in a health club in Colorado Springs. Hall is quoted in *People* magazine as saying, "Being successful is not so difficult as people say."

Gordon Hall is interested in doing things big. Indeed, his business is big. His real estate company is planning to give Phoenix the biggest mall in the world, as well as the tallest building in the state. And in West Germany, Gordon Hall wants to build the biggest mall in all of Europe. "So I say to myself (he is quoted in *People*), 'The biggest and the best.' That's what I'm here to do."

New Offshoot of LDS Church Springs Up

On February 8, 1986 three people representing The Restoration Church of Jesus Christ spoke about their organization to a small audience at the Salt Lake Public Library. The Restoration church was established less than a year ago in Los Angeles by a group of people who had been excommunicated from the LDS Church for homosexuality. The group is called by some onlookers "The Gay Mormon Church."

The "Temporary Presidency" of the new denomination is headed by Elder Antonio A. Feliz (Presiding High Priest), who once served as a bishop in the LDS church. Feliz and others felt they had received a

revelation to create the new church. The church was officially organized on August 28, 1985 and has approximately twenty members. Counselors in the presidency are LaMar Hamilton (Presiding Bishop) and John R. Crane (Presiding Patriarch/ Evangelist). Feliz and Crane have collected their revelations in the book *Hidden Treasures and Promises*.

The Restoration church differs from the LDS church in several significant ways. Its membership is dominated by lesbians and gay men. Also, it refuses to declare itself the *only* true church. The Restoration church believes in the ordination of women into its priesthood; Elder Pamela J. Calkins was ordained a minister in the church. An interesting concept in the new the new church is gay polygamy. *Triangle* magazine quotes Feliz as stating, "If a group of people feels that a plural relationship is confirmed by the Lord and the presidency has no objection, a sealing will be performed."

However, the Restoration church does maintain practices that are similar to the LDS church. They believe in paying tithing, holding Family Home Evening, and in having a lay clergy. The Restoration church plans to implement a missionary program to proselytize gay people. They plan to have temples in which endowments and marriage sealings can be performed. The leaders of this new denomination stress that The Restoration Church of Jesus Christ follows the doctrine presented by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and those found in the four standard works.

The gay Mormon community itself has not totally embraced the Restoration church. Some members of Affirmation, a support group for Mormon gays and lesbians, oppose the new church because they maintain a belief in the LDS Church. Affirmation and the Restoration church are decidedly separate organizations with completely distinct goals. The Restoration church is not allowed to solicit converts at Affirmation gatherings.

When asked if the LDS Church had made any official statement about the Restoration Church of Jesus Christ, Jerry Cahill—spokeman for the LDS Church—said, "I've never heard of it."

Bell on Reagan

The most well-known Mormon educator, T. H. Bell, former U.S. Secretary of Education, recently described his relationship with the Great Communicator. In the March issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine, Bell describes Ronald Reagan as "a man of strength, conviction and courage;" however, he also charges that the Administration failed to set forth a clear policy on education.

"I worked in the Cabinet for four long, tumultuous years," writes Bell. "I learned that Ronald Reagan apparently believed he could get the best thinking from his Cabinet and senior staff members if he allowed a few debates and verbal brawls to discipline their thinking."

Bell believes that a lack of decisive leadership at the top gave the Administration's education policy a certain incoherence. One example of this is in the area of bilingual education, a program the Administration initially wanted to sharply curtail. Given this, Bell says he was surprised to hear Reagan promise Texas Hispanics during his 1984 reelection campaign that he would support continued funding for the program.

Reagan's reluctance to step into education policy also gave an opening to right-wing ideologues who, says Bell, would take the President's general ideas and "carry them to the lunatic fringes of ideological political thought." Bell charges these unnamed conservatives with aiming for the abolition of every major federal education program, including student financial aid and aid to the handicapped.

Bell's criticism was particularly startling in light of his reputation as a low-profile administrator who seldom spoke out on controversial issues during his tenure in the Cabinet. Still, conservative politicians tended to dismiss his criticism. Burton Yale Pines, vice-president of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think-tank in Washington, D.C., dismissed the article as "a rather pathetic exercise" and added, "it was Bell who was out of step with Reagan." Free Congress Foundation president Paul Weyrich was somewhat more blunt, describing the article as "sour grapes from a man now looking for a high-paying post somewhere in the education establishment."

Bell is presently a professor of education at the University of Utah, where he teaches education administration.

Political Shifting

After a long season out in the cold, do Utah liberals have a chance to regain some influence in the state? In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article, Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley argue that Utah may be ready for a change in its political weather.

The co-authors of *Empires in the Sun* and *America's Saints*, Gottlieb and Wiley are familiar with the signs of conservative entrenchment in Utah. The state

gave Reagan his biggest majorities in the country in the last two elections, and at present every statewide office is held by conservative Republicans. Gottlieb and Wiley also note other factors that limit liberal influence: a small and disorganized minority community, a weak tradition of union political activity, the conservative cultural values of Mormonism, and a longstanding hostility to the federal government. But there are other factors at work. During the past decade, immigration into the Salt Lake Valley has eroded the traditional Mormon majority there. More than half the population of Salt Lake City is now non-Mormon, and Gottlieb and Wiley claim that "in the context of Utah conservatism, Salt Lake City is a veritable hotbed of radical-liberal politics." Salt Lake City mayor Palmer DePaulis and his predecessor Ted Wilson have both deviated from the general run of Utah elected officials. They are both moderate Democrats who present themselves as competent young administrators with innovative approaches to the challenges facing the city.

Gottlieb and Wiley also think that Utah voters may be less interested in ideology than their record at the polls suggests. They point to former governor Scott Matheson as an example of a successful Utah politician, who "avoids ideological conflict by staying 'above' politics and focusing instead on one or two safe issues and the cultivation of a pleasing image." Politicians who stress ideology in their campaigns may be less successful. Recent negative polls have caused Senator Orrin Hatch to soft pedal his commitment to several New Right objectives, particularly in the area of women's issues.

Gottlieb and Wiley conclude by pointing out that ideology is less important in American politics than it is in European countries. Instead, American politicians have chosen to portray their opponents as extremists, while assuring the voters that they share the voters' mainstream values. In Utah the "mainstream" has traditionally thought of itself as conservative, but a cultural shift away from that identification might have only a limited ideological impact.

"The Reagan revolution," the two writers conclude, "is not a permanent one even in Utah, especially when its champion leaves office."

A Lethal (Hi)story

TABERNACLE
THOMAS COOK
PINNACLE BOOKS, 1985, $3.50, 326 PP.

Reviewed by Scott Abbott

The Mormon murder mystery, of which Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* is the most famous example, had a banner year in 1983. Rex Burns's *The Avenging Angel* (Viking Press), Gary Stewart's *The Tenth Virgin* (St. Martin's Press), and Thomas Cook's *Tabernacle* (Houghton Miflin) all first appeared in that year. The latter two novels share extensive similarities of plot. In both *The Tenth Virgin* and *Tabernacle*, a street-wise New York detective tracks down a murderer in the very foreign environment of Salt Lake City (with excursions to Provo and southern Utah). Their plots turn on the doctrine of blood atonement; and in each the detective solves the case (which ends with an attempted assasination in the tabernacle during general conference) only by making his way through the labyrinth of Mormon theology, culture, hierarchy, and fringe elements. Both novels make interesting reading, but *Tabernacle* proves more satisfying and more provocative to Mormon readers. (For a further description of *The Tenth Virgin* see Levi Peterson's review in SUNSTONE vol. 10 no. 3.)

In *Tabernacle* Tom Jackson, a ten-year veteran of the Salt Lake police department, still wishes he were in his native New York, which he had left after a mysterious event involving his only real friend. As Jackson solves the series of Salt Lake murders he reflects on those earlier events. Thus the reader experiences two stories at once, both of which illuminate the personality of the New York cop cast out of his seamy paradise into the City of the Saints.

With his heart still in New York, Jackson fights periodic attacks of depression: "'You feel like a fly in a prayer book. The whole weight of Salt Lake just comes slamming down on you!' . . . He did not like the wholesome cleanliness, the other-worldly gleam. But there were cases of blight here and there, a greasy diner or oil-stained gas station." There are important reasons, however, why Jackson is in Salt Lake rather than in New York, and by the end of the book we find just how attractive the city's "other-worldly gleam" is to the cop whose moral foundation was severely shaken in New York.

A man of Jackson's experience is naturally cynical. When he finds Donald Olsen, a Church spokesman in the public communications department, and BYU student Jennifer Warren in compromising (and deadly) proximity to the crime, he works doggedly against what seems an insane coverup by his fellow policemen and by the powerful Mormon hierarchy.

Because of the pressure on him to conform, he takes himself off the case and then must face the persuasive apostle of the Church, Mordecai McBride. Their conversation reveals both men's attitudes toward the Mormons' partially achieved, strenously defended utopia. When McBride finds that Jackson left the case because of the perceived coverup, their discussion has overtones of the current debate over the writing of Mormon history:

"'Do you honestly think we are that corrupt?' McBride asked, a sense of wounded honor in his tone.

'No.'

'You're implying it.'

'Look,' Tom said, 'I know how a murder investigation works. You can't just exclude an entire area of investigation and expect to do the job. You've got to check out everything.'

'And you think we won't?'

'There was a girl up there with Donald Olsen. Maybe they knew each other. Maybe they didn't. But in any normal investigation, that's the first thing you'd need to find out.'

'Agreed. So?'

'They're not looking in that direction,' Tom said.

'I see.'

'They don't want for there to be any relationship between the girl and Olsen.'

'Maybe there wasn't one,' McBride said.

'Maybe there wasn't,' Tom said, 'But from my experience I've learned that if you don't want to find something, you won't whether it's there or not.'

McBride glanced about the room, then leaned forward again. 'Does the word discretion *mean anything to you, Tom?'"*

The apostle tells Jackson how important Olsen is, not just as a person, but as a representative of the Church. "The Church," he says, "has not gotten to where it is in this country by being indifferent to such matters."

Jackson says he is just a cop. When he sees someone murdered he wants to find out who did it.

McBride talks about how insinuations linger and what harm they can do, even if proven false. He promises Jackson that there is no coverup, whatever the appearances. When Jackson finally agrees to stay with the case (so there will be no intimation of "honest cop quits investigation because of coverup") McBride has a few last words for him:

"'You have to understand something about the Saints. We were greatly persecuted. Our leaders were killed. We were driven from place to place until we found Salt Lake. A people with that sort of past is very careful about its future. Very self-protective of what they have, because it took them so long to get it. Maybe sometimes we overreact. . . . We teach the present, but also the past and future. There is a wholeness to our vision, a completeness. We are used to waiting. And we will know when it is finished.'

'I don't know anything about that,' Tom said. 'I'm just a cop.'

. . .

'And I am just your brother,' McBride said."

Jackson continues his investigation of Olsen and Warren, in his own way. It is a mark of the novel's balance that he discovers one of the two to be as squeaky

clean as the Mormons claim, while finding the other has a less savory side. Again and again Mormon doctrines, cultural practices, personalities, and history are called in question, examined, and found to be flawed *and* salvific, unpalatable *and* delicious to the taste. But the author is not only interested in balance. What draws him to Salt Lake City is a religion that has partially succeeded in realizing its utopian dreams.

As McBride says, "there is a wholeness to our vision, a completeness." While that sense of perfection gives Mormons the tremendous power to create a flourishing, largely peaceful empire in the Great Basin, it also inspires a "fortress mentality," an intolerance for imperfection, a need to stifle criticism, a desire to selectively rewrite history, and a deadening stasis.

Jackson attends a general conference session near the end and observes the other visitors:

"They were the tourists of their faith and Salt Lake was their Mecca, the place they came to for inspiration and renewal, a city set down within a curve of snow-capped mountains, a fortress against that alien, gentile world they had no wish to join or understand.And yet, somewhere within the heart of their own citadel, someone was killing them."

That "someone" has an extremist vision of the inviolable perfection of the Church. Because the leaders of the Church believe in continuing revelation, because they have not entirely committed themselves to defending present perfection, there has been a major change in doctrine. The murderer, with a vested interest in the history he sees as violated, is determined to purify his Church. The problems Jackson perceives in the Church and its members, when intensified and focused in a single fanatical individual, result in violence. Or to state it the other way around: the murders done in the name of religion, and as part of a perceived historical pattern, merely magnify tendencies present in the Church as a whole.

That *Tabernacle* is a murderous parable about the uses of history becomes clear near the end of the book, if it hasn't already, when Jackson visits the offices of two professors of history at BYU. One of them, Professor Kraft, has packed his books and is leaving the university, presumably because of limits on his writing similar to those McBride tried to place on Jackson's investigation. The other, Professor Lambert, plays a key role in the final moments of the novel. But I shall not discuss that here, leaving the final unraveling of this lethal (hi)story for you.

Thomas Cook has written about the dark side of ideologies before. His 1982 novel *The Orchids* is largely the diary of a Nazi concentration-camp doctor who, with others even more evil than himself, tried to exterminate the evil he thought he saw in the world. But if this were not obviously Cook's book, I would be tempted to ascribe it to a slightly disgruntled BYU history professor writing under a pseudonym. The author shows an uncanny sense for both the positive and negative sides of Mormonism, and especially for the complications involved in writing "faithful history." There are a few factual errors: two men in Provo plan to meet half an hour later in the Hotel Utah, "disfellowshipment" is mistaken for excommunication, and BYU is attributed a department of theology; but these could be explained as clever dissembling. The cover of the paperback, under the title *Tabernacle*, is dominated by an embossed picture of the Salt Lake temple. But lest we scoff at another error, the tabernacle can be seen hiding in the background. In this, as in any good mystery, things are not as they seem.

Tabernacle is more than a first-rate murder mystery. In murder, its author has found the ugly final consequence of an ideology certain of its own perfection. Mormons, Catholics, Republicans, Marxists, and literary critics would all do well to read this book.

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