

said that the collection was an example of "Mormons talking to Mormons about Mormonism" (Jan Shipps in *Pacific Historical Review* 52 [Feb. 1983]: 118). The implication was that it had little of value for the non-Mormon. Originally, we had intended the essays to speak both to Latter-day Saint and non-Mormon. Clearly, we had not succeeded. In essence, while we had served the faith well by clarifying the issues for Mormons, we had failed to serve it well at the same time because we had not reached non-Mormons.

As I see it, the principal challenge for the intellectual in service to the faith is to speak in a way that can be understood both by church members and by those outside the Church. Because of the problems I mentioned before, that is extremely difficult. In the attempt, we will undoubtedly find ourselves offending and being misunderstood both by members of the Church and by non-members. If, however, we expect to contribute anything in service to the faith from our expertise, we must continue to try.

Prometheus Hobbled: The Intellectual in Mormondom

Stanley B. Kimball

I assume an intellectual is anyone who is guided more by intellect than by emotions — leastways that's good enough for a country boy like myself.

By Mormon I mean something like "faithful" Mormon, not smarty-pants intellectuals, mere cultural Mormons to whom the faith is not deep and moving. If some of my comments appear critical, I am scoring the faithful Good Guys, those of us who should know better.

I feel very strongly about what too many Mormon intellectuals are doing or, more especially, not doing. Too many of us are too often too timid, too afraid that our faithfulness will be brought into question when we try to place our peculiar gifts on the altar, when we try to act in our service of the faith. *Pusillanimous* is a good description of some of us. We let the bureaucracy walk all over us, and the bureaucracy gets bigger and more powerful every year. Some have been questioned about writing for and associating with certain publications and institutions. I have not been, and that suggests quite eloquently how influential I am.

Instead of being afraid and hesitant in the service of our faith, we should be much more diligently and anxiously "engaged in a good cause," in making every effort to carry out President Kimball's absolutely glorious call to greatness entitled "The Gospel Vision of the Arts" which he first made in 1967.¹ We

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¹ Spencer W. Kimball, "The Gospel Vision of the Arts." *BYU Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1967); reprinted in *Ensign* 7 (July 1977): 2-5.

should be using our intellect to the fullest in glorifying God (I like the Jesuit motto, "Ad majorem Dei Gloriam!"), in plumbing the heights and depths of the real meaning of the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy *mind* (Matt. 22:37; italics added). We should be learning what the fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the so-called missionary section, means about a marvelous work, "Oh ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve Him with all your heart, might, *mind* and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day" (D&C 4: 2). How many of us will be blameless in this reference to "mind" service? Is it possible that this revelation contains a hint to reach out to even sophisticated souls, a suggestion that Mormon intellectuals might have some slight missionary value? I pray to God this is so.

Among other things, however, we take up entirely too much time trying to decide whether there even is a Mormon aesthetic. Of course there is. To a Davis County boy like myself, it is nothing more or less than a consideration of "creative sources, forms, and effects." Any Mormon artist/scholar/intellectual should be able to quickly and nicely explain whence his/her creative sources, what form he/she thinks best for him/her, and what effects he/she wishes to call forth. Maybe we should spend more time trying to identify and solve problems of the Mormon aesthetic.

Let us then get on with our peculiar calling to present and interpret the Restoration in both scholarly and artistic ways to all humankind, yea, even to the sophisticated.

Must we forever leave the field to the amateurs and the well-intentioned? to those who prefer inferior illustration (not even good enough to qualify for the opprobrious epithet of "Socialist realism") to real art? to those who prefer copies of authentic masterpieces of sculpture to originals so that the artistic sensitivities of a generation are stunted? Must we retreat from those who are not bothered by the distracting frontier English, repetition, tautologies, and storybook cadences of the temple text (may we not "adorn the doctrine of God," Titus 2:10)? surrender to those who scold innovative stake music directors, to those who prefer Mantovani to Mozart? Must Mormon theater and drama eternally be apotheosized and cryogenically dwarfed at the glorified roadshow level? Must a whole generation perish in theatrical unenlightenment? Must we sit and wail as the technocracy ignores the real purpose of religious architecture — that of enclosing sacred space rather than the prime requisite of today, functionalism and efficiency, decoration not adornment? Are our archives to be managed rather than utilized so that we may "know the truth and the truth may make us free"? (John 8:32) The day of the pioneer-plowman is over, the day of the businessman-administrator-bureaucrat, like the poor will be with us always. When will the epoch of the intellectual go beyond dawning and fully break?

Were the hobbles of Mormon Promethians to be removed, what might intellectuals in the Church effect? While it would take a full symposium to detail this radiant dream, the real answer is clear enough, the challenge already given, the way pointed in President Kimball's ringing, all-encompassing plea

for a superior Mormon culture in his "Gospel Vision of the Arts." One sentence sums up the challenge: "We must recognize that excellence and quality are a reflection of how we feel about ourselves, and about life, and about God." President Kimball adds, "For long years I have had a vision of members of the Church greatly increasing their already strong positions of excellence till the eyes of all the world be upon us."²

In light of this sixteen-year-old vision and challenge, is it not regrettable that official Mormon culture is still what it is — mediocre? that we self-appointed intellectuals as well as the business-technocrat-bureaucrat complex have so poorly risen to the challenge? Is it not a most serious oversight that the majesty of Mormonism is not better presented artistically? Could not this be considered as some sort of sin of omission?

As I said in 1980 at a similar Sunstone Symposium, "Intellectuals of Mormondom, arise. We have nothing to lose but our frustrations!"

In Mormondom, as everywhere else, there should be (and fortunately evidence comes forth frequently that there are) those with powers of scholarly and artistic discernment, those who can not only tell the difference between the good and the bad, but also between the good and the mediocre, and even the difference between the good and the very good. Such individuals should not only try to lay their gifts on the altar and be anxiously engaged in the good cause of glorifying God and bettering (as well as building) his kingdom through the proper exercise of intellect and artistic sensitivity, they should insist upon the right.

Why has the Church officially failed to carry out President Kimball's challenge? It is not a simple question of money, for bad art usually costs about as much as good. It is not lack of energy or manpower, for when similar pleas were made for home gardens, keeping journals, cleaning, and painting up, such challenges were vigorously promoted. It is not even wholly because intellectuals are unappreciated.

The Church taps the services of the best technocrats, businessmen, and bureaucrats it can find for routine administration worldwide. Why do we not demand the finest in culture? In the main, it is simply a matter of priorities.

Officially, the Church ignores the purpose of religious architecture. Contemporary chapels, perhaps the most widespread and visible symbol of the Restoration, are as devoid of Spirit as the latest junior high schools. And, at the highest level, one cannot help comparing the total appropriateness of everything about the Salt Lake Temple proper to the Las Vegas *Haute* of more recent temples. And why must many of our visitors' centers resemble Disneyland?

With few exceptions, the quality of official art and sculpture died ages ago; at best, uncontroversial illustrations reign supreme today. This lowly state of official Mormon art can best be exemplified by two things. One is the enormous mural of *Christ and the Twelve* in the Church Office Building, its very location proclaiming it as the exemplar of official Church art. When Saints visit headquarters, they see this inferior illustration. For our youth this is tragic. Com-

² Ibid., pp. 3, 5.

pare this experience with President Kimball's in Copenhagen when "we were excited and inspired as we drank in the beauty of Thorwaldsen's *Christ and the Twelve Apostles*."³ Mormon artists, properly fostered, could eventually match for the Church anything in Denmark or Europe.

When it comes to sculpture we prefer copies of authenticated masterworks such as the magnificent *Christus* dominating the visitors' centers in Salt Lake and Mesa. Several years ago, the *Church News* grandly announced that the marble from which the second copy in Mesa was made was "imported." Tush! The copy could have been made of solid platinum and it would still have been a dead moon, shining by reflected light, not its own.

In 1983 the same publication made as much over the fact that the damage to the Temple Square copy had been painstakingly restored as Rome did over the restored *Pieta*. What a lost opportunity! The damaged copy on Temple Square should have been quietly removed and an original *Christ of the Americas* commissioned and installed.

But no, and our children mature, thinking mere copies are perfectly proper in expressing the artistic dimension of the Restoration and the artistic vision of President Kimball, who in 1977 asked regarding Michelangelo, "Could we not find an embodied talent like this?" Well, we might at least try. The continued use of copies suggests publicly a Philistine mindset which neither recognizes our own sculptors nor wants their original works.

Over eighteen years ago in *BYU Studies* and seventeen years back in *DIALOGUE*, I grumped about the lack of sufficient *esprit de corps* among Mormon intellectuals for the improving of Mormon culture, which would not only benefit the Church and society but also lead to a better public image of us as a people, and also about the lack of properly developed Mormon themes for use within and without the Church to produce the finest culture possible, one commensurate with the import of the Restoration. I also wrote, "Mormon culture is potentially strong. The talent is available and faithful men stand by. [Oi veh! In those days I did not think to write men *and women*. But worse, not a soul ever pointed this out to me.] What is lacking is a climate, an atmosphere in which the intellectual becomes as necessary and as useful as the pioneer of the past and the administrator of the present . . . The time has come to create a climate wherein Mormon intellectuals may more fully serve, may be more fully engaged in a good cause, and may more effectively build up Zion and glorify God."⁴

In 1978, I sent a detailed report to the First Presidency's office suggesting how the Sesquicentennial might become an appropriate Jubilee Year to upgrade all forms and manifestations of Mormon culture, that "out of Zion the perfection of beauty" (Lam. 2:15) might proceed throughout the Church as a whole. Alas, the few cultural offerings of 1980 were not of that quality. While individual Mormons have done much to the greater glory of God, an officially generated and approved climate for the arts and intellectuals is as lacking today as in 1964.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴ Stanley B. Kimball, "Letter to the Editor," *DIALOGUE* 1 (Summer 1966): 14-15.