

APRIL 1991

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# SUNSTONE

GRETHE PETERSON ON BEING A MORMON INSIDER & OUTSIDER  
KATHLEEN FLAKE ON MORMON WOMEN & SPIRITUAL GROWTH



BELIEF, METAPHOR, AND RHETORIC:  
THE PRACTICE OF TESTIMONY BEARING  
DAVID KNOWLTON



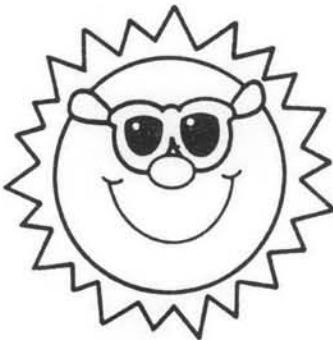
# SUNSTONE

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## READERS' FORUM



Irene Baird and Verla Galloway, oldest and youngest grandchildren of Jonathan Heaton.

## ONCE MORE . . .

**W** RONG! The polygamous family on the cover of SUNSTONE 14:1 and your reply to Vance Pace's inquiry (SUNSTONE 14:4) is not of the Alma J. Heaton family, unless you consider a grandson the head of the family. It is of the family of Jonathan Heaton (born 17 September 1857), one of the United Order's efficient young farmers, and his wives Clarissa Amy Hoyt, whom he married on 27 September 1875, and Lucy Elizabeth Carroll, whom he married on 6 December 6 1878. Altogether Jonathan had fifteen sons and eleven daughters. His first wife had fifteen children and his second, eleven. Some of the people in the picture were spouses and grandchildren. My mother, Amy, named after the "other mother," the youngest of Lucy Elizabeth's children, was born in 1903 and in the picture looks like she was about ten years old. My mother said that "Papa" would never allow his children to say "half" brother or sister; they were all brothers and sisters.

Two years ago I attended a reunion for the grandchildren of Jonathan Heaton up Main Canyon, several miles north of Orderville. On that same trip, we encountered Irene Heaton Baird in the Orderville grocery store, then in her ninety-second year. She is Grandpa's oldest grandchild. My sister, Verla Esplin Galloway, is one of his youngest grandchildren and was forty-two at the time—a fifty year time span!

JEANETTE HUGH  
Fruit Heights, UT

## GENDER POWER

**I** N ANN PEREZ'S letter ("If It's Not Broke," SUNSTONE 13:5) she makes a case for innate differences between the sexes which I find demeaning to men and disempowering for women. There are differences, but to

make too much of them is a disservice to both sexes. Some social scientists have said that there are greater differences between individuals than between the sexes. This position may be closer to the truth and much more empowering for everyone.

Perez asks, "Can women handle a third shift?—bishopric meetings, quorum activities, world-wide stake conferences, etc." Many Mormon women already have three shifts—working, home duties, and Church responsibilities. The issue is whether they are worthy to have some decision-making input in the Church or just be dictated to. That the Lord would eliminate more than half the Church population from directly contributing brilliant, fresh, creative input makes about as much sense as slavery or the political disenfranchisement of women being the Lord's will.

CINDY LOPEZ  
Rosarito Beach, CA

## THE PRIDE OF ZION

**D** EAN MAY'S "The Economics of Zion" (SUNSTONE 14:4) exemplifies the problem inherent in any attempt to establish a physical Zion. This problem has been a curse to the Jews, and it can also be a curse to the Mormons. Both groups, as part of the prophetic tradition, see themselves as having been specially selected by God to establish his earthly city in preparation for the redemption of humankind. History records their failures. The Jews, in their most recent attempt, have retrieved their homeland, but have not, as a people, gone through the transformation that will bring about Zion. Likewise, Mormons are also oblivious to the changes they must go through to become a Zion people. This is evidenced by the value placed within the Church upon money and other material possessions, along with the emphasis upon Church growth, physical structures, and contributing one's physical resources and time to the Church.

Isn't one of the main messages of the Book of Mormon about the pride that accompanies materialism and its consequences? I will extend the sources of pride and say that any perceived success eventually results in pride and separation both from God and humankind. Even if the Mormons successfully put together an economy based on the Law of Consecration, pride would eventually destroy it.

As long as we live in a world of perception, we will never be able to completely avoid comparison, competition, and pride. In actuality we can only change the world by changing our minds, since our perception of the world is a mental process. We appear to live in a world motivated by fear, but it is possible through forgiveness—a mental process—to transform this world into one motivated by love. True forgiveness eliminates, as much as is possible, the separation that exists between human beings and brings us closer to a oneness with God. We cannot forever remain in this state within the world, as the eventual decay of the Zion-like community in the Book of Mormon demonstrates. But rather we must leave this world, as did Enoch's Zion. This is accomplished not by us, but by God reaching down and taking us into his own.

TOM DAVIES  
Orem, UT

## THE BIG PICTURE

SINCE ALL FACTS are "theory laden," all of Kunich's facts and statistics derive meaning from his assumptions. Allow me to point out fatal assumptions in three key areas in "Multiply Exceedingly: Book of Mormon Population Sizes" (SUNSTONE 14:3).

1. *Allowable sources of Book of Mormon populations.* Kunich fails to define the problem of the initial Book of Mormon population by refusing to resolve the tension between B.H. Roberts's view involving continent-wide, exclusive populations, and John Sorenson's view involving localized, culturally mixed populations (see his *An Ancient Setting for the Book of Mormon*). This issue must be resolved before any meaningful estimates and calculations can be made.

Kunich ignores Jaredite survivors "because of their total extinction." Yet Hugh Nibley, Sorenson, and John Tvedness have pointed out both internal and external evidence for continuing Jaredite influence. The internal evidence begins with the recognition that the prophecy of destruction applied only to Coriantumr's royal house and people, and that the word "destroy" refers not to extinction, but to "breaking apart." Nibley and Tvedness have shown Jaredite linguistic and cultural influence on the Mulekites and Zoramites.

By themselves, the Jaredite remnants upset Kunich's calculation, in which the Book of Mormon populations are "all assumed to have descended from Lehi and Mulek pioneers" (36). But other possibilities exist even apart from the Jaredites. Who are the "many nations" ready to overrun the land

after the Nephites "dwindle in unbelief"? Sorenson argues that these "other nations" should be assumed to exist even in the first centuries during the Nephite "dark ages" between Jacob and Mosiah (Sorenson, 83-84). Nibley pointed out the enigmatic (non-Jaredite) "former inhabitants of the land" of Helaman 3:45. Sorenson cites Alma 31:35 as describing ethnic variety among the Lamanites (frequently a loose political designation), since "many of them [not all] are our brethren" (242).

2. *Appropriate controlling statistics.* Kunich "assume(s) an equal rate of natural increase for all groups. . . ." Which groups? His assumed groups. What increase? Global increase. Without authentically defining the composition of the main groups, probable cultural mixing, and without defining their lifestyles in a specific cultural setting, what valid assumptions can he possibly make? Yet, Kunich claims, "We have sufficient working information to place these data in perspective" (29).

Consider Kunich's use of an average worldwide population growth (set alongside chiefly European and Mesopotamian cultural descriptions, rather than Mesoamerican) to constrain an interpretation of a localized Mesoamerican situation. Nowhere does he provide any numbers for Mesoamerican



"I recorded the General Conference on tape so you can fast forward past the talks that offend you."

growth patterns, population flux, cultural mixing, and potentials for spurts of geometrically rapid growth. His global numbers lump together the Sahara, the Arctic, the Siberian tundra and Mesoamerica, and function as straight-line constraint over time. Is his straight line figure an appropriate constraint on population in the lush Mesoamerican climate? I doubt it.

3. *Lamanite lifestyles.* Kunich's descriptions of Lamanite lifestyle and growth patterns depend on "the extent that these scriptures [depicting the Lamanites as hunter-gatherers] are correct." I submit that "correct" is too loaded a term. Kunich should ask not only whether his citations involve accurate descriptions (Sorenson argues that they often sound like "Near Eastern epithets"

which should not be taken literally), but also whether they are *comprehensive*. When the sons of Mosiah go among the Lamanites to provide our first and only description of their culture from the inside, what do we find? A bunch of hunter-gatherer savages? No, kings, governments (an elite class), prisons, synagogues, sanctuaries (implying a priestly class), houses, buildings (a laborer class), and flocks (implying herdsmen). Periods of trade between the Nephites and Lamanites imply a merchant class.

I'd like to nominate John Kunich's "Multiply Exceedingly" for the Strain at the Gnat, Swallow the Camel Award.

KEVIN CHRISTENSEN  
San Jose, CA

In what year did Jesus Christ leave the carpentry trade?

What were the market principles underlying the Last Supper?

Compare the literary styles of the New Testament and Beowulf.



IF RELIGION WAS  
TAUGHT IN THE SCHOOLS

*John Kunich responds:*

Christensen misses one of my article's main points: that if influx from non-Nephite/Lamanite populations is necessary to make the Book of Mormon plausible, then most of the LDS church, including its highest leadership, has been wrongly assuming that all people in the book came from the pioneering ocean voyagers, and that all modern Native Americans are their descendents. This has been the official position, and has been taught in Church classes since the early days of the Restoration. If we now abandon this view, it has profound implications for our doctrine, including racial views. For example, if the "curse" of the Lamanites was not a genetically transmitted, literal darkening of skin pigmentation, some of our more embarrassing doctrinal positions can be modified or discarded. This would be a major, highly significant change for many Mormons, and is not something to be flippantly dismissed. My goal was *not* to discuss whether Sorenson's theory of other native groups is likely; my point was that the Book of Mormon population figures cannot be reconciled with the traditional notion that they all came from the Lehi and Mulek groups.

#### THE FLIP SIDE

THE NEWS ARTICLE "Comments on Temple Changes Elicit Church Discipline" (SUNSTONE 14:3) concerns members who spoke with the press about temple changes. The article reports that these members were then called in for interviews with Church officials. "As word of the questioning spread," the piece goes on to say, "some were disturbed by what appeared to be an *inquisitorial* approach by Church leaders" and "many are troubled by the *systematic* censoring of believing members" [my emphasis].

Is it conceivable that we have strayed into journalistic hortatory? Based solely upon your article which states that all but two found their meetings not only "non-threatening" but "pleasant," it is difficult to detect the level of Procrusteanization which some found so disturbing.

The more difficult issue of confidentiality is obfuscated by hauling out the censorship bugbear. Your "many" confuse censorship with what some would regard as understandable attempts to cure logorrhea.

The tableau presented by your correspondents of benighted Church officials being faced down by persecuted truth-seekers will not, I believe, be credulously embraced by intelligent readers who will realize that there are usually two sides to a transaction.

THOMAS J. QUINLAN  
Salt Lake City, UT

## THE SERMON OF THE LEVITE

ONE OF JOHN CHRISTOPHER'S numerous disappointments with my play *Mother Wove the Morning* (SUNSTONE 14:4) is that I am too much a Mormon in that I sermonize. This may be true. However, he clearly is too much a Mormon in that he dozed off in the middle of the sermon.

My first clue was his erroneous recollection that in my scene of the rape of the Levite's concubine, I left the concubine still alive when the Levite chops her into twelve pieces, when the text clearly says she was dead. In fact, my dialogue has the Levite saying of the concubine, when she does not respond when he commands her to get up, "Well, she is dead. Bring the ass."

Contrary to Christopher's accusation, nowhere do I hint that he chops her up as a punishment for "her sin of getting raped."

Furthermore, I did not treat the action that ensued after the rape, the raising of an army to punish the rapists, because my scene was already too long. But Christopher's suggestion that this action shows how strongly the ancient Jehovah-worshippers felt against rape, thus making them not anti-female at all, is laughable. In the view of the men involved, the rights of this woman (as well as the rights of all other Old Testament women who were raped) had not been violated; rather, the property rights of the men who owned them had been violated, thus the great outcry.

An unmistakable message of the Old Testament feeling on this subject comes from the fact that while his concubine was being

gang-raped outside, the Levite slept soundly all through the night. The clear message of the scene as I presented it, perfectly true to the text (Judges 19) is that the male was valued much higher than the female; a man could offer his daughter or his concubine for the probable death with a clear conscience, but he must at all costs protect the Levite priest.

In the words of a Catholic theologian (I'm going to sermonize; oh, well!), "Where God is male, the male is god."

CAROL LYNN PEARSON  
Walnut Creek, CA

## A KINDER, GENTLER RESEARCH

KEITH NORMAN'S article "A Kinder, Gentler Mormonism: Moving Beyond the Violence of Our Past" (SUNSTONE 14:4) succumbs to a common fallacy Mormon "liberals" use to discredit the Mormon endowment ceremony. He writes:

"Nineteenth-century Masons were wont to trace their origins back to the temple of Solomon, if not further. Thus it is easy to see how Joseph Smith could come to regard the Masonic rite as genuine in origin if corrupted in form. Historians today, however, can doc-

ument Freemasonry in its current form only to the eighteenth century."

The (flawed) logical progression runs as follows:

1. Masonic ritual professes to derive from King Solomon's temple via the medieval Templars.

2. Joseph Smith was influenced by Masonry in creating the endowment ceremony, thinking the temple traditions were from Judaic antiquity.

3. However, scholars have shown that Masonry "in its current form" was created in the 18th century.

4. Thus, according to this argument, the elements in the temple with close Masonic parallels are not revelation from antiquity, but late connections with no ancient authority or validity. This leaves us with a picture of Joseph Smith as drastically mistaken.

I fully agree with #2. The chronology of Joseph Smith's induction into Masonry and exact parallels between Masonry and the endowment make it obvious, to my mind. Just as Joseph used the language, words, and phrases of the King James Bible to translate the ancient Book of Mormon, so Masonry supplied him a ritual vocabulary for "translating" the endowment revelation. Mormons with a fundamentalist, simplistic view of revelation, of course, have always



"Well, is your husband part of the Mormon intelligentsia, or does he think the Church is crooked, or does he like a good murder mystery? If he believes the Church did nothing wrong, then wait for the Church's version to be printed."

rejected this idea with unreflecting paranoia.

I also have no problem with #3.

But the logical flaws in #1 and especially in #4 are easy to see. First, Joseph did not make much of Solomon, either in the temple, or in his written revelations. If Joseph had been centrally influenced by ritual magic, which concentrates so much on Solomon (*The Key of Solomon* is the primary ritual magic text), he probably would have done more with him.

Second, Joseph Smith did not take over the Masonic ritual whole cloth "in its current form," as I think Norman (see his footnote 13) and other "liberals" will agree. There is nothing in the endowment about Solomonic temple builder Hiram Abiff, the central cult figure of Masonry, and there is not much in Masonry about the creation of the world and Adam and Eve (for a summary of the endowment, see Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine*, 227). Also, Masonry is fraternal, but women and the divine are central to the endowment. So Joseph Smith did not use Masonry "in its current form"; he used ritual elements from Masonry. Thus the 18th century piecing together is entirely irrelevant and the "liberal" argument outlined above is fatally flawed.

The central question that needs to be dealt with in respect to the antiquity of the

endowment is: are the endowment/Masonic ritual elements ancient? This is the question that Norman, in dismissing ritual elements of the endowment as unimportant, does not ask.

Let's take one ritual element as an example. The compass and the square, key Masonic symbols, can also be found on the outside of the Salt Lake Temple. My friend Michael Lyon, who has spent a great deal of his life studying Oriental art, has done an enormous amount of research on the symbolism of the compass and square in ancient Chinese funerary ritual and in Oriental culture in general. In one funerary hanging, two Chinese primordial parents, somewhat comparable to our Adam and Eve, hold the compass and square pointed toward the sky; the whole hanging is marked with constellations. Square and round, earth and heaven, are adumbrated (see Santillana, *Hamlet's Mill*, 273). Another friend, completing his doctoral research on the ancient Near East, has collected material on measuring tools used symbolically in temple building and kingship ritual in Mesopotamia and Egypt (see Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, 104). Further, I have an article forthcoming in *Classical Quarterly* that deals with a passage in Plato in which he uses measuring tools, including compass and

square, to define pure, ideal beauty (see Plato, *Philebus* 51c, cf. *Theognis* 805). Our word "normal" derives from *norma*, the Latin word for carpenter's square; from this primary meaning, the metaphorical meanings, "rule, pattern, precept" developed. *Norma* is etymologically related to the Greek *fnosko*, "to know," and in fact to our "know." In the Old Testament, a measuring instrument is used to suggest the creation of the world, and perhaps also pre-creative planning (Job 38:5). Thus, as with all important symbols, there is a rich array of intertwined meaning that can be expressed by the compass and square, or comparable measuring tools—pre-existence, creation; ideal beauty (for Plato, premortal); the cosmos, heaven and earth; sexuality; morality, law; temple building, kingship. And thus, it is clear that the Masons did not think up the compass and square in the 18th century. They simply made use of archaic, rich ritual symbols.

(I can't resist adding: in a recent Sunstone conference, a co-writer and I discussed some of the above material, and Ed Ashment, the respondent, instead of commenting on our arguments or evidence, delivered a broad philosophical denunciation of irrationality [his code word for religion, I think], ending by linking me and my collaborator with Khomeini! We were taken aback to find that we had reached such exalted heights of criminality. But Ed also criticized us for bringing together comparative evidence from different cultures, as in the preceding paragraph. This is a rather pedantic, reactionary criticism—cross-cultural comparison is used by any number of respected scholars. An example in my own field is Walter Burkert, the great historian of Greek religion. The important issue is not whether one uses cross-cultural parallels, but how carefully one judges which of them are closely convincing and which aren't.)

Finally, Keith Norman, in his footnote 19, writes that Joseph Smith used the Egyptian Book of Breathing documents as a "catalyst" for the Book of Abraham revelation, then footnotes this with Hugh Nibley's *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* (1-3). Yet when one turns to those pages, one finds that this whole section is preceded by the headings, "A. What the Book of Breathing is Not" and "1. Not the Source of the Book of Abraham." Nibley believes that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham, but not from the extant papyri. Surely Norman is misreading or misrepresenting Nibley here. Norman cites other authors who support his statement; one is puzzled as to why he brings Nibley in, and moreover in the first, most visible posi-

... YEAH, I JUST GOT IN LAST NIGHT! HEY, WE'RE WATCHING MY MISSION VIDEOS — OH, THERE'S MY FIFTH COMPANION! — WHY DON'T YOU COME ON OVER? (CLICK) HELLO?



tion, when Nibley would entirely disagree with Norman's point. Norman has once or twice criticized Nibley's footnotes; it is curious that he himself would quote Nibley in such a careless way.

TODD COMPTON  
Los Angeles, CA

## AN UNDERHANDED JOB

I WAS IMPRESSED with John Tanner's thought-provoking article "Why Latter-day Saints Should Read Job" (SUNSTONE 14:4). It is unfortunate that such an excellent article had to be introduced with a second-hand account of a drawling "Church leader" who foolishly ridiculed the reading of Job. Perhaps the story was intended to make us reconsider the value of Job, but it reminded me of films that are spruced up with unnecessary sex and violence in order to not appear overly wholesome and thereby receive a more sophisticated adult rating. To be worthy of publication in SUNSTONE, does an article have to contain little token "digs" at Church leaders in order to appeal to independent thinking?

JIM FRANCKUM  
Loveland, CO

## SEEING DOUBLE

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED Lavina Fielding Anderson's "In the Garden God Hath Planted: Explorations Toward A Maturing Faith" (SUNSTONE 14:5), in which she discusses meadows vs. lawns, and how they relate to the Church and gospel. She is a very gifted thinker and writer and always gives us much to contemplate.

She had one error of fact: the fourteen year old girl that Joseph Smith married was not Helen Mar (only one r) Whitney, but rather Helen Mar Kimball, the daughter of Heber C. and Vilate Kimball (see *Mormon Enigma*, 146-147). To please her father, she went along with it, although her mother was heartbroken. Helen said later that had she known it was to be a marriage in every sense of the word, instead of just a ceremony, she would never have agreed to it.

Joseph Smith did also marry a Whitney. She was the seventeen year old daughter of Newel K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney. Her name was Sarah Ann Whitney.

OMER DEAN NELSON  
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## AN INNOCENT RACISM

I WAS HEARTENED by the spirit of

Eugene England's essay "Are All Alike Unto God?" (SUNSTONE 14:2), but his concentration on Mormon relations with African Americans overlooks the older and much more problematic relations between Mormons and the native peoples of North and South America and the Pacific Islands. As a consequence, his discussion of racist practices within the Church, such as denying African Americans the priesthood or access to temple rites, does not adequately take into account the racist foundations of Mormon scripture which invest skin color and native culture with a cosmic significance (racialism is the belief, racism is the deed). By allowing all worthy males to hold the priesthood Mormon leaders have removed racism from the institution of the Church, but racialism is so thoroughly embedded in modern scripture that I fear it is almost impossible to remove it from orthodox Mormon thought and behavior.

Most Mormons would not admit to being racist, and I think rightly so. But I find that there are many racialsists in the Church who, in accord with modern scripture, believe that the native peoples of the Americas and the Pacific Islands are dark-skinned, ignorant, and "primitive" because of a curse from God. How can it be otherwise? Most Mormons accept the Book of Mormon as the literal word of God, "the most correct book on earth" that has been written in a "plain and precious" style. Even a figurative reading of the racial construction of good and evil in the Book of Mormon—that phrases such as "dark and loathsome" or "white and delightsome" refer to lifestyles rather than

skin color—implicitly privileges white conceptions of civilization, culture, and religion over native beliefs and practices. Whether read figuratively or literally, the bulk of teachings from the Book of Mormon prophets England quotes to argue that God is indeed no respecter of men gives greater support to the belief in a God-ordained hierarchy of races and cultures.

Perhaps on one level the popular Mormon view of African Americans can be seen as representative of general attitudes towards all people of color. But such a generalization collapses too many nuances and ignores the unique trials that the perceived Lamanites have endured in the face of Mormon racialism and cultural imperialism. Indeed, African Americans have but a few passages in the Pearl of Great Price that attribute their racial origins to Cain's sin. American Indians, Latin American, and Pacific Islanders have to contend with an entire book—the cornerstone of Mormonism—that attributes their racial and cultural origins to a "loathsome people, full of all manner of iniquity" who err because of the "false traditions of their fathers." If my soundings are correct, no current in popular Mormon thought anticipates the whitening of African Americans when they convert to the true religion. If the Book of Mormon prophecies are to be taken literally, however, then a righteous "Lamanite" today should have the curse of darkness removed from his skin and his mind through living the gospel according to Mormonism.

Historically, Mormons have been hesitant to extend full fellowship to African Ameri-





cans, but Mormon acceptance of the perceived Lamanites has been at the price of their identity and culture. By seeing American Indians, Latin Americans, and Pacific Islanders as Lamanites, Mormons impose a heritage upon those ancient cultures that is fundamentally of white construction. It is a perspective that—whether originating from the mind of the white Nephites or Joseph Smith—does not respect native cosmology, modes of worship, tribal lore, or religious institutions. The prophets from Nephi to Moroni, for example, dismiss native identity and history as “false traditions” and ignore the centrality that spirituality has played in Native American life by calling Indians a people that “dwindle in unbelief.” Even the very essence of what an Indian is about, indeed, his or her very identity, according to the Book of Mormon, is illegitimate, is wrong, is a lie. The native peoples of the Americas owe their existence to Laman’s rebellion and must carry his “sore curse” until they repent of their sins and make an acceptable sacrifice to God. Part of that process of repentance that the Book of Mormon outlines requires that the dark race abandon their native traditions, accept their “true” identity and history that whites have produced, and assimilate white ethics and culture. The Book of Mormon clearly exalts whiteness, civilization, Christianity, and manliness over the native culture and religion of dark-skinned Lamanites, and the Mormons have carried that same perspective in fellowshipping the native peoples of the Americas and the Pacific Islands. Such as-

sumptions are offensive to a people with proud histories, rich cultures, and ancient religions.

If the God we see through Mormon scripture is no respecter of persons as England suggests, then why, in “the most correct book of earth,” does he introduce race as an evil among the Nephites? Why does he, through the voice of the Nephite recordkeepers, invest a dark skin with a negative significance and white skin with positive reference? Even if the dark skin of the Lamanites came into the world of the Book of Mormon through natural causes and played into the preexisting racialism of the Nephites, as England has previously suggested, why didn’t the God of the Book of Mormon set the record straight (as he did with infant baptism) concerning the racist undercurrents of Nephite theology? As presently constituted latter-day scriptures teach that “men are punished for their own sins and not for Adams’ transgression,” *except* for the Native Americans who are cursed because of an alleged group of wicked men who lived over twenty-five hundred years ago, *except* for the Jews who are punished for an allegedly wicked generation that lived almost two thousand years ago, *except* for African Americans who are cursed because of an allegedly murderous ancestor who sinned in the dawn of the human race. Only white men have been freed from their original sins. That Nephi recognized the inherent equality of the gospel while laying the foundations of Mormon racialism and paternalism is of little consolation. Racism may have existed in the latter-day church, as En-

gland argues, because Mormons failed to appreciate the full implications of Christ’s atonement. Yet they did not need to look outside the Church to justify their actions. I believe that they implicitly understood the racist construction of good and evil in the Book of Mormon all too well.

EDUARDO PAGAN  
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*Eugene England replies:*

I appreciated Pagan’s thoughtful review of an aspect of racism in popular Mormon theology that I did not deal with in my essay but have analyzed earlier (see “‘Lamanites’ and the Spirit of the Lord,” *Dialogue*, Winter 1985). However, I do not share his fear that “racism is so thoroughly embedded in modern scripture . . . it is almost impossible to remove it from orthodox Mormon thought.” Nor do I find Nephi’s recognition of “the inherent equality of the gospel” (in 2 Nephi 26:33, I assume) only of “little consolation” since he also lays “the foundation of Mormon racialism and paternalism” in his writings about the Lamanites and about dark and white skin.

Briefly, I would suggest that the Book of Mormon is about as racist (and violent) as the Bible—and for the same reason: it was *necessarily*—because God cannot *force* our agency or perceptions—“given unto my servants in their weakness [which must include prejudice], after the manner of their language [which certainly includes worldview], that they might come to understanding” (D&C 1:24). The miracle of the Bible is that despite the natural weaknesses of the recordkeepers, which for instance shows itself in prejudice toward Samaritans, etc., God could get them to record Christ’s powerful undermining of that prejudice. The similar miracle of the Book of Mormon is that despite the admittedly pronounced racism of the Nephites, God could both reveal and deconstruct that racism in their own text and also profoundly and directly renounce it.

If we read the Book of Mormon in a way that accounts for the most evidence, scientific, logical, and scriptural—as, for instance, John Sorensen reads it in *An Ancient Setting for the Book of Mormon* (see especially 84-86 and 92-94), we should read it as the record of an elite-structured and elitist Nephite minority culture, surrounded by a various cultures made up of the darker-skinned peoples *who were already here* and with whom various rebels intermarried to make up the “Lamanites.” When Pagan asks “Why does [God], through the voice of the Nephite



“It’s not that you’re not a spiritual giant, Tom. It’s just that Alex knows God personally.”

recordkeepers, invest a dark skin with a negative significance and white skin with positive reference?" the answer is *God* didn't do it. The *recordkeepers* did it, *because they had their agency*. God expects us, I believe, on the basis of general principles he has taught us again and again and specific traces he gets those recordkeepers to include, despite their prejudices, to see through their expression of those weaknesses.

Not only does God tell us clearly that all are alike unto him, which *ought* to carry more weight than a host of Nephite slanders of their frightening, dark-skinned enemies, but he blatantly shows us the Nephite recordkeepers' prejudice when they "forget" to include Samuel the Lamanite's prophecies and Christ insists they put them in (Helaman 14:10 and 3 Nephi 23:9-13).

In some ways most remarkable is that the recordkeepers are inspired to undercut their own racism in reference to what Pagán rightly sees as the most damaging idea in the Book of Mormon—that God curses evil people with a black skin. I believe that is a perspective that, in Pagán's words, originated "in the mind of the white Nephites," but the *Book of Mormon itself tells us so*: In 2 Nephi 5, when Laman and Lemuel rebel, the Lord *seems* to curse them and their descendants, *genetically*, with a dark skin. But a much more naturalistic reading (and one consistent with the impartial, non-racist God we know from other scriptures) is encouraged if we look at the entire record.

For instance, when the Amlicites (former Nephites) marked *themselves* with "a mark of red upon their foreheads" as part of becoming Lamanites, we are told that "thus the Word of God is fulfilled. . . which he said to Nephi [back in 2 Nephi 5]: Behold, the Lamanites have I cursed, and I will set a mark on them that they and their seed may be separated from thee and thy seed . . . except they repent of their wickedness and turn to me" (Alma 3:14). This implies strongly that the *original* Lamanite "curse," as well as this one on the Amlicites, was propagated *by the Lamanites themselves*—which they could easily do either through marking their own skin or by intermarrying with darker New World people around them. If this is what happened, as Alma 3 implies, then there is no need to postulate a genetically inherited dark skin as a curse from God.

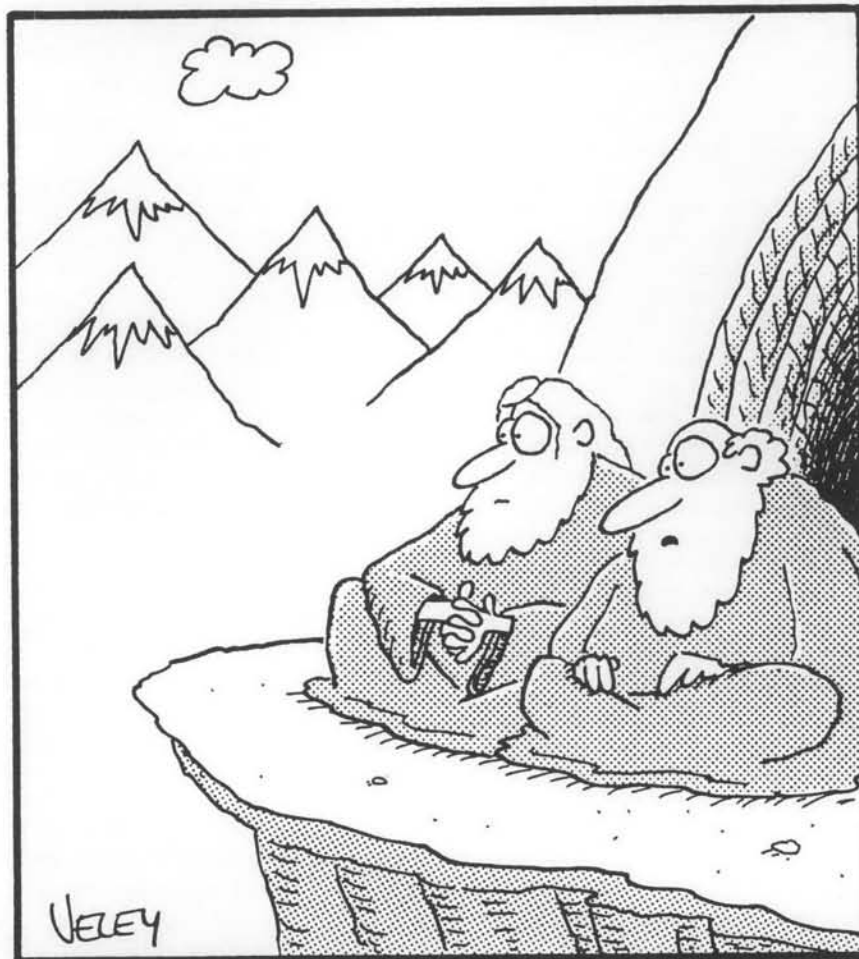
My argument is not that God *cannot* do genetic tricks, but rational and scriptural evidence indicates that he *doesn't*. The prophet in Alma 3 states *unequivocally* that "every man" that is cursed brings "upon himself his own condemnation" (Alma 3:19), rather than

receiving it through his race. And passages throughout the Book of Mormon that have been assumed to describe racial intervention by God are actually about other kinds of reasonable, law-fulfilling, individual spiritual change. For instance, though 2 Nephi 30:6 has been thought to promise the future righteous Lamanites a miraculous change to lighter skin color it actually refers to "scales of darkness" falling from their eyes, and the description of their resulting state has now been changed back from "white" to the first edition's "pure and delightsome" (another implicit recognition that *human* racism has interfered with the message God was trying to get through). Other passages make most sense as descriptions of natural processes resulting from changed lifestyle and intermarriage (Mormon 5:15, etc.), rather than as the wholesale and sudden genetic interference of a race-conscious God.

Let's remember that the Book of Mormon itself, in its preface, admits that "if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; where-

fore, condemn not the things of God." Let's recognize and expose the all-too-understandable "mistakes of men" in the book but also search out and make certain we understand the God-given resources there to combat our racism. Elder McConkie's public recognition that until the 1978 revelation giving blacks the priesthood he hadn't fully understood the "all are alike unto God" passage in 2 Nephi 26 is both a warning and a model. We must and can understand what God is saying—miraculously, despite the difficulty of Nephite prejudice—against racism and sexism, yes, perhaps particularly against the denigration of "Lamanites" that Pagán has rightly denounced.

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"I don't know what's wrong with me. . . . It's getting so I can't tell the difference between the Truth and a truism anymore!"

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## FROM THE EDITOR

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# PEACEMAKERS ON EARTH



By Elbert Eugene Peck

*Every important idea is simple. If evil men can work together to get what they want, so can good men to get what they want.*

WATCHING THE incredible mobilization of arms and public opinion over the war in Iraq, I recalled this quote, which opens and closes the epic 1962 Russian film (now four videos) of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. After first seeing this film at BYU's International Cinema, I thoughtfully returned to my apartment late on a frigid winter night pondering the quote's implications: How "good men," freed of a common enemy, fragment their efforts into uncoordinated individual projects motivated by self-interest. There have been impressive non-military collective enterprises but we have never been able to wage the single-minded moral equivalent of war—even limited wars on poverty, education, drugs, or the environment—let alone to unitedly wage peace. I don't have any satisfactory answers.

On one hand, from my idealistic, Zionistic (an RLDS term) hopes, I want to believe that humankind can work collectively for good and peace. Yet, on the other, I have seen and been part of the inevitable abuse of a too trusting collectivity and now celebrate the braking agency of the individual (which is always transgressed in war's totalitarian administration). The Union produced by the U.S. Constitution may be the last, best hope of the world, but its strength is grounded in the cynical checking of one's self-interest by others'. That dynamic is necessary because, as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn observed, "the line dividing good and evil cuts through every human heart, and who is willing to kill a part of himself?" Evil men can accomplish their coordinated acts because they manipulate the evil in each of us, while good men are less inclined to resort to such coercion.

In his social films, American populist moviemaker Frank Capra became increasingly pessimistic as he struggled with the question of how basically good, if flawed, people can overcome evil in the world. His early works, such as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, and *Meet John Doe*, chronicled

the heroic if tainted achievements of the common man in the large social and political arenas. In spite of their "CapraCorn," they also revealed the fickle gullibility of the good ol' American public as well as the unavoidable and polluting alliance with hardened, worldwide people. Though Capra proudly made the World War II propaganda series *Why We Fight*, after the incredible Allied victories he retreated from exploring cooperative good works to showing goodness in interpersonal relationships, although he still emphasized our interrelatedness, as with the self-doubting, selfishly motivated, but self-sacrificing George Bailey in *It's A Wonderful Life*.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes I similarly retreat, but in the back of my mind whispers an old Neal Maxwell quote I learned on my mission: "Random individual goodness is simply not enough."

Last January, when the war in Iraq blazed, a friend in New York lamented: "I am torn. I don't know which side to support. I wish the Church would make a statement. We need a moral voice, a prophetic voice, now. Where is it?" I thought how proclaiming on the rightness of a war was a major role for the Hebrew prophets. They'd tell the king to not resist Assyria's attack because it was God's judgment on Israel; later they'd tell another to ally with a heathen nation and fight. Much to the kings' annoyance, Israel's prophets meddled in politics because Israel was not a nation like any other nation—it was a nation whose king was God. And the forms of their witnessing were closer to the passive resistance tactics of the 1960s civil rights protesters than to today's institutional press releases. In fact, next only to chastising backsliding Israel, God's prophets focused on national issues of war and peace, and these two roles and issues were inseparably linked.

What should Latter-day Saints and prophets be doing today? There is no country today which has covenanted to have God as its king and to be his people. Instead, God's kingdom is not of this world and its citizens are blessing every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, being light, salt, and leaven—catalysts for goodness. Perhaps the appropriate models for us are Joseph in Pharaoh's

court and Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's. Each effected goodness in the place he was scattered, yet each was unwilling to render to the state what belonged to God, and suffered for it. There are many Mormons, such as President Bush's domestic advisor Roger Porter, who play this faithful citizen role well.

Still, I think of Sister Rosemary Lynch, a Franciscan nun who regularly addresses boards of multinational corporations, chastising and challenging them to address their moral responsibilities regarding war and peace, homelessness and hunger, and other social causes. Who among Mormons plays that prophetic role of such witnessing to the powers of today's world? It was a role played by Paul and other early Christians.

Perhaps we have over-interpreted what is meant by being "subject to the powers that be." The early Christians (and early Mormons) were clearly subject to their governments, yet they were also pacifists. Christ subjected himself to his rulers' decisions while he passively resisted their demands. He was not a threat to them because he would not physically attempt revolt, not because he would always obey them; his revolution was in changing people's hearts through his inner peace. There is something wrong in our theology of loyalty to governments when it creates the situation where two LDS soldiers are each justified in serving their country and in killing the other. Eastern religions might encompass such opposition, but the heaven-on-earth Christian tradition does not.

In pondering what caused so many Frenchmen to cross Europe and invade Russia, Tolstoy concluded that war is caused not by leaders' Napoleonic-sized egos dominating others, but by the amalgamation of all events and individuals which when combined destine history. Many discredit much of Tolstoy's philosophy of history (I do too), but there is something to the democracy of opinions which if flawed tempt opportunistic despots. As peacemakers leavening the loaf of the world, Mormons need to be visible and active Christian proponents for peace, to be more than obedient citizens of warring governments, especially now that there are sufficient numbers of us to collectively be lights which can draw others, or, to again change the metaphor, to be the salt which brings out the flavor of goodness and gentleness in the rest of humankind.

When enough of us play that role, then the whole world together will send back the song which the angels sang. ☪

1. See Morris Dickstein's "It's A Wonderful Life, But . . ." in *American Film*, May 1980, 42-47 and Frank Capra's autobiography, *The Name Above the Title* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1971).

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## TURNING THE TIME OVER TO . . .

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David Anderson

# MEN'S ISSUES: TRUTH, MYTHS, AND PAIN AVOIDANCE



Feminism calls a man's attention to very painful human stories in which the villain with a thousand faces is someone whose body, reflexes, and desires look a lot like himself.

I WOULD LIKE to offer some unsystematic observations and reflections on my experience with men and being male.

Some of the issues facing men today arise out of or are provoked by feminism, and many of those involve work and the workplace. One such issue is the conflict between domestic and vocational duties. Earlier in this century, many men worked at back-breaking jobs for many hours to provide a minimum family standard of living. Coal miners, for example, worked twelve hours a day, six days a week. It is not surprising that a man burdened with such a job would have few additional responsibilities, domestic or otherwise. In those social conditions, the man's valuable and privileged place in the

home and family is easy to understand.

Jobs for most men are today less physically demanding. Life at the desk may be stressful, but it doesn't stunt or even kill you as quickly as life in the coal mine could before protective labor legislation. Still, even well-paying jobs today can be extremely demanding. Consequently, many men continue to expect treatment as a privileged member of the family insofar as domestic chores and responsibilities are concerned. Indeed, a recent sociological study concluded that even in households where both parents earn paychecks, women spend *fifteen* fewer hours per week at leisure activities than do their husbands.<sup>1</sup> That amounts to an additional month of twenty-four hour days each year of extra household work for the women.

The temptation for the sole or even the co-breadwinner to demand or expect favored treatment at home may be especially strong for Mormon men, who are often reminded

that they should "preside" in the home. I expect that for some men the inspired translation of "preside" is "to get my own way—if not immediately, then at least inevitably." Further, I suspect that men are sometimes not so much exhausted when they return from work as they are indifferent. Having been both exhausted and indifferent, I know how hard it can be to distinguish where one leaves off and the other begins. But it is a happy development that both in and outside the Church the sharing of domestic tasks among both partners on a more equal basis is at least a topic for serious discussion and change.

### WORKPLACE ISSUES

A SECOND related issue for many Mormon men is dealing with the mixed signals and hypocrisy over the importance of money, status, and worldly success on the one hand, and family, work, and relationships on the other. Many men are consumed by their jobs, perhaps in part because they hear conflicting messages from the culture (including from the pulpit and, sometimes, from their own families) about the relative importance of money, career success, and the psychological and spiritual well-being of their families. In the silent competition between love and power, men choose power because it guarantees survival. And perhaps because, milligram for milligram, it also provides a bigger jolt.

Another issue for men that is related to the workplace is the widespread use of performance drugs like caffeine and alcohol. The use of these drugs often eases stress. Some Mormon men use these drugs to help them deal with work. Then they don't go to church because they know Mormons aren't supposed to do that. In particular, drinking alcohol after work and on weekends is one of the principal ways American men deal with the stress and pressure of their jobs. Getting an alcoholic buzz with other men is also one of the few ways that American men seem to be able to be relaxed, friendly, and carefree with each other. It's a great fuel for male camaraderie and what passes for male intimacy. In contrast, Mormon men who do go to church are left with the poor substitutes of food abuse or spectator sports consumption. Neither non-Mormon or Mormon men have learned successfully how to ease work-related stress.

Another issue men face, and sometimes turn away from, is the presence and rights of women in the workplace. Sex discrimination in the workplace, including sexual stereo-

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typing, is not just a legal but a social issue. The forms of stereotyping often underscore how complicated the issue is. In a meeting I once attended, the head of a large corporate employer boasted over drinks how his organization had been the first in Utah to employ a woman in a certain high level position. Then he proceeded to comment at length and with some gusto about the size of her breasts, as if that were the most noteworthy manner in which she filled the position. Such anecdotes illustrate the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle connections between gender bias and cultural norms. Until the norms change, the law is at best an imperfect instrument of change.

#### MALE SEXUALITY

**M**OVING away from the workplace to a more general subject, I believe that one of the major and perennial issue men face is dealing with their own sexuality. By and large, it seems to me that men are more driven and burdened by their sexual desire than women. I will focus on a couple of sexual issues for Mormon men. But first note that strong connection in current American culture between a man's sexual identity and his value as a human being. That connection can be illustrated by Pat Oliphant's cartoons of George Bush during the presidential election. Oliphant often drew Bush with a purse and then added to the humor by making the purse-carrying Bush skinny and awkward-looking, a schoolboy in ill-fitting clothes. After we finish laughing, though, the role of the feminine purse is instructive and troubling. Slung on the gangly figure's arm, it plainly is intended to signal a disability, that Bush is "wimpy," meaning both feminine and ineffectual. (Of course, with the Persian Gulf War Bush overcame that label). Equating the feminine with being soft-headed and ineffectual is pervasive. Perhaps it isn't surprising that men are reluctant to risk being labeled feminine. The message is succinct and urgent: feminine today, feckless tomorrow.

We can test that message by asking if there is any male accouterment or sign which, placed on a female, calls into question her ability to lead. Imagine a cartoonist drawing Margaret Thatcher in combat boots. That might be seen as a humorous jibe at her rigid politics or personal style, but it does not connote a true disability or lack of effectiveness as an executive. This is one simple example of how the culture tells men that their sexual identity had better be protected if they want to succeed, or survive.

Let me return to one of the sexual issues

confronting Mormon men. It has been said that the best form of birth control for people over forty is nudity. In our highly promiscuous society, however, one of the toughest challenges for many Mormon men, whether over or under forty, is simply not to become promiscuous—to be chaste. Apart from the tug of the hormones, this is difficult for many men because the American male is taught that having sexual relations often is an important part of demonstrating and preserving his sexual identity. The culture of sexual consumerism has many voices, most of them loud. Of one thing they are certain. Life is like a beer commercial. "And when a real Nautilus-perfected man has found his temporary sexual partner, hey, it just doesn't get any better than that."

I am struck by how individual and private is the struggle to become or remain chaste. For some men, illicit sexual desire is like lint; they can brush it off their clothing without a thought. For others, this desire is like a grievous wound in their flesh that will not heal. And sometimes men with impeccable, lint-free clothing are suddenly wounded. In my experience, Mormon men for whom sexual fidelity is difficult don't discuss it much with women or men. Like most males, they live out their pain in silence and secrecy.

But there is another, institutional angle on this subject. Levi Peterson has remarked, somewhat playfully, that there is nothing wrong with sexual desire. In fact, it has kept him awake during many a boring sacrament meeting. Such remarks serve the useful purpose of subverting the well-intentioned efforts of clerics to control sexuality and sexual desire by turning it into something shameful. Or unspeakable. Perhaps feeling they are poorly matched with a powerful foe, when they can talk about sex at all, Mormon men often lie to each other about their sexual desires in order to encourage themselves and others to be chaste. A friend of mine was once told by an earnest priesthood leader that if he would serve faithfully on his mission he would not have a wet dream for two years. Such fanciful and twisted thinking is also apparent in the pamphlets which tell young men that the sexual urges they act on before marriage are something essentially ugly and shameful, while sexual desires and their satisfaction in marriage are lovely and something entirely different.

I don't think men are very good at recognizing or talking about how their sexual needs are connected to their other distinct needs for romance, respect, esteem, and friendship. For all their power, sexual needs are not mere hormonal epiphenomena. Mor-

mon men might be aided in that recognition if they were encouraged to speak more openly about their emotional as well as their sexual needs with their spouses and friends and in the Church.

#### FEMINISM

**F**INALLY, a few comments on Mormon men and feminism. In his recent book, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths*, Daniel Goleman sets out a comprehensive theory of self-deception.<sup>2</sup> He begins by exploring the physiological trade-off between pain and attention. When humans initially feel pain or find themselves in a dangerous or stressful situation, attentiveness increases dramatically. Quickly, however, the brain releases a group of chemicals known as endorphins, neurotransmitters that act like opiates. Endorphins mask pain so that the endangered creature can better respond to the crisis situation it faces.

Goleman then traces a similar psychological tradeoff between perception and denial. Faced with an unpleasant fact or a stressful situation, human beings commonly use denial as an endorphin-like palliative to mask the pain connected with the experience. When the facts are unpleasant, denial soothes the pain like an analgesic. Denial often occurs automatically, without any awareness, much less acknowledgment, that a tradeoff has occurred.

For example, when a group of professional people on their way back from lunch are confronted with a drunken panhandler, their first reaction is to look away, to act as though he is not there. Denial quickly prevents us even from witnessing the moral scene we are part of. Indeed, the last thing we want is a fuller or sharper view of the moral situation and our responsibility. We don't want to see ourselves through the panhandler's eyes as we walk jauntily by, having spent more on lunch than he will eat on for a week. Through the anesthetic of denial, we avoid the painful perception of his need. Goleman says that this use of denial or selective recognition to avoid mental (or spiritual) pain is one of the central mechanisms of self-deception. In short, our ability to see moral or normative truth often is limited by our unwillingness to endure mental pain.

What does this sort of self-deception have to do with men's issues? I think this account of self-deception as a pain-avoidance technique helps explain why many men, including Mormon men, are so ill-informed about, and sometimes hostile to, feminist criticism and theory. Not that feminists are always right. In fact, I expect that feminists are often

wrong about important things, particularly where religion is concerned. But feminism calls a man's attention to very painful human stories in which the villain with a thousand faces is someone whose body, reflexes, and desires look a lot like himself. These stories are actually painful social facts; they include the widespread violence toward, and sexual abuse of, women and their children by men, the wholesale abandonment or neglect of women with children by the men who have fathered them, and the culture's necrophilic worship of male violence and domination roles. Like the inconvenient panhandler, feminism and the facts to which it calls attention are ignored by many men because the pain of acknowledging their existence is too great. It would require too much reflection, too much recognition, and maybe too much change.

The same is true, I think, of Mormon men and the issues of women's standing and rights in the Church and its priesthood. In a recent public debate on women and the priesthood, it seemed to me that the principal difference between University of Utah law professor Ed Firmage and BYU political science professor Ralph C. Hancock was that Hancock did not feel, or at least did not acknowledge feeling, the slightest pain or discomfort over the current Church policy.<sup>3</sup>

That stoic response to the issue is widespread among men in the Church and should not surprise us. After all, men are good at denying pain by suffering it in silence. Or perhaps the explanation for this silence is more complicated, but just as familiar: a steely, aggressive orthodoxy has always been the refuge of comfortable men challenged by new ideas—especially when those ideas involve new and painful ways of seeing ourselves. Hence, just as it was to the pious and resolute men whom Jesus criticized, our orthodoxy can become an end in itself. And if it is grasped primarily to avoid pain, when the truth becomes painful, it becomes a dead end.

In any event, I think our current policies and attitudes toward women will never change until men are willing to acknowledge that they have some responsibility for them. Given our profound institutional arrogance, even such a small step will likely prove a long and painful process. ☞

#### NOTES

1. Arlie Hochschild, Anne Machung, *Second Shift: Inside the Two-Job Marriage* (New York: Penguin, 1989).

2. Daniel Goleman, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986).

3. Georgeann Balif Arrington, Edwin Firmage, Ralph C. Hancock, Margaret Toscano, "Parliamentary Discussion: Should Women Be Ordained?" Salt Lake City: Mormon Women's Forum, 1989. Tape.

## PSALM

### MOUNTAIN PSALM

We didn't come here to pray  
But snow and a brittle skim of ice  
Suggest otherwise. And to climb  
Is a form of worship: we accept  
Someone else's version of the way up;  
We trust and follow.

Of course questions, doubts: Why so slight  
An incline? all the doubling back  
When we might rise? Is a trail  
Best for some best for us?  
How to reconcile crystal-laden air  
With the consequence of sight?

We walk under pines, stiff as elders,  
Imposing answers all along our way.  
From beneath, they are a density  
Only occasionally letting through  
Dust of brilliance, surprises of light.  
But the more we climb, the smaller  
They become, an aspect, a deeper green.

And then, the nature of treachery  
Or the treachery of nature. Considering  
Flaming peaks are tricks of light on ice,  
They way up is also the way down,  
And we don't transcend but climb,  
For what, then, should we pray? Balance,  
And the snowy grip of each footfall?

And the sun, source of energy and vision,  
Metaphor for whom we seek and how.  
Father, Mother, give us distance  
Through which to see our lives.  
Passage to this lookout and a blessing  
To perceive the extent and limits of our sight.

From this height, air streams down and  
Out to the valley floor, refreshing  
The city as it struggles through its haze.  
But the city of our dwelling has become  
Its own reward, streets locked,  
All of the angles right. How rarely  
We prevail, vision cleared, above,  
Eating apples, bread, and cheese  
In the clean moment, on the legitimate rock.

—SUSAN HOWE

Religious activity which is its own end is just so much ethics and discipline. If we would rise above it, we must employ this beehive of religious activity we call “the Church” to invite God into our lives.

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## BEHOLDING AS IN A GLASS THE GLORY

By Kathleen Flake

WE HAVE ALL SAID OR HEARD IT SAID, “THAT CAT thinks it’s a dog.” What we mean is that the cat acts like we expect a dog to act. Maybe she prefers the company of dogs or waits at the door for the family to come home or even eats dog food. Of course, the cat probably doesn’t think she’s a dog any more than she thinks she’s a cat. Unlike those of us here today, cats don’t have conferences to consider the nature of their being.

Notwithstanding our human capacity for awareness, we can get as confused as some cats. There are many examples around us of people who seem to be something they are not because they have learned to act in ways that obscure who they really are. For example, people of average or even extraordinary intelligence are sometimes placed in institutions for the mentally impaired. When they are discovered, the question naturally arises, “How could this have happened?” The explanation is always that the behavior of these unimpaired people was superficially indistinguishable from the legitimate patients. Maybe they imitated the patterns of speech or the particular stiffness of gait they observed in others. Maybe they didn’t object to the institutional food and clothing or ask for more sophisticated forms of entertainment. In short, as all humans are wont to do, they conformed to the world as they experienced it, imitating the norm that was known to them and not expressing a desire for opportunities unknown to them. And, just as important, their institutionalized society validated these choices, approving of them for acting like everybody else.

These influences, which make cats act like dogs or the able act unable, operate in all areas of our lives. The pervasiveness of the influence may be such that we do not observe it. It is simply what life is to us on its most elementary level. Like fish in water, we do not know what this wetness is. It has always seemed to me that seeing life “steadily and whole,” as is our

theme today, can only be done by acknowledging these influences that encourage us to be what we are not or to be less than what we are. It is not an easy thing, especially if we have grown to like this dog-like life, or if disabled people are our only models. Acknowledging these influences can be even more difficult with regard to our spiritual lives where social convention can masquerade as divine will.

Yet, here is where I find the question we are considering today most compelling. If we were to see spiritual life steadily and whole, what would we see? Are we cats acting like dogs? Are we imitating—through ignorance and lack of imagination—a dominant spiritual style, foreign to our own capacities and aspirations? For example, do you remember how for years we listened to lessons about “our sister from Chad” and made plastic grapes, without noticing what a strange thing that is for a religious community to be doing? Didn’t Joseph Smith tell the sisters in 1842 that the purpose of the Relief Society was to “save souls”? Yet, it wasn’t until the Society’s program was included in the Sunday worship schedule that we realized its curriculum was so secular as to be largely inappropriate to the Sabbath. Consequently, the Society’s curriculum has quietly, but exhaustively, been rewritten in the last decade.

Other things are not as easy to acknowledge. My great grandmother left a journal of everyday life in a Mormon town on the Arizona Frontier, where she served in a Relief Society presidency. In the same tone as we today speak of visiting teaching—very matter-of-factly and with confidence that it is our responsibility and gift—she writes of her many visits to heal the sick by the laying on of hands. More intriguingly, she records without fanfare the blessings of comfort and promise, again by the laying of hands, which she received from and gave to the other members of her presidency when the weight of their responsibilities became heavy to bear. One hundred years later as I serve on another Mormon frontier, the inner city, I am vaguely aware that I am imitating social norms when I limit my ministrations to praying for, presiding over, advising, and exhorting others. I can sometimes even admit to myself that I imitate the norm at the expense of what I know to be the

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DANA JACQUES

Women have a more highly developed capacity "to be." Men have a more highly developed capacity "to do." These characteristic elements affect the ways in which various life activities—such as "knowing"—happen for men and women.

responsibilities and gifts given to me by God. Yet, I rationalize my choice in terms of what others are doing and what they would do to me if I acted differently. Also, I confess to you that I don't even consider it possible to do what my grandmother actually did so routinely. Hers were opportunities unknown to me and so I have trouble seeking them. Besides, everybody tells me I am doing such a great job.

What will I say when Grandmother asks me how this could have happened? Will I get away with saying, "It was what was expected of me and, besides, I didn't know that alternatives existed"? Doubtful. The harder question, I imagine, will come when God asks me why I cared so little for these gifts or why I was so vain as to think I could "save souls" without them. Then, I will be forced to admit that I was "running a program," not saving souls. In this nightmare, God then says, "Okay. Off you go to the kingdom of middle managers, program runners, and presiders." What a bitter moment that will be for me. I will protest that this is not where I want to live, but I will be forced to admit that this is what I am: competent, organized, well-intentioned but not very faithful. What does Moroni say: "Wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also"? (Moroni 7:38). So, the nightmare ends as I go take my place on the stand—next to all those other competent, organized, well-intentioned but not very faithful souls—trapped

in a meeting that drones through time and throughout all eternity.

**W**HAT is the alternative? What is it we have the "power to be" that goes beyond organizing programs and counseling people? The answer to that question is so commonly held in the Church that it has been reduced to an heroic couplet: "As Man is God once was; And, as God is Man may become." For a Latter-day Saint woman to understand what she is to be, she must begin here then: with who God is.

One of the first things we are taught about God is that they are our parents but, in certain very significant respects, we are not what they are. We may resemble them in form—or, in other words, we are in the image of God—but in capacity we are merely potential to their accomplished fact. We are human, subject to spiritual and physical death, and they are Eternal, not merely timeless but the source of life. And, as our childlike understanding of them as our Heavenly Father and Mother matures, we learn that our Heavenly Parents are defined as such by their capacity, not merely to embody our spirit intelligences—to give us form—but to direct our spiritual development, progressively in stages, until we become more like them: possessed of the life that characterizes them. Indeed, we call



God our Heavenly Parents because they are able to engender in us the quality of this, Their life, or, in other words, Eternal Life. We *are*—we exist here—for the purpose of receiving that direction and gift from them. When we do receive it in its fullness, we shall be like them. This, to us, is the heaven referred to by other Christians. It is the object of all our religious endeavors and spiritual desires—it is Eternal Life.

How is it, then, that we can become like God by having this quality of life called “Eternal” life? The Savior says: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). What a curious formula this is. What does it mean, this equating of knowing God with Eternal Life? I’ve never heard this formula explained beyond an equating of “having Eternal Life” with “going to the Celestial Kingdom” where God is, *ergo*, we will “know” God when we live with God. Because, however, Eternal Life is a quality of life, a state of being, not a place, that answer has never satisfied me. The mysteriousness of this formula is only enhanced by its having been used in the temple to explain the purpose of the temple ceremony to persons receiving their own endowments. A curious formula for a curious place.

How is it that knowing God can give us Eternal Life by making us like God? What kind of “knowing” is this that can change us so much? Although this sounds like a very tough question, the answer is, I think, well within our ken. We see a version of it in our daily lives. We grow and change emotionally not by what we eat, own, or read but by being in close association with others. We see this all around us. The power of intimacy to change us causes parents of all generations to warn their children of the danger of poorly chosen friends and mates. Children, too, acknowledge the effects of intimacy when they laugh as their two parents use the same words, express the same preferences, even seem to look alike. What we know by common experience has been confirmed by science. Psychology teaches us that it is by intimately knowing and being known by others that human beings grow and develop on the non-biological level. Infants who are not loved do not develop the full range of human feeling or capacity to enjoy life. Adults who do not keep love in their lives stagnate. Likewise, we spiritually change and mature, live or die spiritually, through the level of intimacy we are able to maintain with God. We do not change spiritually by going to church on Sunday, taking meals to the sick, or paying tithing. Rather, we change to the degree that these things draw the Holy Spirit into our lives. People who do not keep the Spirit in their lives, but merely obey the written law of the Church, do not develop the full range of spiritual capacities and eventually stagnate. Religious activity which is its own end is just so much ethics and discipline. The Pharisees will ever be our example in that regard. If we would rise above it, we must employ this beehive

of religious activity we call “the Church” to invite God into our lives. I believe this is what Nephi means when he warns us to pray that God will consecrate our “performance” to the “welfare” of our souls (2 Nephi 32:9). It is only God’s involvement in our lives that enables us to do the kind of good that changes us, that enables us to be more than simply ethical and disciplined. If we speak of this at all, we call it “having the Spirit.” I do not believe that we are given this and other endowments of the Spirit merely to awaken our conscience and increase our religious skills. I believe that such endowments are meant to change us by giving us increasing intimacy with our Parents until we become like them.

**B**EFORE going on, let me say something about why I want to talk to you—as women—about this subject of becoming like God by knowing God. I suppose the human race will have significantly evolved when it can observe differences in men and women without judging them to be weakness and inferiority in the one and strength and superiority in the other. In the last twenty years, more research has been committed to identifying

such differences, though we have only begun to distinguish fact from prejudice. One of the more intriguing areas of study has to do with the ways in which women and men “know.” The psychologist from whose work I am about to quote prefaces his conclusion, regarding differences in the ways in which men and women know, with a warning that he uses the terms “male element” and “female element” to describe what is characteristic of each gender, not what is exclusive to it. Each sex has both male and female elements in its fundamental, psychological makeup. Each gender has, however, a greater sophistication with the psychological element named after it (largely because of the different demands nature places upon us in bearing and rearing children). Women have a more highly developed capacity “to be”; hence, this is called the female element. Men have a more highly developed capacity “to do”; hence, this is called the male element. The significance of this is, in part, that each sex experiences and comprehends the world through its dominant element. Consequently, these characteristic elements affect the ways in which various life activities—such as “knowing”—happen for men and women. Thoroughly confused? Listen to his conclusion and see if it doesn’t make sense notwithstanding my introduction:

“It is the essence of the female element that it can relate, know and communicate in a more fundamental way of feeling, than the mere external relating, knowing and communicating of the male element. . . . Put simply, the silent relating, knowing and communicating of love is a profounder thing in human experience than

We, as women, must begin  
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of the Gospel as it has been  
restored, not simply as ethical  
guidance

science. Science never knows the “person”; it only has information about the “person.”<sup>1</sup>

This kind of knowing by being, rather than by doing, often occurs on a silent level and is most easily observed in the healthy relationship between mother and child, especially the newborn infant. What the mother knows of the infant, and its wants and needs, arises not from the mother knowing about the infant because, as yet, there are no meaningful facts to be known. Such facts as its weight and length, baldness or hairiness, don't tell her very much about who the child is, what it needs or wants in a given moment. What the mother knows comes from her capacity to be with the child in a psychological, emotional sense, not merely a physical one. Gradually, this knowing that comes from the psychological symbiosis between the infant and its mother will necessarily weaken as the child matures. The capacity, however, to know another on a level of feeling—rather than external facts—does not cease, neither is it limited to mothers.

**I**F science is right, and from my experience it seems to be, nature has equipped women with a highly developed faculty for communicating, relating, and knowing on this level of feeling rather than on fact-gathering. It is not uncommon for men to conclude that women know what we know because we exchange private facts—namely, gossip—rather than feelings. It is just as common for us to conclude that *they* know nothing at all because they are not as adept in our ways of understanding by feeling. Each is being unfair to the other, of course. Much can be said about this different way in which men and women “know”; even more can be speculated. I will limit my speculation to one hypothesis having to do with our spiritual development.

I believe that women's capacity to know—not simply to know about—another has power to mold more than our emotional lives. What may have begun as a function of biological necessity for childbearing has, for most of you, become a highly developed, though hardly noticed, talent for *knowing* another by *being with* another. Again, this is not to say that men do not have this capacity. They do have it; just as we have a capacity to know by doing. Remember, this is not a zero sum game. Everybody wins; nobody loses. Today, however, we are talking about what women are and their power to be. Our capacity, as women, to “relate, know and communicate in a more fundamental way of feeling, than the mere external relating, knowing and communicating of the male element” is no different from other talents or personality traits which serve us in our efforts to mature spiritually. This aptitude, however, directly relates to the process of exaltation as we understand it, namely, to know God.

Do I go too far in supposing that this capacity to know on a level of feeling, not fact, which characterizes our way of

relating, is the way we are to know God? The Savior says to the Pharisees: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye *think* ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me” (John 5:39-40, emphasis added). So much for the science of theology. What about the significance of knowing by good works, even God's work? Consider Joseph Smith's retranslation of Matthew 7. The King James Version reads, “Many will say to me in that day [of judgment], Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23). Joseph Smith makes one change in the verses. No, the Lord does not deny that their works are marvelous or nullify their works for lack of authority. But, the last verse now reads “Ye never knew *me*. . .” (JST Matthew 7:33).<sup>2</sup> So much for doing good works independent of a relationship with God. This, to me, is at the core of what we call the Restoration. All our doctrines and programs and priesthoods only have meaning in the context of this invitation to know, not simply to know about, Jesus Christ. What has been restored in this dispensation are the

principles and ordinances through which God may be known by us (D&C 88:67-69, 74-75; D&C 93:1, 19-20).

**I**T is possible, however, not to take this idea of relationship far enough. Certainly, there are some benefits to simply analogizing the elements of a healthy, human relationship to a relationship to God. For example, it is worthwhile to remember the importance of listening to God, as well as speaking to God, honestly; and of being open to what God is, not just what you imagine God to be; and of making time to be with God and not just when on some errand you think would please Them. Such common sense approaches can even revolutionize your present “activity” in the Church. If we were to stop here, however, the idea of being in a relationship with God for the purposes of eternal progression would be reduced to trite and vapid sentimentality and so anthropomorphize God as to deny any possibility of experiencing the divine. In fact, it is just such sentimental talk that makes our belief in eternal progression anathema to our Protestant and Catholic cousins. Why? Because it obscures, even denies, a fault in humankind so great as to defeat any human effort at genuine intimacy with our Heavenly Parents. We call this fault in us the effects of the Fall.

Whatever capacity we have to relate to God in a way that transcends theology, or the science of knowing about God, only works if it is exercised through the guidance and gifts which God has given us for overcoming the Fall, namely, the principles and ordinances of the gospel. While we as women may be potentially more adept at knowing God, not simply knowing about God, because we employ this capacity to relate

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in close association with others.  
It is by intimately knowing  
and being known by others  
that human beings grow  
and develop.

and communicate on a level of feeling, we are also less likely to appreciate the necessity of exercising this capacity through the doctrines of the Gospel, especially those rituals and the teachings related to them that make the abstractions of theology real in our everyday life. Unfortunately, our more highly developed capacity “to be”—to experience life fully, to understand our existence by being in relationship to others—has led us to easily accept the idea that it is our relationship to our loved ones, not our God, that exalts us. Just as unfortunately, it may be men’s more highly developed sense of doing that invites them to see these ordinances and other priestly activities—rather than the being in a relationship to God—as the purpose of their religious endeavors. What I want to suggest to you today, sisters, is that this notion that we are exalted through our earthly relationships is, like most half-truths, a very dangerous lie. It can rob you of your spiritual potential, your “power to be” as God is. If, however, in addition to cultivating earthly relationships, you will devote yourself to knowing God, then you can receive Eternal Life through the ordinances and principles God has ordained for that purpose. Though you have heard these ordinances and principles described many times, permit me to describe them again, if only because they are so beautiful, but also because we as women have seldom if ever articulated them in the language of our experiences and values.

AS a consequence of the Fall, we are in a broken relationship that needs to be reestablished, and reestablished on new terms, this time not out of the symbiotic harmony and dependence of the Garden but with a conscious awareness that we are separate—not just independent, but different—from our Heavenly Parents. Our challenge is “to be” willing to sacrifice those differences which come between us and our Parents. With Lamoni’s father, the wisely naive King, we must say, “If thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee” (Alma 22:18). We are empowered to give away all our sins through the process known to us as the first four principles and ordinances of the gospel: Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Repentance, Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

This is, of course, not the end of it. It is only the point at which we receive the First Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which purges us of our sins or, in scriptural terms, “justifies” us. If we would be like God and not merely sinless, we must also receive the Second Comforter, or the presence of Christ himself that sanctifies us, or makes us holy. After all, God is not merely sinless but is holy, full of light and truth. This change from sinlessness to holiness is accomplished through what might be called the “second four principles and ordinances of the gospel” which have the power to exalt, not just save us; to

sanctify us, not merely to justify us.

Earlier I spoke of how God is our Parents because they are able to engender in us their own capacities, even to endow us by direction and gift with the holiness that defines them. This direction and gift is received in the temple. In the temple ordinances, we take upon us the very signs and tokens of the divine life and, ultimately, at the veil the identity of this life is named for us and upon us. Having known God by experiencing their presence in this life, as symbolized by the veil, we are prepared to enter into their presence (D&C 132:22-24). These temple ordinances are the ordinances of knowing and, in the temple, they communicate to us “in a more fundamental way of feeling, than the mere external relating, knowing and communicating of the male element,” which is the method of knowing that we use in the tabernacle and chapel. This may be one of the reasons why the temple is such a traumatic experience for most. We are more comfortable with external or scientific ways of knowing about a thing—through lessons, talks, or sermons—than with ways of knowing the thing itself. Hence, we do not appreciate how we the living are given “life more abundantly” as we receive the knowledge that is in the

temple. Rather, we speak of “doing work for the dead” as our exclusive purpose in returning to the temple. In doing so, we turn what is to be an initiation into Eternal Life into a kind of service project for the dead, and remain ignorant of the knowledge God would give us as we act the role of Savior for the person whose “work” we are doing.

The temple ordinances only have effect in our lives as we live the principles which accompany them. As it says in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength” (D&C 20:31). Just as we actually receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost, which remits us of our sins, only by exercising faith and repenting, so also we actually receive the endowment of knowing God by loving and serving God with all, by consecrating all that we have and are. These two principles of loving God and serving God plus the temple ordinances of endowment and sealing could be considered the “second” four principles and ordinances of the gospel which follow the first four described above.

Temples have always been and are today where God appears to those who are prepared by principle and ordinance “to know” God, for “this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent” (compare John 17:3 and D&C 132:29). This knowing is had on a level of feeling, not through intellectual analysis. It relies upon the processes of our hearts, not of our heads. This knowing through our hearts is as real a knowing and results in as real a knowledge as that which comes through our minds. Indeed, unlike intellectual knowledge, this knowing *of*, rather


Given our cultural preoccupation with striving and our belief in the efficacy of our own effort, the significance of yielding can be lost upon us. It is not our task to fight Satan. Christ has already done that, and he won.

than *about*, God has the power to change us to be what we were meant to become when we came here.

If we would suffer this change, we must yield to God through the process of the justifying and sanctifying principles and ordinances. As King Benjamin says in inviting his people to receive the Holy Ghost, we overcome the spiritual death occasioned by the Fall, by “yield[ing] to the enticing of the Holy Spirit” (Mosiah 3:19). And, as Helaman explains to us, the Nephites lived the sanctified, holy life, or established Zion as we call it, by “their yielding their hearts to God” (Helaman 3:35; see also Moroni 7:43). Given our cultural preoccupation with striving and our belief in the efficacy of our own effort, the significance of yielding can be lost upon us. It is not our task to fight Satan. Christ has already done that, and he won. What we must do, if we would realize our “power to be,” is yield to Christ as he communicates with us through the Holy Spirit. Obviously, this will require effort, but it is not the competitive effort identified with running the good race and fighting the good fight or even managing the corporation. It is the effort of conforming our will to the righteous will of another. It is the work of every good relationship we have ever known.

No, we are not Christian soldiers. Warfare is not the work of the spiritual life. We are in a relationship, sometimes described as a covenant or marriage, which is designed to change us by revealing to us ourselves and the other in a manner which empowers us to change until we not only *do* good but *are* good, not only *do* what God would have us do but *be* what God would have us be. Otherwise, what we do is so much discipline and optimism but does not engender spiritual life in us or others. And, this is what we are here to learn to become: as God is, even capable of engendering spiritual life or, as it is sometimes phrased, worthy of being called saviors on Mt. Zion—not merely *acting* the part for the dead but also *being* the thing itself for the living.

**T**ODAY, I have tried to articulate the process by which all persons—Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female—may become “heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:28-29). What is the promise? That we may know God and, thus, have Eternal Life. Admittedly, in describing this process, I have used those scriptural metaphors which are most understandable to me, to my experience and values as a woman. I have also tried to act my conviction that we, as women, must begin to learn and live the truths of the Gospel as it has been restored, not simply as ethical guidance which governs our earthly relationships. Then, when we see who we are after living these principles and ordinances of the Gospel, we will know what women have “the power to be” and will, at the very least, know our ecclesiastical roles. On the other hand, if we continue to live spiritually imitative and derivative lives, we shall never know who we are, for no man can tell us what we will see when “we all, with open [or, in other words, uncovered] face, beholding as in a glass [or, mirror] the glory of the Lord, are

changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). 

## NOTES

1. Harry Guntrip, *Schizoid Phenomena, Object Relations and the Self*, (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1969) p. 270.
2. Joseph Smith’s “New Translation” of the Bible, 1944 ed. (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing Co., 1970).

### CALL FOR MISSIONARY POETRY

When you were on your mission, did you write any poetry? Expressing thoughts in verse is fairly common among missionaries. Some have written poetry before and continue it after their missions; others write only while they are serving missions, and they never do it again. The poetry may be devotional, humorous, or personal. It may be for public exposure or left in the pages of a missionary journal. It may be rhymed and metered, or written in blank or free verse. It may be totally original, or perhaps it is a parody (whether serious or humorous) of a hymn, song, or existing poem. Poems may serve an “official” purpose such as performance at a mission conference, or they may be highly unofficial satires of mission life.

We want to look at the poetry that missionaries write, why they write it, and what it means to them and those around them. (I’ll host a session on missionary poetry at the Sunstone Symposium in August). We don’t expect all of it to be “good” poetry in the academic sense, but we expect that it will be valid—that is, it will be an expression of some of the deepest, most honest thoughts that missionaries have.

Please send us samples of your missionary poetry. With each example, please include some background on when, where, and how it came to be written. Also, please give us a brief biography of yourself (or the writer, if the poetry you send is not your own), and give us permission to reproduce the poems for the purposes of this study. Authors’ copyrights, registered or not, will be respected. Please include your name, address, and phone number with all submissions. If you wish your name withheld from public knowledge, please indicate this desire, but do not leave your name off the submission.

Send your poetry to:

Elaine Thatcher  
Sunstone Foundation  
331 South Rio Grande Street  
Suite 30  
Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1136  
801/355-5926

Mormons may not have a bound canon of prayer, an approved prayer book from which we read and repeat at our meetings, but we do have an extraordinary, complex, unwritten formality that all of us learn and which we use to evaluate other's testimonies.

# BELIEF, METAPHOR, AND RHETORIC: THE MORMON PRACTICE OF TESTIMONY BEARING

By David Knowlton

*"Brothers, and Sisters,  
I want to bear you my testimony."*

FOR MORMONS, THESE ARE VERY RICH WORDS. Like a chocolate truffle, they can inspire delicious anticipation, or, with the dulling of the taste buds that comes from over-indulgence, they may strongly turn us off. But in either case, unlike other words we daily throw at each other in our very verbal society, they are never just there. They key us, they prompt us, they require us to respond.

To the non-Mormon, to someone who hasn't heard them in at times emotional and at times boring contexts, these words in a testimony are almost incomprehensible. To be sure, the words still carry their dictionary definitions, but the non-Mormon hearers lack the context—the living, the folding over and over again of experience and significance, like the butter and dough of a warm, flaky croissant. Mormons have saturated these words with ritual and mystical meaning—as well as with personal, living meaning—to the point that these words have layer, upon layer, upon layer of references. The most simple of words—"I want to bear you my testimony"—become dense, multi-vocalic, ritual signs. These kinds of words and their relation to the community have been compared to generations of leaves that compose the forest floor. With the annual fall of new leaves they become more compacted. Over time they decompose into the rich soil which nurtures the trees and a host of secondary flowers and shrubs.

Because these words form part of a complex system, com-

prehending their use and meaning is difficult. Those inside it cannot see all the interrelationships composing the whole, while those outside it do not share in the on-going community, the interlocking of contexts and meanings, the cycles of leaves which sustain the collectivity.

As an anthropologist, I'll explore in this article the significance of the words in testimony meetings and the practices in which they are embedded. To do so, I'll utilize the methods of the ethnography of speaking<sup>1</sup> (which analyzes how words are used in a speech community by different kinds of individuals) to understand how Mormon speech is affected by the context of shared understandings and different degrees of verbal competence. The first part of this article will introduce anthropological concepts which then will be applied to Mormon testimony meetings. For some readers, the terms and approach may be new and initially hard to understand and will require a slower and more careful reading than many articles demand; it may be useful to re-read the background sections after having read the application to Mormonism. In addition to the general benefit of learning a new approach to culture, I believe this intellectual discipline is important to our faith. Many of us are not satisfied with the usual LDS testimony meeting and make trenchant criticisms of its frequent "emptiness," "triviality," "hollow formalism," etc. Yet the meeting has evolved as an integral part of Mormonism and has great ritual salience. It is structured the way it is because it responds to important spiritual and mechanical dynamics of the Church, as do our frustrations. We need to carefully analyze the meeting and understand it, lest in our recommendations for change we throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water.

Nevertheless, such analysis is not easy. To do so, we tread on both the pedestrian and the sacred within Mormonism. In some way, our religion depends on these events being seen as immediate manifestations of individual and collective relationships with God. To show them as also being mechanical—products of natural human process—is to seemingly pull

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the curtain off the little man and his levers while he is speaking as the grand wizard of Oz. Analysis seemingly removes the magic and mystery, as well as the immediacy, of our spiritual feelings. As a result, we feel resistance and anxiety. Furthermore, this analysis might seem to open Mormons to the same critique of empty formality which we make against the traditional Christian 'apostate' rituals. Nevertheless, given the commonness and heat of our frustrations with our services, it necessary that we move onto this level of study. We need to remember that the divine can only mobilize itself in human life through processes like those in our meetings. In and of themselves, they are not divine, even though they seem such. Rather, they are vessels and vehicles for the divine and have their own history and function. An understanding of their form helps us comprehend our boredom and frustration.

In this study, I'll bring my experience of moving outside my native Mormonism to attempt to comprehend a religious and social system radically different from my own: the Andean society and religion. My work among the Indians in Bolivia has continually forced me to revisit my own traditions from their vantage point. Thus Mormonism becomes for me, at times, strange, weird, unusual, and needing explanation. When the anthropologist moves from her own culture to another and back again, she becomes an outside/insider who at times observes her native society from both a native and a non-native point of view. Therefore, as what Jan Shipps might call a Mormon outside-insider,<sup>2</sup> I'll compare and contrast the two cultures I comprehend to one degree or another in the hope of explicating those redolent words, "I bear you my testimony. . . ."

#### RITUAL AND RHETORIC

**T**HIS analysis requires a foray into the philosophy and anthropology of ritual and signs—the mechanics of religious practice. Although I attempt to express the following points in relatively simple and common language, the reasoning may at times seem opaque, because it is built on centuries of careful thought about these issues. Just as a child learning to ride a bicycle or play a violin has to spend time observing and learning 'before he develops the innate skill to ride or play without thinking, we, too, live in the world and experience God and

spirituality because of learning to do so. This implies that there is also a mechanics of the vehicles for religion and our practice in using them. Because most of us have already learned the mechanics, we do not usually think about them. Further, there is almost a taboo forbidding us to do so since in the act we seem to be denying God an immediate relationship with his believers. As a result, in looking at the mechanics we must hold on to our faith, for a while, in order to understand how it works, so that

once again we can just live it without having to think first.

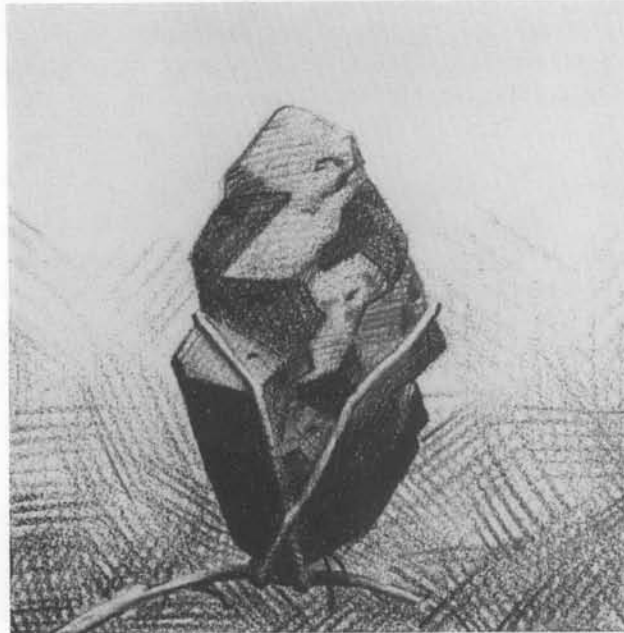
As Mormons, we know well the monthly experience of sitting in fast and testimony and listening to speaker after speaker say basically the same thing in almost the same words. With no effort we can produce a list of the common phrases and topics. The repetition of them often gets boring and many wonder why we don't vary our language and subjects. More than we realize, imbued in this tiresome treadmill of language and formality are vital processes which cement individuals and the congregation to the Church and its teachings.

A Mormon "testimony" is simultaneously at least two things. It is a metaphor portraying one's internal commitment to the Church and the community. It is also a ritual practice. For example, when we ask someone about her testimony, we are inquiring about her connection with the body of members and thence with God.

This is not the same thing as when

we stand, in church or elsewhere, and bear testimony; then, we perform a ritual—a patterned practice of rhetoric, a chaining of words together in socially established ways. In performing this ritual the metaphor is motivated and made real; our internal commitment is given context and purpose within a set of communally validated meanings.

It may surprise some Saints, but our bearing of testimonies is as much a structured ritual as the high Catholic mass with all its pomp and circumstance. It is also a ritual like that of Andeans who ceremonily combine pieces of sugar, stone, and llama wool in interesting ways and then burn them as an offering to the mountains and the earth to guarantee the cycle of fertility and reproduction or to redress some wrong. Our LDS ritual primarily differs from these in the kinds of signs and symbols we privilege, or sanction. Mormons don't use emblems of sugar, llama hair, or stones; we use words in sequence. Words become our stones, our llama hair, our sugar; our processions, our chantings, our vestments. When we combine



**Ritual links our intellectual side with our emotions, it takes the formative myth of society and presents it as a type through which individuals play out their life stories. Sacrament meeting links the formative myth of Mormonism and the Saints' daily lives.**

these emblem-words in meaningful ways within ritual settings, they not only create referential meaning (an understanding of the intended message), they also invoke spiritual significance. The ritual process of testimony meeting takes the testimony as metaphor—something which is internal to each of us but that as metaphor is excessively abstract—and makes the related experience real for the individual and the congregation. But for this to happen there must be a collective understanding of the meaning of the speaker's words; thus, the testimony only acquires meaning in shared, rather than individual, contexts. Therefore, it is the ritual of testimony—the structured, public speaking of shared rhetoric—which makes the metaphor of testimony tangible and immediate.

#### RITUAL RHETORIC AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

OF course, Mormonism is not unique in its focus on the ritual use of language as something central to its worship and to the self-identity of its believers. In fact, this dynamic is found in very different religious traditions.

The anthropologist Susan Harding describes how ritual rhetoric among fundamentalist Baptists actually creates belief.<sup>3</sup> She argues that the words themselves, when used within ritual contexts (such as motivating sermons or tent meetings), create a crisis within the people which the rhetoric turns around and legitimates by giving it a label, a definition, and a cosmic significance. This process of creating the experience and then defining it connects the individual to the ritual and to the ideological structure of the religion (this process also happens in Mormon testimony meetings, and will be described later).

To elaborate, since fundamentalist Christians give tremendous emphasis to the general abasement and sinfulness of humanity, they preach that this situation can only be changed through the grace of God. Therefore they focus, during the altar call as well as other ritual times, on the public acknowledgment of one's sinfulness and one's acceptance of Christ's saving grace. Their rhetoric repeats this over and over in multitudinous examples. It attempts to create a dissonance in the individual who can now recognize and label his abasement. The solution to his situation—Christ's grace—is also labeled and repeated over and over in rhetoric and in the ritual form of their worship. This overlapping of rhetoric with ritual makes Christian fundamentalism a powerful and motivating religious form to those who accept its premises.

Another anthropologist, Richard Bauman, explored the ritual use of language within historic Quaker worship.<sup>4</sup> Bauman explained how the Society of Friends valued silence and the contravening of the standard social uses of language to access the Sacred. The egalitarian Quakers rejected the traditional religious rhetorical forms which supported social hierarchy and class difference and argued for plain speech prompted by spiritual movement. Nevertheless, their meetings for worship have a ritual process which proscribes and validates their limited social rhetoric. The ritual form itself enables them to understand the presence of the Spirit. It makes the divine tangible.

In many Protestant groups—including groups not usually

classified as such (including Mormons) but which liturgically descend in some degree from the Protestant reaction against Catholic and High Protestant ritual—words form their central worship service and thereby become the major ritual of their congregation. This religious focus on rhetoric makes their religious practice unlike that of the Bolivian Indians and many other societies where worship focuses almost entirely on the mobilization of concrete signs—things like the sugar and the stones and the llama wool. For Mormons, then, speech *becomes* the meeting. As part of the rebellion against "apostate" Christianity, we generally avoid effective concrete ritual signs (the sacrament and the temple ceremony are two obvious exceptions). As a result, the words we use, the way we put them together, and the tone of voice that is used, have to communicate what would otherwise be communicated by more concrete ritual expressions, such as incense, priestly robes, and the procession led by the cross.

In contrast, an important Bolivian Indian ritual involves the feeding of mountain shrines by preparing a table/mass (the word the Indians use means both the Catholic mass as well as a table) with stamps of sugar carrying various images such as the condor or llama, bits of colored wool, coca leaves, and other concrete symbols. This table/mass is usually burned or buried as an offering to the sacred and living mountains. The spiritual significance comes from the placing of these emblems within the coordinates of a social space saturated with spiritual meaning. Although words occur at times as a prayer over the offering, their significance is limited to being another symbol among many in the complex juxtaposition of the symbols composing the ritual.

#### LANGUAGE IN MORMON RITUALS

IN rituals where words have to fill the place of more concrete signs, the weight of ritual meaning is born by even the most simple and seemingly insignificant aspects of language. For example, some have argued that in the Anglican Church the most significant variable differentiating the various portions of the worship service is the timbre and the tone of voice that is actually used.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, ritual language has to be considered somewhat differently from everyday language. Normally, when we think of language we think about its meaning. We treat it as referring relatively transparently to objects and ideas in the external world. We think about the supposed definition of the words and sentences. Linguists call this reference. But reference is only one of the many functions of language. Also important is the pragmatic function: the social meaning of language for the formation, maintenance, or change of social relations. For example, when we ask someone how she is doing we generally are not so much making an enquiry about her health as we are maintaining a social relationship. Most speech does a lot more than simply communicate referential meaning.

Thus in analyzing ritual language, we are better served by focusing on the way words are juxtaposed to one another within the religious context and on the group's norms used to

produce and interpret the language of worship than by simply focusing on the referential meaning. We also must evaluate how chains of discourse (different parts of the meeting) come to hold symbolic significance, not so much for their content but because, through their location within ritual, they operate as if they were sugar, coca leaves, or llama wool within a symbolically motivated social space.

To evaluate the use of language within the context of testimony meetings, we need to look at the meeting as a ritual *performance* of words. First we note how the words combine into ritually significant speech styles and genres, such as announcements, prayers, talks, songs, and testimonies. Each mobilizes the relationship between the sacred and the participants in a somewhat different fashion. Together they create movement within the meeting and a unified ritual vision of Mormonism. By examining the flow of words through the course of the meeting we notice that there are relatively bound forms of speech versus relatively unbound forms: There are times and places where you can be more or less spontaneous and free in your expressions and times and places where you can't. Interestingly, the bound forms occur at the beginning, the end, and in the middle, such as prayers and hymns. They mark the progress of the ritual; they serve as punctuation guides that inform us about the motion of the meeting.

This is probably not an earth-shaking observation for members of the Church, but to the anthropologist it indicates form and structure around which ritual significance is constructed. Mormons commonly argue against ritual, seeing it as an empty form indicating the hollowness of an apostate world. Nevertheless, we too have a definite ritual, as indicated by the pre-determined bound and unbound public expressions, and by our uncomfortableness when someone breaches the commonly understood language style of each form. Hence, within this meeting marked by bound verbal forms, we enter a sacred space where language no longer sounds nor operates as it does in everyday life. The way the language is organized keys us to hear and interpret it differently—our structuring of language creates our ritual.

As Mormons, we intuitively know that public prayer is more or less bound, although we don't think of the opening prayer as being as formal as a written prayer, such as the sacrament prayer which must be repeated perfectly. The em-

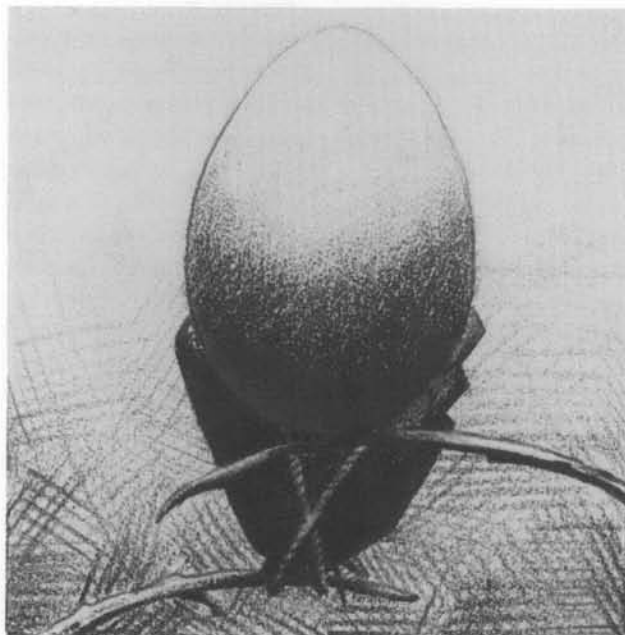
phasis on making sure every word is said correctly, indicates the culminating significance of the sacrament prayers as the mid point—the high point—of the worship ritual. In contrast, we understand the opening and closing prayers as relatively free expressions of individual wishes and desires, personal expressions standing for those of the congregation. Nevertheless, opening and closing prayers are very limited syntactically and in content. What is acceptable to say in an opening prayer

other than "we ask thee," or "we thank thee"? Even the greetings and the closings by the person conducting are relatively constricted. We don't teach these limits to one another formally, but by social control and social communication we learn the appropriate ways to speak when praying and conducting. They are not free expressions. Here we find a tension between our anti-ritual ideology and the necessity for ritual in order to have a relatively formal structure, such as a sacrament meeting.

In fact, LDS sacrament meetings have a symmetrical structure of bound and unbound sections. We begin with a hymn and invocation followed by relatively unbound speech involving ward business leading to the sacrament. This is followed by the next phase of somewhat free speech involving talks, a section structurally parallel to the business section, followed by the bound hymn and benediction.

For me, the most interesting part of the meeting is the section of talks or testimonies. In some senses, this is really the high ritual of Mormonism. We often refer to the temple services as our high ritual; we may think of the ritualistic ordinances such as baptism as being really important, and in a cosmic sense they are. But in terms of the ritual of day-to-day Mormonism, the religion we all eat, live, and breath, the high ritual occurs at that part of the meeting immediately following the sacrament, when we speak, when we stand up and share talks, when we bear testimony. This is when we actualize and make concrete the abstract metaphors of the endowment and personal testimony, those gifts from God which should motivate our life, leading to the change of heart described by Alma. In the sacrament talks and, especially, in testimonies we either have demonstrated for us or, when speaking, we individually relive the semiogenetic events of Mormonism, those storied events that mythically created and continue to explain Mormon cosmology, doctrine, and ritual.

Paradoxically, this part of the meeting is also the time when



**LDS ritual primarily differs in the kinds of signs and symbols we sanction. Mormons don't use emblems of sugar, llama hair, or stones; we use words in sequence. Words become our stones, our llama hair, our sugar.**



many of us go to sleep, when we tune out of the talks, when we lose track of the meeting. In some ways, this also can be interpreted within the ritual as an indication of people not listening to the whisperings of the Spirit, to the still small voice. This common tendency to boredom and inattentiveness also demonstrates a structural weakness within the ritual about which many of us lament. When we hear a “good” talk or testimony we feel moved and fed. Generally, though, we grumble about the tediousness and poor quality of most talks and testimonies. We see them as hackneyed, repetitive, and ordinary. While this is a weakness, it is also not surprising nor uniquely Mormon. Common ritual does not necessarily give everyone a peak experience all the time. People around the world argue about the spiritual value and effectiveness of their ritual.

Some cultures, however, do not automatically assume that their ritual is always to be treated with reverence or to produce some ecstatic, emotive experience or satisfaction. I was surprised when I first encountered an example of this. In the first Bolivian community where I did field work, there was a monolith named *Guillermo Pumakhusi* that had tremendous sacred significance. It was a Pre-Incan carved stone pillar with a probably male face on one side and snakes on the other which stood in the middle of the school yard, the center of the community. The town’s inhabitants believed that if the monolith were damaged, the social and political climate of the community would be destroyed, totally destroyed. From time to time people would make offerings—burn mesas—to *Guillermo* to keep the climate functioning or to solicit his good will in preventing family disasters. And yet the kids of the community often played on *Guillermo*, swinging on him. On most days, he was not granted a lot of ritual deference or respect. People were generally bored around *Guillermo*. He did not have significance all the time. But at critical moments people would render offerings to *Guillermo* with great respect, faith, and worship. *Guillermo* was one of the major ritual items of their lives. He anchored their cosmology, their idea system, their day-to-day practice, their economy and society. If they did not make offerings at the particular times, the people feared their economy would decay because of natural or social disasters. Still, *Guillermo Pumakhusi* is in some ways weak. The community must make an effort to convince the people of his importance. At some point, as the Bolivian village’s worldview changes, his status could easily decline to that of a mere artifact representing their ancient culture, rather than being a living manifestation of the sacred.

I suspect that LDS testimonies and talks are somewhat similar to *Guillermo*. They often bore us, but at critical times they are also the most stimulating and anchoring moments of our life. Most of us have had the experience of bearing testimony and feeling suddenly moved, touched by the Spirit, feeling that something significant was going on. At these moments, our life experience becomes anchored to the Church, to the Mormon flow of sacred events. Our faith is renewed. We leave the meeting refreshed and excited. That is important. That is what ritual is supposed to do, and it is interesting to understand how such a boring ritual accomplishes something

so important and lasting.

The anthropologist Victor Turner indicated that one of the important things about ritual is that it links our intellectual and cognitive sides—our ideological explanations of our lives and the world around us—with our emotions, with the more generative process of life.<sup>6</sup> According to Turner, ritual takes the formative myths of any society—Mormon or Andean Indian—and presents the myths as a type through which individuals play out their own life stories. In a sense, the ritual is the stage, the formative myth the script, and we are the actors. We don’t often regard sacrament meeting or the bearing of testimony as a linkage between the formative myths of Mormonism and the way Saints live out their daily lives, but it is. The act of testimony or the process of sacrament meeting is a replaying of our formative myths. By myth, I don’t mean a falsehood—the popular definition. Myths are narrative vehicles which convey to the community the values it collectively holds. For the United States, the story of the Revolution is our formative myth, it tells us who we are and what we value; that is why we retell the story over and over again. For Mormons, the Joseph Smith Story is our formative myth, and it is pregnant with most fundamental LDS beliefs—prayer and personal revelation, prophets and authority, truth and apostasy. A formative myth is not only a sacred story, it is a charter, an organizing story, something that is beyond empirical proof or the necessity of empirical truth. It is a type, a classifying event, it provides us a model of and a model for our sacred society. To the degree that Mormon cosmology and ritual remain valid for a Latter-day Saint, he or she is animated by its myths, even if not consciously. We relive our Mormon myth in the moment when we feel moved by the Spirit and anchor our experiences and our selves to the explanatory power of the myth.

#### HOW BEARING TESTIMONY IS A RITUAL WHICH BINDS THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE CHURCH

OF course, all this reliving of the formative myth operates at a relatively abstract symbolic level. Thus, the myth must be made concrete and tangible so that we can experience it. That is the function of ritual: it binds our personal life with the community’s myth. In Mormon ritual, the speech styles, especially of public testimony, do this for us.

On the surface, the LDS testimony may appear to be spontaneous, but in terms of form it is also relatively bound, although not quite to the extent of the opening and closing prayers. We often think that we can stand up and speak our soul or that our soul pours forth when we’re speaking in testimony, meaning that we’re under the freeing movement of the Spirit. While we may indeed be feeling the Spirit, our expression of it is not so free as we might think. In reality, we’ve all heard so many testimonies that their pattern has been ingrained in our minds, and we unknowingly follow it. When we bear testimony we operate within a formal structure that can be analyzed in technical terms. The important point is that although the content allowable in a testimony is limited, testimonies are even more limited in terms of *how* ideas and experiences are

framed rather than the subject matter. In other words, we pick and choose the experiences we mention in compliance with our community's canons of adequacy. That is, we decide which of all our daily experiences are appropriate to share in a testimony meeting, then we structure those experiences in particular ways, generally in ways that demonstrate the effectiveness of the gospel or of the hand of God in our lives.

A ritually significant prototype for bearing testimony comes from the Joseph Smith story. The missionaries teach this as a model for the witness we should receive about the "truthfulness" of the gospel, and all of us learn the model in Sunday School and other auxiliary classes. The testimony model is contained in the formative myth, in Joseph's story—it teaches us how to "do" testimony—thereby, when we reproduce that model in our testimony (our personal myth), we're implicitly living through the same kind of events that Joseph Smith did. Our life becomes a token of the same kind of things that motivated Joseph Smith. Bearing such a testimony manifests of the movement of the spirit of the Lord in our lives, and at the same time justifies and legitimizes the Church which Joseph Smith organized. It teaches us the "truthfulness" of the gospel. (In quotes because truthfulness is a very Mormon word, not one which has a strict referential meaning; rather, it is a ritual word, taking its meaning from its use within ritual.) The testimony takes this myth and makes it tangible through the play of referential meaning and ritual form; i.e. by performing the ritual in socially validated ways, we give support and reality to the quite abstract myth. Our experience then becomes anchored within the process of the Church, yet we are unaware of the social process producing this. It seems to be something simply produced by the movement of the Spirit. But, in fact, the Spirit operates within our carefully crafted ritual.

While testimony is the result of a structure which orients the content of ritual toward sustaining the Church, its great strength is that it functions in the mind of members as an unstructured entity. The apparent lack of structure provides the testimony with a pervasive naturalness which is accepted unquestionably by believers. When a member stands to bear testimony, she must reinterpret her individual experience to fit the structure of the form. Since that structure asserts the primacy of the Church in opposition to other institutions, her experience will be structured in ways that demonstrate that

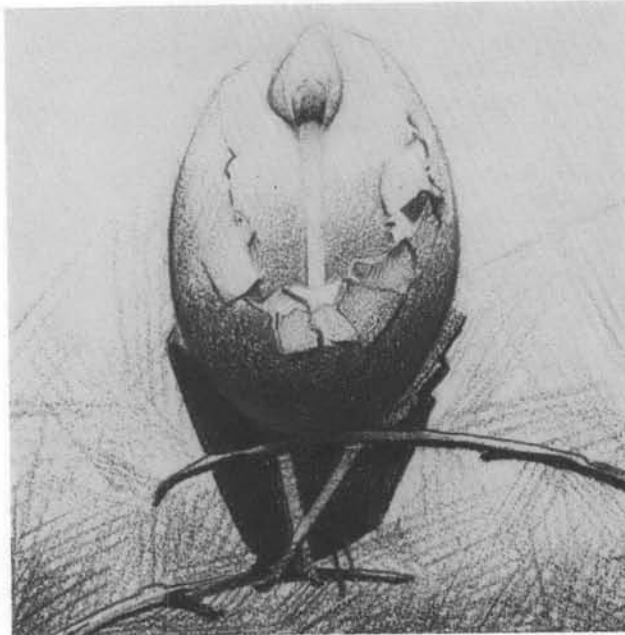
primacy or privilege. To the member, this proof becomes an unquestionable reality. Thus, when a member bears testimony or emotively listens to others' testimonies, he is reinterpreting his own experience—especially in relation to the realm outside the religious meeting—in terms of the Church. This reinforces the Church's privilege as his dominant ideology and makes it resistant to other modes.

As we have seen, the bearing of testimonies, then, is an important mechanism for maintaining the privileged position of the institutional Church among its members and in relation to the wider society. It recognizes the position of the Church as one of many competing ideologies in a changing society, yet it takes these issues and interprets them in a framework which defends Mormon ideology as the dominant interpretive mode for members. It accepts individual experience and creeds and subsumes them under unifying collective symbols. It accepts independent action by the members and reinforces the sacred authority of the Church hierarchy. But perhaps more than that, it unifies the congregation with a sense of community, a community unified by common mythology and speech forms, by a common testimony.

Over the years I have tape-recorded a number of testimony meetings. Although in some ways intrusive, it also was of great help.

When I participate in testimony meetings as a Mormon, I hear the event differently than when I listen as a researcher to a recording of someone expressing her thoughts. While recording, listening, and transcribing testimonies, the researcher distances himself from the immediacy of the experience. When I listen to recorded testimony, I do not listen intuitively. I do not listen for the quality of spiritual expression. Instead, I listen for the formal elements, for the genre boundaries, for the structures, for the forms—the more boring and tedious and absolutely essential building blocks of testimonies.

In Figure 1 is a testimony from the Austin Second Ward recorded in 1982. It is transcribed in free verse to indicate the prosodic spacing of the speaker. In some ways this is a minimalist testimony, yet it still follows the pattern of the more baroque Joseph Smith story: struggling with the world, in this case with science classes; seeking to find out the truth; having a manifestation, a simple, quiet, peaceful manifestation, unlike the marvel of having God appear to you; then, this simple, quiet manifestation said, "it was true." Because he bore his testimony



**When we reproduce the model of the Joseph Smith Story in our testimony we're implicitly living the same kind of events that Joseph Smith did. Such a testimony manifests the spirit and legitimizes the Church which Joseph Smith organized.**

this way, and because he had been constantly taught the Joseph Smith model, for the young man in Austin, Texas, his immediate experience linked his life with that of Joseph Smith. He became a participant in the cosmic event of the Restoration. It became vivid within his own life. For just a moment, the other parts of his life, schooling, etc., became secondary to the testimony itself, to that nice feeling he had where, "Hey, it can't be any other way!" There was an immediacy of experience that was profound. That is what ritual is supposed to do.

When we are in testimony meetings, many of us hope to hear something profound or insightful. I suspect we want to hear words chained together in a way that would be more typical of a scholarly discourse—the kinds of things I would report to the American Anthropological Association. For anthropologists, however, their professional meetings are similar to testimony meetings for Mormons. The presentations are usually more tedious and boring than any testimony meeting. Scholars are not generally very interesting writers or performers. They may have brilliant ideas, but they bury them in tedious and dully presented prose. Nevertheless, there is a ritual form to that kind of meeting as well. It also stresses, symbolizes, and legitimizes the major events of being an anthropologist. The meeting's form takes the individual experience of being an anthropologist, of doing field work in another culture and trying to bring results back to the scientific community, and connects it with the mythology of the famous anthropologists of the past. It takes the individual experience and ties it to all the other experiences of anthropologists and makes them one. Generally, the playing out of the form is boring, although every once in a while you experience an epiphany.

THE SPEECH OF TESTIMONIES:  
TIMBRE, RHYTHM, PITCH

**A**N important part of the performance of testimonies concerns what I call spiritual speech. Ideally, a testimony is a manifestation of a spiritual revelation. Mormon ideology says

FIGURE 1

There's ah  
one thing that I've noticed, ah.  
I've spent a  
few years in college in  
in engineering.  
And  
in physics classes and in engineering classes  
the teachers, the professors stand up there and they say  
"well  $x = y$  and this is always true."  
But you can  
You play around with that a little bit you can make it so  
it's not quite true.  
And I've always felt  
kind of lacking when someone says "this is always true."  
Except  
in the case of my testimony.  
I've, there's,  
Well six months ago I would've  
I had no testimony at all.  
And I thought  
"It's ridiculous  
to believe in something you can't see."  
But I had one experience a few weeks ago.  
I was sitting here listening to the speaker  
and for just a moment  
it seemed like  
my mind kind of opened up.  
Just for a second.  
And I kind of laughed inwardly and I said,  
"Huh, it can't be any other way."  
And I just, I know with  
no doubt in my mind at all  
that Christ is our savior  
and that Joseph Smith did receive the fullness of the gospel.  
And I say this humbly in the name of Jesus Christ,  
Amen.

**This minimalist, free verse testimony follows the pattern of the Joseph Smith story. Because this young man's testimony modeled the life of Joseph Smith, he became a participant in the cosmic event of the Restoration.**

almost chanted, such as a cantor in a Jewish Synagogue, only here the melody is almost a monotone with a very significant variation: at the key points it generally drops down a third or a fourth and stays flat to the end of the phrase. Back up, level out, drop. Back up, level out, drop, stay flat. When it flattens that's the crucial moment of a talk—the moment when people are telling you the most significant spiritual things. Their speech becomes more like music, but a very monotonous music, chanted, then with a nice little drop and then leveled out. Additionally, the tonal range of the expression drops to the middle low range and the timbre becomes husky, indicating to the congregation the speaker is feeling emotional: that she is feeling the Spirit. This important form keys native Mormons to the presence of the Spirit.

To some of us this speech pattern may often sound quite dull and dry, but it does key people to the movement of the Spirit. I call this "spiritual speech" because the style also typifies how general authorities give talks, in that very same

that we receive our testimonies as a gift of the Spirit. Now, the problem with receiving a testimony as the gift of the Spirit is that I may know it, but nobody else does. How do I convince others that I have really communed with the Spirit? This becomes a technical problem of communication. How do I show to people that my witness is for real? That my life really did follow the type of Joseph Smith's life? Although I can simply bear witness of the fact, and I can mold it according to the Joseph Smith model, there are additional ways to indicate to people that I have indeed felt the Spirit. These tools are generally paralinguistic, that is, aspects of speech beyond words such as timbre, rhythm, and pitch.

If you listen to testimonies and try to follow along, you will notice a place where the discourse changes from the common language of speeches to that of being moved by the Spirit. It is here you can hear these paralinguistic cues. The speech becomes slowly and evenly pulsed. Further, the tonal contours become leveled. Most speech has ups and downs which communicate a lot of meaning and purpose. In a testimony the tones flatten. The testimony becomes

rhythmic, leveled, toned way, dropping down at the end. Most Mormons can reproduce the style, and probably do when they bear testimony, and usually they are not conscious of doing it. We are native performers, experts, and do it unawares. I am surprised when I discover myself reproducing the style.

These details are important. They are not things we consciously control, but they are consequential because they are patterned socially, and they carry a tremendous amount of meaning for the community. Furthermore, they are learned. These are not natural speech patterns. They are learned within the Church. Mormons may not have a bound canon of prayer, an approved prayer book from which we read and repeat at our meetings. Neither do we have a testimony book from which we read and repeat. But we do have an extraordinary, complex, unwritten formality that all of us learn and which we use to evaluate others' testimonies.

Since not every one performs this ritual with the same skill, the bearing of testimony can also function as a social diacritic. In some ways the skill of bearing testimony helps to separate the weak from the strong. Our ritual performance skill very clearly indicates—indexes—to other members the quality of our belonging, the quality of our personal testimony. If one were to analyze the social hierarchy of almost any ward, she would probably find that the individuals who are best at performing ritual speech are also those who occupy important positions in the hierarchy. They will be the ones in the ward who have tremendous prestige and are recognized for their spirituality. This indexing is necessary among any social group. I imagine that even a utopian egalitarian society has some way of distinguishing among the members even though they dress and speak very plainly. I suspect speech was a significant tool to distinguish among members in the pioneer community of Orderville. Speech skills are not distributed uniformly among us; they are always held differentially. Some individuals are better performers and some are worse. Performance thereby can index status and spirituality.

Here I am referring to spirituality as a social form, something that must be manifested in socially approved ways to be publicly accepted. This is a radically different, although related, meaning from the more individual and mystical communion with God. It is similar to the term "righteousness." Jesus accused the Pharisees of being "whitened sepulchers" because of their public displays of religion. Nevertheless in any human society, the internal and private have to be made public by such performances in order to be recognizable to others. They must be keyed by socially approved forms. As a result, they may also be performed falsely, opening room for hypocrisy and falsehood as well as integrity. The tension between the private and public is an important dynamic within Christianity and is unavoidable so long as spirituality and righteousness are defined as essentially only judgeable by God, all the while they must be made operative within the congregational societies of Christianity. Performance, like it or not, becomes the critical means of determining whether a given individual is righteous or spiritual.


For example, in Austin we had a high councilor who came

frequently to our ward and gave long, beautiful talks. They were well constructed, well presented, and well acted. They were lovely. I recorded some and found their poetic form amazingly complex, much more so than the performances of almost any of the other members. However, the members of the ward were generally dissatisfied with the talks. After meetings I even heard the bishop complain, "he sounds like a Baptist preacher." What the high councilor said was not heretical, but, to be interesting, he had violated the canons of Mormon performance, thereby challenging his own expert status as a member of the high council. He was defeated by his own rhetorical skill. It called attention to itself as performance thereby defeating its utility to index spirituality.

Although performance enables the private to be publicly seen, in the case of testimony, to be successful, it must appear non-performed. It must appear to be a simple, and spontaneous outpouring of one's soul. Otherwise it will be greeted skeptically. This is a problem since it is a performance and can be falsified, and it is also often boring. Yet if we enhance its performative qualities, we call attention to the possibility of faking it and thereby deny its ritual validity for the community as a whole.

#### SUMMARY

**I**N conclusion, public testimony is first a metaphor and a ritual. Second, its form privileges the gospel in terms of our personal experience. Third, there are ways of making the internal metaphor external through ritual. Fourth, such testimony links emotions—personal and motivating emotions—with the social process, with our daily life, and with the gospel. Fifth, the sacred myths of the Church become seen as a type of our own experience, or, our own experience becomes seen as a personal replaying of the sacred myth. And sixth, testimony is a social diacritic, classifying members.

As a communal ritual and a metaphor of our internal life, the public bearing of testimony depends on an interesting sleight of hand. It takes the semiologically abstract and makes it concrete. We then tie ourselves to it through performance, making the metaphor real. Testimony becomes something that one can possess because he has obtained it appropriately, through accepted ritual. We may not all be satisfied with the ritual or with how it is usually performed, but we should carefully analyze its function before recommending changes, lest we unnecessarily weaken something critical for the everyday ritual functioning of Mormon culture. 

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Third Place, 1989 Brookie & D.K. Brown Memorial Fiction Contest

# MANHATTAN

By J.R. Rodriguez

WHEN HE TAKES HER TO HIS PLACE SHE'S NOT sure that what he wants to do is *that*, but when they get into the thing itself it's all right, better than all right, and she surprises herself through it all, retaining a semblance of order, of self, of history.

"I'm fourteen," she says to him later, sitting on the floor.

"I'm thirty-eight," he says, looking out the window at the quick climb of Wyoming mountain. "Call me if you want to go out and do something, okay?"

GOING home, she wonders when it happened for her mother, probably not at fourteen, but who's to say? And where, not *who*, but *where*? Wyoming seems like the place, not just for her mother or herself, but for everyone. It is the place.

She wonders if she's missed dinner.

WHEN it happens, she's not disgusted or scared, but amazed. She *feels* it right away, though the doctor and the books say that she cannot.

"I'm pregnant," she tells her parents.

"Oh, Shelly," her mother says. She starts to cry.

Her father folds up the newspaper that he's reading. He is bald, and his bifocals remind Shelly of Benjamin Franklin. He has been a Mormon bishop for a long time. He knows calm.

"Greens," he says after a few minutes. "You'll have to eat more greens. For the vitamin A. You don't want that baby to have to wear glasses," he says, putting his paper away. "Bifocals are not a pretty thing."

"AUGUST fifteenth," the doctor says. "Sonograms are never wrong," he says.

"Summer baby," her mother says. "You were a summer baby. It was so uncomfortable," she says to Shelly. "I drove your father crazy, didn't I, Buzz?" she says to her husband.

"Absolutely," her father says. "August fifteenth, that's V-J day. I was ten. I grabbed this girl who lived next door to us—sixth grader—gave her a big kiss. Precocious, no doubt about it," he says.

"You can see his heart beat," Shelly says.

They all crowd around the monitor to watch the sound-wave painted picture.

"He's beautiful," Shelly and her mother say.

SKIN tightening and itching, breasts starting to hurt, Shelly looking in the mirror at the changing shape. "Wow," she says. There are no stretch marks. Shelly checks herself every day, looking everywhere. She gets a schedule of next year's high school classes.

*Your freshman year in high school is very important*, it says.

On the floor, Shelly and her parents go over the classes together.

"How about an art class?" her mother says.

"No," her father groans. "I'll buy her some clay."

"*Engineering Principles*. I want that," Shelly says. Her father rolls over to his back. "I am a happy man," he says.

THERE is a community group every Tuesday night. The ravished brides of quiet, the group leader says. She is a pregnant psychologist named Toffman. She has no husband and is left-handed. "I am a woman," she says the first night that Shelly comes. "And I love my baby."

She introduces Shelly to the group. Except for Toffman, they are all girls. Some of them have huge stomachs, some still look slim, girlish tautness on the wane.

They talk about their parents, boyfriends, soaps.

"I think about my baby dying sometimes," this girl named Yolanda says.

At the end of the night, Toffman walks Shelly outside to wait for her mother. "I counseled a group in Philadelphia when I was in grad school. They were all black, city kids, never seen their own fathers. All these girls are different. White country girls. Buttermilk, that's what I call all of you."

When Shelly's mother comes, she waves to Shelly. Her face is excited and happy, the way it used to be when she would pick Shelly up after some church activity.

In the car, Shelly puts her hands on her stomach. "Feel me, mom," she says.

THERE'S this Mormon kid. Twenty-one. Goes to school back east. He sees Shelly sometimes in her father's dentist's office. He works for one of the doctors in the small building which was once a saloon where people like Earp and Masterson came in for corn whiskey.

He comes in one day. "You like movies?" he says. "Some," she says.

"Want to go see one sometime?"

"All right," she says.

When he leaves, she tells her father. "His name is Clendennon."

J.R. RODRIGUEZ is a freelance writer.



KENT CHRISTENSEN

*"I'm pregnant," she tells her parents. Her father folds up the newspaper that he's reading. He has been a Mormon bishop for a long time. He knows calm. "You'll have to eat more greens. For the vitamin A. You don't want that baby to have to wear glasses."*

"He seems nice," he says.

"I look good in white," Shelly says, her uniform starched and pleated like the doctors in the building.

"Like a seraph," her father says.

"I spent two years in Fiji," Clendennon says. "As a missionary."

"How was it?" she says.

"Hard," he says.

"I'm pregnant," she says.

"I know," he says.

"You're into movies," she says.

"I love them," he says. "I saw *Manhattan* in Suva. That's this city. It was great. The voices were all screwed up, but still, I loved it."

"Say something in their language," she says.

"Fijian," he says, "That's what it's called." He thinks for a minute. "*Rairai vinaka*," he says.

"What's that?" Shelly says.

"Beautiful," he says.

"No," she says. "Something else."

He goes over it in his head. "*Navua-ni-kau e vinaka sara. Na*

*cava ko kila baleti Jisu?*" he says.

"What does that mean?" Shelly says.

"It means, 'the fruit was excellent.' What do you know about Jesus?"

"Yes," she says, smiling. "That's it."

"MY parents wanted me to go to California. To some halfway house in the sun. *California*," Yolanda says with contempt.

"Shelly's parents are cool," Marianne, a pretty eighteen-year old who is due first, says.

"My parents will be gods one day," Shelly says.

"Support is what we're all about," Toffman says.

"I'm real horny," this girl named Becky says. "I mean, I wish I had a guy."

The girls laugh.

"The hormones will attack at will," Toffman says. When they are leaving, Shelly invites the girls to come into the office. "My dad will fix your teeth for free," she says. "Moms should have nice teeth," she says.

WHEN Clendennon comes over, Shelly puts on her

first maternity dress.

Buzz introduces himself. "Silly name for a grown man," he says. "I know it."

Shelly's mom makes a beautiful elk tenderloin. "Buzz shot it last season," she says. She has perfect, small hands.

"I have good teeth," Clendennon says at the dinner table. "Nobody in Fiji has good teeth," he says.

"I went on a mission, too," Buzz says. "Nineteen fifty-four. I was living in Cleveland before I left on my mission. Missed the Giants and Indians in the Series. Made me pretty mad. Don't know whatever happened to Vic Wertz," he says.

"I think Buzz is a beautiful name," Shelly says.

"It's a good name for a baby," Clendennon says.

"Oh, no," the mother says. "Babies need real names."

"Where did you go on your mission?" Clendennon asks Buzz.

"The southwestern states. Picked up some Spanish and a little Navajo. I had very little money. Had some bread and cheese that had these tiny bugs all over it. We were hungry. I had some Mexican guy spit at me when I came to his door one time. Ate bugs, just to be spit on. Bad winter all the way around," Buzz says.

After dinner, Shelly helps her mother clear the table.

"Your daughter is beautiful," Clendennon says.

"She waddles, though," Buzz says.

SHHELLY'S mother had seven pregnancies the first three years that she was married. The first six spontaneously aborted, sometimes coming like nothing, a misplaced menstrual cycle, no messier than her monthlies, but sometimes they came, a blood-shriek against the sky, and she would look at what came out of her sometimes and you could see that it was a baby, a real baby, and it was going to kill her the doctor said, so when Shelly came they stopped, knowing that this would be it, this was all the heart and uterus and hands would take.

AT Toffman's house, the girls watch *Manhattan*.

"You'll love this," Shelly says.

Marianne loves the caramel popcorn. "I'm having contractions," she says, half-way through the movie.

When Woody Allen's heart breaks, her water goes.

"We'll get your stuff," Toffman says. The girls rub her stomach and back and arms. On the floor, they undress each other. They put their pregnant bodies against each other.

Marianne's stomach starts to get lower and harder. "It's real," she says, "It's real."

The girls dress themselves and carry her to the car outside.

MARIANNE and Yolanda have their babies two days apart. The girls pick Shelly up and they go to the hospital. They are a pregnant army. They pass the two babies around. Toffman brings a big blue and pink cake. The girls play the radio real loud and dance. A nurse tells them to be quiet.

"We're all mothers," Shelly tells her and the nurse doesn't come back.

CLDENNON takes Shelly into the Tetons. They set up camp near a stream, not too high up. It's warm but the adiabatic cool comes and they sit by the fire that night. Shelly is wearing Clendennon's *Cornell* sweatshirt. They can hear an elk calling.

"They don't have anything like this back east," he says. "It's different, but it's nice," he says.

"I've never been anywhere," she says. "Only to Utah, to see my grandparents."

"I think you'd really like it," he says.

"I might," she says.

He puts his hands on her calves.

"My legs are sore," she says.

He rubs them.

"Come," he says. "Come with me when I go back to school."

"My upper legs are sore, too," she says.

He rubs them all over.

"You're crazy," she says.

He kisses her legs.

She pulls his hair lightly. "I can't." She leans back against her sleeping bag. "Do you think someone else can hear that elk calling," she says, "I want someone else to, so badly," she says.

THE heart wanting. If this heart were to stop. If my heart stops, that's what Shelly is thinking when the baby is coming. If this heart stops, please make it work again, she wants to say.

"It hurts, mom," she says, although her mother is not in the room.

Outside, the group is watching television. Yolanda has her baby in a red backpack.

"Hey, they have one of those old Pepsi machines," Marianne says. "The Pepsis are only thirty cents."

The girls go through their purses for change.

"What are you hoping for, Buzz?" the girls ask.

"A boy," Buzz says. He runs his tongue over his gums. "I have perfect teeth," he says.

In the room, Shelly's mother brings pineapple juice and crushed ice. She runs a moist towel over Shelly's face.

"Mom, I think I'm dying," Shelly says.

"I thought I was going to die when I was having you," her mom says. "Your father was reading a book—some hunting thing. He had my hand in his, never said anything, except when I started to scream at the end, he said, 'I've finished reading.'"

When the doctor puts his hands in Shelly, he feels the baby's head. "Cord around the neck," he says. "I'm taking him now. Help me, Shelly, bring it home with me, doll," he says.

Afterwards, Shelly sleeps. Her mother is on the bed, next to her and she, too, is asleep.

The baby isn't blue for very long. In the nursery he turns pink all over. The nurses dress him in a white and blue sleeper. The girls gather around the window and call out to him. He looks like Buzz.

"Goddammit, that's a baby," Marianne says.



Paradoxically, the reward for the hero's solitary journey is community.

## INSIDER OR OUTSIDER?: LOOKING FOR A BRIDGE

By Grethe B. Peterson

*Heros take journeys, confront dragons, and discover the treasure of their true selves. Although they may feel very much alone during the quest, at its end, their reward is a sense of community; with themselves, with other people, and with the earth.*

THESE LINES BEGIN Carol Pearson's book *The Hero Within*, which traces the hero's journey that Pearson says every woman and man must travel if growth and individuation are to take place. Using the "archetypal model" of psychoanalyst Carl Jung, she suggests that there are six archetypes we live by. The journey she describes is more circular or spiral than linear. It begins with the complete trust of the *innocent*, moves on to the longing for safety of the *orphan*, the self-sacrificing of the *martyr*, the exploring of the *wanderer*, the competition and the triumph of the *warrior*, and finally to *authenticity* and *wholeness*.

The sequence of these patterns or archetypes varies with each person. How we experience the world has much to do with where we are on that journey. Carl Jung said the lessons learned on the journey are deep and abiding, and they exist in what he calls the collective unconscious, of which we are all a part.

For most of us, part of the maturation process consists of confronting our insufficiencies, fears, and inadequacies—dragons, if you will—killing a few, fleeing from others, and finally incorporating some into our lives as old friends. It is a time of facing some of our greatest fears, coming to grips with them, and moving on.

For me, these encounters have been important, necessary, and, of course, never easy. But the journey has made me see life differently, and it has made me especially aware of how harshly we judge the imperfection and the inevitable, necessary incompleteness in others and ourselves. We label as aberrant the person or idea that is not necessarily right or wrong

but outside the boundary of our comfort zone. If confrontation does take place, it often results in feelings of alienation or isolation. One can easily feel or make another feel like an outsider, not understood or valued. This process sets up boundaries to protect one's inside comfort from outside discomfort, often resulting in further labeling, estrangement, and isolation.

A further refinement of this notion was described by Chaim Potok at the 3rd Annual Tanner Academy Lecture at Utah State University in 1989:

This, however, is not a static universe, but a boiling cauldron of colliding ideas and worldviews. It is impossible to avoid encounters with systems of thought different from and often antagonistic to our own. We live in a world of unremitting cultural confrontation.

The hero's journey is a metaphor for how we come to know who we are. Often on that journey we label ourselves, responding to what Potok calls "cultural confrontation." Such self-labeling and confrontation often results in profound isolation, paradoxically from those people or values that are closest (including ourselves), as well as those distant.

I want to share some aspects of my own journey from the perspective of someone who has moved from being a religious outsider to being a presumed insider, to talk about the historical perspective of the LDS church moving from the status of national outsider to a regional insider, and then suggest what I see as a bridge that transcends labeling and brings us to wholeness.

If I appear to be guilty of labeling, please remember that when I talk about the insider or outsider I am talking about our own perceptions as to where we are in relation to the world in which we live. I am talking about the assumptions—admittedly labeling—we make about ourselves and others which create barriers and isolation.

### MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

MY cultural confrontation began at an early age. I was raised in a family where education, critical thinking, and

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Christian service were valued over religious orthodoxy. I was always proud of my parents and our family values, but I felt outside the mainstream of religious life in Provo, Utah. My parents were loyal to the Mormon culture and were proud of their pioneer heritage. I went to Sunday school to see my friends, but I never felt comfortable praying in public and knew nothing of personal testimony.

Imagine the exclusionary impact of a comment made by a well-meaning BYU classmate who, upon finding out that I had supported Harry Truman, and not knowing the religious separation I felt, said, "I can't believe you are a Mormon and a Democrat." At the time I thought maybe he was right; perhaps they were mutually exclusive.

I graduated from BYU and left for Boston and graduate school and was quite certain my outsider status to Mormonism was permanent. I loved my Mormon friends, and I respected my Mormon roots, but religious faith seemed remote and unlikely.

At a time when I was exploring a new environment, being challenged intellectually in new and important ways, and moving out on my own, I encountered Chase Peterson. Here was a man, who from the age of sixteen had lived as an outsider in New England culture, being the only Mormon in his prep school and later one of very few Mormons at Harvard College and Harvard Medical School. The Church and the gospel were his core and that security contributed to his ability to develop close and lasting relationships with a great variety of people like and unlike himself. He appreciated diversity, and he understood the advantages of separateness. His choices about beliefs and lifestyle clarified who he was and what he wanted in life. As an outsider his life was rich and diverse.

So there we were, two outsiders in New England, raised in the same but very different Mormon culture. My confrontations had resulted in feelings of alienation and confusion with my core culture, and his in personal definition and freedom. I was an outsider in a homogenous society where the only diversity I knew about came from my parents' work and their associations. In contrast, Chase had spent his teenage years in an umbrella culture where self-confident outsiders were accepted and thought to be interesting for their differences. Chase was an outsider who felt connected and validated by the

different people and cultures around him.

As our relationship grew, I realized how important my family values were, even though new possibilities of a religious life were becoming apparent. To marry Chase and embrace the Church and gospel concerned me because I feared it would move me away from my family. The decision to marry Chase in the Salt Lake Temple represented a major shift for me; I was moving from the outside to the inside of Mormonism. I was not sure how it would feel, or if it would work. But I made the conscious choice to be married in the temple and to honor those covenants.

Chase's shift from outsider to insider came in 1963 when we moved to Utah to practice medicine. Because he was already inside the Church he moved not into the Church but into the Utah culture, which was very different from his earlier experience. Suddenly, he was part of the majority with stereotyped assumptions being made about his viewpoints because he was male, white, and LDS.

In reaching beyond one's LDS boundaries one is often misunderstood by both insiders and outsiders, each wondering how the other could possibly understand his or her point of view.

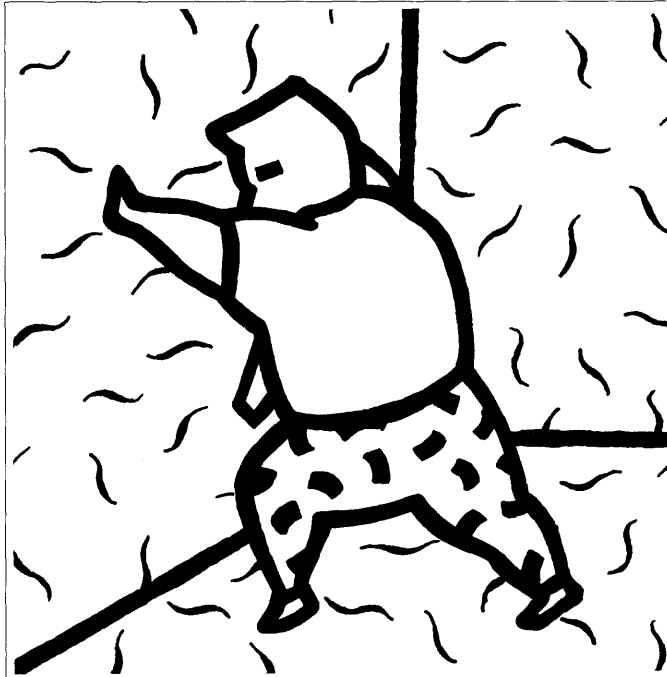
I relate this personal history because I think it demonstrates the complexity of the outsider/insider experience and how difficult it is to generalize it. Chase and I have traveled together for over thirty-four years. There have been periods

of personal and spiritual growth, periods of connecting with our Church and culture in profound ways, but there have also been times of separation and isolation when he or I have felt like outsiders, isolated in our responses to what is happening around us and not feeling understood. We constantly struggle with stereotyping by both Mormon insiders and outsiders.

#### MORMON INSIDER/OUTSIDERS

THE complexity of the LDS outsider/insider mindset is not solely expressed in the Pearson-Jung journey. Mormonism's history has evolved from that of the outsider mentality to that of the insider. Mormonism began outside the religious establishment, and outside the social and economic norms of the day.

Joseph Smith was poor, uneducated, and fiercely indepen-



The presence of the insider pushing the outer boundaries of the Church gives depth and richness to being Mormon.

LANE J. TWITCHELL

dent. He had a significant religious experience that moved him even further outside the mainstream of nineteenth-century America. Joseph attracted other outsiders like himself. They were people who were discontented with their faith and economic life. They were willing to risk censure and hardship and came together in a community of faith, suffering persecution and isolation, further defining them as outsiders.

By the time the Saints arrived in Salt Lake Valley, these outsiders had created their own religious community and, as a result, these national outsiders became regional insiders. Pioneers on the move became settlers with all the solidness of the word "settling." These people led the Church and defined the institution. Now they were insiders who experienced status and power to shape their society.

As an institution, or an individual, shifts from outsider to insider status, new issues and often a new mindset predominate in the culture. In the early years, the Utah Church was a national "outsider" but a regional "insider" and had to deal with a variety of outsiders. Whether it was a federal marshal pursuing polygamists or a non-Mormon mining community that was growing in wealth and prestige, the LDS response was understandably suspicious and defensive. The issues of the "outsider" in Utah, which is generally a euphemism for "non-Mormon," continue to raise important questions.

Just this year I was involved in ongoing discussions with newcomers to Utah, talking about how they feel about living in Utah. Most of those interviewed were professional women who came here because of their jobs or their husbands' jobs. As you might expect, the responses to living in Utah were mixed. Those who lived in religiously mixed neighborhoods which provided their children with friends from a variety of backgrounds felt positive about Utah. The negative experiences happened where families felt isolated in highly concentrated Mormon neighborhoods, where the major interaction with their neighbors was colored by proselyting.

As a result of these discussions a network for newcomers to Utah has been developed which attempts to link families with peers with common backgrounds and interests. In addition, some LDS church officials met with these groups and listened to their concerns. In response a letter was sent out to all wards encouraging more openness and non-proselyting interaction

with non-Mormon neighbors.

This kind of action is designed to reduce the tension that often exists between the majority and the minority in Utah. But the real challenge lies in educating members of the majority to be aware that even well-intended behavior can appear exclusionary in the community as, for example, talking about *the Church* or "the mission."

Recently the issue of school prayer has created an intense conflict in Utah, which seems to define itself as *the outsider/insider* issue. In the letters sections of the *Salt Lake Tribune* or the

*Deseret News* you get a sense of the anger and how it raises many concerns.

Regardless of the constitutional issues raised by the ACLU, the question of public prayer is a symbol for pluralism in the state, polarizing people into outside/inside rhetoric and positions. For LDS people, public prayer is a common and comfortable practice. For non-Mormons, non-Christians, or atheists, a prayer offered exclusively in LDS style, or in the name of Jesus Christ, is inevitably exclusionary. At a place like Harvard where there is religious and non-religious diversity, there is no problem with an ecumenical prayer at commencement. But when it appears that the insiders of a religious community extend their practices into the secular community, it's understandable that the minority feels injured and further alienated, and fights back.

As this public battle is being fought, it is important to acknowledge the contributions of the outsider to our state and culture. Take, for example, the University of Utah. Probably over 80 percent of the faculty is non-Mormon. During the years after World War II many distinguished outsiders came here—men like Max Wintrobe and Louis Goodman, without whom our medical school could have not become the outstanding center that it is today. In the humanities our strong English department is largely made up of outsiders, one of whom, Mark Strand, was just named the Poet Laureate of the United States.

Now what about the experience of the insider/outside, the people who are in the Church, who are spiritually committed to the Church, but are interested in exploring their faith beyond the conventional boundaries? For me, *Dialogue* and *SUNSTONE* are significant voices for the insider/outside. They provide opportunities to explore religious and cultural issues



LANE J. TWITCHELL

**If we acknowledge that we move from places "inside" to places "outside" at different times and circumstances we are in a position to better understand each other.**

outside the “correlated” Church. For some Church members who might consider themselves inside/insiders, the existence of these publications have no doubt caused considerable discomfort, often polarizing one group against the other.

From *Dialogue* came SUNSTONE, the Sunstone Symposium, *Exponent II*, and the Mormon Women’s Forum—all necessary voices. In my experience the presence of the insider pushing the outer boundaries of the Church gives depth and richness to being Mormon. My personal testimony is strengthened by multiple expressions of belief.

Being inside is often no more comfortable than being outside. Wherever we place ourselves, we often feel isolated and alone. As we confront the reality of our own lives, and the reality of our own religious communities, it is often difficult to feel connected and at peace.

#### BRIDGING THE OUTSIDER/INSIDER PERSPECTIVES

WHAT are our solutions? How do we connect with our brothers and sisters in the ward and in the world, especially when perceptual differences are larger than real differences. Where is the bridge that allows us to understand and accept each others’ experiences?

I suggest two possibilities. First, that the journey itself, our own personal journey, is a bridge. As we travel from innocence to authenticity the process can move us to a higher level of understanding or transcendence. The hero (you and I) knows what it means to be an outsider. The outsider stage is a necessary part of the growth that finally brings one to self-knowledge, knowing who we are, what we think and feel, and what we value.

Second, it seems to me that such a traveler is a bridge person who forms bridge institutions which connect outsiders and insiders, reducing labeling and misunderstanding. People in the Salt Lake community like Lowell Bennion, Emma Lou Thayne, Boyer Jarvis, Esther Landa, Obert Tanner, Aileen Clyde, Ian Cumming, Ed Firmage, and Blanche Freed, are all bridge people. David O. McKay, N. Eldon Tanner, Hugh B. Brown, Anthony W. Ivins are examples of LDS leaders of the past who were strong insider bridge builders.

There is no question that the Sunstone Symposium, the efforts of *Dialogue*, SUNSTONE, *Exponent II*, and the Mormon Women’s Forum are significant bridge institutions that provide the community and culture with comfortable ground where insider and outsider faith and culture can be explored.

My life becomes more vital and clear when I face my fears and let them go, whether they are fears of being left out as an outsider or smothered as an insider. Moments of doubt and fear are the times when we are most vulnerable and, consequently, the times when we have the most to gain. If we open our hearts, reach out and embrace the shadows, we expand our boundaries and move to a higher level of consciousness. After our solitary journey outside we can return and live inside with a more comfortable view of ourselves and others.

If we acknowledge that we move from places “inside” to places “outside” at different times and in different circum-

stances in our lives, that nothing is static (as Potok said), we are in a position to better understand each other. Acknowledging the isolation and anxiety we have known can in fact result in compassion for those in pain because of their outside or inside position.

If we take our journey, understand it, and truly find out who we are, we can reach out to the community around us, revel in our similarities and our differences, and our commonality will ultimately invite communication.

As I suggested in the beginning, the reward for the hero’s solitary journey paradoxically is community—community with self, community with others, and community with the natural and spiritual worlds. For me, the journey is about spiritual growth or, as someone has said, it is about “soul-making.” It has much to do with my relationship with the Savior, my love for him, and my understanding of life’s journey as he defines it.

At the end may we feel at home back home. And may that home have many rooms with doors and windows that define our internal space while communicating and de-mystifying the outer light—doors with hinges and windows with translucency, inside and outside, at one with the authenticity of the journey that brought us home. ☞

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#### AT LEAST FOR A MOMENT

Anyone who’s had a cocker spaniel  
 knows when they’re happy they piss on your feet.  
 I was ready to do this meditation stuff  
 until I read the final desired outcome  
 is constant quiet concentration,  
 a constant half-smile of contented joy.  
 Well, that’s fine for taking extra long blue bed sheets  
 out of the dryer or off the line,  
 but what about singing and drinking a Coke  
 while I shave my legs in the bathtub?  
 What about waltzing naked to Tchaikovsky?  
 What about my poor father when he first heard  
 Sid Vicious do “My Way”?  
 What about bleeding ankles?  
 What about pissed-on ankles?  
 What about crying if my dog dies?  
 Good grief, if I stand on the back porch  
 in late July in my nightgown  
 the clouds cover the stars but still  
 it won’t rain  
 and I feel like saying  
 “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made”  
 let me mean it vehemently, emphatically,  
 with my mouth wide open,  
 or drawn tight in a line,  
 at least for a moment.

—HOLLY WELKER

The vision of community that God presented extended  
beyond the human family to include the land itself  
and those creatures, wild and domestic,  
who shared this land with God's people

## BIBLICAL ROOTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

By Richard Cartwright Austin

### THE ERA OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

WE HAVE COME TO THE END OF THE ERA dominated by Cold War, forty-three years from 1945 to 1988, during which the fear of nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union always remained at the top of the political agenda. As East-West tensions ease, we are discovering that environmental pollution now poses the greatest threat to human welfare, to natural life, and to the continuance of this planet as the only habitable place known to us in the universe. The era of Cold War is yielding to the era of Environmental Crisis.

We are already feeling the heat as the gasses from smokestacks spread a carbon dioxide shield that traps radiation from the sun, creating a "greenhouse effect." Droughts are more likely to spread across the land, while oceans may rise to flood coastal areas. Other pollutants have opened holes in the ozone layer above the South Pole. As a result, increased ultraviolet radiation may begin to kill the microscopic sea life at the base of the food chains in cold ocean waters. As ozone depletes further, genetic mutations may spread among lower forms of life, while fair-skinned humans suffer more skin cancer.

Acid and toxic rains have severely damaged the forests of Europe, and they are now affecting North American lakes and

forests from Newfoundland as far south as the Great Smokey Mountains. The tropical rain forests of the world are being cut so rapidly that they may all be gone in a generation, and with them 40 percent of all the species of life upon the earth today will perish. Earthly life has not endured such a cataclysm since the one that extinguished the dinosaurs.

We deplete the earth's resources at alarming rates. Two oil crises in the past twenty years should have taught us that we must conserve, but we do not do so. Not only does our profligacy create temptation for ambitious dictators in Iraq and elsewhere, but our wastefulness leaves us with few alternatives other than military ones. We are a nation of oil junkies, and we will fight for our fix.

Meanwhile, our chemical wastes, nuclear wastes, and garbage wander the earth looking for somebody foolish enough to take them, while those stored closer to home poison ground waters and foul streams. Highways, shopping centers, and sub-divisions cover the landscape, gradually paving over the natural life and beauty.

The population of the world grows at alarming rates, particularly in the poorest countries where people's only hope for social security is children who might take care of them when they are sick or elderly. As the food runs low in these countries, millions of desperate people stream toward the prosperous nations and wade the Rio Grande rivers of the world to find their way to us. All of these problems will come home to roost here, of course, because the United States is not only the richest country in the world, it is also the largest consumer of natural resources and the largest polluter in the world.

The environmental crisis is so complex, and it is growing so rapidly, that it will challenge every aspect of our society: our religious beliefs, our political institutions, our economic practices, and our cultural attitudes.

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## THE LIBERATION OF NATURE AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

REMEMBER, if you will, that when a “doctor of the law” told Jesus, “‘Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.’” Jesus replied, “foxes have their holes, and birds their roosts; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:19-20, Revised English Bible). Here, as frequently, Jesus identified himself with the dispossessed. He warned this establishment admirer not to expect comfort in his company until things are put right in God’s kingdom. Until then, Jesus and those who traveled with him would share the lot of the homeless.

In biblical history this theme of dispossession and repossession appears primarily in relation to the “promised land.” The ancient Hebrews who remembered slavery wanted to live on the land in freedom. They dreamed of “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8, King James Version); that is, a watered land with grass and flowers where a

family could gather surplus honey from beehives and graze a small private flock of sheep or goats for meat and milk. The vision of community that God presented, however, extended beyond the human family to include the land itself and those creatures, wild and domestic, who shared this land with God’s people. The biblical vision is rooted in the knowledge of oppression and contains memories of human bondage, abused creatures, and damaged landscapes. Thus it speaks to the modern environmental crisis.

The Hebrew understanding of land is unique. In Egypt those who were to become Hebrews had been reduced to forced labor: working lands, mines, and manufactures owned by the pharaoh. Meanwhile, peasants in Canaan labored under a feudal system where ownership resided in a nearby prince and through him, perhaps, in a distant king. Oppressive landlords forced their tenants to abuse the earth in order to squeeze from it every last bushel of produce, while warlords—even in those days—scorched the earth and poisoned streams and wells in order to debilitate their enemies. However, at Sinai the Lord offered Hebrews a covenant which would help them escape from the politics of power. Priests were seen to be

exempt from feudal politics, so God lifted this new people above power politics by calling them a kingdom of priests, while the landscape they were destined to inhabit would also be called *holy*, removed from the traditional patterns of human ownership, and brought into the realm of ethical decision: “For the land belongs to me,” this God declared, “and you are only strangers and guests of mine” (Leviticus 25:23, New Jerusalem Bible).



ROYDEN CARD

The biblical vision is rooted in the knowledge of oppression and contains memories of human bondage, abused creatures, and damaged landscapes. Thus it speaks to the modern environmental crisis.

When the Hebrews invaded Transjordan, and then Palestine, they invited oppressed peasants to rise up in the name of Yahweh, and so swelled their ranks. When they divided the liberated landscape among the tribes, and then among families within tribes, each family accepted its share not from a political authority but from God. Rights of tenancy became a sacred, religious concern, to be protected from politics and economic manipulation.

Thus the land was drawn within the circle of ethical reflection at the heart of the Hebrew covenant. Since the promised land was an

object of ethical concern, human obligations to the land and to other creatures who lived there could be prescribed. The Hebrews struggled to appreciate what it meant to serve a God who was not a tribal deity limited to a particular landscape: “The whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5, 6, New Revised Standard Version). At the same time they tried to appreciate the claims of the animals, domestic and wild, who shared the land with them, as well as the rights of the ground itself. All these were part of the covenant community.

In my writings I call the Bible’s vision a *biblical ecology*. This biblical ecology differs from the modern ecological understanding in two ways. First, it includes a sense of God’s purpose. The Bible portrays nature not as an autonomous system but as a moral one, whose health and integrity stem from an intimate relationship with God. Second, in the Bible the moral engagement between nature and humanity is critical to both parties. Nature’s vulnerability to human influence is not simply an accident of evolutionary history; rather, it has been God’s intention from the beginning, because despite the grave risks, mutual vulnerability opens potential benefits to all.

Now that human impact upon earthly life has become so pervasive, modern society is struggling to understand the need to limit our impact so that natural systems are not destroyed. The environmental movement has encouraged nations to screen some areas, such as parks and wildernesses, from human degradation, and to curtail the pollution of basic environmental systems, such as air, rivers, oceans, and groundwaters, that touch all life. Many environmentalists assume that while humanity could *not* survive without healthy natural systems, the rest of nature could get along quite well without humanity. The environmental movement has alerted us to the need to disengage from nature and pull back, but it has difficulty developing positive visions of desirable relationships between human culture and nature. I believe that biblical ecology's most significant contribution can be a positive moral vision of human relations with nature.

Genesis, chapter 2, suggests that God formed humanity to be a caretaker for the earth, while Genesis, chapter 1, suggests a human vocation to bear "the image of God" to nature. The words *image* and *likeness* are closely associated with God's charge to establish "dominion" over life on the earth. The image was something to be seen by other creatures, warning of the divine authority behind human administration of nature. The Priestly writers were probably familiar with the practice of imperial agents to erect images of the king whose authority they bore. The Bible uses this imperial language to suggest that no creature, seeing men and women, should doubt that we bear authority from God.

It would be foolish, however, for us field representatives of God's dominion to imagine that our authority is our own. We will be secure in our position only so long as we do *God's* will. As soon as the first man and woman in Genesis received their awesome commission, God gave them field instructions. People could eat the plants, but not all of them, for the fruit of the earth must be shared with all the multitude of animals God had formed (Genesis 1:29-30). The dominion that humans were instructed to establish was God's; they received no authority to exhaust the earth's life for exclusively human ends.

Christian theology has generally followed the lead of Paul,

who affirmed that Christ, the new Adam, manifested the image of God fully, and that believers would exhibit the image as they conformed to Christ's character. When we recognize the image of God in Christ, who "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7, RSV), it is easier to separate the core of truth from the imperial language of dominion. Jesus urged that we cease our fretful exploitation of the earth and, instead,

*notice* our surroundings:

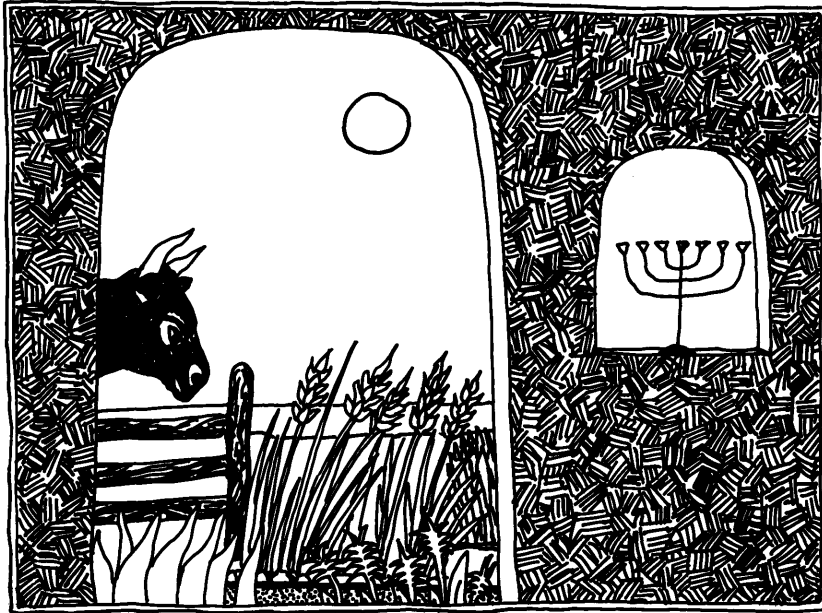
I tell you not to be anxious about food and drink to keep you alive and about clothes to cover your body. Surely life is more than food, the body more than clothes. Look at the birds in the sky. . . . Consider how the lilies grow in the fields; they do not work, they do not spin; yet, I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendor was not attired like one of them. If that is how God clothes the grass in the fields, which is

here today and tomorrow is thrown on the stove, will he not all the more clothe you? How little faith you have! . . . Set your mind on God's kingdom and his justice before everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well. So do not be anxious. . . . (Matthew 6:25-34, REB)

If we have faith in this God, we will notice the world around us, love it, and take care of it.

#### SABBATH ETHICS

**F**AITH in the Lord requires us to abandon the exploitation of others and to cultivate moral relationships instead. The laws in the Bible are attempts to convey such moral relationships. In the Old Testament there are two distinct currents of legal interpretation flowing from the Ten Commandments. One applies the commandments with additional lists of prohibitions, and often with severe penalties; this current can be legalistic and repressive. Another current, however, develops ethical reflection from the fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8, KJV). This results in positive injunctions similar to modern affirmations



ROYDEN CARD

Hebrew Sabbath laws conferred rights upon the whole covenant landscape and the various plants and creatures within it, not just upon its human citizens.

of civil rights. Indeed, Hebrew Sabbath laws reached more broadly than modern civil codes, because they conferred rights upon the whole covenant landscape and the various plants and creatures within it, not just upon its human citizens. Through their Sabbath reflection, the Hebrews discovered design in the relations between the Lord, humanity, and nature which became an inspired architecture for justice—a biblical ecology.

Directly following the Ten Commandments in the book of Exodus is the “Covenant Code,” believed to be one of the oldest collections of law from the Hebrew settlement of Canaan.<sup>2</sup> Several verses in this collection spell out what the Sabbath cycles of days and years should mean for social relationships and also for environmental relationships.

For six years you may sow your land and gather its produce; but in the seventh year you must let it lie fallow and leave it alone. Let it provide food for the poor of your people, and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You are to do likewise with your vineyard and your olive grove.

For six days you may do your work, but on the seventh day abstain from work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and your home-born slave and the alien may refresh themselves. (Exodus 23:10-12, REB)

This brief passage is remarkable for its breadth of moral concern. Sabbath law forestalled the vice most characteristic of agriculture: the temptation to turn work into perpetual drudgery. It gave rights to servants, children, and strangers, and it provided rest for domestic animals. The law provided the land itself with fallow time for renewal, and it gave the landless poor access to food. It even upheld a place for wild animals within the agricultural domain.

Sabbath law gave rights to the land itself, most particularly the right to periodic rest so it might recover itself and, for a brief time, be free to bear the fruit of its own choosing. Land could be used, but it must be not enslaved, for land was a partner within the covenant community. It had rights to its own life, and it also had the duty to support the whole community, particularly the poor and needy. Indeed, land-

owners were warned that if they neglected to give rest to the land, then God would remove them from it:

I shall scatter you among the heathen, pursue you with the drawn sword; your land will be desert and your cities heaps of rubble. Then, all the time that it lies desolate, while you are in exile among your enemies, your land shall enjoy its sabbaths to the full. All the

time of its desolation it will have the sabbath rest which it did not have when you were living there. (Leviticus 26:33-35, REB)

Next to the land itself, domestic animals were the most important agricultural resource. When Jesus taught, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you” (Luke 6:27, NRSV), he generalized from an ancient provision of the Covenant Code concerning domestic animals and their owners. Exodus reads:

Should you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey straying, you must take it

back to him. Should you see the donkey of someone who hates you lying helpless under its load, however unwilling you may be to help, you must lend a hand with it. (Exodus 23:4-5, REB)

Was this an obligation to help the animal because of its covenant status, or an obligation to help even one's enemy because livestock was so vital to human welfare? I believe both of these moral concerns joined to create an imperative strong enough to transcend the anger in a personal dispute. Domestic animals certainly had covenant rights, such as their right to Sabbath rest. On my farm, I mow hay with workhorses and I know that the work animal's practice of nibbling is annoying to the farmer, but Deuteronomy gives the animal that right: “You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain” (Deuteronomy 25:4, NRSV). The same book forbids yoking an ox and an ass together to the plow; such a cruel mismatch would overwork the one and frustrate them both.

No doubt Hebrew farmers tried to keep wild animals away from their standing crops, but nevertheless wild creatures held an acknowledged right to glean agricultural leavings. Other laws, too, recognized rights for wild species within cultivated



ROYDEN CARD

In Christ, redemption is ecological. The health of one relates to the health of all. We are not rescued *from* others but redeemed *for* others. Humanity and other species are created to nurture each other.

regions. Specific regulations, for example, limited the harvesting of birds. Intuitively, Hebrews came to associate protection of birds with maintenance of a productive agricultural environment. One law in Deuteronomy decreed:

When you come upon a bird's nest by the road, in a tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs in it and the mother-bird on the nest, do not take both mother and young. Let the mother bird go free, and take only the young; then you will prosper and enjoy long life. (Deuteronomy 22: 6-7, REB)

Fruit trees received special recognition and protection, since each fruit or olive tree was an important addition to the Hebrew agricultural community. A law from Leviticus required that trees were to be brought into the covenant fellowship ceremoniously, much as children or converts were. For three years after planting, any early fruit should not be eaten. Fruit from the fourth year should be removed (in explicit analogy with circumcision of the male foreskin) and offered to the Lord "in a feast of praise" (Leviticus 19:24, JB). Then, in the fifth year, the fruit from this new member of the community might be enjoyed. Fruit trees outside the covenant community, whether wild or cultivated, also merited protection. In this instance it is Deuteronomy which anticipates Jesus' commandment to love one's enemies:

If, when attacking a town, you have to besiege it for a long time before you capture it, you must not destroy its trees by taking an axe to them: eat their fruit but do not cut them down. Is the tree in the fields human that you should besiege it too? Any trees, however, which you know are not fruit trees, you may mutilate and cut down and use to build siege-works against the hostile town until it falls. (Deuteronomy 20:19-20, JB)

This commandment, ascribed to Moses, limited the impact of warfare upon nature. The "scorched earth" practices of Canaanite kings were rejected. In light of this biblical insistence that we shelter the natural world from warfare, modern "scorched earth" warfare—Sherman's march from Atlanta to the sea, or the napalm bombing of Vietnam, to say nothing of

atomic warfare—is also unjustifiable and appalling.

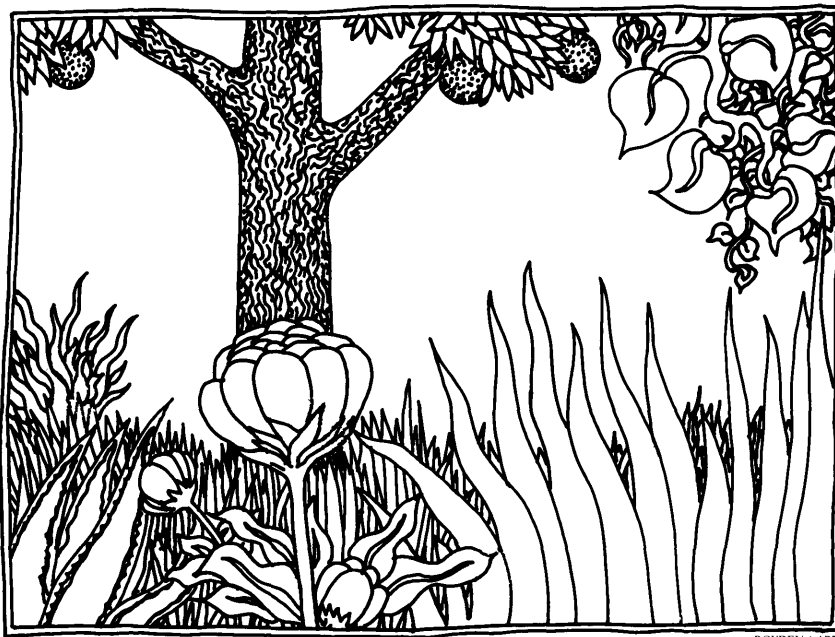
#### CREATION IS WAITING FOR CHRISTIANS

**E**VEN though the early Christian movement spread beyond the ancient holy land and lost touch with the Hebrew ethics that grew from the bond with this particular landscape, the Apostle Paul continued to teach that redemption applies to the whole earth. Jesus Christ has inaugurated a new creation within which human relationships with nature are redeemable. Paul argued that for Christians all foods are clean, including foods once prohibited by Hebrew dietary laws as well as those marketplace foods that, in the Roman world, were routinely blessed in pagan ceremonies. Christ had affirmed the integrity of all God's creations and provided the basis for wholesome relationships among all things. So Paul wrote:

Well, then, about eating food sacrificed to idols . . . even if there were things called gods, either in the sky or on earth—where there certainly seem to be "gods" and "lords" in plenty—still for us there is one God . . . from whom all things come and for whom we exist; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we exist. (1 Corinthians 8:4-6, JB alt.)

Once we know Christ, Paul affirmed, we can never again imagine that God is remote from this world, never again conclude that anything earthly is beyond God's redeeming power. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul explained that Christ's *passion* as the suffering servant of all was not a departure from the character of God but the clearest revelation that he was God indeed.<sup>3</sup> Christ's humility is sufficient to inspire every creature—if Christians will also give similar witness.

Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus. He was in the form of God; yet he laid no claim to equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the form of a slave. Bearing the human likeness, sharing the human lot, he humbled himself, and was



ROYDEN CARD

These creatures were not automatons programmed to a narrow track of life. God instilled in them the breath of life, the capacity to live from within themselves. They too could be creative.



obedient, even to the point of death, death on a cross! Therefore God raised him to the heights and bestowed on him the name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow—in heaven, on earth, and in the depths—and every tongue acclaim, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” to the glory of God. (Philippians 2:5-11, NEB, alt.)

The letters to Colossians and to Ephesians make this cosmic understanding of Christ’s redemption explicit: “Through him God chose . . . to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (Colossians 1:20, NEB); “that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ” (Ephesians 1:10, NEB). Christ did not come to rescue a handful of believers from this world. He came to renew creation, to restore humanity and nature to full communion with God, and to bring all creatures into just and compassionate relationships with each other through the inspiration of his own humble sacrifice.

In Christ, redemption is ecological. The health of one relates to the health of all. We are not rescued *from* others but redeemed *for* others. Christians need not imagine, like some radical environmentalists do, that nature would be improved if humanity would just go away and let nature alone; though we should understand that nature is in peril until humanity repents of pollution. Nor need we conclude that our true home is in some other place without the beautiful plants and animals, birds and insects, who share this planet with us. The “world” we are asked to shun is the culture of injustice, not environmental relationships. Humanity and other species are created to nurture each other. Apart from the earth there is no salvation. Those who work for the renewal of God’s covenant and the building of Jesus’ kingdom must engage with the landed, the landless, and also the landscape. Our future, and the future of all who share this earth with us, are joined.

#### THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

**I**N conclusion I want to circle back to Genesis, chapter 1, the creation of the world—the most beautiful poem of creativity I know.

The story opens with a vision of a watery emptiness: “the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, with a divine wind sweeping over the waters” (Genesis 1:2, NJB). The Lord had no competitor and met no resistance from the elements. God inaugurated creation decisively, using powerful words. “And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light, and that it was good” (1:3-4, KJV). Again and again, day by day, God spoke and it happened, God fashioned and it stood.

Very soon on the third day the newly formed earth began to express itself in response to God’s creative intention. “God said, ‘Let the earth produce vegetation’. . . the various kinds of seed-bearing plants and the fruit trees with seed inside, each corresponding to its own species. God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:11-12, NJB). In this creative relationship there was no jealousy or tension between God and the earth. Again and again, day after day, God surveyed the work and saw how good

it was. God was self-giving and creation was beautiful.

As the narrative unfolded one day following another, God felt increasing delight in how many things came to life. On the fifth day God created multitudes of birds to “fly above the earth across the vault of the heavens,” as well as fish and sea creatures to “swarm in the water” (Genesis 1:20,21 REB). God addressed them directly: God’s first commandment was a word of blessing and encouragement spoken to fish and birds. “Be fruitful and increase; fill the water of the sea; and let the birds increase on the land” (1:22, REB). This text, like others in the Bible, presumes that God could communicate with all creatures and they could answer. The relationships between God and living creatures were not mechanical and manipulative but intimate and responsive. Though humanity would later receive important rights and duties in relation to other forms of life, it was God who had the most intimate relationship with both plants and animals.

God’s delight in natural diversity shines through the stately repetitions of this story. “God made the wild animals in their own species, and cattle in theirs, and every creature that crawls along the earth in its own species. God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:25, NJB). These creatures were not automatons programmed to a narrow track of life, nor were they puppets dangling from God’s fingers. God instilled in them the breath of life, the capacity to live from within themselves, however critical their dependence upon their environment. They, too, could be creative.

This God differs from our anxious expectations. God did not fashion a spectacular display of objects to confirm the prowess of their Creator, nor a merely decorative backdrop for the human drama. This God created an earth, lively and life-giving, overflowing with diverse creatures. And at the end of the story there is that amazing grace: God rested.

God saw everything that God had made, and indeed it was very good. Evening came, and morning came, a sixth day. Thus the heaven and earth were completed with all their mighty throng. On the sixth day God completed all the work, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day God had rested after all the work of creating. (Genesis 1:31-2:3; author adapting NEB and JB)

This God is creative. And God’s rest invites us to be creative as well. We may respond, and God is not too busy to listen, to notice us, to admire our work, to accept our offerings. ☞

#### NOTES

1. Richard Cartwright Austin has authored a four-book series, *Environmental Theology*, published by Creekside Press, Box 331, Abingdon VA 24210. In addition to *Hope for the Land: Nature in the Bible*, the series includes *Baptized Into the Wilderness: A Christian Perspective on John Muir*, *Beauty of the Lord: Awakening the Senses*, and *Environmental Theology and Personal Ethics*.

2. Martin Noth, *Exodus, A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 173-175. The name is suggested by the reference in Exodus 24:7.

3. John Gibbs observes that “only by taking ‘the form of a servant’ was Jesus ‘in the form of God.’” See John G. Gibbs, “Pauline Cosmic Christology and Ecological Crisis,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1971, 473.

TANGLED WOODS AND PARISIAN LIGHT

And after the earthquake a fire . . .  
 And after the fire a still small voice  
 I Kings 19:11-13

Cascading glass heralded their approach.  
 Shards fell in cataracts  
 Beneath their feet like benedictions,  
 Like garments cast down, like broken petals.

The hierophants burst into the narrow street  
 Casting cars aside, flourishing banners.  
 Flames leapt from the flanks of the procession  
 Casting a parahelion of light.  
 Voices rose to glossolalian heights.

Flames, certitude, lambent Parisian afternoon light  
 Shone in lucent eyes, glinting helmets,  
 Truncheons tightly grasped,  
 Bats and chains expertly wielded.

The disciples of hieratic history  
 The masters of dialectic  
 The architects of humanity.

While a portal, as if daubed in lamb's blood,  
 Sheltered four souls from the raptus of the holy host.  
 Two worn stone pillars and a lintel  
 Spread over their heads like wings in the tent of meeting:

A boy clung to his father's leg  
 Eyes on the street wide and wincing.  
 The man cradled his son's head listening  
 While the other pair spoke in low voices,  
 Searching for words in an alien tongue.

A dog was strung up on a lamp post.  
 A placard hung round its attenuated neck,  
 Its hanging tongue the same deep crimson  
 As the shrill apocalyptic text  
 Which it bore upon its broken chest.

The two bent nearer the father and the son  
 As if to shield them from the proximate menace,  
 Continuing the tale of a youth  
 And the questions he bore into a tangled wood.

The seried ranks of acolytes bore the epicenter of the quake away  
 Leaving clustered knots of onlookers among the rubble  
 To register the aftershocks, the emptied vials of wrath—  
 The simplicity of the shouted syllogisms  
 The utter directness of the violence  
 The thrill of the extraordinary gesture.

The tale neared its end:  
 "The woods shone.  
 The boy returned through the fields,  
 A live ember of divine words in his hand.  
 And thus his story began."

Once the two had read a different text  
 In similar slanting Parisian light,  
 An epic of engineering  
 That stretched like a broad filament  
 Knotted with triumphant stones.

From the Tuilleries to the northwest,  
 Three monuments perfectly aligned  
 Lock the sun's descent on its mightiest day  
 Between two arches great and small  
 And impale it upon the apex of an obelisk.

Could the earth be changed in a day?  
 Could a man—the father, a child—this startled boy, be aligned  
 Like stone vaults and shafts rising from a grand boulevard  
 Winched up, plumbed straight, squared off?

The hapless corpse was mercifully lowered from the gibbet.  
 From the shelter of their portal the four stepped  
 Into the keen-edged current of the shattered glass strait  
 To join with bending figures the gathering in of  
     broken backed books  
     bread tossed upon the stones  
     blood poured upon the ashes.

The four bent to the street to gather in broken emblems  
 And passed them from hand to hand with care,  
 With the flawed, deep love  
 Of mutable beings for tangible things.  
 Each stone and word, each crumb and crimson drop  
 A testament of patience, routine and of love unfeigned—  
 The enduring revolt, the joints and sinews of all our stories.

—STEVEN EPPERSON

## A Veiled Disappearing Act?

# THE PUZZLE OF ANNALEE SKARIN: WAS SHE TRANSLATED CORRECTLY?

By Samuel W. Taylor

I<sup>N</sup> THE SUMMER OF 1952, THE LOCAL BEST SELLER ALONG THE Wasatch Front was Annalee Skarin's *Ye Are Gods*. The book was something new in Mormon literature; some scholars considered it the first genuine approach to the faith on a metaphysical basis. The Saints loved it. The book's beautiful and inspiring author was in great demand for Church and fireside talks.

Then, abruptly, the book was denounced by Elder Mark E. Petersen, and Annalee Skarin was excommunicated and delivered to the buffetings of Satan for writing it. Two weeks later, she claimed to have become a translated being. As such, she produced eight more books, all of them still in print and selling briskly.

She has become a cult figure in New Age circles. I attended a lecture on the life and works of Annalee Skarin by Robert Coe Gardner of San Francisco. Though the Church has disowned her, her position as a cult figure is secure and growing. The East-West Bookstore of Menlo Park, California, which specializes in occult materials, reported her works are "going like hotcakes." *Sons of God*, which Annalee wrote under the pseudonym of Christine Mercie, went into its fifteenth printing in 1976.

She was born 7 July 1899 at American Falls, Idaho, the seventh of twelve children. (A seventh child born on the seventh day of the seventh month is significant in occult circles.) Her father was a sturdy Mormon farmer who died when she was nineteen. Annalee was a delicate child but developed into a beautiful young lady. A brief marriage ended in annulment. She then married unhappily again, an ordeal lasting twenty-one years, during which she had two daughters. After a divorce she finally married her true love, Reason Skarin, a police officer in Buffalo, New York. Her oldest child never forgave her for this, and turned against her. Linda, the other girl, remained close to her mother.

Such are the verifiable facts about Annalee Skarin. Everything else is controversial.

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ANNALEE claimed that *Ye Are Gods* was "written under the direction and power of God and according to his command," as the result of a vision. Her youngest daughter was dying of an undiagnosed ailment (years later discovered to have been consumption, a medical rarity in that environment). As the disease ebbed and flowed for more than two years, Annalee prayed that Linda be restored to perfect health, if meant to live, and taken without suffering, if meant to die.

Then one night after an unusually long siege I realized she was dying. I dropped to my knees beside her bed and felt that my heart would break . . . and in a wild, heartbroken panic I clung to her. I felt that I could never go on living without this little one. . . . A long shudder shook her tiny frame. She stiffened—then grew limp. . . . The agony of my soul was too deep to express as I felt that I could not possibly let her go.

It was then that Annalee realized "that I was thinking of myself, not of the little child in my arms—and a wider vision came. It was then that I truly prayed."

When she looked down "for the last time, as I thought, upon that tiny upturned face. . . . I was speechless with gratitude and awe. My child slept in peace, all fever gone." And then, "looking up in wonder, I seemed to see no ceiling in the room—the open dome of heaven shown above. And then, so near that I was startled, I saw the veil of heaven drawn back as the curtains of a stage—and He stood there—with all the glory, majesty and power of eternity stamped upon His brow, the Savior of the World."

Annalee claimed that her book was "written under the direction and power of God and according to his command." It really wasn't hers, "except that I had been called to be the scribe"; therefore she "could accept no pay or receive no royalties." When established publishers turned the book down, she borrowed \$5,000 to have it published by a vanity house, then she distributed the edition gratis. A Salt Lake book dealer, Eugene Wilson, disposed of 500 free copies for her. Truly, this was a labor of love.

As literature, *Ye Are Gods* stood out from the bland mainstream of Mormon literature. The Saints took it to their bosoms,

forming study groups to discuss it. Annalee Skarin became a reluctant celebrity in the Buffalo area. Any credit, she claimed, belonged to God, not herself. In fact, she and her husband went into seclusion for a while "because too many were seeking to take hold of us, expecting us to do their fulfilling for them." This was impossible; the Kingdom of Heaven dwelt in every bosom. "Each individual has the complete path of his own divine progress . . . right within himself."

In rejecting the material things of the world, in claiming that the only reality was the mind and spirit, Annalee was an ascetic in the pattern of mystics throughout the ages. She was a modern stylite, retreating atop her private pillar.

In the spring of 1952 Annalee was visiting friends, Chris and Sally Franchow, in Salt Lake City who lived on Ninth East, just across from the Hillcrest Ward. As news of her visit became known, she was besieged with invitations to speak at Church and fireside groups. Then without warning the axe fell. After addressing an enthusiastic congregation, she was ushered into the bishop's office where she was confronted by Elder Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Council of the Twelve. He denounced *Ye Are Gods* as inspired by Satan, and demanded that she repent and repudiate the book. "And then it was that I, who love Christ above all others," she wrote, "was acclaimed to be the great anti-Christ." When she rejected the ultimatum, she was tried by a Church court and excommunicated in June 1952.

Annalee called it a "kangaroo court," where "I was refused counsel. My efforts to bear witness to what I had written, or even to defend myself, were denied and silenced." When Sally Franchow tried to defend her, "For her courageous efforts she too was excommunicated."

FROM the Church's viewpoint, Annalee Skarin had sinned woefully, according to a fifteen-page, single-spaced list prepared by Elder Petersen, together with material of similar length and detail supplied to Annalee's older daughter.

The major thrust of Elder Petersen's reaction was that "Mrs. Skarin announces that she has received her books as revelations from the Lord." The Church believes in continual revelation, which only the president is authorized to receive for its guidance. Annalee "does not so much as mention the president of the Church," Elder Petersen charged, but "attempts to give revelations on her own part and defends this fact even though she is a woman."

Without challenging Elder Petersen's verdict, I will point out that every Latter-day Saint is authorized to receive personal revelation for his or her own guidance. Also, from an author's viewpoint, when Skarin says "This book has been written under the direction of the Almighty," she is speaking of the source of a writer's inspiration—which is a strange, elusive, and baffling force which seems to move the pen. Lacking this, an author may become unable to write anything at all—"writer's block."

Authors have various devices for courting the muse. One method of getting warmed up in the morning is to re-copy the

last page of work done the day before; that failing, copy two pages, then three, then four. Some writers can create only under specific circumstances, such as only upon the ironing board in the kitchen, only aboard a train, only upon an antique typewriter, only in a bathtub of hot water, only after a slug of whiskey. Annalee Skarin had to write on her knees. Long before the actual creation began, "the calluses upon my knees bore witness" to the search for inspiration. "When the book, *Ye Are Gods*, was scheduled to come forth I spent many anguished hours pleading with God to have someone important write that glorious record," she related, until she received word that she was chosen as author because of her faith. Thereupon, "under direction of God and according to his command," she wrote with "fire and tears as the Light of God poured through my being and out through my fingertips upon the pages placed in the typewriter."

Such was her creative process. The actual writing took only thirty days.

AT the Hillcrest Ward, where members had formed a study group of enthusiasts for her book, the verdict of Annalee's trial by Church court was announced in open meeting. "You can be sure these doings created a lot of excitement," James D. Wardle told me. Wardle is a barber in Salt Lake who maintains what might well be the finest private collection of LDS materials in the world. "I attended the meeting and heard it done. The hall was packed, with not even standing room in the wings." Wardle, a member of the Reorganized church, felt that the only thing wrong with *Ye Are Gods* was that the Utah church officials "just could not stand having a mere woman teaching their own doctrine and . . . having it accepted as inspiration through her, instead of themselves." He added that, "I consider her works the first *genuine* approach to Mormonism on a metaphysical basis."

Soon after her excommunication, Annalee Skarin vanished. According to eyewitnesses, she became a translated being. To the *Church News*, however, which devoted a full page on 3 November 1956 to demolishing her image among cultists, it was a "disappearing act" which she had used twice before in Buffalo. This was "her stock in trade, especially if the act can be staged with the trappings of the occult."

Such are the two versions of the controversy. The *Deseret News* materials, Wardle informed me, were supplied by the husband of Annalee's elder daughter.

During the twenty-one years following her translation, Annalee Skarin published eight more books, evidence that whether in this or another world, she kept busy. *Sons of God*, by "Christine Mercie" was her second book, after *Ye Are Gods*. This was followed by *To God the Glory* (1956); *The Temple of God* (1958); *Secrets of Eternity* (1960); *Celestial Song of Creation* (1962); *Man Triumphant* (1966); *Beyond Mortal Boundaries* (1969); and *The Book of Books* (1973). All of them are essentially spinoffs of *Ye Are Gods*.

With nine books in print after many editions, and with a

growing Skarin cult actively promoting her works, she very possibly is the most successful author the Mormon culture has produced. Though officially cast out, she maintained her faith in LDS doctrine. Annalee claimed that "I was to have the gift and power of the 'Three Nephites,' that I would be able to go forth . . . to serve mankind and help bring the world to light," while the "same promise is yours if you only lay hold of it." She believed in the literal promise "of overcoming death given in what is known as the 'WORD OF WISDOM!' . . . And, *I, the Lord, give unto them a promise that the destroying angel shall pass by them. . . .*" She claimed that "Death is the dreary, back-door entrance into the other world. It is the servant's entrance. But there is a great front door of glory for those who OVERCOME."

A friend of mind has the same faith as the promise of the Word of Wisdom, except he doesn't expect to be translated, nor immortal, but merely that he will live for 500 years. He retired at age 65, expecting that he would live on Social Security for 435 years. Whether Annalee will become the Fourth Nephite, and my friend live out his expected life span, I really don't expect to be around to confirm it.

Annalee waited fourteen years before telling her side of her trial and excommunication. In *Man Triumphant* she wrote:

I was not hanged as a witch. I was not crucified. I was stoned to death . . . And the great man who hurled those stones of mockery and falsehood had others hold his cloak while he did the stoning. . . . In the tragedy of my heartbreak and in the overwhelming grief of my sorrow . . . I went forth an outcast.

She fled to the mountains "to cry out my anguish in tears," whereupon "an angel of the Lord came to me and I was . . . taken away that they saw me not again for three years."

An "Editor's Note" on the flyleaf of *Ye Are Gods* says:

Soon after publishing the first edition of this remarkable book the author, Annalee Skarin, according to Affidavits in our files, underwent a physical change known as "translation," such as did Enoch of Biblical days.

**T**AKE it or leave it. Yet there is another aspect of the Skarin case which would catch the attention of any professional author. A book requires a contract. It requires a copyright (all of which were done in her name). As a successful author, Annalee should have received a substantial advance against royalties. Yet the legal and financial aspects of the case remain a mystery.

The metaphysical author Friend Stuart, director of the Invisible Ministry, interviewed the president of DeVorss & Company, publisher of all her books except *Ye Are Gods*, and confirmed that affidavits on file had been supplied by Annalee's attorney, George Morris of Salt Lake City. Morris also delivered the manuscripts of seven of the eight books published after her translation, while one was handled by "a woman agent."

In his pamphlet on the Skarin case, *Transition or Translation*, Stuart said his "main purpose was to determine to whom

the royalties on sales of the books are paid." He was told that "royalties are paid to no one. The firm has been instructed that all profits from the books be used to finance additional printings."

What Annalee needed—and badly—was an agent. The statement by DeVorss simply blows the mind. Ordinarily, royalties begin at about 12 percent of sales, and escalate according to volume of books sold. Annalee, as a successful author, should have been able to command perhaps 25 or 30 percent royalties. With nine best-selling books in print, published in many editions, while a growing Skarin cult promotes sales, we are talking of big money. And who, I wonder, got it?

She herself, as with *Ye Are Gods* (published by another company, The Philosophical Library of New York), absolutely refused to take money for what she considered to be the word of God. However, she could have had royalties paid to some worthy charity, such as the Red Cross. The question of who *did* reap the windfall of this literary innocent remains unanswered.

In 1966, at the time her seventh book, *Man Triumphant*, appeared, an English author named Anthony Brooke arrived in Salt Lake to investigate the Skarin case which he published in *Revelations for a New Age*. Elder Mark E. Petersen told Brooke that Annalee was an anti-Christ and her book was filled with false doctrine. It was a question of deciding "whether the doctrines of the Church are true or whether Mrs. Skarin's doctrines are true." In his opinion, she was mentally unbalanced.

The book dealer, Eugene Wilson, who had distributed 500 copies of *Ye Are Gods* free of charge, "described her as charming and 'very sane,' possessing a keen sense of humor and emanating what he could only define as a high spiritual quality."

Brooke got a haircut at the shop of James D. Wardle, who "produced from an adjoining room a mass of" materials concerning the case. (I also had access to this file.)

Two important contacts were "with Miss Skarin's lawyer, who had known her since she was a child, and the lady, now elderly, in whose house the alleged translation took place." Both "accept the translation as a fact and have no doubt about it at all." The lawyer said "he wound up her affairs at the time of her translation and she no longer has any personal worldly affairs, though reports continue to circulate in regard to ways in which she still serves mankind as she takes up her body and leaves it at will."

How much time Annalee spent in the translated state is a matter of question. Over a period of years, she would materialize in the flesh at various locations in the Los Angeles area to review her books, then would vanish to a hideout under an assumed name. The books she continued to produce had to be punched out on the typewriter keys. And although the lawyer said she had no more worldly affairs, he was silent concerning royalties from a list of best-sellers.

There are contrasting accounts of how Annalee Skarin vanished. The *Deseret News* reported that "she broke the news of her forthcoming 'translation'" at the home of Sally Franchow on 16 July 1952; then when she vanished "many were

convinced that the woman had indeed gone heavenward. However, the departure was slightly marred when Mrs. Skarin, apparently losing something in the 'translation,' was forced to reappear secretly several days later to retrieve some personal belongings—among them her false teeth."

The teeth are significant in the account of what happened. Sally Franchow (called "Mrs. B" by Brooke) told a different story. She said on 16 June Annalee had mentioned that "the angels might be coming," and left instructions that if this happened her books and personal effects should be sent to her younger daughter, Linda.

In the night Mrs. B awakened suddenly "and went straight into Miss Skarin's room to find her gone, with her dentures on a table beside the bed and all her clothes left in the room. A strong yet delicate scent filled the entire house, and it was in fact this strong aroma which had awakened Mrs. B from her sleep."

The next evening around 10:30, when Mrs. B was in the living room with her son and two daughters, "Miss Skarin entered the home wearing a plain blue dress, with her hair seemingly rather disheveled and her legs covered with dust. She immediately spoke and said, 'Do you believe I have Translated?' Mrs. B and the members of the family replied at once in the affirmative, whereupon Miss Skarin invoked blessings upon them." Meanwhile, "according to Mrs. B and her family, who all testify to the same story, Miss Skarin was transformed before their eyes into a shining being with white raiment. Mrs. B noted that the transformed Annalee Skarin displayed her new and gleaming teeth and her hair shown with a golden light. She later disappeared from their sight."

Among Skarin study groups today, the overnight growth of natural teeth is taken as one of the strongest evidences of her translation.

The *Deseret News* reported that on disappearing, "Heaven for her turned out to be a little apartment at 210 South Flower Street" in Los Angeles, where she and her husband "changed their names. Mr. Reason Eugene Skarin became Mr. Raymond O. Janson, dutiful husband of the authoress Evon Janson." From this hideout "they could venture forth, attend a few meetings with the faithful, appear as if from 'on high' to keep up the act, and then suddenly retire from before the misty eyes of their followers, and hide again on Flower Street." Annalee continued writing, while Reason landed a job in the building maintenance department of the Aetna Company, paying \$250 a month. Whether this was a disappearing act or an attempt to put the responsibility of finding illumination upon the individual, rather than letting herself be used as a crutch, must remain a matter of point of view. However, whether right or wrong, Annalee was an ascetic who lived according to her own code of values. Her marriage relationship with Reason Skarin attests to this.

Before writing her first book, Annalee had had two unhappy marriages. After her first was annulled, "the forces of darkness," as she called them, prevented her from marrying her true love, Reason Skarin, with whom she had been soul mates for two years. So once more she married the wrong person, and "twenty-

one years of unfortunate, unhappy marriage" ended in divorce. At long last Annalee was united with her true love. For twenty-three years she had "lived with him in my heart, and he had lived with a small picture of me upon his dresser."

Annalee made the break from her unhappy marriage as a result of her vision of Jesus Christ, when her daughter Linda was healed. Both she and Linda experienced the vision. Linda told her mother that angels in white nightgowns came to take her away, but allowed her to remain because of Mommy's prayer.

Following this experience, Annalee began investigating spiritual matters, "and prayed that she might have the meaning of faith and all its wondrous works," her friend Martha Baker reported in her book, *Living Inspired Faith Everyday* (1974). "Out of this quest came the writing of a book, which Annalee titled *Ye Are Gods*."

When united with her true love, Reason Skarin, "we renewed our pledge to live as nearly perfect as we could," Annalee reported. "We covenanted to live in virtue, abstaining from sexual intercourse, that we might not be guilty of transgressing any of the divine, higher laws. And since I had been married, and was divorced, this seemed a most necessary pledge to us. Christ's injunction concerning divorce and re-marriage being considered adulterous on the higher level, we could take no other course than to make a covenant of complete abstinence."

She admitted that "It was easy to make the pledge for our souls were willing—but our flesh was weak." They were newly wed, "and we were in love. I loved him with every singing, vibrating cell of my body. I loved him with all my heart. I loved him with my mind and with all my intelligence. And our bodies were young and strong, for they had not aged with the years. And we were mortal."

Consequently, "We would spend half our nights upon our knees pleading with God to give us power to fulfill our covenant and to sanctify our lives in virtue, unto Him."

Where their strength was weak, "God gave us the power to subdue the flesh. And after a year the fires of our crucifixion were in complete control. And the problem of sex was taken entirely from our lives and all the desires of the flesh. And our love became even greater. Our love was unsullied and unmarred by any physical defilement."

In this condition, "Each caress was a sacrament of wonder. Each kiss contained a thrill of glory . . . . As Reason would hold me in his arms each cell and fibre of my entire being would vibrate and sing in ecstatic, melodious wonderment, and my whole body would sing in reverberating splendor, 'I love you! I love you! I love you!' " As their love increased, "Our hearts would open as wide as eternity in a melting glory of unspeakable, reverent, holy devotion," until "all physical mortal claims lost their hold and we were lifted beyond the human demands of the flesh into a condition of utter glory, of continual joy and ever increasing splendor as new fields of service opened before us in an ever upward, progressing of eternal wonder."

Quite obviously, we can thank the repressed sex impulse for the successful literary output of Annalee Skarin. She poured

the fire and the drive into her creative effort; her books throb with passion. Had she and Reason enjoyed a normal conjugal relationship, it is entirely possible her writing—if any—would have made no waves in Salt Lake.

Annalee and Reason had been in seclusion two and a half years after her translation when, on 26 December 1954, they were involved in a serious car accident, and their assumed names proved an embarrassment. When Reason reported for work four months later, a new regulation required fingerprinting. He turned and walked out. The *Deseret News* reported that Annalee gave her age as 30 at the time of the accident, though actually she was 55. With Reason unemployed, and owing hospital bills, the *News* reported that “they were broke and on public relief . . . they were unable to meet their payments on their home; none came to their aid. They had to leave. Where did they go? They left no forwarding address.”

This again brings up the question of royalties from her two best-selling books at this time. Evidently personal need wouldn't allow her to touch remuneration for work “written under the direction of the Almighty.”

Although cast out by her own people, with “a gestapo spying system to find who had copies of the book” and to threaten the membership of any who accepted its teachings, Annalee Skarin was taken up on a national basis by the Gentiles. She published a total of nine books, the final one in 1973, *The Book of Books*, which she announced would be the last, at age seventy-four. All of them are still in print, after many editions. There are still study groups devoted to her works although almost exclusively non-Mormons. There are self-appointed torchbearers who still give talks about her works to interested groups, and supply copies of her books. However, I am unaware of any formal sect or organization. This is in agreement with her basic thesis that each individual must personally make communication with the kingdom of heaven within.

In assessing the question of whether she was translated correctly or merely employing a disappearing act, I will refer to Eduard Meyer's classic discussion of those whose spiritual lives “have belonged more or less among the mentally unbalanced, the fanatical, the visionaries and dreamers, the seers and workers of miracles.” Among “countless varieties” are prophets such as Amos or Isaiah; or fanatics in whom the spirit creates rapture . . . such as Saul, or Elias; further, there are these who were actually mad, and are to this day revered as Saints in the Orient. But common to all is the fact that the every-day world of the senses merges with the supernatural world of spirits and dreams, and that . . . awareness of the border line between the two worlds is lacking, along with the distinction between reality and fact which the normal human possesses.

Professor Eduard Meyer of the University of Berlin was a man of vast learning with a particular interest in ancient religions. He came to Utah in 1904 to spend a year studying the modern American phenomenon of Mormonism. When Joseph Smith stated that sometimes he spoke as a prophet and sometimes

as a man, Meyer was willing to accept his words at face value, as typical of the double nature of prophets.

“God's ways are not those of men, and a human scale of values may not be imposed,” he stated in his *Ursprung und Geschichte der Mormonen* (1912). “Does not the Bible tell of grave sins and misdeeds committed by Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon, men who were nevertheless chosen prophets of God? God chooses whom he will, without having to give an account of himself.”

While Annalee Skarin was considered by some to be a prophet without honor in her own land, quite obviously she had the dual nature of the mystic. Whether or not translated correctly, she herself believed her books were written by the finger of God. If her religious ecstasy sprang from a suppressed sex drive, this was necessary preparation in courting an author's muse. She could write only upon her knees.

The question must be whether all this is evidence of mental disturbance, a deliberate “disappearing act” to hoax disciples of the various study groups devoted to her works, or does it indicate the typical pattern of mystics and prophets?

She wrote a final letter to DeVorss from Redding, California, in 1981. A friend reported meeting her there in 1982 at a health food store. At that date Annalee Skarin would have been 83 years old, earth time. Further affiant knoweth not.

Her books still live, all in print. She put her soul into each volume. The surviving body of her work may well be the translated Annalee Skarin. ☞

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## THE BELLS OF BOSTON

Hidden between the skyscrapers,  
The old churches sit like aged women  
Veiled in lace, who settle in worn pews  
Next to the tall slim girls with direct eyes.  
Theirs is the grace of a tree bent by wind,  
But still nearing quiet, delicate blossoms.  
When they speak with their bells,  
They call us back to a century no less harsh  
Than our own. But in those years grew  
More arbors of the old belief where we  
Could walk and bring our joy and grief.  
I think of the child I was, so eager for mass,  
To hear the bells calling us in. I wanted  
To sit by Grandpa who was quiet, strong as stone,  
But who touched me as though I were a flower.  
When he and Grandma bowed their heads,  
I wondered what they were saying, for what they asked.  
Now, in my hotel room, I hear the bells ringing in a chorus  
All over the Back Bay of Boston, from Copley Square,  
Echoing over Cambridge. They sing, waking  
An answering voice in my breast, gathering like angels.

—CARA M. BULLINGER

# A DAUGHTER'S RESPONSE OR THE INSIDE VIEW

*By Hope A. Hilton*

ANNALEE SKARIN'S OFTEN ASCETIC LIFESTYLE, DEVOTED beyond question to finding the path to God through poverty and service, befitted a sixteenth-century nun more than a Mormon housewife.

In the early 1930s she taught drama to the sixth grade in our local Catholic school for two years. Her reverence for the Mother Superior and the teaching nuns was evident in her conversation. Once, during the production of the "miracle plays," she complained of her students who failed to internalize the drama with sufficient visual ecstasy. She cried in desperation at their wooden expressionless faces, "Haven't you ever seen a vision?" One can only imagine their astonishment as they must have guiltily replied "no" to their demanding teacher. Annalee's qualification for this teaching position was her spring quarter instruction at the University of Utah under the famed Maude Mae Babcock in 1920.

There were people who believed Annalee saw visions, even communed with the supernatural. She was essentially a loner and was considered to be a faithful Latter-day Saint by those in authority. The woman they observed was one who paid 50 percent tithing, who fasted weekly—one time for three days until she could not rise from her bed—and one who was a charismatic and successful teacher, preacher, and missionary for the Church. She never missed a meeting, compiled reams of genealogy on weekly trips to the Los Angeles Public Library on Hope Street, and made yearly 1000-mile round trips to the Mesa Temple to fulfill her other-worldly obligations; she was known to have helped the poor and needy many times. Few, if any, match Annalee Avarell Skarin's devotion to the Church.

Her role models stretched from Isaiah to the Reverend Aimee Semple MacPherson with eastern mystics sprinkled over all. Even with all of her good works there was deep within Annalee's psyche an essential cog that malfunctioned. Whether put there by illness, as I believe, or by a childhood and early adulthood of severe trials, God alone knows. Whatever the cause the

machine eventually broke down from the inner stress of attempting to reach perfection in mortal shoes.

Samuel Taylor portrays Annalee as coming from a normal background; in fact she was crippled by her heredity and bleak environment. She was born to Frederick John Kohlhepp and Mary Ella Hickman into a home on an Idaho dry farm and was deprived of many necessities of life. The father, a Jewish convert to Mormonism, was sick with tuberculosis and unable to support his Mormon pioneer wife and their ten children of whom two boys and six girls reached maturity. The mother spoke several times in tongues trying to control her daughters while she peddled vegetables from a cart and broke wild horses to supplement a meager income. Annalee, born in 1899, was the ninth child. The two boys left no mark: one was mentally retarded, the other died a quiet Utah farmer with no descendants.

The six sisters were willful and headstrong. The last girl, Constance, was born in 1908 after Grandpa Kohlhepp returned from his LDS mission when grandma was forty-three. She was denied kinship in the family by the two oldest sisters, who were already away from home and did not witness her birth. Constance suffered from their rejection and grandma's abandonment of her to the home of one of the older sisters at age ten. This sister told her she was taken from the town prostitute as a baby.

Like an exploding galaxy the sisters went to homes in Utah, California, Wyoming, Arizona, and Oregon as they married. There was never talk of a family reunion; the argument about Constance's legitimacy overshadowed all else.

Annalee was haunted for years over the fate that had befallen Constance who denounced the Church on her mission in 1933 and was sent home in disgrace. Annalee felt she had failed to rescue her from the devil's claws.

Hers was a family that disintegrated before her eyes, yet Annalee wanted children of her own. From her first marriage she had a son who died at nine months. After this marriage dissolved, she served a mission in California. After her mission she married Hugo Avarell in 1922. This marriage produced a son, who died at birth, and two daughters. Though wanting

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*HOPE A. HILTON, a daughter of Annalee Skarin, lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.*



children, the selfless commitment to motherhood was never very evident.

ANNALEE'S voluminous writing began during her first marriage and continued throughout her life. Her education had ended with the eighth grade, except for the incomplete quarter at the University of Utah. Annalee tried to cover up her lack of education by later inventing college degrees. The five or six aliases she used made her claims difficult to verify. She typed almost daily on her portable Smith-Corona as I grew up. Her letters often reached a length of twelve single-spaced pages. (If she had ever met a computer there would have been a fourth marriage.)

Her writing was more than that of a frustrated woman who desperately needed an audience and acceptance. I believe she truly wanted to inspire and help people, yet because of her mental illness she failed to see that her loyal followers would some day be forced to choose between her "revelations" and those of the Church prophets. It was not evident to her that her claim to be "the one chosen to speak for God" ran contrary to the priesthood hierarchy.

Like a moth with filigreed wings of lacy substance, she hovered in a darkened room where a lone candle burned. She desired the flame for its light, but flew too close until she turned her means of success to ashes. She lay crumpled and excommunicated in a Church court in June 1952. For many Church members in Southern California and Utah, and later in Buffalo, New York, where she moved in 1943, this event was a disaster for she was their spiritual guru. The testimonies of LDS doctrines she helped build and nourish were threatened. As always, Church members were free to make their decisions: many chose to leave the Church and follow Annalee.

Annalee herself, crushed though unrepentant, rose phoenix-like to continue her mystical teachings already rejected as heretical by Elder Mark E. Peterson's hastily convened court. She taught that man did not need to die; death was a state for the wicked, not for those who had the power of faith and miracles.

In 1943, her own pathway to glory necessitated an end to her twenty-one-year marriage. No marriage partners were ever more mismatched. She moved to Buffalo, New York, and a new marriage to her life-time love, Reason Skarin, a convert from her California Mission in 1920. This became a marriage of denial, poverty, and teaching, reverting to her ascetic lifestyle of continence. Reason quit his job as a police officer just one year short of a pension.

Annalee was a paranoid-schizophrenic who listened to an inner voice whose tapes were often garbled. She was a dramatic actress who sought center stage and applause while proclaiming her humility. She was a master of cover-up which only those on the inside could see.

There is no question that she helped many. I recall three LDS ex-convicts who told of surviving their long confinements because of the hope-filled letters they received from Annalee in prison. Other converts who did not leave the Church have

pleaded in years past, "Don't say anything bad about your mother, she changed my life."

Annalee did change people's lives, some for good, others were less fortunate. Her claim to being "translated" the night of 16 June 1952, five days after her excommunication, was the natural outgrowth of her diligent pursuit of earthly perfection. "Translation" offered a means of escape, becoming almost a necessity after the excommunication. She chose this route and, once chosen, it could not be reversed. If her earthly body was found subject to mortality her claim would be exposed to the world as a lie.


As far as can be determined, from 1952 until 1971 the "translated" Skarins lived in southern California. I last saw my mother in May 1952 in Chicago for two hours when she was on her way to Salt Lake City where, unknown to her, the excommunication court was waiting.

Annalee and Reason disappeared in 1975 from the Redding, California, area where they had lived in poverty in an old trailer from 1971. Both are presumed dead. Annalee would have been ninety years old in July 1989. A few of her dedicated followers remain in Redding waiting for her to return in glory. Her twelve books continue to be printed and distributed at a minimal price by devoted believers in the hope that the minds and hearts of the downtrodden, the suffering, especially mothers who have lost infants, might find solace. From her own experience Annalee learned the art of coping with disaster. To help others survive the painful trauma of the loss of a child she wrote of faith, belief, and a vision of eternity, coupled with personal communication with God and angels. The denial of her own pain accompanied by elaborate fabrication came from her slow descent into madness. Even in this demented state she was a great success.

I reject Samuel Taylor labeling me as "the unforgiving daughter," implying it pertained to my mother's divorce from my father. Personally, if I had been Annalee, I would have left him long before twenty-one years had elapsed. I have defended the Church's right to excommunicate my mother as a necessity when Elder Peterson, after a heated verbal confrontation, withdrew Annalee's Church membership, judging her to be insane. I do not believe sexism was an issue in this proceeding as Taylor claims.

Today, the Church umbrella gives shelter to liberals and conservatives. However, I believe that even by today's standards my mother needed to be excommunicated because her typewriter would not stop and her claims to Godhood multiplied.

Overall, I feel Samuel Taylor's article captures the ethereal spirit of Annalee's voluminous writings by using her words, yet he mostly misses the dark side of her deceiving nature. By eschewing worldly values Annalee received as pay the adoration she so desperately craved.

If the mortal remains of the Skarins are ever discovered, only then will the mystery surrounding their 1975 disappearance be solved. 

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## MONOLOGUES AND DIALOGUES

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# OUR MOTHER IN HEAVEN



By Robert A. Rees

"Sometimes I feel  
like a motherless child.

—American spiritual

—Statement made by a Mormon woman  
describing her feelings in her search for a  
Heavenly Mother.

MORMONISM IS UNIQUE among Christian religions in believing in a Mother in Heaven. What is strange is that we do not make more of this in the Church itself. What a wonderfully liberated and liberating doctrine! And yet at times it seems as if we are almost embarrassed about it. Certainly, we have not brought this concept centrally into our teaching and thinking. Why is this so?

Perhaps one of the reasons is that in our anxiety to be accepted and accommodated by our fellow Christians we do not want to emphasize differences, especially differences in doctrine that represent a radical departure from traditional Christianity. But this can't be the whole answer since we openly teach other doctrines that are more offensive to our fellow Christians (such as plurality of Gods, baptism for the dead, and eternal marriage).

We are told that one of the reasons there are not more references to Heavenly Mother is that God the Father does not want men taking her name in vain or speaking disparagingly of her. Let's consider the implications of such a line of reasoning for a moment. What it suggests is that our Heavenly Mother must be protected from language somewhat in the way that women were protected during the Victorian era. But wouldn't she, being God, be much more offended by the actions of her children? Wouldn't seeing them destroying themselves break her heart more than hearing her title used disparagingly? Would she rather be protected from the possibility

of offensive language than to let her sons and daughters know not only of her existence but of her love? It seems inconceivable that either the Father or the Mother would prefer no references to her than to let their daughters go without divine gender identification.

If the Mother and the Father are coequal, coeternal, are in fact one in a deeper and more mysterious way than the oneness of the Father and the Son, then she would be no less concerned for our spiritual welfare than is the Father, no less anxious that we know our true identity as men *and* women.

What we are left with is an image of our Heavenly Mother staying at home having billions of children while the men—the Father and his sons—go off to create worlds, spin galaxies, take business trips to outer space. She is happy, it would seem, to let them have all the recognition, all the glory.

We believe that like the Father, God the Mother has procreative powers. When the Gods said, "Let us make man [generic] in our own image," I think it should read, "And God the Father and God the Mother said, 'Let us make man and woman in our image, after our likeness,' and so in the image of the Gods, male and female, made they them." This is confirmed in a statement issued in 1909 by the First Presidency: "All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity"<sup>1</sup> Given Mormon theology, it is the only thing that makes sense. Ultimately as well as presently, she should be part of our awareness, part of our identity.

But our Heavenly Mother must have creative as well as procreative powers (perhaps our lack of awareness of this fact is reflective of our sexist orientation in favoring mortal women's procreative powers over their creative ones). If everything here is, as the scriptures say, a type of what exists in the eternal worlds, then God the Mother's brightness, inventiveness, creativity, to say nothing of her love and compassion, must equal in magnitude those of the Father. How

could she be God and be otherwise? I am reminded of Ben Jonson's lines addressed to the goddess Diana:

Bless us then with wishéd sight  
Goddess excellently bright.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thou that makest day of night  
Goddess excellently bright.

But this is misleading since Diana is goddess of the moon and Heavenly Mother is goddess of the sun. A better line is that of Sir Thomas Browne: "The sun itself is but the dark simularacrum, and light but the shadow" of this goddess.

Why do we not know the voice of this mother of all creation, this mistress of light and space? Is it possible that that divine feminine voice has been speaking all these centuries and men just haven't been listening? Could her voice be that still, small voice through which the Father tries to communicate with us at times? If so, I believe that hers is also a powerful voice, rolling at times like thunder and cutting through the darkness like lightning. What explains the fact that many Mormon women, and perhaps a few Mormon men, are beginning to feel her presence in their lives, other than that our consciousness of her identity has been awakened? The freeing of the bondage of women has also liberated our Heavenly Mother from the silence in which men have held her. An increasing number of Mormon women testify to hearing her voice and are finding lyric modes in which to tell us about her. Like Procne in Greek Mythology, her liberation from the bondage of silence has been a transformation into song.

As a bishop of a singles ward, I have been painfully aware of how Mormon women suffer from not having a clearer identity of themselves as women. In blessings that I have given I have expressed to both men and women that before they left the preexistence to come to mortality their Heavenly Father *and* their Heavenly Mother called them to their side, mutually blessed and embraced them, and expressed their love and confidence as they sent these, their sons and daughters, into this dark world. I truly believe that happened to each of us, personally and individually. I also believe that when we return to their presence, we will be embraced again by them, and we will feel our hearts melt with joy in the presence of their manifold and manifest love, as we greet them, Mother and Father, in their "royal courts on high."

The idea of having a Mother in heaven is particularly meaningful to me. I was separated

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from my own mother in infancy and even though I lived with her for several periods during my early childhood, I never really knew her and, for reasons that were not entirely her fault, never received from her the nurturing love that every child deserves. I might have received some of this from my paternal grandmother, to whom I have felt close even though I never knew her; but she was killed in a tragic accident just after I was born. I had three step-mothers but none of them was a mother to me. All my life I have wished for that special love that only a mother can give. For as long as I can remember the lack of this love has left a giant absence in my heart.

Although I have only a vague sense of her identity, I am grateful to know that I have a Heavenly Mother who, like the Father, "will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:8) when we are reunited. All that we know of her from modern revelation, all of the images we find of her in other traditions, all the ways in which our imaginations reach out to her, make the idea of heaven more inviting.

I would like to suggest that as individuals and as a church we open our hearts and minds, awaken our imaginations to the possibilities that our Heavenly Mother holds for us. Let us celebrate her elevated place in our theology and teach others about her. Surely many men and women in this godless world might find their way back to the light through this goddess of all the worlds. ☐

#### NOTE

1. First Presidency, "The Origin of Man," *Messages of the First Presidency*, James R. Clark, comp., vol. 4 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), 201.

#### GOOD FRIENDS

We talk late in the dim room  
Of the women you have known  
The men I have known  
Our histories, fantasies, and passions  
There's nothing I would not share with you  
Except—

my wish to touch your soft beard  
that gleams in the lamplight  
that screens the delight of your smile

We walk home separate ways  
You to your woman  
I to my man.

—KARLA BENNION

## LIGHTER MINDS

# THE BISHOP'S DREAM: A STORY

By D. B. Paxman



You find your failings fascinating, as if all creation holds its breath while you go through your Sunday-morning personality adjustment. This is not the stuff of great personal struggle.

I'M A BISHOP. Last night I dreamed that hundreds of people—most of the ward—were lined up wanting to confess their sins. Mormon Lent. Flesh eaters, mutton grease still on their lips. And they wanted me to pull out my ecclesiastical napkin and wipe them clean. But I wanted to hear no more confessions. So I stood at my office door and snapped, "If you want forgiveness, start living what you know. Stop coming here with your miserable cycle of follies. I don't want to hear

DAVID PAXMAN grew up in Provo, lived in Chicago and Hawaii, and has recently moved back to Provo, where he teaches English. This is his first appearance in SUNSTONE.

about your hard feelings toward Sister Avery because she didn't invite you to her daughter's baby shower three years ago, and how you're concerned for her social insensitivity and want to know what we can do for her. I don't want to hear ANY MORE [I shouted now, my voice trembling with rage] about your Sunday shopping or your adolescent petting sessions that you found INCONVENIENT to confess when you first went to the temple. I don't want to hear any more about cans of beer and dirty jokes on the deer hunt, movies in hotel rooms on your business trips, or about how you cheat each other so your kids will have the right skateboards and shirt labels. Or about your seasickness,

now you've helped them anchor their self-esteem in the things of the world. What did you expect! Just once I'd like to see some self-initiated, four-fold recompensing. I'm fed up listening to gossipers pinched in their souls who want to feel just good enough to start meddling in others' lives again. And I'm fed up with prigs who tattle on gossipers. Most of all, I'm fed up with your self-importance. You seem to find your failings—and believe me, they are trivial, unoriginal, and dull—infinately fascinating, as if all creation had nothing better to do than hold its breath while you lie to yourselves, bear grudges, lust, scream at your kids, and go through your Sunday-morning personality adjustment so you can teach a lesson that makes everyone think how righteous you are. Believe me, this is not the stuff of great spiritual struggle. Now, if anyone needs to talk to me about real sin, real struggle, I'll be here for an hour. The rest of you get home and take control of your lives. Stop using me as a crutch. Now beat it before I excommunicate the lot of you."

THE crowd was shocked. No one in the church had ever talked to them this way. No one dared look anyone else in the eye. No one dared mumble. They shuffled their feet uneasily and started filing toward the chapel door. Then a man cleared his throat—dryly, full of tension.

"Bishop," he stammered. It was my membership clerk. "We're sor . . ."

"Shut up!" bellowed someone else. The ward turned to gaze in the direction of the voice. "I suppose I'm one of your trivial sinners who thinks what he's doing is pretty important, but then, I've been taught to be like this, haven't I?"

I shivered: it was my former bishop. I'd been to see him.

"You think we'd show up here on our own if it hadn't been drummed into us that this was absolutely indispensable? What happened, anyway, to make this necessary? You really think the scriptures mean it the way it's explained in the lessons and talks we get? I'll tell you what I think. I think someone couldn't leave things alone. Afraid we might live in the open and confess to just anyone with broken bones like ours. Right now I'm thinking what's going to happen if we haven't been told the truth."

He went on. "You want to know why we're here? Because we've been told we'd better, or our souls will be in jeopardy. What a joke! Our souls are in jeopardy because we've been taught to LIVE trivially, to stay in

the mainstream, float where the current takes us. We're here because this is all we have to offer the Lord, as miserable an offering as it may be.

"You think we like showing the stains in the underwear of our lives? And how do you think women feel, telling intimate details of their lives to men in dark suits like you and me, who stink like everyone else if they don't bathe? But now you're bored with us, eh. Maybe you're the addict. Well, we can't give you stronger doses of confessional pleasure. We're only petty thieves. Hardly worth a cross.

"You tell us we don't know what we want, and then command us to go home and leave you alone? Who's the hypocrite? We've learned to want what we've been told to want, so don't be surprised when we come back asking what that is. We're a patchwork of oughts and shoulds, scared our own fabric will show through. Ever listen to our questions? 'Elder so-and-so, what do we believe about the moral justification for bombing brown people?'—as if what we believe is not what we believe, but something out there, detached and floating like an escaped silver lining to the cloud we live in. We're told to listen and follow and we can't go wrong. It's an attractive proposition to people who feel they'll never completely go right anyway. Much safer, when there are men with answers, eh? Did it ever occur to you that if we knew what God wanted of us—really knew—we'd deliver ourselves over with our sins on our backs, leap into eternity, jump off the ladder and catch us Jesus, confession or no confession, church or no church? And I'm going to ask you something, Bishop, and you mark my words. You think we're scared of taking control of our own lives and sins? We're terrified. Even more scared than some leaders are that we just might. It's enough to make you sick.

"Sick? Yes, we're sick. You know why? We're trapped. Ever think about what we've pledged? Ever look one of us in the eye—not like a leader with a supercilious assurance and a patronizing pat on the knee, but like a fellow, fractured human—and ask us if we can live up to our oaths? If you ever did, you won't forget it. Yes, we're sick. We've signed a contract we can't deliver. We've taken solemn vows to give everything—including our selves, and we swore that the selves we'd give would be new creatures, whole and saintly, and we know that failure is the penalty, and the penalty is to be just what we're afraid we are after all. And we can't just quit because that means quitting what we are, if

you follow me. So we look for relief—relief from our own shame and betrayal. We figure, the way out is to be honest. Believe tenaciously, and share our sins. With anyone. Anyone will do, as long no one pretends to be whole. How about you, Bishop?"

"I'll tell you what I propose. I propose we all look each other in the eye and say, 'I'm pretty mediocre, and so are you.' And then let's laugh at ourselves. Yeh. I suggest you join in. And if you have anything to confess to us, anything we really need to know, we'll hear you. And if you find a way out, don't tell us what to do. Show us. Who knows, maybe you're only angry at yourself, tearing and biting at us from the shallows of your own stagnation. It's all right, Bishop. It's our way. I know what it's like.

"And then let's go home, and each of us sit alone and ask how on earth we ever let ourselves get this way. That's what I propose. Then maybe we can start to think what it would be like to be fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

BY the time he stopped speaking, everyone had vanished. I was alone in the meeting house, then alone in my bed in the night, wishing for morning. ☞

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#### I COME FIRST TO THE RUINS

Fog that yesterday had cat feet  
Had teeth today,  
Leaving the trees  
Dripping white blood.

Hunch-back crows, black fruit  
On the limb of winter,  
Shadow the perfection of death:  
They will not clutter  
The ground like apples.

I come first to the ruins,  
To see the stalks  
Brittle in the clasp of each other's arms,  
To hear the grey sky sing  
Through the wind.

—DIANNA BLACK

(Title from W.S. Merwin's "December Nights.")

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## REVIEWS

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# MORMONISM'S MURKY CORNERS

## NIGHT SOIL

New Stories by Levi Peterson

Signature Books, Salt Lake City, 1990, 192 pages, \$14.95



Reviewed by Ron Molen

MANY STORIES HAVE been written about life in the Mormon village, but none so disarmingly honest as those in Levi Peterson's *Night Soil*. With the exception of "Sunswath," Peterson tells his stories in third person with a rustic twang that achieves extraordinary authenticity. His is a unique narrative voice that defies analysis. In *Night Soil*, Peterson places words in singular combinations. He twists and turns them, achieving greater meaning and power than ever before.

Peterson's stories are humorous, and at times hilarious. Reading them, I often smiled and laughed out loud. But there is much more here than humor. Peterson relentlessly pokes around in murky corners, and confronts cherished ideas head on in a way that is fresh, intriguing, and sometimes disturbing. He takes us for a wild ride, forcing us to grab for the familiar, then promptly yanking it away.

The first story tells of a young boy who delivers the *Deseret News* on horseback to a variety of endearingly zany characters on his route in the village. "The Newsboy" is a warm, innocent story, Peterson at his best,

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RON MOLEN is a writer and architect who lives in Salt Lake City.

and a Mormon classic.

Otis is a small town merchant intrigued with fundamentalism, and the main character in "The Third Nephite." Peterson tells a story about provincial thinking and superstition, which reminds us of the bizarre in our folk culture.

"Petroglyphs" is the story of the relationship between a narrow-minded graduate student and a much older, female professor he greatly admires. It is an intriguing story of how an inflexible Mormon ideology can mitigate the capacity for tolerance and understanding.

Clifford, the main character of "The Goats of Timpanogos," is plagued by guilt when his wife dies before they can be sealed in the temple. This common situation is resolved in an uncommon way by a clairvoyant who helps him find redemption.


"Sunswath," told in first person, is the darkest story of the collection, and it originally appeared in *SUNSTONE*. The mistress of a proud intellectual critical of everything religious, is weakened and made miserable by the purposeless of life.

Wallace is sixty-five, and bored with his wife, his work, his community; he feels that life is passing him by. His feelings change when he meets a woman from out of town

who shares his interest in poetry, and suddenly old stirrings surface. "Wayne County Romance" is set in a Mormon village, and like "The Newsboy," it is one of Peterson's most successful stories.

"Night Soil," the final story, is about an outrageous, one-legged derelict named Pickett whose faith is a function of his inebriation; even so, he is a religious man who thinks often of God and the meaning of life.

It is not difficult to understand why the author chose "Night Soil" as the title of the collection; only in the reading does the reason become apparent. At a book signing, I was privileged to hear the author attempt an explanation for a curious fan using theological terms that left us all baffled.

Levi Peterson is not a cautious writer; he takes chances plowing into the very core of Mormonism, its quirks, peculiarities, and superstitions. The stories are complex, deserving more than one reading. And they will offend some, for they are outrageous, appalling. With boyish mischief, the author stirs us up, makes us uncomfortable, forces us to think, makes us feel. If there is a serious Mormon fiction emerging, certainly Levi Peterson is at its center. Like his earlier novel *Backslider*, *Night Soil* is not only entertaining and provocative, it is important Mormon literature. 

## PONDBIRDS

Now I love the weekends  
and leave the lights on.  
Gnats gather by the window.  
Away from my wife  
I wonder in the blue grass  
where it all led to;  
pondbirds in sleep,  
my paisley tie out of a colleague's past  
in my mouth and wet.

She had hands she'd raise  
more terrible than pale and  
wiping her eyes with an open palm  
she didn't know what she was saying.

Lights on bring the bugs up from the pond,  
no one's awake;  
what I can't see feels okay in the blue grass.  
Out the screendoor yesterday I saw  
their faces, hers,  
her words and mine on the blackboard.  
She would be in sentences now,  
still not getting it right.

—GARY BURGESS

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## RESEARCH REQUEST

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JESSIE EMBRY is writing a paper on missionary impressions of Hitler and Nazi Germany. Individuals who have letters from LDS missionaries in Germany in the 1930s are requested to share photocopies of them with her. Jessie Embry, 4069 HBL, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602 (801/378-4048).

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# NOT QUITE SO STRANGE

A RESPONSE TO BLAKE OSTLER'S REVIEW OF  
*STRANGERS IN PARADOX:  
EXPLORATIONS IN MORMON THEOLOGY*



By Paul and Margaret Toscano

SUNSTONE READERS ARE apt to get only an unfavorable and distorted view of our book *Strangers in Paradox* from Blake Ostler's review ("Speculation, Myth, and Unfulfilled Expectations," *SUNSTONE* 14:6). In fact, Ostler's review is not a review at all, but the continuation of an on-going theological debate in which Ostler has participated, not as a detached, objective, and neutral observer, but as a powerful and aggressive contestant with strong theological positions of his own. He did not so much review our ideas as use them as a foil against which he could assert and expound contrasting doctrinal constructs.

Ostler's theological agenda, however, is not nearly so irksome as is his persistent, and at times seemingly calculated, misconstruction of our words. For example, he alleges that in our book we attempt to "recreate" Mormonism in our own image. But throughout the book we make repeated statements to the contrary, explaining that we are only exploring possibilities, that we have no final answers, that we mean only to be tentative and speculative, and that we wish not to be taken dogmatically.

Ignoring these disclaimers, Ostler berates us for reaching the conclusion that "what the Book of Mormon proclaims more clearly than any other scripture is that Jesus is our Heavenly Father" (64). Ostler does not explain that we make this statement within the context of our attempt to sort out Mormonism's various and often contradictory God concepts (i.e., the one God of the Old Testament, the two Gods of the Lectures on Faith, the three Gods of the New Testament, the council of Gods of the Pearl of Great Price, the Adam-God of Brigham Young, the Jesus-Jehovah of the Book of Mormon). The reason we say that "Jesus is our Heavenly Father" is because Mormon scripture presents Jesus as

the God of the Old Testament (3 Nephi 15:5), the Creator of the world (Alma 11:38-40), the Author of salvation, the Father of the Resurrection and the Redemption (Mosiah 16:13-15), and the center of all life in the universe (D&C 88:4-12). We believe that Jesus has a God and Father (as Joseph Smith stated in the King Follett discourse), but Mormon scripture presents Jesus as the center of worship for us. When Jesus speaks of the Father, we think he is referring to his God and Father or else he is referring to himself in his role in eternity as our God and Father (John 14:8-14).

Ostler says that our belief that Jesus is our God does "violence to the real Jesus of Nazareth, the historical man who walked around the Palestinian country-side." He contends that "the real Jesus of history would be shocked" at our rendition of the Godhead. This is a rather curious objection coming, as it does, from a defender of traditional Mormonism, as Ostler purports to be. Why would any Mormon apologist assert that the "real Jesus" was only "an historical man"? If Jesus were only an itinerant Jewish rabbi, he would be dead and unconscious and beyond being shocked by the ruminations of two middle-aged Mormon theologians. No, if we had a worry it would not have been that we offended "the real Jesus of history," but the rather more imposing Jesus of eternity. However, we don't worry about this because we believe it is not possible to offend God with mere speculations on the nature of the Godhead, especially since the available information on this point is so unclear and scanty that it leaves the question open.

Ostler is right, of course, when he says that we often cite scriptures that support our position and gloss over alternative points of view. However, we attempted to warn our readers in the Introduction that our book

is not a systematic theology, nor is it reflective of mainstream Mormon thought. We do not provide complete discussions of or final answers to the questions we address here. Rather, our approach is personal and subjective. In these chapters we invite further discussion and reassessment. Our goal is to be clear and thought-provoking without being strident or dogmatic.

When Ostler dismisses this approach as "proof-texting," he is merely refusing to accept our book on its own terms, chastising us for not having written the book he would have written. For example, Ostler is annoyed because we focus on Christ as Father without much discussion of his role as Son. We do this not to slight the Sonship of Christ, but because his role as Son is better understood, while his role as Father has been mostly overlooked in Mormon theology.

Ostler says of our attempt to resolve the confusion surrounding the Godhead, that we adopt:

a strange hybrid [doctrine] not asserted by any scripture but which somehow becomes controlling for [us]: The notion that there is a God, the father of Jesus, but he is only Jesus' God and not ours. This doctrine is not only not scriptural, it doesn't make any sense.

But in I Corinthians 3:23, Paul tells the faithful, "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's"; and D&C 76:59 states that the redeemed "are Christ's, and Christ is God's." These scriptures accord with our view. Of course, neither of these verses suggest that Jesus' God is disinterested in us. Nor do we make that assertion in our book. What we do say is that our connection to God, the Father of Jesus, is through Christ, our God and Father—"the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Ostler says this position is confusing and has no scriptural support. If our position is confusing, it is because it is rooted in scripture and, therefore, reflects the confusion on the Godhead inherent in our sacred narratives. The complexity of our view results from our attempt to harmonize a number of different and seemingly contrary Mormon God concepts. The only way to avoid this complexity and to achieve the theological simplicity Ostler apparently prefers is to ignore parts of the four Standard Works as well as important statements of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. This we have chosen not to do.

Ostler is obviously uncomfortable with complexity and ambiguity. He likes things clear. He is, perhaps, the most promising of Mormonism's systematic theologians.

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Trained in philosophy and dedicated to the rational, it is little wonder that he views with suspicion and distaste our own predilection for mystery, myth, and metaphor. For Ostler, truth is like the hard, crisp edges of a piece of xerox paper. For us, truth is a bumblebee in a meadow or a handful of sod. Ostler doesn't want us getting near his xerox paper with our sod anymore than we want him littering his papers all over our meadow.

But this mutual aversion we have to each other's approaches does not excuse Ostler from resorting, in his review, to "dirty tricks." For example, he excoriates us for advancing speculative interpretations of scriptures which he thinks have clear and obvious meanings. He alleges that our failure to detect this same clarity in these texts results from an apparently deliberate attempt on our part to

ignore the obvious meanings of Mormon scriptures for the mere purpose of disagreeing with Mormon beliefs in general and with the evil "ecclesiastical institution" in particular.

Ostler should not have put the phrase "ecclesiastical institution" in quotes and then juxtaposed it to the word "evil," thus insinuating that this phrase could be found in our book. Never in our book do we say that the Mormon ecclesiastical institution is evil. Nor do we hold this view privately, although we express concern about the use of power within the Church structure. Ostler has no basis in reality to make this offensive and highly inflammatory statement.

Ostler further implies here that we advance untraditional interpretations in our book simply to be contrary and disagreeable. This is an *ad hominem* attack unworthy of one who has himself been accused of disloyalty to the Church for his theological views. Anyone who has read Ostler's work knows that he advances markedly untraditional views about the historicity of the Book of Mormon, asserting that some of the language and ideas in that book do not originate in antiquity, but in the nineteenth century. For taking this position, Ostler has been subjected to much undeserved and thoughtless criticism, particularly from conservative elements pontificating in religious education at BYU. What good does it do for Ostler to subject us to the same heartless slurs that have so pained and dismayed him?

Ostler spends considerable space discussing the doctrines of pre-existence, grace, and free will. In doing this, he almost entirely ignores what we have to say about these subjects, except to raise contrasts to his

own very interesting views. What is most striking, perhaps, is how certain Ostler is about his opinions. Everything seems clear to Ostler, except, of course, what we have written:

The Toscanos certainly have a flare for catchy phrases. I found their book interesting from the standpoint of rhetoric alone. . . . The Toscanos' book abounds in such catchy but meaningless phrases.

One of the statements Ostler cannot comprehend comes from the chapter "Bringing Good Out of Evil." In this chapter we assert that, because God created the world and put us in it and allowed us scope to exercise our free choice, God is, in part, responsible for the evil that happens here. This is so, not because God wills evil, or desires evil, or does evil, but because God does not use the divine power to prohibit or prevent evil. Thus, we conclude, that the "evil in the universe done by devils and humans is an unavoidable part of God." Admittedly, this passage is not easy. It contradicts the traditional view of God. But it is not, as Ostler asserts, an "outright and intentional contradiction." But according to Ostler:

This just won't do. . . . the fact that Gary Bishop accepted responsibility for brutally killing several young boys hardly exonerates him. Similarly, God cannot be regarded as good if he contains within himself evil and is in fact responsible for all events because he causes them via universal causal determinism as the Toscanos suggest.

This is not what we suggest. This is only what Ostler chooses to perceive. We *do not* say that God kills people and then seeks to exonerate himself by taking responsibility for the killing. What we do is suggest that God could prevent a murder, could warn a victim, could cause the police to stumble upon the crime in the nick of time, could send an angel to arrest the homicide. But mostly these things do not happen. Nevertheless, we assume that God is not powerless, or callous, or indifferent. We assume that God is good. But in what sense is God good if such evil can exist in creation? It was in our attempt to answer this question that we made the statement that Ostler considers gibberish:

[the] evil in the universe done by devils and humans is an unavoidable part of God. The evil happening on earth is not only our responsibility but God's . . . . God is good not because God is utterly disassociated from evil but because, as a being of glory, God can recognize evil, circumscribe it, and pri-

marily through personal sacrifice God can bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, fullness out of emptiness, health out of sickness, and perfection out of imperfection (112-13).

Ostler's inability to make sense of what we say is especially evident when he comes to our chapters on free will and salvation by grace. There we assert that in "Mormonism salvation is by grace alone" (129), but we also assert that we participate in our own salvation by voluntarily accepting "God's gift of salvation by grace" (124). Ostler dismisses this as sloppy thinking. He puts great value on precision of expression: Clarity never faileth. But it is not always easy to be clear. The phrase "by grace alone" may be an overstatement. But we did not mean to use the word "alone" in its exclusory sense (as in "one cannot live by bread alone"), to mean that free will plays no part in salvation—for, of course, it does. Rather, we use the word "alone" in its exceptional sense to mean unique, unexcelled, or unequalled (as in "she was alone among her peers"). For us, we are "saved by grace *alone*" because God's grace is the unexcelled and unequalled ingredient of salvation which can not be supplied by human effort and which we stress because it is so often ignored in Mormon theology. We try to make this clear in our over-all treatment of this issue.

Ostler, however, faults us no matter what we do. On the one hand, he scolds us for accepting as Mormon doctrine certain traditional teachings of the Christian church. On the other hand, he scolds us for ignoring these traditional teachings, or, as he puts it, for our "repeated failure to recognize the well-established meaning" among Christians of certain, basic theological terms, such as "grace." For example, at one point in his review, he attributes to us Lutheran leanings:

The Toscanos also adopt the Lutheran notion (virtually absent in scripture) that persons, if saved by grace, are not judged by their own deeds but by Christ's merits (124-25). This position is exactly the opposite of Alma's response to Corianton's argument that God is not just in his judgments. Alma argued that God is just precisely because all persons will be judged according to their own works.

While Alma does argue that all will be judged for their works because of the justice of God, he also says that, under justice, all are condemned for their works because "the justice of God . . . consigneth them forever to be cut off from his presence" (Alma 42:14). We argue that only those who receive the mercy or

grace of Christ can be saved at the judgment bar of God, for they are judged by the merits of Christ, as if they had done Christ's works rather than their own. We must clarify that we did not get this from Martin Luther, but from the Book of Mormon:

know that there is no flesh that dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah (2 Nephi 2:8; see also, 2 Nephi 31:19; Alma 24:10; Helaman 14:13; Moroni 6:4).

In light of these Book of Mormon scriptures, how can Ostler insist that we adopted this idea from Lutheranism or that this teaching is "virtually absent in scripture"?

Ostler chides us because, in making our "Case For Grace," we do not cite sources he approves of, but rely instead upon what Ostler characterizes as "a number of rather short and controversial [SUNSTONE] articles." He would have had us quote from long, authoritative sources, published in prestigious journals, by well-known scholars. Unfortunately, articles by Mormon authors in support of the concept of salvation by grace do not exist in abundance, and we quoted what we could find.

OSTLER says he is appreciative of our treatment of feminist issues in the priesthood chapters. He even allows that we have convinced him that there is no good reason why women shouldn't be chosen for such callings. This is quite an admission, considering how far apart we are on other issues. In spite of this agreement, Ostler proceeds to compare a woman's desire for priesthood to a man's ambition for the apostleship:

Suppose that it is true (it may well be) that Rex Lee is the spiritual equal of Dallin Oaks . . . Does it follow that God or the Church has any sort of obligation to make Rex Lee an apostle because of this spiritual equality? Of course not.

Ostler seems unaware that he is arguing here for the doctrine of "separate but equal." Yes, women are the spiritual equals of men, but they have separate roles. He then launches into a long justification of this position that is logical but not realistic. Practically, if men are allowed to hold priesthood and to exercise its privileges while women are denied those rights, then all the assertions we make about the spiritual equality of men and women become, on a day-to-day basis, nothing but hollow pretenses. Besides, a woman's desire for priesthood is not like a man's desire for the apostleship; it is like a man's desire for priesthood, like an immigrant's de-

sire for citizenship, like a slave's desire for freedom. Ostler also wrongly suggests that we say that women should hold priesthood only because they are the spiritual equals of men. But we argue that women should hold priesthood for other reasons, too: because God called them to the priesthood; because they are, in fact, invested with the full keys of the priesthood in the temple; and because the Church desperately needs women functioning in priesthood callings on all levels.

TOWARD the end of his review, Ostler accuses us of committing the dreaded "fallacy of composition"—believing that the properties of the part can be applied to the whole. We do this, but do not see it as a fallacy if it is not done in a scientific or historical context. As a literary device, seeing the macrocosm reflected in the microcosm is pretty standard stuff. In the chapter "Beyond Matriarchy, Beyond Patriarchy," we attempt to address the question of "Why a male savior?" and suggest an answer that is intelligible only if we take the long view of our mythic journey from pre-mortal life, through mortality, to our post-mortal existence. In attempting to map out this journey, we resort to Jungian psychological concepts. We analogize mortality to that period in individual development sometimes referred to as the patriarchal stage, wherein one begins to differentiate between opposites. We suggest that in such a stage the male God predominates, but if we are to progress, then we must move beyond mere differentiation toward individuation and wholeness—in other words, we must come to accept the importance of both differentiation and completeness. We posit that the male God serves as savior in mortality in order both to underscore the importance of differentiation and to bring that stage to an end. This, we suggest, is why the male God comes to die: to end one stage and to open a new one, to inaugurate a time when male and female, Bride and Bridegroom, are respected equally. Our exploration, here, resonates with historical implications, we know, but its main purpose was to address a theological problem that we thought would best be understood with a psychological analogy.

In his penultimate paragraph, Ostler takes it upon himself to reprimand us for our "extreme alienation or disillusionment with the 'institutional hierarchy.'" He says that the "institution" is simply made up of real people doing their best." In fact, we are not critical of Church leaders in our book, although we do express serious reservations about certain Church traditions and practices and about the Church's corporate power

structure. Ostler patronizingly reminds us that Church leaders are not perfect (as if this were not perfectly clear). He says that to expect them to be perfect is "the great lie." Neither we, nor anyone we know, expect the leaders of our Church to be perfect. What we expect is that they be human, that they admit their imperfections, and that they be open to criticism and accountable for their doings, as all imperfect people should be. Frankly, we couldn't care less about the private peccadilloes of the Brethren. These are matters between them and God. But the health of the Church, the propriety of its programs, the spirituality of its teachings, the effect of its traditions and practices on its members, and the official sayings and doings of its leaders—these are matters that touch every Latter-day Saint. On these issues, healthy dissent and discussion should not be trivialized as an "inflated expectation" that our leaders be perfect. We think it is a rather wholesome expectation to presume that our leaders will act within the framework of the gospel for the common good.

As a closing salvo, Ostler pretends to discover the secret motive of our book, what he calls "the Toscanos' confession." He produces it like a smoking gun. It consists of a passage from the chapter "Zion: Vision or Mirage." This confession, however, is anything but a secret. In fact, the entire chapter was intended by us to present our readers with some of the experiences that lay behind many of our biases. The passage Ostler produces (and misquotes slightly) is not the heart of our "confession," which comes in the paragraph that follows it:

In our youth, we were tempted to believe that we could build the holy city. Our temptation now is to believe that our alienation is the only reality and that life is no more than survival in a cold world, where cruelty hides behind masks of indifferent courtesies, and where the meaning of our cities is to make and vend our merchandise. This, however, is also a temptation, not an insight. We were too blind in youth to see the coming darkness, but we need not be too blind in age to see the coming light.

In his conclusion, Ostler laments that Mormon theology deserves more thought and less fanfare than we brought to it. This may be his most cogent point. We probably addressed a subject too large for us and with only meager means. Our hope, now, is that others will read our book more carefully than Ostler has and with a greater willingness to overlook its defects. ☐



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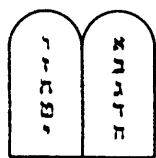
# HAROLD BLOOM'S IRONIC, FEMALE, CO-AUTHOR OF THE BIBLE

THE BOOK OF J

By Harold Bloom

Translated by David Rosenberg

Grove Weidenfeld, 1990, 340 pages, \$21.95



By Brett DelPorto

**B**EFORE A PLANT of the field was in earth, before a grain of the field sprouted—Yahweh had not spilled rain on the earth, nor was there man to work the land—yet from the day Yahweh made earth and sky, a mist from within would rise to moisten the surface. Yahweh shaped an earthling from clay of this earth, blew into its nostrils the wind of life. Now look: man becomes a creature of flesh.<sup>1</sup>

A pretty good opening paragraph—wonderful language, high drama. Some brilliant imagery. But, well, it needs something—maybe a little better focus, perhaps a more reverential tone. Let's see . . . How about: *In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth . . . Yeah. That's the ticket.*

It may seem odd—perhaps even sacrilegious—to imagine an ancient editor pondering the scriptures, crossing out this passage, tinkering with that phrase, adding a word here, or maybe even rearranging entire sections.

But scholars agree—generally—that a final edit, somewhere around the fifth century B.C.E., brought several sources together to form what exists today as the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Pentateuch or Torah.

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BRETT DELPORTO is a reporter for the Deseret News.

Generally, that is. When it comes to details, scholars fight like alley cats in a gunny sack.

And while this not-so-holy war has usually been fought by stuffy academicians gathered at obscure big-city seminars, the newest round of debate is playing out much more publicly in the pages of national magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*.

And the man most likely to blame for blowing the dust off these musty academic disputes is Yale literary critic Harold Bloom.

In *The Book of J*, Bloom proposes that the Bible as it exists today results from several centuries of additions to and revisions of an original text—a text written by a single writer known to scholars as J or the Yahwist.

By itself, this is nothing new. It's been at least a century since scholars first identified the Yahwist text, so-called because the writer of those sections referred to God as Yahweh (sometimes rendered "Jahweh," which accounts for the "J" designation), while other sections call God by the name Elohim.

What is controversial about Bloom's commentary and David Rosenberg's translation of the J text is their insistence on lifting the writings from the surrounding material to stand alone. This outrages traditionalists, who believe the Pentateuch was written by Moses, as well as biblical scholars, who be-

lieve the J writer's contribution should be combined with other sources and read as a single, compound author.

Perhaps even more maddening to both scholars and traditionalists is Bloom's claim that most of the modifications of the J text were for the worse. The J writer, says Bloom, was an author of the stature of Homer, Shakespeare, or Tolstoy, and most of the changes were made to suppress the J writer's vision of an anthropomorphic, "all-too-human" god—a god who bears little resemblance to the all-powerful, all-knowing, completely transcendent God of the classical Judeo/Christian tradition.

"The real scandal was one issue only, which is that the Yahweh as represented by the first major biblical writer is simply not the Yahweh of the rest of the five books of Moses or Torah or Pentateuch, and therefore not the Yahweh of the normative Jews and the traditional Catholics and Protestants and Muslims," Bloom said in a recent interview.

Interestingly, Bloom believes a more human God would not be a scandal to many Utahns. In fact, he argues, the God of the J writer is very similar to the God of Joseph Smith.

Bloom expounded on that theme during a recent lecture in Salt Lake City—a lecture he characterized as "a very sincere tribute to the astonishing religious inventiveness of Joseph Smith"—in which he read a chapter from an upcoming book on American religion.

"The achievement that astonishes me is that I think he [Smith] had found his way back, either by inspiration or by imagination—depending on whether you are a believing Latter-day Saint or not—he had found his way back to certain elements in archaic Judaism that normative Judaism and orthodox Christianity have abandoned," Bloom said in the interview. "And that moves me very much and makes me feel some affinity with him."

When Bloom talks of the "real" scandal of the J text, he's attempting to turn attention from his claim that the J writer was actually a woman, perhaps a princess in the court of King Solomon, who likely wrote in the tenth century B.C.E. Those contentions, now deemed largely irrelevant by Bloom, are easily the most talked about aspects of the book; in fact, they are probably what accounts for its brisk sales.

"I regard the question of the gender, the social rank, the geographical location, even to some extent the historical circumstances of the writer, as being a very minor aspect of my book," Bloom said with some impatience.

"If I had the book back in my hands, I don't mind telling you or anyone else, since it's become such a red herring in the discussion of the book, that I would suppress that [the claim that J was a woman] completely. It is a book about God and about the representation of God and about the scandal of the J text, which I'm trying to bring forward."

That's not to say Bloom recants the claim that J was female. In fact, he says he's more confident than ever, on "aesthetic or psychological" grounds, that the J writer was a woman. For example, he points out that almost all of the major female characters—from Eve through Sarai and Tamar—are stronger and more vivid than the men. And Eve, he notes, was created after Adam, and "surely J's ironic point is that the second time around, Yahweh has learned better how the job ought to be done."

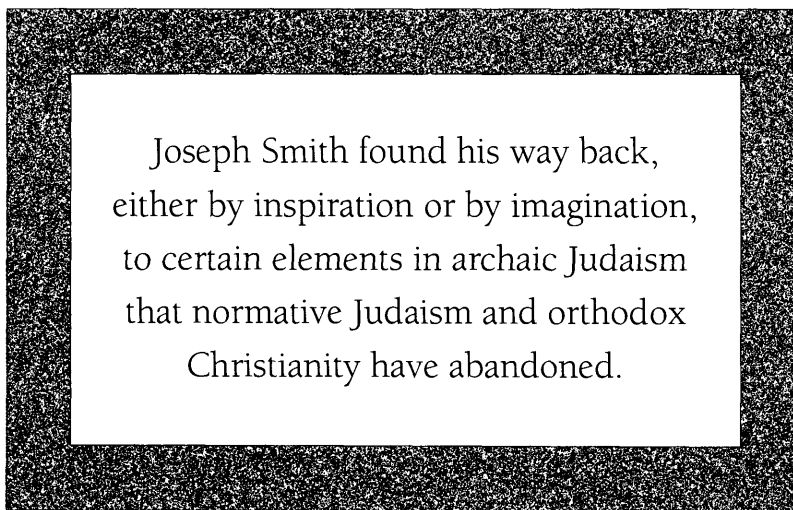
Those are strong and, for many, outrageous claims. One may wonder how Bloom can speak with such confidence about the gender of a writer who, if he/she existed at all, lived and died 3,000 years ago. Indeed, one may wonder how Bloom or other biblical scholars can be so sure that there was a J text. For we must remember that the J text was not, like the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Gnostic Gospels, literally unearthed and restored after being lost for thousands of years. In fact, the J text is a reconstruction based on the sense of Bloom, Rosenberg, and other scholars that there is a single, identifiable voice underlying the Pentateuch.

The notion that the Bible is composed of various documents—the so-called Documentary Hypothesis—dates back to the nineteenth century when scholars identified several different biblical voices. Besides the J text, scholars have also isolated at least three additional sources: the Elohist, or E, which is identified by portions of the Pentateuch where God is referred to as Elohim; the Priestly author, or P, who is believed to have written the first part of Genesis; the Deuteronomist, or D, who wrote most of the Book of Deuteronomy. And, finally, there is the Redactor, or R, who wove the various sources together in about 400 B.C.E.

With typical brashness, Bloom admits J is a fiction, "although I point out that it is no more or less a fiction than the fiction that

Moses is the author." In reading the J text, Bloom is, in his own words, "imagining an author"—the process through which a reader, perhaps only half consciously, constructs an author who speaks to the reader in a personal way.

"Wordsworth said literature is a man or, we might add, a woman in this case or in many cases, speaking to a man or a woman. One listens for a voice . . . I do not see how



anyone, from the time they are a child on, can read a book without imagining an author."

That may sound hopelessly subjective, but subjectivity is another charge Bloom is glad to accept. In fact, Bloom argues that a subjective approach yields a much richer interpretation than any attempt at objectivity. For Bloom, objectivity is nothing more than a "fetish or an idol" of scholars who are looking for the "lowest common denominator"—something so obvious and bland that no one could disagree with it.

"What is really hard to achieve is authentic subjectivity," Bloom said. "It comes from a lifetime of deep reading and deep reflection. And, obviously, I ground my work on the only thing I can ground it on: my own authority as a literary critic and an interpreter of texts."

As one might expect, not everyone is willing to concede Bloom's authority, especially not when it comes to the Bible. Some Bible scholars fault Rosenberg's translation as rough, cumbersome, and sometimes just plain wrong. As for Bloom, some have wondered what right a literary critic has to shoot off his mouth about the Bible.

"Bible scholars . . . have announced, 'Aha. He is not a Bible scholar. He is a mere literary critic.' To which I would say: What is a Bible scholar anyway? A Bible scholar, so far as I

can see, with very rare exceptions, is just a very bad literary critic."

But it is true that Bloom's career in Higher Criticism—the academic discipline of Bible interpretation—is of recent origin. And he might also admit that his subjective approach, however well-grounded in deep reading, contains a few biases. One such bias was stated succinctly in his 1989 book *Ruin the Sacred Truths*:

"The scandal is the stubborn resistance of imaginative literature to the categories of sacred and secular. If you wish, you can insist that all high literature is secular, or, should you desire it so, then all strong poetry is sacred. What I find incoherent is the judgment that some authentic literary art is more sacred or more secular than some other."

For Bloom, sacred texts can, and perhaps should, be read as literature. This is so, he says, because the reasons a certain text becomes sacred have nothing to do with literary value.

Such non-literary considerations came into play in the canonization of the Old and New Testaments. And, Bloom believes, it also happened with sacred writings of the LDS church.

"I think [the sacred/secular distinction] is based upon a political, social, and economic decision. The Pearl of Great Price, you know, of Joseph Smith has been canonized as a Latter-day Saints scripture. The King Follett Discourse by Joseph Smith has not been canonized. Both of them have, I think, some literary value, quite possibly more than the Book of Mormon does. Obviously, it was a political or social decision on the part of the Mormon church to say that the King Follett Discourse is not canonical and the Pearl of Great Price is. But it does not make either one of them more or less a work of literature."

In *The Book of J*, Bloom pushes a similar line. In fact, he takes it a step further, claiming not only that the J text can be read as literature, but that its author intended it as such. "Of all the extraordinary ironies concerning J, the most remarkable is that this fountainhead of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam simply was not a religious writer," Bloom writes.

(An interesting aside is that Bloom doesn't question the intentions of Joseph Smith. "I would think that I would as soon question his sincerity as I would question [that of] St.

Paul. And I'm not being ironic. Who are we to presume to question the sincerity of figures who devoted their lives to a spiritual vision and indeed accepted martyrdom for it?")

If J was not a religious writer, then what was he/she up to? According to Bloom, J was a writer of great sophistication who wrote of Yahweh as a character in a narrative. The Yahweh of *The Book of J* is jealous, impulsive, and given to random outbursts of anger, as when he almost kills Moses in the desert for no apparent reason. Yahweh is also portrayed as a prankster who baffled the tongues of those constructing the Tower of Babel at least partly as a kind of cosmic practical joke. He's also a god who played favorites, preferring the fierce, cunning Jacob to the good-natured Esau and the inventive, exuberant Joseph to the reluctant Moses.

What's more, Bloom contends that J used a sophisticated, unique form of irony, something vaguely Kafkaesque in flavor. Any visitor to the macabre world of Franz Kafka—a land where men are inexplicably transformed into cockroaches and hunger artists fast as a form of entertainment—may find this to be Bloom's wildest claim. But there is something to it. For what Bloom refers to as irony is not the usual sense of saying one thing and meaning something else. Rather, it is what Bloom calls the radical "incommensurateness" between humanity and God, but an incommensurate-ness that must sometimes yield to the inevitable similarities that result from men and women being made in the image of God.

"On the one hand, it's like the Freudian sense of the uncanny. It seems to be very familiar, something you encounter all the time, the way you encounter another person. Except you look at this person, at this personality, which also happens to be the God of major religions—that's the shock. That's the irony of this writer. Irony may not be the right word, but I don't know any other word to use for it."

You wouldn't expect someone who holds such views to be a church-goer, and, in fact, Bloom seems far from any mainstream religion. He describes himself as a "heretical Jew," one who is "irretrievably secular" in his thinking.

And yet, it's hard not to get the impression that he is, in some highly unusual way, deeply religious, or at the very least deeply interested in religion. After all, this is the man who was quoted in the *Salt Lake Tribune* as saying he might have become a Mormon if he'd lived in the nineteenth century. He's also said he views himself as a "gnostic," someone who, by the standard definition, attains knowledge through a direct, intuitive grasp

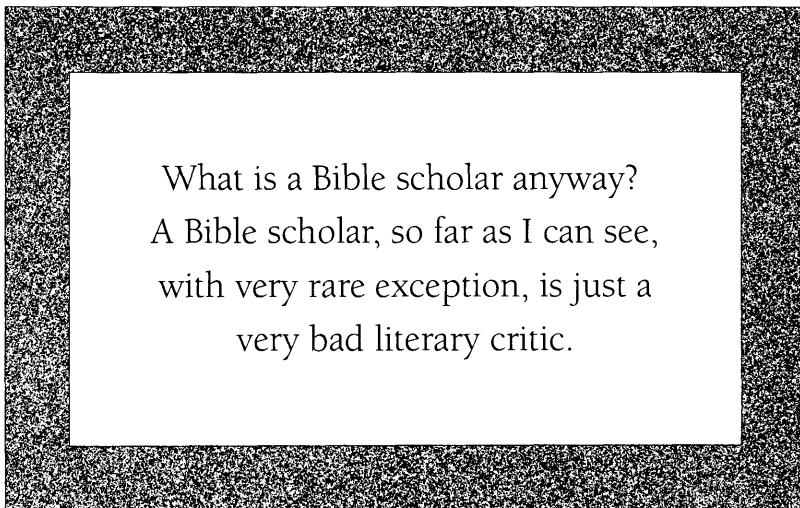
focus on Yahweh, the all-too-human God who creates man by breathing life into the *adamah*, the clay. Here, metaphors abound, and no doubt part of Bloom's appreciation for this passage is an admiration for the technique. Still, Bloom hints—and it is no more than a hint—that the metaphor is somehow more than metaphor, as though the power with which Yahweh animates the lifeless muck still moves within all of us, still fills our

lungs in a way that is beyond our control or understanding. It is that kind of a deity, one who blows life into our bodies and renews us a thousand times a day, it is that God, the Yahweh of J—and perhaps even the God of Joseph Smith—in whom Harold Bloom would place his trust.

"I've said that to ask me to believe in a gaseous vapor, a floating spirit somewhere, does not greatly impress me. I would think that the question of belief or disbelief rises for me because it's like asking me to believe or disbelieve in my own breathing, since the Yahweh of the J writer is nearly identified with breathing. That is to say he is the God of vitalism and vitality, and it is very difficult to deny that."

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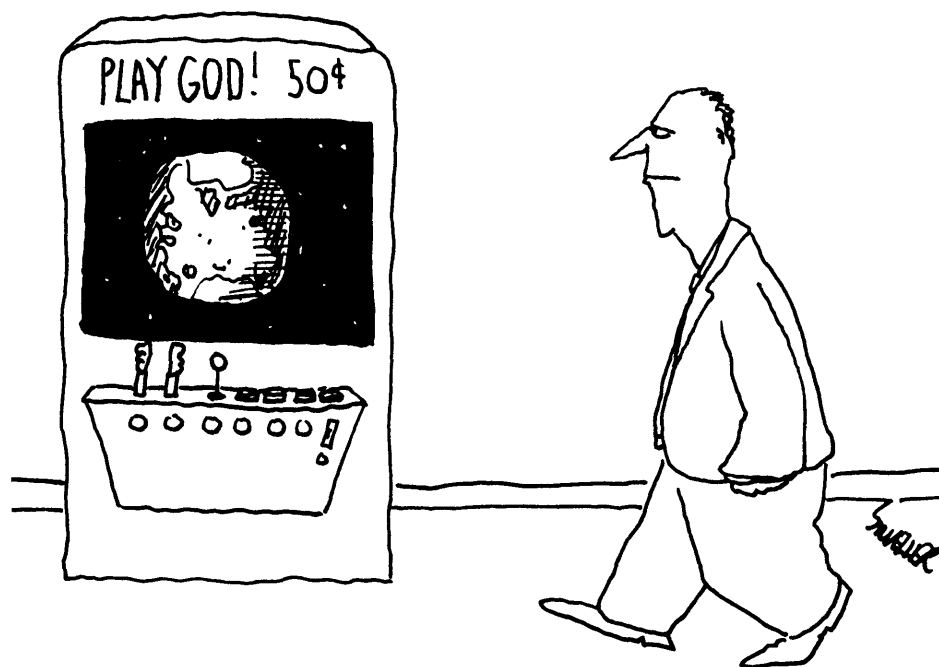
1. Harold Bloom, *The Book of J*, 61.



of truth, generally religious truth. A gnostic is also, in the most general sense, "one who knows," in contrast to an agnostic, one who doesn't know.

So, if Harold Bloom is a gnostic, what is it, then, that he knows?

The key to Bloom's thinking may be his



## HAROLD BLOOM LAUDS THE AUDACITY OF JOSEPH SMITH

By Dennis M. Clark

ON 15 November 1990, Harold Bloom spoke on "The Religion-Making Imagination of Joseph Smith" at the University of Utah's Kingsbury Hall.

When, well into his address to the mixed and expectant audience, Harold Bloom described contemporary Mormonism as "the most work-addicted culture in all of religious history," he might not have known he was making a joke. His reaction to the laughter hints that he didn't.

Half of the audience—those curious about what in provincial patriarchal Mormonism could possibly attract the attention of an urbane, sophisticated Jewish literary critic—laughed because they found the description an accurate and pointed put-down. After all, hadn't Bloom begun his David P. Gardner Graduate Lecture in the Humanities and Fine Arts address with this assertion?:

"It has become something of a commonplace to observe that modern Mormonism tends to reduce itself to another Protestant sect, another Christian heresy—while the religion of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Parley and Orson Pratt, and other leading early Mormons was a far more radical swerve away from Protestant tradition."

And hadn't he followed that jab shortly with this pointed observation?: "Joseph Smith is a vital part of the American sublime, very much here in the Mormon present, even if his believers, for now, have chosen their own kind of patient version of what we might call the 'Japanese option,' deferring the imperial dream in favor of economic triumph."

The other half of the audience—those who wondered how

badly this literary critic would maul the Prophet for the infelicities and the clumsiness of his style—laughed to relieve their remorse at what their church has given up to obtain success. Bloom had been discussing the milieu wherein the Smith family was left "longing for a church in legitimate and absolute descent from ancient authority, a personal god, a history of providences, a theocracy of saints. These three were Puritan inheritances. As a kind of Puritan anachronism, two centuries too late, the Mormons became furious monists and, perhaps, the most work-addicted culture in all of religious history."

That last sentence provoked the laughter, at first scattered and nervous. Responding to those first laughs, Bloom said (in a much less lectorial voice), "Obviously I'm going to be saying things tonight that will be funny to many of you in a legitimate way, and, as an outsider, I will not understand. This is a unique . . . [laughter at Bloom's pause] this is, I must say, a unique experience in my long career as a lecturer because usually lecturers feel rather uneasy that their jokes aren't going to work. [Hearty laughter from the audience.] But I will [Bloom now laughing mildly] go on and do my best."

Bloom seemed genuinely puzzled by the laughter. Even afterwards, when I asked him about it, he wouldn't accept the notion that this laughter was just a nervous titter from an audience eager to please the man who had so pleased them.

For what Bloom had done was to restore Joseph Smith to us as a prophet. And in doing that,

he had confounded both halves of the audience, and united them in a sense of wonder at Smith's audacity, imagination, and revelation.

"As a Jewish Gnostic," he said, "I am in no position to judge Joseph Smith as a revelator; but as a student of the American imagination, I observe that his achievement—as national prophet and seer—is clearly unique in our history."

"Researchers have not yet established, to my satisfaction, precisely how much the Prophet Joseph knew about Jewish esoteric tradition or Kabbala or about the Christian gnostic heresies . . . What is clear is that Smith and his apostles restated . . . the archaic or original Jewish religion, a Judaism that preceded even Yahwists or the 'J' writer, the author of the earliest stories in what we now call the five books of Moses."

Bloom not only accepted the most unusual of Joseph's innovations, he found in them the heart of Joseph's work:

"The religion-making genius of Joseph Smith, profoundly American, uniquely restored the Bible's sense of the theomorphic, a restoration that inevitably led the prophet into his most audacious restoration, patriarchal plural marriage. That audacity I will defer for now since its . . . (oh, uh—I will come to it, my dears. I will come to it [laughter]. I don't mean to be humorous) that audacity I will defer for now, since its complex realization was deferred in Smith's career until its religious basis was thoroughly established. And I believe we are only starting, now, to recover Joseph Smith's full vision of God."

Again, Bloom seemed genuinely puzzled by the laughter, and again he confounded the audience by affirming what many in the audience regarded as the most oppressive feature of an oppressive religion: polygyny.

That laugh-provoking deferral of the discussion of plural marriage involved another of Smith's most controversial restor-

ations: Enoch.

"Whether Smith ever had read a version of the apocalyptic book of Enoch is absolutely uncertain, but I hardly think that written sources ever were necessary for many of Smith's giant imaginings. . . . *Enoch chose Joseph Smith* because esoteric traditions always have exalted Enoch as the archetype of man-becomes-angel and even man-becomes-god. The revelation of Enoch was made to the Prophet Joseph precisely as it was made to the Kabbalists, to grant unto us a more human god and a more divine man. But the Enoch of Kabbala was a very solitary figure, who went up into heaven to become Metatron, a version of the archangel Michael. It is characteristic of Joseph Smith that his Enoch founded a city, Zion, and gathered a people together there, and then took city and people up to heaven with him" [emphasis added].

When Bloom came finally to his discussion of plural marriage, it was in the context of "ancient Jewish theurgy (which is, of course, the process for strengthening God)." The idea of a God who *needs* his creatures is heretical to Christianity; that those beings would not be his creatures, but intelligences coeval with God, only makes the heresy worse. But that the process for strengthening this God would be sexual must seem most heretical and repellent. This, Bloom says, is the greatest of Joseph Smith's restorations:

"Joseph Smith's prophetic aim was nothing less than to change the whole nature of the human, or to bring about in the spiritual realm what the American Revolution had inaugurated in the socio-political world. Kings and nobles had lost their relevance to Americans. That hierarchy had been forever abolished. Joseph Smith, in his final phase, pragmatically abolished the more fearsome hierarchy of all official Christianity. Plural marriage was to be the secret key that unlocked the gate between the

**THE BROOKIE AND D.K. BROWN MEMORIAL FICTION CONTEST** deadline for short stories dealing with LDS issues is 1 June 1990. Authors may submit a total of three stories in two categories: **short stories** (6,000 word limit) and **short short stories** (1,000 word limit). See the October 1990 SUNSTONE for the complete announcement or contact the Sunstone Foundation, 331 Rio Grande, Suite 30, Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1136 (801/355-5926).

**THE CHARLES REDD CENTER FOR WESTERN STUDIES** and the Utah State Historical Society are sponsoring a one-day symposium on the experience of **Utahns during World War II**. Roger Launius, former historian at Hill Air Force Base and chief NASA historian, will give the keynote address. Other activities include academic papers, panels of Utahns who served in Europe or on the homefront, sound rooms replaying war radio broadcasts, oral history rooms where people can record where they were when they heard about Pearl Harbor, and viewings of the movie *Since You Went Away*. For more information contact the Charles Redd Center, 4069 HBLL, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602 (801/355-5926).

**THE COMMUNAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION** and the Center for Communal Studies at the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville announce a program of grants to assist students of **communitarianism** to carry out **research** at the center's archives or at the site of an historic or contemporary intentional community. Grants are competitive and will normally be limited to \$500. Contact: Jonathan Anderson, Department of Anthropology, Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA 50012.

**THE DANISH IMMIGRANT MUSEUM** is compiling a national directory of information on Danish American life and heritage. Please send any information about **Danish immigrants in Utah** to The Danish Immigrant Museum, Box 178, Elk Horn, IA 51531 (712/764-7001).

**MISSOURI RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE SCHOLARS-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM** is designed to promote public understanding of American religious history through the lens of nearby Missouri history. Six scholars will conduct programs in several Missouri cities in 1993. They will spend one week in each community leading workshops, giving informal talks and participating in radio programs. The core of the program will be an evening presentation of *Chautauqua*, held on a stage under a large tent. Costumed and speaking in the first person, each scholar will perform a portrayal of one a historic figure, including an early Mormon leader. Applicants must submit by 1 August 1991 a three-page letter of intent identifying the historic person they wish to portray. Contact: Christine Reilly, Missouri Humanities Council, 4144 Lindell Blvd., Suite 210, St. Louis, MO 63108-2931 (314/531-1254).

**THE MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION** will hold its annual meeting on **30 May - 2 June 1991** at the campus of Pomona College in Claremont, CA. **Martin Ridge**, head of research at the Huntington Library, will present the Tanner Lecture; **Leo Lyman** will discuss the Mormons in San Bernadino; MHA president and RLDS Church Historian **Richard Howard** will speak on relationships between the LDS and the RLDS churches. For further information contact Jessie Embry, PO Box 7010, University Station, Provo, UT 84602 (801/378-4048).

**1992 RELIEF SOCIETY SESQUICENTENNIAL**. "In conjunction with the Relief Society's 1992 sesquicentennial celebration, the General Relief Society Presidency would like to hear from [LDS

women]. Write your feelings about being a woman and a member of the Church, your conversion story, your struggles, or your hopes and dreams." Send essays to Women's Voices, c/o Relief Society, 76 N Main, Salt Lake City, UT 84150.

#### SUNSTONE LECTURES AND SYMPOSIA

**1991 NEW TESTAMENT LECTURE SERIES**, sponsored by the Sunstone Foundation and the Student Religious Forum, features a monthly lecture on the second Tuesday of each month. On 9 April BYU philosophy department chair **James E. Faulconer** will speak on "Paul's Letters to the Romans." On 14 May **Arthur Bassett** will speak on "Do We Teach Four Gospels or One?"

Lectures are held in room 101 of the James Fletcher Physics Building at the University of Utah; \$2 donation. To receive a notice each month of the upcoming 1991 lectures, send your name \$3 to Sunstone, 331 Rio Grande, Suite 30, Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1136 (801/355-5926).

**1991 SUNSTONE NORTHWEST SYMPOSIUM** will be held on **8-9 November** at the Mountainers Building in Seattle, WA. Proposals for papers and panel discussions are now being accepted. Volunteers interested in helping organization the conference are needed. Contact: Molly Bennion, 1150 22nd Avenue East, Seattle, WA 98112 (206/325-6868).

**1991 WASHINGTON, D.C., SYMPOSIUM** will be held on **19-20 April** at the American University Campus. Guest Scholars include **Jan Shipps**, **Robert Rees**, and **Maureen Ursenbach Beecher**. **Carol Lynn Pearson** will perform her one-woman play, "Mother Wove the Morning." For more information contact the Sunstone office or Don Gustavson, 413 Clearview Avenue, Torrington, CT 06790 (203/496-7090).

**SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM XIII** will be held earlier than usual on **7-10 August** at the University Park Hotel in Salt Lake City. Proposals for papers and panel discussions are not being accepted. Contact: Cindy Dahle, Sunstone Foundation, 331 Rio Grande, Suite 30, Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1136 (801/355-5926).

## NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCES

**Author, doing research for a book, seeks interviews with persons who have had a near death out-of-body experience.**

- Interviews are taped.
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- Anonymity can be provided.
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divine and the human.

"I emphasize again what I feel is the profound affinity between Joseph Smith and the Kabbala, since in each the function of sanctified human sexual intercourse essentially is theurgical. Either there was a more direct Kabbalistic influence upon Smith than I know or, again, as I say, far more likely, his genius re-invented Kabbala in the effort necessary to restore archaic Judaism.

"Joseph Smith's emphasis

upon human power necessarily achieved an apotheosis in his exaltation of plural marriage, which became, for him, the new and everlasting covenant between God and the Latter-day Saints."

Bloom finished his lecture leaving the entire audience mystified, enlightened, abashed, and exultant. Which is not to say that any were converted. Bloom wasn't preaching, after all.

And to some, his scholarship may seem a bit too sweeping. For example, he refers to a comment

about Mormonism attributed to Tolstoy: "If there is already in place any authentic version of the American religion, then, as Tolstoy himself surmised, it must be Mormonism, whose future as yet may prove decisive for the nation, perhaps for more than this nation alone." However, Leland Fetzer concluded in a 1971 *Dialogue* article that Tolstoy probably never made the comment to which Bloom referred.

I look forward to the publication of this lecture as part of

Bloom's forthcoming *The American Religion: Analysis and Prophecy*, for, among other things, the sources of Bloom's studies of archaic Judaism, and Kabbala. If this book proves to be as controversial as *The Book of J* (see previous article), it should enlarge the imagination in ways most welcome today. In the company of more timid, less passionate scholars, Bloom flowers as our pre-eminent man of letters. ☞

## ONE FOLD

### VATICAN COUNSELS THEOLOGIANS

IN SPRING 1990 the Vatican published a document entitled "On The Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian." Responding, apparently, to Catholic theologians who have voiced to the media their criticism of the church's leadership and theology, the document defines the role of the theologian, shows his or her relationship to the magisterium (the church's teaching authority), and emphasizes the responsibility of both to boost and reaffirm the faith of the lay membership of the church.

The role of the theologian, the document states, "is to pursue in a particular way an ever deeper understanding of the Word of God found in the inspired Scriptures and handed on by the living Tradition of the Church." It emphasizes the theologian's own responsibility to "deepen his own life of faith and continuously unite his scientific research with prayer." And it particularly stresses that the theologian must respect the members of the religion "and be committed to offering them a teaching which in no way does harm to the doctrine of the faith."

After defining a theologian's role, the document delineates the role of the church's pastors as one which "must protect God's People from the danger of deviations and confusion, guaranteeing them the objective possibility of professing the authentic faith free from error, at all times and in diverse situations."

The document recognizes that tensions between the magisterium and theologians may arise and, in many cases, may be an impetus for deeper investigation and clarification of the faith. However, it cautions theologians that at times the pastors may decide that a particular theory or teaching contains "in addition to solid principles, certain contingent and conjectural elements." The document cautions that in such cases the theologian must loyally and respectfully submit to the authority of the magisterium. It further states that if the theologian continues to experience objections, he should consult his ecclesial leaders, explaining his difficulties. He should not turn to the "mass media" as a means of expressing disagreement, "for it is not by seeking to exert the pressure of public opinion that one contributes to the clarification of doctrinal issues and renders service to the truth."

Respecting the dilemma theologians face when they are asked to shelve their reservations about a specific issue, the document, nevertheless, says the theologian "has the duty to remain open to a deeper examination of the question." Keeping silent in such an instance, the document states, can indeed be a "difficult trial." But, it

continues, "It can be a call to suffer for the truth, in silence and prayer, but with the certainty, that if the truth really is at stake, it will ultimately prevail."

It appears that the document was aimed primarily at European theologians who, in the past, have been closely linked with the church's teaching authority. In 1989, 170 German-speaking theologians publicly criticized Pope John II in a document known as the Cologne Declaration. Other well-known theologians who have been denied teaching positions because of their theological views include Hans Kung of Switzerland in 1979, and Rev. Charles Curran who, in 1987, was barred from teaching theology at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

One anonymous Catholic theologian who commented on the document said, "This is the latest salvo in an ongoing political and theological battle, although [the Vatican] might call it a 'process of discernment,' about what doctrinal views can be taught in the church." He recognized that some Catholic theologians have created scandals by undermining important doctrines. He says that the church has a point in wanting to keep such arguments out of the press because the church debates tend to be complex and lengthy, and the press condenses these issues into melodramas portraying the theologians as heroes and the magisterium as villains.

The same theologian says part of the problem is that Catholic conservatives—in and outside the Vatican—make little or no distinction between levels of doctrine. Many view a theologian's disagreement with the Catholic church's ban on artificial birth control as serious an offense as rejecting the doctrine of Christ's resurrection.

In a related matter, the Vatican has compiled a universal catechism summarizing the contents of the Catholic faith and the way it is to be taught throughout the world. The document was prepared to check the spread of deviant theological ideas taught in local dioceses. Many critics say the problem with the document is that it makes no distinction between what is central to the faith, what is nonessential and what is merely the theological opinion of the consultants who prepared the Vatican document.

American bishops have planned conferences to allow theologians from their diocesan staffs to voice their concerns and discuss the impact of the documents. But it seems clear that both documents are an attempt to bring regularity into the way the faith is presented to its world-wide membership. ☞

# APOSTLE CONFRONTS SECULAR EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

IN A recent BYU devotional address, Apostle Boyd K. Packer discussed the Church's role in education. First, he reviewed the Church's historic commitment to education at all levels, beginning in Kirkland, through the pioneer schools and academies, and culminating with the twentieth-century seminaries and institutes.

Elder Packer then explained the procedure the Church Board of Education and the Board of Trustees for Church colleges and universities uses to make decisions and policy. He said that the boards work in much the same manner that the Quorum of the Twelve does.

"Matters of consequence are seldom decided in the meeting where they are proposed." Often serious matters are deferred in order for the board to experience a unanimity on the matter. "Sufficient time is taken to 'bring us all along' so that it is clear that each of us either has a clear **understanding** of the issue, or as is often the case, has a very clear **feeling** about it," he said, noting that "if one of us cannot understand an issue or feels unsettled, it is held over for future discussion" [emphasis his].

To illustrate the importance of unanimity, Elder Packer shared a personal anecdote about being a new general authority on an assignment with Apostle Marion G. Romney. Elder Romney joked that he was glad to have Elder Packer, whose motto on a previous assignment had been "Follow the Brethren," because "Now I know that Brother Packer will do everything I tell him to do." Humorously, Elder Packer responded in turn, "Brother Romney misunderstood! Our motto was 'Follow the **Brethren**,' not 'Follow the **Brother**'" [emphasis his].

"That is how we function—in council assembled. That provides safety for the Church and a high comfort level for each of us who is personally accountable. Under that plan, men of very ordinary capacity may be guided through counsel and inspiration to accomplish extraordinary things."

Recognizing that detractors may think a large university would be better governed by a board of trustees composed of "specialists and experts," Brother Packer acknowledged that such experience has its place. "However, we may not put quite the premium on this as others do," he said.

He then enumerated the academic, religious, business, governmental, industrial, and secular credentials of the members of the Board of Trustees. He listed the academic degrees of the board members, noting that all but one hold university degrees. He also demonstrated that the board members have vast experience in education, public service, business, and industry. The board currently consists of the First Presidency, six apostles, a member of the Presiding Bishopric and the presidents of the Relief Society and the Young Women organizations—two "great women endowed with a special credential of insight [who] have full voice [on the board]."

Elder Packer noted a Catch-22 the Board faces: "We are caught between those who think we are not in touch with the world and those who think our keeping in touch is somehow wrong."

Stating that worldly credentials are never alluded to in council meetings and that he might be scolded for mentioning them, Elder Packer said he shared them

because some "feel we may not understand the mysteries of the world of academia and therefore are not fully qualified to set policy, standards and direction for a university. For them, perhaps these things needed to be said." But he noted that the values the Board emphasizes more than secular credentials are those which "relate to the qualities of character which establish a balance in education and have to do with moral stability."

"We know the voice of the Lord when he speaks, we know the processes of revelation and how to teach them to those who want to learn. These qualifications we *do* talk about constantly and strive ever to measure up to them."

Elder Packer then addressed the decline in religious-sponsored education, and warned that religious institutions are fast becoming a relic. He said this has been the result of universities' commitment to the highest possible academic standards: In trying to compete with the most prestigious secular universities, many boards have assumed that religious input had to be sacrificed.

Quoting the New York-based Institute on Religion in Public Life, he read, "For the most part, the schools that lost, or are losing, their sense of religious purpose, sincerely sought nothing more than a greater measure of 'excellence.' . . . It may reasonably be surmised that most believed that they were advancing a religious mission by helping their schools become like other schools—or at least more like the 'best' of other schools. The language of academic excellence is powerfully seductive."

Elder Packer stressed that the gospel requires the mixture of reason and revelation and said, "There are two opposing convictions in the university environment. On the one had **"SEEING IS BELIEVING"**; on the other: **"BELIEVING IS SEEING."** Both are true! Each in its place. . . . The combining of them is the test of

mortal life!"

Elder Packer said that *if* BYU is to fulfill its dual mission of reason and revelation, the "best protection is to ensure that the prerogatives of this unique Board of Trustees is neither diluted nor ignored. . . . Theirs and theirs alone is the right to establish policies and set standards under which administrators, faculties, and students are to function."

He cautioned, "The moral and spiritual capacity of the faculty and what they shall give, and the spiritual atmosphere in which students are to learn and what they receive will not emerge spontaneously! They happen only if they are caused to happen and thereafter maintained with unwavering determination. We at BYU can become competent in both, and at once merit the respect of those charged with the accreditation of institutions of higher learning."

"Recently lengthy discussions on the future role of BYU have been held between the Board of Trustees and Administration. They have led in the direction of defining BYU as an 'academically selective, teaching-oriented, undergraduate university, offering both liberal arts and occupational degrees, with sufficiently strong graduate programs and research work to be a major university.'"

"When that role is finally defined," he said, "it will be determined by the Board of Trustees, whose fundamental credentials were not bestowed by man and whose right and responsibility it is to determine policy and 'approve all proposed changes in basic *programs* and *key personnel*' and establish standards for both faculty and students."

"To you of the administration and faculty," Elder Packer concluded, "I repeat the counsel given to Dr. Karl G. Maeser by President Brigham Young when he sent him here to start this school: 'You ought not to teach even the alphabet or the multiplication tables without the Spirit of God. That is all. God bless you.'" ☪

## UPDATE

### CHILEAN LEFTISTS BOMB LDS CHAPELS

LEFTIST GUERRILLAS bombed a half-dozen locations, including four LDS chapels, the night before President Bush arrived in Chile on 6 December 1990 to celebrate the country's peaceful transition to democracy and to support its pro-growth economic plans. Other locations with U.S. ties, including a McDonald's and a park adjacent to a hotel where members of Bush's advance team were staying, were also bombed.

Many Chileans have viewed the United States with suspicion and hostility for years because of accusations that the United States subverted Chile's democracy in 1973, paving the way for 17 years of military rule. With the restoration of freedom and economic growth, much of the passion against the United States has dissipated.

Church spokesperson Don Lefevre said, "They're message bombs from outfits who feel the meeting houses are United States related. It's a Yankee-go-home kind of message. We've tried to educate them that it is Chileans who build those churches and use them and that it is Chileans who suffer when they damage them."

In a related incident on 16 February 1991, leftist rebels in Santiago, Chile, set a Mormon chapel afire and left pamphlets protesting the U.S.-led war against Iraq. According to the Associated Press, the attack was one of a number of attacks against U.S. and European targets in South America after the war began. Three Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants in Lima, Peru, were also attacked. Mormon chapels continue to be viewed by leftists as prime targets for retaliation against U.S.-based policies.

### MONSON ADDRESSES LDS PATRIOTISM

"YOU RARELY find any Latter-day Saints in the role of conscientious objector," said President Thomas S. Monson, second counselor in the First Presidency. "We don't believe in marches and protests and carrying placards," he told Associated Press religion writer George W. Cornell, explaining that Mormons believe in bringing about change by working through the established system.

"Our church has always taught members to obey the nation," said President Monson. "In time of war or stress, we have no hesitancy in following the flag. . . . You won't find any more patriotic group."

In the story, which appeared in newspapers throughout the United States, President Monson said, "Once the United Nations took its action and President Bush took his stand, we were behind our leader. . . . That's all that was needed."

"Interestingly, in our church, it is assumed and understood that when the leadership of our nation lines up behind a particular policy in a crisis, we support and sustain it," he continued.

"We're not just sheep that are going to roll over. . . . Each individual makes decisions for himself. . . . We don't believe in people following blindly," President Monson explained. "They weigh things out. . . . They're not just 'yes men,' puppets on a string. They have their free agency, accountable for their own actions, the right to choose."

President Monson said that if a person questions a national course "he can serve in some capacity that will suit his conscience and country together." But "when the nation needs us, we respond," he said, noting that there are about 35,000 Mormons in the U.S. armed forces.

President Monson attributed LDS patriotism to the Church's em-

phasis on family, community, pride in heritage and the American legacy, and to certain LDS teachings such as be "loyal to the royal in you." "If there's no disloyalty in the person, then no disloyalty in country. From childhood on, we're instilled to be loyal."

President Monson also emphasized the LDS teaching that every person "learn his duty" and carry it out "with all diligence." "You have to be careful what you ask a Mormon to do, he'll do it," he chuckled, according to the A.P. story. "They love the Church and love the Lord."

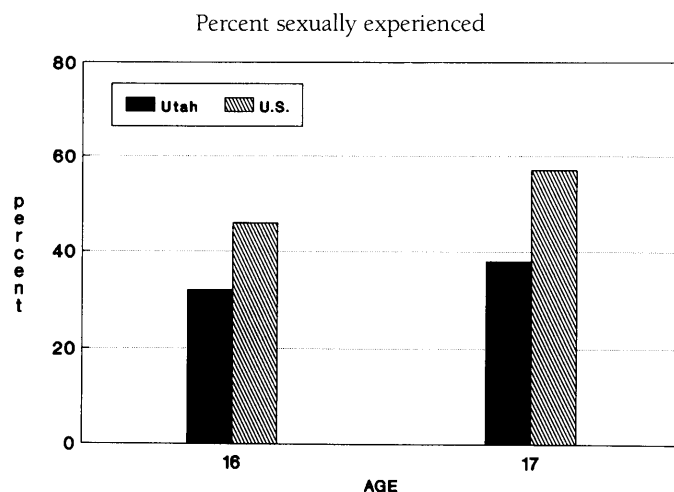
### SUNSTONE OFFICERS DISCIPLINED

LATE LAST fall the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported the fact that SUNSTONE publisher Daniel H. Rector and editor Elbert Eugene Peck had their temple recommends revoked for printing the news story "Comments on Temple Changes Elicit Church Discipline" (SUNSTONE 14:3) which reported media coverage of the recent changes in the temple endowment and the subsequent Church actions taken toward members quoted in the stories. Rector and Peck declined to elaborate on the details and are addressing the discipline privately.

### CUTS PRODUCE BUDGET SURPLUSES

THE RESULTS are in for the first year of the new ward budget program which funds local ward and stake expenses from general tithing donations. In 1990, all stakes in the U.S. and Canada quarterly received \$10 for each person attending sacrament meeting, based on the stake quarterly average. Stakes were free to divide the total among stake programs and the wards based on needs (the maintenance of meetinghouses—utilities, custodial, etc.—is covered directly by the Church). Probably afraid of running out of funds before the year's end, most wards and stakes spent their trimmed-down budgets very conservatively. Some areas had 15 percent of their budgets unspent at the end of the year. Year-end surpluses are returned to Church headquarters. All in all, it appears that luxuries were cut rather than programs and activities. The 1991 allotment to stakes will be the same as in 1990.

### TEEN SEX IN UTAH AND THE NATION



Source: Report to Governor's Task Force



STANDING UP FOR ART



U.S. SENATOR Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) occasionally raises liberal and conservative eyebrows when he champions so-called liberal positions, such as his support for day care funding. Recently the *Salt Lake Tribune* interviewed Hatch on his crucial role in saving the National Endowment for the Arts from Sen. Jesse Helms's assault. Hatch said that while some of Mapplethorpe's photographs were objectionable, "the man knew what he was doing with a camera. And I'm not going to fail to see the good just because there are some things I might find objectionable or obscene." "Sex is an over-

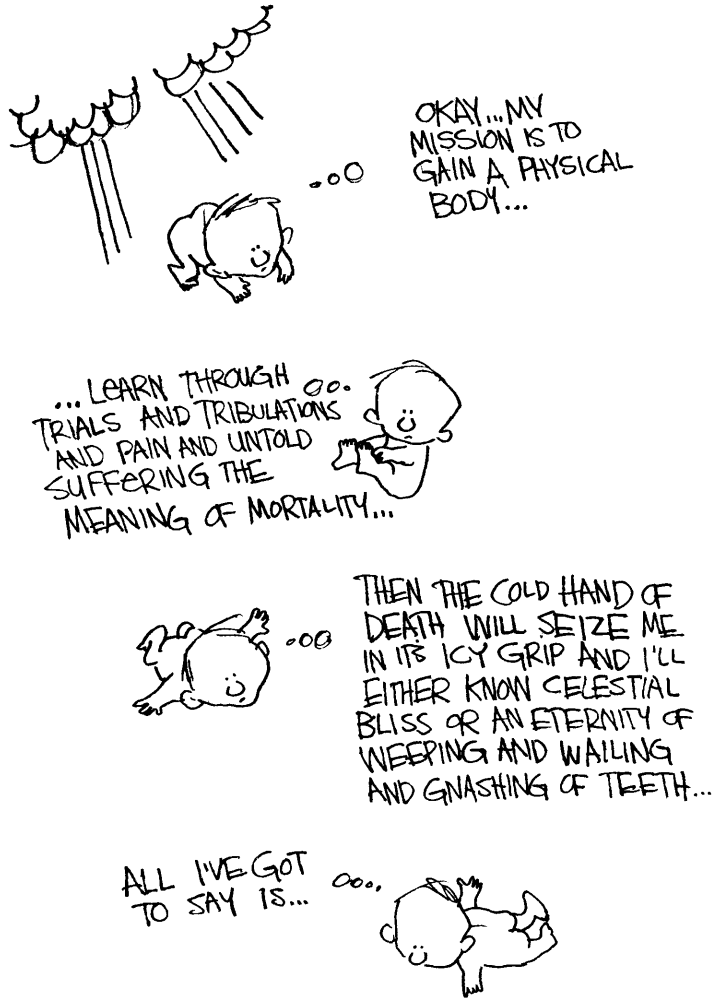
whelming factor in all art. That doesn't mean it has to be blatantly obscene," he continued, noting that taxpayers don't have to fund objectionable works. "I think there are those fundamentalists who would find some of Michelangelo's, Titian's, or Rubens's work objectionable because they display freely enough the female form, or the male form, or young children's forms. Yet we hallow that art today and we look beyond form to the substance of the art."

Hatch said he remains particularly concerned about sacrilegious art works but "as much as I believe in religion, as much as I'm devoted to my faith, I don't believe that you can write content restrictions," he said, noting that artists need to be more sensitive about people's religious beliefs. "If there are any more really blatant illustrations of obscenity or pornography or even sacrilegious art [funded by the NEA], I believe we'll be right back where we were with the demand for content restrictions. It will then take somebody like me standing up again. And I will probably do so."

OUT OF SIGHT . . .

SHORTLY after the Washington Temple eclipsed the old Washington Chapel as the symbol of the Church in the U.S. Capital, the Church removed the Angel Moroni from its steeple and sold the cherished but underused inner-city chapel, which needed major repairs and served only a regional single adult ward. Many old-time Washington Saints lamented the liquidation of the building and were further outraged a few months later when it became the residence of the Unification Church—the Moonies. Similar complaints have come from the merchandising of other

history-laden chapels. Notable is the old Salt Lake 19th Ward Chapel that is now occupied by the Salt Lake Acting Company which annually presents *Saturday's Voyeur*, an irreverent and highly popular parody of Mormonism. To avoid similar offensive reuses, for some time the Church's preferred method of decommissioning LDS chapels is to raze the building and sell the vacant property. When it does sell a building, it attempts to confine the building's new role to a compatible use, such as housing another church or a community group.



# 1991 SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM WEST

MARCH 1991

OAKLAND, CA.

## AUDIO TAPES

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ___ #1 THE TEMPLE: HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND RELIGIOUS VALUE<br>Ed Ashment, Paul Toscano, Margaret Toscano  | ___ #10 DOES BIBLICAL CRITICISM COMPROMISE SACRED SCRIPTURE<br>Sheldon Greaves   |
| ___ #2 THE CHURCH AND RACIAL DIVERSITY IN CALIF.<br>Bob Larsen   | ___ #11 RELUCTANT ENCOUNTERS WITH MORMON HISTORY<br>Newel Bringham   |
| ___ #3 ABORTION: A PANEL DISCUSSION  | ___ #12 THE BOOK OF MORMON AND NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE<br>Kevin Christensen  |
| ___ #4 THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE OUTCAST IN THE BOOK OF MORMON<br>Todd Compton   | ___ #13 FALSE NOTIONS OF UNSAID SERMONS<br>Robert F. Bohn  |
| ___ #5 95 WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY IN THE CHURCH<br>Elbert Eugene Peck<br>ECCLESIASTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GRACE: THE POISONOUS PEDAGOGY OF UNRIGHTEOUS DOMINION IN THE CHURCH<br>Erin R. Silva | ___ #14 PRE-MORTAL CALLING AND MATE SELECTION: A MORMON CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORY OF ROMANTIC LOVE<br>C. Jess Groesbeck               |
| ___ #6 WHAT DO THESE WOMEN WANT: MORMON WOMEN AND FEMINISM<br>A Panel Discussion   | ___ #15 CLAIMING PRIESTHOOD AND NAMING THE GODDESS<br>Margaret Merrill Toscano   |
| ___ #7 MORMONS AND THE ARTS<br>A Panel Discussion  | ___ #16 HOFFMAN, HISTORIANS AND THE CHURCH<br>Ross Peterson  |
| ___ #8 TALKING ABOUT THE TEMPLE: THE APPROPRIATENESS OF PUBLIC DISCOURSE<br>E. Gary Smith  | ___ #17 A WORLD FOR ELIZABETH: REFLECTIONS OF A FEMINIST MOTHER<br>Alison Walker   |
| ___ #9 OH SAY, WHAT IS THE TRUTH? USE ONLY AS DIRECTED<br>Samuel W. Taylor   | ___ #18 THE CHURCH AND RESPONSIBILITY OF INDIVIDUALS TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN RELIGIOUS PLANS AND GOALS<br>J. Bonner Ritchie, Kate Kirkham |
|  | ___ #19 ON BEING A RIGHT BRAINED MORMON IN A LEFT BRAINED CHURCH<br>Lori Erickson  |

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