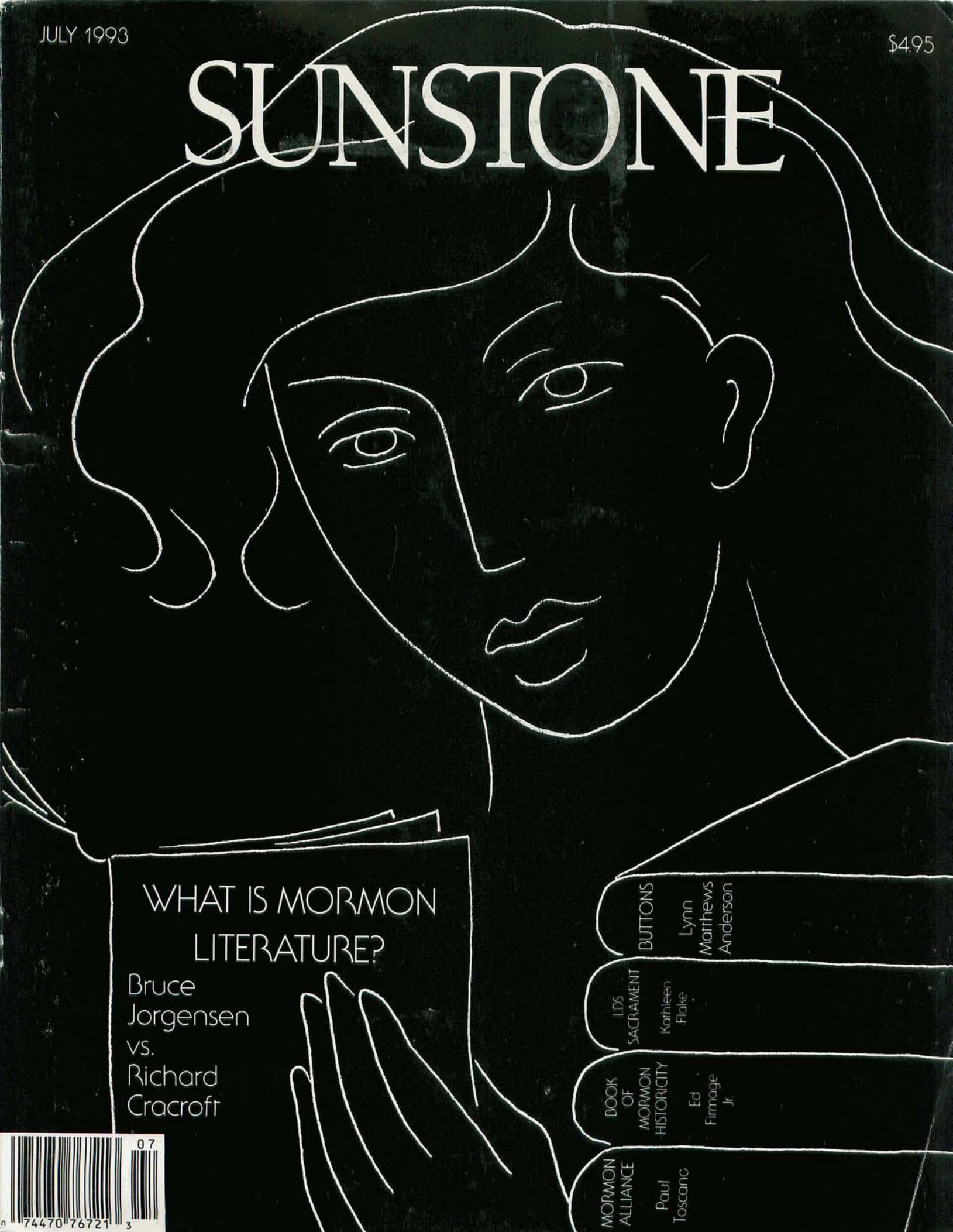


# SUNSTONE



## WHAT IS MORMON LITERATURE?

Bruce Jorgensen  
vs.  
Richard Cracroft

BUTTONS

Lynn Matthews Anderson

LDS SACRAMENT

Kathleen Flake

BOOK OF MORMON HISTORICITY

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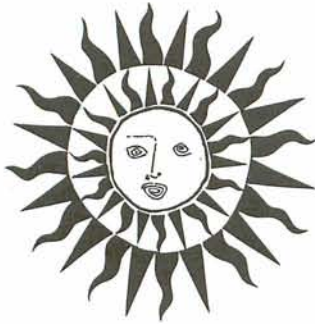
# SUNSTONE

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## READERS' FORUM

### SUFFERING THE WICKED

WHEN TAKING UP the task of judging the Brethren or lesser members of the Church, there are four basic principles I use:

*First*, all sin. While God cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, he is able to use men and women in spite of their sins. However, no one should be fooled into believing that a particular package of sins is more acceptable than another.

*Second*, if God can turn the works of evil people to do his will, then he should also be able to turn the acts of his servants to bring about his will. The Old Testament reveals numerous examples of God working with prophets and judges with gross sins.

*Third*, in taking offense with those God calls to leadership or whom God accepts into his church, one is taking offense at God's decisions and choices and rejecting his servants. Since God counsels us to be patient and to avoid taking offense, we are left without excuse when our actions reject God.

*Fourth*, God is greater than the world. Either God rules or anything can be had for money. If God rules, he can author our salvation, work perfect judgment, and "judge between me and thee." If money and the world rule, then we all die and our judgments are futile as well as puerile.

It is easy to find fault with the weak and foolish. God has promised us leaders who are not from the wise and the learned, but who are of the same flesh and weaknesses as we are. Given that our leaders live up to those descriptions, will we still look to the author and finisher of our faith? Will the weak things become strong unto us, or will the servants of Christ turn into stumbling blocks and rocks of offense? Titus 1:15 warns how our judgments reflect back on us.

As Peter said, "We must bear wicked men with patience, brethren, knowing that God who could easily wipe them out, suffers them to carry on to the appointed day in which the deeds of all shall be judged. Wherefore should we not then suffer whom God suffers?" (in *Clementine Recognitions* III, 49).

STEPHEN R. MARSH  
Wichita Falls, TX

### HONEST ACCOUNTS

A FEW MONTHS ago, President Gordon B. Hinckley came to a multiregional conference in Lansing, Michigan. In the Sat-

urday afternoon leadership meeting he took questions. Being in attendance as an assistant ward clerk, I stood quivering in my shoes to ask: "Why don't the general authorities today speak openly about their remarkable spiritual experiences in the way that Joseph did?"

President Hinckley answered my question at length, saying that the Church leaders do have many important spiritual experiences. He mentioned revelations on family home evening, extending the priesthood to all worthy men, and instituting the new budget policy. He pointed to the tremendous growth of the Church, suggesting that it would not have been possible without divine guidance. What he did not do, which I hungered for, was give a description of what it was like to receive those revelations on matters of Church administration. If accounts of angels are now too sacred to reveal, then I would like to hear of a burning in the bosom in response to the Spirit. If their experiences as general authorities are to be kept secret, then I would like to hear, in their own words, in full honesty, how they gained a testimony when young and kept it through the inevitable vicissitudes of life. Such honest, unvarnished, personal testimonies in conference talks strengthen our faith more than doctrinal restatements or second-hand anecdotes.

With some exceptions, it seems that modern Church leaders make no direct public claim to spiritual gifts other than enhanced judgment in Church administration. There is a great enough dearth of accounts of spiritual manifestations among recent Church leaders that several of my Mormon friends have been led to wonder whether the general authorities have any. Believing our leaders have many spiritual manifestations even now, I found myself asking why they are so reticent about the spiritual experiences they do have.

One of my friends pointed out that the precedent set by Joseph Smith was to talk openly about at least a subset of his spiritual experiences. Though he did not speak much of the First Vision until many years afterward, he spoke early and often of the visits of the Angel Moroni. Joseph Smith let neither fear of a disbelieving world—already stocked with hostile journalists—nor a view of the inhabitants of the United States as swine to be kept from pearls prevent his proclamations of the truth of the divine and angelic restoration of the gospel.

Several possible explanations for the current reticence about spiritual experiences

come to mind. Perhaps the decline of the nineteenth-century "magic world view," written about by D. Michael Quinn, has made it uncomfortable to speak publicly of powerful spiritual experiences. Perhaps the tendency to portray general authorities as superhuman has made them ashamed of seemingly small but powerful experiences. Perhaps God restrains them from sharing things because we are not ready for more. Perhaps the decline in accounts of spiritual experiences from our leaders is largely accidental. Since new general authorities follow the teaching and preaching style of those more senior, a gradual drift away from speaking about spiritual experiences and toward an emphasis on rational understanding and harmonization of existing scripture, nudged along, perhaps, by sociological forces about which we can only guess, took place without anyone intending such a shift to occur.

In my own ward, I have seen the power of honest accounts of the spiritual experiences, growth, and troubles in individuals' lives. Inspired in part by Orson Scott Card's notion of a Speaker for the Dead who gives an honest account of someone's life as that life appeared to the one who lived it, sharing honest accounts of our own spiritual lives

while we are still alive can increase the depth of spirituality and community in our wards and stakes. "Pillars of My Faith" at Sunstone symposiums encourages such honest spiritual autobiographies, but there is time for only a few to participate directly in such a large gathering. Testimony meetings give the opportunity for such sharing, but only if we take that opportunity and push back the boundaries of what people feel comfortable in saying in those meetings to allow the telling of the difficult spiritual experiences that almost always stand in counterpoint to positive spiritual experiences.

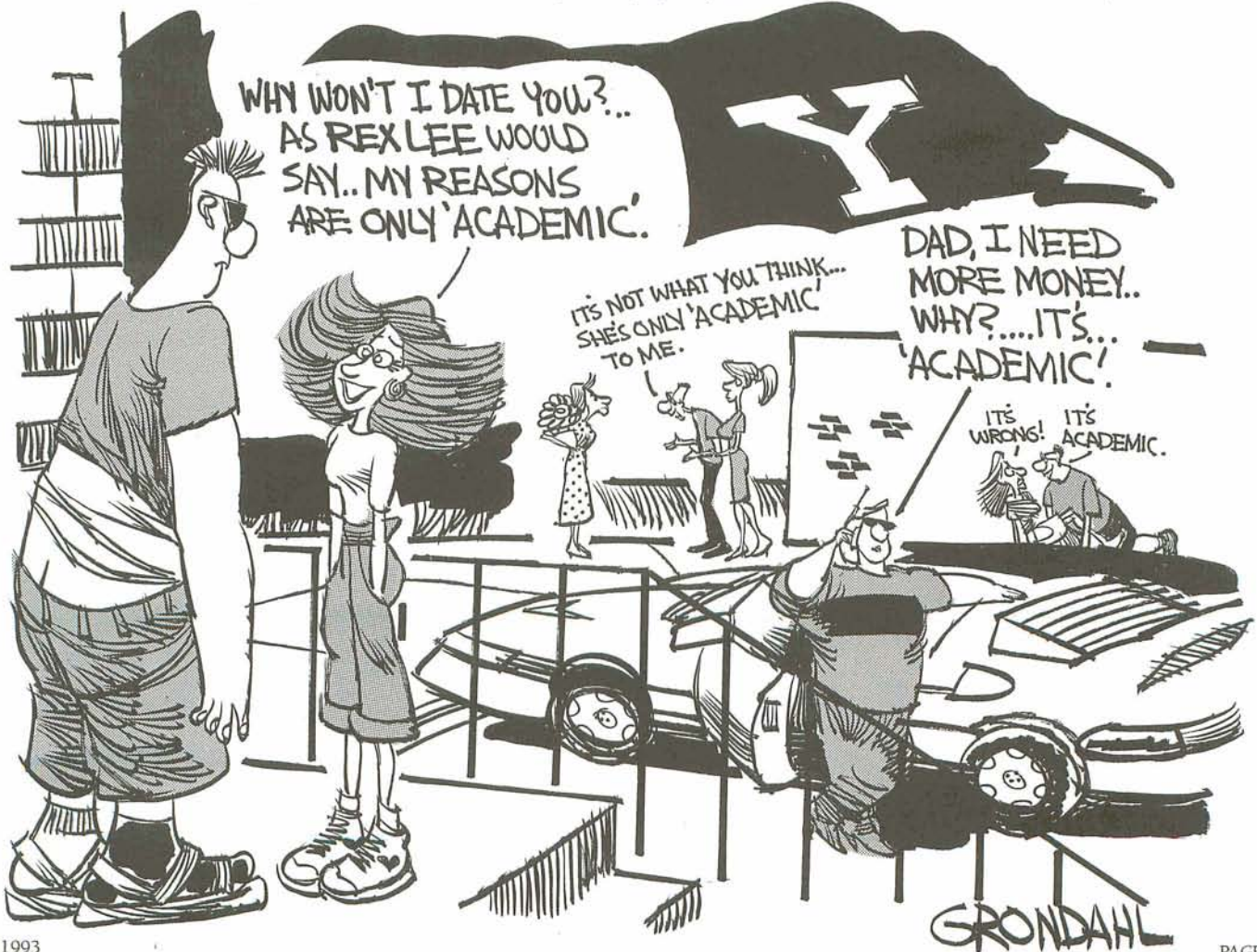
I recently taught Helaman chapters 4 and 5 in the gospel doctrine class. In Helaman 4 we read of pride, riches, oppression of the poor, "making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and revelation," and various other crimes causing the Nephites to be "left in their own strength" (4:12, 13) and so to a great defeat at the hands of the Lamanites. In Helaman 5, we read of fire encircling the formerly wicked but repentant Lamanites and the sharing of that remarkable experience converting so many Lamanites that they returned the land they had conquered to the Nephites. We discussed "the spirit of prophecy and revela-

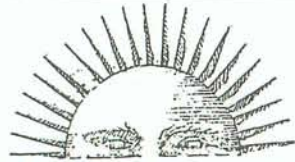
tion," and while various members of the class shared their spiritual experiences, I had a small spiritual experience myself. It occurred to me as a flash of insight and seemed emphasized to me by the Spirit, that when it speaks of "making a mock of that which was sacred" (4:9), the verse can be likened unto us as a warning against making light of each other's spiritual experiences. It can often be appropriate to soberly discuss the boundary between natural and divine in someone else's experience, but we should never ridicule an experience so close to someone else's heart. Only if we respect and honor one another's spiritual experiences, as honestly told in human weakness, will we feel fully free to share those experiences with each other.

MILES SPENCER KIMBALL  
Ann Arbor, MI

## WHAT IS MAN?

I WAS SURPRISED at the space allotted David Knowlton's jejune and aphotic "On Mormon Masculinity" (SUNSTONE 16:2). Consisting of unsupported assumptions, mushy logic, and fashionable platitudes, it is typical of contemporary social science discourse. Its fear-of-women, fear-of-sex clichés





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were almost unbearable, its preening fillips at Church culture embarrassingly trite, and its trendy nostrums for Mormon male angst devoid of substance.

Torn between the Church's emphasis on sexual restraint and American culture's emphasis on sexual performance, the traditional Mormon male is, in Knowlton's view, a bag of pathologies. Knowlton is not surprised, therefore, to find anecdotal evidence of fear of physical contact between the sexes and sexual dysfunction in marriage among Mormons. In fact, Knowlton finds pretty much whatever he is looking for; thus, for instance, "it should not surprise us" that the Church office building is, in fact, a phallic symbol representing male dominance. From the outset we are expected to take as axiomatic the view that masculinity has little biological basis, but is, rather, dependent upon the public display of masculine acts: "One is only as much a man as one's last male act."

May the merciful heavens save us from that which follows: "Women also represent to men their own potential impotency . . . as exacerbated by their attempts to repress and control their libidos. Simply put," gushes Knowlton, "Mormon women represent to Mormon men a threat of emasculation." Moreover, Mormonism's lack of emphasis on the doctrine of a Heavenly Mother is due, not to a lack of scriptural information, but "because she implies a threat . . . to the individual Mormon male's sense of self as man." What is more, "Mormonism is a religion obsessed with masculinity." Proof of this may be found in the Church's "attempts to socialize its youth into the yoke of priesthood. . . ."

What would our expositor have us do for this writhing, groping creature, the naked Mormon male, so depicted in illustrations that accompany the article? "We should reconsider masculinity using the textured advances of feminist theory to explore the nuances of gender," says Knowlton. Risking knee injury with such politically correct genuflections, this smarm of psychobabble and feminist theory will likely offend even those males who have already received the enlight-

enment of said theory, for it suggests that men are, or ought to be, a bunch of submissive lapdogs waiting for Mormon feminists to descend upon them en masse to correct their gender disfigurements.

Nevertheless, I personally tingle as I await my own eminent reconfiguration.

THOMAS J. QUINLAN  
Salt Lake City

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

EGAD, I AM bothered, boggled, and bewildered, and worse, apparently, teetering on the verge of apostasy because of my paper presented at the 1992 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, "The Second Coming? Wait a Second. What Day and What Hour?" In it I quoted from the *History of the Church*, where on 14 February 1835 Joseph Smith exhorted the members of Zion's Camp to "go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, for the coming of the Lord—even fifty-six years should wind up the scene." On that day Lyman E. Johnson and Heber C. Kimball were promised that they should witness the Second Coming. The next day Orson Hyde, David W. Patton, William McLellin, John F. Boynton, and William Smith were all assured that they would live "until the Lord comes" (DHC 2:181-91).

I pointed out that the Second Coming had been expected ever since the First Coming. The New Testament wasn't written until some seventy years after the death of Jesus, because he was expected to return any day.

Little did I realize the danger of such statements until the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a chilling article on 2 December 1992 headlined, "Mormons' End-of-World Talk Could End LDS Membership." Ronald Garff, who had been selling tapes called "Today through Armageddon," was warned by Church authorities in Salt Lake to cease and desist or face excommunication. Avraham Gileadi also faced the axe for his writings and lectures on the subject. Several people have already been consigned to the buffetings of Satan for latter-day talk.

## Pontius' Puddle



My paper stated that the Nauvoo Temple was believed to be more than the house of the Lord; it was to be his actual residence at the Second Coming.

"The history of the Mormons since Nauvoo has been a veritable litany of signs that the Advent was near," I said. "As I write this, just two weeks ago the priesthood lesson was devoted to a discussion of the many signs of the Last Judgment which already have come to pass, and the very few remaining." However, if the Brethren have had later and different information, so be it, and let me repent fast.

If we can no longer believe or talk about such things while remaining in good standing, vital changes are essential in order to conform to the new policy. First, we should immediately recall the seven volumes of the *History of the Church*, which are rife with predictions of the imminent Advent. Second, the name of the Church is an anachronism. If we are no longer the Latter-day Saints, here are some suggestions to update our name in accordance with the new policy: Former-day Saints (were first); Former-Latter-day Saints; Present-day Saints; Ladder-day Saints (upward and onward); Everlasting Saints (not to be confused with Everlast boxing gloves, though we are smiting Satan hip and thigh).

SAMUEL W. TAYLOR  
Redwood City, CA

## FUNDAMENTALS

RECENTLY I READ "Changed Faces: The Official LDS Position on Polygamy, 1890-1990" by Martha Bradley (SUNSTONE 14:1). One year ago my husband, our eldest daughter, and I were rebaptized. We recommitted ourselves to the Church—as Fundamentalists. Since then, two more of our children have done the same.

I want to correct Bradley's erroneous conclusion that polygamy is on its way to becoming a "curious historical relic." The doctrine is alive and flourishing.

The Church has been successful in convincing people that fundamentalists are a wild-eyed, weirdly dressed, fanatical fringe group. We are Latter-day Saints who love the Church, sustain the prophet, as far as he sustains the Lord's commandments, and follow the teachings of the Prophet Joseph.

Our group includes a registered nurse, two teachers, a college sports coach, a dental assistant, a construction engineer, a rancher, a legal secretary, two military members, and a physicist. We are intelligent, articulate members of society. Most importantly, we are or were all active, temple-going, tithe-paying

members of the Church who read and prayed for light and truth, and got it!

ARCHER and SANDRA FORD  
Azalea, OR

## REDEMPTION POLITICS

I WAS STRUCK by Gerry Ensely's letter that posed the rhetorical question about "why, if traditional Christianity is correct, God doesn't simply forgive sin in the first place without the ritual immorality of punishing a totally innocent third party in the process" (SUNSTONE 16:3).

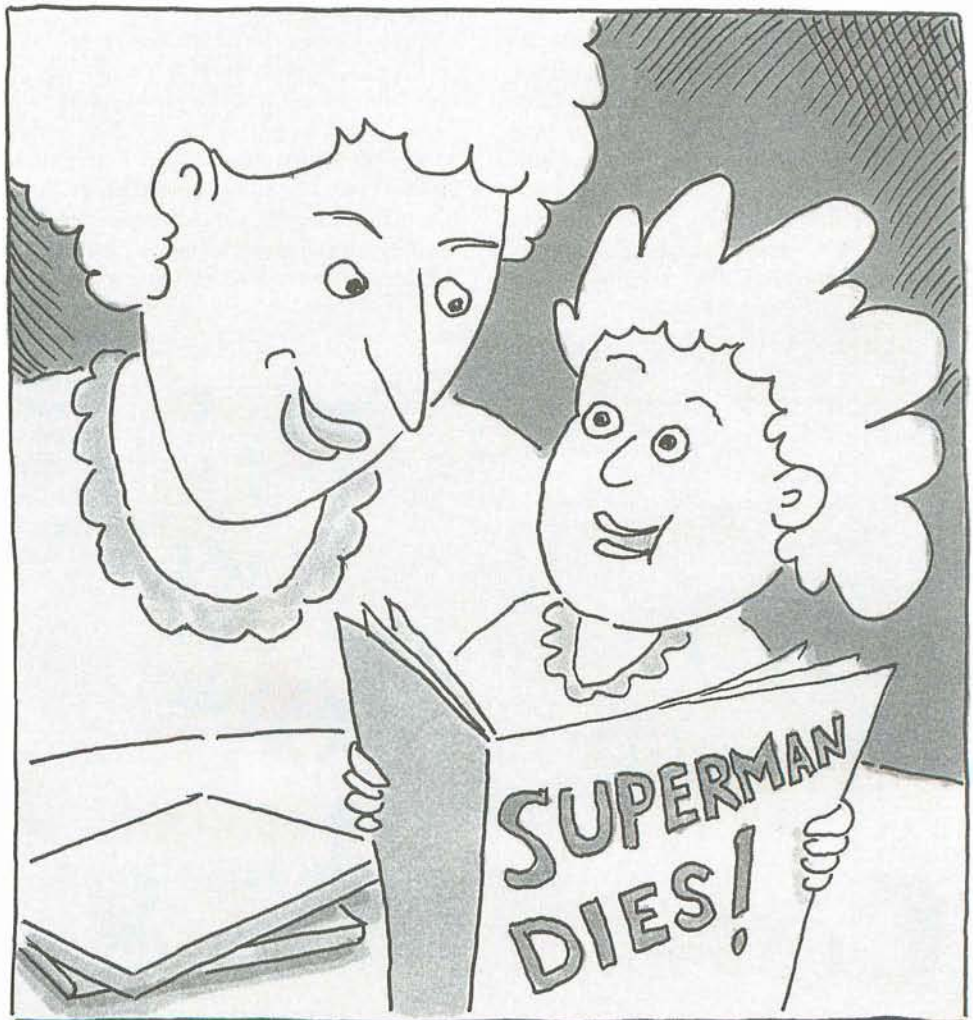
While Ireneaus, as quoted by Ensely, comes closer than apostate Christianity to a reasoned response, I was disappointed that there was no citation of President John Taylor's *Mediation and Atonement*, which formulates in somewhat poetic, but persuasively argued terms, a more complete Restoration view of why Jesus had to die.

President Taylor, heroically anticipating the contributions of Heisenberg's Uncer-

tainty Principle, contemporary Chaos Theory, and Bell's Theorem, saw reality as probabilistic, i.e. choice determined, rather than based on Newtonian determinism, which still rules some backwaters of science (primarily the social sciences).

Taylor drew upon the peculiarly Mormon notion of a finite God existing in the same universe with other uncreated intelligences of Nature—stars, mountains, seas, and gardens—which were organized into higher forms by him. In their more evolved states these intelligences may become human and creatures. These intelligences are coeval with God, not his creations ("Man also was in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be" [D&C 93:29]). God is thus the Great Catalyst, speeding up the evolution of natural processes rather than causing them. The great purpose of creation: "Men [in the form of highly organized intelligence] are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25).

Taylor went on to argue that Nature,



"Mommy, can we get Superman baptized for the dead?"

which following the initial creative act had been in full harmony with God's will and purposes, reverted to quasi-chaos when Adam and Eve, God's elect children, deliberately broke his law. By this act, death—chaos in slow process—came into the world, requiring a voluntary act by one "like unto God," willing to sacrifice himself, though himself without sin, to redeem his sinful brothers and sisters.

Only thus could the rebellious Intelligent Matter of Nature be persuaded to trust God once again, realigning itself with his purposes—the rebellious elements of which post-Adamic man now consists agreeing with man's imperfect spirit to permit a glorious resurrection.

Thus, viewed in John Taylor's terms, Jesus did not die to satisfy an arbitrary concept of justice, but as a calculated and unavoidable strategy of remediation, bringing rebellious nature back into a compact with God and his fallen children, as outlined above. Compare this to the traditional story of the politics behind the War in Heaven.

Projected into the experience of the material world, redemption is thus seen as more politics, albeit a curiously Mormon materialist, quasi-pantheistic politics, than as primitive magic, or even the doctrinal "mystery" acceptable to traditional Protestant or Catholic theology.

While some may argue that there's more poetry than mathematics in President Taylor's formulation, it is nevertheless miles

ahead of Irenaeus in giving intellectual content to the Atonement, and light years ahead of traditional Christianity.

D. B. TIMMINS

## BOB JONES OF THE WEST

AS A FORMER non-Catholic student at the University of Notre Dame and a recent non-Mormon student at Brigham Young University, I read your report "BYU Memo Highlights Academic Freedom Issue" (SUNSTONE 16:1) with great interest.

To compare the two schools, as the *BYU Daily Universe* and many within the LDS community do, is problematic when all that is compared are the similarities. The differences must also be noted. On the surface, the two institutions do bear certain similarities—both are in the mainstream of current academia. Both have acquired outside accreditation with its mandate for academic freedom. However, BYU, unlike ND, is outside current mainline academic practice with respect to its Religious Education faculty and its position on academic freedom.

BYU is different. I learned this rapidly and with great surprise. It was hard for me to conceive that any university would take such things as hair length and the length of shorts as serious issues of academic quality. At Notre Dame I was never required to sign a form abrogating certain of my rights of freedom of speech and expression. Rather, the freedom to choose was left to individual stu-

dents. At ND, freedom of speech was taken seriously. Mario Cuomo, the Catholic governor of New York, spoke on campus and defended his pro-choice stance, a position at odds with the Catholic hierarchy and ND president Father Theodore Hesbergh. Catholic theologian and controversial critic Hans Küng had earlier spoken on campus. These occurrences are akin to BYU inviting Mormon scholar Sterling McMurrin to speak on why he doesn't think there were gold plates.

Most impressive was the religious diversity of the Notre Dame faculty. Despite having a student population that was over 90 percent Catholic, ND had a varied faculty throughout all of its colleges, including theology. For instance, Stanley Hauerwas, a major Methodist theologian, and John Howard Yoder, a Mennonite theologian, were both on the divinity faculty. Such a state of affairs reflects a religious university strong in its faith and trusting of its students to intelligently and faithfully deal with all issues relevant to a Catholic faith.

On the other hand, BYU wants simultaneously to inculcate the doctrines of the "one true Church" thereby limiting freedom of speech, while also being a university of outstanding academic qualities—the "Harvard of the West"—with the necessity to be an arena of open intellectual inquiry. Mormon culture and society is caught simultaneously between the Charybdis of Mormon distinctiveness and the siren of worldly secularization. These currents lead to the controversies over issues of what to teach and how to teach it.

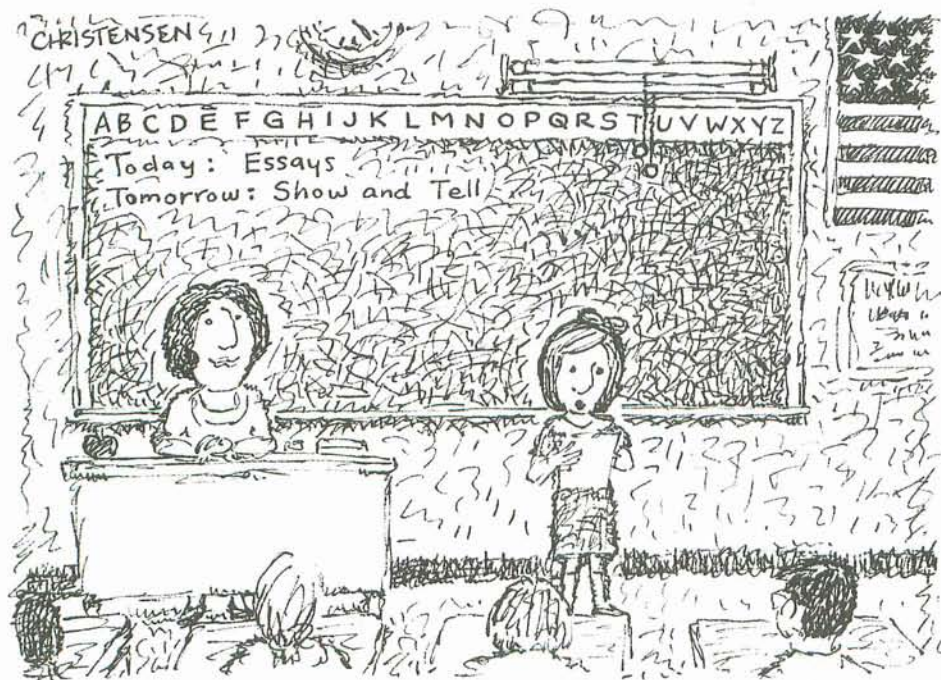
Perhaps the most tragic aspect of this controversy is the effect it has had and will have on the quality of academic programs at BYU.

What BYU is, what its mission is, is unclear. It is incumbent on a university that purports to be a religious institution to make clear its mission. Does BYU want to be a university like Notre Dame, a religious university able to accept accreditation from secular organizations and still remain faithful to its religious roots and to freedom of speech and freedom of expression? Or does it wish to reject accreditation and stress that it is like Bob Jones—a school for a specific body of saints that expects obedience to its dogmas? The choice must be made, and made in an honest, straightforward, and clear way.

RON G. HELFRICH  
Provo, UT

## THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND SCHOOL

QUESTIONING IS A legitimate tool of academia, but it is not necessarily a legiti-



"Have you ever wondered, where did I come from? why am I here? and where am I going after this life is over?"



mate tool of religion. When the resurrected Christ came to the Americas, he chastised the Saints for their debate on baptism. He gave them the manner that they should baptize and then told them to cease their disputations concerning the points of his doctrine.

Religious questioning is not detrimental if it is tempered with "not my will but thine." But when questioning leads to criticism, it is often followed by apostasy.

The Lord has said that his thoughts are not our thoughts and his ways are not our ways. Questioning and criticism are academic tools, but they are not the Lord's way. If the Lord is upset with a doctrine or practice, he will change it through his prophets, not through his scholars.

One of the differences between a university and a church is the acceptance or rejection of questioning and criticism. To a university, questioning and criticism are fundamental rights; to religion, such scrutiny is discouraged.

Many people see BYU professors as quasi-general authorities. BYU should be run like a university rather than an arm of the Church. Give BYU professors academic freedom; give the Church allegiance; but give up the concept that BYU is the Lord's university.

GEORGE FAIRBANKS  
Mesquite, TX

## A 24-HOUR SEMINARY

SCOTT ABBOTT seems to be confused and conflicted about an important concept in his essay "One Lord, One Faith, Two Universities: Tensions between 'Religion' and 'Thought' at BYU" (SUNSTONE 16:3). The concept is "exclusion." Generally in this essay where he defends the importance of reason and the intellect, Abbott condemns exclusionary thought and practices, specifically criticizing leaders of the Church or BYU. He asks why the BYU board of trustees has the need to "assert exclusive control" over school policy (emphasis added here and below). He also fears that the word Mormon will "evoke bigotry, exclusion, narrowness, and sectarianism in nonmembers' minds."

However, in other places Abbott seems fond of exclusivity. In the first paragraph, he tells his readers about his tenure "at an exclusive university" in Tennessee where he taught before coming to the Y. (He also mentions Princeton three times in quick succession to make sure we don't miss the time he spent there.) And in explaining his current pride about being on the Y's faculty, he tells us that some of the Y's "most exclusive scholarships" are now going to women.

How do we make sense of Abbott's contradictory use of this concept? Is he for exclusion or not? Although Abbott professes to be against exclusionary thought and practices in general, he appears to like being part of exclusive groups on a personal level. If he's part of an exclusionary group, he supports exclusion; if he's not, he's opposed to it.

I appreciate Abbott's defense of intellect and rationality and their importance to religious faith. I decided not to accept a scholarship to BYU back in 1962 because I was afraid the Y would be like seminary, twenty-four hours a day. But although I chose not to attend the Y, I've always respected the fact that it is a school with a difference. And I admire and appreciate Church authorities—whether in Provo, Salt Lake, or wherever—who try to help us find the balance between faith and reason. Finding this balance necessarily requires discriminating, even exclusionary, thought and practices. We make choices every day about how we lead our lives and what thoughts we think. We necessarily must exclude some activities and some thoughts. Even if it were good to do so, there simply isn't time enough to do or think everything, and I appreciate the Church's guidance in these matters.

Rather than condemn our leaders as flawed and inadequate, as Abbott does, they should be applauded for attempting to do something that many universities hold in contempt. Despite his varied educational experiences, Abbott seems surprisingly paro-

chial, even naive, about American education today. Most universities don't even try to reconcile faith and reason. Faith is not invited on campus, but is told to stay far away. I have two children attending colleges in the East and Midwest, and I've decided that twenty-four-hour-a-day seminary is much preferable to the twenty-four-hour "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" scene on many campuses. Sadly for the nation, many students are demoralized at college, in all senses of the word, before they begin their adult lives.

CATHERINE HAMMON SUNDWALL  
Silver Spring, MD

## IS WRIGHT WRONG?

DAVID P. WRIGHT'S article ("Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth," SUNSTONE 16:3) in Old Testament studies illustrates the heavy price paid by self-absorbed intellectual provincialism in religious life. He writes with self-righteous indignation, as though he himself discovered all of the main scholarly achievements of Old Testament scholarship over the past two hundred years. Without the self-celebratory "I," he could not have written a line about what are, in fact, perfectly standard and broadly accepted positions in that field. But he does not merely reinvent the wheel. In his remarkable exemplification of the costs of ego-centrism in scholarship—which by definition demands humility to learn both from



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"... I... I think of all the Ffrenssh ch-chocolates, I like the ones in the sh-shhhiny foil the best... (hic)."

others and from one's own limitations and mistakes—he ignores the vast literature of theology devoted to the very problem that concerns him. That Van Harvey's classic *The Historian and the Believer*, in print for decades now, might have helped him in his perfectly reasonable reflections on the conflict between theological truth and historical fact, Wright seems simply not to know. His article is merely naive.

JACOB NEUSNER  
Tampa, FL

## THE WRIGHT DIRECTION

I CAN ATTEST to the process of conversion David P. Wright mentions.

I joined the Church in my mid-teens. It appealed to a nascent conservatism that also led me to volunteer as a precinct worker for Barry Goldwater's presidential candidacy. In my subsequent studies of the scriptures and Church history, my natural inclination was toward the traditionalist view. My conversion to the historical-critical orientation was tortuous and painful. I resisted stoutly for some time. But, slowly, I was forced to admit that the evidence was overwhelmingly on the side of the critical approach.

The critical mode is considered humanistic and those who adhere to it are presumed to be liberals. But, it doesn't have to be that way. It is not necessarily the road to alienation, inactivity, and apostasy. My outlook remains conservative. I'm still a Republican Party activist. In the Church, I would be

considered mainstream. I taught early-morning seminary for fifteen years. I have served in four bishoprics and have filled two missions. My wife doesn't work out of the home, and I have four over-achieving children. My eldest son is on a mission in France. I have a testimony. I have spiritual experiences. I get answers to my prayers.

There is no reason why the traditionalist view should prevail in the Church. It is a mistake that it does. Our objective is to find the truth, yet LDS biblical scholarship is essentially stuck in the nineteenth century. The Prophet Joseph recognized there were problems with the Bible. We should be confronting those problems with the best scholarly tools available to us.

No one expects our scientists to do their research using century-old methods, yet we expect our biblical scholars to work under just such a restraint. Wright's article was a good step in the right direction. I hope to see more scholars explore other critical studies.

MICHAEL RAYBACK  
Boulder, CO

## MODEST PROPOSALS

I HAVE BEEN a SUNSTONE reader for several years and compliment your generally good scholarship and interesting articles. However, a recent issue (16:3), illustrated two small but pervasive problems.

PROBLEM 1—SOLUTIONS. I enjoyed the fine and fascinating analysis by Martha Bradley, "The Mormon Steeple: A Symbol of

What?" Her article, though, is an example of what I often find in SUNSTONE articles: superb analysis; weak solutions. In her case, the solutions are not just weak, they are non-existent. Her thesis was beautifully developed and documented. Indeed, the Mormon steeple is void of any symbolic worship value. But what's the answer? Does she have an idea for a new steeple that could embody and perhaps refocus the Mormon chapel as a House of God and not a "house of community, social, and administrative life"? Can such a design meet the difficult resource allocation decisions that *must* happen in a growing global church where the tradeoffs are not carpet versus steeple, but education versus missionary work versus non-U.S. development where needs are four walls and a roof?

As a leader in a Fortune 10 company, I have come to appreciate that there are many who can analyze a problem and tell me the four thousand things wrong. But few can perform the analysis and with vision carve out meaningful and lasting solutions. Sadly, academia has the same problem. This is an area where SUNSTONE could improve.

Other articles in the same issue perform just as badly. Paul Pollei's "The Decline of Music in Mormon Culture" is an interesting and accurate portrayal of the state of music in the Church. Suggestions, Paul? Nope. I did count one regarding expanding BYU's annual workshop for Church musicians. A weak solution: how will that reach us out here in Wisconsin and beyond? Proposals, SUNSTONE, please!

On the bright side, Lisa Bolin Hawkins's "Life Is Too Full of Surprises," concerning those dreaded, suspenseful "please call President So-and-So" (where So-and-So is a stake president, bishop, or whatever), is not just good analysis, but offers several insightful and—more importantly—actionable solutions. This is the kind of work in which SUNSTONE should be engaged.

PROBLEM 2—NOTES. Excuse me for being a student of Miss Thistlebottom, but we have to improve the way we use footnotes. The footnote is supposed to provide reference material or slight expansions or refinements in definitions. The way the footnote is used in much of Mormon scholarship, and particularly in SUNSTONE, is unacceptable. Any more it seems that core ideas and evidence are not in the text but in the notes.

Consider David P. Wright's fine paper. There are many poor endnote usages in this paper. *The first occurs with endnote 4.* The note is hardly referential; worse, it is tediously long. It talks through the problem of

TELESTIAL KINGDOM  
(detail)



the "spiritual mode as an avenue of historical understanding"—frankly, a paper within a paper. The note has little to do with Wright's main thesis. It is distracting at best; at worst, it is a private little argument. The bottom line? Fit it into the article or eliminate it.

In note 12, Wright commits another noteworthy sin. The discussion in the text deals with why baptism could not have been a *rite de passage* in the Old Testament. Wright's excellent point is that the historical and textual evidence does not support the traditional Mormon view. However, rather than address the pitfalls of blaming these kinds of things on the lost "plain and precious parts" in the body of his argument—certainly a critical argument to a Mormon audience—Wright relegates it to a short note. As an example of his thesis that critical historical analysis can add value to our understanding of the LDS canon, this seems like a key example that ought to belong in the text.

Perhaps the gravest error of all in Mormon footnoting, and certainly present in Wright's article, is the number and degree of cheap shots that take place in the notes. Do SUNSTONE and Mormon writers have to resort to such cowardly approaches as burying scholarly insults in their endnotes? Consider note 59. In the body of the article Wright is telling us what the Book of Mormon teaches about Native American skin color. The note gives a few scriptural references as a good note should, but then Wright refers to John Sorenson's *Ancient Setting* and informs us that Sorenson's "partially critical attempt" to resolve these issues "cannot be accepted." Wright may be correct but (a) the least he can do is give us the evidence (like we good skeptical SUNSTONE readers are going to take his undocumented opinion for anything!) and (b) please keep the scholarly bickering out of the notes.

Come on, SUNSTONE scholars and editors, give us better writing!

DOW R. WILSON  
Elm Grove, WI

## ANTI-MORMON AUTHORS

I AM OPEN minded about the Church, and have been a subscriber to SUNSTONE for some time. Although there have been many faith-weakening articles, I have put up with these because of a general interest in the intellectual and practical side of the Church.

However, there are limits to my tolerance, and SUNSTONE has now exceeded them. Your September issue contains a letter by Deborah Austin Stolworthy, that contains comments about Joseph Smith that can only

promote apostasy: "If a man can so lie to and humiliate his 'elect lady' [Emma Smith] what other lies would he tell? . . . Joseph Smith's grand tradition of lying for the Lord has flourished in the Church ever since. . . ." ("Mercy, Mercy," SUNSTONE 16:3).

These comments are not only faith-weakening, they are intended to be faith-destroying. How can anyone who believes as she does continue, or want to continue, to be a member of the Church? If Joseph Smith was nothing but a liar, and if the Church leaders now continue this "grand tradition" of lying, then Joseph Smith was no prophet and neither are they. And this means neither the Book of Mormon nor the Church can be true.

Lest anyone miss this point, it is stated explicitly in David P. Wright's article. Ignoring all the other extremely persuasive evidence for the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon, he cites such things as the supposed division of Isaiah into three authors as proof that the Book of Mormon cannot be true, and invites the reader to share his conclusion that "A critical study of the Book of Mormon, as I have indicated, shows that Joseph Smith was its author."

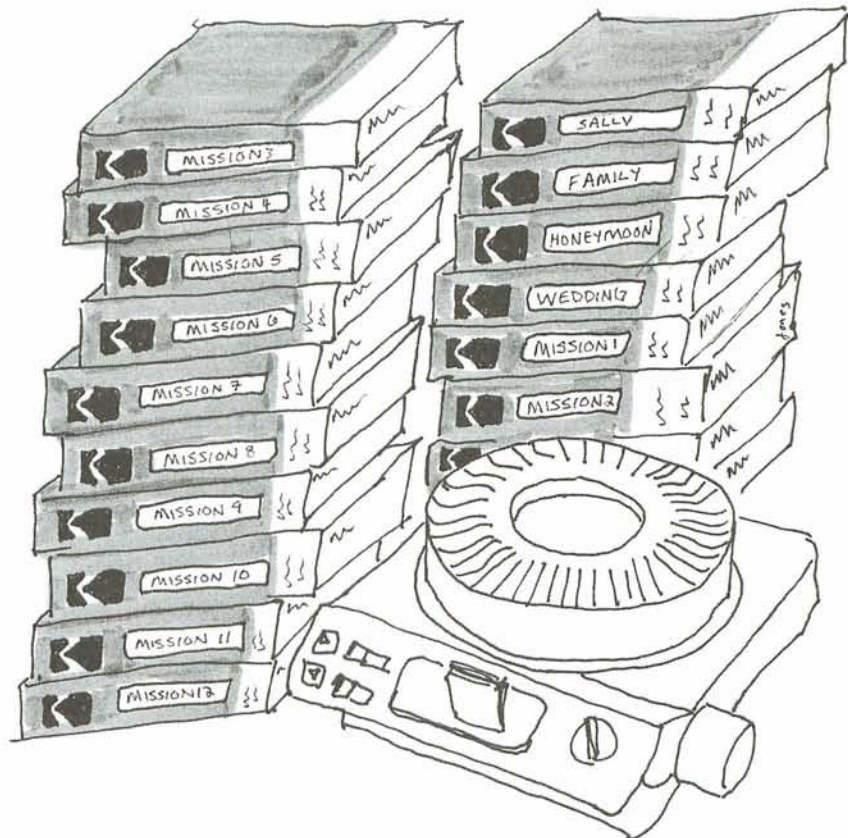
What is going on here? This is the kind of stuff I would expect to read in avowedly anti-Mormon literature, unabashedly aimed at persuading the reader to leave the Church. Undoubtedly it will be gleefully quoted by them in support of their purpose.

The Brethren really do know what they are talking about. One seriously risks losing his or her testimony by getting mixed up with SUNSTONE. How else can I protest? Please cancel my subscription.

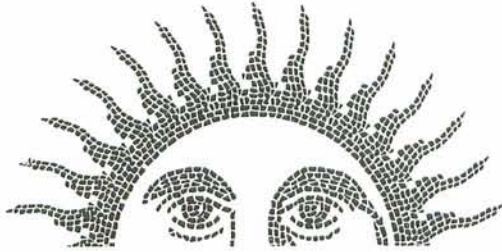
FRANK. J. JOHNSON  
Potomac, MD

Note: See the Give and Take column on page 11 for further discussion of David Wright's article.

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## METAPHORS OF MY FAITH



By Elbert Eugene Peck

RECENTLY, ALAN CANFIELD and I were discussing the traditional symposium session Pillars of My Faith where panelists share their spiritual journeys. Some call it an intellectual testimony meeting, others raw soul bearing. When Peggy Fletcher Stack originally conceived the panel in 1983, she hoped it would be a theological and philosophical exploration of the core tenets that support one's belief, that animate one's life and theology. Some speakers have fulfilled this analytical task with distinction, such as BYU philosopher Chauncey Riddle's "What a Privilege to Believe!" (SUNSTONE 12:3) in which he systematically outlined his beliefs in an inspiring and obviously life-long integration of his heart and mind.

More often the Friday evening session results in weaving belief-changing experiences into spiritual journeys. I find solace, hope, and company that, at core, our intellectual religious deliberations are rooted in individual religious experiences.

For some, the pillars metaphor proves helpful. Kathleen Flake explored which of her beliefs were merely ornamental pillars and which were the load-bearing ones that supported her faith (SUNSTONE 13:5). Others supplant the pillars. Mary Bradford explored the "pillows" of her faith on which she rests her head (in *Leaving Home* [Signature Books, 1987], 59). Elouise Bell preferred feminine "arches" (SUNSTONE 15:5). Faith for Emma Lou Thayne is a "great sea" of friends, family, and Church that buoy her up (SUNSTONE 16:2). A natural, diverse meadow structures Lavina Fielding Anderson's faith (SUNSTONE 14:5).

"What metaphor best depicts your faith?" Alan asked, dragging our heretofore comfortable, abstract conversation into the irk-

somely personal. But, as males, we avoided self-revelation with playful nominations for each other—the gargoyles of my faith, the traffic jams of my faith, the black holes, the hormones, the pinball games, fast foods, sitcoms, bulletin boards, CD players. . . . Yet his question stuck with me, and this spring as I walked to work I searched for metaphors to convey my beliefs. That task is difficult, revealing, and rewarding. What image illuminates my relationship with Christ, my social spirituality, the quiet, on-going dialogue between my lived life and God, the moments of ecstasy, and the fluctuating framework of theological construction?

For example, prompted by sun-lit sprays from the Church Office Building fountain, one day I meditated upon the rainbow—a radiant, transcendent, ephemeral event that retains its brilliance even as a memory. In some ways, my faith is like that: technicolor shimmers of spirit that sustain me through longer black-and-white stretches. But that image apprehended only one small feature of my belief, so I kept searching.

One metaphor I kept returning to was that of a river. My faith is like the course of a river, sometimes surging, other times slow but deep. At times my river of beliefs snakes freely through a flat meadow, its unbounded, meandering path constantly changing. Other times it cascades through layered, grand canyons carved by countless generations before. Deep in those set canyons of tradition my faith follows the awesome routes saints and pilgrims pioneered. Sometimes I am grateful for the hard cutting already done, other times I cut against the restrictive cliffs in eroding dissent. Still other times my faith is but a shallow summer rivulet haunted by the towering traditions that

determine my feeble flow. Then there are the horseshoe river bends now abandoned by new, shorter routes, permanent reminders of where my faith-river once coursed but no longer does. My river of faith continues through impotent nights and indulgent days, colored by the moods of spring, summer, winter, and fall but at root independent of them. Nourished by others' streams and by God's rain, my faith also nourishes others. I enjoy exploring this metaphor because it celebrates the journey (another favorite metaphor) and the diversity of my experiences. It allows me to revisit and incorporate many aspects of my life into one rich image. Still, this metaphor does not completely satisfy. It is too passive and doesn't reflect back my passionate quest for God and religious community, two crucial pillars of my faith.

"Hikes of my faith" profitably explores the deliberate and taxing journey aspects of belief, and, if the mountain climb is with a group, it incorporates the individual vs. community dynamic. Like Parley Pratt's, my faith is also like the breaking sunrise, whose brilliant light gives shadowy objects clear definition, and through the sun (Son) I see and experience life.

Countless other images, large and small, came to mind while sauntering through the streets of Salt Lake: My faith is like unto a growing tree with spreading branches and deepening roots (thank you Alma and, yes, Barbara Walters). With banyon or quaking aspen trees our interconnected social spirituality is included. There is also the tapestry of my faith, and the mural of my faith.

I am vulnerably aware how these metaphors, although illuminating, neglect many of the load-bearing pillars disclosed by this venture, and even together they portray incorrectly my complicated faith. Ultimately all metaphors and language are incomplete. But I have been blessed by this exploration and invite interested readers to join the quest and share their metaphors of faith in letters to the magazine.

Robert Frost said all language and thinking is metaphorical. His favorites were natural images—trees, snow, walls, night. I'll continue my ponderings. Each new image crafted to celebrate one aspect of my faith will distill yet another I had missed, prompting yet one more quest. Similarly, Jesus reeled off a succession of metaphors to describe different aspects of the kingdom of heaven—sown seeds, mustard grains, hidden treasures, pearl searches, netted fish (see Matthew 13). The examined religious life is a life of continual redefinition, of *failed but fruitful* attempts to capture in words and images that elusive but real something only our hearts know. ☞

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## GIVE AND TAKE

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# THE FINAL STEP



By William J. Hamblin

DAVID P. WRIGHT'S essay ("Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth," *SUNSTONE* 16:3) raises two sets of important issues: one set is methodological; the second, literary and historical. This essay will examine only the methodological questions.

A disturbing aspect of Wright's essay is his condescending and inaccurate portrayal of the differences between the so-called "traditionalist" and "historical-critical" approaches to scripture. To me this is a false dichotomy. The correct dichotomy is between people operating under secularist or supernaturalist assumptions. The secularist metaphysic usually denies the existence of God altogether. "Soft" secularists, while admitting that God exists, refuse to allow him to intervene in the world in any meaningful way. The result is that in analyzing historical events or texts, one can effectively dismiss God as a causal factor. Thus, Wright's statement that "the main theoretical recommendation for the critical mode is that it is consistent: it treats all media of human discourse—secular and holy—in the same way" (29b) is another way of saying that Wright's "critical mode" denies God's meaningful intervention in history; all texts are therefore made by humans, with no authentic (i.e. propositional) revelation from God. If the existence of authentic revelation is denied, then revelation can be redefined so as to be reduced to states of mind that can be dismissed as internally induced by hard secularists. God's permitted behavior is limited to creating some vague emotion that is psychologically indistinguishable from creative genius, imagination, feeling good, or falling in love. Supernaturalists, on the other hand, allow God to do whatsoever he pleases. If he wants to perform a miracle, predict the future, appear to a young farm-boy, or reveal truth, he is perfectly free to do so.

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The differences in assumptions and approaches are thus not between the open-minded "critical" thinkers and the dogmatic "traditionalists" as Wright would have us believe. Instead, within both the secularist and supernaturalist paradigms, there are critical thinkers and dogmatists. Wright's attempt to equate all supernaturalists with dogmatic supernaturalists is highly misleading. While there certainly are dogmatic supernaturalists who enter into "little review of what qualifies for evidence in historical study"—assuming, of course, that we can come to an agreement on what is evidence—and whose "conclusions in many respects are predetermined" (29b) there are precisely the same types of people operating within the secularist paradigm. Anyone who has had any contact with the secularized academy must be aware that it is no haven of open-mindedness and rationality. One need only go to a national convention of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature to discover numerous ideologically-based presentations lacking the slightest trace of "critical" thought. The tyranny of dogmatism and political correctness among the secularists is just as pervasive and damaging as it is among supernaturalists.

Thus, the real issue should be: is there a "critical" supernaturalist paradigm that utilizes all the tools of rational discourse to interpret scripture and religious tradition? I believe there is; if so, then Wright's critique of all "traditionalists" as dogmatists is misdirected and irrelevant. Many supernaturalists (such as myself) accept and use the critical historical methods (there are many, not one as Wright implies) as useful tools, while rejecting some secularist assumptions about the texts, methods, and causality. For example, the basic methodology of scholars working with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies centers on careful and critical analysis of scripture and history. They make no attempt to "immunize scripture or claims about historical aspects of

scripture from critical study," as Wright asserts (29b). They may disagree with Wright's conclusions, but is not creative disagreement part of the critical endeavor? If so, why are they excluded by Wright from the community of critical scholars?

Wright lauds what he calls "open-ended inquiry" where "no conclusion is immune from revision." But does this apply only to conclusions that fall outside the secularist paradigm? Are the assumptions and conclusions within the secularist paradigm also open to question, or must we abandon Wright's "willingness on the part of the researcher to acknowledge the possibility that historical matters may be different from what is claimed by a text and the tradition surrounding it" (29a)? This dialectical sword cuts both ways: if we are able to criticize the secularist paradigm, then may we not, with our critical and rational credentials intact, determine after careful study of the evidence that Wright is wrong?

I find it most disturbing that Wright and other secularists are unwilling to admit that it is possible to examine precisely the same evidence that they have seen, using precisely the same rigorous methods of inquiry, and yet come to honest, rational, and defensible conclusions concerning the historical questions surrounding the documents that differ from theirs. Yet this is what Wright seems to be doing when he writes that "Any operation that does not have the critical element [read secularist paradigm] is not historical" (29b). To me, Wright is saying that if you don't come to the conclusions derived from the secularist paradigm, you are not a "real" scholar.

Wright's claim that "the main objection of the traditionalists to the critical mode is that it requires denying supernatural elements and discounting the evidential value of mystical and emotive-spiritual experience" (29b) shows a remarkable misunderstanding on his part. The main objection is that the secularist paradigm reduces all revelation, and all forms of God's intervention in history, to only "mystical and emotive-spiritual experience." For the supernaturalist, God's intervention in history—the resurrection of Christ or Joseph's First Vision, for example—is just as real an historical event as the assassination of Julius Caesar or the battle of Waterloo. God's intervention in history cannot be transformed in a reductionist fashion into mere "mystical and emotive-spiritual experience." If God really did appear to Joseph Smith, or if Jesus really was resurrected from the dead, then it is the secularists—despite all their claims of superior critical analysis and

method—who are ignoring the evidence and whose conclusions are predetermined. If Wright will not allow for the possibility of authentic prophecy because *some* biblical texts can be *interpreted* as not being authentic prophecy, then whose conclusions are based on “preexisting ideas” (29a)?

It should be emphasized that most people, secularist or supernaturalist, base their conclusions about scripture and history not on a first-hand knowledge of the evidence or analysis, but on authority. How many of the readers of *SUNSTONE* who have accepted positions similar to Wright’s can read the Hebrew texts in the original and make a judgment on these literary or historical issues for themselves? The vast majority cannot and have simply accepted the position of the secularists based fundamentally on their *authority*. In this they differ little from the Latter-day Saints who accept the authenticity of the Book of Mormon on the authority of prophets or Latter-day Saint scholars. Of those Latter-day Saints who can read Hebrew and Greek, and can therefore engage the material critically, some take positions similar to Wright’s, but many others do not. On the other hand, within the secularized academic community there is absolutely no consensus on most of the issues discussed by Wright—all they agree on is that the supernaturalists are wrong. If the secularists cannot agree among themselves, why should the supernaturalists jettison their interpretation for “*clear conclusions and evidence generated [by the critical method]*,” which Wright claims exists, but whose existence he has by no means conclusively demonstrated.

Wright’s discussion of prophecy is interesting in that it highlights his refusal to make explicit the logical implications of his position. I’m sure that Wright must be aware that Korihor and Sherem the anti-Christ preached that “no man can know of anything which is to come” (Alma 30:13; cf. Jacob 7), clearly implying to me that such an assumption is antithetical to the gospel. What are we to do with Joseph’s vision when Moroni clearly stated that ancient prophecies were about to be fulfilled and indeed uttered new prophecies about Joseph Smith (Joseph Smith—History 1:33-41)? Since according to Wright there can be no prophecy, what really happened in this vision? Was Joseph lying about what Moroni said? Was it a hallucination? Did Moroni purposefully deceive Joseph? Or was Joseph simply making the whole thing up? It seems to me that accepting the secularist assumption that there can be no prophecy logically requires one to conclude that Joseph Smith was not a

prophet, or to redefine the term prophet so as to make it cognitively meaningless (shaman, mystic, and religious genius are some of the alternative terms that I’ve seen). Is Wright willing to take this logical final step?

Wright would have us believe that the Book of Mormon is a nineteenth-century document, but nonetheless contains profound truths as “a window to the religious soul of Joseph Smith” (32). This is a rather ambiguous statement since even Fawn Brodie and the most radical anti-Mormons would agree that the book is a “window to the soul of Joseph Smith.” The question is: what is the nature of the soul we perceive through this window? Is it the soul of a prophet, lunatic, or con-man?

And what does one do with the golden plates? If there were no Nephites, there were no plates and no angel Moroni. What, then, of Joseph’s claims to have seen and spoken with Moroni on numerous occasions? Hallucinations or lies? If the golden plates existed, who made them? If not, why does Joseph repeatedly claim to have possessed and translated them? How did he convince the eleven witnesses to say they saw the nonexistent plates? I have never seen cogent and rational answers to these questions from secularized Mormons. The only consistent explanations I can conceive of is that if there were no plates, Joseph was a fraud or a lunatic. If this is the case, why follow him at all?

Applying precisely the same assumptions and methods to New Testament studies as those discussed by Wright concerning Old Testament studies, secularists have come to the conclusion that the gospels are all pseudepigraphical documents written after A.D. 70, which bear only a “mythical” relation to the “historical Jesus.” Therefore, Jesus did not perform miracles or prophesy. His suffer-

ing and death atoned for nothing. He was not resurrected, and he is the Son of God only in a vague metaphorical way. Does Wright accept these conclusions of scholars operating under his secularized “critical mode”? If not, is he not guilty of selectively applying the “critical mode” when convenient, precisely as he accuses his traditionalists? If Wright accepts the secularist assumptions here, what is left of the gospel? But if one is free to reject secularist conclusions concerning Christ, why are we not free to reject their conclusions concerning prophecy, the authorship of Isaiah, or the historicity of the Book of Mormon? Indeed, from the secularist perspective, the historical reality of the resurrection is far more absurd than the trivial literary questions such as how many people wrote Isaiah.

The very unremarkable conclusion I come to is that if one accepts secularist assumptions, one naturally comes to secularist conclusions. Wright’s attempt at creating a “post-critical apologetic” becomes a somewhat pathetic effort to retain the form of religion while denying the power thereof (cf. Joseph Smith—History 1:19). Thus, whereas Wright maintains that he is boldly going wherever the “truth” takes him, in reality he is simply coming to the logical conclusions that naturally derive from his acceptance of secularist assumptions, a path down which many before him have trod. Unlike most who walk this path, however, Wright is unwilling to take the final step and admit that if his secularist assumptions are correct, the gospel must be simply untrue. Fortunately, as the ongoing research by many Latter-day Saints demonstrates, there are alternative perspectives that can successfully combine the tools of the historical-critical methods with supernaturalist assumptions. ☒

## THE CONTINUING JOURNEY



By David P. Wright

THE ARGUMENT OF my paper, “Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth” (*SUNSTONE* 16:3, 28), is that there are alternative interpreta-

tions of certain historical matters regarding Mormon scripture that cannot be ignored, that these interpretations get closer to what actually happened in history, and that it is

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consequently necessary for those in Mormon tradition to formulate responses that acknowledge these conclusions and yet cultivate faith. With this—and in view of the concomitant implication that traditional sources of knowledge are not sure sources of historical knowledge—I argued that Mormonism should be willing to entertain the historical critical approach to scripture which, despite its limitations, allows for striving toward a clearer understanding of history. Admittedly, these critical conclusions and approach are more secular or humanistic in character than traditional views and approaches. This disturbs William Hamblin and constitutes the focus of his response. A few points of counter-response are in order here.

(1) Hamblin tried to describe historical criticism as operating by secularist presuppositions in which the supernatural is excluded. My basic definition, it should be noted, did not require this. The definition was based on James Barr's, which should be fully cited here. He takes up separately each of the terms in "historical criticism" and says:

Historical reading of a text means a reading which aims at the reconstruction of spatial-temporal events in the past: it asks what was the actual sequence of events to which the text refers, or what was the sequence of events by which the text came into existence. . . . Such historical reading is, I would further say, "critical" in this sense, that it accepts the possibility that events were not in fact as they are described in the text: that things happened differently, or that the text was written at a different time, or by a different person. No operation is genuinely historical if it does not accept this critical component: in other words, being "critical" is analytically involved in being historical.<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of this I observed in my article that the key marker of the critical method is "a willingness on the part of the researcher to acknowledge the possibility that historical matters may be different from what is claimed by a text and the tradition surrounding it" (29a). To this I added two other defining elements: an open-endedness with respect to conclusions and prioritization of the evidence of contextual study over surface claims by a text and over external traditional claims about a text. Nothing in this definition requires the rejection of the supernatural.

(2) But with this said, a potential secularizing element may be seen in historical criticism as I have defined it. To be willing to entertain different solutions and to be open

to revision of views means that one must seriously consider secularist explanations. Such open consideration compromises conviction that should prevail, it is thought, around Mormon traditional or supernaturalist views. The critical approach may be also considered secularizing because of the pluralism in views that it allows. This is antithetical to the unity that is usually expected in religious tradition.

(3) In view of these difficulties, one with traditional convictions might not be willing to adopt criticism as I have defined it and argue instead (a) that criticism should not be defined so as to entail a willingness to change and revise views, (b) that criticism does not require a willingness to open up all views to revision, or (c) that criticism is not an approach and ideal to be sought after. Hamblin's response seems to accept the second option. He adopts criticism to an extent but, as his discussion appears to indicate, would leave certain issues outside of critical review. If I have judged his position correctly, then questions of consistency and secularization arise even for him. Take the Book of Mormon, for example. There is a range of views that recognize it as an inspired book but judge its translation differently. These include the views that (a) it is a literal translation, much like the King James version is a close translation of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek biblical texts; (b) it is a rather literal translation but that Joseph Smith has used some of his own idioms in expressing the ideas behind the text and that he has occasionally added glosses explaining unclear terms or ideas; (c) it has an ancient core but has been substantially added to by Joseph Smith (well articulated by Blake Ostler; see my note 57); (d) the book is scriptural but is wholly a composition of Joseph Smith. Hamblin does not tell us where he stands on this issue, but his stern rejection of my view (d), his citing of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) as an example of the type of scriptural scholarship he idealizes, and his rejection of being identified as a "dogmatic supernaturalist" indicate that he may have a position somewhat like (b). This view of the Book of Mormon sees certain elements as anachronistic and therefore coming from Joseph Smith. It does not ascribe them to supernatural revelation to the ancient inhabitants of America. Thus it adopts aspects of secularist explanations. This may seem like quibbling—what is the effective difference between view (b) and (a) for the Church? I did, however, hear Professor Robert Millet of Brigham Young University in a Religious Education faculty seminar

on 21 November 1986 say that "he finds saying that there is slight updating in the Book of Mormon more devious than saying it is all modern [i.e., a nineteenth century composition]."<sup>2</sup> His reason for saying this was that the latter view could be easily recognized as wrong, while the former could not and therefore might be attractive and be accepted. Thus, a view as seemingly innocuous as (b) is felt by some to be quite threatening to pure supernaturalist faith.

Another example of a tendency toward secularism is found in a work published by F.A.R.M.S., again, the organization whose research Hamblin prizes: John Sorenson's *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*. Sorenson argues for a limited Central American geography for the Book of Mormon. This contradicts some of the statements of early members of the Church and even Joseph Smith about the geographical setting for the Book of Mormon stories. While Sorenson questions some of the evidence that makes it seem as if Joseph had a specific view about the book's geography, he is forced to say that "ideas he later expressed about the location of events reported in the book apparently reflected his own best thinking."<sup>3</sup> That is, Sorenson and his readers need not put much stock in Joseph's views about geography: a prophet's words that tradition values are set aside with relative ease.

These are just two examples of many that could be raised. They make it clear that even Hamblin's "critical" supernaturalist paradigm—if I have approximated correctly any of the views he shares—already contains secularist tendencies. The questions to be asked here are: What are the secular limits of the "critical" supernaturalist paradigm? How does one determine which supernatural beliefs are amendable and alterable and which are not? Who is to make up this list? What is the evidence that will clearly determine what is to be included among unrevisable beliefs?

(4) Hamblin portrays conclusions as being almost a mechanistic function of presuppositions. Yes, presuppositions have a lot to do with conclusions, but there is much more to the thinking and evaluation experience. If it were merely this then there would be no movement from one paradigm to another. It is better to think of thinking not as a linear movement from premises to conclusion but as a play between various possibilities with the thinker choosing in the end that which makes the best sense to her. In this entertainment of possibilities, various op-

tions may play on stage in one mind and compete with each other. To say that conclusions follow *simply from presuppositions* tends to distract attention from the historical evidence that must be considered.

(5) Observation (3), above, suggests that the supernaturalist-secularist dichotomy proposed by Hamblin may not be proper and true. Another consideration bears this out. His category of secularism is not as descriptive as it is polemical. In this category he effectively places those who maintain belief in the divine, though not in the specific or extensive supernaturalist manner that he argues is suitable, by his disparaging discussion of their misrepresented faith. In this he implicitly defines quality of religious belief being commensurate with the quantity of supernaturalism it fosters or allows. Religious belief that, for good reason, is cautious about accepting traditional or superficial claims about the acts of God is characterized as deficient, lacking, wanting. The fact of the matter is that while critical historical study can lead to reservations about the manifestation of the supernatural in various matters, the faith and hope of a historical critic grows and blossoms in other ways. New and, to him, invigorating understandings of the divine take root which are just as meaningful and motivating as traditional supernaturalist perceptions. The holy is real to him and his love for humanity and creation develops and bears fruit. I would be wary of approximating this secularism and judging it inferior to supernaturalism from a religiously experimental point of view.

(6) The unfortunate thing in regard to the foregoing is that in our religious community there is yet little tolerance for a historical critic's faith. Faith needs support, but there is really none of this officially for students who approach historical questions openly and yet seek to assert faith. Many who might have flourished in a more magnanimous and encouraging community have been pressed socially and emotionally to take the "final step" that Hamblin seems to recommend to me here. I am worried that alienating critical scholars who would constructively imagine new avenues of faith will leave the Church unprepared to deal effectively with critical conclusions like those described in my paper as they urge themselves more and more on the community. ☞

#### NOTES

1. James Barr, *The Scope and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 30-31.

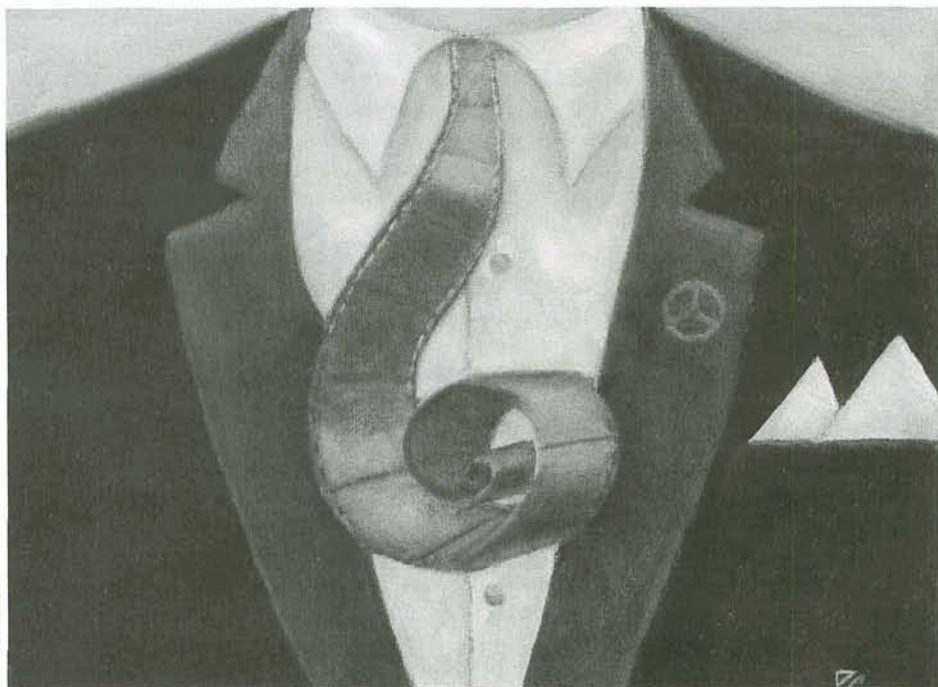
2. My summary of his statement recorded in my journal on that day.

3. John Sorenson, *An Ancient Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo: E.A.R.M.S., 1985) 1.

## TURNING THE TIME OVER TO . . .

Paul Nibley

### HOW MORMONS SEE THEMSELVES IN FILM



Where are our Woody Allens and our Mel Brookses?  
To see ourselves as a Brady Bunch family, where  
parents always know best and there are always happy  
endings, keeps us from examining the real conflicts  
in our lives and finding solutions for them.

IN 1968 I was dating a daughter of a stake president in the San Francisco Bay area. General authorities usually stayed in their home during stake conference visits, and I was always invited to dinner on Sunday afternoon between sessions. One conference visitor was Elder S. Dilworth Young, a fine Mormon poet and a man of great taste. During dinner he asked me what I was going to do with my life when I got out of the military. I said that I wanted to make movies. He asked me what kind of films I wanted to

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make. Like many young dreamers who want to make movies, I had not thought much about what I would put into them. I said, "I want to make films that will help the Church—like the one we saw last night about working in the Sunday School." Elder Young pointed his fork at me and said, "Don't you ever make a film like that." He told me that no matter how clean and wonderful it made us feel, the film was a disservice to the Church.

Elder Young felt that the Mormon community was a wonderful source of dramatic material because of those very conflicts that embarrass more defensive Mormons. He wanted to see movies about dramatic conflict and humor unique to Mormon culture—



movies about Mormons that would succeed in Hollywood. He never got to see one; as far as I know, one has not been made. I have concluded that this is because Mormons are uncomfortable with the requirements of successful storytelling.

ONE of the least understood human experiences is dreaming. We all dream, but all we really know about dreaming is that it is an important biological or spiritual function of the brain. People deprived of dreaming go insane.

Storytelling augments our need to dream. When the listeners or readers become involved in the story, they exercise their emotions, just as they do when they dream. A good storyteller tries to make the experiences in the story as vivid and realistic as possible; thus the audience's involvement becomes more dreamlike. In a dream we experience a strange separation of self that does not happen in waking life. We are *in* the dream: talking, running, fighting, happy, sad, or confused; but at the same time we are *outside* the dream: witnessing it and seeing ourselves from all sides. In a well-crafted story a similar separation takes place—we identify with the protagonist and feel her emotions. At the same time we are outside watching, and we can see things she can't see and know things she can't know.

In a sophisticated form of storytelling—a play—characters act out the story in a controlled setting to intensify audience involvement. Anciently, temples were the finest storytelling facilities, and the modern theater descends from them. At present, film is our most sophisticated form of storytelling. In a dark theater people forget where they are and become totally involved in the story on the screen. They can move through space and time just like they do when they dream. I can't tell you what the rest of the audience was doing the first time I saw *Rocky* because I was too involved in the story myself. I went a second time to watch the audience instead of the film. During the fight scenes at the end, I saw people jerking and twitching like dreaming dogs as *Rocky* danced and punched. Not being a critic, I can't address the artistic value of *Rocky*; but as a filmmaker, I can say that it is storytelling at its best.

I've always wanted to be involved in the kind of storytelling that approaches the dream experience. I want to successfully tell stories about Mormons. I want to tell about the people I know and the relationships I have witnessed or experienced—exciting, passionate stories. However, based on my own and others' experiences, I think the

Mormon community resists such storytelling because they feel the stories might damage the Church's image. "We don't want to air our dirty linen in public" is a common cliché they use.

By comparison, there are many movies about Jewish faith and culture, but that has not always been the case. When there were fewer Jews than Mormons in the United States, the studios that still dominate the motion picture industry today were built by a handful of Jewish immigrants from Germany and Eastern Europe. These men resisted making films about Jews in the same way that most Mormons resist making movies about Mormons. They tried to remain ethnically anonymous and produced movies about their ideas of a perfect Protestant American community. But some courageous Jewish directors insisted on making movies about the people they knew best. In 1929 the first movie with synchronized sound, *The Jazz Singer*, portrayed a Jewish cantor's son who breaks his father's heart by singing jazz instead of canting in the synagogue. It enjoyed huge success even though virtually no one in the audiences, outside of New York and Los Angeles, knew what a cantor was, or anything else about contemporary Jewish culture. In spite of *The Jazz Singer's* success, Jewish writers and directors still met resistance from the Jewish studio heads when they tried to make movies about their own culture. But they persisted.

In the 1940s, when anti-semitism was growing in America as well as in the rest of the world, the Jewish film moguls got together and discussed the idea of fighting back with films that would show what was happening. Several projects were started, but most of them were eventually scrapped. One completed project, *Gentleman's Agreement*, starred Gregory Peck as a reporter who posed as a Jew to write about anti-semitism. *Gentleman's Agreement* broke through the Jewish community's wall of resistance about "airing dirty linen in public." After this film it became more acceptable for Jews to make movies about themselves. In the sixties a floodgate opened, and a lot of Jewish dirty linen was aired, along with some very bleached linen. Directors like Woody Allen and Sydney Lumet started opening up the Jewish community for the world to see.

I think Mormons can learn from Jewish filmmaking experiences, but there are obvious differences between the two groups. The Mormons are a proselyting people trying to share their message to the entire world; the Jews are a closed society, difficult to join even through marriage. Ironically, one would

think that a closed society would remain secret, while a proselyting society would become well known; but that is not the case. Many non-Jews have some idea of what a bar mitzvah is and know that the bride and groom stomp on wine glasses and say *mazel tov* at the end of the wedding ceremony. But how many non-Mormons know what happens when a boy becomes a deacon, or understand the phrase "for time and all eternity"? Everyone knows about the Holocaust, but how many know that the governor of Missouri once ordered genocide against the Mormons? Elder S. Dilworth Young dreamed of people knowing about LDS culture the same way they know Jewish culture. He wanted Mormons to tell stories about Mormons to the world. It wasn't happening in the sixties; it's not happening in the nineties.

ABOUT twenty years after getting career advice from Elder Young, I was teaching screenwriting at BYU. One of my students wrote a charming story about a young Mormon couple: The husband works at the Mission Training Center, and his wife is expecting their first child. When the woman goes into labor early, the doctor prescribes an ounce of vodka every thirty minutes until the labor stops. The young man's challenge was to get vodka in Provo on Saturday evening and then to get his wife to drink it. It was folksy and Mormon and funny. I was very proud that it came out of one of my classes.

I related the screenplay to some high-powered filmmakers at the Sundance workshop for independent filmmakers the following summer. Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn loved the story, and Ring Lardner Jr., a Jewish screenwriter, thought it was delightful.

The next school year the student began production on the film. Unfortunately, he had talked to someone during the summer who had convinced him to eliminate all references to Mormons. The logic was that no one would understand words like *priesthood* and *home teacher* or conversations about missionaries. Because the characters were originally Mormons, and received most of their motivations from that fact, eliminating their Mormonness reduced them to one-dimensional characters. Not surprisingly, the story fell flat.

Regretfully, this was not an isolated incident. I had trouble getting *any* student to write about Mormons at all. Almost every student script was full of people who drank, smoked, had coffee for breakfast, worked as bartenders, slept around, or dealt with

drugs. The characters were suspiciously flat and, when questioned, the students admitted their characters were inspired from movies or television shows. Ironically, they actually knew real people they could have used as models for these characters, but they refused to use them. I might ask, "Do you know anyone who actually sleeps around?" "Yes. A guy I went to high school with." I would ask for a description of the person, and then ask the class to respond. Invariably they would feel that the real character was much more interesting than the fictional one. "Why don't you use the real character in your story?" "I tried, but it just felt wrong."

#### WHY WE CAN'T MAKE FILMS ABOUT OURSELVES

WHY are LDS students unable to write screenplays about Mormons? We have all had the experience of seeing a photograph or videotape of ourselves that we felt did not represent us fairly. When we hear our own voices on a recording or see ourselves in photographs, we are surprised at what we hear or see; we experience an embarrassed, uncomfortable feeling. This is usually a personal experience, but in the case of ethnic or religious minorities, seeing a film about themselves can become a group experience. The documentary film *Sherman's March* provides some useful examples. The following descriptions will not have the power of viewing the film, but I hope they will adequately convey the scenes. To experience the scenes' impact to the fullest, of course, they should

be seen in context during a screening of the entire film, which is now available on video. I recommend watching it with a group of people for reasons that will become clear.

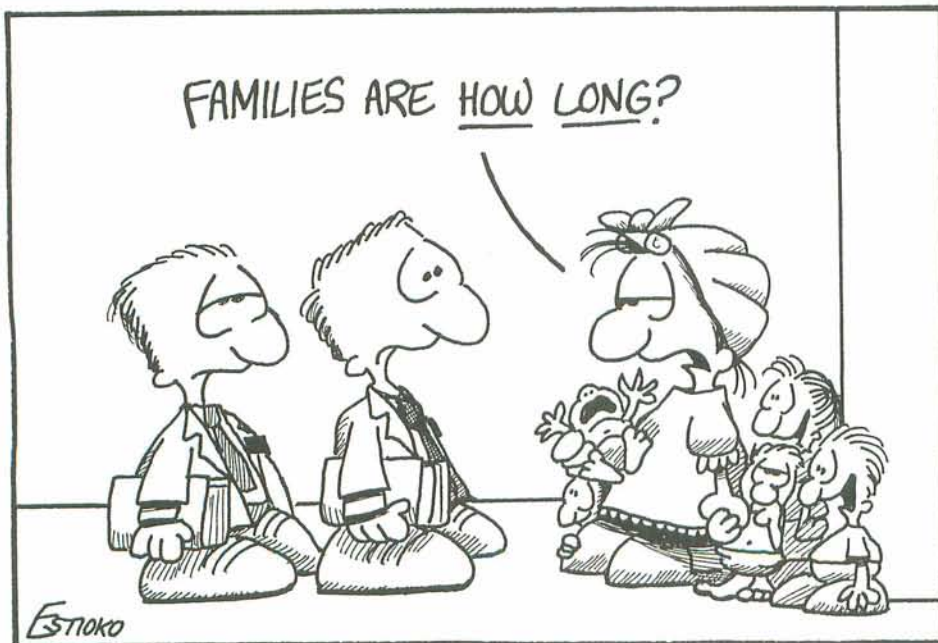
*Sherman's March* was made by a filmmaker who received a grant to make a documentary on General William T. Sherman's march through the South during the Civil War. As filmmaker Ross McElwee started production, he kept digressing to film his own personal life. He is an admittedly neurotic man concerned about his relations with women and obsessed with the possibility of a nuclear holocaust. Though he occasionally shares something about Sherman, most of the film follows McElwee through one relationship after another and through his search for ways to survive a nuclear war.

The first example occurs in the first half of the film. In this sequence, Claudia, his fundamentalist Baptist girlfriend, takes McElwee to a secret survivalist hideout in the mountains. He is allowed to film the survivalists only after promising not to reveal their names or the location of their settlement. At the beginning of the sequence, the survivalists talk rationally about gathering doctors, dentists, and skilled workers together to have a balanced community in case of a nuclear holocaust; but as the sequence continues, they appear more and more paranoid. They wear guns and use sticks of dynamite for target practice. They speak of the government as their "mortal enemy" and ultimately appear so extreme that they elicit laughter from the audience.

What the audience sees is McElwee's *impression* of the people he visited. He talked to the people and filmed them, and then put together bits and pieces of the two days he spent with them. The audience doesn't experience the survivalists the same way he did because in the editing he eliminated a lot of boring conversation, bad camera work, etc. To make his points clear, when he edited the material, he exaggerated his feelings and made things seem more extreme than they were in the actual experience. For example, when Claudia shows him where the survivalists plan to build some tennis courts for the settlement, McElwee asks her if they are going to play tennis during a nuclear attack. Immediately after that question there is a cut in the film—an edit. Her answer is a quick, confident, yes. The audience laughs because it appears that she has entirely missed the irony of playing tennis while atomic bombs are falling. What appears to be her answer is actually an answer to a different question, which has been seamlessly cut out, along with her real response to the tennis question.

At first glance this kind of filmmaking seems unfair and dishonest. If the filmmaker is in the business of propaganda or news gathering, it is unfair and dishonest; but most filmmakers are not making propaganda films. McElwee is telling the story of his own personal fears and nightmares—to get us to feel what he felt. He tries to give us that dreamlike experience of participating and watching at the same time. He wants us to identify with the protagonist—himself—and experience his emotions. For most viewers that is exactly what happens, but a problem arises for those viewers who are closely aligned with the other characters in the film. Instead of identifying with the protagonist, they identify with the people he observes. The result is a confusing mixture of emotions. The fundamentalist Baptist isolationists in the audience will probably feel uncomfortable during the sequence on survivalists and experience defensiveness. On the one hand, the people in the film seem ridiculous and the rest of the audience laughs at them. But on the other hand, what the survivalists say is correct and makes perfect sense to a fundamentalist isolationist. Thus, isolationists will feel some discomfort and conflict.

I have observed that such defensive feelings are not only the fault of the film, but they result from the makeup of the audience as well. If, for example, the above sequence were screened at a meeting of the Aryan Nation or some other isolationist group, the reaction might be one of admiration for the



men in the film and extreme interest in the success of their settlement. It might be followed by a question-and-answer period where people would seriously consider following the example of the people in the film and plan their own community. Possibly, they would feel little if any defensiveness. If, on the other hand, the same individuals were mixed with a larger, politically liberal audience, and heard chuckles and laughter from people who did not share their beliefs, the Aryan Nation members might feel uncomfortable and offended.

The next sequence from the film takes place about a year later in McElwee's life. He has left Claudia and gone through two other women in his search for security and a relationship. An old friend comes to his rescue and helps him find a woman who will share his views on survival and make him happy. She introduces him to Dede, a beautiful woman who teaches at a girls' school. Being a good sport, McElwee goes out with Dede and discusses, as usual, his personal fears about a nuclear holocaust. She informs him that she and her family have foreseen such a disaster and have prepared for it. She shows him where she and her mother have stored food and water in their house, and tells him that they have more dehydrated food in a storage unit. Eventually it comes out that her preparedness is part of her religion—she is a Mormon.

The first time I saw this film it was with a non-Mormon audience in a theater, and my emotional reaction was very strong. I began to suspect that Dede was a Mormon when I saw the powdered milk in her house, but I dismissed it. When I found out that she didn't drink Coke, I was sure that she was a Mormon. When she actually said she was "a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—a Mormon," I was embarrassed, groaned out loud, and sank down into my seat. When she talked about Joseph Smith, I cringed at every cliché that I had used so often myself. I didn't understand my embarrassment, and I didn't consider for an instant that the rest of the audience didn't feel exactly like I did.

Since that first viewing, I have screened the film many times with friends and with classes at BYU. During those screenings I have monitored the reactions of first-time viewers. During this sequence, ethnic Mormons (as opposed to converts) usually experience uncomfortable emotions, as I did. Some cover their faces with their hands. Others scrunch down in their seats, and there is often a groan of embarrassment when Dede says that she is a Mormon. Non-

Mormon audience members, however, show amusement, but no signs of discomfort. Recent converts, for whom the clichés have more meaning, often feel pride in Dede's courage, along with some delight that the joke is on McElwee and his matchmaking friend. The strong, negative feelings that Mormons experience when they see this scene come from the same confusion of identities that happens when we hear our voices on recordings or look at pictures on our driver's licenses, and say, "That's not me!"

Ross McElwee has given us the best version of his experience that he can put together from the material he has shot, and he structured the story to make the viewer identify with him. Even though in some shots the sound and picture are quite poor, he included them because they were essential in relating his experience. Most viewers do identify with McElwee and, like him, find what Dede says quite interesting. Mormon viewers, however, are too close to Dede and identify with her as well as with McElwee. The confusion of emotions from playing two parts at once produces a kind of stage fright in Mormons, and they fear that Dede is saying the wrong thing. They react to the situation as though they are in Dede's place undergoing an interrogation on some kind of member-missionary hot-seat. The fact that she is well prepared and handles the situation nicely is of little comfort.

In my experience, most Mormon viewers are so involved with Dede and their own confused emotions that they fail to understand how McElwee feels about Dede. In the subsequent scene he describes his feelings, but the confusion lingers long enough to make Mormons miss what he says. There is absolutely no reason for Mormons to feel embarrassed or defensive. McElwee describes Dede as an angel and a woman of "purity, strength, and conviction." He rejects the peace of mind that her religion gives her just as he rejects solutions to his problems every time they are offered to him throughout the film. This film is not about solutions; it is about neurotic self-absorption. Non-Mormon viewers quickly recognize that, of all the women that McElwee becomes involved with, Dede is the easiest for him to reject because she is the closest to what he claims to be seeking. If he were to continue his relationship with Dede, he would find actual solutions and no longer be able to wallow in the self pity that he seems to enjoy so much. When I poll audiences about McElwee's description of Dede, Mormons almost never remember it; non-Mormons almost always do.

THE kind of emotional roller coaster that happens when we Mormons see ourselves in films is not pleasant for most of us. Rather than personally experiencing that ride, we tend to trust our public image to advertising people who can make us feel comfortable. To be sure, the Church needs good publicity, and I have no quarrel with the official Church image. But where are our Woody Allens and our Mel Brooks? The official image of what we should be, and wish we were, is not what we are. To see ourselves as a Brady Bunch family, where parents always know best and there are always happy endings, keeps us from examining the real conflicts in our lives and finding solutions for them. And this practice presents a sterile, one-dimensional view of Mormons to the world, and to ourselves.

Storytelling and dreaming are closely connected. Perhaps storytelling is a kind of social dreaming. Individuals deprived of unrestricted dreaming don't function normally, and eventually go insane. What will become of a culture deprived of healthy storytelling? When the angel sounds his trumpet and reveals all "the secret acts of men, and the thoughts and intents of their hearts" (D&C 88:109), only those who have never shared their secrets will be truly embarrassed and ashamed. We have a chance to prepare for that angel by telling our stories before he comes. I hope the Mormon *Gentleman's Agreement* or *Fiddler on the Roof* will soon be made, and the world will have the privilege of knowing about our unique culture, and we will become a healthier, more functional culture at the same time. ☐



#### ECLIPSE

If I break off the cusp  
of this sharp night, it will be  
smooth, holy, like a unicorn's  
horn or a Chinese vase  
of cloisonne. Something tries  
to invade me and I just  
swallow it up, bruised a bit but still  
smiling. The shards of the window  
open like petals in the middle  
of the living room floor.

—HOLLY WELKER

*Joseph Smith's inspired expansion on the narratives of the Last Supper radically shifts LDS sacramental memorial from Christ's death to his life and identifies the present-day partakers of the ritual meal with those disciples who actually associated with Christ before and after his death and resurrection. In doing so, it gives particular meaning to the LDS sacrament as a covenant of discipleship and as a promise of intimate association with the Lord. When appreciated independent of other LDS ordinances, the sacrament can instruct us in and give us access to a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ. Understood within the whole that constitutes the fullness of the ordinances of the restored gospel, the LDS sacrament integrates LDS doctrines of salvation and exaltation in the weekly liturgy of the Church and in the daily lives of the Saints.*

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## SUPPING WITH THE LORD: A LITURGICAL THEOLOGY OF THE LDS SACRAMENT

*By Kathleen Flake*

**F**OR TWO MILLENNIA CHRISTIANS HAVE GATHERED each week, even every day in some eras, and always every spring, to remember Jesus Christ by reenacting his last meal with his disciples. Why did they, and why do we still, do this? Because, of course, he asked us to:

And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. . . . And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. (Luke 22:14–15,19.)

As one scholar has observed: "Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done. . . ." <sup>1</sup> It is, indeed, extraordinary how

many generations have reenacted the Last Supper as the definitive expression of their Christianity and their hope of salvation in Jesus Christ. Both the enormity of this tradition and our radical departure from it invites us as Latter-day Saints to consider the role of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in our own theology of salvation.

Is the sacrament merely what we do to redo what we have already done at baptism? Though not inaccurate, I suggest that this is a too narrow understanding of the role of the sacrament in our theology.

The LDS sacrament liturgy is a profound example of the restorative work of the prophet Joseph Smith. It evidences revelation of both form and content that had been obscured by layers of sacrificial theology and passive memorial. In Joseph's work on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, no less than with the other ordinances of the Church, we can see—if we will look—restoration of truths that are "plain and most precious" (1 Nephi 13:26). These truths deserve our attention. I ask you to look again at our sacrament by considering three questions. First, what are Latter-day Saints *remembering* when we "do this in remembrance"? (Luke 22:19). Second, what is it we do

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when we “do this”? And, finally, why do we “do this”? What promise do we obtain by remembering him this way?

WHAT ARE WE REMEMBERING  
WHEN WE TAKE THE SACRAMENT?

*Added insights from the Restoration forcefully redirect one's attention from Christ's suffering and death on the cross to “this hour” when he was with them.*

ALTHOUGH one can say that all Christians are remembering Jesus Christ when they reenact the Last Supper, their ways of remembering him vary greatly as does their understanding of him and the way in which he redeems them. Such great differences in eucharistic theology and practice notwithstanding, Catholic and Protestant liturgies have an identical focus. They do not so much recall the events of the Last Supper as the events that followed it, namely, Christ's suffering and death on the cross. The same cannot be said of the Latter-day Saints.

To appreciate the extent to which LDS sacramental memorial diverges in content and, therefore, meaning from that of other Christian traditions, one must first realize that Latter-day Saints do not rely exclusively upon the New Testament to understand Christ's command to remember him by breaking bread and sharing the cup. Rather, the LDS obligation to remember Christ derives from two accounts of this ritualized meal: the one in the East on the eve of his death and the other in the West after his resurrection. In adding this second narrative as a basis for the LDS sacrament, Joseph Smith forever separated us from traditional Christian understandings of the Lord's Supper. Moreover, the theology expressed in what we must now call the “second” meal results in a subtle, but radical, shift of focus from the circumstances of Christ's death to the events of the meal itself.<sup>2</sup> In Third Nephi, we read:

And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the disciples: . . . this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you. And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, *which I have shown unto you*. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you. . . . [A]nd they [the twelve disciples] gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled. (3 Nephi 18: 5, 6–7, 9, emphasis added.)

Thus, while LDS theology retains the context of the Christian sacrament as a meal (“and they were filled”), the meal no longer memorializes one event that occurred immediately prior to Christ's passion. Rather, the LDS sacrament includes in its tradition a second meal occurring in the West *after* his resurrection. Christian tradition is further altered by the second meal's definition of “this body” as “my body, which I have shown unto you.” What the Nephites were being shown and commanded to remember was, of course, the resurrected body of Christ, not the body about to be sacrificed on the cross. Hence, when Latter-day Saints gather at the table each Sunday,

we have this second meal's post-passion context as a part of our understanding of what is to be remembered when we “do this in remembrance” of Jesus Christ.

How, then, is this second meal to be reconciled with what we must now call the “earlier” meal in Jerusalem? Joseph Smith's extensive elaboration upon the New Testament text is instructive. The Joseph Smith Translation of Mark's Supper narrative reads:

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake . . . , and gave to them, and said, *Take it and eat. Behold, this is for you to do in remembrance of my body; for as oft as ye do this ye will remember this hour that I was with you.* And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, *This is in remembrance of my blood which is shed for many, and the new testament which I give unto you; for of me ye shall bear record unto all the world. And as oft as ye do this ordinance, ye will remember me in this hour that I was with you and drank with you of this cup, even the last time in my ministry.* (JST Mark 14:22–24, italics are Joseph's additions or changes.)

In this expanded text, Jesus refers to his body as emblematic of “this hour that I was with you” and, by implication, not emblematic of his imminent suffering and death. With respect to partaking of the cup as well, it is understood as memorializing “this hour that I was with you and drank with you . . . even this last time in my ministry.” In this way, JST Mark places the entire ordinance in the context of remembering “this hour.” Hence, both Third Nephi and JST Mark emphasize the immediacy of the disciples' experience with Christ in time. This constitutes a theologizing on the sacrament that forcefully redirects one's attention from Christ's suffering and death on the cross to “this hour” when he was with them. This is a unique theology of the Last Supper and deserves our attention if we would participate meaningfully in the sacrament.

What is it about “this hour” that makes it worthy of being the singular memorial of Jesus' ministry in the East and the West and his continuing power as our Redeemer? The nature of the audience provides the first clue to the significance of “this hour.” In the East, the intimacy of the gathering is unmistakable. Even in Third Nephi, though the numbers are greater, those invited to partake are a select group (3 Nephi 9:13) and are prepared (3 Nephi 11–17) before the twelve disciples are sent for the bread and wine for the meal. Possibly because the numbers are larger, the text is explicit about the exclusivity of those who may share in this meal:

And now behold, this is the commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it; . . . if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood ye shall forbid him. Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out from among you, but ye shall minister unto him and shall pray for him unto the Father, in my name; and if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in my

name, then shall ye receive him, and shall minister unto him of my flesh and blood. But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people, for behold *I know my sheep, and they are numbered.* (3 Nephi 18:28–31, emphasis added)

From this passage we understand that only disciples, or true followers of Christ, were present at the first meals, and that only disciples may partake in future meals as well. While the unrepentant are welcome to commune with Christ's disciples ("ye shall minister unto him and pray for him"), only true disciples may partake of the ritual meal emblematic of Christ's communion with them. This creates an intimate and separate group. They are known and numbered. Hence, one of the things we learn from this second meal is that those who come to the table must come as disciples.

This, then, is the beginning of the answer to our first question. Latter-day Saints come to the sacrament table to remember Christ as he was in "this hour" when he was with his disciples. They do not "do this in remembrance of" him only on the cross or even at Gethsemane, but in the context of these two accounts of meal fellowship with his most devoted followers. Though this should alert us to the fact that the table differs from the baptismal "gate by which ye should enter" (2 Nephi 31:17), the significance of "this hour" is not in who is invited, but rather in what he did. In the East, immediately after the institution of the sacrament, he washes the disciples' feet and admonishes:

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. (John 13:13–16.)

In "this hour" in the West, he heals and sanctifies the multitudes (3 Nephi 17, 19) and, immediately after the institution of the sacrament, he admonishes: "Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do . . . even so shall ye do unto the world" (3 Nephi 18:24–25). These actions inform our sacramental memorial. We remember him in "this hour" as he explicitly models the life to which each disciple is called. In this way, the sacrament ritualizes the identity of the LDS community, defining its internal cohesiveness and its external boundaries primarily in terms of discipleship to Christ, not communion with each other.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, in "this hour" the Lord makes the promises by which we are enabled to live the life he modeled. John's record is the most complete expression of them:

- Let not your heart be troubled: . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14:1, 3.)
- And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, . . . If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. (John 14:13, 14.)

- Keep my commandments. And I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; . . . I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (John 14:15, 16, 18.)
- He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him . . . and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. . . . Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:21, 23, 27.)
- As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:9–11.)

In these promises of future intimacy spoken on the eve of separation, we find the meaning of our LDS sacrament memorial: "And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you" (3 Nephi 18: 7, 11).

To share a meal is to share a life, it is sometimes said. When we gather to the table to share this meal we call "the sacrament," we come as disciples who would share in Christ's life and, hence, seek fulfillment of the promise of association symbolized by the table. Though he had to die to obtain this promise for us, we do not believe that it is in his death on the cross that it is fulfilled. As Paul reminds the earlier Saints: "For if, when we were enemies [or, in our sins without benefit of Christ's atoning sacrifice], we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10). In other words, the LDS sacrament illustrates the promise of a shared life with Jesus Christ—"this hour that I was with you"—as opposed to baptism's promise of a shared death and rising from the dead with Christ.

In baptism, particularly LDS theology of baptism for the dead, we have the expression of our belief in the universality of the salvation offered by the death of Christ on the cross. This is a doctrine of salvation through the grace of Christ: "For all the rest [excepting those who chose a second death] shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb, who was slain. . . . That through him all might be saved. . ." (D&C 76:39, 42). We also believe, however, that "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3; see also D&C 20:30–31). The promises Christ made to his disciples, when he taught them the sacrament before and after his death, pertain to exaltation not merely salvation. They hold out the possibility of intimate association with him—an association imaged for us in a ritualized meal patterned after his Last Supper with those whom he loved and who loved him. Those who would be his disciples today are likewise invited to the table to obtain these promises. But, we must now ask, how can these ancient promises be realized by us? How does our partaking in the ritualized meal offer the promise made to others so long ago at the actual meal?

## WHAT WE DO WHEN WE "DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE"

*The sacrament prayers direct our action over the bread and cup to explicate a theologically whole—works and grace—response to the memory of Christ.*

AGAIN, because our soteriologies differ, Christians do not have the same answer to this question. Not only do we differ in what we remember, we differ in what we do when we remember. For Catholics, the Eucharist has traditionally been a dual action of sacrifice. First, the communicants bring to an altar a sacrifice of the fruits of the earth: bread and wine. Second, in the transubstantiation of these elements by priestly mediation, Christ's sacrifice is reenacted. The promise of the Eucharist as understood in Catholicism, namely, becoming the body of Christ, is obtained by *receiving* the bread and wine which have become the body and blood of Christ.

This great emphasis on sacrifice and real presence in the Eucharist led to a number of devotional practices and theological positions that figured prominently in the causes of the Reformation. The Reformers, however, protested themselves into an opposite extreme: the sacrament is not necessary for salvation. Because of their theology of salvation by grace, the Protestant liturgy constitutes a *memorial* to Christ's having already done his saving work, a work that was fully accomplished on the cross. Therefore, Protestants come to the sacramental table to praise, not petition with priestly sacrifice. Latter-day Saints do neither. We believe that there are promises yet to be obtained through the sacrament, and we believe we obtain them by ourselves making promises at the table and then keeping them in our daily lives. For us, then, the sacrament is most essentially a covenant-making activity. The thing that we do when we "do this in remembrance" is to covenant, not sacrifice or even praise.

The role of covenanting in Christian liturgy is an old debate of increasing interest to modern scholarship. As begrudgingly stated by one scholar, "No one can deny that 'covenant' is a prominent theme in connection with the Lord's Supper, or at least the Greek term usually translated as 'covenant.'" While "no one would deny" prominence of covenant in the sacrament, most have questioned its meaning and relevance. The central issue in this debate is the question of mutuality in the covenant relationship. For some it challenges the core belief in salvation by grace alone or unconditional election. For others, it unacceptably implies limits on God's omnipotence or presumes a reciprocity *per se* incompatible with divinity. LDS theology finds neither concern an impediment:

Ancient and modern scriptures also teach the unconditional and universal gift of the resurrection, while at the same time indicating qualitative distinctions, for there is a higher "resurrection of life" (John 5:29), and there is the "first resurrection" of the faithful before all the rest are called up (Revelation 20:5). God reserves his greatest blessings not for those professing, but for those obeying (Matthew 7:21–23). . . . Here [in Exodus 19's account of the Sinai covenant] are mutual promises, and it is irrelevant that this is not an agreement

between equals. Of course God's majesty and glory are on one side, and Israel's fallible abilities on the other. Nevertheless, the covenant is contingent.<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding our emphasis on covenant theology, it is important to note that the LDS sacrament prayers allow for the traditional distinction between covenant, with its implication of reciprocal promises, and testament, as in "last will and testament" and, therefore, a one-sided action.<sup>5</sup> The prayers make this distinction in the different covenants associated with the bread and water, respectively. The prayer over the bread balances the three-fold requirements—remembering, taking the name of, and obeying Christ—against the promised blessing of the Spirit and is in the model of Sinai covenanting. The blessing over the water, however, requires only that the partaker "always remember him [the Son]" in return for the Spirit. This is more akin to the one-sided action of "testament" or gift. To consider this difference a rhetorical device to avoid redundancy in composition is to ignore the decision to employ two prayers. If convenience were the only goal, then one prayer would have achieved it. Stronger evidence than structure exists for concluding that these differences are intentional and have theological significance, however.

The LDS gloss on the old grace-versus-works debate is summed up in the Book of Mormon's dictum: "for we know it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:24). The "all we can do" is explicated in the prayer of the bread with its imposed obligations to remember, take the name of, and to obey Christ. "After" that, the principle "by grace that we are saved" is presented in the prayer over the water by its "witness that they do always remember." Significantly, the lack of obligation to do other than remember is associated with the prayer more explicitly referential to Christ's sacrifice of "shed blood for them [the partakers]." Hence, the principle of grace is attached in the prayer, as it is in theology, with Christ's gift of himself in propitiation for sin. As discussed, the prayer over the bread has been theologized to explicitly disassociate it from commemoration of his death. In this way, the prayers direct our action over the bread and cup to explicate what is, for Latter-day Saints, a theologically whole—works and grace—response to the memory of Christ. Moreover, there is no justification for viewing these prayers as capable of performance independent of one another; they together constitute the covenant that enables the disciple to follow, even to associate with, the Master. But note, in this theology, sacramental remembrance is required, even to benefit from grace. The role of memory in sacramental covenant-making is key to understanding how the sacrament operates to obtain for us the promise of the covenant.

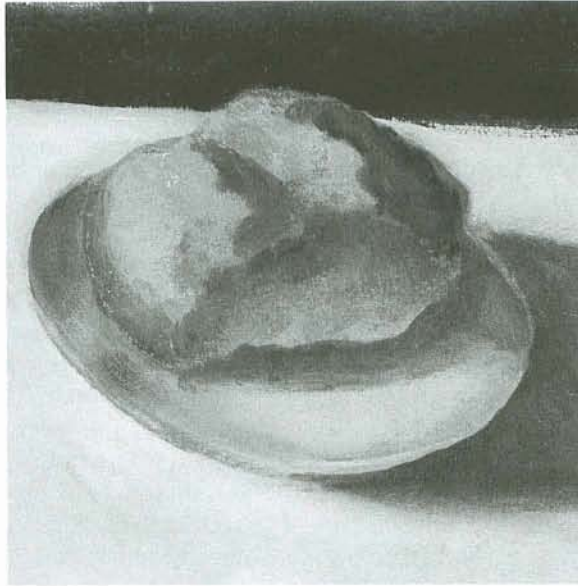
## COVENANT AND MEMORY

*We remember that we may be remembered, we promise that we may obtain promises, we keep our promises so that God will keep his.*

ON one level, sacramental remembering employs memory's power to turn our feelings and intentions toward the

object of our memory—Christ. This is, however, the most superficial aspect of memory's role. The sacrament is not merely an expression of our gratitude for or even of our dependence upon Christ. Neither is it simply a ritualized reenactment of an historical event. The sacrament is an ordinance and, as such, is an instrument designed to mediate salvation. It exists to make the saving power symbolized by a past event present with us now. Otherwise, like a gravestone or other monument, the ritual reenactment of the Last Supper would simply mark what was, not invite and enable it to be again for us who need it, too. For example, the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C., memorializes the United States' indebtedness to Thomas Jefferson for crafting the Declaration of Independence. We do not, however, expect this monument to actualize Jefferson's historical deed. It has happened already; it need not happen again. Moreover, while the monument may inspire us to want to be better citizens, it certainly does not bestow upon us Jefferson's political brilliance. In contrast, however, the memorial action we call the sacrament is designed to make the past present. Partaking of the sacrament in imitation of the Last Supper is meant to actualize for us the promise of "this hour that I was with you." It is meant to give us access to the blessings promised at the earlier meals when the Lord commanded all future disciples to remember him by coming to the table.

Understanding what the Lord was asking for when he asked us to remember him this way requires us to look to Old Testament understandings of memory and memorial. Jesus was, after all, a Jew speaking to Jews when he established these rituals, and his teachings had meaning to them and continue to have meaning for us in that context. In his definitive work on the meaning of memory in the Old Testament, one scholar concludes that "Israel celebrated in her seasonal festivals the great redemptive acts of the past both to renew the tradition and to participate in its power."<sup>6</sup> In other words, when each successive generation of Israel rehearsed its history at Passover and its other



O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee  
in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ,  
to bless and sanctify this bread  
to the souls of all those who partake of it,  
that they may eat in remembrance  
of the body of thy Son,  
and witness unto thee,  
O God, the Eternal Father,  
that they are willing to take upon them  
the name of thy Son,  
and always remember him,  
and keep his commandments which he  
hath given them,  
that they may always have his  
Spirit to be with them.  
Amen.

(Moroni 4:3; D&C 20:77.)

great feast days, it was remembering that Jehovah brought their forebearers out of Egypt and chose them as a people by giving them the law. Each new generation participated in this reenactment in order to invoke the blessings associated with those historic events on themselves, namely, to be delivered and to be chosen. In sum, Israel remembered God in order to invoke God's remembrance of his promises to Israel. In the first century of the Christian era, after a millennia of feasts, the Jews still prayed at Passover: "Remember us on this day, Lord our God, for prosperity, and visit us on it for blessing, and save us on it for life."<sup>7</sup> In the Old Testament, "the essence of God's remembering lies in his acting toward someone because of a previous commitment."<sup>8</sup>

For centuries, Israel gathered in homes and in temples to remind God of his promises in Egypt and Sinai as means of asking him to "act toward" them because of his previous commitments. "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm," he had promised in Egypt, "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God. . . ." (Exodus 6:6-7). By the seventh century B.C.E., however, Israel was about to be overcome by its enemies and prophets arose to explain why: "Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him . . . sin. . . . For Israel hath forgotten his Maker. . ." (Hosea 8:11, 14, emphasis added). Israel had made the fatal mistake of seeing its status with God as part of the immutable, cosmic ordering of the world. They had come to believe that God's having chosen their forebears was an

accomplished fact that only needed memorializing, not renewing.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, their remembering God had become only a psychological recollection of him, not an acting toward him. This was not memory at all: "Israel hath forgotten his Maker," said Hosea. To cure this lapse of memory, the prophets demanded that Israel *act* toward God, not just assume his acting toward them based on their status: "turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and



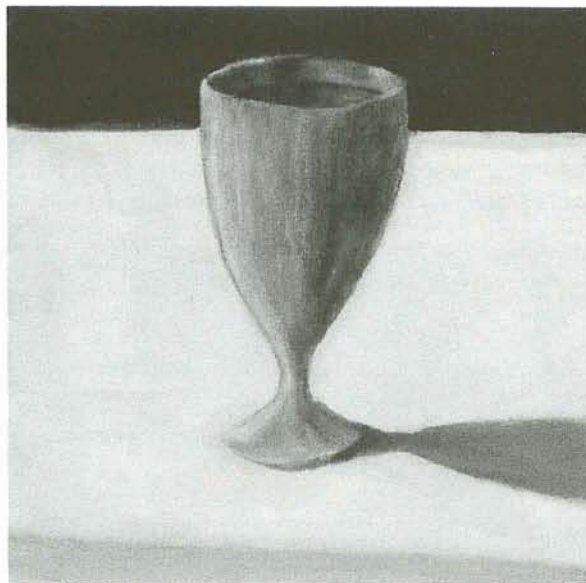
turn unto the Lord your God . . . ” (Joel 2:12–13). This demand by the later prophets to include personal devotion and obedience in Israel’s remembering of God is understood by some scholars as the introduction of covenanting into Israel’s cultic forms (or ordinances):

The covenant represents the refusal of prophets and their disciples to encapsulate Yahweh’s relationship with his people in institutions, and to insist that it depends on a moral commitment on both sides which needs to be continually reaffirmed in faithful conduct, not taken for granted . . . as if it were part of the order of nature.<sup>10</sup>

Latter-day Saints would disagree and say that covenants were in existence long before the seventh century B.C.E., but they would emphatically agree that realizing God’s promise of a saving relationship to his people “depends upon a moral commitment on both sides which needs to be continually reaffirmed in faithful conduct.” The essence of what we do when we, as latter-day disciples, remember the Lord’s saving actions and promises at the table, is to covenant—to remember that we may be remembered, to promise that we may obtain promises, to keep our promises so that God will keep his.

Therefore, it is significant to us that the most recent New Testament scholarship has concluded that the prototype for the Eucharist is the *todah*, a “celebration of covenant” that “spiritualized” Israel’s annual cultic sacrifices.<sup>11</sup> Emphasizing the *todah*’s function as a thank offering for deliverance, one Christian scholar goes so far as to say that it “shows that the essential thing is the surrender of self to God the Savior in a proclamation of the covenant of God.”<sup>12</sup> It is difficult for Latter-day Saints to appreciate the challenge this conclusion presents to traditional Christian theology and praxis. For nearly 1,600 years the Eucharist was primarily, if not exclusively, understood by Christians as a sacrificial offering in expiation of sin and, after the Reformation, a memorial to God’s having expiated our sins. Now, however, the most recent scholarly research has concluded that early

Christian communal meals were related to “covenant



O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee,  
in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ,  
to bless and sanctify this wine  
to the souls of all those who drink of it,  
that they may do it in remembrance  
of the blood of thy Son,  
which was shed for them;  
that they may witness unto thee,  
O God, the Eternal Father,  
that they do always remember him,  
that they may have his  
Spirit to be with them.  
Amen.

(Moroni 5:2; D&C 20:79.)

sacrifices” rather than to other types of cultic meals that were characterized to a greater extent by expiation for sin. The Supper was basically a meal celebrating the definitive covenant of God with his new people: the gift and reception of a “food” rendered symbolically present to the believers the covenant that had been sealed by the fidelity of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

If it is to be fully understood, the LDS sacrament must also *not* be seen as exclusively related to the “expiation of sin,” or as merely a renewal of the baptismal covenant.

#### THE CONTENT OF THE COVENANT: OUR PROMISE

*The sacrament takes these elemental commitments of obedience and testimony and demands that they be performed in remembrance of Jesus Christ.*

FROM its earliest beginnings, the LDS church has understood God’s saving work as always occurring in the context of covenant. Indeed, the Church understands its very origination in the necessity of mending broken covenants (D&C 1:15–17). We have also always articulated our spiritual experience and expectations almost exclusively in terms of covenant. For example, consider the instruction on how the Church was to make its “exodus” to the Rocky Mountain West:

The Word and Will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel in their journeyings to the West: Let all the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and those who journey with them, be organized into companies, with a covenant and promise to keep all the commandments and statutes of the Lord our God. . . . And this shall be our covenant—that we will walk in all the ordinances of the Lord. (D&C 136:1–2, 4.)

Of course, this evokes almost verbatim the scene described in Deuteronomy 29:10, 12: “Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel. . . . That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD. . . .” No less than for Old Testament Israel, covenant theology for the LDS church “is a

central theme that serve[s] to focus an entirely idiosyncratic way of looking at the relationship between God and his chosen people, and, indeed, between God and the world.”<sup>14</sup> Hence, those LDS ordinances that enable the relationship between God and his chosen people—baptism, ordination, sacrament, endowment, sealings—are each characterized by an exchange of covenant promises. While these promises are related, each is also unique to the ordinance it accompanies. To ignore these differences is to miss, even misunderstand, the obligations we assume with each ordinance. To not understand an obligation puts one at risk of not fulfilling it.

When we partake of the sacrament, we covenant that we “are willing to take upon [us] the name of [the] Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given. . .” (D&C 20:77). This mirrors the covenant made at baptism, which Nephi calls a “witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ . . . and are willing to keep [the Son’s] commandments . . .” (2 Nephi 31:13, 14). In the temple, too, we promise to obey and to witness of the Son. This oath of naming/witnessing and obeying is required of all who would benefit from the covenant Christ made to the Father that he would redeem us. Indeed, it is so fundamental that eventually every knee must bow (or obey) and every tongue confess (or witness) that Jesus is the Christ (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Mosiah 27:31; D&C 76:110). These commitments are first undertaken by us at baptism and we are expressly required to recommit to them at every formal, developmental step in our relationship with God. Their importance cannot be overestimated. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper, what must be stressed is that the presence of these commitments in every covenant we make does not mean that they constitute the only covenant we make. Neither does it mean that the kind of obedience and witness required of us remains constant as we develop in our relationship with God. Or, more specifically, when we take the sacrament we are not simply renewing our baptismal covenant to witness and obey Jesus Christ. Rather, the sacrament takes these commitments and demands that they be performed in remembrance of Jesus Christ.

Consider the emphasis in the sacrament prayers where we are told that we “eat *in remembrance* of the body of th[e] Son, and witness . . . that [we] are willing to take upon [us] the

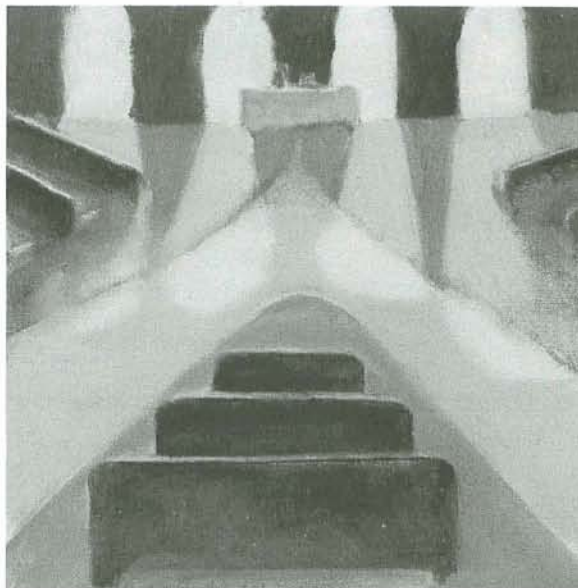
name of th[e] Son, and [to] *always remember* him, and keep his commandments which he hath given [us]. . .” (Moroni 4:3). And over the water we covenant: “that [we drink] *in remembrance* of the blood of th[e] Son, [and] . . . witness . . . that [we] . . . do *always remember* him . . .” (Moroni 5:2). Note the emphasis on memory. Not only do we remember in obedience to his original command to “do this in remembrance,” but the

sacrament itself contains the covenant committing us to remember. Moreover, in these prayers the vows of obedience and testimony are explicitly made a part of the vow to remember Jesus Christ. Thus, the promise to remember is not only the context of the covenant, but it is the central vow of the covenant.

At first, this may seem a tautology: How else can we obey and testify if we do not do it as a function of remembering Jesus Christ? Yet we see it all around us and in ourselves. Many Saints obey the Word of Wisdom, motivated by its benefits as a health code. It is a matter of logic to them: “If I do this, I won’t get cancer.” Others pay tithing, motivated by its promise of temporal security. It becomes an investment of sort: 10 percent for a stake in the open “windows of heaven.” Sometimes obedience is a matter of convenience: “If I stay home this morning, everyone will ask why I wasn’t in church.” Obedience here becomes the path of least resistance; sometimes it’s simply easier to obey than not to obey. There is, of course, an enormous amount of obedience offered in

fear: “If I don’t do this, God will get me.” Guilt and need are also common motivators: “If I don’t do this, God will abandon me.” Finally, some obey without thought: “Just do it,” their t-shirts exhort. This obedience has virtually nothing to do with thinking of him, much less remembering “this hour.”

What about testimony in the absence of memory? This seems the most impossible, yet it is just as pervasive. The same Saints who obey out of logic, perceived benefit, and fear will often rise on the first Sunday of the month to witness the rationality, the benefit, or the protection offered in various commandments. They will do so without ever relating their experience to an understanding of Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord. Don’t misunderstand my point here. This is obedience. This is witnessing. It is the action required by baptism. These are good people bearing one another’s burdens, giving of their substance to the poor, and, with their lives more often than their words, testifying of God’s goodness as they receive rewards



Joseph Smith literally rewrote the traditions of both Christians and Jews and in doing so created a system of belief and a religious institution that merges Old Testament notions of tribe and covenant with New Testament notions of discipleship and grace.

of obedience to the law. They "are in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, . . . have entered in by the gate" (2 Nephi 31:18). But I suggest that these are also "they who receive of his glory but not of his fullness. These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus. . ." (D&C 76:77, 79). They are believers in, not disciples of, Jesus Christ.

Entering into and living the sacramental covenant distinguishes the disciple from the baptized believer. The disciple can never dissociate an act of obedience from memory, or "from an acting toward God." Obedience always occurs in the context of remembering him, not out of guilt or obligation or perceived benefit, but out of desire and love for the Master personally. In the New Testament this principle is often taught in Christ's inviting his believers to disobey the commandments as they understand them and to follow him: to harvest and eat on the Sabbath, to take up a bed and walk on the Sabbath, even to admit everyone—"bond and free, male and female"—into the covenant. Hence, to obey becomes an act of personal and immediate responsiveness to Christ. It is ultimately, at its finest, an expression of love. Christ's last recorded words to his chief disciple are instructive. "Simon, lovest thou me?" he asks and is answered three times. And, of course, during the Last Supper he taught us: "If [you] love me, [you] will keep my words . . ." (John 14:23). This is the oneness Christ has with the Father and which defines him as he who "suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11). This is the oneness Christ demands of disciples in the last hours he spent with them (John 15: 9–15; see also John 17 and 3 Nephi 19). We, too, are asked to assume this obligation by covenant. When we come to the table each Sunday, we express our intention to be disciples, not merely believers. When we remember him this way, we are asking him to do for us what he did for the disciples who joined him in those first meals.

#### THE CONTENT OF THE COVENANT: HIS PROMISE

*We come to the table hoping for communion  
with Christ, not just in that fleeting moment,  
but in time and throughout eternity.*

**T**HE role of the sacrament in the life of the Church is not only to impose upon the faithful a covenant obligation of

discipleship, but also to offer them the benefits of discipleship. Here it is easiest to see the difference between the baptismal and sacramental covenants. Consider that in each of these ordinances we have "pictures" of the promises offered to those who receive them. In baptism we are presented with a "picture" of sharing in Christ's death so that we may share in his new life. We ritually die Christ's death by being completely immersed in the watery grave:

[W]e are buried with him by baptism into death. . . . For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Romans 6:4, 5–6.)

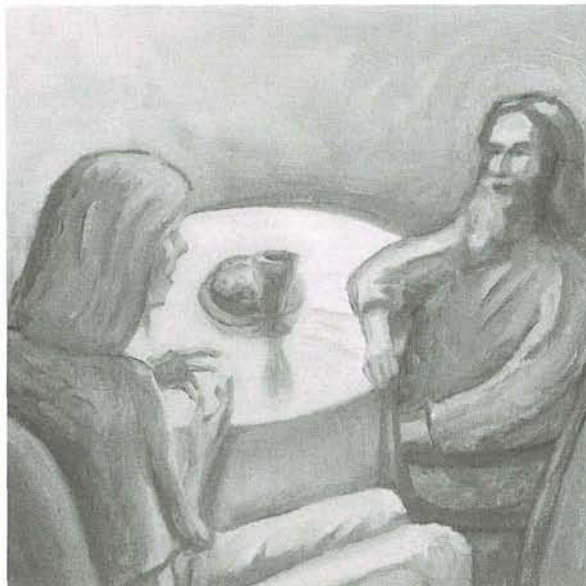
In contrast, the sacrament presents us with a ritual "picture" of a shared life with Christ and of his abiding with us, as promised. In this way, the symbol of table fellowship illustrates the promise of true discipleship. Far from placing our attention on Christ's suffering and grief, Latter-day Saint theology of the sacrament points us to Christ's intimacy with his disciples before and after his death. In this way, the present-day disciple is invited to remember the historical event of communion with Christ in hope of obtaining the promises made by Christ in that hour.

While this promise of association with Christ is a commonly held eschatological theme, LDS theologizing on it separates it from the

future return of or reunion with Christ and literally interprets the promises contained in John's account of the Last Supper, namely, that Jesus will make his "abode" with his disciples:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, . . . we will . . . make our abode with him. (John 14:16, 21–23.)

This "another Comforter" is understood in LDS doctrine to be the promise of communion with Christ himself, in contradistinction to the Comforter referred to as the Holy Ghost in



In baptism we are presented with a "picture" of sharing in Christ's death so that we may share in his new life.

The sacrament presents us with a ritual "picture" of a shared life with Christ; the symbol of table fellowship illustrates this promise of true discipleship.

John 14:26. In sermon, Joseph Smith elaborated as follows:

After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then . . . it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter. . . . It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn.<sup>15</sup>

This is the direct expression of the hope of communion implicit in the theology and practice of LDS sacrament. Discipleship holds the promise of actual association with the Master, not merely in the resurrection but now, on earth. This is how transcendence is conceptualized in LDS theology: Christ makes his abode, as illustrated in the holy meal, with his disciples by means of increasing endowments of spiritual presence in time that we might be prepared for eternity (D&C 76:116–18). Thus, the hope expressed in LDS sacrament memorial is not hope of transcendence out of the world, it is the hope of Christ's presence with his disciples in the world, abiding with them.

This is how we believe he asks to be remembered by all who would be his disciples: sharing a meal and sharing a life. Of course, for the Jerusalem disciples it would be immediately necessary for them to hear and remember that hour's tender promises. They would soon be required to witness his death and to feel the death of their own hopes in him "for as yet they knew not . . . that he must rise from the dead" (John 20:9). No doubt in the West, too, they felt a great loss at his less violent, but no less absolute, separation from them (3 Nephi 17:17). And even today, we who love him seek his presence to comfort us, heal us, and empower us to endure conditions that cause us great pain and try our faith. In the same manner as his disciples of old, we desire to have the promises of "this hour" fulfilled on us. Hence, as Latter-day Saints, we come to the table primarily in discipleship, hoping for communion with Christ not just in that fleeting moment, but in time and throughout all eternity. For it is in communion with him—his making his abode with us—that we understand the fulfillment

of the everlasting covenant (JST Genesis 9:21–23) and the gift of Eternal Life (John 17:3; D&C 93:1, 19–20). This is why, for Latter-day Saints, it is not enough to come to the table to remember him on the cross. As mysterious and as humbling as the recollection of Golgotha is, it does not adequately signify to us the Lord's power to save. Neither does it represent the fulfilling of God's covenant to his children.

#### REMEMBERING HIM

*We remember the full range of his redemptive acts—past, present, and future, and ask to be a part of that history.*

**I**N the sacrament, Latter-day Saints gather to eat and drink in remembrance of Christ and we "do this" to witness that we remember him and to covenant that we do always remember him. The addition of a "second" meal to our understanding of the Last Supper makes clear that our remembering him is not limited to events in Palestine. Moreover, Joseph Smith's amendments to Mark's account of the Supper in Palestine make it clear that in the sacrament we are not simply memorializing the Lord's power over physical death. This means that, as opposed to traditional Christianity, we do not remember Jesus Christ exclusively as sacrificial lamb on the world's altar, but rather in the broader context of all his saving deeds. We remember that he is the minister of the covenant made before the foundation of the world, namely, that he would do all that was necessary for our salvation and exaltation. Hence, we come to the table not only to remember the past, but to anticipate the future.

In Latter-day Saint theology, no less than in Old Testament cosmology, history unfolds "from the actions of a Person or of a Will guiding the whole [such] that every single event in history was [and is] always seen to have come from this whole, this 'plan' of God."<sup>16</sup> We teach of a plan of redemption made before the world was created and animated by an everlasting covenant that God through Jesus Christ would enable us to be saved and exalted. We revere Christ as "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20) to effectuate the "plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world" (Alma 22:13). We also remember that he "shall proceed to do a marvelous work . . . that I may remember my covenants . . . that I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people. . ." (2 Nephi 29:1). For us to remember him is, then, to remember him as the executor of this plan upon which our entire fate depends and which culminates in his pasch, but is by no means limited to it or even completed by it. Latter-day Saints remember Christ not only in propitiation for our sins, but also in the full range of his redemptive acts past, present, and future: creator, redeemer, and, of course, "messenger of the covenant" (Malachi 3:1; 3 Nephi 24:1). Consequently, unlike other liturgies, the concluding words of our sacramental prayer oblige us simply to "remember him" without further elucidation of particular historical events. Thus, we come to the table to pledge our faithfulness and anticipate the unfolding of history through the everlasting

covenant. We ask to be a part of that history as it has been and will yet be.

In the ritualized, holy meal we call "the sacrament," not the cross, not in all our talking about him—no, not even in the baptismal tomb—we remember him and the hour when he made the commitment that he would fulfill his covenant and make his abode with us. While all who have faith in Christ and repent may be baptized, only those who, after baptism, "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Nephi 31:20) are invited to the table to sup with him. If we keep the sacramental covenant of discipleship, or in Joseph Smith's words, demonstrate that we are "determined to serve Him at all hazards," then he will abide with us. Such remembrance is, indeed:

an occupation for the saint—  
No occupation either, but something given  
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,  
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender. . . .  
Here the impossible union.  
Of spheres of existence is actual. . . .<sup>17</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (New York: Seabury Press, 1945), 744.

2. Nothing in this paper should be construed to suggest that the Lord's suffering and death for our sakes is not a central part of LDS doctrine. Indeed, there is much in our doctrine that makes this point; for example, see D&C 19:15, 18. In making a separate point about the sacrament, I do not intend to distract from or in any way diminish what is a proper devotional regard for the Lord's passion.

3. John Reumann, *The Supper of the Lord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 34.

4. Richard L. Anderson, "Religious Validity: The Sacrament Covenant in Third Nephi," *By Study and Also by Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991), 5.

5. Reumann, 36.

6. Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1962), 75.

7. R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed* (New York; Pueblo, 1987), 11.

8. Childs, 34.

9. "Israel believed its social order and institutions to have been established by God and thus to be legitimated by him as permanent. . . . When offenses were committed or when there was any other sign that Yahweh's favor had been lost, the organs of the cult (lament, sacrifice, etc.) were there to restore it. Thus Israel's well being (*salom*) was believed to be permanently guaranteed by Yahweh." E. W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 204.

10. Nicholson, 216, emphasis added.

11. Jerome Kodell, *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1988), 48-49.

12. Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread. The Witness of the New Testament* (New York: Paulist, 1986), 44.

13. Leon-Dufour, 41.

14. Nicholson, v.

15. Joseph F. Smith, ed., *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1969), 150-51.

16. Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 218.

17. T. S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages" from *Four Quartets* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1943), 44-45.



## THE DESERT TEMPLE

The temple curtains billow.  
An eastern wind  
lifts grace  
on its wings:  
*ha chaim ruoch.*<sup>1</sup>

The desert night,  
cooling balm, instills  
sweet-water winds

of oasis  
sifting through dry air,  
brightening stars  
on this night  
that is as clear  
as prayer ascending.

The living goes on  
beyond the curtains.  
The cattle and the cocks  
lie in the sapphire  
lowering of dusk.  
The tents close,  
their flames extinguished.  
Some sleep.

But not all.  
In the temple,  
the curtains rise:  
Dust falls from their hems  
and they fill  
with the breath of it—

*Ruoch sh'Elohim.*<sup>2</sup>  
*Eloi Eloi Eloi*<sup>3</sup>

—VIRGINIA ELLEN BAKER

1 *ha chaim ruoch*: Hebrew for "the living breeze" or "the living spirit."

2 *ruoch sh'Elohim*: Hebrew for "the breath, or spirit, of God."

3 *Eloi*: the Hebrew name for God the Father, or the God of the Old Testament.

1991 Brookie and D. K. Brown Memorial Fiction Contest Winner

## IN A SUMMER SKY

By Afton L. Pettegrew

“A FAIRY TOLD ME WHERE A SECRET TREASURE is,” the big neighbor girl, Coralee, said over her shoulder.

I quickened my step to hear more. I was into fairies and elves and Saturday morning's *Let's Pretend* stories on the radio.

Great cloud puffs sailed high, their shadows drifting across the corn fields and fluttering wild roses. Oats grew thick and tall, grey-green, rippling smoothly in the wind. The shade of the Potawatomi plum trees was thin. Sunshine flickered between their round leaves, and dozens of grasshoppers jumped, crackling, away from our footsteps.

“What's the secret treasure?”

Coralee said nothing. She only paid me attention when there wasn't anything else to do. It didn't matter, as I had my very own tiny-winged friend. Her name was Priscella.

No bigger than a hummingbird, my fairy was beautiful. Instead of straight brown hair and drab hazel eyes, she had pink, glistening curls and not one freckle on her nose. She never wore flour-sack bloomers or hand-me-down clothes. She only liked rose-colored petal skirts with matching gauzy blouses. And Priscella hated big brown oxfords. She flitted about in tiny golden slippers. My fairy and I played together when I was alone.

“What is the secret treasure?” I asked again.

“Jewels,” Coralee said. “Emeralds and diamonds and rubies.”

“Where is it?”

“Down.”

“Down where?”

“Down the cross lanes in Uncle Iver's apple orchard.”

I liked Uncle Iver. He had an elf living in his back yard. Uncle Iver and his wife lived uptown. However, his apple orchard was down the cross lanes west of town, past my house. Each morning while the sky was still milky blue and dew drops twinkled in the grass, he passed on the other side of the road in blue bib overalls and straw hat. With a willow whip in hand, he herded his half dozen Guernseys down the cross lanes to graze for the day.

Uncle Iver wasn't really my uncle. Back in the days of Brigham Young and polygamy, my great-grandfather, the first bishop in our Mormon town, also had plural wives. So we all

were now kissing cousins of sorts. Most of my playmates called him Uncle Iver, as I did.

I knew, and all my friends knew, Uncle Iver and his wife had an elf living in their backyard. The famous poplar tree where the elf lived had a wicked, gaping hole in its trunk. It stood gigantic, several feet from their kitchen door. Its spreading branches of deep green shaded their entire house.

I never knew what had happened to the tree. It was as though someone had tried to rip its heart out. Or perhaps caterpillars or disease had nearly killed it. But the hardy poplar struggled on, long surviving its wounds. The result was a healed scar, a gaping oval hole, a dark hidden home for Uncle Iver's elf.

I wasn't sure if Coralee or even Uncle Iver's wife was aware of the elf. His wife hardly seemed like the kind. She was tall and queenly and made lovely quilts. Her house felt cool and sterile. Uncle Iver was a smiling, small man. The top of his head barely came up to his wife's shoulder. I never saw them walking, dancing, or even talking together.

I looked up into Coralee's round face framed with straw-colored hair. “Did the fairy tell you exactly where the secret treasure is?”

“Mmmm, it's a secret,” she said, blue eyes sparkling.

“Please, can I see the secret treasure?”

“Well, being you are my best friend, maybe I'll tell you.”

I held my head proudly. I wanted to be Coralee's best friend more than anything else. She was so grown-up and smart, and no one ever, absolutely ever, bossed her around.

We came to the flat, grassy ditch bank in front of Coralee's house. Crystal water sparkled over clean stones and white-washed sand. She sat down. We watched a pair of pale violet butterflies as they hovered, then alighted. Their gilt-edged wings pumped as they sipped.

My feet felt hot and thirsty. I took off my oxfords. Mud squeezed up between my toes. Like swirls of smoke, my footprints would not stay. The toes smoothed out. The heel dwindled to a small hollow, then melted away. The wind made a wild, lonely sound in the willows. I waded in. Gurgling cold mountain water washed between my toes and circled my ankles.

“I'll tell you about the secret treasure first,” Coralee said. “Then, after you have climbed the silo, we'll go down to Uncle Iver's orchard and see the treasure of jewels.”

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LANE MITCHELL

I couldn't remember my name or where I was. Nor did I care. My former world had become nothingness. I was conscious only of a hand gripping the instep of my free foot.

My heart stopped. The word *silo* startled me. It represented something exceedingly high.

Suddenly a great black cloud of birds rose up and whirled above us. The noise of their wings was almost louder than Coralee's voice.

Still, I could hear her telling about a little golden chest hidden within an apple tree stump, as if in a cave. It lay glittering upon a bed of dried apple leaves and was filled with emeralds, diamonds, and rubies. The tree stump, between two vibrant apple trees, was overgrown with ground-cherry bushes and twining green vines of wild morning glory. She said the morning glory was like a grotto of red, blue, rosy pink, and striped white flowers. Their throats were open as if shouting a protest to trespassers, protecting the small golden coffin.

The flock of crows passed swiftly over the corn tops and settled at a distance.

I turned and looked beyond Coralee's house. The silo, the mile-high concrete cylinder, was in the center of a barnyard that surrounded it like a festering sore. Old haystacks and manure piles rotted around pig sheds. Brown horses stood side by side, head to end, flicking their coarse black tails to keep the flies from eating at the corners of their eyes. Within a pole fence, white-faced range cattle stood on sturdy legs. First one, then another, bawled. Tongues licked flat noses. Black and

white Holstein cows munched through slits in wooden stalls. And the jutting stacker pole, tall and naked, would soon now be lifting forkfuls of fresh hay into loaf-like stacks.

I looked at Coralee. She was running her hand through the shadows of the grass. I stepped out of the water, crushing some slender green blades. The warm breeze dried my feet. Coralee didn't seem to be in any hurry. I wasn't either.

My thoughts turned back to Uncle Iver's elf. One time my fairy, Priscella, and I went uptown to get the mail and buy a yeast cake and a few gumdrops from the General Store. We decided to pay a visit to Uncle Iver's elf. We crossed the street and stood in front of Uncle Iver's gate. I had always gone there with my friends, the twins, whose uncle he truly was. I had never before gone inside Uncle Iver's yard alone.

Uncle Iver's house looked quiet and scary. I was taking a chance that Uncle Iver was out and about with his farming business. And I hoped his wife was bent over the usual quilt frame.

I "ssshhed" the wire gate as it squeaked on its hinges. I knew I was where I ought not to be, and I made my brown shoes step as lightly as possible. I followed the concrete walk around to the back of the house. The windows were shiny clean, the lace curtains slightly ajar. There, close to the kitchen door, stood the huge poplar with the gaping cavity in its belly. Its great

roots had grown slowly, breaking the walk, causing it to shove upward.

The tree's oval opening was large enough for me to crawl into. I peeked inside the pitch-black hole and softly called, "Hello." It smelled musky. I thought I heard squeaky sounds like those of disturbed, sleeping bats.

"Anybody home?"

I didn't expect an answer, but a tiny yellow light winked in the gloom. I opened my little brown paper sack and set one red, sugar-coated gumdrop on the lip of the oval hole. Quickly I retraced my steps and, quietly as possible, reclosed the wire gate.

The town was very quiet. Priscella and I walked down the middle of Main Street. I told her that Uncle Iver's elf was probably east of town at Sweet Pea Hollow. She flitted around my head twice, meaning she agreed.

I'd learned from *Let's Pretend* that elves don't like to be seen by humans. But I knew he was a cute little fellow with a mop of green curls and pointy ears. On his brown suit, over his round belly, were four large buttons. His leggings covered his feet and turned up at the end where a single bell jingled above each foot.

Priscella and I laughed to ourselves. We could just see him lolling among the pink, white, and blue pea vine blossoms and drinking creek water from a leaf. We knew he also rode the big saw mill wheel—when no one was looking, of course.

"Well, do you want to see that secret treasure or not?" Coralee asked, sounding annoyed.

My stomach jumped a little. "Yes, yes, I do."

Besides being anxious to see the secret treasure, I wanted to stay on Coralee's good side. Once when she had been annoyed at me, she and her cousins had locked me in the lavatory at church. Giggling, howling, they'd held the door for a long time. I was glad Priscella was with me because when I cried, she understood. When they finally released the door, I came out fighting. The cousins were still laughing. But Coralee was nowhere to be seen.

At Sunday School that day our teacher told us about heavenly beings, guardian angels. In times of great danger, our angel would be with and protect us. Guardian angels sounded good to me. I envisioned mine with shining silver curls.

Coralee's voice nudged me. "Come on. Let's go climb the silo."

We walked in silence. No one appeared as we passed Coralee's house. A speckled chicken was taking a dust bath under a lilac bush. A fat, velvety black and yellow bumblebee aimed at a mauve hollyhock. Clumsily it jarred the powdery center, and golden flower dust sprinkled to earth.

The silo was tall and round. A small diagonal half tube covered the iron rungs forming a ladder to the top. The area close to the silo was neat and clean. I felt very small there. I put my hand on the silo's concrete shell. It was cool. I shivered.

Coralee said she would wait right there at the bottom of the silo until I came down.

Clearing my thickening throat, I asked, "Do you promise?"

When she squared her shoulders, I noted her chest was not

flat like mine but had two little peaks. Her hand made a big, sweeping X. "Cross my heart and hope to die."

More confident, I stood under the diagonal tube. My heart quickened. Down in the bottom, last year's silage had spoiled into a brownish, pungent mass, ready to seep away. Above, the silo was tall, round, and hollow inside. The rungs were wide apart. I began to heave myself up.

"Hello!" I yelled after a few fruitful pulls.

"Helloo, hello-o-o, hello-o-o-o," came the echo, sharp at first, then soft and mournful.

Forced, vibrant laughter bounced higher and higher around the concrete cylinder until it exhausted into the spot of blue above.

Coralee's voice came from far down on the ground. "Only scaredy cats scoot around the top on their seats!"

Her words stopped me cold.

"Big kids stand up and walk the silo rim!" she shouted.

I jumped in my skin. I felt I might lose the lunch I hadn't had. I tightly closed my eyes but beads of fear oozed out anyway.

At the very top, the thin, high sky was too hot to look at. I thought heaven, where God and my guardian angel lived, couldn't be far away. My feet still rested two rungs down. My knees sagged. With stiff knuckles, I forced them upright.

I could see our house next door, with poplars half way around. Dad's peach orchard and garden between the rows were there. The long, yellow-green, sweet corn leaves fluttered and the melon vines uncurled beyond patches of big spreading leaves. Yellow wax bean and carrot rows were feathery green, and the beets thrust up dark leaves on red stems. Taking a deep breath, I smelled Dad's pink-cheeked peaches fevering in the sun.

My sister had told me that several years ago she'd climbed this very silo. She'd looked to the northwest and watched one of the first Diesel streamliners going from Chicago to California. It was so tiny and faraway the yellow engine and silver body looked like a little worm inching across the country. Trains didn't pass through our mountain town, but in my bed at night, I could faintly hear big black steam engines bellowing black clouds into the air.

Glancing eastward, I felt as lofty as the faraway mountains. Through a silvery sheen, I saw our whole town, trees, shimmering housetops, the town hall, the church belfry, and other silos towering here and there.

"Are you going to stand up there and daydream all day?"

I was too high for her crossness to affect me. Still, I did want to please her. And be considered one of the big kids.

I knelt, then stood erect on the silo rim. The wind ruffled my skirt. Somewhere I had heard someone say, "Never look down at the ground." So, looking neither right nor left, I glued my eyes on my brown oxfords. For balance, I stretched out both arms. Hardly daring to breathe, I took my first tiny step. At a snail's pace I crept half way around the silo's rim.

Then, for some strange reason, I stopped. I couldn't control my eyes any more. My glance slid off my feet, off the narrow ledge, and miles down to earth. The ground began to move. It



went slowly back and forth at first, then faster. My head felt woozy. I swayed. I could hardly see. The ground blurred as it whipped faster and faster.

I was too frightened to cry out. Who could hear me? Who could help? Blood hammered in my ears. My quaking insides said if I fell within the silo, maybe the slimy brown mess at the bottom would save me. I knew if I tumbled outside, I would land like an egg, in a broken splat.

Mother's face flashed into my mind. Darkness like black smoke swirled around. I felt myself teetering. Then I felt as though someone had turned a key and locked me, balanced on one leg, like a frozen ballet dancer, on the brink of death.

Slowly a dark, almost pleasant, numbness closed around me. I couldn't remember my name or where I was. Nor did I care. My former world had become nothingness. I was conscious only of a hand gripping the instep of my free foot. It felt as if my brown oxfords weren't even there. Comforting and warm, the hand brought that foot back to the silo's rim. Then the hand guided both feet, one step at a time, around to the iron-rung ladder back to earth.

Shaking, tottering, I eased myself down and grasped the top metal bar. Still in an awkward position, I could topple either way. The last memory I have of the miracle hand was its diminishing touch on my descending feet. My brown oxfords were stepping downward, downward to safety. I trembled as I struggled to hang on. My teeth chattered like woodpeckers and echoed about the cold, empty, near-tomb. My vision was still blurred, yet I sensed I was near the bottom. Letting go, I tumbled, hard, to the ground.

I don't know how long I lay curled below the ladder. I only know the ground felt warm and safe. I wanted to hug and tell it I loved it.

Finally gathering myself up, I crawled to the silo and leaned back against it. The blessed sunshine soaked into my small frame and gradually stilled the chattering. Sitting, I pulled my legs up, wrapped my arms round them, and rested my forehead on my kneecaps.

Coralee had disappeared, was long, long gone, of course.

Late summer, my favorite time of year was ending. Waving corn fields, taller than farmers' heads, were ready for harvest and to be stored in the silo. The sun was hot and the earth dry. Soon, two men will walk beside a flatbed pulled by a team of workhorses. Each will take two rows and with a short-handled hoe, chop! chop! chop! will cut two or three corn stalks at a time. Pheasants will fly up and now and then a rabbit will jump and bound away. High in the sky, meadowlarks will sing.

The men will hold the bundle of stalks under their arms and close to their bodies. After cutting several hills and making the bundles heavy, they will slip the hoe underneath and flip the lower end of the stalks to the center of the flatbed. Tassels will bounce on the edge of the wagon. The men and wagon will leave a wide path of stubble behind. Four or five wagons and crews will work in relays from the corn fields to the silo.

A power-driven tractor and a corn chopper will be there. A farmer will feed corn stalks into the sharp blades of the noisy, greedy chopper. Then, forced by the tractor's power belt, the

corn pieces will be sent up, up through a large pipe that curves over the rim of the silo. Pitchfork in hand, a man inside the silo will evenly distribute and tromp the silage. As the silo fills, he will put boards inside the iron rungs to hold the sweet smelling corn. Cattle will eat the slightly fermented silage during winter months.

One day Priscella and I will walk down the cross lanes by ourselves. It will be late summer, the growing season over. We will search for the hidden rubies, diamonds, and emeralds in Uncle Iver's apple orchard. Among the trees heavy with crisp red globes, we'll search for a stump.

Within that stump, as in a small hollow, will be the secret treasure. On leafy bushes hovering above, thick on stems under large leaves, will dangle the six-cornered bells, pale grey and thinner than paper, that hold the plump, golden ground-cherries.

The twining morning glory will have grown weary, twisted tight over the alcove where the little golden chest lies. Priscella and I will not be one bit surprised to see the lid open and Uncle Iver's elf sitting Indian style on those glittering jewels, eating a yellow ground-cherry.

AT church this coming Sunday, I knew Coralee and her cousins would put their heads together. She would whisper to them. Then they would all look at me and laugh. It wouldn't matter. I was bigger than Coralee. I felt very grown up. I had received a miracle. The hand of my guardian angel had guided my feet as I had tottered on the silo's rim. As long as I lived, even when I was old and gray, I would remember that warm hand helping and preserving me.

I felt sad as the cattle moved restlessly, wanting to be fed. Day had become dusk. Mama would be wondering where I was. Uncle Iver would soon be driving his Guernseys past our house. At home, he would pull up his stool and milk. Then with full, frothy pails, he would walk toward the kitchen door and past the big spreading poplar where his elf lived.

The breeze dropped with the sun and whispered softly among the trees. The earth below the summer sky breathed gently in the fading day. It was time for Priscella and me to go home. ☞



## PARADISE

*You found your way in,  
you find your way out.*

*A path of purple flowers  
in the snow, the dead  
leaves hanging on:*

*we're not going anywhere  
and it's later all the time.*

—TIMOTHY LIU

*What is the Mormon Alliance about? What do its organizers see as so wrong with the Church that they feel the need to speak out? Here is how one of its founders sees the Alliance's underlying philosophy and critique, its programs and solutions, and its hopes for Mormonism.*

## DEALING WITH SPIRITUAL ABUSE: THE ROLE OF THE MORMON ALLIANCE

*By Paul James Toscano*

### WHAT I BELIEVE

I HAVE NOT BORNE MY TESTIMONY ON FAST Sunday in well over a decade. I don't know why: reticence, frustration, disappointment, small children underfoot, perhaps grief, or a rapid succession of painful paradigm shifts. But at the outset of this essay, I have decided to make a public statement of my religious beliefs because it may help clarify why I have concluded that an organization with the goals and objectives of the Mormon Alliance is urgently needed in the Mormon community.

I believe that I exist, and that you exist, and that we inhabit a cosmos ordered upon principles that are complex, obscure, maddeningly elusive, and in a state of flux. I believe the natural world I experience with my senses is real, but that its exact nature lies beyond human sensory capacity, even when enhanced by technology. I believe we humans and our understandings are limited and imperfect. I believe that, for the foreseeable future, we must content ourselves with perceptions of truth rather than with truth itself.

Because I believe we exist, it is easy for me to believe that God exists. Our existence makes probable the existence of other intelligent beings. If there is one intelligent being, and another more intelligent, there is probably another more intelligent than the first two. The most intelligent of all is God. This is not proof, I know. For this reason I sometimes doubt the reality of the spiritual world and life after death. I am a child of my generation. I have existential angst. My doubts, though, are mostly emotional. At bottom I believe in life after death because I have experienced life before death. To me eternal life seems no more amazing than mortal life; and the reality of

immortal souls, no more implausible than the reality of mortal bodies.

I believe in an other-dimensional, spiritual realm that is co-extensive with the natural. The two are intertwined and interdependent. The natural world gives shape to the spiritual, while the spiritual gives life to the natural. They relate to each other like blood to the body, like oxygen to the blood. I believe this not because I have seen into the spiritual world, but because I have seen into myself. The kingdom of God is within each of us. Our access to the spiritual world is primarily through our own being. The way to the spirit world is not so much upward, as inward. Of course, there is no proof of this either. Proof is natural and outward. I believe in proof, when I can get it. But I also believe in experience. We experience the spiritual world when we think, or calculate, or discern, when we respond to beauty or truth, when we suffer or doubt, when we love or hate, when we dream, and even when we despair. I despair sometimes because I cannot know the spiritual world as I know the natural, but neither can I know that natural world as I know the spiritual. The natural world seems to me so real and yet so meaningless, while the supernatural world seems so unreal and yet so full of significance.

I believe the most significant element of the spiritual world is God; and I believe the most significant aspect of God is that God did not choose to be insulated from the natural world. This is why I am a Christian: I believe that God entered the world with all its pain and limitations in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He is Lord and Savior. He atoned for our sins and loves us in our sins and imperfections and was willing to make himself equal to us so that we may be made equal to him. I accept without reservation the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am not ashamed of it. I believe also in the existence of a Goddess, a female counterpart to Christ, a Bride of the Bridegroom. She is his equal. She too descended to earth to be our constant companion, to mourn with us, comfort us, bring us into a newness of life, and lead us into all truth. This Lord and Lady

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are co-partners in our creation, redemption, and exaltation. The purpose of existence is to know them as we are known by them and to share with them eternal life. With divine help mortals are capable of becoming like them. I believe this because we have longings to be good and fair and just and merciful, even if we cannot perfectly achieve these things. Some people have made the journey to spiritual maturation and have entered into the presence of God. I believe in angels and devils, in spirits good and bad. I believe some angelic beings visit the earth and live among us as mortals to share our pains and griefs. I believe heraldic angels sometimes visit mortals with personal messages and, more rarely, with messages for others. I believe some people are born with the gift to perceive the supernatural world.

I believe Joseph Smith was one of these people—a man gifted and flawed, spiritual and natural, careless and caring, passionate and aloof, known for good and evil. I believe he saw angels who conferred on him spiritual power and authority by which he revealed the mind and will of God through scriptural texts. Taken together, these texts proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ with clarity and set forth a cosmogony, cosmology, angiology, soteriology, and eschatology that is as rich as it is undervalued.

I believe people are called of God to their spiritual convictions. Some are called to one religion, some to another, and some to none at all. Some have the gift to believe; others have the gift to be skeptics. Some are called by birth; others, by rebirth. All are precious in the sight of God. Each is deserving of the understanding and respect of the others. For those called by birth or rebirth to be Latter-day Saints, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living church on the face of the whole earth. This is not to deny the truths to which God has called others; it is only to reaffirm the truths to which God has called us.

I believe in the restoration of the priesthood and of the Church and in the gifts of apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers. I believe that the Church is good and is capable of greater good, and that God has called the Latter-day Saints, leaders and members, to repent and forgive, to be vulnerable to pain and reproach without responding in kind, and to bring good out of evil. I believe in the spiritual efficacy of the ordinances of the gospel, the endowment, the sealings, the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, and in vicarious ordinances for the dead.

I believe in the fruits and gifts of the spirit and that all these blessings have been given to the Latter-day Saints to help us build Zion—a true community that eschews selfishness, lust, greed, elitism, self-righteousness, xenophobia, and authoritarianism and is founded upon the principles of justice, fairness,

mercy, equality, truth, and charity—the mutual, reciprocal, and unconditional love of God. I believe in the institutions of church and state and that they should (1) guarantee to all individuals the right to develop their gifts, characteristics, talents, dignity, personhood, and potentials, (2) restrict the arbitrary use of power upon any individuals or institutions, and (3) encourage the growth and development of voluntary communities based upon free and open covenants. In the words of my friend Fred Voros, I believe that baptism washes away our sins, not our rights. I believe it is consistent with my faith as a Christian and a Mormon to write and speak my views, to disagree even with my leaders, and to state my dissent and my reasons therefor and, if I am ignored, to raise my voice, to express my distress or indignation, and even to resort to sarcasm and satire. I believe in this not because I hate Mormonism and want to see it destroyed, but because I love Mormonism and want to see it flourish. I have made this statement because I wish to show that I do not approach this topic nor have I participated in the organization of the Mormon Alliance as an outsider or non-believer.

#### SPIRITUAL ABUSE

IT is also my belief that unrighteous dominion, spiritual abuse, theological correctness, and ecclesiastical tyranny are utterly repugnant to the teachings of Jesus Christ, to the assumptions and aspirations of the Restoration, and to the goals and objectives of the LDS church. In saying this I do not indulge a juvenile idealism that lusts for human perfection. I am not talking about personal human foibles. I have already said that I believe in

human limitations and imperfections and in the need to repent and forgive. I am not here criticizing people but bad principles, not our heritage but false traditions, not our leaders but unwholesome teachings, damaging expectations, and unjust procedures that tend to create a climate of intimidation and to justify spiritual abuse.

I have used the term “spiritual abuse” both in the title and text of these remarks. I learned that term from the book *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*, by David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen.<sup>1</sup> The authors are Christian ministers. Their book is not about Mormonism, but about spiritual abuse in Protestantism. Without intending to do so, these authors describe with disturbing accuracy many spiritually abusive practices of the LDS church. They point out these techniques so they can be recognized and dealt with. The authors, unfortunately, do not provide a good, formal definition of spiritual abuse. However, Margaret Toscano, Fred Voros, and James Gardner (my nephew) have helped to create such a definition.

The short version is this: Spiritual abuse is the persistent

## DIRECTIVES

REQUIRE THE  
BISHOP TO ACT  
SIMULTANEOUSLY IN  
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OFFICER, ACCUSER,  
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JUDGE—ALL OF WHICH  
ARE AT ODDS WITH HIS  
ROLE AS PASTOR.

exercise of power by spiritual or ecclesiastical leaders in a way that serves the demands of the leaders to the detriment of the members.

The long version is more complex but necessary if spiritual abuse is to be distinguished from mere insults, violence, or other forms of hurt: Spiritual abuse is the persistent exploitation by spiritual or ecclesiastical leaders in a religious system of an imbalance of power between the leaders and the followers, whereby the leaders maintain control through the exercise of their authority without adequate accountability by taking actions, making definitions, creating rules, or rendering judgments that are unfair, unequal, or nonreciprocal, while taking advantage of or promoting the inexperience, ignorance, fear, confusion, weakness, or delusion of the followers, in order to perpetuate the power imbalance and thereby gratify temporarily the demands of the leaders or the perceived interests of the ecclesiastical institution to the detriment and at the expense of the spiritual needs, rights, entitlements, dignities, or empowerment of the members. Let me illustrate these generalities with some specifics:

*Legalism or performance preoccupation.* The most spiritually abusive behavior or attitude identified by Johnson and VanVonderen in their book is legalism, or performance preoccupation. Legalism is a form of religious perfectionism that focuses on the careful performance of some behaviors and the careful avoidance of others. Religiously legalistic people feel that spirituality is the payment we receive for doing good works, rather than a gift from God which empowers us to do good works. The problem with legalism is that (a) it emphasizes success and respectability rather than holiness; (b) it values image over individual or community spirituality; (c) it leads people to view God not as a loving Savior, but as a relentless taskmaster, never satisfied, vindictive, distant, and intolerant of even the slightest mistake; (d) it promotes the judgment of others' performance rather than personal repentance; and (e) it can cause leaders to promote statistically verifiable works to justify continued use of compulsory means.

*Power posturing.* Johnson and VanVonderen write: "Power-posturing simply means that leaders spend a lot of time focused on their own authority and reminding others of it, as well. This is necessary because their spiritual authority isn't real—based on genuine godly character—it is postured."<sup>2</sup> The watch-cry of modern Mormonism is "Follow the Brethren." The over emphasis on obedience to Church leaders, if continued unabated, will surely eclipse personal revelation, personal responsibility, and personal devotion, and will eventually end in a leadership that is out of touch with reality or corrupted by special privilege.

*Shaming.* Shaming is another spiritually abusive technique. It includes name calling, belittling, put-downs, and comparing the abused unfavorably with others. The most memorable example of this technique I can recall occurred when Apostle Bruce R. McConkie went to BYU and, in an address delivered to thousands of students and faculty, publicly denounced certain passages of George Pace's book on developing a personal relationship with Christ. Elder McConkie gave no prior

warning of his intentions, made no prior attempt to work things out privately with Brother Pace, engaged in no prior discussions to understand Brother Pace's message. Elder McConkie merely shamed him before his peers and his students, not by name, but in such a way that there could be no doubt who was meant. Although I have been told by more than one insider to this story that Brother McConkie later expressed regret for this incident, he never apologized publicly; and George Pace has born the scars of this humiliation for over a decade. This is an act of spiritual abuse, but no more so than shaming people by calling them apostates, anti-Mormons, or enemies of the Church, when there is neither basis in fact nor justifiable reason to do so.

*Secretiveness.* Johnson and VanVonderen say, "When you see people in a religious system being secretive—*watch out*. People don't hide what is appropriate; they hide what is inappropriate."<sup>3</sup> This is not to gainsay the need for confidentiality with respect to personal finances, health, family issues, and victimless transgressions. In Mormonism, however, secretiveness, especially with respect to such community issues as our history, our finances, and the deliberations of the Church's governing councils, is legendary. Church leaders wrongly justify secretiveness for public relations reasons—to protect the good name or image of the Church; or leaders, expressing a patronizing view, insist that members be treated like children and given "milk before meat," even if they are sick to death of milk and are dying for meat and potatoes.

*The Demand for "Peace and Unity."* True peace and unity are important spiritual values. But, to quote Johnson and VanVonderen: "experiencing true peace and unity does not mean pretending to get along or acting like we agree when we don't."<sup>4</sup> Pseudo-community is a term used by Scott Peck in his book *The Different Drum* to refer to false communities in which people hide their concerns and disagreements behind masks of courtesy and respectability.<sup>5</sup> False peacekeepers are those who encourage others to get along while preventing them from dealing with the fundamental issues that are pulling them apart. A true peacemaker is one who faces conflict, not one who covers it up. For real peace to exist, there must be more than a truce; the real reason for hostilities must be addressed, grievances must be aired, knowledge and understanding of the opposing positions must be acquired, and then there must be change, repentance, and forgiveness, followed finally by healing and genuine community. This cannot happen if false peacekeepers hinder the process by covering up the problems.

*Unspoken Rules.* Johnson and VanVonderen state further: "In abusive spiritual systems, people's lives are controlled from the outside in by rules, spoken and unspoken. Unspoken rules are those that govern unhealthy churches or families, but are not said out loud."<sup>6</sup> In the Church we have many unspoken rules that serve no beneficial function: We cannot say the prophet is too old. We cannot ask how much our leaders are paid. We will not hear in general conference any stories about the historical practice of polygamy. The existence of unspoken rules is abusive because it engenders hypocrisy: we claim allegiance to one set of values, but we live by another.

In one case, the enforcement of an unspoken rule ended in the excommunication of an individual who challenged the stake president's mistaken understanding of common consent. The Church law of common consent, as set forth in the revelations (D&C 20:60-67; 26:2; 28; 38:34-35; 41:9-11; 42:11; 102:9; 124:124-145), entitles members to vote any leaders in and out of Church office, regardless of whether or not the leader was called by revelation. But an unspoken rule of the Church is that one is never to vote no, unless one has specific knowledge of wrongdoing on the part of the leader whose name is presented. The stake president excommunicated this member for exercising his right to vote no, while apparently unaware of the teachings of Church President Joseph F. Smith given in general conference in 1904:

We desire that the Latter-day Saints will exercise the liberty wherewith they have been made free by the gospel of Jesus Christ; for they are entitled to know the right from the wrong, to see the truth and draw the line between it and error; and it is their privilege to judge for themselves and to act upon their own free agency with regard to their choice as to sustaining or otherwise those who should exercise the presiding functions among them. We desire the Latter-day Saints at this conference to exercise their prerogative, which is, to vote as the Spirit of the Lord prompts them on the measures and the men that may be presented to them.<sup>7</sup>

*The "Can't Talk" Rule.* One particularly abusive unspoken rule deserves special mention: the "Can't Talk Rule," which may be stated best this way: If you bring up a problem, you become the problem.<sup>8</sup> This rule contradicts the main assumption of the Restoration: if we are to receive greater light and knowledge, we must seek it. If Joseph Smith had not asked God which church was right, there would have been no Mormonism. Revelations come when they are sought. When people raise problems and issues, they are just asking questions. They are not denying authority; they are asking authority to do its job. And the answers authorities give do not end the discussion. They merely turn it in new directions and raise fresh questions. This is quite tedious work, and the best way to avoid it is to ignore questions, deny problems, and scapegoat those who raise them. This is effective, but highly abusive.

*Other Techniques.* Johnson and VanVonderen list quite a number of other abusive techniques: the misuse of scripture, the demand that wives submit to husbands, the requirement that members just forgive and never confront abusers, the advice to simply ignore rather than deal with the past, the admonition to make checklists of dos and don'ts, the tactic of "bait and switch," and the technique of "triangulation" by which accusers refuse to confront the accused directly but only

through some mediator. The authors also deal at length with the problem of false authority—authority based solely on ecclesiastical office and unrelated to love, truth, and spirituality. Space does not permit me to explore these here.

#### ECCLESIASTICAL TYRANNY

**I**N addition to these abuses, some Mormons also endure what I call ecclesiastical tyranny—the failure or refusal of Church leaders to apply principles of fairness and due process in Church administration or Church courts, now called "disciplinary councils." The rules governing these councils are found in two places: the revelations (D&C 42, 102, 107, 121, 134) and in the Church's *General Handbook of Instructions*. Unfortunately, the procedural protections provided in the revelations are undermined in important ways by certain directives of the *Handbook*.

According to Doctrine and Covenants 102, when disciplined by a high council members are entitled to one-half the council to insure that the accused is not subjected to insult or injustice (v. 15). Two or more high councilors are to present the evidence (v. 13). The accused is entitled to an impartial hearing (v. 20). The evidence is to be examined in its true light (v. 16). In cases where doctrine is at issue, the decision must be based on "sufficient writings"; if the case cannot be disposed of by this recourse, the president may seek revelation on the doctrine (v. 23). However, no person is ever to be judged by evidence obtained by revelation.<sup>9</sup> The general principles that govern the admissibility of evidence in a court of law apply in a disciplinary council, which includes the right of ac-

cuser, accused, and high councilors to call, examine, and cross-examine witnesses.<sup>10</sup> The accuser and the accused have the right to make closing statements (vv. 16-18). The stake presidency has the responsibility of formulating a tentative decision (v.19), but only the high council can render that decision final by a majority vote (v. 22). The accused has a right to have the decision reconsidered (vv. 20-21) and, after reconsideration, to appeal the final decision to the First Presidency of the Church (v. 26). If the accused is still not satisfied, Doctrine and Covenants 107 establishes a right of appeal to the general assembly of the priesthood quorums of the Church (v. 32). From this there is but one more appeal, to the president of the high priesthood plus twelve high priests acting as a court of last resort (v. 80). There are special procedures for trying a president of the Church or of the high priesthood (vv. 32, 82, and 83). No person is exempt from these procedures nor can they by any means be abridged (v. 84).

I believe these procedures, when coupled with adequate notice and opportunity to prepare a defense, are sufficient to

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WHAT TREASON IS TO  
ONE'S COUNTRY.

protect members from abuse in any disciplinary context. However, a number of the directives of the *General Handbook of Instructions* undermine these procedures. I will review only the most glaring procedural contradictions and problems.

Perhaps most-disturbing is the tradition, reinforced by the *Handbook*, of according to Melchizedek priesthood holders the full procedural protections of scripture by ensuring them a hearing before the stake high council, while relegating non-Melchizedek priesthood holders, including adult women, to the less formal and less procedurally protected jurisdiction of the bishop's court. But even in a high council court setting, the procedural protections of the revelations have been seriously eroded by the *Handbook*.

One directive (*Handbook*, p.10-2) requires the stake president or bishop to investigate the case. This directive conflicts with the requirement that the president or bishop be a judge and, with the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants 102, that the judge be impartial. How can a judge be impartial if he is to weigh the evidence he himself has gathered? These directives require the bishop or stake president to act simultaneously in the conflicting roles of police officer, accuser, prosecutor, and judge—all of which are at odds with his role as pastor.

Another handbook directive (10-2) allows a bishop or stake president to ignore all the procedural safeguards if *informal* rather than *formal* discipline is chosen. Informal discipline includes private counsel/caution and informal probation, which can include indefinitely prohibiting the member from partaking of the sacrament, from holding Church position, from attending the temple, from holding a temple recommend, etc. This directive does not protect a member from a bishop or stake president who may impose any of these deeply punitive sanctions unrighteously, or without adequate cause, or without sufficient evidence, or for improper reasons, nor does it take into account that members so disciplined have no procedural recourse to correct abuses of the system.

Another directive prohibits bishops and stake presidents from giving to an accused member any specific information about the evidence that will be brought against the member in the disciplinary council (10-6). Moreover, the accused's witnesses may not attend the hearing together (10-7), while the accusers (who are often the members of the bishopric, stake presidency, or high council) are not prohibited from acting in concert against the accused. Other directives remove the final decision from the majority of the high council and rest it solely with the president of the stake (10-8), who, especially in cases of apostasy, is the individual usually bringing the charges. The *Handbook* is at odds with the revelations, in part, because a confusion exists between the judicial functions of a high council and the governing functions of the Council of the Twelve. Though unanimity is required of the Twelve in reaching their decisions (D&C 107:27), there is nothing in the revelations that requires unanimity in the judicial decisions of a high council. If the high council does not act unanimously, this does not mean inspiration is lacking. The revelations do not allow the stake president to use his authority to manipulate a unanimous decision. To do so would render the participation

of the high council a mere formality. The president is of course entitled to inspiration, but he is not entitled to have the last word. Only a majority of the high council may express the mind of the Lord in a disciplinary council (D&C 102:22). Nor may the high councilors abdicate this responsibility. In a Church disciplinary council, unity is not the objective. Truth is the objective. And the majority rules. It should be reversible error to violate this process or ignore it.

Perhaps the most treacherous mechanism of spiritual abuse in Mormonism is the use of a distorted concept of apostasy to prevent members from expressing their religious views. The dictionary definition of "apostasy" is rebellion against God or abandonment of one's faith. In the Old Testament it refers to Israel's unfaithfulness to God (see Jeremiah 2:19, 5:6; c.f. Joshua 22:22, 2 Chronicles 33:19). In the New Testament, apostasy refers to the abandonment of Christian faith (see Hebrews 6:6). Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined "apostasy" in *Mormon Doctrine* as the "abandonment and forsaking of . . . true principles."<sup>11</sup> All these are acceptable definitions for ordinary purposes, but no one of them could be used by a disciplinary council to determine if a member should or should not be excommunicated or disfellowshipped from the Church. Many members lose or abandon their faith for various reasons. Some continue to attend Church; others remain very involved with their faithful families and friends. Often we hold out hope that these individuals will return to full fellowship. Even though their "falling away" or "abandonment of faith" is technically apostasy, Church policy is, rightly, that they not be excommunicated, even if they join another (non-polygamist) church.

Excommunicable apostasy must be more than mere unbelief, more than disagreement, more even than dissent, contention, or opposition. To be excommunicable, apostasy must be to one's religion what treason is to one's country. To avoid condemning as apostasy mere lack of faith or differences of opinion, the formal definition of excommunicable apostasy must be carefully drafted so it does not have too wide a sweep. Fred Voros and I developed the following proposed definitional language:

A member may be excommunicated for apostasy only upon proof of one or more of the following: (1) public renunciation of the divine authority of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when accompanied by the commission of one or more overt acts intended to destroy the Church, its members, or its property; or (2) perpetration of any criminal or fraudulent act intended to injure the Church, its members, its property, or its reputation; or (3) the knowing and unauthorized performance or procurement, in whole or in part, of any ordination, endowment, or marriage sealing; or (4) support of the apostate activities defined above given with the intent to destroy the Church.

The purpose of this definition is to allow for a member's dissent, disagreement, disassociation, and even opposition, while permitting excommunication for only palpably injurious

or destructive acts committed against the Church. The proposal requires that excommunicable apostasy be proved by competent evidence, rather than by suppositions or feelings. Under part one of this proposal, a member could not be excommunicated simply for publicly or privately renouncing the Church's claim to truth, divine authority, or inspiration unless that member could be shown to have committed one or more overt acts intended to destroy the Church, its members or its property. Thus, a member's right to doubt, disagree, disbelieve, and dissent would be protected. However, if the renunciation element of the definition could not be proved, a member could, nevertheless, be excommunicated for perpetrating any criminal or fraudulent acts intended to injure the Church, its members, its property, or its reputation. The injuries here, particularly to reputation, must be demonstrated and must result from a criminal or fraudulent act, but not a tortious one (e.g., slander or libel). The purpose of this segment is to protect the Church from the criminal or fraudulent activities of members claiming to accept the truth of the Church, while protecting such members whose conduct falls short of crime or fraud. The third segment of the definition allows the Church to excommunicate members, whether or not they accept or reject the divine authority of the Church, if they either perform or procure an ordination, endowment, or marriage sealing without proper permission of the duly constituted leaders of the Church. This allows the Church to expel members who perform without authorization those ordinances that create special relationships of authority and power. Finally, to support, financially or otherwise, any of the aforementioned apostate activities with intent to destroy the Church would also constitute proper grounds for excommunication.

This proposal is very different from the Church's current three-part definition found in the *General Church Handbook of Instructions*—a definition that authorizes excommunications for any reason or, arguably, no reason at all. Part one of the *Handbook* definition makes excommunicable as apostasy any "act in clear, open, and deliberate public opposition to the Church or its leaders" (10-3). Thus, a member who makes an open or public statement may be excommunicated as an apostate if the Church or any one of its leaders (local, regional, or general) considers the statement to be in opposition to that leader's views, even if the leader is acting in bad faith, illegally, under a mistake or misunderstanding, without proper authority, contrary to the established ordinances, revelations, or procedures of the Church, or under circumstances where there is good reason for differences of opinion. This definition condemns as apostasy even courageous acts of faith, such as the open,

deliberate, and loyal opposition of such individuals as Paul the apostle (Galatians 2:11-14), Samuel the Lamanite (3 Nephi 23), and even Jesus himself (Matthew 23).

Part two of the *Handbook* definition of excommunicable apostasy includes the "persistent teaching as Church doctrine of information that is not Church doctrine after members are corrected" by their bishops or higher authority (10-3). Again, the definition is too broad; for under it members who are merely mistaken or stubborn could be condemned as apostates. This is too harsh a punishment to impose upon persons who, though difficult, lack hostile intent and have committed

no destructive acts. Moreover, much Church doctrine is too elusive, inchoate, and controversial to serve as a standard for orthodoxy. Besides, the excommunication of mere dissenters would constitute an assault on personal liberty and a trespass on the human rights of members. Therefore, none of the following should be considered excommunicable apostasy: (1) speculating about Church history, doctrine, or scripture; (2) maintaining, expressing, publishing, or speaking one's dissenting opinions; (3) believing (not practicing) or teaching (not intentionally supporting the practice of) a doctrine that is sincerely held, but questionable or even false (e.g., that there are people on the dark side of the moon and they dress like Quakers) or a doctrine that has been characterized by the Church or its leaders as scripturally unsound, but which has historical, literary, or scientific support; and (4) expressing personal differences with or even animosity toward Church leaders—for to define the latter as apostasy is to value loyalty to Church leaders over loyalty to God.

Part three of the *Handbook* definition condemns as excommunicable apostasy the adherence by a member to the teachings of apostate cults (such as those that advocate plural marriage) after being corrected by bishops or higher authorities (10-3). This definition is impossibly vague. The word cult

is essentially a slur; any religion can be called a cult. The LDS church is regularly defamed in this way by anti-Mormons. This definition would arguably make excommunicable a person's membership in or support of a family if some of its members were polygamists. Excommunicable apostasy must be more than mere association in or involvement with a group. At very least, it must be proved that the group is dedicated to the commission of specifically defined apostate acts (such as those proposed by Fred and me); and then it must be shown that the accused member is a competent adult with control over his or her relationship to the group and is knowingly and intentionally involved as a supporter or perpetrator of its apostate acts. To expel members without proving all of these elements is to promote a kind of Mormon McCarthyism—the punishment of

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people for mere associations that are either innocent, ill-advised, or coerced.

#### THE CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL ABUSE

WHY, in a Church that has so much to offer and so many texts and traditions that contradict unrighteous dominion, ecclesiastical tyranny, and theological correctness, do we find so many instances of spiritual abuse? I believe the answer is faithlessness and fear. There is a growing tendency for Church leaders to reinterpret and preach the gospel in legalistic and judgmental terms, thereby undermining the Saints' faith in the unconditional love of Jesus Christ and his power to save. Moreover, there is fear—fear of impurity, fear of becoming contaminated with the things of the world, fear of being deceived, fear of displeasing God, fear of being persecuted or mocked. Our leaders, too, are afraid—afraid they will be held accountable for our sins, afraid they will fall short of their callings, afraid they will leave the Church in worse condition than it was when it was put into their care.

These fears are very real. And to offset them, we anticipate our persecutors, our competitors, our detractors, and our critics. We try to avoid sin rather than to repent of it. We try to neutralize the effects of evil, real or imagined, even before the evil has occurred. We launch preemptive strikes. We engage in prior restraint.

In doing this we often objectify others, treating them as categories of evil rather than as individuals with hopes and fears. In this way we manage to avoid their personhood altogether and deal with them as enemies, or apostates, or anti-Mormons, or liberals, right-wingers, fundamentalists, or intellectuals. Thus, we nullify them as people. We do not have to be influenced by them. We do not have to consider what they say, or if they are in pain, or if we have caused that pain. We can just banish them from our world view altogether. We can make them nonpersons. As the Book of Mormon says, we "notice them not" (Mormon 8:39). This is a terrible temptation, especially for a people who themselves have been objectified as enemies, non-Christian, cultist, foolish, and anti-intellectual. If Mormonism has become closed and repressive, it may be because it was the object of persecution and abuse. As Michael Quinn has observed about our Mormon history, those who have been abused often grow to be abusive to others.<sup>12</sup> If we perceive ourselves as victims, always victims, then we can always justify as self-defense our abusive treatment of others.

This is understandable but wrong. Those who have been abused in the past are only postponing the moment of their own healing by repaying those abuses with further abuse. We need to understand our fears, our pain, our deep resentments and hurts—and the fears, pain, resentment, and hurts of others. Knowledge is the doorway to spirituality. It is to this end that God gives us spiritual gifts. Prophecy, revelation, instruction, inspiration, insight, even the gifts of healing and tongues were given, not to prove that we are right, but to give us understanding of ourselves and others, so that we might

love others as we are loved by God. Fear arises upon ignorance. Love arises upon knowledge. Without knowledge and understanding there can be no love, no hope, no joy. Knowing others requires that we listen to them, respect them, deal with them in justice, fairness, mercy, compassion, and hope. Only in such a climate can we open our hearts to each other. This is not to say that there is no place for anger or reproof or criticism, but these things must be mutual and reciprocal, and there must exist adequate procedures for dealing with dissent, disagreement, discord, and disputation. Power must never be used to favor one over another, only to assure a level playing field for all. We need not be neutral, but we must be even-handed. The fact that we are full of passionate convictions should not disable us from accommodating the convictions and passions of others, even if they are quite different from our own. Every right we claim for ourselves, we must willingly accord to our detractors. And for every control we impose on others, we must be willing to have a like control imposed on us. Only by engaging in this kind of reciprocity can we understand the wisdom of creating as few controls and prohibitions as possible in order to maximize self-determination, self-definition, and self-actualization. We must not intervene too much in the spiritual journeys of others. If we always prevent people from making mistakes, we prevent them from spiritual growth. This is, in part, the meaning of Jesus' statement: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Unfortunately, many of us are too hurt, too fearful, too exhausted even to desire understanding and knowledge. We can love those who are like us but not those who are different. We are convinced that our pain and sorrow is worse and our expectations, assumptions, and aspirations are better than anyone else's. We defend our insularity, our xenophobia, our elitism, our narcissism as purity. In the name of keeping our doctrine pure, our church pure, our traditions pure, we ignore the pleas and criticisms of others and turn ever more inward, clinging ever more fiercely to our obsession that we, we few, we band of brothers, we alone are God's chosen, we alone are his people, we alone are the elect. And thus, by imperceptible degrees are we led carefully into idolatry, in which we prize self-love above charity, self-help above sacrifice, self-aggrandizement above spirituality, self-atonement above Christ's atonement, and self-praise above the praise of God.

#### THE MORMON ALLIANCE

I HAVE said much of this in other ways in other places.<sup>13</sup> Talking about these things is important. We must continue to talk. But we must also act both to promote what is good and to oppose what is bad in Mormonism. And to this end the Mormon Alliance was organized as a non-profit corporation on 4 July 1992. The date has some psychological but no political significance. It is not an organization about politics either of the left, the center, or the right. Its mission and purpose is to uncover, identify, define, name, chronicle, resist, and even combat acts and threats of defamation and spiritual abuse perpetrated on Mormon individuals and institutions by Mor-



mon and non-Mormon individuals and institutions. Within the Alliance there are four major divisions: the reconciliation project, the defense project, the case reports committee, and the common consent council.

The reconciliation project will, if possible, (1) intervene at the request and on behalf of Church members in instances where they have been subjected to spiritual abuse in order to assure that the procedures and protections afforded by the revelations are observed, (2) promote the principles of justice, fairness, even-handedness, equity, and due process in the treatment of Mormon individuals and institutions by other Mormon individuals and institutions, and (3) promote support groups for spiritually abused Mormons.

The defense project will act to contradict anti-Mormon sentiments and in a constructive way assist in defending the Church, its leaders, and its members from libel, slander, and defamation by non-Mormon individuals or institutions.

The case reports committee will compile, verify, and publish accounts of defamation and spiritual abuse and the courageous acts of individuals working to resist spiritual abuse.

And the common consent council will promote the right of members to participate in church governance and will work to open and maintain a correspondence with the leadership of the Church.

The Mormon Alliance is about change. I believe in change. We are changed by birth, by life, by rebirth, and by death. And our eschatology tells us that, when the Bridegroom and the Bride are finally revealed, the whole world order will be changed. I believe this, too—the strange teaching that the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and that we shall all be changed. The yoke of the oppressor shall be lifted. The haughty shall be humbled, and the hearts of the hardened, broken. The old, corrupt world of greed, power, lust, and abuse shall be made new again. The lamb and the lion shall lie down together without any ire, and Ephraim be crowned with his blessings in Zion, and Jesus descend in his chariot of fire.

Yes, we shall all be changed. I believe the time for change is upon us. Those who choose now to advance it must be bold and courageous, willing to take risks, willing to suffer abuse, discouragement, and loss. Nevertheless, I believe that whosoever makes this effort with purity of heart will have the blessing and help of the Almighty and will find, in the end, that they have played some small part in strengthening the Saints and in helping the Church to receive the healing spirituality that today—in this hour of darkness—is our most pressing need.



#### NOTES

1. David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse: Recognizing and Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority Within the Church* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1991).

2. Johnson and VanVonderen, 63-64.

3. Johnson and VanVonderen, 78.

4. Johnson and VanVonderen, 90.

5. M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 86-90.

6. Johnson and VanVonderen, 67.

7. Joseph F. Smith. *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977) 48; Conference Report, April, 1904, 73, emphasis added.

8. Johnson and VanVonderen, 68.

9. According to Joseph Smith in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964), 214.

10. According to Joseph F. Smith in *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 40.; *Juvenile Instructor* 37 (15 February 1902): 114.

11. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* 1st ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 41.

12. D. Michael Quinn. Remarks made at a panel discussion at the 1991 Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, Utah.

13. Paul Toscano and Margaret Merrill Toscano. *Strangers in Paradox: Explorations in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990).



## DISSONANCE

Once, while coming out of books,  
she stumbled, coming out too soon;  
and found herself so far from home,  
she fell in blood and windblown pages.

She learned better ways—  
They taught her,  
in their brown offices,  
to cut that cord  
along the leather spine  
that sustained her.

She can look upon it now,  
on the handiwork  
of this aligning, and say  
“That is good”—

but.

It is the afterword that haunts her,  
and she prays that spines  
can be mended with glue  
and a healthy slap  
from the bookbinder  
to send her  
wailing into rebirth  
before the cord is dry.

—VIRGINIA ELLEN BAKER

*Reading literature is risky, but it may help us to be more critical  
—and more merciful—“readers” of the culture we live in.*

## TO TELL AND HEAR STORIES: LET THE STRANGER SAY

*By Bruce W. Jorgensen  
With Ancillary and Humble Annotations  
by N. Oman Claythorpe*

THE OCCASION TEMPTS ME WITH DEFINITIVENESS, the seduction of the summa, the lust of the Last Word. But I mean to speak as a scribe, not as one having authority. There is a huge liberty in that: the freedom to say what I think as generously as I can. I expect also to mingle the philosophies of men with scripture, but I will not teach that mingling for doctrine, and in fact I hope to show how poorly at least one “philosophy of men” mingles. It consoles me to think that, not pretending to teach doctrine, I may freely and without reproach do what we all always do anyhow.

Last semester in a course I teach, a student raised his hand and, acknowledging he might be the only person in the room who felt this way, said he didn't think we ought to read or discuss, in a class at BYU, Chekhov's “The Lady with the Dog” because it “glamorized immorality.” It's the story of a habitual womanizer who begins a casual affair with a much younger married woman and finds himself seriously in love “for the first time in his life.” As often happens, I wasn't ready, but I gave the obvious pedagogical rationale: this is a short story course, Chekhov is a great master of the genre, and this is generally recognized as one of his great (and genre-changing) stories. I offered an analogy of a kind I don't trust very far: is sulfuric acid dangerous? if so, why are BYU students instructed to titrate it in chemistry labs?<sup>1</sup> And I said the question seemed central.

I said that partly because at the same time I'd been re-reading and preparing to discuss Socrates' “quarrel with the poets” in Books 2, 3, and 10 of Plato's *Republic*, which poses the question in an acute and highly general form. Socrates says in essence that it's bad for both the poet and the audience to “imitate” a bad man, or even a “mixed” man, since what we must do is cultivate virtue, and to imitate badness or mixed-

ness is to make our souls rehearse badness. “The listener,” he says, “must be ever careful, must fear unceasingly for the city within himself”; “great is the struggle, great indeed, not what men think it, between good and evil, to be a good man or a bad man” (Plato, 408). If Socrates means what he says and is right, we're all, all of us TV watchers and novel readers, rather steadily contaminating ourselves with mixedness if not badness.

Yet Plato's dialogues themselves “imitate” both “mixed” characters like Phaedrus and the interlocutors here, Plato's half-brothers Glaucon and Adeimantos, and pretty decidedly “bad” ones like Meno and Alcibiades. So we might suspect some subtle, midwifing form of Socratic (or Platonic) irony at play in the famous quarrel. Socrates may be trying to provoke his interlocutors to question the notion that Homer and Hesiod “educate” by offering models for “imitation”; or to question the more general notion of “imitation” as an adequate account of how fictions work, how they're made, how they're received.

I notice that no matter how generally Socrates poses the question, he also rather insistently returns to specific, even singular instances—Achilles, Priam, Odysseus, Zeus, and so on. Is he inviting Glaucon and Adeimantos to consider such narrative singulars so closely as to “deconstruct” the general “theory” he seems to be giving them? My own experiences with the question, too, are always provoked by literary singulars, though the would-be censors (in my class or in myself) nearly always appeal to some general or even “universal” principle. I'd venture to state Socrates' supposed position this way: Poetic works educate us by offering us models to “imitate” in our actual political and ethical lives. But to do so they “imitate” the political and ethical badness of mixed or bad persons. Thus while offering to “educate” us they actually infect us with badness. Therefore, from any city that would be a good city, we

1. Are they? We suspect the Speaker hasn't troubled to check this allegation.

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must ban poetical "imitation." A close criticism of either the first or second proposition, in the light of our experience of any of the singular instances Socrates alludes to or quotes, might undermine either proposition and thus the whole argument. But I can't settle the famous quarrel here or now—it's one for readers of Greek who know far more about fifth-century Athens, especially its notions of education, than I'm likely ever to learn.

For Mormon readers and writers, versions of the quarrel keep coming up as we write, read, review, and commend or condemn works of putative "Mormon poetry" or "Mormon fiction," etc. A few days after that one came up in my class, another came up in Gene England's Mormon Literature class, when I guest-lectured, in the form of troubled reactions to Dennis Clark's story in *Greening Wheat*, "Answer to Prayer": was this pun-riddled story about a troubled Mormon husband who masturbates in the john at work, invents fantastic/domestic bedtime tales for his children, and prays with shocking fervor and honesty "really Mormon" fiction? And was it "good" or "harmful" to read it?

Yet another version came up not long ago in Richard Cracroft's *BYU Studies* review of England's and Clark's poetry anthology, *Harvest*, which found many poems in the latter half of the book, apparently, lacking a "whole and absolute . . . vision of the universe" (Cracroft, 120) and thus failing to express "the innateness and immediacy of the divine" (121). These, wrote the Reviewer (I'll call him "Reviewer" to avoid simplistic identification with our friend Richard Cracroft, who is a much broader man),<sup>2</sup> were poems turned up by an editor "rooting in the humus of recondite and not-very-fertile Structuralism" (122).<sup>3</sup> In these poems the Reviewer found "only occasionally . . . that distinctively Latter-day Saint voice, the sensibility of the believing poet," but rather more often the spoor of "a faltering spiritual vision" or even the "repress[ion] and replace[ment of] soaring spirituality with earth-bound humanism." These were "decidedly non-LDS poems" (122).

It was at best a mixed relief, amid all this, to find a couple of my own poems let into the fold. But distressing, overall, to read so much xenophobia, so much of "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee" (Matthew 26:73);<sup>4</sup> to read that so many poems by so many younger Mormon writers are fungoid—truffles or perhaps deadly amanita.<sup>5</sup> I pondered in my weary heart whether I lived—or wanted to live—in a "whole and absolute" universe; and if I did, how any "divine" might manage to be "innate" or "immediate" in it. I wondered

aloud a tired, head-in-hands question: Is there a Mormon criticism?

BUT it's risky to quarrel with the king that shall be.<sup>6</sup> I'd rather take on Socrates first after all, and then try to sneak up on this Reviewer later with the help of some Jewish radicals.<sup>7</sup> Socrates first disposes of the "matter" of poetry—the kinds of stories about gods, heroes, and men that should and should not be told in educating the "guardians" in a well-ordered city; stories like the one Hesiod tells about Kronos castrating his cruel father Ouranos (Plato, 175), or the one Homer tells about kingly old Priam "rolling on the dungheap / and calling loudly on the name of each" of his dead sons (185).<sup>8</sup> Then Socrates says to Adeimantos, "We must make up our minds whether we will let the poets imitate when they make their narratives, or imitate in parts and narrate in parts . . . or whether we will allow no imitation at all." It's one of the few places in the dialogue (in the Rouse translation, anyhow) where Adeimantos pulls up sharp: "O my prophetic soul! he said. 'Your question is whether we shall admit tragedy and comedy into our city, or not.'" And Socrates allows, "Perhaps . . . and perhaps I mean something more than that.'" He says he doesn't know yet himself, but "wherever the enquiry shall blow us like a breeze, there we must go" (192).

By "imitation," Socrates means that kind of composition in which the poet takes on the "voice" or "manner" of his character (191), that is, using direct dialogue or first-person narration—or, in modern fiction, interior monologue or stream-of-consciousness. The enquiry eventually blows us toward implications like these—call them reefs or shoals or safe harbors, according to your own literary-ethical disposition:

If [the young guardians-to-be] do imitate, they should imitate from childhood . . . men who are brave and temperate, pious, free, all things of that sort; but things not for the free they should neither do nor be clever at imitating, and nothing else that is ugly, that the imitation may never give them a taste of the real thing. Have you perceived that imitations settle into habits, and become nature if they are continued from early youth, in body and voice and mind? . . .

Then any we care for, and think they should become good men, we will not allow to imitate a woman, being men themselves, either a young or older woman, nagging at a husband or quarrelling with

2. Indeed! And his literary-appreciative girth is shown by his high praise of that renegade Vardis Fisher's rendition of Joseph Smith's first vision, and by his recent adoption (note the word) of that West Coast expatriate Judith Freeman's novel, *The Chinchilla Farm*, for his Mormon Literature class at BYU, Winter 1991.

3. Cry foul! Here the Speaker, unable to resist his own penchant for puns and quasi-scatological jokes, wrenches the Reviewer's remark *radically* out of context: the phrase applies to editor Clark's *theory*, not his selections; and "rooting" is obviously used neither in its porcine nor its mycological, but in its *dendrological* sense.

4. Obviously the Speaker's emphasis. And isn't he playing fast-and-loose with the sacred text here? This is what the bystanders in the high priest's courtyard say to Peter, the President-elect of the Church, who is denying he knows Jesus in order to shelter the seedling Church. The Speaker so wildly misapplies

this scripture here that we wonder if he is truly Mormon.

5. Once again the Speaker is seduced by his own devious wit: he might not know an amanita if it bit him, though he seems to know that its common name is "death cup," thus offering an odd allusive link to the execution of Socrates. The Reviewer neither said nor implied anything of the sort!

6. Really too pedantic! Rex quondam Rexque futurus indeed. But does the Speaker expect us to believe he has read Malory or Geoffrey of Monmouth, much less that he really knows any Latin?

7. Surely here he tips his incarnadine hand.

8. These unedifying stories may be in the classical texts, but must the Speaker rub our noses in them? What's his insidious game? We suspect he might be one of those "true believers" in "history with warts," too.

gods and boasting, thinking herself happy; or one held in misfortune with mourning and dirge, much less one in sickness or in love or in labour of child. . . . Nor must they imitate slaves whether men or women, doing what slaves do. . . .

Nor wicked men, as it seems, cowards, those who [are] . . . scolding, mocking and speaking vilely of each other, whether drunk or sober, and imitating what such men say and do to each other or to themselves with offence. And I think they must not get the habit of making themselves like madmen in word or act. They must know about madmen, of course, and about bad men and women, but they must do nothing of all this nor imitate this. . . .

. . . the decent man in his narrative . . . will not be ashamed . . . especially to imitate the good man acting firmly and sensibly, but less willingly and less often a good man shaken by disease or passions, or again by drunkenness or some other misfortune. But when he comes to one unworthy of himself, he will not wish to make himself really like a worse man, except now and then if the man does something good; he will be ashamed. He is unpractised, you see, in imitating such persons; and at the same time he resents modelling and fitting himself into the shapes of the worse. He disdains it in mind, unless it be just a bit of fun. (193, 194.)

Socrates does urge Adeimantos—baiting him to resist the argument?—to admit that “the mixed style [combining ‘simple narrative’ in the poet’s own voice with ‘imitation’ of the characters’ voices] is delightful; and much the most delightful to children and tutors alike” (195). But it’s not long before we blow a goodbye kiss to the imitative poet and let him “go in peace to another city” (196).

In the last book of the dialogue, Socrates looks back<sup>9</sup> on the “city . . . in words” he and his interlocutors have “arranged . . . most admirably in general,” and says he finds it “especially” so in regard to poetry (393), by their having decided “not to let in the imitative part of it” because “all such things are the ruin of the hearers’ minds, unless they possess the antidote, knowledge of what . . . things really are” (394). Notice the implied “poison” or “contamination” metaphor, to which I shall return.<sup>10</sup> Here, Socrates must review and expand his critique of “imitation,” as Glaucon and Adeimantos seem to have forgotten it. Are they dunderheads? Is this another cue that *we ought* to resist Socrates’ argument because they don’t?<sup>11</sup>

Imitation works “at three removes from truth” by imitating only appearances of things (399), which are themselves imitations of the Forms. “Then the imitator will neither know nor

have right opinion about what he imitates, as regards fineness or badness”; and “his imitation is a kind of play, not earnest” (402). Worse still, it “joins hands and makes bosom friends with that part in us which is far away from wisdom, for no healthy and true end,” and is thus “an inferior uniting with an inferior and breeding inferior offspring” (403)—terribly un-eugenic. That is, since all imitation is of “men in action” and “feeling either grief or joy” in their action and its results (405), and since “the wise and calm character, being nearly always the same and self-composed, is not easy to imitate, and when imitated is not readily understood, especially by a festival assembly of all sorts and conditions of men gathered in a theatre; for the condition of mind is . . . alien to them”; then “the imitative poet is clearly not naturally suited to imitate this part of the soul, and his skill is not set upon adapting itself to it, if he is to be popular with the multitude, but rather to imitate the resentful and complex character, because that can be imitated well” (405). Doing what he does best—this poor business of imitating inferior appearances for the inferior part of the soul—the imitative poet “arouses and fosters and strengthens this [inferior, divisive] part of the soul, and destroys the rational part”; “he establishes an evil constitution in his soul; he gratifies the unthinking part of it . . . by imaging images very far away indeed from the truth” (405-06). The imitative poet does himself ill; he is self-corruptive.

And that, says Socrates, is not “yet the strongest accusation against imitation. For it is surely monstrous that it is able to corrupt even the decent people, with very few exceptions” (406), by enticing<sup>12</sup> them to “yield” themselves, with “delight” and “sympathy” no less, to “womanly” states of soul in imagined characters of which they would be ashamed in themselves. This is true, Socrates maintains, of “pity,” of jesting at “the ridiculous,”

And the same with love-making and anger and all the desires and griefs and pleasures in the soul which we say go along with our every action—poetical imitation produces all such things in us. For it nourishes them by watering what it ought to dry up, and makes them rulers in us, when they ought to be ruled that we may become better and happier instead of worse and more miserable. (407.)

Glaucon “cannot deny it”; and so, farewell Homer and all the comic and tragic poets, including the aged and still astonishingly brilliant Sophocles, of whom the equally aged Cephalos reported this at the beginning of the dialogue: “I was with him once when somebody asked him, ‘What about love now, Sophocles? Are you still able to serve a woman?’ ‘Hush, man,’ he said, ‘I’ve escaped from all that, thank goodness. I feel as if I had escaped from a mad, cruel slave driver.’ ” (127.)<sup>13</sup>

9. A dark, perverse hint here of Lot’s wife looking back on Sodom? (Genesis 19:26.) Or a suggestion that the Speaker suspects Socrates himself would not be a citizen of the city he has created? Unthinkable.

10. Here the Speaker seems to fancy himself a hero in the mold of General MacArthur—a man worthy of imitation (but not by such as this).

11. Rhetorical question. Does he really suppose Socrates and Plato don’t mean what they say? That they did not always strive to speak and write in such a

way as not only to be understood but also never to be *misunderstood*?

12. The word does not occur in Plato’s text, and we suspect an allusion to its scriptural occurrences in 2 Ne. 2:16: “man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other”; or Mosiah 3:19: “the natural man is an enemy to God . . . unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.”

13. Why must the Speaker—why indeed must Plato—leave in this unedifying bit of trivia? We might excuse a pagan—but this Speaker!

Farewell to poesy, then, unless she “can give some reason why she ought to be in a well-ordered city,” for though we must admit we are “enchanted” by her, “especially when [we] see her through Homer,” we must “do as people who once were in love with somebody, if they believe their love to be no good to them: they don’t want to give it up, but they must” (408). So the intellectual male “founders” of a (mental and verbal) city reject the works and the presence of imitative imagination, personified as female.<sup>14</sup>

WAS that what my student wanted, what those students of Gene England wanted, what the Reviewer of *Harvest* wanted? that well-ordered city, uncontaminated by the “alien” poison of the “imitation” of “bad” or even “mixed” men and women? that well-guarded citadel of the (male, mailed) mind,<sup>15</sup> that castle in the air, that cloud-cuckoo land?<sup>16</sup> Poor Chekhov will condemn himself to exile from that city of words by the words of his own hand, in a letter written on April Fool’s Day 1890 to his millionaire conservative editor-friend Alexei Suvorin, who had scolded him for his “objectivity, calling it indifference to good and evil”:

You would have me say, when depicting horse-thieves, that stealing horses is an evil. . . . stealing horses is not simply stealing but a passion. Of course, it would be gratifying to couple art with sermonizing, but, personally, I find this exceedingly difficult and, because of conditions imposed by technique, all but impossible. Why, in order to depict horse thieves in seven hundred lines I must constantly speak and think as they do and feel in keeping with their spirit. . . . (Chekhov, 133.)<sup>17</sup>

As an artist—indeed the great poet of that form we call the short story—Chekhov, grandson of a serf and son of a father who beat him; Chekhov, who later said he had “squeeze[d] the slave out of himself, drop by drop” (107), consciously chooses to do just what Socrates warns against, to “speak and think . . . in keeping with [the] spirit” of men and women shaken by passions, sometimes of women “in sickness or in love or in labour of child”; he consciously embraces the risk of what Socrates felt was a form of slavery, and in that embrace he finds one form of the liberty he prizes most highly: “to be a free artist and nothing more,” free “from force and falsehood, no matter how [they] manifest themselves” (81). And I am saying I think that in so doing he is true—as a great many other modern and contemporary writers are true—in a very deep way to the central passion of Judaeo-Christian story: the passion of the

Other. I’ll try to explain.

I’ll take a flying leap,<sup>18</sup> is what I’ll do, and say that I think the central question of all story—and thus possibly of every form of human culture—is just this: How shall we greet the Other? Shall we devour, or annihilate, or welcome? Polyphemos the wheel-eyed or single-eyed<sup>19</sup> has his answer: eatemup! (*Odyssey* 9.273-93). And for those who like their answers short and scriptural, I’ll offer two or three before going on somewhat longer. From the Apostle Paul, once Saul of Tarsus, once “consenting unto [the] death” of Stephen, once making “havock of the church,” once a persecutor “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,”<sup>20</sup> once stopped and questioned by a Stranger on the Road: “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2). (I’m making the traditional assumption that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews: God forbid the writer should be somebody else, some stranger, some unknown other!) Paul may have in mind the way Abraham rushes out of his tent to welcome strangers in the plains of Mamre (Genesis 18:1-2), or even the way his brother Lot welcomes two strangers (the same? others?) at the gate of Sodom, the polluted city. But I digress. Here’s another one, which the author of the Epistle may have had by heart: “But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34).<sup>21</sup> The scriptorially minded could also read Deuteronomy 10:16-19 before commending themselves as supplicants to the Lord’s care tonight:

Circumcise therefore the foreskin<sup>22</sup> of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great god, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and the widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

I MEAN to take the ancient and widely understood habit of hospitality as metaphor and ground for Christian (and Mormon) imagination and criticism. On the way, and to substantiate “widely understood,” I remind you of how that habit operates in the *Odyssey* (by Homer or somebody else or maybe even, Zeus forbid,<sup>23</sup> a woman). When Telemakhos, seeking news of his absent father, reaches Pylos, the city of Nestor breaker of horses, a sacrifice to Poseidon is in progress; but the

14. Here, dare we suspect a “feminist” agenda?

15. O my prophetic soul, indeed.

16. Sheer name-calling!

17. This smacks of the unseemly petulance of the recipient of literary patronage. Moscow rumor about this time had it that “Chekhov is Suvorin’s kept woman” (Troyat, 134).

18. Not content with recklessly trying to leap over tall buildings in a single bound, the Speaker must make it his theme!

19. We note the Speaker’s irreverent allusion to Matthew 6:22: “if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” There is simply no room in the Kingdom for his kind of foolish binocular vision: “if thy right eye of-

fend thee, pluck it out. . . .” (Matthew 5:29).

20. These unedifying details might have gone charitably unmentioned.

21. This chapter of Leviticus, in current LDS copies, bears the following heading: “Israel commanded: Be holy, live righteously, love thy neighbor, and keep the commandments—The Lord reveals and reaffirms sundry laws and commandments—Enchantments, wizardry, prostitution, and all evil practices forbidden”; the recommendation regarding strangers is but one among “sundry” rules and other more important principles by which Israel is to keep itself holy.

22. Once again it suits the Speaker not to cut the gross—and grotesquely incorrect—anatomical detail.

23. An unwitting clue that the Speaker is at heart a pagan?

stranger is welcomed and feasted on wine and the flesh of the sacrificial bulls before Nestor speaks: "Now is a better time to interrogate our guests and ask / them who they are, now they have had the pleasure of eating. / Strangers, who are you? From where do you come sailing. . . ?" (*Odyssey*, 3.69-71.)

I remind you that in Greek one word, *xenos*, means both "stranger" and "guest"; and in the world Homer (or whoever) imagined, the stranger/guest is always—if the means are available—washed, sometimes fully bathed and clothed in clean garments, and fed to repletion—all this before being asked his name and story. Sometimes the story is asked before the name, I suspect because the story will tell us, better than a name could, who the stranger is among us. Much the same thing happens to Telemakhos when he reaches Lakedaimon and stands in the forecourt of the house of Menelaos, who is "deeply vexed" that his "henchman" should wonder whether to unharness the strangers' horses "or send them on to somebody else": "Unharness," the king says, "and bring the men here to be feasted" (4.1-36). The searching son isn't even asked his name in this case; Helen guesses who he is by his resemblance to "great-hearted Odysseus," and Peisistratos son of Nestor confirms the guess (4.140-57).

And the lost father Odysseus himself, when he makes his way, already bathed and wearing garments laundered at the inlet by Nausikaa, into the hall of the Phaiakian king and queen on the island of Scheria, spends a night and most of the next day, first given the seat of the king's best-loved son (7.170-71), then feasting, telling the last leg of his journey, sleeping, hearing bardic singing (including the story of "the love of Ares and sweet-garlanded Aphrodite" [8.267], another Socratic no-no),<sup>24</sup> feasting, sporting in the agora, watching "a dance on the generous earth" (8.378), before anyone bothers to ask who he is. By then, the ship is ready for his departure, he's loaded with guest-gifts, and he's weeping like a woman (8.521-32) over Demodokos' song of the Trojan horse. Only then does Alkinoös say, "Tell me the name by which your mother and father called you" (8.550). And he wants to know the story, too; so we and the Phaiakians, to whom "always the feast is dear. . . , and the lyre and dances / and changes of clothing and our hot baths and beds" (8.248-9), we get to hear the Great Wanderings, which take up the next four books of the poem, with all of the listeners "stricken to silence, / held in thrall by the story all through the shadowy chambers" (13.1-2). Last, I remind you that one way to translate the opening words of the *Odyssey* (as both Butler and Lattimore do) is simply "Tell me, muse"—as if the muse were a feminine guest with a tale the poet welcomes. Do all stories come from the Other? Are they all breathed into us by the visiting stranger?

The rule at any rate seems clear: welcome the stranger, bathe and clothe and feed, maybe even hear the story, then ask who. By then the stranger is among us, our guest, entertained like one born here and come home from long wandering. Back there on the plains of Mamre, before a certain stranger leaves he has promised you the son you've almost given up hope of having, laughed at your old wife for her laughter, knowing he'll have the last laugh and you—you'll name your son for that: Isaac, "he laughs." Strangers, hosts, guests, old wives, newborn babes—we all say the laugh's on us.

From Abraham and Homer at least down to the much-travelled Saul of Tarsus, then, there flows a perennial comprehension of hospitality as that gesture in which the wayfaring stranger becomes our guest-friend. We may watch it flood to the surface of Orson Scott Card's science-fiction novel *Ender's Game*, in the "xenocide" Ender Wiggin's version of what the "Bugger" Hive Queen would say to the destroyers of her alien species: "But still we welcome you now as guestfriends. Come into our home, daughters of Earth. . ." (Card, 355). In the Book of Mormon, too, as a couple of my students pointed out to me, Amulek understands this when he welcomes Alma: "[G]o with me into my house and I will impart unto thee of my food; and I know that thou wilt be a blessing unto me and my house" (Alma 8:20).<sup>25</sup> As readers, perhaps especially as readers in the formal role of critics, I suggest, we often too quickly judge the stranger by her language—her speech bewrayeth her as "not one of us" (what else?)—before we hear her story. Perhaps especially male guardians or priests, charged as we feel we are with the purity of the city, sniff the odor of contamination so quickly as to reject the gift the stranger may bring, or withhold the gift the stranger may need of us.

There's a holy urgency, we may tell ourselves, because we suppose on good authority that the end is nigh and the city must be every whit holy, pure as a bride arrayed for the bridal. "Heah come de judge! heah come de judge!" we chant to ourselves; but the judge ain't come yet. And in the meantime, in-between-time,<sup>26</sup> ain't we got fun?<sup>27</sup> Well, no, not if our puritanical side, what Nietzsche called the "ascetic priest" in us, has anything to say about it. In the meantime, we'll have mean time, niggardly, narrow, miserly time; not time as the "Old Shepherd" in Act 3 Scene 3 of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* grasps it when he and his "Clown" son take up the abandoned Perdita, lost daughter of Leontes and Hermione: "'Tis a lucky day, boy, and we'll do good deeds on't" (3.3.136). We'll have mean time; not time as a merciful means<sup>28</sup> to something else,<sup>29</sup> something or somebody other than we already are; not time to mean all we can to one another while the judge graciously defers his arrival, giving us all this meantime.

24. Rightly so.

25. Careful readers will have noticed that Amulek has been instructed by "an angel" to "receive" Alma; thus there is little evidence of a "habit" or "rule" among the Nephites.

26. A typo, or one of his deliberate puns? But what fork would he have in mind here?

27. This clowning is beneath comment.

28. A covert allusion to that raucous drunk Dylan Thomas and the demipagan nostalgia of "Fern Hill"?

In the sun that is young once only,

Time let me play and be

Golden in the mercy of his means (12-14)

*The Poems of Dylan Thomas*, ed. David Jones (New York: New Directions, 1971), 196-96.

29. Possibly an allusion to a little-known book by Jonathan Bishop, *Something Else*, which the Speaker is known to have read and marked with some care. Bishop's even less-known book, *Who Is Who?*, may also lurk beneath the surface here.

THE one we expect as judge and bridegroom, who may appear a stranger to us, and we strangers to him, lived, while he was here, in the comprehension of hospitality I've been sketching out. This is noteworthy, considering that his sojourning mother and father found "no room . . . at the inn" (Luke 2:7) and his birth was hosted by beasts, shepherders, and a cheering-section of angels.<sup>30</sup> In fact, he himself said he'd had "no place to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58). Yet, invited once to eat at the house of a Pharisee named Simon, as he lay at lunch,<sup>31</sup> a woman came and began to bathe his feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair, the means available to her for welcoming this stranger as a guest. And Simon said in his wary heart, "If this man really were a prophet, he'd know what kind of woman he's allowing to touch him." Simon could sniff out contamination, whether in the itinerant rabbi or the woman come in off the streets so hungry to meet the rabbi that she'll crash a private party. But the young rabbi, catching a whiff himself, says, "Simon, I've got something to tell you"; then tells a parable and goes on matter-of-factly to upbraid Simon for failing in his ordinary duties as a host: "You didn't wash me, you didn't kiss me; but this woman here, since I came in she hasn't stopped kissing my feet and washing them with her tears and wiping them with her hair. She loves much, so her many sins are forgiven." (Luke 7:36-50.)

Another time, the young rabbi took off to the borders, tired perhaps from walking and teaching, and lodged in a house in the city of Tyre (Mark 7:24-30). I imagine him again lying at lunch or supper, and I like to think the people of the house have a bitch there, with a just-weaned litter of pups sprawling and foraging on a packed-dirt floor, begging for table scraps. Again a woman comes in with her trouble; a Greek, a Syrophoenician if we like precision, and her daughter is sick, contaminated, possessed of another kind of stranger, a demon.<sup>32</sup> She's heard of the rabbi, about whom news always seems to travel fast, and she breaks in on his supper to beg him to come heal her little girl. It's the only time I can think of in Mark's Good News<sup>33</sup> that the rabbi even temporarily draws a line to keep somebody out; he's notorious, as every Pharisee knows, for crossing all *their* lines. He tells her, "You don't feed the dogs before the children have eaten." Maybe he just wants to finish his meal before it cools. But this woman, full of love for her daughter and hope for the rabbi's good gift, comes right back at him with wit that the Pharisees seldom show, and even the disciples too infrequently: she says, "But sir, the pups under the table eat the crumbs the children scatter." Welcoming, loving her wit and the passions that drive it, changing his mind, perhaps even laughing, he says, "For that saying, go your way, your daughter is whole."

It's good news indeed, telling good stories about this guest, so I'll go on for another. Once in the last days of his work here,

in Jerusalem now and not out on the borders, he's constantly harassed by Pharisees trying to snare him in a word, trying to make his speech bewray him so they can hand him over to the law. One day (Mark 12:28-34), a scribe after listening to some of this asks him, "Rabbi, what's the greatest commandment?" Well, that's easy, and Jesus quotes him straight: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord. . . ." Then for good measure he adds, "And the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The scribe likes this answer (scribes always like accurate quotes, plus extras, in oral exams), so he echoes it back and adds another line for good measure himself: This "is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Well, the rabbi likes that, so he says, with what I take to be a generous smile of welcome, "You're not far from the reign of God." Then Mark tersely says that nobody dared to ask him any more questions. Nervous, I suspect, about finding themselves invited *in* where they were busy trying to keep somebody else *out*.

THAT may serve to sweep the dooryard for what I want now to enter upon: the yoked questions of what might be called "Christian imagination" and "Christian criticism"—of which I hope anything we might call "Mormon imagination" and "Mormon criticism" would be an instance. To guess how "Christian imagination" might act, I'll tell another story (John 8:2-11) that may let itself be read as suggesting what the imagination of Jesus was like. Once a gang of scribes and Pharisees, all men we must suppose, priestly guardians of communal purity, seeking one more time to trap Jesus, drag before him in the temple "a woman taken in adultery," caught "in the very act," to which these gentlemen have somehow made themselves witnesses. The old law says stone her; what does the young rabbi say? (We may wonder where her partner is, who presumably also was caught in the act, but the crimestoppers aren't saying.) Jesus buys a little time by scratching in the dirt, thinking is my guess, but more than that, imagining, taking in the story. And that would mean all of it: first, yes, the woman's desire, her pleasure, her fear and shame and guilt, her agony at being hauled into open daylight (half-naked? the text doesn't say, thus allowing our moral and sensual imagination to take part also, with results differing according to gender); but the men, too, their conniving, their so-conscious righteousness, their prurience, their pleasure in cruelty, maybe mixed with shame and pity, whatever passions shake them. I must suppose that, being who and what he is, this constantly tested stranger dives to the bottom of whatever they all feel, each one, descending "below all things" (D&C 88:6; cf. 122:8) to become enough to answer their need more than their bad-faith legalistic question.

The imagination of Jesus, I'm suggesting, which is the

30. Called, chosen, and carefully coached, we may be sure.

31. Here and throughout his retelling of New Testament stories, the Speaker paraphrases freely, though not enough to be charged with egregious travesty. At some points his renderings resemble the versions of Reynolds Price in *A Palpable God* (New York: Atheneum, 1978; San Francisco: North Point, 1985).

32. Only here does the Speaker even slightly acknowledge what should be

obvious to anyone who lives in a house with a front door: not all strangers are nice guys; the stranger could be anybody, the Avon Lady or Prince Paris or Ted Bundy as well as the Prophet Elijah.

33. No: see Mark 4:12, which is thoroughly germane to the issue here: "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; . . . lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."

originary Christian and Mormon imagination, will take precisely the risk Socrates warns against as the ruin of the soul:<sup>34</sup> to understand an other, whoever the other is, however bad or mixed. Something like this, I am persuaded, must lie behind the response Jesus makes, which most of us, sinners and accusers in need of justice and mercy, have by heart and can quote verbatim. I'm saying that Christian imagination chooses to be the antithesis of Socratic imagination: where the Greek will ascend, will fly every possible contamination in order to keep the city of pure soul well-governed and sterile, the radical Jew dives to the bottom to seize the root<sup>35</sup> of our cruelty and sorrow, to search out the venom that festers our wounds and thus begin to heal us. To do that, Christian imagination risks hearing our voices, the voices of all the others; "alternate voices" if you like,<sup>36</sup> voices speaking by turns. (To hear or to echo or to quote may not be to "imitate" in Socrates' sense; I have no answer to that question.)

THE risk of listening to other voices brings me, then, to what I propose—have been proposing all along—as the first gesture of a "Mormon reading," a "Mormon" way of judging the works of the imagination. Here I can rely on two quite explicit statements in Mormon scripture. This was the partial answer I took back to my class a week or so later, with the question of Chekhov's story still hanging over us. First the voice of the sojourner known as Jesus: "And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good. . . ." (Ether 4:12). Then the voice of Mormon, chronicler of a culture wrecked by fraternal estrangement, his words handed on to us by his son Moroni, a visitor who showed up shining in a boy's bedroom: "I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God" (Moroni 7:16).

I'd want to underscore certain words here: "gift," of course; "inviteth," whose Latin affiliations and affinities are obscure, but which we normally associate with welcome; and "persuade," which at its root touches sweetness and is closely allied with *suavio*, to kiss.<sup>37</sup> But my immediate question is how to apply such a rule of judgment to literature, or rather, to specific stories. Clearly, these voices urge all of us who meet a stranger or a story to consider what it "invites" or "persuades" us to do. It's the burden of every censor: if I would censor, I first must say what "it" invites *me* to do. My student challenging Chekhov may not have considered this; at least he did not say he felt invited to do evil or to persuade not to believe in Christ; ostensibly, he seemed to want to persuade me and the rest of

the class to be better Christians. But I'm already ahead of myself. First of all, what "thing" are we talking about? The story? Or any one experience of it? I suspect it's the latter, since not all of us are persuaded alike by the same story, and each of us may find different persuasions or invitations in the same story upon different readings. Probably, too, it is wrong, or at least rash, for us to take a *part* of the thing—the subject of the story, or a scene or detail or word in it—for the "thing." And so also with a moment of our experience of a thing, whether it's a scriptural narrative or anything else.

Concerning whether it's "right" or "wrong" to read a story like "The Lady with the Dog" in a BYU class, then, how would we judge? Does it "persuade" or "invite" to do good or to do evil? I can only say what it persuades or invites me to do (and perhaps I am deceived, and in some dark pocket of my psyche something else is afoot).<sup>38</sup> To put this too simply and generally, Chekhov's story invites me to believe that love is better than sexual predation; and to understand something of the hearts and minds of two casual adulterers (the "he and she" of it) who painfully and problematically (and however imperfectly) come to love one another, and face at last the question of what now to do. Is it always "wrong" to divorce? Has marriage always and everywhere persuaded or invited to do good? (A friend told me he once heard a man say, "I never could understand how anyone could commit adultery until I got married.") Reading literature is risky, as living in Western culture, in America, in Provo, at BYU in the 1990s is risky. So we read and discuss literature in class, which is also risky, but which *may* help us to be more critical—and more merciful—"readers" of the culture we live in. Chekhov, I find so far, helps me that way.

SOMETHING like that was my belated partial answer to a hard question that still has not gone away; I trust rather that it has begun to be listened to, has become part of the conversation in the household. I want to turn now at last back to questions of "Mormon literature," questions the AML has long assembled to ask and converse about. Implicitly, perhaps, to questions like "Is there a Mormon criticism?" or the one Dennis Clark asked in *Harvest*, which I hope you now hear as highly pertinent: "Is there a Mormon audience for poetry?" Explicitly, to questions about fiction, about short stories and novels. And for responses, I want to listen awhile to the voices of some others: novelists and story-writers like Chekhov, Henry James, Rainer Maria Rilke, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, Reynolds Price, Milan Kundera.

About being a Mormon audience, about Mormon reading, including the formal, institutional kinds of reading we call literature classes and criticism, then, I answer first that it

34. Is the Speaker wresting the scriptures again? "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39, cf. 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33). By some devious means he seems to have learned that "life" in the Authorized Version translates the Greek *psyche*.

35. We confess ourselves astonished, even in the sometimes lubricious purview of this Address, to suspect here a lurking and (to be charitable) possibly unconscious (and to us incomprehensible) allusion to Eudora Welty's *Losing Battles* (362). Another, perhaps more likely antecedent is an episode in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Tablet XI, lines 266-91).

36. Elder Dallin H. Oaks offered the definitive apostolic counsel on this.

37. How very interesting—how sweet! Lips that touch Nietzsche shall never touch mine.

38. Gigantic understatement.



would be generous, hospitable;<sup>39</sup> it would listen, then take its turn and converse, as the AML for fifteen years now has feasted and conversed. Yet we've also had a continuing "tradition" of sometimes adverse or even acerbic dissent from the decisions of our preferably anonymous awards judges: this or that novel or batch of poems or stories is "not really Mormon"; and ironically enough, one such plaintiff had been the defendant in an earlier complaint. But we're not a court, not even a "court of love." We're more of a wayside inn, and these complaining and dissenting voices, too, should be entertained in our conversation. *Diversa non adversa*, Peter Abelard wrote to his stern opponent Bernard of Clairvaux: we—our minds, our voices—differ but are not against one another.<sup>40</sup>

Maybe the idea of "criticism" itself, of a crisis in which we have to decide, is the problem; we are to "receive"<sup>41</sup> and "hear" before we judge. Hospitable reading would be slow to shut out. It would be slow to decide whether a literary visitor is "Mormon" or not, especially slow to gauge this by some presumed "doctrinal" criterion or some elusive metaphysical or "essential" notion of "spirituality." After all, we are instructed by the visiting resurrected Christ in 3 Nephi 11:28-40 that his "doctrine" is repentance, faith, and baptism, "and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock" (3 Nephi 11:39-40).<sup>42</sup> If that and only that is "doctrine," then it offers a test no poem or story can either pass or fail, since only personal agents can offer to meet such a test, and they do so in action. Maybe Mormonism itself has no "essence" but only a story,<sup>43</sup> which comprises all the stories of all the agents who come upon those invitations to action and offer to take them up.

I suspect it's a striving after wind<sup>44</sup> to pursue the "essence" of Mormon literature. When the Reviewer of *Harvest* says that "the more pertinent question" is "What is a Mormon poem?" he's asking emphatically a question framed by Western ontology, which has always asked, "What is it?"—always sought essences uncontaminated by time, space, matter, or the stories of existents. Stories always tell *how it goes*.<sup>45</sup> "Essentialism" is the problem in that review,<sup>46</sup> and it's why the Reviewer's

judgments and descriptions of the poems he shuts out don't attend closely enough to the poems to notice traits that might "pass" even his criteria. Margaret Rampton Munk's suite of poems on dying (as a Mormon) with cancer "are certainly not a Mormon response to life and death" (Cracroft, 122), he says, apparently overlooking, for instance, the likely Mormon overtones of "solemn ceremony" and "sisterhood" in poem IV, "The Nurses" (England and Clark, 141), or what I take for a pervading "Mormon" attitude toward the body.

Next, of Kathy Evans he writes, "Neither is [her] beautiful reverie, 'Midnight Reassembled,' rooted in the Mormon ethos in any way that I can discern" (Cracroft, 122), and offers in evidence these lines from the middle of the poem:

Somewhere, out there  
in the immensity of night  
a swan glides across  
the surface of its own image,  
wings touching wings on the water.  
We touch the world this way.  
(England and Clark, 172.)

Perhaps he glimpsed "the self-fascination of much contemporary poetry" (Cracroft, 122) in the mirror-image here, and that made him miss the pun in "a swan glides across" and forget that in the immense night Cygnus is the Northern Cross and that the swan has served as one of the many figures of Christ from at least the twelfth-century *Speckled Book* down to the contemporary Galway Kinnell's "To Christ Our Lord."<sup>47</sup> Yet it should have been harder not to hear in these lines the echo of "the Spirit of God mov[ing] [or brooding] upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2).

I notice, too, that all but one of the specifically named shut out poems are by women, while all but two of the specifically shut in are by men;<sup>48</sup> both of those are Linda Sillitoe's, and one, to be sure, is her "Song of Creation," which the Reviewer calls "lovely, feminist lines about the Mother and Father sharing in the creation of the world" (Cracroft, 122-23). Have I stepped in still-fresh irony here?<sup>49</sup> Mother and Father make a world together, but their daughters' voices sound a little too strange to this guardian of the city.

The one poem by a male writer specifically shut out of the

39. This word signals what we suspect is a pervasively dissolved influence in the Address, from Emmanuel Levinas's *Totality and Infinity*, which announces in its Preface the book's project "to present subjectivity as welcoming the Other, as hospitality" (27).

40. The Speaker seems to have learned this remark from Friedrich Heer (116). But he conveniently passes over the rest of the story: Abelard, a premature feminist and dangerous intellectual notorious for his scandalous affair with Heloise, was condemned as a heretic and banished to the monastery of Cluny; his adherents were excommunicated and his books were burned, Pope Innocent II himself (whose name speaks volumes) lighting the bonfire at St. Peter's. That Abelard's faith-eroding *Sic et Non* should forerun the scholasticism of Peter Lombard and ultimately Thomas Aquinas, and that his elevation of Mary Magdalene above the militant saints should intitate a cult, are typical aberrations of apostate Christian history.

41. Has the Speaker the temerity here to allude to Moroni 10:4: "And when ye shall receive these things . . . ?"

42. No comment. This "deconstructive" use of a sacred text speaks amply for—and against—itsself.

43. The Speaker seems to have imbibed this notion from Richard Rorty's

paper, "Heidegger, Kundera, and Dickens" (69). His fancy word "essentialism" below occurs in the same source, though he claims to have made it up for himself and been using it for years. Likewise, his earlier allusion to "what Nietzsche called the 'ascetic priest'" seems to have been lifted from this paper, though we have seen one or more worn volumes of that self-styled "anti-Christ" Nietzsche on his own shelves.

44. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher" (Ecclesiastes 1:2); "and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit [Hebrew: striving after wind]" (1:14).

45. Could this, perchance, be an "essentialistic" remark?

46. We've also overheard the Speaker say, promiscuously mixing metaphors, that "Reviewers always shoot from the hip, and often miss; they're plagued by premature ejaculation. And they often suffer from chronic contraceptive imagination." Out of the word of his own mouth. . . .

47. Did he make up *Speckled Book*? At any rate, these references are to the aberrant tradition of Celtic Christianity.

48. Such niggling tabulations are unworthy of the Spirit of True Criticism. And we are certain that the Reviewer's feminist credentials will be found impeccable.

49. Barnyard rhetorical question! Moo! Moo!

fold is Lance Larsen's "Passing the Sacrament at Eastgate Nursing Home," which the Reviewer describes as "a portrayal of routine and sterile Aaronic priesthood service in which the sacred ritual never rises beyond the 'bikini splendor, of the Hunsaker twins' or 'the lady in 243 who wore her breasts at her waist'" (Cracroft, 123). Deflected here, perhaps, by the attention the youthful persona does pay to female flesh, young and old, the Reviewer's censorious El Marko felt-tip must have spread its swath too wide and blotted out the boy's clear awareness that "we gave them / bread of another world." Those Hunsaker twins may now be "sex objects," as is "the wrinkled / Miss July behind the door" of the janitor's closet where they prepare the sacrament; but this boy is coming to know they will one day be women like the fallen lady in 243. He can add two plus two, even if the Reviewer can't. At the end of the poem he's thinking not of the twins' "bikini splendor" but of that lady and of how he "with clean and careful hands / laid the bread on her tongue." This is one of the tongues we must learn to hear, as this boy may now begin to try. The one female tongue that speaks in the poem calls him "Jesus"—this priesthood holder headed for the Order of the Son of God. And his priestly service is not "sterile"; his hands are "clean and careful." Would those be enough "hint[s] of transcendence and greening spirituality"? By my own argument I should not trouble to seek them out. I don't offer my readings as "definitive" (I don't believe in definitive readings, though I do believe in worse and better, smaller and larger), or as deciding whether these poems are "Mormon" or not; but I would say my readings seem to receive and respond more fully to the poems' available language. And above all I want to suggest what perils we are cast among<sup>50</sup> when we play the metaphysical quiz-game of essences.

Mormon reading would be patient, longsuffering, kind; its truest guides might be First Corinthians 13 and the thirteenth article of faith.<sup>51</sup> "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal": I suggest Paul says that if I don't graciously welcome and hear the tongues of others, I "thing" my own tongue, I become a noisemaker, a nonperson, incapable of true saying. Wouldn't a Mormon criticism conduct itself "ethically" in some manner rather close to what our friend and neighbor Wayne Booth recommends and exemplifies in *The Company We Keep*? Might it not ask what "kind of friendship" (Booth, 207) an implied author offers us in the gift of a text? what "kind of desirer" (201) the text invites us to be? whether it beckons us into a "pattern of life . . . that friends might well pursue together" (222)?<sup>52</sup>

A Mormon criticism will surely not judge very quickly by superficial elements such as the presence of the always-ready-

to-hand clichés of pop Mormon "spirituality" or "virtue," or, negatively, by the presence of topics we disapprove or words we must not say, in honor of which I've begun to compose a ditty:

We must not say the a-word,  
no, never say the b,  
not any of the three—  
or is it four or five or more,  
or upwards of a score?  
At any rate, not even contemplate  
the words that start with c;  
and d avoid lest ding or dong  
accompany our little song.  
And e-words—they excite,  
though polysyllabically long,  
so saying them cannot be right;  
and then we find and founder on  
the letter coming all along . . .

Well, it might go on, and I've had flashes of the whole alphabet becoming interdicted, right down to Z, for—of course! Thank you, Pat Aikins—*zucchini*, which one dictionary defines as "a summer squash of bushy growth with smooth, slender, cylindrical, dark-green fruit."<sup>53</sup>

Mormon reading, I dare to hope, would be slow to shut out a poem or story merely because it takes up the matter of sex—"the great relation between men and women, the constant world-renewal," as Henry James called it, noting its "immense omission in our fiction" in his 1899 essay "The Future of the Novel" (39). That may have been only part of what Chekhov had in mind when he advised his aspiring-writer brother Alexander, "Don't have too many characters. The center of gravity should be two: he and she" (Chekhov, 37). I can take Chekhov generally here, supposing "he and she"—or "him and her" as other translations have it—epitomize the play of difference, of necessary complementary opposites, Same and Other, which might beget all stories. Still, there are "The Lady with the Dog" and a great many others in which Chekhov tries out the "him and her" or "he and she" of it—the how and show of it, the who and shoe of it, the hem and sheer of it, the hire and share, the hope and shape of it, the here and home, the harm and charm, the hump and slump, the chime and shine, the heat and shade, the hide and hair, the high and shy of it, the hum and whirr, and the hymn and howl of it.

E. M. Forster said that "Human beings have their great chance in the novel."<sup>54</sup> And D. H. Lawrence wrote that the novel was "the highest form of human expression so far attained. . . . Because it is so incapable of the absolute" (Lawrence 1985, 179). Flannery O'Connor wrote that

50. Yet another covert allusion, this time to John Crowe Ransom's "Captain Carpenter":

To any adversary it is fame  
If he risk to be wounded by my tongue  
Or burnt in two beneath my red heart's flame  
Such are the perils he is cast among. (33-36)

But to what intent?

51. Unlucky numbers! Yet the Speaker plunges on.

52. Brother Booth seems much more cautious than the Speaker about whom he allows into his living room.

53. The dictionary supposedly quoted here has not been found, and we suspect an oblique thrust at Sister Elouise Bell's well-beloved celebration of that great green blessing of the Mormon garden, now gathered into her collection *Only When I Laugh*.

54. Where? Just tell us where.

Fiction is the most impure and the most modest and the most human of the arts. It is closest to man in his sin and his suffering and his hope, and it is often rejected by Catholics [Mormons too, as we know] for the very reasons that make it what it is. It escapes any orthodoxy we might set up for it, because its dignity is an imitation of our own, based like our own on free will, a free will that operates even in the teeth of divine displeasure. (192.)

I think they all had in mind the same conception of the novel that Milan Kundera has in mind when he says, "The novel is the imaginary paradise of individuals. It is the territory where no one possesses the truth, neither Anna nor Karenin, but where everyone has the right to be understood, both Anna and Karenin" (Kundera, 159). The world of a novel is not that of some absolute, "essentialist" either/or, these voices say, but a world of both/and, all together. Novels are polyglot and heteroglot: many-tongued, other-tongued.

For Kundera, the European novel thus understood is "the depreciated legacy of Cervantes" (3-20). But I think he hasn't traced its genealogy back far enough. I think the fiction that is "incapable of the absolute" and in which "everyone has the right to be understood" descends lineally from Mark and Luke, from the stories they tell about that wayfaring stranger Jesus and his doings on dusty roads and streets; and behind them, I think, it goes back to some of the stories the stranger himself told. The stories I've already retold may suggest where I'd start looking; but to see this genealogical line start to trace itself, read Luke 15 and notice there how different Jesus' last parable, the one we call The Prodigal Son, is from his first two; how it gives everyone, even the grudging Pharisees, their chance to be heard and understood, and then doesn't shut the story down with the "absolute" of a "doctrinal" message. Then notice how the good-news writer Luke doesn't shut his story down either, doesn't tell us how this particular bunch of Pharisees took that tale.<sup>55</sup> I suspect that a lot more fiction-writers than are dreamt of in our theory or history have learned from these storytellers. We shame ourselves by not taking instruction from them, too. Kundera comes closer to this genealogy when he calls the novel "The art inspired by God's laughter" (160).<sup>56</sup>

D. H. Lawrence seems to have had such open, generous storytelling partly in mind when he wrote that "only in the novel are *all* things given full play; or at least, they may be given full play . . ." For him, "out of the full play of all things emerges the only thing that is anything, the wholeness of a man, the wholeness of a woman, man alive, and live woman" (Lawrence 1985, 198). More and more, I find, I want that wholeness in the fiction I read—and, because I've tasted it

richly there, in the life I live. For D. H. Lawrence, in a letter written 2 June 1914 (thirty years before my own birth), the only re-sourcing of art, re-vivifying it, is to make it more the joint work of man and woman. I think *the* one thing to do, is for men to have the courage to draw nearer to women, expose themselves to them, and be altered by them: and for women to accept and admit men. That is the start—by bringing themselves together, men and women—revealing themselves each to the other, gaining great blind knowledge and suffering and joy. . . . (1932, 198.)<sup>57</sup>

In the next breath, Lawrence refers to this as "a sermon on a stool" (199).

Like Henry James, Rainer Maria Rilke writes of "the great renewal of the world" in the fourth of his *Letters to a Young Poet*; and rather like Lawrence he suggests that it "will perhaps consist in one phenomenon: that man and woman, freed from all mistaken feelings and aversions, will seek each other not as opposites but as brother and sister, as neighbors, and will unite as *human beings*, in order to bear in common, simply, earnestly, and patiently, the heavy sex that has been laid upon them" (1984, 41). And in his *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, in a section that recalls the seventh of the *Letters to a Young Poet*, his narrator writes:

But now that so much is changing, isn't it time for us to change? Couldn't we try to gradually develop and slowly take upon ourselves, little by little, our part in the great task of love? We have been spared all its trouble. . . . We have been spoiled by superficial pleasures like all dilettantes, and are looked upon as masters. But what if we despised our successes? What if we started from the very outset to learn the task of love, which has always been done for us? What if we went ahead and became beginners, now that much is changing? (1983, 135.)

More and more I'm persuaded that to undertake the great task of love—all of its works—I must listen to the voice of the Other, let the stranger say. I'm urged this way by some of the voices, female and male, that I've listened to longest and most attentively.

Eudora Welty wrote in her essay, "Looking Back at the First Story," "Imagining yourself inside the skin, body, heart, and mind of any other person is the primary feat, but also the absolute necessity" (755): the absolute necessity for making fiction. Reynolds Price's richest early story, "A Chain of Love," in which he imagined himself into a country girl named Rosacoke Mustian, was helped by his reading of Welty's fiction in the year he wrote that story. Recently, Price has urged more

55. The Speaker has been promulgating this eccentric interpretation of Luke 15 for almost five years now, and its lack of popular acceptance is but one sign of its essential erroneousness. For a near-canonical reading of the prodigal son parable, see Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (307-11), which also quotes extensively from the earlier apostolic interpretation given by James E. Talmage in *Jesus the Christ* (460-61).

56. The Speaker conveniently omits to note that Kundera also says, "I like to imagine that Francois Rabelais heard God's laughter one day, and thus was born

the idea of the first great European novel . . . as the echo of God's laughter" (158). This discovery exposes his insidious agenda: this whole long performance has been a clandestine effort to stage an assignation between the Spirit of Rabelaisian laughter and the Spirit of Gospel Truth. But the lady won't show up.

57. It's like this nasty man to advocate exhibitionism and "joint work." And what's this about being "altered" by women? The fool under the trenchcoat deserves it!

specifically:

Men should excavate and explore, however painfully, their memories of early intimacy with women, and attempt again to produce novels as whole as those of their mammoth and healing predecessors [such as Tolstoy]. More women should step through a door that is now wide ajar—a backward step, also painful but short, into the room of their oldest knowledge: total human sympathy. (Price 1987, 375.)

I welcome both these voices, and I pass their word on to my students. I'm urged on and encouraged by the examples of several among us: Douglas Thayer and Levi Peterson (1991), who in recent essays have begun to write movingly about their mothers; Bert Wilson, who listened so well to his mother's stories that one of her sentences helped guide him "through the dark"(23). My own first step out of my hard male skull and into a voice and experience much like my mother's, in a story called "Two Years Sunday" (*Wasatch Review*, 1.1 [1992]: 25-36), still seems one of the genuinely liberating things I've done in my slow effort to learn to write stories; other equally nourishing steps farther into that "common room" have followed, and I mean to take more.

But the step I take here and now is "down" or "aside"—from inconspicuous figurehead to something near a voice whispering low out of the dust. My valediction as outgoing president is simply this: Welcome to our common room; tell us your story so our hearing and telling can go on. That would be faring well. ☞

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#### SILENCE

I haven't a heart of darkness  
where blackness converges neverness  
or the brights circularize drabness,  
where suns surrender light to final  
coldness, stars die,  
voices murmur, sometimes roar  
into the abyss of fear.

Silence is the final alert moment  
before birth and reckoning.  
In everywhere, everything, woman:  
Women hold half the sky—  
the vast, busy, silent spaces  
where light travels fastest.

And peace, when found,  
sounds like church bells stirred  
by morning flocks of pigeons;  
peace, when found, stands firm  
like rain-greased torsos of storm-torn  
sycamores,  
creases the gnarled hands of old men sleeping,  
overwhelms  
the brisé flash and foul, acrid  
prelude of war.

—SEAN BRENDAN BROWN

The best writing in Mormon literature has been done by the Sophics, who have bones to pick and axes (and teeth) to grind. But the large majority of the Latter-day Saints are not responding to literature that seems to them unauthentic—a ladder leaning against the wrong wall.

## ATTUNING THE AUTHENTIC MORMON VOICE: STEMMING THE SOPHIC TIDE IN LDS LITERATURE

By Richard H. Cracroft

I

“**E**SSENTIALISM IS THE PROBLEM,” PROCLAIMED my colleague, Bruce W. Jorgensen, in his 1991 presidential address to this distinguished body of Latter-day Saint writers, critics, publishers, and readers, thereby fixing his sights on an elusive problem that is central to the purposes of the Association for Mormon Letters and to future Mormon literary criticism. Elevating to Pearl Harbor status my review of Eugene England’s and Dennis Clark’s important but spiritually bifurcated anthology, *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems*, Jorgensen dive-bombs my review, zeroing in with Sophic glee on my attempts to show the presence and absence of the *spiritual essence* of Mormonism in the works of contemporary Mormon poets (Cracroft 1990). Urging a Mormon literature that is hospitable to the stranger at the gate as well as to the next-door-neighbor, Jorgensen firmly shuts his door on my assertion that an anthology subtitled “Contemporary Mormon Poems” should reflect a Mormon *Weltanschauung* and ethos, insisting at last that “Maybe Mormonism itself has no ‘essence’ but only a story,” and asserting that “It’s a striving after wind to pursue the ‘essence’ of Mormon literature.” “Essentialism is the problem” of my review, insists the usually astute Jorgensen, and he is right. Just as I am right about the fact that *essentialism* is also the answer to the need to center and ground modern Mormon criticism. Allow me to remind the reader of the contexts of Jorgensen’s claim: In my review of *Harvest*, I assert that which is apparent to any right-thinking, red-blooded, and sanctified Latter-day Saint who reads the poems sequentially,

attentively, and—big gulp here—*spiritually and essentially*—that a surprisingly large number of the poems written by Mormon poets and included in the “New Direction” section of *Harvest* selected by Dennis Clark are skillfully executed poems grounded in the “earth-bound humanism” (Cracroft 1990, 122) of our contemporary secular society, but reflecting little or no essential Mormonism. It seems to me, as I state in my review, that such poems, mislabeled *Mormon*, lack, ignore, repress, or replace the Mormon “essence” so *essential* to distinguishing a work of Mormon letters from a work that is merely Western or American or Protestant or Jewish. If a work of literature is written by a Latter-day Saint and sails under the title of “Mormon,” it is, I believe, the duty of a Mormon literary critic to point out for the potential readership, which inevitably will be mostly Mormon, the presence or lack of such Mormonness.

In describing western novels, the late Virginia Sorensen says that western writers and readers have, in addition to telling with integrity the human stories of life in the American West, “the responsibility of preserving some web of significance men can live by” (Sorensen, 283). Present-day readers, writers, and critics of Mormon literature and members of the Association for Mormon Letters are part of what amounts to the first generation of critics of a nascent Mormon literature. We are likewise weaving and identifying—privileging—and scrutinizing this aborning Mormon literature to trace a “[larger] web of [deeper] significance” (Sorensen, 283), which—if truly Mormon—is being woven out of the stuff of Mormonism and spun across a Mormon world view interlaced with Mormon *essences*, those often ethereal but real, ineffable but inevitable spiritual analogues and correspondences that convey Mormon realities, and without a sense of which no literature could be essentially Mormon. Such is at least part of the responsibility of the Mormon critic.

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But there is an obstacle that must be confronted by members of the Association for Mormon Letters and by the contemporary and future Mormon critic. Most of us who devoutly study Mormon literature are Latter-day Saints of some variety—garden, hybrid, or noxious weed. More or less, we share a love for the Mormon Idea, for Mormon doctrine; we see the world Mormonly; or we love the Mormon ethos—its tradition and culture and history; or, at very least, we are curious about what happens when Things Mormon hit a fan called Things Non-Mormon, Things Worldly. Still, the obstacle persists: It is (for some—surely not the present reader) our inner *Schweinhund*, our doubting, skeptical, Sophic, eye-single-to-the-glory of secular humanism willingness to be hospitable to virtually any attack upon our own church or its leaders, to substitute almost any cause or complaint for fixing our souls to the cross, to overlay the prevailing, faithless world view on our once bright faith in the Restoration.

Whether we trail our Mormonness behind us, conceal it, or wear it on our sleeves, most of us who constitute the LDS literati leave our Mormon Home Places to become steeped at our various worldly universities in the alluring secular *Weltanschauung* of a relentless, overweening, skeptical, and triumphant empiricism. Then, having absorbed the world and all of its attractive graces and having replaced the spiritual authority figures of our youth with new-found Sophic authorities, we sally to our separate Zions in the tops of the mountains, flourishing newly won and brightly burnished "objectivity," a quiver-full of tyrannical and dogmatic literary ideologies, bristling with a wonderful array of arcane critical tools, and a helmet brimming with ardent appreciation for those who profess the gospels of immorality, atheism, nihilism, negativism, perversity, rebelliousness, doubt, disbelief, and disorder. With a world view fraught with what Thomas Mann has called a "sympathy for the abyss," we survey the field, full of troops ill-equipped with Urims and Thummims, Liahonas, and the Peepstones of Faith, we strap on the breastplate of humanism and lower our lances of Marxism, Deconstructionism, Post-Structuralism, Feminism, or Reformed New Criticism and boot-up our computers in the cause of Mormon letters—*sans* its so-called (*shudder*) essences.

## II

**B**UT what to our wondering eyes should appear but the Mormon audience—the orthodox Latter-day Saints who, to our embarrassment, resemble our own believing and innocent former selves—the selves we shelved in the cause of the worldly philosophies. Though we generally succeed in ignoring that Mormon audience—talking by them, or dismissing them as ignorant and incompetent—at some point we who battle for Mormon letters must confront the fact that they are our constituency, the only audience likely to listen to us, the only group to whom Mormon critics and the Association of Mormon Letters have any real obligation. To Sidney Smith's 1819 query, rephrased, "Who in the world reads a [Mormon] book?" we must answer, *Mormons*—until such time as some-

one organizes "Gentiles for Mormon Literature" or promotes an "Ex-Mormons for Mormon Literature" night at the local high school gym.

And if teaching the Latter-day Saints about Mormon literature is at least part of our work and our glory, what is it, then, that we should keep in mind about our audience? What is it that makes them orthodox? "Orthodoxy," says Eugene England, the founder of our feast, means to be "focused on the great central ideals and values of a group. In Mormonism . . . that means being committed to the optimistic view of life, to faith in Christ and his Atonement as sufficient and powerful to save us from ignorance and sin, to a liberal concept of the nature of humans and of God and to a conservative moral life, based in reason and committed service" (England 1991, 60).

Such a definition, however, makes no differentiation between *Christian* and *Mormon*, and does not define the Latter-day Saint at the center of the faith. My experience of over twenty years in many thousands of personal interviews with salt-of-earth, temple-recommend holding, and thus orthodox Latter-day Saints, is that the "central ideals and values" of a majority of ecclesiastically active Saints are more or less rooted in essences of spirituality shared by those whom Jeffrey C. Jacob has called "Charismatics," men and women who do not fit comfortably in Richard Poll's (1967) classifications of "Iron Rodders" or "Liahonas," but whose lives are informed by and whose values are centered in a personal, *dynamic* theology of momentary supernal expectation; men and women who, in the face of an overwhelmingly secular society consciously cultivate "a sense of God in their lives" and seek about them "the presence of the divine," eschewing faithlessness, doubt, and rebellion—not coddling it—and quietly enduring uncertainty while seeking to elevate "the place of the Holy Spirit in their lives, . . . as an independent source of guidance and inspiration." Such charismatic Latter-day Saints seek, says Jacob, a "personal relationship with Christ" (Jacob, 48, 49 *passim*), and such, I believe, stand at the center of Mormon orthodoxy.

It is vital to the future of LDS literature that Mormon critics, scholars, and publishers—people who *are not*, generally, this charismatic kind of Latter-day Saint—would do well to remember that when they solicit the attention of a Latter-day Saint reader, they are treading on holy ground occupied by the potential protagonists of Mormon letters, by inconsistent, foible-ridden, groping men and women, who nevertheless differ from other believers, as Joseph Smith said to President Martin Van Buren, through "the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Hill, 271); in such men and women the Godhead is lively; they expect the presence of the Godhead in their lives; they believe in the literal reality of God as a sensate, corporeal being who lives on the planet nearest Kolob; and they believe in Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ, the Creator of earth and the Savior of humankind; and they believe in the possibility of gaining what Christ called "life eternal," of coming to know Elohim and Jehovah (John 17:3) through what Stephen L. Tanner calls "empiricism of the spirit" (Tanner, 50). Herein is the great difference—that Latter-day Saints believe that the Father and his Son *can* and *may*

and *do* intervene in mortal lives—and may do so momentarily—to assist mortals in their individual and collective courses. They believe that Joseph Smith Jr. is one of those chosen prophets in whose life the Godhead intervened to effect the opening of the Last Dispensation of the Fullness of Times; and they believe that each Latter-day Saint is part of the dynamics of God's uttering again to the whole earth—to the living and the dead—the good news of the redemptive acts of Jesus Christ, and, in his stead, of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Latter-day Saint sees as his or her mission the preparation of a Zion people (beginning with their own families) for the second advent of Jesus Christ. Enroute, the Saints must walk by faith, not skepticism and doubt, learning, as Brigham Young called it, to be "righteous in the dark," but directed according to the will of the Father and personal righteousness, by the prophets, holy scripture, including the Book of Mormon, translated from ancient records through the gift and power of God, the Holy Priesthood, and by individual access to the Holy Spirit through the dynamics of personal inspiration and revelation from the Godhead to every faithful and worthy member of the Church of Christ.

I believe that such orthodoxy prevails, more or less, among the Latter-day Saints and thus among Mormon readers—though certainly not in certain circles—present company *accepted*. Those central and orthodox beliefs spark literary imaginations; and Latter-day Saint writers and critics can spark the imaginations of that orthodox audience—if their own lives are informed by such orthodoxy. These beliefs, indelibly etched on the souls of each faithful Latter-day Saint, are the home base to which each believing Mormon returns after venturing into the bewildering world where temptations and sins of omission and commission and insistent and persuasive voices and presences cry, "Lo, here" and "Lo, there." Roughly half of the Latter-day Saints lean against these pillars of Mormon orthodoxy, while planting their footing in the shifting sands of mortality and taking a spiritual fix on Kolob. They strain and sweat and err and falter under their weary, mortal loads, but remembering that at least one definition of a *Saint* is that of a "sinner who kept on going," they plod on, cock-eyed—one eye fixed on Kolob and the other fixed on the next, deceptive step in front of them. I admire the plodding Latter-day Saint, them of the last wagon—or the middle or the front, for that matter; and I believe that, collectively, they are about as faithful and good-hearted and Christian a people as exist on the face of the earth. And I believe that their struggles toward Sainthood are the stuff of a great moral literature; and that poetry and fiction and drama can be a blessing to such in their mortal wanderings, clarifying their vision and giving uplift and instruction, creating delight and beauty.

We who write and critique and publish for the Saints must not forget, then, that these are people who have followed Joseph to their individual sacred groves and struggled up the mountain, returning to their dailinesses forever altered in vision and countenance, their lives centered in Jesus Christ and irrevocably altered by the historic events of the Restoration and the occurrences of the Holy Ghost in their lives, much as

Pip's view of matter was altered by what he saw in the fathomless depths beneath the *Pequod*. Among that *believing people* whose literary expression we undertake, encourage, and promote, are many who would echo C. S. Lewis's (paraphrased) statement about Christianity: "I believe in [Mormonism] as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

Such indelible belief posits a controlling metaphor by which Mormons experience the world, and through which we can communicate with the Saints. Metaphors assist us, asserts Neil Postman, in constructing reality: "We make the world according to our own imagery," he explains, and those images and metaphors express "some of our most fundamental conceptions of the way things are" (Postman, 123-24). Imbued with the sense that "all things . . . are spiritual" (D&C 29:34) and "are created . . . to bear record of [God]" (Moses 6:63), the Latter-day Saints attempt "to live," as President Marion G. Romney would say of President Harold B. Lee, "in the shadow of the Almighty" (Kimball and Kimball, 208), to see the world as emblematic and anagogical, like the nomadic Abraham, who wrote, "eternity was our covering and our rock and our salvation, as we journeyed from Haran . . . to the land of Canaan" (Abraham 2:16). This Latter-day Saint metaphor of the Plan of Salvation, with each Saint slogging, via Babylon, on a Pilgrim's Progress toward Zion's Celestial City, informs Mormon reality and becomes a tenacious presence in the Mormon soul—ask any who have left the Church how difficult it is to slough off and switch the metaphor.

In fact, it makes a remarkable difference to a writer and a reader if both writer and reader make God and humankind constantly present on his or her world stage—see the world anagogically, emblematically, and typologically, or by the light of the metaphor of men and women as children of heavenly parentage, and mortality as a way-station in eternity. Or if they see the world modern—as a dead-end street, and see men and women and their self-serving institutions as deluded and misguided, worshiping a fabricated projection of their own minds and needs.

If we who are Mormon writers, critics, and publishers wish to speak to the Saints, we must speak to them through LDS metaphors. We cannot dismiss or belittle or patronize them merely because we have supplanted their metaphors or because they refuse to set their familiar metaphors aside. This people deserves a literature grounded in Mormon metaphors, exuding their essences, mirroring their dualistic world, establishing their vision of themselves as pilgrims wandering by faith across a twilight stage, buffeted by the forces of evil, seeking the forces of good, and wondering at the shadows and ambiguities to be found between these bewildering parentheses in eternity. Again, the very stuff of literature.

Should LDS writers and critics and publishers continue to feed these men and women stones when they ask for the Bread of Life shaped from the stuff of the mortal experiences, good and bad, of fellow believers? When it is the Mormon *essence* that enlivens these metaphors and speaks to the souls of the LDS reader, can writers and critics continue to countenance

Jorgensen's statement that "It is a striving after wind to pursue the 'essence' of Mormon literature" (Jorgensen 1991)? On the contrary, as Elder Orson F. Whitney urged in his "Home Literature" sermon of 1888, "The Holy Ghost is the genius of 'Mormon' literature" (Whitney, 206).

Faithful Latter-day Saints need, as I need, a Mormon literature that enables us to explore common metaphors, to probe how one copes as a faithful Latter-day Saint with the junctures between the vertical and the horizontal, between the love of God and the love of our fellow beings, between the wearisome today and the promise of tomorrow—confrontations that exude essences of spiritual realities while dealing with the stuff that makes for a representative literature "which," as President Spencer W. Kimball expressed at BYU's 1976 centennial celebration, "edifies man, which takes into account his immortal nature, and which prepares us for heaven" (Kimball, 454). Some years ago, Jorgensen expressed well his similar need: "I need Mormon literature," he wrote; "I need to understand and share Mormon experience, need to imagine it as a way to understand, in pain and joy, myself, my brothers and sisters, my Brother, my Father" (Jorgensen 1974, 61). We all need such a literature.

### III

IN the midst of these Saints, each adventuring along the gap between celestial ideals and telectual realities, stand the Mormon writer and critic and publisher, literary midwives to our Mormon experiences. While too many popular modern LDS writers mistake sentimentality for spirituality and sell their art and their audiences short, distrusting as they do the spiritual sensitivity and intelligence of the Mormon audience (the subject for another day), too many of the artistically gifted literati are ignoring essential Mormonism in their writing and criticism and publication and continue to insist, with Jorgensen, that it is futile to seek for "an elusive metaphysical or 'essential' notion of 'spirituality'" in shaping a Mormon literature for this people (Jorgensen 1991, 14).

Lacking a firmly founded center stake, then, modern Mormon criticism, like Mormon literature, is unsettled and uncentered, too prone to follow Corianthon in a-whoring across distant and exotic horizons after the shallow attractions of blind secularism, visionless and perverse fault-seeking, skeptical and compromising humanism, and hearkening to glib but hollow and faithless voices of Babylon. Ignoring the spiritual essence of Mormonism, the very essence that differentiates Mormonism from other believers and from the world, too many of our modern writers and critics—the *creme de la creme* of Mormon letters—have bound themselves to the literary masts of the world rather than orthodoxy, and have become "like the wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." The consequences are clear: as Latter-day Saints read the literature of doubt and dissonance so often applauded by Mormon critics and the Association for Mormon Letters, they register dismay on reading short stories, novels, poetry, and drama that fail to reflect a Mormon world view with which they can

identify. Such a literature of shock, supported by a justifying criticism, continues to create a gap of distrust between critic and reader. Repeatedly, Latter-day Saints positioned at the center of the Mormon experience must put down the latest Mormon novel or collection of poetry and sigh with J. Alfred Prufrock, "That is not it at all,/That is not what I meant, at all."

The reason for the confusion lies with Latter-day Saint writers and critics who, unable to write out of faith or to leave off skepticism, attempt in their writing to have their faith and doubt it, too. It is the ancient paradox of Goethe's *Faust*, "Two souls alas! are dwelling in my breast" (Goethe, I, ii). It is the old, old dualism of Plato, Paul, Kant, Coleridge, and Emerson. Hugh Nibley labels it as the *Mantic* versus the *Sophic*, "two fundamentally antithetical ways of perceiving the world" (Nibley, 314). Positing the reality of other worlds, the *Mantic* world view, based in the Greek word for *inspired*, *prophetic*, or *oracular*, is simply "vertical supernaturalism" (Wright, 55). Manticism is not mysticism, but "the belief in the real and present operation of divine gifts by which one receives constant guidance from the other world" (Nibley, 316). The "sophic world view of horizontal naturalism," on the other hand, confines all realities to the natural order (Wright, 51), is "necessarily antireligious," critical, objective, naturalistic, scientific, and horizontal in attitude. And though the Sophic has as its purpose "the elimination of the supernatural or superhuman" (Nibley, 383), it can only be understood in relationship to the Mantic, believing tradition against which it is reacting.

Antithetical to the Mantic Mormon world view, the Sophic nevertheless reigns triumphant in Western culture and has had a vigorous impact upon contemporary Latter-day Saints. It has become a *given* in our society to think of the supernal as mere superstition, and of notions of God, eschatology, redemption, and theophany as quaint and outmoded. "Modern men take it for granted," asserts Rudolf Bultmann, "that the course of nature and of history . . . is *nowhere* interrupted by the intervention of supernatural powers" (Bultmann, 15-17; emphasis added).

Certainly "all have not faith" among the Latter-day Saints, and Mormon literature must continue to be hospitable to the writings of those among the Latter-day Saints who are struggling with doubt and are torn by the old tension. But such works must be understood and criticized from the Latter-day Saint standpoint and not in such a manner as to advance the Sophic world view as representative of Mormonism.

These Mantic-Sophic tensions so evident in contemporary Mormon literature find parallels in the often acrimonious struggle currently being waged between New Mormon historians and the Traditional Mormon historians, between those Sophics who understand events as proceeding from natural causes and who balk at the historicity of theophanies, visitations, and golden plates; and those Mantics who see such as occurrences arising from divine intervention and purpose (Thrower, 229).

In modern literature, the Sophic position ascended with Literary Realism, a technique become a philosophy that is, in



Thomas Carlyle's word, "descendental," or non-transcendental. "The realists," claims Harold H. Kolb Jr. in his fine treatise, *The Illusion of Life*, "cannot accept supernaturalism, Platonic idealism, and the worlds of spirit. They do not necessarily deny the validity of such worlds; they simply ignore them as unknowable in ordinary human terms and thus irrelevant to ordinary human experience" (Kolb, 38). This Sophic-Realistic denial of such essences as irrelevant characterizes the literature of what is increasingly called the post-religious or post-Christian age, and translates variously into twentieth-century American literature as Literary Naturalism, Modernism, Existentialism, or Nihilism. By whatever philosophy, writers have been anxiously engaged since around the American Civil War in "Horizontalizing the vertical tradition" (Wright, 57).

Mormon writers and critics have been schooled in this Sophic literary tradition and unnaturally apply it to the Mantic tradition of Mormon letters. It is no wonder, then, that Jorgensen would shudder at examining *essences*; no wonder that a great deal of confusion has resulted; no wonder that there is no solid center to Mormon criticism or Mormon literature. Often torn in our own faith between Mantic and Sophic traditions, we are even more confounded as Sophic critics by the task of dealing with the Mantic world in Sophic terms—the only way we know how. It is in this context that we must understand President Kimball's call for a literature and, by inference, a criticism of our own, centered in Mantic Mormonism and dealing honestly and literarily with human life as experienced by Latter-day Saints. Orson F. Whitney was referring to the essential difference between an LDS and a worldly literature when he said, "Our literature must live and breathe for itself. Our mission is diverse from all others; our literature must also be" (Whitney, 206).

But in Mormon criticism the confusion between the Mantic and Sophic stances continues. A typical illustration of such doublemindedness is seen in Eugene England's enthusiastic but Sophic review for a primarily Mantic BYU Studies audience, of Levi S. Peterson's well-crafted, imaginative, serio-comic, obstinately perverse, and theologically non-Mormon novel, *The Backslider* (1986). England describes with reverence—and to the stunned disbelief of many BYU Studies readers who are not part of the frequent gatherings of Sophic Saints (the Inward Church below?)—Frank's culminating, *deus ex machina* vision that comes as he zips up his pants before a flushing urinal in which he suddenly sees an aw-shucks Cowboy Jesus who straightens Frank out by dishing out, while rolling and smoking a Bull Durham cigarette, homely counsel about Frank's sexual hangups, his guilty sensual indulgences with his wife, and his longstanding quarrel with a vindictive, Tetragrammaton kind of God. Jesus' advice to Frank, as he rides off on his horse, is, "And work on that crap about hating God. See if you can get over it." Frank culminates this descendentially transcendental travesty by flushing the urinal, retching, vomiting, then crying (Peterson 1986, 356). And England culminates his review of *Backslider*: "That vision is one of the most lovely and believable epiphanies I have encountered in modern fiction. It is the capstone to an extraordinary

achievement, not only in thematic content that is seriously theological but in form that is meticulously crafted to give permanent being to that content" (England 1990, 101). My own Sophic literary sensibilities cheer England's testimonial: *The Backslider* is true and faithful to a Sophic and secular vision of literature. But my Mantic sensibilities recoil, as have so many Latter-day Saint readers who, approaching this work of Mormon literature touted by England and others, are shocked by this profanation of Christ, as they are by the grotesque God of Frank's strange, quasi-Calvinistic—but decidedly not LDS—theology.

Of course *The Backslider* doubtlessly speaks profoundly and in relief-rendering tones to readers who are grappling with the guilt imposed on them by LDS-Christian theology, enabling them to look closely at the pin that skewers their souls. For many Mantic LDS souls, however, *The Backslider* speaks a shocking, disconcerting, and dissonant language that seems unauthentic and off-putting. In fact, such Sophic works constitute much of the better-written contemporary Mormon fiction. Likewise, much of our contemporary LDS criticism about such works is centered in Sophic secularity. And where Sophic and Mantic criticism come into confrontation, the Sophists—who edit the journals and privilege the books to be reviewed and the reviewers who do the reviewing—hasten to correct any Mantic deviations, just as my criticism of a number of the *Harvest* gleanings as excellent Sophic but certainly not LDS-Mantic poems is countered by Jorgensen's attempts to shoe-horn, stretch, and (I believe) skew these poems into expressions of the LDS ethos, much like the painful attempts of Cinderella's ugly sisters to wedge large feet into a dainty glass slipper. Such Sophic strivings do not resonate with those who share the Mormon vision and seek in their literature the spiritual essence of Mormonism. There can be congeniality between the two positions, and hospitality without accommodation, but there can never be comfortable compromise of Mantic and Sophic viewpoints.

## IV

WHAT I have said can be misconstrued, I realize, as being exclusionary, even elitist. I do not mean it to be such. Nothing that I say here will change the fact that, to date, most of the best writing in Mormon literature has been done by the Sophics, who have bones to pick and axes (and teeth) to grind and divine itches that need to be scratched, while the inarticulate Mantics are too busy doing their Home Teaching—and making faithful statements that pain the Sophics. Nothing that I say here will change the nature of a single struggling doubter or, for that matter, of a struggling charismatic—for we all struggle.

I simply suggest that the large majority of the Latter-day Saints are not responding to literature that seems to them unauthentic—a ladder leaning against the wrong wall. Of course the Sophic will continue to write a literature that reflects his or her reactive world view, but we must understand that such a world view will continue to be unauthentic to the

charismatic Latter-day Saint.

I affirm Candadai Seshachari's admonition: "For the Mormon writer, the creative center of his subjectivity lies not so much in what he shares with the rest of mankind but in that unique Mormon experience which he shares with fellow Mormons." And he adds, "This experience defines his being," for "It is through this singular experience that he [the Mormon writer] asserts his individuality, indeed, his humanity" (Sesachari, 109). In a similar vein, Don D. Walker has noted, "To write with integrity for readers who understand that integrity, writers need a tradition, a system of moral values in which they can make meaningful judgments—they need a frame of belief" (Mulder, 210).

The challenge to LDS writers who desire to touch the lives of their people is to write honestly and well, from within this frame of shared belief in the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to probe the lives of faithful men and women confronting a Sophic society, a difficult world, and a self that seems ever to fall short of achieving the ideal. How much better does anyone accept direction and challenge from one who understands and empathizes and shares—and believes.

In increasing numbers, in every literary genre, the Mantic voices are there that speak to the Saints from within the fold, with power and authenticity and integrity. The Association of Mormon Letters has honored a number of them. In fiction alone, we find, for example, the powerful and freeing fantasy of Orson Scott Card's *Seventh Son*, *The Red Prophet*, and *Prentice Alvin* centered in the essences that moved the Maker, Alvin Miller Jr., whose life parallels in so many ways the life of the Prophet Joseph; or in Card's novel, *Saints*, where he portrays Dinah, the Gentile soul adrift in Babylon, brings her to conversion at the hands of the sincere and profane Heber C. Kimball (surely the most brilliant portrayal to date of a Mormon missionary at work), and lifts her out of Babylon—at dramatic personal cost. Or the power of Marilyn M. Brown in *The Earthkeepers*, in which she narrows the canvas, as William Mulder urges, but not the expansive spirit of Mormondom. Or Gerald N. Lund's notable and prize-winning contributions to LDS historical fiction, moving readers first by the twice-told truths of the Restoration and again by the reader's vicarious participation, through the Steed family, in their individual spiritual confrontations with Mormonism; Lund is true to the essence of Mormonism in, among other scenes, Mary Ann Steed's moving conversion to Mormonism as she listens to the Prophet Joseph reading aloud from 3 Nephi (Lund, 331). Or in Margaret B. Young's Jewish-to-Mormon conversion novel, *House Without Walls*; or in Randall L. Hall's *Cory Davidson*; or Carroll Hofeling Morris's *The Broken Covenant*, well-written chronicles of the breaking and contrition of hearts following transgression; or Kathryn Kidd's comically authentic *Paradise Vue*; or, recently, the movingly refreshing evocation of the essence of universal spirituality in Judith Freeman's *Set For Life*—not a Mormon novel but surely a Mantic one. Or what seems still to be the best fictional expression of Mormonism's essences to date, Eileen Gibbons Kump's sequential stories, *Bread and Milk*, a cycle which follows Amy Gordon through a

Latter-day Saint life that is quietly but strongly centered in the Mormon ethos. For example, Kump concludes the book with an *essential* moment, as the now elderly and widowed Amy Gordon, suffering from mortal symptoms while writing her recollection of her wedding day, dissolves the veil in a wonderfully Mormon *coup de force*:

Amy took the pencil and began to write. There was a numbness in her arm, slight but not imaginary. She wrote regardless, driven to preserve the picture. . . . When she was finished, she fell backward. Then she let go of the pencil. "Please," she said aloud. "I want the memory of my wedding day!" She was in her white dress, waiting, and Israel hadn't come yet. She started to cry and there he was, arms outstretched, hurrying toward her. Only this time the hair and mustache were white. (Kump, 91.)

The day-dawn is breaking, as it should—and with our support—for the subject matter is there, if Mormon writers will accept the challenge to deal with the subjects Mormonly. "It does seem odd," the late Karl Keller wrote in 1974, "that of all the things Mormon writers of fiction have had to offer the world, they have not yet offered it their beliefs, their theology, the gospel" (Keller, 62).

However post-structurally or Marxianly or feministically modern Mormon critics wish to deal with horizontal, Sophic literature, it is their challenge, when acting as LDS critics, to promote a truly Mormon literature, to read and critique LDS writing with eyes of faith, with feet firm-set in Mormon metaphors. Then, allowing the LDS writers their *donnée*, that their work is faithfully grounded in the Mantic realities of the spiritual world, in important *essences*, to sound that work for honesty and integrity and authenticity, to subject that portrayal of Mormon reality to the most rigorous literary standards. It is the critics' responsibility to understand the essential Mormonness of the work, to place the work within the Mormon tradition and ethos; to place it in the literary tradition of Gentile writers; to show where and how it succeeds, and why; and if it falls short, why—but, for a pleasant change, from the window of the Latter-day Saint's house of fiction, or verse.

We need, for a change, an alternative criticism, a *Latter-day Saint* criticism centered in the gospel, in Mormon faith, and not in the Sophic creeds of secularism. By "Faithful Criticism" I do not mean a criticism that shuts its eyes to falseness, to the lies of sentimentalism, or promotes tidy didacticism and *deus ex machina* conclusions. I do not call for a Literary Divining Rod to be bestowed on qualified LDS critics for the purpose of detecting the presence of the Holy Ghost—although given Elder Whitney's pronouncement that the Holy Ghost is the genius of Mormon literature, such wouldn't hurt. We need Faithful Critics who cultivate the presence of the Holy Ghost, who are themselves faithful Latter-day Saints who have been to the mountain, who understand the Mantic-Mormon paradigm of the world, who are willing to grant the *donnée* of faith and belief and the exciting spirit of expectation, the possibility of holiness, the eventuality of the Finger of the Lord enlivening the Latter-day Saint life, critics who will formulate a criticism

that can deal honestly, authentically, and artistically with that kind of world view.

Given this green and vibrant world and other-world view, the possibilities are limitless. The way to perfection, which Joseph Smith compared to a ladder, is arduous and long and fraught with missteps and backward steps—the stuff of fiction and poetry and drama. Eternal Lives arise from hard-won experience in the crucible of mortality, where we learn that the old verities are eternal in fact and mortal in application. Mormon artists have the opportunity, within their own framework and metaphors of faith, “To make a world,” wrote Karl Keller, “where the factors of one’s faith actually become realities” (Keller, 71). Doing justice, as he noted elsewhere, “to the visible world because it suggests to [the writer] an invisible one,” Mormon critics will avoid mixing the metaphor and thus falsifying the sound. They will seek to identify and shape a literature that can probe the essences, and the authentic Mormon voice, long recognized by Latter-day Saint readers who know the voice of the Shepherd, will rise above its present murmur as William Mulder prophesied in 1954: “Mormon literature will move toward the promise of its highly articulate beginnings,” he wrote, “for Mormon readers will demand of Mormon writers authentic voices, whether in fiction, in history, in biography, or in missionary tract—the authority of good writing, of truths made memorable” (Mulder, 211). ☒

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*A look at the order in which Joseph Smith translated the books in the Book of Mormon can account for some of its textual puzzles.*

# HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND THE BOOK OF MORMON: A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

*By Edwin Firmage Jr.*

TEN YEARS AGO, AS A FIRST-YEAR GRADUATE student at Berkeley, my ambition was to become another Hugh Nibley, whose writings I had loved since I was twelve. As a young admirer, I didn't understand everything I read. On my first encounter, I wasn't quite sure, for example, what the difference was between Sethe and Seth; it was all German to me. But, Nibley was my mystagogue. Through him I had my first vision of a strange and exciting antiquity. Even now, despite a very different scholarly outlook, I admire Nibley; he remains, to my mind, the most original thinker and social critic our church has known.

As a neophyte, but armed with German, and a little Arabic, Greek, and Hebrew, and intent on acquiring the requisite apologetic tools, I went to Berkeley to study ancient Near Eastern languages, and particularly Egyptian, the language of mysteries par excellence. Not long after my arrival, I was asked to teach the Book of Mormon gospel doctrine class in the Berkeley Ward. I welcomed the opportunity, as it would give me a chance to delve into the book to a degree that I hadn't since my mission. By the usual LDS standards, I was as ready as one can be to teach scripture. My wife and I regularly attended church and the temple, and we prayed together. My history was nothing but faithful. I had every reason to expect that my study of the Book of Mormon would reward me, as it had in the past, with an increase of faith.

But, it didn't. To this day I don't entirely understand why, but within just six months I no longer believed the Book of

Mormon to be an ancient text. I can isolate several issues that played a role in my change of mind, but none of them should have been significant enough in itself to have caused such a turn of mind. Indeed, even taken together they seem inadequate to the task of breaking down my wall of faith. I have often thought that my Berkeley experience was fundamentally a conversion, or, if you like, an anti-conversion. The process had all of the inscrutable suddenness that characterized some of the conversions I had witnessed as a missionary. Like a conversion, the effects of my change of mind propagated with amazing speed. Almost overnight, my whole outlook on life was different. The particular problems that I encountered as I re-read the Book of Mormon were catalysts, not the active agents, of my reform. Something else far more powerful was ultimately the force behind the conversion. I don't know why that something had the effect it did, any more than I know why conversion on occasion seemed radically to alter newcomers to the faith. One thing is certain: a close reading of the Book of Mormon provoked this change. How ironic, I thought, that after doing precisely what then Apostle Ezra Taft Benson had been admonishing us to do—studying the Book of Mormon—I found myself regarding it as a work of historical fiction.

My study of the Book of Mormon now took a different direction. Since I had given up on its historicity, how was I to explain its origin? Thus began an intensive period of study that culminated in a hastily written document on Book of Mormon origins, which I completed in the summer of 1984. Producing this document was an exercise in catharsis; for a time, I did little else. Once it was done, I felt little inclination to return to the Book of Mormon as an object of serious study. Perhaps coincidentally, my interest in Egyptian also waned. But my interest in ancient history, if anything, increased. More and more I was drawn into the world of ancient Israel, and particularly its cult. I was now free to enter into biblical study without having to perform mental gymnastics to make the Bible conform to a Mormon world view. Once again, I was

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fortunate to have a guide. However, this time, the guide was not mystagogue, but rabbi and teacher. For the next two years, under Jacob Milgrom, I read the book of Leviticus. In good Jewish tradition, our study was painstaking, methodical, down-to-earth, and always rooted in the text. By the end of my third year, our graduate seminar in biblical Hebrew had covered, I think, eight chapters in all. After years of looking at Nibley's big picture, I now had a chance to see its finer detail.

By the standards of the German scholars who established historical biblical criticism, my Berkeley training was decidedly conservative. Jacob Milgrom, in company with other leading Jewish scholars (Moshe Weinfeld, Moshe Greenberg, and Yehezkel Kaufman, to mention just a few), has criticized many of the assumptions and conclusions of biblical criticism as practiced by the German school. But, on at least some basic principles, there is agreement. First, all agree that the Bible can and should be studied as a historical document. Second, all agree that there exist in the Pentateuch or Torah—the focus of historical critical study—at least three separate traditions, usually denoted as J (or JE), P, and D, each with its own distinctive style, vocabulary, and subject matter. Textual, literary, and linguistic methods have been developed to identify those traditions and other strands woven into the biblical text by its various editors and authors. Not infrequently, these biblical traditions are at odds with each other. Further, within each tradition, it is often possible to detect historical development over time and differing points of view. Third, all agree that our understanding of all of these traditions is greatly advanced by comparative study of contemporary literature from the ancient Near East.

These are a few of the basic tenets of historical criticism. Of these, at least two are applicable to Book of Mormon research: the Book of Mormon, too, can be studied as a historical document, and it should be compared with contemporary literature. The question, of course, is to what time period the book should be attributed, and with what literature it should be compared. In this paper, I hope to show how identifying it as a composition of Joseph Smith facilitates our understanding of the work, much as historical analysis illuminates the Bible.

What follows are a few of what for me in 1984 were discoveries of some importance in my search to discover how the Book of Mormon came into being. These observations do not by any means constitute a comprehensive explanation of the book. They are offered less as proofs of my thesis that the book is of modern origin than as examples of how the assumption that it is modern resolves otherwise significant difficulties.

#### THE EGYPTIAN CONNECTION

I will start with the Book of Mormon's Egyptian connection that at first so fascinated me. Like many pseudepigraphic works before it, the Book of Mormon announces itself as an ancient text miraculously preserved by divine providence. In this respect, it is not particularly noteworthy as a piece of pseudepigrapha. It is, however, rather less like its apocryphal congeners in that it also lays claim to an Egyptian genealogy—a genealogy that has attracted authors of sapiential, magical, and

alchemical works since Greco-Roman times, but which seems out of place in a work of Christian apologetics. In view of Joseph Smith's involvement in popular magic, one might perhaps be inclined to seek the origin of the Book of Mormon's Egyptian genealogy in Egypt's age-old association with the world of magic. Certainly the Book of Mormon is an instance of that syncretism of traditions that is so characteristic of Joseph Smith. But the Book of Mormon's Egyptian connection has a simpler explanation.

Nephi, the first and most important of the putative writers whose compositions make up the Book of Mormon, tells us that his work was written "in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:2).<sup>1</sup> The plain sense of this statement is that the Book of Mormon was written in Egyptian, while its theology derived from Judaism.<sup>2</sup> That Lehi's family read and wrote Egyptian is also evident in the fact that the "plates of brass," which had been kept by Lehi's kin, are also said to have been written in Egyptian (Mosiah 1:4). Lehi was at pains to preserve this linguistic heritage (anyone who has ever had to learn Egyptian can sympathize). Soon after leaving Jerusalem, he asks his sons to return and get the plates of brass from Laban "to preserve unto our children the *language of our fathers*; And also that we may preserve unto them the words which have been spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets . . . since the world began, even down unto this present time" (1 Nephi 3:19–20, emphasis added). Therefore, both the brass plates and the Book of Mormon were, according to the latter's self-description, in Egyptian (and not just Egyptian characters).

Despite Hugh Nibley's efforts to make the Egyptian connection palatable,<sup>3</sup> it is wildly improbable. First, it is said that Lehi's family has for generations comfortably used Egyptian, so much so that his family, whose history the brass plates prove themselves to be (1 Nephi 5:14, 16), actually kept copies of the Hebrew scriptures in Egyptian. Centuries before the Septuagint, the first translation of the Bible, and at private initiative, the entire Hebrew canon had been translated! This presupposes that by this date a canon in fact existed—a proposition to which few biblical scholars would give credence. But no less implausibly, it asserts that Lehi's family had gone to the trouble and expense of translating or having others translate the canon into Egyptian and of engraving this enormous translation on brass plates. No serious historian of the ancient Near East can credit such a scenario.

What, then, is the explanation of the Book of Mormon's Egyptian connection? I think the answer lies in an incident in the early history of the translation. In February 1828, Joseph Smith had let Martin Harris borrow a transcription of some characters and their "translation" to have their accuracy verified. Harris took the transcription to Professor Charles Anthon, a noted classicist at Columbia University. In Joseph Smith's 1838 history, Anthon is reported to have identified the characters as "Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic" (Joseph Smith—History 2:64).<sup>4</sup> According to this account, Anthon also certified the correctness of the translation. While we may well doubt this latter claim, Anthon may have ventured to identify the nature of the characters.<sup>5</sup> The Book of Mormon

itself, in a classic case of prophecy after the fact, suggests that Anthon ventured no translation (2 Nephi 27:9–20). Martin Harris would appear, perhaps willfully, to have taken Anthon's remarks on the transcription as a vindication of Joseph's translation. In any event, what Anthon may have said off the cuff Martin Harris took as gospel truth. A leading scholar had identified these characters as Egyptian; therefore that is what they had to be. Joseph Smith undoubtedly found this identification useful. Perhaps already wondering what the Book of Mormon language was to be called, Joseph Smith now knew a credible response for the curious and incorporated it into the subsequent text. Henceforth, if anyone should ask from what language the Book of Mormon had been translated, Joseph could say "Egyptian," and could cite Anthon's "expert" testimony to that effect. Indeed, he could parry all such questions by having the Book of Mormon itself proclaim its Egyptian origin. It is interesting that at each of the two beginning points in the translation (1 Nephi and Mosiah; I'll explain what I mean by this later on) the Book of Mormon advertises itself as a translation from Egyptian. The Book of Mormon's Egyptian connection, born in an off-the-cuff remark by Charles Anthon, can thus be explained by reference to Joseph Smith's experience rather than to an ancient source.

The Egyptian connection is, of course, incidental to the basic story of the Book of Mormon, which Joseph already knew by the time Harris visited Anthon. Still, it has important implications for our assessment of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon as an ancient text and also for our understanding of what was involved in Joseph Smith's "translation."

#### PROPHECY AND THE ORDER OF TRANSLATION

THE Book of Mormon, as is well known, is a collection of three distinct compositions: the so-called "small plates" of Nephi (1 Nephi–Words of Mormon), Mormon's abridged history of the Nephites (Mosiah–Mormon), and the history of the Jaredites (Ether). It is from the second of these that the Book of Mormon gets its name. The reason Mormon chose to include Nephi's record with his abridgment was to preserve Nephi's extensive prophecies about the coming of Christ (Words of Mormon 1:4). Beginning in 1 Nephi 11, for example, Nephi foretells Jesus' birth to a virgin in Nazareth, his miracles, the appearance of John the Baptist, Jesus' baptism, and his death. Nephi reveals that the Messiah's name will be Jesus Christ (2 Nephi 25:19), and that he will be crucified and rise after three days (v. 13). Nephi predicts the natural disasters preceding the coming of the resurrected Christ to America, as described in 3 Nephi. He sees Jesus' visit to the survivors and the twelve New World apostles whom he selects (1 Nephi 12; 2 Nephi 26). These last prophecies are of especial importance. There could be no doubt for anyone who subsequently read Nephi's record that the resurrected Jesus would appear in America.

It is therefore surprising that in the early part of Mormon's abridged history prophecies about the advent of Jesus say nothing about his coming to America (see Mosiah 3:5ff.; 7:27;

15; Alma 4:13; 5:50; 6:8; 7:7ff.) Not until Alma 16:20 is it clearly stated that Christ would appear there: "Many of the people did inquire concerning the place where the Son of God should come; and they were taught that he would appear *unto them* after his resurrection" (emphasis added).<sup>6</sup> The people's uncertainty, shared significantly by Alma himself (7:8), implies that nothing was known about a promise that Christ would visit America, as described in such detail by Nephi. The discrepancy between the prophetic material in 1–2 Nephi and that in Mosiah through Alma 16 cries out for explanation.

As in the case of the Egyptian connection, a credible explanation is found in the story of how the Book of Mormon was translated. In June 1828, 116 pages of translation, virtually everything that had been done up to that point, disappeared after being lent to Martin Harris. For some time thereafter, Joseph was forbidden to translate, and, though perfunctory efforts began again in the autumn, nothing substantial was produced until the arrival of Oliver Cowdery in April 1829. When translation began again in earnest, instead of redoing what had been lost, Joseph apparently continued from the point where the 1828 translation had stopped, with Mosiah, and proceeded to the end of the book, and then translated the first part of the book (1 Nephi through Words of Mormon). This reconstruction of the order of translation is based on the handwriting analysis of the "dictated" Book of Mormon manuscript carried out by Dean Jessee.<sup>7</sup> Jessee tentatively identified the handwriting of John Whitmer and of an additional unknown scribe in the first fifteen chapters of 1 Nephi, where, had Joseph and Oliver begun there, we should have expected to find Oliver's hand. We know, however, that toward the end of the translation in June 1829 John Whitmer briefly acted as scribe. Mosiah and Alma, then, antedate 1–2 Nephi in order of transcription and translation.

With this in mind, it is not difficult to explain why the prophecies of Jesus in Mosiah and Alma 1–16 show no awareness of Nephi's prophecies of Jesus' American ministry. The explanation is simply that during the initial stages of the new 1829 translation, from the beginning of Mosiah to Alma 16, Joseph Smith had not yet conceived the story Christ's visit to America. The ignorance of Nephi's prophecies manifested by the characters in Mosiah and Alma 1–16 reflects the fact that Joseph Smith, the creator-translator, did not yet know what turn the narrative was to take. Nephi's unambiguous prophecies of Christ's coming to America reflect the fact that they were translated, or, as I now prefer to say, composed after the events they claim to foretell were composed.

This is not the only instance where the order of translation has substantively affected the Book of Mormon. One of the striking things about 1 and 2 Nephi is the relative dearth of prophecies relating to the immediately succeeding history of the Nephites and Lamanites—this in stark contrast to the abundance of prophecies dealing with events subsequent to the end of the Book of Mormon period proper. Thus, for example, 1 and 2 Nephi predict the European discovery of America, the persecution of the Indians, the translation of the Book of Mormon itself, the loss of the 116 pages, the Charles Anthon incident, and the three witnesses. From the perspec-

tive of subject matter, therefore, 1 and 2 Nephi continue the narrative left off in Mormon. The disproportionate attention these books bestow on prophecy and especially prophecy relating to modern events contrasts with their disinterest in the more immediate future of the Nephites and Lamanites, and strongly suggests that it was the purpose of 1 and 2 Nephi to outline God's continuing influence in American history after the close of the Book of Mormon era. In other words, having finished the story of the Book of Mormon as he had originally intended it, Joseph Smith continued the narrative by addressing topics of subsequent (modern) history when he returned to deal with the gap left in the book by the loss of the 116 pages. The resulting text was necessarily prophetic rather than historical in nature, as Joseph was describing events that would transpire only after the Book of Mormon chronicle had been closed.

LDS readers who have noticed the two different genres that characterize 1 Nephi through Words of Mormon and Mosiah through Ether will perhaps observe that one need not resort to historical criticism to explain the difference; the Book of Mormon itself tells us that the "small plates" of Nephi were deliberately written to preserve prophetic rather than historical detail (cf. 1 Nephi 9:1ff.). All this necessarily means, however, is that the early Book of Mormon's turn to prophecy was deliberate. The existence of a separate set of plates devoted to matters prophetic is, I think, demonstrably a device created to explain how new source material had turned up to replace the lost 116 pages, and why this new material focused on prophecy at the expense of history. The Book of Mormon itself provides the strongest reason for regarding the small plates as a literary fiction: nowhere in Mosiah to Mormon is reference ever made to a separate set of small plates. What the Book of Mormon record keepers pass from generation to generation is simply called the plates of Nephi, without ever a hint of separate historical and prophetic collections. There is a single set of plates called the plates of Nephi that is maintained right down to the end of Book of Mormon history (for example, Mosiah 28:11, 20; Alma 37:2; 44:24; 3 Nephi 5:10; 26:11; 4 Nephi 19, 21; Mormon 1:4; 2:17–18) and that is valued for its sacred as well as historical content (Mosiah 1:2 with vv. 6–7; Alma 37:2; 3 Nephi 26:7, 11).

Another reason for regarding the existence of the small plates as a literary fiction is the peculiar way in which they are linked via the Words of Mormon to the rest of the Book of Mormon. The most striking thing about the Words of Mormon is that it is supposed to be Mormon's last words: "And now I, Mormon, being about to deliver up the record which I have been making into the hands of my son Moroni. . . . Wherefore, I chose these things to finish my record upon them. . . . And now I, Mormon, proceed to finish out my record. . . ." (Words of Mormon 1:1, 5, 9). What, then, is this editorial intrusion doing in the middle of the Book of Mormon? If, indeed, Words of Mormon is Mormon's valedictory, then it belongs at the end of his abridgment, not at the end of the plates of Nephi. If, as Mormon says, his own abridgement had already been completed, what need is there for these transitional verses about King Benjamin, since they link not his abridgment of Lehi's

record but Nephi's self-contained account to the beginning of Mosiah? In my opinion, there is no choice but to accept that Words of Mormon is nothing other than Joseph's attempt to knit the two parts of his translation together, while explaining how it was that he so providentially had something like a duplicate of the lost translation.

Joseph's sensitivity to the problems connected with that loss are apparent in the preface to the 1830 edition, which explains that he has substituted Nephi's record for the lost material, and implicitly, therefore, that no one should expect the translations to match exactly. He thus is protected from the charge of fraud, should the two translations ever be compared. Concern about such a charge is made explicit in Doctrine and Covenants 10:10. Despite this caveat, one is entitled to suspect its motive. If Joseph were ever confronted with the lost material, and it failed to match up with the new translation, he could simply have asserted that it had been altered. Does he save face any better by coming up with an altogether different production? Is he not just as vulnerable to the charge of fraud on account of his having deliberately avoided this test of his prophetic ability by "translating" a different work?

First Nephi through Words of Mormon, therefore, prove to be an epilogue to the Book of Mormon proper, not only in terms of order of composition but also in terms of subject matter. These books are implicitly recognized as such by the fact that a new set of records has to be conjured up to explain their appearance.

MUCH more could be said about the effect of the order of translation on the development of the Book of Mormon narrative, but I'll limit myself to just one last example. The key to this case is the fact that nowhere in the Book of Mormon's many detailed prophecies of the last days is anything ever said about the establishment of a new church in the latter days. The nature of God's latter-day work after the appearance of the Book of Mormon is very vague, strikingly so after the detailed prophecies pertaining to Joseph's involvement in the translation.<sup>8</sup>

Not surprisingly, then, while Nephi foresees the rise of a "great and abominable" church following the apostolic era, he says nothing of the Great Apostasy as Mormons understand that term today, that is, the utter elimination of the legitimate church of God. By the same token, nothing is said of the Restoration, again in the global sense in LDS use today. The Book of Mormon portrays cases of apostasy in every era, as well as restorations. But these are localized events. Joseph Smith, as he is portrayed in the Book of Mormon, is not the prophet of the Restoration, but the translator of the Book of Mormon. He is a seer rather than first elder. Joseph's calling, as described in the Book of Mormon, is connected solely with the Book of Mormon. He will be a "Moses" (2 Nephi 3:6ff.) in that his book will play an important role in the gathering of Israel. The powers promised to Joseph are those necessary for its production (v. 11). He is called a seer, and Joseph in fact used a seer-stone during parts of the translation. He is to have "judgment in writing" (v. 17). The "great and marvelous work and a wonder" (2 Nephi 27:26) that was to come about in the last days was nothing more than the Book of Mormon. The

phrase also has this specific meaning in those early sections of the Doctrine and Covenants that preceded the publication of the Book of Mormon (D&C 4:1; 6:1; 11:1; 12:1; 14:1). After that, and still almost a year before the Church is founded, references to a “marvelous work” cease.

Accordingly, it would appear that concrete plans to found a church came to Joseph Smith either after the translation of the Book of Mormon or in its last stages when the incorporation of additional prophecies may have proved too difficult. Perhaps the notion of the need for a new church arose during Joseph’s intense involvement in prophesying his own role in the Lord’s latter-day work. While one must use arguments from silence with caution, the unusual detail of Book of Mormon prophecies concerning Joseph Smith’s life, foretelling as they do his name (2 Nephi 3:15) as well as every major event in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, is our surest reason for regarding this silence as significant. On reflection, in fact, the silence makes sense. Little if anything in Joseph Smith’s experience up to 1829 would have led him to think about founding a church. One looks in vain, for example, in his 1832 and 1835 diaries for any evidence that his 1820 vision or his interviews with Moroni had led him to expect his subsequent role as Church leader. The same is true, surprisingly, even of the 1838 account.<sup>9</sup>

Given the Book of Mormon’s silence on the possibility of a new church, how can one explain what I call the handbook of church government found in chapters 1–6 and 8 of Moroni? These chapters epitomize church government in telling how one is initiated as a member, how the sacrament is administered, who governs the Church, etc.—all basic issues of church administration, and all conveniently gathered together as if to instruct would-be church builders. If, as suggested by the manuscript evidence, 1 and 2 Nephi were composed after the remainder of the Book of Mormon (including Moroni), why is nothing more said about the appearance of a new church, such as appears to be adumbrated in Moroni?

One possibility is that while Moroni 1–6 and 8 do indeed function as a handbook, they were intended not as the basis for a new church, but as a guide to be used in the reformation of existing religious institutions. If so, it would have been the Book of Mormon itself as much as anything else that contributed to the reform. And, the Book of Mormon need not portray Joseph Smith as playing a pivotal role as church reformer, much less founder.

A more radical explanation would be that Joseph Smith, in fact, composed Moroni after 1 and 2 Nephi. While I do not necessarily favor this explanation, I offer the following pieces of evidence in its defense. First, it was toward the end of the translation (June 1829) that Oliver Cowdery began working on what we now call section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, known to have been begun in 1829.<sup>10</sup> This suggests that the idea of a new church was beginning to exercise Joseph’s mind. Second, if we exclude 1 Nephi through Words of Mormon and also Moroni, and if we restore the 116 pages of Mormon’s abridgement, the resulting book is in fact a book by Mormon, that is, the book as it was perhaps originally conceived in Joseph’s mind—the work of a single author. The loss of the 116 pages dealt this conception and Joseph’s vision a blow. While

Joseph was eventually able to recover his gift, the structure of the Book of Mormon would have to change. Above all, the 116 pages would have to be replaced. The fact that Joseph did not immediately act to provide a substitute text suggests that he may have needed time to consider its ramifications: best perhaps to finish the story as he had already envisioned it and address the replacements later. All of the additions (Ether, 1 Nephi–Omni/Words of Mormon, and Moroni) in this scenario come toward the end of the translation process. The complex story of large and small plates and multiple authorship is thus explained in simple fashion as the consequence of accident on the one hand and theological development in Joseph’s mind on the other. Hence the succession of insignificant record keepers from Jacob down to the time of Mosiah is required only in order to fill up the chronological gap between the end of the founding family’s story and that of Mosiah, the two Almas, and the Nephite wars.

**I**N saying that the church handbook is unique I do not claim that the concerns it treats are not addressed elsewhere in the Book of Mormon; some are, some are not. What is unique is that the resulting guidelines are assembled in one location, in what is obviously a manual of instruction. Each of the topics taken up in the handbook were matters of debate in Joseph Smith’s time, which explains why they are treated at all.

Many readers of this article will recall Alexander Campbell’s dictum that the Book of Mormon includes “every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years.” Joseph Smith, according to Campbell, “decides all the great controversies—infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of freemasonry, republican government, and the rights of man.”<sup>11</sup>

The matter of infant baptism, which heads up Campbell’s list, is broached for the first and only time beginning in Moroni 8:4—part of what I’ve called the handbook. That Moroni would now address this matter is puzzling, since the Nephites had been practicing baptism at least since Alma the Elder’s time (Mosiah 18:10ff.). How is it that only at the end of Book of Mormon’s thousand-year history does the question arise? By way of comparison, although there is no trace of it in the New Testament, infant baptism was nevertheless an established practice by the late second century, demonstrated by the fact that Tertullian advocated that children not be baptized as infants, for fear they would sin before they could reasonably be expected to act differently.<sup>12</sup> It is also mentioned by Irenaeus, and is an apparently normative albeit localized practice.<sup>13</sup> The issue can scarcely have been avoided by the Nephite church during its long history. Nevertheless, Moroni 8 implies that the issue is altogether new: Mormon and Moroni are initially at a total loss for a response. Even with his thorough knowledge of Nephite history, Mormon has to go to God himself for an answer (v. 7). Mormon’s justification (v. 8) is a curious pastiche of New Testament sentiments torn from context, in a manner not uncharacteristic of the rest of the Book of



Mormon. His quotation of Jesus to the effect that “the law of circumcision is done away in me,” is the most peculiar. This Pauline sentiment makes sense in its original social setting—the struggle to establish the independence of the gentile Church from Jewish ritual—but what relevance does it have to Moroni’s practical difficulty? In fact, the problem faced by Paul could scarcely have arisen in the Book of Mormon world, since Nephite leaders had all along championed the ultimate rejection of the Jewish “Law” in terms that could fairly be called anti-Jewish. The problem of infant baptism, therefore, cannot realistically be located in the sort of world that the Book of Mormon itself would lead us to expect. But in Joseph Smith’s world the issue was very much alive. Presbyterians, the most popular group around Palmyra, held with Calvinism that baptism as a sign of conversion was not necessary as a means to salvation. It was not administered to infants. Methodists, the next largest group in the area, required infant baptism. Baptists, also well represented, of course held that only believers should be baptized, and thus excluded children from the rite. Universalists allowed baptism in any number of forms, but held that it was not mandatory in any event. The Society of Friends (Quakers) did away with sacraments altogether. One could, therefore, find among major religious movements in the area just about every possible attitude toward baptism. The key to understanding Moroni 8, and many of the other passages discussed in Moroni’s handbook, is the reference to “disputations” (vv. 4-5), which these revelations are meant to quell. Curiously, this late reference is the only hint of such disputations in the Book of Mormon. But reference to “disputations” makes great sense in the context of New York revivalism.

How one deals with infants is obviously not the only controversial point about baptism. We should, therefore, expect that if Joseph had set out to settle matters of controversy once and for all he would address himself to other points of debate. Third Nephi 11:22 begins to do just that. It, too, is introduced by the key word “disputations” (v. 22, also 28ff.), which again are unanticipated. We often hear of political dissension in the Nephite camp, but nowhere previously is anything said about disagreements among the faithful about how baptism should be done. Third Nephi leaves nothing to speculation. Every word and action is specified in detail. Christ himself—what better authority—makes its necessity and scope very clear. This is important, since the New Testament lacks such explicit divine instruction. The uncertainty, which this no doubt evoked in the minds of seekers after the “primitive church,” could only thus be completely dispelled. Such explicit instruction fills a definite gap in the New Testament picture of the Church.

Similarly missing from the New Testament are exact details about the administration of the Eucharist (the Mormon sacrament), which are, however, obligingly supplied by 3 Nephi 18. Verse 34 explains that this is again because of disputations. However, in this case, we should expect no disputes at all, since the Eucharist only comes into being with Jesus’ advent. Nevertheless, the exact significance of each act is, as in the earlier cases, carefully spelled out (vv. 7, 11).

Having already chosen twelve disciples to govern his

church, Jesus next gives the disciples power to bestow the Holy Ghost (v. 37). This almost completes the rudimentary framework for church organization. All the Church lacks is a name, which is providentially supplied in chapter 27. Once more, the motivation is “disputations” (vv. 4ff.), but again, mention of these squabbles comes with no apparent context, except upstate New York revivalism. Anyway, why couldn’t the leader of the Church have simply requested revelation on the matter, putting an end to debate? In theory that should be quite enough. But coming directly from Jesus’ mouth this statement can no longer be questioned. That is the reason for its importance to Joseph Smith. It provides what the New Testament does not: explicit details from Jesus himself for the organization of the Church. The church “handbook” of Moroni 1-6, 8, then, epitomizes 3 Nephi’s more important administrative concerns (the ordination of the Twelve, the mode of baptism, the manner of administering the Eucharist, the authority to bestow the Holy Ghost). Unlike 3 Nephi, however, Moroni’s handbook is explicitly designed for “some future day” (Moroni 1:4). With such perfect instruction, the primitive American Church operates without any disputes at all (4 Nephi 2). This idyllic church is an extreme form of what New Testament scholar Robert Wilken calls the “myth of Christian beginnings.”<sup>14</sup> Eusebius expresses it concisely:

Until then [the early second century] the church had remained a virgin, pure and uncorrupted, since those who were trying to corrupt the wholesome standard of the saving message . . . lurked somewhere under cover of darkness. But when the sacred band of the apostles had in various ways reached the end of their life, and the generation of those privileged to listen with their own ears to the divine wisdom had passed on, then godless error began to take shape through the deceit of false teachers, who now that none of the apostles was left threw off the mask and attempted to counter the preaching of the truth by knowledge falsely so called.<sup>15</sup>

“Eusebius wrote a history,” writes Wilken, “in which there is no real history, for there is no place for change in his portrait of Christianity. The true church always remains the same from generation to generation. . . . There is no genuine history, for there can be no history. . . . The history of the church is a history of an eternal conflict between the truth of God and its opponents.”<sup>16</sup> Although they make different uses of it, this myth is basic to Protestants and Catholics alike, and, needless to say, to Mormons as well. It is precisely this image of pristine Christianity as one supposes it must have existed under the apostles that underlies 4 Nephi. It is, of course, also the prototype for the primitivist model described in 3 Nephi and explicitly recommended for later implementation in Moroni 1-6, 8.

One consequence of this notion of unchanging faith is that diversity cannot be tolerated; the only way of explaining differences is to say that divergent views contradict or oppose the true faith. If there can be only *one* way of doing things, then “disputations” are necessarily a sign of trouble in the Church. By attributing his handbook for the Church to Jesus, Joseph Smith establishes that one way beyond dispute. One solution

to sectarian squabbles, the one ultimately chosen by Joseph Smith, was to establish a new church based on the unambiguous constitution of ancient American Christianity. However, as Eusebius demonstrates, the notion of a post-apostolic crisis need not lead to what Mormons would call the Apostasy. It is therefore possible that Joseph's handbook of church government, while ultimately providing the basis for the new Church of Christ, was initially intended as an epitome for emulation by the existing religious institutions of his day.

### CONCLUSIONS

I have tried to show how a historical-critical approach helps us to understand the Book of Mormon. Many questions remain, and numerous problems have yet to be discovered and analyzed. I myself have questions about the Book of Mormon that I can't answer. While the scope of this presentation prevents me from discussing all of its implications at length, let me at least broach the one that I'm sure occupies many readers' minds. If Joseph Smith is the author of the Book of Mormon, is he then a fraud, or is the Book of Mormon the result of revelatory experience (something maybe like *A Course in Miracles*)? At present, I have no compelling answer and am willing to entertain either possibility.

Either way there are serious implications for my faith. One thing I would stress, however, is that as a Mormon I'm not unique in facing such historical critical challenges to belief. Christians of other denominations and Jews have struggled with them for at least two hundred years. They're hard for any educated person to avoid, for historical criticism, science, and religious pluralism have fundamentally altered the way we all view religion. In the West we now universally regard religion as a matter of personal choice. People speak of their "religious preference," often not realizing just how unusual it is, historically speaking, to have such a choice. In most periods of history, in East or West, that freedom has been minimal or non-existent. The freedom to choose, expressed in a profusion of different religions, is part and parcel of the pluralistic society to which we belong. As a result, none of us can escape the awareness that our religious beliefs are not shared by the majority of our fellow human beings. Most of us, at some point, must choose to believe (or not to believe), perhaps in spite of what others think.

The necessity of personal choice is what Peter Berger dubs the "heretical imperative."<sup>17</sup> The essence of heresy is choice: that is what the Greek word *hairesis* means. Implied, of course, is that you choose to believe something of which the majority disapproves. But the majority is now much less monolithic than in earlier ages. There are, if you will, a multiplicity of majorities, and we are free to pick a world view with which we feel comfortable. By the standards of the medieval church, therefore, we are all heretics, because we all assume that it is up to us to choose what we believe.

Freedom to choose can be a frightening thing because it means that we are individually responsible for what we do. The realization of this freedom can, therefore, lead to profound unease. One response to such unease is fundamentalism, which seeks to drown out the voice of freedom by ever more strident denials of

the existence of legitimate alternatives. But the fundamentalist is not thereby rid of the annoyance of modernity. The denial of modernity is the mainspring of the fundamentalist's zeal.

For those who choose to believe, there is, according to Berger, an alternative to fundamentalism. It is a chastened belief which recognizes that certainty will always elude us, and that that is a part of life. We choose to believe, though we cannot know for sure what the end of our faith will be. Such a faith accepts that much, perhaps all, of what we cling to as support of our faith is subject to change. But, in Berger's view, the proper response to constant change is not to abandon religion altogether, but constantly to redefine what faith means. This defining process necessarily leads to different results for everyone.

In the wake of my own encounter with modernity, in which historical study of the Book of Mormon has played a decisive role, my religious journey has embraced Berger's process of redefining faith and I find myself in places I never before considered. My life is richer, even as my belief grows more uncertain. ☒

### NOTES

1. Note in passing that only in Mormon 9:32 is the Egyptian said to be "reformed." Otherwise, the Book of Mormon's designation is simply "Egyptian."
2. The anachronistic reference to "Jews" is worth noting, but remains tangential to the present discussion.
3. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), 13–32.
4. According to W. W. Phelps, no doubt quoting Harris in his 15 January 1831 letter to Howe (*Mormonism Unveiled*, 1836, 273), Anthon is said to have described the transcription as "short hand Egyptian."
5. In the preface to his *Classical Dictionary* (1825), Anthon shows some acquaintance with Champollion's treatise. Even so, his ability to translate anything must have been minimal, to say the least. It is therefore doubtful that Anthon in fact ventured a translation. Anthon himself denied having authenticated Joseph's translation. His two versions of the interview, occasionally at odds with each other, are discussed in Richard Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984, 88), where further literature is also given. However, Anthon may have ventured to identify the provenance of the characters. The reason for thinking so is that Harris's description of the figures as "short hand Egyptian" reflects a knowledge of current Egyptological terminology, of which Harris could not have been aware. Champollion's *Précis du Système Hiéroglyphique* I:18, 20, 355) describes hieratic as *tachygraphie*, which is in fact rendered "short hand" in the American review of Champollion's work (*American Quarterly Review*, June 1827, 450). Anthon is known to have been familiar with this piece (*Classical Dictionary* 4th ed., 1845, 45), and he is the only known source from which Harris could have learned this usage.
6. A general designation of the Nephite people is intended.
7. Dean Jessee, "The Original Book of Mormon Manuscript," *BYU Studies* 10 (Spring 1970): 259–78.
8. The one post-translation event that does appear in prominence is the gathering of Israel. But the gathering of Israel is seen not as the response to a new church but as the effect of the Book of Mormon gospel, which was to prepare people for an imminent second coming. Cf. John A. Clark: "[Martin] said he verily believed that an important epoch had arrived—that a great flood of light was about to burst upon the world . . . that a golden Bible had recently been dug from the earth . . . and that this would . . . settle all religious controversies and speedily bring on the glorious millennium" (*Gleanings by the Way*, Philadelphia, 1842, 223). Harris's statement does not, of course, necessarily represent Joseph's point of view, but it is entirely consonant with the stated purpose of the Book of Mormon (cf. e.g., 1 Nephi 14:7; 2 Nephi 27:26ff.; 28; 29; 30).
9. See Dean Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984).
10. Lyndon Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo: Seventy's Mission Bookstore, 1981), 126, n.3.
11. Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon* (Boston, 1832), 13.
12. Tertullian, On Baptism xviii (trans. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Christian Library* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869], 252f.).
13. II, xxii.
14. Robert Wilken, *The Myth of Christian Beginnings* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1980).
15. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.32.7–8 (quoted in Wilken, 71).
16. Wilken, 73.
17. Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (New York: Doubleday, 1979).

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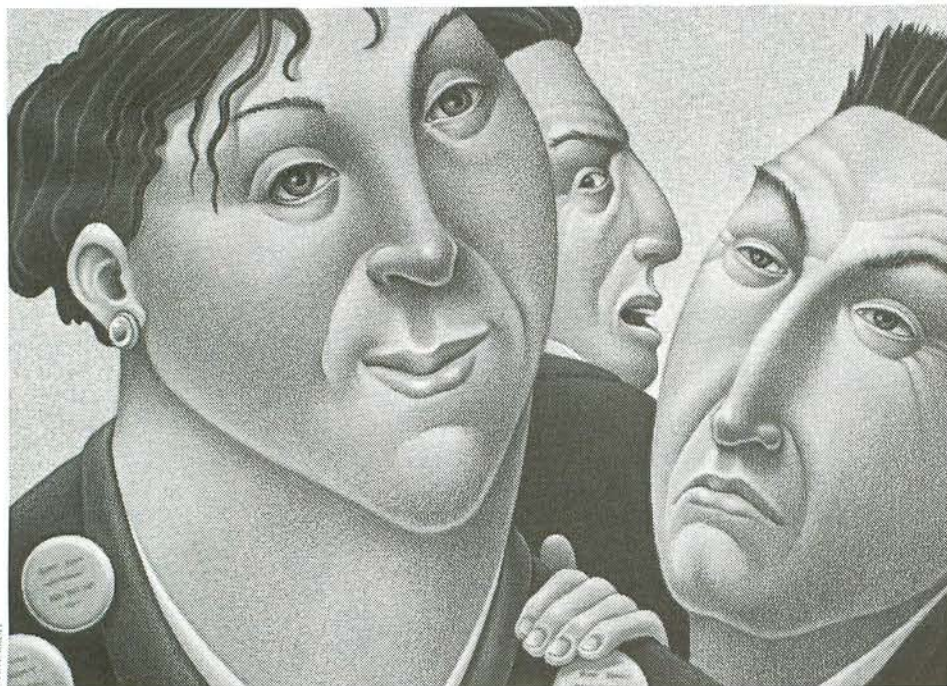
## LIGHTER MINDS

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# BUTTONS, OR, HER STRENGTH IS IN HER PRINCIPLES

(From the Personal Oral History of  
Donelle Lou Clawson Phelps)

by Lynn Matthews Anderson



Vonda Mae kept wearing a new button every week, such as the time she wore one that said, “Prospective Elder.”

I REMEMBER THAT very first Sunday when Vonda Mae Woodruff came to church wearing a button that said ASK ME! I didn't think much of it at the time. I thought maybe it was just her way of breaking the ice and getting acquainted with all the new people in our ward. (We get a whole new crop of

couples in the ward every school year because of the university nearby.) Anyway, I was her visiting teacher (along with Sister Eckersly who works outside the home although she doesn't really need to, so she never can manage to go with me. But to her credit she at least writes notes to the inactive sisters on our list). I thought Vonda was nice enough, if a bit peculiar. Though she'd been “born in the covenant” and in Pocatello, she'd been raised in the East, which I figured accounted for it.

Anyway, every so often after that she'd wear a button. At first, most of them were funny, like THE HURRIER I GO THE BEHINDER I GET and I'M SO FAR BEHIND I THINK I'M

AHEAD! Then she started wearing buttons that would say things like SAVE THE EARTH and SAVE THE WHALES and SAVE THE CHILDREN and SAVE THE goodness knows what else. She was always trying to get the Relief Society to serve “healthy” things at homemaking meeting. But then I don't know what got into Vonda. I'd known for years that she had been subscribing to magazines besides the *Ensign*, so maybe that was it. Rumor has it she'd started listening to even more “alternate voices,” and that despite inspired counsel at general conference.

Lord knows I tried to be Vonda's friend. I spent at least an hour every month preparing the visiting teaching message. And when her whole family came down with the flu, including her, I brought over some of my famous hotdog casserole. I tried to teach her correct principles, but I knew I was up against a lot when I saw some of the books she had on her shelves—all about feminism this and liberation that and even one book with the title *Sexual Politics*, of all things. One month I felt inspired to do extra research on the visiting teaching message, which was “Follow the Brethren.” And do you know that when I quoted to her what I'd found in a Mormon quote book, that “when the Brethren have spoken, the thinking has been done,” she just laughed and said it was a *Church News* editorial that must have been snuck in when the brother in charge was on vacation. I did not think that was very funny, and I told her so. Then she looked at me and said (and I will never forget this to my dying day), “Donelle, you really don't have a clue, do you?” And then she had the nerve to offer me some of her books to read, which I politely but firmly refused to do. I knew better!

Well. After that, I asked to be reassigned, but the Relief Society president asked me to please stick it out because, as she said, she was confident that I at least wouldn't be corrupted by anything that Vonda would say, which I take as a great compliment. But now I just go and give her the message and ask how her family's health is, and I don't stay one second over fifteen minutes. But I make sure I go before the twentieth of the month so no one can accuse me of procrastinating on an unpleasant duty.

All I know is that the time I visit taught her after New Year's last January, she told me that she'd made a resolution to be a better feminist. I hardly knew what to say. She'd already started singing the hymns in a funny way. When she was asked why she was changing all the words to some of the Songs of Zion, she said, “I am not a man. I am not a brother or a father or a son. I want to be

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included as a woman when I sing." She didn't seem to mind that what she sang didn't always rhyme or usually needed more notes than the song called for. She sang her changes good and loud and all the new people who weren't used to her would crane their necks to try to see where these strange sounds were coming from. And it wasn't just her, but usually her whole family would be singing different words. Sometimes they weren't even the same different words! But at least the Sunday School president was able to figure out that Vonda Mae should not be called to be the Sunday School chorister, even though she has had musical training and not too many people in the ward can lead music. As it is, they use her as a substitute only when there is absolutely nobody else they can call on, and even then they try to pick hymns for her to lead that she won't find any reason to have to change on the fly.

Anyway, as I was saying, after New Year's she started wearing buttons all the time to church with something controversial on them, such as the time she wore a button that said PROSPECTIVE ELDER. It had been obvious to me since the very first that Vonda Mae had been tainted by the Women's Movement, but up until then I hadn't known just how badly she'd gone astray. Whatever could she mean by it? I went up to her and told her that it was plain as day that the men, being less spiritual than women, really needed the priesthood or else they'd never learn to serve others and get to the celestial kingdom. Vonda just said right back that she knew plenty of men who were just as spiritual as women, and besides, she also knew plenty of women who could use some incentive to serve others. That was Vonda, all right. She never could admit to being wrong even when presented with the Lord's truth. And to top it off, the next week (which was the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend, and I still cannot fathom why we are having a holiday that honors someone who everyone knows was a communist) Vonda wore a button that said WOMEN DO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH BUT STILL HAVE TO SIT IN THE BACK OF THE BUS. The Relief Society president asked her why she was trying to stir up contention, and Vonda just replied as pleased with herself as she could be that she intended to be the Rosa Parks of Mormonism. I for one had no idea what she meant, but some of the other ladies—and, mark this, most of them were from the East, too—nodded their heads and smiled. (Vonda had worn her liberal Eastern politics on her sleeve from the very first, and it always amazed me how many women didn't seem to know any better than to agree with

her.)

The next week Vonda wore a button that said ELIZA R. SNOW WOULD BE APPALLED! Some of the women went up to Vonda and asked her what her button meant. She said something about how we really ought not to be celebrating the sesquicentennial of the Relief Society in 1992, because, after all, Brigham Young had disbanded the organization in 1844, and it didn't get reorganized until twenty-two years later. Well, we all thought she was just splitting hairs over that, but then she went right ahead and said something else about how Eliza R. must be turning over in her grave about how wimpy LDS women are these days. Now Vonda was beginning to make me mad. I come from good pioneer stock as do most of the women in the ward, and I went right up and told her that none of my female pioneer forefathers were wimps! She just looked at me and said, "That's just my point. Those women had power and they knew it. Most of today's LDS women roll over and play doormat if an almighty priesthood holder tells them to. LDS women today don't know anything about their heritage."

Now you'd think with all this feminism business that Vonda could not possibly be married. But no, she was married all right, and with children, but her husband was a convert as well as from the East, and what was more, he taught at the university and had a beard to boot. After Vonda began wearing her buttons and talking about them, some of the brothers in his quorum told him that as head of his house he should make her stop all this nonsense. He just laughed. Sometimes he would wear buttons to church, too, but he never went in for it like Vonda did. But there was the time when he wore a button that said IN THE HEAVENS, ARE PARENTS SINGLE? And Vonda Mae was wearing one that said NO, THE THOUGHT MAKES REASON STARE!

ALL in all, if it had just been the buttons, or even just the buttons and the singing, maybe we could have all ignored Vonda. But she began to challenge the Relief Society teachers right in class. She would tell the class that what Sister So-and-So had just said was simply "Mormon folklore," not doctrine. In one lesson on celestial marriage, Vonda kept trying to bring up the subject of eternal polygamy, but since nearly everyone I know, myself included, would rather live in the terrestrial kingdom than share our husbands, she couldn't get anyone to discuss it in class. That seemed to disappoint her, but the next week she showed up with a button

that said IF POLYGAMY IS A TRUE PRINCIPLE, WHY DOES IT MAKE US SO UNCOMFORTABLE? Though the Snows and the Grants, who had polygamous roots, seemed mightily offended, the Kimballs, the Claytons, and the Browns (who also came from families that had obeyed the Principle) stayed after the meetings to talk to Vonda about her ideas.

But you should have heard Vonda when Sister Grimmert said that the reason we don't hear about Heavenly Mother is that God the Father loves her so much that he wants to protect her name from being taken in vain and ridiculed. Well, Vonda nearly fell out of her seat for as much energy as she put into waving her hand to get the teacher to call on her. Then she said something like, "Since when does a goddess need male protection? Is protecting our Mother's name more important than letting humankind"—she always said humankind—"know that she exists and cares about us?" Honestly, for a smart woman, Vonda didn't seem to be able to figure out even the most basic truths of the patriarchal order in heaven.

It was getting pretty predictable that whatever controversial subject would get brought up in church would be met with a button the next week from Vonda. So I was not surprised when Vonda showed up with a button that said WOMEN WILL BE LIBERATED ONLY WHEN HEAVENLY MOTHER REVEALS HERSELF. There she goes, I said, dragging our sacred doctrine of a Mother in Heaven in the mud and casting this doctrinal pearl right before any old swine of the world. (Although to be fair I must say that Vonda hardly ever wore any of her buttons in public where the gentiles might mock.)

Anyway, Vonda was giving the Relief Society teachers such a hard time that one of them nearly quit outright and, even worse, one of them took to calling Vonda for ideas before presenting her lessons. (I must say that that teacher presented some pretty off-the-wall lessons, to say the least. People would talk about them for days afterward.) Finally the Relief Society president told the bishop that he had to think of some calling for Vonda that would keep her from attending Relief Society. Fortunately, there was an opening in the Primary for a Merrie Miss teacher, so Vonda Mae was called to that. We weren't sure, what with her having become a women's libber and all, that she wouldn't have the gall to turn down a calling, but she seemed happy as a clam to be a Primary teacher teaching the ten and eleven year old girls.

Not soon after that the entire Merrie Miss class wrote a letter to the Primary general

president to say that they thought the name "Merrie Miss" was stupid. Only they didn't say it exactly like that—they used words that no ten-year-old girl in the world would know, so it was obvious who had really written the letter, even though the girls themselves signed it. Personally I can't imagine why there would be all this fuss over a name—I mean, would they want to be called "Sullen Suzies" or something like that? The girls also told the Primary general president that they wished they had a more exciting name like the boys had. Now, I have never been all that keen on the boys' names myself, but all I can say is that Merrie Miss is such a pert and cheerful little name. I like it lots better than being a Gaynote or a Firelight or a Merry Hand, which is what I was called when I was in Primary.

Well, the Primary general president actually wrote back to the class and told them that they should think about the positive things Merrie Miss can stand for, which is what I thought all along. Still, it didn't surprise me that with Vonda as their teacher, the girls would send a petition to our ward Primary president, Sister Vandergrift, asking her to please call their class "Course 10 and

11," rather than Merrie Miss. At first Sister Vandergrift didn't want to do it, but then all the girls showed up wearing buttons Vonda had made for them that said CALL ME MERRIE MS., PLEASE. The next week the Merrie Miss sign came down off the row and Course 10 and 11 was in its place. I don't know why, but Sister Vandergrift seemed to think that was all right, and evidently no one from the stake noticed.

But Vonda Mae couldn't just stop there—not her, no sir. She was all the time talking to those girls about how important it was for them to prepare for careers and for missions. What happened to talking about preparing to raise a family?—is what I wanted to know. But despite all this, Vonda Mae didn't get herself released until she made buttons for all the girls that said PROSPECTIVE DEACON, which they wore to church once and only once. Even so, the Beehive teacher quit in hysterics about three weeks after several of Vonda's former Merrie Misses started attending Young Women. No one still knows for sure what happened, since the girls' parents are all too embarrassed to talk about it, but rumor has it that the new crop of Beehives just up and marched themselves into the

bishop's office and demanded that he make them all deacons. The Beehive teacher was absolutely sobbing to the Young Women's president, saying that she had had nothing to do with it and that she didn't know what she could do about stopping the girls from including Heavenly Mother in their prayers. She now attends the other ward.

The bishop first thought that just changing Vonda Mae's Primary assignment from Merrie Miss to Valiant A would suffice. But it wasn't long after that that her nine year-olds had to make a presentation in sharing time and the whole class, boys included, talked about how important it was to have a Heavenly Mother and to learn more about her. Bad enough that Vonda was wearing a button that said WITHOUT GOD THE MOTHER, WE HAVE A SINGLE-PARENT CELESTIAL HOUSEHOLD that day, but worse was that her Valiant As had buttons that said HEAVENLY MOTHER, COME HOME! So then the bishop switched her to teaching the Sunbeams, where everyone thought there wouldn't be any way for her to spout her feminist notions to any real effect with three-year-olds.

I hate to say anything bad about any of God's chosen servants, but the bishop was, in a word, Wrong. Complaints began pouring in from all the Sunbeam parents whose children had learned "different" words to the Primary songs from Sister Woodruff. They were singing things like "I am a child of God, and They have sent me here," and "I know my Mother lives, and loves me, too," and learning new verses to "Book of Mormon Stories" that talked about women. But as usual it took a button to get the ball rolling for Vonda to get herself released. She made one for all her Sunbeams that said I WANT TO SING ABOUT HEAVENLY MOTHER.

Shortly after—the next week, if I remember correctly—Vonda Mae was released from the Primary with a vote of thanks and put into the nursery, where the kids were too little to know how to read. But after a while some parents complained that they couldn't safely send their older kids to collect their nursery-age brothers and sisters without they'd be corrupted by Vonda Mae's buttons. And more than one parent complained to the bishop that all of their children, no matter what age, were starting to ask very hard questions at Family Home Evening. So Vonda Mae ended up as assistant ward librarian. She was a real help in the library, said old Sister Partridge, who'd been the ward librarian so long that no one could even remember the last time they'd seen her in a regular Sunday School class. Vonda never complained about her new calling. In fact, she



After another hour of cross-examination, the skillful attorney managed to pester a full confession out of poor Mrs. Laban . . .

was just completely full of enthusiasm and was unusually helpful about getting visual aids for the teachers.

**B**UT then the real trouble began. Vonda Mae was taking it upon herself to “fix” some of the visual aids. Can you imagine! She’d find a poster that would say “Men are that they might have joy,” and go right ahead and make it read “Men [and women] are that they might have joy.” What’s more, she did it in magic marker, not pencil. Everybody who checked out Bibles or Triple Combinations found little pieces of paper in them with feminist thoughts on them. (“Consciousness raisers” is what Vonda called them.) And Vonda had taped a full typewritten page into all the other books and magazines and manuals saying what she thought was right or wrong about them. (“Critical reviews” is what Vonda called them.) And what else Vonda Mae did to the manuals, especially the YM and YW manuals, was almost unspeakable. I can’t imagine where she found the time to do this, but she went and read every single lesson manual and put her “corrections” (as she was pleased to call them) and “supplementary material” in all of them. (And she did all that in ink, too.) Some of the teachers never noticed the additions or corrections, but there were some teachers who were furious. The bishop was livid. But Vonda told him that she had the facts and the scriptural references to back up her views and to her mind it was high time that the Latter-day Saints stopped believing in 1950s fairy tales about men and women.

To make matters worse, Vonda Mae was something of an artist, and she also drew women in the pictures of the Last Supper. Things came to a head, though, when Brother Clark, who was one of the regular teachers of the elders quorum, ended up with a poster that said, “Let every man [and woman] learn his [or her] duty,” with women included in a picture of the priesthood blessing a baby. He nearly burst a blood vessel when he put it up on display and some of the brethren began to laugh. He went storming in to see the bishop—just left his class high and dry for the better part of ten minutes—and it was after that that Vonda Mae was released. We didn’t have the money to replace the corrupted posters and visual aids, so we either made do or we didn’t use them.

But by then the apostate influence of Vonda Mae had already started to make an impact. It hadn’t taken long for the ward to take sides once Vonda had started wearing her buttons all the time. Fully one-half of the ward refused to even look at Vonda Mae

when she’d come into the building, and some parents would hustle their children right by her so that the kids wouldn’t get corrupted. Vonda started getting hate mail, and she took to stapling up those letters and her long replies on the bulletin board for everyone to read. In all this time, though, only one person ever tried to forcibly remove one of Vonda’s buttons, and that was the one that said BIRTH CONTROL IS NOT A SIN. Sister Sorenson, who had ten children, took that as a personal slap in the face, and she told the bishop that no amount of apologies from Vonda Mae could ever lead her to forgive her.

But even though there were people who wouldn’t look at Vonda’s buttons, there were nearly as many people who would go right on up to her as soon as she’d come in to see what her latest button would say. They would ask her what it meant and Vonda Mae would tell them her ideas and some of them—not all, mind you, but some of those who listened—would actually be nodding their heads and agreeing with her! Even priesthood holders. And even people from the West who had been born and raised in the Church. One sister confided in me that

she’d just about worn a button herself to church, but had chickened out at the last minute.

That was when I took myself and went straight to the bishop. It’s got to stop, I told him. But he said that he’d already talked to Vonda Mae to no avail and besides which, there was nothing in the handbook about people wearing buttons to church, so long as they weren’t political. He said his hands were tied. Wasn’t that just like a man? But he did tell me that he’d finally managed to find Vonda Mae a calling where he was sure she couldn’t offend anyone—sacrament bread coordinator. (He’d first tried having her type up, copy, and pass out the program, but that only lasted two weeks because she kept including all kinds of pernicious feminist stuff.)

At first even Vonda couldn’t figure out a way to make a feminist statement out of making bread assignments, but it didn’t take her long. Now, see, everyone in the bishopric was agreed that the sacrament bread ought to be homemade whenever possible. At first Vonda tried to tell them that that wasn’t really important, but they stood firm on that



principle. So then she started getting very pointed about the way she'd assign the bread—every other week she'd ask a priesthood brother to bake and bring bread. And when she'd find out that Brother So-and-So would accept the assignment and then get his wife to bake the bread, she'd get right on the phone and reassign the same brother, telling him that since he'd raised his hand to sustain her in her calling, that meant he was to accept assignments himself and not to try to get out of them by making someone else do the work. She read about five different brothers the riot act and then after that the men just seemed to be resigned to taking their turns when they were asked. Sometimes the bread on those weeks was a little heavy, but usually the men did just fine and some of the women reported that their husbands had liked baking bread so much that they actually kept on doing it on their own. Other women reported that they got breadmaking machines on their birthdays or for Christmas. I will say that Vonda Mae was no respecter of marital status—she'd assign single men and single women and divorced ones and woe to anyone who showed up with a loaf of store-bought bread unless they had a good excuse. And even then Vonda Mae kept a loaf of homemade bread in the kitchen freezer at church just in case, which had the label on it, "If you even think about devouring this loaf that is meant to be used for the sacrament, you will be answerable to God." This kept even the missionary elders from eating it.

MEANWHILE Vonda Mae kept wearing a new button every week. She wore a button to every single church meeting she went to, including stake conference, and she would wear a bigger-than-usual button to any stake conference when a general authority was attending. She'd get in line to shake the authority's hand as bold as brass, and she would smile and thank him for his inspired talk. And she nearly always gave him a note or a letter to take back to the brethren in Salt Lake. If he'd been good about using what Vonda Mae called "gender-inclusive language," she'd make a point of telling him she'd noticed and that she was very grateful. But if he hadn't, she'd look for all the world as sorry as could be and say in a meek little voice about how she hoped he wouldn't think she was criticizing or trying to steady the ark or putting a hand on the wheel of the Good Ship Zion, but she was concerned about the girls thinking that they weren't important when all they were hearing was "men this" and "men that." And that even

though some older people knew that "men" used to mean "men and women," the young people didn't know that, so could he please keep that in mind the next time he'd be giving his otherwise very uplifting talk in a stake conference or wherever.

She was just as meek as you please, but I can't think that any of those brethren were fooled one minute, not with her sporting buttons right in front of their faces with apostate slogans like RELIEF SOCIETY—WOMEN TEACHING WOMEN WHAT MEN WANT THEM TO TEACH and ISN'T IT TIME TO LIFT EVE'S CURSE? and GOD LISTENS TO ALTERNATE VOICES.

But it was the button she wore that said LDS WOMEN: SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS IN GOD'S KINGDOM that made that one visiting general authority righteously indignant. He told her she shouldn't be questioning the Brethren and that she should accept the place God had assigned to women and not go around trying to be an influence and make other people uncomfortable. She just looked him straight in the eye and said, "Elder So-and-So, the God I worship isn't a sexist being. It's just too bad God has to work with mortals who can't see beyond people's sex organs in determining how best to use them in the kingdom." I was so shocked that she would say such a thing in church, let alone to a general authority, that I nearly forgot to look at the man's face. He was as shocked as I was I am sure, and he started getting red in the face, and then Vonda Mae said very sweetly, "May God bless you in the work of the Church, and please take this back to the Brethren in Salt Lake," and before he could even open his mouth to rebuke her, she'd stuck a letter in his hand and left the stand. The next week she wore a button that read WORTHY OF THE PRIESTHOOD IN EVERY WAY—JUST THE WRONG SEX.

It wasn't long after that, of course, that Vonda Mae really got her comeuppance. Some say it was because of that general authority, and some say it was because of all the letters she'd been sending to Salt Lake, but I think it was the Lord's own vengeance upon her for the apostasy of feminism. As I said before, her buttons had been getting more and more outrageous, but the last one was the corker, the straw that broke the camel's back. It said SENILITY HINDERS REVELATION FROM MOTHER IN HEAVEN, and if that wasn't evil speaking of the Lord's Anointed, I cannot ever hope to know what is. Apparently the bishop agreed because as soon as he saw that button just before sacrament meeting, he told one of his counselors to start the meeting without him, and he just about literally

dragged Vonda Mae into his office. It wasn't my place, but I needed a drink of water and they were yelling at each other and the Court of Love was held soon thereafter.

The upshot of which was that Vonda Mae was placed on probation and that she would only be allowed to come to church if she would stop wearing buttons. So far she's only come when one of her children has to give a talk. She wears feminist earrings, but since they don't say anything no one really minds them.

But her influence was felt, and not a week went by after the Court of Love when six other women in our ward—and all but two from the East—started wearing buttons, and all the buttons said ELIZA R. SNOW WOULD BE APPALLED! Where will it end? □



## SAYING WRITE US

She drew the knife down, across, fragmenting both onions on the worn cutting board. When tears bit her eyelids she thought of other smells, sea water and the odors of her children that not even her husband recognized. He thought she should have done something. That when their

second daughter called her and said she'd left college to ride up the California coast on a motorcycle, she should have explained that this was nineteen ninety-two and now completing school was stylish. But as she had held the phone that afternoon, she couldn't

remember her children's smells or even orange blossoms outside her parents' house. She only smelled oak paneling and her secretary's strong lemony perfume. Saying "Write us" had seemed sensible. She wiped her hand on her apron and gripped the thigh underneath.

—HOLLY WELKER

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## REVIEWS

# HOMEMAKING MEETINGS

### WOMEN OF COVENANT

by Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and

Maureen Ursenbach Beecher

Deseret Book Co., 1992, 544 pages, \$21.00

### ELIZA AND HER SISTERS

by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher

Aspen Books, 1991, 166 pages + index, \$8.95



Reviewed by Jessie L. Embry

IN THE FOREWORD to *Eliza and Her Sisters*, Leonard J. Arrington declares, "We are now in the third decade of the modern women's movement, and it is clear that women have been major players in the historical events that have molded the world" (vii). Arrington then describes studies which discuss the role of women in the LDS church. Two recent histories, *Eliza and Her Sisters* and *Women of Covenant*, can now be added to that list.

Reading *Women of Covenant* reminds me of attending a Relief Society homemaking meeting. There are some things I really enjoy. It gives me an opportunity to visit with friends who usually don't have the time to chat and to occasionally learn. It also inspires me to do my visiting teaching and to care more about the sisters in my ward. But there are some things that are always missing. While tough issues are occasionally raised, there never seem to be any solid answers. And most of the time is spent doing craft projects that I never finish.

For me, *Women of Covenant* has all the positive elements of a homemaking meeting. I learned about "old friends," the general presidents of the Relief Society. While I have studied the life of Emmeline B. Wells, I knew

almost nothing about Louise Y. Robison. I was introduced to women on the ward and stake level whom I have never studied. I was especially impressed with the stories of women from throughout the world, and how all these women throughout time and place have used our shared beliefs to cope with their struggles. Since I have researched Relief Society history myself, I expected much of the book to review familiar stories. I was pleasantly surprised. For example, while I can recite the history of the Cottonwood Maternity Hospital, I knew very little about the Snowflake Hospital. Because the book taught me some new things, refreshed my memory on others, and showed the spiritual strength of Relief Society women, I applaud the authors.

I also appreciate the authors for writing a religious history of faith. The Museum of Church History and Art entitled its main exhibit on the history of the Church "Covenant Restored." The display focuses on the covenants that members make with God and explains that these covenants can be seen in all aspects of Church history. *Women of Covenant* takes the same approach. The authors show how women have made covenants with God and how those promises are reflected in their daily activities in the Relief Society. Like the women who attend my homemaking meeting, bring dinners to sick members of the ward, and visit teach me in my home when they have many other things they

could be doing, the women in this book are willing to perform tasks because they agree with the Savior's counsel that service to others is service to him. Like a homemaking meeting, the book inspires me to be of greater assistance.

Yet, also like a Relief Society homemaking meeting, I left *Women of Covenant* feeling that most of the difficult questions had not been answered, the project had not been completed. Although the authors acknowledge some of the difficult problems of women and the Church, like a fruit salad, the apples' sharp edges are covered with whipped cream. An example is the Relief Society grain storage program. As the authors point out, the women started saving wheat when Brigham Young gave the assignment to President Emmeline B. Wells in 1876. From then until President Barbara B. Smith turned the wheat over to the Welfare Committee in 1979, the Relief Society claimed ownership of the project. But the women could only watch as they gradually lost power. From total responsibility where not even the president of the Church could ask for the grain without the sisters' permission, the Relief Society saw their control slip until they were told to counsel with a ward bishop on how the grain should be used. Finally, the Presiding Bishopric sold the grain during World War I without first consulting General Relief Society President Emmeline B. Wells. The Relief Society did not replace the grain; the interest on the monies from the sale was used to support maternity and infant care until the principal was used to purchase wheat again as part of the welfare program of the 1930s. The wheat was still nominally the Relief Society's until President Barbara Smith turned over the remaining control to President Kimball in 1979.

Although this is a familiar and oft-told story by LDS women historians, unfortunately the telling of the story is scattered throughout this book, so it is difficult to see how one event led to another. Yet the entire story is a classic example of how Relief Society authority shifted from the women to ward bishops and the Presiding Bishopric. Looking at the events in isolation from the gradual loss of power that had occurred earlier obscures the complete picture.

For me, the entire history of the Relief Society is a story of a loss of power. The earliest loss came when Emma Smith attempted to use the organization to argue against plural marriage; as a result the Society was disbanded. When Relief Society was started again in 1867, the women had their own meeting buildings, their own magazines

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JESSIE EMBRY is director of the oral history program at the Charles Redd Center at Brigham Young University.



(the *Women's Exponent* and the *Relief Society Magazine*), and their own programs (in addition to grain storage, the women had a genealogical program, bazaars, and an independent budget, just to name a few). As the Church grew and "correlation" programs were developed to administer to a larger membership, the Relief Society gradually lost control of its own destiny. The Genealogical Society, for example, took over from the women a *Deseret News* column, an index card program, and much of the teaching work. The separate *Relief Society Magazine* was replaced with a yearly women's issue and then a few pages in the *Ensign*. A room in the meetinghouse replaced the Relief Society buildings; their budget was absorbed by the ward. Like the grain storage programs, this loss of power was gradual and part of a larger plan to bring the auxiliaries under priesthood direction. While the Sunday School and the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association also lost power with the reorganization, the men who directed those programs still maintained priesthood authority. Only women's organizations lost all sense of power.

While this story is gloomier than the authors wanted to present, understanding this loss of control is an essential element to understanding Relief Society history. Many of these facts are presented, but they are not tied together. Therefore, like my homemaking projects, the craft of historical interpretation was never completed in this book.

But did I expect answers to these tough questions in this book? Realistically, no. The authors are aware of the concerns and have dealt with them in other forums, but I didn't expect to find them openly dealt with in a *Deseret Book* publication for the general Church. To understand the complete history of Relief Society, we need to look beyond the "official statements" to the "alternate voices" (just as to see the concerns of LDS women we must look beyond the official Relief Society meetings to informal gatherings). *Women of Covenant*, like Relief Society, will be the standard for women in the Church; unfortunately, it does not provide the vital explanations we need to learn from the past.

**E**LIZA AND HER SISTERS, a collection of previously published essays on Eliza R. Snow by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, also reminds me of homemaking meetings. Once again, there is a special spirit in the book. Sister Snow does "come to life" as the summary on the back of the book suggests. With carefully crafted prose, Beecher shares her insights on Snow as a "poetess, prophetess,

priestess, and presidentess." Just as I leave homemaking meetings feeling a new closeness to the women who were there, when I finished this book I felt a fresh kinship with Snow and some of her early associations. Although I had read all of the articles earlier, having them placed together provided new insights. I especially admire the concluding chapter which looks at the informal power of the early Mormon "leading sisters" and honestly concludes that just as there was a male power structure in Utah that was connected by kinship ties there was also a female elite who dictated the women's organizations and roles in the Church.

Yet there are also elements of what I dislike about homemaking meetings in this book as well. Because the book consists of essays originally published to stand on their own, just as in homemaking meetings there is a lot of repetition. And while the author adapts some of the latest in feminist studies in each chapter and addresses some of the difficult questions about Mormon women and power (and that is to the credit of the journals that originally published the articles and Aspen Books who put together the study), I left the discussion still feeling that the process of historic interpretation was not complete. I want to know more about why the Relief Society was disbanded in 1844 and not started again until 1867 in Utah. I crave a better understanding of the meaning of women meeting together at Winter Quarters. I want to have a better grasp of how the "leading sisters" affected the lives of the more "ordinary" Mormon women. And more than that, I want to be able to tie together all of the pieces of Snow's life mentioned in this book and see her as a complete person rather than in fragments. Beecher's complete biography of Snow should deal with this question, but for now I am stuck with disjointed pieces. Like homemaking meetings which look at a different topic each month and the only thread is the same women in attendance, *Eliza and Her Sisters* only barely holds together because Snow is in all of the chapters.

*Women of Covenant* and *Eliza and Her Sisters* are both attempts to look honestly at the role of women in the Mormon church. However, it will take future studies to fully discover that. These future books and articles will have to be willing to pose hard questions and accept unpleasant and uncomfortable answers. Until then our studies of Mormon women, like Relief Society homemaking meetings, will remain delightful gatherings of love and friendship in a safe comfort zone, but provide no real guidelines to help women deal with their daily lives. ☐

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# A SPOKESPERSON FOR THE NEW "LOST GENERATION"

HOW I GOT CULTURED: A NEVADA MEMOIR

By Phyllis Barber

The University of Georgia Press, 1992

189 pages, cloth, \$24.95



Reviewed by Margaret Young

I FIRST MET Phyllis Barber at a Sunstone Symposium where we were doing readings—she from her novel *And The Desert Shall Blossom* and I from *Salvador*. Both of us had agents representing our work and high hopes of national publication. However, both of us ended up publishing with good—but nonetheless limited—regional presses (Phyllis with the University of Utah Press and I with Aspen). She heard from the “big” publishers essentially the same thing I did: “Good work, but inaccessible to our audience.”

Perhaps what excites me most about Barber’s novel, *How I Got Cultured*, is that it comes pre-decorated as the winner of the prestigious Associated Writing Programs award for creative non-fiction and is published by the University of Georgia Press—far, far away from Utah. This signals that once again writers coming from, and unashamedly writing about, Mormon beginnings may indeed become “accessible” to a national audience—something that happened decades ago with the so-called lost generation: Virginia Sorensen, Vardis Fisher, and Maurine Whipple.

Phyllis has done it. She has made her Mormon “culture” very accessible, not only because of her obvious love and command of language, her humorous, painfully honest accounts of growing up as the bishop’s daughter in the Nevada desert, but because she presents her Mormonism from the context of her own life, a life so realistically described and its episodes so familiar that they surely must have resonated even to typesetters in Georgia.

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MARGARET YOUNG’S latest book, *Elegies and Love Songs* recently won the Association for Mormon Letters award for short fiction.

She relates the Joseph Smith story as she heard it in Primary class, complete with children echoing demands to know why the Holy Ghost isn’t pictured in the visual aid, and the teacher assuring them that, though the Holy Ghost has no body and is therefore invisible, he isn’t like the scary ghosts big kids talk about. She describes ward talent night, where “A Spanish dancing costume [hung] from a nail where a picture of Joseph Smith receiving his vision hung on Sundays.” She describes a ward dinner: “We had to pray over the food on our buffet table before we scooped and plucked and mathematically figured out how to fill a plate to capacity.” And she shows Mormon doctrine from a child’s perspective: “Being a good Mormon was the most important thing anyone could ever think of doing, and everything on earth was only transient, sandwiched between the pre-existence and the hereafter.”

Barber details how she got “cultured” in the Mormon faith. And her sometimes mystical experiences with the outside “culture”—both the raucous Las Vegas culture of dance and barroom cowboys, and the artistic “culture” personified by Leonard Bernstein—are evocative and all the more poignant when juxtaposed with her religious growth and/or captivity.

There is another possible interpretation of the word “cultured” in her title—whether she intended it or not. I’m thinking of “cultured” buttermilk or yogurt, the “culture” as a souring agent: Barber tells her story from close-up, yet sourfully far away. Though Phyllis Barber may be the spokesperson for the new “lost generation” of Mormon writers, even when she seems to patronize Mormons just a little in writing about her past, she shows a deep fondness

underlying her prose. She even tells us that the Holy Ghost once spoke to her, assuring her he loved her and would show her the way. The Holy Ghost, it seems, was very much a part of her coming of age.

*How I Got Cultured* is a break-through book. It begins to present the full Mormon picture—neither caricatured nor idealized—that we Mormon writers *must* present if we are to firmly establish ourselves in the borderless literary canon. And Phyllis Barber is an ideal writer to do this for us. She is herself a literary explosion, something like the nuclear bomb test cloud she describes in her book, a cloud that “flowered, mushroomed, turned itself inside out, and poured into the sky.”

And could be seen, I might add, from miles away. ☐

## BOOKNOTE

### IMAGINATION COMES TO BREAKFAST

Signature Books, 1992, 60 pages, \$9.95

Poems by Kathy Evans

KATHY EVANS’S *Imagination Comes to Breakfast* is aptly named and well designed. The steaming cup and pink carnations on the cover fall into a sky where an egg cup opens into a rooster and floats away. Likewise, the poems inside surprise us like the angles of domestic life, sharp in their sudden perspectives.

“I have my own apocalypse,” the consistent “voice” in these poems tells the Jehovah’s Witnesses at her door. “The soup bones in the broth are bubbling, / I hear spiders in the cupboard, / and the angels shaking tambourines.”

Indeed, in the organic way such women create homes, Evans evolves a world of mystery teeming just below the dust left by heavy traffic. Poems of love, tedium, tension, and joy intermix, and both genders are welcome here.

“If you were infinite, I would / count you anyway, and if I were the color of fire, / you would be the memory of fire,” she explains in “Aggregates.”

This tall, sixty-page collection offers insightful interludes for any reader capable of wandering between breakfast and imagination. Congratulations to Signature Books, once again, for its discernment and commitment to excellent writing. ☐

—LINDA SILLITOE

# A PEEK INTO CHURCH PROTOCOL

VICTIMS: THE LDS CHURCH  
AND THE MARK HOFMANN CASE

By Richard E. Turley Jr.

University of Illinois Press, 1992, 519 pages, cloth, \$27.95



Reviewed by Fred C. Esplin

WELL, AS IT turns out, the Church had the McLellin collection all along—long before Mark Hofmann tried to sell it to them. But the lack of a comprehensive list of the holdings in the Church and First Presidency archives prevented anyone—including the Church archivist or the First Presidency—from knowing it.

That's perhaps the most interesting of many insights provided by the latest book on the tragedy wrought by Hofmann. Another is the most complete accounting available of Hofmann documents acquired by the Church (in the appendix).

Richard Turley is the managing director of the LDS Church Historical Department and *Victims* is his attempt to give the Church's side of the story. As Turley unabashedly explains in his preface, he had two purposes in mind in writing the book: first, to tell the story from the Church's point of view; and second, to set the record straight, or, as Turley puts it, to "correct some misconceptions about the case."

"What misconceptions?" you ask. Well, that the Church was trying to buy historical documents to hide them, that the Church didn't cooperate fully with law enforcement authorities in the investigation, or that the Church had anything to be embarrassed about in the way it handled the whole matter.

Clearly, Turley had his work cut out for

him. But despite the size of the task, *Victims* is a remarkable book and an important contribution to the historical record of the whole affair.

If you're looking for an impartial, complete accounting of the Hofmann affair, this isn't the book for you—your time would be better spent reading *A Gathering of Saints* by Richard Lindsay or *Salamander* by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts. But, if you've read those books (and if you haven't already wasted your time with Gregory Smith and Steven Naifeh's *Mormon Murders*, don't) and would like to round out your understanding with the Church's view, *Victims* is the book for you. Certainly it's a must for any serious scholarly study of that bleak episode in Mormon history.

*Victims* provides access (albeit selective) to the diaries, correspondence, and interviews with the principal general authorities involved in the case. The book is exhaustively documented and much of the more interesting details are in the footnotes (100 pages worth), some of which are devoted to "correcting" previously published sources.

Among the more revealing aspects of the book, in addition to the major contribution of offering the Church's side of the story, is some insight into the inner workings of the Church. The documentation of how a member of the First Quorum of Seventy (Elder Pinnock) relates to a member of the Quorum of the Twelve (Elder Oaks), how they, in turn, relate to a member of the First Presidency (President Hinckley), and how the Church bureaucracy relates to the general authorities, are all a study in contemporary

Church government. The respect for protocol, the deference shown to position, the assumption of unstated but assumed wishes—it's all there and lends an important understanding to how things work at Church headquarters.

You gain understanding and feel empathy for Elder Dallin Oaks as he anguishes over newspaper and TV accounts that call into question the actions and motives of the Church. But you can't help but wonder if Church criticism of inaccuracies or distortions in the press couldn't have been better dealt with at the time by providing the press more access rather than keeping them at arm's length.

You also get the feeling as you read the book that the phrase "The buck stops here" doesn't apply at Church headquarters. Regrettably, the Church is not immune from bureaucratic obfuscation.

All that said, *Victims* is an important contribution to the historical record of the Hofmann affair. It will be interesting to see how the Church chooses to deal with future, unpleasant episodes—and what balance it seeks between providing access to historians and the news media versus issuing an "official" version of events for the record. ☐

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FRED ESPLIN is manager of KUED-TV at the University of Utah, a Sunday School teacher, and an occasional cowboy.

## NEWS

# BYU FIRES TWO CONTROVERSIAL FACULTY MEMBERS

BYU FACULTY members David Knowlton, assistant professor of anthropology, and Cecilia Konchar Farr, assistant professor of English, were notified in 9 June letters that the university had approved a decision by its faculty council on rank and status to deny them candidacy for continuing status (tenure). The university decisions prompted heated protests and accusations of violations of academic freedom.

The actions were the culmination of a year-long third-year employment review process, which is a major hurdle in gaining continuing status after five years of employment. BYU considers three areas in its faculty evaluation: scholarship—books and articles in peer-reviewed professional journals; teaching—student and department evaluations; and citizenship—university committee assignments and general contribution to the university community. Keeping BYU's honor code is also required.

Given that the announcement was, by some accounts, two months overdue, it had been preceded by wild rumors and speculations on how BYU and the Church were preparing to drop the bomb on its trouble makers.

In announcing the decision of the faculty council, both BYU spokesperson Margaret Smoot and BYU President Rex Lee initially, and somewhat defensively, said the decisions to terminate Knowlton and Farr were based solely on "inadequate performance" in scholarship. They denied that either individual was "being punished for political views, religious outlook, or criticism of the Church."

But both Farr and Knowlton, citing their termination letters, said they were being punished for

their religious and political views, not for their scholarship, which each said should have been adequate for the review process.

The controversy focused on three issues: whether Farr's and Knowlton's scholarship merited dismissal; whether there were really hidden Church agendas in the university's action; and whether the review process operated correctly.

### REVIEW PROCESS

To understand the debate, it is first helpful to understand the process by which a faculty member is granted tenure, a status that traditionally has been granted faculty members to insulate them and their research from unwarranted discipline.

Like most U.S. universities, individuals hired for permanent faculty positions at BYU go through a multi-year review process before being granted tenure. Before the initial hiring, BYU requires that prospective faculty members pass a general authority interview and be approved by both the department and the university. After three years, the individual's performance is reviewed, and, if found satisfactory, he or she officially becomes a candidate for continuing status. At this stage, an individual may also be terminated or given a provisional candidacy with specific areas that must be addressed to acquire tenure. The primary purpose of the third-year review is to give professors a sense of how they stand with respect to obtaining tenure and knowledge of what defects in their performance need to be corrected. Two years later, at the five year review, candidates are reviewed again and are either terminated or given permanent status.



BYU students protesting faculty firings

The faculty review process starts with the professor compiling a review file of relevant information—published articles, teaching evaluations, papers presented at conferences. The university department then reviews the case and makes a recommendation. Next the department chair reviews the case and makes a recommendation. A college faculty committee and the college dean follow the same process. The case is then reviewed by the university-wide council on rank and status, which is comprised of faculty members and an associate academic vice president. Finally, the university president and provost comprise the final level of the review process.

Of the fifty individuals up for third-year review this year, five were terminated. Only Farr and Knowlton have made public the outcomes of their reviews. Because the announcement of the reviews came out later than usual, Farr and Knowlton had already signed teaching contracts with BYU for the 1993-94 school year and so their university employment won't end until the summer of 1994.

### SCHOLARSHIP

Both Farr and Knowlton claim that the letters informing them of their dismissals fail to acknowledge much of the academic material included in their review files.

Knowlton's department voted to give him candidacy, and his

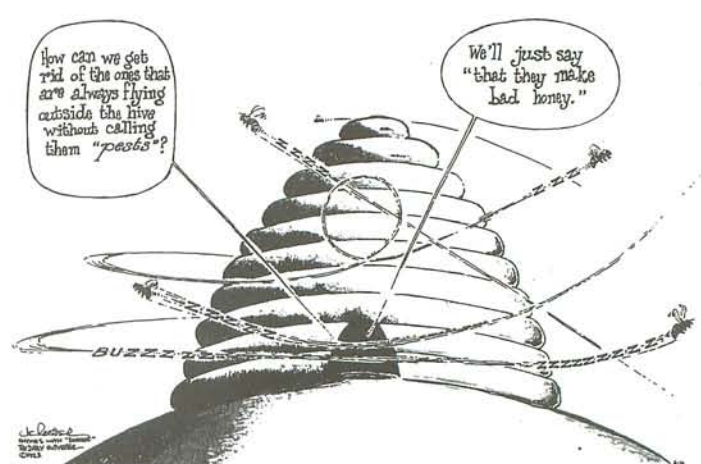
department chair voted to give him provisional candidacy. His college committee and dean also recommended provisional candidacy. At the university level he was denied candidacy.

While Knowlton was informed that his teaching and citizenship were satisfactory and that his scholarship was the issue of termination, Knowlton says his peer-reviewed articles published in international journals (one out of Oxford and two written in Spanish in South American journals) were disallowed by the reviewers, who only considered professional American anthropological journals where he has not published.

He also states that he should receive credit for his article in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and his four articles in *SUNSTONE*, most of which deal with Latin America, his field of study. The charge prompted a campus discussion about scholarly articles in non-juried publications, and some propose a new standard of evaluating all articles on scholarship instead of where it was published.

Although not a fact the review committees may consider, prior to his termination announcement Knowlton's department had already given him leave from teaching this fall in order to finish several professional articles and a book.

After heated debate, Farr's English department voted to give her provisional candidacy, although the four-person depart-



ment review committee found both her teaching and scholarship exceptional. Both her department chair and college dean recommended provisional status with strict behavioral regulations, but the humanities college review committee and the university committee both voted to deny her candidacy.

Concerning Farr's scholarship, her termination letter, which has been described by others as surprisingly mean-spirited, said her publications were "inadequate in number and quality." But the BYU Ad-Hoc Faculty Committee on Academic Freedom—a group of professors that has met unofficially for over a year to discuss academic freedom at BYU—reviewed her publication record and compared it with individuals who were granted third-year candidacy in the college of humanities during the last five years. The results show Farr's statistics to be comparable if not above average. She has published three articles in peer-reviewed journals (with two more submitted for publication); the college average was 1.1. The average of her student teaching evaluations was 6.14 on a scale of 7, while the college average was 5.9. Additionally, she has given 17 presentations at scholarly conferences, far above the 2.8 college average or even the 10.8 average for professors being granted full tenure.

In light of these comparisons, many faculty and students feel that

Farr and Knowlton are being held to a higher academic standard (some say it's more like the five-year standard) than other faculty and that they have cases for appeal and potential law suits.

"Previously, the third-year review process has been used to prepare individuals for their tenure review, not to get rid of faculty," said one faculty member. Similarly, others have noted that in a less controversial environment the university would probably be more interested in cultivating these two scholars and correcting their defects than in dismissing them.

In contrast, others say that Knowlton and Farr were simply caught in the on-going efforts of the university to raise its academic standards and what was once passable is no longer the case.

#### RELIGIOUS AGENDAS

Although the university community continues to discuss the merits of Knowlton's and Farr's scholarship, most faculty seem to feel that the decisions were colored to some debatable degree by other religious issues, as both Smoot and Lee also eventually admitted. Both Farr and Knowlton were on the widely rumored, officially denied, but privately confirmed list of faculty that general authorities wanted removed from campus (see "BYU continues to debate Academic Freedom Issue," *SUNSTONE* 16:4). Both were widely known for their controversial writings.

"I was fired because I am a feminist," Farr told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Farr has been censured in the past for her involvement with VOICE, a BYU student feminist organization, and for her participation in a Salt Lake pro-choice rally.

Many feel that an anti-feminist wave is sweeping BYU's campus. In the English department a war is currently raging over the teaching of feminist and postmodern criticism, and Farr is an important symbol in the battle. Gail Houston, another assistant professor of English up for third-year review who was granted provisional status, says the review process demonstrated a clear bias against feminism. "These firings are political," she told the *Tribune*. "The review process is fair most of the time—unless you're an activist. There's clearly a double standard."

Knowlton also feels that the university is hiding the real reasons for his dismissal. He cites as the sources of his discipline his research on Latin American terrorism against the LDS church that was criticized in the Church's statement on symposia, his *SUNSTONE* articles, and several speeches he has given on Mormon topics. "The real issue is academic freedom," he said. Knowlton says his termination letter clearly acknowledged that his writings and speeches were issues in his termination because they were supposedly detrimental to the mission of the univer-

sity.

Some see a pattern between these two cases and David Wright's, where in 1987 the university candidly dismissed him at his third-year review for his religious beliefs and not his scholarship (see "BYU Professor Terminated for Book of Mormon Beliefs" *SUNSTONE* 12:3). They note that Wright was, in part, targeted for dismissal by conservatives in Religious Education who acted to have him terminated before he received the protection of continuing status. Is there a pattern emerging of identifying and removing liberal faculty early in their careers? they ask.

#### FAULTY PROCESS?

Was BYU merely finding an academic ruse to effect the Church's religious decision? While there are differing rumors about a memo from Apostle Boyd K. Packer instructing BYU administrators to get rid of Farr and Knowlton, knowledgeable insiders say that any Church involvement with BYU administrators did not directly affect the rank and status council, which primarily looked at academic performance. Nevertheless, others point out, conservative members of the council did not need to be directly told of the Church's wishes.

Others cite the university's recently approved academic guidelines that separate disciplining faculty for religious reasons from regular academic review and see a blurring of the line in these cases.

Some criticize the university

review committee for overturning the college and department recommendations, which are theoretically more knowledgeable about the particular academic discipline. They cite the academic review guidelines of the Association of American University Professors that states that preference should be given to the department and college peer reviews and that only in exceptional cases should the university overturn them.

Some intimately familiar with the university's processes agree that there were anomalies in the process. A letter from provost Bruce Hafen was inserted into Farr's review file that was read by the department, college, and university committees reportedly implies that her Church standing is in question (a charge she denies). The letter is considered by many faculty to be an inappropriate and prejudicial intervention in the review process on the administration's part. Reportedly, some members of the faculty committees interpreted the letter as an indication that Church leaders were applying pressure for Farr's dismissal. Others say that Hafen's memo was appropriate because it was clarifying previous correspondence between him and Farr that was also in her file.

As public accusations flew about the reviewers lying about the real reasons for the dismissals, President Lee defended the process: "I want to speak for the integrity of my university, including the integrity of its people and the integrity of its processes," he said. "I have been saddened by . . . allegations or innuendoes that substantial numbers of our faculty have not told the truth. Such things are not typical of BYU and do not bear the approval of the great majority of us."

Lee also defended Hafen's memo as appropriate to the review process. In a column in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Lee wrote, "[I]n both cases weakness in teaching and scholarship were enough by themselves to make candidacy

inappropriate. This does not mean that citizenship factors were irrelevant to the university's decision; it just means that teaching and scholarship were the primary grounds. The general issue was whether they did enough things right to be given the long-term commitment of tenure, rather than whether they did something wrong."

Nevertheless, while defending the process, Lee has said that its outcome may not have been correct, and he will reconsider the cases with an open mind on appeal. Both Farr and Knowlton have written letters informing the university of their intentions to appeal the decisions. The appeals are, again, decided by President Lee.

#### RESPONSE

The response to the terminations ignited a firestorm of controversy on and off campus, in newspaper stories and letters, on TV and radio talk shows, and in telephone calls and office conversations.

Over 100 students gathered on the afternoon of the announcement to protest the action. Carrying a banner that read "Stop Academic Terrorism" and placards with statements such as "Save the Classroom," the protesters stood outside the administration building chanting slogans such as "Stop Telling Lies" and periodically reading a prepared statement that said in part: "Silencing . . . activist voices hurts the quality of education the university promises in our mission statement."

The demonstration marked the first time in over 80 years that BYU students have protested infringements of academic freedom. The last such student protest was over the 1911 firings of Ralph Chamberlain and Henry and Joseph Peterson for teaching evolution and biblical higher criticism.

Later in the week, students protested again on campus and a protest meeting was held by faculty and concerned citizens at the Seven Peaks Resort Hotel in Provo. David Knowlton called

for an "open discussion of academic freedom. This university has trouble with controversy." Psychology professor Tomi-Ann Roberts, who, with her husband, German professor Bill Davis, are leaving BYU because of academic freedom issues, spoke in behalf of Cecilia Farr.

BYU graduate Joanna Brooks, who said that she had given back her diploma to BYU in protest, said that the terminations will affect BYU's national reputation. She recounted her experience interviewing for a nationally prestigious graduate fellowship, where she spent the hour defending the university from charges of racism. "They asked how I could call myself a feminist after a BYU education." With the addition of the recent decisions, she said, to enter BYU now, especially as a woman, is a mistake.

Many faculty similarly lamented the decision. "I'm disappointed and embarrassed," said botany professor Samuel Rushforth, "by a process that would dismiss Cecilia Farr. I think she's one of the best at BYU. . . . [S]he's improved the educational discourse on this campus."

On campus, countless debates continue over the merits of Knowlton's and Farr's cases, the Church's prerogatives, the effect on the university's national reputation, and, once again, academic freedom at a religious school. Reportedly, an unofficial faculty group is being organized to support the university's decision and to counter the work of the Ad-Hoc committee, which is supporting both Farr and Knowlton.

The Farr-Knowlton news disappointed many younger faculty members, who privately say they are now looking for positions at other universities.

Harold Miller, out-going dean of honors and general education, said on KUER-FM that he was leaving BYU after eighteen years because it is "a moral obligation to step away." "It seems to me that at this point in time that the university—read that the administration, board of trustees, faculty—

are unsure of what BYU should be. I am convinced that they do not want it to be a university in the sense that most of us have been schooled in. . . . A university . . . is traditionally conceived as a free and ordered space that is a place given to inquiry, and that inquiry is alleged to be unbounded. It is apparent to me that here the inquiry is bounded."

Many have speculated whether these actions would affect BYU's accreditation, a once-a-decade review that begins in two years. Discounting the possibility, Joseph Malik, director of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges that reviews BYU, told the *Daily Universe* that accreditation standards allow for "reasonable limitation on freedom or inquiry or expression which are dictated by institutional purpose" as long as those limitations are published candidly. Nevertheless, it is obvious issues of academic freedom will be raised in that review process, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* has already written two stories on the firings.

Most of the letters and opinion pieces that have filled Utah newspapers have assumed that the dismissals were decided by the LDS church for religious reasons, and the debate has been over the appropriateness of the action. A Dan Jones *Deseret News/KSL* poll reported that while 36 percent of Utahns feel that faculty at public universities should be disciplined for expressing views that embarrass their institution, 54 percent feel that individuals at private universities should be. And 65 percent feel that private, religiously affiliated universities should be given more leeway in picking professors and academic standards that reflect the institution's religious beliefs.

With nasty appeals, debates, and possible lawsuits on the horizon for the next year, at least one insider hopes that the Church will recognize that it will win even if it reinstates the professors. Given the national pattern in similar cases,

the chances are that even if their appeals are granted, Knowlton and Farr will leave BYU on their own after a few years. Many disillusioned others may also leave, and similar others may be discour-

aged from applying. A conservative shift in the faculty would be accomplished with much less bloodshed and contention.

Making the same point, one faculty sadly noted that it was

way over fifty years before evolution was taught at BYU after the 1911 firings and wondered just what kind of religious university BYU will become if keeps repeating that reactionary pattern.

Whatever the outcome, this episode raises the temperature of on-going identity crisis at BYU to a point where its eventual transformation may soon become apparent. ☞

## SUNSTONE CALENDAR

**THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORMON LETTERS** has issued a call for papers for the 1994 AML symposium. Persons with proposals or finished papers should write or phone program chair Ann Edwards Cannon, 75 O Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84103 (801/364-7326).

**CROSSROADS**, a forthcoming collection of essays written by Mormon women ages 18-40, is being compiled and published to increase and improve dialogue among women in the Church, develop greater appreciation and tolerance for diversity of choices women make, deepen understanding for the struggles and dilemmas women face, and explore what might be unique about how Mormon women look at decisions. Send first draft (1400 word min.) or detailed outline by **31 July 1993** to: Mary B. Johnson, Winsor School, Pilgrim Road, Boston, MA 02215. Art and poetry will also be considered.

**DESERET INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION** has given hope to thousands of people worldwide. The foundation is composed of medical personnel, many who are former LDS missionaries, who donate their time to facilitate major surgeries, dental work, and hospices in the Philippines, India, Thailand, China, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Brazil, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Tonga, and Indonesia. The foundation, run on a volunteer basis, works with a relatively small budget. Because of this, it cannot sponsor expensive operations like heart surgery; instead, the focus is on deformities and injuries such as cataracts, crossed eyes, cleft lips and palates, club feet, etc. Last year it conducted 3,000 surgeries. Foundation president E. William Jackson said that the foundation designs individual programs to meet the country's needs and recruits local people to help in their own country. Contact: Deseret Foundation, 890 Quail Valley Drive, Provo, UT 84604 (801/221-0919).

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SEX AND RELIGION** has issued a call for papers for its first annual conference tentatively scheduled for **16-19 November 1994 in Salt Lake City**. As soon as sufficient funding is available, a forthcoming quarterly journal, *International Journal on Sex and Religion*, will be announced. Please send proposals for the conference, or requests for more information, to: International Conference on Sex and Religion, 369 East 900 South #280, Salt Lake City, UT 84111.

**LOWELL BENNION FEST** to celebrate his 85th birthday and many and various contributions. Friends are planning a day of scholarly papers, personal reflections, and community service on **Saturday, 7 August**, at the University of Utah Student Union Building. Sponsored by Douglas Alder, Mary Bradford, Eugene England, Emma Lou Thayne, and the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center.

**MILLENNIAL INTERIM COMMITTEE** is a new, informal society of faithful, thinking Mormons and other sincere Christians who wish to discuss common interests and expand friendships with people of similar minds and open hearts. They hope to eventually produce a monthly publication to complement other scholarly Mormon publications, but with slightly less research-oriented articles, more news, more discussion, and readers' letters. For more information, please send a SASE to: Millennial Interim Committee, P.O. Box

11951, Salt Lake City, UT 84147.

### SUNSTONE CONFERENCES

**1993 SALT LAKE SYMPOSIUM** will be held **11-14 August 1993** at the Salt Lake Hilton. To volunteer (every hour volunteered means one free session) or to request a preliminary program, please contact: Greg Campbell, The Sunstone Foundation, 331 Rio Grande Street, Suite 206, Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1136 (801/355-5926).

**CHICAGO SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM** will be held on **22-23 October 1993**. Contact: Kirk and Becky Linford, 961 Elm Court, Naperville, IL 60540 (708/778-9551).

**NORTHEAST SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM** will be held **12-13 November 1993** at the Burlington Marriott Hotel. Contact: Don Gustavson, 413 Clearview Avenue, Torrington, CT 06790 (203/496-7090).

**NORTHWEST SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM** will be held **29-30 October 1993** at the Mountaineers Building in Seattle, WA. Contact: Molly Bennion, 1150 22nd Ave East, Seattle, WA 98112-3517 (206/325-6868).

**SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM WEST** will be held **11-12 March 1994** at the Burbank Airport Hilton.

### INFORMATION WANTED ON PATRIARCH JUDSON TOLMAN.

Any information on his before and after manifesto activities would be greatly appreciated, including, diary entries, patriarchal blessings, and references.

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## AWARDS

### THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORMON LETTERS

1992 awards given at the annual symposium, 23 January 1993, with excerpts from the awards

*An Award in the Essay*

**MARDEN J. CLARK**

*Liberating Form: Mormon Essays on  
Religion and Literature*  
Salt Lake City: Aspen, 1992

This book appeals to thoughtful Mormons who are against the grain of intellectual modernity, claiming still to believe in a divine plan of salvation, eternal laws, ideality, truth, and especially intimations of *a priori* essences—all of which are, to some extent, knowable and, hence, liberating. The essays reveal a mind confronting dilemma and working its way toward some kind of acceptable, if not always comfortable, statement of belief; a mind that has conscientiously been where it invites the reader to follow, both in doubt and in faith. The author does not dogmatize or scold; he hardly even urges. He just shares the joys and frustrations of a thoughtful, honest, Mormon literary scholar in precise, clear, honest language.

*An Award in Biography for 1992*

**RUDI WOBBE AND  
JERRY BORROWMAN**

*Before the Blood Tribunal*  
American Fork: Covenant  
Communications, 1992

It is refreshing to find an autobiography that directly addresses some of the dilemmas faced by the Mormon world-wide church. *Before the Blood Tribunal* tells the story of three German teenagers who took on the Nazi regime. The story of Rudi Wobbe's involvement and imprisonment throughout the war is powerful. The authors use straightforward language—"telling it as it was" adds to the book's strengths and addresses the difficult questions of whether Mormons should be loyal to principles or to governments.

*An Award in Poetry*

**KATHY EVANS**

"Wednesday Morning," "Midweek,"  
"Eight Windows," "Vows,"  
and "Love to the Second Power"  
in *Imagination Comes to  
Breakfast: Poems*  
Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992.

These poems transcend through the familiar, awakening to "the splendor / of everything ordinary." The details, language, and images are agile and vivid; they settle in the mind with a strange familiarity—not trite or overused or even expected, but fitting, right, satisfying. They are as full of movement and sound as they are of contemplation. This realization that "Time is traveling away from us again, / her cape blowing backwards in the wind, / her songs, scarves and hair unbraiding," that reminds us to love what we see, to embrace what we find. They "instruct" us to travel forward in love, "to go on loving," by

helping us see the ever-shifting patterns of a world with which we think we are familiar. "Maybe it's a question," writes Evans,

... of taking nothing for granted

I wanted this

to be a love poem

Is there any other kind?

*An Award in Children's Literature*

**BARBARA J. PORTER  
AND DILLEEN MARSH**

*All Kinds of Answers*  
Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992

This is an honest book that ends with "answers that only Heavenly Father knows. You can hear him when you're very still and listen with your heart. His are the very best answers of all." There is no preaching here, yet child and God are brought together. The illustrations are rich with variation: girls and boys of different races, ages, and costumes. A girl wearing a Superman suit on one page contrasts with one in a wheelchair. The soft tones of the colored pencil drawings combined with the large odd-angled graphics produce a wonderful tension: the child's view, an adult's view, and in one case a pig's-eye view. Porter and Marsh have eyes and ears to see and hear the small sights and sounds of a child's world, but it appeals to both children and adults.

*An Award in the Short Story*

**MARGARET BLAIR YOUNG**

*Elegies and Love Songs*  
Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press,  
1992

Young's stories are not concerned with ideology or dogma but with people. Souls. Many are not Mormon, but peculiar people in their own right, disturbing and unsettling: a mother who tries to reconnect with the daughter she deserted; a woman who loves a man who loves another man; a man whose wife's lover invites him to watch the weekly executions near the Saudi oil fields; a woman who dutifully but bitterly nurses her grandmother-in-law through her last dying days. We are reminded that we are indeed our brother's and sister's keepers, and that before we can truly love our neighbors we must understand them. In a world fraught with danger in the form of intimate relations, religion becomes a necessary precaution for both believers and un-

*An Award in the Novel*

**ORSON SCOTT CARD**

*Lost Boys*  
New York: HarperCollins, 1992

*Lost Boys* is partly a horror story which delves into character and partly a psychological mystery which explores spiritual discernment—

but chiefly it is a serious consideration of the mature love necessary to carry a family through crisis. The main characters' primary trait is growth within the context of family, church, and community. It's plot is complex, but as tight and quick-moving as a braided whip, with strands which appear and disappear. Card lays down the central story of a child who withdraws into silence and depression; he plaits into it the story of the father's struggle with his job, the mother's efforts to achieve at church. Few novels have used as a protagonist an average, intelligent, and active Mormon coping with living in but not of the world. Card has found the universal in the particular, effectively using Mormon culture as the texture of a nationally-marketed novel.

*Honorary Life Memberships*

**EMMA LOU THAYNE**

Poet, novelist, essayist, teacher, editor, peace activist, wordsmith. In the words of Grethe Petersen, Emma Lou is a "bridge person," whose work speaks to people both in and out of the Mormon culture. Her latest book, *Things Happen: Poems of Survival*, showcases Thayne's poetic gifts: the language at once conversational and compressed, the exact image frequently drawn from domestic detail, the tight structure that never confines, events ranging from traveling through Eastern Europe to remembering her five grown daughters to mourning the death of a friend lost to AIDS. They reveal a human who is always passionately engaged by life. Thayne's works include *Spaces in the Sage*, *Until Another Day for Butterflies*, *With Love, Mother*, *Never Past the Gate*, *The Family Bond*, *And Woman's Place*, *Once in Israel*, *How Much For the Earth*, and *As For Me and My House*.

**RICHARD SCOWCROFT**

Utah born and reared, Richard Scowcroft graduated in English from the University of Utah, received a doctorate from Harvard, taught writing there, and later joined Wallace Stegner as co-director of Stanford's creative writing program. He published six novels: *Children of the Covenant*, 1945; *First Family*, 1950; *A View of the Bay*, 1955; *Wherever She Goes*, 1967; *The Ordeal of Dudley Dean*, 1969; and *Back to the Mountain*, 1973. The first and the fifth are distinctly Mormon in setting and theme. A sensibility conditioned by Mormon values and experience appears in the rest. Glen Wiese has written: "Scowcroft is imaginative, witty, sensitive, and wise—a man who has lived abundantly and has enjoyed it immensely because he sees the humorous and serious in life and reveres both. His kindly ironic vision penetrates complexities in human experience, and his language power shares those complexities in dazzling ways."



IN THE NET

CONFERENCE EXPO, APRIL 1993, SALT PALACE



KNEE PHYTE SHORTS



DROPPED KEYS

IN HIS RECENT book, *What Do Mormons Believe?*, BYU President Rex E. Lee apparently got some of the beliefs wrong. The book was thoroughly edited by the Church-owned Deseret Book Company staff and was approved by a general authority reader, but after its publication at least one senior general authority strongly chastised the publisher for some of the book's contents, which were revised in subsequent printings. One instance involved Lee's use of the word *keys*, which in twentieth-century LDS usage has been narrowly defined to mean directing authority held by bishops, priesthood presidents, and apostles (not counselors or organizations). But in the nineteenth century, *keys* was often used more broadly to mean authority, as in the famous incident where Joseph Smith told the Relief Society that he delivered the keys to the Society, whose officers were "ordained" to lead it. The below revised version from page 102 not only standardizes priesthood nomenclature but, interestingly, also avoids the controversial example of the Relief Society:

*First printing:* As discussed in chapter seven, keys of the priesthood are distributed to all members according to their callings. Women in a Relief Society presidency, for instance, are set apart to their callings and given the priesthood keys to govern that organization.

*Third printing:* As discussed in chapter seven, authority is distributed to members according to their callings. The president in a Primary presidency, for instance, is set apart to her calling and given the authority and responsibility to govern that organization.

**HUMANIST  
MORMON  
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 TO "INACTIVE,"  
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 TO REFER TO YOU AS  
 "LESS ACTIVE" ...

PERSONALLY,  
 I PREFER  
 "MORMON Lite."



Dear friends:


Like many others, we have been concerned and saddened by the increasing climate of confrontation in the Church we love. We believe that much of the trouble began with miscommunication and misunderstanding, but has moved beyond to a spirit of distrust and judgment. We are deeply discouraged at the prospect of hurtful collisions between parties who may have ceased trying to listen and understand with as much good will as the gospel suggests.

Believing in the power of fasting and prayer, we have chosen Saturday, September 11, as a day for us to fast and pray for understanding and reconciliation within the Church. We invite any and all who share our concerns to fast with us on that day. We are not suggesting a fast so that our own points of view may prevail. We recognize that our own perspectives are imperfect and believe that God can lead us to greater understanding. Rather, we will be praying that the spirit of charity, which Christ has promised to those who prayerfully seek it, may be more abundantly present in all of our dealings as brothers and sisters.

In making this invitation, we are acting only as concerned individuals. We represent no group, nor do we plan to form a group. We make absolutely no claim of Church sponsorship of our actions, nor do we mean to imply criticism of any individual or point of view. For us, this is one attempt to do something positive.

Sincerely,

  
Paul Anderson

  
David Alfred  
221 W. 3700 No., Provo

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