

ARTICLES

ART AND THE CHURCH: OR “THE TRUTHS OF SMOOTHER”

WAYNE C. BOOTH

AS I TRIED to figure out why on earth I was chosen for this talk, I could think mainly of reasons against it. First of all, I am a striking example of the failed artist. I remembered my first awareness, as a schoolboy in American Fork, that there was something called “art,” something different from everything else. That awareness came in the form of a report card grade. There it was, my first report card, and there was the new word that I could read for myself, being in the second grade: “Art,” with the only low grade on the sheet: D. My beloved Miss Walker had given me a D! I didn’t even know we *had* a subject “art,” but I quickly figured out that art must be what I had called Drawing, the one subject in Miss Walker’s class that I hated. I would sit there, in Drawing period, peeking over Virginia Shelley’s shoulder to see how she was doing *her* drawing, and then I would try to copy it. What I chiefly remember is that if you put a bow tie on a stick figure, people will know that you intend not a girl but a boy.

My contact with what we called art in those days, the graphic arts, went on being unpleasant for a long time, and I still can’t draw a figure with the bow tie on straight.

Through school and high school, I had some experience, much of it wonderful, some of it awful, with the *other* arts, like literature, and music. But nobody called them art. With what we called art I had nothing you could call experience at all. In those dark days it was possible, believe it or not, to go through the first eighteen years of life without ever having seen a really good painting or piece of sculpture—or even a good photograph of one—not even a *tableau vivant* of one. I don’t suppose that could possibly happen today.

WAYNE C. BOOTH is Professor of English at the University of Chicago. His books include *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, *Now Don’t Try to Reason with Me*, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, and *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Asset*.

My experience with music was considerably better, as you would expect. Music was a part of our family life, a part of our church life, a part of the life of our town and county and state. It's true that standards of performance were immeasurably lower than they are around here today, although almost nobody ever said anything negative about anybody's effort, at least not in public. I very much doubt, for example, that there was any musical group at that time, anywhere in Utah, with standards of performance as high as have been reached by the octet we have just heard here. We had a lot of music, but as I remember my own fumbling rendition of "Hearts and Flowers" as a budding pianist filling sacrament meeting time, and my later clarinet solos, which I thought were very fine indeed, I realize that we didn't even suspect our need for critics who might raise our standards.

I do remember meeting one good critic, though. One day we in the Public Service Bureau here took a Sunday School program out to the State Mental patients. I played a clarinet solo, and as usually happened when I played a clarinet solo, somewhere along the way in my soulful rendition of "The Swan" I had a bit of trouble with a squeaky reed. I'll never forget the high dry cackle that came from a tough critic at the back of that little hall: "He's off!" That music critic, that critic of art, was right, and his voice has echoed in my soul almost as painfully over the years as that D I got in "Art."

With such low credentials my troubles in preparing for today were terrible. Not only did I feel unqualified in talking about any of the arts except literature, a little, and music, a little less; I felt ignorant about my assigned subject, the relation of the arts to the Church. I had of course read a lot of discussions about the arts in Mormon culture. I had seen the arts discussed by some as if they were the enemy of religion; by others as if they were more important than religion; by others still as if they were acceptable only when doing direct missionary work; and finally by some who clearly thought the arts a nuisance and treated them like orphans. But I could see no clear agreement among those who seemed to know most. They didn't agree either about the condition of the arts now in the Church, or about where they ought to be.

I tried out several drafts of what I might say, and nothing worked. The more I wrote, the worse it looked. At one point I just about decided to phone and claim that I had contracted some fatal disease, like progressive cowardice, or galloping conflictivitis. By yesterday afternoon I was feeling desperate, believe me. I could see all you good people headed for this hour, eager to be edified, and the vessel from which you were to drink wisdom was dry as a gourd.

My sister Lucille, bless her, seeing my misery, finally suggested that I come over here to the library and browse around, in the hope of stumbling on something that would give me an idea. So I talked my way into the rare book and manuscript collection and began desperately leafing through whatever came to hand. Under a stack of diaries, I noticed a packet of letters on paper of a very strange color, a kind of dull dayglow red. I took off the elastic bands, opened one envelope, and began to read:

February, 1977

Dear Smoother,

On the whole I was pleased with your first report, though you did seem to take a long time to get around to it. As soon as you left for Utah, I began to worry for fear you had not really understood what you're supposed to do. But your report made us all feel pretty hopeful about your mission. Your report on your activities during annual conference was especially pleasant. It was good to hear that there had not been a single reference by anybody in the tabernacle to the importance of painting, or theatre, or literature, or sculpture, or even music. Nice going.

You musn't feel too bad about your failure to jam the broadcasts of that dangerous choir. Better luck next time. Meanwhile keep working on our desensitizing program: remember, it won't matter much whether the choir *broadcasts*, as long as you can keep people from paying full attention. Keep them talking loudly about it—and taking it for granted: that's as good for us as silencing it would be.

As ever,
The Chief

I was a bit puzzled by that letter, so I opened the next one:

August, 1977

Dear Smoother,

Yes, you're quite right. I *am* deeply disappointed in your performance during—well, really it's almost a year now since you spread your wings and left us. Ever since I assigned you to this crucial mission up there, things have seemed, if anything, to get worse. Your assignment was to reverse the revolting improvements in the arts we have been witnessing on every hand. You were to prepare the soil for our later missionaries, by combatting, in every possible way, the tendency of the arts to strengthen the souls of those who take them seriously. Your assignment was twofold: to stamp out every vestige of serious artistic effort by Mormons, *and* to make sure that nobody noticed what had happened. On the one hand, silence or drive out the genuine artists; on the other, make sure that everybody feels good about the substitute art that is left behind.

But from your last letter, it sounds as if you've actually made progress backwards. All you do is complain about how hard it is to deal with those people. And then you enclose the crowning proof of your incompetence, the reprint of the recent pronouncement by President

Spencer Kimball. Perhaps even your hazy mind can see that this one message, coming from the prophet, as he calls himself, could finish us off once and for all. How could you let that happen? You whine around about my not having warned you that the Mormon leaders would be strongly opposed to your mission. What did you expect, knucklehead? Of course they're opposed—for the same reasons *we* have for sending you there in the first place. You don't even seem to be aware of what a terrible blow to us the president's message is. I have enclosed the copy you sent me, circling those passages that seem to me most dangerous.

Please, please concentrate on these matters, Smoother, and get cracking. It's time for you to be about your stepfather's business, namely mine.

As ever, in spite of all,
The Chief

As you can imagine, things were feeling a bit eerie, sitting alone in that quiet room. Obviously I was onto something. I opened the enclosed xerox copy, which turned out to be indeed President Kimball's message of 1977, reprinted in *The Ensign* (July, 1977), the one calling for a glorious renaissance in the Mormon arts.

Old Nick had circled some passages in a bright red magic marker. I quote:

In our world, there have risen brilliant stars in drama, music, literature, sculpture, painting, science, and all the graces. For long years I have had a vision of members of the Church greatly increasing their already strong positions of excellence [in the arts] till the eyes of all the world will be upon us.

President John Taylor so prophesied. . . . For years I have been waiting for someone to do justice in recording in song [like Beethoven] and story and painting [like Raphael] and sculpture [like Michelangelo] to the story of the Restoration. . . . Our writers, our motion picture specialists, with the inspiration of heaven, should tomorrow be able to produce a masterpiece which would live forever [like Shakespeare's or Goethe's]. But the full story of Mormonism has never yet been written nor painted nor sculpted nor spoken. It remains for inspired hearts and talented fingers *yet* to reveal themselves.

The final circled passage read:

We must recognize that excellence and quality are a reflection of how we feel about ourselves and about life and about God. If we don't care much about these basic things, then such not caring carries over into the work we do, and our work becomes shabby and shoddy.

Real craftsmanship, regardless of the skill involved, reflects real caring, and real caring reflects our attitude about ourselves, about our fellow men, and about life.

Now then, Smoother, how can you sound so calm in the face of stuff like that coming a full year after your calling? I demand an explanation.

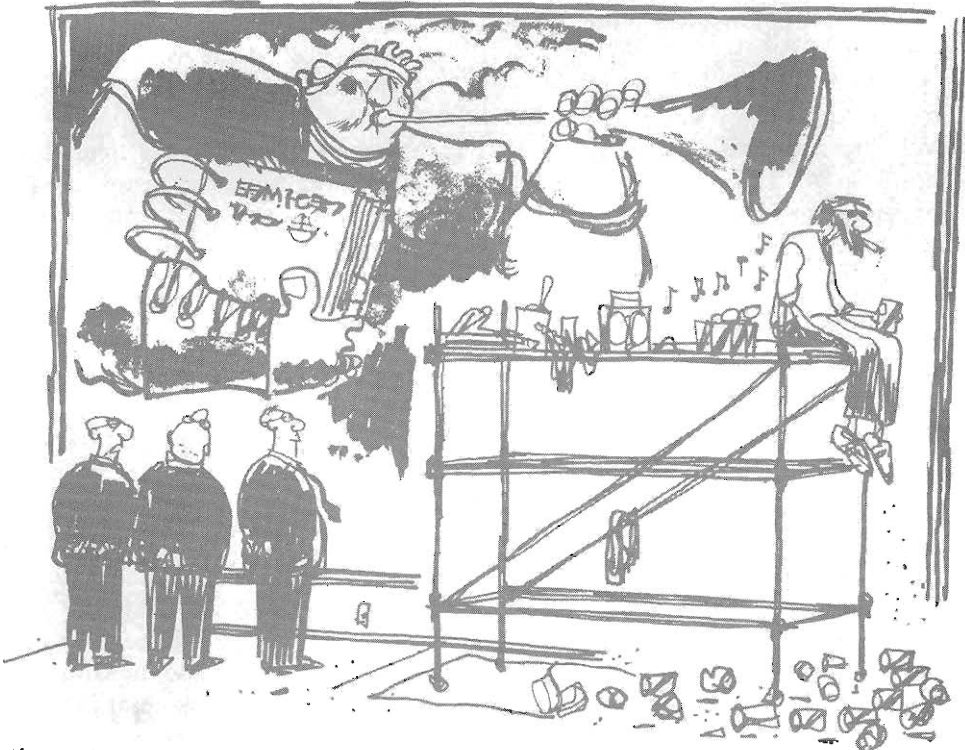
Yours in anger,
The Chief

The next letter in the stack was postmarked Provo, Utah, and it was very brief.

Dear Boss:

I'm sorry that you are so upset about my work. I'm doing the best I can in what turns out to be a very confusing situation. Anyway, I don't see why you think President Kimball's speech is such a terrible blow to us. Mormon church presidents have always talked that way. So what's new? I don't think people will pay much attention to one speech, no matter who gives it. Won't they just go on behaving about the same as before?

As ever, but puzzled,
Smoother



"IT'S GREAT, BUT I'LL BE GLAD WHEN OUR CHURCH
GETS ITS OWN GIANTS OF ART."

As I picked up the next letter, I felt a strong electric charge from it. There was no opening greeting, no "My Dear Smoother," and there was no date.

Now see here, Smoother, how stupid can you get? You say you hope people will just ignore President Kimball, as they have ignored messages like that before. What I have to say to you, *Dummkopf*, is that we can't *count* on that. Don't you see that this is the strongest statement ever made by a Mormon leader about the kinship of art and worship? He sees *no inherent conflict between the arts and the aims of the Mormon Church!*

Don't you see, idiot, that any such view strikes at the very roots of our program. He speaks as if a member of the Church who is a fine artist is actually serving the Church by *being* a fine artist. He talks as if doing great art was itself a religious duty. He almost seems to be saying that to work at becoming a fine artist is a kind of worship. Once people take seriously his suggestion that there is a close tie between the virtue of fine craftsmanship and the virtue of religious devotion, our goose is cooked.

Maybe you'd better come on down home here. I kid you not when I say that in your next letter I expect to hear of some *results*.

Yours, till I hear from you,
The Chief

Well, by now it was clear to me that I was saved from disaster here this morning. All I had to do was read to you from this fantastic result of my investigative reporting, and the hour would pass without your finding out how little I knew. So I spent a few hours copying the letters, without asking anyone's permission (I'm just a little ashamed of this).

I can't read you the whole pile today, but of course I'll be getting them published as soon as possible—perhaps in *The Ensign*, perhaps in a private printing. I sort of have an idea that there's money in this collection. Perhaps I could put them out on three dollar cassettes—

Anyway, for now let me just go on reading a selection, without comment.

Smoother!

Your reports get worse and worse. Why you should have thought that our purposes would be best served by attacking all art is beyond me. Your task is to push the *right* kind, but you can't decide what kind *that* is until you understand your assignment better. Our general job from the beginning has been to deaden spiritual experience by homogenizing it and smoothing out souls. Your special assignment is to use art and attitudes towards it to destroy souls. The last way to do that is to get rid of all art, including the bad art that is our best tool.

The big thing is to keep every member busy busy busy with the most deadening kinds of activity, including a bland enjoyment of the safe kinds of art. In general those will be the works that never deal with us or any of our deeds. You must work up a quiet censorship program attacking all art that tries to portray evil and the dangers of its triumph in the world.

To help you in this purification campaign, we are shipping you today 100,000 copies of our new revised edition of the Standard Works—I hope you'll like the way the project has turned out. We went through every page of all the scriptures and cut out every example in which a religious hero did anything evil—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—we've whitewashed all the good guys to perfection. The original shows *all* of them subject to evil and making serious mistakes. We cleaned that stuff up good, so now there's no more lust, no more murder, no more deceptive trickery, no more envy or hypocrisy or greed, except of course in the comfortably bad guys like Pharoah or Herod or Judas or Laban.

One big advantage of these new standard works is that the entire edition is very small. By the time we got all the evil cleaned out, we'd wiped out about three fourths of all the scriptures, and we figure you can easily talk people into choosing this cheap and cheerful edition rather than those heavy volumes they've been lugging around: complicated, confusing, and most important, dangerous to our program because they *portray it in action*.

Your next step is to convince them that *all* stories should be cleaned up as nicely as we've cleaned up the scriptures—free of reference to our very existence, except as easily identified and easily defeated villains.

Must I do all your thinking for you?

The Chief

Dear Boss,

With all respect, Boss, you don't *know* these people. It's true, as you say, that if we call the new edition a Standard Work a lot of people won't notice any changes. But there's sure to be a few Hugh Nibleys nibbling around and paying attention, and then they'll alert everybody, and we'll be right back where we started. So what am I gonna do?

Puzzled

My Dear Fumbling Smoother,

Have you totally forgotten about the huge supply of those Invisibility Facilitators we provided you with? You've probably not even looked into that carton. The instructions in it are clear. You just slip

one of those little computerized gadgets into the pocket of anybody who seems to have his eyes open, and his natural tendency to close them again will take over.

For 150 years we've had a lot of trouble because no matter how subtly we worked, some Mormons kept noticing what the words on the pages actually say. Though most of them have been pretty good at ignoring whatever they didn't want to see, too many of them just plain *paid attention*. Now our little computerized zapper does the trick.

Get busy on planting one of those on every Mormon who shows the slightest sign of beginning to look and think. And move fast, because we're working rapidly on our new editions of other church works. Your first shipment will be of four million reprints of cards with the revised Articles of Faith—you know, with little changes like "We believe in being subject to kings, rulers, magistrates, etc. And in obeying etc." . . . And then we just add, "And in accepting without question our leaders' judgments about art." Or: "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy, *and safe*, we seek after these things." Or: "We believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God, which has nothing to do with beauty."

Then we're making up little handouts and bumper stickers, with sayings like "The Glory of God is a carefully limited intelligence." "Man cannot be saved in total ignorance, but the more of it the better."

After that we'll be issuing revisions of all the presidents' collected discourses, slightly altering them wherever they give us trouble about art. The way people speed-read these days, and with the aid of the Invisibilitator, we can't fail.

I'll have to skip some details here that many of you know about if you've read the various collected Discourses. The Chief ran through each president, cutting everything he had to say in favor of music, art, architecture, beautifying cities, good books, gaining knowledge, and developing independent judgment. For example, the Chief says:

Where President Joseph F. Smith said, "Read good books. . . . Seek out of the best books knowledge and understanding. . . . Read anything that is good that will elevate the mind. . . ." *we* have it say, "Buy the best books and, without actually reading them, extract some good quotations for your Sacrament Meeting talks." Where President Brigham Young says, "Build beautiful cities in which may be found magnificent edifices . . . [and] handsome streets . . . to make our mountain home a paradise and our hearts wells of gratitude to the God of Joseph, enjoying it all with thankful hearts . . .," just change it a little, a *very* little, to "Build big commercial centers in which may be

I HAD AN ORIGINAL
THOUGHT ONCE, BUT
IT GAVE ME A
HEADACHE.



found the most economical and profitable buildings, to make our mountain home luxurious even if ugly, so that our hearts will be filled with gratitude for our deep freezes and our microwave ovens and two cars and four TV sets per family." When President David O. McKay says, "Music is truly the universal language, and when it is excellently expressed, how deeply it moves our souls," just change it slightly to "Computer language is the truly universal language, and when it is excellently programmed, how easy it makes things for our minds."

And where the Doctrine and Covenants reads, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom: seek learning, even by study and also by faith," we just print a slight change, "Seek ye out of the Reader's Digest of books, words of conventional wisdom: seek established learning, even by rote study and also by unthinking faith."

And finally, we'll not stop with modern texts. We're altering a few Biblical expressions, too. For example, when the Bible says "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you. For so did their fathers to the false prophets," we change it slightly to "*Blessed* are you, when all men shall speak well of you. For so did their fathers to the false prophets."

I don't want to hear from you again until you can say that Utah is blanketed with those Revised Standard Works, those cards—and those Invisibilitators—I mean Blinders.

The Chief

Smoother:

I grow a bit weary. Your latest campaign to convince people that the best art is too difficult to bother about is entirely misguided. You haven't understood that most Mormons are not afraid of difficulty and of hard work, and if they once discover that something is *truly* virtuous, lovely, and of good report, even though difficult, they'll dig in and try to obtain that difficult blessing. That's why they're so hard to work with—you've got to outsmart them, and the only way to do that is to keep them busy with and satisfied by trivia.

Let me try once again to explain why you have special problems with this bunch. It's all in their unfortunate traditions.

I have to cut here two pages of the Chief's little history of the Church, showing why it produced a people too many of whom are still trying to gain experience for themselves instead of depending on other people's.

He goes on:

With a people like *that* it's no good stressing that true art is just too much trouble: *that* crowd *lives* on trouble. Instead get them to seek out what is easy, kind of nice, and of good report on the best seller lists, then convince them that there's something wicked about trying to discriminate the best from the next best.

Try to memorize, if you can, the first principles of our gospel.

Major premise: Strong individual souls growing independently through exercising free agency are the *enemy's* bag.

Minor premise. Genuine artistic experience transforms *crowds* into *individual souls*, growing in independence and the capability of real loving community, rather than remaining dependent and fearfully clinging to each other.

Conclusion: Therefore, this is our work and our glory, to smooth out all individual feeling and judgment, so that people blur into crowds so homogenized they can't tell each other apart. Try to *think* about what this means.

The Chief

P.S. Here's another slogan to make into bumper stickers and T-shirts. "If God had really loved good art, he'd have hired Michelangelo to illustrate the Doctrine and Covenants."

The Chief

P.P.S. How *could* you allow the publication of that speech by the BYU president, the one where he said BYU gets only a B+ not an A? Your job is to teach everybody that *every* Church program, including what is done in the arts, is already an A+. When people start assigning B+ to Church achievements, first thing we know they'll be saying that the art works done in the name of the Church are only B+ and then where will we be?

Crossly,
The Chief

Dear Boss—

You keep complaining, but if you look at the figures, I must be doing something right. You remember we worked out that measurement scale, the Beauty Index Tabulation, or BIT, based on the number of hours individual Mormons spend either creating something beautiful or trying to recreate and understand and enjoy what others have created? Well, during my time in office I can boast that the average number of BIT's—the hours with beauty per Mormon per week, has gone steadily down. What's more, I've got proof that the Beauty/Crud ratio and the Active/Passive ratio have also gone steadily down.

You remember we decided that our prime testing time for BIT's would be Monday evening when the threat to our program was highest? Well, we found just this last Monday evening that more families than ever before chose to do their home evening by sneaking in TV or going together to the most relaxing movie they could find. But what I'm really proud about is that we found an increase of those who were

passively reading aloud from the Manual, which fortunately ignores serious art, and then asking each other those easy dull questions. Well, Boss, our poll last Monday showed fewer than ever working on anything likely to produce a memorable family experience.

I have to admit, though, that there are a few holdouts. I'm sorry to say that one Provo family last Monday actually put together a crazy combo of piano, guitar, violin and drum, and composed a hymn of their own instead of singing the one suggested. But I've got their bishop working on them.

Anyway, I hope you see how discouraging it is for you to keep on nagging at me, when I am getting mostly good results.

Smoother

P.S. I've been assuming that my best program with Mormon liberals is just to attack *them* directly, right? They all say they want more art, and they all seem to be against censorship, and they all seem to want art that deals directly with us and our works. So since they're always attacking our program, I just attack them head on. Right?

Dear Smoother,

Wrong! Wrong again! *Stupidly* wrong. You forget our guiding principles: First, people, *all* people, are partly on our side and respond best when not directly attacked. Second, we always have worked best, from Eve on, by boring from within. Now if *God* is smart enough to see behind labels like "liberal" and "conservative," and if he can thus get inside every soul, where the action is, you've got to learn to do the same. A so-called liberal is just as useful to us as a so-called conservative. They just require different tactics. When you find somebody who calls herself a liberal, flatter her for her courage and intelligence. Make her think that she becomes a heroine just by calling herself a liberal. Convince her that just to use words like liberal or unorthodox proves that you're thinking for yourself.

Remember: it is especially easy to get a liberal to pray "I thank thee Lord that I am not as other women," and once anybody does that, she's ours.

Third, never forget that when liberals begin to get excited about art works, and to realize that they can't count on their bishop to be exactly an infallible guide through the realms of beauty, they are likely to fall in love with the very *idea* of art and to begin talking as if *all* art is divine and all attacks on it come from the devil. Encourage them in that belief. Get them to say, as some of them will be glad to, that no art, however shoddy morally or technically, ever hurt anybody's soul, and that all questions about the morality of art are asked only by squares.

Here is a slogan you might put on every liberal's desk: "If you don't understand it, it's gotta be good." The point here, as with the conservatives, is to blind the liberals with sloganized thinking.

Fourth and last: play upon the liberal's belief that sin doesn't exist, and encourage his natural desire to blame all the world's ills on conservatives. Get him to spend his energy complaining behind closed doors instead of speaking out in meeting where ideas can be tested. And finally, convince him that he's only really thinking if his thinking is negative.

Well, as you can see, I could write an entire tract on the subject of how to seduce liberals. But if you'll just wake up and think a bit, you can work it out.

The Chief

25 March 1980

Goldang it, Smoother, you haven't the brains God gave Baal!

I am really almost running out of patience with you. You are always doing things backwards. In your last letter you boast about your campaign to discredit the Osmonds, because everybody says they are the best missionaries the Church has.

You seem to have forgotten our basic principles. Our program is not to attack any and all artistic life. In fact our program is not primarily concerned with art at all. What we are out to do, I must repeat, is to prevent spiritual awareness, the depth of spiritual experience, and the genuine growth in individual souls that comes through loving exchange of experience in a community of such souls.

Have you forgotten our slogan, inscribed over the very door you must pass through each time you return from Earth? "Homogenize, tranquilize, desensitize!" Can't you see that the very qualities that make the Osmonds so agreeable and pleasant make them our best allies?

Let me just quote from the *BYU Today* of this month:

As far as 46,000 people are concerned, the event of the year, notwithstanding the LDS Church Sesquicentennial . . . just happened in January at the BYU Marriott Center. The Osmonds performed live in concert. [They] did more than merely shatter glass or bend iron. They won an audience by igniting their afterburners, melting their artistic mettle, and pouring out their golden talents into eager ingots. No one was ingrate. Indeed, the Acts of the Osmonds [note, Smoother, please note the Biblical language here: the *Acts of the Osmonds!*] in spite of some bare backs, split skirts, long hair and rock beats, were well received. University officials talk now of canonizing them in some way. . . . "Our ultimate aim" Donny said, "is to make people happy with our music."

Just ask yourself what it means to us to have 46,000 people completely relaxed and smoothed for three hours, with no possibility of their falling into active worship, or serious thought, or deep emotion. Can't you see that the more there are whose afterburners are ignited in that pleasant, comfy, reassuring way on a Saturday night, the fewer will ask for anything more on Sunday morning or on Monday evening?

Wake up, man. Get out there and start developing more professional groups like that. Wherever you find people singing together for pleasure, not profit, playing music together, telling stories to each other, writing quietly in a study, praying with genuine feeling of gratitude for the beauties of this world, *put on an Osmond record*.

While you're at it, develop cozy versions of all the other arts, as our man Radamanthus has managed to do in the Soviet Union. Why not organize a "Utah Academy of the Comfortable Arts"?

Meanwhile, don't forget that even the symphony, even the best university theatre can serve our purposes if you'll just get *audiences* to sit piously and passively on their . . . cultural pride.

Get with it man!
Chief

Dear Smoother:

Your last still shows you floundering. Maybe it would help clear things up if you went to take a good look at what your predecessor, Slobber, achieved in the art of the Church's various visiting centers.

First he got everybody together to agree to a pitch aimed at visitors who knew nothing and cared less about art. Then he got them to hire some *non*-Mormon artists to do much of the work. Slobber knew that there were an increasing number of fine Mormon artists who would have been spiritually challenged with a commission like that, and that to see what happened would drive a wedge between some of them and the Church.

I recommend that you go sit in the Salt Lake Center for an hour each day for a week, followed by an hour outside looking at the Temple and the Tabernacle and across the street at that dangerously imaginative landscaping behind Hotel Utah. Then *think* about the differences, and you just might see the light.

Impatiently,
The Chief

P.S. You haven't commented on my suggestion that you set up a media office to help the Church distribute those commercial cassettes that turn Church history into sleeping pills. I especially recommend a program to encourage the growing practice by Sunday School teachers of using slide lectures instead of talking and living with the class. I

have taken a count of dead souls during some of those canned lectures, and believe me, the count was *good*.

Dear Smoother:

At last you seem to be catching on. I was delighted to learn from your report that your campaign has succeeded with the Church Architect's Office, and that they have decided to continue their policy of making every ward chapel look just like any other ward chapel. There's nothing that works so well to keep people from paying any attention to the quality of what they make and build than building everything on exactly the same plan. So long as we can keep every element of artistic originality or interest out of the ward buildings, we can hope that every member every Sunday will have at least three hours of absolute aesthetic quietude, with nothing visible that could possibly stimulate religious gratitude or joy.

There is of course the added benefit that any young Mormon with architectural genius is likely to be discouraged from taking up architecture as her career.

Your big task here is to make everyone feel that to put too much energy and thought into how a building looks is to forget its spiritual purpose—and besides, it wastes money. So keep your eye on that office. Be sure to let me know at the first sign that they might change their minds and hire an architect to design each new chapel.

In haste,
The Chief

Dear Boss,

I'm sorry to complain again, but it's a lot tougher than you think. You didn't even mention that this crowd has built big universities full of art and literature departments, with professors *paid* out of church funds to teach people to love art. They got a lot of troops up here, Boss, *paid* troops, working with missionary zeal to carry out that terrible program of President Kimball's.

So what I mainly need help on is this: in that university you didn't even mention, Brigham Young, do you know what they've got? They've got a general program for beautifying individual minds and hearts. And now they're gonna have a big symposium, one that threatens my whole mission!

But I got a plan, Boss, one that maybe shows I'm catching on. What I think we have to do, in the face of this symposium, is organize a bigger campaign than anything we've yet done. If we're gonna have an effective anti-personal-engagement-with-art campaign, I gotta have some reinforcements. If you could send up Slider, in hypocrisy, Smudger, in blurring, Stunter, who's so good in Pharisaism, and

Shrinker, as general manager, I think we could really put on a Counter Symposium in the Anti-Humanities that would by the end of that week in November leave not just the BYU campus but the whole state of Utah in a lovely condition of dehumanized sleepiness. How about it, Boss?

Smoother

Well, the next envelope seemed to be the last, and it was the fattest of the lot. Unfortunately because of the time I'll have to cut a good deal of it:

Bless you, Smoother,

Great stuff at last! The anti-criticism symposium is a marvelous idea. I like your idea so much that I will meet your request: Slider, Smudger, Shrinker, and Stunter are on their way. Also Smiley and Sneaker.

I *liked* those new slogans of yours: "A critical thought will come to nought"; "The devil thinks for himself"; "I don't know much about Art, but I know what the Church likes"; "The devil is a great artist with words, and look where it got *him*"; "If it was good enough for me last year, it's good enough for me this year." But yours *are* a bit long and cumbersome. You might try shorter ones like: "The mind is a bind," and "To think is to shrink."

Here are some other ideas. Try to make sure that everyone is too busy *talking* about art to find time to *make* any of it or *enjoy* any of it. Fill every hour of each day of the symposium with lectures and discussion groups. I hear there is a dangerous plan to present an actual play in the evening: *Stop that plan at all costs!* The evening should have *more lectures*. Get them to cut that woodwind octet—they're just too good. Remember, fill up every possible minute with long speeches so people don't have a chance to challenge each other. If you can't cancel that play, schedule a talk at the same time.

Finally, convince them all that to hold a conference on the humanities is as good as, maybe even better than, getting people active in creating some works of art.

Well, you can see that I too am growing excited about this coming symposium. It offers us the best chance we've had to make a real difference. Since BYU is the center of Mormon artistic creation and criticism, if we can dominate the humanities at BYU we can dominate the whole Mormon world, and hence, at the rate those detestable people are growing, soon the whole world will be ours.

In fact, I think I'll just come up myself for those three days . . .

Well, the letters ended there. I looked at my watch and saw that I just barely had enough time to walk over here and start talking.



I do feel uncomfortable about just reading you those letters, without preparing a talk of my own. It's sort of cheating. But if the Chief is right, any talk I might have given wouldn't have done much good anyway, not with all of *them* here in the audience with their Invisibility Facilitators.

Of course if I'd made the lucky find of the letters before last night, I might have warned everybody, or prepared a talk fighting back against them. As it is I'll just have to leave it up to you to determine whether they'll succeed in ruining this symposium. The trouble is that although the letters give a pretty clear picture of what *their* program is, they leave it up to us to decide what ours will be.

Whatever it is, if we're to fight back effectively it's obvious that we're going to need the help of someone on our side more powerful than the Chief of *their* side. I therefore conclude with a prayer that we'll work even harder than we have ever done before to discern our past mistakes, and to discover the Lord's will in the arts, thus to cultivate our souls in a loving but critically alert community.