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Toward a Theology of Dissent: An Ecclesiological Interpretation

Matthew Bowman

My goal here is twofold. First, I want to demonstrate that current notions about dissent in the Church—whether it is good or bad—are inadequate because the language available for talking about dissent is insufficient. Both dissenters and their critics oversimplify and improperly conflate categories, which leads to a great deal of suspicion and mistrust on all sides because we can't communicate effectively with each other. This deficiency is not particularly anyone's fault; rather, it indicates that we need a better concept of what dissent is, so that we can talk about it in more subtle ways.

Thus, my second task is to present a particular way of thinking

about Mormon ecclesiology. Ecclesiology is relevant because dissent is inherently a churchly act; the very word implies a particular relationship with authority. What I have to offer, I hope, will aid us in thinking about the roles dissent might play in a Mormon ecclesiological context.

For many Mormons, the word *dissent* functions, more or less, as a synecdoche for *apostasy*—that state defined in official Church publications as a state of being rather than as a particular violation, as a general orientation against the principles of the faith.[1] Elders Neal A. Maxwell, James E. Faust, and Russell M. Nelson, among other contemporary General Authorities, have used the terms interchangeably. There is simultaneously a great deal of line-blurring and very little wiggle room here. Dissenters stand in company with "critics" and "skeptics—anyone who keeps us in darkness and tries to keep us from finding the light," as President Faust put it.[2] "Saints of the Lord follow Him and His anointed leaders," Elder Nelson warned, so inevitably "the path of dissent leads to real dangers." He offered as an example the corrupted Nephite dissenters referred to in Alma 47:36, who "not long after their dissensions became more hardened and impenitent, and more wild, wicked and ferocious."[3]

According to these apostles, dissent is a manifestation of two sins: the specific crime of contention and disobedience but also, consistent with its characterization as apostasy, a sign that one is generally out of harmony with the Church and therefore out of harmony with the faith the Church teaches. Indeed, the identification between assent to authority and commitment is so close that that the Church's official reference work *True to the Faith* promises: "You can safeguard yourself against personal apostasy by keeping your covenants, obeying the commandments [and] following Church leaders."[4]

This sort of conflation is unfortunate but also understandable. The most famous dissenters in Mormon history may be the Book of Mormon characters Laman and Lemuel.[5] Close behind, of course, come the triple anti-Christs of the same book. Given the imperative of "likening" that governs Mormon scriptural hermeneutics, the examples of Sherem and Korihor can be read, not merely as particular events, but also as normative generalizations. Since Sherem and Korihor advocated dissent out of insincerity

and a conscious decision to follow Satan rather than God, and since Laman and Lemuel murmured, and since the Nephite dissenters who followed Amalekiah did so despite their "knowledge of the Lord" (Alma 47:36), it is easy to conclude that dissent is inherently harmful both to the Church and to the believer. Moreover, in all of these cases, dissent is not accidentally or unintentionally harmful but is undertaken with deliberate and malevolent intent.

Consequently, given the scriptural and institutional authority behind these assertions, it seems clear that it is quite Mormon to label dissent evil. But many dissenters insist that their actions are not the fruit of apostasy. Rather they are motivated by deep commitment to the principles of Mormonism. They point to the tradition of Joseph Smith, dissenter from frontier evangelicalism. They insist that Mormon doctrine describes individuals who are born equipped with the right to seek divine inspiration, tools of powerful spiritual discernment, and a conscience uncorrupted by the Fall; thus, they are able to correctly make moral decisions—and all of this independent of the structure of the institution. This argument ought to temper our fear of dissent by reminding us that dissent is as rooted in Mormon theology as the assertions of obedience to authority of the apostles quoted above.

But neither of these competing definitions of dissent is entirely satisfying. Their ways of addressing each other, for instance, seem rather one-sided, each becoming an excuse for disregarding the other. On the one hand, we are told that personal inspiration should confirm what General Authorities have already stated; on the other, we hear the constantly repeated mantra that the Brethren are capable of mistakes, too. These claims do little to resolve the deeper tension between individual conscience and the ordained hierarchy, a tension that exists because Mormonism grants to both a legitimate claim to epistemological authority.

Resolving this tension seems an impossible conundrum. However, Catholic theologian Avery Cardinal Dulles has offered a definition of dissent that uses that tension in a constructive fashion. According to Dulles, dissent, as differentiated from a sinful state like apostasy, is rather a single measured judgment, in which a Church member takes exception to one of the Church's declared

positions. Further, dissent is, in the best cases, not merely a theoretical or intellectual disagreement but an imperative born of a "divergent sense of moral obligation."[6]

Several points of interest lurking here add texture to the debate between conscience and authority. First, a dissenter can honestly perceive the decision as a moral one. Dulles and other Catholic theologians assert that such a thing is possible within righteousness because human nature, though scarred by the Fall, naturally tends to the moral; conscience, therefore, can, in many cases, be trusted.[7] Mormon theology, as I have indicated, offers similar warrant for the exercise of conscience.

But at the same time, Dulles reminds us that dissent always occurs within the context of a church, not merely as a rejection of it. This is important because, for both Catholics and Mormons, belonging to a church means membership in an ecclesiastical body that claims to be more than merely a gathering of Christians. Rather, God is in contact with the Church as well as with the individual. In other words, the church is a sacrament; it is a channel through which God extends grace and duty to human beings in ways not possible for individuals alone. In such a religion, authority and conscience exist in dialectic; they condition each other, strain at each other, but neither can exist fully before God without the other. The Church does not exist for its own sake, but neither do we gain salvation in isolation. So one can—and should—dissent as a member of a faith. The act of dissent should not be understood as a departure from that Church but rather as an act within it that draws upon its theology, history, and relationships. A Mormon dissenter should dissent first as a Mormon.

In a way, then, Dulles affirms both sides of the present Mormon debate. But it is in the acceptance of that tension that, paradoxically, we can find a legitimate place for dissent in Mormon theology. While our consciences must be taken seriously, we cannot allow them to serve as an easy escape when the Church's demands seem troubling, because dissent is both an ecclesiological and an individual issue. Membership in the Church is different than membership in a civic or economic body; the Church exerts claims of a spiritual type similar to that of conscience. To invoke, then, the same sorts of arguments that we might offer to justify dissent from a political party is to ignore the sacramental nature

of the Church's communion. It is no wonder that many Mormons, even if they are not theologically sophisticated, at some level recognize the importance of words like *covenant* and consequently are intuitively unsympathetic to the sort of dissent which appears to miss much of what is fundamental about belonging to the LDS Church.

This is unfortunate. As I will argue shortly, I believe that dissent, rightly pursued, strengthens both Mormons as religious people and also the Church as a body. But the power of individual liberty in American culture makes the temptation to invoke it as a self-justifying argument for dissent within Mormonism doubly strong. Much dissent uses trigger words like "authoritarian" or "tyranny" to attack not merely positions of the Church but the very legitimacy of the authority behind them. Such an argument is old, old criticism, dating back to the cultural context of nineteenth-century America, in which political liberalism celebrated the civic freedoms of the individual and looked with suspicion upon institutional power. Protestant evangelicalism similarly maintained that a personal encounter with God, unmediated by institution or authority, was the determinative event of one's religious life. Both forms of individualism crop up in Mormon dissent.[8]

One example is Andrew Callahan, the founder of Signing for Something, a group that opposed the Church's efforts to pass Proposition 8 in the 2008 California elections. Callahan maintained that the Church's position ran counter to Christ's directive to "love one another" but also that it was an attempt to improperly assert religious authority in the public sphere. He claimed that the Church's interjection of its authoritative voice forced him and others into "choosing between the voice of our conscience and the advice of our church's leadership." While the dilemma that Callahan and many other California Mormons faced was a heartbreakingly painful one, I would argue that the form of Callahan's dissent failed to deal with the complicated issues of Mormon ecclesiology. Callahan maintained that the Church's actions were an inappropriate assertion of power because they interfered with "basic civil rights."[9] This sort of political language is not uncommon among Mormon dissenters or critics. Canadian critic Bob McCue, for instance, has argued that Mormonism's no-

tion of freedom is incompatible with democracy and is therefore to be scoffed at.[10]

Let me be clear–I am here neither endorsing nor decrying Callahan's politics; rather, I am saying that Mormon theology needs a more robust language of dissent, one which avoids appeals to political or evangelical language in favor of ideas more in tune with Mormonism's own ecclesiology and anthropology. Finding such a language would, in turn, allow us to escape the simple dichotomies that popular readings of the Book of Mormon create and to separate the particular act of dissent Callahan pursued from the unhelpful language of critics like McCue who judge Mormonism on ideologically inappropriate standards. The Church is essentially a theological organization, after all, and there is no fundamental reason to assume that it *should* be compatible with the political workings of modern liberal democracy.

To provide another example, Grant H. Palmer looks with impatience upon the ecclesiological trappings of Mormonism, maintaining that, while the theological innovations, sacraments, and covenants that Joseph Smith came up with are all very nice, they should, in the end, be merely supplementary pieces in an assemblage of Christianity.[11] That form of Christianity resembles the sacramental soteriology that Joseph Smith erected and which the LDS Church has long taught less than it represents liberal Protestantism's emphases upon common grace and social justice. Palmer's particular appeal for Mormonism's refocusing on Christ, then, though worthy as a theological goal, will fail to find much traction in Mormon theological culture, because he is arguing that Mormonism should not be Mormon.

However, these sorts of appeals to vaguely Protestant theologies of grace have long been popular among Mormonism's critics, often because they dovetail nicely with complaints about church hierarchy. Paul Toscano, for instance, expresses bafflement with Russell M. Nelson's claims about the nature of divine love[12] by wearily deeming it "the usual confusion" over works and grace among Mormon leaders, and proclaiming, "All I can do in response is to repeat Paul's teaching in the epistle to the Romans. . . . The works that save us are not ours, but those done by Jesus Christ in Gethsemane and on Calvary."[13] But of course, Mormon

soteriology, and arguably the Apostle Paul's, are both more complicated than Toscano implies; his appeal to the authority of scripture flattens the internal questions and difficulties of the texts. This sort of Protestant interpretation of Paul may be compelling theology in its own right, but it is not self-evidently Mormon doctrine.

Similarly, Shawn McCraney, a self-styled "Born Again Mormon," states that his book by that title is not "anti-Mormon literature" because it, commendably, does not engage in "gotcha" history or trumpet the failures of Mormonism's founders (though his success at these tasks is debatable). Rather it is a devotional work that seeks to correct certain overemphases in present-day Mormon culture. It explains how Mormons "who have been miraculously born again by the gift and power of God (through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ) can remain active, peaceful, evangelical members of the present-day LDS Church." However, McCraney adds that Mormonism deviates from "orthodox Christianity" by teaching "the idea that there are certain laws and principles that . . . must be adhered to and followed in order for God's people to progress."[14] This theology, McCraney maintains, actually obstructs the salvation of Mormons and must at a fundamental theological—though not, perhaps, at a social or cultural—level be set aside. Unfortunately, this means that McCraney stumbles in the same way as Palmer or Toscano; he regards a great deal of what is foundational to the mature Mormon theology that Joseph Smith enunciated as ephemera to be set aside. The sort of dissent he engages in, then, misses the mark and his book becomes essentially an evangelical mission tract. Again I should state that, as with Callahan, it may be useful here to look past McCraney's stumbles to better understand the possible uses of dissent in the Church. Though McCraney is an excommunicant by request who has been denied rebaptism, his underlying point about the neglected place of grace in Mormon life is echoed by Mormons in good standing like Stephen Robinson. McCraney's work has also been criticized for its sympathetic stance toward the Church by such notable anti-Mormons as Ed Decker.[15] A discussion of his ideas within the Church—unlike those of say, Bob McCue—might aid in the creation of a spiritually deeper community.

So, the aspiring Mormon dissenter is caught between, on the one hand, a Church leadership that finds it alarmingly easy to equate dissent with apostasy and, on the other, critics who fail to engage with Mormonism on its own terms. If Mormon dissent is both to be effective and to find a place within the Church, neither of these situations can prevail. In the following paragraphs, I hope to offer a reconceptualization of Mormon ecclesiology to make the case that dissent of a particular kind might be both acceptable in and enriching to the Mormon tradition.

The first thing to do, I think, is to broaden our conception of the Church beyond the model that Dulles calls "institutional."[16] An institutional church conceives of itself in primarily organizational and even juridical terms. It lays great stress upon the managerial functions and responsibilities of various offices, upon correct procedure and proper deference. Contemporary Mormonism, postdating the organizational revolution of Correlation, emphasizes the administrative nature of priesthood organization, subordinating Church auxiliaries to the priesthood hierarchy of General Authorities and centralizing control over Church curriculum, activities, and teachings. An institutional church is vulnerable to a lack of flexibility, a tendency toward secularization, and a propensity to minimize the mystical and organic characteristics of the Church in favor of the procedural and quantifiable. It is easy to see how, in such a Church, dissent can be collapsed into disloyalty.

However, I would argue that, for several reasons, thinking of the Church as primarily an administrative and institutional hierarchy of authority is an oversimplification that neglects its sacramental qualities. Particularly relevant for our purposes is the question of how epistemology relates to ecclesiology—that is, where in the Church we might find authoritative truth. Karl Barth said that the greatest problem with Catholicism was its "and"; Catholics embraced faith *and* reason, scripture *and* tradition, grace *and* works. Like Catholicism, Mormonism acknowledges a number of authoritative sources of knowledge about ultimate things: scripture, reason, particular events in the history of the Church, personal inspiration through conscience or "the light of Christ," and the authoritative statements of the Church leadership.[17] Perhaps because of this epistemological multiplicity, as

Nathan Oman has argued, there is very rarely a clear and conclusive method for determining what official Church doctrine is.[18] Judging what is or is not official, a distinction relatively easy for Dulles as a Catholic, is much harder in Mormonism. Many Mormons would follow Robert Millet and maintain that a unified proclamation of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve is official–but some such proclamations, such as the 1876 Proclamation on the Economy, are not considered official today. Rather, in virtually every case, a slightly different confluence of factors generates a common understanding of what is or is not official, a judgment frequently guided simply by what is or is not emphasized at any given time in official venues.

This is as it should be. Paul calls the church the "body of Christ," and a church which is a body is also living (as God names His church in section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants), which means that it is ever changing, perpetually growing and adapting in response to the situations in which it finds itself. This, of course, is why Mormons insist upon the value of continuing revelation and an open canon. Our beliefs are essentially fluid. But all of this is also a signal that context matters to Mormons. We are, like Catholics, bound to a church and therefore to the weight of time, tradition, and history. In contrast, to Protestants, theologies of salvation, the Church, and the power of the word of God can be described as historyless.

This historical awareness is relevant for two reasons. First, it means that the Church is bound to the contingent rather than the eternal and is therefore shot through with the flaws that afflict everything in this fallen world.[19] In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants God grants that He is pleased with the establishment of "the only true and living church"–but immediately follows that statement with several caveats, culminating in a reminder that "the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance." Though we are always striving for sinlessness, God's approval of the Church does not mean He is unaware of its flaws. This state is unavoidable and ultimately irreparable; the Church, as Bruce McConkie acknowledged, always speaks knowing that it looks forward to more light and more truth than it then possesses in any given now.[20] It is what Catholic theologian

Charles Curran described as "a pilgrim church," the collected faithful bearing each other up on the journey through history toward the redemption at Calvary. Even as history may demonstrate flaws, it also reveals the gifts of grace that have guided a maturing people.[21] God is in the present, but also in the past, and will be in the future.

Second, the Church's historical awareness means that Mormon ethical theology is much closer to Curran's theory of "relational-responsibility" ethics than to a sort of propositional deontology which maintains that context does not matter in moral decision making. Nephi killed Laban in response to a particular set of circumstances. We have continuing revelation in part because context does matter, and particular mitigating circumstances are legion. In Mormonism's particular soteriology, obedience to God is required, not for obedience's own sake or because submission to the divine itself is a first principle, but rather because it gestures toward more foundational principles of progress and development. The secondary nature of commandments in Mormonism is the reason we are urged to pray for guidance before making moral choices. As Apostle Dallin H. Oaks has stated: "As a General Authority, I have the responsibility to preach general principles. . . . There are exceptions to some rules."[22] Similarly, as Curran argued, we must judge "the morality of actions not merely in terms of the nature and purposes of individual faculties or substances but rather in relation to other beings as persons."[23] To cite Thomas Aquinas's example, normally we are required to return the property of others; but if someone who is drunk, enraged, and threatening to kill people asks you to return the sword he lent you, you have an obligation not to return the sword. The moral dilemmas of any particular situation can be best grasped by those individuals who stand within it and who are therefore best equipped to judge the particulars.[24]

These two factors combined should not make us wary of official positions which the Church takes, though they may mean that, following Oaks, the Church is better equipped to proclaim general rather than particular principles. What these factors should do is make us think harder about the complex interplay between individuals and institution as we seek to make moral judgments. I would maintain that dissent in Mormonism functions

much like moral judgment; what rises to that category from simple disagreement is necessarily determined case by case and is deeply dependent upon context. This characteristic should indicate to us that there is far more theological room for dialogue on many issues than we usually assume and that, indeed, such dialogue is often essential for the Church to move forward toward greater truth.

This dialogue often occurs at multiple levels of the Church. Brigham Young espoused and taught the Adam-God doctrine. There was some debate within the Church hierarchy about it, but just as significant was the doctrine's failure to gain the widespread approval of the Saints. In the late nineteenth century, multiple Saints took issue with the doctrine; and there was little trouble thirty years later when the First Presidency and leaders like James E. Talmage enunciated a new trinitarian theology.[25] Elder Nelson's talk clarifying the nature of divine love has suffered a similar fate; the Saints have not rejected the term "unconditional love" in reference to God as Nelson recommended; it has appeared in a number of works published since the talk and was used by another apostle, Robert D. Hales, in the October 2008 general conference.[26]

The revocation of the priesthood ban is another example. Though some argue that the June 1978 revelation did not come under pressure, I maintain that the scholarly work of Saints like Lester Bush[27] and the discontent—sometimes public—of many more was honest dissent, drawing upon other sources of moral truth to propel the entire Church toward greater righteousness. The Church, to use Curran's phrase, is a place of "communal moral discernment."[28] We wrestle with what we are taught, strive to work out moral obligations in our homes and neighborhoods and communities, teach each other through action and word, and gradually come to some sense of the truth through the demands of experience. The Holy Spirit sometimes moves in the hard-won moral sense of the collective community of the faithful; and, as Armand Mauss has pointed out, it can be the role of dissenters to give that spirit voice and to raise questions that General Authorities' own experiences might not have led them to ask.[29]

What is interesting about this dynamic process of doctrinal

development is the model of the Church it suggests, one similar to Dulles's "community church."[30] In this model, organization is not linear, but networked; there is a variety of roles to fill; all are interdependent, and all tools do not rest in any one place. This model is a modern rephrasing of Paul's classic metaphor of the Church as the body of Christ. I should be clear that I am not advocating in any way a reduction of the authority vested in the General Authorities of the Church. What I *am* arguing is that they do not bear all responsibility—a concept different from administrative capability.

Not that the Church's Correlation movement needs another crime laid at its door, but among its effects was to direct the Saints' attention inward and upward toward the priesthood hierarchy, training them to expect all good things to come from Salt Lake City. Further, it trained General Authorities to think of themselves as primarily administrators, responsible to the institution as much as to its members. However, as Doctrine and Covenants 46:11 teaches, "There are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God." Inspiration of the Spirit is one of these gifts, but another is "the word of knowledge" (v. 18), while others are faith, prophecy, and wisdom. These gifts are distributed throughout the Church, and each one of them is a way to learn truth about God. This is why the Church as a body is more than the Saints as a group; it is also why overemphasizing the administrative power of priesthood can create a problematic imbalance.

The point here is that the General Authorities of the Church perform essential, but still particular, functions; and holding the priesthood keys to administer the Church and its ordinances is not the same thing as possessing all spiritual gifts. The mandate under which General Authorities govern the Church is pastoral, to maintain the salvific communion the Saints have with each other. The priesthood administers sacraments, cares for the needs of believers, and nurtures the spiritual health of souls. The revelation that is now Doctrine and Covenants 28, for example, instructs Oliver Cowdery to "teach" the Saints (v. 1); indeed, he was the first Mormon to deliver what we today call a talk. But Cowdery's mandate is carefully described and circumscribed in a number of ways. If he was "led . . . by the Comforter to speak or teach . . . by the way of commandment unto the church," he

should do so, but "thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom." Nor may he "command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church." The purpose of these gifts was to "cause my church to be established among them [the Lamanites]," among whom he is sent on a mission (vv. 4–6, 8, 14).[31] Frequently when high officials of the Church like Cowdery, Joseph Knight, Hyrum Smith or even Joseph himself are instructed to preach the gospel, they are told to "exhort," a particular type of preaching known to nineteenth-century Americans.[32] The preaching style described in D&C 15:6 is a good example: "this thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me." The Doctrine and Covenants repeatedly commands the early leaders of the Church to give primary emphasis to repentance in their preaching; section 19 instructs them to "preach naught but repentance (v. 21) and directs that "of tenets thou shalt not talk" (v. 31; see also 14:8, 15:6, 16:6, 44:3). Furthermore, the apostles in the Quorum of the Twelve, of course, are to be "special witnesses of the name of Christ to all the world–thus differing from other offices of the Church" (D&C 107:23). They speak primarily not to clarify doctrine or to give their hearers God's opinion about particular issues, but to call people to Christ, to urge righteous behavior, and to encourage the Church to move forward as one. To borrow an evangelical term, the primary responsibility incumbent upon an apostle who opens his mouth is to witness.

Conceiving of the priesthood in this way–as primarily spiritual and pastoral, a role consistent with the Pauline body of Christ–helps us to visualize the Church as a sacramental community that transcends the skeleton of the administrative bureaucracy, a body that fears the rupturing damage of injury more than the transient pain of disagreement. In the Book of Mormon, of course, the most nagging sin is not doctrinal dissent, but those things–often social and cultural–which cause division in the community. Honest dissent is possible, not only because the authorities of the Church are not omniscient but also because the nature of their callings neither demands nor expects them to be.

This view does not minimize the importance of the General Authorities' role as leaders and administrators. They are due

something similar to the *obsequim religiosum* of Catholicism: the "due respect" or "assent of faith," an acknowledgement of the particular authority they hold as administrators of God's church. But numerous threads to moral wisdom are woven into the fabric of human existence; and it is inevitable, given our imperfections, that sometimes some will knot, or particular individuals will suffer blind spots. Because of this, the body of the Church works in synergy; tension is inherent because perfection is impossible, but it is a dynamic tension that pushes the Church forward to greater truth. The pastoral role demands not assertion by fiat, but rather understanding, sympathy, and healing of the dissonant agony that a Saint who feels compelled to dissent may feel, for easing pain is the first mission of the pastor. Recognition of the importance of the pastoral role will help authorities confronted with dissent to avoid defensiveness.

I should close by outlining some of the responsibilities of the dissenter, for they also exist. I hope that what I've said already makes clear what many of them are. Dissenters should seek to ground their protest in the language and intellectual traditions of Mormonism. This means that, though the dynamic vagueness of Mormon theology and the multifaceted nature of Mormon epistemology make a great deal of honest dissent possible, boundaries must exist. These boundaries are necessary because, while priesthood leadership may have a limited perspective, so also might the dissenter. The virtue of mutual humility should lead both dissenter and Church leader to acknowledge that neither holds a monopoly on divine truth. This acknowledgement, in turn, dispels the false dichotomy of institution confronting individual in favor of the quest for what Dulles calls "authentic consensus,"[33] an engagement based on charity in which both sides recognize the higher goal of sacred and inclusive communion, a church made healthier through cultivating the dynamic power of its own tensions.

Notes

1. "Apostasy," *True to the Faith* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 13.

2. James E. Faust, "Put Light in Your Life," *New Era,* June 2007, 4.

3. Russell M. Nelson, "The Canker of Contention," *Ensign,* May 1989, 68.

4. *True to the Faith,* 13.

5. For instance, Neal A. Maxwell, "Lessons from Laman and Lemuel," *Ensign,* November 1999, 6, advises Church members that "we should so liken . . . these two" to contemporary dissenters in order to avoid "failing to understand the dealings of the Lord with his children."

6. Avery Dulles, *The Resilient Church: The Necessity and Limits of Adaptation* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 107; Margaret Farley, "Ethics, Ecclesiology, and the Grace of Self Doubt," in *A Call to Fidelity,* edited by Timothy O'Connell (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 68.

7. Charles Curran, *Faithful Dissent* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 78–79.

8. See Seth Payne, "Purposeful Strangers: A Study of the ex-Mormon Narrative," Paper presented at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, August 9, 2008, for a similar distinction between evangelical and secular Mormon criticism.

9. See www.signingforsomething.org/blog/pageid?=260 (accessed October 31, 2008).

10. Bob McCue, "Are Mormons Free?" *By Common Consent: The Newsletter of the Mormon Alliance* 12, no. 1 (June 2006): [2].

11. Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 261–63; *The Incomparable Jesus* (Salt Lake: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 51–53, 110.

12. Russell M. Nelson, "Divine Love," *Ensign,* February 2003, 20.

13. Paul James Toscano, "For the Love of God," *By Common Consent: The Newsletter of the Mormon Alliance* 9, no. 3 (July 2003), [2].

14. Shawn McCraney, *I Was a Born-Again Mormon: Moving toward Christian Authenticity* (New York: Alathea Press, 2007) ii, 239–40.

15. See, for instance, Stephen Robinson, *Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992) 14–17. On Decker and McCraney, see Blair Hodges, "Review of Shawn McCraney, *I Was a Born-Again Mormon: Moving Toward Christian Authenticity,*" forthcoming in the *FARMS Review of Books* 21, no. 1 (2009).

16. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 35.

17. See D&C 14:18–20, Moroni 7:18. Robert Millet, "What Is Our Doctrine?" *The Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* (newsletter of BYU's Religious Studies Center) 4, no. 3 (2003): 15–33.

18. Nathan B. Oman, "A Defense of the Authority of Church Doctrine," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 1–27.

19. See, for example, Grant Wacker, *Augustus Strong and the Dilemma*

of Historical Consciousness (Atlanta, Ga.: Mercer, 1985); George Lindbeck, "Doctrinal Development and Protestant Theology," in *Man as Man and Believer,* edited by Edward Schillebeeckx (New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 138–39.

20. Bruce R. McConkie, "All Are Alike unto God," August 18, 1978, CES Religious Educators Symposium address, speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1570 (accessed October 31, 2008): "We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has [sic] come into the world. We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept. We have now had added a new flood of intelligence and light on this particular subject, and it erases all the darkness and all the views and all the thoughts of the past."

21. Curran, *Faithful Dissent,* 96–97.

22. Dallin H. Oaks, "Dating versus Hanging Out," *Ensign,* June 2006, 15.

23. Charles Curran, *A New Look at Christian Morality* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publishers, 1968), 244.

24. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* IIa, IIae, 120.

25. Boyd Kirkland, "The Development of the Mormon Doctrine of God," in *Line upon Line: Essays in Mormon Doctrine,* edited by Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 42–43, 46.

26. See, for example, Drew Williams, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Mormonism* (New York: Alpha Books, 2003), 213; Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1998), 63; Robert D. Hales, "Christian Courage: The Price of Discipleship," *Liahona,* November 2008, 72–75.

27. Lester E. Bush Jr. "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (Spring 1973): 11–68.

28. Farley, "Ethics, Ecclesiology, and the Grace of Self Doubt," in *Call to Fidelity,* 65.

29. Armand Mauss, "Alternate Voices: The Calling and Its Implications," *Sunstone,* Issue 76 (April 1990): 7–10.

30. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church: Expanded Edition* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 205–6.

31. See also Dallin H. Oaks's reflections on Doctrine and Covenants 28 in *His Holy Name* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), viii.

32. For a contemporary example, see WGT Shedd, *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1867), 158–59.

33. Dulles, *The Resilient Church,* 111.