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**FORKED TONGUE?**

Linda King Newell's personal assessment of herself and her unbiased motivation in co-authoring the book *Mormon Enigma* (Speeches & Comments, SUNSTONE, 10:7, p. 40) makes me sick to my stomach. My intestinal fortitude is certainly up to anything that an open and avowed apostate can dish out; maybe at times I can even relate a bit to them, but shame to anyone who knowingly assures her listeners that she is an active and faithful Latter-day Saint, when her forked tongue and written works prove otherwise. With faithful Saints like her our prophets, including Joseph, certainly have no need for real enemies.

It is true her "nonjudgmental book" (her words, and I have to laugh) received raves from a "booted-out" church historian, a non-Mormon writer, (albeit one whom I admire) and a few other unauthoritative people. So what? It is also true that their text was carefully annotated, but from what sources? A vast majority of them from vicious apostates (Hurlbut et al). Many texts from the RLDS Church, whose mission is to destroy the true church, and many from the history of a sweet, dear sister, whose book was banned by a prophet of God because it contained numerous errors, incident to the old age and memory of the writer. Can a stream rise any higher than its source?

Newell's challenges to our so-called myths are as asinine as her book. For instance, as any good deacon should know, the restitution of all things pertains to the Everlasting Covenant and Priesthood Keys and not to the Law of Moses. As for her numbers, I recall a visit in 1947 from my mission president. From a show of hands, he informed us that 75% of the missionaries were descended from the polygamous 3% of the pioneers.

I would also ask Ms. Newell if the scriptural admonition, "by their fruits they shall be known" be true, where then are the descendants of those who rejected the principles of yesteryear? Where are the Emma Smiths? Where are the William Laws and others today? Who fulfilled

prophecy? Who built up the Kingdom? Did Mary Fielding Smith practice an unhallowed lifestyle? Does a bitter fountain bring forth sweet water? Is the church that Newell so faithfully pledges her soul to today the true church of God on earth? Could it be that the myth of the origin of plural marriage is true, that it really did come as a commandment of God? If so, her own words, "I find very little in the system of polygamy that would come from a just and loving God," will one day make her as nauseous as they make me today.

P.S. If I didn't like your heretical magazine so much I would cancel-ha!

Max H. Rammell  
 Rexburg, ID

**LITERARY INFLUENCES**

Someone once summarized Aristotle's view on happiness (apparently based on his *Ethica Nicomachea*, Books 1 and 10) thus: "Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence." (Quoted in Lillian Eichler Watson, *Light From Many Lamps*, New York, 1951, pp. 1-2.)

In relation to this we find something attributed to Joseph Smith in the (so-called) *[Documentary] History of the Church*, 5: 134-35. It is contained in an essay simply tossed into the 1842 record with no explanation. It reads, "Happiness is the object and design of our existence and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it."

I wonder how instructive, putting revelation aside momentarily, it might be to thoroughly examine the literary influences on and sources of the Prophet's thoughts?

Stanley B. Kimball  
 Edwardsville, IL

**BY THEIR FRUITS**

I can't decide whether Scott Dunn's "Spirit Writing" was written with tongue-in-cheek or whether it is a serious attempt to discredit Joseph Smith. Since I can't believe that any loyal member of the Mormon Church would try to downgrade the Book of Mormon to the status of *Jane Eyre*, I have had to come up with another theory about Dunn's moti-

vation. Perhaps he was carried away with the cleverness of his analysis of the seeming similarities between the Book of Mormon and other books written speedily by persons who were not supposed to know much about what they wrote about. At any rate, as a long-time student of the occult "sciences" I was intrigued (but also disturbed) by Dunn's attempt to understand Joseph Smith's achievement in the light of other seemingly miraculous literary achievements. Even if there are similarities in writing methodology and content, that does not prove (as Dunn seems to imply) that Joseph Smith was just another "spirit writer" and the Book of Mormon just another "spirit written book."

As defined in Dunn's article, "spirit writing" or "automatic writing" is rapid writing or dictation which seems almost effortless—yet is coherent and imaginative. Dunn cites works by Helen, Jane Roberts, Levi Dowling, John Newbrough, Charlotte Bronte, Robert Graves, Lilian Johnstone and Pearl Curran to establish some "parallels" with Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. Whether these seem like damaging or spurious "parallels" will depend on each reader's assessment of the criteria Dunn utilizes to postulate them. His main criteria seem to be writing methodology and originality.

Let me explain what I find both unconvincing and dangerous about Dunn's insinuation that Joseph Smith was just another "spirit writer" and the Book of Mormon just another "spirit-written book." I realize that Dunn did not come right out and say either of these things, but he certainly insinuated them. For, on the last page of his article, he pleads for a reconsideration of "the role of the standard works." Evidently, he feels that he has desecralized the Book of Mormon by "proving" that the method by which Joseph Smith brought it forth (as well as much of its content) is similar to some other literary productions. What is new about this claim? Nothing as far as content is concerned. Critics from **Hurlbut to the Tanners** have been harping on seeming similarities for years.

However, the use of the new and somewhat sinister term "spirit writing" does *seem* to be a new claim and therefore a new explanation. Is it really? No, but it was probably inevitable that "parallels" would be drawn because some of the "common-sense" explanations of why Joseph Smith couldn't have written the Book of Mormon himself (too ignorant, etc.) fairly cry out for comparison with other persons who have written marvelous things they weren't supposed to know much about. Even the claim that Joseph Smith picked up his dictation where he left off without having to have anything read back to him, while it sounds uncanny, has been shown to be typical of "spirit writers." So what? Superficial similarities between the writing methodologies employed by Helen, Roberts, Dowling, Newbrough, Bronte, Graves, Johnstone, Curran, and Joseph Smith, and, for that matter, countless others, don't prove anything about the source and value of their output. How about Nostradamus, Mary Baker Eddy, Edgar Cayce, Jeanne Dixon, etc.? Didn't they all claim supernatural assistance or inspiration in the production of their writings? If a claim of supernatural assistance, coupled with rapid writing or dictation, is what constitutes a "spirit writer," then, obviously, Joseph Smith was one. But, again, that proves nothing about the source of the inspiration or the worth of the message. Emphasis on the methodology of literary production (and, for that matter, on literary quality) simply diverts attention from the main issue—which I say is the content of the message and, of course, the source.

If the Book of Mormon can't be declared guilty by association with other seemingly "spirit written books," then what about the matter of originality? Total originality has never been a major claim to fame of the Book of Mormon. Not only are whole chapters of Isaiah quoted (as noted above), but the Sermon on the Mount is quoted from the New Testament. Obviously, Joseph Smith wasn't overly worried about being accused of plagiarizing the Bible. He translated whatever was

on the gold plates—regardless of what men would think about it. But why is the Book of Mormon phrased in King James' English? Undoubtedly because that was the only literary language Joseph Smith knew. He could hardly have done otherwise—unless, as some suppose, he was given by the Holy Ghost exact English equivalents of each word and phrase he came across on the Gold Plates. I realize that there is room for honest disagreement about the precise process used by Joseph Smith in his translation of the Gold Plates. Dunn questions whether he followed the procedure recommended to Oliver Cowdery in D&C 9—or whether he was given exact English equivalents. I assume that he was given the exact words and phrases to pass on to his scribe when he started out, i.e., when he was fully dependent on the Urim and Thummim. Later, after he had gained more understanding of Reformed Egyptian, I suspect that he was able to translate directly from the Gold Plates.

But, regardless of how it was done, it was done "by the gift and power of God." What does that mean? Simply that he did it with divine assistance. 2 Peter 1:20-21 tells us how scripture must come and how it must be interpreted: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Because every reader can test for himself or herself Joseph Smith's claim that he was divinely inspired to bring forth the Book of Mormon, the Book of Mormon makes a bid for our attention and belief that goes well beyond anything put forth in any book not claiming to contain God's word. Only the Bible, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price can be tested in the same way. I suspect that most people who believe the Bible to be the word of God have never tested it; they simply accept it by tradition.

In other words, the Book of Mormon is not really comparable with *Jane Eyre*, *The White Goddess*, *A Course of Miracles*, *The Seth Material*, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ*, *The Urantia Book*, *Spray From an Island*

*Sea*, or the case of Patience Worth. Nor is it really comparable with the case of Bridey Murphy, the trance readings of Edgar Cayce, the “prophecies” of Jeanne Dixon, or the prophetic quatrains of Nostradamus. Taking the latter example, Nostradamus had great style (and made many lucky guesses) but his “prophecies” were about worldly kingdoms—not the Kingdom of God. Hence, his achievement, though impressive, is irrelevant to our salvation. The existence and message of the Book of Mormon, on the other hand, is absolutely essential to our salvation. That’s the difference! It is a difference in kind—not merely one of degree.

Here again, content and source are what counts, not writing speed and style. The Book of Mormon never claimed to be great literature. But, it can bring us a lot closer to Jesus Christ than *Jane Eyre* can! Dunn suggests towards the end of his article that we may need to demote the Book of Mormon to the level of other “spirit written books” or else elevate them to the level of the Book of Mormon. Hogwash! This is about as logical as insisting that all books bound in Morocco leather with gilt-edged pages and a cloth bookmark are scripture. A book is not scripture because of the way it was written or the way it is bound. It is scripture because of its content and its source (along with formal acceptance as scripture by a general conference vote.) Either Joseph Smith was or was not inspired by the Holy Ghost to translate the Book of Mormon from ancient records. Since he made that audacious claim, it’s up to each reader to test the claim by reading the book and praying about it. If they are not willing to do both of these things, they have no promise. All too many people are “sure” that the Book of Mormon is about the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. If they never get past that misconception, they will never learn what it really is about.

To my way of thinking, the real issue is the source of Joseph Smith’s inspiration. Early detractors recognized this as the real issue when they went to such trouble to defame his character and impugn his worthiness to receive inspiration from God. They didn’t use operational terms like “spirit writing” to try to show that Joseph Smith didn’t have

anything over other people claiming supernatural inspiration. They simply declared that he got his inspiration from the Devil, the Father of Lies. This is probably still the main issue (or explanation) for fundamentalist Christians. Sophisticated Christians, who no longer believe in the Devil, have had to come up with other explanations—most of them based even on psychological or occult suppositions. “Spirit writing” is one of these. In other words, it is assumed that Joseph Smith spun the Book of Mormon out of his own fevered imagination—with a little help from the “collective unconscious.” That isn’t a new claim either!

I, for one, am convinced (as Dunn apparently is not) that Joseph Smith didn’t have access (without divine inspiration and an ancient record) to the cultural knowledge that would permit him to write a 500-plus page book about more than 2000 years of ancient history pertaining to largely unknown civilizations. (How, for instance, could he have made up 200 or so unfamiliar proper names that have turned out to be genuinely Near Eastern?) The other writers that Dunn has compared to Joseph Smith came up with seemingly unknowable cultural data, but that data was at least available in books in their day. Ancient Mesoamerican high civilizations (those having cities as described in the Book of Mormon) were essentially unknown to citizens of the United States before John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood published their monumental *Incidents of Travel in Mexico, Chiapas and Yucatan* (1841). In other words, it is easier to believe that Pearl Curran (or even Bridey Murphy) could come up with valid descriptions of life in England (or Ireland) hundreds of years before their time than it is to believe that Joseph Smith could have come up with minute descriptions of ancient high civilizations in Mesoamerica before they were known to exist. True, not all cultural details mentioned in the Book of Mormon have been validated thus far. However, enough have been validated to establish the cultural context of the Book of Mormon through empirical investigation. [See John Sorenson’s new book entitled *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (1985)]. I say

this in all seriousness in spite of the spate of unscientific and sometimes ridiculous claims put forth by writers and map-makers less responsible and careful than John Sorenson. No one ever said it would be easy to find the truth. However, the gift and power of discernment, one of the more useful of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, can help honest investigators cut through the thickets of seeming similarity and discover for themselves the Tree of Life; they can sift through the gravels of the Stream of Life and come up with pure gold; they can wade through piles of seemingly identical oysters and come up with the Pearl of Great Price. Just as there are “distinctions without a difference,” there are similitudes without much similarity. This, to my way of thinking, is what Dunn has done with his “parallels.” By emphasizing methodology of literary production (and, to some extent, content) he has discounted the transcendent message of the Book of Mormon—which makes it unique in spite of Isaiah passages and superficial similarities with Ethan Smith’s *Views of the Hebrews* and Solomon Spaulding’s famous manuscript. Again, what is so new about the claim that Joseph Smith could have gotten some ideas for the Book of Mormon from his environment? Post hoc reasoning is easy. Any number can play. It all boils down to a matter of opinion—and faith.

To say that Pearl Curran or some other automatic writer came up with comparably unknowable information is to prove nothing about Joseph Smith. Remember the craze that Bridey Murphy caused? Some people are gifted with a vivid imagination, others with insight into the future (or the past), others are surely inspired by the Devil, and others are inspired by the Spirit of Christ. In other words, there are lots of ways whereby people can come up with seemingly miraculous scenarios. Even scientists have hunches that lead them to great breakthroughs in thought. Walter B. Cannon devotes a whole chapter (chapter V) of his book *The Way of the Investigator*, to the “Role of Hunches” in scientific discovery. Automatic writing is a kind of non-stop series of hunches and insights, isn’t it? The point is that labeling is not explaining: calling Joseph Smith a “spirit writer” does

not explain (or explain away) his achievement.

Because it is so difficult to say with any finality who was gifted or inspired in what way or by what external force, the best that we can do is to test the content of a purported book in the scientific way recommended by Alma 32. Mormons do not pretend or claim that they have a corner on all spiritual knowledge and inspiration. Indeed, 2 Nephi 29:7 says quite the opposite: "Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth." If God has given His word to his children in various nations, it must mean that His word was given through holy men—if not fully-endowed prophets. I have read enough of the Koran to feel that God could have inspired it, but *not* in the same way as the Standard Works of the Mormon Church. Nevertheless, this scripture (2 Nephi 29:7) does give us some insight into the attitude we, as Latter-day Saints, should take towards the "sacred books" that are not a part of our Standard Works. It is pretty obvious to us that there is a hierarchy of "sacred books"—or, should we say, degrees of dependability. The Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are the pinnacle of the pyramid as far as we are concerned. And why not? We have tested them as directed in Alma 32. We have tasted them and found them delicious. We have found that they enlarge our souls. (One way that they enlarge our souls is to make us love and respect all mankind.)

But don't all so-called "sacred books" (as well as many secular books) enlarge one's soul and make one better to cope with life? Yes, of course. But, just as a beginning arithmetic book does not take one through differential calculus, a good but limited "sacred book" in the Hindu, Jain, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist, Shinto, Islamic, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, or Post-Christian tradition can't take one as far and bring one into a

covenant relationship with the True and Living God and His Son Jesus Christ as the Mormon scriptures and the Mormon Church can. If a Mormon doesn't believe that he has something extra, something extremely important to add to whatever a person of another religion (or no religion) has, then he doesn't really understand the mission of the Restored Gospel.

To compare *A Course in Miracles*, *The Seth Material*, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ*, *Oahspe*, *The Urantia Book*, *Jane Eyre*, *The White Goddess*, *Spray From an Inland Sea*, *The Sorry Tale*, and *The Case of Patience Worth* with the Book of Mormon—just because they *may* have been written by superficially similar techniques is to miss the whole point. The point is that the Book of Mormon has been offered to the world as a new witness for Jesus Christ. One can find out for oneself if this claim is true. I know for myself that it is true because of the witness I received while reading 3 Nephi, chapter 17-19.

Charles L. Sellers  
Knoxville, TN

#### AND SPEAKING OF AUTHORITY . . .

I read with some interest David John Buerger's article on Elder Bruce R. McConkie's citations from commentaries on the Scriptures ("Speaking with Authority," *SUNSTONE* vol. 10, no. 3). I was somewhat dismayed at Mr. Buerger's side-stepping of probably the most important sources that Elder McConkie depends on to establish his doctrinal views. These two scriptural commentaries are cited at a ratio of at least 20 to 1 to all others that he cites, including himself.

I have spent the last 12 years indexing Elder McConkie's works and now have a 400 page document which demonstrates that in his published texts he cites over 16,000 different scriptural passages a minimum of 25,000 times. To my understanding, there is only one commentary more authoritative than the Standard Works themselves and that is, as the Prophet Joseph Smith was wont to say, "the oldest book in the world; . . . even the Holy Ghost" (TPJS, p. 349). How often Elder McConkie quotes from this

"oldest of books" Mr. Buerger will have to determine for himself, as we all must.

On the other issue of self-citing, most prolific LDS and non-LDS writers do this. The motive for the practice is generally nothing more than convenience for the reader.

In light of the preponderance of numbered scriptural citations and insights prompted by the Spirit (which are "unnumberable," perhaps), Elder McConkie's quotes from himself seem proportionately quite modest.

Paul Nolan Hyde  
Simi Valley, CA

#### JOHNNY LINGO

Since Johnny Lingo's cows did not give Mahana any more innate worth than she already had, neither would I expect the kiss of a royal-born daughter of Heavenly Father to make Kent any more princely than Frogley.

Connie Susa  
Warwick, Rhode Island

#### NOT SO WORD PERFECT

Wonderful as *Word Perfect 4.1* is, it is no substitute for proof-reading. I was dismayed as I read my review "A Personal Response to Dialogue" (10:8, p44) to find several errors which altered the meaning of what I had actually written. Probably anyone can correct *uspet* to *upset* (WP Speller where were you?), but your rendering of "For *him* [my father] the most impressive feature of the Stanford Ward was its elders' quorum" to "For *me* the most . . ." obscures the very reason that I was allowed to go to Stanford in the first place. Further on, it was my "naive arrogance" not my *native* arrogance that was challenged. Finally, I should have been identified at the end as Susan Taber, not Susan Buhler.

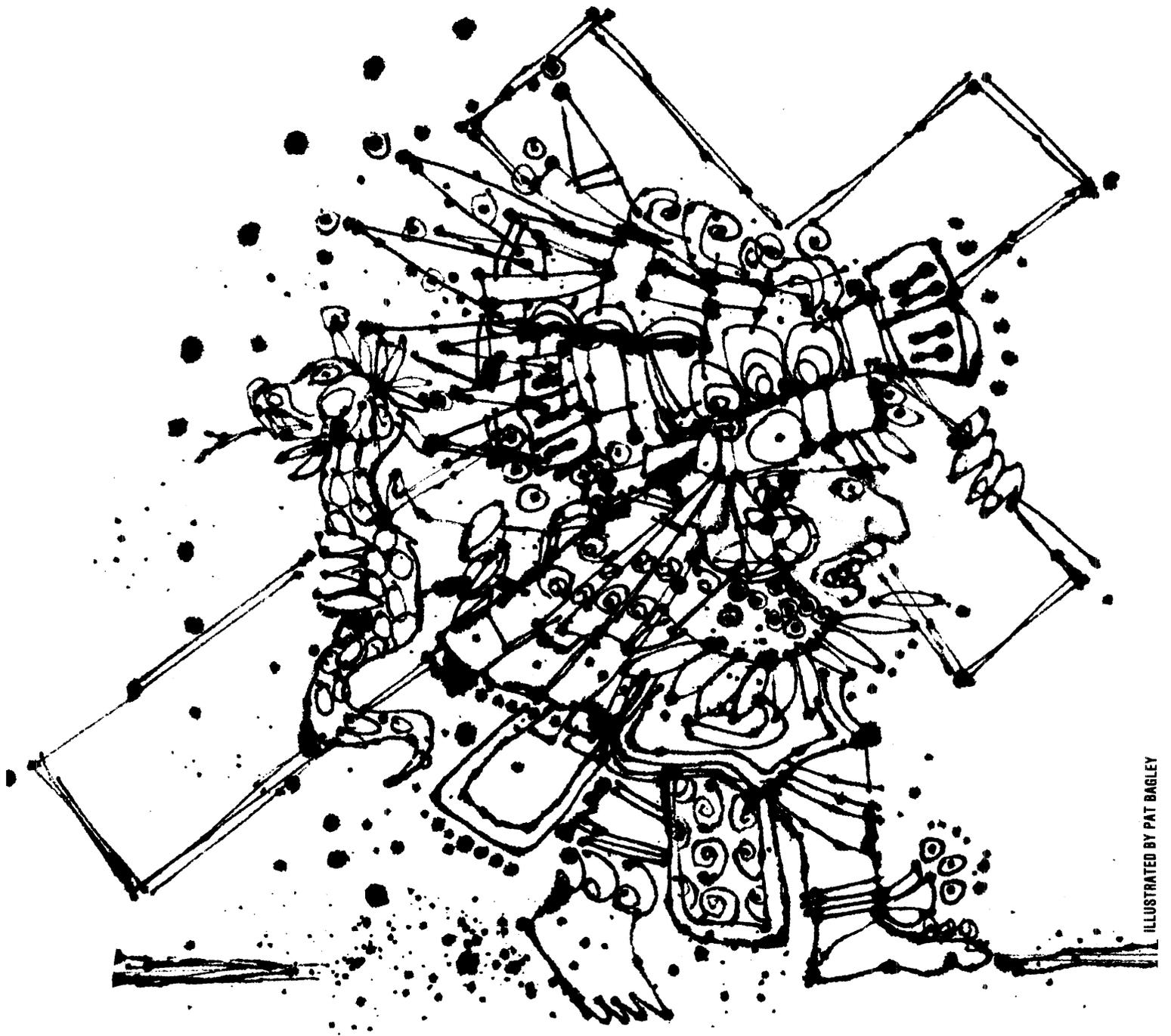
Since the review was in your possession for nine months before publication, I find it difficult to understand why I was not given the opportunity to proofread it prior to publication.

Susan B. Taber  
Newark, DE

# The Christianization of Quetzalcoatl

A History of the Metamorphosis

By Brant Gardner



ILLUSTRATED BY PAT BAGLEY

**A**ztec religion on the eve of the Conquest was a vibrant mosaic of interwoven deities and practices, yet of the whole pantheon only one native god is well known to the world: Quetzalcoatl. From the time Cortez was hailed as the returning Quetzalcoatl, the Western world has been fascinated with this enigmatic Aztec deity. The anomaly of a white, bearded lawgiver who taught culture and kindness has been so intriguing that many have thought him to have been a foreigner who brought a new message to the natives. Within two decades of the Conquest, Quetzalcoatl was identified with St. Thomas, the wandering apostle. Since that time Quetzalcoatl has been described as a Viking, a Chinese Explorer, an extraterrestrial, Moses, and Jesus Christ. Similarly, most Mormons assume that the legends of Quetzalcoatl were simply distorted reminiscences of the visit of Christ to the New World as detailed in the Book of Mormon.

The identification of Quetzalcoatl with Christ or any other non-Indian figure depends upon a series of traits which appear in native sources. Quetzalcoatl is said to have been a benevolent lawgiver who provided the moral basis for the society; he was a white, bearded man wearing a long white robe, and he left with a promise to return and rule again. While all of these traits have roots in the native legend, each one has been altered by the pressures of the Conquest. The most striking aspects of these traits—those which suggest that the legends referred to an appearance of Christ—are all Spanish elaborations on native legends. The original tales, as far as I can reconstruct them, do not support the identification of Quetzalcoatl with any foreign visitor.

Marcelino Penuelas has vividly described the process which has Christianized Quetzalcoatl: "Rather than explain the myth, the more or less solid explanations of those who may be called mythophiles, mythophobes, and mythomaniacs add fuel to the fire which produces the halo of [his] mystery" (*Cuadernos Americanos*, 133:89). In this case, the original observations of native beliefs were only slightly distorted, but each subsequent writer has, in his own way, altered the legend to suit his particular interests.

The best example of this process in action comes from the comparison of three texts concerning Quetzalcoatl. The Florentine Codex is a major collection of cultural information taken directly from native informants. Compiled under the direction of Fray Bernardino de Sahagun, it contains this indigenous description of Quetzalcoatl: "There, it is said, he lay; he lay covered; and he lay with only his face covered. And, it is said, he was monstrous. His face was like a huge, battered stone, a great fallen rock; it [was] not made like that of men, and his beard was long." (*Florentine Codex*, ed and trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, 3:13)

The second passage is Sahagun's own Spanish version: "And he was always lying down and covered with blankets, and his face was very ugly, his head large and bearded" (*Historia General de las Cosas de la Nueva Espana*, p. 196). The first distortion of the original is very subtle as it comes from context rather than text. The native account of Quetzalcoatl's appearance comes in a passage concerning the priest-king of Tula, but Sahagun's account follows a description of Quetzalcoatl's temple in Tenochtitlan. This sug-



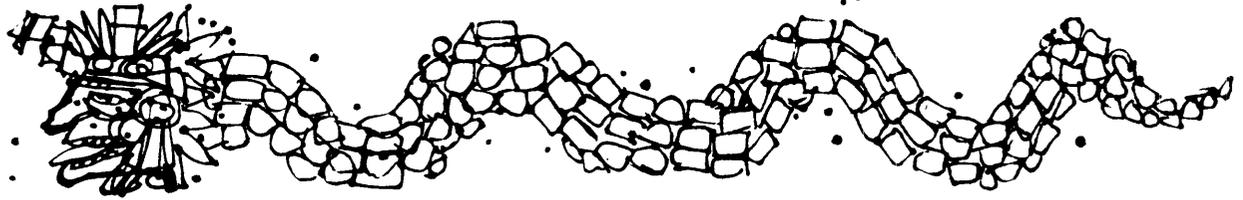
gests that Sahagun's passage describes the idol rather than the person.

The second slight shift occurs when Quetzalcoatl is described as ugly rather than monstrous. *Ugly* is an aesthetic value judgment; *monstrous* is an essential description of his nonhuman nature. The native text explicitly states that his face was not like that of men. Quetzalcoatl's monstrous characteristics were important signals to the native mind which classified him as extrahuman, a demigod; but Sahagun's account fails to convey this message.

This text was further compromised by Juan de Torquemada. He is relatively faithful to the Spanish account, but he includes a further interpretation which does not exist in Sahagun:

*[Quetzalcoatl's] image had a very ugly face, and a large head, and was very bearded: he was lying down, and not standing, covered with blankets, and it is said that they did it in memory that in another time he was to return to rule, and in reverence of his great majesty they should keep his figure covered and lying down, which must signify his absence, as one who sleeps, who lies down to sleep, and when awakening from that dream of absence, will rise, to rule. (Monarquia Indiana, 2:52.)*

Torquemada makes explicit Sahagun's inference that the description refers to the idol rather than the man. As in Sahagun's version, Quetzalcoatl is still ugly, but he is not monstrous. In this passage, however, Quetzalcoatl undergoes



**Commentators on the Quetzalcoatl myth have interpreted the material to support their own beliefs.**

another quiet transformation. Where the original implies that the face is covered due to its monstrosity, in Torquemada, Quetzalcoatl is covered in deference to his majesty. The suggestion that the prone position is a symbol for his sleep of absence might be a plausible native category, but it is not corroborated by Sahagun's text nor by any other source on the Quetzalcoatl legend.

Thus a single piece of native information about Quetzalcoatl was successively shaped until the native deity appeared as only a shadow behind a more Christian definition. The Christianizing process evident in the progression of these passages was no accident. Very subtle influences were at work which predisposed certain Spaniards to see biblical influences in the customs of the natives.

In *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Benjamin Keen has surveyed the literature on Aztec themes and found "a link between the positions of the Spanish writers on Indian policy and their attitudes toward Aztec civilization" (p.77). In other words, their politics influenced their vision of Aztec society. Those political attitudes have direct relevance to the history of Quetzalcoatl after the Conquest.

While the New World was embroiled in the pragmatic aspects of the Conquest, the courts of Spain rang with an intellectual and moral controversy over the proper relationship between Spain and the inhabitants of the New World. At question was the very humanity of the indigenous populations of the New World. If the Indians were seen as subhuman, they could be exploited. If they were indeed human, however, the obligation was to treat them as such and to enlighten them.

The most vocal advocates of the Indian cause were the priests, and parallels to biblical religion in native custom were a hallmark of their writing. They speculated in print that these survivals indicated that the Indians had once been true believers, but had fallen from grace. The unstated thesis was that their previous acceptance of the true religion was *prima facie* proof that the natives were human.

This undercurrent in the literature on the Aztecs highlights an important division in the way in which the early chroniclers report on the legends of Quetzalcoatl. The anti-Indian writers limit themselves to the physical idol and the sacrifices made in his honor. Except for Cervantes de Salazar, none of them mention the culture hero whose legends have become so famous. Those legends are found only in the pro-Indian authors,

who had a vested interest in a Christianized native. This underlying motivation colors the tale of Quetzalcoatl. In the end, the changes so transformed the original that a new deity was created and a new tale begun.

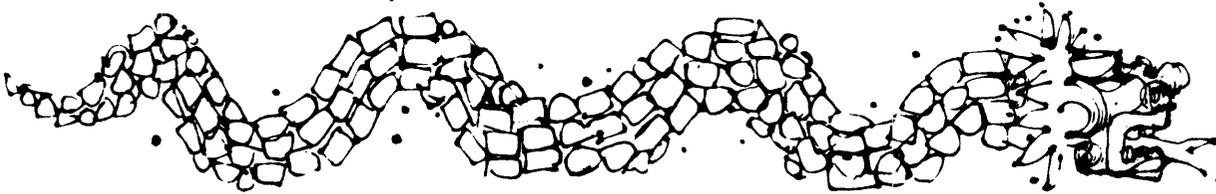
The subconscious drive to Christianize Quetzalcoatl is evident in the alterations in his clothing. Quetzalcoatl is usually described as wearing a white robe which reached his ankles. While this is indeed striking in contrast to the common loincloth worn by most natives, it is not a foreign element of clothing. In addition to the loincloth, native male dress allowed a sort of cape called a *tlilmatli*, which was a piece of cloth worn under the right arm and tied in a knot over the left shoulder. The most common style reached to just below the shin, but custom dictated longer lengths for those of higher social rank. Only the most important men could wear a *tlilmatli* which reached the ankles. Quetzalcoatl clearly qualified for that privilege.

When this *tlilmatli* entered Spanish literature, it was labeled *ropa* or robe. From that point on the connection to the native garment was lost. Once the descriptive word was principally Spanish, the connotation of the garment followed the Spanish rather than the Aztec conventions. It easily followed that the garment should change from a square of cloth which was tied over the shoulder to a more standard European garment with sleeves. So completely did Quetzalcoatl's apparel lose its original shape that the "Relacio de Genealogia," a document from around 1532 could state that his clothes were "like the dress of Spain" (*Nueva Coleccion de Documentos para la Historia de Mexico*, 3:243). The climax in the Christianizing process came when Torquemada in 1615 reports that Quetzalcoatl was dressed in a friar's habit (1:254-55).

If it was politically expedient for the Spanish to relate native practice to Christianity, it was even more pragmatic for the natives to play the same game. The Christianizing process soon became a two-way street, where the Spanish not only shaped native legend into Christian molds, but the natives adapted those Christian molds to their own legends and fed them back to the Spanish.

Father Diego de Duran received the following report from one native:

*Asking another old Indian what information he had of the departure of Topiltzin [another name for Quetzalcoatl], he began to relate to me the fourteenth chapter of Exodus, saying that the Papa [Quetzalcoatl] had arrived at the sea with many people and that he continued and had struck the sea with a staff and it had dried up and become a road*



through which he entered, both he and his people. Also that his persecutors had entered after him and the waters had returned to their place and nothing more was known of them. And as I saw that he had read the same as I and I knew where he was going with the story, I didn't ask him more so that he would not relate the Exodus to me, of which I felt he had received notice, yet he went as far as to mention the punishment which the children of Israel had with the serpents because of their murmurings against God and Moses. (*Historia de las Indias de Nueva Espana e islas de la tierra firme*, 1:12.)

Duran is unquestionably correct in assuming that this tale repeats the Exodus story, but it is also interestingly parallel to the native legend of Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl does take a number of people with him in some versions, he does come to a sea, and miraculous things occur. Quetzalcoatl is also linked with serpents. All of these points seem to have allowed the informant to correlate that particular biblical story with Quetzalcoatl. The important point is, however, that the native related the tale as part of Quetzalcoatl's story. The same forces which led Spaniards to select Christianlike aspects from native customs also led the Indians to reshape their own lore in a more Christian cast.

The benevolent nature of Quetzalcoatl's religion is one facet of the myth which was transformed as much by the Indians as by the Spaniards. Sahagun's native informants were men knowledgeable in their own culture, but schooled by the Spanish and well-versed in Catholicism. They emphasize the point that the Toltecs, the people of Quetzalcoatl, worshipped only one god. Few lessons taught by the Spanish were more strident than their insistence on a one and only god. Native idols had been obliterated and the force of Spanish culture pressed home the tremendous importance of this Christian principle. Even so, the native assertion of a former worship of one god might not be so suspect if it did not follow a list of the gods worshipped by the Toltecs, a list compiled by those same informants.

Another early native text, the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, is more explicit about the relationship of Quetzalcoatl to other gods. Speaking of Quetzalcoatl himself, "it is told that, idolatrizing, he prayed in the heavens and that he invoked Citlalyncue, Citlallatonac, Tonacacihuatl, Tonacatecutli, Tecolliquenqui, Yeztlaquenqui, Tlallamanac, and Tlallichcatl" (*Codice Chimalpopoca*, p. 8).

Of even greater importance is the claim that Quetzalcoatl never participated in human sacrifice. Andres de Olmos was one of the original twelve priests sent to Mexico, and one of the

great early ethnographers. A passage ascribed to him contains this description of Quetzalcoatl's religion:

*He never admitted sacrifices of the blood of humans nor of animals, but rather only of bread and roses, flowers and perfumes, and of odors. [Also] he watched and prohibited with much efficacy wars, thefts, murders, and other harms which they did to each other. Whenever wars were mentioned before him, or other evils concerning the wrongs of men, he would turn his face and cover his ears so that he would neither see nor hear them. (Bartolome de las Casas, *Apologetica Historia Sumaria*, 1:644.)*

Such a Christian man could never permit human sacrifice, and the native writers of the *Anales* indicate that it was a conflict over that practice which led to Quetzalcoatl's exodus from Tula.

In spite of these early and important sources, it appears that this part of the legend also underwent a cosmetic shift which eliminated the association with human sacrifice.

Two very early and important sources are the *Histoyre du Mechique* and the *Leyend de los Soles*. Each of them gives different accounts of an episode in the life of Quetzalcoatl. In the *Histoyre's* account Quetzalcoatl's brothers . . .

*returned to look for Quetzalcoatl and they made him believe that his father had been changed into a rock, persuading him also that he sacrifice and offer something to this rock, such as lions, tigers, eagles, little animals, butterflies, for he would not be able to find these animals. And as he did not wish to obey them, they wanted to kill him, but he escaped from among them and climbed a tree, or something like it, on top of that same rock and shot arrows at them and killed them all. Having done this, others came seeking him with honors and they took the heads of his brothers and emptied the skulls to make drinking cups. (Pp. 113-14.)*

This is a far cry from the Quetzalcoatl of the friars who covered his eyes and ears so as not to be reminded of death. Even more important is the account of the *Leyenda*:

*His uncles were greatly angered, and shortly they left, going before Apanecatl who came out quickly. Ce Acatl [another name for Quetzalcoatl] rose and split open [Apanecatl's] head with a smooth and deep cut, from which blow he fell to the ground below. Immediately [Quetzalcoatl] caught hold of Solton and Cuiltron. The beasts blew on the fire and he killed them quickly. They gathered them together, cut a little of their flesh, and . . . they cut open their chests. (Teogonia e Historia de los Mexicanos, p. 125.)*

While human sacrifice is not explicitly stated, the indications are overwhelming. Not only were the chests opened, presumably to remove the hearts, but the fire is also reminiscent of a form

**The Christianizing of native legends became a two-way street, with the Spaniards and natives both contributing to the process.**

**Many factors encouraged some Spaniards to see biblical influences in native customs.**

of Aztec human sacrifice. Against the backdrop of these tales, it is not surprising to find that the quintessential city of Quetzalcoatl among the Maya, Chichen Itza, is permeated with the iconography of human sacrifice.

The best hypothesis to explain the early accounts of Quetzalcoatl's abhorrence of human sacrifice is that the native legends were consciously shaped by the Indians to improve their standing with the Spanish overlords. In Central Mexico this influence took the form of Christianizing the religion of Quetzalcoatl. The same pattern was repeated outside of the Central Mexican region, but with an interesting twist. Among the Maya Quetzalcoatl becomes the scapegoat rather than the hero. According to a native informant in Merida, Yucatan in 1581:

*It is said of the first inhabitants of Chichen Itza that they were not idolaters until Kukulcan [the Maya name for Quetzalcoatl] the Mexican captain entered these parts. This one taught them idolatry. . . . [Before] they had heard of a creator of all things, of the creation of the heaven and of the earth, and of the fall of Lucifer, of the immortality of the soul, of heaven and of hell and of the universal flood. (Cristobal Sanchez in Coleccion de documentos ineditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista, y organization de las antiguas posesiones Espanoles de Ultramar, series 2, 11:121.)*

Leaving out the names, the tale is parallel to many from Central Mexico. The earlier people knew of the Christian religion and were exactly the kind of people the priests were looking for. Sadly, some devil came and forced them to change. It is clear that this is a tale told under the painful dictates of the Conquest, and that the actors in the drama were changed to accommodate regional interests.

Perhaps the most confusing aspect of the myth is the reference to a white Quetzalcoatl. The idol of the god was always painted black, and I know of no native or even early Spanish text which specifically mentions a white skin. I have been unable to find the point at which this concept enters the legend, but it is clearly not a part of the important information which described Quetzalcoatl at the time of the Conquest.

I can offer only one possible source for the theme. Quetzalcoatl is associated with the west, which in the Aztec symbol system was white. Thus Quetzalcoatl is white as an indication of the west, just as other deities were red, blue, and black when associated with other compass directions.

It could be argued that the elevation of Cortez to the status of the returning Quetzalcoatl was

based on the color of Cortez's skin, but the earliest evidence does not support this conclusion. The Spaniards were revered as gods, but according to Sahagun the black slaves which shipped with them were also specifically called gods. Clearly a white skin was not a requisite of deification. The Spanish were gods by virtue of their miraculous ships which appeared to be floating temples and their sticks which spit thunder and fire and caused trees to fall down. It was the miracle of who they were rather than their color which fired the native imagination.

In *Visions de los Vencidos*, Miguel Leon-Portilla reports one of the rare Aztec comments on the Spanish skin color, which simply states, "Their skin is very white, more so than ours" (p. 12). All of the references to Quetzalcoatl as the white-skinned god seem to be traceable to our own cultural inclinations to link white with skin color.

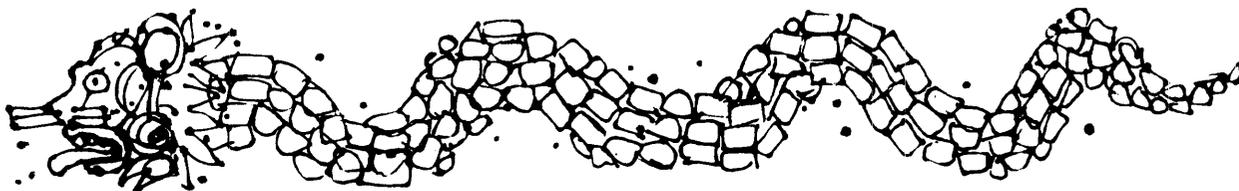
Stripping away the influence of the Spanish, Quetzalcoatl becomes once again a very Aztec god, complete with the duality of good and bad which characterizes the Aztec pantheon. The moral and political climate of the Conquest generated pressures which selected certain facets of the native tradition and so presented them as to appear Christian. The early Spanish fathers found such evidences behind every tree, but no bough was more fruitful than Quetzalcoatl.

The centuries which have passed have expanded those themes to the point that our popular conceptions of the deity have replaced the native understanding of their own god. Personally, I am satisfied that a reconstruction of the native Quetzalcoatl leaves no room for an identification with any of the popular suggestions.

On the other hand, it would be erroneous to assume that the disqualification of the Quetzalcoatl legends as recollections of Christ's appearance in the Americas in any way impinges on the historicity of that appearance. It merely stands as a further caution against our lack of caution and sophistication in relating pre-Columbian legends or artifacts to the Book of Mormon.

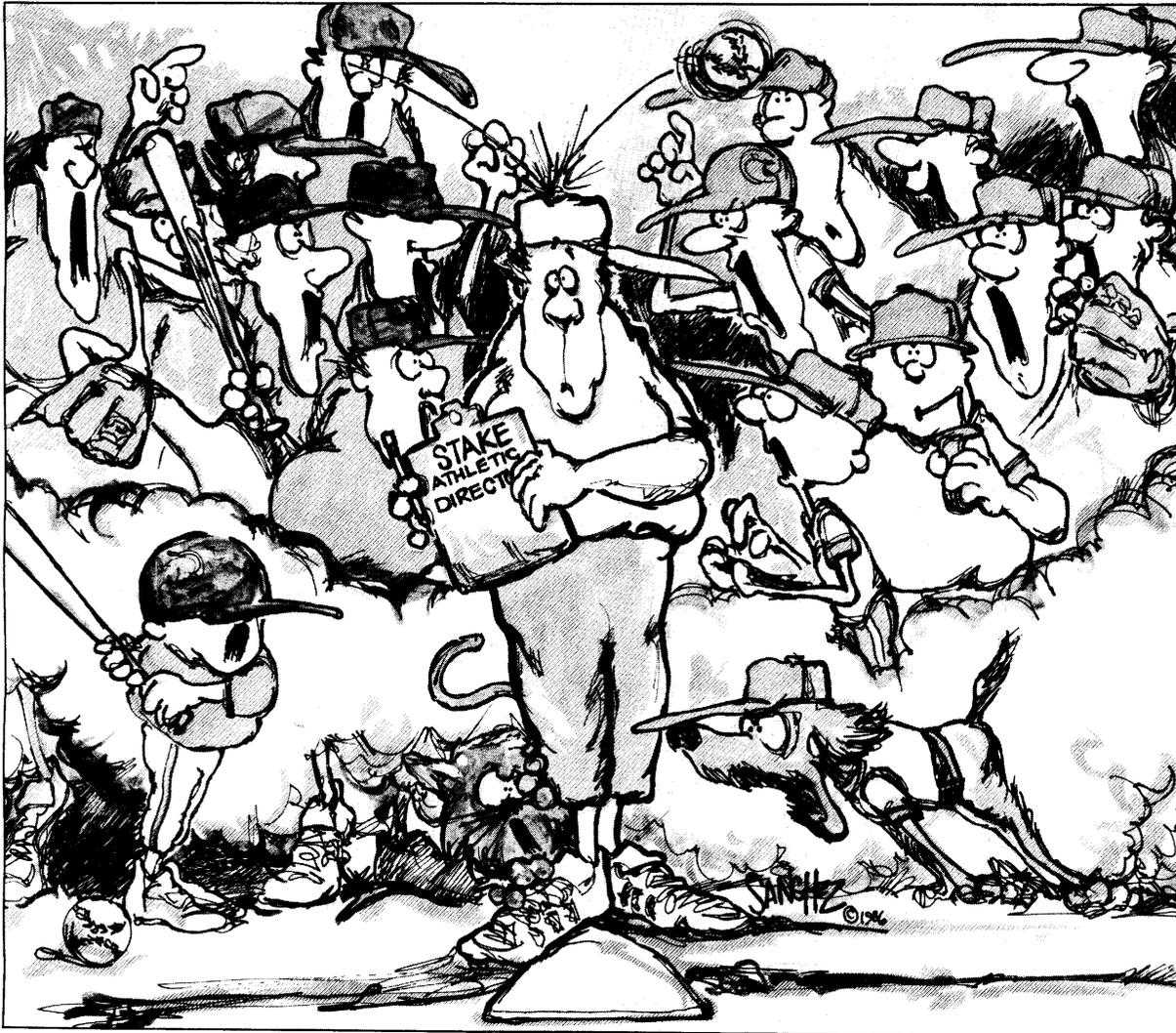
While I mourn the passing of a popular figure of Western folklore, I find the native Quetzalcoatl to be equally fascinating and challenging. The Christianization of Quetzalcoatl is merely the closing chapter in the very long story of one of the most important native religious traditions of the Western hemisphere. When we no longer ask him to be who he is not, perhaps his own story can be told.

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# The Worst Job in the Church

Coping with the Thrill of Victory and the Agony of Defeat.



ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON SANCHEZ

By D. James Croft

**W**hen the editors at SUNSTONE saw the title of my article, they began to gripe and carp, saying it sounded too much like I was griping and carping about the Church. I told them that everybody expected SUNSTONE to gripe and carp about the Church, and that if their readers expected something sweet-smelling and prissy they would read *This People*. They admitted that *This People* was sweet but denied that this had anything to do with its smell. That's when I whipped out a

copy and showed them the ad for scratch-and-sniff Article of Faith cards, but they said I was changing the subject.

The upshot was that if I was going to gripe and carp, I had to be very scientific and analytical so that only the snooty intellectuals would know I was griping and carping. That way those who enjoy griping and carping would be secretly tickled, and those who don't would never know anyhow.

So I went back to the drawing board and became very scientific. A methodical approach to the "worst job in the Church," I decided, required some very specific (if highly arbitrary) criteria for measuring the desirability of Church jobs. Here's what I came up with: (1) Do the job's required tasks bring out the best in people? (2) Does the job demand a low level of effort? (3) Does it have a high level of recognition, glory, and appreciation from the people served? Of course, some readers may wish to argue with these criteria, but if they do, I say let them write their own article. Better yet, let them publish a nasty letter to the editor in the Readers Forum department. (The editors inform me that's where griping and carping is supposed to go anyway.)

At this point, I suddenly realized that these criteria could also be used in evaluating the best job in the Church. For example, think of the job of bishop. This calling certainly ranks high on criterion number one, or bringing out the best in people. Too, although there are times when the bishop sees many people at their worst, typically a bishop receives a great deal of appreciation, glory, and recognition from the people in his congregation (criterion number three). But this job fails to satisfy criterion number two: The amount of work most bishops put into their job is far too high to consider this important calling as one of the best in the Church. The ratio of glory to work is simply not high enough to get my vote for best job.

Several people have suggested that being a youth leader or teacher is the best job in the Church. But I have to disagree. True, these positions give you the opportunity to bring out the best in people. But these jobs also involve a substantial amount of work, if they are done right. And they are a mixed bag in the recognition, glory, and appreciation department. After all, people in these positions sometimes have to wait five to ten years until the students and youth they have worked so hard to serve move from the ward, go away to school, or leave on missions before they receive any kind of thoughtful recognition.

Based on my criteria, I believe the best job in the Church is that of Gospel Doctrine teacher. This person has the opportunity to influence people's lives for the better through good teaching. Moreover, if the class is awake and alert, the teacher merely has to prepare three controversial questions per week and then call on people who wish to answer them. Of course, the teacher does have to have one sentence at the end of the class to summarize what has been said and attempt to bring organization out of the chaos created by the various answers. Also, the Gospel Doctrine teacher gets a lot of recognition and appreciation from the members of the class. That's because this class typically involves a very significant number of the adult members of the ward: With that many people attending the class,

there's bound to be at least *one* who will come up and tell you your lesson was good, no matter how terrible it was.

Be that as it may, I created these criteria for the darker purpose of identifying the worst job in the Church. I know many people would say that scoutmaster must be one of the leading candidates. However, I think others would agree with me that this is really not so much a job as a sentence. Besides, it does have the long-term payoffs similar to those of youth leadership positions: When young men go off on missions or to school or the military service, the things they say in testimony meeting about their scouting experience and their former scoutmasters must make all of those scouting efforts seem worthwhile.

Another likely candidate for the worst job in the Church is ward financial clerk. There is certainly no glory in this job. In fact, there is no acknowledgment that it even exists, except when the bishop has to sustain some detail-oriented workaholic to that position in sacrament meeting. (How many of you reading this article can name your current ward financial clerk? See?) This poor soul labors long and hard and has very little impact on whether people behave at their best or worst. And the amount of work required of this person at tithing settlement nearly equals that of the bishop. But who ever offers the ward financial clerk the cookies, nice cards, and hugs the bishop receives? The only thing keeping this job from being the worst in the Church is that the financial clerk is the only one in the ward besides the bishop who knows how much everyone earns.

So what is the Church's worst job? In my opinion, any job with the word *stake* in its title must be a serious contender. That's because people with stake jobs often have to work very hard at what they do (with the obvious exception of high councilors), receive little recognition or glory, and don't really get to work with the people in the Church. Stake leaders merely work with other stake leaders and their ward counterparts. As a result, they spend their time dealing with ecclesiastical overachievers who are difficult to influence for better or for worse (or influence at all for that matter).

Among the stake positions which could be considered, I must nominate the calling of stake athletic director as the worst job in the Church. The work load alone is enough to drive a lesser man to a sex-change operation. For example, one of its major duties is to set up the programs that sponsor the athletic contests between stakes, wards, and individuals. In addition, this pre-season work includes obtaining facilities, scheduling team play, developing rules that govern the games and events, and finding officials to enforce those rules.

Another perplexing responsibility of the stake athletic director is establishing eligibility: Who

gets to play for each team? No matter how tightly the rules are written to establish eligibility, new interpretations will be required to settle such important religious issues as whether an individual is eligible to play on a ward team if he moved into his aunt's house three games into the season. Some of these issues and their resolutions are enough to cross a rabbi's eyes.

After all the pre-season work is done, the stake athletic director also gets to administer the play during the season and adjudicate any disputes which arise. By some mysterious phenomenon understood only by religious mystics in the Indiana-Muncie mission, it turns out that everyone present at a given game is an expert on the rules *except* the amateur officials assigned to help the stake athletic director. Even the opinion of the stake athletic director is considered worthless. This is particularly curious, given that the stake athletic director wrote the rules himself at the first of the season. Most challenging of all is the fact that the athletic director must adjudicate these disputes when everyone is excitable and given to contention.

No one should underestimate the amount of work involved in resolving these disagreements. At such moments, it becomes apparent that when Solomon wrote, "a soft answer turneth away wrath," he had certainly never been on a softball field or basketball court (Prov. 15:1). I have been involved in situations where questionable calls by officials or referees have been debated for weeks after the season was over by people I had once thought were rational. Rivalries between Church units have become so intense in some quarters that parents attend games to prevent violence or mini-rioting after the events. Some Latter-day Saint referees and officials who are certified by their local athletic associations will not officiate in Church events: They say they would simply rather work the industrial leagues where they do not have to take so much abuse.

Through it all, the stake athletic director must keep in mind that he has to be fair to everyone involved and live by the letter of the rules which he (or perhaps the American Softball Association) has determined. After all, enforcement of the rules may determine who wins, and winning, of course, is the most important thing in an athletic contest. At least that's how it seems to many of the participants. In coaching, I have seen adult team members quit because, as they told me, "You're playing me less than I should be playing; I'm more talented than others you're giving equal playing time to." My response is: "Fine. If you want to win, go play for a county recreation league."

Perhaps the job of a stake athletic director and those officials he has to work with would be easier if there were age and ability restrictions on players that participate in these events. This would eliminate a common problem in today's

Church athletic program known as *the aging jock syndrome*. Such yesteryear athletes, finding they can no longer keep up with the younger players, sometimes resort to subtle competitive strategies to compensate for the age and slowness which are creeping up on them—things like tripping opponents or punching them out to slow them down a bit.

It may seem difficult to believe that this sort of behavior would actually take place among Christians (especially Mormon-type Christians). Perhaps in our effort to become as little children, we overshoot our devolutionary goal and become as little animals. Whatever the theological explanation, the basketball court or the baseball diamond seems to bring out the beast in too many of us. Just walking onto the court or onto a field can sometimes unleash irresistible competitive juices in the most gentle of brothers and sisters.

For example, I had an opportunity for a period of time to play basketball on a regular basis with a person who is now a General Authority. His name is well known in the Church as one of the most kind and loving people in the whole world. His speeches and books exude love toward his fellow men. But even he experiences this transformation on a basketball court.

Naturally, you will never catch me succumbing to such lunacy. Of course there was a very understandable incident in a basketball game I played several years ago. Now that I think about it, I was playing quite well. In fact I had a very good first half, which for some reason surprised everyone who knew my skill at basketball. When it came to the second half, the other team, seeing my obvious talent, put a very tenacious guard on me. He was very good at keeping me from getting the ball. But finally late in the third **quarter I got the pass, dodged the guy who was guarding me and went in for the lay-up.** Assessing the situation, he committed an intentional foul by grabbing me around the waist and holding me back. He figured, quite rationally I suppose, that a foul was better than a sure lay-up. Almost instinctively, I let my elbow fly, knocking the guard on the chin. Poor sport that he was, he instantly fell asleep and dropped to the floor. The official, however, failing to appreciate normal human reflexes, ejected me from the game. It was a mortifying experience to be treated so unjustly. But I have gotten over it. In fact, when I recently mentioned this to a friend of mine, he suggested that it was probably my fixation on this event that prompted me to write this essay. I chuckled and explained how wrong he was, and, like a gentleman, he apologized, although he paused first to pick up several of his teeth.

But how does the job of stake athletic director measure up according to my three criteria of Church job desirability? First, do the efforts of the stake athletic director bring out the best in the people he serves? In theory, this job is supposed to do just that. According to the

Church's *Guidelines and Rules of Play for Competitive Athletics*, the purpose of the Church athletic program is to promote the well-being of Church members by providing various wholesome competitive athletic activities to "build character and integrity, develop athletic skills, encourage fitness, promote good sportsmanship, promote friendship, [and] proselyte and activate non-members and inactive members." During my years of personal experience in Church athletic activities, I have seen some cases in which these objectives have actually been met. However, my conversations with experienced people lead me to believe that when it comes to the Church athletic programs, theory and practice are almost total strangers. Indeed, all too often the efforts of the stake athletic director bring out not the best but the worst in people. The athletic director spends a significant amount of time creating and governing situations that are highly emotional and prone to conflict. Moreover, the program itself is specifically designed to produce winners and losers. Perhaps an institution which prides itself on promoting the self-worth of individuals and building positive self-images should seriously reconsider putting so much time and effort into programs which regularly produce losers and low self-esteem.

I have already ~~griped about~~ analyzed at length the second criterion of effort level. Clearly, this calling requires incredible amounts of time to organize and adjudicate, a high level of administrative skills, an extra telephone line at home and a truly exceptional level of tolerance for watching mediocre athletic performance.

I know what you are thinking: Why not just get some assistants and delegate some, most, or all of the work? Forget it. Almost invariably, the people who are called to be assistants or ward athletic directors fit into the category of "miracle workers"—it's a miracle if they ever work. This is because many ecclesiastical leaders see callings to the athletic program as an ideal way to activate the truly flakey members of the ward. Unfortunately, assigning some inactive, has-been jock or sports trivia nut to the ward or stake athletic program can have a rather detrimental effect. Some of these people simply have too much emotional capital invested in the game, spend too little time thinking about the purposes of the program, and emphasize winning over sportsmanship. Furthermore, when it comes to administrative skills, they are definitely bench-warmers. Suffice it to say that the team of workers often given to the stake athletic director are not destined to be enshrined in Mormonism's administrative or spiritual Hall of Fame.

Spirituality, in fact, is a decidedly *optional* skill in this Church job. The only spiritual part of any athletic competitions in the Church is the mandatory opening prayer just before the competition. During a recent softball game, I called the two teams together, and the home team called upon

one of its members to pray. In the prayer, the player said, "Dear Lord, please bless us that we'll remember the purposes of the athletic competition, that we'll engage in fair play, that we'll be good sports, that we'll develop friendship, and we'll remember that it doesn't matter who wins or loses." On walking back to the dugout, one of his teammates said to him, "Boy, you sure ruined this game!"

Just like any other job, that of the stake athletic director would be tolerable if there were enough glory, recognition and admiration to compensate for the work performed (criterion three). But when was the last time you heard anyone in fast meeting express appreciation for the stake athletic director? I submit that this must be a rather rare event, if it has ever occurred at all. Instead, the stake athletic director receives a great amount of abuse for the decisions he has to make regarding rules, eligibility, and scheduling.

There are, of course, those bright shining moments when players, coaches, and fans credit you with the wisdom of a Solomon for deciding an issue in their favor. However, that praise, like fame, is fleeting. Indeed, one quickly realizes how fragile this admiration is the moment he makes a clearly uninspired decision against the interests of the team.

Why, you may ask, do I continue to be involved in the stake athletic program if I have such a negative attitude and believe it to be the worst job in the Church? The answer is that after three years of intense involvement in the stake athletic program, I am at the end of my rope. I have asked for release. I have even gone so far as to request a new job and specified the position I would like to have. I have requested that I be compensated for this arduous experience by calling me to the best job in the Church.

No, I have not requested the position of Gospel Doctrine teacher. In fact, the job I have requested is one that doesn't even exist in the Church as yet. I would like to be the *inactive priesthood member monitor*. This is an undercover assignment given to an active member like myself who has the responsibility of working with inactive brethren by cleverly infiltrating their numbers for several years. The cover for this assignment will be so deep that not even the bishop and priesthood leaders of the ward will know who has the job. This is necessary so the inactive priesthood member monitor can meet with the stake president on an annual basis and report not only on the stake's inactive priesthood members but on the ward reactivation efforts as well.

But there is one serious risk associated with this job: In the efforts to reactivate me, is it possible that my bishop and local priesthood leaders may end up calling me to work in the stake athletic program?

D. JAMES CROFT is the physical activities specialist in the McLean Stake, Maryland.

# Judas Iscariot



ILLUSTRATED BY GARY C. KUNZ

## Betrayer or Betrayed?

**A Plea for Understanding and Compassion**

*By Alfred A. Blue*

**N**o sorrow is more penetrating to the soul or searing to the heart than the betrayal of a beloved and trusted friend. Certainly Jesus felt pain at the expectation of his betrayal by one of his disciples: the Savior hurt not only for himself but especially for the betrayer, for he knew the tragic effect the act

**We should ask why Judas' accusers stress his act of betrayal but ignore his repentance.**

would have on the life and destiny of its perpetrator.

My thoughts often turn to Judas Iscariot. No man in history has been more maligned. In the past scholars and theologians have denounced him in the most scathing terms imaginable. But was he the perfidious character they describe? Did his act of betrayal, admittedly the deed of a defective character, really make him a son of perdition, unfit to receive forgiveness? If so, then why can I, a weak and struggling disciple so far from being like my Master, feel compassion for him? Why do I see in him a glint of possible repentance and redemption? If I can see and feel such things, cannot Christ and God also? Perhaps a closer look at the evidence will reveal alternatives that may redeem rather than condemn him.

The condemnation of Judas focuses less on the act of betrayal than on its consequence; critics blame Judas for the death of Christ. But it is vividly apparent that Judas did not anticipate the consequence of his act, nor was he aware of it until his deed was complete. Whatever Judas' motives were for betraying Christ to the Sanhedrin, he did not plot, plan, conspire, or expect the Savior's death. Indeed, the accounts give the distinct impression that the priests either lied to Judas or withheld their real intent from him. Judas had been tricked, manipulated, used, and duped, a fact Judas undoubtedly threw in their faces along with the thirty pieces of silver they had paid him.

If he did not know the consequence of his act, why then did Judas betray his Lord? We can only speculate as to the motives, but we can, it seems to me, justifiably dismiss the charge that he was by nature an evil-hearted man, driven by a satanic urge to kill the Master. Such a man does not turn so readily as Judas, with such deep and profound remorse, contrition, and repentance. One wonders why Judas' accusers harp so insistently on his betrayal but ignore his repentance of that betrayal. If Judas were the infamous devil described by his accusers, he would have gloated and gloried in his act. But Judas found no such satisfaction. Afterward, he sought to nullify his participation in the betrayal by sacrificing all that had perpetrated it—his very life. Such an act speaks strongly of personal despair and painful awareness of the tragedy he had initiated.

Some argue that Judas revealed a cowardly nature and sealed his damnation by committing a final act of infamy—his suicide, a deed tantamount in their minds to murder. He was now guilty of two murders, Christ's and his own. Thus his culpability was compounded.

This view betrays an insensitivity toward suicide in general. I find it sad that some members of the Church are so hasty to judge and condemn. My own occasions of despair have given me great compassion for those who take their own lives. In such moments, life seems utterly devoid of

meaning, hope, and companionship; every second is seared with pain so exquisite that one welcomes death as not only a relief but a blessing. The suicidal act reflects not a desire to escape life, but a desire to live it fully; the aim is not to destroy the self but to end the pain inside. Instead of self-murder with malicious intent, suicide is insistence that life have meaning. Thus, paradoxically, the emphasis is on life, not death.

Moreover, the person who chooses to take his own life is not acting rationally. His perceptions are distorted, his vision obscured. His pain has made him momentarily insane, and right and wrong—if even perceived—are not at issue. Consequently, one does not choose to commit suicide in the same manner he makes other decisions; he is impelled to do it to relieve his hurt.

I am not attempting to justify suicide but only to plead for understanding and compassion for the suffering who succumb to its appeal. I believe it is generally wrong to take one's life; it is a mistake, a grievous and profound mistake, but is it a sin? And even if it is a sin, is it unforgivable? Who among us is so lacking in sensitivity, so devoid of that divine love which Christ implores us to possess, as to look upon these people with derision and condemnation?

Those who condemn Judas to perdition justify their judgment from no less an authority than the author of the fourth Gospel, John the apostle. John, it is rightly presumed, ought to know whereof he speaks, for he was one of the apostles closest to the Lord. John avers that Judas was a devil (John 6:70) and a son of perdition (17:12). Yet curiously, the apostle Matthew does not so refer to Judas. Why? Is it because the Lord told John things not revealed to Matthew? Possibly, but it seems odd that John would not share these insights with a fellow apostle.

Interestingly, Mark and Luke also omit such references to Judas. Neither of these men were apostles and so did not have the advantages of Matthew and John. But Matthew was a close friend, companion, and interpreter for Peter, and most, if not all, of his Gospel narrative is taken directly from Peter's account. Apparently Peter, who was also very close to the Savior, did not discuss Judas' destiny with Mark (or if so, Mark did not record it). The only aspersion Luke cast upon Judas' character is the report that Satan entered into Judas who went away and conspired with the chief priests to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3). However, this observation would not be taken as eternal condemnation, for on a previous occasion Jesus made a similar reference to Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. 16:23). The point in both cases is that men of good intention can sometimes be in league with the devil and in opposition to God. But being touched by Satan does not mean one is polluted forever, or that he has sold his soul to the devil. Indeed, the conversion of Saul the Pharisee into Paul the

apostle demonstrates otherwise.

Another curiosity develops. Why is Matthew the *only* Gospel author to report Judas' repentance? If Matthew knew of it, surely John would also. Why then did John not report it? These perplexing questions cannot be answered with certainty, but a possible solution may lie in an analysis of John's temperament and disposition.

As the beloved disciple, John is depicted by many authors as particularly free of character defect. Nevertheless, in the initial stages of John's relationship to Christ, the apostle had glaring faults, almost severe enough to disqualify him from the high office to which he was called. He was, for example, intolerant. When on one occasion he saw someone not of his faith casting out demons in Jesus' name, he scolded the man, warning him not to repeat such an indiscretion in the future. Consequently, Christ found it necessary to correct him (Luke 9:49-50). John was also vindictive. Encountering a certain Samaritan village which refused to receive the Lord, John and his brother James requested the Lord to call down fire from heaven to punish them. This elicited another rebuke from the Savior (Luke 9:51-56). Finally, John exhibited selfish pride and unholy ambition. This is evident by his request that he and his brother James be given position of precedence over the other apostles in his kingdom. Once again Christ found it necessary to teach John humility (Mark 10:35-40).

Of course, it is important to note that these faults show what John was, not what he became. John conquered these weaknesses and became a valiant apostle. But this perfection was not achieved overnight, and it may be that while writing his Gospel, he still harbored bitter resentment against Judas for the betrayal of his Lord. Such anger is understandable in the face of John's loss of the Master he had come to love so dearly. Is it not conceivable that this judgment of Judas was opinion born out of bereavement rather than fact?

There is another curious statement in John which critics of Judas have, I believe, misinterpreted. John quotes Jesus as saying "I know whom I have chosen: but that the scriptures may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18). Judas' critics interpret this to mean that Jesus, knowing Judas was a devil, deliberately chose the apostle for the express purpose of fulfilling the scriptures regarding the Crucifixion. But this appalling theory taints Christ with the same evil that makes devils themselves so reprehensible: the exploitation of another's weaknesses to promote personal interests. Such a view contradicts everything the Church teaches about the Savior. He came to save persons from their sins, not to destroy them.

To understand this scripture, it is important to note that Christ is quoting the forty-first Psalm. Jesus apparently saw this verse as a prophecy or

parallel relating to his impending death. The full citation reads, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I have trusted which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." The "familiar friend" to whom Christ refers is clearly the one who will betray him, Judas. It is significant, then, to note that the next voice in the Psalm is that of the betrayer; "But then oh, Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up. . . Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting." (Ps. 41:9-10). Critics of Judas seem to neglect this subsequent verse which describes the repentance of the one who has "lifted up his heel." In quoting this scripture Christ does not say that the betrayer will be condemned; he simply alludes to his own betrayal. Neither does the scripture condemn the betrayer. To the contrary, it clearly states that the betrayer is sorry for his sin and prays for forgiveness: "Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee" (Ps. 41:4). This is directly parallel to the events described in Matthew 27:3-5 in which Judas admits his sin and is filled with remorse and repentance. Thus, the second part of the scripture is fulfilled as well as the first.

Jesus knew what he was doing when he chose Judas. He recognized in him all the potential for greatness he saw in the other apostles. Christ was aware of Judas' weaknesses; but as a loving member of the Godhead, he would give the apostle the benefit of faith over and against a reason to doubt. Christ loved those whom he had chosen with a divine love that few of us understand. He knew more profoundly than any of us that love involves the risk of tragedy.

Virtually everyone encounters a friend who proves untrue and leaves lasting scars. But that is the risk every Christian must take. That is the risk Christ took when he chose Judas. He took that risk because he loved; moreover he did not cease to love when the risk proved unfavorable. Could it be that Judas was in the forefront of Christ's thoughts when in his last moments on the cross he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"?

Of course, we have no way of knowing if this was the case. Nor can we know what Judas' thoughts were in the moments before he took his own life in an agony of shame and remorse. The acts of every person are the end product of a complex of past experiences and innate capacities that no other person can fully understand; that understanding, and the judgment of our actions, is reserved for God. As the Lord told the beleaguered Saints of Kirkland in Section 64 of the Doctrine and Covenants: "I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."

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**Christ knew better than any of us that love and trust involves the risk of tragedy.**



ILLUSTRATED BY DAN CRAM OLSEN

By Mark C. Dangerfield

# Do You Teach the Orthodox Religion?

**A**pproximately one year ago I had a conversation with a close friend that lasted into the wee hours of the morning. Somehow we hit on the topic of missionary work. During our discussion my friend asserted that missionary work would be of greater value if we spent the bulk of our time simply “doing good”—showing kindness to the disadvantaged, teaching basic skills, helping people in a Christian, nonsectarian way, like Mother Theresa—rather than actively trying to convert them to our faith. If they never entered the Church (as of course most people don’t), we would nevertheless have done them much practical good. I argued for the more traditional approach—actively teaching the gospel.

As we talked, it seemed to me that our contrasting approaches to the subject reflected a different mindset regarding the gospel. Moreover, it is my observation that more and more LDS intellectuals are adopting the viewpoint of my

friend. But as an overview of this approach will show, this trend can lead to some serious consequences, including not only the abandonment of our missionary duties but the breakdown of our entire religion.

Before demonstrating this, I ought to make it clear that both my friend and I are active members of the Church, for whom the gospel is important. Additionally both of us could be considered Church "liberals," or "intellectuals" in the sense that we both enjoy examining, discussing, researching, questioning, and reflecting on every aspect of the Church and the gospel.

The speculative freedom that we both experience in Mormonism can be traced to two doctrines. The first stems from the Lord's declaration in the Doctrine and Covenants that "it is not meet that I should command in all things" (D&C 58:26). Consequently, Church leaders must frequently use their own intelligence in making decisions governing the Church. Indeed, he instructs seekers to "study it out in your mind" before even asking the Lord (D&C 9:8). Though Church leaders may properly seek inspiration in all their decisions, the Lord is simply not disposed to instruct them on every point. As a result, it is no surprise to see various programs and doctrines changed, dropped, or modified, including the duration of missions, Sunday meeting schedules, temple recommend requirements, Word of Wisdom emphasis, and so forth.

Not only won't the Lord tell us everything to do, but, as Joseph Smith made quite clear, not everything the Lord intends to tell us has yet been told: He will yet reveal "many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven" (A of F 9) in a progressive fashion: precept upon precept, line upon line. Thus, additional enlightenment on issues of major consequence is not only possible but is to be expected. Perhaps the most memorable example of this doctrine is the landmark revelation giving the priesthood to worthy black males.

The existence of so many teachings, policies, and practices stemming from (to quote Ronald Poelman's October 1984 conference address) "traditions, customs, social practices, and personal preferences of individual Church members" leaves ample room for individual interpretation, speculation, and decision in this area, subject to a responsibility to support Church leaders in carrying out Church programs.

Unfortunately, such a high degree of "academic freedom" in the gospel is heady stuff for LDS liberals like myself, and I fear the intoxicating effect has created a tendency among many to push the notion too far. A recent letter to the SUNSTONE editor is instructive in this light. The writer first asserts that Mormonism is "founded upon the notion of flux—the supreme reality that everything in the cosmos changes with time." In a "real world of incessant flux" the

author continues, "truth" is the "eternal plan of salvation, where only birth, death, and resurrection are mandatory, all else being left to personal free choice and individual responsibility." (Letter of Gerry Ensley, January-February 1984, pp. 2-3.)

For that writer, the entire gospel seems tentative. Although few others I know are overtly willing to take the open-ended notion to such extremes, I perceive an unhealthy and unwarranted trend in that direction. Indeed, though the idea of Mormonism's "speculative theology" is not particularly new, it has been much more widely acknowledged, discussed, and written about in the last several years, due in no small part to independent LDS publications and symposia.

Consider, for example, a 1981 SUNSTONE article by Michael Hicks with a title almost identical to my own: "Do You Preach the Orthodox Religion?" Focusing on "the Idea of Heresy in the Church," Hicks debunks the notion that heresy refers merely to disbelief and states that such a definition works only if there is in fact a "fixed and stable orthodoxy" by which to measure belief or disbelief. In the restored Church, says Hicks, Joseph Smith "refused to establish a pattern of orthodox belief for Latter-day Saints," and in fact "evolved an all-embracing policy of tolerance toward many divergent beliefs." As evidence of this, Hicks relates an incident in which an 1843 high council attempted to censure Pelatiah Brown for his interpretation of the biblical Book of Revelation. Joseph rebuked the council, saying that "correct knowledge on the subject is [not] so much needed at the present time." Furthermore, "it does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine." In fact, Joseph related, "I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trammelled." (*History of the Church*, 5:340.) Joseph, says Hicks, "was compelled to take such a [tolerant] stance," since his progressive revelations produced an evolving theology that "led his doctrinal thought from something akin to Campbellism to a revolutionary spiritual and communal philosophy."

Hicks goes on to say that because of Joseph's open-minded views and his "aversion to a sense of orthodoxy," the only creed he ever propounded was the Articles of Faith. And those were so broad (e.g., "We believe in God, the Eternal Father") as to be nearly useless. Hence, Hicks notes, they were little used in Joseph's time and the so-called "Mormon creed" was preferred: "let every man mind his own business."

Through all of this, Hicks creates the same impression as the previously mentioned letter to the editor: for Mormonism, there is no heresy, because there is no orthodoxy. Do your own thing—anything goes; rather than being offended at what anyone else in the Church believes, we should mind our own business.

**If we cannot state our fundamental beliefs with certainty, the significance of the gospel message is lost.**

Hicks goes on to disabuse us of any notion that the standard works or modern revelation could possibly provide us with some sort of certain orthodoxy. Even ignoring problems of an unstable canon of scripture, Hicks avers, we are left with the inherent vagueness of the revealed word. Modern revelations likewise provide no hope since, to quote Brigham Young, "it is impossible for the poor, weak, low, groveling, sinful inhabitants of the earth to receive a revelation from the Almighty in all its perfections" (*Journal of Discourses*, 2:314). Thus, there is no way to be certain about any Church doctrine. Hicks buttresses the point by citing B. H. Roberts' injunction "never to look for finality in things for you will look in vain."

What is left? For Hicks, only reason (or what he deems a "sanctified form" of reason) which is "elevated . . . to the highest position" in his view of the gospel. True orthodoxy, Hicks assures us, has nothing to do with holding a certain set of beliefs, but simply consists in "continual acquisition" of knowledge. The real heresy is to "retard the mind." (SUNSTONE, September-October 1981, pp. 29-34.)

A similar effect emanates from D. Jeff Burton's paper, "The Phenomenon of the Closet Doubter," which played to a packed house at a Sunstone symposium a few years ago. Burton discussed a group of members who secretly disbelieved in one or more doctrines that the average member views as fundamental gospel tenets, such as Joseph Smith's first vision or the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Though the paper took an analytical tone, neither criticizing nor lauding the phenomenon, the clear unspoken premise was that since such doubters were nevertheless active Church members, it really made little practical difference whether or not they believed in the doctrine. Certainly this was how the paper was received, and there was a general sigh of (intellectual) relief. Again, the essay and the response exemplify a movement in which it is increasingly acceptable—indeed, admirable—to doubt everything in the Church. (SUNSTONE, September-October 1982, pp. 34-38.)

Cole Capener's article, "How General the Authority," also fits into this trend. After noting two "conduits" of revelation—that given through the prophet and passed down through the hierarchy, and that given to individuals—Capener points out the inevitable doctrinal conflicts this produces. These conflicts stem, according to Capener, both from revelation's inability to convey "absolute truth" and from the fallibility of mortals, including Church leaders. He then poses the question of how we should act when our conscience runs contrary to the teaching of Church authorities. To resolve this, Capener distinguishes between Church *doctrine*, which represents "unchallengeable dogma," and Church "policy," which represents changeable teachings and practices. It is all right, Capener says, to

challenge or disagree with policy, but actual doctrine should be accepted.

That point I accept wholeheartedly. Unfortunately, Capener gives only lip service to the point, then proceeds to denigrate and cast uncertainty on every possible test for distinguishing between "doctrine" and "policy." He examines—and rejects—the "general conference test," the "thus-saith-the-Lord test," the "First Presidency signature test," the "standard works test," and the "personal revelation test." Though Capener is willing to acknowledge that some "certain" doctrine exists (for Capener, this is—"at a minimum"—"The acceptance of the existence of a personal god, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith"), his ultimate proposal for distinguishing between doctrine and policy is an excommunication test: As long as what you think doesn't get you excommunicated, you are all right. Capener's message is finally that there is little if any essential doctrine and in any case no way to tell what doctrine is essential. (SUNSTONE, Autumn 1984, pp. 26-30.)

Scott Dunn's essay, "The Dangers of Revelation," also continues this trend. In it, Dunn systematically excoriates any reliance on revelation by addressing himself to eight "dangers" of inspiration. He begins with what for some liberals is the cardinal sin: the intolerant and arrogant thought that "we are right and they are wrong." Moreover, reliance on the revelations of others leads to "unhealthy devotion" to Church administrators. Make no mistake, though; according to Dunn, this does not mean that we should rely on our own inspiration—that is danger number three and leads to "agonizing confusion" or to danger number four, "self-deception," or even number five, "unrighteous dominion." The sad fact, asserts Dunn, is that "revelation often emerges in great variety, resulting in conflicting doctrines and troubling inconsistency." And it is of no help to say that we will only follow the revelations of LDS prophets; that ignores the "basic problem," which is, "Why should Joseph Smith's inspiration be considered superior to that of Ellen White? Or Mary Baker Eddy? . . . or the Pope?" And don't think you can solve *that* problem by revelation: for Dunn, a revelation "isn't an objective solution at all, but only continues a vicious circle created by the fact of conflicting inspiration." In short, Dunn's paper holds out no hope in the quest for anything certain or essential in the gospel. Rather the thesis of the paper is that any such certain belief would be arrogant and intolerant. (SUNSTONE, November-December 1982, pp. 25-29.)

Significantly, this attitude reflects a similar trend in the sectarian world. Kenneth Woodward, *Newsweek's* religion editor, voiced this view in a Sunstone symposium address entitled, "The Use and Abuse of Religion." In it Woodward draws a distinction between "certainty" and "humility"

and refers to certitude as the "enemy of faith." "No one," says Woodward, "knows God with certitude":

*Every tradition, being a human response to the divine, conceals even as it reveals his face. We cannot be certain of God any more than we can be certain of ourselves or of those we love. Indeed, as theologian John Donne has amply demonstrated, the more we try to make sure of another's friendship or love, the more uncertain we become. And the more we try to make certain of ourselves, the more we lose ourselves in uncertainty. How much more true is this of God who so transcends all our categories of thought and desire?*

*But the kind of religion we hear about today, the kind that is sold on television and door to door is the kind that appeals to insecure people seeking false certitude. In short, it is false religion. Jesus did not teach certitude but understanding.*

I disagree with just about every line of this quote. For me the logical conclusion of such sentiments is that since no religious doctrine may be known with certainty, no religious doctrine may be considered wrong or right. To do so would be "arrogant and intolerant."

To understand just how tentative this leaves things, consider Sterling McMurrin. McMurrin is a baptized member of the Church. He has not been excommunicated and considers himself a Mormon. Yet in an interview conducted by Blake Ostler and published first in the *Seventh East Press* and later in *Dialogue*, McMurrin made clear that he thinks Joseph Smith's story about the angel and the gold plates is ridiculous; he does not believe in the divinity of Christ and is agnostic regarding the existence of God! (*Seventh East Press*, 11 January 1983, p. 5, passim.)

If these writers are at all representative it is apparent that many Mormon liberals have focused on the changeable or uncertain elements in the Church and gospel to such an extent that they have come to feel less and less sure about what if anything is certain or essential. But the conclusion that everything is open to change or challenge has dramatic implications, as Sterling McMurrin seems to realize. In that interview, Blake Ostler asked McMurrin whether the "uniqueness of the Mormon faith" wouldn't be compromised if a "normative, systematic theology were developed." Though I suspect Ostler was looking for an affirmative answer, McMurrin answered in the negative: "It is quite true that theology can destroy much of the character and quality of religion. But religion without theology tends to be just a matter of superstition and emotional excess. In my opinion, theology is a very important thing for Mormonism, and Mormonism has a very good and strong theological base." Then he added this significant statement: "If a Church is to survive as a viable and strong institution, it must have some quite clear set of beliefs and a firm basis for those beliefs (emphasis added)."

The message should be clear: if all it means to be a Mormon is to be able to believe anything and everything, then our teachings are no different

than those of any other religion, and Mormonism loses its meaning. If we cannot with reasonable certainty state what our fundamental principles are and assert that those doctrines are transcendent and necessary to the faith, then the significance of the gospel message is largely eviscerated. The "good news" becomes no news.

There might, I suppose, be little cause for alarm if this stance uniformly resulted in a collection of Burton's "closet doubters," who, while disbelieving every doctrine, actively participated in and supported the Church and its goals. Unfortunately, the results of this mindset do not stop there. Just as my friend argued for general humanitarian missionary service in preference to proselytizing, I believe one consequence of the trend toward doctrinal uncertainty is an aversion to missionary work. Indeed, this conclusion follows logically and perhaps inescapably. With such an uncertain, open-ended view of the gospel, how can one in good faith spend time trying to convert people? What does one try to convert them to? How can you teach the gospel if you are uncertain what "the gospel" is, or believe that it cannot be defined in any lasting or certain way?

A clear example of this is Sterling McMurrin, who in his interview relished the fact that he had "never had any disposition whatsoever to argue for or against a person's religious beliefs or to try to change another's religious views." McMurrin felt that was why he was never called on a mission. In his words, "To be a good missionary, you have to be sure that you have the truth and that the other person is in error." That, McMurrin said, "is a qualification that I do not possess." My fear is that an ever-increasing number of LDS liberals likewise lack that qualification and are similarly disinclined to perform missionary work.

But such liberals do not stop at opposing missionary work; the trend toward uncertainty also frequently results in a tendency, exemplified in Dunn's and Woodward's papers, to disparage those who claim certainty, especially those who attempt to convince others that their view is right. Kenneth Woodward, for instance, expressly denounced those who "insist on peddling religion door-to-door."

I have a dual concern regarding this increasing disdain for missionary work. My first is for the value of the work itself. I have seen the gospel message change lives for the better in a way I don't think anything else could. To the extent that Mormons are not motivated to share the gospel with others, fewer people will be helped.

My second concern relates directly to my topic: It is my experience that missionary work tends to strengthen an understanding of and a belief in certain fundamental doctrines. Other callings in the Church apparently do not achieve this effect to the same degree as missionary work. This is because standard missionary work involves (1) teaching people the foundational doctrines of the

**If being a Mormon means believing anything and everything, then our teachings are no different than those of any other religion.**

**The Church's uniqueness stems from a group of revealed, eternal principles at the heart—the gospel essentials.**

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and (2) teaching people why they should join that church. Very little of what missionaries teach (or should teach if they do the job properly) can be considered anything other than gospel essentials. At least in their teaching activities, missionaries talk, think, and study about God, Christ, the purpose of life, revelation, faith, baptism, and the Atonement. As a result, they are forced to consider the possible significance of these doctrines in the lives of others as well as in their own.

On the other hand, it seems to me that most Latter-day Saints who are involved in other Church programs spend relatively little of their time exploring the essential principles of the gospel. Instead, much of their time is spent confronting what Elder Poelman termed “traditions, customs, social practices, and personal preferences”—that is, those elements of the Church subject to change and most vulnerable to the imperfections of its members.

For example, I once served as the Young Men's president and priests quorum advisor. Although I had many rewarding experiences working with the young men, I was often frustrated by what to me were confusing, changing Church programs and policies relating to what was then the Mutual Improvement Association. I was also frustrated by the constant stream of activities I was expected to plan and participate in and the frequent (and frequently fruitless) meetings I was supposed to attend. It was easy to come away from that experience with some doubt about the inspiration of Church programs. The experience also made it easy to wonder what if anything in the Church is eternal and unchallengeable. When people feel that they are involved in Church programs that are not inspired, eternal, or unchangeable, even while maintaining a belief that the organization in general is good, their motivation to conform or to actively serve that organization may be weakened. For me, missionary work helps counteract that problem.

For the past five and a half years, I have been involved in various aspects of the stake missionary program, including serving as a stake missionary and ward mission leader. I have found that experience spiritually enlivening for both myself and those whom I've taught. I've also come to feel more strongly than ever that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has something unique and important to offer the world and that both the Church's uniqueness and its importance flow from a group of clear, revealed, eternal, and elemental principles that lie at the heart of the gospel—the gospel essentials.

I choose the term *essentials* since it denotes the intrinsic, fundamental, and distinctive nature of something; it includes those properties or characteristics that are necessary to a thing's existence, identity, and definition. Hydrogen, for example, is an essential element of water—

remove hydrogen from water, and you no longer have water. In a similar fashion, the “gospel essentials” are those principles and concepts that cannot be removed or changed without destroying “the gospel.”

Similarly, I believe in a relatively small number of core teachings which are essential and fundamental; beyond these, there remains much room for doctrinal evolution, progressive revelation, speculative theology, and so forth. Of course, a number of Church intellectuals have given lip service to this idea. Davis Bitton, for example, alluded to this in his 1980 address to the B. H. Roberts Society when he quoted one of Roberts' favorite aphorisms: “Unity in essentials; liberty in non-essentials” (SUNSTONE, March-April 1981, pp. 50-51). Cole Capener examines a comparable concept in his paper, “How General the Authority?” And even Michael Hicks' essay allows that there are some doctrines in the Church of which, as Hicks says, “we may and must be certain.” Unfortunately this raises a troubling question: What doctrines constitute this indispensable core?

For me, no teaching in the Church can be considered a “gospel essential” unless it has been revealed. That is, our distinctive message is that the Church was established not by man, but by God. Because God's ways and thoughts are not man's, He must reveal them. As Joseph Smith organized the Church under the direction of heavenly messengers, we depend on the Prophet's revelations as a source of gospel principles. Joseph taught that the Bible was generally inspired, but problematic in its current form. He brought forth the Book of Mormon and taught that it was God's word and inspired both in the initial writing and in the translation. He also produced numerous revelations, many of which are incorporated into the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. With various qualifications, we accept these inspired volumes—the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price—as scripture, the word of God.

There is, of course, no way to prove Joseph Smith's divine calling. That must come through individual inspiration, study, and faith. My point is that if one accepts Joseph Smith's divine calling, then the revelations he brought forth possess sufficient internal consistency to allow the derivation of certain key points of doctrine. Admittedly, much of the scriptural writing Joseph produced is either difficult to understand or ambiguous. Nevertheless on a number of basic issues, I believe his teachings and those of his successors are sufficiently clear and harmonious to determine the essentials of the gospel with practical certainty.

Of course, it may be complained that *practical certainty* falls short of the *absolute certainty* we often hope for as disciples. My response is that nothing in life is known or understood with absolute

certainty. Imagine a spectrum consisting of degrees of certitude. At one end of the spectrum is bare *possibility*. You believe something might conceivably be possible, but you have no feeling either for or against it. As you proceed along the spectrum, you acquire higher degrees of certitude. Perhaps you begin to *suspect* something is true, then actually believe in it; as your degree of certitude grows you develop an active faith in the thing. Finally, at the far end of the spectrum, is knowledge. When you know something, you feel so certain it is true that you are willing to completely rely on that knowledge. This does not necessarily mean you are *absolutely* certain of the thing—perhaps niggling doubts will on occasion present themselves. Or perhaps you even acknowledge a small possibility that you are wrong—though the possibility is so minute as to be meaningless to you. That is what I mean by “practical certainty.”

It does not take a great deal of sophistication to cast doubt on things. My eleven-year-old son enjoys going the rounds with me on how we can know anything with absolute certainty. I will say something like, “Before we moved to Boston, we *believed* that it existed, since we had read about it in books, and everyone we knew believed there was a place called Boston. When we actually arrived there, we *knew for certain* it existed.” Then my son will counter with this argument: “But Dad, maybe we don’t really live in Boston. Maybe this is all a dream (perhaps a nightmare!), or maybe someone cleverly delivers us a *Boston Globe* each day and has changed all the signs so that we think we are in a place called Boston, but really we’re still in Phoenix?”

This type of philosophizing has been going on for a long time. It took Rene Descartes a while to satisfy himself that he even existed. But practically speaking, I don’t think he entertained any serious doubts. In similar fashion, I believe the fundamental principles may be derived from the scriptures and the teachings of modern prophets, with practical certainty.

What then are the gospel essentials—the core doctrines that must be believed? I don’t pretend to be able to produce a definitive list. Frankly, I think the active realization some “gospel essentials” do exist may be more important than unanimous agreement on what they are. And of course, our understanding of the significance of various doctrines may vary over time. But since producing a minimal list may help stimulate discussion on the matter, I offer the following:

1. I believe in a personal, tangible God who organized the world from existing materials, and who, though incomprehensibly glorious and powerful, is in some respects limited by the nature of the universe.
2. I believe that man is the offspring of God.
3. I believe happiness is the aim of existence.
4. I believe true happiness comes only in being and acting like God.

5. I believe Christ is the physical son of God. He lived on earth, suffered in some way for our sins, gave up His life for us, and was resurrected. His actions make our reunion with God and ultimate happiness possible, though Christ’s sacrifice alone will not save us.
6. I believe Joseph Smith communicated with God and Christ. He restored Christ’s Church to the earth.
7. I believe the Book of Mormon is divinely inspired.
8. I believe those who succeeded Joseph Smith are also prophets who can speak for and with God.
9. I believe that to achieve happiness and exaltation, one must keep certain commandments, including those relating to chastity, honesty, and active love of neighbor.
10. I believe that in order to achieve the highest degree of exaltation and happiness, we must participate in certain saving ordinances such as baptism and temple ordinances.
11. I believe this church is the only one with authority to perform those saving ordinances.

What of Mormons like McMurrin or the “closet doubters” who don’t believe all or some of the above? Should they be removed from the Church? No. I do not believe someone should be excommunicated merely for what I would consider doctrinal error. That doesn’t mean I think the error harmless or meaningless—on the contrary, belief in certain core principles is important, as I have tried to demonstrate. I simply think we should be tolerant of those who are still weak in the faith: We can accept those who may not clearly see the light without denying or doubting the clarity of our own vision. The gospel and the Church are here to help us grow to perfection, and all of us fall short of that in some respects.

The trend toward doctrinal uncertainty which has seized so many of today’s Mormon intellectuals originated from the accurate perception that LDS theology is both expansive and expanding. But I believe we have taken that trend too far and have lost our balance. It is time to “correct the course” by giving more attention to those crucial elements of our theology—the gospel essentials—that make our religion what it is.

I suspect there are many LDS liberals who have been caught up in this “uncertainty trend” without fully realizing it or without recognizing the troubling implications of that tendency. This is perhaps the greatest danger of all: since it has now become fashionable to be doubtful and uncertain about everything, many people are doing so unthinkingly.

It is time to think about it.

MARK C. DANGERFIELD holds a bachelor’s degree in Greek from Brigham Young University and is seeking his juris doctorate at Harvard Law School.

**The gospel is here to help us grow to perfection and all of us fall short in some respects.**

# Windows

By Phyllis Barber

**T**his time, Herbert Jensen's family lives in a warehouse at the edge of Ely, Nevada. This time, his father takes work at Ely Meat and Company, part-time until the mines open again.

The Jensen's home was once an office when the roller mill had a clientele. Its partitioned walls protect eight-year old Herbert from the empty warehouse during the day, but they can't shield him from the high, black-eyed windows when the sun goes down. They grow in the dark; the cross-bars on the panes disappear.

Herbert curls into himself and his pillow so he won't see night creatures slip through the glass.

Outside the half walls and under the same roof, chickens in a pen scratch deeper into their straw nests. Inside, Herbert, his older brother Jack, and two younger sisters, lie crosswise on a double bed and huddle for warmth under a pieced quilt. The baby, wrapped in flannel, sleeps in an open dresser drawer. When Herbert tosses to escape the old man in his dreams, the one with grisly knobs on his face and three arms at each side, he feels a sharp elbow jabbing into his ribs.

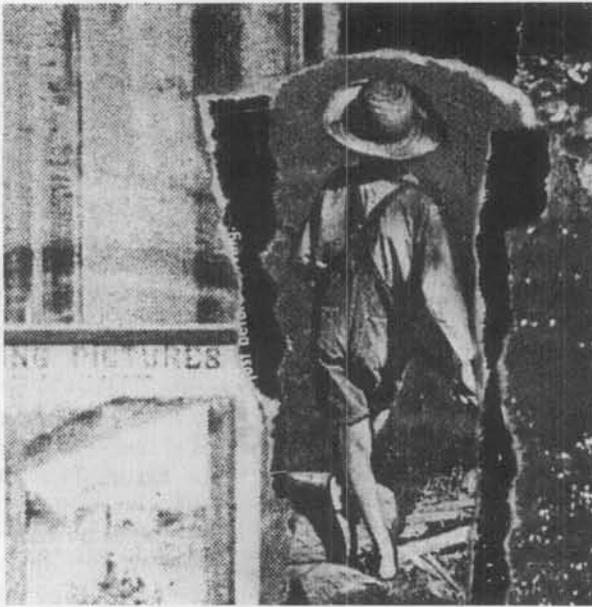
"Stop it," Jack yells thickly, half asleep. "And stop hogging the covers."

The quilt barely covers Herbert's thigh. He wants to kick Jack as hard as he can. He wants to curl his lip back over his teeth, snarl at his brother, and make him afraid, but Jack will pin him to the floor and make him say "Uncle" if he does.

In the other bed, his father whispers. "Esther? are you awake?"

In the hollow of the warehouse, under the high steel roof with the barest hint of light at the windows, the cock begins to crow.

Springs squeak as his father moves closer to his mother.



"Not this morning, Alf," his mother says as she gropes for the kerosene lamp, the matches, the light. She sits on the edge of the bed, brushing and braiding her long brown hair. She loops the belt on her bathrobe and pads across the floor to stuff the wood stove with fire.

"Time to get up, little Herbert," she says as she cracks eggs into a bowl. "Your father wants you to help him take the bull up to Old Ben's."

Herbert burrows into the mattress and pulls a corner of the blanket around his shoulder. He sinks inward

to his secret place, the pool where he talks with fish and breathes water. When he's not drifting or spinning through currents, he likes to sit on the shore and slide eight fingers between ten toes. He doesn't have to be wary. He doesn't have to double his fists to ward off boys with big shoulders and thick thighs. His pond is safe from slithering snakes and from his father's belt that cuts into his skin.

"Herbert, hurry. You need something to eat before you go." His mother hums for a minute, stirring the eggs with a fork, and then starts to sing. "And He shall feed His sheep."

Herbert sticks one foot out of the covers, remembering when she sang the "Messiah" with the Box Elder Tabernacle Choir in Brigham City, when she looked so pretty in her black dress and white collar, when she singled him out in the audience and smiled as she sang the last "Alleluia."

"Herbert," his father yells as he splashes water on his face, stretching up on his toes to see his reflection.

Herbert crawls out of bed and into his overalls. He sits on the floor to lace his boots. He watches his father angle for a clear space in the broken mirror.

"The ladies will still notice," his mother says.

His father fans her attentions away with his left

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hand. "There's not enough starch in this shirt."

"I'm trying to make do, Alf."

His father fastens his last button, slips into suspenders and a straw hat.

"Your eggs are ready, Herbert," his mother says.

He wishes for more eggs, dozens of them. He wishes he could eat all day or stay in bed to read *The Tales of King Arthur*, his only book except for the Book of Mormon, both gifts from his mother.

"Herbert, your father is waiting. Grab another piece of bread to take with you. Come on now. Hurry."

"I'm coming, Mother." He follows her outside to the pen where she checks to see if, by some miracle, the bull has more fat than yesterday. He sees her shake a sorry head at the bull and at the chickens that have followed her out through the open door, pecking the hard earth for grain.

"Only a handful for now." She tosses the feed gently. "Share chicky chicks. Share until Alf gets back from Old Ben's."

Then she bends to her knees and laces her son in her arms. "Good-bye my boy with the deep-water eyes."

He clings to their good-bye, but doesn't say what he thinks. Maybe, someday, he can take his to his pond and grant her three wishes. One would be for a washing machine, he knew that for sure. Maybe for a real house with open-and-shut windows and trees. Maybe for a knight or for Jesus.

Four years earlier, Herbert's father had tried Idaho for luck. Sometimes, Herbert went with him to knock on doors in Pocatello, Blackfoot, and Malad. While they stood on the porch to wait for an answer, his father would always straighten his tie and check his briefcase for spots of mud. The housewives would ooh and aah and say "I want that one" as they browsed through his catalogue of new-fangled washing machines, but then most of them remembered their lean crops. "Please come back in six months, won't you please? And, young man," they'd say to Herbert, "where on earth did you get those big liquid eyes? And look at those eyelashes. What I wouldn't do for eyelashes like those. Oh my."

One day when he was supposed to knock on more doors with his father, Herbert woke to the sound of hammering. He noticed the briefcase full of catalogues half-shoved under his father's bed.

"What's Papa building?"

"A chicken coop," answered his mother who was sweeping the plank floor of the two-room house. "We're going to try chickens awhile."

The greenhorn-built coops didn't satisfy Finney who took to roosting at the edge of the hole in the outhouse. One day, Finney fell in.

His father, brother Jack, and Herbert puzzled over a way to save the lost chicken they couldn't afford to lose.

"Herbert!" his father said as his eyes lit up with a solution.

Anchored by his father, he dangled down into the hole from a rope around his waist. He eased past the scratchy tree roots that poked at his eyes and drew long white marks on his arms.

Herbert kept checking the window of sunlight above. Sometimes he saw Jack's head blocking the light and his shadowed eyes squinting into the darkness. At those moments, Herbert felt some satisfaction in being the only one who was the right size and weight for this job, and he dangled with a certain sense of pride. But the close earthen walls crowded his pride. He closed his eyes and held his breath. Mechanically, he rolled the woven hemp between his fingers and stroked the wisps that had escaped the braid. He thought about a fish at the end of a line, the one that he and his dad had caught in Big Creek. Pretty fish, blue/purple/silver, except for its eyes that didn't blink and its mouth where the hook had been.

"Find anything yet?" his father called.

Herbert wouldn't take the necessary breath for an answer. His father lowered the rope another six inches.

When Herbert heard Finney's fussing and clucking, he grabbed at the sound and gulped for air. "Chick sales," he yelled, saying the only words he could think of that might release him from the dank place where breathing made him see white. He had heard lots of the oldtimers excusing themselves to the privy, saying they had to go to a "chic sale," and they'd walk off fancy like a lady in a style show and slap their thighs.

Finney pecked his arm, its one free wing flapping wildly. "Bauk, bauk," Herbert clucked back at the chicken all the way to the top, gripping the rope and the wing of the frenzied captive. In the open air and on firm ground, Herbert stripped, threw himself and his overalls into the creek, and then streaked through the meadow's mustard grass, bare and bumpy as a plucked chicken. "Chick sales," he shouted as he ran. "Bauk, bauk."

The wary bull shifts weight as his father opens the makeshift pen. "Old Ben awaits your coming, El Toro," he says. "Ondalay." Herbert watches his father flip his suspenders with his thumbs and pull himself taller.

"Herbert, stay behind the gate. Stay out of his way."

Herbert waits with the prodding stick that is too long for his small arms. He closes his eyes, imagining at least a river's width between him and the animal. The bull's hair is whorled in peaks of brown and white; its eyes are rimmed in red. It moves slowly out of the pen, appraising them with a snort.

When a departing family had suggested a trade—their Hereford for his trailer, his father had seen financial possibilities but not the bull's confirmation, the short neck, the lineback. Unable

to breed the bull, he tried to fatten it on hopes. The time had come to sell.

"Let's go, son. Keep your distance, and poke him hard when he goes in the wrong direction."

Autumn tints the late November air as the three of them edge along the railroad track. Not one Nevada Northern box car rumbles past. No demand for copper. No buyers. Herbert and his father sidestep the random foliage, too spare to give its leaves away to any season. The bull tramples whatever stands in its path until they reach a dirt road

"Good day, Ma'am." His father tips his hat as a lady swishes by.

She smiles, turns her head away and passes.

"Herbert," his father says within her hearing, "I must teach you the rest of 'Thanatopsis.'"

Herbert is calculating how much money he will need to buy the washing machine that his mother keeps wishing for, the one on page 12 of his father's old catalogues. If only he could peddle newspapers with his brother Jack.

"Herbert," his father snaps his fingers, "you're wandering all over the road. Mind what you're doing."

Herbert feels a knuckle planted in the middle of his backbone. He jumps to the side, pokes the bull to satisfy his father.

"Ah, 'Thanatopsis.' William Cullen Bryant, you know."

"Daddy, why do I have to go? Why couldn't Jack go with you? He's the oldest."

"Mind your manners, son. Your brother Jack faced it like a man when he went for the first time."

His father tips his hat again. Another swishing skirt. "And how is Miss Lily today?"

"Just fine, sir, I mean, Alf."

"She's one of my customers," his father confides. "You know how my customers like me, don't you son?"

Herbert answers his father with another poke at the bull, remembering the day last July when he had seen that woman at Ely Meat and Company. He had been delivering a box of plucked chickens to the market where his father wrapped parts of animals in neat packages. The wagon squeaked all the way into town, one wheel crooked, as he pulled the poultry. He rubbed the cloth over the single penny in his mother's coin purse and rehearsed his upcoming business transaction. After the chickens were delivered, he'd go to Scanelli's for peppermint. He'd pull the purse out of his pocket, hoping Mr. Scanelli would notice how his mother trusted him with her purse, the

one that clicked when it opened and closed.

"Two peppermint sticks," he would say. Then he would hold the penny up between his thumb and first finger. "I earned this all by myself. I plucked twelve chickens for my mother." Then he'd see if he could make the candy last the whole day, sucking slower than ever before. He promised himself that he wouldn't bite into the red and white stripes.

Herbert guided his wagon to the back door that said "Ely Meat" in red paint and tugged on the rope handle. Sawdust powdered his shoes as he slid the box off the rim of his wagon to a place just inside the door. He pulled the door shut behind him, adjusted his eyes to the cool darkness, and made way through the hanging sides of beef. He'd tell his father that the chickens had arrived and then on his way to Scanelli's. But his father was busy.

"A breast or a thigh, Miss Lily?" his father was saying to the dark-eyed lady with long red fingernails. "You know, my dear, that the quality of mercy is not strained but droppeth as the gentle rain, don't you?"

"Why, I can only buy wings today, Mr. Jensen."

"Wings for the lady. And they shall fly as a winged angel unto the archangel himself."

"Oh, Mr. Jensen. Where'd you learn that fancy talking?"

"The Bible mostly. I'm a church man on some Sundays. But could you please remember to call

me Alf? I feel better when people call me Alf."

"Oh, we do want you to feel welcome. How is your family doing, sir?"

"Alf, please."

"Sorry . . . Alf."

"We are waiting until a company house is available. They are difficult to acquire these days, even with the slow-down in the mines. Not many places for people to go right now."

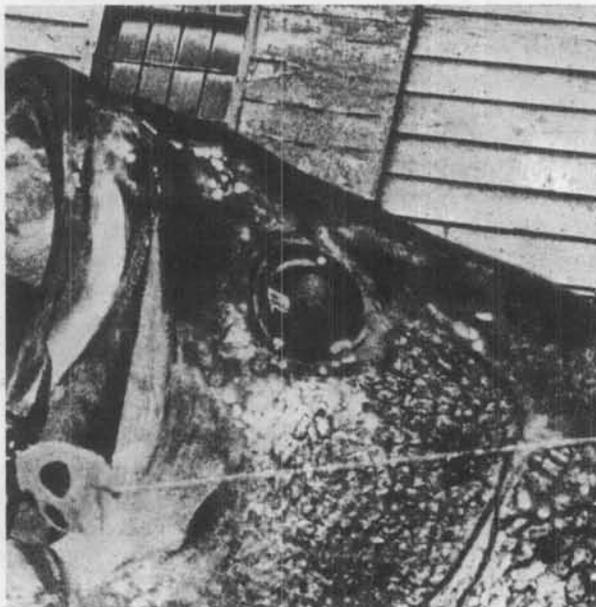
"Good luck to you, sir. Alf." She reached

out to pay for the white package of wings.

"Oh, thank you, my gentle one." He grabbed Miss Lily's hand, raised it to his lips and kissed two knuckles, each separately.

Herbert watched his father's eyes close reverently at the back of Miss Lily's hand, just as they closed when he drank from the sacrament cup at church. He decided to tell the owner instead of his father about the delivery.

"Thanks, son," Mr. Horlacher said as he



tweaked Herbert on the ear. "You're a good boy to be helping out like this."

Herbert groped back through the sides of beef and picked up the handle of his wagon. He pulled it to Scanelli's, the wheel squeaking in a higher

rangewithout the weight of the poultry. When he ordered the two peppermint sticks, he forgot to show off the purse or tell Mr. Scanelli about the money he had earned all by himself. As he walked back up the hill toward the warehouse, he bit into

the spiral and snapped off a piece of peppermint instead of making it last the whole day as he had planned. He didn't even notice.

The bull stumbles in a rut. Dust clouds the road, profuse after six months of straight sun.

"Damn it, Herbert. Watch where you're guiding that bull. Stop dreaming and wipe those seepy eyes."

"Yes, sir." Herbert tries to whistle, but chokes on the dust. His shoulders stoop. He wishes that he lived in a deep lake where his watery eyes wouldn't be noticed. All fish eyes are watery, he thinks, all the time. Days and nights. Nobody says anything.

"Son, do you want to be in the meat business like your dad?"

Herbert hitches his pants up off his hips and watches the early morning light reflect off the edges of his father's rimless eyeglasses. He thinks of Old Ben—his gapped teeth and his beard full of wood chips and straw. If some miner would dynamite that old man, then Herbert would wrap Ben's pieces inside of white packages and seal them with brown tape, just as his father did with beef at the market.

"You know, learning to make a pretty display in the showcase, green parsley and red meat trimmed just right? It's what I do every day to keep us alive. Butchering."

"You mean like Old Ben does?"

"No, no son. Old Ben runs the slaughterhouse."

"I don't like him." Herbert remembers his ugly laugh.

"He's just foreign, son. He was born in the old country."

"I don't like him anyway."

"Some folks think he's touched. But, anyway, there is a difference between what I do and what Ben does. Fine art, that's what butchering is. Someday I'll teach you, son."

Herbert looks at his father, at his barrel chest and proud walk. He pulls his own clothes back as he contemplates the possibility of money in his own hands.

"When can I sell papers downtown with Jack, Dad?"

"You stay home and help your mother with the babies and the chickens. Don't let me catch you on those streets again. You're not old enough."

In September Herbert had gone with Jack to sell papers on an evening when his father was late from work. Idle Greek miners argued in the street; Italians laughed as they disappeared into the tavern with the smoked-glass windows. In between sales, Jack was teaching Herbert to hawk distances. They balled up their saliva, tried to hit increasingly long-range targets.

"Paper, sir?" Jack said to a briskly paced passer-by.

As two pennies dropped into his brother's hand, Herbert heard music from the tavern. He started to move his feet, head back, mouth upturned, arms wide open. His body caught the rhythm, and he abandoned himself to full buck and wing, pounding the time into the wooden sidewalk. He poured himself onto the street, lost to the music.

Old Ben had suddenly reeled out of the tavern's double doors, laughing, and had slapped Herbert on the back. "You wait for Papa, little boy?"

Ben leaned in close, breathing whiskey steam on Herbert through his yellowed teeth. "You wait a long time—a long time." Then he stumbled down the muddy street, roaring a laugh that stopped all music in and out of Herbert.

"Herbert." He heard his name being shouted from behind the double doors. "Herbert, what in the hell are you doing out?"

"I wanted to help Jack, Dad."

"You're not to be on these streets at night—ever." His father's face was red, his eyeglasses further down his nose than usual as he leaned on the half door, swaying.

"Good night, Alf." Her creamy voice cut into my father's angry words. Her dark eyes peered out of the tavern over his shoulder, her ruby-red fingernail shifting his tie.

Herbert had gone to bed that night crying, a swath of red belt mark across his buttocks.

"I will buy a washing machine for Mother. You wait and see."



"Good luck, son. She'd like that, but she's used to promises."

The bull hesitates.

"Stay close with him, Herbert. He's getting wary. And hurry along now. Why do you drag your feet like that?"

Herbert doesn't answer.

"Now, son. Remember we were discussing 'Thanatopsis.' Here's a line for you to memorize: 'and what if thou withdraw/In silence from the living, and no friend/Take note of thy departure.'"

"And what if thou withdraw," says Herbert.

"In silence from the . . ."

"Living?"

"Good boy," says his father. "Good. You've a quick memory, but you must stop daydreaming. Your mother would like to box your ears, you're always off somewhere in that head of yours."

"And no friend?" says Herbert.

"Yes, 'no friend' is right. You're getting it. Ah, Bryant."

The high windows of the slaughterhouse reflect the red of the morning sun. Herbert stiffens and slows as he hears the animals and smells the air.

A stray chicken bobs along.

"A Rhode Island Red," says his father. "Well, I'll be . . . I haven't seen one of those since Malad. Looks like Finney." Every one of his father's chickens always had a name, even the ones he raised to sell. "Here chick, chick, Finney, Finney. Come to Alf." His father is crouching closer, his hands a spring trap.

Herbert flaps his arms like wings.

The chicken steps sideways, ruffling a few feathers.

"Here chicky, chick."

"Bauk, bauk, bauk, ba-rack-it," Herbert crows.

The bull forgotten for a moment, heads for the trees.

"The bull," yells his father.

Herbert is paralyzed between the chicken and the bull, unable to attend to either capture.

"Move, you baby," says his father. "Get over where that bull is and poke him hard."

His father runs, his straw hat bouncing. Herbert runs, holding the prodding stick like a ramrod, but his arms are tired. The stick slants groundward, rising and falling.

"I can't, Dad."

"Run. We can't lose this bull."

The long stick slams into a rise of ground.

Herbert's hands slide until the end of the stick pushes his stomach almost to his back.

"Daddy," he screams.

"Fool." His father runs after the bull, almost to the trees.

Herbert's pain sears red; he doubles over and tries to find a place inside of himself that doesn't hurt when he breathes.

Clutching his abdomen, Herbert runs unsteadily, dragging the stick behind him. His father wrenches the prod from the boy's hands and whirls it towards the trees. But the bull has stopped, mid-chase, lured by a patch of grass. It stops dead still. His father crouches, ready to fight, as the bull pulls a tall weed and crushes it between slow-moving jaws.

Herbert closes his eyes to find shelter from his father's wrath, to go to his pool under the willow tree. It won't be long, he thinks, and he can sell papers.

"A gift for you, Mother," he will say in his bow tie and shiny shoes, "here's a big box. I rolled it here on my wagon all the way from the train station. Jack helped me, a little."

"A big box for me?"

"See what it says on the side, Mother? It starts with a W."

"Herbert," his father shakes his shoulder. "Didn't you hear me?" He is still shouting. He slaps the prodding stick into Herbert's open hands, closes the boy's fingers around the wood, and the three traipse back into the road.

When they open the door, they see steam rising from barrels of livers, lungs, and unrecognizable parts. Ben has been at work early. He walks toward them holding a braided whip.

"In the chute," he says.

As the bull enters the passageway, Ben whips him along the narrowing wall until the animal noses into the wall. The concrete in front, the closing gate behind, compress the bull. Ben tears off his shirt, big shoulders shiny even in the blurred morning light.

"Watch, little boy." He laughs from his belly.

Herbert noses into his father's belt buckle, into trouser pleats.

"Herbert!" His father pushes him up toward the concrete platform.

Ben eyes the bull. "He's a bit on the puny side, Alf."

"What isn't these days?"

Ben grunts.

"I have to go to the bathroom, Dad." Herbert cups two hands over his crotch.

"Not now son. See this through."

"I have to go."



"It can wait."

"But. . ."

"Shut up, son. Now."

Ben lifts the sledge hammer.

Herbert looks out the door.

His father's bony knuckles dig into Herbert's backbone. "Stop crying, Herbert."

The hammer strikes. Ben jumps down and lifts the side gate. The bull rolls out of the restrainer, rests near a depression in the concrete floor. Ben grabs a tin cup from the ledge, unsheaths his knife, and slashes through spirals of brown hair from the top of the throat to the breastbone. The blood sheets into the trough and spatters Ben's apron.

Herbert puts one arm over his eyes. His father pushes it back down.

Ben holds the cup at the throat, slit open in a V. Blood on the tin handle, blood on Ben's wrists and in the cup until it overflows to coat Ben's rubber boots. He gestures his cup toward Herbert. "You like some little boy?" and takes a sip as he walks toward him.

"No, Daddy. Don't let him come near me." Herbert grabs his father's thigh.

"And this will soon be a man?" Ben laughs, still approaching.

Herbert's stomach rises, the morning's scrambled eggs returning. Clabber spills onto the slaughterhouse floor and speckles his father's brown shoes.

Herbert's father holds his son's head up while Ben gathers the hide into his hand, skinning it from the pinkish skull, leaving the eyes standing alone, three dimensional on a flat plane.

Herbert wants to sink to the ground and rest his ear on his father's shoe. He wants to escape, to splash in his pond and run through mustard grass. But the eyes hold him, those strange eyes that stare at him from the place where the skin has been scraped away by Ben's knife. They are filled with white and black, arranged as any normal eyes would be.

"Daddy," he whispers, still holding to his father's leg, "why does Ben leave the eyes like that?"

"I don't know, son." He pats the top of Herbert's head. "Maybe nobody wants to buy them."

"How long will they stare like that?"

"They'll shrivel up pretty soon, unless he lances them."

This time, without insistence from his father, Herbert watches Ben raise his cleaver and hack the bull's head away from the body. He watches him lift the head and carry it under his arm, almost as if it were a knight's helmet carried for a bow to the queen. As Ben hangs it on a metal hook, the eyes still stare at Herbert. He remembers something his mother has said many times—"The eyes are the windows of the soul." The eyes still seem to be alive, and he wants to look more closely. Maybe he can see the soul that his mother says is a part of all living things. He releases his hold on his father and walks to the head, to the row of hooks.

The skull hangs just above the top of Herbert's eyebrows. He lifts his chin, his head. Finally, his eyes connect with the two fixed orbs, the only remainder of the animal that Herbert remembers. He looks into the eyes that are losing sharp definition at the edge of the pupils. They are merging, black with white, into a sluggish mixture of themselves.

"His eyes are like mine, Papa," he says, not turning from the skull. The bull is like me—deep-water eyes. I can see in there.

His father half-smiles in approval; his son has stopped acting afraid in front of Ben. "Yes, Herbert, El Toro. Brave, fierce, courageous."

Herbert doesn't hear his father. "You have a friend," he is whispering to the eyes, as if the bull were all there to hear and respond. "I have long green grass by my pond. You don't have to go away."

Ben leans on the post near the hooks, drawing his knife out of the sheath attached to his belt.

"You want to see what eyes really are?" he asks as he pierces the edge of one of the shining half rounds with the tip of his knife. The jellied substance drips out to a pool on the hard floor, leaving empty, black-eyed windows behind.

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ILLUSTRATED BY CAROL HEAD NORBY



# Franchising the Faith

## From Village Unity to the Global Village

By Ron Molen

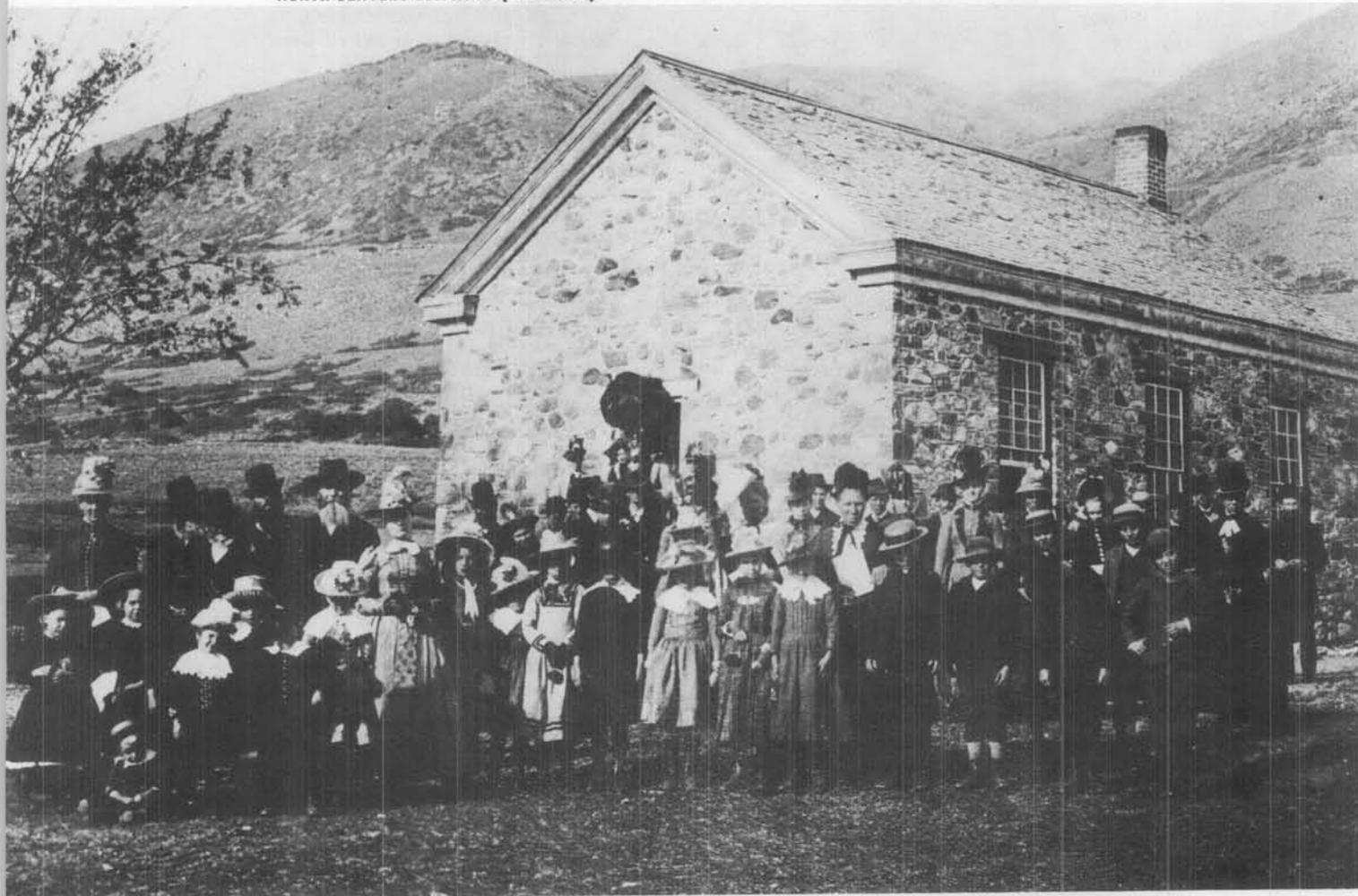
**T**he essence, the lifeblood, and the organizational core of the Church is the ward. It is the place where the most important things happen and is responsible for the unique community spirit, the will to cooperate so characteristic of the faith. I would further suggest that there are many members today who tend to be active principally because of the quality of community still found in the ward.

From its very inception, the ward has been an extraordinary institution; but it is not a static one, for the ward has experienced dramatic changes during the last 150 years. I am interested in these changes, questioning what has been gained and concerned about what has been lost. Though I am not a sociologist, historian or an

anthropologist, and therefore do not intend to present a scholarly treatise, I can offer the perspective of a voice from the street. I will make some sweeping generalizations, as I am trying to look at the big picture and address general concepts.

Herbert Ganz, an eminent sociologist who speaks of the importance of scale in human institutions, doubts that human beings in a nuclear family can sustain a close relationship with more than ten or twelve other families. When that number is exceeded, the group tends to fragment. There is substantial sociological data to back up this proposition. Ganz refers to this scale of close interrelationships as a *social intensive unit*.

NORTH CENTERVILLE WARD (1895-1910)





SEVENTEENTH WARD MEETINGHOUSE (1900-1910)

Ganz also observes that a family cannot sustain a loose, more relaxed community relationship with more than 100 families. To exceed this number introduces an unmanageable overload; this causes some members to withdraw, and the 100 family level remains fairly constant. Ganz refers to this as the *social extensive unit*.

The Mormon ward is a *social extensive unit*. There is ample sociological proof that its scale meets the needs of those it serves and that it achieves this marvelous natural fit with a minimum of conflict and tension, providing an optimum community environment for rearing the young. I know of no other religious group that is so committed to maintain a specific size for its congregations. Church leaders enamored by the idea of growth have nevertheless demonstrated great wisdom in not allowing wards to exceed 500 members and thus to lose the magic that results in a community of this size. The ward, therefore, is a virtually perfect example of a *social extensive unit*.

The size of the ward, however, is one of its few

historical constants. The basic purpose, function, and organization of the ward have gone through some radical changes. These changes have occurred primarily in the ward's responsibilities to the individual and family, rather than the individual member's responsibilities to the ward. For example, historically the member has been obligated to follow the teachings of the Church, pay tithing and fast offerings, attend meetings and participate in a substantial number of activities. These requirements haven't changed significantly. The ward's obligations to the member, however, have changed dramatically. Indeed, over the years the community's commitment to the member has continually receded into something smaller, less ambitious, less communal, and therefore less dynamic.

This transition has passed through four phases. The first is the Rural Village Ward, followed by the Urban Territorial Ward, followed by the World Church Ward, followed by the Corporate Correlated Ward.

### THE RURAL WARD (1830-1910)

One of the most spectacular social innovations of the early Church was the Mormon Village. It was an ideal plan for settling the Great Basin because it was a fully developed concept that made for ease of replication. Brigham Young's dream was that the territory would be filled with self-sustaining communities that would trade their surplus production. Although the Utopian ideal of the Mormon Village was seldom fully realized, and then for only a short period of time, it nevertheless captured the imagination of the early members, generating a vitality and idealism seldom encountered since.

One of the most important social organizations of this period was the ward. Although in secular terms *ward* refers to a particular section of the city

and has no religious roots whatever, in the Mormon Village the ecclesiastical and municipal authority was the same. Thus the ward began as a neighborhood with the ward building as its community center. It was a spiritual and secular community with a defined territory.

The main responsibility of the bishop of the ward in this period was to look after the temporal needs of his congregation, to make sure the aged, the sick, and the needy were taken care of. (Interestingly, stake leaders assumed responsibility for spiritual leadership.)

Of course, the real source of economic security came from the larger, self-sufficient Mormon Village, where the population did not exceed the carrying capacity of the land on which it survived, and the always sufficient surplus was used to care for those in need. To assist the community in this

CENTRAL STATES MISSION KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI (1937)



obligation, individuals were expected to pay fast offerings. This set a precedent that was to endure for some time.

During this period the ward members decided on the kind of church building they needed, and the bishop had the responsibility of mustering the necessary resources to build one. The bishop had a great deal of power, particularly in the smaller communities, in collecting tithes and offerings and then determining how the money was to be spent. This gave the community of the ward a significant dimension of self-determination. As a result, this period saw the construction of some very interesting churches by a congregation that collectively owned their community center.

This was the golden age of the ward community, for it was the organizational keystone of a church whose overall goal was establishing the kingdom of God in a promised land. This was the rural, agrarian, life-supporting community functioning at its best.

This basic form persisted from 1830 until Utah acquired statehood, when the growing importance of industry forced a shift in population from rural to urban. By 1920 the Church population was mostly urban and the agricultural capacity of the state of Utah could no longer meet the needs of the population. For the first time food was imported. This led to the next phase in the ward's history.

#### THE URBAN TERRITORIAL WARD (1910-1950)

This was a period of significant expansion which resulted from an energetic missionary effort. As the social intensive and basic organizational unit, the ward easily replicated in urban centers.

I personally grew up in a ward in Chicago that was a vital community where the members showed a highly developed sense of communal responsibility. During this period many similarities to the early organizational form remained, but there were also some significant changes.

To begin with, the ward building during this period for the most part remained in the ownership of the congregation in a kind of perpetual trust like any Protestant congregation. Also at this time a certain level of architectural freedom was still allowed for new buildings. Even as late as 1940 some rather interesting buildings were being completed. The use of stained glass windows, mosaics, frescoes, and sculpture gave each building a certain unique identity.

But the real shift occurred in the responsibility and calling of the bishop. He was now responsible for both the spiritual and temporal well-being of the membership. Also, the goal of the Church in general shifted from promoting the kingdom of God in a promised land to a rapidly expanding church in the nation and even the world. The concept of the Mormon Village now belonged to another era.

BURLEY STAKE SUNDAY SCHOOL BURLEY, IDAHO (1913)



**Through the years the basic purpose, function, and organization of the ward have changed radically.**

Many creative innovations in the Church auxiliaries were instituted during this period. The Relief Society, MIA, Sunday School, and other organizations had to adjust to the new urban setting. Many concepts that worked well in the wards were accepted by the general Church leadership and then recommended as Church-wide programs. A good example is the welfare plan, developed first by Harold B. Lee in the Pioneer Stake, which filtered up to the top and became general Church program. Although the plan didn't have time to fully respond to the needs of the Depression, it was an extremely creative effort.

Significantly, the Depression had brought into focus the problem of living away from the land and its accompanying life-support. The Mormon Village had been abandoned, and for a time no alternative survival strategy filled the void. Although the new welfare system met this challenge, its management was assigned to the stake rather than the ward. Unfortunately, the stake does not have the dynamic energy of the ward, probably because it is out of scale, cumbersome, remote, and lacks the territorial identity of the ward. The Church, not the ward, assumed the obligation to assist in the temporal well-being of its members.

Still, the Urban Territorial Ward made a reasonably successful transition from the rural setting to the new urban environment. The territory that the ward served remained fixed, the ward building retained a strong community identity, and the community itself retained a limited self-determination.

#### **THE WORLD WARD CHURCH (1950-1975)**

After the war and the great immigration of members from Europe, General Authorities began to think of the Church as a world organization. During this period perhaps the most radical changes occurred, and for good reason. Managing a world church required a vast bureaucratic expansion and centralization. No longer could the Church in Utah serve as the pattern for the rest of the world but rather had to adjust to a new model that could be replicated with ease around the globe. The one exception was that the Church in the United States had to pay its own way, while the foreign Church received a heavy subsidy. Because wards in the United States needed to carry their own costs as well as those of wards in other countries, there had to be some definite adjustments.

The very simple economic solution to this problem was to let two or three wards use the same building even though this forced the wards to abandon their territorial identity. The financial burden of building new meeting houses for the vastly expanding Church population was cut in half and thereby made manageable. Because of the territorial attachment of some congregations to their building, the central church took over the ownership of all Church buildings.

At this point the ward ceased being a community in the classic sense. It had no self-determination, no defined territory, but functioned as a unit of the central church, an outlet, a franchised operation. No longer was the typical Mormon congregation afforded the same rights and powers as any Protestant congregation.



In addition, the warm, folksy relationship between the central church and the local church was lost. The Church leadership was isolated by the expanding bureaucracy as it began to develop more rigid controls and programs in order to make the administrative task more manageable.

The new bureaucracy carried out its responsibility with such rapid efficiency that members used to the older methods were often horrified. The tasks of collecting and distributing money were computerized even before many large corporations had applied the new technology. The Church building committee became very efficient at cost controls by simply disregarding any recommendations from the local congregation. Because of the frequent shifting of ward boundaries and the use of chapels by as many as three congregations, it became necessary to serve the central church rather than the nebulous congregation.

During this time the Church architecture continued its deterioration with the construction of bland ward buildings and often bizarre temples totally devoid of any semblance to the long evolving traditions of Christian architecture.

Because of the rather tenuous relationship between the central church and the local church, local leaders had to be chosen on the basis of their capacity to respond to the dictates of higher authority. Programs, methods, and systems emanating from the central church were applied whether they worked or not. Once they were labeled as "inspired", they were integrated into the system with mindless obedience. Two-way communication ceased. The central church issued

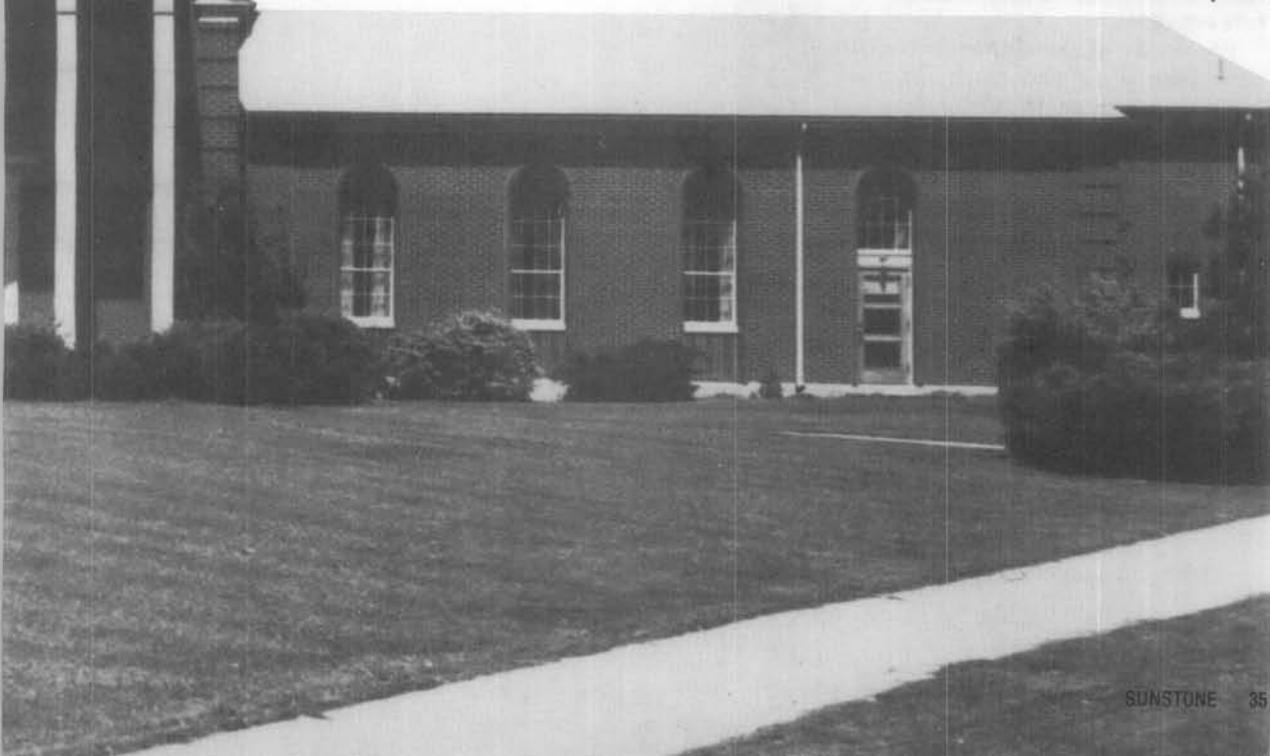
its edicts, and the local church responded. The oft-heard complaint about dull lesson manuals is a good example: No one at the top seems to listen, nor for that matter to care.

The final blow for the now beleaguered ward was the complete turnabout of the long-held commitment of the Church to assume responsibility for the temporal well-being of its members. A revolutionary change in the welfare plan was instituted, and again with good reason. During the recession of the mid-seventies the leadership had come to the realization that Church welfare could not care for more than three percent of the membership. It was also clear that the welfare plan could not expand fast enough to handle the needs of a rapidly increasing membership. Since half the Church was carrying the financial burden for the other half, the added burden of subsidizing welfare would have been intolerable. The new position taken by the central church was that the family must assume the obligation of caring for the temporal needs of the members. The Church welfare plan was to be used only as a backup for more extreme cases. In addition, the management of the welfare system was removed from the stake and conducted by the region, further reducing the obligation of the central church to the individual member. Welfare was still available, but it was now almost as remote as government assistance.

But somehow through the aforementioned changes, the ward, this extraordinary institution, retained its life. And although much of its vitality was drained off and dried up, there was still some remaining magic.

**In the postwar era, the warm relationship between the central church and the local church was lost.**

THIRTEENTH WARD MEETINGHOUSE (1950's)



## THE CORPORATE CORRELATED WARD (1975-1985)

The ultimate realization of bureaucratic control came in the form of Correlation. The Church leadership, isolated from the reality of ward dynamics and the human qualities of those it was meant to serve, idealized the membership beyond reality and then instituted such rigid programs that Church participation became a monotonous burden.

Consolidation of church meetings and correlation of teaching materials has created an atmosphere in the anonymous ward building that works against enthusiasm. This robotization of procedures finds the average member performing his religious obligations by the numbers, hurrying to get it over with and then fleeing to something more satisfying. Communal interaction has been reduced to a minimum. After three hours of meetings, the members are too nervous and exhausted to interact.

Young children are being conditioned to Sundays with three hours of tedious boredom that for some obscure reason needs to be endured. A vital local community would never institute a three-hour meeting for anyone, let alone young children. Only planners remote from the institution served could expect positive results.

But even after the onslaught from the central church this extraordinary community miraculously retains some vitality. The question now becomes how long community can be sustained on three hours a week in a building with no community identity, grinding through the required programs which few, if any, enjoy. How unfortunate that this ingenious, inspired concept is no longer allowed to be a community in the full sense.

We send out missionaries to convert people to the faith, but we must remember that the ward is the physical embodiment of that faith. If this singular direction,

this mindless reduction is allowed to continue then soon, to paraphrase Gertrude Stein there is no there there. As it is, there, there is less and less there.

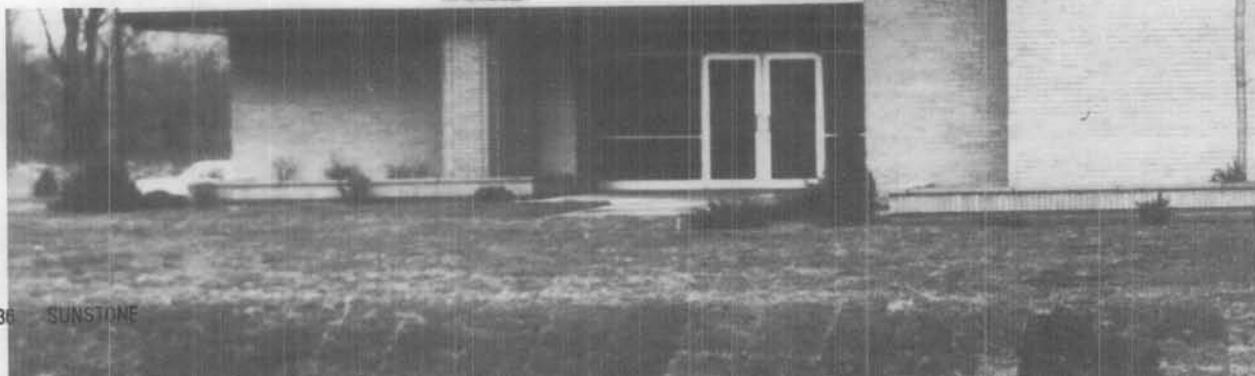
What are the basic requirements for a valid community?

1. First, there must be self-determination, or the right for the local community to decide on what is best for it, what things would enhance its condition. A community cannot, must not be required to respond to rigid programs established by remote planners. Goals can be set from a distance, but the means and methods of achieving these goals must be the result of local initiative and even local inspiration, for it is often local inspiration, insight, and creativity that eventually produces the exciting idea, the breakthrough.

The local community must have control over its resources, or those elements critical to its survival. These physical, human, and financial resources must be available to respond to immediate community needs first. A community that cannot finance its own operation can never be its own community. For half the church to carry the financial burden of the other half is unnatural and unbalanced. The wards of Latin America must become financially self-sufficient, and the wards in both the United States and the rest of the world must be given the freedom to discover new possibilities.

2. A community must have the commitment of its members, and this commitment must be self-generating. A shared faith in the binding myth is not enough. The critical additional dimension is the joy and celebration of being part of something exciting and fulfilling, of working on the edge of

**Consolidated meetings and correlated teaching materials have created an atmosphere that works against enthusiasm.**



discovery in a dynamic community committed to human progress and that is willing to go wherever that leads. "The glory of God is intelligence." "Man is that he might have joy." These are exciting concepts that often seem forgotten.

Community gatherings cannot be restricted to once a week, nor can the main Sunday meeting be so filled with repetition that no time is allowed for members to get to know each other and discuss the real needs of the community. With the new consolidated schedule, visiting has deteriorated. In most contemporary religious organizations, either before or after church the members gather at a kind of reception where light refreshments are served and people have the opportunity for fellowship. I believe this is an excellent idea. In addition, I would suggest that if the wards were given the freedom of accomplishing certain things each Sunday, they would quickly resolve a more satisfactory, even more enjoyable solution that would make more sense.

3. The community must have a defined territory. It must be a special place, a holy place where many of the most important matters of life are accomplished and a sense of identity established. This can never be accomplished in a building that is clean, barren, and anonymous, owned by a remote corporate institutions and is shared by other congregations without the slightest hint of who inhabits the space. Great religious architecture is the ultimate community architecture, for it has been the product of many generations contributing their own additions and embellishments to create a sense of locality and history. Early Mormon ward buildings achieved this by starting with a strong design and adding stained-glass windows, frescoes, mosaics, painting,

and sculpture. Music was composed, hymns written. It was a culture that was alive, always reaching. Unfortunately this hardly describes our present condition.

4. A community achieves its validity through the commitment of its members to each other. The member donates to the community, the community in turn obligates itself to the member. A community is a cooperative, a sharing of burdens. That was true of the classic Christian community of the New Testament, as it was true of the early Mormon community. The welfare program might function more successfully were its management located at the ward level.

None of this is to suggest that the solution lies in some idealized reversion to the past. Times change. Needs change. Solutions change. Of prime importance is our realization that the ward is an extraordinary human institution with incredible potential. With the freedom to search out these possibilities, extraordinary things could be realized.

Ashley Montague, eminent anthropologist, insists that the evolutionary progress of the species came not only through the survival of the fittest, namely, the strongest and most intelligent, but rather through the collective strength of an intelligent community. Man's capacity to cooperate and the strength derived therefrom cannot be overestimated. In a world of self-centered materialism, which clearly has not been an optimum one for the nuclear family, the magic of a cooperative institution like the ward and its inherent benefits to the family should be given every possibility to develop to its full potential.

In conclusion, I would suggest that although there is great inspiration at the top of the Church, there is also highly significant inspiration at the bottom. As we are obligated to follow those who lead, they too are obligated to listen to those who follow, for in the final sense, the community belongs to us.

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AKRON WARD, CLEVELAND, OHIO (1960-1970)



**We must recognize that the ward is an extraordinary institution with incredible potential.**

# QUESTION: IS SEXUAL GENDER ETERNAL?

By Jeffrey E. Keller

As has been covered elsewhere (*Dialogue* 15:59-78, 1982), there has never been a consensus among Mormon theologians as to when we acquired any of our premortal individual characteristics, including sexual identity. Joseph Smith's original teaching on the subject stated only that "the Spirit of Man is not a created being; it existed from eternity" (Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, p.60). Though the prophet never explicitly mentioned gender, and indeed used a neuter pronoun to describe man's eternal spirit, some of his contemporaries inferred pre-earthly gender from his teachings. Joseph Lee Robinson, for example, wrote, "As we understand, [our spirits] are organized upon the principle of male and female" (in Andrus, *God, Man and the Universe*, p.20).

Though later church president Brigham Young and several key apostles were never as pointed in elucidating the doctrine of spiritual gender as Robinson, their belief in the concept followed from their assumption that "the spirit is in the likeness and shape of the body which it inhabits" (Penrose, *Journal of Discourses* 26:21; see also JD 15:242; 26:216; Pratt, *Key to Theology*, pp. 50, 124).

John Taylor and Orson Pratt more explicitly mentioned "male and female spirits" (JD 13:333; Young, "Origin and Destiny of Women", pamphlet by Alder, n.d., p.4) and Taylor further proclaimed that courtship between spirits led to sexual covenants in the pre-earthly life. According to Taylor, women in the pre-earth life "chose a kindred spirit whom [they] loved in the spirit world . . . to be [their] head-stay, husband and protection on earth" (ibid).

Decades later, Elder B.H. Roberts became the first church theologian to postulate gender before spiritual birth: "There is in that complex thing we call man, an intelligent entity, uncreated, self-existent, indestructible, . . . possessed of

powers that go with personality only, hence that entity is he, not it, . . ." (1908 *Seventies Course in Theology*, p.8) Elder James Talmage similarly proclaimed six years later: "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms as reasonable, scriptural, and true, the doctrine of the eternity of sex [i.e. gender] among the children of God." Talmage unintentionally anticipated future questions on this doctrine when he also declared: "There is no accident of chance, due to purely physical conditions, by which the sex of the unborn is determined; the body takes form as male or female according to the sex of the spirit whose appointment it is to tenant that body" (*Young Women's Journal*, 25:600, 1914).

The issue of assigned gender resurfaced most recently as a response to the questions of homosexuality and in the role of women in the church. Addressing the latter topic in an address to the 1983 October Women's Conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley stated, "I know of no doctrine which states that we made a choice when we came to earth as to whether we wished to be male or female. That choice was made by our Father in Heaven in his infinite wisdom" (*Ensign* 13:83).

Seven years earlier, in October 1976 Priesthood session of General Conference, Elder Boyd K. Packer had tackled the sensitive issue of homosexuality. In this talk, he addressed a concern of transsexuals (i.e. people who feel that they are females trapped in a male body or vice versa). Echoing Talmage's 1914 sentiments, Packer stated, "From our premortal life we were directed into a physical body. There is no mismatching of bodies and spirits" (*Conference Reports*, p. 101).

Modern sexual issues present more theological questions than just the mismatching of spirits, however. As pragmatically obvious as sexual gender is, it is

frustratingly hard to define. Duane Jeffery has treated this issue in some detail in "Intersex" (*Dialogue* 12:107-113, 1979). Briefly, all human embryos initially have the complete cellular apparatus for making male as well as female sexual organs. The sex of the end product is determined by the embryo's particular genetic make-up as reflected in its paired sexual chromosomes, designated X and Y. If the embryo has two X chromosomes, its potentially male (Wolffian) system degenerates and the female (Muellerian) system develops. If the embryo has one X and one Y chromosome, the reverse happens and a male develops. In the real world, however, every conceivable thing that could go wrong with this idealized system sometimes does. Depending on the physical location of each type of cell line, some individuals may become reproductively normal males or females, or may develop into true hermaphrodites, having one testicle and one ovary, or both types of tissue on a single gonad. Further, since sexual development is also dependent on genes found in non-sexual chromosomes, malfunction of these other critical genes can cause a variety of sexual dysgenesis: infertile but normal appearing females, infertile but normal appearing males, and many varieties of pseudo-hermaphroditism wherein it is often impossible to say by looking at the external genitalia of the newborn whether the child is male or female. Whether to raise these children as male or female is often an arbitrary decision made by doctors and parents. Both decisions usually require reconstructive surgery and lifelong hormonal therapy. One would expect that with respect to the indwelling spirit, the choice of gender made by these parents is incorrect 50% of the time. There are also cases of normal male children who have been raised as psychologically normal females (albeit infertile, of course) following accidental amputation of the male genitalia.

These diverse cases, as a whole, are not as uncommon as one might think. They are problematic to Mormon theology because they suggest that many people who were, say, males in the preexistence have in this life a female body and a female self-

image; they marry and are sealed as females and raise adopted children as females. The theological issue of their eternal sexual status is understandably of vital interest to them.

One possible way to explain these cases would be to invoke the omniscience of God, i.e., God knew that the surgeon would slip during the circumcision and amputate the penis, and that as a result, the child would be raised as a female. Therefore, God inserted a female spirit originally. However, such a solution may invoke an inordinate amount of predestination relative to Mormon theology.

The case of the transsexual is perhaps more problematic. The transsexual male sincerely and agonizingly feels that he is a female trapped inside a male body, typically from his earliest childhood memories. Despite public assurances by General Authorities that God never makes mistakes assigning gender, and despite that participation in a sex-change operation is grounds for excommunication, the church has been surprisingly lenient in dealing with individual cases of transsexualism and sexual dysgenesis.

Sexual identity after the resurrection is implied by the Mormon concept of 1) a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother, who have begotten our spirits in their image (*Messages of the First Presidency* 4:203; Wilcox, *Sunstone* 5:9-15, 1980), and 2) our capacity to become like them after resurrection. Indeed, the epitome of exaltation to Mormons is "eternal lives, meaning that in the resurrection they have eternal [spiritual progeny]" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1st ed., p. 220).

According to this theology, sexual gender after the resurrection is essential because "[God] created man, as we create our children; for there is no other process of creation in heaven, in the earth, or under the earth or in all eternities" (Brigham Young, JD 11:122; see also JD 6:101; 16:376). Indeed, Apostle Orson Pratt went so far as to assign post-resurrection sexual reproduction to all living things: "the spirits of both vegetables and animals are the offspring of male and female parents which have been raised from the dead" (*The Seer*, p. 38).

Heber C. Kimball went further, assigning spiritual gender and sexual reproduction in inanimate objects like the earth: "The earth has a spirit as much as any body has a spirit" (JD 5:172). "Where did the earth come from? From its parent earths" (JD 6:36). Kimball indeed understood the interaction in this life between farmer and mother earth to be a type of sexual congress resulting in the "conception" of plants: "Does this earth conceive? It does, and it brings forth. If it did not, why do you go and put your wheat into the ground? Does it not conceive it? But it does not conceive except that you put it there. It conceives and brings forth, and you and I live" (JD 6:36). In modern times John Widtsoe states with more reserve: "[Sex] is an eternal quality which has its equivalent everywhere. It is indestructible. The relationship between men and women is eternal and must continue eternally" (*A Rational Theology*, p. 69).

However, "only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring" (*The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve*, in *Man: His Origin and Destiny*, p. 129). When questioned as to how the lower kingdoms would be kept from cohabitation, Joseph Fielding Smith responded that "the privileges of increase or cohabitation between men and women in these kingdoms would be impossible because of peculiar conditions pertaining to these glories" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:64:67). Smith based this interpretation on Orson Pratt's teaching in *The Seer* (p. 274) that

"there will be several classes of resurrected bodies: . . . each of these classes will differ from others by prominent and marked distinctions." Smith interpreted Pratt's "marked distinctions" to be the absence of sex organs and sexual gender in the lower kingdoms:

"I take it that men and women will, in [the Terrestrial and Celestial Kingdoms], be just what the so-called Christian world expects us to be—neither man nor woman, merely immortal beings having received the resurrection" (*Doctrines of Salvation* 2:287-288).

In conclusion, the Mormon doctrine of sexual gender encompasses several not completely consistent beliefs. First, Mormon theologians agree that sexual gender has existed from the beginning, though they disagree as to when the beginning was. Nevertheless, men and women created in the image of divine heavenly parents, procreate our spirits via sexual union; our mortal bodies look like these spirits. Second, the blurring and overlapping of sexual identity in this life do not necessarily negate the concept of eternal gender if the omniscience of God can always be invoked to explain them, though this is not without pitfalls. Finally, sexual gender and sexual procreation may continue after the resurrection in the celestial kingdom but not necessarily, though this has not been ruled out, in the lower kingdoms.

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# SOCIAL STUDIES

By Martha Bradley

Mormons have long attached great importance to the concept of an ideal order of community life. Different strategies have been tried at various times: we may recall the distinctive aspects of life in Kirtland and Nauvoo, and many communities in the Great Basin were founded as part of the United Order experiment. But while the approaches to Zion may have altered over the years, the goal itself has remained constant.

This aspiration toward the ideal of Zion has left a distinctive mark on Mormon settlements, and in recent years that distinctive character has drawn the attention of Mormon and non-Mormon scholars alike. The literature dealing with Mormon community life and the dynamics of those communities continues to grow, but the following abstracts summarize some of the more notable articles to appear in this area.

Mark Leone "The Evolution of Mormon Culture in Eastern Arizona" *Utah Historical Quarterly* 40(1972):122-41.

Each town in the little Colorado area of Arizona was both part of the larger network of Mormon towns in the Great Basin and an isolated, insulated world unto itself. The Little Colorado area settled under the United Order of Enoch between 1876 and 1885. Colonization was strongly influenced by United Order ideas; the cooperative principle was extended to every form of labor and investment. While cooperation helped to unify the Saints in tight communities, it also fostered the isolation of each town and encouraged the inhabitants to sever ties with the outside world. As was true in most Mormon settlements the notions of self-sufficiency and internal completeness added religious significance to cooperative endeavors.

In the first twenty-five years of settlement each town moved toward internal isolation. This

trend was advanced by intermarriage, which accounted for 80 percent of the marriages in the settlements. This in turn solidified the inbred kinship network of religious, social, and economic ties. Intermarriage created distinct economic advantages; at the same time endogamy was a function of economic stability. Isolation was also extended because each town raised essentially the same crops to ensure that basic subsistence was possible. In the nineteenth century economic stability was equated with self-sufficiency.

Tithing, the author explains, was the means for dealing with inequalities among the various areas. Bishops and other church leaders were the agents of redistribution. Regional disparities were handled by the stakes in the same way through the storehouse system and the Arizona Cooperative Mercantile Institution. Furthermore, the Church functioned in the distribution of natural resources and regulated water sharing and the allotment of land.

In the twentieth century the rate of community exogamy doubled, thus increasing community interdependence. Leone examines this and other factors that caused the area to become absorbed into the national economy.

After 1920 the Church's role in the economic life of the community changed; it assumed a back seat to individual economic decisions about the allocation of resources. In the nineteenth century ecclesiastical leaders chose and defined the tasks and work to be done. With the shift of power to the individual Church member, roles were less precisely defined and a new flexibility or willingness to serve where needed was required.

Dean May "The Making of the Saints: The Mormon Town as a Setting for the Study of

Cultural Change." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 45(Winter 1977):1:75-93.

In large measure the main business of the Church in the nineteenth century was to settle the Saints in unified, harmonious, and orderly communities. This effort centered on the doctrinal concept of the gathering, which was extended beyond the ideal of a diffuse community of the faithful to include locality—combinations of Saints in compact farms and villages.

When both Brigham Young and John Taylor directed the members to gather together in towns, pragmatism directed their thinking. Cooperative effort facilitated ecclesiastical organization and made possible regular meeting schedules and stable leadership systems. The mutual protection fostered by cooperative relationships benefitted everyone.

The author reviews past community studies that have centered on the experience of the Mormons, particularly the work of Lowry Nelson and Thomas O'Dea. Since 1849 an extensive bibliography of Mormon towns studies has developed that stresses the distinctive aspects of LDS town life. As a group these studies ask similar questions about how this distinct subculture emerged. Their observations vary, as do their methods. They generally agree that the Mormon community places a greater emphasis on unity and solidarity, on cooperative enterprise, and group values over individual achievement.

May discusses as well the work of social historians who in the last fifteen years have done important community studies of New England towns. He suggests that this work illustrates the potential for similar studies of Mormon communities. He encourages a longitudinal approach wherein a detailed analysis of changes over time in economic and social conditions of community life would be made.

One significant difference between the two areas of study—the New England town and the Mormon town—is that New

England towns moved toward greater disintegration wherein communities lost control and broke apart, whereas the movement in the Mormon town was instead toward reintegration and greater order.

Richard V. Francaviglia "The Mormon Landscape: Definition of an Image in the American West." *Proceedings of the Association of American Geographers* 2(1970):50-61.

Community, to the nineteenth century Mormon, was a set not just of relationships or neighborhoods but of appearances as well. Most Mormon settlements were founded upon basically the same principles, and were run by ecclesiastical officials who had similar resources and motivations. They also had certain visual characteristics that were typical of Mormon towns throughout the West.

The basis of many Mormon colonization efforts was the plat of the City of Zion. This was always modified to fit specific environments or economic needs, but in general the objective was to create beautiful, orderly cities. The plan for the City of Zion went so far as to include instructions for gardens, orchards, and placement of houses. Much of what was visually typical of Mormon towns was, therefore, prescribed by the plan: for example, the common north/south, east/west orientation and the unusually wide streets. Although many elements were characteristically Mormon, others were simply small-town.

The ward meetinghouse was located near the town square at both the symbolic and actual center of the life of the community. Also bordering the town square was the school, which again illustrated the dynamic relationship between education and religion in the Mormon faith.

Although ideally beautiful cities of God, most of these towns were actually sturdy, commonsense farming communities exhibiting a predominantly rural feeling. Again in a manner suggested by the plan of the City of Zion, the Saints built their homes, farm buildings, and

corrals on small pieces of property in town and would travel to their outlying farmlands. Permanence was the most typical feature of houses—these homes were built to last. A high percentage of them were built with brick or stone, often in the Nauvoo style, thus creating a direct visual link between the group's history in New England, in Illinois, and in Utah.

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# NEWS AND

RELIGION

## RLDS Support Women In Priesthood

By Ron Bliton

The ordination of women to the priesthood appears to have gained strong support in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Two years after a revelation granting the priesthood to women was voted into the church's scriptural canon, delegates to the biennial RLDS World Conference have overwhelmingly voted down efforts to delete the document from the Doctrine and Covenants.

The idea that women might be called to priesthood service has not always been so widely accepted in the RLDS Church. Resolutions have been presented at every RLDS World Conference since 1970 calling for priesthood ordination or a greater role for women in the church. However, earlier resolutions were rejected by the delegates, who were reluctant to make such a drastic change in policy in the absence of scriptural or revelatory precedent. In addition, the rules and regulations of the RLDS Church clearly precluded any move to ordain women.

In 1982 two resolutions were put before the Conference. Both agreed that scripture offered no clear guidance on this issue. But while one resolution stated that this scriptural vagueness left the church free to ordain women, the other held that the church should wait for prophetic guidance. Neither resolution passed. Instead, a task force was appointed to explore the feelings of church members on this issue and to report their findings to the 1984 Conference.

When the results of the task force's survey were made public in February 1984, it became clear that the RLDS Church was far from a

consensus. Nearly half the members opposed giving women the priesthood; about one-third supported the idea, while the remainder was unsure.

When the 1984 Conference convened in April, the delegates received the unexpected news that they would be voting on the canonical status of a revelation by President Smith. The text dealt with the nature and responsibilities of priesthood, and read in part:

*... (A)ll are called according to the gifts which have been given them. Therefore, do not wonder that some women in the church are being called to priesthood responsibilities. This is in harmony with my will . . . Nevertheless, in the ordaining of women to the priesthood, let this be done with all deliberateness. Before actual laying on of hands takes place, let specific guidelines and instructions be provided by the spiritual authorities, that all may be done in order.*

After some hesitancy, the Conference adopted the document as Section 156 of the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants. The first ordinations took place in November 1985 and since then over 200 women have been called to priesthood service. (Unlike the LDS Church, RLDS men do not automatically enter the priesthood and advance according to their age. Less than one-fifth of RLDS men hold priesthood positions.)

The change in policy has met with strong opposition from some of the more conservative members of the church, who feel that the church may be following shifting secular values rather than the will of God. "Our mission . . . is not to react to the swings of time," said one delegate to the 1984 Conference. "If women were to be in the priesthood they would have been in

from the beginning." Glen Miller, a conference delegate from Oklahoma, expressed similar reservations. "For nearly 6,000 years God has not seen fit to call women to the priesthood. I see no scriptural basis for calling women to the priesthood. I feel that it is not the will and the mind of God."

Most members of the RLDS Church have grown to feel reasonably comfortable with the new policy, but opposition from some quarters has remained intense. At this year's World Conference delegates from the Central Missouri Stake and the Nebraska District submitted three resolutions aimed at reducing the 1984 revelation to the status of "non-scripture." The First Presidency ruled all three resolutions out of order, and the floor sustained the decision by a nine-to-one margin.

Although the wide margin of the sustaining vote left little doubt about the church's commitment to a priesthood without gender restrictions, opponents of the policy remained adamant. "We intend to struggle until hell freezes over, and then skate on the ice," said former RLDS pastor Ralph Whiting, a delegate from Warrensburg, Missouri. Whiting was removed as pastor last year because of his opposition to the ordination of women.

However, opponents of the measure are having trouble putting up a united front. An International Elders' Conference that ran concurrently with the World Conference this year drew 200 delegates representing various groups who had split with the RLDS Church over the priesthood issue. However, the delegates were unable to agree on a plan for unification before the conference adjourned.

In any case, the dissidents' decisions will probably have little impact on the vast majority of RLDS Saints, who seem ready to follow their Presidency on a course that other branches of the Restoration have left unexplored.

# REVIEWS

NEWS

## *Polygamists Enter Political Arena*

For nearly a century, polygamists in Utah have largely kept to themselves and hoped that outsiders would not notice their continued adherence to The Principle. But that reticence may be fading, as two of Utah's more outspoken polygamists have announced their candidacy for local offices on the Libertarian Party ticket.

In Salt Lake County, former Murray police officer Royston Potter is actively seeking the post of county sheriff. In the south of the state, Alex Joseph, who is presently the mayor of the tiny community of Big Water, is running

for a seat on the Kane County Commission. National officials of the Libertarian Party believe that Joseph may well win the race. Potter's candidacy is more problematic: a serious challenge, party officials believe, would require a campaign chest of more than \$40,000. In 1984 the party raised only \$6,000 for all of its Utah candidates.

Although neither of the two candidates regards polygamy as an issue in their campaign, both feel that their commitment to the practice was a decisive factor in leading them to seek office on the Libertarian ticket. As Alex Joseph's

wife Elizabeth says, "Anyone in our position has to be a Libertarian. It's the only group that says victimless crime isn't the business of the government."

For their part, Libertarians seem perfectly willing to take the two polygamists under their banner. Alex Joseph has already won their gratitude by leading Big Water's four city council members into the Libertarian fold, making the largely non-polygamous town the nation's first to be controlled by Libertarians. State party chairman Bob Waldrop says he believes the two controversial figures will help draw attention to the Libertarian Party, and says he isn't bothered by the run-ins that Potter and Joseph have had with the law. "It's kind of hard to be a Libertarian," said Waldrop, "and not be a lawbreaker."

## *Church Archives Adopts New Access Policies*

A recent statement from the library and archives of the Church Historical Department announced that the archives is instituting several new procedures governing patron access to historical materials. Administrators hoped the move would improve security at the archives, as well as helping to preserve the many historical documents there.

Before adopting the new policies archives officials consulted with a representative from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and

other experts in the field to learn more about current practices at other collections. The procedures they adopted were outlined in a press release dated May 27.

According to the statement, the new user requirements include signing in and signing out when patrons use the facility. Researchers who wish to examine particularly rare or sensitive documents will need to have their request approved by a review committee. Other changes include the remodeling of the archives

reading room, and the installation of a computerized circulation system and other sophisticated electronic equipment.

The desire to upgrade procedures at the archives may well have been prompted in part by a continuing problem with security control over sensitive material in the collection. Some users have also been frustrated in the past by what they feel are vague and inconsistent access policies. The general feeling seems to be that the new policies will lead to more professionalism in the administration of the collection. In addition, they should make it easier to protect the aging and valuable documents housed in the archives. One user of the collection said that so far the change in access policy had not hindered his research. "This may well be a more professional policy than we've seen in the past," he said. "We'll just have to wait and see."

# Playing Chicken with God

## ULTIMATE REALITY AND SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

EDITED BY J. DUERLINGER  
NEW ERA-PARAGON HOUSE,  
1984, 237 PP..

## GOD AND TEMPORALITY

EDITED BY BOWMAN CLARK  
AND EUGENE T. LONG  
NEW ERA-PARAGON HOUSE,  
1984, 198 PP..

Reviewed by James E. Faulconer

These two volumes are reprints of papers from a conference sponsored by the New Ecumenical Research Association (hence the publishing imprint "New Era"—these books have not been seen by *Correlation*). The conference, held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1983, was held under the title, "God: The Contemporary Discussion." A reader familiar with the work of a growing number of philosophers from Anglo-Americans like Nelson Goodman and W. V. O. Quine to Europeans like Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Jurgen Habermas, who question the metaphysics of transcendence which makes talk about "ultimate reality" possible, will not find either of these books as useful or interesting as they would be if the authors of the papers had confronted the questions that have been raised about the metaphysics they assume. The papers in both volumes accept that metaphysics so unquestioningly that none of the authors even feel obliged to mention its arguability. Such an omission undercuts much of what could have been very useful material. The omission is especially disappointing to Latter-day Saint readers because it is just such discussion which may help us see the implications of our own position, a position which at least calls into question traditional talk about God in terms of metaphysical transcendence, if it isn't absolutely incompatible with that talk.

The first collection, *Ultimate Reality and Spiritual Discipline*, is least affected by this omission (though it is always there, and sometimes explicitly), for it centers around questions of spiritual discipline more than around questions of ultimate reality. Latter-day

Saints tend to be unfamiliar with the term *spiritual discipline*, but in most cases it could be replaced by something like *religious practices*, *spirituality* (if thought of in the concrete terms of practice rather than in the foggy terms of attitude which are sometimes used), or *worship*. Contrasting terms are *theology*, *doctrine*, etc. This volume contains twelve essays from a variety of religious traditions (for example, Buddhist and Islamic as well as Judeo-Christian). These essays take up issues such as whether spiritual discipline is necessarily elitist, how institutionalization and spiritual discipline are related, whether spiritual discipline can give one insight into ultimate reality (there's that unquestioned metaphysics again), and the place of spiritual discipline in a secular society. Though many Latter-day Saint readers will find the discussions odd because they center themselves in an understanding of God foreign to Latter-day Saint theology, I recommend them. For one thing, they provide us a focus for our own questions of spiritual discipline. For another, being written from a variety of religious perspectives they give readers some insight into and, therefore, appreciation for the spiritual discipline of others. I found Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse's description of St. Ignatius' spiritual exercises quite useful in both these regards (though I didn't find her references comparing Ignatius' work to Carl Jung's very enlightening).

The second volume, *God and Temporality*, is more affected by the unexamined but arguable metaphysics than the first because it is considerably more concerned with metaphysical questions. Nonetheless, even with that flaw there

are some interesting articles in it. One, "The Divine Historicity," by Galen Johnson, is particularly representative; at one and the same time it offers insights into the question of the relation of God to time, and it exemplifies the metaphysical problems inherent in each of the papers. It begins as an examination of human being in light of some discussions about historicity, discussions which have argued that persons are necessarily temporal. Then Johnson goes on to apply the results of that thinking to thinking about God as a person, arguing that God too is historical because he is a person. Latter-day Saints will find much here that is intriguing and much that could merit consideration in our own discussions of the Divine.

Johnson's argument, however, is flawed in the same way as the rest of the essays: he would have done well to have taken into account the discussions of temporality and human being which postdate the sources he cites. He mentions Martin Heidegger's work, *Being and Time*, as one of the origins for the discussion of the temporality of being (though, oddly, he speaks of Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty as existentialists), but *Being and Time* was published in 1927. Heidegger followed it up with many other related writings, including criticisms of the position he took in *Being and Time*. Since 1927, especially during the last twenty years, others have discussed this issue extensively, relying on Heidegger's work as well as the work of several others, including Merleau-Ponty and the philosophers mentioned earlier. (Johnson is not alone in calling Heidegger an existentialist and in relying only on his early work. Eugene T. Long, one of the editors, makes the same mistakes in his paper, "God and Temporality: A Heideggerian View." That the editor would make such mistakes in an article explicitly on Heidegger does not speak well for the volume.)

The question of temporality and being continues to be a live issue today. The work of Jacques Derrida, for example, as difficult and perhaps arcane as it is, is quite relevant to the issues Johnson discusses. The result of this unfamiliarity with relevant philosophical

issues is that Johnson “chickens out” in the end of his paper and reverts to a discussion of God in terms of transcendent metaphysics. I put *chicken out* in quotation marks because I don’t think Johnson’s switch back to transcendence is an act of cowardice; rather it is inescapable as long as he unquestioningly accepts tradi-

tional metaphysics. But whether cowardly or unconscious, this reversion is a fatal flaw.

What explicitly characterizes Johnson’s paper characterizes the rest of the papers in the volume as well. Thus, the specialist in theology may find *God and Temporality* useful since it contains occasional interesting and

perhaps valuable insights. However, the general reader would be best off to not bother with it.

*JAMES E. FAULCONER is an assistant professor of philosophy at BYU.*

## Up Against the Flannelboard

CORY DAVIDSON

BY RANDALL L. HALL  
THOMPSON PRODUCTIONS, INC.  
1984, 188 PP., glossary

Reviewed by Bruce W. Jorgensen

Most “Mormon novels” sold along the Wasatch Front these days are flannelboard stories—cutouts pushed around on a soft-warm-fuzzy background to illustrate lessons. There have been exceptions in both “adult” and “young adult” categories: Marilyn Brown’s *Earthkeepers* and *Goodbye, Hello*, Dean Hughes’ *Hooper Haller*, Don Marshall’s *Zinnie Stokes*, and most notably Doug Thayer’s *Summer Fire*, to name the handful that come readily to mind. Not that these are Great Novels, nor flawless, nor always unsentimental or non-didactic, just more substantially *there* as readable human stories, not flattened into pasteboard by heavy platitudes.

Randall Hall’s *Cory Davidson*, I regret to say, does not join the exceptions. I think it should have, both for the story it tries to tell—of a missionary who sins gravely, conceals the sin to finish his mission, bolts and goes underground, and finally moves to confession and toward consequences—and for the central symbolism with which it tries to irradiate that story. The trouble is that the story—one that needs to be told and told well—isn’t written solidly enough to anchor the symbolism. It just leaves it floating.

Part of the trouble is the didacticism one tends to expect in Mormon pop fiction. Here a long passage from Alma 39 (Alma rebuking his wayward missionary son Corianton, an obvious but not improbable parallel, stressed on the jacket copy for those who might miss it or need reassurance of the book’s homiletic purpose) warps the story toward preachment. But the parallel isn’t all that close: Alma accuses Corianton not of fornication but of going “after the lusts of [his] eyes,” and for him Corianton’s most “grievous” deed, his “great . . . crime,” appears in context to be that he forsook “the ministry wherewith [he] was entrusted.” In whatever degree of hypocrisy or bad faith, Cory does finish his mission. Yet however we read the passage and its pertinence to the book, a thematic intrusion of this size and force will always threaten to suck the life out of story, to reduce character and action to examples of its generality.

Especially when character and action have little life themselves. And that is the other part of the trouble here; right from the start the “felt life” of the protagonist vaporizes in clichés and explanatory authorial abstractions. By the fifth line of the book, Cory has “felt a deep sense of relief” and recalled how five months earlier he had been “full of anxiety and anticipation,” and by the end of the

first page he will be “caught suddenly by despair” and feel “a surge of nervousness and awe and helplessness draw up around him like a blanket.” You get the idea; but you don’t get the embodied person who is supposed to be feeling all these things. D.H. Lawrence (with whom I can agree on this) said that the novel was “the one bright book of life,” and that out of its “full play” could emerge “the wholeness of a man, the wholeness of a woman, man alive, and live woman.” Too little of life gets full play in this book, and even in his fragmentation and deadness, Cory is seldom whole or alive enough to matter much to us.

“We have to choose,” Lawrence said elsewhere, “between the quick and the dead,” and it seems one of the necessary truths of reading that we do so choose. The first half of *Cory Davidson* is almost entirely dead, except for one poignant, almost buried simile: “Something was slowly bending part of him inside, twisting him back and forth, back and forth like a strand of wire” (11). That is “quick,” and against it you can measure the rest of the novel’s language, which is all too like Cory’s postlapsarian journal entries—“more an outline than a history . . . few thoughts and feelings over and above those that would be considered appropriate to the situation” (71). Any serious Mormon fiction writer will have to furiously resist and subvert the flannelboard talk of the whole culture.

That was the bad news. The somewhat better news, which came too late to save the book for this reader, is that in the second half things get a bit thicker and more tangled. (This may suggest, by the way, that the whole book would have gone better if it started later—after the end of Cory’s

mission rather than during its last hypocritical phase.) Hiding out in the city of Caxias, Cory meets the middle-aged doctor Helmut Bruegger and his ten-years-younger wife, a painter perhaps too symbolically named Christina. What begins to connect Cory and Christina is their eerily similar responses to the impoverished lives in the village in a ravine near the city—his as he walks above the ravine, hers expressed in a painting he sees when he first meets her. From here on it is the presence, the undercurrent, of something felt but unspoken between these two that carries the story and gives it whatever depth it achieves.

Christina is human enough to love Cory, perceptive enough to sense his trouble, and decent enough not to compound it. Under the surface of rather typed characterization and scenes (one by a waterfall "splashing into a small, clear pool bordered by rocks and ferns"[122]), we sense the

"myriad of complexities and contradictions"(154), emotional and moral, that Cory can only ponder abstractly. And Christina's agency in the narrative makes its morality, and the working-out of Cory's penitence, something subtler, riskier, and rather more credible than a matter of broken laws and institutional procedures. Here would have been the emotionally charged and conflicted context in which to call up Cory's memories of his guilt and his long dry season of hypocrisy. And here, too, is what we have of story to support the book's final symbolic image: the huge panorama of Rio de Janeiro, its "lights that told of kindness, sacrifice and laughter, of hidden desire, deceit and guile," that "flickered on the edges and were gone, bounded by blackness"(187); and above the city, the huge statue, Cristo-Redentor, "gleaming in a burning whiteness" yet "gathering the full spectrum to Himself, drawing all the whirling colors through the blackness of the night

into the vast bosom of quintessential whiteness"(188).

*Cory Davidson* may do well (and I hope it does) among its probably intended audience of LDS Seminary students and prospective missionaries, unless it suffers the quasi-official disapproval of books the least bit too truthful about missions. The book is basically wholesome and hopeful, and who can knock that? But I wish it had done well as a work of fiction, too. For it might be said that the dimension of Mormon experience that matters most, the very center of it, is anybody's entry into the atonement. So far, even the best fiction we have moves around that undisclosed center, which waits for whoever is both saint enough to reach it and artist enough to find words for it.

**BRUCE JORGENSEN** is a professor of English at BYU and is currently teaching at Cornell University.

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## BOOKNOTES

### TALKING YOUR ROOTS: A FAMILY GUIDE TO TAPE-RECORDING AND VIDEOTAPING ORAL HISTORY

BY WILLIAM FLETCHER  
*TALKING YOUR ROOTS*,  
BOX 3452,  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20010  
1983, \$21.95, 289 PP.

Reviewed by Kerry William Bate

The reason SUNSTONE and other periodicals publish articles about Peggy Fletcher's ancestors and not mine is that her grandfather was a United States Senator, her great-grandfather a president of the Mormon church, and her great-great-grandfather a member of the First Presidency of that church.

My people, on the other hand, were common and obscure. It points up a conundrum facing historians: In our professedly egalitarian society, we generally publish stories of the elite in professional journals, and the commonality is relegated to the anonymity of the cliometricians and statisticians.

Who, then, shall tell us the tales of our past? Alas, the unwelcome job falls to family history buffs, people so ill-prepared that they confuse historiography with hagiography. But it is precisely they who must take a truly egalitarian approach: if it's a family history, then we can't just leave unpleasant, obscure Uncle Wendell out. We may bowdlerize him, sanitize him, and even legitimize him, but he has to be accounted for.

The challenge to those few of us interested in upgrading this often deservedly maligned field is that there are no family history publications where we may experiment and challenge each other to come up with interesting and professional biographies of the obscure.

How well served we are, then, when we have a book such as William Fletcher's *Talking Your Roots*. This book equips us to tell the stories of the common man through tape-recorded and videotaped interviews. It challenges us with questions for oral interviews we would never have thought of before ("When did you declare your independence?" "What about drinking and smoking?" "Did girls in your high school get pregnant?")

This book in hand, we are well-prepared to rescue the lives of working people. We miss, though, a discussion here of the legal rights of interviewer and narrator, and an honest look at the serious problems facing us if we choose to transcribe the interviews we do. Most serious of all, there is no discussion of how to preserve copies of our product. Preserving them within the family is rarely successful.

Whether anybody will ever examine what we compile after we do the interviews is a question to be resolved only when historians force history to be democratic. As for me, I would rather read the biography of a First Empire fishwife than that of Napoleon, but the historians of the past have not given me that option. This book

will grant that chance to our children.

### HOLY DISOBEDIENCE: WHEN CHRISTIANS MUST RESIST THE STATE

BY LYNN BUZZARD AND  
PAULA CAMPBELL  
*SERVANT BOOKS*, 1984,  
243 PP., \$9.95.

Reviewed by Bill Douglas

"In some strange, perhaps contradictory way, the Anabaptist recognition of the critical question of *means* must be linked with the larger Catholic and Reformed traditions of *public ends*." Had Buzzard and Campbell pursued this thought, they might have contributed to the Christian approaches to civil disobedience—but they do not.

This is not a well-written book. Proofreading errors abound, especially in the footnotes. "Perhaps" appears three times on the first page, and the whole first chapter is an awful sensationalization of all sorts of diverse religious resistance groups, from those that non-violently oppose nuclear weapons to those that bomb abortion clinics. The best chapter deals with the free exercise of religion clause of the Constitution, where the authors have expertise. The chapters presenting historical and religious background to civil disobedience and nonviolence are adequate but are somewhat marred by misinterpretations of more radical groups, e.g., the Black Power movement

and Liberation Theology.

Some of Buzzard's and Campbell's critiques of specific civil disobedience has validity, but much is simply a defense of the status quo. Their bias, which they seem not to recognize, is fundamentally one of class—a middle-class evangelicalism that dares not challenge the premises of order overmuch. To be sure, they speak of Christianity as "revolutionary," but they also make a distinction between the spiritual and the political.

For those afraid to leave the shelter of their social position, this book may be a useful introduction to the subject. For everyone else, Gandhi, King, *Sojourners*, Francine duPlessix Gray's *Divine Disobedience*, and Howard Zinn's

*Disobedience and Democracy* could be read more profitably.

## WOMEN AND JEWISH LAW

BY RACHEL BIALE  
SCHOCKEN BOOKS, 1984.  
293 PP., \$18.95.

Reviewed by Michael T. Walton

The position and possibilities for women in Judaism are largely set by *Halachah*, the way of life developed from biblical law through the Talmud to the present. Rachel Biale has undertaken an exploration of traditional Jewish law and its impact on women who find tradition important to their self-definition. In her discussions of marriage, divorce, sexuality and

marital relations, sexuality outside of marriage, procreation, abortion, and rape, Biale focuses on the dialectical process by which these issues have been interpreted and reinterpreted. She concludes that meaningful change can occur in traditional Judaism only when new authorities interpret *Halachah* in terms of female equality because *Halachah* as it is now construed does not regard men and women as equals.

For the non-Jewish world, Biale's study has a twofold significance. It reveals an aspect of Judaism not well known to outsiders, and it describes a process through which a traditional system can change. Similar processes may open possibilities for change in other systems.

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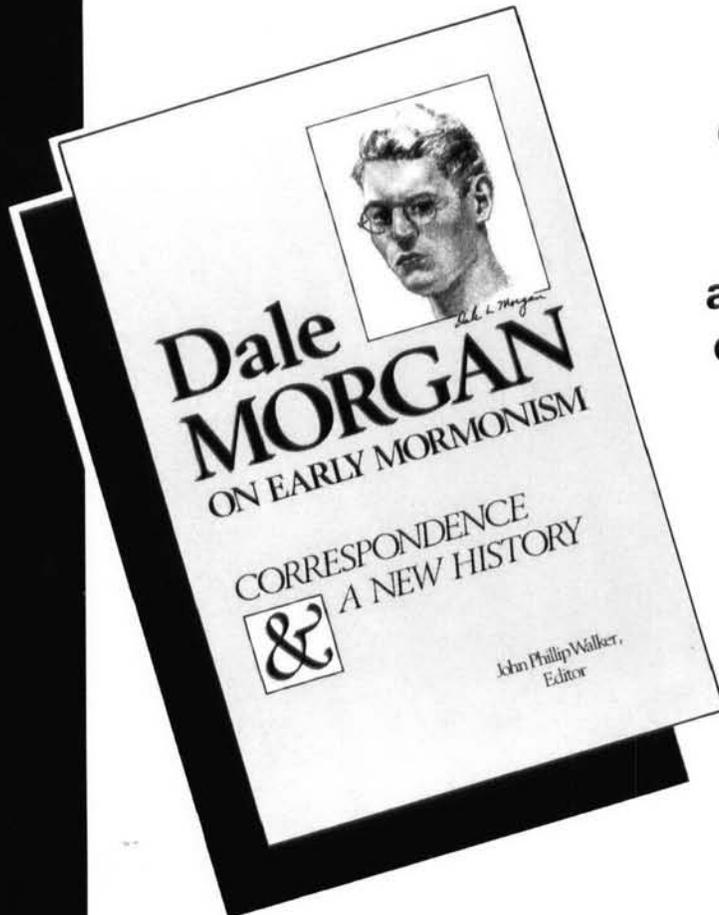
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