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MORMON MISSIONARY PREACHING TO THE LOWER CLASSES IN LONDON

ANTI- INTELLEC- TUALISM IN MORMON HISTORY

by Davis Bitton

WITH A REPLY

by James B. Allen

Almost from its beginning Mormonism was disparaged as fundamentally superstitious and irrational, with an appeal only for the poor and uneducated. Even before the description of Joseph Smith as “ignorant” and “illiterate” by the residents of Palmyra and the denunciation of Mormon beliefs as “subversive of human reason” by those dubious judges the “old settlers” of Jackson County, the stereotype was established of a low-brow, irrational religion.¹ This image was consciously promulgated, especially by the Protestant clergy, and became the standard view of Mormonism in the public opinion of the nineteenth century. If the term “anti-intellectual” had then been current, it doubtless would have been added to similar epithets used to describe “the Mormon delusion.”

Sometimes early Mormon leaders simply admitted the essential accuracy of the charge. “I call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised, to thresh the nations by the power of my Spirit,” said an early revelation to Joseph Smith.² But on the whole Mormons did not relish being portrayed as oafs and simpletons. Soon they were calling attention to passages in their scriptures which praised intelligence, thought, and the pursuit of knowledge, pointing with pride to the schools they established, and citing statistics of literacy and school attendance. This anti-image did not become widely accepted in the nineteenth century, and even today the older stereotype persists.

The fact of the matter is that Mormonism, like Western society in general, has had an ambivalent attitude towards intellect. A simple

label, ignoring contrary pressures and assuming a non-existent stability, will not do. Recognizing the interplay of opposing values, we need to examine the specific circumstances which have had an impact on Mormon attitudes and the modulations from one generation to another. Such an approach may enable us better to distinguish fundamental Mormon commitments from temporary, circumstantial attitudes, and may help us to see recent manifestations of anti-intellectualism in larger perspective.³

I

In several respects the Mormonism of the nineteenth century was less hostile to intellect than the common assumption has had it. For one thing, Mormonism had much in common with the rationalistic Christianity growing out of the Enlightenment. Rejecting the traditional Christian creeds, Mormonism turned away from the mystery of the Trinity, the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, the depravity of fallen man, predestination, and a hell of eternal punishment to the Godhead as comprised of three individuals united in purpose, the creation of the world from previously existing matter, free will, the dignity and high destiny of man, and a graded salvation for all — to beliefs, in other words, which were more satisfying, more readily understandable, and more “logical” to the average person. Although such a congeries of beliefs made the Mormon religion thoroughly unpalatable to Catholicism and the main branches of Protestantism, it was Mormonism which, in the context of the time, was easily more rationalistic.

It was possible, of course, to turn away from the traditional creeds not because they were irrational but because they were unscriptural. Nineteenth-century Protestant revivalism thus reacted against abstruse theology and returned with high fervor to the homely truths

¹ B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (6 vols., Salt Lake City, 1930), I, 324. For a critique of the Palmyra affidavits, see Hugh Nibley, *The Myth Makers* (Salt Lake City, 1961).

² *Doctrine and Covenants* 35:12. The oft-recounted meeting of Martin Harris with Professor Charles Anthon, cited as dramatic fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah, provided early Mormons with prototypes of the simple believer and the professorial fool.

³ Definitions are important here, but it is not feasible in an interpretive essay to elaborate on the subtle distinctions already made by others. A convenient working definition of intellectuals is that offered by Merle Curti: “those men and women whose main interest is the advancement of knowledge, or the clarification of cultural issues and public problems.” *American Paradox, The Conflict of Thought and Action* (New Brunswick, 1956), p. 73. The difference between “intelligence” and “intellect” is thoughtfully discussed by Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (New York, 1964), pp. 24-33. As for literature and the arts, significant and relevant as they are, I have not attempted to include them in the present essay.

of the Bible. There is some of this same compulsion among early Mormon preachers, who prided themselves in being able to prove their claims out of the very Bibles of their opponents. Nevertheless, there are important differences. For the Mormons the Bible was only one among several scriptures; its message was often described as applicable to a certain time and place in the past, with modern problems requiring new revelation; it was seen as having been corrupted, distorted, and inaccurately translated, and was explicated with the aid of a panoply of additional scripture, inspired revision, and new revelations. The Mormons could scarcely be charged with Bibliolatry, and it is perhaps understandable that Protestant ministers saw Mormon criticism of the Bible to be essentially the same as that of the rationalists.⁴

Mormonism was also close to rationalism in its attitude towards science. For one thing, it did not retain the traditional dichotomy of spirit and matter; all things were material, although differing in density. God was not conceived as pure mind, without spatial extension, nor did He call the material world into existence from nothing. Closely connected with this forthright materialism was the belief in eternal laws of cause and effect. Laws of nature were held to be not derived from God but inherent in the cosmos; it was by using them that Deity worked out the divine purposes. Rejecting the deist conception of an absentee God, Mormonism regarded divine activity in the mundane dimension of space and time not as "intervention" but as a consequence of spiritual laws of cause and effect. Miracles were explained as the operation of laws not yet fathomed by human science. Once you understood the whole picture, everything would seem perfectly natural, perfectly scientific.

Not only was there little sense of conflict between science and religion in nineteenth-century Mormonism, there was a strong sense of identification. Both the Gospel and science were seen as consequences of the outpouring of the Spirit of God in preparation for the millennial reign. In both religion and science the Lord was "extending the Saints' understanding"; both through the heavenly visitations connected with the Restoration and through exciting new inventions the "veil" which had shielded the earth from divine communication was "beginning to burst." These associations made for an exuberant

⁴J. B. Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages* (New York, 1842), argues rather convincingly that Mormons were so convinced of the inadequacy of the Bible and the apostate condition of Christianity that, if they ever abandoned Mormonism, they were almost inevitably agnostic toward all religion. Cf. Daniel S. Tuttle, *Reminiscences of a Missionary Bishop* (New York, 1906), p. 363.

optimism: both the coming of Elijah and the new technology seemed to herald the “dawning of a brighter day.”⁵

There was even every expectation that the Saints, unhampered by incorrect first principles, would lead the way in scientific research. As H. Tate wrote in 1842: “The saints being of choice intellects, selected from the great mass of mankind, with free and independent minds, determined to think and know for themselves, are well situated by an attentive observation of the phenomena and laws of nature . . . to discover and demonstrate new truths. . . . If the world in confusion and under mental bondage have made valuable acquisitions, what may not the saints do?”⁶

The vast difference between human and divine knowledge was recognized, of course, but Mormon leaders seemed to have had little doubt that scientific conclusions were correct as far as they went, that scientific laws were firmly established, and that Mormonism and science were tending in the same direction. In 1871, Brigham Young said:

I am not astonished that infidelity prevails to a great extent among the inhabitants of the earth, for the religious teachers of the people advance many ideas and notions for truth which are in opposition to and contradict facts demonstrated by science. . . . In these respects we differ from the Christian world, for our religion will not clash with or contradict the facts of science in any particular. . . . Our religion embraces all truth and every fact in existence, no matter whether in heaven, earth, or hell. A fact is a fact, all truth issues forth from the Fountain of truth, and the sciences are facts as far as men have proved them. In talking to a gentleman not long ago, I said, “The Lord is one of the most scientific men that ever lived; you have no idea of the knowledge he has with regard to the sciences. . . .”⁷

While the charge that the Mormons were superstitious is easy enough to understand — they were guilty of “seeing visions in an age of railways”⁸ — it is important, I think, to recognize that to nine-

⁵ There are many references to scientific advances in Mormon sermons of the nineteenth century. As Parley P. Pratt wrote: “The triumphs of steam over earth and sea, the extension of railroads, and, above all, the lightning powers of the telegraph, are already, gradually but rapidly developing, concentrating and consolidating the energies and interests of all nations, preparatory to the universal development of knowledge, neighborly kindness, and mutual brotherhood.” *Key to Theology* (Salt Lake City, 1965), p. 78. The most overdrawn attempt I have seen to equate secular progress with gospel dispensations is E. Cecil McGavin, “Why This Has Been a Century of Progress,” *Improvement Era*, XXXIV (1931), 148ff.

⁶ *Times and Seasons*, IV (1842), 46-47. A similar claim that direct access to God would enable the Mormons to excel not only in science but in all learning was made by John Taylor: “You will see the day that Zion will be as far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind as we are today in regard to religious matters.” *Journal of Discourses*, XXI (1881), 100.

⁷ *Journal of Discourses*, XIV (1872), 115-117.

teenth-century Mormons it was the “outside world” that was bound by false and superstitious traditions. In 1870, in an important sermon on the power of tradition, Brigham Young said:

The world of mankind have no idea of the force of tradition upon them, it does not come into their hearts, they do not contemplate it; if they did they would correct many of their errors, and cease a great many of their practices, and adopt others more in accordance with the principles of life and truth.⁸

The power of false traditions — the “web woven around them in childhood’s days,” to use Young’s compelling image — helped to explain why people were unable to perceive the truth of the Gospel when it was presented to them. If only they could disentangle themselves from the absurdities of their creeds and traditions, they could turn to a religion of light and intelligence. The contest, in the Mormon view, was between superstition, tradition, priestcraft, and closed minds, on the one hand, and truth, enlightenment, science, and the Kingdom of God on the other.

Thus confident that time was on their side, never doubting that the relentless march of science would be to their advantage, Mormon leaders made ringing declarations of their willingness to accept truth, from whatever source. As Brigham Young put it on one occasion: “If your doctrine is better than ours, let us know it, for we are searching after true riches.”⁹ And again:

You may take the mother church of the Christian world, the reformers, universalists, deists, atheists, spiritualists and everybody else, and if any or all of them are right, we are sure that we are, for every particle of truth believed in by any one of them, and all the truth possessed by the whole of them combined is believed by the Latter-day Saints.¹⁰

This exultant spirit was given poetic expression in the hymn, still popular with Mormon congregations, “Oh Say, What is Truth?” The Gospel, as the Saints were often reminded, comprehended all truth. The theme was unoriginal, even largely tautological. It reflected a comfortably Victorian conception of truth as absolute (“eternal, unchanged, evermore,” in the words of the hymn) and as readily discerned. But there was no tone of fearful suspicion here, no defensive lack of confidence.

Nor was there a lack of confidence in the missionaries who carried the good news of the Restoration to all nations. One missionary, lecturing in Boston’s Boylston Hall, was described as follows: “His

⁸ *Ibid.*, XIII (1871), 238-241.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I (1854), 39, 334.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, XIII (1871), 238, 241.

reasoning was logical, philosophical, and easy to understand."¹¹ And of another missionary an observer wrote: "If a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, talent, tact, sound reasoning, and powerful argument, are qualifications, then Elder Maginn is fully qualified for the duties of his office. . . . His reasoning was plain, logical and conclusive to the mind of every candid hearer."¹²

Mormon elders were often willing, even anxious, to engage priests and ministers in public debate. One Bostonian asked: "Where is the priest that dare meet the elders of the Mormons on any of these questions? I have heard Elder Page, time and again, publicly challenge the whole clergy of Boston to meet him on any of these questions, using their own hall free of expense, the Bible being the rule of evidence, and where is there one that dare do it?"¹³ One can sympathize with the clergy, I think, for audiences were likely to be anticlerical and sympathetic to the underdog. And as presented by these fervent antagonists Mormonism was often an elusive target: the Mormon elders were well-armed with proof-texts and could use the Bible with great effectiveness; they could make the clergyman's interpretations appear as a craven effort to "explain away" the plain meaning of God's Word, or, alternately, could use any contradictions or lack of clarity to show the need for a modern prophet; and, most frustrating of all, they could at almost any time jump from the realm of logical discourse by "bearing" personal testimony.¹⁴ But Mormons saw the ministerial reluctance as further evidence of the invincible logic of the restored Gospel.¹⁵

Not that conversion to Mormonism was a purely intellectual process. In practice the step was probably taken for a variety of motives which would be impossible to sort out even for a single individual. But everyone was agreed, I think, that final certainty of the Gospel's truth was by a witness of the Spirit. This witness did not come out of the void unsolicited, nor was it an anti-rational substitute for the use of the mind. As Oliver Cowdery discovered, he was first to "study it out" in his mind and then look for a "burning" of the breast

¹¹ *Times and Seasons*, IV (1843), 125.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

¹⁴ In 1855, Apostle George A. Smith said that the opponents of the Church now "know that the 'Mormons' cannot be successfully contended with by argument. . . . they know that the priests have given it up years ago." *Journal of Discourses*, III (1856), 27. See Barbara Higdon, "The Role of Preaching in the Early Latter-day Saint Church, 1830-1846," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, U. of Missouri, 1961), especially chapter 9.

¹⁵ Like war stories, the narration of missionary successes could get better with the telling. Before long it was almost a convention of Mormon meetings to hear of the untrained missionary who defeated the learned clergyman, by logic and the power of God.

if he had it right; the witness of the Holy Ghost which was promised as a manifestation of the truth of the Book of Mormon presumably came after "ye shall read these things" and "ponder them in your hearts."¹⁶ Closely connected with study and prayer in the gaining of a testimony was evidence. Faith itself was described by Orson Pratt as "the result of evidence,"¹⁷ and evidence was eagerly supplied to support the Mormon claims: witnesses, reports of archaeological discoveries, papyri, mummies, skeletons, brass plates, prosperity (or alternately, poverty), and of course the general pragmatic evidence of individual experience. Faith in the Gospel was, at first, a working hypothesis, supported by evidence and reason and later confirmed by experience and the witness of the Spirit. Reason at least had an important role in this paradigm of conversion, and, as later Mormon leaders pointed out, in some respects the whole process was not unlike the use of hypothesis and experiment in science. Mormons did not have the sensation of repudiating reason and common sense; they did not see their faith as a "leap" into the unknown.

To say that Mormon doctrine seemed reasonable to its adherents is not the truism it might appear. It is quite possible in religion to be unconcerned about reason, to seek above all else the mystical "flight of the alone to the alone," or to regard faith in the Anselmian sense of willingness to believe something which in the mind is impossible. The Mormons, on the other hand, were concerned about reason, about evidence, about logic, and about experience. They wished their religion to be intellectually as well as emotionally satisfying.

One other point is relevant, at least indirectly, to the general stance of Mormonism in the nineteenth century. A constant feature of Mormon history for its first seventy years or more was persecution. In the form of mob violence, legal harassment, or the legislative and judicial crusade against polygamy, persecution was the inevitable and expected concomitant of the Gathering. The Mormons sought to gather the honest in heart from the world, erect their own City of God, and launch the millennial reign of Christ. In practical terms, the enterprise included setting up not only a church but also a set of political, economic, and social institutions which quickly won for the

¹⁶ *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 9; *Book of Mormon*, Moroni 10:4-5.

¹⁷ Orson Pratt, *The Seer* (1853-1854), p. 198. The *locus classicus* on faith in Mormon scriptures — emphasizing the importance of desire, of "trying out" or practicing, of experience as confirming evidence, of "nurturing" faith lest it die — is Alma 32 in the Book of Mormon. Here, as always, epistemology is complex, with far-reaching implications. I know of no comprehensive treatment which relates faith, belief, and testimony, as understood by Mormons, to the general problem of cognition. See, however, Wendell O. Rich, *Distinctive Teachings of the Restoration* (Salt Lake City, 1962), chapter 8.

Mormons the reputation of being "un-American." The struggle in territorial Utah, which had been adumbrated earlier and which subsided only in the twentieth century, was concerned not with polygamy alone but also, perhaps more significantly, with alleged Church political control and with economic programs inimical to free-enterprise competition. Mormonism was no conventional church in a pluralistic society; it was, in its own consciousness, the embryonic Kingdom of God, destined to dominate the world.

One important consequence of this relationship was that it facilitated, even presupposed, Mormon criticism of national values and institutions. If one of the traditional roles of the intellectual is that of social critic, Mormon leaders often exercised the same prerogative with gusto. Orson Pratt, for example, deplored the consequences of economic inequality:

An inequality in riches lays a foundation for pride, and many other evils. . . . Besides the great inequalities in regard to the actual comforts of life, it produces great inequality in education, in the social circle, in marriage associations, and in almost every other respect. Hence, an inequality in property is the root and foundation of innumerable evils; . . . it is a principle originated in hell; it is the root of all evil.¹⁸

Such a doctrine was closer to Saint-Simon than to Adam Smith.¹⁹ Mormon leaders were outspoken in denouncing specific institutions and values of American and European society. Overcrowded cities, exploitation of industrial workers through wage slavery, prices determined purely by the market and at the expense of human needs, commercial insurance, and the social evil of prostitution, all came under fire from Mormon pulpits.²⁰ This was not merely sniping at indi-

¹⁸ *The Seer*, p. 293.

¹⁹ Current efforts to disassociate Mormonism from socialism, while obviously primarily concerned with present implications and seldom showing any cognizance of the diverse socialist movements of the past century, emphasize that there was not, according to the Law of Consecration, a complete redistribution of property. Quite true. But no one, I think, would describe Mormon communitarian programs as laissez-faire capitalism.

²⁰ When John Taylor described the institutions of "the world" as "shattered" and "cracked," just after his return from Europe, he meant not only religious institutions but also political and governmental institutions. *Journal of Discourses*, I, 16-17. When they denounced exploitation of workers (*ibid.*, III, 117-118), profiteering by merchants (*ibid.*), putting property and private interests before the public welfare (*ibid.*, p. 330), and expansionist warfare motivated by greed (*ibid.*, pp. 36, 288-289), when they showed some sympathy for revolutions (*ibid.*, II, 190), preached something very close to the labor theory of value (*ibid.*, II, 351; III, 117-118), and called for economic planning to further the common good (*ibid.*, III, 330), Mormon leaders were denouncing the same features of nineteenth-century capitalism as were nihilists, Chartists, socialists, and American patrician reformers, with differences of emphasis and ultimate objective. I cannot refrain from giving my favorite example of Mormon attack on one other Gentile institution. The speaker was George A. Smith: "We breathe free air, we have the best looking men and the handsomest women, and if they envy us our position, well they may, for they are a poor, narrow-minded, pinch-backed race of men, who chain themselves down to the law of monogamy. . . ." *Ibid.*, III, 291.

vidual abuses. It was a structural criticism which denounced the built-in values and institutions of acquisitive capitalism and proposed to erect a radically different society. Gentile social critics might have little use for the Mormon style and might indeed include polygamy as one of the evils requiring reform. But the Mormons could scarcely be accused of being apologists for the national Establishment.

II

It would be absurd to claim that Mormonism in the nineteenth century was a thoroughly intellectual religion, compatible in every respect with the intellectual fashions of that tumultuous age. But we have seen enough, I think, to recognize that, for the Mormons, there was a greater compatibility than we had been led to believe, for their religion was shot through with the values of rationalism, science, education and social reform. It would be easy to point out contrary features: the level of Mormon converts, the practical limits of education, the lack of competent scholarship and publication, the anti-professionalism of the 1850's, and above all the pervasive atmosphere of millennial expectation which colored Mormon perceptions of almost everything else. But having recognized that Mormonism seemed in many respects to be aligned with specific opinions and prejudices of nineteenth-century thinkers, we are in a position to examine, with some sense of perspective, the configuration of attitudes which took shape around the turn of the century. For it was then that the comfortable alignment which nineteenth-century Mormonism had enjoyed with science and reason began to fall apart. Contributing to this development, and to the upsurge of anti-intellectualism in the Church of the twentieth century, were several factors which it will be helpful to consider.

Science and Religion. The apparent congruity of Mormonism and science in the nineteenth century seemed much less compelling by the middle of the present century. Mormon leaders of the pioneer period had not been entirely conversant with the science of their own day, often confusing it with technological innovations such as the railroad. When they spoke of scientific laws, they almost always assumed that these were "true" in an absolute sense, although other laws remained unknown.

The same general conception is reflected in a significant little book published in 1908 by John A. Widtsoe on *Joseph Smith as Scientist*. The thesis of the book was that the teachings of Joseph Smith "were in full harmony with the most advanced scientific thought of today, and that he anticipated the world of science in the statement of fundamental facts and theories of physics, chemistry,

astronomy and biology."²¹ An example of such a "fact," apparently, was the luminiferous ether which supposedly predated all space. Said Widtsoe:

There is at the present time no grander or more fundamental doctrine in science than that of the ether. . . . Together with the doctrines of the indestructibility of matter and energy, the doctrine of the ether welds and explains all the physical phenomena of the universe.²²

Then, on the basis of Joseph Smith's statement that Spirit filled the immensity of space and his description of spirit as attenuated matter, Widtsoe concluded: ". . . it is not improbable that at some future time, when science shall have gained a wider view, the historian of the physical sciences will say that Joseph Smith, the clear-sighted, first stated correctly the fundamental physical doctrine of universal ether."²³

But why attempt to show that Smith's teachings coincided with the scientific conclusions of 1850 or 1900? Widtsoe's basic argument, repeated in chapter after chapter, can be structured as follows: Joseph Smith had made a specific assertion; scientists had now proved something similar (not identical) to be "true"; *ergo* Smith had received this truth directly from God. But what happens to such a line of reasoning when scientists abandon, or at least drastically modify, the "doctrines" of the ether, the indestructibility of matter and energy, and even the Euclidean-Newtonian universe? It is not entirely advantageous, obviously, for theological assertions to be closely identified with the scientific orthodoxy of a given generation.²⁴

The area of real tension, however, is less in the physical sciences than in the biological sciences and anthropology. Here a specific example of how the onward march of science can leave a religious belief behind is the Mormon doctrine of race. In regarding certain races as afflicted with a divine curse, the Mormons were among those who

²¹ John A Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith as Scientist* (reprinted Salt Lake City, 1964), p. 9.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 23. The marginal heading reads: "The existence of the ether is a certainty of science." Widtsoe was in good company at the turn of the century, for although the experiment of Michelson and Morley had cast grave doubts on the ether hypothesis in 1887, "only the generation of scientists after 1900 could bring themselves to do without 'ether,' and then Einstein would formulate his new doctrine of relativity." C. J. H. Hayes, *A Generation of Materialism* (N.Y., 1941), p. 111.

²³ Widtsoe, p. 29.

²⁴ The tendency to think of science in terms of Victorian positivism is so widespread, among scientists as well as non-scientists, that it is scarcely surprising to find it in Mormon writings. But until we come to grips with Mach, Heisenberg, Schrodinger, and Planck, and until we have digested recent important works on the philosophy, sociology, and history of science, it is hard to see how our discussions can be more than shadow-boxing. Here is a sentence worth chewing on: "We may . . . have to relinquish the notion, explicit or implicit, that changes of paradigm carry scientists and those who learn from them closer and closer to the truth." Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Science Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962), p. 169.

were trying to fit the races of humanity into the Biblical framework, a respectable effort which in the mid-nineteenth century might or might not be used as an argument for slavery. In a sense, Mormon theology was here characteristically "rationalistic," proceeding from a set of accepted "facts" to an explanation consistent with the mercy of God: the observed inequality of treatment (including the Mormon policy of baptizing Negroes but not ordaining them to the Priesthood) was thus not capricious or arbitrary; it was "deserved," both because distant ancestors had incurred divine displeasure and because each individual person had behaved in the pre-existent state in such a way as to merit his present skin color.²⁵ In an age when belief in the moral and intellectual inequality of the races was fully consonant with current science the Mormon rationale did not seem at all obscurantist.²⁶

In the early twentieth century, thanks largely to the work of anthropologists such as Franz Boas, the traditional notion of racial inequality was intellectually overthrown: there were no lower or higher races, even in the physical sense, no innate differences of intelligence capacity, no differences even of blood in the traditional sense of "blood of Israel," "Negro blood," or "Indian blood."²⁷ By the middle of the century the weight of anthropological and biological scholarship was so strongly agreed in rejecting traditional notions of racial inequality that the Mormon position, once scientifically respectable, now seemed scientifically absurd, if only because of the practical difficulty of determining race with certainty in individual cases. Moreover, the Mormon doctrine had implications — or could be made to carry implications — which to many seemed morally obtuse.

A similar, perhaps more basic, divergence of Mormon theology and science had to do with the age of the earth, prehistoric man, and the relationship (and mutability) of the species. All Christians of

²⁵ I have presented this much more neatly than it appears in nineteenth century Mormon theology. The mention of the pre-existence, for example, seemed to come as an afterthought — perhaps because the few scriptural passages on the subject, while mentioning differences of intelligence, say nothing of determining race, and because a justification of inequitable treatment on the basis of the supposed pre-existent differences could, intrinsically, be extended to *any* injustice.

²⁶ The standard treatment of scientific views of race in the nineteenth century is William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago, 1960). See also T. F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas, 1963).

²⁷ See Franz Boas, "The Problem of Race," in V. F. Calverton (ed.), *The Making of Man* (New York, 1931), pp. 113-141; and Ashley Montagu, "Problems Relating to the Study of Race," and "The Myth of 'Blood,'" in *Man in Process* (New York, 1961). [Notions of innate racial differences of intelligence are still advanced from time to time. My point here is that the weight of evidence for the past several decades has made it highly difficult, to say the least, to accept both Mormon presuppositions and scientific conclusions on the question.]

course faced the necessity of reconciling Genesis and science, and up to a point the Mormons seemed to retain their old strategic advantage in dealing with such questions. They were able to show in their scripture, for example, that the creation of the earth occurred not in six "days" but in six "creative periods."²⁸ And their doctrine of eternal progression was in some way a kind of long-range evolution.²⁹ But when all was said and done some Mormon beliefs regarded as basic failed to find scientific confirmation, and the Mormon position seemed disconcertingly close to that of Protestant Fundamentalism.

In the nineteenth century the Mormon use of the Bible had seemed free-wheeling, with modern scripture and revelation often providing the exegetical key. Now the range of possible interpretation was often narrowed by those very revelations, as well as by statements of early leaders. If the Book of Mormon used the phrase "the five books of Moses," the Pentateuch must be by Moses. If Joseph Smith once said that the birth of Christ occurred four thousand years after the Fall, the chronology of Bishop Usher was thereby canonized. Earlier there had been a willingness to criticize the Bible for its contradictions, its faulty transmission, its inadequacy, all in the interest of showing the need for modern revelation. But even though rationalists such as Thomas Paine had furnished valuable ammunition, the early Mormons had never been all that radical, always assuming that the original texts of the Bible were accurate, divinely inspired, and not to be "evaded" by fancy allegory. Now any threat to the Bible their progenitors had openly criticized was seen by Mormons as a threat to the presuppositions of their own religion. For all the differences of interpretation which could in fact be found among Mormons, there was no mistaking the pronounced literalism of their usual approach to the scriptures.³⁰ And for all of the persisting difference between them, Mormons and Protestant Fundamentalists were very close together in refusing to allow modern scholarship to shake their belief that (in Joseph Smith's words) "the Bible says what it means and means what it says."³¹ Or, as Billy Sunday put it: "When the word

²⁸ But modern scripture was not needed for this conclusion. "In the nineteenth century the six days of creation were frequently interpreted as six periods of indefinite length." John C. Greene, *Darwin and the Modern World View* (New York, 1963), pp. 18-19.

²⁹ This comparison was often made by John A. Widtsoe, as, for example, in *In Search of Truth* (Salt Lake City, 1930), pp. 67-70.

³⁰ There is no reliable study of Mormon exegesis. Despite Sterling McMurrin's opinion that "often their uses have been abuses and should best be forgotten," I can think of no single area of exploration which promises to be so fruitful in understanding the dynamics of Mormonism.

³¹ When one minister asked Joseph Smith to show him his creed, he handed him his Bible. *Times and Seasons*, IV (1842), 362. More candid were the introductory phrases in a statement prepared for Rupp's *History of Religious Denominations*: "Believing the Bible

of God says one thing and scholarship says another, scholarship can go to hell!"³²

It would be misleading to think of twentieth-century Mormonism as utterly anti-scientific. In many areas there was no occasion for conflict, and even in the more sensitive areas Mormon scientists have always felt free, I believe, to employ what some Mormon are fond of calling "the theories of men." Certainly there have been many Mormon scientists who have found their profession to be compatible with their religious faith. But gone were the days when Mormons could blandly assert, "Our religion will not clash with or contradict the facts of science in any particular."³³

Accommodation and Respectability. Quite aside from intellectual currents, attitudes are obviously influenced by social and economic relationships. In the nineteenth century Mormons had tried to achieve a kind of separatism. When the result was persecution, it was easy to lash out at national values and institutions. Mormons had a distinct sense of "peculiarity," of "alienation," from national society, and some of their views coincided with those of individual intellectuals. All of this was changed by the series of adjustments which, between the late 1880's and 1914, added up to an accommodation to national norms. And since middle-class, conservative political and economic views became dominant, the previous partial alignment with intellectual social critics could not be maintained.

The Church had taken a step in the direction of free-enterprise capitalism as early as 1882, when the boycott of Gentile businesses was lifted and private retailing and manufacturing were allowed. During the next generation, many Church cooperatives and other concerns were sold to private interests. But the Church continued to exert efforts to promote the economy and acquired appreciable holdings in several different enterprises.³⁴

Soon the upper councils of the Church became highly business oriented. I do not see this as any kind of conspiratorial take-over. Men chosen as authorities were leading men of their communities,

to say what it means and mean what it says, and guided by revelation, according to the ancient order of the fathers, to whom came what little light we enjoy, and circumscribed only by the eternal limits of truth. . . ." *Documentary History* (Salt Lake City, 1950), VI, 10.

³² McLoughlin, *Billy Sunday*, p. 138, as cited in Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*, p. 122.

³³ See above, footnote 7. The malaise of the mid-twentieth century, after science had been used effectively by Hitler and after the invention of nuclear bombs threatened annihilation, must have contributed to make Mormons less willing to link the Restored Gospel to "scientific progress." Also, although archaeology may not have "disproved" the Book of Mormon claims in an absolute sense, confident claims of "tangible proof" of the Nephite civilization were now uttered only by the uninformed. Another subtle disillusion was settling in.

³⁴ Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 384ff.

which often meant men of property. Besides, business acumen was needed to handle the complex financial negotiations of the beginning of the century and to manage investments as the century continued. For similar reasons lawyers became increasingly numerous in the hierarchy. The few individuals called from some other walk of life came to share many of the same values and habits of thought, especially as they came to be associated more closely with other General Authorities and, in some instances, served on boards of directors of corporations in which the Church held interest. Such men were highly capable, efficient, and hard-working; their faith and devotion to the church were abundantly demonstrated. But their background, their associations, and their desire to further the Church's financial interests, combined to make them conservative in fiscal and economic policy.⁸⁵

At the same time, not surprisingly, the political identification of the Church became predominantly Republican. To be sure, there were early statements such as the following in the *Improvement Era*, in 1901: "Do not believe all the man says who declares that this party or that is false to every principle of good and true government. . . . No one party possesses all the good; no one party is wholly right nor all in the wrong."⁸⁶ There were Mormons in both political parties, but the majority of General Authorities undoubtedly considered themselves Republican, as did the majority of stake presidents and bishops. Although an effort was made to avoid "official" endorsement of individual candidates or pronouncements on specific legislation, such pronouncements as were made could be counted upon to be almost invariably pro-Republican or, on non-partisan issues, conservative in philosophy.⁸⁷ In short, the men favored for leadership in the Church were solid, conservative types, drawn largely from business and law. And with some exceptions their general political orientation was represented by Senator Reed Smoot, President Heber

⁸⁵ It is the rule rather than the exception for religions, after the initial burst of enthusiasm, to become "adjusted" to society, with the higher clergy identified with the ruling and dominant classes. There is undoubtedly some truth in Thomas F. O'Dea's opinion that the Mormons avoided becoming either an "established sect" or a "denomination." "Mormonism and the Avoidance of Sectarian Stagnation," *American Journal of Sociology*, LX (1954), 285-293. But their leaders were mostly solid, middle-class Republicans. True, B. H. Roberts, a Democrat, showed some sympathy for more aggressive government economic action. See *Discourses of B. H. Roberts* (Salt Lake City, 1948). But it is an understatement to say that he was an exception.

⁸⁶ *Improvement Era*, III (1901), 943-944.

⁸⁷ The conservative political orientation of the Church has been a familiar theme of books about Utah, as, for example, John Gunther's *Inside U.S.A.*, but often they are offensive in tone, casting aspersions on individual motivation. A more measured, documented survey of the problem is J. D. Williams, "The Separation of Church and State in Mormon Theory and Practice," in *Dialogue*, I (Summer, 1966), 30-54.

J. Grant, and President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., — all conservative Republicans.³⁸

The transformation of the Church from the 1880's to 1914 is replete with irony. As Mormon leaders, once vigorous social critics, tended to become Republican, the Republican Party itself was moving away from its earlier radical reform impulses.³⁹ And as the Church abandoned its earlier programs of social planning, economic equality, and public (Church) ownership, other churches were becoming more involved in social work and economic welfare. As the Mormons, large numbers of whom were immigrants of the first or second generation, became more closely aligned with business, other Christians were preaching the Social Gospel and attempting to support the cause of the working classes.⁴⁰ It is tempting to show similarities between Brigham Young and Walter Rauschenbusch with respect to business and labor, but since the context was different, it is probably more significant that the problems of urban industrialism of the turn of the century — against which the Progressive movement as well as the Social Gospel were directed — had not penetrated Mormon country. Not until World War II did industrialization on a large scale hit some Mormon communities with a significant impact, and even then no Mormon city faced the problems of slums, racial minorities, urban blight, juvenile delinquency, and crime of the same dimensions that created the sense of urgency in the large metropolitan centers. This represents a kind of generational 'lag' which goes far to explain Mormon attitudes. It is not surprising, for example, that a Church whose membership included few industrial workers, and whose leaders sat on boards of directors of corporations, showed little sympathy for organized labor or the reforms which labor was agitating for.⁴¹

³⁸ An apostle before his election as U. S. Senator from Utah, Smoot later became one of the most influential Republican Senators. Heber J. Grant, who switched from the Democratic to the Republican Party at the beginning of the century, was a businessman when named an apostle. Later he was president of the Church. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., served as Ambassador to Mexico and Undersecretary of State under the Hoover administration. In 1933 he was called to be a counsellor to President Grant.

³⁹ See Carl N. Degler, "The Great Reversal: The Republican Party's First Century," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXV (Winter, 1966), 1-11.

⁴⁰ See Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York, 1949). Simultaneously Reform Judaism was moving in the same direction, and reform-minded Catholics were preaching the principles of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII's great encyclical.

⁴¹ Some statements were directed against capital as well as labor. In 1901, President Lorenzo Snow called upon the "toiling millions" to "cease to waste your wages" and to "seek for the union of capital and labor." The wealthy were urged to "use your riches to give employment to the laborer." *Millennial Star*, LXIII (1901), 65. But there was an instinctive aversion to strikes. In 1913, President Joseph F. Smith expressed concisely the trickle-down theory of helping the masses: ". . . when business and business conditions prosper, it is a sure indication that material advantages will accrue to and are shared by the people. . . ." *Improvement Era*, XV (1912-13), 555-557.

The Church entered the twentieth century in anxious pursuit of respectability. The Mormons had long been accused of being immoral and un-American. Now they were free to enter the "mainstream" of American life. The old grim days of dust, crickets, and homespun seemed farther and farther in the past. At last the Saints could be "respectable." They became zealously monogamous. They became not only loyal Americans but patriots, determined to prove their Americanism to any doubter. Soon after the turn of the century the new Boy Scouts of America program was adopted by the Church with great enthusiasm. Thousands of Mormon boys could now pledge to do their duty to God and country, with none of the old schizophrenia. The Mormons were becoming middle class with a vengeance.⁴²

But if you have been accustomed to seeing the world as an Armageddon, how do you suddenly adjust to middle-class respectability? From 1830 to 1890, at least, the Saints had seen themselves as persecuted defenders of Zion, holding a beachhead where the Kingdom of God could be established as a prelude to the Second Coming and the millennial reign. If Mormon practices were ridiculed, if Mormon leaders denounced national institutions and values, it was then merely further evidence that the ways of Zion were not the ways of Babylon. A "garrison mentality" had long been influential in curtailing Mormon self-criticism and the free circulation of ideas, but it had at least stimulated Mormon criticism of Gentile society and emphasized the different character of Mormonism.⁴³ But with accommodation Zion had apparently succumbed to the monogamy, free enterprise, and political party maneuvers of Babylon. As the vocal opposition of Gentile businessmen, legislators and judges, and clergymen dwindled, it was difficult to maintain the "garrison mentality," the sense of separateness, at least in the old terms.

But there *were* forces threatening the work of the Church. The most important of these, to judge by the sermons and auxiliary programs of the first half of the twentieth century, were those contrib-

⁴² One reader has remarked that the quest for respectability was characteristic of all immigrants. The difference may be that this was a whole people and that for a generation or more an "artificial" obstacle had held them back, allowing an intense "status-anxiety" to build up.

⁴³ The term "garrison mentality," which I have heard used by Catholics in describing themselves, is even more descriptive of the Mormons. The authoritarianism of the Church in the nineteenth century is often misunderstood. It did not stifle every form of intellectual activity. But it was not conducive to free discussion. In this sense, the Godbeite heresy of 1869 may have tremendous symbolic significance. In effect the Church declared disagreement even on economic matters to be tantamount to treason. Since the Godbeites included among their number one of the few genuine intellectuals of the Church, Edward Tullidge, suspicion of the intellectual was strengthened.

uting to immorality and the loss of religious faith. Not that the same tendencies were unknown in the past century, but the "revolution in manners and morals" and the intellectual currents of the early twentieth century made the problems loom ever larger. In the fight against these "threats," these insidious influences of "the world," the old garrison mentality was readily maintained.

Shall the youth of Zion falter
In defending truth and right?
When the enemy assails us,
Shall we shrink or shun the fight?

Thus the song most frequently heard by Mormon young people in the Mutual Improvement Association. In spirit it is close to the time when the Saints, awaiting invasion by Johnston's Army in the 1850's, sang "Up awake, ye defenders of Zion." Only now the foe was not federal troops but destroyers of faith and morals — and prominent among these, as it appeared to the Church, were the intellectuals.

It was natural that the Church concern itself with the problems faced by young people growing up in an age of automobiles, pursuing higher education, moving to the cities, and marching off to war. A "new morality" was sweeping the country, and to doubt the faith of the fathers was becoming ever more fashionable. As they girded up their loins to fight cigarettes, whiskey, gambling, high hemlines, suggestive new dances, shocking novels, and ideas contrary to the Bible (interpreted literally), Mormons again found themselves shoulder to shoulder with the Protestant Fundamentalists of rural America. And on the other side were those devils, the intellectuals, who were writing "realistic" plays, experimental poetry, and stream-of-consciousness novels, with an uninhibited freedom of subject and frankness of language. It was intellectuals who were applying higher criticism to the Bible and coming up with conclusions which did not sound at all like "that old time religion." It was intellectuals who were purveying (and distorting) the teachings of Sigmund Freud as meaning "anything goes." It was intellectuals who were concluding with Franz Boas and other cultural anthropologists that ideas and values were relative to one's culture. And it was intellectuals who were teaching at the colleges and universities from which parents sometimes saw their children return worldly-wise and skeptical.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ This paragraph attempts to present the "intellectual" as he must have appeared to parents and to those who, quite understandably, were concerned with resisting the threats of faith and morals. It was a stereotype, of course, but one which has been incredibly influential in shaping Mormon attitudes.

If there was any doubt of the evil influence exerted by intellectuals on faith and morals, their disrepute among Mormon leaders was assured by their political views. How could respectable Republicans fail to look askance at intellectuals such as Veblen, Ross, Dewey, Beard, Pound, Brandeis, and others, who tended to be religious skeptics, reform Darwinists, advocates of positive freedom through state action, and who rejected the assumption of an absolute, sacrosanct, God-given Constitution in favor of one that was subject to inevitable interpretation.⁴⁵ As time went on most American intellectuals, if they were politically active at all, tended to range themselves in a bell-shaped dispersal from moderate Republican, to liberal Democrat, to some variety of socialist. Even had not the flirtation of prominent American writers with Communism during the 1930's confirmed their suspicions, Mormon leaders could not be expected to exhibit much warmth towards a minority group so insistently liberal.

To many Mormons, therefore, intellectuals were associated with all that was bad. This guilt-by-association way of thinking has usually been unfair: it ignores exceptions and often assumes a cause-effect relationship which obscures the complexity of the situation. But when devils are needed, stereotypes are near at hand. The old garrison mentality could be maintained. By fighting the threat to faith and morals the Mormons could still see themselves as a "peculiar people," a "royal army."

It is in such a context, I think, that we can best understand various efforts to seal off students from "worldly" ideas, the denunciation of pornography, the unwillingness in Church periodicals to include different points of view or even critical letters to the editor, the hypersensitivity to criticism, the thirst for praise, the patronizing editorials on "professors," the interminable self-congratulation at having the truth, lack of Mormon participation in ecumenical dialogue or even (with some exceptions) in cooperative charity programs, and the suspicion greeting the historian who wishes to study Mormon history. "Is it for us or against us?" The assumption is that the world is divided already between the sheep and the goats.

⁴⁵ It is ironic that the Mormons, who rejected the universal applicability of the Bible (new conditions requiring new revelation), should ever have succumbed to a view of the Constitution as absolute. But their assumption that the meaning of the Bible (in its original form) was clear without interpretation made it easy to assume that the Constitution had only to be applied, not interpreted. This view of the Constitution was part of "the steel chain of ideas" (in Eric Goldman's phrase) with which the dominant groups in America sought to repel progressive reform. The Manifesto of 1890 acknowledged, in effect, that the interpretation of the Constitution by the Supreme Court was "the law of the land." But few Mormons were willing to accept the "new jurisprudence" of Holmes, Pound, and Brandeis, with its implications.

Some of the risks of this kind of thinking are suggested by Hans Kung:

A Church thus turned in upon herself would become, in her relations with the world, a polemically defensive ghetto Church; clinging rigidly to forms whose value is all the past, she would be unable even to hear the demand for new ones, and would hold aloof from the world in proud self-sufficiency. Such a Church would mirror only herself, praising herself instead of the Lord; her arrogant sense of superiority over against the world would be only the reverse side of a sense of inferiority. The root attitude in such a Church would be fear. . . .⁴⁶

In any case, the atmosphere of defensive suspicion had from the beginning stifled Mormon creativity, and it continued to do so during the early twentieth century.

In 1931, after an editorial in the *Salt Lake Telegram* appealing for Utah writers to begin producing works of quality had evoked a sympathetic response from Edgar Lee Masters among others, Bernard DeVoto wrote as follows:

I defy Mr. Masters or anyone else to find one artist or even quasi-artist, in all the wide expanse of Utah, from Soda Springs to Hurricane, from Roosevelt to St. George. No artist ever lived there ten minutes after he had the railroad fare out. If the presence of one should become known the Mormons would damn him as a loafer and the gentiles would lynch him as a profligate.

Who, indeed, ever heard of a Utah painter, a Utah sculptor, a Utah novelist, or poet, or critic, or educator, or editor, or publicist — who ever heard of a Utahn? I am confident that Mr. Masters has not. Let him repeat a line of Utah poetry or the name of a Utah book — any work of the mind or spirit that may be associated with Utah.⁴⁷

Such a letter could not go unanswered. Given the unenviable task of responding was J. H. Paul. DeVoto had been speaking from ignorance of Utah artists, and Paul mentioned Dallin, Fairbanks, and Mahonri Young. But the rest of his response was sheer torture. Had not DeVoto heard of the poets Sarah Carmichael Williams or of Orson F. Whitney? In drama there had been the Salt Lake Playhouse, some famous actors, and two playwrights, Pollock and Royle. There were novels by C. C. Goodwin, Howard Driggs, and Susa Young Gates. In history B. H. Roberts “may have rivaled Gibbon.” In defense of Church music we read the following:

Certain critics have said that the work of several of her [Utah's] composers, notably that of Stephens and Shepherd, is suggestive of

⁴⁶ *The Council, Reform, and Reunion* (1961), p. 33.

⁴⁷ *Improvement Era* XXXIV (January, 1931), 133-134.

the masters. The hymns of Careless have the classical tone; those of Fones, Smyth, and others are said to be deeply harmonic. . . .⁴⁸

But why go on? By the second of his two articles, Paul, obviously frustrated by the whole assignment, conceded that DeVoto's charge was basically true.

The Mormon record in literature, the arts, and scholarship is not so dreary today. It would be much easier to name novelists, poets, composers, scientists, and historians of distinction — not many of more than local reputation, perhaps, but at least one or two in each area. But throughout the present essay we have been concerned not with individual exceptions so much as the general trend. And it is hard to deny that the general attitude, judged by many criteria, is still strongly anti-intellectual. To demonstrate this would be a thankless task. It would require discussion of sermons, of periodicals, of current exegesis, of apologetics, of the incursion of the New Thought, the recrudescence of discredited nineteenth-century Biblical anthropology, political maneuverings, efforts by some to declare discussion of Gospel topics out of bounds, uninformed dogmatism, and lack of respect for scholarly standards of accuracy and proper attribution.⁴⁹ More significant in a sense are the many small clues, trivial individually, which have the cumulative effect of denigrating the life of the mind.⁵⁰ It is no denial of the Church's many splendid qualities to recognize that in many respects it has not proved congenial to free inquiry and that its prejudices tend to be anti-intellectual.

To this charge various answers can be given. More common than one would think is the response that declares the question "out-of-bounds." Merely to raise the question within the Church, according to this line of thought, is bad form; it creates a "bad impression" and appears to be an "attack" on the Church. Once again, of course, this is the "garrison mentality" of the nineteenth century reasserting itself. It should be unnecessary to point out that an inability to engage in self-criticism will scarcely contribute to self-understanding. Nor does it in fact strengthen the real unity of the Church. Nor does it make for a "good impression" — it simply confirms the worst suspicions of those who have long deplored the "authoritarian" aspects of Mormonism.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, XXXIV (March, 1931), 253-256.

⁴⁹ One reader has called me to task for not including the Brigham Young University as Exhibit A of Mormon anti-intellectualism. I know that such a case could be made. But any survey of B.Y.U. should be highly specific in its evaluation as well as analytic — to avoid visiting the sins of the Administration on the heads of the faculty and to recognize excellence where it does, happily, exist. I do not propose to dispose of it in a single flippant paragraph.

⁵⁰ For example, the fact that recent laudatory statements about the Church and its leaders have come from Norman Vincent Peale, Russell Kirk, Max Rafferty, Robert Welch, and the Young Americans for Freedom, speaks volumes.

Another answer, which has the merit of speaking to the question, is a flat denial — the instinctive response of the loyal Mormon, who knows that his is not the base and primitive religion portrayed (and caricatured) in some anti-Mormon tracts. Most commonly heard in such a response are statistics of education, per capita listings in biographical dictionaries of celebrated men, or the names of individual Mormons of obvious attainment in science or letters. Permissible in certain situations, such an argument is disingenuous and evasive, for the existence of individuals of intellect and the reputable quantitative record in education of the Church were never in question. To deny any and all anti-intellectualism in the Church is not only unconvincing, it is itself unflattering, for a purely intellectual Church, if such were possible, would be a bleak and dreary thing.

More convincing is the response that admits the existence of anti-intellectual tendencies within Mormonism while pointing out that in this the Church is far from unique. Many similarities can be found, for instance, between Mormonism and American Catholicism, which had its own garrison mentality and lack of an intellectual tradition.⁶¹ Or attention can be called to the long-standing prejudice against intellect in America in general, with the implication that Mormon distrust of higher education and abstract thought, preference for the plain and practical, and admiration of “doers” more than “thinkers,” are simply reflections of American national character.⁶² Such comparisons are valuable. The assertion that Mormon society was in many respects simply America in microcosm, made most eloquently and cogently by William Mulder,⁶³ is sufficiently true that it often seems to explain the whole story. However, it is hard to believe — and Mormons would not wish to believe — that their own basic values and their own series of experiences were irrelevant. They are Americans but, in Mulder’s phrase, “Americans with a difference.”⁶⁴ Their attitudes are best understood, I believe, in terms of their own values and the changing historical context.

Perhaps we can understand the problem more clearly if we recognize that there are different levels of anti-intellectualism in the Church. At bottom there is what appears to me to be a substratum of aversion to intellect inherent in any society. Since it is the nature of intellect to evaluate and criticize, it is inevitable that some tension

⁶¹ See Thomas F. O’Dea, *American Catholic Dilemma* (New York, 1958).

⁶² See Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (New York, 1964).

⁶³ *The Mormons in American History* (Reynolds Lecture, University of Utah, 1957).

⁶⁴ The validity of the concept of national character has been questioned. Are not all Americans — all subgroups — “Americans with a difference”?

exist between the intellectual and his fellow men. By his activities as teacher or writer he helps to conserve the values of society — or, in the present instance, of the Church. But by training and instinct he is constantly thinking, evaluating, criticizing, trying to separate the wheat from the chaff. This can lead to conflict with those who have a vested interest in old forms, who dislike hearing cherished customs described as obsolete or unessential, or who misconstrue faith to mean unthinking acceptance. The intellectual is not at ease in Zion. By the very nature of his reading and comparing, he confronts views which are different from his own. Not only does he suffer some alienation due to the suspicion of his fellow men, but also “he runs the risk of dissolving, by critical activity, the meaningful basis of his own life.”⁵⁵ This is not to say that the intellectual is incapable of faith, loyalty, devotion, or emotional attachment to tradition. But to these he adds, at times, the kind of searching thought which may be salutary but is often unwelcome. Suspicion of intellectuals is thus inevitable in any society, and because Latter-day Saints are people in a society, they will display the same propensity.

On the next level there is aversion to intellect inherent in any revealed religion. The claims of revelation are *prima facie* absurd to scholars, whose naturalistic mode of explanation is ill adapted to the unutterable things of the Kingdom. “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” asked Paul.⁵⁶ Later, in the third century, Tertullian asked: “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, the Academy with the Church? What is there in common between the philosopher and the Christian, the pupil of Hellas and the pupil of Heaven?”⁵⁷ When God called an “unlearned boy” to be prophet of this dispensation, when Mormon scriptures warned of the dangers of pride in worldly learning, when the Christian clergy was ridiculed for relying on the dry husks of seminary study, and when the Saints were told that only the power of the Holy Ghost would enable them to know for themselves, Mormonism was evincing the attitude of *any* revealed religion in an unbelieving world.

There is another level of anti-intellectualism which stems from a specific feature of the Mormon Church. I am referring to the lay, or non-professional, basis of its organization. In an age when other Christians are groping towards a “theology of the laity” there can be no doubt of the many beneficial effects of the widespread participa-

⁵⁵ This quotation and the whole analysis of the inherent ambivalence of the intellectual vis-a-vis society, I have taken from Thomas F. O’Dea, *American Catholic Dilemma*, pp. 29ff.

⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:20.

⁵⁷ As quoted in C. N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (London, 1944), pp. 222-223.

tion and the deep individual involvement fostered by the Mormon polity. But there is another side which should be recognized. In practical terms the Mormon lay organization has meant no divinity schools, no theological journals, no class of men competent in languages, versed in the literature, and trained to handle theological ideas. While contributing to the admirable vitality of Mormonism, the non-professionalism of Mormon organization and worship has done much to create an atmosphere of hostility to special competence and to scholarship.

But if the present essay has demonstrated anything, it is that anti-intellectualism, far from being a fixed quantity, has varied in emphasis and application. The specific areas of tension have shifted from generation to generation. And they have been profoundly influenced by "extraneous" factors: education, experience, occupation, eschatological images, political and economic conditions, the moral atmosphere, various associational alignments, and the thrust of science. If this be true, a great deal of Mormon anti-intellectualism, including its most flagrant individual manifestations, should be regarded as not inherent but circumstantial.

Towards Gentile sophistication the Church can of course show a sturdy indifference, maintaining what Joseph Smith called "the even tenor of our ways." Mormon theology need not, as I have already suggested, try to conform to the latest trends of scholarship and science. But the question is not quite so simple. While continuing to seek the honest in heart among the meek and lowly, Mormon missionaries have found that leadership of local branches often requires some degree of education. And on general principle it seems a pity to exclude potential converts who are intellectuals. Many of course exclude themselves, but I am referring to those who are seeking. Quite understandably they are hurt by imputations of evil character, offended by suspicion of their motivation, and put off when partisan political and economic views of mid-twentieth century America are presented as part of the Gospel that is without beginning of days or end of years. To be sure, the gate is strait, but it can at least remain open.

Recognizing that the Church will always be composed mostly of non-intellectuals (a fact which is reassuring), we are left with the question: What, after all, is the place of the intellectual in the Church? In view of their traditional function in any society, to say nothing of their frequent lack of balance and puerile hypersensitivity, intellectuals should anticipate some degree of tension. Individuals will always face problems in maintaining faith, and some will leave the Church. This is to be expected and within limits is a sign of

health in the organism. But in view of the increasing numbers of Mormon writers, scientists, academicians, and laymen of broad interests, perhaps it is time to remind ourselves that they have souls worth saving, that they have in many instances demonstrated their devotion under trying conditions, and that they can contribute importantly to the work of the Church. This does not necessitate setting up an intellectual elite which scorns the faith that our parents have cherished. Nor need it represent a capitulation to the conclusions of Gentile scholarship. But the unnecessary affronts, those due to circumstantial alignments and an inherited garrison mentality, should be seen for what they are. For however understandable our prejudices may be in the light of the experiences of the past century, the modern scriptures and the living oracles have agreed, I take it, that the ultimate goals of the Church and the eternal aspirations of its members can scarcely be best furthered in an atmosphere of defensive nostalgia and obscurantism.

THOUGHTS ON ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM: A RESPONSE

James B. Allen

Whenever a young Mormon intellectual attempts to discuss anti-intellectualism within his Church, especially in the broad, 166-year historical context attempted by Professor Bitton, it seems to me that he is faced with at least three natural problems that tend from the outset to diminish his possible effectiveness (in other words, he almost has three strikes against him before he starts):

(1) Such a discussion by an intellectual is an examination of attacks upon his own attitude, insight, and intellectual commitment. For this reason it is usually defensive in nature. It is not difficult to fall into the trap of self-pity to which, as Richard Hofstadter suggests, intellectuals are sometimes prone, and the resulting discussion will tend to lack the complete objectivity to which historians are supposedly committed.

(2) It is obvious that a study of one phase of an institution cannot present a balanced view of that institution's historical development, or of its innate spirit. This hardly needs to be said, except for the fact that this particular issue, anti-intellectualism, is so sensitive that many will judge the essay too quickly on the basis of their own preconceptions and mind sets. Some ardent defenders of the faith will see in it, erroneously to be sure, an attack upon all that is good within the faith, while some who are critical of the Church will gleefully read into the essay a major intellectual rebellion which, I am sure, was not intended by the author. These are chances he must take, however, in approaching such a delicate subject.

(3) The complicated nature of anti-intellectualism itself militates against the success of a short essay if its intent is to present an in-depth or balanced view of the movement within the Church. The term "anti-intellectualism"