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tomy of Christ and Paul (e.g., p. 56) is hardly this settled in current New Testament scholarship; reference to "the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith only" (p. 88) seems to reflect more what theologians say about Paul than Paul's words, where the term "only" is wholly absent.

This problem transcends *Theological Foundations.* The Mormon intellectual is capable of drawing inferences from isolated sources and then formulating conclusions that may not correspond to the body of revelations. No thinking person can avoid theological generalizations, but the student of Mormonism must frame these in the context of the basic doctrinal sources, the Standard Works. Whoever aspires to formulate Mormon theology is committed to his scriptural homework: Pratt, Roberts, and Talmage led the way here. Professor McMurrin is a competent technician at methods which are not always adequate to this task. Nevertheless, his mastery of other theologies must challenge any Mormon writer who seeks to write significantly on doctrine. Judged by the author's statement of intention in the foreword to produce a "comparative commentary," he has clearly succeeded. Extraneous opinions on origins aside, Professor McMurrin has commented impressively on the strength of the Mormon position.

## A STANDARD OF OBJECTIVITY

*David W. Bennett*

The appearance of Sterling McMurrin's new book *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* will be regarded as an event of first importance by anyone who has a serious interest in this subject. Mormon readers will delight in seeing their theology shine with a natural lustre beside other systems which men have been polishing up for a much longer time. Non-Mormon readers will welcome a chance to view Mormon theology under this new lamp, which lights up the more striking and attractive features of its subject without generating uncomfortable heat on any side, and without casting distorting shadows across any face or into any hidden corner. Indeed, the dispassionately cool but sympathetic light in which the ideas contained in this book are examined sets a very high standard of objectivity for future writers, in or out of the Church, a standard which could usher in a new era for scholarly studies on Mormonism.

The title of Professor McMurrin's book gives no hint of its real scope; as the author indicates in his foreword, he has "composed a

comparative commentary that is intended simply to differentiate Mormon doctrine from the classical Christian theology as that is set forth by the major theologians or expressed in certain of the historic symbols of the Christian faith." It seems to me that the commentary contains two to three times as much material on classical Christian theology as it does on Mormonism. Professor McMurrin warns that his "highly selective references to Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish doctrines and ideas can lead all too easily to distorted conceptions of these religions and their theologies." On the contrary, his illuminating discussions will, I think, tend rather to help many serious minded Mormon readers to arrive at a much less distorted view of classical theology than the one which is traditional in the Church. Herein lies one of the main values of the book.

Many enthusiastic readers of this book will come away with the satisfied feeling that the theological foundations of Mormonism are philosophically sound. But no such conclusion is warranted, nor, I am sure, intended by the book or its author. Dr. McMurrin's book is not a systematic treatise on Mormon theology, as he himself insists, and the most that should be claimed for it as a defense of Mormon theology is that it shows the main lines along which the theology might be developed to make it appear quite respectable alongside other theological systems. It is far from certain that, if the development of the theology were competently carried through along the suggested lines, the result would be sufficiently representative of actual beliefs and practices to be acceptable to the Mormon people.

But even if one grants the theological respectability of Mormon doctrines when compared to other systems as in Dr. McMurrin's book, there still remains the question of the philosophical respectability of theological systems generally. Such systems are in wide disrepute in philosophical circles at present. The reasons are hinted at but not adequately developed in the book, doubtlessly because providing philosophical criticism of theological doctrines is not a primary aim. Still, such a criticism would undoubtedly call into serious question the meaningfulness and practical importance for today of many of the theological doctrines which are referred to in the book. The suspicion that these doctrines lacked a clear meaning would engender doubts as to the value of the numerous discussions which are based on them.

This matter seems important enough to deserve clarification by an example. Much of the strength of the Mormon theological

position is supposed by Professor McMurrin to derive from the doctrine of the uncreated eternal intelligences whose main characteristic is to possess freedom of the will. Notice the impressive list of concepts involved in the statement of this idea: uncreated, eternal, intelligences, freedom, and will. In dealing with such notions, the tendency among present day philosophers is first to isolate each concept from the others for a closer analysis, and then to split each term into as many further parts as may be suggested by the many different kinds of contexts in which the term can be meaningfully used in ordinary language. This process of conceptual analysis, the details of which are too technical to enter into here, is in many ways quite the opposite of the kind of synthesis which characterizes most theology. Rather than to separate concepts and then split them up by analyzing the different linguistic contexts in which they appear, theology tends to take concepts which are already complex, to put them together to form larger doctrines, and then to draw still larger conclusions which appear to be implied by these doctrines.

The analytic approach assumes that for the most part words should be used with the meanings which everyone understands them to have from common speech; the synthetic approach allows much greater freedom in the use of words in uncommon ways. For example, the word "intelligence" in Mormon theology is only very loosely related to its ordinary meanings. A patient analysis of different contexts in ordinary language where this word is used may help us to understand its meaning in such contexts, but how shall we understand the meaning in theology, since we admit from the outset that in theology the word is used quite differently than in everyday speech? If we analyze technical theological contexts we may indeed learn how to use the word properly in these contexts, but this may only deceive us into supposing that we understand it; this kind of analysis does not show how the word can be tied down firmly enough to anything of which we have genuine knowledge or experience. We can talk meaningfully about intelligent men and women, intelligent decisions, military intelligence and the like, because we have some knowledge and experience of these familiar things; but how do we get knowledge of the eternal intelligences of Mormon theology? What experience is this knowledge based on? We can properly ascribe freedom to human beings in certain situations, but it is not so clear to say that they are free, period, less clear to say that they have free will, and still less clear to say that their eternal intelligences have free will.

Finally, while theology is very much concerned to draw out the larger implications of philosophical doctrines, analytic philosophers are more than a little reluctant to do so. So theologians are often found accusing philosophical analysis of being sterile, while analytic philosophers are charging theology with being futile. It is not my responsibility to arbitrate this clash; I will only say that I think there is some foundation for the charges on both sides, though I disapprove the extreme forms which these charges sometimes take.

The point of all this for the present purpose is simply to indicate why we must not construe Dr. McMurrin's book as providing for Mormonism philosophical foundations which will or ought to be regarded as acceptable to many philosophers. There is no reason to suppose Professor McMurrin ever thought his book would, could, or should do this; but some of his readers might very naturally think so. These readers should be reminded that the book is only intended as a comparative commentary on Mormon theological notions in the context of classical theology. Such notions have undoubtedly exerted a very great influence on a very large number of people and deserve to be better understood. Considered in the light of this purpose, Professor McMurrin's admirable essay must be recommended in the highest terms.