

# SUNSTONE



LAST CALL

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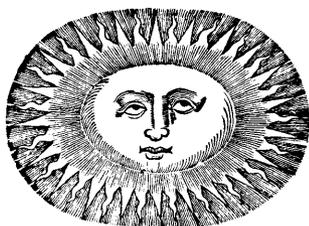
BY HUGH NIBLEY

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|       |   |   |
|-------|---|---|
| 2     | <i>Our Readers</i> . . . . .              | <b>READERS FORUM</b>  |
| 8     | <i>Malcolm R. Thorp</i> . . . . .         | <b>FEATURES</b><br>JAMES E. TALMAGE AND THE TRADITION OF THE VICTORIAN LIVES OF JESUS<br>Looking at the scholarly sources behind <i>Jesus the Christ</i>  |
| 14    | <i>Hugh Nibley</i> . . . . .              | <b>LAST CALL</b><br>An apocalyptic warning from the Book of Mormon  |
| 27    | <i>Stewart Shelline</i> . . . . .         | <b>WHEN THE RAINS COME DOWN THE RIVER</b><br>1986 D. K. Brown Fiction Contest First Place Winner  |
| 46    | <i>Mike Yaconelli</i> . . . . .           | <b>INTERVIEW: SATIRE AND THE GOOD NEWS</b><br>The ethics of lampooning religion and its leaders   |
| 7     | <i>Melissa Sillitoe</i> . . . . .         | <b>POEMS: [in a stone park]</b><br>walking in holladay, utah  |
| 26    | <i>Karen Marguerite Moloney</i> . . . . . | <b>POEM: A Bread and-Butter Note</b>  |
| 33    | <i>Colin B. Douglas</i> . . . . .         | <b>POEMS: Adoni: I Have Sinned</b><br>Adoni: Forsake Me Not   |
| 5     | <i>Elbert Eugene Peck</i> . . . . .       | <b>COLUMNS</b><br><b>FROM THE EDITOR</b><br>A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Gospel  |
| 6     | <i>Kira Pratt Davis</i> . . . . .         | <b>TURNING THE TIME OVER TO . . .</b><br>A Promise Through the Veil   |
| 34    | <i>Marie Cornwall</i> . . . . .           | <b>ANOTHER LOOK</b><br>Differences  |
| 36    | . . . . .                                 | <b>REVIEWS</b><br><b>INSIDE AND OUTSIDE VIEWS ON D. MICHAEL QUINN'S EARLY MORMONISM AND THE MAGIC WORLD VIEW</b><br><i>Jon Butler</i> . . . . . Magic and the Complexities of Mormon History<br><i>Stephen Ricks and Daniel C. Peterson</i> . . . . . The Mormon as Magus<br><i>D. Michael Quinn</i> . . . . . Mormonism: Without Parallel, or a Part of Context? |
| 41    | <i>Sunstone Correspondents</i> . . . . .  | <b>NEWS</b><br>LDS SINGLE ADULT WARDS STRETCH CHURCH POLICY<br>HOFMANN PAROLE DENIED  |
| Cover | <i>Wulf Barsch</i> . . . . .              | <b>LAST CALL</b> , 1988, oil on canvas, 48" x 72"   |

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## READERS FORUM

### A MORAL UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE?

ANTHONY HUTCHINSON'S "Prophetic Foreknowledge" (SUNSTONE 11:4) buttressed what Kent Robson said in two prior articles about free will. The importance of understanding the issues cannot be overestimated, yet such fine minds as James Talmage, Truman Madsen and Neal A. Maxwell have been oblivious to what precise foreknowledge of all things implies: the complete lack of free agency as a meaningful principle. The confusion comes from the notion that "merely" knowing something does not cause it to happen—if God knows something will come about in the natural course of things this is not predestination. In fact, it is, although the agent fixing the future is not God but nature. If something is *known* to come to pass there is no room for deviation from the inevitable; thus if, as advocates of the "television model" of foreknowledge believe, God knows who will be "saved" it does not matter at all how you live since nothing you do will alter the outcome. Everything you could do is pre determined by nature and foreseen by God. On the other hand, it is possible to grant that God may know most things, certainly all things he intends to bring to pass, and prophecy is compatible with free agency as long as there is at least a small chance that free agency can alter things. Contemplating the implications of foreknowledge can lead to absurdist scenarios about the triviality of life, and such a philosophy renders free agency meaningless. No matter how thorough God's foreknowledge may be, there must be some way agency can alter the trends of the future. Otherwise we have no choice, which would make a mockery of all the scriptural efforts to bring about righteousness.

Scott S. Smith  
Thousand Oaks, CA

### PRIESTHOOD AND THE PERFECTI

ARTHUR BASSETT'S "How Much Tolerance Can We Tolerate?" and Richard Sherlock's review of Brigham Madsen's edition of B. H. Roberts's *Studies from The Book of Mormon* stimulated my thoughts on Paul Toscano's densely woven "The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood" (all in SUNSTONE 11:5). The thorough

Biblical grounding of the complex conceptual structure outlined by Toscano became especially noteworthy in light of Roberts's conclusion that the theology of the Book of Mormon could have come from a "religiously fertile, biblically saturated mind (such as Joseph's)."

In Toscano's exegetical brief, I was haunted by Bassett's encouragement to use insight from other belief systems to illuminate one's own beliefs. It occurred to me to compare the main topic of Toscano's discourse to similar features in certain movements of the Middle Ages. Toscano describes the administration of an unconditional divine promise of exaltation to the Divine Nature. This reminded me of the Cathar *Consolamentum*, the rite that bestows and guarantees spiritual perfection unless one turns from this blessing, and becomes accursed (D&C 84:41). Both men and women received the *Consolamentum*, and those who received it were the *perfecti*, the perfect ones who were the standing ministers and missionaries of the Cathar church. They administered the *Consolamentum* and other sacramental rites.

The holy poverty of the *perfecti*, their deliberate shunning of worldly wealth and property, reflected their sincere imitation of the apostolic life described in the New Testament. The motivation to apostolic poverty, as practiced by many popular spiritual movements of the High Middle Ages may be understood by studying D&C 84:77-105. Men even temporarily living the mendicancy described in D&C 84 gave Mormondom its leadership for a whole generation.

The promises of worldly wealth for Abraham in the Joseph Smith Translation (JST), cited by Toscano, stand in stark contrast to the sentiments of D&C 84:77-105. Yet the verses Toscano cited from the JST do suggest that these material blessings were connected with Toscano's "fullness of the priesthood." Perhaps this seeming contradiction can be understood in light of teachings among certain persons commonly associated with the medieval Free Spirit movement.

Mormonism's solution to the problem of reducing the risk associated with the rite bestowing Godhood is contained in one of the footnotes for D&C 84:41 which refers to D&C 132:27, which states, in effect, that after having been assured exaltation, all sinfulness short of murder will not affect the efficacy of the promise. Here is a connection with the lay spirituality movement of the Free Spirits, who tended to either seek spiritual perfection through apostolic abstinence and poverty, or to assume a state of perfection had been achieved.

In the latter category there were some who taught that once achieved, this state of perfection could not be lost, regardless of how one abused institutions or people. If D&C 132:26-27 had been a Free Spirit holy writ, it would have been preserved in Catholic inquisitorial proceedings as prima facie evidence of the inherent criminal potential in Free Spiritism: having achieved spiritual perfection, accepted moral laws no longer applied to them.

The leading lights of this movement would have abhorred the notion that debauchery, violence toward others, or stealing from "the world," was compatible with an assurance of Godhood. But just as certainly, these leading lights taught that once perfected or assured of perfection, one was above the laws that applied prior to achieving this state of grace. Two examples are Sister Catherine, who was confirmed in her godhood in a cataleptic trance (as in Alma 19 and 22, observers thought she was dead), and Margaret Porete, whose "The Mirror of Simple Souls" caused her to be burnt in 1310. Catherine no longer felt any need for asceticism, and believed luxuries did not necessarily damage the spirit. Perhaps the enigma presented by the JST's linking material riches with the con-

firmation of Abraham's exaltation may be understood in the light of Catherine's experience. Similarly, Margaret Porete observed that penances and sacraments were no longer necessities to her. Like God, she was beyond these aids to spirituality. Neither of these lay spiritual leaders would, I believe, suggest that crimes against humanity could be freely indulged in now that they were assured godhood.

The material covered by Toscano partakes of a whole constellation of concepts associated with the quest for spiritual perfection and Godhood in the spiritual movements of the Middle Ages. Since these concepts were the products of women and men claiming divine revelatory experiences, this may suggest that where there is revelation, these concepts should follow. And it suggests, perhaps, that the psychological/theological orientation of the recipient of revelation defines the nature of the generally accepted interpretation and consequent behavior. Thus, Joseph Smith's psychological/theological immersion in the Bible could in large part explain his elaborate, totally Biblical framework for this revealed concept, as outlined by Toscano. In keeping with Bassett's thought, how-

ever, it would be xenophobic to denigrate the revelations of the women and men prophets of the Middle Ages to allow us to remain secure with strikingly similar revealed concepts within our own belief system. Perhaps God's revelations are given to those who seek light in all ages and times, and differences in those revelations are relatable to differences in the mindsets of the recipients and their times.

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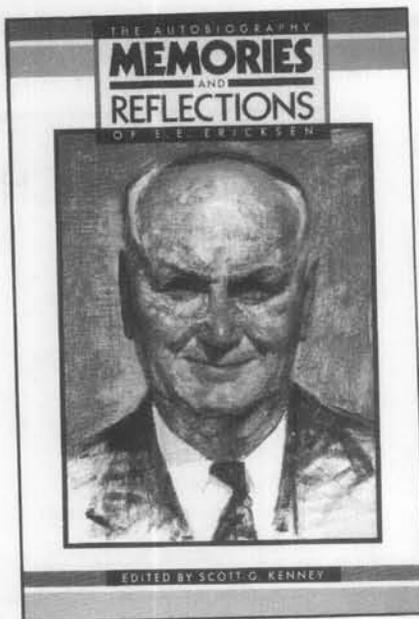
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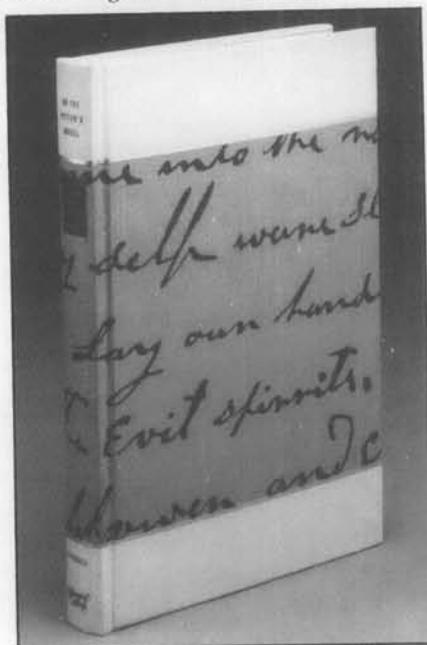
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## A HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GOSPEL

By Elbert Eugene Peck

ONE SATURDAY EVENING, several years ago, my Plymouth Duster threw a rod, stranding my brother and myself in Logan, Utah, without enough money for two bus fares to Provo. We spent the next few hours trying to catch a ride south using our thumbs and hand-made signs which read "Salt Lake" and "Provo/BYU" before we gave up and spent our money on a cheap motel room.

The next morning, as we again stood on Highway 89 at the edge of town watching car after car pass us by, it became increasingly difficult not to pronounce judgment on these "self-righteous Saints." After all, some of them had been to Church where they might have sung, "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief!" Indignantly, I thought about the parable of the Good Samaritan and how it has a very literal application in today's world. Yet these Mormons weren't applying it—even on Sunday! Weren't we stranded on a road, in need of aid? Wasn't the Samaritan, like these Mormons racing down the road, also on an errand? Yet he stopped when it was inconvenient. Even the oft-used excuse about concern for safety (which is a legitimate concern of women) is addressed and dismissed by the parable. The point became even more emphatic when, ironically, our long-sought-for ride south to Salt Lake was eventually provided by a non-Mormon female student from Maryland.

As the day wore on, I began to analyze the experience and became less concerned about the un-Christian acts of the drivers and deeply disturbed by my increasing anger towards them. I tried to change my feelings, but it was hard; especially while petitioning for hours in front of the stop light at the Salt Lake Sixth

South freeway entrance ramp, waving "BYU" and "MTC" destination signs with no result.

Trying to be charitable, I reminded myself that these "insensitive, judgmental" drivers were really the good people I associate with every day; if I were someone else, they could easily have been my mother or father, my sister or a friend—or even myself. Having recently been a driver, I tried not to take their rejection personally, knowing very well that when they drove past without even acknowledging my presence, they weren't intentionally confronting me. That thought helped, but it was not enough. The relentless

wave of car after car, stop light after light, hour to hour, rejection to rejection, was like the rising pounding surf slowly erasing the best defended sand sculpture. As well might man or woman stretch forth their puny arm to stop the Gulf Stream as for one to continue to love in such a situation.

Then I realized that I was in a minority; the "underclass" of people who must thumb for a ride. Although I knew the adventure would be brief, for the moment I had an intimation of how it felt to be in a minority and experience the cumulative effect of the acts of the unthinking, albeit non malicious, majority. I also noticed how quickly feelings change when perspective does.

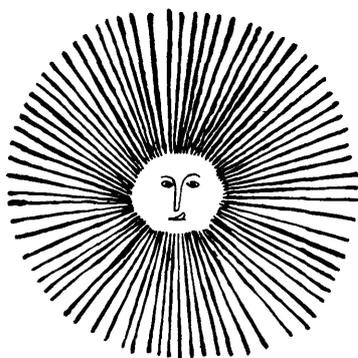
I think what irked me most was that I was being *ignored* by individuals in cars. It felt like I was not a legitimate road user; not a member of the club—a stranger, an outsider. The indifference offended me much more than outright conscious rejection, where at least there is communication, dialogue. However, when I was considered, I was rejected with stereotypes,

which I also resented. From this perspective it is easy and natural to make angry, defensive judgments which only increase the polarization. It is terrible to feel that the surrounding community has locked you out of the game, or doesn't even see you; and that feeling, like oxygen in the air, fuels the angry blaze with increasing gales.

Members of the majority, on the other hand, seldom perceive that their individual actions, when cumulated, have such an oppressive effect on others. For them, the passing by of a hitchhiker is a single private decision based on their own situation, void of any sense of guilt or systematic discrimination: "I'm late for the airport..."; "I'm not going far enough to be of help..."; "I'm alone, and they might have a knife..." Yet for the hitchhiker, the experience is a systematic rejection, a lack of trust by an empowered class of people. I'm sure this same phenomenon occurs in other situations with even graver results—with race, gender, culture, language and economic status—and that feeling of not being a full fledged, accepted, contributing member mitigates our efforts to be of one heart and establish Zion.

In part, I don't think the elimination of classes and material distinctions is necessary to avoid the polarization and hatred that the minority feels, although the Book of Mormon seems to indicate that that is the ideal (4 Nephi 3, 17). Hitchhikers don't need to buy or be given cars to feel legitimate and equal with drivers—sameness is not equality. What they need is to know that they are on the inside of society—given attention and fair consideration. The majority has the greater ability to prevent the social schisms in the body of Christ which St. Paul warned against. They liberate minorities from the destructive, polarizing perspective of being a foreigner in their homeland with acts which convey trust and genuinely include them (although doing so requires exchanging security for vulnerability). When that happens, equality is achieved while the differences remain: The hitchhikers' lifestyle hasn't changed, but they are accepted, legitimate, first-class citizens on the road.

Although we are commanded to "live together in love" (D&C 42:45), it is easy to estrange and be estranged by common things, the same everyday social things for which we all beg: to speak and have others listen, to act and receive a response, to be sought out and included in community discussions—to be treated as if we mattered. Emily Dickinson understood how from such daily beggings comes the unimagined and glorious Kingdom of God:



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As if I asked a common Alms,  
And in my wondering hand  
A Stranger pressed a Kingdom,  
And I, bewildered, stand—  
As if I asked the Orient  
Had it for me a Morn—  
And it should lift its purple Dikes,  
And shatter me with Dawn!

(*Complete Poems*, 323)

It is arrogant and presumptuous for the comfortable ninety and nine in a ward to even unthinkingly expect the one to conform to their norms in order to be accepted and, more importantly, valued. The concept of value has been cheapened by our meaningless overuse of the word "appreciate," which we often use to excuse our exclusive behavior ("I appreciate your situation, but..."). Appreciate means to regard highly, and to truly value a person requires that we approach them assuming worth in their *current* station.

In a recent *Yale Law Journal* article, Robert Burt persuasively argued that "the underlying goal" of Jesus' parables is to "lead the listeners to acknowledge their vulnerability....that there are none *but* outsiders....there are no righteous people without the need to repent....no faithful elder sons....no sheep but those who are lost....The parables in effect only teach the proper question so that...the true initiates teach themselves the proper answer." Having the sense that "we are all beggars" allows us to see, understand, and embrace the strangers not in our majority.

My brother and I finally got a ride in the late afternoon to Provo only after I spotted and flagged-down a fellow-worker from the Missionary Training Center. After a night and a day of separation from society it felt good to be in the car of a comfortable friend—I was part of the system again, but the experience has been molded into a powerful personal myth which pricks my contentedness. Now, I always give hitchhikers a lift. The last one was so solicitous and grateful I was embarrassed; I felt like a Southern white man being pandered to by a slave. So I said, "Hey, we're all in this life together, only we beg for different things."

I wish I could see the beggars in need of the intangible social lifts as easily as I now see thumbs out on the roadside, and then have the courage to overcome my insecurities and act. Occasionally, friends who feel they're on the outside, like many women in the Church, share their experiences and, as with the parables, I vicariously feel their painful disenfranchisement. That does help, but what I probably really need are more desperate, begging personal experiences.

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## TURNING THE TIME OVER TO . . .

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*Kira Pratt Davis*

# A PROMISE THROUGH THE VEIL

THIS IS WHAT it feels like to go bald: first your hair goes limp, as if the follicles all at once lay down and gave up. The scalp feels strange, like the feeling when you have worn your hair one way for a long time and then you suddenly change it—as if it is bent the wrong way, only it feels that way all over. Then it begins to come out. It comes out in wet mats after you wash it that first time. It feels slippery, running your hand down the back of your head, because it's all loose hair, and when you take your hand away there is the mat of hair. It itches. It is obsessive. You mourn and look for the bald spots in the mirror, but you can't resist the itch of something loose, something that is itchy; unconsciously you stroke it and look at the handfuls of hair.

Mark put a paper sack next to the computer: "If you're going to be a shedding cat" (my metaphor, the morning we woke up and our pillows were covered with fur like the inside of a cat's bed), "then you might as well be a responsible one!" A place to put the handfuls I absently stroked out, stared at, winced, and tossed on the floor here in the attic.

But then it stops itching. There remains a thin mist of hair around the revealed contours of your head. The scalp is slightly gummy. It is cold, especially at night.

The mirror is unforgiving: the long maroon scar where the breast used to be, the wild bald head, even the pubic hair is thin. I look pitiful and stripped as a concentration camp victim. Only my bones don't show so much.

But once it is done, it becomes a brute fact. It is almost funny. And I wear scarves, paisley or red with gold bangles. People tell me how good I look—I have good cheekbones, good eyes, they say. They are glad it is happening to me and not to them because I look so good in

scarves. I say thank you. I don't mind the slight death wish behind the compliment because I am getting a thick hide. And I like dressing like a gypsy. The rubber breast under the bulky sweater, the long swishy skirt, the scarves, boots—I feel very much at home, as if it took this calamity to bring me to my fashion senses. I feel big, flashy, a little rebellious. I take bigger steps. I have stronger opinions.

I went to the temple today. I called there yesterday and asked if it was okay to wear a white scarf over my bald head. I told each different sister I was transferred to that I had cancer and had lost my hair from the chemotherapy, and was it all right to wear a scarf in the session? I told my little story five times to five different sisters who didn't feel qualified to answer my question, until finally I was transferred to the temple president. I told him my story and slowly, as if he was testing it around his mouth, he pronounced that as long as it was an all white scarf it would be all right. I asked him to please write me a letter stating what he had said, and could he please leave it at the front desk for me so that I could carry it with me to defend myself against zealous temple workers. I had thought at first, imagining the worst, how I would whip off my scarf defiantly if someone asked me in an indignant whisper to take it off. But then I thought it would be much more civilized and less humiliating to simply show the letter, smile apologetically, and pat them on the shoulder.

The sister at the front desk was concerned when she saw me in my red scarves with gypsy bangles and told me I would have to take off my scarf just to walk down the hall and up the stairs to the dressing room. I said, "But I don't have any hair. I am undergoing chemotherapy and it all fell out." I smiled calmly as I said this. She was disconcerted. She asked if I had an all white scarf, and I said yes. She took my arm, friendly, a little nervous, and led me to the first

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*KIRA PRATT DAVIS is a free lance writer living in Maryland.*

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open door in the hall and told me to put on my white scarf at once. I did. There was a mirror. I tucked the ends back around under the front, for thickness. Still, there was a tiny bald spot, cool, in the back. It looked hospital-ish. I shrugged and left the room. The attending sister wasn't right there so I went up to the dressing room on my own, clutching my recommend and my letter from the temple president, should anyone stop me.

I expected to be stopped. No one did.

I stopped in the hall and filled out a little slip for the prayer roll. I put down my new baby niece, two friends who also have cancer, and myself "and family." Then I dropped it in the box. I ordered a dress, size small, and then realized as I was putting it on in the locker room that I had forgotten to order a slip. So I asked for help and a nice grandmotherly sister came over to my locker and I explained my forgetfulness and handed her some change to rent a slip for me. She came back in a few seconds and cheerfully handed it to me, holding the metal door of the changing booth mostly shut and have me my change. Then I came out, looking very hospital-ish indeed—tight white scarf, white dress, clutching the little gauze bag with my temple clothes in it, the temple clothes I was married in.

I watched and listened as attentively as I could. At first I found it strangely more violent, and harder on Eve, than I remembered. Then I nodded off in spite of myself. Blame the chemotherapy.

And then it was time for the veil. I waited behind a little old lady with gray braids up over the top of her head. She could not remember anything, and could hardly even repeat what the patient plump sister was telling her to say. I smiled at the anonymous pleasant sister next to me (she hadn't looked at me during the whole session as I was sitting by her—I wondered if I looked pitiful and horrifying), and said, with an indulgent chuckle, "poor thing." She gave me a slight thin-lipped smile and met my eyes.

Then the worker sister on the end beckoned me over and I remembered almost everything, but at the very end, the last words I had to say caught me up short, they seemed so aimed at me. Health and bone marrow were what I wanted, what I needed to live. I couldn't answer. I stood there in that embrace and bobbed my head up and down with my eyes squeezed shut. My sister patted my back and repeated it for me, trying to nudge me along. I finally blubbered it out and cried. The sister patted me, almost crying herself, and said "Oh,

don't do that! I was about to tell you how perky you were!" And I passed through the veil.

It was because I had come looking for reassurance, in spite of my rationalistic tendencies. Those words seemed like a promise to me, and it was too strong and sweet to bear for a few minutes. I sat in the celestial room and stared at the chandeliers as they waved and tinkled gently in the drafts from the air vents. Light winking in rainbows off the crystals. I spoke to my dead father and asked him why.

"Well sweetie, it's to make you strong," I imagined him saying.

"But Daddie, couldn't I have read a book or something?"

"No, honey, that doesn't sink deep enough. You're getting stronger already—I know you feel it. Don't worry. You'll be all right."

I have had these curious made-up, or dreamed, or—who knows?—real discussions with my father ever since he died two and a half years ago. Sometimes he doesn't answer. But I had him answer me there, I stood him next to me and made him talk. I sat for a long time, next to the cut, marbled mirrors that reach up like sharp peaks into the vault of the room.

After I was dressed and had my outrageous scarves on again I went down to the temple cafeteria. As I sat eating my pizza I watched the people around me. There was a table full of visitors from, I'd say Georgia, including the lady with the gray braids. They still had their white clothes on and were talking about how many more sessions they were going to do.

Then a sister, round in her white polyester dress, came up to me, touched me on the shoulder and said, "I'm so glad you came today."

"You are? Well, thank you! Do you know me?" I was wondering if she had been in our ward. She said no, "I was just glad to see you here today. Come back, all right?" I said I would. It struck me that they all easily guessed my troubles, smiling and gentle with me. No one wears a scarf to the temple unless they're bald, and no one my age is bald unless they have cancer. I wondered if they were so gentle because everybody gets something, every family has its tragedy; they knew, they were all weathered, they had seen. I felt kindness like milk flowing around me and my eyes began to sting. I didn't want to cry again, so I left.

When Mark came home that night I hardly recognized him—he had shaved off his beard (after four years!) and his lips were thin

and his poor chin was white—I recognized my old high school friend.

"I told you I was going to shave if you lost your hair!"

I laughed. "Come let me kiss your adolescent cheeks!"

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in a stone park  
wedged between asphalt trees  
two girls (pretty as boys)  
dance on benches  
under the summer sun  
to unheard music.  
men in suits & curious ties  
prance by, unnoticed.

—melissa sillitoe

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walking in holladay, utah

houses are guarded by fences  
but unassuming trees  
extend leafy hands

circles of houses  
stare boldly  
from shuttered eyes

at twilight foothills  
wrapped in cloudy shawls  
prepare for night

while the last ice cream truck  
gurgles manically  
of carnivals in france

—melissa sillitoe

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The Genealogy of *Jesus the Christ*

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JAMES E. TALMAGE AND THE  
TRADITION OF VICTORIAN  
LIVES OF JESUS

By Malcolm R. Thorp

JAMES E. TALMAGE HAS BEEN RIGHTLY VIEWED as one of the three European immigrants who were influential in systematizing LDS theology in the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Talmage's specific contribution was described as consisting of a fundamental reinterpretation of the nature of the Godhead, as well as the doctrine of man. It is also apparent that Talmage played the major role in embedding Mormon thought on the earthly mission of Jesus in the orthodoxy of the "Victorian lives of Jesus tradition," the purpose of which was to make Christian beliefs safe from the critical approach of modern biblical criticism. This paper attempts to demonstrate Talmage's reliance on Victorian biblical scholarship, and more specifically, to assess his place within this tradition. It will be argued that Talmage's masterpiece, *Jesus the Christ*, owed much to Victorian lives of Jesus writers, especially Frederic W. Farrar, both in terms of approaches to subject matter, as well as to materials presented. While certain differences between Talmage and these writers exist, the similarities are altogether too obvious to be ignored.

Talmage began his work on the life of Jesus in a series of lectures at the Latter-day Saint University Sunday School, during the school terms of 1904-1906.<sup>2</sup> A trained geologist and educator by profession, Talmage lacked formal skills as a biblical scholar, especially knowledge of ancient languages. Nevertheless, from the beginning of his teaching career, Talmage displayed an interest in gospel themes, and his training in science encouraged him to collect references for his frequent lectures on LDS topics. While his elaborate journals<sup>3</sup> make no mention of an interest in biblical textual criticism, which had only made an impact on American scholarship within his lifetime, it is obvious that he was aware of these new currents of thought and reacted negatively to them.

In his earlier book, *Articles of Faith*, Talmage asserted that evidence of the Bible both internal and historical proved the genuineness of the various separate parts. He wrote that the Bible had come down to us through the work of a special Providence; and, although there were some errors in the text, these he believed were minimal. In addition, Talmage stated that all human efforts at bringing forth a better edition of the Bible were nothing more than the works of man and that the only way an improved text could appear was through prophetic inspiration.<sup>4</sup> In short, Talmage's treatment of the eighth article of faith provided little encouragement for the study that came to be known as higher criticism.

Nor did Talmage wish to promote such a critical approach in his book *Jesus the Christ*. In the preface to that work, Talmage described his purpose as formulating a narrative of Jesus's earthly mission that was based on an explication of the "Holy Writ of olden times in the light of present day revelation."<sup>5</sup> While it is true that there is much in his text derived from materials in the LDS tradition, it is also obvious that Talmage went beyond the mere explication of "Holy Writ" from a Mormon perspective. For example, the underlying thesis of *Jesus the Christ* is that the text of the Gospels is reliable, that discrepancies in the story are minimal and insignificant, and that none of the textual problems are important enough to cast the least shadow of rational doubt upon the historicity of the story of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the modern believer should not fear textual exegetes who quibble over detail and purposely mislead through falsely portraying the supposed logical inconsistencies in the story. This same message can be also found, as we will see, in Farrar and his counterparts in late nineteenth century Britain.

II

Any discussion of the tradition of Victorian lives of Jesus must begin with an examination of Daniel Pals's book on this

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subject, which was published in 1982.<sup>7</sup> In his book, Pals attempted to demonstrate the similarity of approach that one finds in reading the genre of Victorian biographies of Jesus. While these voluminous biographies are of considerable interest to our understanding of the crosscurrents of Victorian thought, none of these studies are relevant to biblical scholarship today. As Pals shows, all of the "lives" were lacking in critical content and were derivative from a standard collection of conservative writers who represented a reaction against the contemporary German trends of biblical criticism. In the late nineteenth century, however, the biographers of Jesus played a pivotal role in the process by which Christianity in Britain reconciled itself with the growing awareness of biblical criticism, especially after the publication in English in 1885 of Julius Wellhausen's monumental study of the history of Israel.<sup>8</sup> According to Pals, these writers soften the impact of the new criticism, thus enabling Britain to avoid the bitter falling out that occurred in America between the fundamentalists and the liberals. Pals observed, "Anyone who read of Wellhausen and his doubts about the Old Testament had an equal opportunity to open a *Life of Christ* and read its reassurances about the New." The Victorian lives were perceived as the products of criticism, but with a difference: positive, reassuring, and above all, faith promoting.<sup>9</sup>

For our purposes, Pals's discussion of the "Big Three" Victorian

writers—Frederick W. Farrar, J. Cunningham Geikie, and Alfred Edersheim—is particularly important, because Talmage used these authors extensively in his work. Frederick W. Farrar's scholarship, according to his son-in-law, belonged to the "extensive" rather than the "intensive" school. His book, *The Life of Christ* (1874),<sup>10</sup> resembled a summa of safe, orthodox opinion, including the work of Cambridge scholars such as Westcott, Hort, and Lightfoot.<sup>11</sup> German textual criticism was not only virtually ignored, but there is an underlying theme of rejection of such probings.<sup>12</sup> But what Farrar could not explain with the text, he explained with the exotic materials that he had gleaned from his travels in the Holy Land, as well as fanciful descriptions that brought about charges of sensationalism.<sup>13</sup> In spite of limitations, Farrar's *Life* was a publication landmark for a book of this kind, going through as many as twelve reprintings in one year.

Not far behind Farrar in reader appeal was J. Cunningham Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ* (1877),<sup>14</sup> which, according to Pals, was written as a conscious imitation of Farrar.<sup>15</sup> In many ways a stylistically more satisfying biography, Geikie's biography also tended to be better at synthesis than original analysis. Geikie's book showed its author's concern for meticulous historical detail as he attempted to enliven the life and times of the Savior. But even here, one wonders if he reached the point of losing his readers in a the great labyrinth of detail, thus hiding

his lack of an original approach.

The most original of the three biographers was undoubtedly Alfred Edersheim, a convert to Christianity and a recognized authority on Jewish customs at the meridian of time. In 1883 his *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* appeared, providing Victorian readers with an abundance of historical detail on social conditions during the time of Jesus.<sup>16</sup> But, however interesting Edersheim is, even for modern readers, his book followed the same pattern of interpretation as Farrar and Geikie. As Pals states: "The curious thing about this vast storehouse of information ... was that it apparently coexisted in the same mind with a critical innocence difficult to fathom."<sup>17</sup>

Pals fails to point out, however, that the slowness in accepting new foreign methodologies (such as German textual criticism), and the conservatism in eventually adopting such new thought, fits well into the English tradition of gradualism. British scholars were traditionally slow in responding to continental intellectual movements, but surprisingly, German biblical criticism penetrated into intellectual circles within a mere generation. Undoubtedly the reason for the spread, even at this modest pace, was due to the penetration of German educational ideals and the appeal that such methods had on young scholars in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, many of the best and brightest students at this time went to Germany for at least part of their education, thus bringing back with them the latest in scholarship. At any rate, it is curious that Pals failed to develop this theme adequately in his study.

Pals notes that the writers of Victorian biographies "reveal too much about the intersecting currents of Victorian society, popular attitudes, religious thought, biblical study, and cultural change to be passed over so easily."<sup>18</sup> Pals, however, was not altogether successful in developing this theme. Much more, for example, could be said about Farrar's treatment of Jesus than Pals reveals. Indeed, Farrar was so caught up in the religious controversies of his day that his book loses relevance for a contemporary audience. Farrar was so fiercely anti-Catholic and anti-atheist that his narrative was encumbered by his opposition to such sectarian notions.<sup>19</sup> Farrar's biography also contained the typically Victorian underlying theme the idea of progress, as well as the corollary notion of the superiority of Western cultural traditions. Consider the following exposition, which reveals more about what smug and confident Victorians thought about their world than the reality of conditions:

Come and see a dying world revived, a decrepit world regenerated, an aged world rejuvenescent; come and see the darkness illuminated, the despair dispelled; come and see tenderness brought into the cell of the imprisoned felon, and liberty to the fettered slave; come and see the poor, and the ignorant, and the many emancipated for ever from the intolerable thralldom of the rich, the learned, and the few; come and see hospitals and orphanages rising in their permanent mercy beside the crumbling ruins of colossal amphitheatres, which once reeked with human blood. . . . ; come and see the dens of lust and tyranny transformed into sweet and happy homes,

defiant atheists into believing Christians, rebels into children, and pagans into saints.<sup>20</sup>

These significant "advances" in Western civilization were seen as the result of adherence to Christian truths, whereas the other great historical religions—Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism—were viewed as decadent and socially debilitating.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Farrar's treatment of the Jews was hardly in keeping with his avowed concerns for charity. Passages in his narrative reveal anti-semitic beliefs, as well as the traditional notion that Jews were being punished for the ancient crime of crucifying their Lord.<sup>22</sup>

Given these prejudices, it is not surprising that racial overtones can also be detected in Farrar's biography. In a most revealing passage, Jesus was depicted as a Teutonic ideal rather than a Jewish man:

He is a man of middle size, and of about thirty years of age, on whose face the purity and charm of youth are mingled with the thoughtfulness and dignity of manhood. His hair, which legend has compared to the color of wine, is parted in the middle of the forehead, and flows down over the neck. His features are paler and of a more Hellenic type than the weather-bronzed and olive tanned faces of the hardy fishermen who are His Apostles

...

It would be instructive to compare Farrar's depiction of Jesus with the contemporary painting by Holman Hunt, "The Light of the World," in which the Savior was depicted in mysterious tones, a man with an "electric influence," who could penetrate the souls of men with a mere glance. Thus, Farrar described Jesus as Nordic in appearance, with an outward visage that was not quite human: "A flame of fire and starry brightness flashed from His eye, and the majesty of the Godhead shone in His face."<sup>24</sup>

Although Farrar is still read today by conservative Christians (and Mormons) who wish to escape from the uncertainty of twentieth century interpretations, it can be rightfully argued that Farrar's study lacks those characteristics of transcendency that enables readers of various intellectual persuasions to regard it as a classic biography.

### III

From the LDS perspective, there is an additional reason for paying attention to Pals's book. Pals persuasively demonstrates that Victorian lives writers tended to borrow profusely from one another (but especially from Farrar): "To read them is at time to feel as if one is passing through a museum gallery of reproductions; there is the same Jesus, the same orthodox deity, drawn again and again by different hands."<sup>25</sup> As we will see, Talmage was greatly influenced by this tradition, and it is beyond question that, excepting the Mormon orientation of his book, *Jesus the Christ* can be properly seen as fitting into the Victorian lives tradition.

While it would be too much to argue that Talmage produced yet another reproduction of a Victorian life of Jesus, it seems clear that the narrative of *Jesus of Christ* follows closely the sequence

established by Farrar and his followers. Like other Victorian lives writers, Talmage wrote that there were two cleansings of the temple, two miraculous meals of bread and fish, and he also confidently asserted that there were no essential contradictions in the biblical narratives concerning the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.

Except for Farrar, Geikie and Edersheim, most of the secondary sources used in *Jesus the Christ* predate the emergence of biblical criticism as a discipline. These included such orthodox writers as Richard Chenevix Trench, whose 1846 study on miracles was considered a classic answer to skeptics, as was his 1841 study on the parables. Also prominent were William Arnot's *The Parables of our Lord* (1865) and Samuel J. Andrews's *The Life of Our Lord . . .* (1863). Significantly, most of these sources were published before 1890, and a number of references, such as Adam Clarke's *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary* (1810), went back to the early nineteenth century. Virtually all of the authorities that were extensively used by Talmage were devotional writers who did not approach the Bible text from a historical perspective, and many of these books were certainly archaic works by the time Talmage was writing.

And, like the dog that failed to bark in the Sherlock Holmes story, what is missing in Talmage's book is also revealing: none of the sources he used employed the new critical methodology, a discipline that was producing a number of important studies in Britain by this time.<sup>26</sup>

We can also assert that Talmage borrowed such concepts as "At one-ment," denoting reconciliation, from these writers,<sup>27</sup> as well as his discussion of the meaning of the term Son of Man.<sup>28</sup> Other elements in the story suggest dependence on the Victorian tradition. Talmage, for example, confidently argued that all of the problems of Jesus' genealogy in the New Testament accounts were answered as a result of studies by Mill and Harvey.<sup>29</sup> His discussion of the temptations of Christ, especially the discussion concerning the peccability or impeccability of Christ, largely follows Farrar's narrative.<sup>30</sup> In discussing the cryptic accounts of Jesus's childhood, Talmage (and Farrar) looked upon the paucity of details as proof of authenticity; for "inventive" writers would certainly have added detail.<sup>31</sup> In both Farrar and Talmage, John the Baptist's probable state of mind as he languished away in prison, a condition that cannot be determined by the Gospel accounts, is discussed in such a striking way as to suggest Talmage's reliance on Farrar's earlier account.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Talmage's discussion of Jesus as the world's greatest champion of the rights of women is echoed from the Victorian tradition.<sup>33</sup> We should not accuse Talmage of dishonesty (i.e., plagiarism) here, for, as we have noted, all of the Victorian lives of Jesus writers tended to borrow material from one another. Plagiarism is a word that has taken on a different meaning in contemporary scholarship, but in Talmage's time, it was perfectly acceptable to borrow from other writers, even without footnotes. Thus, rumors that circulate concerning Talmage's prolific borrowing without proper attribution are both exaggerated as well as unfounded in terms of rules of usage during his time.

In criticism of Pals, however, it can be said that there was a

greater amount of individuality in the approaches of Victorian lives of Jesus writers than he admitted, and this is most certainly true of Talmage. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ* is no carbon copy imitation of his predecessors. His expostulation on the Gospels is a more closely literal treatment than any of the major Victorian writers. Talmage's dialogue contains fewer historical materials that would give flavor to the life and times of Jesus. He also avoided the grandiloquent flamboyance of Victorian prose in favor of a more subdued, restrained style. Talmage's independence can also be seen in his occasional divergence from the chronological arrangement that was generally followed by Victorian biographers. In addition, in several instances he refuted allegations from previous writers that he thought to be untenable.<sup>34</sup> Most importantly, Talmage's interpretation of Jesus differs from Farrar and his school. There is no aura of mystery surrounding the Savior; instead, Christ is a rational manipulator of eternal laws that were incomprehensible to man. Certainly the approach of Talmage the scientist can be discerned in the following argument:

In no instance do we find that Christ used unnecessarily the superhuman powers of His Godship; the divine energy was never wasted; even the material creation resulting from its exercise was conserved, as witness His instructions regarding the gathering up of the fragments of bread and fish after the multitudes had been miraculously fed.<sup>35</sup>

While there are important differences between the Victorian biographers and Talmage, when we turn to a comparison of the methodology employed in interpreting the four Gospels we find little difference between Talmage and these writers. In other words, Talmage definitely shares a commonality of purpose and method with the Victorian lives of Jesus writers. Consider, for instance, Farrar's attempt to establish irrefutable Gospel harmony:

[In considering] the evidence of the Evangelists, as evidence given by witnesses of unimpeachable honesty, we have every right to believe that, to whatever cause the confessed fragmentariness of their narratives may be due, those narratives may fairly be regarded as supplementing each other. It is dishonest to assume the existence of irreconcilable discrepancies, as it is to suggest the adoption of impossible harmonies.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise, Talmage wrote in the preface to his work:

True, there are diversities of deduction based on alleged discrepancies in the records of the past as to circumstantial detail; but such differences are of strictly minor importance, for none of them nor all taken together cast a shadow of rational doubt upon the historicity of the earthly existence of the Man known in literature as Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, both authors felt the text was reliable and criticized scholars who suggested that there were textual problems with the narrative. Or, if such problems did exist, they were of little significance and did not distract in any way from the credibility of the accounts.

Still, there are differences of degree between Farrar and Tal-

mage. While both writers were willing to admit that the Gospels were fragmentary in character and were often vague in details, Farrar went even further by admitting that there were probably narrative traditions that superseded the writing of the Gospels, and thus the historical detail was often confused.<sup>38</sup> He argued that there was at least one and possibly two common oral traditions that formed the basis for the Synoptic Gospels. He also admitted that, especially in the Matthew and Mark accounts, the chronological arrangement was often determined by "subjective considerations" (i.e., material was grouped together for expository purposes to illustrate moral or religious lessons) rather than by a historical sequence.<sup>39</sup> In addition, he admitted that each of the Gospels reflected its author's personal individualism, even its author's own natural suppositions.

Nor was Farrar convinced that all of the materials included in the four Gospels were genuine. While he certainly believed in the accounts of the miracles, at least one such story was bothersome to him. Concerning the miracle of the fish caught by Peter to pay the temple tax (Matthew 17:24-28), Farrar believed that the story presented readers with a "fine ethical lesson," but the historicity of this story obviously caused him difficulty. While he averred that the intention of the narrative was to suggest that a miracle had been performed, Farrar reasoned that the most literal translation of this passage would read that "on opening its mouth, thou shalt get, or obtain, a stater." And, Farrar continued, there should be no difficulty in believing that a fish could swallow a glittering coin that was accidentally dropped in the water; hence, the miracle could have taken place. But this incident obviously caused Farrar problems. He wrote that "the peculiarities both of the miracle itself and of the manner in which it is narrated, leave in my mind a doubt as to whether, in this instance, some essential particular may not have been either omitted or left unexplained."<sup>40</sup>

As was usually the case, Talmage was in no way bothered by the circumstances of this miracle, and he offered a most literal interpretation of the happening. He argued that, although the finding of the stater in the mouth of the fish is not indicated in the text, we can assume that the miracle was realized, "as otherwise there would appear no reason for introducing the incident into the Gospel narrative." While admitting that the miracle was without parallel in the Bible, he said this need not raise any questions. In a passage aimed at chastising skeptics (such as Farrar), Talmage asserted that

the knowledge that there was in the lake a fish having a coin in its gullet, that the coin was of the denomination specified, and that that particular fish would rise, and be the first to rise to Peter's hook, is as incomprehensible to man's finite understanding as are the means by which any of Christ's miracles were wrought. The Lord Jesus held and holds dominion over the earth, the sea, and all that in them is, for by His word and power were they made.<sup>41</sup>

Talmage explained that by employing such a device for payment, Jesus maintained his independence as a King's Son, and this was the reason for the miracle. Talmage always looked for a logical reason for Jesus' miracles, and assumed that the miracles

were performed according to proper scientific principles, even though we do not know the scientific methods employed.<sup>42</sup>

While the doctrine of biblical literalism predated Talmage's writings, he certainly provided the Church with an important restatement of this position. Indeed, he maintained that the LDS Church's interpretation of the Bible was more literal than any other major denomination.<sup>43</sup> While the official creedal position was that the Bible was true insofar as it was translated correctly, *Jesus the Christ* leaves the distinct impression that there were few textual problems, at least in the four Gospels. In only one major context does he suggest that there was a scribal error involved, that being John's statement that Christ was crucified "about the sixth hour," while Mark has the event taking place at the third hour of the morning. Talmage believed that this was due to the errors of early copyists, who mistook the sign meaning third for the one signifying sixth.<sup>44</sup> Although he alluded to other errors and textual inconsistencies, he believed that they were easily reconcilable.

Even within the essentially literalistic interpretation of LDS biblical study, it is interesting that Talmage asked few questions about the intentions of the writers of the four Gospels. There was no discussion of the differing purposes, say, of Matthew and John. Indeed, his treatment of John is most revealing of Talmage's approach. Considered by scholars to be the least historical of the Gospels, the Johannine account emphasizes the transcendental and incomprehensible elements of the story of Christ. Scholars also generally assume that the text of John was at least partially rearranged by a later redactor.<sup>45</sup> The text that we have, it would seem, was intentionally arranged to formulate a narrative that was not concerned with biographical details or chronological sequence. Yet Talmage and the Victorian biographers attempted to harmonize John's account with the others, arguing that the essential difference is really that John treated Jesus's Judean mission more fully, while the Synoptic writers were more interested in the events that occurred in Galilee.<sup>46</sup>

When confronted with a problem, such as John's early account of the cleansing of the temple, it was de facto assumed that there were two cleansings, even though the Johannine account of the incident reveals certain contextual problems as the story fits into the narrative. Also significant, in terms of the logic employed, is the account of the woman taken in adultery. Some scholars have raised questions about this incident because the story does not appear in early manuscripts of John, as well as the contention that neither the language nor the grammar of this passage are consistent with that contained in the Gospel.<sup>47</sup> While it might well be argued that the incident is authentic, certainly Talmage's reasoning (which is adopted from Farrar) does not clearly resolve the issue. Farrar contended that the episode was historical; otherwise, he asked, why is it contained in so many important manuscripts that we now have?<sup>48</sup> Notice the logic employed here. Clearly, Farrar does not build a case based upon reasoned exposition of the various early versions. Rather, he offers an authoritarian pronouncement that is aimed at convincing the

reader that no discussion is necessary.

## IV

Talmage's *Jesus the Christ* is a book that is important to the restatement of theology that was taking place in the first decades of the twentieth century. As a clear, concise statement of LDS beliefs, it is deservedly recognized as a Mormon classic. But this is not to say that methodology used in 1915 and before is sacrosanct and answers the questions today. It is sometimes argued in defense of the Victorian approach that these writers knew Jesus with greater insight and understanding than later scholars. But can such a statement, especially in light of Pals's study, really be shown to be valid? Has the Victorian tradition really answered all of the important issues concerning the four Gospels, as well as the interpretation of Christ that is found in Paul and in the accounts of the early Church?

F.C. Burkitt was arguably the greatest New Testament scholar in Britain during the early twentieth century. Writing only a few years before Talmage, he asserted that the tangled questions of Gospel history admit no easy solutions, orthodox or otherwise. Furthermore, in answer to the question of why we need historical criticism of the Bible, he replied:

It is not to get new ideas of religion or of philosophy that we need a minute and searching historical criticism; rather do we need to test the ideas we already have by the historical facts, and we cannot get at the facts without the criticism. Not that it is always or generally an easy task to exercise a true historical criticism upon a great subject, and it is only too easy to fall into error. But of this, at least, we may be confident, that our errors will not long escape detection: if not by our own generation, then by the next. And the attempt to "return to the historic Christ" is the only way by which we can escape from the tyranny of the last generations's theories about Christ.<sup>49</sup>

LDS discussions on the New Testament have often ignored textual issues and authorities have been conjured up from the remote past in such a way as to suggest that textual problems themselves are a myth. Although Talmage was certainly forthright about where he got his ideas, we still like to imagine that we really get our ideas exclusively from the Bible and other revealed sources, rather than from scholarly traditions that need to be defended through rational discourse.

Any attempt at interpretation of texts either sacred or profane obviously involves us with the preconceptions of the author and his age. It is always human minds that organize and interpret the "facts," which never entirely speak for themselves. Nor can we ever know the exact intention of any document, especially ancient texts, where the gaps in language and cultural traditions between such past ages and the present are so wide. Thus, scholarship is always an ongoing process, and there is little room for embedding thought in procrustean beds of past generations. As new questions arise and new sources come forth (such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and biblical fragments from earlier manuscripts) which help us to understand the Gospels more fully, then seekers of

light and truth should approach their study honestly, through the mediums of both faith and reason.

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13. Pals, p. 84.
14. U.J. Cunningham Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1879).
15. Pals, pp. 93-94.
16. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. (New York: Loonmans, Green, and Co., 1910).
17. Pals, p. 105.
18. Pals, p. vii.
19. Farrar, p. 373.
20. Farrar, p. 137.
21. Farrar, p. 216 and passim.
22. For example: Farrar says that "avarice the besetting sin of Judas the besetting sin of the Jewish race . . ." was perpetuated from ancient to modern times p. 593). See also pp. 289, 445, 604, 632.
23. Farrar, p. 246.
24. Farrar, p. 135.
25. Pals, p. 127.
26. The most important secondary works used by Talmage were Samuel J. Andrews, *The Life of our Lord* . . . (London: A. Staham & Co., 1863); Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes* (n.p., 1810); Charles Force Deems, *The Light of the Nations* (New York: Gay Brothers, [1884]); John Robert Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible* . . . (London: Macmillan and Co., 1909); Edward Greswell, *Dissertations upon the Principles and Arrangement of a Harmony of the Gospels* (Oxford, 1830); Lord Arthur Charles Hervey, *The Genealogies of our Lord* . . . (Cambridge, 1853); John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890); William Hodge Mill, *The Evangelical Accounts of the Descent and Parentage of the Saviour* . . . (Cambridge: J. and J. Deighton, 1842); William Smith, comp., *A Dictionary of the Bible* . . . (Hartford: J.B. Burr & Hyde, 1872); Richard Chenevix Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord* (London, 1846); Richard Chenevix Trench, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord* (London, 1841).
27. Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 23.
28. Compare the discussion in Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 142, with Farrar, p. 140, n. 2.
29. Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 89, n. 5.
30. Farrar, p. 116; Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 134.
31. Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 111; Farrar, p. 70.
32. Talmage, *Jesus*, pp. 255-56; Farrar, pp. 229-34. In Farrar especially, there is a propensity to describe psychological states of mind, often in an imaginative way that does not relate to the text.
33. Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 475; 484, n. 5; Geikie, vol. II, p. 349.
34. See Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 186, n. 3, where he openly criticizes Farrar's position on the Nobleman of Capernaum.
35. Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 495, 334.
36. Farrar, p. 43.
37. Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 1. Also important to Talmage's methodology is his statement that "it is the part of prudence and wisdom to segregate and keep distinctly separate the authenticated statements of fact . . . from the fanciful commentaries of historians, theologians, and writers of fiction, as also from the emotional rhapsodies of poets and artistic extravaganzas wrought by chisel or brush" (p. 93). Talmage obviously believed here that objective, impartial, even "scientific" inquiry was possible. The problem is, how is it possible to keep to strictly "authentic statements of fact"? And, who determines what is authentic and what is imaginative? See also, Farrar, p. 40, for a similar statement.
38. Farrar, p. 482.
39. Farrar, pp. 543-44.
40. Farrar, p. 395.
41. Talmage, *Jesus*, pp. 382-86.
42. Talmage, *Jesus*, pp. 151-52, n. 7.
43. Talmage, *Articles*, p. 236. Talmage's method involved what scholars have called the theory of verbal inspiration and inerrancy of every part of the scripture, an approach that (as we shall see) discredited the differences between the four Gospel writers. For a discussion of this theory, see Stephen Neil, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 4-5. The official pronouncement of the Church on this issue was made in October 1922 when Charles W. Penrose and Anthony W. Ivins reiterated the Church's belief that the Bible was the word of God as far as it was translated correctly. At the same time, they pointed out that there were some problems with the Old Testament texts. Thus, it was asserted that what was important was not that the books in question were historically correct, but that they were doctrinally accurate. In conclusion, they said, "To answer yes or no" to biblical criticism, "is unwise and should not be undertaken by one representing the church." No position was taken toward individual members of the Church who sought understanding through textual criticism. See Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 283.
44. Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 668, n. 7.
45. Raymond E. Brown, trans., *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii), The Anchor Bible, vol. 29 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1983), p. xcvi-cii.
46. Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 166, n. 2.
47. John 8: 3-11. For a discussion on the problems of this passage, see Brown, *John*, pp. 332-34.
48. Talmage, *Jesus*, p. 422, n. 5.
49. F. Crawford Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1907), pp. 30-31.

## An Apocalyptic Warning from the Book of Mormon

# LAST CALL

By Hugh Nibley

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON IS THAT Jesus is the Christ. On the truth of that proposition depends our only hope for eternal life, and without that we are going nowhere, as many a wise man now assures; life becomes absurd, much ado about nothing, "a tale told by an idiot," etc. First and foremost, the Book of Mormon preaches the Gospel but it supports its presentation with strong evidence. It tells us frankly on the title page that its intent is to *show* and to *convince*. To convince is to overcome resistance—that is the object; and the method is to show, to demonstrate by evidence. The woman at the well harkened to the Lord's message and urged the other villagers to do so because he told her all about herself, things that only she knew (John 4:6-30). So it is with the Book of Mormon; its message is the Gospel, but as an inducement to consider the doctrine seriously an impressive historical superstructure has been erected.

Let us forego the discussion of the doctrinal and spiritual part and in the limited space given confine ourselves to the historical, though both parts deliver the same message.

But is it history? Until specific sources are available one way or the other, can you tell me why it should not be treated as history? Here, a very young man (or somebody in the 1820s, perhaps the most barren and desolate decade in scholarship) has offered to present us with a complex history of a civilization covering a thousand years, and neglecting no major aspect of the human comedy from beginning to end. The author assures us that this is all history, and he has written it all out for us. This, by the rules of textual criticism, puts the ball in our court: The writer has done an awful lot of work, and it is now up to us to show that his work is not what he says it is.

Today, Egyptologists admit how very close to nothing at all is known about the ancient Egyptians, even though we have thousands of pages of their writings to read. But Egypt is our town, a crowded pageant of familiar faces, compared to the vast and

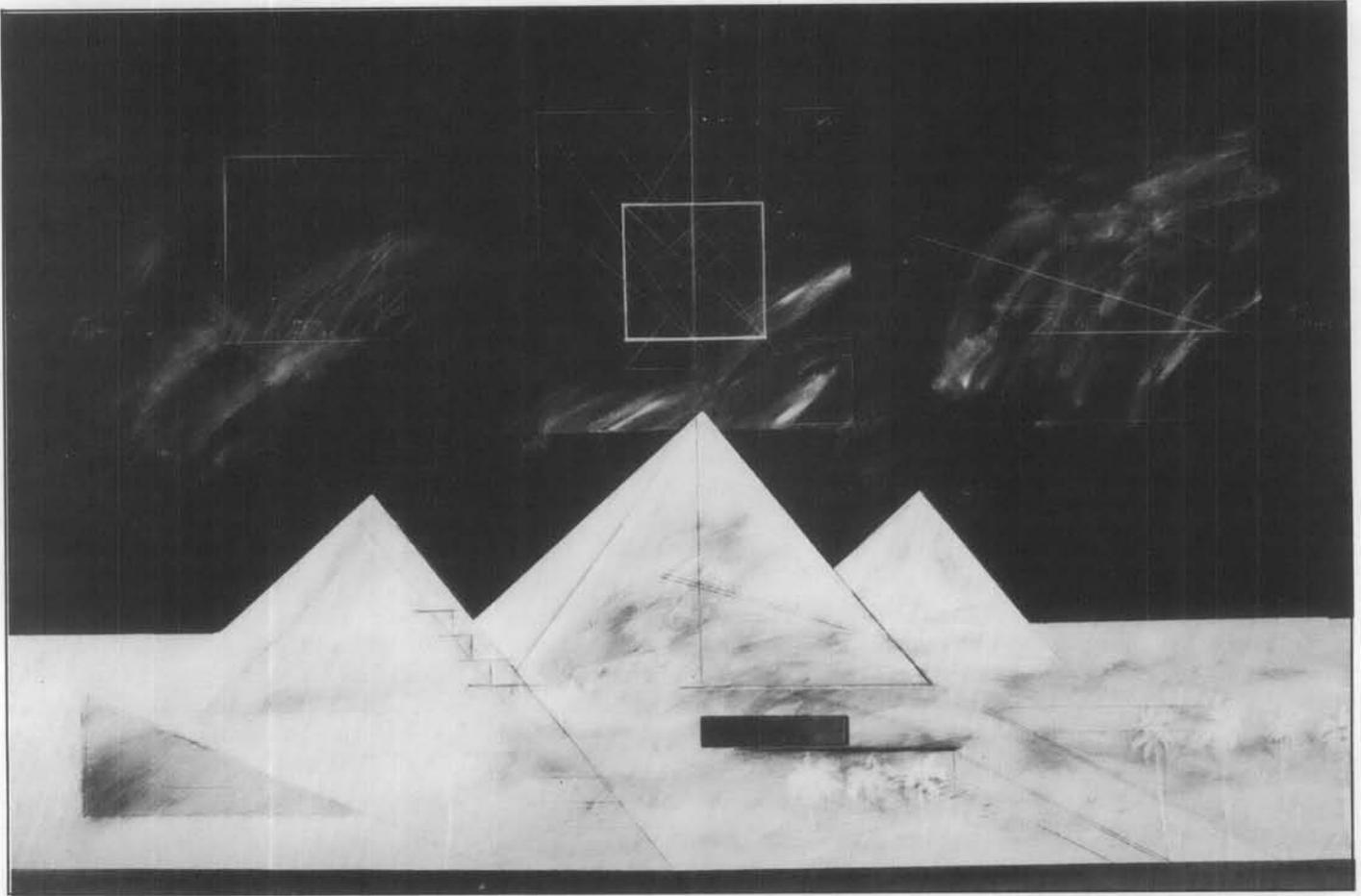
total blank of the canvas which still awaits the portrait of the Americas of a mere thousand years ago. Do you think anyone is qualified at this time to tell the world just what went on and did not go on in that most lost of lost worlds?

For example it is only since 1960, as Klaus Koch has shown, that we have seen "the rediscovery of apocalyptic."<sup>1</sup> The most significant form of that ancient literature is the *Himmelsreise der Seele*, [*The Ascension of the Soul to Heaven*] or as it is now somewhat pompously called the *psychanodia*. The existence of the genre was first demonstrated by Martin Haug in 1872. The last 25 years have seen the emergence of two "psychanodic" heroes who quite overshadow all the others, namely Enoch and Abraham. Joseph Smith was only 23 years old when he produced the Book of Enoch and the Book of Mormon; the latter opens with the most perfect model of an ascension (*Himmelsreise*).<sup>2</sup> We find the righteous man in a doomed and wicked world supplicating God, carried aloft in an ascension in which "he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne" (1 Nephi 1:8); he returns to earth, and begins to teach the people, who mock him and threaten his life; he retires to the desert with a faithful following in the expectation of founding a pious colony in the wilderness.

We have space to consider only certain specialized but supremely important aspects of Book of Mormon history. I have treated several others in some detail in the light of more recent findings: the crisis in Jerusalem (illustrated by the Lachish letters);<sup>3</sup> nomadic life in the deserts of Arabia (as reported by mid-nineteenth century and twentieth century travelers);<sup>4</sup> the communities of sectaries in desert retreats (as described in the Dead Sea Scrolls);<sup>5</sup> ancient religious rites, ordinances and ceremonies (depicted in documents found since the mid-nineteenth century);<sup>6</sup> ancient warfare (in the light of personal experience);<sup>7</sup> proper names (from lists supplied by archaeology in Palestine and Egypt).<sup>8</sup> etc., etc. But if such a performance was beyond the capacity of anyone living in the 1820s, what is even more fantastic is the picture painted by the Book of Mormon of another world entirely, even more removed from the imagination of anyone living in 1830, namely our own world of the 1980s. And this is the world with which the Book of Mormon is primarily concerned.

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For over a century Mormons promoted the Book of Mormon as the story of the Indians. "Wouldn't you like to know where the American Indians came from?" my missionary companions used to ask the factory workers and peasants of Europe, who couldn't have cared less. Why have we ignored the book's own insistent and repeated statements on why it was written and to whom it is addressed? The first chapter is a prologue set in the Old World which bluntly states the argument: "There came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed" (1 Nephi 1:4). In the last chapter of the Book of Mormon we find the identical proposition repeated for another and a distant people—a proud civilization which must repent or be destroyed (Moroni 10). In between the beginning and the end, the proposition is repeated more than a hundred times. "Destruction" is repeated some 513 times in the book, and "repentance," 385 times. "Destroy" is used in the proper sense as *de-struere*, to break down and scatter the elements, to smash the structure.<sup>9</sup>

A society on the brink of destruction is not a safe place to linger, and so we are immediately introduced into the *Rekhabite* motif: "Come out of her, oh my people! Partake not of her sins lest ye partake of her plagues" (cf. Jeremiah 35). After the Ascension of Lehi, he does what other prophets did after such an

experience and takes off into the wilderness. The Rekhabites were contemporaries of Lehi who did just that, and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows us that such things actually did happen repeatedly.<sup>10</sup> The flight from Egypt, of course, had set the example, and to it the Book of Mormon preachers, like those in ancient Israel, often refer and compare themselves. The First Psalm dramatizes the situation by comparing the righteous to a fruitful tree of life and the evil man to a barren plant; the one follows paths known to God, the other gets lost in the sand.

The Rekhabite move is repeated again and again in the Book of Mormon. Not long after the arrival of the family of Lehi in the New World, when the tension became unbearable between Nephi and his elder brothers, "the Lord did warn me, that I, Nephi, should depart from them and flee into the wilderness, and all those who would go with me" (2 Nephi 5:5). Even so, "Mosiah...being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi, and as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord should also depart out of the land with him, into the wilderness...did according as the Lord had commanded him" (Omni 1:12-13). From his community in turn, others broke off and disappeared into the wilderness (Omni 1:27-30). Likewise, Alma founded his pious colony at the Waters of Mormon, a wild place (Mosiah 18:4), and when later his church had been absorbed by a local kingdom, his people "gathered their flocks together" and while the guards slept "Alma and his people

departed into the wilderness” (Mosiah 24:18, 20). After the title of liberty was raised, many Lamanites gave up everything and went over to join the devout and peaceful society of the Ammonites (Alma 62:27). Even so, the Latter-day Saints given the choice between Missouri and Illinois or the desert chose the wilderness.

So here we have two sharply divided societies to whose irreconcilable views there is only one solution—separation. But the trouble with idealistic communities fleeing from the wicked world is that they take their tensions with them. In the desert, trouble within the family, which began in the city, only gets worse. Laman and Lemuel side with the people at Jerusalem: “We perish if we leave Jerusalem,” they said. “You perish if you stay,” said Nephi, because there isn’t going to be any Jerusalem. How does he know? “I have seen a vision” (2 Nephi 1:4). That is just what is wrong, say Laman and Lemuel. Here they are being led by the “foolish imaginations” of “a visionary man”—a *piqqeakh*, one who sees things that others do not—to give up “the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things,” and for what? “To perish in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 2:11). Jerusalem offered Laman and Lemuel wealth, social position, the security of a great city with strong alliances (1 Nephi 2:13). What is more, righteousness was on their side: “We know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people; for they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord, and all his commandments, according to the Law of Moses” (1 Nephi 17:22). It was their father who was off base; what did he and Nephi have to offer but “great desires to know the mysteries of God” (1 Nephi 2:16)? Feelings ran so high that the brothers went so far as to conspire to remove Nephi and his father from the scene.

The hopeless impasse was an anguish of soul to the father and son who received comfort and encouragement in inspired dreams, in which the high life and hunger in the sands become an allegory of the perennial choices before us. That is how Nephi explains it. Fashionably dressed beautiful people, partying in the top-priced upper apartments and penthouses of a splendid high-rise, have fun looking down and commenting on a bedraggled little band of transients eagerly eating fruit from a tree in a field (1 Nephi 8:10-27). “The great and spacious building,” Nephi explains, “was the pride of the world” (1 Nephi 11:36), or rather it is the “vain imaginations...of the children of men” (1 Nephi 12:18). Which is the real world? There is no possibility of enjoying the ambience of both, for “a great and terrible gulf divideth them” (1 Nephi 12:18); the choice was narrowed when that “great and spacious building...fell, and the fall thereof was exceeding great.... Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (1 Nephi 11:36).

This great dichotomy is the perennial order of the world, “opposition in all things,” a symmetry as natural as that which pervades all matter; but it is a *broken* symmetry. Without the Rekhabite principle, the Book of Mormon would be nothing but a *vates malorum*, a wail of despair without hope. What breaks the

symmetry is the indeterminate principle as stated by Heisenberg and also by Moroni in his final reflection on the fate of the Nephites: “The devil...inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually. But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually” (Moroni 7:12-13). Powerful forces exerting equal pull in opposite directions. What breaks the symmetry? The free will of the individual. The nation may go to hell, but the individual does not have to. Almost every leading character in the Book of Mormon is one who breaks with the establishment and goes his way. So Moroni explains, “Wherefore, take heed...that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil. For...it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil...as the daylight is from the dark night” (Moroni 7:14-15). In the end this broken symmetry is the hope of salvation.

But God has more to offer those who break with the world than “wearying in a land of sands and thorns.” The wilderness is only a transition, a difficult exercise of disengaging from the fashion of the world: “He did straiten them in the wilderness with his rod” (1 Nephi 17:41). Beside the “mysteries of God” there was more awaiting the faithful, “ye shall prosper, and be led to a *land of promise*...which I have prepared for you; yea, even a land which is choice above all other lands” (1 Nephi 2:20, italics added). “He leadeth away the righteous into precious lands, and the wicked he destroyeth, and curseth the land unto them for their sakes” (1 Nephi 17:38). The idea is biblical—the promise to Abraham—and also classical, as we see in Tyrtæus and the Aeneid.<sup>11</sup> It is the normal product of times of hardship and migration, when wandering tribes seek happy homelands, which finds its culmination in the hope of America.

This is the “choice land above all other lands” since the Flood, reserved for the New Jerusalem and the “remnant of the house of Joseph...like unto Jerusalem of Old” (Ether 13:2,6-8). But God placed the promise upon it “in his *wrath*” (Jacob 1:7; Alma 12:35; Ether 1:33; 2:8; 15:28; italics added). Why that of all things? Because his patience was at an end when men had defiled all the other lands in the glorious and beautiful world he had given them. He would set apart a place where he would stand for no nonsense; there men would be given such freedom as nowhere else, and could enjoy such prosperity as nowhere else. But in return for this liberty certain ground rules have to be observed. Perfect liberty means that you can go as far as you want, free of many of the age-old hampering restraints imposed by man; since this is a place of testing, that is the purpose of leaving everyone pretty much on his own. But when the inhabitants abuse that freedom until they “are ripened in iniquity” their presence will be no longer tolerated; “when the fullness of his wrath should come” they will be “swept off,” suddenly and completely (Ether 2:8). As it was in the days of Noah, it shall be business as usual, right up until the last moment, for it is “not until the fullness of iniquity” is matched by “the fullness of his wrath,” which “cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity” that they will be abruptly terminated (Ether 2:8-10). God was angry when he laid down these conditions: “These are my thoughts upon the land which I shall give you for your inheritance; for it shall be a land

choice above all other lands.” And these are the thoughts: “that my Spirit will not always strive with man; wherefore, if ye will sin until ye are fully ripe ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Ether 2:15). This promise is conveyed to us for our special benefit: “And this cometh to you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness come, that ye may not bring down the fullness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done” (Ether 2:11). It is Moroni’s prophetic warning to stop doing what we are doing. Fullness and ripeness: when the cup is full it can no longer be diluted; when the fruit is ripe it can only rot—there is no point to continuing the game. But up to that point all is permitted.

“Promised Land” has a nice upbeat sound that we like very much, but the great promise is worded as a curse: “Thus saith the Lord God—Cursed shall be the land, yea, this land, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, unto destruction, which do wickedly, when they are fully ripe...for this is the cursing and the blessing of God upon this land” (Alma 45:16). When Lehi’s party had barely left Jerusalem, Nephi had a vision in which he “looked and beheld the land of promise.” And what did he see? “A mist of darkness on the face of the land of promise,” and horrible destruction and desolation (1 Nephi 12:4). Obviously one is not home free when he has set foot upon the land of promise. Quite the opposite; from then on he must watch his step and control the impulse to do whatever he pleases and “have it all.” For “God has sworn in his wrath” that what went on in other lands should not go on here. There are nations that were old when Nephi left Jerusalem and whose cultures and languages, customs, manners, and traditions still survive. They have all paid a high price in human suffering as they go along from folly to folly and disaster to disaster, but they are still there. It is not so in the New World, where great civilizations vanish without even leaving us their names and where no high civilization has survived. It is significant that with all the warning and promising only one penalty is ever mentioned, and only one means of avoiding it. “Prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently...and...by so doing they kept them from being destroyed upon the face of the land; for they did prick their hearts with the word, continually stirring them up to repentance” (Jarom 1:11-12). The penalty is destruction; the deliverance, repentance.

To avoid the destruction of the righteous with the wicked, God effects “a division of the people,” the Rekhabite phenomenon, the awful gulf, etc. It is the division between two ways of life, but it does divide the good guys from the bad guys into discrete societies. It is convenient to imagine all the righteous in one camp and the wicked in another, and this has been the usual and comfortable interpretation of the Book of Mormon—it is the good guys versus the bad guys. But this is exactly what the Book of Mormon tells us to avoid. God plays no favorites. Nephi rebukes his brothers for believing that because they are Jews they are righteous; God does not judge by party, he tells them; a good man is good and a bad one bad, according to his own behavior,

“Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God” (1 Nephi 17:35). Family and race and nationality account for nothing. “God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people” (Alma 26:37). He numbers them as his own, not as being on one side or the other of a boundary, “the Lord doth grant unto all nations...to teach his word...all that he seeth fit that they should have” (Alma 29:8). Nephi finds the answer to the question, who are the bad guys? Where is the real enemy? In himself. It is his own weakness that makes him frustrated and angry, he says. Why should he take it out on others? (2 Nephi 4:26-35). Though others may be seeking his life, his escape is to follow the path that God has shown him, “a way for mine escape before mine enemies!” It is not for him to settle the score with them: “I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm” (2 Nephi 4:33-34). He is to tell the people who their real enemy is. The Lamanites are not the problem: “And the Lord God said unto me: They shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the remembrance of me; and inasmuch as they will not remember me, and hearken unto my words, they shall scourge them even unto destruction” (2 Nephi 5:25). Did the wickedness of the Nephites make the Lamanites any less wicked or less dangerous? On the contrary, it made them more dangerous because God had planned it that way. As long as the Nephites behaved themselves the Lamanites “curse[d]...with a sore curse...shall have no power over thy seed except they shall rebel against me also.” God means to keep them in place right to the end as “a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance” (1 Nephi 2:23-24). The Lamanites “have not kept the commandments of God” and have “been cut off” (Alma 9:14). Nevertheless, “the Lord will be merciful unto them and prolong their existence in the land” (Alma 9:16), “but...if ye [Nephites] persist in your wickedness...your days shall *not* be prolonged in the land, for the Lamanites shall be sent upon you...and ye shall be visited with utter destruction” (Alma 9:18-19).

The Book of Mormon goes to great lengths to describe just what a wicked society looks like and how it operates, with enough examples to type it beyond question, and with clinical precision it describes the hysteria that leads to its end.<sup>12</sup> It also tells us how to recognize a righteous society, usually presenting the two types to us in close proximity. With these two images firmly in mind we are told why this presentation is being given, for whose benefit, and why it is so singularly important. The authors do not ask us to make comparisons and see ourselves in the picture, because that would be futile: the wicked the people are the more they balk at facing their real image and the more skillful they become in evading, altering, faking and justifying. So the book does not tell us to make the comparison—it does it for us, frankly and brutally. The Book of Mormon does not need to tell us what the wickedness of Jerusalem consisted of, since we have that in the Bible. The first display of evil is in the ambition

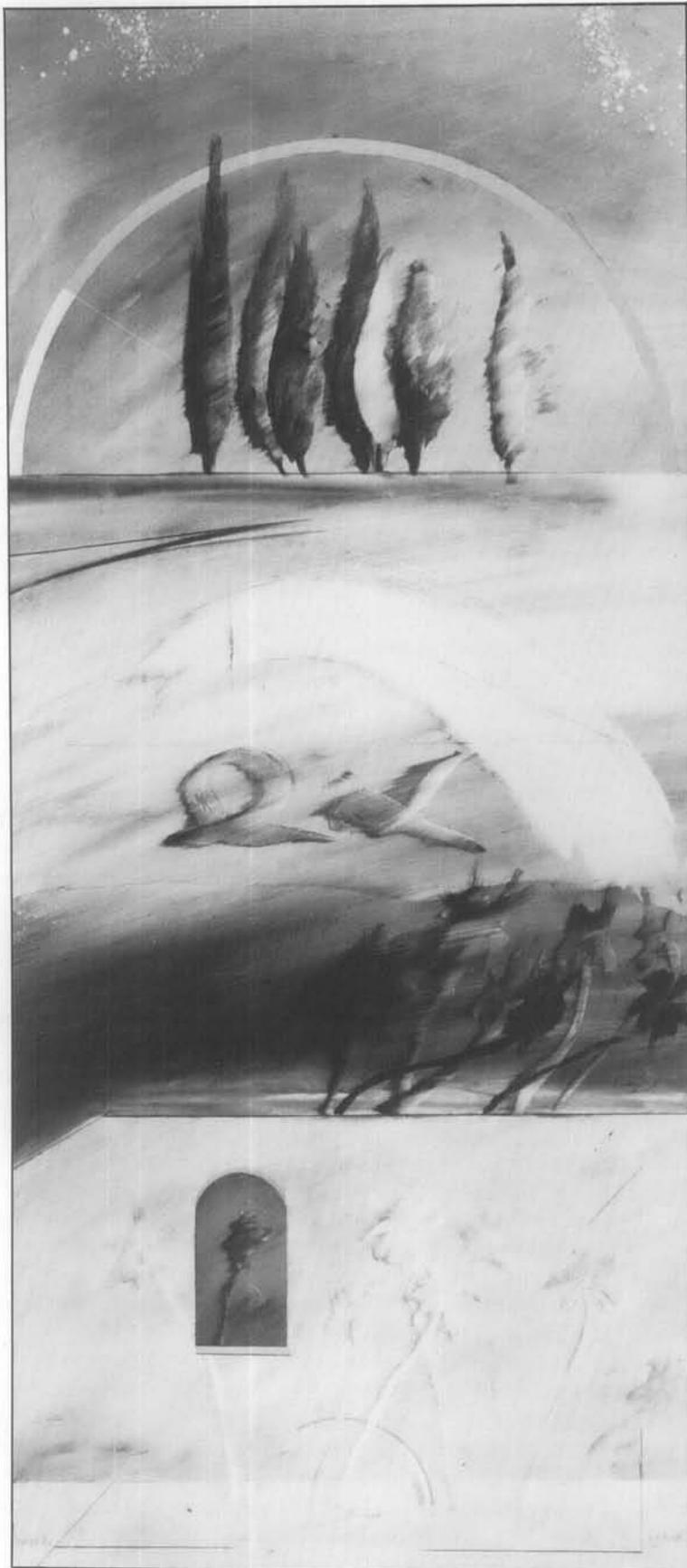
of Laman who stirred everyone's hearts to anger by accusing Nephi of thinking "to make himself a king and a ruler over us" (1 Nephi 16:38), which is exactly what Laman was aspiring to do (1 Nephi 17:44, 3:28-29). But the prime evil quickly emerges and persists throughout the book. Nephi, following Isaiah, explains the situation with the Jews, "for because they are rich they despise the poor...their hearts are upon the treasures; wherefore, their treasure is their god" (2 Nephi 9:30). "And they that are rich...puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom, and their riches—yea, they are they whom he despiseth" (2 Nephi 9:42). That must be the all time put down.

Nephi's brother Jacob took over the leadership when the whole community was affected by the virus they had brought from Jerusalem: "You have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren...ye suppose that ye are better than they.... [God] condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you....O that you would rid you from this iniquity and abomination" (Jacob 2:13-16). In Alma's day, good conscientious people, "because of their exceeding riches ...which they had obtained by their industry [the work ethic, no less]...were lifted up in the pride of their eyes....The people of the church began...to set their hearts upon riches...that they began to be scornful, one towards another" (Alma 4:6-8). The result was "great inequality among the people...that Alma...seeing all their inequality, began to be very sorrowful" (Alma 4:11-15). "Will ye persist," he cried, "in the wearing of costly [not beautiful but always costly] apparel, and setting your hearts...upon your riches? Yea, will ye persist in supposing that ye are better one than another" (Alma 5:53-54). "And thus we see how great the inequality of man is because of sin and transgression" (Alma 28:13). The Book of Mormon describes the declension by which that mentality inevitably led to "wars and contentions among the Nephites...an awful scene of bloodshed" (Alma 28:9-10).

Needless to say, advocates were not lacking to justify and even sanctify such behavior. Korihor, a contemporary of Alma, rallied the people of property to free themselves from the oppressive restraints of sacral government. "foolish performances," he said by which "this people bind themselves...that they might not lift up their heads" (Alma 30:23). Thanks to the government, said he, people "durst not enjoy their rights and privileges." In particular, "they durst not make use of that which was their own lest they should offend their priests" (Alma 30:27-28); his appeal was for freedom from restraints "laid down by ancient priests" (Alma 30:23), freedom to follow the natural order in which "every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime" (Alma 30:17). The bottom line was the common-sense creed, "when a man was dead, that was the end thereof," all accounts settled, all charges dropped, all moral objections canceled. This was good news to the beautiful people, "causing them to lift their heads in wickedness," enjoying unlimited criminal and sexual license, "leading away...women, and also men, to commit whoredoms" (Alma 30:18)—a plain but discreet way of hinting at rampant homosexuality.

When a long war was followed by a post-war boom, there arose a dissension among them, and they would not give heed to the words of Helaman and his brethren: "But they grew proud, being lifted up in their hearts, because of their exceeding great riches; therefore, they grew rich in their own eyes, and would not give heed to their words" (Alma 45:24). Taking advantage of this backlash, one Amalickiah rode the wave to greatness. He is something of a standard type in the Book of Mormon; quite a charmer, "a man of many flattering words," who "led away the hearts of many people" (Alma 46:10). Of large and imposing presence (Alma 46:3), he was shrewd and calculating, "a man of cunning device" (Alma 49:11), and perfectly cynical—"he did not care for the blood of his people" (Alma 49:10). He had solid support among "those who were in favor of kings,...those of high birth, and they sought to be kings; and they were supported by those who sought power and authority over the people" (Alma 51:8). He wrought infinite mischief, as an example, Moroni reflects, of "the great wickedness of those who are seeking for power and authority" (Alma 60:17). It was this "iniquity...for the cause of your love of glory and the vain things of the world" (Alma 60:32) that plunged the Nephites into that terrible war, and "caused so much bloodshed among ourselves"; it was all due to "the desire [for] power and authority which those king-men had over us" (Alma 60:16).

The parallel path to power was that of organized crime. Kishkumen also aspired to head the government and began by employing the talents of one Gadianton, "exceedingly expert...in his craft" which was to "carry on the secret work of murder and of robbery" in a businesslike and professional manner (Helaman 2:4). Though their first plan failed, the campaign continued and clever public relations "seduced the more part of the righteous" to invest in their numerous projects, "come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils." Thus "the Nephites did build them up and support them, beginning at the more wicked part of them," but then growing ever more respectable "until they had overspread all the land" (Helaman 6:38). When "the Nephites...did turn into their own ways, and did build up unto themselves idols of their gold and their silver" (Helaman 6:31), it became an easy matter to swing elections in favor of the society, and put its people in office, especially filling the judgeships and getting complete control of the law courts; from then on they could make legal whatever they chose to do. Speaking of the days of Moroni, Mormon observes that it was the lawyers and judges who started laying "the foundation of the destruction of this people" (Alma 10:27). So with the public "in a state of...awful wickedness" (Helaman 4:25), the combine "did obtain the sole management of the government"; and the first thing they did was to "turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God" (Helaman 6:39). In control of the nation's wealth, "in the space of not many years" (Helaman 6:32), the Gadianton society had become perfectly respectable, "filling the judgement-seats...Condemning the righteous...letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money...held in office [perpetually]...to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world" (Helaman 7:4-5). It all goes



back to one thing, the line of ambitious men who beguile the public and aim at absolute power, and always start out by "seeking for gain, yea, for that lucre which doth corrupt the soul" (Mosiah 29:40). Among such men were religious promoters like Nehor, who engaged in "the spreading of priestcraft through the land...for the sake of riches and honor" (Alma 1:16), or the wicked King Noah, who "placed his heart upon riches" (Mosiah 11:14). There is one phrase occurring some fifteen times in the Book of Mormon that starts the alarm bell ringing and the red lights flashing; the fatal words are "They set their hearts on riches." If you can have anything in this world for money, well, money is what you want; how you get it, as the Roman satirist says, is not too important as long as you keep things respectable by keeping your murders secret—another main theme of the Book of Mormon.

Nephi ended his days in deep discouragement: "I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men; for they will not search knowledge" (2 Nephi 32:7). His brother Jacob takes up on an even more alarming note. In their frontier condition his people had taken to the barbarian custom of collecting wives, concubines and the spectacular loot that barbarians love. We should note here that the savage Lamanites who lived by raiding and plunder sought exactly the same things as the supposedly more civilized Nephites did—the whole lot of them "set their hearts on riches." Three hundred years after Christ, both the "people of Nephi and the Lamanites had become exceedingly wicked one like unto another" (4 Nephi 1:45). Who were the barbarians when "the people of Nephi began to be proud in their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, and become vain like unto their brethren, the Lamanites" (4 Nephi 1:43)? Love and display of wealth, as Plutarch tells us in his first Moral Essay, is the characteristic mark of the barbarians.<sup>13</sup> It is not surprising that "the robbers of Gadianton did spread over all the face of the land" with business booming everywhere—"gold and silver did they lay up in store in abundance, and did traffic in all manner of traffic" (4 Nephi 1:46). The work ethic paid off only too well when the "laborer in Zion" labored for money (2 Nephi 26:31), and "the hand of providence...smiled upon [them]" (Jacob 2:13).

The prosperity in the time of good king Mosiah produced a spoiled generation of smart-alecks, "many of the rising generation...did not believe"; actually, "they were a separate people as to their faith...even in their carnal and sinful state" (Mosiah 26:1-4). The sons of Alma and Mosiah were among that alienated generation; it took an angel to convert them, but the tradition never ceased out of the land (Mosiah 26:4). King Mosiah, to undertake reforms and make the country "a land of liberty," insisted that "this inequality should be no more in this land" and suggested a system of judges to equalize things (Mosiah 29:32). Under Alma the church was an ideal community (Alma 1:26-28), but the rest of the society indulged in the usual catalogue

of wrong-doing: “envyings and strife; wearing costly apparel; being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes;...lying, thieving, robbing, committing whoredoms, and murdering, and all manner of wickedness” (Alma 1:32). All the excitement of a highly competitive society, a night of prime time TV. There are four things that can lead to certain destruction according to both Nephis: the desire for gain, for power, for popularity, and for “lusts of the flesh”—the lifestyles of the rich and famous (1 Nephi 22:23; 3 Nephi 6:15).

After the war with Amlici, the people repented and prosperity returned, whereupon “the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches...which they had obtained by their industry” (Alma 4:6). “Many...were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw...[as] the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches” (Alma 4:7-8). The usual competitive escalation of unpleasantness followed, “yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church” (Alma 4:9). When “Alma saw the wickedness of the church...thus bringing on the destruction of the people, [and when] he saw the great inequality among the people,...seeing all their inequality, [he] began to be very sorrowful” (Alma 4:11-12, 15). He laid down all his great offices of state, realizing that all the power and authority of the highest political and military (Mosiah 29:42; Alma 2:16) offices which he had held would not correct the evil, and spent the rest of his days preaching repentance (Alma 4:19-20): “Yea, will ye persist in supposing that ye are better one than another;...And will ye persist in turning your backs upon the poor, and the needy, and in withholding your substance from them?” (Alma 5:54-55). Things got worse and there was a nasty war. Ammon was told by the Lord to save the people of Ammon who wanted no part of the business. “Get this people out of this land that they perish not....And they gathered together all their people...and...flocks and herds, and departed into the wilderness” (Alma 27:12-14). The Rekkhabite solution was still the only way out. The Ammonites missed the tremendous battle that ensued and the great lamentation that followed: “And thus we see,” says Alma, “how great the inequality of man is because of sin and transgression, and the power of the devil, which comes by the cunning plans...to ensnare the hearts of men” (Alma 28:13). Need we go on?

What does a righteous society look like? Far less spectacular than the wicked, it keeps a low profile; a healthy body is not aware of the ailing organs that provide the interest, conversation and titillation of a hypochondriac world. “Happy is the people whose annals is a blank!” says Voltaire. “What a drag!” says the overstimulated TV libertine. From the outside, the righteous society looks empty and boring to those who have not the remotest conception of what may go on inside. Alan Watts points this out in an essay in which he finds that the obscuring wall between the two worlds is simply money.<sup>14</sup> For those on either side of the veil it is the other side, naturally, that is not real, only

our side is real. However, there are certain guidelines to what is a good society, though mostly given in negative terms—those who keep the ten commandments are praiseworthy for what they do *not* do. Jacob gives us some rules: “Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you” (Jacob 2:17)—it is not the wealth but the inequality that does the damage. Of unequal distribution he says, “do ye not suppose that such things are abominable unto him who created all flesh? And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other” (Jacob 2:21). Benjamin recognizes the same danger of acquisitiveness: “I...have not sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches of you; Neither have I suffered...that ye should make slaves of one another....And even I myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you” (Mosiah 2:12-14). “For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being...for all riches which we have of every kind?” (Mosiah 4:19). And when Alma organized his church, “they were all equal, and they did all labor...And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had” (Alma 1:26-27). The main theme is obvious: “For thus saith the Lord: Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man think himself above another” (Mosiah 23:7). “I desire that the inequality should be no more in this land...but I desire that this land be a land of liberty, and every man enjoy his rights and privileges alike” (Mosiah 29:32). For this reason, Mosiah laid down the kingship in favor of a system of judges, as a more equalitarian order (Mosiah 23:7). But the great obstacle to freedom was not government, but money; to maintain their liberty, Alma’s people “were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength” (Alma 1:26). (How could they be equal in wealth, we ask today, if no two of them were equal in strength?) Under the law of Mosiah and the judges, “there was no law against a man’s belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which would bring men on to unequal grounds” (Alma 30:7). “Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege...but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him” (Alma 30:9), or to put him at a disadvantage, for the idea was that “all men were on equal grounds.” So even Alma, the high priest and chief judge of the land allowed people to go around preaching atheism. The righteous can only preserve their liberty by remembering the words of the patriarch Jacob, in all humility considering themselves despised and rejected in the manner of the youthful Joseph (Alma 46:24-27). Moroni calls upon his people to recognize their position as the meek and humble of the world, “we, who are despised” (Alma 46:18) by those whose “pride and nobility” he denounces (Alma 51:17, 18-21).

Alma begins his book with a happy picture. After a long war and great suffering, the people had learned their lesson, and here we have a picture of a righteous society: “And thus they were all equal, and they did all labor every man according to his strength. And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel” (Alma 1:27). “Through the preaching of Ammon,” many Lamanites “became a

righteous people”—and here we have another important criterion of righteousness—“they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion” (Alma 23:7). And “there was not one soul among all the people who had been converted unto the Lord who would take up arms against their brethren; nay, they would not even make any preparations for war” (Alma 24:6). They repeatedly refer to all their former battles as murders (Alma 24:9-11; 27:8). When such groups got into trouble, Ammon recommended the Rekhabite solution—they “departed out of the land, and came into the wilderness” and carried on as “perfectly honest and upright in all things....And they did look upon shedding the blood of their brethren with the greatest abhorrence” (Alma 27:14, 27-28).

When the Lord appeared among the people he established his order of things, thereby demonstrating that it is not impossible for human beings on this earth to live after such an order without being bored by inactivity or lack of excitement. Fourth Nephi gives us the description of the model society:

The people were all converted to the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free...continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord....And...there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people....There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither...Lamanites nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the Children of Christ....And how blessed they were!” (4 Nephi 1:2-3, 12, 15-18).

Does this sound tame? The wicked flaunt their riches and their learning in the highly visible manner; “they are they whom he [God] despises.” To be righteous they must “consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility” (2 Nephi 9:42), with no photo opportunities whatever. What counts is long suffering and patience—very low profile and non-spectacular; to call attention to one’s patience is to be impatient, “the Lord...trieth their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21). In fact, the whole program culminates in “a sense of your nothingness” (Mosiah 4:5). To discover that one is nothing is the first step in breaking loose; when you have done that, says Benjamin, “ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God.” Yes, but what do you *do* to fill the time? “Ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you” (Mosiah 4:12). And what is that glory? Intelligence, the greatest fun of all, with no room for invidious comparison, rivalry and jealousy, that characterize the competitive business and professionalism, since truth alone is the object (Mosiah 4:13-16). In the end, we have no choice; Moroni prescribes the cure: “I give unto men weakness....I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness...that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me....If the Gentiles have not

charity...[I will] take away their talent” (Ether 12:27-28, 35). There is no other way than to be “meek and lowly in heart,...have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing,...cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all,...the pure love of Christ....Pray unto the Father...that ye may be filled with this love...that ye may become the sons of God” (Moroni 7:44-48). This is Moroni’s summary of the situation.

We have ample material for an operational definition of righteousness and wickedness. One does not need to compose graduated lists of sins in the manner of the Jesuits. “I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin,” says King Benjamin “for there are diverse ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them” (Mosiah 4:29). The same applies to deeds of righteousness, whether an act is a sin or a good deed depends on the state of mind of the person who does it. The Book of Mormon gives us the touchstone of righteousness, which is *repentance*. The test of righteousness or wickedness is not one of location, a matter of being in one camp or the other, but of *direction*, as Ezekiel tells us (Ezekiel 18:26), one who has a low score in doing good, if he repents and does an about face, is counted as righteous, while one who has a long record of good deeds, if he turns around, has joined the wicked (Ezekiel 18:27). The person on the top step facing down, is in worse condition than one on a bottom step facing up.

But isn’t there a difference of degree? Not at all: is it not all the more reprehensible for the righteous person to backslide, and all the more commendable for the rascal to turn righteous? The Book of Mormon is full of examples on both sides: “Therefore, blessed are they who will repent,...for these are they that shall be saved” (Helaman 12:23). And Nephi assures us that “all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel if it so be that they will repent” (1 Nephi 22:28). Indeed, “the days of the children of men were prolonged” for the express purpose “that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened” (2 Nephi 2:21). This was done to give everyone the fullest opportunity, “for he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents” (2 Nephi 2:21). Christ’s first pronouncement to the Nephites was, “I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me” (3 Nephi 11:32). To carry on at all “we must call upon thee” “because we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually” (Ether 3:2). Only little children are exempt from the command of constant repentance (Mosiah 3:21). Even the poor and despised must watch themselves and constantly correct their ways (Mosiah 4:24).

Does one person need repentance more than another? Until we have reached the shore, no one is home safe; a swimmer can drown 50 feet from the shore as easily as a mile from it, and in this life, none have reached the shore, for it is a probation right up until the last. Only one who is like the Son of Man “full of grace and truth” (2 Nephi 2:6) may be exempt from repentance. While the great storm and earthquake were raging, the people were still given a chance to repent, “Wo unto the inhabitants of the whole



earth, except they shall repent" (3 Nephi 9:2). "O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent....But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate" (3 Nephi 10:6-7).

This ongoing exercise that lasts all our lives is strictly a private affair. Repentance is an intransitive or rather a reflexive verb; you cannot repent another or for another or make another repent. In every single prophecy and promise of destruction in the Book of Mormon, there is a repent clause added. Repentance and repentance alone can save a land cursed with "workers of darkness and secret combinations." But if they accept repentance, that means "never [to] be weary of good works, but to be meek and lowly in heart; for such shall find rest to their souls" (Alma 37:31-34). The long and puzzling story of the olive orchard in the fifth chapter of Jacob seems to present an endless combination of tactics to preserve the orchard. The point is that any combination is possible; God will try any scheme general or local to redeem the people. It is the plasticity of the thing that is impressive; sixteen times the trees are given a last chance to get growing again, there is no end to the Lord's patience. This is Nephi's message also to the Gentiles: "Therefore, cheer up your hearts and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves" (2 Nephi 10:23); this is still the time of probation, nothing is final. Christ "hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem them from their sins because of

repentance" (Helaman 5:11). There were times when mass repentance turned history around, when the Nephites were completely converted (3 Nephi 5:1), and the robbers all rehabilitated (3 Nephi 6:3), but such times follow only upon great upsets, overthrows and defeats, for without strong pressure what man is going to repent who thinks things are going his way? It usually amounts to being "awakened...out of a deep sleep" (Alma 5:7), and what is more annoying than being awakened out of a deep sleep?

In the need to rationalize their ways, it is not enough for the guilty to justify their position; it must be sanctified. There's a wonderful account in the Book of Mormon that shows how that is done. It is Alma's report on the Zoramites, which tells us how the vilest people he had ever known managed to project an image of extreme righteousness loudly proclaiming themselves as "a holy people" (Alma 31:18), while their thoughts "were on their riches" (Alma 31:24-28). Independent, proud, enterprising, hard working, very prosperous, zealous in religious observances, including strict dress standards, brave and aggressive, the Zoramites in their time were the meddling catalyst that spread violence and war everywhere, even persuading the youth of the land to join up with the Gadianton robbers in order to embarrass the Nephites (3 Nephi 1:29).

Why does the Book of Mormon have so much to say about war, incidentally? Because it's the story of our own time. I have

often heard generals deplore the awfulness of war, but the commander who really hates it is Captain Moroni. He is worthy of closer attention because he's the one who is held up as the model of military macho to LDS youth. Repeatedly, in the long account of Moroni, Alma reminds us that he did not "glory in...the shedding of blood" (Alma 48:16) as others do. His Nephites fought only when obliged to "contend with their brethren" (Alma 43:14) and only if they were "not guilty of the first offence, neither the second" offence (Alma 43:46), to say nothing of preemptive strikes. They celebrated their victories not by getting drunk but with fasting and prayer (Alma 45:1). "If all men had been like...Moroni..." says Alma (Alma 48:17). Well, who was he like? and just what was he like? "He was a man like unto Ammon" (Alma 48:18). It was Ammon's people who refused to make war under any circumstances (Alma 26:32-34).

How did Moroni go about making war? First of all the people humbled themselves, "they were free from wars and contentions among themselves." War was not a solution to internal unrest. They were reluctant "to contend with their brethren,...sorry to take up arms against the Lamanites, because they did not delight in the shedding of blood,...and...they were sorry to be the means of sending so many of their brethren out of this world" (Alma 48:20-23). When Moroni had immobilized a guard house with a gift of wine, he refused to follow up the ruse because he said it would be an "injustice" to perform a shameful act of taking advantage of a drunken enemy (Alma 55:19). Moroni was especially keen to watch for any slightest tendency of the enemy to give up; he was hypersensitive to that moment in the battle when the enemy falters, and the instant that came, when he sensed they were weakening, he would propose a stop to the fighting to talk things over (Alma 52:37-38). "We do not desire to be men of blood" (Alma 44:1), he tells them on the battlefield; "ye are in our hands, yet we do not desire to slay you...We have not come...that we might shed your blood for power" (Alma 44:1-3). "We would not shed the blood of the Lamanites, if they would stay in their own land. We would not shed the blood of our [Nephite] brethren if they would not rise up in rebellion and take the sword against us. We would subject ourselves to the yoke of bondage if it were requisite with the justice of God" (Alma 61:10-12). He detested the power game that some men play; "I seek not for power," he says often, "but to pull it down. I seek not for the honor of the world" (Alma 60:36). He thinks more kindly of the Lamanite invaders than of the ambitious men on his own side. He says it is "the tradition of their fathers that has caused their hatred...while your iniquity is for the cause of your love of glory and the vain things of the world" (Alma 60:32). He fought against people being "known by the appellation of kingmen...and the pride of those people who professed the blood of nobility...they were brought down to humble themselves like unto their brethren" (Alma 51:21). Inequality, that was the enemy in Moroni's eyes. When he raised the Title of Liberty it was to teach his people to think of themselves and the poor and outcast of Israel (Alma 46:18, 23-24), not as a proud army with banners. Reminding them that the rent garment could very well be their own condition (Alma 46:21), if they tried to match the enemy's own

machismo.

Moroni's behavior gives point to the question, "Who is the enemy?" The most clear cut case of good guys fighting bad guys is Alma's duel with Amlici—right out of *Star Wars*. "Alma being a man of God...was strengthened, insomuch that he slew Amlici with the sword" (Alma 2:30-31). It came down to a single duel between the two leaders. Yet Alma taught the people right on the spot and they believed it. He said it "was the judgments of God sent upon them because of *their* wickedness and *their* abominations" that brought the whole thing on (Alma 4:3, italics added). It wasn't the good guys fighting the bad guys at all. What kind of victory for the winners was it when "every soul had cause to mourn" (Alma 4:3)? Alma decided to preach to the enemy, as did Ammon who rejected the stock argument for military interventionism: "Let us take up arms against them...lest they overthrow and destroy us" (Alma 26:26). We have to sweep them from the lands or they'll destroy us if we don't. In enemy territory, as you know, Ammon was "cast out and mocked and spit upon, and smote upon [his] cheeks" (Alma 26:29). He overruled the powerful reflexes to hit back which you certainly would expect of the mightiest warrior of his time, which Ammon was. He would not do that; he said we just kept hoping that "perhaps we might be the means of saving some" (Alma 26:30). In that he was brilliantly successful.

Mormon also knew the futility of military operation, and he had lots of experience. When the army of Mormon, flush with new victory, started settling the Lamanite question once and for all under the noble call to "avenge...the blood of their brethren," he left his command and "utterly refused to go up against [his] enemies." Revenge, he said, was the one thing God would absolutely not tolerate (Mormon 3:9-16). For once that starts, there is no ending. Mormon shows us military and power completely out of control, practicing the usual atrocities, requisitioning everything for themselves while "many old women do faint by the way and die" (Moroni 9:16). Who were they defending? "My people," he says, "they are without order and without mercy,...past feeling,...[worse than] the Lamanites....I pray...[for] their utter destruction" (Moroni 9:18-22). He's the one who has "loved" and "led them" (Mormon 3:12) for all those years; now, he prays for their destruction unless they repent (Moroni 9:22). But always repentance is open right unto the end. The fog and horror of battle pursue us right up to the end—the nation completely in arms at Cumorah with trained, experienced warriors, all a splendid sight marching forward. Alas, there's nothing heroic about it. How could they have been such fools? Pity was Mormon's only reflection on the splendid sight (Mormon 6:17-22). His last word to the survivors in the land is that they must lay down their arms and never take them up again for they will never prevail by force. The only way they can prevail, he says (Mormon 7:3), is by repenting. Cumorah was no solution, the war went right on among the victors. Moroni's only comfort upon the earth is that "the hand of the Lord hath done it" (Mormon 8:8). And his word to us is, "Therefore, he that smiteth shall be smitten again, of the Lord. Behold what the scripture says—man shall not smite, neither shall he judge" (Mormon 8:19-20). That

is the lesson of Cumorah: The calamities of the Nephites are due to their own wickedness. It was their quarrellings, and...contentions,...murderings,...plunderings,...idolatry, whoredoms...abominations...which brought upon them their wars and their destructions” (Alma 50:21).

Why does Moroni, vigorously pruning the record to make room for only what there is space for, insert his own long abridgment of the record of the Jaredites? He tells us why: What is going on in the world today, that’s what the picture is. The Jaredites were plagued by that Asiatic tradition of kingship that required that a ruler should rule everything.<sup>13</sup> Where a kingship or office itself is sacred, what is in the king’s interest is moral and what is against the king’s interest is immoral. As Cicero says, speaking of the ruling class in Rome, “everything becomes a pure power play.” Any man who is strong enough can grab the power any way he can. The proof of his deserving it is that he has it. So we reach the final showdown in the story of the Jaredites. We find “war upon all the face of the land, every man with his band fighting for that which he desired” (Ether 13:25), every soldier of fortune out for himself. And “there were robbers, and in fine, all manner of wickedness upon all the face of the land” (Ether 13:26). As “every man did cleave unto that which was his own, with his hands, and would not borrow, neither would he lend” (Ether 14:2). Everyone for himself; this is free enterprise come to its conclusion. And “every man kept the hilt of his sword in his right hand, in the defense of his property and his own life and of his wives and children” (Ether 14:2). It all ends up in the family shelter. And the result: “All the people upon the face of the land were shedding blood, and there was none to restrain them” (Ether 13:31). It can actually come to that. War settles everything by a neat polarization: everything evil on one side and everything good on the other. No problem remains for anybody on either side but to kill people on the other side. So when Shiz set out with that noblest of intentions to “avenge himself” of the blood of his brother (Ether 14:24), his host forcibly recruited everyone who was not grabbed up by the other side. Shiz and Coriantumr are both obsessed with the paranoid conviction of an ever threatening enemy whose rule of evil can only end with his extermination. The most significant thing about this polarization, of course, is that it puts an end once and for all to any thought of repentance, in which lies the only hope for survival and peace and leads in the end to the Book of Mormon phenomenon which until recently I thought was quite fantastically impossible—not just improbable—over-imaginative, and which some authorities in Washington still insist is unrealistic, namely: the “utter destruction” of *both* contestants in the war (Ether 11:20; Moroni 9:22). It nearly happened with the Nephites and Lamanites, and it did happen with the Jaredites.

**T**o whom is all this addressed? To whom it may concern. And whom does it concern? To whom it may apply. In the midst of describing the plots and combinations of the Jaredites, Moroni pauses to explain, “I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that...Satan may have no

power upon the hearts of the children of men,...that they may be persuaded to do good continually” (Ether 8:26). Notice that the program is entirely positive; it has to do with persuasion to do good, and appeals to their hearts, not the mangling of their bodies. The book is addressed to a people very much in need of repentance: “And then, O ye gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways?” (Mormon 5:22). “He hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been” (Mormon 9:31). The Lord in person spoke to the Nephites: “I command you that ye shall write these things after I am gone,...that these sayings which ye shall write shall be kept and shall be manifested unto the Gentiles” (3 Nephi 16:4). Nephi says, “I have spoken plainly to you, that ye cannot misunderstand. And the words which I have spoken shall stand as a testimony against you; for they are sufficient to teach any man the right way” (2 Nephi 25:28). “I, Mormon, do not desire to harrow the souls of men [by] casting before them such an awful scene of blood” (Mormon 5:8). Why, then, does he dwell on these pictures when he says he has no desire to do this? He says “but I...[know] that a knowledge of these things must come to the remnant of these people, and also unto the Gentiles, who the Lord hath said should scatter this people” (Mormon 5:8-9). “Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent...and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain [money, not ideology, is the motive] and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you...even the sword of...justice...shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye suffer these things to be” (Ether 8:23). Specifically, we are told to look out for one fatal symptom, the thing that has “caused the destruction of [the Jaredites]...and also the destruction of the people of Nephi,” and will surely do the same for whatsoever nation in the future shall come under the control of the “secret combinations to get power and gain” (Ether 8:21-22).

The time came when the prophets did the only thing left for them to do: They “mourned and withdrew” (Ether 11:13). And Mormon was forbidden to write anymore for them, but for us he directs his writings to another people living far in the future (Moroni 1:4): “I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But...I know your doing...[for] Jesus Christ has shown you unto me” (Mormon 8:35). Make no mistake about it, as the politicians say, it is our generation being described, when the manipulations of the combinations, far and wide, shed the blood of husbands and cause widows and “orphans to mourn, [be assured that] the sword of vengeance hangeth over you” (Mormon 8:40-41). “Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you,...that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not...these murderous combinations...which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, ...even the work of destruction come upon you...the sword of justice of the Eternal God shall fall” (Ether 8:23). Notice, first he says the sword of vengeance hangs over you because of the things you have done, and then the sword of justice (you deserve it) “shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall

suffer these things to be" (Ether 8:23). So the great takeover is to be followed by the "great overburn." Now that phenomenon is mentioned more than thirty times in the Book of Mormon, when the wicked are burned as stubble and a vapor of smoke covers the earth (1 Nephi 22:15, 17-18, 23; 3 Nephi 10:13-14; 25:1; Mormon 8:29). "And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel...and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner...of hypocrisy, and murders, and priest-crafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and...shall reject the fullness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them" (3 Nephi 16:10). Fortunately, that has not happened. "There shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth; there shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms" and as to the morality of it all, "there shall be many who...say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not,...But wo be unto such" (Mormon 8:31). "Wo be unto the Gentiles,...For notwithstanding...they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them,...if they will repent" (2 Nephi 28:32, emphasis added).

And so the timely reminder to the Church is this: Do not "suppose that ye are more righteous than the Gentiles...For...ye shall...likewise perish;...ye need not suppose that the Gentiles are utterly destroyed" (2 Nephi 30:1). The Church is in the same danger as the Gentiles: "Wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion! Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well!" (2 Nephi 28:24-25). Here we see how the label of Zion has been processed in a smooth soft-sell by broadcasting: "All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well...the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:21). That's the business of advertising, to cheat and to lead carefully.<sup>16</sup>

"When ye...receive this [word], repent all ye ends of the earth" (Ether 4:17-18). Whatever course they take, "all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day" (Ether 5:4). The Gentiles will have their innings; they will be "lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, and prevail against the other inhabitants of the land" and so forth. But "the Lord God will not suffer...the Gentiles [to] utterly destroy" them (1 Nephi 13:30). But when that time is finished, "Wo be unto the Gentiles." Then it will be their turn, "if it so be in that day they harden their hearts" (1 Nephi 14:6). After the Gentiles take over completely and remove all rivals, then they become the endangered ones: "And then, O ye Gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye...repent and turn from your evil ways?" (Mormon 5:22). For then, "the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked he will destroy...by fire" (2 Nephi 30:10).

About 200 years after Christ visited the people, they became tired of intellectual integrity and self-control and opted to give up the law of consecration. From then on everything went in a fatal declension, each step of which has been duly marked and described in the Book of Mormon.

First they became *privatized*. They no longer had "their goods

and their substance...[in] common" (4 Nephi 1:25). Then they became *ethnicized* as they "taught [their children] to hate" the Nephites and Lamanites they had been playing with (4 Nephi 1:39). Then they became *nationalized* by serving the careers of ambitious men. Then they became *militarized*, from the need for large scale security when mutual trust gave way to self-interest. And they were *terrorized* as shrewd men saw the advantages of organized crime. Then *regionalized* as people began to form various combinations for protection and profit, entering through business relations with the criminal society and even sharing in their profits. Then *tribalized* as they finally succeeded at the urging of various powerful interests in abolishing the central government completely. Then *fragmentized* into paramilitary groups, wandering bands, family shelters, and so forth. Then *polarized*; to check the general disorder and insecurity, great armies were formed around competent leaders by forced recruitment or conquest. And *pulverized* as the great armies smashed each other and left the land utterly desolate. It is left for a future generation to take the final step and become *vaporized*. Viewing the state of the land at the American bicentennial, President Spencer W. Kimball declared himself "appalled and frightened" by what he saw and in this and in his last published address he quoted many of the passages we have just cited from the Book of Mormon.<sup>17</sup> Now, President Ezra Taft Benson issues an inspired appeal to make Book of Mormon an object of our most intense concern.<sup>18</sup> Suddenly, we find ourselves there: scenes and circumstances that not long ago seemed as distant as Nineveh and Tyre suddenly come to life about us. Could Joseph Smith have made all this up?

## NOTES

1. *Ratlos vor der Apokalypth* (Gütersloh: Mohr, 1970), 11-12.
2. The Ascension Motif is discussed, for example, in Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret 1967), 212-13; Blake T. Ostler, "The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis," *Brigham Young University Studies* 26 (Fall 1986): 67-95; and John W. Welch, "The Calling of a Prophet," in *1 Nephi: The Doctrinal Foundation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft and BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988).
3. The Lachish Letters are discussed, for example, in Hugh Nibley, "Dark Days in Jerusalem," in *Book of Mormon Authorship*, Noel B. Reynolds, ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft and BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 103-121; and "The Lachish Letters: Documents from Lehi's Day," *Ensign* (December 1981): 48-54.
4. See *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), passim; reprinted in the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, volume 5.
5. See Hugh Nibley, "Churches in the Wilderness," in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft and BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978): 155-186; *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1957), 113-63.
6. See, for example, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 178-89; *Since Cumorah*, 198-226.
7. *Since Cumorah*, 328-70.
8. *Lehi in the Desert*, 20-36.
9. *Lehi in the Desert*, 241.
10. Jeremiah 35:1-10, 16, 18. The Rekhabites are discussed, for example, in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 123; "Churches in the Wilderness," 165.
11. Tyrtacus, *Idylls of Theocritus with Bion and Moschus and the War Songs of Tyrtacus*, J. Banks, tr. (Bell, 1905); Vergil, *Aeneid*, IV, 259-78.
12. Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 315-50; *Since Cumorah*, 373-409; "Freemen and Kingmen" (Provo: F.A.R.M.S. N-FRE, 1981).
13. Plutarch, *Moralia* 1 and 7. On the Education of Children and On Love of Wealth.
14. Alan Watts, *Does it Matter?* (New York: Pantheon, 1970), 6-24.
15. *Lehi in the Desert*, 190-200.
16. Discussed in Hugh Nibley, "Victoriosa Loquacitas: The Rise of Rhetoric and the Decline of Everything Else," *Western Speech* 20(1956): 57-82.
17. "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign* (June, 1976): 3.
18. "The Book of Mormon, Keystone of Our Religion," *Ensign* (November, 1986): 7; *Ensign* (May, 1975): 65.

A BREAD-AND-BUTTER NOTE  
for Layne and Miri, Rotorua, New Zealand

## I. "Welcome"

Miriama minced  
and marshalled crisp criticism  
at New Zealand's state of welfare and weather  
(exonerating the state of New Zealand wit),  
quipped and baited,  
skirted and waited.

Miriama sidled,  
sliding up her brows  
(painted and plucked,  
no doubt,  
at the dressing table mirror  
of her sophisticated Sydney flat),  
sizing me up—

Then, as predictably as she had returned  
to raise her children in her childhood home,  
asked how I liked—  
then insisted I keep the small  
wood figure of a Maori chief.

## II. The Visit

Geysers, rainbow deposits of lime, model Maori *pa*:  
Warding off New Zealand winter  
in the cape your grandma knitted,  
you gave me Whaka's wonder.

You even explained how your mother  
(knowing instinctive respect  
would never wiggle you too near an edge)  
planted you,  
delighted and indulged,  
beside the bubbling pools of boiling mud  
(the best babysitter you ever had)  
and left—to shepherd tourists  
through this curious reserve.

Really, even though the kiwi  
hid in the simulated nighttime of his cage  
most effectively  
(you'd have been the first to point him out),  
could I complain?

It's one thing  
to visit Whaka with a guide,  
and quite another,  
genial Miriama,  
to walk its steaming pathways  
with a friend.

## III. Settlers

Shaking a warm Tahitian lagoon,  
*Te Arawa* embarked,  
and under three sails and the Southern Cross  
knifed swelled souther seas  
to this island of winters  
which, generations later,  
still make Miriama cringe.

But finding this volcanic plateau,  
they stayed,  
built *pas* and remembered  
(while thawing in thermal pools)  
the cool enticement of Tahiti's waterfalls.

And they multiplied,  
bequeathing down the years  
title to memories and mysteries  
and this  
last-of-a-series  
ancestral home.

Even now Whaka belongs  
to the Rotorua Maori,  
Miriama's mother and myriad aunts,  
light-skinned daughters of settlers,  
*Arawa* aristocrats.

So let he tell  
of opened windows in her Sydney flat,  
of the Opera House— and efficiency;  
let her, flip immigrant's kid,  
cut and contest  
the wisdom of her ancestral canoe—

She's back.  
To the matriarchy.  
Babysitting by the boiling mud  
heirs of the *Arawa*—  
multiplying on a volcanic plateau.  
She's a Maori.

—KAREN MARGUERITE MOLONEY

## NOTES

1. A bread-and-butter note is written by way of thanks for hospitality.
2. A *pa* is a fortified village.
3. Whakarearewa, or Whaka, is a Maori settlement and geothermal reserve less than 1.5 kilometers south of Rotorua on North Island.
4. *Te Arawa*, or "The Shark," is the name of the sailing canoe which, roughly six hundred years ago, carried from Tahiti to New Zealand the ancestors of the Rotorua tribes named after her.
5. The present-day *Arawa* are lighter-skinned than other Maoris, not, as might be inferred, from intermarriage with Caucasians, but because their pioneering ancestors were lighter-skinned than other early settlers.

First Place Winner in the 1986 D.K. Brown Fiction Contest

# WHEN THE RAINS COME DOWN THE RIVER

*By Stewart Shelline*

Nineteen forty was the year of vanishings: Nobuyuki, his only son, into the wartime silence of Manchuria; Reiko, his wife, into the fire that swept through the munitions plant in Akashi. That was the year Taiji closed the doors of the mud-walled house the three of them had shared and made his way to Karafuto, the island of his ancestors, where he hoped to find work in the coal fields near Esutoru and consolation in the work.

Lying awake nights in the six-mat room he rented from a cabinet maker, Taiji thought often of his son, his boy who chased dragonflies among the tall grass that grew along the banks of the river near the mud-walled home they had all left behind. His Nobuyuki, who floated driftwood out on the water, who used a bamboo shoot to free his boats from among the reeds, who followed his boats some days to the ocean and let them go out upon the waves. And he thought of Reiko, the shadow of his son, ever hovering near with her box of rice paper and scissors and glue. Reiko and Nobuyuki made kites every March; the three of them would spend the afternoons then in the park or on the paths between rice fields, three figures staring up to a fragile, tugging tuft against the sky. Some days, when Nobuyuki was young, Taiji would hold the string and wonder if the kite were not holding him. Some days he had thoughts of holding Reiko and Nobuyuki tightly in his arms and letting the distant kite pull them all up with it into the sky.

Reiko had laughed when he told her this. Nobuyuki had asked if the string wouldn't break.

Nobuyuki had been seventeen when the Imperial Army conscripted him. Taiji and Reiko were not communists but they had not supported the generals. They did not look to Manchuria or the Dutch East Indies or to anything but the fields. They planted the rice paddies at the end of May as they did every year, wore their wide straw hats beneath the sun as they hunched over to press the tender rice shoots into the flooded fields. Some morn-

ings, before they went to the fields to work, they assembled with the other parents on the parade ground at the school where Nobuyuki went. They would raise their arms and shout to the framed portrait of the Emperor. Soldiers with red bands and tight visored caps stood on either side of the portrait, the actions of their automatic rifles reflecting the morning sun. Taiji remembered working hard in the fields after those mornings to rid his mouth of the bitter taste left by the soldiers. He believed the Emperor but he did not believe the generals.

Taiji and Reiko had nothing to say about Nobuyuki's conscription. They were pleased, however, that he had not volunteered: many sons of the farmers who worked the fields above Akashi had volunteered. So when the fall of nineteen thirty-nine came Nobuyuki helped his parents harvest the rice and then when the letter came he packed his things. He did not show emotion when the letter arrived, nor in the days that followed. Taiji was proud of his son for that. They went with him to the National Railway station in Akashi and saw him off there. Reiko did not weep as the train closed its doors on the figure of her son. Quiet, she followed the train's fading outline with her eyes until it disappeared, closed her eyes for a moment, then followed Taiji back to their home in the fields. They did not hear from him for weeks and then there was a letter postmarked Tokyo and then, for New Year's, a card from Mukden. Only these before winter.

In the winter Reiko rode past the munitions plant each afternoon on her way to and from the markets in town. She had a bike with a large wire basket in front that she filled with long white radishes and chinese cabbage shipped from Kyushu province. Sometimes there were eggs or chicken and she would bring these home to Taiji in the sagging mud cottage surrounded by black winter rice fields. She went with neighbor women and they chattered on their bikes for the three miles to the market in Nishi-shin Machi. The neighbor women talked about shortages of kerosene, about husbands and children, about the other women who lived among the clusters of homes scattered around the patchwork of fields that stretched back from the shore up into the foothills. If they talked about war at all it was to hear whose sons had died, whose had been wounded. Except for such times, the war was far away.

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They felt the earth tremble with the big explosion and they saw the dark plume of smoke on their way into the market. They stopped to look. The plant was large and extended away from them in one continuous angle of rusty, corrugated metal. A fence surrounded the plant and guards stood at the gate but when the explosion occurred at the far end of the complex the guards left their places at the gate. The women stopped their chattering and left their bikes near the corner of the building close to them and watched as the fire brigade rushed to and fro on the hard dirt of the compound. They watched as the black smoke pouring from the gaping hole in the wall and roof thinned and turned to bright orange flames. Other women on their way to market that afternoon also stopped but none of them knew what was happening when the men of the fire brigade dropped their hoses and ran.

One of the women said she heard a hiss and a rumble and then saw the building burst open like an orange when it is stepped on. Reiko was killed when the tall metal wall at the north end of the building billowed out and collapsed on her. A dozen workers and a fireman were killed when the fire swept through the building but Reiko was the only one of the neighbor women to die in the blaze and explosion.

That night, after he had been told of Reiko's death, Taiji knelt and placed a small bowl of rice before the god shelf and waited in the stillness of the house in the fields. After a while he lowered his head to the tatami and then rose sharply to his feet. He removed the bowl of rice from before the god shelf and walked quickly to the door and out into the fields. He scattered the rice into the darkness, then let a long, high wail from his throat.

There was no one to hear his cry and it died out somewhere in the blackness that hovered over the silent rice fields.

The next day he went to the munitions plant and found her bike beneath the rubble. The green paint had burned away and only a charred line around the rims told where the rubber tires had been. He could not find the basket. A guard chased him from the rubble. He left the bike there.

When spring came he did not go into the fields. He took what food he had and gave it to the family who lived closest to him. Nobuyuki had taken his own things when he left, so Taiji gathered Reiko's belongings—the combs and mirrors, the single, simple kimono, the box of rice paper and scissors and glue—and took them to this family and then went home and spent his last night in the home he had built for Reiko and enlarged for Nobuyuki. In the morning he arose and bathed. After he had eaten a bowl of cold rice he closed the door behind him.

By evening he was in Kobe.

By spring he was in Esutoru.

Taiji heard from his son only once in the five years on Karafuto. Nobuyuki wrote his first letter from a transport ship somewhere in the Pacific, so he could not give much detail about his regiment's plans. He still did not know about his mother because Taiji had not written him: in those five years his father had become gaunt and weak, not from the hard coal-mining work but from remembering Reiko's death: he could not console

himself. He expected to die soon and he did not know how to contact his son. And he believed Nobuyuki was near death.

As the war worsened Taiji's thoughts of death increased.

Near the end of the war he stopped eating altogether and had to be taken to the hospital in Maoka by a big Korean whom Taiji had worked alongside in the coal fields. He stayed there through the summer of 1945 and by the beginning of August he had improved enough to sip small bowls of miso soup.

He was awake when the snipers shot at the incoming Russian ships. He heard the sharp report of the rifles from his hospital room. Taiji and the others in the hospital had not been told of the Emperor's surrender nor of the Russian advance below the Fiftieth Parallel. The shots from the shoreline puzzled him but when the great guns from the warships began their bombardment he felt afraid and thought of Nobuyuki.

Taiji could smell the smoke from the fires started by the bombardment. He heard people running in the streets and shots being fired but he did not know what had happened.

He tried to rise from his bed but his legs were weak and he could only sit up. When the big Korean came into the room hours later Taiji shuddered: the Korean's eyes were wide with fear. He told Taiji about the Russian landing, about the peace envoys that had been sent to greet the invaders. With shaking shoulders he told of the murder of the envoys, how twice they had gone with white flags waving, how twice the Russians had cut the envoys down with rifle fire. The Korean said he had heard of many rapes and murders. He said he had seen the troops enter the building where the telephone equipment was kept, watched as the bodies of the seven telephone operators were pulled out and laid in the street. They were not pretty girls, he said, but the thin line of blood across each girl's throat made their white skin whiter. He had heard of other suicides, too.

The big Korean stayed with him all through that night and when the Russian troops came in the morning he was still there, asleep, slumped against the bare wall by the window.

Taiji and the big Korean were made prisoners of war and moved to Toyohara and then to Otomari. On the first of the new year 1946 they were moved across the Japan Sea from Otomari to a concentration camp in Siberia.

Weakened by his illness, his shoes taken by a guard, Taiji lost his feet in the middle of February to the harsh winter. He did not heal well after the surgery and in March was sent once again to the camp infirmary. Black sores of frostbite covered his shins and an infection from the first operation had spread almost to his groin. The doctors shook their heads when he was brought in the second time but it took only a few hours in the afternoon to remove the rest of the legs. Within a week Taiji was back with the rest of the prisoners in the compound.

The big Korean was with him all through that winter.

Some times he would carry Taiji outside and set him against the building. Tears would appear in Taiji's eyes then; often the big Korean would be afraid to move him at all. The stumps of Taiji's legs had not healed well and for weeks after the operation there were red and yellow flecks among the snow drifted softly against the walls of the wooden building where the big Korean gently set



him down.

By fall what was left of his legs had healed and he was sent with a group of other disabled prisoners to the submarine base at Maizuru. American soldiers greeted them there. They took them into a warehouse on the base and put goggles on them and sprayed them with DDT to kill the lice.

Taiji was in Akashi again before the leaves began to turn.

## II

We had always wanted to talk to them but it wasn't until after the night on the bridge that we ever thought of it. We had been in the park all through the winter and never seen them and it wasn't until spring, when things began to pick up, that they started coming. They sat on a bench along the far shore where very few people walked and since we tried to stay where the people were we almost never walked over there. On our side of the lake there were more people but we were always aware of the two of them over on the other side whenever we passed the white boat dock where the couples came and rented the blue or yellow boats that took them out among the lily pads along the shore. We could see the white shirts of the two men quite well even when the cherry trees behind them kept them in the shade. The older one never moved of course but the younger one sometimes left the bench and knelt down just above the row of stones that rimmed the lake and kept the shore from washing away. He would kneel there sometimes for an hour or more, not throwing anything into the water or watching the ducks. There were orange carp and white carp in the lake but they move around quite a bit

so we decided he wasn't looking at the carp because he stayed in one place. It seemed like he wasn't looking at anything but we could not really say because we were on the other side of the lake and it was hard to see his eyes that far away. But he wouldn't move for an hour or so like that and we supposed that he was probably not looking at anything but just thinking. We used to think he was looking at us but the lake was too wide to know for certain.

We spent at least a part of every day there in the park until later after we had overworked it and began to see the same people. We became quite well known in the park after several months. We heard stories from time to time at the church about people who no longer went to the park because they were afraid of running into us but stories like that were never told to our faces so we didn't believe them. We were often at the train stations too but we never heard stories about anyone not using the stations because we were there. You hear stories about people doing this or that but you have to not think about people that way. You do your job and if they accept you, fine. And stories like we heard just didn't make sense—it was a large park and there was plenty of room for all of us. And we never forced anything down anyone's throat, either. We had a job to do and we did it the best we knew how and still we heard those stories. But the Japanese are suspicious anyways. However much you tell them differently they just go on believing what they will.

That was the year there was a very long winter and there was talk about the cherry blossoms freezing. It had not been an exceptionally cold winter although it had snowed twice. None of it stuck to the ground but it was the only snow either of us had seen since we had come to Japan. There were some mornings

when we left the apartment and saw water frozen in the sewer trenches along the road by the railroad tracks but we didn't think much of it because the winter was just long, not exceptionally cold. And by the first week of April we began to see the buds coming out on the trees in the park and we were able to leave our overcoats behind although we still wore sweaters in the mornings. We would have to take them off after we came back to the apartment for lunch and put them on again after we came home for dinner but I remember how free it felt not to have to wear the heavy overcoat and muffler and gloves.

I remember those first days of that spring because I felt free. But then in June we walked toward the other side of the lake and saw the two men come around the corner from the street and enter the park.

## III

Nobuyuki came home the December after the armistice. The mud-walled house among the rice fields was still there but most of the rest of Akashi had been leveled by bombs and fires. The big Kawasaki plant west of town was destroyed; the munitions plant where his mother had died had been rebuilt and then bombed, rebuilt and bombed until it was finally abandoned late in the spring of nineteen forty-five.

Many of the farmers had left the fields the year before when the bombing became more frequent, so many of the fields had gone to weed. But the mud-walled home was still there although the bedding and paper-screen doors and even the god shelf was gone. The nearest neighbors were still there and it was from them that he learned of his mother's death and his father's journey to Karafuto.

The rains of five summers had melted the white lime layer protecting the mud of the walls. Exposed to the wind and rain and sun, the mud had dissolved and cracked in many places. There were holes near the entryway that let winter rays of sunlight onto the tatami, drying the mats. To save the tatami, Nobuyuki set out to patch these holes first. Then he patched and smoothed other weakened places in the walls and when spring came around he painted the patched places with lime.

That spring Nobuyuki heard the creak of a cart's rusty wheels and watched from the entryway of the house as the cart made its way up the narrow dirt path bordered by rice fields. He did not know the farmer but when he saw the form laid out in the back of the cart he knelt down and wept on the black hardened soil of the path. The farmer said nothing for a while, just stood on the path and held the handles of his cart. He had carried this load four days from Fukuchiyama and was tired.

Nobuyuki heard his name called from the back of the cart. He arose from the dirt and stood at the back of the cart and tried to look at the prone figure but could not.

When he heard his name called out again he knelt in the dirt once more.

"Nobu- . . ."

He could not answer. It was not his father. He had come to

think he had no father and now there was this figure in a cart. It wasn't that he had never seen legless men before. He had been in Okinawa when the invasion there began and he had seen them before, the legless, armless, handless, faceless bodies. But not of his father. . . .

"Nobu- . . ."

Nobuyuki rose from the earth and looked at the torso of his father. Taiji's borrowed khaki pants were tucked neatly up under the stubs of his legs. His eyes were steady like the surface of a still pond. As he looked at his son's bowed head, a ripple of pain spread across Taiji's face and closed his eyes.

"Carry me in."

Nobuyuki could not move but when he felt his knees bend again he straightened them and bowed his head and called out to the figure in the cart.

"Father."

The farmer held the cart level as Nobuyuki reached in and slid his hands underneath his father's arms and pulled Taiji to him. At the edge of the cart he turned his father around and reached behind him. He felt for his father's arms and lifted them up, slid his own strong arms beneath his father's and lifted the torso with his legs. Taiji's back and pelvis swung against Nobuyuki's as his body fell away from the cart. Nobuyuki remembered the long pole his mother had used to balance the buckets of water from the river on her shoulders as she carried them. He felt his father's arms, thin and weak, and remembered the time he had lifted the heavy crossbar and buckets as a boy. (His mother had laughed when he stumbled beneath the load.) There was silence as he carried the awkward weight of his father into the newly whitened mud-walled home. He propped his father against the wall on the sun-weakened tatami and then he went outside and wept to the silence of the fields.

The farmer watched Nobuyuki, then turned his cart around on the narrow path and went back toward town. It was the planting season and he had to be back in Fukuchiyama to start his rice crops.

After a while Nobuyuki entered the house and went into the kitchen and made two cups of strong green tea.

One by one over the years they sold the fields around the house. After MacArthur left, Nobuyuki took the money they had saved and built a small square room on the front of the house and bought shelves to hold the bread and packages of cookies and candy he bought from the dealer in Kobe. He hung brightly colored cloth over the doorway leading into the breadstore. He planted rice each year but only in the field next to the house; they were businessmen now. And they tried not to mind the houses going up in the fields where before they had waded in the rice with wide-brimmed straw hats, Nobuyuki, Taiji and Reiko.

The path eventually became a narrow paved lane along which uniformed-and-capped children laughed their way to and from the somber concrete elementary school. The children would stop at Nobuyuki's breadstore and buy melon-flavored bread and cream-center bread. Later years of children bought ice cream

from the red-and-white freezer Nobuyuki had purchased and set near the entrance. The children liked the ice cream bars with the sweetened condensed milk in the centers and Nobuyuki made sure the dealer from Kobe always brought plenty of them. This was long after the war, about the time they first saw the foreigners along the path.

Naiji saw them first. It was in the spring and he saw them from the chair where he smoked cigarettes and watched the children from the new houses. When the weather was good Nobuyuki would lift him by the arms, like a pack, and carry him from the house. Outside, near the sliding door that led into the breadstore, Nobuyuki had placed a chair. Here he would set his father in the morning. In the afternoons he would bring him in for cups of green tea and a rest. When his father awoke from his rest Nobuyuki would take him on his back again to the chair by the entrance and leave him there. For thirty years this had been a daily occurrence. At first Taiji had moved around in the house fairly well, pulling himself along the smooth tatami with his strong arms and hands. But age took his strength just as the winter in Siberia had taken his legs and now that he was seventy he could not move around the house. He had to be carried even to the bathroom. Nobuyuki did not like to do this but it was his father and he had no choice.

Taiji watched the foreigners as they came up the narrow lane, sentineled now on both sides by the white walls of the houses. They were walking their bicycles and the white short-sleeved shirts they wore hung limp from their shoulders.

It was in June, the monsoon season. It had not rained for more than a day but still the humidity hung in the air like smoke. Taiji's eyes did not waver. The foreigners smiled as they passed. One of the bicycles had a flat tire.

Taiji thought of the Americans at Maizuru who had sprayed him with DDT; he watched the two foreigners as they disappeared along the lane, noticed the wet dark stain of sweat on their backs. Taiji adjusted the fold of his pants beneath the stub of his right leg and wondered when it would rain again.

There were other foreigners after that, always in pairs and always in white shirts and ties. Some of them stopped and at the breadstore and bought bread or sometimes, ice cream. They were quiet, for the most part, although some spoke better Japanese than others. Taiji never spoke to them; Nobuyuki learned the names of some of them but they were never around long enough and after a while he confused names and stopped trying to learn names at all. The foreigners never bought much and often asked for the bread heels cut off the loaves before they were packaged. Nobuyuki would fill empty bread bags with the heels but he would not accept money for bread he would otherwise throw away. The foreigners came often after that to get the bread heels but still they did not talk much and Nobuyuki did not talk much to them. He knew they were Christians. All foreigners were Christians.

Taiji did not ask about them. They were foreigners, and that was all.

## IV

The young one was carrying him on his back in a strange way. We talked about it once. I thought it looked like he was carrying water, the way he had his arms stretched out level from his shoulders. The older one seemed frail so I suppose he couldn't have just held the younger one around the neck although being small and without legs he was probably not heavy. So I thought it looked like the younger one was a peasant carrying water but my companion said he thought it looked like the old man was stretched out on a cross like Jesus. I told him I thought that was blasphemous but he stuck with it and I admit there was something of a resemblance to a man on a cross the way he carried the old legless man but you can't be sacrilegious with things like that. We argued about it afterwards but I don't think he understood what I was saying about keeping things sacred. He was a new missionary so I can see how he wouldn't understand something like that.

When we came around the corner we both stopped and I suppose we stared. It was a very unusual sight whether it looked like a man on a cross or a man carrying water on a pole and we were surprised. We recognized the younger one as the man who owned the breadstore out by the church across the river. The older one we presumed was his father, the old man that sat in front of the store all day and chain-smoked and never smiled. Whenever we had to go to the church we passed their store and he was always there if the weather was good enough. They were a strange pair and running into them in the park and seeing the older one sort of bouncing against the back of the younger one startled us. I was quicker than my companion and was able to smile and nod before they passed. The older one's eyes didn't even blink as he looked at us. I wondered if he had been injured in the war. Perhaps a shell had landed close to him and he had never recovered the use of his eyes and face or something. He was an old man to have fought in the war but there were a lot of people who came to the park who had lost limbs or eyes or who had big skin cysts that protruded from their faces or necks. Some of the injuries were quite comical—one man had a scar from his lip to his eye that pulled his mouth up so that he was always smiling. There were a lot of mentally ill around too, but it was hard to tell until you had got them to stop and started to talk to them. We tried to be very careful not to spend time with those kind but still we made mistakes. Several times I couldn't tell if they were crazy until I got to the end of my lesson and started asking questions. Some of them were pretty good, though: they nodded at everything we said and smiled a lot and seemed quite relaxed. But they rarely kept appointments and I think we baptized only two of them while I was there.

So we went on to our side of the lake and they went on to theirs. We left the park early that day and didn't come back for almost a week but it wasn't because of the old man. The monsoon season starts in June and we did not want to get caught in the park if the rains began. We stayed close to our apartment and the train stations and spent more time at the church. And June is a hard month to be a missionary there. People stay indoors and no

one wants to talk in the rain.

## V

Sundays they came to the park and sat on the far side of the lake, away from the people. Taiji had remembered the cherry blossoms when he was in Siberia and each spring Sunday they would close the breadstore and go to the park. They would put on clean white peasant shirts and khaki pants. Nobuyuki would lift his father the way he had lifted him from the farmer's cart after the war; when they left the house he would close the door of the mud-walled home with his foot. They would walk down the dirt path to the river where Nobuyuki had chased dragonflies as a boy, where he had launched a thousand dream ships on hot summer afternoons after school and watched as they disappeared into the shimmering waves of the Inland Sea. Then they would cross the bridge and head toward the sea for a block, then follow the railroad tracks to the edge of the park. They would enter there and walk beneath the cherry trees to the side of the lake farthest from the crowds and find a bench. Nobuyuki would set his father on the bench and then go and kneel by the lake. Throughout the springs and summers and falls of three decades they made this trek, Taiji on the back of his son, arms outstretched, along the path and across the bridge and into the park. Then out of the park, across the bridge, along the path and home.

That spring they came again. They saw the foreigners, but they were used to foreigners coming into the breadstore and so they did not notice the flush of the foreigners' faces as they passed on the way to their bench on the good side of the lake. It was the good side of the lake because they could see the blossoms better from this side and because they were not directly under the trees like the people on the other side. They had the rippled surface of the lake between them and the full hill covered with blossoms and they had the reflection of the blossoms in the lake. The blossoms were closer on the other side, but seeing the water and the reflection and the blossoms together was Taiji's worship, now that he had neither incense nor altar. And it was quiet there. So quiet that Taiji could remember Reiko and the way she had followed with eyes that would not weep the train that took her son away from her. He could remember the green bicycle she rode to market and the faded orange kimono she had worn at O-Bon and the New Year and he remembered how sad he had been that he could not afford to give her a new kimono for the New Year of 1939. And he remembered he had given away the box of brightly colored rice paper and scissors and glue.

He could remember the hospital in Maoka and the strong Korean who had carried him, and he remembered the snow and the red and yellow flecks where what remained of his legs had touched the snow. And he remembered a long cart ride from Maizuru to Fukuchiyama and from Fukuchiyama home. Staring into the dark surface of the lake, beneath the reflection of the blossoms, he could also remember the anguished night before the god shelf when he had cursed his gods and cried.

Nobuyuki kneeled by the lake and remembered many things

too. He remembered the dragonfly summers and the fleeing boats and the seasons that moved too quickly through his boyhood. He remembered the bright kites his mother had made and he remembered his father's humble wish to climb the sky on the string of the kite. He remembered returning to the abandoned house, the holes in the mud walls, and he remembered walking to the deserted munitions plant and kicking through the rubble and being unable to find his mother. He had expected to find her there, something to remind him of her. But there was only the rubble and bent-over fence and he had gone home and patched another hole in the wall that day. He remembered the faces of the children who came to the store with five-yen and ten-yen and fifty-yen coins clutched tightly in their hands, coins warm against the coolness of his own hands. He remembered their brightly colored caps and their stiff leather backpacks and he yearned to have such children always in the store and in the home he shared with his father. But the children came and went like the years and still his father struggled on and still Nobuyuki could not remove the image from his mind of his father lying motionless in the back of a farmer's cart, alive and dead; he remembered the coolness of the black earth beneath his knees, the warm trail of tears that ran down his face. He remembered the seasons of cherry blossoms but no matter how hard he stared into the shivering surface of the lake he could not bring the blossoms back.

He wondered what the blossoms looked like from the end of a kite string.

## VI

When the rains came in June the river filled to its banks and we watched the runoff from the bridge by the church. Except for in June, the river is quite small and there are fishermen along its banks and sometimes you can see the cardboard shanties of drifters who live among the reeds and the thin curls of smoke that rise up from their fires. We used to wonder if the drifters ever got caught when the rains came down the river but the people at the church didn't know much about the drifters. Sometimes it would rain for days and when we crossed the bridge we then could feel a rumble from the water that passed within a foot of the bottom of the bridge. The water peaked after sunset so whenever we had to cross the bridge at night we rode very fast and shouted to each other and whenever we felt a shudder we shouted louder and pedaled faster.

We didn't see the car hit them but we were riding heads down into the rain and didn't see much at all of what happened that night. Coming from the church a while after sunset we were racing and shouting as we crossed the bridge. I saw the headlights first because I was in front and had to look up from time to time to check for cars. It is a very narrow bridge with room for only two lanes of traffic although there is a pedestrian bridge farther down the river. But when the rains come down the river the pedestrian bridge is even shakier than the automobile bridge.

We did not see the two crossing on the other side. We had

seen them in the park again that day, far across on the other side of the lake, just sitting on the bench doing whatever it was they came to the park to do. We decided they had stayed late and when the rains started at sunset they had gotten caught and were trying to hurry home. We had been at the church and were going home and so we were going the other way on the opposite side of the bridge. There are no lights on the bridge so it wasn't unusual that we couldn't see them. The driver of the car said he couldn't see them either, even though they were wearing their white peasant shirts. We had lamps on our bicycles and I suppose that is what saved us. I *suppose* that was what saved us: the driver saw the lights from our bicycles and swerved to miss us and that's when he hit the two of them from behind.

We heard the thud and stopped but in the dark we couldn't tell what had happened. We saw the car stopped in the middle of the bridge with one of its headlights gone out and there was a tightening feeling in my stomach as we approached, walking our bicycles. The rain was coming down hard and the water in the river was very high and from time to time I could feel the shudder of the bridge and it was spooky in the dark.

There was no blood at all. The older one was lying face up in the middle of the traffic lane closest to the sea, his shirt wetted against his skin and his pants tucked neatly up under his legs. By the light of the headlamp we could see his eyes were open just like they were the day we ran into the two of them in the park and when the driver shone his flashlight on the face as we came up the eyes still did not blink and we knew by that he was dead. We looked for a minute for the younger one but after a while it was clear he had been knocked over the side of the bridge into the water. The bridge at that point is only a mile or so from the ocean and with the runoff moving as swiftly as it was his body was probably already to the sea by the time we started looking for it.

The rain was still coming down hard and we could see drops falling into the older one's face and into his opened eyes so I took off my coat and put it over him. The man who had hit them did not seem upset so we went back to the church to call the police. The accident happened in the middle of the bridge and for a while we were the only ones there but as we went back to the church we passed people under big umbrellas who had also heard the thud and who were coming to see what had happened.

We had to pass by the breadstore on our way to the church. There was a streetlamp across from the store and we could see the mud walls of the building. In several places the mud had fallen off and we could see the lathing in a trellis pattern underneath. The rice paddy next to the store had not been planted that year. Except for where they had built it up around the edges the paddy was completely submerged by water from the rain. There was a sign in the middle of the paddy but I could only make out the characters for the word "construction" beneath the light of the streetlamp.

We felt sorry for the two of them because they had died without hearing about Jesus but there is only so much you can do and when they never smile at you and sit on the other side of the lake they make it very hard and damn there were so many

bitter old men from the war. So many bitter old men.

When we got back from the church the police were already there. I was getting wet without my raincoat but they had taken the body of the older one away and when I asked no one could tell me what had happened to it. It was a London Fog. It had cost me more than a hundred dollars and it was the only coat I ever really liked. I hated to lose it. I hate to lose anything. But damn the bitter old men.

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ADONI: I HAVE SINNED  
*Ether 3:4*

Adoni: I have sinned;  
I have sinned grievously against thee.  
My legs are water, my bowels burn;  
My bowels are hot stone.  
Silence encloses me like iron walls;  
I cannot hear thy voice.  
I have sinned against thee,  
And thy voice is shut out.  
Reach forth thine hand to touch me;  
As thou didst touch the small stones,

Reach forth to touch me.  
Make me clean as burning stone.  
I have loved thee in time past;  
I have embraced thy fire.  
Embrace me now in my uncleanness.

—COLIN B. DOUGLAS

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ADONI: FORSAKE ME NOT

Adoni: Forsake me not;  
Turn not away.  
Sin like a girl  
Comes whispering;  
Like a girl with light fingers,  
Whispering softly.

—COLIN B. DOUGLAS

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## ANOTHER LOOK

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# DIFFERENCES

By Marie Cornwall

TWO DECADES AGO in a sacrament meeting talk in the Palo Alto Ward, Richard Poll distinguished between Iron Rod and Liahona Mormons. According to Poll, the primary difference is that an Iron Rod Mormon sees the revelations of God as a “handrail to the kingdom,” while the Liahona Mormon sees these same revelations as a compass only. Poll was attempting to legitimize two faithful approaches to gospel living, and to articulate why people from these two perspectives have such a difficult time understanding each other. The talk was later printed in *Dialogue*, *SUNSTONE* and *A Thoughtful Faith*, and his labels are still widely used.

But the typology never has been a really good description of differences in the way people look at the world, the Church, and the gospel of Christ. Despite the inadequacies, the labels stuck. The most unfortunate consequence of the labeling was that Poll’s initial intent to legitimize the place of *both* types of people in the Church was understood as a the legitimization of the Liahona perspective. Being a Liahona, in some circles, became a badge of courage and distinction.

Typologies like this have one major failing. As soon as someone attempts to classify all members of a species into one or the other of the classes, additional categories are required. There are always a good number of exceptions—people who don’t fit in either category. This is why social scientists are beginning to reject the use of typologies, focusing instead on the underlying dimensions the typology attempts to describe. Identifying the continuum along which people distribute themselves is much more useful. So how do people differ in their religious perspectives, and can we achieve a greater unity of the faith by recognizing the legitimacy of such differences?

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First, keep in mind that people understand the *world* differently, not just God and gospel principles. Differences in religious perspectives are merely a mirror of differences in how people understand the world generally: issues of authority (whether religious, parental, or governmental), the meaning of truth, and the complexity of life.

Sociologists use the term “world view” to describe the totality of an individual’s perspective on the world. Personal world views are acquired through conversations with significant others, and are supported by the intimate relationships of a religious community. These personal world views are never exact duplicates of the “official” version because they are very much a function of a person’s (1) unique social world or culture, (2) historical time, and personal maturity.

As I have traveled and done research on Latter-day Saints in different cultures, I find differences in how they interpret gospel perspectives. For example, middle class American and working class British members have different interpretations of what it means to be blessed of God, related primarily to their economic expectations. In British society, unemployment is high, educational opportunities are limited, and upward mobility is difficult. Therefore, British working class members are likely to recognize God’s hand in matters that many Americans take for granted. For example, one woman told of getting free pizza from the local pizza parlor. Eating out is a luxury for most British Saints. It was a gift from the grateful owner of the pizza shop to his plumber who came quickly and repaired the water line. But the plumber’s wife interpreted the gift as God’s kindness towards her because she gave up a free day to care for a depressed ward member. In contrast, I have an American friend whose difficulty finding employment upon graduation from college precipitated a major crisis of faith. It became a trial of faith because he expected

becoming established in a career would be simple, and because he understood a successful career was one of those blessings which comes with righteous living.

Cross-cultural differences are easiest to pinpoint, but differences also exist within a culture. These are the result of family backgrounds, socioeconomic class, education, or even one’s close circle of friends. We come to understand the world and our religion based on conversations and discussions with others who are close to us. And since each of us exists in a slightly different personal world, and since our conversations are shaped by interactions with others in that small personal world, our world views differ.

The historical period in which a person lives also influences his or her world view. Reality is understood from the relatively narrow perspective of one generation. Let’s take, for example, the meaning of the word “prosper.” God promises Lehi’s descendants that if they keep the commandments they will “prosper in the land” (1 Nephi 2:20). The word prosper comes from the Latin *prosperous* meaning “favorable.” Plants prosper when they are fruitful and their leaves are healthy. But in Webster’s Third International Dictionary, we find prosperity defined as “a state of good fortune; especially financial success,” and then “a state of high general economic activity marked by relatively full employment, an increasing use of resources, and a high level of investment, compare depression.” Baby boomers have come to understand a new definition of prosperity, as in post-World War II prosperity. It was a time of great economic expansion which may be unparalleled in future years. It was also a time when doing well and doing well financially came to be synonymous. In another time and context the meaning of prosperity may have been different. Lehi and his family were standing on the shores of an uncharted and uncertain new land. The promise that they would prosper may have been interpreted as a promise that they would do well in this new environment. Doing well could mean a growing population (they likely had no population problem), low infant mortality, low incidence of disease, no drought and good crop years.

In addition to social worlds and historical time, a person’s world view is influenced by his or her level of maturity. In the past three decades, research on the stages of cognitive and social development has presented us with interesting connections between physiological development and social and cognitive processes. While much of the research has focused

on childhood and adolescent years, evidence points to differences among adults as well. Dealing with ambiguity, comprehending abstract ideas, recognizing when social norms and expectations can (and should) be circumvented are all very much a function of one's developmental stage. The "liberal thinking" parent who is frightened by the rigidity of adolescent children misunderstands the tie between the way one believes and one's cognitive development. Abstract concepts are very difficult to grasp, and viewing life as black and white is a stage towards abstraction. Pushing children through their concrete stage too quickly may be harmful to both parent and child, particularly if it occurs only because the parent's own world view is threatened.

Culture, historical time, and personal maturity form reality triangles from which individuals must interpret their personal life story. Interpreting one's life story in the context of God and the Gospel is a highly personal task. As the individual matures he or she begins to view the world differently, and in the process may change the content of his or her religious beliefs. Being confronted with alternative world views from other social worlds or cultural contexts may require a re-evaluation of one's own views. For some the re-evaluation is too threatening, perhaps because of the lack of experience in dealing with alternative explanations, or because re-evaluations may require changes too great to make. More likely, the alternative world view doesn't work in one's own personal world.

The existential value of religious faith is in its ability to explain the unexplainable and the unexpected. The utility of religion is most often tested by life events which are not easily explainable: death of a child or young person, childlessness, singleness, bankruptcy, loss of security, and the lack of success.

When individuals draw upon religion to explain the unexplainable, they begin personal searches for answers to the most personal religious questions. Mormonism emphasizes personal revelation. Individuals are supposed to obtain answers to personal questions, but there is a presumption that all personal answers must be the same. The problem is, they can't be the same because the fabrics of our lives differ.

There are some areas where disagreement could be dangerous to the viability of the Mormon group. But most areas of disagreement in personal world view are not threatening to the group. When personal answers are invalidated the safety and stability of our own private world is endangered.

Religious communities exist to nurture personal identities and devotion to something greater than the individual. A unity of faith is only possible when individual members open their hearts to the personal traumas and personal answers of others. The miracle of unity is reflected in the caring of two people with different perspectives, different life contexts, and the same devotion to Gospel principles.

The Church is growing beyond rural communities and homogeneous social worlds. One challenge of that growth is the maintenance of a religious community that includes a plurality of cultural and social worlds. The problem, of course, is that this kind of unity requires that all of us be strong, mature, faithful, and charitable.



*"So This is why the Lord established Zion right on the Wasatch Fault!"*

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REVIEWS

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# MAGIC AND THE COMPLEXTITIES OF MORMON HISTORY

## EARLY MORMONISM AND THE MAGIC WORLD VIEW

by D. Michael Quinn

Signature Books, 1987, \$14.95, 313 pp.



*Reviewed by Jon Butler*

D. MICHAEL QUINN'S thesis that a magical world view structured Joseph Smith's religiosity and early Mormon religious practice inevitably makes Quinn's book controversial. It could hardly be otherwise, given the murderous recent interest in Mormon history in Salt Lake City. But this is not a merely trendy book. It is a major work of scholarship, formidably researched and vigorously argued, and it challenges scholars in a variety of disciplines, not just those in Mormon history. The issues it raises are as important to religious history generally and to American religious history in particular as they are to Mormonism.

Quinn's book is important for three reasons. First, it undermines traditional interpretations of Mormonism's origins and thereby shatters the exceptionalist myth about American and Mormon religion. Second, its choice of evidence opens up major questions about the historian's conceptualization of scriptural texts. Third, Quinn's argument brings both Mormonism and American religious history more tightly within the Western intellectual and religious orbit, meaning the expansive West of Europe, not the narrower confines of Utah.

Quinn's argument is spare and economical. He finds Mormonism rooted in a "magic world

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view" often hostile to orthodox Christianity yet sometimes combined with it in powerful ways, especially in Christianity's popular forms. This "magic worldview" took root in both intellectual and folk sources and showed a distinct preference for a "white," or positive, magic that answered difficult questions, found lost objects, cured disease and prevented death (as first described in Keith Thomas's magisterial *Religion and the Decline of Magic* [New York, 1971], a classic book required for any reader interested in Quinn's argument, pro or con). In Joseph Smith's case, this interest led from treasure seeking to apparitions to golden plates to healing to miracles, finally to Mormonism in its pre-1880 varieties. Nor was Smith alone. Mormons of many backgrounds and views followed Smith in these practices until they were discarded in a modernizing process of sharp, swift effectiveness that occurred after about 1880.

Is Quinn's thesis valid? Previous historians (and anti-Mormon detractors) pursued their arguments about Mormon magic through analogical proofs. Their reasoning went as follows: 1) Smith searched for fortunes using weird objects and devices; 2) these objects and devices looked a great deal like the paraphernalia early modern European occultists used to invoke supernatural aid; 3) therefore, Smith was an occultist or practitioner of magic. Direct evidence about eighteenth- or nineteenth-century magic was hard to come by;

the century of the Enlightenment seemed to furnish few exemplars for Smith to follow. Worse, Smith's activities were themselves poorly documented, often only sloppily so by anti-Mormon propagandists. Smith's behavior sometimes *looked* magical but it was extremely difficult to demonstrate that it was magical.

Quinn's book caps investigations begun some twenty years ago by Mormon and non-Mormon historians who sought to understand, not discredit, Mormon origins. Even as these investigations began, the distinguished Mormon historian Marvin Hill wrote that their evidence about Mormon magic was too abundant and pervasive "to brush aside or ignore." Quinn makes that evidence mountainous. No one has so amply documented the interest of Joseph Smith and other early Mormons in fortune-finding and witchcraft, their possession of seer stones and use of divining rods and healing sticks, and their ownership of daggers and parchments engraved with acknowledged "magical" symbols. The result is a stunning turn from the mere possibility that early Mormons imbibed magic to an overwhelming probability that they did so.

Quinn accomplishes his feat (to paraphrase John Houseman) the old-fashioned way—with evidence. The book is an encyclopedia of American and Mormon occultism from the 1780s through the 1860s, and it culminates in a sixty-plus page bibliography and meticulous index that will allow friend and critic alike to pursue every one of Quinn's arguments and evidences. Moreover, every one of his important proofs comes from Mormon contemporaries who were not bothered or embarrassed by such practices, such as Lucy Mack Smith and Oliver Cowdery. This kind of proof gives the book special power for historians, who, like jurors, thirst for direct rather than indirect manifestations of an alleged and important behavior. Quinn's book accomplishes another aim as well. His prodigious research allows him the luxury of never depending on anti-Mormon agitators to substantiate his points. They become little more than interesting antiquarians and controversialists who sometimes correctly perceived magic in early Mormonism but who never understood its origins, depth, or even its importance.

One sometimes wishes that Quinn had written a more leisurely book, as much for himself as for his readers. He might have felt more free to speculate on some of the broader implications of his findings, such as the issue of intellectual chaos in a new religious movement or the competition to define orthodoxy as a religious movement matures. Still, the obsessive pursuit of every scrap of evidence about

Mormon magic also accounts for the power of the book and even gives it a certain charm. Certainly, no one will mistake its message.

No, Quinn has not settled the question about Smith's occultism. Such questions are never settled, at least not in the way that federal budgets are settled. Historians who still are debating John Locke's influence on the Constitution hardly can be expected to reach quick agreement on an interpretation of Joseph Smith's occultism. Yet we have made the necessary leap. Like Zeezrom healed by Alma, we need no longer be buffeted by doubt that Smith harbored occult or magical notions and that these found sympathetic responses in thousands of followers.

But what kind of response, to an occultism of what meaning? No longer burdened to demonstrate any influence, we will now contest the ground of *what* influence. The question about Smith's occultism—Was Joseph Smith a “magician” and, thereby, a charlatan? (this is not at all the same as asking whether Smith used magic, which is Quinn's concern)—now will fragment into a thousand slipperier questions, each one of which will be as difficult to answer as the original query. What did Smith take from occultists, metallurgists, and alchemists? What did he transform? Which occultism was more important, the magic that descended from early modern European intellectuals like Francis Barrett, Nicholas Culpeper, and John Heydon, or the anonymous occultism which circulated through visual and verbal “folk” traditions? Did single, coherent folk magic and alchemical traditions find homes in early America, or, like Christianity, did conflicts and tensions characterize their internal histories and dynamics? Was the magic important to Mormon origins also important to Mormon expansion and to its development as a major religion? A Mormon history bloodied by the mere suggestion of magic among its founders surely will be further disturbed as scholars now probe the certainty of that practice.

Quinn's expansive view of early Mormon thinking opens additional questions about the canon of religious movements, including Mormon canonical texts. Jan Shipps already has demonstrated that modern Mormonism accords “First Vision” an importance unknown to the first Mormons. Quinn extends this reconstruction of Mormon texts by reexamining the Book of Mormon and the physical artifacts that Smith frequently carried with him. Quinn's techniques are commonplace among European medievalists, none of whom would write religious history by focusing, for

example, on only a few of Thomas Aquinas's works. Texts from many sources, some avowedly “popular,” as well as sculpture, painting, and physical artifacts have long comprised their canon, and Quinn and the medievalists may yet teach American religious historians important lessons about textual diversity in all facets of American religion.

Quinn also tells us something important about the breadth of the Mormon texts. Quinn's subject is Mormonism as well as Joseph Smith, and he quite rightly examined many “texts” produced by many Mormons who “founded” as fully as Joseph Smith did. Puritanism, Presbyterianism, Christian Science, and Scientology all cry out for similar canonical redefinition because historians too often restrict themselves to the most familiar and traditional materials, thereby missing movers as much as movements. In taking this expansive view of the canon, Quinn has raised an important question: are a movement's texts comprised of only a few sources taken from a few persons, or are they defined by many sources culled from many adherents? The answer defines the subject and its history simultaneously: whose text, whose scripture, whose religion. In the case of Mormonism, only by adopting the broadest conceptualization of “text” can we understand its tumultuous origins and take seriously the extraordinary proselytizing that established Mormonism as the most important religious tradition born (but not conceived) in the antebellum American spiritual hothouse.

Finally, Quinn's argument about magic and Mormonism demonstrates that we can no longer consider Mormonism the uniquely American phenomenon we once believed or

hoped it was. Quinn's Mormons are not nearly so idiosyncratic or unique as historians might have dreamed. They fit with surprising ease into intellectual and spiritual traditions relatively common in early modern Europe. An interpretation that stresses Mormonism's links to its surrounding cultures is not surprising, of course. David Davis long ago uncovered Mormonism's Puritan roots; Gordon Wood has written about its evangelical origins; Jan Shipps has reminded us of its developmental complexities. Now, Quinn has uncovered new cultural matrixes important to shaping Mormon origins, from seventeenth-century Hermeticists to Emanuel Swedenborg to early nineteenth-century popularizers of traditional folk wisdom to Christianity, of course, in both learned and popular varieties. No one who has read Quinn's book and likes it could any longer describe Mormonism as exemplifying the naive tradition in American culture. This realization might also encourage the same reader to rethink stereotypes about more general American-European cultural and religious separation, which guide American historical scholarship more fully now than they did thirty years ago.

In the end, Quinn's book does what good books always do. In telling us about Mormonism's magical heritage, its multiple “texts,” and its churning European intellectual and cultural roots, it tells us about Mormonism's intricacies and, especially, its vast, often rambunctious complexities. These complexities always have distinguished Mormon religiosity. Increasingly, they distinguish its history. Quinn's book reflects that growing maturity. It would be a shame for both American and Mormon religious history if complexity, which always reflects maturity, were banished in favor of alluring, but always false, simplicity.

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# THE MORMON AS MAGUS

EARLY MORMONISM AND THE MAGIC WORLD VIEW

by D. Michael Quinn

Signature Books, 1987, \$14.95, 313 pp.



*Reviewed by Stephen D. Ricks  
and Daniel C. Peterson*

MICHAEL QUINN'S *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, like his other studies, is well written and articulate, and, except for the unfortunate incorporation of his references into the body of the text, proceeds with a smooth and deliberate flow. Like his other writings, this volume reflects deep erudition. Fully sixty-seven pages are devoted to listing bibliography, their usefulness enhanced by an introductory section giving those entries treating specific topics, e.g., "theories of magic," "the relation between magic, religion, and rationality in early modern Europe," "the interrelation of the occult and Mormonism," and "Mormon folklore." In addition, there are forty two pages of figures.

Quinn has provided a wealth of information concerning the early history of Joseph Smith, his family, and the early period of Mormon history, frequently from almost inaccessible sources. He offers considerable evidence indicating that Joseph Smith, members of his family, and some of his early associates were involved in the use of seer stones, divining rods, amulets, and parchments, as well as in the search for buried treasure. Further, he adduces evidence to indicate that Joseph maintained some interest in these matters even after the New York period. Quinn believes that involvement in such things in no way compromises

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Joseph Smith's role as a prophet and, indeed, bears his testimony early in the book.

Up to this point, we see no need to contest Quinn's basic evidence or to disagree with what we understand to be his thesis. On the other hand, we have considerable reservations about his uncaredful and potentially misleading use of the terms "magic" and "occult," as well as the extent to which he might seem to be implying that these activities had a formative influence on the coming forth and current composition of the Book of Mormon.

Quinn says in his introduction (pp. xi-xii) that he has adopted Webster's Third New International Dictionary as a guide for his use of the terms "magic" and "occult." He also describes a "magic world view" which he believes characterized the Smith family and many of their associates. However, even a casual reflection on some aspects of the most normative of Western religious traditions, such as Judaism and Christianity in its major forms, reveals rites that could easily be construed to fit Webster's definition of "magic," and beliefs that correspond to Quinn's further refinements on the "magic world view." With some ingenuity, it could be argued that the more radical fundamentalist Protestant formulations of confessing Christ as one's personal savior—with their concomitant guarantee of salvation—represent a kind of "magic." The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation could also be (and has been) viewed in the same way.

Quinn is not unaware of the problems inher-

ent in his definition. In his introduction and in the first chapter of the book, he discusses the difficulty of establishing an objective set of criteria to distinguish "magic" from religion. Yet, throughout the book, he persists in describing certain activities of Joseph Smith as "magical."

Quinn's calculus for distinguishing "magical" actions from those that are not is certainly not the same as that of Joseph Smith, who provides no explicit evidence that he viewed the use of seerstones and divining rods, the possession of amulets and parchments, or digging for money as "magical." The assumptions of Quinn's definition are, to a large extent, the assumptions of normative Protestant Christianity, influenced by Enlightenment rationalism. But are these the optimal presuppositions to use in a work of this type? We think not. Protestants influenced by the Enlightenment were precisely those who opposed Joseph Smith most vehemently. Why, in a volume that wishes to be objective about, if not sympathetic to, Joseph Smith and early Mormonism, does Quinn purchase the assumptions of Joseph Smith's hostile critics?

There is a growing consensus in the social sciences that, since there are no objective criteria for distinguishing magic from ritual, "magic" is useless as a classificatory term. In some ways, we are inclined to think it worse than useless. It is so frequently pejorative in connotation, and its polemical potential is so high, that it tends to draw its users away from the standards of objectivity that the social sciences claim to espouse. (The same observation applies to the term "occult," as well.) Borrowing the "center/periphery" (i.e., "outsider/insider") model from the sociologist Edward Shils, "magic" might perhaps best be defined as ritual action of the periphery as it is viewed by those at the center. Such a definition would clearly imply that it is the perspective of the speaker or writer, and not the nature of the act itself, that determines whether that act is viewed as magical. It seems to us that other, less value-laden terms, such as "religion," "popular religion," and even "folk religion," might be used with more profit, objectivity, and, ultimately, less misunderstanding. We suspect that the rather sinister and, for many believing Saints, uncomfortable overtones to the discussion of Joseph Smith's relationship with "magic" and the "occult" would be substantially reduced or altogether eliminated if one of these other, less titillating terms were substituted, or if those actions broadly categorized as "magical" were described more specifically. To say that Joseph Smith had a seer stone, and sometimes used it to look for treasures hidden in the earth, is one thing; to say that he was involved in "magic"

and in "the occult" (though actually describing the same activity) sounds far more serious.

In chapters 5 and 6, Quinn attempts to demonstrate "magical" influences in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and seeks to document allegedly "occultic" parallels to its content. For page after page, he adduces occultic etyma that parallel the proper names found in the Book of Mormon. The number of these is sometimes simply staggering. In a single footnote paragraph (p. 131) at least a half dozen "occult" parallels are cited to the name Moroni. In these chapters, Joseph Smith begins to seem not merely a farmhand on the early American frontier, but a Renaissance magus, bedecked in a starry robe. In the introduction, Quinn says that he is not claiming that Joseph Smith or any early Mormons read "any or all of those books. Rather, the citations are intended to demonstrate the extent of the written tradition, which, in time, diffused widely within the oral tradition" (p. xviii). But how do we know that it had done so in the particular instance of the Smith family? Further, although Quinn expressly denies that these parallels represent direct thefts by Joseph Smith from magical lore, he states that they "suggest that the conceptual viewpoint (or paradigm) and language of these texts may have sometimes reflected the religious, intellectual, and cultural perspectives of the nineteenth-century folk culture to which they were directed" (p. 150). But what, precisely, does this mean? Have the names been reshaped (or actually chosen) to appeal to the cabalistic predilections and experience of the intended readership of the Book of Mormon? We ourselves find ancient Near Eastern etymologies of some of the names far more compelling than the "occult" ones supplied by Quinn.

Our general impression is that Quinn's evidence is sometimes being milked for rather more than it is worth. A few examples should suggest what we mean. Thus, to term such pseudepigraphic texts as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Ascension of Isaiah "occult," as he does in a discussion of the doctrine of multiple heavens (pp. 173-175), is to use the word so broadly as to rob it of any meaningful content. Further, speaking of the Italian surname Morrone/Morroni/Marony, Quinn observes that it "can refer to a man 'with a dark or swarthy complexion,' which suggests a connection to folk magic" (pp. 131-132). Surely, though, dark complected people have no necessary connection to the occult. And in his discussion of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, Quinn stresses the magical paradigm of three supernatural visitations which

must be concluded before the dawn. Then he fails to mention Moroni's daytime fourth visit (p. 122). And what hour of the night would not be appropriate for an angelic visit, according to pages 121-122? There seems to us, additionally, no justification for his inferring magic from Joseph Smith's use of the verb "to conjure" (p. 119). The context of the passage in question is, after all, plainly not "magical" in any sense, and very common non magical usage of the word is attested as early as the thirteenth century. Finally, the tortured analysis of the Smith family's "Holiness to the Lord" parchment (pp. 108-109) serves to illustrate the weakness of Quinn's case for numerology among the founders of Mormonism. On the same topic, for example, he provides no evidence that any Latter-day Saint other than himself has ever noticed the alleged mystic meaning in the fact that the ideal quorum numbers stipulated in D&C 107:85-89 come to a total of 180—which is equal to the numbers of degrees in a triangle, "the most potent geometric form in magic." (Is it significant that this fact occurs on page 180 of Quinn's book?)

Quinn goes to great lengths to establish links between the Smith family and other early Mormons, on the one hand, and the occultic activities of the 1802 "Wood Scrape" on the other. Pages 83-97 abound in second cousins and even third cousins twice removed, linked to associates of Nathaniel Wood by marriage. No genealogical tie is too tenuous to transmit occultic lore. Yet when he wants to argue for the presence of an amphibian at the Hill Cumorah, the fact that his two main sources, Willard Chase and Benjamin Saunders, are closely related is rather casually dismissed. We are assured that Saunders's interview in late 1894, dealing with events of nearly six decades earlier, is uncontaminated by the notions of his brother-in-law, whose affidavit had been published fifty years before.

Quinn's attempted rehabilitation of the salamander is, in fact, extremely puzzling. Although there are no authentic documents explicitly linking Joseph Smith or early Mormonism to the figure of a salamander, he spends several pages (pp. 129-133) showing how perfectly proper it would be if it were there. We are sympathetic with his desire to substitute its neutral-to-positive image for the negative and sinister image of the toad, but there is simply no evidence for it in the documents. Had Mark Hofmann not planted the idea in Mormon minds, would anyone ever have thought of it? Further, it needs to be pointed out that exhaustive studies of the treasure digging motif in American folklore have failed to turn up any trace of a salamander in connection

with treasure digging.

Despite our manifold reservations, we must say the Quinn's book is important and, in many ways, brilliant. No one interested in Mormon origins can overlook it. Furthermore, its implications for traditional views of the Restoration are by no means entirely negative. His recognition of the centrality of heavenly ascent in both the temple endowment and the ancient mysteries, and of the chasm between the Masonic and Mormon rituals revealed by its absence from the former, is a point which cannot be stressed too strongly. And Quinn offers a wealth of evidence which would seem to show that, at the very times when Joseph and his associates claim something very special was going on, something quite unusual really was. Unfortunately, in his attempt to view much of Mormonism from a "magical" perspective—an enterprise in which he realized there were dangers of overemphasis (p. xx)—he has probably gone too far.

Occasionally, "discovered" or "rediscovered" elements of Mormon history have precipitated calls by historians and others to reassess the whole of early Mormon history in the light of that element. In the late sixties, work on the Council of Fifty resulted in such a call from certain quarters. Significantly, Michael Quinn was among those who showed that such revisionist history would produce more distortion than genuine insight. Some may similarly see the alleged "magic" and "occult" elements in Joseph Smith's background as requiring a reassessment of LDS history. However, if *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* is an example of such revisionist history, the hypothesis may already have reached—or exceeded—the limits of its usefulness.

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# MORMONISM: WITHOUT PARALLEL, OR PART OF A CONTEXT?

By D. Michael Quinn

THE TWO PRECEDING reviews of *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* serve to demonstrate a fundamental problem that arises any time scholars discuss Mormonism. The reviews do not state their central assumptions, which are diametrically opposed.

Butler as a Mormon-outsider assumes that Mormonism reflects or responds to its immediate environment and distant heritage in various ways, and that social environment and human heritage are part of understanding Mormonism. In the view of most academics, such assumptions are necessary for a rational approach to any development in human experience.

Ricks and Peterson as Mormon-insiders reflect a common Latter-day Saint insistence on seeing Mormonism as unique and without any parallel beyond those that are officially authorized by Mormon theology or by LDS leaders. Although rarely stated explicitly, this claim to a divine uniqueness without secular parallels has become a virtual proposition of faith among many Mormons. Thus there is often discomfort or suspicion when a Mormon-outsider or insider proposes to discuss Mormonism "in context."

At the extreme, this view can foreclose any real communication between Mormons of this view and anyone else, Mormon or non Mormon. Even a study of Mormon history that demonstrates the author's expressed intentions of fairness, sympathy, empathy, academic neutrality, or even faith will often appear as "anti Mormon," "negative," or "non-faith-promoting" to those Latter day Saint leaders and members who believe that Mormonism has no context except God and his prophets.

But if Mormons, particularly LDS academics, are going to have any reciprocal discourse with others about Mormonism, three ground rules seem necessary. First, as much as possible, the vocabulary should communicate the same meaning to every participant, and should use sparingly terms with specialized Mormon definitions. Second, Mormons should not expect to escape the requirements of a nonpartisan use

of the same words to describe phenomena that have the same or very similar outward appearance, particularly when Mormons are perfectly willing to allow such terms to be applied to such phenomena in diverse circumstances outside Mormonism. Third, Mormons and non-Mormons alike should agree that observing the first two ground rules does not amount to a position of belief or unbelief.

Butler's review follows the above guidelines, but the Ricks Peterson review does not seem to. The latter argues that the term "magic" is useless and should be discarded in favor of "ritual," or "religion," or "popular religion," or "folk religion." A major problem with that proposal is that "magic" is a sub-category of all the terms Ricks and Peterson advocate. "Magic" can communicate specific meaning even if that meaning must be refined carefully, but "ritual" could be anything from spirit incantation to baptism to the Boy Scout handshake to shaving the face daily. As far as my research indicates, every culture has concepts of both magic and religion, even if they overlap or even if the concepts are used polemically within the culture. According to the Ricks-Peterson view, the British Museum would benefit by retitling its massive collection of "Magic Manuscripts" as "Ritual Manuscripts" or "Religious Manuscripts." General terms always have problems, but those difficulties cannot be solved by substituting terms of even broader application.

The Ricks-Peterson review seems to be arguing without any substantiation for a unique dimension to early Mormon use of seer stones, divining rods, amulets, astrological guides, healing objects, house charms against evil spirits, and parchments inscribed with symbols from previously published handbooks of magic (or would Ricks and Peterson call them handbooks of religion?). The Ricks Peterson review assumes that these early Mormon activities bore no real relationship as phenomena to identical practices throughout early America and even by some of Joseph Smith's neighbors. In other words, since Joseph Smith did it, the activity was by definition not magic, or folk

magic. Ricks and Peterson do not seem to be seriously advocating the abandonment of "magic" as a term to describe the activities of Pharaoh's court, or of Simon Magus, or of John Dee. Nor do they seem to object to the standard use of the term "folk magic" to describe treasure digging ceremonies by other early Americans who did not happen to be numbered among Joseph Smith's family and other Mormon leaders. This effort at redefinition seems simply to originate in the demand to see manifestations of Mormonism and its leaders as beyond any comparative categories. For Joseph Smith and others in America and throughout the world, identifiably magic objects and activities have been part of their religious quest, but that fact does not remove the objects and activities from the category of the magical, nor does it lessen the religiosity and divinity of the quest.

Moving beyond those general observations about the two reviews, I have a couple of corrections for each. Ricks and Peterson have misread the book in a number of respects. For example, they complain, "In a single footnote paragraph ([p.] 131) at least a half dozen 'occult' parallels are cited to the name Moroni." To the contrary, that footnote begins with Hugh Nibley in citing non occultic parallels to the name Moroni, to which another reader has added that Moroni was the capital on the island of Grande Comore. Even though my book emphasized occult-magic parallels, it presented differing evidence and viewpoints. Ricks and Peterson also indicate that I tried to establish a link between the Vermont "Wood Scrape" in 1802 and treasure-digging in Palmyra in the 1820s based on distant cousin relationships. On the contrary, I began the discussion of various familial links by observing that the Palmyra newspapers of 1819 and 1824 verify the presence of a Justus Winchell in Palmyra, corroborating the claims of Vermont residents (long disputed by Mormon apologists) that Winchell of the Vermont Wood Scrape later associated with the Smith family in treasure digging at Palmyra.

Butler rightly points out evidences I present that Joseph Smith and other early Mormons engaged in folk magic activities and used magic objects, but he does not sufficiently acknowledge my view that the Book of Mormon and Mormonism (which I personally regard as God-given) transcend environmental explanations. Nothing touched by humans can avoid the human context, and nothing touched by God can avoid the transcendent. The sacred history of Judaism, early Christianity, and Mormonism comprise both the human and the transcendent.

## SINGLE ADULT WARDS STRETCH CHURCH POLICY

IN THE spring of 1986 the Church issued a new set of guidelines to standardize student and single adult wards throughout Church. However, today U.S. landscape of single wards is at least as varied and chaotic as a result of the policy as it was before.

Singles comprise a significant portion of the adult LDS membership. In the Church's 1981 membership survey of the United States and Canada, singles without children comprised 27 percent of the households in the Church and another 5 percent were singles with children (a total of 32 percent).

The stated overall purpose of single adult wards was to temporarily meet the needs of "younger unmarried members" who have completed missions and have graduated from college or are approaching graduation, to provide Church leadership experiences and to "create an environment in which single adults can meet and marry."

In general, the 1986 policy permitted stake presidencies to organize a single adult ward if there were more than 200 single members in their stake between the ages of 21 and 30 (a limit few stakes could meet); when the number dropped below 200 the ward was to be discontinued. Singles under the 21 who were not living with their parents were permitted to attend a singles ward. Singles residing in stakes without a singles ward were not allowed to become members of a singles ward in a nearby stake. Single parents with children at home were to attend conventional wards with complete youth programs.

The policy appears to have been a compromise on the general

Church level between authorities who favored single adult wards and those opposed. The setting of the lower age limit at 21 instead of 18 was partially in response to complaints from parents along Utah's Wasatch Front who did not want their children just out of high school and still living at home to attend another ward.

The upper age limit addressed the concern of some authorities that older single men were dating and marrying young single women and hence increasing the already disproportionate number of older single women in the Church. It also met the concerns of those who feel that the Church should not have permanent specialty wards for any group. In addition, there were complaints from older singles, particularly in Utah, who felt that being assigned to a singles ward cut them off from family and friends and was the equivalent of being a "second-class" member in the Church.

Since 1973 when the First Presidency allowed the creation of single adult wards, their existence has been controversial and unconstant, with wards being created, dissolved and recreated again. The current policy has continued the tradition. When the Guide was released, some stakes below the 200-member threshold dissolved their singles wards, others kept their ward and only enforced the 21-year age requirement, others also sent the membership records of everyone 31 and older to their "conventional" wards. Some, especially in urban areas outside Utah, just ignored the policy altogether. This varied compliance resulted in confusion, resentment, and a sizeable active but wardless single pop-

ulation.

A brief survey of some of the single adult wards in the U.S. metropolitan areas illustrates the problems. Salt Lake City may have the greatest concentration of singles and single adult wards. In the early 1980s all non-students were required to leave the University of Utah student wards and attend the conventional or single adult wards in their stake. In reality, many singles, not comfortable in their conventional ward and not having a single ward in their stake, never settled in another ward. "Ward hopping" in search of friends and community is common occurrence, as is regularly attending a single adult ward without officially being a member of it. Today, there are hundreds of singles who have not had a calling in years.

The number of single adult wards in the Salt Lake valley is decreasing as stakes discontinue their single adult wards to meet the 1986 policy. Those that remain enforce the policy in different ways. Some wards only accept members living within the stake boundaries, others openly invite any single to attend but will only extend callings to members living within their boundaries, while still others seemingly accept the entire valley as their jurisdiction. Some wards have the reputation of being "meat markets"—primarily social centers, places to meet and date other singles. Other wards have a tighter-knit sense of community (particularly due to boundary maintenance).

Understandably, regular Church programs, such as home and visiting teaching, suffer greatly when an "active" elder can go for years without having a calling, home teachers or a home teaching assignment, or a bishop who knows his name. While most active singles regularly attend one ward, many singles report that the Salt Lake singles wards focus more on social activities and less on the service and reactivation.

In contrast, the five wards in the Washington, D.C., area have instituted several innovation which

address many of the problems manifest in Salt Lake. The three wards in the Virginia suburbs have replaced the standard home evening group program with "priesthood correlation groups" which plan weekly projects to instruct about and implement the three mission of the Church: proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints (including all aspects of welfare services); and redeeming the dead. In addition, the wards and groups get involved in numerous community service projects. Reportedly, this focus helps give these wards a sense of purpose beyond being a "graduate MIA."

On the other side of the Potomac, the Washington Stake discontinued its single adult ward and replaced it with two hybrid conventional wards whose membership includes all single adults in the stake plus married couples without children at home who live within the ward boundaries (couples with children attend other conventional wards with youth programs). Members in the ward feel the arrangement has proved successful both in meeting the need of single adults to affiliate with older members and in revitalizing wards in aging residential neighborhoods.

Several common elements help make both Washington innovations work. One is the strict maintenance of ward boundaries which include not just the sponsoring stake but other stakes in the regions, thus providing an ordered way for singles in stakes without a singles ward to join one. Having a stable membership allows ward leaders to use the conventional ward programs to better watch over their members, administer Church programs, and provide callings for all everyone.

Within the stakes, there is very little sense that these wards are simply temporary places where singles find their eternal mate. Indeed, long-time members say they appreciate being treated as a legitimate ward, instead as a stepchild of the Church. The stakes expect the same from their single adult wards as they do any other

ward, including budget assignments, staffing stake positions, welfare assignments, road shows, etc.

In most of the Washington wards, there is no upper age limit at which members are required to leave the ward (although some will not accept new members past 35). The local experience is that as singles approach forty without marrying, many of them decide on their own to transfer their membership to the conventional ward. Several bishops feel that this is preferable to arbitrarily forcing someone to move at a specific age, thereby creating unnecessary resentment.

In contrast, many singles in Manhattan, where there is no single adult ward, say that they feel comfortable in the diverse membership of the downtown wards. They receive important callings, and do not want a single adult ward organized.

On the other side of the continent, the San Francisco single adult ward is addressing the growing challenge of gays in the Church. A large portion of its members are believing Mormons who openly acknowledge homosexual inclinations but who, because of their faith, are celibate. The bishop meets regularly with groups of gays for counseling and support. Many prominent ward positions are staffed by celibate gay ward members. Given President Hinckley's comments at a recent General Priesthood Meeting that the Church does not recommend marriage as a solution to homosexuality, many of them could be active single adults for their entire life.

Down the coast, the dozen-plus Los Angeles single adult wards are

in a balkanized situation similar to that in Salt Lake. There are wards with strict membership rules and boundaries while others, responding to the wardless single population "looking for a home," welcome all who attend. There are also stakes without single wards which adamantly refuse to allow their members to transfer to wards outside the stake.

While there are diverse single adult programs throughout the United States, there is one thing single adult ward bishops are nearly unanimous about—the importance of singles wards. They do not feel that a conventional ward supplemented by stake and regional activities can adequately meet the needs of most single Church members. Citing numerous examples of individual growth, opportunities for major callings, and increased social support, nearly every singles bishop argues that the needs of singles were better addressed in his ward than in a conventional ward where the emphasis is on the youth programs and adults primarily receive support from spouses.

Clearly, as local leaders respond to local needs, the Church's single adult ward policy has not brought uniformity to Church administration. In some cases it has had the unintended result of alienating single members who find little in common with their conventional ward but are restricted from joining a single adult ward. In many ways, the confusion over singles policy is a metaphor for the confusion in the Church over how to assimilate our increasing differences under the umbrella of unity.

## HOFMANN PAROLE DENIED

By Ron Bitton

ON JANUARY 29, the Utah Board of Pardons decided not to grant a parole or rehearing date for Mark Hofmann. The decision by the board virtually guarantees that

Hofmann will spend the rest of his life behind bars.

Although the board had suggested earlier that Hofmann serve only seven years as part of a plea

bargain through which authorities hoped to learn all the details of Hofmann's extraordinarily complex case, it took only 27 minutes for board members to reach their decision. According to Board Chair Victoria Palacios, the decision was justified by the "large number of [Hofmann's] victims" and his "callous disregard for human life."

The decision seemed not to disturb Hofmann, who testified before the three-person board for about an hour. Whatever Hofmann's feelings may have been, for most other members of the community the board's decision came as both a surprise and a distinct relief. It marked a decisive end to the chain of events that began on 15 October 1985, when Hofmann murdered Steven F. Christensen and Kathleen Sheets.

As investigators began to grasp the scope and complexity of the Hofmann case, they recognized that it could take years to build a firm case against Hofmann. In fact, in an interview with the *Deseret News*, Salt Lake County Attorney Robert L. Stott estimated prosecutors would have had only a 75 percent chance of convicting Hofmann for the murder of Christensen and only 25 percent for the murder of Sheets.

Eventually, prosecutors reached an agreement with Hofmann in which he pleaded guilty on 23 January 1987 to two counts of second-degree murder (which is not a capital offense) and two counts of fraud. In return for these relatively lenient charges, Hofmann agreed to discuss the details of the two murders, as well as 33 documents he forged and sold, in a series of interviews with county prosecutors.

When the transcripts of the interviews were made public last July, they proved disappointing. Hofmann and the county prosecutors spent only 14 pages discussing the murders. The rest of the 537 page transcripts were taken up by discussions of the technical details of the forgeries.

Polls taken after the release of the transcripts showed that an overwhelming majority of Utahns

felt that Hofmann had duped the prosecutors by offering full disclosure on the forgeries and then balking when the time came to discuss the murders. However, the transcript concludes with a threat by the prosecutors to report his noncompliance to the parole board.

On 29 January, the prosecutors delivered on that threat. In a letter to the parole board, Stott noted that "Two respected citizens of this state were murdered by Hofmann. . . . The victims of Hofmann's crimes are numerous, the damages are staggering. Hofmann has yet to make a full and complete answering of all his crimes."

Stott noted specifically that Hofmann had refused to discuss the details of ten charges, including the murders; that he had shown a general reluctance to discuss his motives and feelings regarding his crimes; and that prosecutors doubted his claim that the explosion in which Hofmann was injured was meant as a suicide attempt, although they could not disprove it.

Hofmann's attorney Bradley Rich expressed surprise at the parole board's decision. "Historically the board has looked at some very serious homicides and set reviews at 10, 15, and 20 years down the road." Rich expressed his continued support for his client and added, "I look forward to the time when a future board will say he deserves another chance."

Although Hofmann's career has come to a conclusive end, it may be years before the dealers and collectors who bought his forgeries (many of which are still undetected) and the historians who interpreted them deal with the damage he did to them. For others—Hofmann's family, his associates, and the family and friends of Steve Christensen and Kathy Sheets—the task may never be complete.

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THE SUNSTONE FOUNDATION

PRESENTS

# The 1988 Book of Mormon Lecture Series

HELD SECOND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH

7:30 P.M.

**FEBRUARY 9**  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**NEW EVIDENCE FOR THE BOOK OF MORMON, OR  
WHY NEPHI SHOULD NOT HAVE KILLED LABAN**  
EUGENE ENGLAND, professor of English, Brigham Young University

**MARCH 8**  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**LEHI'S THEOLOGY OF OPPOSITION IN ITS 19TH AND 20TH  
CENTURY CONTEXTS**  
MARK THOMAS, author of "The Meaning of Revival Language in the Book of Mormon"

**MARCH 22**  
(4TH TUESDAY)  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**BOOK OF MORMON HISTORY FROM THE LAMANITE  
PERSPECTIVE**  
RICHARD L. BUSHMAN, author of *Joseph Smith and the  
Beginnings of Mormonism*

**APRIL 12**  
103 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**SCRIPTURAL FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE BOOK OF MORMON**  
BLAKE OSTLER, author of "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion  
of an Ancient Source"

**MAY 10**  
Fine Arts Auditorium  
University of Utah

**THE BOOK OF MORMON**  
HIGH NIBLEY, professor emeritus, ancient studies,  
Brigham Young University

**JUNE 14**  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**THE BOOK OF MORMON CONCEPT OF PRIESTHOOD**  
PAUL JAMES TOSCANO, author of *Gospel Letters to a Mormon Missionary*

**JULY 12**  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**THE LITERARY ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON NARRATIVE**  
DAVID P. WRIGHT, assistant professor, Hebrew and Near Eastern languages,  
Brigham Young University

**AUGUST 9**  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**THE RELIABILITY OF WORDPRINT MEASUREMENTS IN 5,000-WORD TEXTS:  
AN PRELIMINARY BOOK OF MORMON CASE STUDY**  
JOHN L. HILTON, staff physicist, Physics International, Berkeley, CA  
(A copy of the technical study on measuring author identification may be obtained in advance by sending \$1.50 to Sunstone)

**SEPTEMBER 13**  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**DEFENDING THE BOOK OF MORMON FROM ITS HISTORY  
NOT ITS HISTORICITY**  
VAN HALE, religious talk show host, author of articles on Mormon history and doctrine

**OCTOBER 11**  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**A LITERARY LOOK AT THE BOOK OF MORMON**  
STEVEN C. WALKER, professor of English  
Brigham Young University

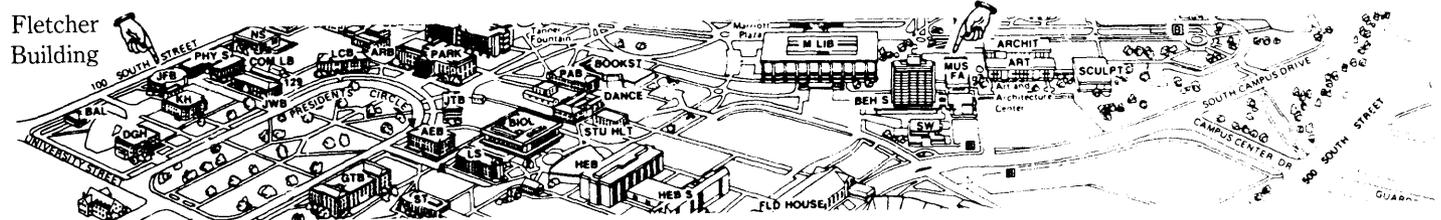
(WED.) **NOVEMBER 9**  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**THE GADIANTON ROBBERS**  
DANIEL PETERSON, instructor, Hebrew and Near Eastern languages,  
Brigham Young University

**DECEMBER 13**  
101 James Fletcher Building  
University of Utah

**PANEL: THE HISTORICITY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON**

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TO RECEIVE FUTURE LECTURE MAILINGS SEND NAME AND ADDRESS TO SUNSTONE

**BURDENS OF BIRTH**

MUCH TO the consternation of some young women who feel that the LDS Church's veneration of motherhood is not matched by its actions, the Mormon church does not provide paid maternity leave for female employees, but treats pregnancy as the equivalent of an illness. The Church does, however, allow six weeks of leave without pay while still holding the position for the employee (if sick leave time is accumulated it may be used instead). Women's rights activists say the policy is about average for Utah; only two percent of U.S. companies provide paid maternity leave.

**AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION**

Reflecting the continuing official concern about immorality at Church schools, Ricks College recently announced that all hot tubs installed in college-approved off-campus housing must be segregated by sex, monitored, and secluded for privacy. The school, which recently banned cable TV from student housing, has not had a history of problems since only one complex, the all male Alpine Chalet, currently has a tub. No mention was made of swimming pools.

**HIDDEN TITLE**

FORMER BYU religion students who spent late nights sifting through the Book of Mormon to find those priceless pearls to fill in the thousands of blanks in Cleon Skousen's *Hidden Treasures From the Book of Mormon* will be happy to learn that the treasures are no longer hidden. Apparently in a response to all the discussion about Joseph Smith, magic, and treasure seeking, the word "hidden" has been deleted from the title of the latest edition.

**THE WORLD IS HIS CAMPUS**

THE CONTROVERSIAL D. Michael Quinn, author of *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years*, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," and *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* recently announced that when winter semester ends this April he will resign from his "continuing status" (tenured) position as professor of history at Brigham Young University because he wants to "pursue his career plans elsewhere." For the immediate future, Quinn has secured a grant to allow him to do full-time research at the Huntington Library on two book-length projects he has been working on since his dissertation: a study of the kinship affiliations of the LDS hierarchy, and a social and institutional history of polygamy from 1830 to the present.

**SUBLIMINAL PROSELYTING?**

"Mormons are not up front about how they do things," complained Moshe Dan to the *Jerusalem Post*, objecting to the way lights in BYU's recently completed Jerusalem Center form a giant crucifix at night. Dan and other Old City members of The Committee to Preserve the Holiness of Old Jerusalem have requested that the Knesset discuss BYU's apparent proselyting, which the university agreed to forego as a precondition to building the complex on the Mount of Olives. Explaining that Mormons don't use the symbol of the cross, Kelly Ogden, the center's assistant director, said the cross was a coincidental byproduct of interior hallway lights. He promised that if the now turned-on grounds' lights don't do the trick the school will turn on more lights inside to change the pattern.



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## INTERVIEW

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# SATIRE AND THE GOOD NEWS

*A Conversation with Mike Yaconelli*

*Mike Yaconelli is editor of The Wittenburg Door, an evangelical Christian satire magazine, and president of Youth Specialties, a resource organization for youth ministries. Portions of this interview are taken from his presentation at the 1987 Sunstone Symposium IX.*

**WHAT QUALIFIES YOU TO PRODUCE THE CHRISTIAN EQUIVALENT OF MAD MAGAZINE?**

I've always wondered what my spiritual gift is. I looked and I couldn't find it in Corinthians. I couldn't find it anywhere until I heard a statement by Ernest Hemingway when he was asked what makes a great writer. He said it's somebody with a built-in crap detector. Suddenly I discovered my spiritual gift. I also discovered why I couldn't find it in the New Testament. I think that's what good satire is. It's just crap detecting. It's just looking at something and saying, "What?! You've got to be kidding me. This can't be true. They don't really believe this. They're not really sitting there going along with this, are they?" That is what the role of the satirist is all about.

**WHAT ELSE PRODUCES GOOD RELIGIOUS SATIRE?**

First, the ability to laugh at something when you really feel like crying. Some of us just naturally laugh instead of cry when we see something bad. But it's not really laughter, it's really crying inside. We make fun of it because it hurts so much that we figure if we laugh about it maybe that will make it okay.

Every so often in our magazine, we give an award called the Theologian of the Year. A few years ago Tammy Faye Bakker, won the honors. Now, all we did was excerpt a little bit of her book—which sold 60,000 copies, by the way—without saying anything else. And when

people read it they had no choice but to laugh. In *I Got To Be Me*, which is an incredibly profound statement to begin with, Tammy deals with the difficult theological issues of our day: death, grief, God's healing, God's will—all in one remarkable story of Chi Chi the dog. One day Chi Chi dies unexpectedly and Tammy has the dog kept around for a few days, hoping for God to resurrect it. She can't accept Chi Chi's death until she finally comes to understand that God took the dog to keep it from wetting on her drapes! It breaks my heart to realize that Tammy had no idea what she was writing. She had no idea how ridiculous that sounded. And there were 60,000 people who bought that book and never once wrote in to say, "What?!" I have to laugh at stuff like that.

**CAN YOU ALWAYS LAUGH? DON'T YOU SOMETIMES FEEL OUTRAGE?**

There are some things that the church does which make me angry. I wish I didn't get angry, but I can't help it. You know why I can't help it? Because we should get angry. We have every right to get angry. When what is happening is absolutely contradictory to everything we believe, we have to speak out somehow. If we didn't, the stones would speak out.

I'm thinking about something that's going on right now in the Protestant church. There are thousands of huge churches of three, four, five thousand members that have instituted a new kind of tithing program. It's called "God's Guarantee Plan." Here is how it works: You get a little

pledge card at the beginning of the year. It says "I will give ten percent of my money to the church for the next 90 days." The second part of the deal is this: at the end of the 90 days, if you are not completely satisfied with the results, the church will give you the money back. Now, I don't understand, when the pastor, in his great pastoral tones, announces this program, why the entire congregation doesn't stand up and go, "What?! Are you nuts?" I don't ever remember Jesus saying, "take up your cross and follow me, and if at the end of 90 days you are not completely satisfied..." You have to get mad at stuff like that.

**WON'T YOU HINDER GOD'S WORK BY THROWING STONES AT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TRYING TO LEAD ACCORDING TO HIS WILL?**

Good satire militates against what people do, not against the people themselves. Take Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker—they're real easy targets. But I don't want to make fun of *them*. I want to make fun of what they're *doing*. It's what they're *doing* that worries me. Them, I can love. Them, I can even forgive. But what they're doing is another issue.

Bishop Steven Neal (I have no idea what he was bishop of, but it sounds really good) once said, "Criticism is the manure in which the servants of the Lord grow best." Satire is not an argument; it is a mirror. You don't try to argue through satire. You simply try to reflect what's happening, and you hope that people will see what the problem is and take a look at themselves and others. That is the purpose of satire. It always slips in a little pin that pops the balloon.

I've met a lot of so-called important people in our magazine's history as we've interviewed religious leaders. Most of them are a bunch of pompous egotistic maniacs—I'm trying to be kind. They need their balloon popped. But they have all these people around them who are trying to protect them. The "yes people." And the "yes people" are trying to keep everybody from getting to their boss. Those people are very, very destructive. Nobody needs to be protected from anybody.

**ARE THERE PEOPLE, THOSE WHO GOD HAS PUT IN AUTHORITY OVER US, WHO WE SHOULD NOT CRITICIZE PUBLICLY?**

I don't think so. Everybody is open to criticism. I think you go to them privately first. That's the good way to do it. But public people require public criticism. The problem is that

public people can't be counted on. I go in privately and they give me the B.S. like, "Thank you for coming, and I really appreciate your bringing that up and I can promise you that we're going to do something about it," and then, you know, that's it. They continue to do what they do. It's a very cynical view, but it happens to be one that I hold. So I think that sometimes public figures require public statements.

Now, again, why am I doing it? Is it to nail them? Is it to make fun of them? Or is it to make them deal with what they're doing? When Robert Schuller spent \$15 million on his Crystal Cathedral, we listed a complete page of things you could do with \$15 million. The list was unbelievable: You could build ten seminaries in Africa; feed so many people for a year... and on and on. (We researched every one of those things to find out how much money it would take.) Or you could build one glass church! He was furious. Absolutely furious. He said that we had totally misstated reality. That, in fact, they give a lot of money away, and blah, blah. Well, I think he was wrong.

## HOW CAN YOU SATIRIZE WITHOUT BEING DISLOYAL?

Effective satire must come from within, not from without. Those who criticize effectively must also love what they criticize. As a Mormon, there may be a lot of things about the Mormon church you feel unhappy with. Because of those feelings, you are told, "You're not really a Mormon. You're not really part of the Church. You're on the fringe. You're a trouble maker. You're disruptive. There's something wrong with you." Deep in your heart you're going, "What are you talking about? I love this church. I love these people. That's why I'm criticizing it. I have the right to because I'm part of it. It's me that I'm criticizing. I'm not standing outside looking in. I'm inside looking around and saying, 'Hey! There are some things here we've got to deal with because we care about them.'" And that's the tough part, because after sitting in the same churches and the same meetings you walk away thinking, "What?!" while all your friends are saying, "Wasn't that wonderful!"

## ISN'T SATIRICAL COMMENTARY A BIT ARROGANT?

We have a section of the magazine called "Truth is Stranger than Fiction" where we reproduce newspaper advertisements and flyers from churches promoting the worst publicity gimmicks imaginable—things like animal acts and freak shows for Christ. You're right, there is

probably a little bit of arrogance in that. All we're doing is reprinting them but, obviously, we're doing it because they're so totally unbelievable.

A friend of mine at a radio station took a bunch of these advertisements and checked them out. One was for a little midget gal, 2'3" or something, called Little Phyllis, billed as "the shortest woman in the world." "Come see this midget speak at our church," and so on. My friend called her and said, "What do you think about people advertising you being a midget, and making you into a sideshow at a church? Doesn't that bother you?" "Oh, no," she said, "I just think it's wonderful that I am able to go to these churches and talk to people about Jesus. They come and they want to see me and it just really is a neat thing." He's going, "Now, wait a minute!" Then she says, "You know what's the best ministry I have above anything else?" He said, "What's that?" "It's when I go back to the pastor's home where I'm staying. I get to minister to these preachers' wives. They're all really in bad shape." And then she said, "I'm with these real fundamentalist churches and so here I am, this midget, and I'm staying at this house, and I get into these incredible conversations with the wife, and I have this wonderful ministry."

After I heard that, I felt terrible. I thought, here is this dear gal just kind of doing her thing. But I still defend what we were doing, which was to say that it's wrong to make a spectacle of it. Sideshows at church are wrong and they shouldn't do it. On the other hand, even though they are wrong and even though all that terrible stuff is going on, here's this little gal, her bones are all disintegrating and she has to lie down most of the time, and she's just so excited every time somebody asks her to speak. That ruins it. I've learned that once you know people, it's harder to make fun of them. So I use this strategy: Don't get to know anybody.

## PEOPLE REALLY RESPOND TO SAPPY, SENTIMENTAL FLUFF. CAN'T IT DO SOME GOOD?

Sure there's good in it. God can make good out of anything, even things that are horrible, but we still have to speak to the specific problem that's there. If we're doing sappy, sentimental things, we need to say so. That doesn't mean God can't use it. That doesn't mean people don't respond. But, unfortunately, millions of people are responding to Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker. Now, God is actually using them—you can see the strong feelings their supporters have—but it's still wrong. It's still wrong. I'm not going to back down and say,

"Well, but look at all the people that are helped by it." I don't care. It's wrong. It takes a certain temperament to be a critic. If you find yourself always equivocating, you probably ought not to do satire because you don't have the gumption for it. In a sense, a satirist is able to focus on something and not be riddled by, "But what about this, but maybe there's a good part over here."

## WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE?

There's always the risk that you're going too far. That is the risk of satire. Conversely, the risk of being positive all the time is that you never address any problems. You just kind of let things flow. Yes, we screw up. On the other hand, so do the other people who are running around being positive all the time and saying, "Let's just say we're saying the same thing and let's not get anyone upset; let's just keep everything going." Well, that's malarkey. Problems need to be addressed, but it shouldn't be a personal attack.

Neither do I think you satirize God. I think that's off limits. We've been accused of blasphemy and I want to listen to that criticism because I don't think everything is up for grabs. That's what has happened to *National Lampoon*. Years ago, *National Lampoon* was wonderful. Now, all they do is make fun of women's breasts and the trashiest, ugliest, the most despicable, untasteful things they can come up with, and call it satire. That's not satire. That's cheap nonsense. With good satire, you think; it's clean; it's clear; it's subtle.

## HOW CAN WE TAKE OUR RELIGION SERIOUSLY WITHOUT TAKING OURSELVES TOO SERIOUSLY?

So many adults are so serious all the time. We're so uptight. Then, of course, you add to that the church and religion and God and Jesus and spiritual stuff, and now it's this incredible burden. Have you ever been in church when someone burped and it almost blows out everybody's sinuses because you're all sitting there trying not to laugh? Wouldn't it be great if the speaker could just go "Okay, who did it?" What is wrong with admitting something is funny?

I grew up in a very conservative church and we would love to ask our Sunday school teacher tough questions. We'd say, "Uh, what does the Bible say about French kissing?" Our teacher would stumble around for a while and then she would come up with the one statement that wiped out all of us: "Mike, I can't find a specific verse, but when you're in a dilemma like that ask yourself this question: If Jesus were there

with you, would you do it?" As a result, I was constipated for three days. I kept on kissing, but no way was I going to the bathroom. The attitude was sort of like if Jesus were here nobody would laugh. Nobody would do anything. We'd all just kind of sit around. That's malarkey. I think one of the ways we communicate the reality of our faith to this world is by knowing how to laugh.

## DOES THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH REALLY NEED SATIRE?

The reason we have satirists and the reason we do satire is because the world out here is going to hell on a roller skate. People are struggling and lonely and looking for something that will give their life meaning and significance, and the church is running around talking and philosophizing—intellectualizing when in fact people have desperate needs that aren't being met. That's why I do satire. I do it because I care about people and their needs, and the loneliness and the desperation that goes on in our culture today.

My guess is that most of SUNSTONE's authors raise issues about your church *not* because they want to make their point, and show how smart they are, but rather because they're trying to say to the Church, "Would you please listen to the real world out there? Would you get out of your ivory tower, go out there where people really live and hear what it is that they are struggling with and dealing with and understand that? Take all your structures and all that stuff and say, 'We will forget all that right now. Let's see if we can try to communicate to this world, to the people we're living with.'" I think the Mormon church would triple its evangelistic effort if it would shut up long enough to listen to people. Forget the doctrine, forget all the rest of it. Imagine two guys riding up to your door on their bikes. Knock, knock, knock. "Yes, hello." "Hi, we just wanted to come in and listen." "What? No books, no tapes, no slide projector?" "No, we just want to listen to you. We just want to hear what it is you're feeling."

Nobody listens to us anymore. Everybody is preaching. Aren't you sick of it? I'm sick of TV specials. I'm sick of cassettes. I'm sick of seminars. Everybody running around with "Eight ways to Overcome Depression," "Nine Ways to Have a Happy Marriage," "Six Ways to Know the Will of God." They didn't read the New Testament, did they? Jesus would get up there and say, "Blessed are the poor," and when he got done they'd go, "Huh?" And he'd say, "Let me explain what I mean. One time there was a guy. And the rains came. And he built his house on

the sand..." And he'd get done and they'd go, "What?" And he'd say, "Goodnight guys, I'll see you." And they'd go, "What the heck was that?" He didn't explain anything. He just left them there struggling with the thing. I honestly think that people today are sick and tired of sermons. They just would like somebody to shut up long enough to listen to them.

A good friend of mine had three of his kids die of cancer. When the third boy died, all these people came into the hospital room with tapes and books and advice and prayers. He says he could hardly wait for them to get out of the room. Then, he says, "A friend walked in who'd lost his own kid in a tragic car accident, grabbed a chair, slid it up next to me, reached up and held my hand and never said a word. I never wanted the man to leave."

Jesus said when people weep, you weep with them; when they laugh, you laugh with them. Now, when people get depressed we go, "Hey, listen to this tape." Doesn't that make you mad when you're depressed and people go, "What's the matter?" "I'm depressed." "Hey, don't get depressed." It's like you're stupid. It's like, "Oh, I forgot. Okay, no problem." The Bible says if you really want to help people who are depressed, get depressed with them. When they weep, you weep. And when they laugh, you laugh—not give them a sermon; not give them a tape; not give them "Eight ways to overcome that." You just listen and care and empathize with them.

## YOU'VE TALKED ABOUT WHAT THE CHURCHES SHOULDN'T DO. HOW SHOULD THEY PRESENT THEIR MESSAGE?

People are afraid. They are scared to death of God. There is this deep sense of fear in all of us. It's not AIDS, it's not nuclear war. It's not all this other stuff. It's that something is desperately wrong with everything. It's like we all have this deep down fear that the whole ground beneath us is going to crumble. And then we try to say to people, "Well, you need to come to God. You need to know what Christ's love is like. You need to respond to the Gospel." And we see people backing off and saying, "No way. We're scared to death." People are afraid of God. Isn't that odd? Part of our trouble is that we're trying to communicate to people the love of a God who they're afraid of.

I believe that the message of the church should not be, "You're only acceptable if you do this and this." The message of the church needs to be, "God loves you. The doors are open. He loves you with everything. You have nothing to be afraid of. God is your papa, your daddy." That's what it means in Romans 8:15 "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba." We're the apple of his eye. He loves us with everything. And when we communicate that to this world, they are no longer afraid of God. They embrace him. They throw their arms around him and say, "Oh thank you for the good news."



"HECK IF I KNOW WHAT THIS STUFF SAYS... WHO DO YOU THINK I AM, HUGH NIBLEY?"

# 1988 SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM WEST

## CONFERENCE AUDIO TAPES

RECORDED LIVE JANUARY 15 & 16, LOS ANGELES, CA

| TOPIC  | SPEAKER                                      | TAPE # |
|--|--|--------|
| "Foundations or Christianity"                | Sterling McMurrin                            | 1      |
| "A Different Drummer"                        | Lavina Anderson                              | 2      |
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