

SUNSTONE



RESPIRE FOR A HERETIC:
JESUS AND THE LANGUAGE OF DESIRE

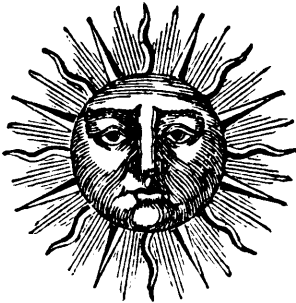
DONLU DEWITT THAYER

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READERS FORUM

CORRECTIONS

In RICHARD POLLS article, "Dealing with Documents: Myths, Documents, and Faith" (SUNSTONE 12:3), pages 18 and 19 were inadvertently reversed.

The deadline for the Sunstone Student Essay Contest announced in the previous issue is 5 January 1989.

MECHAM VINDICATED

IT'S A PITY that Eduardo Pagan was in such a rush to condemn Governor Evan Mecham and his supporters ("Razing Arizona: The Clash in the Church Over Evan Mecham," SUNSTONE 12:2) that he couldn't wait to gnash his teeth in your magazine. Had he waited until a verdict was handed down in the Mecham "criminal" trial (verdict: innocent on all counts) he would have saved himself the embarrassment of exposing not only his poor scholarship but his personal bias against and false judgement of a just man.

I hope he soon learns that abiding truth is found in the scriptures—not in the newspapers!

*Shirley Whitlock, president
Arizona Eagle Forum
Mesa, Arizona*

CHOICE AND FOREKNOWLEDGE

SCOTT SMITH (SUNSTONE 12:1), is absolutely correct in his reading of James Talmage et al. Foreknowledge does not mean that God has foreordained our destinies, but that natural law has. My agreement with Mr. Smith is short-lived, however, since I believe his conclusion is incorrect. Not only is the deterministic model appropriate, it is experientially valid and congruent with LDS theology.

It is not the belief that God possesses absolute prophetic foreknowledge that drives me to accept determinism. That doctrine is an LDS heresy because, to the extent we attribute to God absolute metaphysical characteristics, including foreknowledge, God's personal attributes are diminished. God, then, would be denied the rich experiences of discovery and growth. The long held claim of orthodoxy that God possesses absolute power, knowledge, presence, et cetera reduces the status of God

to that of a mere machine without the ability to experience sadness, elation, growth, or change. Furthermore, such a transcendent and absolute God is so far removed from mortality that He becomes nearly meaningless. While LDS theology teaches us that we are literally members of the family of God, the orthodox view of God as absolute increases our estrangement from Him. If that were not enough, an absolute God must take responsibility for all the suffering and evil in the world. It is enough that God is supreme. However, accepting God as supreme rather than absolute does not resolve the determinism-free will question.

The fundamental premise which I take to be intuitively true is that when one is faced with a decision, one decides in favor of what he believes to be in his better interest. Choices often appear to be harmful (and, in fact, many are) but the alternative is always perceived as more harmful. Thus, one chooses to continue to smoke cigarettes believing that he will quit before it is too late and escape future harm to his health and avoid the present discomfort of withdrawal. Conversely, if one chooses to sacrifice to help another, that person believes, correctly, that doing so is in his better interest. In a sense, there is no moral difference between the philanthropist and the criminal because they are motivated by the same desires. The real difference is the knowledge they each possess.

Correct decisions result from an adequate awareness of true principles. But whatever the decision, it follows from life's experiences, which include the natural endowments (intelligence, personality traits, etc.) as well as nurturing and all other environmental factors. These factors are not freely chosen.

The argument on a secular level would acknowledge that since we do not freely choose our early experiences, including both environmental and biological factors, and since early experiences shape those which follow, they are not freely chosen either, but are determined. No decision can be divorced from the knowledge and experience which shape it. The LDS doctrine of a pre-existence in which one chooses their mortal circumstances does not offer an escape from the deterministic conclusion.

We may have chosen the family and culture we would be born into, but we did not understand the implications of those choices. Had we possessed that knowledge we would not need to come to earth. Since we are on

earth primarily to learn, I must suppose that in our prior condition we were ignorant of the things we experience on earth; hence, we were ill-equipped to make informed decisions about our next level of existence.

I conclude then: God is not absolute, but is supreme and therein lies His greatness. God is subject to natural law as each of us is; but, as the father's wisdom and knowledge is greater than the child's, so is God's understanding greater than ours. Free will does not really exist in the sense that our decisions are uncaused, or that we all have an equal opportunity to make decisions of the same quality. Our decisions are shaped by our experiences which are not freely chosen. Does this render life trivial or absurd as Mr. Smith suggests? Certainly not.

It is not necessary that we hold a view of life in which moral judgments and punishments play a role. It is precisely those views which allow us to feel better than others, to become intolerant, and to feel hatred and condemnation. When we realize that we do not all have an equal opportunity to make the right decisions, blameworthiness becomes problematic. It is enough to know that consequences follow all our behavior. Good decisions result in consequences which are, ultimately,

more pleasant than those which follow poor decisions. We do not need to postulate a vengeful God waiting to punish those who fail. Failure (and success) has its own consequence.

The LDS metaphor of God as Heavenly Father is powerful because we easily relate it to our earthly experience as parents. We want our children to be happy and successful and to this end we teach them true principles. When our children are young we use various rewards and sanctions to structure their behavior; but when they mature we expect them to understand that virtue has its own rewards. So as we mature spiritually we understand that our spiritual efforts to bring about righteousness are effected through learning and teaching true principles. Since we are not only destined to create worlds but we create our present world in everything we do now, our earthly experience can hardly be considered trivial. On the contrary, the opportunities for development as individuals and as a society are innumerable and the responsibility is enormous.

Our motives are equally righteous. The differences in our decisions and behavior are the result of experiences not freely chosen. Yet each time we behave righteously, we provide

a positive learning experience for those around us. Evil is the consequence of ignorance, not a malevolent force whose goal is to bring about suffering.

Leonard R. Gay
Norcross, GA

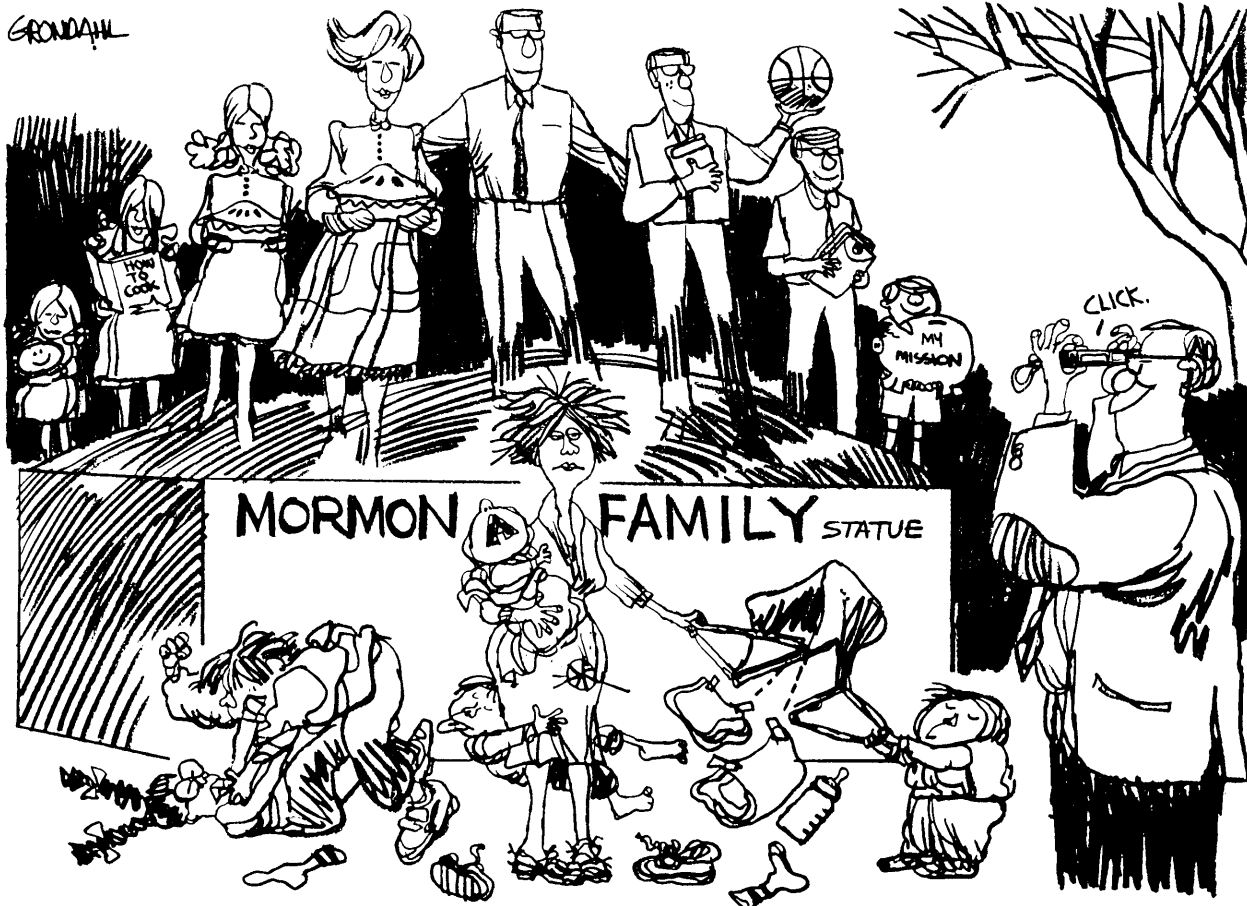
PROPHECY AND FOREKNOWLEDGE

I WAS PLEASSED to note in a recent issue absolute proof that God is directing your labors. The prophecy of the April 15 birth of Peggy and Mike Stack's baby in the March 1988 issue not only got the gender right but had the exact day as well. Any revelations on the timing of the Millennium?

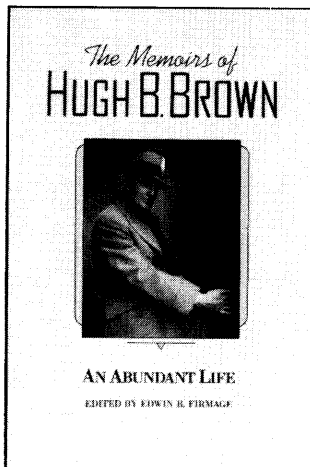
Greg Kofford
New York City

Editors reply:

No word on the Second Coming, but our May issue reported on Provo's rescheduling of its Fourth of July celebration, in this issue (July) we have a Sunspot on BYU's fall homecoming, and in the forthcoming September issue we report the October announcement of the plans for the new RLDS temple. Thanks for reading SUNSTONE—the voice of the future.



“For those who want all the facts . . .” *



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An Abundant Life: The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown, edited by Edwin B. Firmage

Hugh B. Brown (1883 - 1975) served in the First Presidency of the Mormon church from 1961 to 1970 — one of the most controversial decades of Latter-day Saint (LDS) history. During these years, and earlier, he came to be known among Mormons worldwide as one of the most compassionate and tolerant of the LDS church's ranking General Authorities. Five years before Brown's death, his grandson Edwin B. Firmage conducted a series of candid, in-depth interviews with him. This dictated "autobiography," arranged and edited by Firmage, forms the basis of *An Abundant Life: The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown*, an insightful, refreshing look into the life and thought of one of contemporary Mormonism's best-loved and reform-minded leaders.

"What a great philosopher, and what beautiful, rich philosophy he has given us! Ralph Waldo Emerson said, 'It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion. It is easy in solitude to live after one's own. But the great man is he who, in the midst of the crowd, keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of his character.' Such a great man was Hugh Brown." — from the foreword by Spencer W. Kimball, twelfth president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Firmage teaches law at the University of Utah and is the co-author of *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

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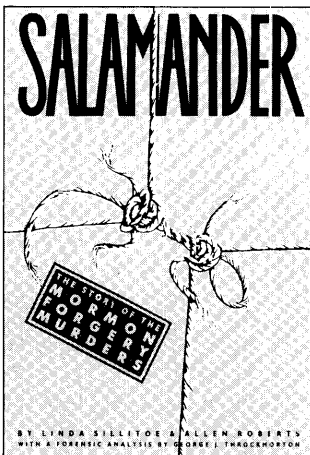
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Vogel is the author of *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*.



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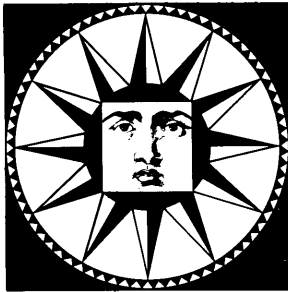
— Peter Brown, *Los Angeles Times*

Signature Books

FROM THE EDITOR

STRETCHING AS HIGH AS THE HEAVENS AND CONTEMPLATING THE DARKEST ABYSS

By Elbert Eugene Peck



THE SYMPOSIUM WILL be a greater legacy for Sunstone than the magazine," said Eugene England after the first symposium in 1979. In August 1988 we celebrated the tenth annual Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium and Gene's statement now appears prophetic.

The seeds of the symposium were planted by Tom Alexander during a late-night conversation at a Mormon History Association meeting when he acknowledged the development of an impressive body of work on Mormon history—but, he said, "there's nothing about theology and its development, nobody's working on that." Then SUNSTONE editor/publisher Peggy Fletcher thought, "If that's true, it's because there's no forum to discuss theology." Later, when Truman Madsen organized a BYU conference which gathered non-Mormon scholars to address LDS theology, Fletcher concluded that, using academic/critical methods, Mormons could add insights to their theology that outsiders couldn't.

Overcoming skepticism—"we're not Truman Madsen, no one will come"—the first Sunstone Theological Symposium was held at the University of Utah, primarily as an attempt to obtain theological articles to publish in the magazine. After a few years of deciding to sponsor the symposium on a year-by-year basis it became an annual August event around which some people planned their summer vacations and Utah pilgrimages.

The symposium now is not exclusively theological; it is a smorgasbord of papers and panels on topics, issues, opinions, and academic disciplines relevant to Mormonism and of interest to Mormons and their friends. I view

the symposium as a large tent into which we gather competent scholars of various perspectives to present their research and to hear that of others. Often scholars aren't aware of research in other areas and the symposium promotes that important interdisciplinary dialogue. In recent years we have been pleased by the number of Mormon associations who have sponsored adjunct sessions at symposiums, including the Association of Mormon Arts and Letters, the Society for the Sociological Study of Mormon Life, the John Whitmer Historical Society, the Gerontological Resource Center, Utahns United for Peace, the St. Chad Society, and *Exponent II*. Ross Peterson recently told me that since he became an editor of *Dialogue* and had seen how many *Dialogue* articles came from symposium presentations, he has become convinced of the importance of the symposium for LDS publications.

In addition to providing a forum with those all too necessary deadlines to wrap up research and writing, the Symposium also provides an important community for many thoughtful Saints. The symposiums have blessed my personal deliberations and struggles by exposing me to the faith and thinking of individuals whose thoughts have more substance than mine. This believing community of thoughtful Saints constructively frames and challenges my centrifugal tendencies. For many people, the symposium is a spring where they are refreshed intellectually *and* spiritually and to which they return regularly. And the community is growing—the year 1989 will not only celebrate the eleventh Salt Lake Symposium but also the fifth one in Washington, DC. (in April), the third in California (in San Francisco in March), and the first in Seattle (in the fall).

Most who attend the symposiums regard it as an important event, but not a vital one. However, for some who are at a troubled point in their religious commitment, the discovery of a group that is interested in confronting in a rigorous manner the issues which concern them has brought life again to their religion. In any event, it is *fun* (in Robert Frost's sense

where "the work is play for mortal stakes") to occasionally gather and hear thoughtful papers which stretch the mind and challenge assumptions, to meet friends from past events and make new ones, and to simply sit and talk, in a hallway, over dinner, in a hotel room late at night. I believe such speculation—the simultaneous stretching of mind and hearts—is a spiritual need and a spiritual exercise, even though the conclusions may not be so important and the discussion of differences must be civil and with good will.

Speculation often has negative connotations for Mormons. I suppose the fear is that speculation leads one to a false pride, to heresies, and to doubt, all of which lead to apostasy. A more scriptural, and acceptable, word is "pondering." Whatever the word, the thing they are getting at is thinking, rethinking, examining, dreaming, wishing, questioning, and, for Christians, asking. Revelations may come, but even if the answer is simply "have faith," such ponderings develop an enhanced awareness which can produce inspired insights, understanding, patience, humility, charity—speculation can be "spiritual," especially when done within a supportive community.

From earliest of times, the Saints established forums to explore the mysteries of the gospel and the Church. For example, the Nauvoo Lyceum provided opportunities for theological innovation and speculation. The lyceum featured speeches by many Nauvoo citizens; some meetings were attended by the Prophet, who spoke and commented on others' addresses. Sunstone symposiums carry on that independent tradition. What we are about was described by Joseph Smith, who challenged us to explore heaven *and* hell yet also cautioned such mortal attempts:

"A fanciful and flowery and heated imagination be aware of, because the things of God are of deep import and only time and experience and careful and solemn and ponderous thoughts can find them out. Thy mind O man, if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss and expand upon the broad considerations of the Eternal Expanse. He must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God than the vain imaginations of the human heart; trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations; too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified character of the called and chosen of God. . . ." (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, pp. 396-397.)

TURNING THE TIME OVER TO . . .

Thomas G. Alexander

NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

AFTER I JOINED the faculty at Brigham Young University, I almost became convinced that the Book of Mormon was irrelevant to understanding New Testament Christianity. Today, I believe that the teachings of the two books—New Testament and Book of Mormon—are quite consistent on the principles of Christian living and that they support one another.

Perhaps I should explain first how I came to the conclusion that the two might be inconsistent. At the time I joined the faculty, some of the teachers in Religious Instruction—they seemed to be the dominant faction at the time—interpreted the teachings of the Book of Mormon in a particular way. On a number of occasions, students came in to see me complaining that in their Book of Mormon classes, these faculty members were preaching something quite different than Christianity as they knew it.

Just what was it that they were teaching? Essentially, their point of view opposed any positive governmental programs for dealing with social problems in our society. They attacked any measures to regulate business in the public interest. Most particularly they took the position that public assistance to the poor or other disadvantaged people in our society was unconstitutional because it was contrary to the principles of the Founding Fathers, and immoral because it breached the principle of free agency.

Both the students who came to see me and I found these teachings absolutely at variance with the New Testament as I understood it. Christ taught us to love one another and to help one another. Paul taught us to bear one another's burdens. The Book of Acts described

a society in which there was no poor and in which all things were held in common. The Book of James is a treatise on the corruption that can come from the misuse of excessive wealth and on the need to provide for the poor. In virtually all cases, the help for the poor came from voluntary action, but nowhere in the New Testament that I know of is public assistance or regulation in the public interest condemned.

In practice, then, on the one hand, what I saw was a New Testament which preached compassion whether it was personal compassion or organized compassion. On the other, then, I saw a group of Church members within the university preaching that organized compassion—if it were organized through government—was evil. In my view, these people were denying the message of Jesus Christ.

I would like to do two things in this article. First, I will argue that the teachings that we should only assist people through voluntary charity and that it is immoral to assist people through government are, in fact, not teachings of the Book of Mormon. Second, I will argue that the implication that such activity is unconstitutional or that it involves a breach of the principle of free agency is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of our government.

First, let's look at the teachings of the Book of Mormon on welfare assistance. If you look particularly at the work of King Mosiah, Alma, and the Sons of Mosiah in the Books of Mosiah and Alma, you find that when the people were faithful they did certain things. Among the most important were that they tried to promote equality in the community and that they assisted those who were needy. For example, King Mosiah declared: "And there was a strict command throughout all the churches that there should be no persecutions among them, that there should be an equality among all men; That they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself, labor-

ing with their own hands for their support." (Mosiah 27:3-4)

As a result, we learn that there was peace in the land for a time. Now, you might say, "Well, this was a commandment for the churches, it didn't apply to the civil government." But Mosiah was both the civil and religious ruler of the people. His successor, the chief judge Alma, also held the religious and civil offices and under his leadership the people also imparted "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, yet they were neat and comely. And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace again, notwithstanding all their persecutions." (Alma 1:27-28) The Book of Alma tells us that the wickedness that came into the community consisted of not only various sinful activities such as adultery, stealing, murder, but also of "turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted. Now this was a great cause for lamentations among the people" (Alma 4:12-13).

Clearly most of this assistance came from private individuals helping another within the church, but Alma made it clear that church membership was not a requirement for assistance. Members were not to distinguish between the worthy poor and others. Alma Chapter 1 says: "And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need" (Alma 1:29). The result was that "they did prosper and become far more wealthy than those who did not belong to their church." (Alma 1:1)

As I read through the Book of Mormon, I find no scripture which even by implication indicates that only members of the Church ought to receive our charity and assistance. Nor do I find any scripture which says that government should not assist people.

Now, let me turn to the problem of the need for governmental assistance, its constitutionality, and the principle of free agency.

First, I should say that voluntary charity and other private giving has always been extremely important in our society and it will continue

THOMAS G. ALEXANDER, a professor of history and the director of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University, is a Sunday School Gospel Doctrine teacher.

to be important. If we ever reach a condition in which people are not willing to give their time and means to assist others or to promote good causes, we will be at least as corrupt as the people who disregarded Alma's and Mosiah's teachings. Voluntary assistance by individuals, the countless hours that caring people donate to assist those in need of help, and the selfless compassion they exhibit are of inestimable value to our community. Voluntary activity accomplishes at least two things. First, it provides help for others, and second, it sets a tone, an attitude, and an example which improves the sense of compassion in our community. If we are ever to hope to develop a truly Zion community, we must continue to promote voluntary acts of charity and compassion for others and giving for worthy causes.

On the other hand, we seem to have major problems in our society with which voluntary charity has been unable to deal. The best examples I can think of have been major economic disasters which have affected large numbers of people. A good example is the Great Depression of the 1930s. By the winter of 1932-33 the United States had fallen into a deepening economic morass which had lasted for four years. In the United States as a whole the unemployment rate had reached 25 percent. Here in Utah unemployment rose more than 10 points higher—over 35 percent. Neither private nor Church-administered charity succeeded in dealing with these problems. Expenditures for assistance by the Church declined from about \$600,000 in 1929 to about \$413,000 in 1933. Why? Largely because most people—themselves in economic distress—did not believe they could donate as much as previously. Given their poverty, perhaps the astounding fact is that they contributed as generously as they did. Yet by 1936, the unemployment rate had declined to 6 percent. Why? Principally because the federal, state, and local governments had put people to work on emergency public works projects. They built high schools, city and county buildings, and erosion control projects among other things. Some of the finest public buildings in the state from that period were public works projects, and erosion control projects eliminated the annual flooding that had plagued the Wasatch Front for decades. Moreover, when the federal government began to cut back on those expenditures in 1937 and 1938, unemployment increased.

At the same time, the Church reorganized its welfare system. President Harold B. Lee and the members of the Pioneer Stake undertook a new self-help program there, and the Church leadership elaborated that into the Church wel-

fare program. The *Readers Digest* published an article which said that the Mormon Church was taking care of its own. The *Readers Digest* was wrong. Latter-day Saints like many others in Utah continued to receive public assistance and to work on public works projects here.

Although there may be some, I can think of no major economic or natural disasters in modern times that private voluntary charity has succeeded in dealing with effectively. Whether it was the economic reconstruction of Europe after World War II or the current drought in the Farm Belt of the United States, governments have provided assistance in part because private charity has been unable to marshal all the resources necessary to deal with those problems. Private charity has helped in each case, and it ought to be applauded for doing so, but in no case that I can think of has it been able to deal with the entire problem.

But, critics might say just because it has been expedient does not make it right. It is, after all, both unconstitutional and contrary to the principle of free agency. On the question of constitutionality, the answer depends upon whose reading of the Constitution you accept. Both James Madison and Alexander Hamilton were members of the constitutional convention and both of them read the Constitution quite differently on the subject of the powers of the federal government. Hamilton took a broad interpretation of its powers while Madison took a more restrictive one. Who was right? I suspect that both of them were. People approve measures of public policy, including constitutions, for various reasons. They read into the documents those things that support their point of view. One of my young friends told me that her teacher told her that we Mormons believe in the Constitution as originally interpreted. My response to that position is that it is an enormously naive view of both the drafting of the Constitution and the political process that gave the document meaning.

In recent years the Supreme Court, which is the final judge of the meaning of the Constitution, has held such activities to be constitutional. As early as the case of *United States v. Butler* (297 U.S. 1) in 1936, the Supreme Court held that in the dispute between Madison and Hamilton, that Hamilton had been right and that the general welfare clause in Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution was a separate and distinct category of power and that Congress had a general power to tax and appropriate for the general welfare. As far as the law is concerned, this is basically a settled question. Congress may appropriate money for grants to the states and to individuals.

Now, what about the free agency argument? This argument asserts that by making appropriations to assist others, Congress and the state legislatures are taking money without our consent and forcing us to give it to others, thus breaching the principle of free agency.

It seems to me, that this argument is a fundamental misperception of the nature of our government. People who argue this way misunderstand the issues that spawned our revolution and that underpin our federal and state constitutions. No legislative body takes money without our consent. In our system of representative democracy, each of us votes for people who are to act for us in the legislature. Under the Constitution, we freely consent through our representatives to spend money for roads, for education, for welfare, or national defense, or for other purposes. That we may not personally approve of a specific measure that our representatives support is irrelevant. In the private sector, if we hire someone to do a job for us, we are responsible for their actions just as though we did the job ourselves. If we do not like what the employee does, we are free to remove him or her and hire someone else.

The same principle applies in legislative representation. Frankly, I would like to see my representatives appropriate less money for war machinery and more money for education. But unless I want to organize a revolution to overthrow the government, my recourse under our system is to try to elect representatives who agree with my point of view. In some states, we have the right to use the initiative or referendum to allow the voters to consider measures of public policy directly.

If my representative, in the case of the legislature, or the majority of the people, in the case of the initiative, disagree with my point of view, it is neither a breach of my free agency, nor is it stealing money. It is, rather, an example of free government—in a democratic republic—in action.

In summary, then, I am convinced that the teachings on charity in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon are entirely consistent with each other. I am convinced, also, that my colleagues were quite mistaken about the implications they saw in the Book of Mormon. I am also quite convinced that assisting people through governmental measures as through private gifts and charity is both Christian, constitutional, and consistent with the principle of free agency.

 The Life of the Mind Beyond the Wasatch Front

ZION'S GULAG: REFLECTIONS ON INTELLEC-CHALS, INQUISITION, AND THE CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY

By Neal C. Chandler

WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN, THE BISHOP CALLED ME into his office for an unscheduled interview, a sort of spiritual wellness spot check, prompted, I suspect, by the concerns of my Explorer advisor and of my own mother that I was not fellowshipping well with the youth of the ward. This was true. Being of goodly parents, but also of highly awkward and irregular stature, I did not fit smoothly into most of the official and unofficial alliances of adolescence. I liked baseball even less than various team captains liked having finally to choose me. Success at other sports was dictated entirely by the relative usefulness of pure, inert mass or height in the constellations of activity around me. My utter bio-chemical preoccupation with things female (and you'll never encounter five more carefully chosen words) manifest itself as utter social paralysis. I had no desire to own a car, not at the price of supporting one, nor did I work on cars. And most crippling of all, I discovered after a failed flirtation and to almost everyone's incredulous disdain that, in fact, I did not like rock'n roll. I didn't listen, didn't keep track of songs or singers, didn't dance, didn't care. I found my friends, as obviously I had no other choice, at and beyond the fringes of normalcy: guys who, like myself, hadn't worked out well; guys who still wore earmuffs and cuffed Levis; guys who didn't go to church, or who went but with premeditated questions; guys who conducted Brahms and Shostakovitch in the back seat of the family Studebaker; guys who read "Pogo;" guys who wrote poetry.

The bishop pulled at his suspender a little, a sage gesture I'd seen on television, and said, "I understand you've been hanging out with the 'brains.'" He said "brains" in quotation marks.

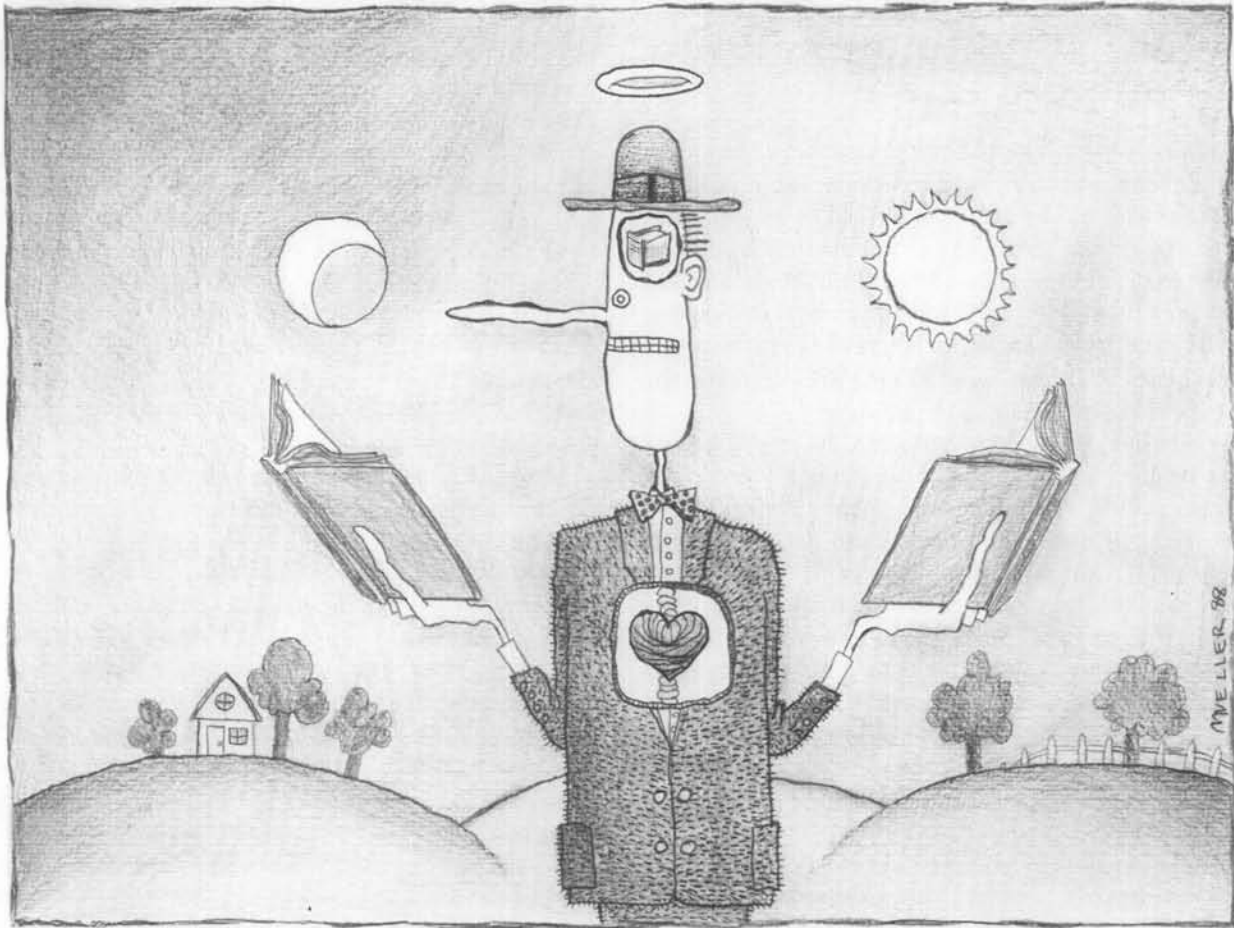
Because I didn't know how the remark was intended, I didn't know how to respond, but my internal reaction was pleasure. Ward gossip had it that I was hanging out with the brains. Oh, I was

not accused of being a brain; no one, least of all my teachers, had cause to suspect that. But if others in the Explorer class had nothing to fear from my grade point average, still their hearts and their circumscribed horizons crouched in orbit far below my own far more exalted sphere. I had become sidekick to the stars, a Fuzzy or a Gabby or a Poncho to the Bob Steeles, the Roy Rogers, and the Cisco Kids of the mind. That moment, I know in retrospect, saw the birth of a Mormon "intellec-chal."

Now, I have given this word a Mormon ethnic spelling because it is phonetically and semantically peculiar to Mormonism where it connotes not intelligence (a word with its own Mormon history), but a certain kind of attitudinal disorder. Indeed, I have since learned that to qualify among the Saints as an intellec-chal requires neither grades, nor credentials, nor learning, nor, for that matter, intellect, but only the disturbing symptoms of a too objective or analytical distance, a kind of willful autism of the spirit. Appearance is, in this regard, far more important than substance. Often a beard alone will do. Sometimes the mention of an unfamiliar book. Or you may also bring up an entirely familiar and authorized book, the sort good Mormons display on coffee tables, but then say that you disliked it, or liked it with reservations . . . or, and this especially, say you found it well intentioned, but misguided. If you cite C.S. Lewis instead of B.H. Roberts, if you cite B.H. Roberts instead of Joseph Fielding Smith; if you quote Brigham Young on both sides of any single issue, if you quote scripture in context . . . you become suspicious. But you seal your identity when you ask unexpected questions in classes where, as real Mormons know, it is actually your role to provide familiar, ritual answers to familiar, ritual questions in a kind of informal Mormon catechism. Such call and response ceremonies have become our new world answer to liturgy in old world Christian tradition, and the disruption of liturgy is the sure Cain's mark of an intellec-chal.

Suddenly people glare at you across the Sunday School classroom. Eyebrows rise and eyeballs roll as you raise the arm of flesh yet one more time. Fragile investigators and question-

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traumatized new members cringe behind every folding door and under every folding chair. But then perhaps late one night a caller phones with a hardball question to which the teacher, the manuals, prayer, and even Elder McConkie have managed no satisfying answer. And indeed, what such callers seem to want is not answers, not really, but a respite from inexorable answers. They want breathing room. They need, or seem to need, distance.

At such rare moments it has occurred to me that the unofficial, but widely recognized office of ward intellec-chal might even be a calling, one which comes not by the laying on of hands but as a sort of foreordained, if also minor, spiritual gift. Cynicism, which is distance with an ironic backspin, is mentioned nowhere I know of in the gift registries of scripture, but it seems none the less to have been my gift, and I have been content to make do. My willingness was cast, I think, in that meeting with the bishop some thirty years ago.

He asked me what I thought I wanted to do with my life. I answered that I wanted to be a writer. I knew no more about writing then than about chemical engineering, but the way his eyebrows drew suspiciously together, and the long appraising silence that followed told me I was really on to something. He began to tug at his suspender again.

"I think that's a fine idea," he said, then continued carefully to explain that since the days of the restoration only two books,

both by an Apostle, James Talmage, had qualified as standard reading for the Saints.

"The Church probably could use a good writer," he conceded without concession, "but what I meant was what are you going to do for a living?" His response was, of course, as appalling and eyebrow tightening to me as mine had been to him. But my bishop was a good man, and a wise one, and the question he posed then is a question that has never really gone away. It preoccupies my wife, my creditors, and me (probably in that order) still today. Yet for all his prescience, the bishop, much like the first grade teacher who told me that, merely because I was right-handed, I might not write with my left (I do, of course), or the high school counselor who thought that college might not be for me (I've hardly ever left since), or the missionary companion who bore testimony to the mission policy on wearing hats (he also had a testimony of white cotton sox), or even the well-meaning advisors who counsel me today against wasting effort and possible talent on the provincial crochets of Mormon culture, like all of these, that bishop with his informed, well-meaning opposition set my jaw, my sails, and my destiny: he called me to the pseudo-false priesthood of Mormon intellec-chalism and therein to the office of writer. I would be remiss today if I didn't acknowledge that unintended act of kindness and express my abiding mortal gratitude.

I hope you'll forgive this indulgence into my past. It may be my only opportunity to participate in an important rhetorical tradition peculiar, I think, to Mormon public expression. My wife

calls it the "Where was I, what was I wearing when the call came talk." And now, in my case as well, it is a matter of public record.

It is also my purpose here to examine some general misconceptions about Mormon intellectual life: these include dark warnings that intellectuals are by definition as well as temperament unorthodox, uncommitted, and dangerous, but also the counter-assertions which depict them as progressive, practical, and unjustly persecuted. Such bromides are the substance of my rumination, and so it should surprise no one that its form has already begun to resemble the familiar, three-legged milking stool of all popular Mormon discourse on things philosophical.

We have already addressed the question: "Where did I come from?" Liturgical precedent requires that we turn next and in order to the matters of "Why I am here" and "Where I am going?"

Perhaps you were aware that the muse and general guardian angel of most Western intellectuals is the mythical Trojan princess Cassandra, who endows them with both a troubled clairvoyance and the straightforward gift of impotence. This is particularly true in America where the significance of everything, even of artists and philosophers, is measured finally in terms of contribution or threat to the gross national product. By this standard, obviously, one can calculate the societal value of intellectuals without a computer, calculator, or toes, just the opposed thumb and forefinger of a single hand.

As a result, there exists in the West a general fascination with dissident writers and intellectuals in Eastern Block countries, which resounds as indignation, but is, I think, actually fueled by envy. Here are men and women for whom principled martyrdom is a daily opportunity. Unlike most white Americans, they constitute a society perpetually in its heroic and embattled phase. Their deliberations preserve a giddy seriousness and intensity long lost to the safely institutionalized intellectuals of the West. Moreover, they are taken seriously. What more vivid evidence for the grudging respect accorded Eastern dissidents than the bitter persecutions to which their governments feel impelled to subject them. Oh, to be thought dangerous, instead of merely erudite or tedious or lost in "left" field. Similarly, the recent preoccupation of liberal academics with what is called the "threat" of the fundamentalist right plays as enlightened outrage, but is, in fact, rooted in the pleasure of having been branded wicked by the pharisees, and thus invited to play the starring role of martyr in a popular passion play.

And it is precisely here that the blessings of contemporary Mormonism for the intellectual make themselves most evident. After all, there is in those forbidding descriptions of narrowly authoritarian governments something familiar to most of us. Let me digress, if I may, directly into the heart of the matter.

Many years ago, a friend and I researched and wrote a study inspired by a then immensely popular book which seemed to have achieved that near-standard-work status approvingly described by my bishop so long ago. We had seen this book carefully tucked between zippered triple combinations and Sunday School manuals

and toted dutifully to church week after week by faithful Saints in wards from the Wasatch Front to Manhattan Island. It was not an overtly religious book, and its certain prominence at Mormon gatherings may have surprised those unfamiliar with the idiosyncracies of Mormon practice. To the initiated, however, it was a book of modern-day revelation. Its title was *The Naked Capitalist*, by W. Cleon Skousen. Surely, some remember it. For those who don't, the astounding thesis of the book, simply stated, was that the real and until then unrecognized, driving force behind communism, Maoism, socialism, welfarism, indeed the whole worldwide array of menacing Bolshevik conspiracies was actually and amazingly Western capitalism directed by a coterie of international super-capitalists who sought secretly and malevolently to enslave the entire planet.

Sound incredible? We thought so too, but this amazing disclosure was documented so insistently and creatively by one of the world's foremost conspiracy researchers that those who attempted to deny it merely revealed the extent of their own craven complicity in the plot . . . or so it seemed at first. But then, as my colleague and I pondered the text, we realized that, in fact, it too was part and parcel of that same grand conspiracy. Brilliant and devious as he was, the author was obviously an insider, privy to information, possessor of insights and evidence that only a well-positioned participant in the nefarious machinations of this monstrous combine could possibly have obtained. And what better, what more diabolical way to mislead the public than to concede part of the picture, baiting a trap with a portion of the truth while the essence of the conspiracy went securely undetected.

The Naked Capitalist was a colossal cover-up, but as with various other modern-day cover-ups, the perpetrator had outsmarted himself. This time his efforts to mislead and obscure had, instead, made transparent the very truth he sought to hide. Reading carefully between the lines, my colleague and I were able to unravel the genuine plot of plots behind his plot to conceal the plot behind the plot behind those other plots. We entitled our expose *The Naked Mormonist Revealed: or None Dare Call it Theo-Political-Polytotalitarian Sedition*. Its astounding thesis, as those of you who are yourselves initiated insiders may well be guessing at this very moment, is that the real arch-manipulator behind the capitalists behind the Bolshevik conspirators is, in fact, the Mormon hierarchy.

Sound incredible? We thought so too, and we dismissed our first suspicions as silly and impossible, but as always we undertook aggressively and very, very creatively to transubstantiate the story. We interrogated the facts, and the facts, after some resourceful persuasion, spoke eloquently for themselves. The tale they told was truly incredible.

Yet sadly, our document is still, after all these years, unpublished and largely uncirculated. I submitted it once to SUNSTONE, but Peggy Fletcher reported back (almost immediately) that though, yes, she had found it interesting, it was probably not right for SUNSTONE and that she wouldn't touch it with electrician's gloves and a twelve-foot, insulated pole. The reason was put more trenchantly, perhaps, by a friend who read it, smiled, and then advised me to put it away in a locked drawer and forget it.

"They'll believe it, you know," he said. I laughed. He didn't.

"It's more convincing than the book that provoked it, and think for just a minute how many people have swallowed that dancing sea elephant whole." He was, of course, paying a compliment to our rhetorical skills. He was also pointing out that even scandalously blatant satire is invisible to those willfully unschooled in scandal, that in a society which like our own has made intellectual naiveté a matter of principle, all "scholarly documentation," even when it is unscholarly, off the wall, and outrageous, is effectively intimidating.

But there is yet another factor which made this unpublishable joke a bad, perhaps even a dangerous one, a factor that seems overriding to me: there are times when we read or hear or think about totalitarian systems and methods that comparisons to the Church, far from being forced or farcical, simply suggest themselves.

Richard Sennett observed that in seeking and accepting authority from institutions or ideologies, we are seeking to secure our lives and their significance in a manifestly dangerous and unsecured universe. Totalitarian pretensions and measures therefore respond to a demand for universal guarantees that we impose on would-be authority. "Totalitarian regimes refuse to acknowledge anything contingent or accidental to be real; everything the state does has a reason."¹ For us, it requires no leap of imagination to replace the word *state* in the last sentence with *church*. Everything the Church does has a reason. Everything the prophet, the authorities, the brethren do or did or say has its reason, even though that reason may be beyond comprehension or common sense. Their ways may not be our own, but "All things," or so Brother McConkie reassures us, "are governed by law: nothing is exempt."² The Lord, hence, his Church, hence its righteous leaders are always in control just as dialectical materialism, hence the party, hence its leaders have always and necessarily known just exactly what they were doing. When Elder McConkie describes communism as "a form of false religion" and as "one of the major divisions of the church of the devil,"³ he is, in fact, legitimizing its structure though he repudiates its content. Communism has a form of institutional godliness, but denies the source and substance thereof. It mirrors the authoritarian hierarchies of heaven, even though it "denies men their agency; wrenches from them their inalienable rights; and swallows the individual and his well being up in the formless mass of the state."⁴

The irony which Elder McConkie, of course, fails to see in his own argument is that he criticizes communism for a relationship of form to substance which is altogether rational and consistent. The need for authority and the assertion of freedom are not humanly congenial. They are at war, but it requires a far less dogmatic if no less conservative writer to tell us how and why this is so. "I tell you man has no more agonizing anxiety than to find someone to whom he can hand over with all speed the gift of freedom with which the unhappy creature was born." Moreover, "man seeks to worship only what is incontestable, so incontestable, indeed, that all men at once agree to worship it . . . and the absolutely essential thing is that they should do so all together."⁵ In these famous passages from *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor points out that absolute security has an abso-

lute price. Only in complete surrender can a calling and election be made completely sure, and if my calling has been made sure, yours may not challenge nor contradict nor contest it. Seen from without or even from the frontiers of orthodoxy, dour institutional insistence that every knee must bend and every tongue conform plays as a threat, but seen from within, "monolithic Mormonism," as Richard Cummings once termed it,⁶ is no diabolical machine; to the anxiously compliant it is more like a small, secure, well-lighted room, or the house built by that third little pig with walls of stone against the hoary huffs and puffs of doubt and an open kettle bubbling on the hearth awaiting wolves and intellec-chals.

In this general regard, Elder McConkie has surely been too soft on communism, which is no more consistent than are we about the difficult relationship of agency to authority. Communists pay as much lip service to inalienable, individual freedoms as anyone. They are simply more powerful, more ruthless, more meticulously rationalized in the practical suppression of such freedoms than the systems with which we are familiar. That, of course, is our good and providential fortune. Still, we too have heard ritual pledges of allegiance to a principle of individual agency which, for purposes reputedly beyond the reasoning of mere individuals, may be openly venerated, but not, for heaven's sake, practiced. We too have seen agency defined as the freedom to affirm, to conform, to bend to the iron rod, or suffer the elective agonies of hell. Having failed to embrace this mystery, we, not unlike our Eastern counterparts, may also find ourselves banished to the arctic peripheries of fellowship. And interestingly, like our persecuted, pioneer forebears, or more generally like outcasts of conscience in all ages, we have come in time to discover a kind of rough hewn, elemental land of promise in such wilderness communities. The rationalizations—we have all heard them, and some of us perform them—insinuate that though the solid heart of the tree keeps it standing, heart wood is dead wood while the real life of every tree flows and surges vulnerably on the frontier. Siberia, the Gulag, these are code names for the latest gathering places of Zion.

So why am I here? I'm here because there is a hardy, back thumping—albeit grave faced—frontier camaraderie among Mormon intellec-chals, who have, in fact, the best of all possible worlds. A fire burns at Sunstone Symposiums you'll not find at Modern Language Association conventions or meetings of the American Dental Association or even among the love-it-or-leave-it patriots who finagle tickets to general conference.

I am also here because I'm a cussed fence-sitter in this sub-heavenly war between the forces of good and the champions of virtue. And there is in Zion's Gulag a kind of two-edged kingdom patriotism, a mind-set for fence-sitters, both affirming and cynical, taking point while it fiercely guards the rear.

I am probably also here because restored authority in the Church has not, or at least not as a matter of guiding principle, discovered that intellectuals are far easier to corrupt than to repress, their egos far more susceptible to honors and offices than their arguments to correction. Our church has thus far been preserved from the sardonic, but indubitable wisdom that prisoners make the sternest of prison camp counselors, and intellectuals the most

effective inquisitors. There are, thank Heaven, few offices, no elite orders, and only dubious honors for intellec-chals in official Mormonism, and the organizational benefit is, I think, wonderfully captured in the coy parsimony of a former employer of mine. "I pay you poorly," he said, "and I use you badly, but it keeps you pure."

Finally, I am here because persecution, if it is not overwhelming, is energizing. If the penalties for participation are rolled eyes instead of arrest, early release from Sunday School callings instead of torture, or even the loss of a rung or more on the administrative career ladder, then the persecuted are, at very modest cost, given open license to take themselves very seriously before an audience to whom they have been certified as dangerous and, therefore, interesting. In fact, moderate martyrdom in this form may be the only program of genuine temporal luxury offered by the Church to its members. Participation is entirely voluntary and must surely qualify as one of the best callings in the Church. It's a marvelous job, yet somebody's got to do it, and, in fact, it may even be a sin to turn it down.

It remains then only to ask where I, indeed where the Church's intellec-chals, who may or just as likely may not also be persons of intellect, are going. And I would again be remiss, if I didn't concede that there are many who think they have a good idea already. As for me, I am willing to leave speculation in heavenly mansions to the real estate professionals of the spirit. I'm used to fixer-uppers, and I am more interested anyway in the here and now of "going" which because it is always immanent is far more difficult to foresee.

What is the future of Mormon intellec-chalism? What are the prospects? If we accept one of Eric Hoffer's nastier observations—and they are nasty because of their unsparing realism—the prospects are by turns good and very, very bleak. To begin with he argues that the obvious impotence of the intellectual is, in fact, a covert ally.

. . . Authorities, even when feeble or tolerant, are likely to react violently against the activist tactics of the fanatic and may gain from his activities, as it were, a new vigor. Things are different in the case of the typical man of words [Hoffer's definition of the intellectual]. The masses listen to him because they know that his words, however urgent, cannot have immediate results. The authorities either ignore him or use mild methods to muzzle him. Thus, imperceptibly, the man of words undermines established institutions, discredits those in power, weakens prevailing beliefs and loyalties.⁷

This view, which Hoffer is unkind enough to support with ample historical precedent, offers vindication of a sort, but it comforts with disquietude. For, if it is indeed the nature and calling of Mormon intellectuals to make themselves heard—and why else this great, expanding marathon of words—and if, even unsought and undesired, the ultimate consequence of doing so must be

subversion of the Church, then the worst fears of the repressively orthodox are confirmed.

The mortal flaw in intellectuals, according to Hoffer, is "that no matter how much they preach and glorify the united effort, they remain essentially individualists. They believe in the possibility of individual happiness and the validity of individual opinion and initiative" in institutions ruled inevitably and necessarily by those who, no matter how much they preach and glorify freedom, remain essentially authoritarian, opposed to and appalled by claims of individual agency. And this is so not because of some ruthless power hungry leaders, but because "their attitude is in full accord with the ruling passion of the [people]."⁸

To truly principled dissent in an authoritarian church falls the responsibility not only to enact but also to legitimize the agency it invokes, demonstrating by some as yet undiscovered alchemy that authority and freedom may indeed be married without actively enthroning one principle and pressing the other into compassionate lip service. The prognosis is grave; with history, the institution, and the majority against it, treatment is uncertain and a cure as yet undiscovered. Only the Church's ragtaggle outposts of windbag intellec-chals seem far enough removed from the realities of power to keep on truckin' after windmills. Yet if, as one observer argues, history is a series of trial-and-error experiments in which even the failings of men may have value and "in the course of which the intellectuals were those who through their homelessness in our society were the most exposed to failure,"⁹ then our chief opportunities are in fact coincident with our frustrations. If things were any better, they would probably be worse.

So if you ask me where I am going—whither the Gulag?—my answer is nowhere. I, at least, will not go off to brood in splendid, agnostic solitude. I am certainly not going into exile with the Unitarians, the Scientologists, the Reorganites, or even Ex-Mormons for Jesus. Nor do I intend any hermit's pilgrimage into deferential silence. It is not "their" Church; it is our Church, and its center is delimited only barely by its periphery. I should like to say that I, that we, are simply standing firm, but I suspect it's really rather more like treading water, resisting the current, and recklessly waving off the solid, seasoned pragmatism of Hoffer, and the Inquisitor, and certain other helpful seers and officials, to wait, instead, and to thrash ineptly toward the resolution of an ancient Christian paradox, one re-revealed and re-affirmed through Joseph Smith.

Perhaps you know the story of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius. Perhaps not. In any case, during the sixth century he was a genuine, credentialed Christian intellectual. Educated in Rome and in Athens, he immersed himself in the study of ancient culture. He wrote long boring books, including, in fact, essays defending orthodox Christian doctrines and arguing rationally for the subservience of reason to faith. Moreover, he was no reservation intellectual. He entered politics, distinguished himself by his eloquence, and rose all the way to the office of prime minister under the barbarian king Theodoric.

But on 23 October 524 the king's executioners tied a cord around the head of Anicius (etcetera) Boethius and tightened it

till his eyes burst from their sockets. Then they beat him with clubs until he died.

And why this monstrous fall from grace? The king, you see, was a Christian, but not a Christian in good standing. He was an Arian, a believer in the Arian heresy, and thus, not entirely secure in civil employment. When jealous courtiers implicated Boethius in a Roman plot against Theodoric, the scholar vigorously denied all allegations. He was, he insisted, a loyal subject and servant to the king. But as a Roman Christian, he was also a man divided, and he admitted, foolishly perhaps, that had he known of such a plot, the king would not likely have learned of it from him. Theodoric had him arrested.

In prison Boethius had time to think over the ironies of his plight. He was imprisoned, unjustly perhaps, by a king whom he had denied ultimate allegiance in deference to an orthodox Christendom whose rulers were, as he well knew, even less just than the heretic Theodoric. In fact, the chief grievance against this Arian king was his protection of the Jews. When Christian mobs destroyed synagogues in Roman cities, Theodoric rebuilt them at public expense. Moreover, Theodoric urged constraint and tolerance in governance. "The most dangerous heresy," he wrote to the Orthodox emperor Justin, "is that of a sovereign who separates himself from part of his subjects because they believe not according to his belief." But Justin, in a pious rebuke, replied that public order required unity of belief and therefore he had a perfect right to deny office or employment to any whose religious loyalty he had reason to question.

For all his diplomacy and careful apologetics, Boethius found himself impaled on both horns of the faithful intellectual's dilemma. He was trapped, as we are sometimes, though far more gently trapped, between allegiance to an institution and allegiance to the principles that are—or should be—that institution's franchise. The difficult truth is that truth does not always bless the blessed nor honor those whom we feel bound to honor. Boethius knew that he had fallen victim to orthodox Christian arrogance just as surely as to an enlightened heretic's rage; if not driven completely by his circumstance into the arms of doubt, he must surely have sought "a certain discretionary distance"¹⁰ from which to view and survive the seamy underside of faith.

It is not nearly so surprising as some have thought that a contemplative man, imprisoned for a too candid and too principled allegiance to Christendom, should in prison have written a religious and philosophical work with no reference to Christianity or to any Christian doctrine. This famous book was written to console the writer. And it was written, necessarily, I think, at a distance. Surely there is for all intellectuals, dissenting or institutionalized, Mormon or generic, a bittersweet lesson in the peculiar circumstance that the last signal work of pagan philosophy was written by a Christian martyr.

Boethius died disillusioned, yes, but if we believe his book, he had made his peace with disillusionment. His legacy is consolation. The indignantly authoritarian Theodoric and the piously orthodox Justin both died old and bitter with their street-wise intentions and their powerful empires in ruins. And here in Zion's

Gulag, dear brothers and sisters, that qualifies as a faith-promoting story.

NOTES

1. Richard Sennett, *Authority* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 191.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd. ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 433.
3. McConkie, 151.
4. McConkie, 151.
5. See Sennett's discussion of these texts, 293 ff.
6. Richard J. Cummings, "Out of the Crucible: The Testimony of a Liberal," *Dialogue* 19 (Summer 1986) 122.
7. Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (New York: Harper, 1951), 130.
8. Hoffer, 141.
9. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1936), 159.
10. Cummings, p. 125.

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 The Confessions of a Proud Bystander

 RESPITE FOR A HERETIC:
 JESUS CHRIST AND THE LANGUAGE OF DESIRE

By Donlu DeWitt Thayer

VISIONS OF LOVE

I HAVE LIVED my whole life in a dissolving world, though for a long time this did not matter to me much. The year I was born, Richard M. Weaver published his book *Ideas Have Consequences*. This was, Professor Weaver said, “another book about the dissolution of the West,” a process he traces to a change in metaphors for comprehending and shaping reality that occurred in the fourteenth century when William of Occam and the nominalists won the great medieval debate over the existence of universals. When humanity ceased to believe in the reality of universals, says Weaver, it made an evil decision, which began the “abomination of desolation” that appears in the modern world as a “feeling of alienation from fixed truth.”¹

But I grew up in a different history. Instructed in and measured against truths that were fixed, that were the word of God revealed through holy books, and prophets living and dead, I was certain of everything that really mattered—of God and his Son Jesus Christ, of the Church and its inspired programs, of the Universe and my place in it. Of course, I knew of the evil world outside, whence could come atom bombs or bad people, and of the natural world where accident and disease could maim and kill. But the point of life was to overcome the evil world, to fight our way back through the natural world to our true home, where God (Father and Mother) and Christ dwell.

We could do this by following carefully the sure guides we had been given. I could follow those guides, for I was not just any ordinary person; I was a youth of the noble birthright, stalwart and brave, firm as the mountains around me, a member of the chosen generation, saved for these latter days. I was glad that I would be punished for my own sins, and not for Adam’s (or Eve’s) transgression. I was, in a word, special.

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All through my childhood I lived in expectation of some miraculous confirmation of my own particular spiritual prodigiousness. For a while when I was very young, I thought that perhaps I would somehow confound the wise in the temple at age eleven-and-a-half. More likely, though, I would have a vision, a revelation from God that would reveal to me a secret of godliness and tell me the great and unique task set for me in mortality.

This must come, I knew, some time during my fifteenth year, or before. Otherwise, I would not be as “special” as Joseph Smith had been.

As far as I knew then, it never happened. By the time I was fourteen, I had begun to worry that it wasn’t good to think I was so special. It was hard to think of my own specialness without thinking of other people as less special. I made up a little slogan that I hoped would remind me to be better. I wrote it down and posted it where I could see it every day: “Some people need to know God loves them. Other people need to know he loves other people, too.” I tended, I knew, to be the second kind of person. I didn’t know what to do about this. People told me I was special. I was officially part of the most special generation in the history of the world.

Of course, I knew I had faults (faults—trials—could be marks of God’s favor, too). And I strove mightily to purge myself of weakness and sin, setting goals, keeping lists, certifying my spot in the ranks of the chosen. I hadn’t had a vision in time to be special in the way Joseph Smith was, but maybe there would be something else. Perhaps I could become the mother of the great prophet of the last days. I didn’t think about this very often, though. I had other things on my mind. The trials of adolescence broke my attention, got in the way of my clear thoughts about the secrets of godliness.

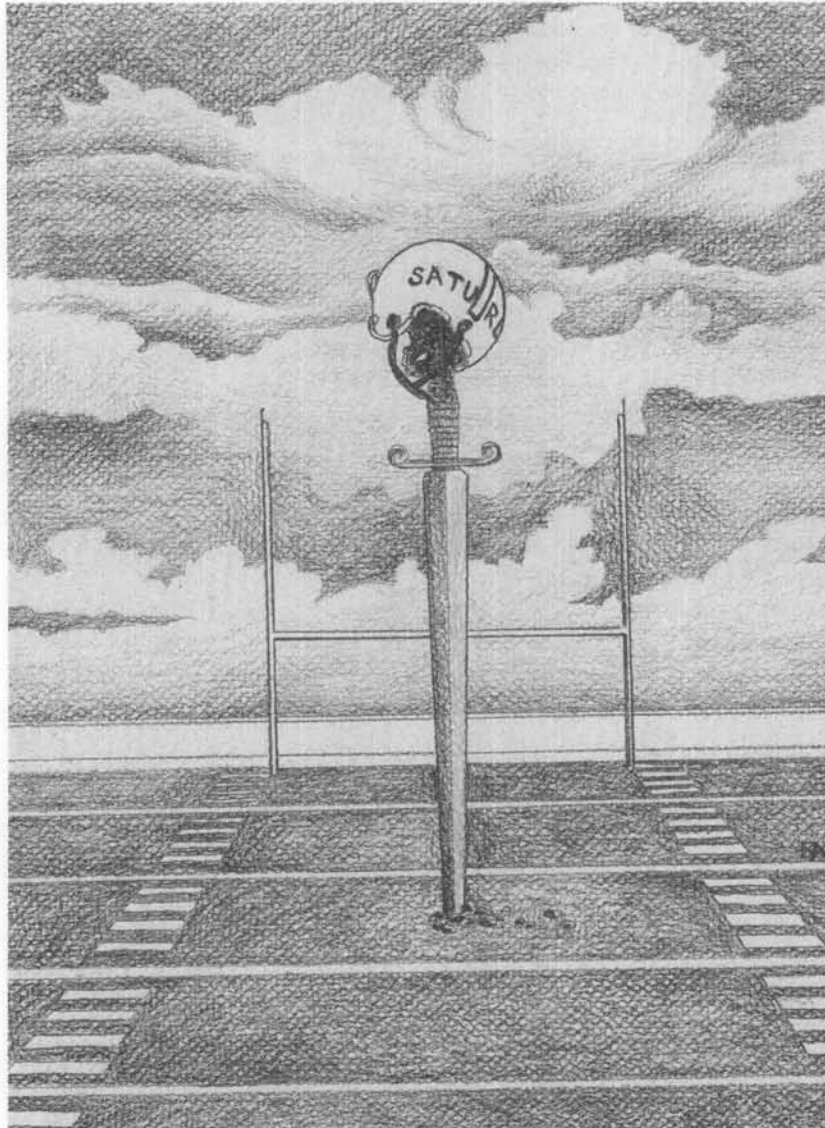
And so I missed it. For I now realize that in a much less dramatic way than I had expected, I *had* received my vision, at the very time I had been expecting it. When I was moved at age fourteen to write that little slogan, I had received the most important revelation of my life. But it would be a long time before I would understand the fact behind the reality of all “universals”—before

I would understand well enough the love of God, for other people or for myself. Before I could come to this understanding, my illusions about myself and about reality would have to be shattered. I would have to know my own "alienation from fixed truth." My world would have to dissolve, my heart be broken, so that I could be "born again," with a new heart and a new mind. I would have to learn a new way of living, a way not of striving but of repenting.

Because I could construct a mental reality in which my problems were the result of my own righteousness in contact with an evil world, it was very difficult for me to comprehend that I needed to change fundamentally. Yes, I had my faults, and I could work on those, systematically, until I was perfect. But there was nothing basically, fundamentally wrong with me, with my ideas. I *knew* that if everyone could see and feel as I did, the world would be good and safe. I was almost twenty years old before the Vietnam War and my feeble attempts to discuss it with French communists in student restaurants in Grenoble brought me my first real anxiety about my own fallibility, about threats to my ideological security from the "outside world." Here were people, seemingly sane and happy, who had never heard of Joseph Smith, who did not believe in Jesus Christ, and who were confident of truth as they saw it. I knew they must be wrong, but I couldn't refute their arguments. I sensed that even if I had been able to speak their language well, I wouldn't have been able to refute and convince them. I knew I was right, but I couldn't possibly make them see. I decided to feel sorry for them, and I took up eating strawberry tarts in *patisseries* instead of talking to communists at lunch.

I gained fifteen pounds and went home to Utah, where the world would be safe and right again. But I discovered that I was no longer safe, not even here. I had seen something that I could not stop seeing, and soon disillusionment reigned on every side.

This could have been a chance for me to grow up. I know now that disillusionment is a natural part of maturing. It clears the mind for the new vision of experience. In some societies, disenchantment is built into the rituals of a religious education: the Zen initiate must endure the broken Buddha; the Hopi youth sees the unmasking of the Kachina. This is meant to shock the young person into "grasping a higher reality" and developing a "mature religious perspective."² But, as far as I could tell, my disillusionment was not orchestrated or guided, and I didn't know it was supposed to help me grow up. I just felt betrayed.



But I have always fought for my illusions. I remember how I used to run away, fingers in my ears, when my little brother would try to tell me about Santa Claus, continuing to imagine ways he *could* exist, far beyond the usual age for such belief. This was a type for my future behavior. If I didn't like finding out about Santa, or about Vietnam, I especially didn't like finding out about the Church, learning that it was not a perfect institution, that its leaders were not absolutely and unanimously reliable guides to every important truth.

For a long time after I was forced to discover this, I pretended not to know it. I disguised my feelings of betrayal, turning them into the "courage" and "blind faith" of a stalwart and berating myself when my courage and faith would fail. I was alternately self-righteous and self-condemning. I was attracted by but critical of those who might have served as guides for a successful resolution of my disenchantment. Then, as the evidence mounted against the "establishment," I began to turn my criticism more and more often upon fallen idols, and upon those who seemed to reach adulthood without ever knowing that anything was *wrong*. The Church seemed full of grown-up children, people who could still believe in being special and right, people who could still be happy being the way I used to be. These people were blind and foolish. They were not to be tolerated. I became

what I called “a critic of my culture.”

So now my world seemed full not of individual people but of types—“us,” careful-thinking, deeply spiritual followers of Christ (sometimes “us” was only me), and “them,” narrow-minded, sentimental, materialistic members of the Mormon Club (arrogant men and silly women). Some of “them” called “us” names like “intellectuals,” “liberals,” or “heretics.” I had in the past used such terms with pejorative intent myself, but I could see the truth now. “They” were the true heretics, they were the ones who were hanging the living gospel up on the goalpost to die, whose behaviorist agendas were turning the bread of life stale by overexposure in misguided and pointless programs. It seemed to me that the fountains of living waters must surely clog up with discarded checklists. I wondered that people would not look up from their statistics, or down from their worldly successes, and *live*.

But I was not living, I was dying. I could not see that in my critical heart I was still preoccupied with “specialness,” that I was jockeying with those I criticized for evidence of God’s favor. Preoccupied with the contributions of others to my pain, I was unable to learn how to find what could really help me. I was irritable, lonely, needy, sad. I alienated friends with my attitudes; my family suffered. Finally, like a spoiled child in a tantrum, who cannot force the world to do her will, I was in an almost perpetual despairing rage.

I can write about this now because I have come through; I am repenting. This has worked in me a commitment to truth and a desire to bear witness of what I believe. Philosopher-chemist Michael Polanyi says that “commitment offers to those who accept it legitimate grounds for the affirmation of personal convictions with universal intent.” According to Polanyi, “personal belief is the source of all knowledge,” and confession can serve as a “logically consistent exposition of personal belief.” In choosing confession as the form for exposition here, I have hoped that this is true, and that my confession will convincingly express what I believe to be universal truths.

The condition of the world matters a great deal to me now that I have moved into it. It seems obvious to me now that the world is dissolute, dissolving, unsolved, unresolved and that I am part of all this, a contributing force in the dissolution of the world. I have learned, in fact, that for much of my life I have been, to use Richard Weaver’s terms, a sort of impious neurotic barbarian. And if what some of “them” call a “liberal intellectual heretic” is one who walks by her own light instead of by the Light of Christ, I have been that, too.

I don’t like confessing to impiety, neurosis, and barbarism, or even to heresy. Though some of us “liberal intellectuals” joke about our “heresies” sometimes, I think heresy is dangerous. Though heretics may claim to want only to help the institution they love, they can, in fact, do very great harm. The spirit of heresy is competitive; it wants not merely to correct, but to conquer.⁵ In reaction to this spirit, the institution, perceiving threats to its stability and power, begins to encrust itself in self-protective dogmas, and, of course, to persecute the heretics. Northrop Frye has observed

that fear of heresy during the Christian centuries resulted in “what was perhaps the deadliest social psychosis in history.”⁶ Who would want to be in any way responsible for the Inquisition?

And heretics damage themselves as well. Heresy inevitably means not only ideological but also spiritual isolation from the community of saints. With minds tuned to opposing, heretics can become arrogant, resentful, bitter, lonely. Or, sensing that belief must be affirmation, not opposition, the heretic may find friends with reinforcing beliefs; a new community may arise. Then, self-congratulatory and shallow-rooted, the bunch of them may fall into errors worse than those of the old institution itself. I remember learning of certain beautiful heretical ideas of early Christian gnostics, ideas about community and relationship, about friendship as “spiritual marriage.” Later I learned that such ideas led to or justified licentiousness in some groups, celibacy in others, which in either is death. According to one scholar, the spirit of gnosticism, moving down through the ages, has shown up in such modern phenomena as positivism, Hegelianism, Marxism, and the “God is Dead” movement.⁷

But, what is a Mormon heretic? What, really, do we *have* to believe? One woman’s heresy is another woman’s doctrine. Isn’t that the beauty of Mormonism? Once I learned to say *that* with confidence, I was able for a long time to hide my real heresy from myself. I am no heretic, my “rationalizing voice” would say. What *I* am, is a person particularly devoted to truth, to correct ideas. I want only to help the Church. And my motives have been pure. If everyone could just get their ideas straight, then we could have Zion, that blessed state I long for, in which all of us would be happy because we would all think just the way I do.

When spoken in my mind by the rationalizing voice, these words *were* perhaps representations of what I was really trying to believe. But in the present context, I use these words to mock myself, and in this way to say that I do not believe exactly what these words superficially say. Irony has been, ever since I learned to use it well, an important item in my bag of verbal tricks. I like this clever way of mocking myself into other people’s confidence, of implying not only that I have been wrong but also that anyone who thinks the way I have thought is also wrong. Irony directed against myself is supposed to keep others from envying my specialness; it can also be a sort of tender trap.

The tools of language have great power—power to communicate, unite, bring order, but also power to confuse and destroy, according to the skill and motives of their users. A point upon which communication can easily fail is tone, the user’s attitude towards his words. If tone is ambiguous, if the user’s attitude towards his words does not match the superficial content of the words, as in my ironic passage above, the possibility for misunderstanding increases. Irony asks for a rather high degree of cooperation between giver and receiver. If that cooperation is possible, because both parties want it and are able to give it, irony can create or mark intimacy. This, of course, is a highly “cerebral” intimacy, which wants to exclude “them” and also to avoid emotional risk even among “us.” The intimacy of irony, therefore, is

likely to be ultimately unsatisfying, with great possibilities for misunderstanding, even between people who know each other well.

Still, I like irony. It's fun. I cannot imagine giving it up utterly. I now believe with Weaver, however, that a part of the remedy for the dissolution of the world is a "restoration" of language, including a return to responsibility for the meanings of our words. Indeed,

all metaphysical community depends on the ability of men to understand one another I should urge examining in all seriousness that ancient belief that a divine element is present in language Knowledge of the prime reality comes to man through the word; the word is a sort of deliverance from the shifting world of appearances. The central teaching of the New Testament is that those who accept the word acquire wisdom and . . . identification with the eternal⁸

It is this that I mean to say here: Knowledge of reality comes to mortals through the Word, and this Word is deliverance. But I mean by "Word" more, I think, than Weaver does. Jesus Christ, the Word, the *Logos*, the Reason of God, is the truth. He is the Way and the Life. He is reality. He is love. It is this knowledge that has delivered me from the shifting world of appearances, from both my illusions and the pains of my disillusionment. It is this that my own words—the clever traps I have often built for myself and others with such devices as rationalization and irony, such habits of mind as competitiveness and indiscriminate criticism—this that my words have kept me from believing. But I have now found deliverance, and its work is to convert me from the heresy of which I have accused myself.

I must say now that in calling myself a heretic, I do not mean to confess that any of my *ideas* about God, the universe, the Church and its founders, leaders, members, programs, are or ever have been necessarily in fundamental opposition to truth, to the precepts of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What I mean to say is that I have seen that "truth" and "correct ideas" are not necessarily the same thing. Even if my ideas are right, *I* can be wrong. I accuse myself not so much of a heresy of the mind, of thinking, as of a heresy of the heart, of motive and being.

Weaver says that in order to stop the dissolution of the world we must return to certain kinds of piety, including "piety towards one's neighbor." This piety means accepting the "substance" of all other human beings, which 25 years ago I might have described as "knowing God loves other people, too." This kind of knowledge, says Weaver, "disciplines the ego."

To have enough imagination to see into others' lives, and enough piety to realize that their existence is part of beneficent creation is the very foundation of human community. There appear to be two types to whom this kind of charity is unthinkable: the barbarian, who would destroy what is different because it is different, and the neurotic, who always reaches out for control of others, probably because his own integration has been lost.⁹

Or never found.

As I have said, I have been guilty of such impiety. Too long focused on my own specialness, too long working through the disappointments of disillusionment, I have been too slow learning the real nature of human community. More than fifteen years ago someone told me I needed to learn what people were for. I was insulted when he said it, but now I see that he was right. People are not to use; they are to love. I have always pretended to know this, but now I see that frequently I have used people, have denied the substance of others in futile attempts to make a reality of myself. Such denial can take various forms—competitiveness, arrogance, intellectual pride, unkindness, vindictiveness, impatience, envy, ingratitude, obsession (a form of idolatry), vanity, and also false humility, self-deprecation, and fear. All of these mean the same thing—failure to love.

For an adult who has willingly taken upon herself the name of Jesus Christ, who professes belief in Jesus and his message, such failure, such impiety, is heresy; it implies deviation from the basic premise of Christianity, which is that love is the foundation of all law, of all commandment. Not a true neurotic, not a complete barbarian, I have *known* this for a long time. I can *think* of charity, preach it, even teach it. But there are two levels of belief—the level of profession, of thought, and the level of action. It is on the level of action that I accuse myself of heresy. I call my sin heresy and not hypocrisy because the disparity in me between the professed and the actual belief is most often a sign not of my intent to deceive but of weakness,¹⁰ a lack of integration, a wrong "idea of being." "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18).

I want to be clear about this. When I accuse myself of heresy on the level of action, I do not mean that last month I did not exercise and eat properly, did not write in my journal, did not do my visiting teaching, did not take a gift to my neighbor's new baby or a casserole to the folks who moved in across the street, did not invite my mother-in-law to dinner, did not use the manual to teach my Sunday School lesson, did not attend the temple even once, and *did* let all my apricots rot on the tree. Last month at least, these were failures of a different, even insignificant, sort. What I mean in saying that I lack "integration" is that I am not whole, not healthy. There is no reliable connection between intention (the action of the heart) and behavior (including attitudes and language). I am, therefore, inevitably impious; I cannot truly worship, which requires a pure heart, focusing of spiritual energy. I am necessarily out of touch with reality, with the substance of others.

My lack of integration—of "integrity"—my dissolution, is shown when my motives are not pure, when I behave in a superficially acceptable way, but my heart is not in it, when I use service as a method of self-aggrandizement or self-preservation or self-advancement. My dissolution is also shown when I "mean well" but do not do well, when I "intend" no harm but do harm,

when I can talk about love or am preoccupied with my search for love but I do not love. Another way of saying this is that I *am* in the wrong way, or I am in the wrong way. As yet, I am not, I am nothing. I do not possess the attributes of God, the Great I Am, the One who is.

I have tried all my life to be like God, and I have failed even to know him. Am I doomed, then, to my failures for as long as I live? Sometimes I have believed I was. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" cried the Apostle Paul. No one, I would have said once. It is the mortal condition. So, though I usually have been able to define myself as "basically a good person," I have not been, since I found out I wasn't "special," a consistently *happy* person. How could any really sensitive person be happy in such a world as this, where all our striving makes so little difference in ourselves, in others, in the general mess? Real lasting happiness would be possible, it seemed to me, only in a different, more perfect, sphere of existence. And the vision of Enoch made me wonder even about *that*.

When I heard President McKay say once that no unhappy person will ever inherit the celestial kingdom, I began to worry. When I found that my unhappiness was drifting into despair, I worried more. C.S. Lewis said that despair is a sin worse than anything that causes it. How could this *be*? If my unhappiness was *caused* in me (and it obviously was) by annoying or hurtful people and by events I could not control, how could it really be a *sin*? Sin had to be something that was my fault, something I could fix. I had fixed all the sins I could find, but I couldn't fix my unhappiness. It wasn't my fault.

The most important work for the rationalizing voice has always been to keep blame for my pain fixed as securely as possible outside of my control. This would enable me to excuse my irritation, anger, criticism, spite, resentment, if these were justifiable reactions to the behavior of others. I know now that when I was critical, angry, competitive, I was estranged in my spirit from God. These actions marked me as a heretic, testified that I did not actually believe that Jesus Christ died so that I might live.

Of course, I have always pretended to faith in Jesus Christ, on the level of thought. It has been more difficult, however, no matter how I carefully rationalized, to pretend to *hope*. I knew of the atonement, believed it had occurred, but often I did not *partake* of it, did not allow myself to be healed by it; I did not hope. (This is what "despair" means.) So I could not have charity, could not know the pure love of Christ. I could not feel the blessing of atonement, unity with God, and could not extend this blessing to others.

So estranged from Reality, I began to feel that nothing was real except the pain of my neediness. I did not know then that my needs were fictions, and that neediness itself was part of my sin. So when in dark days of despair I would ask God to take away my pain, to carry me across the abyss, his "silence" did not mean that he was refusing to rescue me because he wanted me to suffer; as if suffering in itself were good for me. The silence meant, rather, that even God could not take away something I was creating—the

emptiness of the refusal to be filled. He could not carry me "through" something that was an illusion. He could only teach me to see more clearly, and that only if I would turn to him and open my eyes. He could only fill me with love if I would open my heart to receive.

But I did not like to know my despair was illusion. Its effects were devastating to me, and harmful to those around me. It had to be something real, something outside me and beyond my control. Otherwise, the condemnation would be too awful to bear. So I fought for this illusion, too, still building reality out of my own abstractions. Eventually, though, fear of the pain and desperation to be rid of it and its effects on the people I still managed to care about, drove me to find health, to find the reality that changed me—the reality of the desire of Jesus Christ for my wholeness, and his desire of Love Himself for relationship with me.

Gaining the path to health was not easy. I knew that it was necessary, but I was exceedingly reluctant for the real work. It was easier sometimes to endure the accustomed pain than it was to change old habits of mind. It was easier to work hard on wrong things than it was to let myself see the right things. For some time, predictably enough, I worked to name my problem precisely, so that I could control it. I read dozens of psychology books, religion books, philosophy books, so that I could more perfectly comprehend what was wrong with me. Each new insight was opportunity for analysis, rationalization, explanation, accusation. But, at last I was exhausted from this vain obsession with myself and my emotions. Then I learned that instead of trying to control my sin, I had simply to *abandon* it for truth.

The beginning of the change for me is marked in my mind by the memory of an afternoon when a friend spoke to me the words of Jesus from John chapter 15, verse 17 (set here in context):

As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you: continue ye in my love These things have I spoken unto you that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

These familiar words of Jesus pierced my heart, as they were spoken to me by someone who loved me, and who also loved everyone else he knew. Until that moment I had denied the importance of this affection, arising from my friend's own virtue not my "specialness," free for everyone, not unique for me, and therefore, I thought, meaningless. But in that moment I knew that my friend, like Jesus to his disciples, was giving me all he knew. He loved me; he wanted to help me; he would not be more "special" than I. And so a seed of virtue was planted in my heart. As it grew, it would first break my heart, and then heal it.

Some months later, I found myself offended, rejected, accusing, sliding back into pain. But now I knew that there was another way, and I desperately wanted to know how to live virtuous, whole, joyful. Now I prayed for clearer sight, for knowledge of how to stop the pain I caused myself and others, and now deliverance came. In vivid dreams that very night I saw rehearsed real moments from my life. I saw myself over and over again—self-absorbed, competitive, critical, manipulative, tolerant of manipulation by others. I heard myself speak, knew the effects of my behavior on others, my friends. At the same time I saw my heart, and the hearts of my friends. I saw that sometimes I had taken offense when none had been given; sometimes I had criticized unjustly. I saw myself miserable and lonely because of what I had done. I was filled with sorrow.

This sorrow was much different from the black, static, self-regarding pain of my despair. This sorrow was grief for those I had wronged, including, strangely enough, the “self” I watched suffer in these scenes. I was *sorry*, not so much that I had done something wrong as that I had done injury to others, to myself, to God. At the same time I saw that sometimes my heart had been right. Sometimes I had been tolerant and patient; sometimes I had given all I had and all I knew; sometimes I had absorbed offense with love; sometimes I had been a friend. Seeing this filled me with joy.

This was what I had needed to see: my own actions creating my own sorrow, and my own joy. I was being instructed, from my own experience, in how to be. And most importantly, I knew that the One who was instructing me was *with* me, in my sorrow and in my joy. I knew that this One was Jesus Christ, and I knew that he wanted me to overcome myself so that I could be *with* him. This was the most astonishing part of my vision—his desire for me. It was not the desire from neediness that I knew from human life, the often smothering, insistent desire to possess, to convince, to be completed, vindicated, affirmed. Rather, it was a strong, clear desire from wholeness, not desire of me for *him*, for his glory, but desire for *me*, as his glory. It was a desire independent of my desirability, unchanged by my unworthiness, although thwarted by it. It was desire ever faithful.

Now I saw that God’s love for me, revealed in Jesus Christ his Word, was not what I had thought. Twenty-five years after I first heard the message, now I finally got it: God loves me, and he loves everyone else, too. He does not love us because or when we are special, because we can do so many pleasing things. He loves us because he is love and we are his.

In my competitive heart it had seemed that such a love would be meaningless. If I was not loved for my merits, how could the love *mean* anything? But now I saw that this love, the pure love of Christ, is the only meaning there is. The command to love is the command to wholeness. Such love in every human heart would stop the dissolution, would heal the entire world. It seemed obvious to me now that while *attraction*, evoked by attributes that can change, often fails, the pure love of Christ can never fail. It is always an extension towards others; always a bond; always kind, patient,

generous. It is not blind to faults, but there is no self-interest in its discernment of the failings of others. It seeks life and light for all.

In feeling this love, this desire for me, I felt regarded by God, seen, called by my name. I saw that he did not descend below all things in order to remain forever remote from the struggling creature below. He descended in order to be with me, so that I could be with him. Seeing this, I understood, at last, what people are for: they are to *be with*, in their sorrow and in their joy. The purpose of love, its “work and glory,” is to bring to pass immortality and eternal life for others. To be possessed of this love is to participate in the order of the universe. Failing this, regardless of our other gifts, we are nothing, which thing I had never really supposed.

Recently, I learned that the word “sin” is etymologically related to the verb “to be.” It suggests incomplete being, that which is unfinished, not whole.¹¹ All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. This does not mean that we have not yet finished doing everything on the Great Checklist of Life. It means that we lack perfect love—the desire, the will, the ability to create, to bring light and life to the world; we are alienated from Truth. This alienation creates a sense of neediness, that is despair, dissolution, death.

But we can learn love. Desiring earnestly, praying with “all the energy” of our hearts, we can receive this best of all gifts from a gracious God. Knowing love, we will know that the truth will free us from the futility of egocentric striving to root out our own imperfections. His gracious gift is not his loving; love is his very nature, which he cannot hide or withhold. His gift is the Way to *our* loving. He commands us not to be lovable but to *love*.

WORK TO BE DONE

Even though it seems obvious folly now, I must have expected a rest. I must have thought that seeing what I had seen would mean permanent peace of mind. But it was only respite. The vicissitudes of the flesh return to challenge the willing spirit; the integrity fails; I “fall apart.” The neurotic pain does not come back, however, and there is not so much fear as there was: fear of failing, fear of the opinions of others, fear of wrong ideas, fear of loss or betrayal or rejection.

God does not promise a life free from sorrow, even for those who repent. In this world, we will have tribulation, but Perfect Love has “overcome the world,” and will, if we allow, cast out all our fear. So my repentance is not an accomplishment; it is a way of life, a state of mind I know I must continue to choose, turning and returning my wandering heart to love, accepting chastening when it comes, learning grace upon grace how to be a friend to Jesus Christ.

Recently, while reading *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels, I was chastened in a rather surprising way. For it was here that I encountered Irenaeus, second-century Greek bishop of Lyons

and foremost orthodox opponent of gnosticism. Even having defined myself as a heretic, I did not expect trouble with the author of perhaps the most ambitious treatise against heresy ever written. From the Latter-day Saint point of view, after all, the orthodoxy of Irenaeus was already in many respects an apostate orthodoxy. Nevertheless, I felt quite defensive while reading these words of Irenaeus in Pagels, "Though the gnostics are attempting to raise the level of theological understanding, they cannot accomplish a reformation effective enough to compensate for the harm they are doing."¹²

I knew that my defensiveness was probably a sign of some lingering illusion about myself, or some fault in my motives and behavior, but I did not want to know right away what this could be. Since my visions of love, I had concentrated on myself and on my personal relationships. I became a more loving wife, a more consistently patient mother, a better friend, even a better driver. I enjoyed Church meetings more, too. Instead of mentally murmuring my way through the travelogues and bursts of false doctrine in testimony meetings, I had regarded the members of the congregation tolerantly, wondering if anything that I was able to give could be needed by them. I felt better, felt full of insight that I was ready to share. I certainly was not prepared to feel accused of harming the Church.

I began to argue with Irenaeus. Yes, I do attempt to raise the level of theological understanding, and yes, I do (I suppose) have some sort of reform in mind. Surely there has never been any real harm in anything I have done. Before the rationalizing voice could get very far, however, an accusing memory came to me all unbidden, the memory of a Freshman Composition student who 15 years ago had written on his teacher evaluation form: "Miss DeWitt has no right to go around destroying testimonies."

From long habit, rationalizations bloomed in my brain. I had only been trying to help these freshmen avoid the kinds of painful disillusionment I had suffered at their age. If I could be their guide, I, a believer who would help them to see that the gospel was true anyway, they would be fortunate. What I had said about B.H. Roberts was true, and was even meant to be inspiring. If what I said had hurt this boy, that was *his* fault, not mine. No one could really *destroy* anyone else's testimony anyway.

When I call this rationalization, I do not mean to say that there is no truth in it, no validity in the line of reasoning. I mean to say that it is an attempt by my mind to make "sense" out of bad behavior; it is an attempt to preserve my illusions, to mask the truth about what I am doing. This is how my heresy was maintained all those years right along with all my lovely (and often even correct) ideas.

Now I knew better, though, and if there would be pain in accepting the truth, I knew that there would be more pain in avoiding it. So I allowed myself to see that in my embarrassment and annoyance at being forward to be less than perfect, I had not been thinking of my student and his welfare. I had been thinking of myself. Though I have always professed to love my students very much, I had not loved this one enough.

And now that this truth was out, I saw another behind it. If there was a sense in which I had been trying to enlighten and help my students with my esoteric knowledge, it was also true that I had been showing off both my knowledge and the sophisticated and blase way in which I could deal with something that I knew might be troubling. I was pretending that I was one of God's chosen, and that if my students weren't, I would rescue them.

This is not the only memory of this sort that has come to me since then, but this is the one I feel able to admit, perhaps because it happened some time ago, when I was young. "The youth," says Richard Weaver, "is an intellectual merely, a believer in ideas, who thinks that ideas can overcome the world."

The mature man passes beyond intellectuality to wisdom; he believes in ideas, too, but life has taught him to be content to see them embodied, which is to see them under a sort of limitation This humbler view of man's powers is the essence of piety.¹³

I could see this now, and I accepted the fact that my ideas, even the correct ones, had limitations. Once more I saw how I had lacked adequate piety in the past, had been careless of the substance of others. I was glad that I had matured. I rested my conscience a while.

The next chastisement came one Saturday afternoon as I contemplated ways to teach my new wisdom to the young adults in my Sunday School class, who obviously needed a lot of help in learning to love properly. I decided to use verse 7 of 1 Peter 3 to explain how we could have unity in Christ even if everyone around us didn't share our ideas: "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be full of pity, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing." It seemed to me that here is a perfect opportunity to practice what Peter preaches, for in the opening verses of this chapter we find the infamous passage advising wives to be in subjection to their own husbands and husbands to "give honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel." Assuming that Peter is responsible for this passage, there is nothing better to do than to have compassion for him, and courtesy, and faith that he will one day learn better ways, as we have.

I was congratulating myself on the new maturity, on the tolerance that could keep me from bristling at a passage such as this. Something nagged at me, though. Something I had read in Pagels. I went back to look, and found this from Irenaeus:

The gnostics consider themselves "mature," so that no one can be compared with them in the greatness of their *gnosis*, not even if you mention Peter or Paul or any of the other apostles They imagine that they themselves have discovered more than the apostles, and that the apostles preached the gospel still under the influence of Jewish opinions, but that they themselves are wiser and more intelligent than the apostles.¹⁴

The rationalizing voice immediately protested: It is truly compassionate to explain these passages as evidence of cultural bias. We know, after all, of Peter's mistakes, which provide excellent moments of instruction in the Gospels. Of course, if these truly are the words of Peter, it is Peter after Pentecost, who could raise the dead, who would himself die upside down on a Roman cross. But couldn't he have been culture-bound even so?

As a matter of fact, I believe he could have been. But the problem for me at this moment was not Peter; it was *me*, as I was beginning to suspect might be the case from now on. When I let myself see the truth, I realized that my attitude towards Peter was condescending, and it was keeping me from the usefulness of his message. The language of this passage still is not pleasant to my twentieth-century American woman's ears, but recently I was able to come to these words with a new heart. Then I could see that subjection (awful word) of a righteous woman to a righteous man can be fidelity to form, that weaker does not necessarily mean inferior or less valuable, and that honor to someone with less physical strength is care.

I could see, too, that I am not responsible for the unrighteous dominion that can result from other readings of the purpose in this passage. It seems clear that Peter's purpose here is the conversion of unbelievers to truth and the uniting of believers in faith. For the believing couple, the wife and the husband, the end is that they might be "heirs together of the grace of life," a beautiful expression essentially lost to me in my former state of mind. "When thou art converted," Jesus had said to his chief apostle, "strengthen thy brethren." This is the work to which friends of Jesus are always called. In this passage of scripture we see Peter acting as he was called to act.

"Strengthen thy brethren." "Love one another as I have loved you." "Be perfect, even as I, or your Father in heaven is perfect." The command to love, the command to wholeness. Did Jesus also say, "And make sure you set the Pharisees straight?" Many who profess to be his followers behave as though he did. It certainly is easier to do that than it is to do what he said to do. In fact, a common objection to Christianity is that no one *can* do what Jesus requires, that selfless interest in the welfare of others is a human impossibility, that love and wholeness cannot be commanded.

Many Christians, including many Mormons, pretend not to be daunted by this objection. They change the terms of the commandment to "perfect behavior" and "charitable action"—goals and service—and start keeping score. The call to wholeness, however, is not necessarily a call to certain practices in the ordinary world; it is a call to a "vision of a higher world, a different order of existence,"¹³ a *united* order. Organized human attempts at such order generally have failed. Yet, unless we learn something of such order we cannot be whole as God requires, and he does require it. To be God is to require the perfection of others.

How can we respond to such a requirement? We respond by repenting, by earnestly seeking love as a gift from God. I used to believe that the admonition of the prophet Mormon to pray with "all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love" meant to pray *to* be filled with love, as in "Please fill me with love,

oh, please fill me with love!" I believe now that it means to pray, giving the whole heart, so that we are able to be filled with the love that God bestows upon all his followers (Moroni 7:48). Such prayer with such a result is shown to us in the account of Enos, son of Jacob, who prayed earnestly for a remission of his own sins. Receiving this, he was filled with a desire for the welfare of his brethren, of his enemies, and of generations yet unborn (Enos 1:4-17). This is the prayer of a friend of God, one who is learning love from Love Himself.

In Enos is an example of a mortal losing self in order to find self. I used to think that "losing self" meant something like making great personal sacrifices of time, money, health, pleasure, and happiness in order that others might have time, money, health, pleasure, and happiness. Fragmented, striving, I could not really understand what it meant to "lose" a self; I did not have a self to lose. Now I understand that to lose oneself means to emulate the action of God, who, loving the world, gave his essence, his own Son, who "lost" himself so that whoever would believe in him would have everlasting life. Thus was Jesus Christ found to be God of heaven and earth. In giving his Son, his very Word, God gives to us the pattern of fidelity that we must emulate in order to know wholeness.

By the time it appeared in the opening verses of the Gospel of John, the term *Logos*, Word, had been hundreds of years developing in the Greek mind. *Logos*, connoting gathering, arranging, putting in order, and coming to signify speaking, reckoning, thinking, held the meanings of the functions of the human mind that were highest according to Greek understanding, functions that were ordered, moderated, rational. For Greek-speaking readers of the Old Testament, *logos* also had resonance with the Hebrew "word," *dabhar*, originating from a verb meaning to drive forward. For the Israelites, this term designated the highest mental function, which for them was dynamic, masterful, energetic. In this culture, "word" and "deed" were the same; *dabhar* might well be rendered "faithful word," "effective word." For the Israelite, a "word" which does not become a "deed" signifies a counterfeit word, a lying word which does not possess "the inner strength and truth for accomplishment" or which accomplishes something evil. In *dabhar*, "Javeh makes his essence known. Who has *dabhar* knows Javeh."¹⁶

I learn from the Gospel of John, therefore, that in apprehending the attributes represented in the descriptions of God, I apprehend the Word of God ever faithful. In my own fidelity, I will learn of God's regard for me. In order to comprehend the love of God, then, I will need to make promises, to make covenants, and to keep them. So when I said that I did not sin in failing to meet certain expectations arising from my membership in the Church, I did not mean to say that such failure is never sin. I do believe in the importance of the community in which I make formal covenant with Jesus Christ. I believe with Elaine Pagels that "ideas alone do not make a religion powerful, although it cannot succeed without them; equally important are social and political structures that identify and unite people into a common affiliation."¹⁷ I do not want to weaken these structures. I do not want

to harm the Church, even in the name of “raising the level of theological understanding” I do not want to alienate myself from the people and the obligations that often, when my heart is right, push me into unexpected moments of understanding and growth.

I am more careful now than I used to be of facile distinctions (often used as rationalizations) between the Church and the gospel. I am more careful, when I can remember my resolve and put “myself” aside, of what I say about the Church and its members and leaders. I do not see in the Church the kind of perfection I once thought it *must* have, but I do see opportunity to find embodiment of the only idea that really matters—that love is everything. By subjecting myself, as the Spirit directs, to the requirements of membership in the Church, I can learn to bridle all my passions (including my pride, my anger, my impatience, my irritability) so that I might be filled with love. I learn in the Church, as I do in marriage, in parenthood, in friendship, in teaching, in writing, in the beauty of my rose garden, that subjection of the will to a strenuous form can bring unexpected rewards.

In his book *Standing by Words*, Wendell Berry has included the wonderful essay “Poetry and Marriage: The Uses of Old Forms.” Here Berry explores the richness that comes to life through fidelity to form by comparing the requirements of writing good poetry to the requirements of living a good marriage:

The meaning of marriage begins in the giving of words . . . and this must be an unconditional giving, for in joining ourselves to one another we join ourselves to the unknown You do not know the road; you have committed yourself to a way The given road implies the acceptance of a form not entirely of our own making. When understood seriously enough, a form is a way of accepting and of living within the limits of . . . life . . . [but is] also an opening, a generosity toward possibility.¹⁸

This word-keeping “is a double fidelity: to the community and to oneself.” In the keeping of our covenants—of baptism, of priesthood, of endowment, of the holy order of matrimony—the order in our individual lives reaches out into the community of faith. I cannot stop the world’s dissolving, cannot prevent the evil that comes my way, except as I can bring order to my own heart, receiving there the desire of Jesus Christ, the gracious gift made by one who emptied himself (the literal rendering of Philippians 2:7) of his glory to be born, suffer, and die so that I might, if I would, be filled.

Our ability to be filled comes from, as one Christian psychologist has put it, “our learning how to receive our being in the feminine way, at the wounded core. It comes from our acknowledging our dependency on being-one-with others.”¹⁹ This leads us to discover that

we want to be with what matters most to us, with what gives life to any and all being. No longer satisfied with substitute sensations of being we pursue inspection of who we

really are and who others really are in all their differences and samenesses to us.²⁰

Receiving “being” knowledge, substance, truth, in this way (which Ann Ulanov calls “feminine” and which might also be called the Hebrew mode) is an action of the heart that we all, male as well as female, neglect at our peril. The “proclaiming rhetoric of the Bible,” says Frye, “is a welcoming and approaching rhetoric, addressed by a symbolically male God to a symbolically female body of readers.”²¹

The “word of God” is described in the New Testament as a two-edged sword that cuts and divides What it ultimately divides is . . . the world of life and the world of death, and this can be accomplished only by a language that escapes from argument and refutation . . . in short, the language of love.²²

The language of love calls us from the death of our neediness into the abundant life. By submitting our lives to direction by a will higher than our own, we learn, within the bounds the Lord has set, a divine economy. Need is “an economy of scarcity,” of poverty, while desire is “an economy of abundance.”²³ It is the abundance of a pure heart that is seen in such friends of God as Enos, or as the Nephite disciples, who learned a language of prayer beyond mortal ability to describe, or as Joseph Smith, who said that “the nearer we get to our Heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion upon perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders and cast their sins behind our backs.”²⁴

I would like to be such a friend to Jesus. I have seen that his desire for my friendship is greater than any desire I have ever known. Seeing this has brought me to the ability to imagine such a friendship. Too often, however, my compassion extends only to “perishing souls” who are appealing—who are very young, very old, or are disadvantaged, hurt, shabby, disabled, or oppressed. For others who “perish,” such as those who are self-righteous, who are blind to real spiritual truth, or who are in other ways boring or inconvenient, it is still difficult for me consistently to feel real compassion. I tend, still, to long for the Lord to cleanse His Church of my ideological foes, and so bring Zion.

Recently, while reading the new compilation of Hugh Nibley’s writings about Enoch, I was chastised for such a longing. Enoch—intellectual, friend of God whose personal purity saved the world in his vicinity—was missing from the canon until young Joseph Smith brought him back. [Michael Polanyi says that Christianity “sedulously fosters, and in a sense permanently satisfies, man’s craving for mental dissatisfaction by offering him the comfort of a crucified God.”²⁵ With Enoch in the canon, Mormonism offers the comfort of a God who is Eternal Parent, eternally weeping over disobedient and contentious children.] Near the end of Nibley’s book,²⁶ I found this from Brigham Young:

Do not be too anxious for the Lord to hasten his work. Let

our anxiety be centered upon this one thing, the sanctification of our own hearts, the purifying of our own affections. This should be our concern, this should be our study, this should be our daily prayer, and not be in a hurry to see the overthrow of the wicked.²⁷

So I set myself once more to the task of purifying this heart so prone to wander from the Word of God. It is not, I have to say, always clear to me what to do. The Way is not so well defined as life seemed when I was sure of everything. I can see, at least, that unity with others is essential to personal wholeness and union with God, and that such unity does not imply complete agreement of ideas. It does imply, however, mutual desire for wholeness, and this requires a mentality of forgiving. Of me it is required to forgive all offense, for in the end, all offense is offense only to God and can only be judged by him. There is no harm in offense, except to the one who offends, and the one who will "take offense." "For in nothing doth man offend God . . . save [he] confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21), which commandments are circumscribed in love. The great metaphor for unity is the body of Christ; we are all members and have need of each other. It seems to me, however, that

metaphors of unity and integration take us only so far, because they are derived from the finiteness of the human mind. If we are to expand our vision into the genuinely infinite, that vision becomes decentralized. We follow a "way" or direction until we reach a state of innocence symbolized by the sheep in the twenty-third psalm, where we are back to wandering, but where wandering no longer means being lost.²⁸

Though I "wander" a good deal these days, less certain now than I have been before, I am also more serene and less afraid. Perhaps, though I wander, I am now more often safely in the Way of Truth.

Yet, life does not often seem any simpler. My new understanding does not relieve me of the responsibility to evaluate, to discern, to make decisions that are painful to me and distressing to others. I cannot do all that pleases everyone who is touched by my life. I know that even if I do right, I will inevitably be the means by which offenses come to others. I will watch others estrange themselves from me. I will only be able to trust that what I try to do in purity of heart will be enough, and that what I inevitably do in sin will not be too much. And I will try to avoid receiving offense. The One who calls me to be like him has taken upon himself all offense, and I must accept his work.

So while this life is not simple, the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light. Wandering, then, I listen for his call, so that I do not fear too much, and lose the way. Shepherd, king, bridegroom, host, mother, father, friend—he calls in many voices,

all one voice. He calls, and waits, that I should hear, and come.

With desire I have desired to eat with you. Make ready for the bridegroom; the bridegroom comes. How often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks, and you would not. Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. Fear not, little children, for you are mine. Be of good cheer, and do not fear. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know. I am the way, the truth, and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. In this world you shall have tribulation. But fear not: I have overcome the world. This is my work and my glory, to bring to pass immortality and eternal life for you. You are, that you might have joy.

NOTES

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A Review Essay and Bibliography

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF LOWELL BENNION

By Eugene England

Lowell Bennion, one of the major forces in the intellectual, moral, and spiritual life of twentieth-century Mormonism, turned eighty on July 26. As a fitting conclusion to his eightieth year, in which he has published his twentieth book, The Unknown Testament (Deseret Book, 1988) and been awarded the prestigious Richard D. Bass Award for Distinguished Service in the Humanities, we publish this intellectual history, review, and bibliography.

WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE?
BUT TO DO JUSTLY, TO LOVE MERCY,
AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH THY GOD.
(MICAH 6:8)

A UNIQUE FIGURE AND VOICE ENLIVEN—AND HAUNTS—late twentieth century Mormonism. The figure is stooped slightly forward, dressed in work clothes or inexpensive, sometimes mismatched pants and jacket, with blunt farmer's hands protruding, and a browned face and pate, only a fringe of sandy, greying hair. That figure was seen driving to teach religion at the Salt Lake Institute or sociology at the University of Utah or delivering donated food to a Salt Lake widow, all in the same battered 1946 Ford truck. He was seen, awkward in academic robes, delivering the baccalaureate address at the University of Utah and, more comfortable in grubby levis, boots, and straw hat, teaching city boys how to ride a horse and to build a pole barn in the Teton Valley. He was seen giving a Brigham Young University devotional address, instructing a conference of Mormon Sunday School teachers, conducting sacrament service as bishop of a Salt Lake City ward and, now with the hint of a shuffle added to his unhurried, bent-forward gait, moving from session to session at the Sunstone Theological Symposium.

EUGENE ENGLAND is a professor of English at Brigham Young University and author of Dialogues with Myself and Why the Church Is As True As the Gospel. This introduction and bibliography will appear in somewhat different form in England's edition of The Best of Lowell Bennion: Selected Writings, 1928-1988, which will be published by Deseret Book later this year.

Lowell Bennion's voice is not elegant, but rather rough and homey, quite informal and unself-conscious, even when delivering a talk on preparing for a happy marriage to an LDS General Conference. He is completely fearless, almost old-fashioned, outspoken against unchastity, drugs, intellectual pride, Mormon materialism and prejudice—and willing to be heard and published anywhere. Until authors were no longer identified in the 1970s, his name appeared more often than any other in LDS Church lesson manuals for all auxiliaries. He has spoken in more essays and books, over a greater variety of subjects, than perhaps any other contemporary Mormon. He is the only one to have written for virtually every official and independent Mormon periodical of the twentieth century.

Why do that voice and figure haunt—as well as enliven—us? Brother Bennion is among the gentlest and meekest of men, constantly conciliatory and non-confrontive. However, in a time when our quick growth in numbers and material blessings tempt us Mormons to forget some important things, his teaching and writing—and especially his life—provide us our clearest, most challenging reminders of the central message of the Hebrew prophets and Christ, reaffirmed by the prophets of the Restoration: that true religion is based in social morality. His voice has spoken, for nearly sixty years, with a simplicity and clarity like water in a dry land, in favor of *positive*, integrated religion, in support of a holistic philosophy of life, grounded in affirmative and universal principles. For him, religion is based not in strictures or dogmatic theology or ingenious, ever-changing programs and anxious performance. His faith is based in Joseph Smith's revelation of the truth that all humans are co-eternal with God—the same kind of beings and thus co-creators with him: Their basic natures are fulfilled and moved to progression through receiving unconditional love and being given opportunities to love and to serve creatively the needs of all such God-like beings, including themselves.

We are haunted by this unique voice because we know that at times we have discriminated against others because of their race or sex. We know that sometimes we value programs over people and sometimes break hearts rather than break rules—or sometimes prefer “right doctrine” to simple justice and mercy. We

know that with all our growth and great buildings and high activity we sometimes forget the fatherless and widows, the naked and those in prison, the ones right among us as well as strangers and foreigners. We know how hard it is, with busy schedules and a favorable image to maintain and the cumbering responsibilities of a worldwide church, to remember “the least of these.”

Brother Bennion is one who has not forgotten. Without patronizing or condemning, he has taught and written to remind us. And he has set a constant, humble example for us. At the same time—and this, I believe, is the reason his ideas and example will continue to haunt us, the reason he will long be a gentle but piercing reminder—he has provided the most unified picture we have of our theology and the clearest explication of its central doctrines concerning Christ’s atonement and the way of salvation. The force of his intelligence and teaching skills, as well as his leadership and involvement in public and personal service, have unforgettably touched his students and will continue to move those who read him to new vision and practical courage.

Lowell Bennion is a better teacher than writer, but his best essays and sermons convey the teacher. Like every one of his class presentations, each is focused on a single, fundamental, clear idea, usually one that is repeated in other forms and combinations elsewhere in his work. He does not provide answers to questions, as if religion were simply a dogmatic set of answers. For him, as he believes it was for Christ, religion is rather a unified set of tools, principles, ideas, and feelings that can provide a permanent, growing basis for dealing with the bewildering variety of questions and challenges that life poses. It thus can help persons fulfill their deepest natures as children of God. One of his students, who entered the “U” in 1950, remembers attending Bennion’s small LDS Institute classes, where there was no indoctrination but members were led to express their developing thoughts and feelings. “That thrilled me,” he says. “It confirmed my soul. For the first time in my religious learning I felt the teacher was genuinely interested in the questions he was asking, not simply looking for a set answer, that he was interested in *me* and my response. We were soon sitting on the edge of our seats trying to help *him*—and that was the best help for *us*!”

I went to the U from 1951 to 1957, interrupted by a mission to Samoa. I took classes from Brother B., as we called him, and his colleagues and participated in Lambda Delta Sigma, the LDS fraternity/sorority that they had created to provide social and service and spiritual experience to balance their students’ intellectual studies. This was the “Golden Age” of LDS Church education. The faculty at the Salt Lake Institute during that time—Brother Bennion, T. Edgar Lyon, George Boyd, and Elder Marion D. Hanks (who continued teaching there after being called as a General Authority in 1952)—was indeed what Sterling McMurrin identified, on an evening in October 1986 when he and others honored Brother B., as the finest religion faculty ever to grace the Church. They were not only brilliant thinkers and teachers and devoted Latter-day Saints; they were deeply involved, and were *known* by their students and others to be deeply involved, in serving the

poor and deprived throughout the Salt Lake Valley. They spoke with the unique authority of practicing Christians.

Almost every Saturday Brother B. would accompany a Lambda Delta Sigma chapter or two as they cleaned the yard and painted the house of a widow or elderly couple in the Valley. His students saw him delivering food in his truck. We knew from personal experience that Elder Hanks sometimes spent a stormy winter evening driving around helping people stalled in the snow, and we had heard that when all the hotels refused rooms to black athletes visiting in Salt Lake, his family took them in. When that faculty told us the Gospel was true and that it called us to a life of selfless service, we believed them. When they told us to be patient about the Church’s denial of priesthood to blacks, that such a practice did not prove either that God was a racist—punishing blacks or that Christ’s Restored Gospel was untrue, we trusted them.

Bennion’s approach to teaching, which greatly influenced the rest of his faculty and gradually influenced his many students, was based partly on the example of his father, who was known as one of the finest Socratic teachers in the Church. But Brother B. added a unique perspective of his own, which he articulated early in his missionary journal and has both preached and practiced consistently for sixty years: that any religious principle must be consistent within its whole context, particularly the great and repeated fundamentals (including Christ’s teachings), and that its reliability is greatly strengthened by verification through a variety of ways of knowing: reason and experience as well as authority and the witness of the Spirit. This seems simple and obvious enough, but the consequences are enormous for how religion is taught and learned and lived—and that approach was not only unusual compared to most religious instruction in the Church when Bennion developed it, but it remains all too novel today.

The orthodox standard of teaching in the Church auxiliaries and seminaries, which even influences institutes and college religions classes, is still to ask “What word am I thinking of” questions designed to fit a set outline, with evidence provided only by quotation of authority or telling of sentimental anecdotes. There is another way, the way Bennion has demonstrated was taken by Christ, whom he calls “the Master Teacher,” and by the great teacher/prophets of the scriptures. It insists on consistency, openly invites skepticism of itself, and offers a variety of proofs, even asking us to conduct “an *experiment* upon my words” (Alma 32:27). It is aimed at providing foundation principles for dynamic development, not static answers.

I remember a class at the Institute in about 1953 on the nature of God, in which a student asked why, if God is no respecter of persons, as the scriptures and common sense clearly indicate, a difference existed in God’s church between blacks and whites. I immediately answered, as I had been taught in Sunday School and seminary, “Well, God is also a God of justice, and blacks were not valiant in the pre-existence and are suffering the natural consequences.” Brother Bennion—who in my experience was not an antagonist of the Church on this issue and never mentioned it except when directly asked—in the discussion following my remark pronounced no answers. He simply asked me how I knew blacks

had not been valiant. When I had no answer but tradition, he gently suggested that the God revealed in Christ would surely let blacks know *what* they had done wrong and how they could *repent*, rather than merely punishing them—and since God had done no such thing it seemed best to believe blacks had been, and were, no different spiritually from the rest of us. My life was changed, and not merely on this issue. I realized with stunning clarity that many of my beliefs, ones that profoundly affected my relationships to others, were based on flimsy and unexamined evidence—and were directly contradictory to great Gospel principles like the impartial fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of humankind and the unconditional Atonement, which gave sufficient power to *all* to repent and be both saved and exalted.

That crucial change in me was not imposed from outside by authority. It was educated, educed, led out of me by Brother Bennion. I was able to watch how he did it not long after I left the U. I was sent by the Air Force to study to be a weather officer at M.I.T. in Boston, and Brother B. visited our Cambridge Branch on the way to New York to meet his son returning from a mission in West Germany. The Sunday School lesson, on home teaching, was being taught in the standard orthodox manner (“What priesthood must the junior companions hold? Each month home teachers bring . . . what? . . . to every member of the ward? . . . Well, yes, ‘love’ and ‘help’ are good answers, but I was thinking of ‘a message’”). The class, as usual, was bored. Knowing how much this pained him, I waited for Brother B. to rise in prophetic fury and denounce the teacher, the lesson manual, or the class. After a while (*he* was waiting, I realized later, for me or someone else to take the lead), Bennion did raise his hand. He simply asked, with what we all recognized as genuine, uncondemning interest, why, since home teaching was obviously such a wonderful program, true to fundamental gospel principles and human needs, we had such a hard time doing it. He didn’t say another word, but we had the best, most honest and helpful and mutually supportive, discussion I remember in that branch. I learned what I should have had sense to see he was teaching us earlier at the U, that *any* member of a class or group—even a large audience—can make the learning situation more successful, by lovingly and sincerely struggling toward integrated basics: fundamentals rooted in the eternal, universal human needs as revealed by Christ.

Brother B. is the best teacher I have known. I believe he is also the best practical philosopher the LDS Church has produced in the twentieth century: He is both the best thinker about the great theoretical principles on which practical, living religion is based and the best practitioner of those principles. He is good evidence for his own favorite scripture, quoted at the beginning of this essay, in which the Hebrew prophet Micah tells us that, instead of programs and performance, even instead of sacrifice, what the Lord wants of us is justice and mercy and humble love of him and what he stands for—what Christ called “the weightier matters.” All over the world there are former students and colleagues, in business offices and classrooms and kitchens and slums, who go about doing good to “the least of these,” Christ’s brothers and sisters, because of the teaching and example of Lowell Bennion.

This essay is intended to help that tribe increase, by recommending Brother B. to new minds and hearts.

There are now two Bennion memorials at the University of Utah, the new Lowell L. Bennion Center for Community Service and the education building, named after Lowell’s father, Milton Bennion, Dean of the College of Education and Professor of Philosophy at the U. and later head of the LDS Sunday Schools. Milton’s *Moral Teachings of the New Testament* and many essays and reviews in Church and professional journals remain a significant contribution to religious education, and he was, of course, a major influence on his son Lowell. Others of great influence were Arthur Beeley, who taught Lowell sociology and involved him in a study of the social habits of young men in Salt Lake Valley before his mission, and Elder John A. Widtsoe, LDS Apostle and head of Church Education, who was so impressed when he met him while he was studying in Vienna in 1932 that he hired him two years later, as a mere twenty-six-year old, to head the new Salt Lake Institute of Religion.

These men influenced Bennion strongly towards rational religion and towards an attempt to integrate all human scholarship and experience with the Gospel. Both of these emphases fit naturally with his interest in the German philosopher and developer of the sociology of religion, Max Weber, who had died in 1922. But before he wrote his dissertation on Weber, Lowell got married and served a mission in Germany and Switzerland, and Merle joined him in Europe for his graduate work. His diary effectively reveals Bennion’s intense interest in individuals and relationships. His published writings are all modest, even shy, using personal experiences as Christ used parables, only to teach or illustrate principles, not to reveal or examine himself. Therefore, the diary is unique in suggesting the range and depth of his personality and in detailing his spiritual experiences and humble service. Those certainly helped produce the ethical idealism and personal piety that have characterized Bennion’s work as much as its rational brilliance and coherence. For instance, on 13 October 1930, he writes, after some self-analysis, “I still have a big fight on—sometime—somewhere.” On 23 October, “We were called to bless sister Ringger. It fell my lot to seal the anointing and I enjoyed a sweet spirit, promising her health.” On Christmas day, “I feel very responsible to other people and not quite as selfish as I used to. I hope the Lord will see fit to lead me in paths of enlightened service for my fellows. I wish I could increase the faith of other people in God.”

Lowell had graduated from the U in 1928 at age nineteen, because he had skipped two grades. He was married on September 18 and left for his mission one month later. Lowell was extremely lonely without Merle and wrote his diary, full of longings and passionate endearments, essentially as letters to her. He yearned for the time when he could share his experiences and spiritual growth and the culture of Europe with her directly, and a plan to make that possible slowly formed and was realized when his father, who must have sensed his potential, offered to pay his way while he stayed on to do a doctorate at a European university. He studied at Erlangen in Germany and the University of

Vienna, where he was introduced to Weber's work by Erich Voegelin. When Hitler came to power and there was growing hostility, even danger to American students, he went to Strasbourg, France, where he finished his dissertation under Maurice Halbwachs. He had done the research in German and had to defend his work in French, but at Halbwachs's suggestion, he used English for his book, *Max Weber's Methodology*, publishing it in Paris in 1934, the first book-length study of Weber in English.

Bennion compares Weber to Karl Marx, tracing the similar origins of their work in the effort to understand humans in the context of the modern capitalistic order and analyzing their very different conclusions. He shows how Weber's passion to found his work in objective, "value-free" methodologies keeps him from the propagandistic and dogmatic tendencies of Marxism. There is strong evidence for the continuing influence of Weber on Bennion in a long essay he wrote for his sociology students at the U in 1972 and in an informal speech he gave in 1982, in which Bennion reviews his own life as a sociologist and Weber's main ideas. In one chapter of his dissertation Bennion uses Mormonism as a test case to illuminate both the strengths and weaknesses of Weber's method. Valuable in itself as an analysis of the interplay of economic and religious forces, it also demonstrates Bennion's ground-breaking contributions to Mormon scholarship. Except for E.E. Ericksen's *The Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life* (1922), it was the first such scholarly analysis of Mormonism by a Mormon.

The Bennions returned to Salt Lake City on New Year's Day, 1934, penniless and jobless at the bottom of the Depression. Their first child, Laurel, born in France, had died of an infection at six months. Lowell got work as an education director for the Civilian Conservation Corps in Salina and then in Soapstone, Utah, where he and Merle lived in an abandoned sheep camp. In the fall he was asked to head the new Salt Lake Institute, where he remained until 1962, interrupted only by a two-year term as the first director of the Tucson, Arizona Institute. He managed in the early part of 1934 to write his first Church manual, *What About Religion?*, a practical study of how religious feelings develop and affect our everyday lives, very much influenced by his knowledge of Weber's studies of world religions and religious forces. In 1937 Bennion's growing reputation led President Hugh B. Brown of the British Mission to invite him to write five articles for *The Millennial Star*. They show his growing confidence, first expressed in his mission diary when he was studying a variety of great religious and philosophical texts, that a life under the possibility of God's existence is not only intellectually defensible but exciting, challenging and much less wasteful than the alternative. He was increasingly convinced—and able to convincingly express—that life is purposeful insofar as it is meaningful, that is, as it is based on clearly conceived principles related to universal human needs. By 1939 his experience in developing a curriculum and in teaching and counselling college students provided the basis for a review and a long essay on teaching for *Week-day Religious Education*; the periodical of the Church Education System; for another MIA manual, *Youth*

and *Its Religion*; and for the first version of probably his most important book: *The Religion of the Latter-day Saints*. That book became the standard theology text for the LDS Institutes for many years, and based partly on his ideas in it, Bennion in 1955 wrote *An Introduction to the Gospel*—which became the standard Sunday School manual for another fifteen years and is still the best systematic version of Mormon theology. It reflects Bennion's characteristic struggle against the general Mormon tendency to "pulverize" the Gospel, to analyze and defend and explain it in small chunks which may have no logical connection and may, in fact, contradict each other. It gives coherent moral and spiritual force to Mormon thought.

During the 1940s Bennion studied the intellectual contributions of Joseph Smith in restoring the Gospel and gave radio talks in Salt Lake and the annual Memorial Lecture at the Logan Institute on the creative mind and generous spirit of the founder of Mormonism. He developed his orthodox, common-sense views of courtship and marriage, based on an analysis of three kinds of love—unconditional or Christ-like, friendship, and romance. He taught the need to build a relationship firmly on the first and second before the third can play its powerful, important role. And he continued to express his ideas in a variety of forums: Primary, Sunday School and MIA manuals, Relief Society lessons, Institute curriculum materials, and his first essay for the Church's major official magazine, *The Improvement Era*, "The Fruits of Religious Living in This Life"

In the 1950s and 1960s Bennion became the most prolific Church writer, producing many additional lesson manuals, three major books, and scores of articles for the *Era* and the *Instructor*. There were periods in the early 60s when he had an article in every single issue of both those main Church periodicals and his manuals were being used by two or three separate classes in both the Sunday School and the MIA, in English and also in a number of foreign languages. During the 1950s he was invited by BYU President Ernest Wilkinson to give devotionals on four occasions and by University of Utah President Ray Olpin to give the Baccalaureate Address at the 1956 graduation. President David O. McKay asked him to speak at General Conference in 1958 and again in 1968 (apparently the only lay Church member so honored). He was asked to keynote a "Religion in Life Week" at the University of Colorado and to speak at the Deseret Sunday School Union Conference in 1962, and he addressed an "Interfaith Dialogue" of Salt Lake religious leaders on aspects of Mormonism in 1963 and 1964.

During this time of intense intellectual effort Bennion was continuing his commitment to practical religion, not only through Lambda Delta Sigma but also by developing a Boys Ranch in Teton Valley, near Driggs, Idaho. Since his sociological study of Salt Lake boys in 1927 he had felt the need to provide urban youth with the opportunities for outdoor work and recreation that had blessed him as a boy. A friend offered financing, Bennion searched all over Mormon country until he found the right ranch, and aided by the boys themselves (two sessions of forty each summer), he built the dormitories, lodge, and barns. He continued this unique service, at less than cost, helped by young counselors and reduc-

ing or eliminating fees for the needy, for over twenty years, from 1962 to 1984, when his health would no longer permit. Now former students and counselors are planning to reopen the ranch. I know many—friends, children of friends, and my own children—who remember with enormous pleasure and gratitude the work and responsibility and cooperation, the faith-building discussions and counseling, at the ranch. They were blessed by a utopian vision which Brother B. made into a reality.

In 1962 Bennion left the Salt Lake Institute to become assistant (and later associate) dean of students and professor of sociology at the University of Utah. He had been courted for a full professorship by various departments of the U throughout the 1950s, but had loved what he later called “the most complete relationship I have ever had with students” at the LDS Institute too much to leave voluntarily. So why did he finally leave? Bennion’s only public comment has been, “The LDS Department of Education decided to relieve me of my duties as Director of the Institute. I was invited to write courses of study, but I decided to leave the system.” He will not discuss the matter, even in private, but it seems to me there was and is deep pain in him about this. His colleagues who were at the Institute believe that certain Church administrators were unhappy with his “liberal” qualities, particularly his emphasis on the social gospel and his conviction that the Church’s policy on blacks and the priesthood was inconsistent with the restored gospel. The relatively low percentage of total university students enrolled at the institute became a reasonable excuse to change directors in favor of a more aggressive recruiter and to keep Bennion on in some useful but less visible capacity, such as writing courses of study. However, the whole matter was handled in a way that communicated suspicion and ingratitude—and much offended him. That he could respond with patience and charity to what must have seemed a repudiation of his life’s work is for me a major demonstration of his Christian character. He left rather than be humiliated but exhibited no rancor. In fact, he used his moral authority with his students and colleagues to stop their intended efforts to launch campaigns in his favor. But his departure was a tragic—and from the perspective of twenty-five years later, seems an irreparable—loss to Church education.

For awhile Bennion continued to produce manuals and articles for Church magazines, and continued to serve on the YMMIA General Board and the Church’s powerful Youth Correlation Committee (which met weekly to approve and coordinate all Church materials for youth). In 1968 he was asked to speak again in General Conference. But he was not asked to speak again at BYU, and his Church Education curriculum materials were gradually phased out. By 1970 his manuals were less and less used and he was not invited to write new ones. His writing appeared only rarely in official Church magazines, and after the new magazines appeared in 1971, he had only one major essay and three short responses to “I have a question” in *The New Era*. Nothing by him was ever accepted by the *Ensign*, apparently as a matter of policy, despite repeated submissions, even at the invitation of a General Authority.

In the 1970s and 1980s Bennion’s voice has continued to be heard, but mainly through a series of short and quite popular books, published by Bookcraft and Deseret Book, and in various independent or non-official journals and forums. The books show Bennion’s remarkable variety of expertise: a partial listing ranges from *Husband and Wife* and *On Being a College Student* (1972), to *The Things that Matter Most* (1978) and *Jesus the Master Teacher* (1980), to *The Book of Mormon, A Guide to Christian Living* (1985) and just this year *The Unknown Testament—on the Old Testament*. His essays and talks have become fewer but more powerful. “By Grace Are Ye Saved,” a Christmas sermon published in 1966 in *Dialogue*, the new independent journal of Mormon thought for which he was an advisory editor, is a confession of his own neglect of the central Gospel principle of grace and a moving call to all us works-oriented Mormons to see and include that central principle of our faith. His review of David Brewer’s essay, “The Mormons,” in *The Religious Situation: 1968*, provides a stirring defense of the Church against stereotypes, including scholarly ones. His address, “The Place of the Liberal in Religion,” at the Salt Lake Institute in 1969, is a courageous explication and defense of the orthodoxy and value of liberal thought in Mormonism, at a time when liberalism was under severe attack at all levels of the Church. “The Church and the Larger Society,” written in 1969 for *The Carpenter*, an independent Mormon periodical published at the University of Wisconsin, is a powerful challenge to readers to join Bennion in his commitment to social morality as the center of religious faith. “The Things That Matter Most,” a lecture given at the invitation of the Boston Stake for their “Education Week” in 1977, is a beautifully personal and moving testimony of Bennion’s coherent philosophy of life. And his address to the Washington Sunstone Symposium in June 1987, “What It Means To Be a Christian” (published in the July 1987 issue of SUNSTONE), gives his mature estimate of the essentials of the Christian life.

Bennion speaks with the highest authority about the Christian life because of the way he passionately but unostentatiously lives it. In 1972, as he puts it, he “left the halls of ivy for the real world.” At age 64, near retirement from the U and so valued he could have stayed on there awhile, he served on a selection committee for a new executive director of the Community Services Council and accepted a draft to take the position himself. This private service agency, funded by United Way, had been mainly engaged in studying service needs and resources in the Salt Lake Valley. Bennion led the Council into direct service, which now includes a Food Bank that collects contributions (often through Bennion himself in his truck) and stocks centers providing food for thousands of needy households; coordinates hundreds of volunteers doing chore services (painting and fixing up houses again as in the Institute days, providing mail service and meals, etc.) for the elderly and handicapped; an Independent Living Center for paraplegics; a program to provide indigent senior citizens with dentures and eyeglasses at greatly reduced cost; Functional Fashions to make manageable clothing for the handicapped, etc. As Bennion says, with admitted oversimplification, “I used to teach religion; now I practice it.”

During these sixteen years of full-time community service,

extending far past normal retirement, as Bennion is now past eighty, he has also continued to serve his Church faithfully and quietly—remaining on the Correlation Committee until 1972, serving on various high councils, becoming a Bishop in 1979. Many have wondered why he was not called to be a General Authority. It seems to me that the Lord simply had other things for him to do, and he did them.

The honors have come from outside the official Church and, to Lowell's obvious embarrassment, have begun to crescendo in the 1980s: Phi Kappa Phi Honorary Address at BYU, 1973. The invited address at the Boston Stake, 1977. The 1981 Distinguished Service to Humanity Award from the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychologists. An honorary degree from the University of Utah, 1982. Extremely laudatory articles about him in the *Deseret News* (1984), *SUNSTONE* (1985) and *Utah's Peace News* (1987). The Good Samaritan Award from Utahns Against Hunger (1985). An evening for Lowell Bennion, in October 1986, where he was lauded by a poet and former student, Emma Lou Thayne; a colleague at Community Services, Elaine Smart; a scholar and friend, Sterling McMurrin; and a General Authority and co-teacher, Marion D. Hanks. (He also received a station wagon to replace his current battered truck.) Election to Utah's honorary society, the Beehive Hall of Fame (1987). And recipient of the Richard D. Bass award for Distinguished Service by a Utahn in the Humanities (April 1988). Charles Johnson, executive director of United Way, expressed well what the honors are for: "He's a combination of an Old Testament prophet, who wants to give you his vision of what should be, and new Testament good Samaritan, who doesn't stand back and talk, but steps in to do the good work himself."

The vision Bennion has provided in his teaching and writing is rich in variety and implication but coherent, focused on a few basics: Humans should engage in religious thought and living because otherwise their universal needs for meaning, for creative engagement in causes greater than themselves and extending beyond life, for unconditional love and strength to repent and change their lives, will not be met. He often quotes Goethe: "Life, divided by reason, leaves a remainder"; and William Montague: "Religion is the faith that the things that matter most are not ultimately at the mercy of the things that matter least." He loves the free, open, creative spirit of the restored gospel, especially Joseph Smith's unique contribution to Christian thought, the idea that all humans have eternal, God-like being in themselves, were not created from nothing and cannot be reduced to nothing, and thus that their very natures require and yearn for expansion, love, meaning beyond the earthly and material, in fact, for eternal progression. He sees the gospel, not as prohibition and restriction, not as doggedly earning rewards (or being subjected either to irresistible grace or predestined damnation) from an inscrutable Deity, but as a call to respond freely and rationally to the grace and knowledge given by Divine parents that enable us to fulfill our own natures as their literal children. "The truly religious person," he writes, "learns to thrill in the satisfaction that comes from freely

living in harmony with God's laws." But Bennion is also a stern realist, knowing that faith brings inner and eternal satisfactions but not relief from this world's evil and pain and that loving service will not solve all problems or produce utopias: He quotes the Hindu scripture, "To action alone thou hast a right, not to its fruits."

Bennion has experienced and studied a great range of human life in detail and teaches practical guides: "Do not marry anyone with whom you have not worked on a committee" "A student should not come out of a class in religion with all the prophecies dated, the Celestial Kingdom landscaped, the past and future of the Creator understood, and himself ready to step into a place in the council of Deity." "Try a 'work party' sometime, where you have [groups of young people] helping the widows of the ward—serving with their hands, then coming together afterward for an old-fashioned supper, for singing, for prayer." "We should never hold a meeting, teach a class, or plan an activity without asking ourselves: How is this going to affect the people who will participate in the realization of their full potential as children of God?" Along with the practical advice, he is capable of creating memorable phrases: "In the realm of knowledge, one conforms to what is; in the realm of faith, one creates life after the image carried in the heart." "A Christian believes in plain and simple living and high thinking." Brother B. even indulged himself once in a set of poetic lines which provide a concise version of his philosophy of life:

Learn to like what doesn't cost much.
 Learn to like reading, conversation, music.
 Learn to like plain food, plain service, plain cooking.
 Learn to like fields, trees, brooks, hiking, rowing, climbing hills.
 Learn to like people, even though some of them may be different . . . different from you. . . .
 Learn to like to work and enjoy the satisfaction of doing your job as well as it can be done.
 Learn to like the songs of birds, the companionship of dogs.
 Learn to like gardening, puttering around the house and fixing things.
 Learn to like the sunrise and sunset, the beating of rain on the roof and windows and the gentle fall of snow on a winter day.
 Learn to keep your wants simple and refuse to be controlled by the likes and dislikes of others.

Bennion's greatest and most lasting intellectual contributions, I believe, are (1) his insistence on rational coherence in theology and his own success in achieving that coherence and (2), his use of that coherent, rational approach to give the most understandable and personally affecting explanation of the Atonement, the way in which Christ saves us from mortality, ignorance, and sin, that we yet have in Mormon theology. Our theology has tended to be quite rough and ready-made, developed piecemeal in response to continuous revelation in complex and changing historical conditions. Bennion's writing has been a major factor in giving it both elegant intellectual shape and powerful moral force. He shows that its diverse teachings, which seem heretical to tradi-

tional Christian thought and elicit mockery from some non-Mormon thinkers and baldly inconsistent beliefs from some Mormon extremists, nevertheless have great rational consistency. Those diverse ideas, united into a systematic theology, lead directly from a marvelous affirmation of the eternal God-like nature of all humans and culminate in the call to respond to Christ's uniquely saving power and to serve him in the world in ways that fulfill our own and others' needs and nature.

Bennion's teachings are founded in the scriptures. I noticed as a student that his Standard Works were not marked up like most other teachers' (probably because of his aversion to proof-texting and to pulverizing the gospel into disconnected, dogmatic fragments), but they were worn, throughout, to frazzled edges. He *knows* them well, all of them. It was through a more careful study than others had made of the Book of Mormon teachings on the Atonement, particularly Alma 34, that he made his key discovery about how Christ's suffering and death can save us, *not* by paying for our sins *after* we had repented, but by providing us incentive and power to repent *while we are still sinners*. As Amulek says, the Atonement "bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance" (Alma 34:15). That simple change in emphasis, first articulated by Bennion in his *Religion of the Latter-Day Saints*, has, I know from much personal experience, released many Mormons from the burden of guilt they had carried because they had focused on *paying* and *justice* rather than on receiving Christ's mercy, his free gift. They have learned to look with assurance to Christ for *strength* to repent.

With all his love for the scriptures, Bennion has taken a helpfully rational approach to them—and to all other authority, again insisting on consistency, especially on harmony with Christ's teachings, and on individual responsibility: "I do not accept any interpretation of scripture that denies the impartiality or love of God or the free agency and brotherhood of man." *His Religion and the Pursuit of Truth* (1959) and *Understanding the Scriptures* (1981) remain the two best works on epistemology in Mormon thought; they provide a comprehensive analysis of how we can most effectively go about answering the most fundamental and difficult question we face: How do we know something is true, worthy of our commitment?

Finally, of course, Bennion rightly sees his greatest contribution in his ongoing attempt to live the Mormon religion rather than in his teaching and writing. His great achievement is really not in his writings but in his life. However, the two aspects of theory and practice, of word and action, as he well knows, are inseparable. In one of his first published essays, "Teaching Religion by Word of Mouth," he recognizes the great value of learning religion through experience and example but then explores the value of a third way, through the spoken and written word: "The skillful writer with eyes to see and ears to hear and the talent to express his keener insight and deeper understanding singles out tragedy, builds a plot around it, holds our attention to it until we feel it more intensely than life itself." He goes on to offer Jesus, "the artist in parable," as the great example, an example he explores in detail in *Jesus the Master Teacher* (1980). Bennion himself is such an artist, constructing parables from his own and others' experience

and using the scriptures with great power. His power in writing, like that of his example, derives less from its literary beauty than from the moral authority of his life and the felt presence of that life in his teachings.

I offer as a first-rate example the very short essay, "The Weightier Matters" (1978), published in the January 1978 SUNSTONE. I recommend you to turn to it as the best introduction to the values of Bennion's life and writing—and one of the very best essays written in our time. It succinctly expresses Brother Bennion's central imperative to his fellow human beings, based on his long study of the Hebrew prophets, Christ's teachings, and the Book of Mormon: that the God of love who is our divine parent wants most from us that we love and serve his other children, all of them but especially those in need. Without using any sophisticated devices or appealing directly to his personal experience, he simply tells some stories, from the Bible and from lives of people he knows in the Salt Lake Valley, and suggests we compare the modern stories with the scriptural ones and accept the consequences for our own action. We know, because we know his life, which he has neither advertised nor hidden under a bushel, that he speaks from the enormous authority of his own personal involvement in the lives he describes and his own obedience to the scriptural imperatives. I suggest you then get a copy of *An Introduction to the Gospel* and read the chapters on the mission of Christ, then browse as you will from the following bibliography. Wherever you start you will find the same unique voice and basic ideas and will be led into a uniquely challenging but satisfying vision of the religious and moral life.

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A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS BY AND ABOUT LOWELL L. BENNION

Compiled by Eugene England

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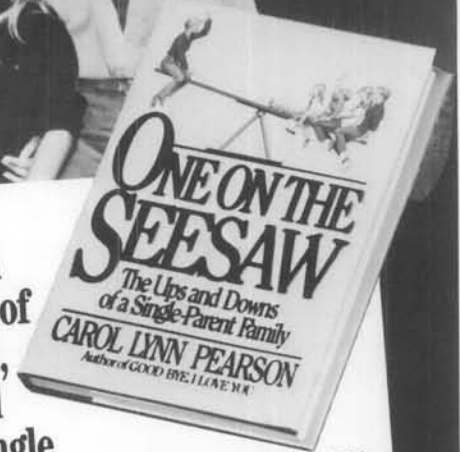
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THE MORAL COMPONENT OF RELIGION

By Lowell L. Bennion

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE RELIGIOUS? What is the basis for a person to entertain the feeling that he or she is religious? I believe there are several bases for a person to feel religious. The reasons vary from person to person and from time to time in the same person's life. Let us review briefly some of the foundations of the religious life and suggest where morality fits in the picture.

I believe the unique and primary role of religion is to help people cope with the uncertainties and tragedies of life. Religion is a way of finding meaning and comfort in an existence fraught with suffering and injustice in which the forces of nature are often hostile and capricious and *an existence which threatens to end in oblivion*.

Religion is a search for security in an insecure world; an effort to triumph over the contingency and powerlessness we face in mortality. Religion enables people to rise above fear and meaninglessness and to feel at home in the universe.

I am very fond of the philosopher W.P. Montague's positive characterization of religion. He wrote, "Religion is the faith that the things that matter most are not *ultimately* at the mercy of the things that matter least." Truth, beauty, and goodness are not at the mercy of a nuclear catastrophe because they have cosmic support.

To obtain hope and trust in the value and meaning of life, the religious person in the Christian tradition holds fast to his or her faith in a personal God, in Christ's redemption from death, sin, and estrangement from the Father, and in personal immortality.

More sophisticated minds make their beliefs part of a rational, systematic theology which defines man's relationship to Deity. They feel religious because of a set of beliefs that hang together and make sense.

LOWELL L. BENNION, the founding director of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah and former University of Utah professor of sociology and associate dean of students, recently retired as the director of the Salt Lake Area Community Services Council. This paper was presented at the 1988 Sunstone Symposium.

Human beings are social by nature as well as individual. Hence, ritual and church affiliation and activity play a large role in helping people to experience religion. Rituals—ordinances, sacraments, ceremonies, songs, and fixed prayers—serve many meaningful functions.

Much of religion is private and subjective. Ordinances and ceremonies lend a measure of objectivity to religious feeling. They are tangible, repeatable, and call for participation and sharing with others.

Rituals have symbolic meaning. Baptism is a classic example. Even as Christ died, was buried, and came forth in a glorious resurrection, so the believer in Christ is buried in water, washed clean, and comes forth to a new life.

The anointing of the sick with oil and the laying on of hands are tangible and symbolic ways of adding meaning to an exercise in faith. Hands and oil do not heal. Faith and the priesthood do, but hands and oil communicate faith and love to participants in the ceremony.

Ordinances and rituals have other values. They facilitate commitments, the making of covenants with Deity and our fellow human beings. They enable us to share humility, faith, and love. The singing of "Come, Come Ye Saints" and "Oh, My Father" bind Mormons together as much as their shared beliefs.

Identifying with events and persons in religious history may give us the feeling of being religious. I am a Latter-day Saint in part because I take pride in my pioneer ancestors of 1847, whom I respect and revere.

I have friends who no longer believe in the divinity of Mormonism and who no longer participate in church life, but they still have a warm regard for the Mormon people. They have retained some values from earlier years. They may be defined as cultural Mormons flavored with religious feeling.

A fourth way, and a very profound basis of religion, is worship of God and Christ. To seek communion in prayer, express adoration in song, give thanks for the gift of life, and to trust them

and the ideals they represent is a very meaningful form of religious experience.

A fifth way to feel religious is by living in harmony with the ethical and religious principles of religion: I am thinking of the private and social principles that determine the moral life of persons who profess to be religious. All of the world's living religions have established moral codes consistent with either their concept of Deity and/or their goal of salvation. This is illustrated in Leviticus—"Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

All these ways of being religious—*theology, ritual, historical identification, worship, and morality*—have a meaning and a place. But tonight I wish to stress the significant role of the moral emphasis in religion.

MORALITY AND RELIGION

I learned the place and importance of the moral dimension of religion from the Hebrew prophets—from Moses and especially the writing prophets: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah. Amos, the first of them, a shepherd in Judea, was moved to go to Bethel in Israel and drop the word of God against the Israelites. This he did, with force!

The Israelites believed in God, offered sacrifices to him, sang hymns, played instruments of music, celebrated the new moon and the sabbath after a fashion. But they lacked one thing—they did not practice justice or mercy in their dealings with fellow human beings. Amos said:

Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

Saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shedel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

That we may buy the poor for silver; and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? (Amos 8:4-6.)

They were chastised because they showed no mercy—

Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, . . .

That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick like David;

That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. (Amos 6:1, 3-6.)

and their whole religious life was rejected of God because it lacked moral principles.

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

But let judgement run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. (Amos 5:21-24.)

Isaiah made the same evaluation of Israel's religion as Amos. I quote a few verses from that wonderful first chapter of his book.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. (Isaiah 1:2,3.)

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. (Isaiah 1:11-17.)

And I must add that beautiful passage from Micah:

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:6-8.)

What these prophets are saying is that unless their people practice justice and mercy in human relations, their rituals and worship are vain and hypocritical. Why? Because God is a person of integrity and compassion, and demands these attributes of those who would serve him. This is called ethical monotheism.

I wonder how we would feel if a prophet speaking in the tradition of an Amos or Isaiah should say to us, speaking for the Lord: "I hate your baptisms, temple ordinances, priesthood ordinances. Your prayers and songs and sacrament meetings I cannot endure because you love pleasure and material goods more than you love the poor and the needy, the sick and afflicted."

You know the place of love in the teachings and life of Jesus. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Paul taught Christ's emphasis on morality in his beautiful eulogy on love.

In the early years of the LDS movement, I find a good balance among theology, ritual, organization, and morality. I delight in the sermon by Amulek in which he encourages people to repent and to pray for their own needs—their flocks and herds and households, and then adds:

And now behold, my beloved brethren . . . do not suppose that this is all; for after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith.

Therefore, if ye do not remember to be charitable, ye are as dross, which the refiners do cast out, it being of no worth, and is trodden under foot of men. (Alma 34:28-29.)

The Doctrine and Covenants stresses the same point:

And remember in *all* things the poor and the needy, the sick and afflicted, for he that doeth not these things the same is not my disciple (D&C 52:40, italics added).

There are a number of reasons why I respect the great emphasis placed on morality in the words of Jesus and the prophets.

Much of religion rests on hope and faith. We have faith in the existence of God, the atonement of Christ, the immortality of the soul. We have a subjective witness of the validity of these beliefs; but they, also, rest on faith. Not so with ethical-religious principles. We *know* from experience and from observation of their presence or absence, of their truth and value. Humility, integrity, and love are laws of life and human relations that are verified continuously in the life of the individual and in society. It may take faith to live by these principles, but we can *know* of their validity with certitude.

These principles bring immediate satisfaction. They are "saving" principles. "Salvation" in Mormon thought is not a reward "here-

after" for a life of obedience "here." It is, rather, a process of learning to live by Christian ideals; of becoming more Christlike in intent, feeling, and living. Beliefs and rituals are not ends in and of themselves. They must be translated into lives of integrity and love to be efficacious. That is beautifully illustrated in the revelation on priesthood in Section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Paul, in teaching faith in the resurrection said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Corinthians 15:19). I grant it would be a sad day to lose faith in eternal life. However, I believe the teachings of Jesus on humility, integrity, and love are as valid for this life as they are for eternal life. If I should lose my faith in immortality, I would still hold fast to the ideals of Jesus as promising life at its best—here and now.

Any religious group that feels an obligation to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world, if they are to be effective, must lead with integrity and love even as Jesus did. Otherwise, they are not in harmony with his gospel. People can resist ideas and hold on to cherished beliefs, but it is difficult not to be moved by Christian love. I believe any missionary effort would be more successful if it began with loving service to our fellow human beings.

CONCLUSION

Yes, there are many ways to be and feel religious—all of which can be meaningful and fulfilling. Beliefs, theology, ritual, church activity, worship of Deity, identifying with religious history, participating in Sunstone symposia, and personal and social morality all have their place.

I simply maintain that in the Judeo-Christian-Latter-day Saint tradition, nothing will substitute for living ethical-religious principles such as humility, integrity, and love. They are as essential to the religious experience as is faith in—and the love of—God. There can be no true spirituality—i.e., relationship to God—without social morality.

REPORT FROM INDONESIA

By T.E. Behrend

MORMONS HAVE never been particularly popular in Java or in Indonesia generally. The exclusivist theology and claims of authority tend to offend the rigorously universalist ideology of the Javanese mystical world view; the intense energy of the missionaries and their use of aggressive proselyting techniques contrast sharply with the self-abnegating, non-confrontational public demeanor that is demanded by Javanese behavioral codes; the dependence of the local Church on imported labor and capital, and the unavoidable Amero-centrism of Church teachings and youthful missionary culture, are unpalatable to many Indonesians contending with the practical effects of "neo-colonialism" in many other areas of life. In a nation of so many different religions (Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, a multitude of animist tribal religions, hundreds of mystical brotherhoods and sects, mostly in Java) people tend to question why one more needs to be imported.

In part due to these factors, but largely due as well to more fundamental religio-political issues involving Islam as well as Christianity, the Church was informed in 1979 that it could no longer employ foreign missionaries. After some delay, the rule came into full effect in 1981, and since then only local members have been called to serve in the mission. As a concession to local poverty, these members receive a salary of some \$65 a month, with housing and other benefits—generous indeed by local standards. There is no shortage of missionaries for the field, though Church membership in Indonesia is optimistically reported to be some 3600 after 19 years of missionizing.

From time to time, the word "Mormon" appears in the Indonesian mass media, almost inevitably in connection with fringe Christian groups ("cults") or the Jehovah's Witnesses. Since the former are often linked with sexual

scandals, and the latter have been outlawed since 1976, these associations in print have the potential to do much harm. A widespread assumption that the Mormon church, like the Witnesses, is forbidden is regularly reaffirmed by such articles. The latest series appeared in mid-January in the Malang, East Java daily called *Suara Indonesia* (Voice of Indonesia). The following excerpt and translation gives an idea of the tack often taken by such articles.

"Quite similar to the Jehovah's Witnesses is a religious sect that calls itself the Church of Jesus Christ of the Holy People of the Final Days, or Mormonism.¹ This sect has also committed a series of acts deserving of suspicion, to say nothing of its teachings that are no less 'wacko' than those of the Jehovah's Witnesses described above.

"Just by way of an initial introduction, and with the intention of providing some information to all concerned parties, especially the government, several of the more disturbing and odd teachings of the Mormons are here presented. Among others:

"(1) God is three. He possesses a body, hands, feet, hair like a man. God was once a male like we are, but because of his struggle he succeeded in attaining his present position. In addition, in heaven there are many Gods, each having his own wife or wives. A council of Gods in the past chose a God for us. We know him now as Father. As a result of his intercourse with Mary, Jesus Christ was born.

"(2) Besides accepting the Bible as scripture, which, it goes without saying, they interpret according to their own tastes, they also have several other scriptures which they say were revealed to the prophet Joseph Smith, including the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, Doctrine and Covenants, and other writings containing political teachings such as those referred to above (especially concerning the invalid authority of worldly governments). These last writings may only be read by those of their members considered to have profound faith.

"(3) According to the Book of Mormon, three days after Jesus was crucified and rose again as reported in the Gospels, Jesus visited the American continent. Indeed, so spiritually exceptional is this continent that gave birth to Joseph Smith, that in one of the 17 Mormon Articles of Faith it is declared that Heaven will be established on the American continent.

"More disturbing still is that Mormon proselytizing is carried out in a propagative way. Missionaries enter from house to house of people of other faiths. Such a practice is clearly not in accordance with regulations and laws now in effect. Some of their activities in the region surrounding Malang that the writer has been able to record include the distribution of Books of Mormon and money to the value of Rp. 150,000 (\$95) among the residents of Kuto Bedah by the Mormon 'elders.' Fortunately, the local residents were alert enough to turn down their gift, but who knows about similar occurrences elsewhere? A case such as this, if not quickly cleared up, will certainly raise new problems, rumors and so forth, all of which endanger national unity. For it is quite likely that this deluded sect calling itself the Church of Jesus Christ will be judged as representative [of all churches], and its activities will be seen as efforts of 'Christianization.' Should this occur, inter-religious relations which heretofore have developed so well may be endangered.

"It is greatly to be hoped that before their mission has made much progress the government will reconsider the granting of permission for their activities, so that the firmness of national stability, and its continued cultivation, will not be threatened."

Mormons do not like to hear their religion described with vocabulary such as this, though the major theological points (excluding the political teachings) are all valid enough. The accusations about improper missionary activities, however, seem to be fabrications. What is most disturbing about this report, however, is the use of negative buzz words that appear daily in the government-controlled media. Not only the obvious references to "national stability" and "inter-religious relations" belong to this category; the phrase "God is three" is pregnant with negative connotations for its contradiction of the first principle of the state philosophy of *Panca Sila*, where God is affirmed to be one.

Two days after the first report, a more ominous follow-up article appeared in the same paper. It quoted the head of the local government office concerned with social and political affairs as having sent a report on the matter to the provincial office at Surabaya. He told the press that "if [the Mormons] are allowed to continue as they have been, dissatisfaction will be

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created among other religious communities." He further stated his conviction, probably based on the distorted report in the earlier article, that "proselytization such as that practiced by the Mormons is not permitted under the constitution."

It is unlikely that two brief articles in an obscure paper in East Java will cause much of a stir, although the possibility cannot be ruled out. This will probably remain a local instance of religious jealousy and sectarian competition. In East Java as in much of the rest of the world, local Protestant churches, tapping overseas sources, produce a generous and continual supply of literature critical of Mormon positions and teachings.

The parochial nature of the Malang incident is indicated in the absence of any reference to it in the national media reports from last February, in which distorted accounts of the Swapp-Singer debacle were given. The major weekly news magazine, called *Tempo*, ran a two-page feature on the violent outcome of that incident in its 27 February issue. An interview with the local mission president (Effian Kadarusman, a highly Westernized Indonesian of Chinese descent) and an inset box outlining Mormon history and society in a dozen paragraphs accompanied the article. The latter was so error-ridden ("At the age of 25 Smith established the Church of Jesus Christ of Holy People at the end of Time at Salt Lake City. It is a splendid building which today is famous for its majestic organ.") that it could be a textbook example of lazy and incompetent background research.

The article ended on a more positive note. The Director General of Guidance for the Christian Populace, a division of the Department of Religion, is quoted as saying that in Indonesia "the followers [of Mormonism] don't cause a disturbance, and so they are left alone." This appears to be the current official position, and it is likely to remain so. The final sentence of the article sums up this attitude. Following a list of Mormon social virtues outlined by the mission president, the reporter concludes, "by such means, then, do the Mormons live peacefully in this nation of many faiths."

NOTES

1. The Indonesian version of the Church's name is quite awkward, and an updated translation should perhaps be sought.

STRANGERS AND FRIENDS

HIDDEN SAINTS



By David Knowlton

ONE TIRED AND LONELY afternoon I met a holy woman. In the thick, noxious air of a downtown Lima, Peru bus station, while crowds of dark strangers swirled, I stood, one foot against a grimy wall, waiting for a bus to take me home. My soul ached with the essential question of our century: How can God and mankind permit massive degradation and slaughter of our fellow human beings? I had gotten too close to the genocidal guerrilla war in Peru and could not comprehend its horror. I hurt.

I searched the chaotic currents around me for a familiar face, an open eye, something to anchor my drifting, almost capsizing values, myself. Dramas of love and life played tantalizingly in the eddies of the station but I was oblivious to their reassertion of human worth. I looked but didn't see, until a glowing, blue-robed wave pushed into the station.

In my mind and culture, prophets glow. You can tell the Lord's anointed because the Spirit shines from them. My soul reached for the wave and was surprised to see it was an older nun. I watched as she shed light, stopping to love the little children jumping in the dust, to touch in human solidarity the arms and shoulders of all near her. People gathered laughingly, lovingly around her, but I stayed back.

We spent a long night sitting near each other on the bus to Arequipa. She ministered to everyone, lifting them, counseling them, caressing them with simple, warm, loving words. I watched and wondered, forgetting the war and my anguished questions.

Near dawn we finally spoke. She held a

Ph.D., and had been a professor of modern philosophy at a university in northern Spain. When she turned fifty, under the influence of new Latin American theologies she retired, took vows of poverty as a nun and came to Peru. After a life of genteel leisure, she now lived in a plywood shack in one of the poorest and roughest neighborhoods of Arequipa. She and a small group of fellow nuns were attempting to create a "Christian community," what we would call a "Zion society." Feeling that meditation, contemplation, in short, spiritual isolationism were not enough, she and her companions formed a small, illegal girl's school to give the children of that disastrous neighborhood skills for social and spiritual progress. The police and municipal authorities harassed them continually. But among the people there they had implanted hope in the Lord and in society.

On paper theologies are too abstract. They have no life. In scholastic discussion they seem merely to speak one to another, from reification to reification, with endless distinctions and contradistinctions. How can they hope to comfort and resolve practical questions of life and death? Many have argued that thought is nil unless firmly anchored in practice. "By their works ye shall know them." But in practice, suddenly the fine points of theology seem as distant as mirages on a sun-filled highway. Practice reveals an ecumenism of common values.

For hours she spoke to me of liberation theology and what it meant to her and hundreds of her fellows. In the United States we hear how it promotes revolutions, represents a preemption of Christianity by Marxist dogma, and how the pope and conservative Catholics oppose it. In Latin America, I found out it means something different, something that should challenge

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us to think and assess our own commitment to Christ's message to love one another.

The Catholic Church has been the property of elites in Latin America for centuries, supporting the status quo. When I was a missionary, we actively—and naively—criticized it for not allowing its members to read the scriptures, for its professional and often venal clergy, for its elaborate and expensive churches built at the expense of its poor members. But about twenty years ago, missionary priests and nuns, many from the United States, began to question their actions. They rejected the status quo. Instead they argued that religion is the property of the people, not of the elites.

They took the scriptures to the common man, who was barely literate at best. They formed discussion groups, where worship, instead of performing mysterious sacraments, became the active consideration of the scriptures as guides to daily life and keys to how society should be structured. Humble, impoverished carpenters studied the great carpenter, simple farmers read the parables of seeds, vineyards, and harvests, working fishermen examined the fisher of men. Instead of turning inward toward a mystical spirituality, the scriptures encouraged them, like the early Mormons, to find Zion on earth instead of merely in the heavens. Once converted to the scriptural message, they sought to love their God and fellow men by actively making society a more divine place.

This yearning for heaven on earth and impatience with human inequality and degradation has led many priests and lay people to become active revolutionaries, where they sealed their testimony with their blood, so to speak. But more importantly, rather than emphasizing the futility of their situation with violence and denying its message through killing, most priests, nuns, and lay people have set out to actively, peacefully change society. To do this they formed what they call "Christian base communities," where the gospel could simply and quietly be placed into practice. No longer is monastic contemplation and separation from the world their idea. They now prefer active involvement in it as a manifestation of spirituality.

As I listened to the woman tell me this, my mind did not hear the Catholic terms. Instead I heard "law of consecration," "united order," "good works," "True religion is this . . ." The woman sensed my spiritual yearning and asked my background. I told her that I was Mormon and had been a missionary in Bolivia. She told me that Mormons are good people and that our religion is good. I was surprised, because I am used to sectarian conflicts from the days

when we actively challenged the priests. She said it is unfortunate that Mormons turn inward so much, instead of embracing other Christians. Why, she asked, do we build such elaborate and expensive chapels in poor neighborhoods, when simple ones will do? Why do we not use some of that money instead to help improve the condition of our brothers? Why do we turn inward to a mystical Christianity, focusing on almost Judaic obedience to tortuously contrived laws, instead of outward to an active, vital religion of healing the sick, ministering to the needy, and feeding the poor?

Her criticisms pained me, particularly because my companions and I had many times used almost the same language to convince people that our church was "true," while the Catholic was "apostate." My arguments were turned against me and my defenses seemed silly at best.

I had been wondering how God can permit so much evil to exist in the world. I was overwhelmed with the question, feeling that without an answer my basis for believing

would wither. By example and by words she, a professor of philosophy and follower of Christ, taught me that like the young Pharisee, I wanted to enter the Kingdom of God painlessly. I wanted logically coherent and consistent answers before I wrestled with the existential questions of human existence, of good and evil and their frequent ambivalence. Her presence reminded me of what the Savior told the young man: "If thou wouldst enter the kingdom of god, sell what thou hast and come and follow me"

She did not ask me to follow her way of implementing the Gospel. It is foreign to my tradition, and the politics of its application scare me. In her wisdom she refreshed my spirit, encouraged me to keep asking seemingly unanswerable questions, and gave me a reading list.

When we reached Arequipa she hugged me, wrote down her address, and told me to write once I had read the listed works and reflected more.



. . . one push and the red light comes on . . . two pushes and the microphone cuts out . . . just like you asked, Bishop. And just in time for Fast Sunday, too.

REVIEWS

THE NAVAJO'S PAINFUL
BUT BLESSED LOT

SILENT COURAGE

by George P. Lee

Deseret Book Company, 1987, \$14.95



Reviewed by Don Norton

WHEN I ASKED an Indian student friend of mine to describe her reaction to Elder George P. Lee's autobiography, she replied, "I'm afraid a lot of people will think, 'Oh, poor George,' when they should be saying, 'How very blessed he was!'"

As a child, George Lee experienced intimately what most of us would do all we could to avoid: poverty, hardship and pain, malnutrition, ridicule from all sorts of people, physical abuse from bigger boys, an alcoholic father, long periods of isolation and boredom, deep feelings of inadequacy—all in all, much of the plight of contemporary "Indianness."

Anglos may romanticize Indianness; Latter-day Saints concede that the Indians are a chosen people. But few of us would willingly exchange "plights." Yet the main value of this story is that it describes very accurately, and thankfully, what it means to be a member of an extraordinarily gifted people and culture. Whatever George Lee has become must be attributed in a large measure to the positive qualities of the culture that produced him: a constant sense of oneness with God and the sacred world that God created; a mother ready at any time to give her life in his behalf; a deeply spiritual, medicine-man father who had the

gifts of crystal gazing and healing (coincidentally, I interviewed recently an Anglo whose mother consistently located lost objects by use of crystal gazing); a noncompetitive eagerness to share with others all blessings, material and spiritual—all good things flow freely from God anyway; a deep and constant spiritual sensitivity; and awareness of the sophistication of his culture, wherein are available knowledge and wisdom that "far surpass [that of] the college doctorate."

George Lee's story is perhaps the most available remedy around for the Western World biases that dominate our thinking and too often distort even the way we see and practice our religion. In many ways this book could be catalogued in the academic compartment of anthropology—I certainly have always been partial to such literature. The study of other cultures exposes quickly the shallowness of so much of what we hold dear, especially our narrow notions of intellectual and material "progress," and our naive habit of equating the noncompetitive and nontechnological with "backwardness."

Not that the "Navajo way" is in all ways better than the Anglo. Elder Lee frequently cites a truism in mixing two cultures: someone caught in the middle should select the best of both cultures, and reject the bad. He deplores Navajo superstition and is distressed by the many unfounded fears that pervade much of

the Navajo way; he differentiates between good and bad medicine men (the bad excite fear and extort money); he is saddened by the Indian's choice of alcohol to escape the boredom of reservation life and the hopelessness of conflict with dominant Anglo ways.

George Lee's description of Navajo life is accurate—of that, some of my Indian acquaintances have assured me: the clan system, medicine men religion, reverence for nature, the depressing circumstances of many childhoods (perhaps even down-played here), the challenge of coping with a hostilely dominant culture. (Compare Helen Sekaqueptewa's *Me and Mine*, 1969, a somewhat parallel Hopi account.) The early chapters are eloquent, notably the testimony of Jaaneez Yee Biye's (Elder Lee's father) oneness with nature:

The Navajos are one with Mother Earth and Nature. The unseen wind speaks my name, and I have uttered kind words in its passing. When the high treetop sways, it is I who sighs the melodious movement, for wisdom has come my way as I have bent to the breath of the Great Spirit

The land of my father, the Navajos, as far back as I can remember, has been filled with movement and life. Upon the monumental red rock, I have sat in silence as the golden eagle soared overhead. From this wingmaster of the sky, I have learned to elevate my thought to the heavens above. I have seen the mesas, their dark cliff pockets among the varying colors that gather to dance upon the steep sides. These things I have pondered. The dark, green forest that crawls agelessly up the slant of the mountains, ancient wisdom—I am one with the splendor and beauty (pp. xi-xii).

Elder Lee's own explanation of how he learned his "religion," though not as metaphorical, is equally eloquent in its plainness:

As a boy, I was taught the way of my people, the traditions, superstitions, taboos, and all that encompasses the Navajo religion, which is deeply interwoven with everyday life. My father and uncle taught me. A system that has only sporadic times or places for religion confuses a Navajo. To us, religion is constant. Prayers, directions, and restrictions are part of every waking moment

I can recall many times when my brother, sisters, and I stayed up late into the night lying on our sheepskins, or just sprawled out on the hogan's dirt floor, listening to stories about my people (p. 35).

This is the beginning of Elder Lee's journey: from the hogan to the boarding school, to becoming one of the first children on the LDS Indian Placement Program, through Anglo public schools (where he held positions of leader-

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ship), to BYU, to the mission field (among his own people), back to BYU, to teaching in the public schools, to graduate work at Utah State University, to fellowship work in Washington, D.C., in behalf of his people, to president of a small college, to mission president, to his present calling as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of his church.

The book is a study of contrasts and adjustments: Indian vs. Anglo culture, the bests and worsts of each. Elder Lee's main message is to Indians: Be proud of your heritage, and retain the best that is in it: but learn to acquire the best traits of the dominant Anglo culture—in particular its notions of wholesome competitiveness (striving to achieve community good), and of course the principles of the restored Gospel.

The writing in the book is uneven, the latter chapters lacking the polish of the earlier, as if Elder Lee worked harder on the early material, or had editorial help. Yet the less polished chapters reflect more precisely the real man, his humor and his habitual way of expressing himself.

George Lee's autobiography is a testimony of spiritual gifts and values: how God dispenses them, to whom, and with what promises and conditions, their uses (to be shared freely—never to be used manipulatively), their exquisite manifestation among the Lamanites—as if, as my Indian friend put it, “every Indian had a personal Liahona.”

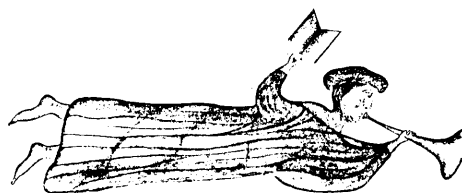
These gifts are present in the covenant people, the Indian, to whom God dispenses them mercifully, asking only that they be expected and received gratefully. And these gifts are for sharing: they are community property, in this case the community of the Navajo. *Silent Courage* is not about George Lee, but about his people. The autobiographical “I” clearly becomes “we” in this story—“we” being the Navajo people and their painful but blessed lot.

A FRUITFUL SEED: NURTURE AND NATURE OF THE IGOSPEL IN SOUTH AMERICA

ACORN TO OAK TREE: A PERSONAL HISTORY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT AND FIRST QUARTER [CENTURY] DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

By Frederick S. Williams & Frederick G. Williams

Fullerton, California: Et Cetera,
Et Cetera Graphics, 1987, 380 pages



Reviewed by Thomas E. Lyon

FATHER AND SON, Frederick S. and Frederick G. Williams, have truly *made* history; were it not for their book many of the early events of the LDS church in South America would remain unrecorded. Frederick S. was among the first dozen Mormon missionaries on the southern continent (1927-29); he returned twice as mission president, accumulating more than ten years of church service to the area. His very “personal history” records dates, names, activities, and human relationships of LDS beginnings. The title, which Williams uses as an extended metaphor throughout the entire book, refers to a statement made by Elder Melvin J. Ballard in 1926. Six months after he and others commenced missionary activities in Argentina, Apostle Ballard prophesied that “the work will go forth slowly for a time just as the oak grows slowly from an acorn. . . . Thousands will join here. . . . The South American Mission will become a power in the Church” (p.30). What began as one mission for an entire

continent, sixty years later encompasses all ten major countries and boasts at least three quarters of a million members. The Williams chronicle, mainly the writing and recollections of Frederick the father, considers the roots and subsequent branching of this very fruitful tree.

There are some defects and problems in the book. The story is so personal that the authors mainly examine the contributions of the senior Williams. Other mission presidents are mentioned but the reader is left yearning for more insight into them and their activities. The vital Perón era is not discussed at all. The chapter sequences are a bit jumbled; chronology is at times difficult to follow. This reader felt that the personal nature of the narration caused the authors to frequently include much more detail than was artistically or historically necessary—the family vacation to Yellowstone Park is one of many examples. Transitions from one paragraph to another and one chapter to the next are often rough or absent. Several careless editing mistakes occur—omission of the word “century” in the subtitle on the cover, or the wrong dates for Williams’s presidency of the Argentine mission on page 75, are two of many

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obvious instances. The chronological gaps are glaring; yet despite these hindrances the book is good, a necessary tool for historians.

Acorn documents the well-known fact that South America was opened as a mission to Europeans, mainly relocated Germans, and not to Spanish-speaking Catholics. One of the best chapters describes the daily routine of a missionary in the 1920s; another presents a woman's view of the mission and mission home—an excellent section. A third offers fine insight into World War II and its effects on South America and LDS missionary work. The complete transcriptions of blessings at setting apart, dedicatory prayers, letters to and from the LDS First Presidency, conversations with government officials and General Authorities are the results of a missionary and young mission president with a sharp-eyed sense for history. The Williamses include five detailed appendices recording baptisms of the first ten years, missionaries who served from 1925-1950, brief biographies of mission presidents and the first fourteen missionaries, and a short personal account by Rulon S. Howells on the beginnings of the Brazilian mission. Seventy photographs aid greatly in preserving early LDS history of South America.

There are too few books of this type, affirming and recording important LDS beginnings outside the headquarters area of the Church, especially in Latin America. Agricol Lozano's *Historia del Mormonismo en Mexico* (Mexico City: Zarahemla Press, 1983) aimed for an objective analysis of Mormonism in Mexico but turned out to be more of a personal narration. Delbert A. Palmer's master's thesis ("Establishing the LDS church in Chile," BYU, 1979), analyzes Parley Pratt's nineteenth century attempt to begin work in Chile and subsequent developments. F. LaMond Tullis's studies on LDS history in Mexico and Latin America are the most accurate and academic to date. Many former mission presidents have recorded their experiences through the oral history program sponsored by the Church Historian's Office and BYU's Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History. None of these former presidents has as yet produced such a detailed record as the Williams.

Part of the value of the book lies in its recapturing a very different era in LDS mission work. Both as missionary and mission president Williams had much more freedom to innovate than currently exists. In an era of limited communications and in a region that almost no one in Salt Lake City even knew about, Williams tried out many approaches to attract attention and win converts. He formed a mission quartet which toured and touted the

Church. A mission basketball team joined in leagues sponsored by local sports clubs (and usually beat all competition; perhaps not the best way to foster goodwill); softball and baseball were tried. A mission band, the "Hillbilly Boys," performed at LDS dances and several non-LDS functions. With the help of many talented missionaries the mission produced a weekly radio show. The speaking, musical and even dancing talents of the elders were offered to prestigious social clubs. Hence the Church received positive publicity among many people of high economic status.

Williams not only felt the need to baptize new converts but to nurture them as well. He was as much a mission president to the members as to the missionaries. During the 1930s Argentina suffered the misery of the worldwide depression and so the mission, quite independently of Salt Lake, organized its own welfare system, beginning with a large communal garden. Out-of-work members sold the produce in a co-op food store that Williams organized; some even delivered the food in handcarts to shut-ins or sold it in the streets. A mission magazine, *El Mensajero Deseret*, commenced under Williams and soon became the official journal of the Spanish-speaking Church. The dynamic mission president even planned an amazing colonization project, a la nineteenth century Mormonism, relocating the Saints from crowded, worldly Buenos Aires to the southern province of Chubut. He projected to structure a twentieth century Perpetual Emigration Fund to aid the poor members who would move south. Church headquarters finally dampened this plan but Williams continued to innovate, branch out and nourish different programs. His imaginative approaches to missionary work are more reminiscent of innovative Ammon ("I desire to dwell among this people for a time... perhaps until the day I die," and "I will be thy servant," Alma 17:23,25) than the approach of his go-by-the-book, call-'em -to-repentance brothers Aaron and Muloki who got thrown in jail while using the "direct method."

Williams's own nature well suited him to be one of the formative LDS leaders in South America. He seemed to understand the Latin need to cultivate friendships above protocol and legal channels. On one occasion he casually gave a silver dollar to a government official (and of course showed genuine interest in the worker and his family); from that point he had little difficulty getting visas and landing permits, regularly delayed or denied to other non-Catholic groups. Another time the mission home was raided by the police, suspicious that all the conference-bound tall blond elders with attaché cases were really German agents. Once

the mistake was realized, Williams forgave the over-zealous police officer and did not report the incident to governmental higher-ups. The resultant friendship with the police aided Church safety and progress in the country. Such rapport was also established with president and missionaries that 40 or 50 years later many still continue to meet in "Che Clubs," sip *maté* together, and strengthen one another in the gospel. Missionaries took much longer than at present to lead their investigators to baptism; indeed the new converts grew slowly in the gospel but established deep roots and firm testimonies before baptism. 'Twas indeed a Golden Age of missionary work.

Latin America and its million Mormons is now an accepted growth phenomenon in the LDS church; the acorn has truly sprouted. But it was not easy to plant the seed. Parley Pratt's 1851 mission to Chile aborted because he never learned Spanish well, never grew to love the culture as did Williams, and because the country had not yet achieved political stability after independence. It appears that after Pratt's negative experience the Church almost forgot about Latin America. A Spanish soldier, Melitón González Trejo, had to come to Salt Lake in 1874 at his own expense to translate the Book of Mormon and try to interest the Church in missionary work among Spanish speakers. It was fifty more years before a modern Mormon walked in South America. Why did the Church wait so long to proselyte its Latin neighbors? Williams does not examine this phenomenon of neglect. Some might postulate fear of failure among Catholics (most LDS converts in the nineteenth century had come from Northern European Protestant countries); others might suspect a racial bias. Even after the work began in South America in 1925, more than twenty years passed before a general authority visited the missions, and this only at the insistence of Williams (p. 237). Latin America is finally receiving the spiritual attention that Nephi and his descendants often predicted; Williams preserves the modern memory.

ERICKSEN'S VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

MEMORIES AND REFLECTIONS: THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF E.E. ERICKSEN

Edited by Scott G. Kenney

With a Forward by Sterling M. McMurrin

Signature Books, 1987, \$12.95, 233 pp



Reviewed by Richard J. Cummings

THIS CANDID AUTOBIOGRAPHY should gladden the heart of any thinking Latter-day Saint with a commitment to intellectual integrity and even a scintilla of good old-fashioned liberalism, the kind that is open-minded, life-affirming, and forward-thinking. It is a prototypical account of the triumphs, as well as the trials and tribulations of a model Mormon intellectual who, against all odds, strove mightily to remain loyal to his church without abandoning his deepest personal convictions or the social gospel and ethical concerns which they led him to espouse. It is above all the engaging account of a big man—Ericksen was six foot two—whose high hopes and aspirations, love of truth, broad-mindedness and magnanimity enabled him to rise above his humble emigrant beginnings to become a distinguished member of his church, his community, and his profession.

I deliberately place the Church at the head of the list not only because it belongs there chronologically, having been the earliest and most significant influence on his development, but also because it continued to be the dominant force in his life, even after the painful circumstances of his release from the general board of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association in 1935 following thirteen years of distinguished service and his equally painful and

abrupt release from his last official Church assignment, that of teacher of his high priest group in the University Ward in 1940. Ironically, his professional career flourished in the years that followed. In 1941, he was elected president of the American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division, and that same year he was made dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Utah.

Although he necessarily turned more and more to secular concerns in the years remaining until his death in 1967, he continued to attend his high priest quorum meetings as long as his health permitted, and he once commented that "after all is said and done, Mormonism does contain the choicest idealism and the finest loyalties" (p. 118). He was able to say this despite an unconventional faith that did not include belief in the supernatural claims of Mormonism. A man with such a practical turn of mind who declared that "religion is a crusade, not a consolation" (p. 203), could hardly be expected to concern himself with speculation about the pre-existence or with the glorious prospects in the hereafter when life here and now was so vital and so challenging. Indeed, much of his difficulty with orthodox Mormonism arose from his pragmatic religion and philosophy, both of which he embraced not because they exalted deity or some higher reality, but rather because each was capable of raising the sights and improving the lot of mankind. In commenting on the official criticism which he and two other pro-

gressive members received on the YMMA general board and which finally led to their release, he observed that "we did not bear 'testimonies'; we did not tell our associates that 'this is the true church.' We did say that this was probably the most 'effective church' in advancing the interests of its young people, but that was not enough" (p. 102). Furthermore, he was temperamentally incapable of the compartmentalization that so many Mormons resort to because of the absolutistic and perfectionistic demands the Church places on them: his religious convictions had to square with his philosophical views and vice versa, which made him, as he put it, "a professor in church and a preacher at the university" (p. 94).

Although he could not accept the traditional account of the first vision, he sincerely regarded Joseph Smith as a prophet in the sense that he initiated a great spiritual movement. Ericksen went on to distinguish between two kinds of Church leaders: the truly prophetic like Joseph Smith and David O. McKay whose teaching "points toward the future" and "emphasizes ideals that could govern the people in matters of education, social welfare, and moral conduct," and the priestly, those who, like J. Reuben Clark and Joseph Fielding Smith, look to the past, stressing "points of doctrine, right beliefs, correct rituals and obedience" (p. 208). The great irony of Ericksen's career is that, whereas he identified with the noble prophetic tradition of the Church, he was always opposed and finally sidelined by the predominant priestly tradition.

Fortunately, his wry, even self-deprecating sense of humor and his indomitable humanistic optimism saved him from lapsing into an attitude of bitter cynicism. For instance, on one occasion, he referred to his ideas as his "FOOLosophy" (p. 136), and on another, he commented that his wife Edna, who was assigned to go to the nation's capitol to decide where a commemorative statue of Brigham Young should be located, was the only woman "to put Brigham in his place" (p. 156).

One of the highlights of his narrative is the tragicomic account of the interrogation which preceded his dismissal as high priest instructor, which he relates in dialogue form, complete with dramatis personae, and which he entitled "An Inquisition (Gentle Without, Raging Within)" (pp. 109-118). What a pity that with such self-righteous shortsightedness, the Church repeatedly demeans and alienates from its midst members of such exceptional ability and dedication as E. E. Ericksen! One can only hope with Ericksen that, eventually, the "Promising New" will prevail over the "Hallowed Old" so that "creative thought in Mormonism is not

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going to be depressed" (p. 212).

In bringing out this splendid edition of his grandfather's memoirs, Scott Kenney is to be commended for the rigor and sensitivity with which he prepared the scholarly apparatus which accompanies the narrative, including an abundance of well-placed and invaluable footnotes, a perceptive introduction in the form of a personal memoir, an afterward which carries the account of Ericksen's life from the point at which he completed it in 1955 to his death in 1967, five informative appendices, a complete bibliography, and a detailed index. One of the appendices, "YMMIA Activities," is based on the actual minutes of the meetings of the general board and affords rare insights into the inner workings of the Mormon hierarchy in the thirties, especially the clash between the "priestly" and the "prophetic" forces. All of this is nicely rounded out by an incisive forward by Sterling McMurrin which is at once a faithful student's eulogy of his mentor, a candid assessment of Ericksen's strengths and weaknesses, and a brilliant exposition of Ericksen's religious and philosophical views. In short, one comes away from reading the book with the distinct impression that E. E. Ericksen would have been both pleased and honored by the thoroughness with which his grandson has acquitted himself of the task of ensuring that his autobiography could finally see the light of day 37 years after its completion.

I cannot resist the temptation to end this review on a personal note. I met E. E. Ericksen only once, but he left an indelible impression on me. It took place toward the end of World War II when he was dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and I was a sixteen-year old freshman. I was taking German from a professor who was suspected of showing excessive sympathy for the Nazi cause in the classroom, and Dean Ericksen had asked a few students to come to his office one by one to answer several questions about the professor's conduct. I was immediately impressed by Ericksen's size, by his intense, no-nonsense manner, and, above all, by his commanding presence. I pointed out that the professor in question, who had been reared in a German community in Wisconsin, was being more sentimental than subversive. As it turned out, Ericksen did not recommend that any disciplinary action be taken. In retrospect and after reading this eye-opening autobiography, I cannot help but lament the fact that a man of such obvious physical, intellectual, and moral stature as E. E. Ericksen was obliged to endure the bureaucratic vindictiveness of so many small men in high places. One can only wonder what such a man would think of the course Church leadership has pursued in

recent years.

In conclusion, this is a volume which offers the faithful a valuable lesson in the need for candor and tolerance, and which provides the thoughtful with much provocative food for thought; in short, it clearly belongs in the personal library of any self-respecting reader of SUNSTONE.



*"Whose ideas was it to have
a youth speaker at this conference?"*

• Celebrating Mormon Thought •

SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM XI

2 3 - 2 6 A U G U S T 1 9 8 9

CALL FOR PAPERS

THE SUNSTONE FOUNDATION announces the eleventh annual Salt Lake Symposium. Proposals are now being accepted for papers, panels, and other sessions. The final selection of program participants will depend on the quality of research, thought, and expression in the finished product.

Papers, with a one-paragraph abstract, should be submitted in duplicate and be between 15-20 double-spaced typewritten pages, capable of being read comfortably in about twenty minutes.

Sunstone appreciates the right to publish at sometime in the future all papers presented at the symposium (unless otherwise agreed in advance).

This year prizes will be awarded for the best student papers. Authors who want their paper considered in the contest should note that in their proposal.

DEADLINES

Proposals: 28 February 1989

Final Papers: 15 May 1989

TOPICS

PROPOSALS should deal with a topic which has some general relevance to Mormonism or other related religious issues. Topics of research may include but are not limited to the following areas:

HISTORY OF RELIGION
COMPARATIVE STUDIES

ETHICS

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS

RELIGION AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

CHRISTIAN LIVING

MORMON ARTS

WOMEN'S STUDIES

LDS HUMOR & COMIC ROUTINES

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

ORGANIZATION STUDIES

PURPOSE

THIS SYMPOSIUM is dedicated to the idea that the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ are better understood and, as a consequence, better lived when they are freely and frankly explored within the society of the Saints. We recognize that the search for things that are, have been, and are to be, is a sifting process in which much chaff will have to be inspected and threshed before wheat can be harvested. In sponsoring this symposium we welcome the honest ponderings of Latter-day Saints and their friends and expect that everyone will approach all issues, no matter how difficult, with intelligence and good will.

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NEWS

LDS REGIONAL NEWSPAPER LENGTHENS ITS STRIDE

By Dan Maryon

THE LATTER-DAY *Sentinel*, the largest privately-owned newspaper for an LDS audience, expanded this summer into Utah, its fourth major market, and may begin a second Utah edition, according to editor Crismon Lewis. Published in Arizona since 1979, the *Sentinel* began publishing a California edition in 1983, merged with the Las Vegas *Beehive* in 1985, and is now distributing 15,000 free copies in Utah to promote its newest local edition. Circulation in Arizona, Nevada, and California currently totals 20,000.

"Our goal is to create a network of local newspapers, in something like the *USA Today* format," said Lewis. "We get calls from all over the country asking us to come in and produce local editions like we've done with the *Sentinel*. Of course, we can't do that everywhere, but by sharing costs and production in our Arizona office, we hope to be able to expand." While the venture is not a great financial success, Lewis points out that it has survived for ten years in Arizona, and is confident about expanding into Utah. Some *Sentinel* employees have been told that the paper's ultimate goal is to have an edition in every city where there is an LDS temple.

The *Sentinel's* full-color, tabloid format does resemble *USA Today*: articles of general interest are published in all four editions, with local features and advertising specific to each geographic area. Subscription, printing and production are handled in Arizona for all editions.

Recently, an official LDS church statement issued in Salt Lake City brought attention to the *Sentinel* when it coldly reaffirmed the newspaper's unofficial status. Several Utahns had asked Church



officials about the newspaper's status when it surveyed Utah political candidates about their stand on moral issues for a special insert in the Utah edition.

"This is something we have done in Arizona for several years,

and no one has ever questioned it," explained Lewis. An *LDS Voter's Guide on Moral Issues* has been inserted in the Arizona edition in election years since 1980. "We don't endorse candidates, but we do inform readers on moral issues, something that is not available elsewhere."

The Church statement was not, however, related to the controversy surrounding former Arizona governor Evan Mecham. The *Sentinel* was the only newspaper in Arizona that supported Mecham during his ouster from office; editorials and letters to the editor became more pointedly in Mecham's favor as the impeachment developed. According to Lewis, "we do not endorse candidates, but we do support good leaders, and we feel that a large segment of LDS members

supported him."

With recent headlines like "Are the Russians Ready for the Mormons?" and "A Song to Sing: LDS Young Help Refute Dan Rather," the *Sentinel* does attract the interest of readers hungry for information on other Mormons. The paper includes short items about Mormons or the Church in the news, local church leadership or programs, and comments on national or local church leadership or programs, and comments on national or local news from a Mormon perspective. "I see our purpose as being a cheerleader for the Church," said Lewis. "We want to be sensitive to the Church and its members, not offend their sensibilities. We give an LDS member's slant to the news, and in that sense we're not completely objective."

ELDER PACKER PROVOKES ACADEMICS

OVER THE years, Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has given several controversial addresses at Brigham Young University that have challenged professors in one

academic discipline after another to integrate spiritual truths into their scholarship. For example, his "Self Reliance" talk disturbed many in the behavioral and management sciences and his "The Arts and the



"Not to worry—I happen to know God doesn't recognize ordinances performed without authorization of the proper priesthood line authority."

Spirit of the Lord" pricked musicians among others.

In the last few months Elder Packer has continued the tradition. As the concluding speaker at the August LDS Booksellers Association annual convention, Elder

Packer spoke on his wife's forthcoming "remarkable book" which traces the Packer family from the sixteenth-century. He predicted that the privately published book "will change the standard of family history in the Church."

In a less public setting with some historians, Elder Packer admitted that although his wife found "some rather unsavory details" about a few of his ancestors these will not be included in the book. The omissions are consistent with his long-standing position that uncomplimentary incidents are not necessary to include in historical writing because they do not inspire the reader—the topic of another BYU address, "The Mantel is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect."

Privately, members and officers of the LDS Booksellers Association were generally dismayed that Elder Packer used his invitation to promote his wife's book and not to discuss LDS publishing in general. Some were simply "disappointed," others "regretted inviting him," while a vocal few, including some association leaders, were strongly indignant and "outraged" at his choice of topic.

A month later at BYU, Elder Packer's recent General Conference address on funerals was the topic of intense, and at times belittling, conversation. Many faculty members resisted the apostle's assertion that funerals must be solemn occasions with little humor and should be conducted like sacrament meetings. Some were especially troubled over his statement that funerals are church meetings under the direction of the bishop who "may honor" reasonable family requests for innovations which do not "accord with established policy." Many said they want a light-hearted farewell and, if necessary, would direct that it be held at a mortuary, without Church supervision.

At the end of the month on 30 October 1988, Elder Packer's BYU Sunday night fireside on "The Law and the Light" reignited heated discussions on religion and the theory of evolution and the prerogative of Church leaders to speak on the topic.

Addressing a 23,000 capacity crowd at the Marriott Center, Elder Packer said he was speaking his "personal conviction for which I

am willing to take full personal responsibility."

He praised those who pursue knowledge in the physical laws and said no Latter-day Saint should hesitate to "accept any truth established through those means of discovery" (emphasis his). However, he said, all knowledge is not of equal value. "When confronted by evidence on the earth below, rely on evidence from heaven above," he counseled.

He then discussed the difference between natural and spiritual laws and reviewed many scriptural passages on the creation.

Elder Packer then stated his conclusion: "It is my conviction that to the degree the theory of evolution asserts that man is the product of an evolutionary process, the offspring of animals—it is false!" He then gave six reasons:

1. The revelations of God testify of a separate creation of man—in the image of God—after the rest of creation was finished. He said, "if the theory of evolution applies to man, there was no fall and therefore no need for an atonement, nor a gospel of redemption, nor a redeemer."

2. The "binding of generations [through the sealing ordinances] cannot admit to ancestral blood lines to beasts."

3. Statements by prophets. Elder Packer quoted from the 1909 First Presidency Statement, "The Origin of Man": "It is held by some that Adam was not the first man upon this earth, and that the original human being was a development from lower orders of the animal creation. These, however, are the theories of man. The word of the Lord declares that Adam was 'the first man of all men' (Moses 1:34)." He alluded to widely-circulated letters by Church President David O. McKay stating that the Church "has officially taken no position" on evolution, and said that the letters were not Church policy and were in conflict with official Church declarations.

4. The existence of moral laws.

SUNSTONE CALENDAR

THE 1987 DAVID W. AND BEATRICE C. EVANS BIOGRAPHY AWARD was recently announced by the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies at Utah State University. Levi S. Peterson was awarded a \$10,000 prize for the best accepted manuscript or published book between January 1987 and March 1988 for his forthcoming *Jaunita Brooks: Mormon Woman Historian* (University of Utah Press). Two \$1,000 runner-up prizes were awarded to Curt Meine for *Aldo Leopold: His Life and His Work* (University of Wisconsin Press) and to Pamela Herr for *Jesse Benton Fremont* (Franklin Watt Press). The 1988 biography award will cover the time period from January 1988 to March 1989.

THE FOUNDATION FOR ANCIENT RESEARCH IN MORMON STUDIES (F.A.R.M.S.) has named Stephen D. Ricks as its new president, succeeding John W. Welch. Ricks, a BYU professor of Asian and Near Eastern Languages, has been associated with F.A.R.M.S. almost since its beginnings in 1979 and has been a member of its board of directors since 1986.

F.A.R.M.S. is a Provo-based, tax-exempt organization which encourages serious research and cooperation among scholars to elucidate the text of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures and to investigate aspects of their content and setting that reflect history, culture, law and language. Ricks plans to continue the F.A.R.M.S. tradition with a vigorous research and publication schedule. Top priority projects include the completion of the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* and a conference on warfare in the Book of Mormon, scheduled for March 1989.

In recent years, F.A.R.M.S. has published and distributed thousands of copies of books, articles, bibliographies, tapes, videos, catalogs, newsletters and updates. For further information, contact: F.A.R.M.S., PO Box 7113, University Station, Provo, UT 84602 (801/378-3010).

HOMOSEXUAL EDUCATION FOR LATTER-DAY SAINT PARENTS (HELP) recently announced that Jan Cameron has assumed the position of chairwoman of the San Francisco Bay area support group organization. For more information write 9200 Alcosta Blvd., San Ramon, CA 94583, (415/829-8528).

THE MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION 1989 annual meeting will be held 11-14 May in Quincy, Illinois, and include a day-long trip to Nauvoo, Carthage and Warsaw for site papers at restoration projects. The conference theme is "Mormons in Illinois: A Sesquicentennial Consideration." Program chair: Roger D. Launius, 1001 East, Cedar Street, New Baden, IL 62265.

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He said to assume that the law of genetics alone governs man is a clever tool of the adversary and that "to regard myself as but an animal would cost my agency, my accountability: I would forfeit justice, mercy, love, faith, the atonement—all that endures beyond mortality."

5. The word "beauty." The precision, harmony, and symmetry of the universe "attest to an order directed by divine intelligence."

6. Personal revelation. "Do not mortgage your soul for unproved theories; ask, simply ask!" he counseled. "I have asked, but not how man was created; I have asked if the scriptures are true."

The response on campus was immediate and strong. In a letter to the *Daily Universe*, Dena Christiansen wrote that although her biology teachers explained that there was "room for wide diversity" on evolution in the Church she was "inclined to believe" a general authority.

Other letters quickly followed. Professor of Zoology Richard Tolman, explaining that Elder Packer didn't have time to review all Church statements on evolution, placed copies of them in the library reading room. Two students lamented the pitting of general authorities against scientific theories and argued that there was wide ignorance by everyone and encouraged scientists to continue their search for truth.

Assistant Professor of Zoology Brian Maurer wrote an opinion column distinguishing the spiritual from the physical man. "I can teach students what I perceive to be scientific truth regarding the origin of humans as physical beings, and at the same time, when called upon, can teach my fellow Saints what I perceive to be spiritual truths pertaining to the ultimate destiny of the human race." He encouraged students not to strain at the gnat in the talk but to pay heed to the general message of divine parentage.

Nevertheless, behind the scenes, faculty members strongly discussed the talk. Some were sad-

dened at Elder Packer's approach to empirical research. Others lament the polarization it was causing. A few drew obvious parallels to the Catholic Church's response to Galileo. Still, others praised Elder Packer's continued challenges to scholars to confront the religious implications of their secular disciplines.

In the biological sciences, professors worried about accreditation and felt that since different points of view would not be given equal play that the open discussion necessary in a university was compromised.

Originally, it was reported that the talk would be published in the *Ensign* and distributed as a pamphlet. However, after protests from university administrators, Elder Packer is now considering publishing it privately through a commercial publisher. Whether the talk will be included in the proceedings of the Book of Mormon Symposium, for which it was the concluding session, is still uncertain.

In any event, Elder Packer's counsel at the beginning of the address now has more relevance: "In the spirit of the Book of Mormon, please, may we drop all

labels, all of the 'ites,' and 'isms,' and 'ists'? Let there be no 'evolutionists' nor 'creationists' nor any manner of 'ists'; just seekers after truth."

ESTHER PETERSON REFLECTS ON HER BYU BEGINNINGS

By Shirley Paxman

ESTHER EGGERTSEN Peterson, distinguished humanitarian and advocate for women and consumer rights, made a welcome appearance at Brigham Young University on September 22 as she inaugurated the annual Alice Louise Reynolds Memorial Lecture.

Taking as her theme "Roots and Wings," Peterson said, "At BYU we found intellectual roots and took wings on the education we received there." She expressed joy at what she termed a "homecoming" for her, and spoke with great humor and warmth about growing up in Provo and the time she

spent at BYU where she graduated in 1927.

As she expanded her talk to describe the examples set by women who opened the door for women to receive the vote and have opportunities for higher education, Peterson expressed regret that her perceptions of the role of women in Utah today do not meet the expectations she had formed from the examples set by Utah's pioneer women.

Her enthusiasm for her subject was apparent as she spontaneously burst into song, singing the suffragette song "Woman, Arise," sung to the tune of "Hope of Israel," and other songs she learned as a child, such as "Have I Done Any Good in the World Today" and "Do What is Right." She expressed deep feelings of appreciation for the words of those songs which molded her life into one of service to others, particularly those who are victims of a society that sometimes does not care.

There is a bit of irony in the fact that the setting for the lecture, the Alice Louise Reynolds Memorial Room, which was furnished and made possible by contributions of the Alice Louise Reynolds Forum, has been unavailable to the Forum for their monthly meetings for several years because the administration at BYU felt their speakers were "too controversial" to appear on campus.

The annual Alice Louise Reynolds Lecture Series is funded by donations from former students and friends of Miss Reynolds, under the direction of Dean Larsen, who proposed that such a memorial be established.

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EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN

RALPH TOLMAN and Don Harman have asked the Utah Court of Appeals to overturn their convictions in a criminal trial because of alleged improper interference in the jury deliberations by a juror holding the priesthood of the "predominant religion" (i.e. Mormon). According to an affidavit signed by a juror, after hours of deliberation the jury was leaning 6 to 2 in favor of acquittal when reportedly one male juror called for group prayer. "Immediately following the prayer, the juror expressed the 'answer' to the prayer—that [the defendants] were guilty," states defense attorney Loni DeLand, and all jurors who participated in the prayer changed their opinions, resulting in a 6-2 vote favoring conviction "without further evidentiary considerations."

A BEAUTY PAGEANT OF OUR OWN

WHEN BYU students earlier this year approved a new student association based on service instead of social activities, apparently few thought they would change time-honored traditions. Nevertheless, in their first administration, prompted by a long-forgotten challenge by then Apostle Spencer W. Kimball, the seven BYUSA presidents announced they were replacing the Miss BYU beauty pageant—which had traditionally been part of the fall homecoming festivities—with "BYU Students of the Year" based on scholarship, oratory, talent, writing, service and leadership. When the change was announced an alumni and student uproar resulted, led in part by last year's pageant chair Kimberly Hanks who protested, "Young men have athletes as role models, the girls need someone also." The not briefed and out-of-town school administration was caught off-guard and temporarily suspended

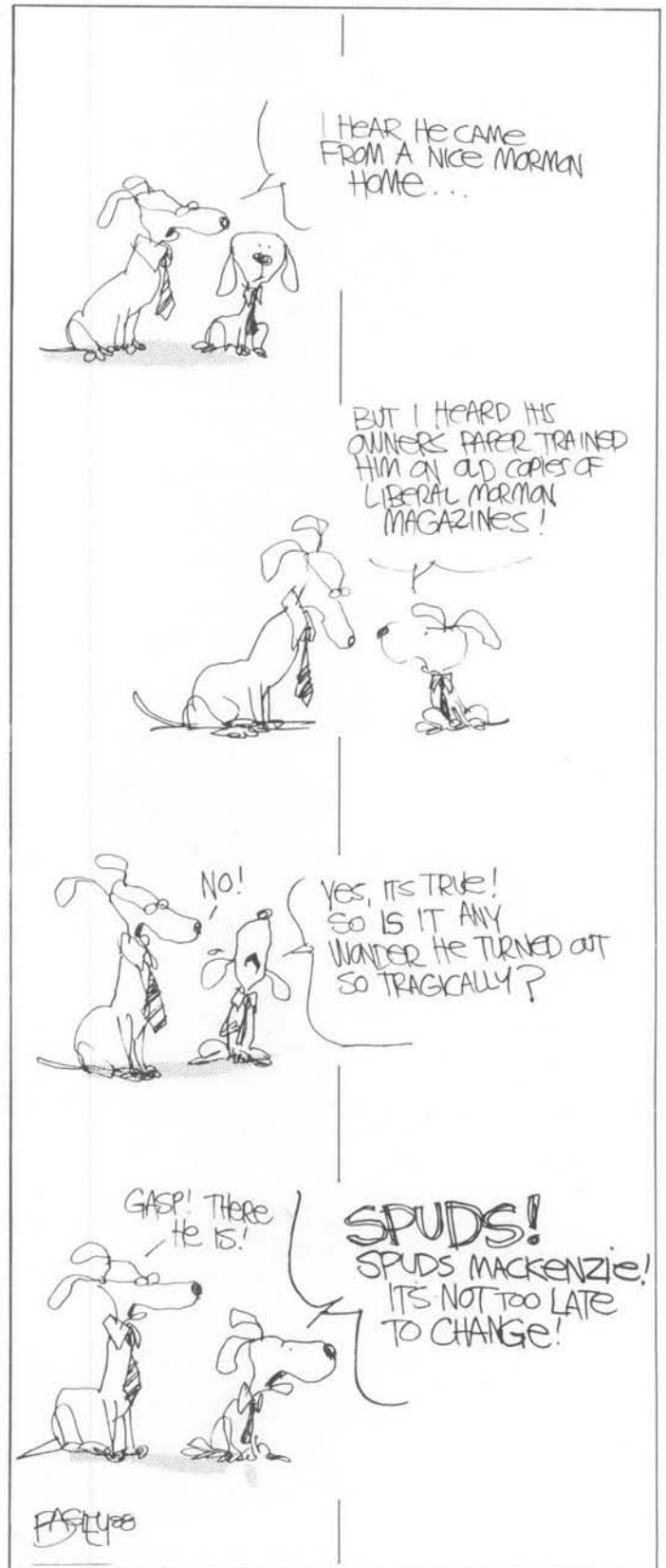
the student leaders' action. They quickly reversed themselves, and after additional student deliberations this September, this fall was the first homecoming that did not have Miss BYU's initials beside the "Y" on the mountainside above the university.

GENERATING MORE HEAT THAN LIGHT

WHEN UTAH Power and Light wanted to hold a community meeting to discuss an election proposal to form their own non-profit power company with prominent West Bountiful City residents, UP&L generally singled out LDS bishops and stake presidency members to attend the meeting because "in a city like West Bountiful, community leaders are often also Church leaders." However, former city councilman and former LDS bishop Max Hall objected. "I don't want to make this a Church issue," said Hall, "but I'm offended that this meeting, dealing with an issue that affects the whole community and held at city offices, was by invitation only."

THE WASATCH FRONT IS OUR WORLD

ALTHOUGH THE Primary General Board helps General Primary President Michaelene P. Grassli and her counselors supervise the activities of Primaries world-wide, you couldn't tell it from the regional distribution of the new eight-member board announced in early September 1988. Five of the members reside in Salt Lake City, two in Provo, Utah, and one in Ogden, Utah. Church spokespersons explain that since the board meets together at least once a week and works on committee and project assignments almost daily it is necessary that they live close to Church headquarters. International input comes from area primary representatives who usually are a wife of one of the three area presidents.



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