

What is the Challenge for LDS Scholars and Artists?

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"We will yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own."

—Orson F. Whitney

SINCE THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH, Mormon spiritual leaders have emphasized the importance of attaining knowledge, both spiritual and secular.¹ Not only have we been admonished to seek and value learning, but church leaders have predicted that church members would surpass the rest of the world in their scholarly and artistic accomplishments. President John Taylor exclaimed,

You will see the day that Zion will be far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind as we are today in regard to religious matters.² God expects Zion to become the praise and glory of the whole earth, so that kings, hearing of her fame, will come and gaze upon her glory.³

1. A few examples include the following:

Joseph Smith: "One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith*, reprint edition (Salt Lake City, Deseret Books, 1989) m, 313); "We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true Mormons" (*Ibid.*, pg. 316). Brigham Young: "Let [the members] be educated in every useful branch of learning. . . (Journal of Discourses 12:22); "Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all sciences and art belong to the Saints (*Ibid.*, 10:24); "How gladly we would understand every principle pertaining to science and art, and become thoroughly acquainted with every intricate operation of nature and with all the chemical changes that are constantly going on around us!" (*Ibid.*, 9:167); "Mormonism embraces all truth, including scientific" (*Ibid.*, 9:149); "Our religion will not clash with or contradict the facts of science in any particular" (*Ibid.*, 14:116).

2. John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses*, 21:100

3. *Ibid.*, 20:47

Many years later, in the first of three related addresses at BYU, President Kimball stated,

BYU certainly must continue to be the greatest university, unique and different. In these fields [drama, music, literature, sculpture, painting, science, and all the graces] and in many others, there should be an ever widening gap between this school and the other schools. The reason is obvious. Our professors and instructors should be peers or superiors to those at any other school in natural ability, extended training, plus the Holy Spirit, which should bring them light and truth.⁴

Implicit in these statements is the belief that processes which underlie the attainment of spiritual knowledge also underlie the attainment of secular knowledge and that because church members are privy to the gift of the Holy Ghost, this, coupled with a love of learning, will result in unparalleled scholarly and artistic attainment. President Joseph Fielding Smith explicitly underscored these ideas when he said,

Knowledge comes by both reason and revelation. We expect the natural unfolding of knowledge to occur as a result of scholarship, but there will always be that added dimension which the Lord can provide when we are qualified to receive and he chooses to speak.⁵

Dr. Allen Bergin, an emeritus BYU professor of Clinical Psychology, published an article in *BYU Studies* in 1979 further rounding out these teachings. He stated,

I believe in bringing the Restoration to the academic world by infusing scholarly work with values, revelations, and inspired methods of inquiry that derive from the gospel. If this can be done rigorously and successfully, the results could be revolutionary. . .but first, *it must be understood that the principle of revelation is as fundamental to the University as it is to the gospel itself.* . . .In keeping with Church teachings, I believe that the extraordinary insights of scientists, scholars, and artists come by revelation in the context of disciplined and educated searching. This means that the process that pertains to sacred knowledge also applies to secular knowledge, for the origins of both lie ultimately in the same divine source of truth.⁶ (Emphasis in the original)

4. Spencer W. Kimball, "Climbing the Hills Just Ahead" in *Educating Zion*, ed. John W. Welsh and Don E. Norton (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1996), 56-57.

5. Joseph Fielding Smith, as quoted in Spencer W. Kimball's "Climbing the Hills Just Ahead" in *Educating Zion*, 71.

6. Allen E. Bergin, "Bringing the Restoration to the Academic World: Clinical Psychology as a Test Case," *BYU Studies* (April, 1979): 449.

And yet, while LDS scholars and artists do make contributions (and at times significant ones) to their respective fields,⁷ one could easily argue that we have not lived up to our potential as encouraged and foreseen by our spiritual leaders. In spite of inspired teachings which assert that the discovery of all truth comes from the same divine source and that "all truth can be circumscribed into one great whole,"⁸ non-LDS scholars and artists are responsible for the overwhelming majority of the world's significant advances in the fields of knowledge. Although the Nobel and Pulitzer Prizes are not the only standards by which to judge world-class achievement in the arts and sciences, a quick look at the religious affiliation of winners illustrates a world-wide trend:

TABLE 1
Religious Background of Nobel Laureates (1901-2002) and
Pulitzer Prize winners (1917-1998)⁹

		Jewish	Protest.	Catholic	Other	Indeterm	Non-rel.	Total
Nobel Prize	# won	127	221	66	36	184	105	739
	% won	(17%)	(30%)	(9%)	(5%)	(25%)	(14%)	
	% of μ	(.2%)	(7%)	(17%)	(39%)		(14%)	
Pulitzer Prize	# won	33	46	20	6	339	N/A	444
	% won	(7%)	(10%)	(4.5%)	(1.3%)	(76%)		
	% of μ	(.2%)	(7%)	(17%)	(39%)			

Clearly, Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners do not come from a representative cross section of the population. Winners for whom religious back-

7. For a listing of names and contributions of LDS scientists, see *Latter-day-Saints and Science: Some Contributions of LDS Scientists*, by Mark W. Cannon. This can be found online at www.meridianmagazine.com.

8. Howard W. Hunter, "President's Formal Charge of Responsibility," *LDS Church News*, 26 Nov. 1994.

9. I am grateful to Dr. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi of the University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel, for providing us with the bulk of the Nobel data in this table. Dr. Beit-Hallahmi and his associates used available biographical information on each Nobel laureate from 1901 to 1996 to compile their data. Using this method, I proceeded to compile the remainder of the data, from 1996 to 2002. The "biographical method" of ascertaining religious affiliation is admittedly imprecise. Note that the "indeterminate" category contains cases where information is lacking or ambiguous, and really reflects, according to Dr. Beit-Hallahmi, a low level of religiosity, or none at all.

The Pulitzer data in this table came from Brennan, E. A., & Clarage, E. C. (1999). *Who's who of Pulitzer Prize winners*. Orynx Press. Only winners from fiction, non-fiction, drama, biography/autobiography, history, music, novel, and poetry had their religious affiliation information included in the table. Data relative to the differing religious groups and their proportions in the population at-large came from www.adherents.com.

ground information was available are disproportionately represented by main line Protestant backgrounds, although Jews are highly over-represented relative to their numbers in the general population.¹⁰ Conversely, the percentage of Catholic winners is smaller than their percentage of the population as a whole. Furthermore, it is meaningful to note that in the overwhelming majority of cases, prize winners are *not* religious individuals.¹¹ The labels used in this table designate family-of-origin religious affiliation rather than winners' devotion to a particular set of religious beliefs per se.

Why do individuals from Jewish and Protestant backgrounds win so many prizes? Some have posited conspiracy theories. Others have advanced more plausible explanations. For example, Dr. John Hulley, former senior economist with the World Bank in Washington, D.C. and author of *Comets, Jews, and Christians*, asserted in a recent interview¹² that a symbiotic relationship exists between Protestants and Jews. In short, Hulley believes Protestant countries, such as the United States, Great Britain, and Germany, provide a fertile soil in which Jews thrive: these countries offer a social environment of *freedom, tolerance, and incentive* which allows would-be scholars and artists the room and safety they need to flower.

Given that most Latter-day Saints reside in Protestant countries, why haven't we experienced a world-class flowering of LDS art and scholarship, such as has occurred among the Jews? Are there factors inherent within LDS culture (our "soil") which might impact academic and artistic accomplishment? On a personal level, we, the authors, freely acknowledge that as LDS academics, we have not contributed any significant scholarly advances to our respective fields. Apart from the many potential idiosyncratic reasons for our lack of achievement (e.g., insufficient IQ, lack of creativity, laziness), answers to these questions are likely to be complex and multifaceted. We speculate about a few that may apply to us, as well as to the general body of LDS scholars and artists.

10. Remarkably, Jews constitute only 0.2% of the world population, yet they win over 17% of Nobel Prizes.

11. The author of the table asserted that, for this data, the labels *Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, or Other* are in the overwhelming majority of cases not a reflection of religiosity, but of its absence ("Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, Religious Affiliation, Religiosity, and Scientific Eminence: A Survey of Nobel Prize Winners 1901-2001," unpublished manuscript).

12. John Hulley interview, *The Jerusalem Post*, Internet Edition, Sunday, May 11, 1997 (www.jp.com).

CULTURAL CHALLENGES:

1. *Our priorities and lifestyle may conflict with achieving scholarly and artistic eminence.*

It is our general view that all other things being equal (such as IQ and native talent), scholarly and artistic accomplishments boil down to *time commitment*. As members of the LDS faith, we are admonished to adopt a hierarchy of priorities which places secular attainment after spouse, family, and church.¹³ Not only are we encouraged to value the institution of marriage, but we are encouraged to marry early; not only are we encouraged to value and respect the family unit, but we are encouraged to start a family early and to have many children; not only are we encouraged to develop testimonies of the gospel, but we are encouraged to attend church regularly and to accept church callings, some of which can be quite labor-intensive and time-consuming. The result is a lifestyle oriented towards familial relationships and ecclesiastical duties, which may not be conducive to achieving a high level of artistic or scholarly prominence.

Take, for example, the cases of a close friend of ours and his younger brother, both of whom were blessed with considerable IQ, motivation, and means to succeed. Our friend, early in his youth, became disaffected from the church, while his younger brother remained devout. Both excelled academically at the undergraduate level, yet only the younger brother married at this time. The older brother went on to complete advanced degrees at the London School of Economics, Cambridge, and ultimately Oxford, joined the faculty at the University of Chicago, and then published a book. He finally married in his mid-thirties, but remains childless by choice. The younger brother took a much more conventional, albeit rigorous path, completing medical school at the Albert Einstein School of Medicine while serving as a bishop and fathering four children. For the sake of his family, he altered his initial plans to become a researcher and entered a more practical and lucrative field of medicine. Both brothers have certainly been successful; however, the younger brother has sacrificed the possibility of scholarly prominence for gospel priorities, while the older brother continues to devote his life to scholarship and is achieving increasing recognition in his field.

Pursuing eminence in the arts can pose similar challenges to active

13. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Focus and priorities," *Ensign* (May 2001): 82; Russell M. Nelson, "Identity, Priority, and Blessings," *Ensign* (August, 2001); Richard G. Scott, "First Things First," *Ensign* (May 2001): 6.

members of the church. Consider the experience of some local friends, both educated in music, who happened to attend two back-to-back organ concerts several years ago and noted a stark contrast in the performers. The first concert featured an acclaimed, world-class organist, who gave a virtuoso performance. The second performer was an organist for the Tabernacle Choir, who also offered a fine performance, but who clearly lacked the skill of the first organist. To our friends' minds, the most obvious variable in these diverging performances was the fact that the first performer was married solely to her craft while the second performer was an active church member and father of eight with obligations tugging him in many directions. We as believers carry the conviction that the second organist will ultimately enjoy a richer life experience because of his priorities, but we can't deny that he will most likely have made artistic sacrifices in the process.

In our opinion, artistically or academically gifted LDS women are even more likely to experience these priority conflicts than are their similarly gifted male counterparts. Men have church sanction to pursue career paths which might coincide with their unique abilities. LDS women, on the other hand, while receiving encouragement to become educated, are generally not encouraged to pursue careers or time-consuming endeavors outside the home unless marriage ultimately is not an option. As a result, the likelihood of LDS women becoming artists or scholars of renown is even lower than it is for men.

Given the demanding three-fold mission of the church, even those of us who dedicate the hours between 9:00 and 5:00 to academic or artistic careers will, because of the value choices we have made, likely take up the remaining, waking hours with church and family priorities. Gospel priorities, though they may afford us many blessings, put devout Mormons at a disadvantage when it comes to producing world-class art and scholarship.

2. *We tend to value conventionality, orthodoxy, and adherence to authority.*

There is too much sameness in this community. . . I am not a stereotyped Latter-day-saint and do not believe in the doctrine. . . away with stereotyped Mormons!

—Brigham Young

The prophet Joseph Smith broke sharply from 19th century conventions in restoring the gospel. Some of his teachings, such as polygamy and the United Order, were unconventional enough to contribute to his martyrdom and to force the early Saints to flee west to avoid persecution. We as members may still consider ourselves "a peculiar people," yet as the church has grown into a global organization now entering the 21st century, our image has evolved: today, we are perceived as conventional

and conservative in our values, behavior, and political orientation.¹⁴ Indeed, Latter-day Saints seem to fit well within certain professions such as politics, law, and business, where maintaining the status quo is often valued and emphasized. An LDS faculty member at Harvard University recently observed that while members of the church were well-represented at her institution's prestigious Business and Law Schools, very few LDS students could be found in Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. She suggested that perhaps our culture encourages "action-oriented talents" more than "contemplative talents."¹⁵ Latter-day Saint celebrities such as Stephen R. Covey, J. Willard Marriott, Orrin Hatch, the Osmonds, and Steve Young, while their accomplishments may be noteworthy, could all be described as having succeeded in "action-oriented" fields rather than contemplative ones. And yet, contemplation is an essential ingredient in the production of significant art and scholarship.

Coupled with our conventional social tendencies, we as members of the church receive considerable encouragement to heed church authorities and to be orthodox in our thinking as it relates to our faith.¹⁶ A united governing body advocating a set of uniform beliefs helps the church function smoothly and provides us with the consistency and structure we need to place and keep our feet firmly on the gospel path. In addition, we are assured that our leaders "will never lead [us] astray,"¹⁷ and are encouraged to accept that "when the prophet speaks, the debate is over."¹⁸ Church authorities often re-emphasize these teachings, which likely have significant benefits for us as church members, bringing peace of mind as we struggle with life's complexities.

Yet, what impact might these tendencies—conventionality, orthodoxy, and adherence to authority—have on the creativity, ingenuity, and innovative thinking necessary for scholarly and artistic advances? Psychological research has shown that those with orthodox religious beliefs appear to think less complexly about religious issues.¹⁹ But what is the

14. David Van Biema, "Kingdom Come," *Time Magazine*, Aug. 1997.

15. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, personal communication, 21 January 2003.

16. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "A Prayer for the Children," *Ensign* (May 2003): 85-87; N. Eldon Tanner, "The Debate is Over," *Ensign* (August, 1979): 2; Dallin H. Oaks, "Alternate Voices," *Ensign* (May, 1989): 27; Ezra Taft Benson, "Fourteen Fundamentals of Following the Prophet," address given at BYU, Feb. 26, 1980; Robert D. Hales, "Hear the Prophet's Voice and Obey," *Ensign* (May 1995): 15; H. Ross Workman, "Beware of Murmuring," *Ensign* (November 2001): 85; Alan P. Burton, "Follow the Brethren," *Ensign* (October 1972): 5.

17. Wilford Woodruff, *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), 212-213.

18. Tanner, "The Debate is Over," 2.

19. C. D. Batson and L. Raynor-Prince, "Religious Orientation and Complexity of

relationship between religious orthodoxy and flexibility of thought about non-religious subjects? Is it possible to be "in the box" religiously, but "out of the box" secularly? Psychological research attempting to answer this question has been mixed.²⁰ Judaism, however, may provide a meaningful model for speculation. In Table 1, we saw that fully 17% of all Nobel Prizes have been awarded to individuals of Jewish background. Yet, not one of those prizes has been awarded to an Orthodox Jew.²¹ Orthodoxy in and of itself is unlikely to be the sole cause of this difference in achievement, but the disparity is striking. Best-selling Jewish author Chaim Potok has written extensively about the inherent tension between living an orthodox religious life and pursuing scholarly or artistic achievement. Of his own writing, he says:

All of my books are an attempt to explore the dimensions of this kind of confrontation. . . .Do [we] throw out [secular] truths in order to maintain our uniqueness, our allegiance to our particular religious "core"? Is that the price that is being exacted from us? That's the tension my characters are caught up with. . . .A tension felt by many people with whom I grew up. . .²²

People of all faiths have resonated to the themes of Potok's books. This kind of conflict is clearly not unique to Jews, but one felt by orthodox believers from many religious traditions.

When we think of our most admired pioneers in the arts and sciences, how many would we consider to have been conventional in terms of their thinking or their approach to their life's work? From Shakespeare to Hemingway, Newton to Einstein, Galileo to Hawking, Mozart to Gershwin, and Rembrandt to Picasso, history's great innovators have had a significant impact upon the world in large part because they have pushed the envelope of convention. As devout members of the church

Thought about Existential Concerns," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22 (1983): 38-50; and M. W. Pratt, B. Hunsberger, S. M. Pancer, and D. Roth, "Reflections on Religion: Aging, Belief Orthodoxy, and Interpersonal Conflict in Adult Thinking about Religious Issues," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 31 (1992): 514-522.

20. See R. A. Altermayer, *Enemies of Freedom*. (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 1988); M.B. Lupfer, P. A. Hopkinson, and P. Kelley, "An Exploration of the Attributional Styles of Fundamentalists and Authoritarians," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27 (1988): 389-398; M. Meadow, and R. Kahoe, *Psychology of Religion: Religion in Individual Lives* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); and S. M. Pancer, L. M. Jackson, B. Hunsberger, M.W. Pratt, J. Lea, "Religious Orthodoxy and the Complexity of Thought about Religious and Non-religious Issues." *Journal of Personality* 63 (June 1995): 2.

21. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, personal communication to authors on 13 January 2003.

22. Chaim Potok, "On Being Proud of Uniqueness," lecture at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, March 20, 1986.

See <http://www.lasierra.edu/%7Eballen/potok/Potok.unique.html>.

striving for excellence in scholarly and artistic endeavors, we may have to tolerate a certain amount of tension between our faith's emphasis upon orthodoxy and conventionality and our attempt to look at our lives and our work in fresh, innovative, new ways.

3. Dogmatism.

There has been great difficulty getting anything into the heads of this generation. . . . I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them. . . fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes which is contrary to their traditions. . . .

—Joseph Smith²³

Dogmatism is defined as “positiveness in assertion of opinion, especially when unwarranted or arrogant; a viewpoint or system of ideas based on insufficiently examined premises.”²⁴ A good synonym for dogmatism is closed-mindedness. One memorable example of a dogmatic individual is Archie Bunker, the main character from the 1970's sit-com *All In The Family*. Archie, a church-going man with minimal education, is a self-proclaimed expert on any number of subjects from politics to race to relationships to religion. In reality, he knows very little and has rarely scrutinized that which he *thinks* he knows. Audiences either loved or hated Archie, but we all had to admit that we recognized him—within our communities, our families, or at times within ourselves.

There is a stark contrast between the closed and open mind, the one-dimensional and multi-dimensional thinker. In Victor Hugo's masterpiece *Les Miserables*, the character Javert is so obsessed with the letter of the law that he spends his life in a self-defeating quest to punish ex-convict Jean Valjean, a man who has long since reformed. By contrast, the character Monseigneur Bienvenu transforms Valjean's life by extending him mercy after Jean has betrayed the cleric's hospitality by stealing from him. There are demigods in the world who with their followers piously scapegoat those who are different or “deviant.” But there are also Mother Therasas, who gather in outcasts and untouchables across all racial and religious differences. The Pharisees in the New Testament fail to recognize the Messiah in their midst because of their dogmatic focus on strict adherence to purity laws. Meanwhile, Jesus turns this same religious establishment on its head by proclaiming those who count themselves righteous as sinners. Those who count themselves sinners, he says, stand at the threshold of the Kingdom of God.

23. *History of the Church*, VI: 184-185.

24. *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Edition.

Dogmatic individuals do not question their assumptions and, as a result, are highly unlikely to push back the frontiers of knowledge. One might ask, what is wrong with a person's dogmatically holding on to a true belief? We, however, are convinced that truth, whether spiritual or secular, is typically multi-faceted and multi-leveled. If we assume there is nothing more or surprising or contradictory to learn, we are not likely to discover truths hidden beneath or within the truth to which we cling. Our knowledge of the truth will remain partial and static.

To be sure, we as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints *do not* have the market cornered on dogmatism or close-mindedness. Just as there can be dogmatic Mormons, there can be dogmatic philosophers, scientists, atheists, liberals, conservatives, and so forth. But because there is so much in the storehouse of insights the restored gospel provides, we as members of the church can easily be lulled into believing that we have all the significant answers. We may not feel any need to question or re-examine our viewpoints, nor approach the world around us in an open, self-questioning, inquisitive way. To the extent that we are dogmatic, we limit ourselves as artists and scholars.

4. *We may not use the Spirit as well as we could.*

Non-Mormon scholars are responsible for the overwhelming majority of the world's advances in knowledge. If it is true, as President Smith and Dr. Bergin assert, that revelation is the guiding factor in the growth of all human knowledge, two conclusions suggest themselves: (1) the Spirit's influence is much broader and less partisan than church members typically assume, and/or (2) we as LDS scholars and artists are not making very broad or efficient use of the influence of the Spirit.

With respect to the first conclusion, N. Elden Tanner wrote:

We learn from the scriptures that all truth is revealed through the light of Christ. . . . Thus, the truths discovered by such men as Sir Isaac Newton, Thomas Edison, and Albert Einstein were actually revealed to them through the light of Christ.²⁵

As evidenced by the innumerable academic and artistic accomplishments of "gentile" society, the Spirit works in a wide variety of contexts, with a wide variety of individuals, who have a wide variety of life-experiences. Yet we Latter-day Saints don't often acknowledge that the Spirit is actively involved with people who are *not* members of our church, many of whom have lifestyles incompatible with our religious ideals.

25. N. Eldon Tanner, "Ye Shall Know the Truth," *Ensign* 8 (May 1978):15.

With respect to the second conclusion, one could ask if LDS academics and artists are perhaps too prideful to seek the Spirit as earnestly as we might. Perhaps we're unaccustomed to or uncomfortable with seeking divine guidance in our academic and artistic pursuits. Using the terminology of Abraham Maslow,²⁶ perhaps too few of us are "peakers": individuals genuinely aware of and connected to the spiritual aspects of life, and so we struggle to identify and be guided by the Spirit.

Ironically, participation in orthodox religion can sometimes lead to a dulling of sensitivities and a de-sacralizing of much of the rest of life for very normal and understandable reasons. First, "familiarization and repetition generally produce a lowering of the intensity and richness of consciousness, even though they produce preference, security, comfort, etc. Familiarization, in a word, makes it unnecessary to attend, to think, to feel, to live fully, to experience richly."²⁷ For example, none of us likely had any difficulty staying alert during our first temple session. Yet how many of us have struggled to attend closely or even stay awake in later sessions? Secondly, "participation in orthodox religion can lead to the tendency to dichotomize life into the transcendent (church-oriented) and the secular-profane (everything else) and can, therefore, compartmentalize and separate life temporally, spatially, conceptually, and experientially."²⁸ Perhaps we're guilty of bifurcating our lives into the secular and the sacred, not believing as deeply as we might that "all things are spiritual" (D&C 29:34). Orthodox religion is not unhealthy in-and-of itself, but we would be well-served to be vigilant in countering such stultifying processes once we recognize them.

We've coined the term "Joseph Smith Complex" to refer to our tendency as a people to recognize only a limited, typically dramatic, set of experiences as being spiritual (for example, feeling a "burning in the bosom" after prayer, hearing a voice, having a dream, seeing a vision, or receiving a directive from a priesthood leader), and only certain places as being validly spiritual, such as the church, the temple, or the Sacred Grove. But as Abraham Maslow points out,

The great lesson to be learned from the true mystics. . . is that *the sacred is in the ordinary*, that it is to be found in one's daily life, in one's neighbors, friends, [work], and family, in one's back yard. . . . To be looking elsewhere for miracles is to me a sure sign of ignorance that *everything* is miraculous.²⁹

26. Abraham Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 27-29.

27. *Ibid.*, 34.

28. *Ibid.*, 33.

29. *Ibid.*, x-xi.

Whatever limitations we may face, the Spirit can enhance what and who we are, which in turn can have a significant impact upon our work. In this respect, desiring and explicitly seeking the Spirit to broaden, enlighten, and invigorate us is a crucial aspect of our reaching our full potential as artists and scholars.

TWO CONTRASTING EXAMPLES OF SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENT:

In our research, we came across two unique world-renowned scholars from LDS backgrounds, each of whom illustrates a different road taken in the attempt to integrate faith and scholarly pursuits.

Dr. Paul D. Boyer, emeritus UCLA professor, won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1997. From personal communications with Dr. Boyer, we learned that he was born and reared in an LDS home in Provo, Utah, and graduated with a B.S. from BYU in 1939. However, when we inquired as to whether the LDS faith had played a prominent role in his life, he informed us, "No, except that the church helped establish good schools in Utah. . . . At the time I was there, BYU was not nearly as conservatively dominated by the Mormon church." He went on to tell us that he and his wife had their names removed from membership roles many years ago and offered the following perspectives on his evolving attitude toward religion in relation to science:

All the truths I know about how living things function, about the wonderful world in which we live and the universe have come from science, not religion. I am amazed that some fellow scientists believe in your type of God. I note that the greater the accomplishment and the more understanding of the science of biochemistry and molecular biology, the less likely is a scientist to have a belief in any religious doctrine or a monotheistic deity.³⁰

While Dr. Boyer has had, by his account, a fulfilling marriage and a rich family life in spite of the rigor of his work,³¹ he at some point decided to forego religious faith in favor of scientific explanations.

Contrast Dr. Boyer with the experiences of LDS Pulitzer Prize winner Dr. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, who was born and reared in an LDS home in Sugar City, Idaho. As an undergraduate, she studied at the University of Utah. Regarding her educational experiences, she told us:

Although I didn't realize it at the time, I think I was fortunate in having been

30. Paul D. Boyer, personal communication with authors, 11 January 03.

31. Paul D. Boyer, autobiographical information included on the Nobel Prize web site (www.nobel.com).

raised in a family, a community, and at a time when the church really emphasized learning.³²

In the midst of her scholarly pursuits, Dr. Ulrich married and had five children. Eventually she completed her doctoral degree, wrote a book for which she won the 1991 Pulitzer Prize in History, and landed a faculty position at Harvard. Dr. Ulrich has been an active member of the church her whole life. When asked if she had “paid a price” or experienced any conflicts between being a world-class scholar and an active Mormon, she replied,

The price [I pay] is in being mistrusted in some LDS settings and circumstances. But I think there is real strength in “not fitting in.” . . . I think gender makes a huge difference. In my case it may have been an advantage because I began my career during a period when feminism was transforming the disciplines. I had the sense of doing something rare and important, and that sustained me. . . . I am fortunate that I have a very supportive husband and children and have chosen a field of work in which life experience is an advantage. My life experience as a mother, grandmother, wife, and active Mormon has been enriching *though time consuming!* I had to learn to take my own work seriously, and that wasn’t easy.³³

As these two examples illustrate, significant challenges and risks are involved in creating world-class scholarship and art as an active Latter-day-Saint. But it can be done.

CONCLUSIONS?

Will we ever see the day prophesied by John Taylor, when “Zion shall be far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind”? Perhaps, but we must acknowledge that world-class achievement in the arts and sciences is an extreme rarity and will always be the exception rather than the rule. Of course, we have had less than two-hundred years in which to establish ourselves as a culture in comparison to the three-thousand-year-old Jewish tradition, so perhaps patience is in order. Yet patience notwithstanding, we can’t overlook what is likely to be the single most important variables, beyond “genius” in academic or artistic accomplishment: time commitment and focused hard work.

As scholars and artists struggle to balance Gospel commitments with intellectual and artistic pursuits, it would seem wise to heed King Ben-

32. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, personal communication with authors, 21 January 03.

33. Ibid.

jamin's words: "...see that these things are done in wisdom and in order, for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27). Perhaps the Spirit can help us discern which concessions to our faith are merely conventional or dogmatic, versus which are inspired and godly. Openness to experience, willingness to ask questions and re-examine assumptions, and increased self-awareness all can and will seem threatening to familiar conventions. Can we, and this is the heart of the dilemma, humbly ask the Spirit to guide us beyond our safe and certified, conventional selves?