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Europe followed the principle *cuius regio eius religio* (whose region his religion) — not only Christians but Moors and Jews and pagans. No European religion transferred to these shores has maintained the principle. Instead the rule in America has been *cuius ecclesia eius religio* (whose congregation his religion). Not Mormon Prophet nor Catholic Pope nor Anglican Priest nor Puritan Presbyter nor Methodist Preacher has for long broken the rule, and the potpourri of American religions endures. Its very multiplicity is the condition of its harmony. Things unique — doctrine, discipline, worship, order, polity, piety, etc. — abide the *de facto* forfeiture of universality by a device that is simple and pragmatic: by turning *de jure* claims to universality into specific characteristics of uniqueness.

The Prophet's dictum holds for the Latter-day Saints: "Truth is Mormonism. God is the author of it." Just that dictum is the ticket of admission to the dialogue between religions and between the religious and the secular in America. For every participant in the dialogue representing religion says the same about his religion (with varying degrees of vehemence). The dialogue proceeds on the tacit assumption that such absolute claims are basically characteristic of religion, and that those who voice them intend them relatively.

MORMONISM AND THE AMERICAN WAY: A RESPONSE

Mario S. De Pillis

Let me begin by congratulating the editors and founders of *Dialogue* for their intellectual daring and integrity in the handling of this journal. And I want to thank them for inviting considered commentary on my article instead of falling back on the usual device of edited letters.

My article, though it was long and detailed, needed formal commentary. In arguing for the importance of early Mormon history as the basis for defining "Mormonism" as a religion, I selected but one major religious element in the early church: authority. Much had to be omitted, a fact that is implicit in the commentaries of both Mr. Clebsch and Mr. Bushman. They have raised the larger question of the significance of the phenomenon of Mormonism in American history and life.

It is a special pleasure to respond to commentators who understood and even in a large part assented to my basic thesis. To use an accurate colloquialism, Clebsch and Bushman knew what I was talking about.

Before taking up the varied questions raised by Mr. Clebsch I would like to clarify my use of the word "authentic." In the standard usage of professional historians the word refers to the historical actuality or "historicity" of a written document or an artifact. In this sense for example, both the "Protocols of Zion" and the "Piltdown Man" have been shown to be inauthentic forgeries. Non-Mormon historians have always implicitly or explicitly stressed the inauthenticity of the golden plates and the revelations claimed by Joseph Smith. I had suggested that while that is a legitimate and relevant inquiry, it might be more fruitful to examine the actual content of the revelations for their religious significance.

Clebsch, on the other hand, in writing of the "divine authority which all historically founded religious claim as their authentication," used the word as a theologian might use it. The historian's method, of course, is hardly capable of scrutinizing the historical actuality of divine intervention.

The theological use of the word "authentic" led Clebsch to imply that I deplore *all* investigations of documentary or "historical" authenticity. Not at all. I simply object to the unscholarly spirit of such investigations in the past (for example, the eagerness to believe in the untenable Spaulding Theory of the origins of the Book of Mormon) and regret their less fruitful effects in the present. Such investigations, when carried out in a scientific spirit, are still relevant to historical truth. And I would even invite Mormon scholars to join in the first necessary step (not possible for non-Mormons), namely, the careful editing and publication of the original manuscripts of the basic Mormon sources, warts and all. Probably the easiest and most logical place to begin would be Joseph Smith's manuscript "History of the Church."

Another way of saying all this is that I took great pains in my article to write not as a church historian or western historian or intellectual historian but as a historian pure and simple, who applies the same basic canons of historical method to all historical phenomena. This stance, conscious if not explicitly announced, explains the first large omission noted by Clebsch: that I ignored certain historians who have already advocated the need to study religious history in its larger historical context and have already fulfilled the need — even to the point of according a place in Mormon history to Joseph Smith.

I was aware of most of the works mentioned by Clebsch, but am still not persuaded that they support his conclusions. First there are two general historiographical articles: one by Clebsch himself (1963) and one by Henry F. May (1964). Both came to a similar conclusion: they saw the beginnings of a new, synoptic, universal interpretation of American religion, one that engages both "church historians" and "secular" historians.

But this is a very new historiographical attitude and has not even begun to touch the writing of Mormon history by non-Mormons. I documented this fact fairly carefully in my sampling of standard intellectual histories and pointed out that it can also be documented in college textbook accounts of Mormonism. Indeed, Puritanism, the one religion that has enjoyed the most rigorous treatment (I called it "serious" and "professional") has hardly had the study it needs — especially for its period of decay in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The monumental work of the late Perry Miller went unheeded by serious, secular, professional, synoptic historians through the 1930's and most of the 1940's. Other religious denominations do not even have their Perry Millers, and it will be even longer before such denominations are understood.

One root of the problem has been the fact that for years "church history" was an isolated specialty. It was written (as we "secular" historians like to think) by seminary teachers, often untrained members of the denomination being written up. The official organization of trained church historians seemed unable to break out of their isolation, and not until the last five or ten years have secular historians deigned to acknowledge the legitimacy of church history — even in its newer scientific form. Suspicion of and

disinterest in church history still persist. I am perhaps a victim of the disinterest, though not of the suspicion.

I did indeed ignore the general works of church historians Brauer and Hudson. But after all they wrote general works: where are the full-length studies of Mormonism by either secular or church historians? And more to the point of my article, where are the secular textbook writers who bother to consult the very new breed of church historians? I do not find that the three pages alloted to Mormonism by Brauer (1953) have in the least affected the intellectual historians or textbook writers. It is the latter and not the church historians who bend the minds of thousands of college students. And for all the mastery Hudson may demonstrate in his four pages on early Mormonism, I doubt that these pages in his new book (1965) will change things much.

But Clebsch's remarks have at least sparked my interest in the new church historians and in what Henry F. May called their "dialogue" with secular historians. I feel as I once did after living for some time with a large and pious Mormon family. Lest I give offense in the intimacy of family life I gave up cigarettes and coffee and adjusted myself cheerfully to meatless weekdays and orange soda. It was wonderful for my character, but I do remember once sneaking out at night for a cup of coffee. Perhaps at the risk of offending colleagues who look askance at church history, I shall take to sneaking out to Brauer, Hudson, and Clebsch.

Mr. Clebsch should not be perplexed at my omission of Thomas F. O'Dea's *The Mormons* (1957). I was speaking of historical research on Mormonism. O'Dea's book, though excellent in many ways, is a sociological analysis using historical materials. He does not consistently confront the great issues of historical change that have been debated in the professional literature. And when he does, he often leans heavily on secondary works, many of which are inadequate.

Clebsch's conclusion that my plea for an honest and serious consideration of Mormonism as a religion "is a plea already largely answered in an ample corpus of writings" is hardly tenable.

A second omission noted by Clebsch has to do with other denominations which, like the Mormons, have suffered persecution. He pointed out that the Quakers, Jehovah's Witnesses, and any similar groups claiming uniqueness and authority "must sense neglect in the very fact of [each] being one sect among many, and under these circumstances neglect is hardly distinguishable affectively from a sense of persecution."

There is some truth in this. A Mormon social psychologist once wrote of the "group consciousness" intensified among the Mormons by persecution. And the Quaker historian Rufus Jones long defended the records and historical reputation of the Quakers from all hostile outsiders as assiduously as B. H. Roberts did among the Mormons.

But a sense of neglect accompanied by some harrassment is hardly comparable to the persecution of the Mormons. The Mormon experience of massive expropriations of property and means of livelihood, of legal injustice, of social harrassment, of widespread bloodshed; of rape, beatings, and violent outrages of so many kinds for so many years — this experience was "affectively" (emotionally) so distinct and unusual that, for me at least, the persecutions of other American sects seem merely unpleasant. Robert B. Flanders, a member of the Reorganized Church, concluded his recent history

of Nauvoo by stating that as a result of the persecution culminating in 1846 the Mormons developed a hatred and suspicion of outsiders that "blighted" the entire mentality of the Mormon community in Utah for many years afterwards.

A final omission noted by Mr. Clebsch is theoretical, complex, and stimulating — though not easy to follow. He suggested that Mormon origins and destiny should be discussed in connection with the socio-politico-economic community known as the United States; and that the United States is more than a community: it is an institutional expression of Western civilization. This is indeed a synoptic and universal approach to Mormon history.

More specifically, Clebsch sees three particularly relevant points to be discussed. First, while accepting the rightness of my emphasis on Joseph Smith and early Mormonism as premises for any understanding of Mormonism as a religion, he would still re-enthrone Brigham Young. He states that when Mormonism is viewed as a distinct socio-politico-economic community within the larger community, Brigham Young is "the representative man of Mormonism's role in American social history." Secondly, as a socio-politico-economic community Mormonism simply does not appear to have the deep historical roots in Western civilization to justify calling it a fourth major religion. Thirdly, even if such a deeply rooted community were assumed, a dialogue with Mormonism is more likely to discuss "shared Americanness" than the religious values of a separate fourth religion: the American situation, in contrast with the European principle of *cuius regio eius religio,* will implacably force all dialogue to proceed "on the tacit assumption that . . . absolute claims [to universal authority] are basically characteristic of religion, and that those who voice them intend them relatively."

These propositions are worth several days of profoundly stimulating conversation, and it is comforting to know that my Mormon commentator, Mr. Bushman, has not confronted me with a similar nest of hornets.

Concerning the first proposition, it seems to me that to invite Brigham Young back to his pre-eminence as "the representative man of Mormonism's role in American social history" is to drag him through a very narrow back door to the throne. It would involve, as Clebsch candidly admits, basing the historical distinctiveness of Mormonism, not on the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the doctrine of authority, the priesthood, and so on, but on the social and economic foundations of the community of Mormonism. In short, it would involve not discussing the history of Mormon religion at all, but only the sociology of the Mormon religion.

Moreover, one cannot, it seems to me, separate Mormonism as a religion with doctrines from Mormonism as a socio-economic community with social values and group interests. I suspect that Clebsch was aware of this impossibility and that his awareness led him to write the unclear and contradictory sentences at the beginning of the fourth section of his essay: ". . . it would require mountains of new data . . . to unseat Brigham Young. . . . Of course I merely underscore De Pillis's emphasis upon Smith's entire career after 1830 as founder of the Mormon *religion,* and I also underscore the uniqueness of the Prophet's revelations not because they were revelations but as his particular revelations."

There are mountains of data, old and new, for unseating Young. I can cite only one (explicitly de-emphasized in my paper): Mormon communi-

tarianism. The entire history of the socio-politico-economic community under Young in Utah can hardly be understood without the "law of stewardship," which Joseph Smith promulgated in the very early revelation on the "United Order of Enoch" (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 42, Feb. 9, 1831). Indeed, Leonard Arrington's socio-economic history of Mormonism in Utah begins in 1830.

The political arrangements of the Utah community were clearly less a product of doctrine than the social and economic institutions. American society at large produced the political order: negatively, by persecuting Mormons as dissenters and thus welding Mormon group consciousness; positively, by supplying ready-made political and legal institutions. Mormons accepted the federal legal and political system. On the other hand, Mormon religion was not without influence in politics. The political order of territorial Utah, for example, was controlled by a ruling class that was coextensive with the Council of Fifty organized in Nauvoo.

Perhaps Clebsch's reinstatement of Young turns on a particular definition of "social history." I myself conceive of social history as the history of society — its classes, property arrangements, social institutions like the family, educational institutions, and so on. In this sense (polygamy and cooperation come immediately to mind), Joseph Smith was definitely the shaper of Mormon society. If "social" and "society" refer to the larger society of the United States, I do not see how either man could be considered more "representative." Almost exact contemporaries, they were very similar in social and geographical origins.

The second proposition I have extracted from Clebsch's analysis concerns my thesis that Mormonism could be considered a fourth religion. Perhaps in emphasizing the unique importance of Mormonism in American culture I pushed that point too far. I rested content with an allusion to an image from a political campaign — metaphorical evidence at best. Mr. Clebsch was most astute to pick this up.

Nevertheless, for all the similarity of the career of Mormonism to that of other sects and for all its shallowness of historical roots as compared with the three major religious communities, I am greatly impressed with its remarkable resistance to erosion — even by the standardizing American "consensus" culture. Consider the fate of its contempoaries, Campbellism and Shakerism, the one with practically nothing left of its original distinctiveness, the other with practically nothing left in membership. Christian Science has shown an ability to survive, but its distinctiveness is quite diluted because it did not, like Protestantism, Judaism, Catholicism — and Mormonism — create a distinctive culture. Or consider, notwithstanding the sociological researches of Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, the continued high percentage of endogamous marriages within each of the four groups — especially within Mormonism.

I agree that it is not Clio's domain to predict, but I sometimes wonder whether sociology can predict much more accurately. Undoubtedly differences among all four groups are declining, but it would be premature to state that the groups have ceased to exist.

Clebsch's less sociological criterion for testing my "fourth religion" thesis is the fact that the influence of Mormonism on Western civilization is at best superficial compared with Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. An impressive argument. Influence depends to a large extent, for example, on

the numbers converted relative to the total population and on the coercive backing of the state; in the light of either of these two causes Mormon influence would necessarily be miniscule in Western civilization and even within the United States. But while quite conscious of the limitations of my thesis, I would suggest that Mormonism is probably the largest religion in the United States associated with a particular socio-economic community which cannot exactly be termed Protestant. The only other such group I can think of is the narrowly ethnic Black Muslims. And without benefit of the government coercion that helped spread particular religions in the past Mormonism has displayed a truly remarkable potential for growth, especially in English-speaking countries.

Clebsch speculates very persuasively on the future prospects for a dialogue with Mormonism. It may indeed be true that Mormonism must "mature" or lose its nerve before it can abandon its claim to unique restored authority and thus prepare the way for a dialogue based first on common Americanness — and then on common religiousness.

But given a complete loss of nerve, I do not see how the discussion of "common Americanness" can precede a discussion of common religiousness. A loss of nerve would mean the reduction of Mormonism to a kind of religion that is socially workable, that is, one that has much in common with other de-universalized denominations. For the Mormons, this would involve, for example, the rejection of authority as represented in (1) a practicing belief in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants and (2) a practicing belief in the historical rationale of a "Great Apostasy" and Restoration. In sum, "maturing" would mean a loss of distinctive Mormon doctrines or "religiousness." It would require — and Clebsch rightly makes this a prerequisite of dialogue between *any* groups — that Mormonism must cease proselytizing among other Christian groups. Catholic and Protestant ecumenists have been able to accept the latter requirement, but the vitality of Mormonism and some of its unique doctrines seem to presuppose what Protestants call "sheepstealing." Thus, the denial of doctrine, whether forced by historical maturity or consciously made in the face of threats, would be so great that Mormonism would have to abjure its own identity.

There would also be serious obstacles on the non-Mormon side. For example, the Jewish, Christian, and non-believing scholars now so effectively cooperating in scriptural studies would have to be willing to discuss Mormon scriptures as if they were as authentically Hebrew as the traditional scriptures. As both Mr. Bushman and I have noted, this seems unlikely.

How optimistic can one be about so fundamental a change in Mormonism (and attitudes toward it)? Considering the continued expansion of Mormonism in foreign countries as well as the United States, change seems improbable.

But ecumenism cannot afford to be as rationally pessimistic as these implications I have spun out from Clebsch's remarks. Looking at the positive side (not so positive, I am sure, for many Mormons), the withering forces of modern social change may indeed force a loss of nerve in the near future. The distinctive aspects of Mormon religion could conceivably be interpreted right out of practical existence — as the doctrine of polygamy and the "gathering" to Zion were. Joseph Smith's claims could then be parables of hope.

This drastic change is merely historical speculation based on Mr. Clebsch's remarks and, I trust, will not offend Mormon readers. Such a change is

probably what Clebsch had in mind in writing that unique doctrines with universal claims can abide the pragmatic *"de facto* forfeiture of universality." Perhaps (to continue in the optimistic vein) a journal like *Dialogue* is a sign. And the theological racism of the Book of Mormon is already profoundly threatened. Eternal denominational verities, even less offensive ones than racism, seem to be dying all about us. The shape of Roman Catholocism is particularly worth pondering in this regard. As Father Gregory Baum recently wrote in *Christian Century,* ". . . what is happening in the Catholic Church at this moment . . . is that we do not always know exactly what authoritative teaching is." One wonders whether the piety of an Italian peasant-pope has not had more effect than all the socio-economic forces of the United States.

This brings us to the third and final proposition drawn from Clebsch: *cuius regio eius religio. Regio* must be translated kingdom or state, not "region." Unlike "region" the word state clearly implies coercive power. It is true that, with the possible exception of the magistrates of Massachusetts Bay, the state in America has not been able to employ coercion in religion. But secularization and disestablishment are no longer unique to America. And the result has been not harmony in multiplicity but polite toleration. Mr. Bushman applies the American rhetoric of toleration in asking fellow Mormons not to snap at me for minor errors because mutual trust can grow only if there is "tolerance on both sides." It seems to me that secularization has led not to the relativization of unique claims but merely to a gradual acceptance of the idea that coercion in religious matters is wrong. Radical Protestant and Catholic ecumenists insist that we have got to go beyond this nineteenth-century concept of "toleration."

If universal claims were really so casual as to be "intended relatively" and if they are to be supplanted by a common search for "truth" as a basis for dialogue, then we will find ourselves asking with the quintessential Roman pragmatist, "What is truth?" I confess, like so many intellectuals, a dangerous attraction to this Roman indifference.

Whatever the philosophical basis for dialogue, it remains true that the practical and theoretical obstacles to a meaningful exchange with Mormonism are very great. Mr. Bushman's comments are all directed to the very concrete problems involved. As a Mormon who has given considerable thought to non-Mormon historical interpretations of Mormonism, he is hardly about to question my stress on the inadequacy of non-Mormon versions of Mormon religious history.

It would be salutary for many non-Mormon historians to heed Bushman's reiteration of what Mormon historians have long said: that for Mormons Smith's appropriation of materials in Jacksonian culture simply shows that God had prepared America for the Restoration. Logically, then, Mormons believe that Mormon scriptures should be tested on their own non-Jacksonian terms: ancient history, chiefly Egyptian and Hebrew. It may surprise non-Mormons to learn that an able linguist with training in Egyptology, who is a faithful Mormon, avidly defends the historicity of Mormon scriptures. It would be interesting to see equally able non-Mormon Egyptologists testing the historicity of these scriptures. Americanists are only partially equipped to do so. And besides, the Mormon view of Jacksonian society is based on a providential reading of history and not merely a universal claim. Twentieth century historians refuse to discuss providential views of history – except as philosophy.

Mr. Bushman's two main points, like those of Clebsch, deal with large topics which I could only touch upon in my paper. One is the need to study the etiology of doctrines other than authority.

I would be the last to discourage a search for other theological elements in Joseph Smith's environment. But I do not see any doctrinal element extant between 1827 and 1830 that could explain the appeal of Mormonism as well as the idea of authority. Of course, the examination of doctrines from the point of view of their appeal to converts may be for Mr. Bushman the wrong end to start from. As he himself asserts, trained historians differ on assumptions, not facts. The professional, secular, non-Mormon historian invariably assumes that Mormonism was a sect and, like other sects, had certain social sources. Thus, Whitney R. Cross, whose work is accepted by O'Dea, tries to establish a connection between the early conversions and the convert's place of residence, his age group, his Yankee traits, his education, and so on. For most non-Mormon secular historians the attractiveness of Mormon doctrine ends up as a product of social factors.

Given this non-Mormon assumption concerning sectarianism and given the much older assumption that Mormon revelation was human in origin, the non-Mormon historian will not generate much enthusiasm for the questions posed by Bushman. He would simply say that it would be interesting to know why Joseph asked the questions he did of specific passages in the Bible, but that his questioning differed little from that of all sectarian prophets of the time. Mr. Bushman and I would agree that purely religious motives certainly operated in conversion — the premise of my article; but I would be more receptive than Bushman to a complementary social analysis.

I deliberately omitted a second topic taken up by Mr. Bushman in that I consciously avoided any lengthy discussion of the Book of Mormon. I was arguing that the locus of Mormon authority was the revelation of the priesthood, together with subsequent elaborations, and not the Book of Mormon. I had stated that themes related to the preservation of a true, orthodox, authoritative faith were nevertheless very prominent in the Book of Mormon, so much so, that "these themes are, it seems to me, the only real theological themes of the book."

I was quite surprised that Mr. Bushman could term this a "misconstruction." A due regard for the deposit of faith has long been a perfectly respectable concern in all religions. No one will deny that there are other themes in the book, such as the fervent devotion to Christ mentioned by Bushman, but none so historically distinctive and so persistent as the theme of authority. It would have been more to the point for Bushman to question my documentation than to compare my emphasis on authority to a strained psychoanalytic interpretation of Augustine or to assume that my lack of personal involvement with the Book of Mormon blinds me to the richness of its religious content for believing Mormons.

A note on my "minor errors" concerning the history of the priesthood: I do not think they are errors but historical interpretations that simply differ from handbooks like that of Widtsoe. Church government is to my mind the most frustrating and difficult topic in Mormon history. I think the clarity which Mormons see in the history of their church polity is as artificial as that of Catholic historians who project modern notions of church government back to the inchoate legal structure of early medieval canon law.