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DIALOGUE: A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

is an independent quarterly established to express Mormon culture and to examine the relevance of religion to secular life. It is edited by Latter-day Saints who wish to bring their faith into dialogue with the larger stream of Christian thought and with human experience as a whole and to foster artistic and scholarly achievement based on their cultural heritage. The journal encourages a variety of viewpoints; although every effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and responsible judgment, the views expressed are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of the Mormon Church or of the editors.

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DIALOGUE: A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT is published quarterly by Dialogue Foundation, Editorial Office, 202 West 300 North, Salt Lake City, Utah 84103. DIALOGUE has no official connection with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Third class postage paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. Contents copyright © 1983 by the Dialogue Foundation. ISSN 002-2157.

Subscription rate is \$25.00 per year; students \$15.00 per year; single copies, \$7.00. A catalogue of back issues is available upon request. DIALOGUE is also available on microfilm through University Microfilms International, Dept. F.A., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, and 18 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4EJ, England.

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LETTERS

Another Look at Adam-God

David Buerger's article, "The Adam-God Doctrine" (Spring 1982) demonstrates a great degree of skill and scholarly research. Nevertheless, he too lightly passes over the times Brigham Young taught against the Adam-God theory and the considerable evidence that Young did not believe Adam to be our God in the normal sense of the word. This information really warrants an article of its own; but here I will try to give some idea of the type of evidence that exists, and put in perspective some of the quotes in Buerger's essay.

Before beginning, I need to reemphasize a point Buerger made well, namely that President Young never equated Elohim and Adam. For example, Young asserts, "Adam. . . is Michael. . . The earth was organized by three distinct characters, namely, Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael."¹

We have seven examples where Young refers to Adam as the "father" of Jesus Christ.² But two may not refer to Adam at all (AG 14, 15). One or two are of questionable accuracy (AG 33, 18), and the rest merely state without elaboration that Adam is the "father of Jesus Christ." Thus it is possible they were intended metaphorically. It is also possible that he was merely citing Joseph Smith and was personally unsure how they should be interpreted. Apparently

¹ *Doctrines of Salvation* by Joseph Fielding Smith, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977), 1:96-97; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as DS.

² David Buerger, "The Adam-God Doctrine," *DIALOGUE: A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT* 15 (Spring 1982): 14, 15, 18, 20, 21, 30, 33; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as AG.

Young did not believe Jesus was the Only Begotten Son of Adam, for he explained: it is the Lord who "created Adam and Eve" that sent his Only Begotten Son (AG 59) and that the Father demanded "recompense" for Adam and Eve's transgression and sent his "Only Begotten Son" to die for us.³ He often preached that Adam and Eve sinned the original sin, that Jesus atoned for it, and that no man could be saved without this atonement (BY 21, 26, 27, 30, 60, etc.). He seems to have believed that Adam was dependent upon Jesus for his salvation. All this and more strongly suggests Young did not think of Adam as the literal father of Jesus.

The book of Moses explicitly denotes Jesus as the Only Begotten Son of Adam's God (1:33, 34; 3:18, 20; 4:28; 6:52) and conclusively demonstrates Adam's dependence on Christ for his salvation (5:7-11; 6:59). An exhaustive search through the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants yields only scriptures agreeing with the book of Moses, for example, Alma 12:26; 42:5, 7; D&C 29:1, 26.

Buerger presents convincing evidence that Young did indeed believe Adam to be the literal father of our spirits. One would think such evidence would end all thoughts that Young believed Elohim to be the father of our spirits. Strangely enough, this is not the case. It turns out Young *also* taught clearly that Elohim is the father of our spirits. For instance, he explains that the father of our spirits sent his Only Begotten Son to atone for Adam's sin (BY

³ John A. Widtsoe, comp., *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1978), p. 59; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as BY.

59). He also proclaimed, "You are well acquainted with God our Heavenly Father, or the great Elohim. . . . There is not a person here to-day but what is a son or a daughter of that Being. . . . If you do not believe it, cease to call him Father; and when you pray, pray to some other character" (BY 50). Another time he said, "We are the children of Adam and Eve. So we are, and they are the children of our Heavenly Father" (BY 222).

Admittedly it is unnerving to have Young teaching so clearly such contradictory doctrines. One possibility is that he was genuinely confused. Or he may have held that Adam, though already resurrected and a god, sent his spirit children to this earth upon which it is Elohim and not Adam whom we consider to be our God, to whom we pray, and whom we call our Heavenly Father. He may have held it proper to speak of Elohim as the father of our spirits because he saw Elohim as our spiritual grandfather, making us his literal spiritual descendants.

We can find some insight into what Young meant when he called Adam our God in the following quote: "Joseph [Smith] said to us 'I am a God to this people & so is any man who is appointed to lead Israel or the Kingdom of God.'" Then Young elaborated, "God did not say worship Moses because he [Moses] was a God to the people. . . . You may say to your wife or son. . . . I am your councillor, Dictator, or you[r] God. Either would be correct . . . yet they should not worship you, for this would be sin."⁴

Here Young demonstrates that in calling Adam our God he need only have meant that Adam presided over us or that we are his descendants. When he referred to Adam as the God of Jesus he may have meant only that Jesus is a descendant of Adam or that Adam presided over some

element of Jesus' earthly life — such as perhaps the sending of angels to instruct him.

Do we have any evidence that Adam presides over us or presided over some element of Jesus' life? Joseph Smith preached that whenever keys of the priesthood "are revealed from heaven, it is by Adam's authority" (DS 1:99). Young may have taken this to imply that Adam presided over sending Moses and Elias to Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. Joseph also taught "Christ is the Great High Priest, Adam next" (ibid.) and that Adam "presides over the Spirits of all men" (AG 25). We know the twelve apostles will judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). Young may have reasoned that Adam will also be one of the great judges of mankind — even greater than the apostles. At Adam-Ondi-Ahman, every man will return the keys of the priesthood he holds to Adam. In the Old Testament, Daniel graphically describes Adam sitting on his throne in glory (7:9, 21, 22). It was Adam who led the war in heaven against Satan (Rev. 12:7), who will lead the last great battle against Satan (D&C 88:112–115), who is called "the father of all, the prince of all" (D&C 27:11), who is "set . . . upon high and given . . . the keys of salvation under the . . . Holy One" (D&C 78:16), and who is a "prince" over us "forever" (D&C 107:55).

Certainly most members of the church are not aware of just how exalted a character Adam is. We seldom think of Adam as presiding over our spirits, as being a judge over us, as being a prince over us forever, or of our being accountable to Adam in any sense. Yet Young seems to have believed Adam was only slightly less exalted than Jesus Christ. He was aware that his views on Adam were unusual and difficult for many to accept.

On the other hand, there are significant areas in which Young did not seem to exalt Adam. Though the relevant resources at my disposal are limited to *Discourses of Brigham Young*, *Doctrines of Salvation*, and two recent articles in *DIALOGUE* (Summer

⁴ Gary James Bergera, "The Orson Pratt-Brigham Young Controversies," *DIALOGUE: A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT* 13 (Summer 1980).

'80 and Spring '82), an investigation of all of them reveals that Elohim is twice named as our Heavenly Father and Adam never is; five times a distinction is made between Adam and "God"; five times Elohim is clearly referred to as "the Father" but Adam never clearly is; six times Elohim is referred to as "the Lord" and Adam never is; three times Elohim is named as the God "whom we serve" and Adam never is; Elohim is named as the God to whom we pray but Adam never is, and twice Adam is said to have assisted Elohim in creating the earth. In other references a distinction is drawn between Adam and the God in whom we believe, the God whose plan it was to send us to the earth, from whom we receive revelations, to whom we pay our tithes, and whose gospel we teach. Adam is never referred to in any of these ways. So when Young says Adam is our God, he apparently means something very different from what we would have meant had we said the same thing.

Young's view of Adam seems to have been this: that Adam is the father of our spirits and came to the earth with a resurrected body but is not our God in any of the senses spoken of above. What are we to make of this theory? There is always the chance he may have been correct. If he is correct, then we must assume that when President Kimball denounced the Adam-God theory (AG 43) he was denouncing the idea that we pray to Adam or the idea that Adam is Elohim, rather than the idea that Adam is the father of our spirits. Also, if Adam came to this earth a resurrected being, then many scriptures would have to be taken symbolically, such as the one declaring that Adam should "surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

In the perhaps more likely case that Young was wrong, we have at least some explanation. Apparently he only mentioned the topic at all because of a misunderstanding of something Joseph Smith had said. He insisted several times that his ideas came from Joseph (AG 25, 30). Furthermore, he made several public remarks

which deemphasized his stand on the issue: "I tell you this as my belief about that personage who is called the ancient of days, the prince, and so on. But I do not tell it because that I wish it to be established in the minds of others" (AG 23). In January of 1860 he advised the apostles to avoid discussing the issue publicly (AG 24).

Strangely enough, it was the times when Brigham Young was trying to deemphasize Adam-God that he (possibly to justify his past remarks) made three of his four statements that he was confident on his stand that Adam is our father and our God (AG 23, 29, 31). His strongest statement called such a belief a doctrine "which God revealed to me" in the midst of explaining that "how much unbelief exists in the minds of Latter-day Saints . . . that Adam is our Father and God—I do not know, I do not inquire, I care nothing about it" (AG 31). The obvious intent of what he was saying was to explain that he did not care what people thought about his idea, not to declare once and for all that the Lord had revealed it to him.

Thus he clearly communicated that his belief need not be accepted by others and was not to be considered church doctrine. This is very different from teaching his ideas as church doctrine in the name of the Lord. Moreover, after Young's manner of speaking, what he said was revealed to him was technically correct. Adam is our father in the same sense that Abraham is our father. He is our God in the broad sense Young called Joseph Smith and Moses gods to their people. Apparently Young did not view himself as using the word *God* loosely or metaphorically but believed any enlightened person would use the term God in this manner. We should note that every recorded instance where he expressed confidence in a specific point of his belief, he used the same words—he was confident that Adam was "our Father and God" (AG 29, 31). It is possible he was merely voicing his confidence in the words themselves which the Lord had "revealed" to him through Joseph Smith.

In conclusion, it seems Young did not consider Adam to be literally the father of Jesus. Since any father may correctly say to his son, "I am your God," Young need not have meant much by calling Adam our God. He was correct in his belief that Adam presides over us. His questionable belief seems to have been seeing Adam literally as the father of our spirits. But he did not believe Adam is the God to whom we pray, in whom we believe, whom we serve, from whom we receive revelations, whose gospel we teach, or even whom we call our Heavenly Father. If President Young was wrong about Adam being the father of our spirits, at least he did not teach his idea as church doctrine, believed he heard it from Joseph Smith, and also referred to Elohim as the father of our spirits. These points need further elaboration as many other relevant statements exist on both sides of the argument. This letter abridges a much longer paper which comes to the same conclusion. Though not everyone will agree with my view in all its particulars, the evidence that Young did not view Adam as our God in the usual sense of the term cannot afford to be overlooked.

Carl Broderick, Jr.
Cerritos, California

A Synthesis Desirable?

Re: Lester Bush's valedictory (Summer 1982). Isn't it likely that the synthesis he desires of Mormon theology cannot exist except in a personal framework? Once a person has complied with the few requirements, such as baptism, priesthood (for the males), temple marriage, sacrament, tithing, etc. he/she can — in fact, must — develop his/her own Mormonism, as long as he/she stays within the fairly loose boundaries of the knowledge and suggested/implicit doctrines now available. The true substance of Mormon doctrine is, except for relatively few "doctrines" and corollary actions, the kind of understanding each person works with. This understanding changes con-

stantly and is evaluated by increasingly absolute standards as one's spirituality, discipline, and sense of knowledge change (grow). That is, each individual starts with what he/she understands and can do. As he/she "grows" in the gospel, so do the standards by which God ultimately will judge him/her.

The equation involved is an individual one and requires the knowledge, love, and justice we expect God possesses for its solution. Each equation is made up of elements including such things as each day's expenditure of energy, on what the energy is spent, of the attitude motivating the expenditure, the circumstances of learning and growth each person happens upon, and the degree of control he/she can exercise over life's happenstances, etc. Not the least of the elements is what each person makes of the less-than-skeletal body of doctrine available and the sometimes free-for-all interpretations given him/her or more importantly, determined by him/her.

Threaded through Mormon belief are two doctrines that can only mean a highly personal interpretation and judgment: free agency and personal revelation.

I think this personalness baffles the hierarchy. Free agency means that persons of quite widely differing interpretations can achieve the celestial kingdom. Application of free agency threatens the values of the hierarchy. They are trying to persuade us that prophets do not disagree. They are trying to give us what God has not: absolute patterns of morality, belief, and happiness. And temporal standards of measurement.

Charles Larson
Pasadena, California

Read It Again, Sam

During the past five years Sam Taylor may have been reading *DIALOGUE* or he may have been reading *BYU Studies*, but when he says, "The baptized *DIALOGUE* [i.e., under Mary Bradford's editorship] is identical with *BYU Studies*," I know he hasn't

been reading both! I read both consistently. As fine a job as *BYU Studies* does, it is still only a limited “voice for the community of LDS scholars.” There are some things published in *DIALOGUE* over the past five years that might have been published in *BYU Studies*, but the majority of it would not even have been seriously considered for publication there.

Robert A. Rees
Los Angeles, California

A Note from “Dr. Smith”

Recently Heath showed how Henry Eyring dealt with some problems of great concern to Mormon scientists (Autumn 1982). It was interesting to read his excellent account of events of thirty years ago, which I watched from close range as an Eyring associate of that period, the “Dr. Smith” mentioned in the letter from Eyring to Bennion.

Certainly Eyring helped many young people stay in the Church and come to terms with it, but I wonder if Joseph Fielding Smith didn’t carry the day with Church leaders. There have been some surprising developments in recent years which must bother many a Mormon scientist.

First, as Sherlock pointed out in *DIALOGUE* (Autumn 1982), both a recent Melchizedek Priesthood manual and a Gospel Doctrine text commend for study and discussion some of Joseph Fielding Smith’s extreme antievolution views. Sherlock stated that there had been no change in the official position of the First Presidency. The priesthood manual lists no authors but opens with a letter from the First Presidency. Perhaps that doesn’t make it official, but many readers must have assumed that it does.

Second, *Church News* editorials regularly let go broadsides at science — not only at biology and geology but even at benign astronomy. We have been told that we should not try to figure out Book of Mormon geography; that there was no evolution

even from one lower form to another (1 Sept. 1979); that we need not speculate as to how the earth or the heavens were created (20 Dec. 1980); and that we must not believe the big bang theory of the origin of the universe (17 Oct. 1981). Since the Church urges everyone to subscribe, many readers must assume high-level approval, even though the author is not identified.

I find these developments confusing. I was brought up on books by John A. Widtsoe, Merrill, and Pack. Those authors — and Henry Eyring — taught me to see science and Mormonism as extensions of each other. Both are revealed, as Brigham Young emphasized. They have developed in parallel because both are essential parts of the dispensation of the fulness of times. (Of course there is some error in science, but there is constant purification.) Now, over a narrow interpretation of a verse or two of scripture, we find much science condemned. What effect does that have on young people studying science?

I urge *DIALOGUE* to find authors qualified to discuss the Mormonism-science relationship of the 1980s. Are large numbers of Church members still choosing to be educated in science? In biology and geology? How do students and scientists reconcile science and Mormonism today? Are there currently any staunch Mormons having great stature as scientists? Who are they? How do they view these problems? Henry Eyring dealt with Joseph Fielding Smith. How can we deal with anonymous manuals and editorials? Is anyone trying?

Richard Pearson Smith
Westfield, New Jersey

Addendum on “Truth”

Your Autumn 1982 issue was excellent — a testimony that you will carry on the fine tradition established by your predecessors.

I am writing to make a number of corrections to my own article in that issue: “Thoughts on the Mormon Scriptures:

An Outsider's View of the Inspiration of Joseph Smith." Never have I known any author who felt that his finished product was perfect, and my own work is certainly no exception.

In the section of my article on pp. 52-53 dealing with "truth" and "historicity," I did not intend to imply that historical fact is not a kind of truth. What we are dealing with is relevant or existential truth, and factual or historical truth. Mere fact or historical truth may leave us unaffected, whereas a fictitious construction may contain more relevant truth. What may be of more interest in dealing with religious scriptures is not historical fact, but rather what it means for us. For someone coming from outside the Mormon community, the importance of the Book of Mormon must be what it means rather than whether it came forth in a particular way or whether it is a literal historical record.

On pp. 50-51 is an interpolation to explain *tablet*. The Arabic word *lawh* refers to any kind of written record or document. In a specifically Baha'i sense, it means a written document of or letter by a Baha'i central figure. Mormon readers might mistakenly understand *tablet* as a stone record or ancient record, analogous to Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon plates.

The articles on Fletcher and Eyring in this issue were fine. I hope there will be continuing discussion of the tensions between scientific investigation and religious orthodoxy in the Mormon community.

William P. Collins
Haifa, Israel

One of the "Less Literate"

As a new subscriber to *DIALOGUE*, I was excited when my first issue arrived. I managed to read every page, some twice, and looked forward to my next issue with pleasant anticipation. However, I was only a few pages into that next issue (Autumn 1982) when I began to wonder if I were getting in over my head.

How does one prove, for instance, that she is an "educated member" and not one of the "less literate"? Should I forward a copy of my transcripts from graduate school? Or would you prefer a rubbing of my Phi Beta Kappa key?

And I'm certain that no one could single me out as he sat in the back of my chapel, looking for his "kind of Mormon." I look like any other overworked, middle-aged Mormon lady. I even gave a pie-making demonstration in a homemaking meeting once.

It goes without saying that I would never be able to submit an article for publication. However, I would like to offer my services as a proofreader of editorials. I've not taught English for some time, but I know a misplaced modifier when I see one. Unless, of course, it is indeed *you* who are "loaded with thoughtful essays, marked by good scholarship, and sprinkled with pithy quotations," in which case I must try to wangle a dinner invitation the next time I'm in Salt Lake. Your dinner-table conversations must be wonderful.

Mary Anne Andersen
Fresno, California

CHART CHANGE

We regret a serious error on the LDS corporate chart accompanying David J. Whittaker's article, "An Introduction to Mormon Administrative History" (Winter 1982, p. 16). During production, Deseret Trust and Deseret Management Corporation were reversed, putting the wrong business in the profit/nonprofit sectors. Please note this change in your issues.



William Smith, 1811-93: Problematic Patriarch

Irene M. Bates

WILLIAM SMITH, YOUNGER BROTHER of the prophet Joseph Smith, has been easy to dismiss but difficult to deal with. More often than not, he has been described with adjectives like *violent*, *wicked*, *unstable*, and *licentious*. Yet intriguing references suggest that a more balanced view of this complex man might be appropriate. The Prophet described his brother in a blessing 18 December 1833 this way: "Brother William is as the fierce lion which divideth not the spoil because of his strength."¹ Then on 9 December 1842, William defended the Nauvoo Charter with uncommon eloquence as representative for Hancock County in the Illinois legislature.² In August 1845, W. W. Phelps designated William "the Patriarchal Jacob's Staff."³ And B. H. Roberts, impressed with the seventy-year-old William in 1881, said he had "so vindicated the claims and the character of his brother that ever afterward whenever the question of Joseph Smith came up, people would say 'He had just as good a right to be a prophet as any man mentioned in the Bible.'"⁴

William Smith was born at Royalton, Vermont, 13 March 1811, the fifth son of Joseph, Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith. He was baptized by David Whitmer 9 June 1830 and was ordained an apostle 15 February 1835, before he was twenty-four years old. He married Caroline Amanda Grant, the sister of

IRENE M. Bates, who joined the Church in England in 1955 and moved to the United States with her husband, William, and four children in 1967, is a 1975 graduate of UCLA. She has published in the Ensign, Sunstone, and Exponent II and is currently researching a book on the office of Patriarch to the Church with E. Gary Smith. This paper was presented at the Mormon History Association annual meeting in Ogden, Utah, May 1982.

¹ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 1:467.

² *Ibid.*, 5:201.

³ *Ibid.*, 7:435.

⁴ As cited in Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), p. 122.

Jedediah M. Grant, in 1833, they had two children, she died 22 May 1845 at the age of thirty-four, and on 22 June 1845 William married Mary Jane Rollins who left him two months later.⁵ On 18 May 1847, he married Roxie Ann Grant, Caroline's younger sister, by whom he had two more children before they separated. He married Eliza Elise Sanborn some time before 1858 and they had three children. Eliza died in 1889 and two years later William married Rosanna Surprise, a Frenchwoman. During the year 1845, while in Nauvoo, William Smith had also been sealed to several plural wives, including Mary Ann Sheffield, Mary Jones, Priscilla Mogridge, and Sarah and Hannah Libbey.⁶ He died at Osterdock, Iowa, 13 November 1893, at the age of eighty-two, a member of the Reorganized Church which he had joined in 1878.

Because William Smith never went west, we cannot know what he might have contributed to the church in Utah. He was ordained and set apart as Patriarch to the Church 24 May 1845, but five months later was rejected as apostle and patriarch at the 6 October 1845 general conference. Official church history records the objection to William: "He aspires to uproot and undermine the legal presidency of the Church," and "his doctrine and conduct have not had a savory influence but have produced death and destruction wherever he went."⁷ Even though Orson Pratt is cited in the *History of the Church* as the one who objected, he was in the East at the time; his own journal names his brother Parley as the one who protested.⁸ So does the journal of Willard Richards.⁹ A vote was taken, William was not sustained, and he was excommunicated two weeks later.¹⁰

William Smith's reputation has subsequently suffered one of two fates. Either he has been ignored, omitted from the list of patriarchs and treated as someone of little consequence, or he has been trotted out as a bad example — a modern Laman or Lemuel, "the profligate brother" of the Prophet.¹¹ Because William Smith was not sustained as patriarch by the general membership of the church, historians such as Joseph Fielding Smith have said William never legally acted in the office and therefore "should not be classed among the

⁵ Willard Richards, Journal, 31 Aug. 1845, Historical Department Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives. See also *Warsaw Signal*, 3 Sept. 1845.

⁶ Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Seventies Mission Bookstore, 1981), p. 277.

⁷ *History of the Church*, 7:458–59.

⁸ Orson Pratt, *Journal of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1975), p. 293.

⁹ Willard Richards, Journal, 6 Oct. 1845, LDS Church Archives.

¹⁰ Dates of William Smith's excommunication vary. Manuscript History, Journal History, and *History of the Church*, 7:483, give the date as 19 Oct. 1845. *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 Nov. 1845): 1019, and Andrew Jenson, *Latter Day Saints Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Co., 1901–1936), 1:87, give the date as 12 Oct. 1845.

¹¹ Jedediah M. Grant, Sunday Tabernacle Discourse, Salt Lake City, 23 March 1856, LDS Church Archives.

patriarchs holding that exalted position.”¹² This ruling raises some questions, however, in light of the common practice noted by Michael Quinn that “important ordinations of General Authorities had not only occurred without a prior vote of the Church but had also continued in force for weeks, months, and years before being officially presented for a public vote of common consent.”¹³ Additionally, William gave more than 290 blessings prior to his excommunication and was at all times regarded by the Twelve as fully functioning in the office; his exclusion from the list of patriarchs cannot be convincingly justified.

A more balanced appraisal of William Smith requires first, seeing the historical context for his early behavior prior to excommunication, and second, looking at William Smith’s own perceptions during the succession crisis of 1844, for that crisis has served, consciously or unconsciously, as the lens through which his character has been viewed. The first understanding is important because we have tended to ignore the mores of nineteenth-century America within which the embryonic Mormon culture emerged. The second understanding — William’s perceptions — is not only crucial to any explanation of his reactions during the succession and later, but also to understanding the crisis in the patriarchal office itself that occurred at the same time.

To begin, it is difficult to find any literal examples of the “death and destruction” which allegedly followed in William’s wake. In fact Brigham Young wrote to Willard Richards from Salem, Massachusetts, as late as 8 July 1844, before he knew of the murders of Joseph and Hyrum: “The Twelve have been faithful in all things. William Smith is a great man in his calling in this country.”¹⁴ But official church history and other publications have made much of William’s “violence” towards Joseph Smith, his brother. For example, two incidents appear in print with predictable regularity, even in short biographical sketches. One is a 29 October 1835 high council trial which took place at William’s instigation. A Brother and Sister Elliot had been accused of beating their fifteen-year-old daughter, and charges against Brother Elliot had been dismissed. Later, Mother Smith testified against Sister Elliot, but Joseph denied her evidence on the grounds that the court had ruled previously on it. William became angry with Joseph, accusing him of doubting his mother’s testimony. Joseph ordered William to sit down but he refused, saying Joseph would have to knock him down first.¹⁵ On 6 December 1835 a further altercation took place. William was conducting a debating school in his home and Joseph questioned if good could come of the school and whether it should continue. William became enraged at Joseph’s interference. He laid violent hands on the

¹² Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 3:167–68.

¹³ D. Michael Quinn, “The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844,” *BYU Studies* 16 (Winter 1976): 193.

¹⁴ Brigham Young to Willard Richards, 8 July 1844, Journal History, LDS Church Archives.

¹⁵ *History of the Church*, 2:294–95.

Prophet, the unspecified consequences of which, it is said, Joseph “occasionally felt until his death.”¹⁶ The brothers were reconciled 1 January 1836, each asking forgiveness of the other.¹⁷

These incidents are recounted with scarcely veiled disgust at such conduct. Yet during the nineteenth-century, this easy resort to anger and fisticuffs was far from unusual both in the Church and in American society in general. More significant, however, was the general attitude towards such activity. Historian Robert Flanders, for example, observes, “For people to take the law into their own hands was to be both democratic and faithful to the tradition of the American revolution . . . It was a regular and ordinary part of the lifestyle.”¹⁸ Benjamin Franklin believed that the liberty of the press should not be tempered by the courts but “by the liberty of the cudgel.”¹⁹ For example, in 1831, diarist Philip Hone of New York witnessed a violent encounter between William L. Stone, editor of the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, and poet William Cullen Bryant, then editor of the *New York Evening Post*. They met on the sidewalk and Bryant produced a whip and lashed Stone about the head with it.²⁰ Yet Bryant is described as “retiring and contemplative,” a self-restrained man who “stood for principles rather than measures.”²¹

Mormon church communities during the 1830s and 1840s, though perhaps more cohesive and to some extent more disciplined, still reflected many of the cultural norms of their day. Even the Prophet Joseph Smith was a product of his time and place and there is ample evidence of his spontaneous physical reactions in socially tense situations. In David Patton’s journal, partly penned by Wilford Woodruff, is this account:

He [David] arrived in Kirtland during the summer of 1837 . . . Their was a great aposticy in the church about those days. David . . . was not altogether satisfied with all things and in one instance while conversing with Joseph, David, while this spirit was upon him, insulted Joseph and he slaped David in the face and kicked him out of the yard and it had a good effect and brought David to his senses.²²

¹⁶ Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:87.

¹⁷ *History of the Church*, 2:353. William had offered to resign his apostleship, “then I would not be in a situation to bring so much disgrace upon the cause,” but requested that he might remain a member of the Church. *History of the Church*, 2:339.

¹⁸ Robert B. Flanders, “Dream and Nightmare: Nauvoo Revisited,” in *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, eds., F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards (Lawrence, Kan.: Coronado Press, 1972), p. 149. See also Gordon S. Wood, “Evangelical America and Early Mormonism,” *New York History* 61 (Oct. 1980): 370, and J. C. Furnas, *The Americans: A Social History of the United States 1587–1914* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1969), pp. 528–29.

¹⁹ Furnas, *Americans*, p. 529.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

²¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1953, *s.v.*, William Cullen Bryant.

²² David Patton, Journal 1832–34, LDS Church Archives. The last part of the journal, undated, is written by Wilford Woodruff, probably after David Patton’s death, 25 Oct. 1938.

Of Benjamin F. Johnson it was said in 1906, “he was possibly better acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith than any man now living.”²³ A great admirer of Joseph, he paid tribute to the Prophet as a kind, generous, and mirth-loving man, then adds in his memoirs:

And yet, although so social and even convivial at times, he would allow no arrogance or undue liberties, and criticisms, even by his associates, were rarely acceptable and contradictions would rouse in him the lion at once, for by no one of his fellows would he be superseded. In the early days at Kirtland and elsewhere one or another of his associates were more than once, for their impudence, helped from the congregation by his foot and at one time at a meeting at Kirtland for insolence to him he soundly thrashed his brother William who [had] boasted himself as invincible.²⁴ (Brackets in original)

The atmosphere in Kirtland at the time might well have led to such demonstrations within the Church, for a journal history entry of 1 January 1836 states that there was “a division among the Twelve also among the Seventy and bickering and jealousies among the Elders and the official members of the church.”²⁵ Warren Parrish about this time tried to drag Joseph, Sr., from the stand during a church meeting because of some remark the Prophet’s father had made, and William Smith alone of those present went to his father’s aid.²⁶

But later in Nauvoo there were similar instances. Hosea Stout, for one, well nigh choked a man who was baiting him.²⁷ And most are familiar with anecdotes of Joseph Smith’s sturdy resistance to abuse. Once, for example, when Ira Spaulding was riding in a carriage with the Prophet, a man who came to collect a note insulted Joseph. The Prophet simply handed the reins to Spaulding, “just stept outside the carriage and knocked him down as flat as a beef, not speaking a word” and travelled on.²⁸ And there are other accounts. The Danites, of course, were an extralegal reaction to the violence meted out to the Saints themselves, and the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* can only be understood in the context of this same time period. Violence and crudity of speech were likewise prevalent.

²³ Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life’s Review* (Independence, Mo.: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Co., 1947), p. 387.

²⁴ Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs, 1903, p. 4, typescript, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

²⁵ Journal History, 1 Jan. 1836, Church Archives.

²⁶ Lucy [Mack] Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool, England: S. W. Richards for Orson Pratt, 1853), p. 211.

²⁷ Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 1:306.

²⁸ David Osborn, Autobiography, cited in Stanley S. Ivins Notebook No. 5, p. 111, photocopy New York Public Library. This autobiography, in a private collection, is not the autobiography in the Church Archives. Osborn relates another hearsay incident concerning Joseph Smith. A man named John Eagle attacked the Prophet when Joseph, as mayor, served a writ on him. Joseph not only knocked the man down but he sent men later to tip over Eagle’s small house and pour out his stock of liquor.

The accusation of “licentiousness” seems to have surfaced mainly during the succession crisis of 1844, a year after polygamy had been introduced in Nauvoo. Even then the judgments passed on William’s behavior were contradictory. During the trial of John Hardy, formerly president of the Boston area, Hardy accused William, along with George J. Adams and Samuel Brannan, “and at least five others of the Twelve,” of teaching the “plurality wife” doctrine in secret, “in its worst features.” William Smith, he alleged, had also behaved in an “obscene” manner towards certain females.²⁹ Wilford Woodruff, visiting Boston on his way to England, evidently accepted the allegations as true. Writing to Brigham Young from Boston 9 October 1844, he said:

I soon discovered from various sources that the conduct of Wm. Smith, Adams, Brannan, Ball and others had been such in crowding their spiritual wife claims . . . until some of the strongest pillars were shaking, and if any opposed them in their deeds, they would trample them down until presiding Elders were losing their posts and some ready to come out in battle array openly against the Church.³⁰

Yet Parley P. Pratt, only three months later, wrote in *The Prophet* 18 January 1845 in New York:

I have just returned from a short visit to Boston and vicinity . . . I must now hasten to close by saying that I highly approve of the course pursued by Elder Wm. Smith and the presiding officers in general in this region . . . and by a strict and just administration of the laws and discipline of the church they have been enabled to cut off from the tree those branches which were most bitter and to excommunicate those members which were seeking the destruction of the society in which they were. Thus they have preserved the church in union by the aid of the Spirit of God.³¹

Nevertheless, George J. Adams and Samuel Brannan were cut off from the Church for adultery three months later, 10 April 1845, Brannan being restored to fellowship six weeks later.³² No action was taken against William Smith and he was ordained as Patriarch to the Church 24 May 1845. Less than five months later, one of the grounds for Parley P. Pratt’s objection to William as an apostle was his conduct in the East; thus one can only conjecture about the basis for the change in Pratt’s publicly stated view of William’s activities there.

There is a reference to possible sexual misconduct on William’s part prior to Joseph Smith’s death which appears as a second-hand account recorded in Abraham H. Cannon’s diary 9 April 1890. According to Cannon, President Snow — illustrating the fact that all must be tested — told of one instance, unspecified in time, when Brigham Young had been “tried to the very utmost by the Prophet.” Joseph had instructed Brigham to prefer charges against Wil-

²⁹ John Hardy, *History of the Trials of Elder John Hardy* (Boston: Conway and Company, 1844), pp. 8–9.

³⁰ Wilford Woodruff to Brigham Young, 9 Oct. 1844, Manuscript History, LDS Church Archives.

³¹ Parley P. Pratt to the Editor, 11 Jan. 1845, in *The Prophet*, 18 Jan. 1845, New York City Library Newspaper Collection. William was no longer editor at this time, having resigned November 1844.

³² Willard Richards, Diary, 24 May 1845, LDS Church Archives.

liam for adultery and “many other sins.” Cannon, quoting President Snow, continues:

Before the time set for the trial, however, Emma Smith talked to Joseph and said the charge preferred against William was with a view to injuring the Smith family. After the trial had begun Joseph entered the room and was given a seat. The testimony of witnesses concerning the culprit’s sins was then continued. [In] a short time Joseph arose filled with wrath and said, “Brother Brig[ham] I will not listen to this abuse of my family a minute longer. [I] will wade in blood up to my knees before I will do it.”³³

Most of the labeling of William as licentious, however, seems to be retrospective. For example, in the January 1865 issue of the *Millennial Star*, a short history of William Smith says, “In all his missions the course of conduct he pursued towards the females subjected him to much criticism.”³⁴ Jedediah M. Grant, in a discourse in the Salt Lake Tabernacle 23 March 1856, compared Joseph Smith — a “great lover of women” who elevated them and made them virtuous and happy — with William, the “profligate brother,” whose brand of love would make women “wretched and miserable, would debauch and degrade them.”³⁵ Even Thomas L. Kane, ignorant of the reality of polygamy among the Saints, referred to William on 11 July 1851 as a “ribald scamp” who, because the authorities had been forced to excommunicate him for his own licentiousness, had concocted “that unmixed outrage the spiritual wife story.”³⁶ Kane’s observation was published, without correction, in the *Millennial Star*, November 1851, by editor Franklin D. Richards.³⁷

There seems to be at least some question about whether William had, in fact, misbehaved since no specific evidence of such wrongdoing seems to have survived. However, even granting truth to the allegations, we must still see the charge of “licentiousness” in the context of nineteenth-century American society. Under frontier conditions couples lived together for months or years without legalizing their relationship, or they resorted to what were called “left-handed marriages” performed by persons of dubious authority, sometimes the bride’s father. Divorce was just as informal; couples simply separated without legal formality.³⁸ Lawrence Foster, characterizing the New York area in the

³³ Abraham H. Cannon, *Diary*, 8 April 1890, LDS Church Archives. The incident related by Cannon might be associated with the 25 May 1842 Nauvoo High Council investigation of John C. Bennett. In an M.A. thesis by Robert D. Hutchins, “Joseph Smith III: Moderate Mormon” (Brigham Young University, 1977), p. 33, n. 104 the author refers to the testimony of Catherine Fuller Warren which names William Smith as being “involved with John C. Bennett in his numerous seductions which included the Widow Fuller.” Hutchins cites “Nauvoo Miscellaneous Papers,” LDS Church Archives.

³⁴ *Millennial Star* 26 (Jan. 1865): 8.

³⁵ Jedediah M. Grant, Sunday Tabernacle Discourse, 23 March 1856, *Journal History*.

³⁶ Thomas L. Kane to President Millard Fillmore, 11 July 1851, *Journal History*, Church Archives.

³⁷ *Millennial Star*, 13 (Nov. 1851): 344.

³⁸ Russel Blaine Nye, *The Cultural Life of the New Nation: 1776–1830* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 139.

1820s with a well-chosen phrase, “a hot-bed of marital experimentation,” asserts: “Nearly all the new religious groups in the area were involved in some manner with unorthodox marriage ideals and practices.” He refers to the concept of “spiritual wifery” as “a catch-all suggesting rationalized infidelity.”³⁹ Orson Hyde in 1832 recorded preaching to groups of Cochranites in the coastal area of Maine, who also believed in plurality of wives.⁴⁰

The Church, too, officially acknowledged the existence of such practices. As early as May 1837 the *Messenger and Advocate* contained a warning from the presidents of seventies meeting held 28 April 1837 that “we will have no fellowship whatever with any Elder belonging to the quorum of the Seventies who is guilty of polygamy or any offense of the kind.”⁴¹ Danel Bachman in his study of plural marriage refers to even earlier gossip about “unusual marital conduct” among the members of the Church in Kirtland.⁴²

Because of the secrecy involved in the early practice of polygamy before the Saints came west, church laws governing it were, to some extent, unformed, unknown, and unenforced, so there were abuses of the principle as well as the approved practice of it.

And it was difficult to separate the two. In a letter to the Twelve, 16 September 1844, John Hall and Richard Hewitt of China Creek, Illinois, expressed concern because some elders were teaching the “spiritual wife” doctrine, causing contention, slander, and backbiting thereby. They wrote, “If such mysteries are generally as have been taught here . . . you will soon be sent to your graves as was the case of our lamented Prophet and Patriarch.”⁴³ The problem had been of at least six months’ duration because Hyrum Smith, in an article in the *Times and Seasons*, 15 March 1844, reported that Hewitt had been to see him about elders in China Creek teaching that men could have any number of wives. Hyrum answered that no such doctrine was taught or practiced and anyone found teaching it “will stand a chance to be brought before the High Council and lose his licence and membership also.”⁴⁴

Yet in 1843, George J. Adams had brought back a wife and child from his mission in England, even though he had a family already in Nauvoo. According to gentile Charlotte Haven, the first wife “is reconciled to this certainly at first unwelcome guest to her home for her husband and some others have rea-

³⁹ Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 131. See also Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 87.

⁴⁰ Orson Hyde, Journal, 11 Oct. 1832, LDS Church Archives.

⁴¹ *Latter-day Saints Messenger and Advocate* 3 (May 1837): 510. Also cited in Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, p. 138.

⁴² Danel W. Bachman, “A Story of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith” (M.A. thesis, Purdue University, 1975), p. 86.

⁴³ John Hall and Richard Hewitt to the presidents and brethren of the Twelve, 16 Sept. 1844, in *Journal History*.

⁴⁴ *Times and Seasons* 5 (15 March 1844): 473–74.

soned with her that plurality of wives is taught in the Bible.”⁴⁵ Adams had been charged with adultery 12 February 1843, but he was restored to full fellowship only three months later, 27 May 1843, and a *Times and Seasons* announcement said he had been “honorably acquitted of all charges.”⁴⁶

Amid the uncertainties of hide-and-seek played by those living the principle, the speed with which excommunicants were reinstated must have convinced many that the church trials were simply a public-relations ploy, and the words *licentious* and *adulterous* must have lost some of their meaning. It is important to note that no action was taken against William. Although contemporaries later called him licentious they took no action that would constitute evidence of licentious behavior. He gave a “spiritual wifery” speech at Nauvoo 17 August 1845 which could have been a rather rash attempt to clear his own name at the expense of others, but was, no doubt, seen by church leaders as dangerous provocation. According to contemporary sources he “avowed that the spiritual wife system was taught in Nauvoo secretly — that he taught and practised it and he was not in favor of making any secret of the matter. He said it was a common thing among the leaders and he for one was not ashamed of it.”⁴⁷ But the speech only served to alienate those living the principle and it disgusted those who were not aware of it, or who knew of it and were opposed to it.

There were other conditions, too, at the time which tended to blur the issue of morality. The Church had for some time been taking care of the marriages and divorces of church members, the latter somewhat loosely.⁴⁸ William Smith’s own first known plural wife, Mary Ann Sheffield, had been sealed to William by Brigham Young in 1845 (exact date unknown), even though she had not been divorced from her husband in England. And in 1893 she would testify “William B. Smith divorced himself from me. I consider he did that when he went away East.”⁴⁹ Mary Jane Rollins, whom he married 22 June 1845 after his first wife died, left him because of his relationship with Mary Ann Sheffield who was living with them at the time. Either she did not know of William’s plural marriage or else she disapproved of it.⁵⁰ In short, it is difficult to trace actual evidence of adultery or of unauthorized wives on William’s part because legal practices lacked the clarity of our own conventions and because of the secrecy involved in the practice of polygamy.

⁴⁵ Charlotte Haven, “A Girl’s Letters from Nauvoo,” *The Overland Monthly* 16 (Dec. 1890): 653, cited in Ivins Notebook No. 3, p. 255.

⁴⁶ Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 27 May 1843; also *Times and Seasons* 4 (15 Aug. 1843): 303.

⁴⁷ *Warsaw Signal*, 3 Sept. 1845. See also Deposition of Cyrus H. Wheelock, Temple Lot Suit (Abstract), Lamoni, 1893, cited in Ivins Notebook No. 2, p. 111.

⁴⁸ Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, p. 135.

⁴⁹ Mary Ann Sheffield Smith West, Testimony in Temple Lot Suit (Abstract), Lamoni, 1893, RLDS Library, Independence, Mo. Mary Ann was uncertain about the date of her sealing to William Smith, and she could not remember how long the marriage had lasted. Lyndon W. Cook, *Revelations*, p. 277, gives the year of the sealing as 1845.

⁵⁰ *Warsaw Signal*, 3 Sept. 1845.

In the context of his own day, William Smith's behavior does not stand out in sharp relief, and even the general description of "unstable" loses some of its edge with a closer look at the careers of the other apostles. William, it is true did resign his apostleship because of his difficulties with Joseph in October 1835, and his faith was doubted more than once. But he was not alone. The Prophet pointed out that William's sins were no more grievous than those of David Patton, Orson Hyde, or William McLellin.⁵¹ Most of the quorum were tried for disobedience, not once but several times. Even Brigham Young rebelled. Once he refused to obey Joseph when the Prophet requested that the brethren be put under bonds because "when some of the brethren in Nauvoo were sent out to collect funds for the building of the temple part of their collections stuck to their fingers."⁵² Although there are references to William's earlier stubbornness, much of the emphasis on William's contentiousness and rebellion comes from the period of the succession crisis when expectations clashed resoundingly.⁵³

William Smith returned from a mission to Nauvoo, 4 May 1845, almost a year after the assassination of his brothers. With Brigham Young installed as virtual president of the Church, William could no longer bask in the security of being the Prophet's brother nor could the Church be recognized as the province of the Smith family. Jan Shipps suggests that "the Mormonism described in Mother Lucy Mack Smith's *History* explains . . . William Smith's 1845 claim that the Saints were all dependent upon his family for the priesthood."⁵⁴ Joseph, Sr., and Hyrum had served as assistant president and associate president respectively while they were Patriarchs to the Church; William not unnaturally expected to hold similar responsibilities. The *Times and Seasons* had made announcements on several occasions signed by both Joseph and Hyrum as "Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints."⁵⁵ And an article in the *New York Herald*, 19 February 1842, reproduced in the *Millennial Star*, referred to "the first presidency of the Mormon hierarchy which consists of four dignitaries — to wit a principal prophet, a patriarch and two councillors."⁵⁶ In a letter to Brigham Young from the mission field,

⁵¹ *History of the Church*, 2:301.

⁵² Abraham H. Cannon, *Diary*, 8 April 1890, LDS Church Archives. On another occasion, during the trial of Benjamin Winchester, Brigham Young refused to heed the direction of the Prophet, saying his mind was made up and that "the remarks of Brother Hyrum or of Brother Joseph had not altered it." He refused to sit upon the case another day. *History of the Church*, 5:411.

⁵³ It has been suggested that Joseph protected his brother William from the consequences of his behavior and this may well be true. But the sibling relationship might also provide an explanation for William's physical encounters with the Prophet — a prophet who also happened to be his brother. The patriarchal succession crisis of 1845 is treated more fully in the essay which follows by E. Gary Smith.

⁵⁴ Jan Shipps, "The Prophet, His Mother, and Early Mormonism: Mother Smith's History as a Passageway to Understanding," paper presented at the Mormon History Association Annual Meeting, Logan, Utah, May 1979, p. 17.

⁵⁵ *Times and Seasons* 4 (14 Oct. 1843): 329, 347–48.

⁵⁶ *Millennial Star* 3 (May 1842): 8.

24 August 1844, William said he wanted simply to stand in the same position as Hyrum who, as patriarch, had been “spiritual father” to the Church.⁵⁷

The martyrdom had caused a fundamental shift, reinforcing William Smith’s fears that the Smith family was being ousted. James Monroe tells in his diary of a sermon preached by William just one week after his arrival in Nauvoo, 11 May 1845. Monroe reports: “He [William] seemed determined to live up to his privilege and stand in his place,” and furthermore “did not seem to approve of the harsh measures now going on to get rid of our enemies but advised the saints to leave judgment in the hand of God.” Monroe says Brigham Young was present at the stand and “spoke in a commendatory manner of William, but I thought rather coolly.”⁵⁸

A 15 May 1845 article, “Patriarchal,” written by William for the *Times and Seasons* reveals much of what he felt at the time. In it he emphasizes the role and sufferings of the Smith family as founders of the Church; he, as the last of that family, asks the support of the community.⁵⁹ In the same issue, an editorial by W. W. Phelps referred to William as “Patriarch over the whole Church,”⁶⁰ a description countered by editor John Taylor two weeks later.

By this time the Twelve were holding at least some council and prayer meetings without William, even though he was still a member of the quorum. At a May 23 meeting “the improper course of William was the subject of conversation,” and it was agreed that William constituted “the greatest danger.”⁶¹ Despite this, the next day, 24 May 1845, William Smith was ordained and set apart by the Twelve as patriarch, and Willard Richards refers to the “warm interchange of feelings” between William and the Twelve.⁶²

But apparently William was still speaking out. Five days later, 29 May 1845, Brigham Young met with members of the Quorum and “prayed that the Lord would overrule the movements of William Smith who is endeavoring to ride the Twelve down.”⁶³ On June 1 an official “clarification” appeared in the *Times and Seasons* defining William’s position as Patriarch *to* the Church, not *over* the Church, an obvious restriction. William saw this as yet another attempt to undermine his position and, while continuing to give patriarchal

⁵⁷ William Smith to Brigham Young, 24 Aug. 1844, Church Archives. Calvin Rudd “William Smith, Brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith” (M.A. thesis, BYU, 1973), Appendix A, p. 183, gives the date of this letter as 21 Aug. 1844.

⁵⁸ James Monroe, Diary, 11 May 1845. Photocopy, Huntington Library, holograph in Coe Collection, Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn. James Monroe, in an entry dated 12 May 1845, agreed with William Smith. He said “The course pursued in this city of late by the Mormons seems to have invited persecution.”

⁵⁹ *Times and Seasons* 6 (15 May 1845): 904–05. Many of the issues of this Church newspaper were published later than the date given on the masthead, sometimes two weeks later. Notes to that effect appear in some but not all of the late issues.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 905–6.

⁶¹ *History of the Church*, 7:417, also William Clayton, Journal, 23 May 1845, LDS Church Archives.

⁶² Willard Richards, Diary, 24 May 1845, Church Archives.

⁶³ *History of the Church*, 7:420.

blessings as “Patriarch over the whole Church” and “by the highest authority in the church of God,”⁶⁴ wrote to Brigham Young 30 June 1845:

I said in a short note to you the other day that I would stand by you till death. But it might be asked upon what principle? I will answer, on the principle that I am dealt justly by in the church. The next morning after our meeting I notice an article that appears under the head of Patriarch. It is not so much the doctrine that I care about; it is the spirit of the article, a disposition that appears in the brethren to cut and shave me down to the last cent . . . I do not like it . . . I have often said I was willing . . . that you should stand as the President of the Church but I claim to be patriarch over the whole church, this gives me my place and proper standing, and what I inherit.⁶⁵

Brigham Young replied the same day, reiterating that William as patriarch must be subject to the control of the Twelve.⁶⁶

Then, on 1 July 1845, the *Times and Seasons* published an excerpt from the *History of Joseph Smith*. Dated 16 December 1833, it dealt with the Jackson County period and also included the 18 December 1833 blessings given by the Prophet to members of his family and to Oliver Cowdery. William’s blessing referred to “the pride of his heart” and his “rebellious spirit.”⁶⁷ He must have questioned the wording because in a reply to him Brigham Young affirmed that the words were indeed Joseph’s.⁶⁸ William’s blessing was published a second time, however, in the *Times and Seasons* just two weeks later, without comment, and the words “rebellious spirit” were omitted.⁶⁹

On 20 August 1845, William wrote to a Brother Little complaining that “there seems to be a severe influence working against me and the Smith family in this place.” He referred to “little Joseph” as “his father’s successor, although some people would fain make us believe that the Twelve are to be perpetual heads of this church to the exclusion of the Smith family.”⁷⁰ William continued to fight for recognition and for his rights according to precedent. After failing to be sustained as patriarch and apostle at the 6 October 1845 general conference, he published a pamphlet against the Twelve and was excommunicated from the Church, 19 October 1845, for apostasy and for opposition to the authority of the Twelve.

From the standpoint of Brigham Young and the Twelve, William Smith was a problem. But from William’s point of view he, as representative of the founding Smith family, was being excluded, denied the rights of presidency held by the two preceding Smith patriarchs. These two perceptions, meeting

⁶⁴ See for example, patriarchal blessings given to William A. Beebe, 21 June 1845; Jonathan Packer, June 1845; Nathan W. Packer, 19 June 1845; Anson Matthews, 16 July 1845; all at Nauvoo, and others. Historical Archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Mo.

⁶⁵ William Smith to Brigham Young, 30 June 1845, LDS Church Archives.

⁶⁶ Brigham Young to William Smith, 30 June 1845, LDS Church Archives.

⁶⁷ *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 July 1845): 947.

⁶⁸ Brigham Young to William Smith, 10 Aug. 1845, LDS Church Archives.

⁶⁹ *Times and Seasons* 6 (15 July 1845): 968.

⁷⁰ William Smith to Brother Little, 20 Aug. 1845, LDS Church Archives.

head-on in the face of a stated doctrine of lineal descent, had prompted the narrower definition of the office. But the confrontation had also illuminated the problems inherent in a doctrine of lineal descent, and it had created thereby a climate of unease between the patriarch and the rest of the hierarchy. William Smith departed, much embittered, but the legacy of the confrontation would remain.



The Patriarchal Crisis of 1845

E. Gary Smith

ALMOST A YEAR after Patriarch to the Church Hyrum Smith was killed, the *Times and Seasons*, the official church newspaper in Nauvoo, carried an editorial entitled “Patriarchal,” with the prefatory note: “As the nature of the office of Patriarch, does not seem to be fully understood, we thought a little explanation on this point might not be amiss.”¹ If what followed failed in its stated purpose of providing a complete understanding of the office, it nevertheless represents the first attempt to provide a written description of the duties and responsibilities of the office of Patriarch to the Church, and for that reason has usually figured largely in historical studies of the subject and period.²

“Patriarchal,” which appeared 1 June 1845, was authored by John Taylor, of the *Times and Seasons* and presumably spoke on behalf of Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve.³ Taylor, in his description of the office of Patriarch to the Church, concluded among other things that: the title is “Patriarch to the Church” and not “Patriarch over the whole Church”; that the Patriarch to the Church is one of several patriarchs, all of whom have equal

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¹ “Patriarchal,” *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 June 1845): 927. Although bearing the publication date of 1 June 1845, the article was not written until 23 June 1845 and was not published until shortly thereafter. John Taylor, *Diary*, 23 June 1845, photocopy in the Historical Department Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; cited hereafter as LDS Church Archives.

² See, for example D. Michael Quinn: “Joseph Smith III’s 1844 Blessing and the Mormons of Utah,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 1 (1981): 14; and *DIALOGUE: A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT* 15 (Summer 1982): 69–90; G. Homer Durham, ed., *The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings of John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1943), pp. 146–49.

³ Taylor, *Diary*, 23 June 1845.

authority to give blessings; that patriarchs only bless the “fatherless” (those without worthy priesthood-bearing fathers); and that the presiding rights of the Patriarch to the Church are limited to presiding over other patriarchs.

To make use of this editorial in reconstructing the office as it once existed we must remember that, as with other offices in the Mormon hierarchy, the position of Patriarch to the Church evolved with few written guidelines during the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph Smith. We are left to evaluate and collate the miscellaneous and disparate evidences available to us. Taylor’s article must be viewed as only one of those evidences; and to test the extent of its value in the reconstruction process, we must first understand what prompted its authorship and the point of view from which it was written.

The story begins with the martyrdom of Hyrum Smith on 27 June 1844. Historians have given much attention to the controversy surrounding Joseph’s rightful successor but little has been written concerning the uncertainty surrounding Hyrum’s successor and the effect of that process on the history of the office of Patriarch to the Church. The patriarchy was then barely ten years old. Joseph Smith, Sr., the first patriarch, was ordained by the First Presidency on 18 December 1833.⁴ On his deathbed, 14 September 1840, Father Smith sealed the patriarchal power upon the head of his son Hyrum.⁵ Four months later Joseph Smith, Jr., received a revelation confirming Father Smith’s action: Hyrum was to take the “office of Priesthood and Patriarch which was appointed unto him by his father, by blessing and also by right.”⁶

When Hyrum was killed at Carthage, his oldest son, John, was not quite twelve years old,⁷ too young, like Joseph III in the case of succession to the presidency, to be considered. Of the brothers, only Samuel and William survived Hyrum. Samuel died a month after Hyrum on 30 July 1844.⁸ This left William Smith as the nearest adult male relative of Hyrum.

⁴ In the larger sense, Joseph Smith, Jr., was the first patriarch. Oliver Cowdery recorded the blessings pronounced by the younger Joseph upon his family on 18 Dec. 1833, before the older Joseph received the priesthood office from his son on the same occasion. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1953), 1:473, originally published as Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums, 1947–1950. Brigham Young once stated that his father, John Young, was the first patriarch in the Church by reason of his ordination after the return of Zion’s Camp, *Journal History*, 21 June 1874, p. 30. However, the return of Zion’s Camp was in 1834, after Joseph Smith, Sr.’s ordination on 18 Dec. 1833. See also D. Michael Quinn, “The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church,” *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 26; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 3:163; and Earnest M. Skinner, “Joseph Smith, Sr., First Patriarch to the Church” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958), pp. 83–86.

⁵ B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978), 4:29; Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), p. 309.

⁶ D&C 124:91; see also *Times and Seasons* 2 (1 June 1841): 42.

⁷ John Smith was born 22 Sept. 1832.

⁸ *History of the Church*, 7:213.

At the time of the martyrdom, William, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, was on a mission to the eastern states.⁹ He did not return to Nauvoo until 4 May 1845, over ten months later.¹⁰ However, William, as well as others, had considered his possible role as a successor to Hyrum's patriarchal office well in advance of his return. On 8 August 1844, Brigham Young had spoken publicly of such a possibility during his confrontation with Sidney Rigdon over leadership of the church, contrasting the cases of the president and the patriarch. At that time Brigham Young opposed naming any man as head of the Church in Joseph's place and declared that the Twelve were sufficient to lead the church without a replacement for Joseph: "Inasmuch as our prophet and patriarch are taken from our midst," he propounded to the congregation, "do you want someone to guard, to guide and lead you through this world into the Kingdom of God, or not? All that want someone to be a guardian, or a prophet, a spokesman, or something else, signify it by raising the right hand (no votes)."¹¹ He then addressed the question of a replacement for Hyrum Smith:

Do you want a patriarch for the whole church? To this we are perfectly willing. If Brother Samuel H. Smith had been living, it would have been his right and privilege, but he is dead, . . . Do you want a patriarch? here is Brother William left . . . Here is Uncle John, he has been ordained a patriarch. Brother Samuel would have taken the office if he had been alive; it would have been his right; the right is in Uncle John, or one of his brothers. I know that it would have belonged to Samuel. But as it is, if you leave it to the Twelve, they will wait until they know who is the man. Will you leave it to the Twelve, and they dictate the matter (a unanimous vote)."¹²

William Smith wrote to Brigham Young only two weeks later from his missionfield and asked: "Will the Bretherin remember me and my clames in the Smith family I do not mean sucessian as a prophet in Joseph place for no man on earth can fill his place . . . hence the 12 come next to him . . . and govern the church in all things."

William pledged his support to Brigham Young as head of the Quorum and as the proper person to receive revelation for the church, then continued: "The next in order is the Patriarch of the church this Singular personage stands as father to the whole church, a patriarch can be a prophet and revelator not to the church as government but to the church as his children in Patriarchal Blessings upon their heads . . . and all I have to say farther is that this office

⁹ William Smith was ordained an apostle 15 February 1835. See Reed C. Durham, Jr., and Steven H. Heath, *Succession in the Church* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), p. 17. His arrival in the Eastern States Mission was some time prior to the martyrdom, for correspondence was addressed to him in Philadelphia on 20 June 1844. See *History of the Church*, 6:519.

¹⁰ James M. Monroe, *Diary*, photocopy, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif., 4 May 1845; William Clayton, *Journal*, 4 May 1845, LDS Church Archives.

¹¹ *History of the Church*, 7:232.

¹² *Ibid.*, 7:234, 241–42.

of Patriark must continue in the Smith family while they live and are in the faith.”¹³

Brigham Young responded over a month later in a letter dated 28 September 1844:

As it regards a Patriarch for the whole church there has not been any appointed yet in the place of Brother Hyrum and I do not calculate to do anything but what is strictly according to the mind and will of God; the right rests upon your head there is no doubt and all will remain as it is until we have further connections from you, but if you feel disposed you can bestow it upon Uncle John or Uncle Asael; and if not disposed to do so but feel to have it yourself we wish you to come to Nauvoo as soon as possible to receive your ordination as Patriarch.¹⁴

At the October 1844 conference a few days later, Brigham Young “went on to show that the right to the office of Patriarch to the whole church belonged to William Smith as a legal right by descent.”¹⁵

Though the Quorum of the Twelve moved steadily toward William’s appointment as Hyrum’s successor, it was a decision they probably would have preferred to avoid. Aware of William’s independent nature, they probably perceived him as less than totally committed. They undoubtedly remembered William’s rebellious conduct ten years earlier at the church trial of a Sister Elliot when he became so angry with his brother, Joseph, that he turned in his “license.” The remaining eleven apostles had to be humbled by a “*Revelation to the Twelve*” before they would open their minds to William’s reinstatement in their quorum: “As for my servant William, let the Eleven humble themselves in prayer and in faith, and wait on me in patience, and my servant William shall return, and I will yet make him a polished shaft in my quiver, in bringing down the wickedness and abominations of men.”¹⁶

A month later William physically attacked Joseph at a meeting of a debating society. In the wake of this disastrous breach in Smith family unity, the Twelve called William to account for his conduct and Orson Johnson preferred charges against him. Orson Hyde, a fellow apostle, even expressed resentment over William’s “superior privileges.”¹⁷

¹³ William Smith to Brigham Young, 24 Aug. 1844, Brigham Young Collection, LDS Church Archives.

¹⁴ Brigham Young to William Smith, 28 Sept. 1844, *The Prophet*, 9 Nov. 1844, New York City Public Library Annex, Newspaper Collection. William responded letter dated 16 Oct. 1844: “In relation to the Patriark for the whole church I must say I am vary thankful to get your opinion on this important subject as favorable to me as it is the legal right rests upon me & all I have to say you know the sufferings of the Smith family. . . . in case I should leve Nauvoo to stay any time Uncle John or Uncle Asel could be appointed to act in my place” Brigham Young Collection, LDS Church Archives.

¹⁵ *History of the Church*, 7:301.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:294–301. For a review of William’s difficulties with the Quorum of the Twelve, see Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 163–65.

¹⁷ *History of the Church*, 2:334–44, 346–47, 352–54.

William's refusal in later years to serve missions like others in the Quorum of the Twelve prompted his defensive letter published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1840.¹⁸ However, the hardships William described as excuses were hardly greater than other members of the Twelve suffered who, nevertheless, responded to the calls. Furthermore, friction between William and the Twelve was in evidence as recently as October of 1844 when apostle Wilford Woodruff wrote disparaging comments to Brigham Young concerning William's activities in the east.¹⁹

Thus it would not be surprising that Uncle John or Uncle Asael, both brothers of Joseph, Sr., were more acceptable to Brigham Young and the rest of the Twelve as possible successors to Hyrum, and Brigham was obviously disappointed that Samuel had not lived to assume the office.²⁰ But it is also apparent that Brigham Young genuinely felt an obligation to follow what he saw as the Lord's will in the matter and to honor what he understood to be Smith family "rights," even if it resulted in conferring the office on William. Accordingly, on 24 May 1845, Brigham Young ordained William Smith to be "Patriarch to the whole church."²¹

Immediately thereafter, an article authored by William appeared in the *Times and Seasons*. (The issue is dated May 15 but the editor apologizes for its lateness. Actual publication was running in excess of three weeks after the stated publication dates. It probably appeared about two weeks after William's ordination.)²² It began with a review of the sufferings of the founding family of Mormonism. William did not refer to Joseph individually but attributed the accomplishments of the Church to "the family." He then referred to his own sufferings and sacrifices, his continuing trust in God, and the fact that he, as "the last of the family" had now settled in Nauvoo. He asked: "Shall I be sustained by this community?" William also advised: "Support and uphold the proper authorities of the church — when I say authorities, I mean the whole, and not a part; the TWELVE and not one, two, six, eight, ten, or eleven, but the whole TWELVE: follow me as I follow Christ."

William's article was not overtly inappropriate but in the context of the times it was filled with possible double meanings. The Council of the Twelve

¹⁸ "Communications," *Times and Seasons* 2 (15 Dec. 1840): 252.

¹⁹ Wilford Woodruff to Brigham Young, 9 Oct. 1844, Journal History, Church Archives.

²⁰ Brigham Young's multiple references to Samuel Smith after Samuel's death in connection with the patriarchal office, may have been intended to divert attention away from any of Joseph's comments about presidential succession inconsistent with leadership by the Twelve. William Clayton in his diary 12 July 1844 states: "Prest. [William] Marks came up to enquire which was best to do about appointing a trustee . . . The Trustee must of necessity be the first president of the Church & Joseph has said that if he and Hyrum were taken away Samuel H. Smith would be his successor."

²¹ *History of the Church*, 7:418; Willard Richards, Diary, 24 May 1845, LDS Church Archives.

²² "Patriarchal," *Times and Seasons* 5 (15 May 1845): 904. In referring to William's article, Taylor said in his 1 June 1845 editorial: "And concerning Brother Wm. Smith, we are better acquainted with him, and with his views, than to believe that he intended to convey any such idea as the one which some persons would put upon, or gather from his sayings."

concluded the day before William's ordination, that William Smith "constitutes the greatest danger" — probably referring to the Twelve's fear that the Smith family, through William, might challenge their leadership of the church.²³ William's emphasis in his postordination article on the Smith family and his position as the only surviving brother could have been seen as a request for support beyond the patriarchal office. His reference to supporting each of the Twelve equally could also have been seen as an effort to undermine Brigham Young's obvious leadership role in the Quorum.²⁴ Furthermore the invitation to follow William as he followed Christ might suggest that William was not subject to the Twelve; and, if so, might not holding the office of patriarch actually put William in a position equivalent to that held by Joseph prior to his death? The Twelve were, after all, aware that Hyrum was also associate president at the time of his death and no doubt sensed a certain merging of the two offices in the minds of some members.²⁵

A second article in the same issue of the *Times and Seasons* written by W. W. Phelps did not discourage such speculation.²⁶ He called William Smith "Patriarch over the whole church," who, in addition to being "a father to the church," would confer blessings upon his "descent," confer blessings upon "all," and confer blessings upon "such as have not a father living to do it." Phelps maintained that William had inherited by right of lineage the same office that Joseph, Sr., and Hyrum had held; he eulogized the Smith family; and he emphasized William's role as the family representative.

The response was immediate. The return to Nauvoo of the only adult male member of the Smith family, coupled with his new ordination and the accompanying articles in the *Times and Seasons*, raised serious questions. The possibility that William might be viewed by the membership as the successor to Joseph as well as to Hyrum was all too real.

²³ William Clayton, Journal, 23 May 1845: "Wm Smith is coming out in opposition to the Twelve and in favor of Adams. The latter has organized a church at Augusta, Iowa Territory with young Joseph Smith for President, William Smith for Patriarch, Jared Carter for President of the Stake and himself for spoke[s]man to Joseph. Wm. says he has sealed some women to men and he considers he is not accountable to Brigham nor the Twelve nor anyone else. There is more danger from William Smith than from any other source, and I fear his course will bring us much trouble. [In the p.m.] The case of Wm. Smith was also talked over. It appears he is determined to rule the church and monopolize the whole to himself."

²⁴ Brigham Young was sustained at the 6 Oct. 1844 general conference of the Church as "the president of the Quorum of the Twelve, as one of the Twelve and the First Presidency of the Church," *History of the Church*, 7:294. Although a separate First Presidency was not formed until 1847, Brigham Young was acting as de facto president of the Church at least by October 1844.

²⁵ For a more complete review of Hyrum's position as associate president see Robert Glen Mouritsen, "The Office of Associate President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).

²⁶ John Taylor, in the 1 June 1845 article, identifies W. W. Phelps as the author of the *Times and Seasons* 15 May 1845 article: "So far as the editorial is concerned it was written rather hastily by our junior editor, W. W. Phelps, and did not come under our notice until after it was published." (It is probably safe to assume the article written by William in the same edition escaped prior detection also.)

The Quorum of the Twelve had to respond quickly and strongly to put aside any such notions. They did so through editor John Taylor in the 1 June 1845 editorial, which was published only two weeks after the articles by William Smith and W. W. Phelps. Taylor did not present a dispassionate description of the nature of the office of patriarch. Rather, he set out to demonstrate, by presenting a restrictive definition of William's position, that such a calling could not possibly be construed as giving credentials which could challenge the exclusive leadership of the Quorum of the Twelve.

John Taylor began with a discussion of the name of the office. The record of William's ordination indicates he was to be "a Patriarch *to* the whole church";²⁷ Brigham Young, in the August and October conferences of 1844, referred to the office as "patriarch *for* the whole church"²⁸ (*italics added*), the phrase he had used in his September 1844 letter to William. On the occasion of Joseph, Sr.'s death, the Prophet Joseph referred to his father as "Patriarch of the Whole Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," and as "Presiding Patriarch of the Church."²⁹ However, the Taylor article maintained that this preposition meant William was "patriarch *to* the church" and not "patriarch *over* the *whole* church" (*italics in the original*). Taylor clearly made the distinction to prevent the title from legitimizing, even inadvertently, any presidential claims William might make. Taylor's article conceded that William would act as a "senior Patriarch," have "priority and presidency," hold the keys of the patriarchal priesthood, and in a council of patriarchs, preside by right of office.

While the article stated that William would be acting "more especially" in the Nauvoo area, and thus implying a geographical restriction, the language carefully avoided denying actual church-wide authority. No known historical evidence suggests any geographical restrictions on either Hyrum or Joseph, Sr. In fact, the article itself quotes, in reference to William, the language of Hyrum's calling — to hold "the keys of the patriarchal blessings upon the heads of *all* my people." (*italics added*).³⁰

Taylor then proceeded in the editorial to the primary purpose for which the parameters of the office were being drawn:

We have been asked, Does not "patriarch over the whole church" place Brother William Smith at the head of the whole church as president? Ans. No . . . But does not the Book of Doctrine and Covenants say, "*First*," I give unto you Hyrum Smith to be a Patriarch unto you to hold the sealing blessings of my church, even the Holy Spirit of promise whereby ye are sealed up unto the day of redemption, that ye may not fall?" Yes, But that is in regard to seniority not in regard to authority in priesthood, for it

²⁷ *History of the Church*, 7:418.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7:234, 301.

²⁹ B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 1:387: "The presiding patriarch over the patriarchs of the church, however, is not so limited, since his jurisdiction in the line of his calling extends throughout the church, and he presides over, instructs and directs the labors of all the patriarchs of the church."

³⁰ *History of the Church*, 4:189.

immediately follows, “I give unto you my servant Joseph to be a presiding elder over all my church.” . . . And from this it is evident that the president of the church, not the patriarch, is appointed by God to preside. But does not the Patriarch stand in the same relationship to the church, as Adam did to his family, and as Abraham and Jacob did to theirs? No.³¹

Taylor made the argument that since the Twelve are commanded to ordain evangelical ministers (patriarchs), the patriarchal office must necessarily be under and subject to the Twelve. This argument ignored the distinction made during Joseph’s lifetime between the presiding patriarch and local patriarchs. D&C 107:39 states: “It is the duty of the Twelve *in all large branches* of the church, to ordain evangelical ministers” (italics added). Neither Joseph, Sr., nor Hyrum Smith, as the presiding patriarch, had been ordained by or was subject to the Quorum of the Twelve — only to Joseph Smith. Since the membership voted not to replace Joseph as president, the Twelve had necessarily adjusted the line-authority for the office of the presiding patriarch so that, for the first time, it was subject to the Twelve.³²

Undoubtedly, the most interesting subject Taylor touched upon in the June 1 article is the relationship between fathers and ordained patriarchs in the giving of patriarchal blessings. “Every father, after he has received his patriarchal blessing, is a Patriarch to his own family; and has the right to confer patriarchal blessings upon his own family; which blessings will be just as legal as those conferred by any Patriarch of the church: in fact it is his right; and a Patriarch in blessing his children, can only bless as his mouthpiece.”³³

Although Taylor was obviously attempting to demonstrate the absence of unique priesthood authority in the office of patriarch by pointing out the parallel authority of all worthy fathers and thereby further dampening any similarity between William’s office and that of president of the Church, his discussion nevertheless gives us important insight into the early relationship between fathers and patriarchs.

Of over 360 patriarchal blessings dating prior to October 1845, reviewed for this paper,³⁴ 226 (or 63 percent) specifically stated that a father’s blessing was being given. Eighteen of the 226 blessings identify the recipient as not hav-

³¹ *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 June 1845): 921. See also D&C 124:124.

³² The Twelve announced prior to William’s return from the East that his patriarchal office would be subject to the quorum: William will “stand in the same relationship to the Twelve, as his brother Hyrum did to the First Presidency, after he was ordained a patriarch,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (1 Dec. 1844): 727. This announcement may have been counterproductive, however, since after Hyrum was ordained a patriarch he also stood to the First Presidency as associate president.

³³ *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 June 1845): 9:921. Eliza R. Snow used similar language in discussing the office of patriarch long after the Saints were settled in the West. Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (1877; lithographic reprint, Salt Lake City: no publisher, 1957), p. 96.

³⁴ The blessings reviewed include “Patriarchal Blessings Not of the RLDS,” RLDS Research Library and Archives Independence, Missouri; Patriarchal Blessings Book 1845 June–1846 April, Theodore A. Schroeder papers, microfilmed by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, copy at RLDS Research Library and Archives; and numerous blessings from individual journals, collections, and private sources.

ing a “priesthood-father.” For example, Joseph, Sr., used the following phraseology in different blessings: “standeth to me as an orphan,” “as thou hast no father,” “to bless thee with a father’s blessing which thou shouldst have received from thy father, if living,” “as thou hast no father with priesthood,” and “for thy father is dead and has not the power of the priesthood.”³⁵

It is also apparent from these early blessings that fathers could and did give patriarchal blessings to their children once they received their own patriarchal blessing from the hands of an ordained patriarch.³⁶ Joseph Smith, Sr., instructed one man in an 1840 blessing: “Thou shall have power to bless thy children, and shall be a Patriarch in thy family and shall have power by the authority of the priesthood to bless thy kindred, thy children, thy children’s children, if they are brought to thee”³⁷

William Smith similarly promised in an 1845 blessing, “Thy posterity after thee shall receive in their turn Priesthood and Patriarchal blessings handed down from father to son according to the established order in the Church of Christ making thee from this time a Patriarch over thine own offspring”³⁸

William’s linking of “Priesthood and Patriarchal blessings was not unusual, and some ordinations to the priesthood took place within patriarchal blessings. However, these seem to have been incidental to the nature of the patriarchal blessing.³⁹ Apparently, it was a man’s knowledge of the lineage through which his children would receive blessings (knowledge imparted by the ordained patriarch), coupled with his own priesthood power and natural authority as a parent, which gave a man the ability to give patriarchal blessings to his own children. Once he knew his own lineage, he could pass the same knowledge on to his issue along with a father’s blessing, the combination thus constituting a “patriarchal blessing.”⁴⁰

But this did not mean that ordained patriarchs were authorized to give blessings *only* to those without “priesthood-fathers” in the church. A careful

³⁵ These examples appear variously in approximately fifteen blessings. See also Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 3:165.

³⁶ Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 3:172.

³⁷ Patriarchal blessing of John Landers, given 17 July 1840 by Joseph Smith, Sr., “Patriarchal Blessings Not of the RLDS, June to September 1845,” RLDS Research Library and Archives.

³⁸ Patriarchal blessings of Joseph McNeil, given 6 August 1845 by William Smith, Patriarchal Blessing Book of William Smith June to September 1845, RLDS Library and Archives.

³⁹ See for example, Hyrum’s patriarchal blessing to Phileman C. Merrill, 2 Jan. 1841 which states: “I ordain you an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and ordain you to that office to preach repentance and baptism” Patriarchal Blessing Book 1845 June 1846 April, Theodore A. Schroeder Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁴⁰ Bruce McConkie has provided an interesting variation on this theme: “In addition to *ordained patriarchs*, there are also *natural patriarchs*. Every holder of the higher priesthood who has entered into the patriarchal order of celestial marriage — thereby receiving for himself the blessings of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — is a natural patriarch to his posterity.” (Italics in the original.) Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), p. 506. This language was omitted from the second edition published in 1966.

reading of the Taylor article, coupled with historical precedent, shows that early patriarchs could and did give patriarchal blessings to individuals who had available and worthy priesthood-holding fathers. But in such instances, the patriarch acted only at the request of the father or with his consent. On occasion, Joseph Smith, Sr., and Hyrum Smith indicated in the text of blessings that it was “by permission.”⁴¹ William Smith became more specific: “By the consent and request of thy father which shall be his blessing upon thy head sealed by the authority of the office of Patriarch. . . .”⁴² Similar language is found in blessings given by Patriarch Isaac Morley as late as 1857.

Patriarchal blessings by fathers and patriarchal blessings by ordained patriarchs were not mutually exclusive in the early church. In fact, the practice of giving multiple blessings to the same recipient was common into the twentieth century. Thus, there was no reason why worthy fathers would not consent to the blessing of their children by an ordained patriarch, particularly by a presiding patriarch carrying the mystique of the founding Smith family name. It is uncertain when the requirement of parental consent died out, but today it has been replaced by formal church recommends for all members, and the role of the father as a giver of patriarchal blessings disappeared for many years. Recently the Church cautiously gave “priesthood fathers” permission to once again give patriarchal blessings to their children. Such blessings cannot be preserved in the archives of the Church, but otherwise appear to be indistinguishable from blessings bestowed by ordained patriarchs.⁴³

Interestingly, Taylor did not mention that one of the responsibilities of patriarchs was to declare the lineage through which a recipient would receive his or her blessings in the house of Israel. This aspect of the patriarchal calling was undoubtedly so well understood that it was taken for granted.

Similarly, the sealing powers were mentioned only incidentally and were probably a matter of common knowledge. While making it clear such powers were not related to presiding priesthood authority, Taylor nevertheless acknowledged the 1841 revelation to Joseph wherein Hyrum was “to hold the sealing blessings of my church, even the Holy Spirit of promise whereby ye are sealed

⁴¹ See for example, patriarchal blessing of Alpheus Haws given by Joseph Smith, Sr., in Haws Family Patriarchal Blessing record book, copies in RLDS Research Library and Archives (Haws' father received his blessing immediately before Haws did).

⁴² Patriarchal blessing of John Willis, 19 Aug. 1845, by William Smith, Patriarchal Blessing Book of William Smith, June to September 1845, RLDS Research Library and Archives. (The father of the recipient received his blessing immediately before his son).

⁴³ “Fathers Blessings to Children,” *Melchizedek Priesthood Handbook* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975), p. 25: “The First Presidency has issued the following policy statement: ‘Certainly we should give new and additional emphasis to the role of the father in giving blessings to children in the family. We think we should generally leave to the ordained patriarchs in the stake the responsibility of declaring lineage in connection with an official patriarchal blessing, but still we could leave unlocked the door so that any father who felt inspired to pronounce the lineage in connection with a father’s blessing he was giving to his children should not be prevented from doing so’ A father’s blessing may be recorded in family records, but it is not to be preserved in the archives of the Church. (Suggestions to Patriarchs, pp. 3–4.)” See also Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:172; McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (1966), p. 558.

up unto the day of redemption that ye may not fall notwithstanding the hour of temptation that may come upon you." In the same revelation Hyrum was given the authority "that whoever he blesses shall be blessed and whoever he curses shall be cursed; that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (D&C 124:124, 92–93)

Thus, Hyrum held the sealing powers along with and subject to Joseph, and these powers, in Hyrum's case, were connected to his calling as Patriarch to the Church. Further evidence of this authority is found in the text of Hyrum's patriarchal blessings in which he would frequently "seal up" the recipient "unto eternal life." He also "sealed" husbands and wives for eternity. The giving of patriarchal blessings for the dead through living proxies was also a familiar practice.⁴⁴ Although the 1 June 1845 editorial seemed to concede the sealing powers to William in his new calling as patriarch, William's efforts to exercise those powers subsequently aggravated what was already open hostility between himself and Brigham Young. By August 1845 William was writing, perhaps defensively, to Brigham Young asking: "When the Brethren call on me to be sealed to their wives, their dead friends &c also to get patriarchal blessings for their dead — what shall I say to them?"⁴⁵ Brigham Young responded on behalf of the Twelve:

Of what use for sealing when everything of the kind must be done over again in the Temple to make it valid? And it is not according to the order of the Church to confer Patriarchal Blessings on the dead by proxy, until baptism &c has been attended to for them by proxy, which must be done in the Lord's House, therefore, any thing of the kind done at this time would be of no effect The Twelve . . . recollect that Joseph said that the sealing power is always vested in one man, and that there never was, nor never would be but one man on the earth at a time to hold the keys of the sealing power in the church, that all sealings must be performed by the man holding the keys, or by his dictation, and that man is the president of the Church. Hyrum held the patriarchal office legitimately, so do you. Hyrum was counsellor, so are you, but the sealing power was not in Hyrum legitimately, neither did he act on the sealing principle only as he was dictated by Joseph. This was proven, for Hyrum did undertake to seal without counsel, & Joseph told him if he did not stop it he would go to hell and all those he sealed with him.⁴⁶

In effect, Brigham was saying that William as patriarch no longer needed the sealing power because the temple superceded former arrangements. And even if that weren't true, William would still have to seek permission to seal from the president of the Twelve case by case. Brigham Young's reluctance to allow William maximum access to the sealing powers is understandable, given William's overt attempts to claim presidential authority himself, particularly after August of 1845. However, William's excommunication in October of

⁴⁴ Several such blessings for the dead given by William appear in the William Smith Patriarchal Blessing Book June to September 1845, RLDS Library and Archives.

⁴⁵ As quoted in Brigham Young to William Smith, 10 Aug. 1845, Brigham Young Collection, LDS Church Archives.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

1845 resolved that conflict while leaving the ambiguous legacy of a changed office to future holders of Hyrum's calling. Not only were the sealing powers thereafter disassociated with the office, there was also a perception of diminished importance, authority, and dignity which perhaps in part contributed to the ultimate demise of the position in the Mormon hierarchy.⁴⁷

Thus, the 1845 controversy between William Smith and Brigham Young resulted in modifications of the office of Patriarch to the Church and undoubtedly set in motion changes affecting the nature of patriarchal blessings and the role of ordained patriarchs and fathers in general. The heart of the controversy was over whether William was receiving the same position of patriarch as that held by his brother, Hyrum. The Quorum of the Twelve claimed it was. In fact it was not the same nor could it be. It had to change one way or the other. Either the office became subject to the Twelve for the first time with far less stature, or it must expand its former authority and become the most important single position in the Church. William attempted, perhaps naively, to convince Brigham Young that there could be, in essence, two heads of the Church: one with line and priesthood authority to manage the organizational needs, and another with staff or spiritual authority to minister to the responsibility of blessing the Church and its members. This was considered unworkable, improper, and unacceptable by the other eleven of the Twelve. Their decision left only the two more extreme options, each unacceptable to the other.

The Taylor article was an important factor in educating the membership to the interpretation favored by the Quorum. Unfortunately, it does so in the guise of defining the office as it had always been and so falls short of giving an objective and comprehensive treatment of the premartyrdom patriarchal office and practices. However, by understanding the article's underlying concern and the context in which it appeared, we can come a little closer to understanding the true nature of what has been an important office in the Mormon hierarchy.

⁴⁷ Patriarch to the Church Eldred G. Smith was designated patriarch emeritus in the 6 October 1979 general conference "because of the large increase in the number of stake patriarchs and the availability of patriarchal service throughout the world." "The Sustaining of Church Officers," *Ensign* 9 (Nov. 1979): 18.



Isaiah Updated

George D. Smith, Jr.

IN THE TIME OF ISAIAH, some eight hundred years before the coming of Christ, there was, of course, no Old Testament as we know it today. The five books of the Torah (the Law) were not assembled until about 400 B.C., and it was not until A.D. 90 that most of the final canon of the Hebrew Bible — the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings — was decided by a council of teachers at Jamnia, thirty miles from the ruins of Jerusalem. With the inclusion of the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes in A.D. 135, the Hebrew Bible was complete.¹ In Isaiah's time, there was no indication that this Jewish prophet's writings would become part of a collection of Hebrew scriptures, let alone apply to events far in the future. This paper examines Isaiah's prophecies in their historical context and compares their meaning as a message for his time with the expanded meaning that Christians — and specifically Mormons — have since applied to them thousands of years later.

Early Christianity grew out of Judaism due largely to the missionary efforts of Paul, who carried the Christian gospel to the Graeco-Roman world. After A.D. 70, when the Romans overran the Jerusalem church of Christians, Christianity became less Jewish. It abandoned dietary laws and the practice of circumcision, and took on a unique identity of its own. No longer a sect within Judaism, Christianity rode the wave of Roman expansion to wide recognition, popularity, and, eventually, power.

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¹ When Jesus attended synagogue school in Nazareth, what we would today call the Bible was then known as the Law and the Prophets, a reference he often used. The Law (Torah) was canonized about 400 B.C.; the Prophets (including Isaiah) was added to the canon in about 200 B.C. See Alice Parmelee, *A Guidebook to the Bible* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), ch. 19.

By the time the Christian Bible was canonized about 393 A.D. at Hippo, a Roman city in North Africa, Christians had come to regard the Old Testament as both a chronicle of religious events before Christ and a prophecy of the advent of Christ. New Testament writers were seen as completing the work of Old Testament writers; the events they reported in the New Testament fulfilled the prophecies in the Old Testament. To Christians, Isaiah seemed to foretell the coming of a personal savior whose suffering would atone for man's sins and bring everlasting life. To Jews, Isaiah seemed to predict the salvation of Judah from oppression and suffering, if it would keep its covenant with Yahweh, Judah's savior and redeemer. Isaiah described the coming of a great king who would lead Judah to victory over its enemies.

When King Solomon died in 922 B.C., Israel split into two kingdoms: Israel in the north, Judah in the south. Isaiah was called to his prophetic mission in about 740 B.C. when the powerful nations of Assyria and Egypt threatened each other from opposite sides of Judah. His career spanned the last forty years of the eighth century through the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The Babylonian and Palestinian Talmudim — an official collection of Jewish law and tradition — indicate that Isaiah was killed by Manasseh, Hezekiah's son and successor to the throne.²

The sixty-six chapters of the book of Isaiah cover three time periods: (1) the period when Judah was an independent kingdom in the eighth century B.C.; (2) the exilic period after Babylonia conquered Judah in 586 B.C. when the Jews had no country of their own; and (3) the postexilic period (after the Persians conquered Babylonia in 539 B.C. when a few of the exiles returned from Babylon to reestablish the Jewish community at Jerusalem). Although the whole work was traditionally ascribed to one author, most biblical scholars now find the evidence persuasive that the book is a composite of two or more authors living at quite different times. It is only in the first part of the book, chapters 1–39, that material from Isaiah's eighth century is found; from chapters 40–66, the historical setting is the sixth century B.C. The people are no longer residents of Jerusalem but exiles in Babylon (43:14; 48:20). Jerusalem has been destroyed and awaits rebuilding (44:26–28; 49:14–23). Babylon is no longer a friendly ally (2 Kgs 20:12–13) for she has destroyed

² *Soncino Books of the Bible: Isaiah* (with Hebrew text and English translation), ed. A. Cohen (London: The Soncino Press, 1967), Introduction, pp. ix–xiv.

The first edition of the complete Hebrew Bible was printed at Soncino, Italy, in 1488. (See Parmelee, *Guidebook*, p. 152.) Prior to that, the sacred Hebrew texts had been copied and recopied by the Masoretes, carefully counting the letters in each book and noting the middle letter to insure accurate reproduction. No manuscript actually written by the author or editor of any Old Testament book is extant. The Soncino edition is in Hebrew and English (1917 translation by the Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia), with rabbinical annotation, old and new. Its authors claim this commentary to be "loyally true to the Jewish tradition with an eye to the latest researches of Biblical scholarship, criticism, and exegesis." Reference is made to important archeological discoveries, such as the cuneiform inscriptions in 1846, etc. Scholars have concluded that the Dead Sea Scrolls "confirm beyond all doubt the general accuracy of the Masoretic text." *The Cambridge Bible Commentary, The Making of the Old Testament*, ed. Enid B. Mellor (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 144–45.

Jerusalem. Unlike the time of Isaiah, the Davidic dynasty is rarely mentioned. The literary form is distinct: the tone has changed from threat and condemnation to consolation and hope; the style has changed from being brief and pointed to being expansive and lyrical. The later writings discuss exile and return to Jerusalem under Cyrus the Persian from a contemporary, not prophetic, viewpoint. Isaiah is generally considered to have written the first thirty-nine chapters (740–700 B.C.); an unknown prophet, named Deutero-(second) Isaiah by Bible scholars, wrote chapters forty to fifty-five during the Babylonian captivity (586–539 B.C.); and a Palestinian prophet called Trito-(third) Isaiah wrote chapters fifty-six to sixty-six after the return to Jerusalem (539–500 B.C.).³

Isaiah spoke frequently of the distinctive relationship between God and Judah. During political turmoil and threatened invasion from the alliance of Ephraim (i.e., Israel) and Syria, Isaiah prophesied that God would protect Judah and that Assyria would destroy both Ephraim and Syria. In fact, Assyria did capture Damascus (732 B.C.) and Samaria, the capital of Ephraim (722 B.C.). An account of these events is given in chapter seven of Isaiah and in 2 Kings 16:5–9.

When King Ahaz doubts that the Lord will protect Judah from the two attacking nations, Isaiah assures him: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a young woman shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).

The name “Immanuel” is Hebrew for “God is with us,” an appropriate name for a child whose birth would convince King Ahaz that God would protect Judah.⁴ Isaiah further tells Ahaz that Assyria will destroy Judah’s enemies even before the child is able to speak: “For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, my father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria” (Isa. 8:4).

Christians interpret these passages of Isaiah as a prophecy of the birth of Christ. Matthew, after recounting Jesus’ birth, quotes Isaiah to indicate that the birth “fulfilled [that] which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet” (Matt. 1:22–23). In many editions of the King James Bible the headnote for Isaiah 7:14 reads “Christ promised for a sign.” The 1979 LDS cross-referenced King James Version uses the note: “Christ shall be born of a virgin.”

The difference between the meaning of the Hebrew word *‘almāh* and the Greek word *parthenos*, used in the Septuagint translation, is crucial to the different interpretations given to Isaiah by Jewish and traditional Christian

³ Peter R. Ackroyd, “The Book of Isaiah,” *The Interpreter’s Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Charles M. Laymon (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1971), pp. 329–71. See also *Soncino: Isaiah*, introduction; and Carroll Stuhlmueller, “Deutero-Isaiah,” *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, et al. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968), ch. 22.

Harry M. Orlinski comments that “the personality of ‘Trito-Isaiah’ is even more elusive than that of his master . . . Our only means of knowing him . . . is as the editor of Deutero-Isaiah, and then through his own editor.” Harry M. Orlinski, *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah*, vol. 14 in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 15.

⁴ *Soncino: Isaiah*, pp. 34–35 (commentary).

scholars. *'Almāh* means “young woman,” and can refer to either maiden or newly married woman.⁵ The Septuagint version, a Greek translation made by seventy-two Jewish scholars in the third century B.C., incorrectly uses *parthenos* which means exclusively *virgin*, not having had sexual intercourse.⁶ Christians adopted the Septuagint misdefinition, and the term is found in early English translations such as the Rheims-Douay of 1582 and the King James Version of 1611. Reflecting recent Bible scholarship, the Oxford Revised Standard Version uses “young woman.”⁷

The seventy-two Jewish scholars who translated the Hebrew “young woman” into the Greek *virgin* may have wanted to make the birth of Immanuel more extraordinary. But the Christians, who believed that Immanuel was Jesus, gave great significance to the idea of virgin birth. Reflecting the spirit-matter dualism of such popular religions from Persia as Mithraism, Manicheism, and Gnosticism — all offshoots of Zoroastrianism — early Christians, especially Paul, regarded sexual gratification as the work of Satan. Since they believed that the world of physical desire was evil, they emphasized that Christ must have been born of a virgin mother.⁸

Reputable biblical scholarship has wrestled with the problems presented by these passages. In 1973, Claus Schedl, professor of biblical studies at Redemptorist College in Mautern, Austria, argued that the name Immanuel, which expresses Isaiah's belief that God will not forsake Judah, is itself a sufficient explanation of the Immanuel prophecy. He noted that *'almāh* appears in the Old Testament nine times, two in a musical reference, and seven in the sense of a “young marriageable maiden.” He explains, “It was presupposed that such

⁵ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 761; J. D. Douglas, ed. *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1982), pp. 1237–38, s.v. *virgin*.

⁶ The Septuagint meaning “seventy” (known as the “LXX”) is the oldest and most important Greek translation of the Old Testament. In 285–247 B.C., King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt commissioned about seventy Jewish scholars, theoretically six from each of the Twelve Tribes, to translate “The Law” into Greek; it was then called the Pentateuch. The term, Septuagint, was later applied to the whole Greek Old Testament. The first version of the Bible in a language other than Hebrew became the Bible of the Christian Church, quoted by Paul and the evangelists. Also, through reading the Septuagint, many gentiles converted to Judaism. Many Septuagint translations arose and two hundred years later, the Jews revised the Greek translations to conform more closely to Hebrew, later abandoning the LXX. Jerome discarded Latin versions of the LXX which had been amplified by the Church Fathers when he translated his Latin Vulgate version in the fifth century A.D.

⁷ The English versions of the Bible are based upon fragments from the seventh century A.D. The Catholic Douay version of 1582 was translated from the Latin Vulgate but gave much attention to the Septuagint translations; the 1611 King James Version (KJV) came from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek text of the New Testament. It was used to revise the existing English Bibles which had also influenced the KJV. The several Revised Standard Versions have incorporated the benefits of discovered texts and recent scholarship. The Oxford Annotated Revised Standard Version is used in this paper.

⁸ Edward McNall Burns, *Western Civilizations*, 4th ed. (New York: Norton, 1955), pp. 86–89, 221–224; Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, 2nd ed. (New York: Scribners, 1976), pp. 249–53. Williston W. Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Scribners, 1959), pp. 51–53. The Apostle Paul contrasts the flesh and spirit in Romans 8:22–25 and 1 Corinthians 15:50.

a maiden would soon marry and share the expected blessing of childbirth. Any contemporary historian who heard the prophet's oracle: 'Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son,' would hardly think in terms of a miraculous conception and birth."⁹

Professor of Old Testament Studies A. S. Herbert, writing in *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible* in 1973, elaborates upon the meaning of "young woman" in Isaiah 7:14: "The Hebrew word, like the English, does not preclude the meaning of 'virgin' that appears in the [King James] Authorized Version, but usage would hardly suggest it." Herbert finds confirmation for this interpretation: "Almost the same words occur in the Ras Shamra text (found at the ancient Ugarit on the Syrian coast) 'A young woman shall bear a son'; the noun is the same as in Hebrew. The point of the oracle is clear. A pregnant woman, probably one of Ahaz' wives, will bear a son with a name which will give assurance of divine protection, yet, since this sign has been rejected, within a few years this same divine presence will bring the disastrous subservience to Assyria."¹⁰

Frederick Moriarty, Jesuit scholar writing in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, concludes that the birth of a son, "God is with us," is vital for Judah for another reason. The overthrow of the Davidic dynasty by an enemy would indicate the cancellation of God's promise to guide and protect the house of David forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). Moriarty feels that the young child may be the future King Hezekiah, whose birth would signify the continuing presence of God among the people of Judah and a renewal of the promise made to David. He suggests that Isaiah unknowingly prophesied the birth of Christ as a fulfillment of the Davidic promise: "This does not mean, of course, that Isaiah foresaw the fulfillment of this prophecy in Christ, but he expressed the hope that Christ perfectly realized." Thus, a "fuller meaning" (*sensus plenior*) emanates from the scripture, intended by God, but not by the human author.¹¹

In a variation on the "dual revelation" notion, Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve asserts that Isaiah hid his meaning because of the wickedness of the people. The ancient prophet, McConkie writes, "spoke in figures, using types and shadows" to hide messages in parables. In the 1980 Gospel Doctrine teacher's manual, McConkie declares that the virgin birth prophecy was "dropped into the midst of a recitation of local historical occurrences so that to the spiritually untutored it could be interpreted as some ancient and unknown happening that had no relationship to the birth of the Lord Jehovah into mortality some 700 years later."¹²

⁹ Claus Schedl, "The Age of the Prophets," *History of the Old Testament*, 5 vols. (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba, 1972), 4: 215-16.

¹⁰ A. S. Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, a volume of *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible* (England: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 63-65.

¹¹ Stuhlmueller, *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, pp. 270-71. *Sensus plenior* is examined by Raymond E. Brown in the same volume, p. 617.

¹² Bruce R. McConkie, "Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah," *Ensign* 3 (Oct. 1973): 80-83, quoted in *Old Testament Part Two*, Gospel Doctrine teacher's supplement (Salt Lake

Schedl argues that the child prophesied by Isaiah was not Jesus but could have been Hezekiah. "The whole point of the Immanuel prophecy," Schedl insists, "is centered on the promise that the house of David will never be annihilated." When Ahaz acceded to the throne in 735 B.C., he was at the marriageable age of twenty (2 Kgs. 16:2). The Hebrew *'almāh* is simply the young bride-consort of King Ahaz, Schedl reasons. Since Hezekiah was only five years old when he succeeded to the throne in 728 B.C., his birth would fall in the year 734/733, about a year after the Immanuel prophecy in 735/734. Since the prophecy fits the events of that time, "it follows that Isaiah did not understand the word *'almāh* in its New Testament sense." Schedl concludes that the New Testament authors do not quote the Old Testament in keeping with the canons of historical criticism. "In their interpretation of Scripture, they are the children of their time."¹³

There seems to be sufficient evidence to indicate that Christian writers have revised the meaning of the Hebrew term for "young woman" and have expanded the significance of Isaiah's "Immanuel prophecy." Although contextual changes have been justified by rationales of hidden writing and double meanings, many Jewish and contemporary Christian scholars acknowledge the primacy of the meaning Isaiah applied in his own time.

The debate between Judaism and traditional Christianity over the meaning of the Jewish scriptures relates to passages through Isaiah. One of the choruses in Handel's *Messiah* is adapted from Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

The King James Version relates this verse to the birth of Christ, but Jewish scriptures indicate a different meaning. The *Soncino* commentary on the traditional Hebrew scriptures adds these notes to the crucial verse:

A Child. The verse has been given a Christological interpretation by the Church, but modern non-Jewish exegetes agree that a contemporary person is intended. The Talmud and later Jewish commentators understood the allusion [as] to the son of Ahaz, viz. Hezekiah.

Hezekiah as a lad had already given promise of his future greatness as a religious and political leader. . . .

As the son of Ahaz he was "Crown Prince" during his father's lifetime. . . .

The meaning of the Hebrew words [in the KJV, "Wonderful, . . ."] is "Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty, the Everlasting Father, the Ruler of Peace." The child will bear these significant names in order to recall to the people the message which they embodied. (*Soncino Isaiah*, notes to 9:6)¹⁴

Redeemer has also been given various interpretations. After the Babylonian conquest of Judah, Deutero-Isaiah (chs. 40–55) speaks to the Jews in exile

City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980), p. 83. The possibility of "dual prophecy" is raised in Monte S. Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), pp. 55–59.

¹³ Schedl, *History of the Old Testament*, 4:217–20.

¹⁴ *Soncino: Isaiah*, pp. 44–45 (commentary).

of the “Lord and thy Redeemer,” who is defined here by Jewish commentary as an avenger: “*Redeemer*. The Hebrew ‘goel’ is a technical term applied to the nearest relative whose duties included the redemption or buying back of the kinsman who sold himself or his sold property or, if killed, the avenging of his blood by slaying the murderer. It is possibly in this sense applied to God, the Redeemer and Avenger of His people Israel.” (*Soncino Isaiah*, notes to Isa. 41:14)¹⁵

This avenging role of the Lord is explained in the next chapter: “The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. . . . I will destroy and devour at once.” (Isa. 42:13, 14)

In Isaiah 43, God is further defined as redeemer and savior: “Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. . . . Thus saith the Lord, your redeemer, the holy one of Israel.” (Isa. 43:10, 11, 14)

The God of Israel is defined as the only God, and the force that shall save Israel from its enemies:

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.

. . . Men of stature, shall come over unto thee . . . they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God.

Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

. . . Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end. (Isa. 45:6, 7, 14, 15, 17)

In the context of defeat and exile, Deutero-Isaiah uses *savior* and *redeemer* to denote the God of Israel who will avenge the suffering of his people, Judah, and make them mighty and respected among all nations. The New Testament writers, Paul and John, interpreted these passages as Isaiah’s prediction that Christ’s death would make individual salvation from death possible, that Christ exchanged his death for man’s sins.¹⁶

From the earliest days of Christianity, Christians have believed that the “servant of the Lord” depicted in Isaiah 40–55 portrays Christ.¹⁷ Handel’s *Messiah* incorporates the “servant” passages of Isaiah 53: “He was despised and rejected by men; Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 195.

¹⁶ See Heb. 9:12, 26–28; 1 John 1:7; John 11:25.

In “The Mormon Christianizing of the Old Testament,” Melodie Moench Charles observes that in the Old Testament view, people are not regarded as inherently sinful and have no need for a redeemer to take away the effect of Adam’s sin (never referred to after its first telling or their own. “If they were obedient, they were in God’s favor.” The messiah sought after in the Old Testament was a just king who would bring peace and prosperity, a righteous man who served God, not a deity himself. “A Messiah who suffers and dies as a substitute for all men as in the New Testament was unknown in Judaism.” *Sunstone* (Nov.–Dec. 1980): 35–39.

¹⁷ Matthew seems to rewrite Isaiah. Compare Matt. 12:17–21 with Isa. 42:1–3 and Matt. 8:17 with Isa. 53:4.

And with his stripes we are healed.” The Covenanters of the Dead Sea community at Qumran preserved fairly complete texts of Isaiah, which are essentially the same as the traditional Hebrew texts, and which clarify the Jewish background of the New Testament.¹⁸ Scholars have found that the Dead Sea Scrolls agree with the rabbinical annotations that the Lord’s servant is “the righteous people of God.” The *Soncino* notes identify the servant as symbolic of Israel in exile, martyred and humiliated by the Babylonians because of their transgressions, but destined to survive.¹⁹ Bible scholar Christopher North contends that the “suffering servant” passages reflect Deutero-Isaiah’s great disappointment in Cyrus’s failure to recognize Yahweh as world king, as well as the prophet’s new insight into the meaning of Israel’s suffering both for the present and for the messianic future.²⁰

The *Soncino* notes to Isaiah acknowledge that Jewish commentators disagree whether the servant is Israel, the king-messiah, or Isaiah.²¹ But the servant is clearly Israel in passages such as Isaiah 49:6–26: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” and Isaiah 41:8: “But thou, Israel, My servant Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, My friend.”

The Jerome Biblical Commentary states, “The Servant is Israel, alive in all her leaders and intercessors: Abraham (49:6); Moses (42:6); Jeremiah (49:1); wise men (50:4ff); David (53:1); and the suffering exiles (52:13–53:12)”²²

Harry M. Orlinski, originator of the just-completed Hebrew-to-English translation of the Jewish Bible (Jewish Publication Society of America), suggests that in each of the so-called “suffering servant” songs of Isaiah 52–53, the servant is the prophet, rather than Israel. Arguing against a vicarious atonement in which first Israel, then Christ, suffers for the sins of the unworthy, Orlinski contends that *servant* has no special meaning in the exegesis of Second Isaiah but rather developed in Christian circles after the significance of Jesus’ life and death came to be reinterpreted. The concept of “suffering servant” is “postbiblical in origin (probably from a pagan Hellenistic, not a Judaic source) . . . It was only after suffering — vicarious suffering — came to be associated with Jesus that these concepts were read back into the passage of the Hebrew Bible most favorable for such interpretation, chapter 53 of Isaiah,” he concludes. The concept of vicarious suffering and atonement is found neither

¹⁸ Millar Burroughs, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking, 1955), pp. 326–45, 348. See pp. 186, 267 for W. H. Brownlee’s collective interpretation of the “Lord’s servant” in the Jerusalem Habakkuk Scroll, dated about 63 B.C.

¹⁹ *Soncino: Isaiah*, pp. 261–64 (commentary).

²⁰ Christopher R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah*, 2nd ed. (London, Oxford University Press, 1964), quoted in Stuhlmüller, *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 367.

²¹ *Soncino: Isaiah*, p. 199 (commentary).

²² Stuhlmüller, *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 367.

in Deutero-Isaiah nor anywhere else in the Bible: “It is a concept that arose in Jewish and especially Christian circles of post-biblical times.”²³

Strongly scripturalist from its foundation, Mormonism has also manifested an intense interest in Isaiah. In 1830, Joseph Smith, founder and first prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presented the Book of Mormon as a translation of ancient Israelite records, religious writings of a remnant of Ephraim and Manasseh who sailed to the New World to become the ancestors of the American Indian. Considered a “new witness for Christ” on the American continent, the Book of Mormon not only records Christ’s appearance in the Americas, but also quotes Isaiah at length and gives a unique Mormon interpretation to several passages. Joseph Smith also reported miraculous experiences which involved key passages in Isaiah.

Isaiah 29 is significant for Mormonism. In this chapter, Isaiah describes the inability and unwillingness of the people and their leaders, “drunken without wine,” to understand the word of Yahweh. The leaders read, but do not understand; although they should know better, they are willfully perverse and refuse to abide in the Lord. The masses, on the other hand, cannot even read the law, for they do not know how.

Finally, a marvelous work and a wonder occurs when a faithful remnant rescues all of Israel. The eyes of the blind are opened and the deaf can hear. Thus, Israel returns to the word of Yahweh. Several groups have seen themselves as that faithful remnant, among them the Qumran community, the early Christians, and the Mormons.

Three consecutive passages from Isaiah 29 have been given unique Mormon interpretation. The first involves a sealed book. Isaiah laments the inability of the people to recognize the importance of the Lord’s messages which

²³ Harry M. Orlinski, *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah*, vol. 14 in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1977), 118. Orlinski refers to Morna D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant: The Influence of the Servant Concept of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament* (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), which concludes that the early church did not attach any great significance to the servant passages or regard them as the key to understanding the atonement (p. 133). Hooker states, “The account of the beliefs of the early Christians which is given in the Acts of the Apostles does not suggest that the primitive community ever thought of Jesus as ‘the Servant’ of Deutero-Isaiah. . . . Paul apparently makes no use of the ‘Servant figure,’ although he quotes twice from the fourth Song. . . . Certainly if Paul himself had thought of Jesus as the ‘Servant’ he would have made it plain” (pp. 147–63). “Neither the Old Testament — including especially Second Isaiah and its chapter 53 — nor the Judaism of the intertestamental period knew anything of the concepts of Servant of the Lord, Suffering Servant, and Vicarious Suffering and Atonement as they came to be developed by the followers of Jesus sometime after his death,” although later Christian congregations have been generally taught that Jesus found the clue to his ministry in the fulfillment of the Suffering Servant prophecies of the Books of Isaiah (pp. 71–73).

Relating the atonement issue to the identity of the “Servant,” Orlinski comments that neither in Isaiah 53 nor elsewhere in the Bible do the sinful get off scot-free at the expense of the prophets, or anyone else. All Second Isaiah says is that “the individual person, whoever he was, suffered on account of Israel’s transgression. . . . the spokesmen of God suffered because of the nature of their calling. . . . The prophets had come and suffered to bring [the transgressors] God’s message of rebuke and repentance.” Deutero-Isaiah says that the prophet “bore the grief and carried the sorrows of the people, having been wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities.” (pp. 56–59)

the prophet has communicated to them. He compares his words to a sealed book which the learned and unlearned, for different reasons, are unable to read:

They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.

For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot for it is sealed.

And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. (Isa. 29:9–12)

In the Pearl of Great Price Joseph Smith reported that in February 1828 Martin Harris brought back the words of the learned professor Charles Anthon: "I cannot read a sealed book." "Sealed books" refer to apocalyptic writings about the end of the world which are to be sealed or closed up until that event occurs. Mormons interpret Anthon's comment as a fulfillment of the passages from Isaiah quoted above.²⁴ The Book of Mormon itself quotes the "sealed book" passages of Isaiah 29 and prophesies the experiences Martin Harris would have with Professor Anthon: "Their learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them" (2 Ne. 27:20).²⁵

²⁴ Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1963), 1:19–20. Joseph Smith recorded the experience of making a transcript of "reformed Egyptian" characters from the Book of Mormon plates, which Martin Harris took to Professor Charles Anthon (Columbia) and Dr. Samuel Mitchell (Rutgers). Harris related that Anthon was reported to have said that the translation presented with some of the characters was "correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian." He also reportedly certified that some untranslated characters were "true" Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac and Arabic, but tore up the certificate when told they came from gold plates revealed by an angel.

More than a year before Martin Harris's visit to Charles Anthon, in January 1827, when Joseph Smith went to Colesville to be married, according to Emily M. Colburn Austin, "he declared an angel . . . told him of golden plates . . . containing a history . . . which Isaiah the prophet had spoken of; a vision which should become as the words of a book that is sealed." *Mormonism: or Life Among the Mormons* (Madison: M. J. Cantrel Book and Job Printer, 1882), pp. 33–35, quoted in Robert M. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1980), p. 96, n. 45.

²⁵ "Sealed books" typically refer to apocalyptic writings about the end of the world which are to be sealed or closed up until that event occurs. (See Dan. 12:4 and Rev. 22:10.) 2 Nephi 27:4–23 admixes Isaiah 29:9–12 with the description of a book (the Book of Mormon) that would be delivered to another (Martin Harris) who would show it to "the learned" (Professor Anthon) who would say he could not read the book. The chapter of Nephi is dated "between B.C. 559 and 545." In *History of the Church*, 1:20, B. H. Roberts footnotes in a letter to E. D. Howe of Painsville, Ohio, that Professor Anthon acknowledged the visit of Martin Harris, "a plain, apparently simple-minded farmer." Anthon went on to declare, "The whole story about having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be 'reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics' is perfectly false." He described the paper brought by Martin Harris as consisting of "all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied in such a way as not to betray

The second passage describes a people who will not listen to or respect Yahweh: “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men. . . .” (Isa. 29:13)

This passage has special meaning for the Mormon faith since nearly the same words were uttered by a glorious “personage” Joseph Smith identified as Jesus Christ in the spring of 1820, after he prayed to inquire which of the churches he should join: “The Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: ‘they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.’ ” (Joseph Smith — History 1)²⁶

From the LDS point of view, it might make sense for Jesus to quote Isaiah to Joseph Smith, even out of initial context, since Mormons consider Isaiah’s words to have been inspired by Jesus in the first place. Unlike the rest of Christianity, Mormon theology regards Yahweh of the Old Testament, creator of the world, as the same Jesus who was later born in Nazareth. Mormon scriptures present Jesus as using the same words, “their lips draw near, but their hearts are far from me,” to describe different situations thousands of years apart.

In the third passage, Isaiah relates a marvelous work by which Yahweh will bring the people of Judah to understand: “Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder (Isa. 29:14). “They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine” (Isa. 29:24).

These passages, which Isaiah applies to the spiritual transformation of the people of Judah in the eighth century B.C., were given a new interpretation twenty-five hundred years later. The restoration of the church of Jesus Christ in the latter days, including the publication of the Book of Mormon, has been identified as Isaiah’s “marvelous work.” Isaiah 29:14 is quoted in 2 Nephi 27:26 in the Book of Mormon, and the entire twenty-seventh chapter of Nephi identifies the Book of Mormon with this “marvelous work.”

The use made of these three consecutive sections of Isaiah 29 indicates the important place that this Old Testament prophet occupies within the Mormon faith. As Latter-day Saint students of the scriptures know, the Book of Mormon quotes nearly verbatim, according to the King James Version, nineteen

the source whence it was derived.” Roberts quotes from Samuel M. Smucker, *The Religious, Social and Political History of the Mormons, or Latter Day Saints From Their Origin To The Present Time* (New York: Miller, Upton & Mulligan, 1856), pp. 37–39, and notes that Professor Anthon’s letter is published in its entirety in Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled*, 1834, pp. 270–72. Since the Egyptian language was not understood in 1828, Anthon would not have been able to attest to the correctness of a transcript containing Egyptian characters.

²⁶ 2 Nephi 27:25 in the Book of Mormon accurately quotes the King James Version of Isaiah 29:13 (“lips near . . . hearts far from me”).

entire chapters of Isaiah and parts of several others.²⁷ While the Book of Mormon draws heavily from Isaiah, most contemporary scholars would not believe all of the chapters quoted were available to the Nephite writers.

In the Book of Mormon, Lehi and his family leave Jerusalem around 600 B.C., taking with them some “brass plates” containing the writings of Hebrew prophets up to that time. It is natural that Isaiah, who wrote prior to 700 B.C., would be included. However, in his writings Nephi quotes chapters of Isaiah which scholars generally conclude were written after 586 B.C., during the Babylonian exile and after Nephi had left for America. Isaiah 48–49 and parts of 50–52, and 55 are quoted with some changes in 1 Nephi 20–22 and 2 Nephi 6–9, and Isaiah 53–54 is partially quoted in Mosiah 14 and 3 Nephi 22.

The difficulties of authorship implied by such out-of-chronology quotation might be resolved by assuming that the Isaiah of the eighth century B.C. prophetically foresaw and authored the later exilic and postexilic writings in advance. Latter-day Saint writers turn the Isaiah chronological problem around and use it to support the single-author theory of all Isaiah writing, even that dealing with the rebuilding of Jerusalem two hundred years after Isaiah lived.

For example, in 1909, Mormon historian and General Authority B. H. Roberts argued that the Book of Mormon’s use of transcripts from the later part of Isaiah’s writing, after Nephi left Jerusalem, is “new evidence for the Isaiah authorship of the whole book of Isaiah.” Other LDS writers such as Sidney Sperry, Hugh Nibley, and more recently, Victor Ludlow, Monte Nyman, LaMar Adams, and Elder Mark E. Petersen advocate similar positions.²⁸

²⁷ William L. Riley, “A Comparison of Passages from Isaiah and Other Old Testament Prophets in Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1971), calculates that the Book of Mormon uses 407 of the 1292 verses in Isaiah, about one-third of the total. Robert N. Hullinger estimates that in numbers of words “the Book of Mormon uses Isaiah for one-tenth of its content” (*Mormon Answer To Skepticism*, p. 72).

²⁸ Perhaps the first Mormon scholar to deal with the “Isaiah problem” — that Nephi quotes from exilic Isaiah scriptures which would have been unavailable to him — was B. H. Roberts. In his *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909) 3:449–60, Roberts lists the arguments for independent authorship of chapters 40–46 of Isaiah: (1) The events are later; Jerusalem is ruined, those whom the prophet addresses are not contemporaries of Ahaz and Hezekiah, but exiles in Babylon; the prophet would never abandon his own historical position, but speak from it; (2) Isaiah 1–39 uses a unique literary style, but these images and allusions are not continued in 40–66; (3) the theology of 40–66 shows an advance which emphasizes Jehovah’s infinitude as the creator, the sustainer of the universe, the author of history, the first and the last, the incomparable one, etc. Roberts questions that several authors wrote Isaiah on the grounds that (1) there is no identity given for other authors, (2) the Jews convinced Cyrus by the prophecies of Isaiah to let them return to Jerusalem thus proving that Isaiah was capable of prophecy, (3) surely, Jesus would not mistake Isaiah (61:1, 2) in quoting him (Luke 4:16–22), and (4) given the “overwhelming evidence for the truth of the Book of Mormon,” transcripts from the later part of Isaiah’s writings is “new evidence for the Isaiah authorship of the whole book of Isaiah” (pp. 459–60).

Sidney B. Sperry, professor of Old Testament Languages and Literature at Brigham Young University, asserts that Isaiah wrote the whole book that goes under his name, a work other scholars insist covered 250 years. 3 Nephi 23:1 quotes Christ as saying, “Great are the words of Isaiah.” In this, Sperry finds evidence of the single author theory: “The Savior himself

The 1980 *Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Supplement* states: "The Book of Mormon is also clear evidence that Isaiah is responsible for the entire sixty-six chapters. Whole chapters from all parts of Isaiah are quoted from the brass plates which Lehi took from Jerusalem about 600 B.C."²⁹ A singular exception, Mormon Old Testament scholar Heber C. Snell, in 1948 advocated the composite authorship of Isaiah.³⁰ Nephi also quotes Malachi, who wrote around 460 B.C., about 140 years after Nephi left Jerusalem with the brass plates (see 1 Ne. 22:15, 2 Ne. 25:13, 26:4, 9; Mal. 4:1-2).³¹

A further and perhaps more serious complication is that it is the quotations from an as-yet-unwritten Isaiah which have been given a different context in the Book of Mormon than they have in the Bible. In Isaiah 48 and 49, for example, the prophet offers hope to his exiled people in Babylon, that they will be restored to their homeland, and even be a light of the Lord's covenant to the gentiles:

Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob (Isa. 48:20).

points out that Isaiah 54 came from the mouth of the great eighth century prophet." *DIALOGUE 2* (Spring 1967): 75. See also Sperry's *Problems of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964) and *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967).

L. LaMar Adams and Alvin C. Rencher, "A Computer Analysis of the Isaiah Authorship Problem," *BYU Studies* 14 (Autumn 1974) 15:1, assert that "the book of Isaiah has a literary unity characteristic of a single author." It should be noted that a subsequent wordprint study by Rencher along with Wayne Larsen and Tim Layton, *BYU Studies* 20 (Spring 1980): 225-51, encountered serious professional criticism over their methodology and conclusions — that there were twenty-four distinct authors of the Book of Mormon. D. James Croft, "Book of Mormon 'Wordprints' Reexamined," *Sunstone* 6 (March-April 1981): 2.

Hugh W. Nibley, in his *Since Cumorah* (1976), pp. 137-52, confronts the charge against the Book of Mormon that it quotes from Deutero-Isaiah, "which did not exist at the time Lehi left Jerusalem" (p. 139). He lists three sources of dating Deutero-Isaiah: (1) the mention of Cyrus (44:28), who lived 200 years after Isaiah and long after Lehi, (2) the threats against Babylon (47:1, 48:14), which became the oppressor of Judah after the days of Isaiah, and (3) the general language and setting of the text which suggests a historical background commonly associated with a later period than that of Isaiah (p. 139). Nibley then answers these with a question: "If others than Isaiah wrote about half the words in his book, why do we not know their names?" (p. 143). The usual scholarly answer is because they are Isaiah's students, compiling Isaiah's words with later material in three successive transmissions. The names of Cyrus and Babylon were thus added later. The question remains: If these final words were added to Isaiah after Nephi left Jerusalem, how did he get them on the brass plates for Joseph Smith to translate almost exactly as they appeared in the King James Version of the Bible? See also Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1982), pp. 541-48; Monte S. Nyman, *Great Are the Words of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), pp. 253-58; L. LaMar Adams, *The Living Message of Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1981), pp. 17-19; Mark E. Petersen, *Isaiah for Today* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1981), p. 140-2.

²⁹ *Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Supplement* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980), p. 105.

³⁰ Heber C. Snell, *Ancient Israel, Its Story and Meaning* (Salt Lake City: published by the author, 1948; 3d ed., Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1963), pp. 24, 187-88.

³¹ Parmelee, *A Guidebook to the Bible*, p. 89; eds. P. R. Ackroyd, et al., *The Cambridge Bible Commentary, The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 135-39.

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth (Isa. 49:6).

After quoting these statements in 1 Nephi 20 and 21, Nephi expounds upon the prophecies of Isaiah in 1 Nephi 22. Speaking between 588 and 570 B.C., he comments that the house of Israel “sooner or later” will be scattered (the Babylonian exile began in 586 B.C.) and relates his own interpretation of Isaiah:

And it meaneth that the time cometh that after all the house of Israel have been scattered and confounded, that the Lord God will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles, yea, even upon the face of this land [presumably America];

And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed. (1 Ne. 22:7–8)

This marvelous work is the gift of the gentiles — the Book of Mormon — to the scattered Jews, a message by which they shall be restored to the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus to their inheritance as the chosen people of God. This interpretation reverses the message of Deutero-Isaiah to the captive Jews in Babylon. Isaiah states that the Jews shall be a light to the gentiles: Nephi portrays the gentiles as bringing light to the Jews:

And now, I would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, and sealed up again unto the Lord, there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed.

And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews.

And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers. (2 Ne. 30:3–5)

Isaiah wrote during a time of Judah’s impending military destruction in the last half of the eighth century B.C. A second author (and perhaps a third) wrote of the Babylonian captivity and the return to Jerusalem. Isaiah promised God’s continued protection of the Jews by prophesying that a young woman would bear a son with the name, “God is with us” (Immanuel). The child’s name would also mean, “Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty, the Everlasting Father, ruler of Peace.” And throughout the difficult Babylonian exile, Deutero-Isaiah continually refers to the God of Israel as “redeemer” and “savior,” Yahweh’s historical role in the salvation of Israel. The “suffering servant” symbolizes Israel in captivity.

Just as Jewish and early Christian writers adapted Isaiah to their own purposes, Mormon writers two thousand years later have also invoked new and contemporary meaning from three consecutive passages of Isaiah 29: A “sealed book,” “lips . . . near, heart far from me,” and “a marvelous work and a wonder.” These passages, which originally described Isaiah’s struggle to have his people listen to Yahweh’s message, became words of prophetic ful-

fillment used by Charles Anthon in speaking about Book of Mormon characters, by Jesus in speaking to Joseph Smith, and as a characterization of the Book of Mormon — multiple new meanings taken from a single Old Testament context. Further, Nephi quotes extensive passages from Isaiah, some of which Deutero-Isaiah wrote after Nephi's departure for the New World, a circumstance which raises more questions about the unique use of Isaiah in Nephite writings.

The great Isaiah scriptures can be legitimately applied to later circumstances for which they might have similar relevance, such as in voicing the timeless hope for the day when nations “shall beat their swords into plowshares.” But can the substitution of new meaning be justified as a dual message hidden in Isaiah's original words? How should students of religion consider the effect of Mormon writings to “update” Isaiah's words into a context foreign to the man, his message, his country, and his time?



Ambiguity and the Language of Authority

Nicolas Shumway

IN WHAT IS CLEARLY the most original and provocative of the essays in the BYU published collection *Arts and Inspiration*, Karen Lynn argues that two fundamental factors undermine the arts, particularly literature, in Mormonism. The first is scriptural completeness which renders any human-made text ultimately superfluous. She writes that “the sacred texts of Mormonism — the standard works — are held by Mormons to be complete and immutable. . . . Because the texts are complete, it is a sacrilege to ornament them; and because the Brethren are divinely called as stewards over the modern relevance of the text, it is a sacrilege for anyone else to expound upon them.” She points out that writers cannot add to a complete canon, nor can they assume the role of interpreters without intruding on the specific stewardship of the Brethren.¹ In her second major point, Lynn argues that Mormonism excludes perplexity or ambiguity, and in so doing refuses space to most great art.

[Among Mormons] bleakness and confusion [in art] are not acceptable; if a complete set of answers and instructions is available, then a confused person must assume all responsibility for his own unhappy state. . . . We insist on success stories and refuse to accommodate stories of defeat, or even stories of righteous struggle unless these stories end by affirming a highly predictable and rather simple role for deity. . . . To a sensitive writer of fiction, tension and irresolution are not preliminary nor secondary; they are inherent in the human condition, as real and everlasting as any other part of life, and they must be reflected and reconciled in any work that seeks to deal with life in a meaningful way. The Mormon artist finds himself a member of a community that

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¹ Karen Lynn, “The Mormon Sacred and the Mormon Profane: An Aesthetic Dilemma,” in *Arts and Inspiration*, ed. Steven P. Sondrup (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), pp. 47–48.

tolerates none but the most simplistic treatments of unhappiness, depression, confusion, and frustration. If the artist describes trials, these must be the trials of a wicked, faithless, or unwise person, one who deserves whatever suffering he meets.²

My purpose is not to refute Lynn's observations, but rather to extend them, and finally to suggest that perplexity is perhaps not the problem but the solution. I will discuss her points in reverse order. If, as Lynn suggests, Mormonism is a religion whose aim is unambiguous truth, there is little question but that art and Mormonism are irreconcilable, at least according to one of Modernism's best spokesmen, Jorge Luis Borges.

In his short story "Deutches Requiem" the protagonist writes, "Formerly I was interested in theology, but from this fantastic discipline (and from the Christian faith) I was led away by Schopenhauer, with his direct arguments; and by Shakespeare and Brahms, with the infinite variety of their worlds."³ In other words, in the variety of artistic representation, Borges finds little that resembles the simplistic dualisms of good and evil, spirit and flesh, right and wrong. The same theme reappears in a poem condemning human arrogance that thinks our actions deserve either heaven or hell.⁴ In another passage, Borges remarks that great, lasting art "is always capable of an infinite and plastic ambiguity; it is everything for everyone, like the Apostle; it is a mirror that proclaims the features of the reader and it is also a map of the world."⁵ In other words, definitive statements and absolute truths are never really present in art. Or, as today's textualist critics might say, texts are infinitely open to infinite readings; texts can neither be determined by authorial intention nor be determinate of a reader's experience. Art fathers ambiguity, irony, variety, and perplexity, not rock-solid truth. Finally, in a conversation I had with Borges several years ago, he remarked that the greatest catastrophe that could befall art would be the discovery of absolute truth, for at that point all discussion would end. Art is searching. It is the anticipation of an epiphany that never comes. Absolute truth in Borges's view is the end of searching, the end of anticipation. The end of art.

Borges's apprehension of finding absolute truth is an interesting contrast to the horror of ambiguity found in some religious people. It is not an exclusively Mormon problem, but I would suggest that Mormons have a particularly difficult time with ambiguity because of the peculiarly unambiguous nature of distinctively Mormon scripture. A former bishop of mine once remarked that the thing he most loved about the Book of Mormon was that one always knew who was good and who was bad. Moreover, if they were good, they prospered, and if they prospered they got proud, and if they got proud they got wicked, and if they got wicked they were cursed, and if they repented the curse

² Ibid., pp. 48–50.

³ Jorge Luis Borges, "Deutches Requiem," tr. Julian Falley, *Labyrinths*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James F. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 142.

⁴ Jorge Luis Borges, "Fragmentos de un evangelio apócrifo" *Obras completas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1974), p. 1011. Unless indicated otherwise, the translations are mine.

⁵ Borges, "El Primer Wells," *Obras completas*, p. 698.

was lifted. Similarly, if a person in the Book of Mormon is good, he either started that way, or he repented. And if someone is bad, he either started bad or got that way through sin. There is no middle ground where ordinary people strive to be good but don't always succeed.⁶ This almost case-study clarity of the Book of Mormon undeniably leaves its mark on LDS consciousness in the type of stories we feel most comfortable with: the unambiguous, morally simplistic, didactic tales Lynn describes.

Mormons, however, accept other scripture that is not so unambiguous. The Bible's historical books often indicate a wonderful lack of interest in portraying biblical characters as paragons of anything, much less virtue. For example, no person in ancient history is described with greater clarity than David. Details concerning his life, his ambitions, his loves, and his actions are described vividly, from his homoerotic relationship with Jonathan to his adultery-inspired murder of Uriah.

Even more striking are Jesus' teachings in the New Testament which often seem designed to upset the certainty lovers of clarity yearn for. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the most interesting part of the story may have been the part that was not recorded: the reaction of Jesus's audience. It is reasonable to assume that Jesus chose a Samaritan to be the hero of his story because of the way that Samaritans were then viewed by the Jews. Not only were they political enemies, they were products of forbidden marriages and practiced an apostate religion. They were evil in sex, politics, and religion — a rather comprehensive list. On the other hand, the priest and the Levite, who shun the wounded man, are worthies in their society. Clearly, Jesus's intention was to upset perceived truth and to introduce in the minds of his listeners the kind of ambiguity that begets searching rather than instant knowing. One wonders who would be the good Samaritan if Jesus retold the parable with characters corresponding to today's prejudices. A benign communist perhaps? A noble lesbian?

The parable of the prodigal son is also ambiguous in its intention. Are we to admire the father for accepting back a profligate and ungrateful son? Are we to condemn the older brother who begrudges his father's charity? Are we to admire the prodigal who by all appearances had his cake and ate it too? Are we to condemn the father for being soft on sin? Are we to follow President

⁶ There is a simple explanation for the peculiarly unidimensional portrayal of characters in the Book of Mormon — an unidimensionality not present in doctrinal passages and one that is plausible within the terms of the Book of Mormon itself. Unlike the Bible, most of the Book of Mormon passed through the filter of a single compiler and editor whose purposes were quite clearly more didactic than biographical. Moreover, Mormon, as he repeatedly tells us, was writing the record of his people specifically for us, the Saints of the restoration. I know of no other case where a writer from the distant past directed his writings to the concerns of readers who would live many centuries later. Biblical writers show little if any awareness of future audiences. Indeed, a central concern of contemporary biblical scholarship and criticism deals with reinterpreting scripture in light of its historical and cultural context. Book of Mormon scholarship, on the other hand, seems to go in the opposite direction: focussing on the idea that despite its accessibility to modern readers, the Book of Mormon is in fact ancient scripture.

Kimball's lead in *The Miracle of Forgiveness* and recognize that the true hero is the older son who stayed home and didn't fornicate?⁷

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard raises similar questions: how is it just for the master to pay the same wage both to those who worked only a few hours and to those who worked all day? Are we to understand from this that there is no danger in putting off repentance until the last minute? Or does the parable merely suggest that God and Milton Friedman practice different kinds of economics? That these questions can be asked at all illustrates the plastic ambiguity that Borges finds in great art. It also points out that Mormons who disallow perplexity must ignore questions raised by their own scriptures.

Lynn's first point, that only the Brethren can interpret scripture, becomes a stumbling block only if we assume that official statements from Salt Lake City, unlike other forms of discourse, do not allow for further enlightenment. Mormon doctrine, however, asserts that the individual has a right to inspiration on any subject. We are taught that only through personal revelation can the truth be ascertained; in other words, only God, as the highest authority, identifies and labels truth. One may search for truth through study and reason, but ultimately only God can validate a conclusion as true. In this sense, every person is his or her own prophet, and the god we follow is the god heard from within.

But Mormonism, like other religions, has also the authority of a god without, a god of visible leaders and official interpretations of scripture, a god beyond the individual experience of the divine. Ideally, one's private experience of truth should coincide with official interpretations of scripture. But on a practical plane, this is often not the case. A perusal of Christian history clearly shows that Bible study by the light of the god within can be a subversive activity — a fact demonstrated by Martin Luther in 1517 and in our own time by the continuing Protestant Reformation, the Second Vatican Council, and Liberation Theology. Mormonism avoids some of the subversive influence of such biblical study by questioning the completeness and reliability of the translations, but even at that I occasionally hear Latter-day Saints wonder if Paul really belonged to the same Church we do.

A more difficult problem than differing scriptural interpretations arises when personal revelation, the god within, fails to confirm official Church positions — a fact witnessed by the not uncommon phenomenon of fundamentalist apostasy. Theoretically, one can dissent from official positions on the basis of personal spiritual witness, but it is best to make sure the god within and the god without agree. My mission president, with folksy lucidity, explained this by saying, "Of course you have a right to ask the Lord if Church leaders speak the truth. Just make sure you stay on your knees until he says yes."

Although one might argue that truth is the central preoccupation of Western religion, I suspect that, in practical terms at least, the real issue is authority, or — better said — how and by whom is truth determined. Mormonism, by

⁷ Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), pp. 307–11.

giving us two sources for truth, sometimes appears contradictory. The basic problem, however, is not the conflict between the truth of the god within and the truth of the god without, but rather the underlying assumption that one or the other is speaking unambiguous truth at all.

Why can we not put the same questions to statements by General Authorities and to our own interpretations of scripture and experiences of the divine that we ask of a literary text? For example: What is the historical and personal context of a statement? How many possible meanings do the words carry? How are words intended? What unexamined assumptions underlie a particular statement? Who is the audience? Who does the speaker think the audience is? How do our culture, our history, our language, our desires, and our personal experiences interject themselves into our understanding and expression of the divine? In short, our search for truth must not discount subjectivity — be it our own, that of scriptural authors, or that of Church leaders. Such a test will quickly prove the fraudulence of attempts to eliminate perplexity. Ambiguity and perplexity are constants in every aspect of our existence, including the way we experience religion, each other, and ourselves.

Interestingly, ambiguity is nowhere more visible than in the statement most often used to affirm certainty and silence doubters: “I know the Church is true.” Who, for example, is *I*? Can anyone describe the speaker without equivocation, even the speaker himself? Is there any reason to take *I* seriously? Why is *I* making such a statement? What does *know* mean? How do we know? How do we know we know? What is “the Church”? Is it the scriptures, the Brethren, the community, the Building Committee? And what is meant by *true*? Truth of correspondence? Truth of coherence? Truth for me and not for someone else? “I know the Church is true” may be a moving and heartfelt affirmation of commitment and faith, but — instructions to missionaries notwithstanding — it certainly does not end a discussion. Indeed, I can think of no better way to start one.

There is no doubt a type of believer among us — and certainly in each of us — who longs for undefiled, crystal-clear, granite-solid truth. Literature and art with their unresolved tension, perplexity, and ambiguity unsettle such belief. But there is also the type of believer who rejoices in the ambiguity of the parables, who believes religion to be searching and most security to be false. When Lynn claims that the Mormon community copes poorly with perplexity, she is probably right. Many of us cling to the unidimensional nature of Book of Mormon characters and to absolute pronouncements from the Brethren. Yet life is full of ambiguity which we must all face at one time or another. And perhaps for that very reason, what is most needed now are questions for gospel answers, new readings of Mormon scriptures that seek out perplexity not resolution, unending quests to intertwine our subjectivity with the subjectivity of others. We should seek out ambiguity, multiple meanings, ironic interpretations, openness. Perhaps then we will know, ambiguously of course, the truth that sets us free from truth itself — from codified, stagnant, repressive truth — and opens to us a world of eternal discovery.

Gratitude

Dianne Dibb Forbis

As I kneel to
needlepoint nice words
in quiet
careful
prayer of thanks,
look upon me also
rending
thick doubt with a shout
ripping all
the threads of dread
romping through new
folds of faith
and jump
ing,
tossing
bursts of bright
high.
Oh, high!
Oh, past the sky!
Please catch my
vast unwieldy weaves of
unhemmed gratitude.

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“Like There’s No Tomorrow”

Steven C. Walker

Let’s talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs,
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.
Let’s choose executors and talk of wills. . . .
For God’s sake, let’s sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of . . . death.¹

I SUSPECT YOU’RE LESS INTERESTED IN SUCH TALK than Shakespeare and I. I’m twenty years closer to death than most of you, and poor Will is centuries gone. But you’re closer than you think. And it may be that all of us would do well to get, in some ways, closer still. For a people who manage to watch 251 murders a year on TV, we Americans — and more especially we Mormons — give death short shrift.

At least I have. When, as a child, I was first told people die, I didn’t believe it. The possibility of dying struck me as as unlikely as the tales Paul Brown was telling me behind the barn about sex: Death just couldn’t be; the notion ran counter to all experience.

How could anything so empty and dreary and final as death have anything to do with me, me so thoroughly *alive*? — the kid with afterburners on his tennyrunners and jaw in perpetual motion from Fleeer’s Doublebubble gum? My attitude was like Mark Twain’s telegram: “The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.”

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¹ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*, act 3, sc. 2, lines 145–148, 156–157, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974), pp. 822–23.

“Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies. / Nobody that matters, that is.”² Even the things that definitely died in those days did not, for me, really die. When I buried my pet parakeet in the shoebox in the nasturtium bed, I went back a month later to dig it up, sure it wouldn’t be there — and it wasn’t there — because Mr. Pete the parakeet had already been resurrected. Even when the sheer omnipresence of death pushes us out of that childish perspective, even when circumstances force us to acknowledge death, we refuse to respect it.

At least I have. I moved from childish disbelief in dying directly to adolescent idealizing: My adolescent perception of death was about as realistic as the interior of a \$7,000 casket. I could sigh with John Keats,

. . . for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call’d him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain.³

Painless death. Greatest invention since painless dentistry. In high school I held — as many, I think, hold — a romantic view of death, a grandiloquent vision of dying as a sort of grand stage exit, the sort of death Housman seems to have had in mind when he celebrated the “Athlete Dying Young”: “Smart lad, to slip betimes away / From fields where glory does not stay.”⁴

We used to think it fine sport, my high school friends and I, to coast down American Fork Canyon in a pickup truck, seeing how far the driver dared go without hitting his brakes. Glenn Warnick, one June afternoon in 1960, went from the Forks — about five miles up the canyon — all the way down.

I can still feel the elation of that joyriding toward death. Others of the fourteen of us piled in the back of that pickup, wiser than I, were screaming for Glenn to stop, pounding on the cab, seeing their lives pass before their eyes. But as that ancient Ford danced sideways on its wheels around increasingly sharp turns toward the bottom of the canyon, I remained numbly comfortable in my attitude toward death: I kept thinking, serenely if a little shallowly, “If you die, you die.”

That adolescent perspective of death lasted with me longer than you might suppose, longer than I might have wished: I was over thirty the weekend I died. The doctor who biopsied the lumps on my throat, unable to give me a diagnosis until the lab opened the following Monday, comforted me with the

² Edna St. Vincent Millay, “Childhood Is the Kingdom Where Nobody Dies,” *Collected Poems: Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ed. Norma Millay (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1956), p. 286.

³ John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale,” *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, ed. H. W. Garrod, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 208.

⁴ A. E. Housman, “To An Athlete Dying Young,” Poem 19 of *A Shropshire Lad* in *The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940), p. 32.

thought: "I don't want you to worry. But cancer of the thyroid is a definite possibility."

Slipping graveward through that weekend, what did I do? Did I set my house in order? Did I write my will? Did I repent of my longstanding sins? I took the doctor's advice: I didn't worry. I just leaned back and didn't do a darn thing — except meditate pleasantly upon how comfortable it would be to do not a darn thing fulltime.

Just before the biopsy, I'd been called as Mutual president; I should have been reading manuals, calling counselors, organizing fall activities. Instead I sat around pondering heavenly blisses. I can still feel the weight of that calling falling back on my shoulders Monday morning when I learned my lumps were nothing but lumps. As the doctor rather gracelessly put it, "You're just a lumpy person."

It's easy in our culture to ignore death. Easy to childishly disbelieve that dying can happen to us. Easy to adolescently underestimate the significance of dying. We're experts at ignoring death.

I always figured I'd sort of grow into it — that by the time death came, experience would have made me ready. Now I'm beginning to think that's about as probable as my plan to walk out of the crowd at the next superbowl and catch the winning touchdown, delighting the Dallas cheerleaders. The idea of "getting in good" with death seems, somehow, less likely than it used to.

Maybe it's just that I'm pushing forty — pushing it really hard — and feeling a sense of my own mortality. As Donald Hall so gently puts it:

My son, my executioner,
I take you in my arms,
Quiet and small and just astir
And whom my body warms. . . .
We twenty-five and twenty-two,
Who seemed to live forever,
Observe enduring life in you
And start to die together.⁵

I expected, as I neared death, that death and I would get friendlier. Instead, I find death increasingly ominous. I assumed death was natural for old folks. Now that I'm becoming one, I'm not so sure it's a good idea for anybody.

William Butler Yeats, world's greatest authority on aging (you'll note I rely not on the Elizabeth Kübler-Rosses, but the people who really know about the things that matter as much as death, the poets), Yeats

heard the old, old men say,
'Everything alters. . . .
All that's beautiful drifts away
Like the waters.'⁶

⁵ Donald Hall, "My Son, My Executioner," *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*, ed. X. J. Kennedy, second ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p. 677.

⁶ William Butler Yeats, "The Old Men Admiring Themselves in the Water," *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 208.

People expect old men to die,
 They do not really mourn old men.
 Old men are different. People look
 At them with eyes that wonder when . . .
 People watch with unshocked eyes . . .
 But the old men know when an old man dies.⁷

It's more than my own aging that has brought me lately face to face with death, with what dying means — and might mean — to us. In the spirit of total morbidity which I am working hard to establish here, I want to share a death with you. "After the first death," says Dylan Thomas, "there is no other."⁸ The death that brought dying out of the theoretical periphery and into the foreground of my life was the death of Barbara Mangrum.

My wife and I met the Mangrums at graduate school in Boston; they seemed to us a better version of Erich Segal's *Love Story* — an honest, believable version. We liked Barbara the moment we met her, liked her the more the more we knew her. Barbara was a sprite of a person, incandescently charming. She was alive as anyone I ever knew, fun-loving, creative: she rode down Capitol Hill in a red wagon with her kids; when she arranged the socks in the sock drawers, she arranged them into rainbows. We still have her art on the walls of our home. But we no longer have Barbara.

One Thursday night two years ago at a Relief Society meeting at Cambridge Ward when Barbara was twenty-eight years old, pregnant with her fourth child, a blood vessel burst in her brain. Eighteen hours later both Barbara and the child were dead. She had been so alive, I found it hard to believe in her death. At her funeral I half expected her to push up the lid of the casket, peek out from under the spray of daisies, and laugh with us at the consternation she'd caused us.

But the casket stayed closed. Barbara was really dead. For the first time in my life I felt personally affronted by death — maybe even a little angry at God. I wrote that day in my journal:

I know, I know
 A light as bright as Barbara can never go
 Wholly out for those of us once blessed to see it.
 But it's too gloomy here, God, with her gone.

Oh my Father
 Did you need the glow of Barbara more than we?
 More than Collin? More than the children?
 More than the need of the new life growing in her at her death?

It seems so shiny up there already —
 All those suns and stars and rainbows —
 I would have thought Barbara's brightness
 Better here to help us beat back a little

⁷ Ogden Nash, "Old Men," *Many Long Years Ago* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1945), p. 204.

⁸ Dylan Thomas, "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London," *Dylan Thomas: The Poems* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1971), p. 192.

This now too-deepening darkness.
 But here in lengthening shadows I can still see,
 God, how your starved hunger for light
 Could long for Barbara.

The day Barbara's casket stayed closed, it crossed my mind that if death can catch up with one so light of foot, so nimble of soul as Barbara Mangrum, death just might catch up with us all.

At Pleasant Grove High School in the fifties—back in *Happy Days* days—we had a saying I liked: We used to say: "Like there's no tomorrow." We used that phrase for virtually every verbal occasion, but mainly it meant *intense*: a singer who sang "like there's no tomorrow" sang with her whole soul; a football halfback who ran "like there's no tomorrow" ran his heart out. Barbara lived like there was no tomorrow.

I know a woman who kisses like there's no tomorrow. When she kisses you, you wish she gave courses in the subject, so that everybody could kiss the way that woman kisses. Maybe that's the way we all should kiss: like there's no tomorrow. Maybe that's the way we should eat cherries and watch Fourth of July fireworks and dance with our smallest daughters and say "good morning" to each other. Maybe we should touch each other today like there's no tomorrow.

Maybe, if we really noticed death, recognizing what it means in terms of terminating life as we have so sweetly known it, we would live like there's no tomorrow. Trouble with us is, we know there's a tomorrow, and so postpone living until then.

Last Memorial Day we took our kids over to the Pleasant Grove cemetery to show them where our family dead reside. It was a fine experience for me, linking generations. It was less fine for my daughter Emily, who had not wandered much, in her six years, around graveyards, and wasn't sure she wanted to start now. Em held my hand tightly, stayed close, and kept asking pointed questions: "Are they really down there in the ground?" "Is it dark down there?"

I didn't admit this to Emily, but it *is* dark down there.

We get the idea, because we're aware of the infinite in us, that things don't end. Ask my colleagues Marden Clark and Marshall Craig, who retire this year from lifetimes of teaching, if things end. Ask my son Scott, who leaves Provost Elementary this fall, if things end. Ask Reed Walker, my father-in-law: As long as I've known him, Reed has grown the finest vegetable garden in Pleasant Grove. Last week he wept because Parkinson's Disease prevents him now from so much as watering his lawn. Ask Reed if things come to an end. Ask if those endings matter.

Omar Khayyam laments,

The Moving Finger writes, and, having writ,
 Moves on: Nor all your Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
 Nor all your Tears wash out a word of it.⁹

⁹ Edward Fitzgerald, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, in *Victorian Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Walter E. Houghton, second ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 347.

Not all endings have to be tragic. This talk, too, shall pass. A Clinton Larson poem presents perhaps a better perspective on the certainty of passings:

'Twas ever thus: from childhood's hour
I've seen my fondest hopes decay.
I never loved a bird or flower
But the damned thing died or flew away.¹⁰

Not all endings have to be tragic. But things do end. Awareness that things don't stay the same forever, "a sense of the ending," as Richard Sewall calls it,¹¹ may make a difference in the quality of our lives. Emily Dickinson says, out of a day of closer attention to candles and afterglows,

By a departing light,
We see acuter, quite,
Than by a wick that stays.
There's something in the flight
That clarifies the sight
And decks the rays.¹²

There's something in departing light that clarifies the sight. Heaven knows our lives are in need of that illuminating something. One of my students, Cheryl Lambert, caught a glimpse in a paper she wrote for our English class of the kind of clarification death can bring:

I live most of my life in a mental fog that protects me from responsibility and painful struggle. I don't need morphine like Mary in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*; my fog is quite natural. Very few people ever suspect, either, because I appear to live as if everything is bright and clear. It's simple enough; nothing ever reaches very deep into my soul without passing through the fog. Only dull images reach my full consciousness. But I know how to pretend to be vital and alive on the outside.

In the past six months, my fog has become more like morphine; it takes more and more to keep up the bliss. When my cousin, just ready to graduate from medical school, came to visit in spring break, my oblivion had built up around me a thick white curtain. I rode to Salt Lake one day with him in his truck, and I couldn't escape the blazing rays of life he shot through my fog. Rick means business in living; he takes every experience and lets it fill him and surround him and turn him inside out if need be to learn from it and grow. He is no blind idealist: "Life is a crap sandwich, and you have to take the biggest damn bite you can," he exclaims with a grin.

I have often wished I didn't have any talent or intelligence to worry about—and I could just curl up in a hole and turn into a clod of dirt. Living in a fog comes close to that. Rick lives every moment with such intense enthusiasm that any such fog can't last long around him; it gets burned away. I don't like what I see at the bottom of my fog.

¹⁰ Clinton F. Larson, "'Twas Ever Thus," unpublished. Included by permission of the author.

¹¹ Richard B. Sewall, "A Sense of the Ending," *The Norton Reader*, ed. Arthur M. Eastman, fifth ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1980), p. 646.

¹² Emily Dickinson, "By a Departing Light," *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 1157.

Rick went back to Charlottesville, to graduate as an M.D., and my fog crept back. Last Sunday as I was wishing I could be a clod of dirt, Rick fell to his death in a pool of icy water at the bottom of a crevasse on Mount Timpanogos. We found out Monday afternoon when rescuers searching for someone else brought his body out. The searing knowledge of Rick's death burned all the fog off.

Rick — alive and shining Rick — is dead. I still have a chance to live.

Something in departing light clarifies the sight. "The terms are clear," Annie Dillard says: "If you want to live, you have to die. A scientist calls it the Second Law of Thermodynamics."¹³ A poet says, "As I was young and easy . . . and happy as the grass was green. . . . Time held me green and dying / Though I sang in my chains like the sea."¹⁴

"In the midst of life, we are in death,"¹⁵ proclaims the Book of Common Prayer — even on sunny summer mornings. Robert Browning thinks so, too: "You never know what life means," Browning says, "till you die: / Even throughout life, 'tis death that makes life live, / Gives it whatever the significance."¹⁶

The reason I bring all this morbid stuff up is that I think it matters: Death matters terribly. Not so much in the past tense — it's not so much that Barbara is gone and I miss her. Nor does death matter so much in the future tense: It's not so much that we will all some day be gone and I'll miss us, especially me. Death matters in the present tense: we live with death, whether we recognize it or not, every day of our lives.

"The only religious way to think of death," according to Thomas Mann, who thought about it a lot, "is as part and parcel of life; to regard it, with the understanding and with the emotions, as the inviolable condition of life."¹⁷

Karen Walker, my brother Robert's wife, could tell us about that: Karen lies this moment in bed, ridden with cancer. The cancer I was sure I would get, the cancer any one of us could get, the cancer every fourth one among us will get, Karen has. Stomach cancer — three operations worth, with endless hours of chemotherapy and heat therapy and every kind of therapy but the kind that works. Karen, in increasingly constant pain, said the other day with that impish smile we see less and less: "Stop hanging around here longfaced grieving for me. You have to die, too."

Indeed we do. Something of us dies every day a little with her. There is something in Karen's suffering that brings home my mortality to me. "Therefore never send to know," John Donne reminds us, "for whom the bell tolls. It

¹³ Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974), p. 184.

¹⁴ Thomas, "Fern Hill," pp. 195–96.

¹⁵ "The Order for the Burial of the Dead," *The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of the United Church of England and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1839), n.p.

¹⁶ Robert Browning, "Guido," *The Ring and the Book*, in *Robert Browning's Poems and Plays* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1962), p. 487.

¹⁷ Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 200.

tolls for thee.”¹⁸ Karen is absolutely right: cancer is far less a sentence of death than being born.

My wise brother looked at me last Thursday out of as weary eyes as I have ever seen and said: “I had not guessed what a hellhole this world can be. But you know, Steve, the beautiful things . . . the beauties are all the more beautiful.”

“The beauties.” Life’s beauties. Karen’s beauties. “Not people die,” mourns the Russian poet Yevtushenko, “but worlds die in them”: “In any man who dies there dies with him / his first snow and kiss and fight. / . . . Not people die, but worlds die in them.”¹⁹

Childish views of death, adolescent attitudes toward dying, Walt Disney versions of being wafted away on marshmallowy clouds may make us miss much of the significance of what it means to be mortal.

I teach Victorian literature. We laugh a lot in class at the way Victorians repressed sexuality: We chuckle at Victorian unwillingness to refer to chair legs except as “limbs.” We chortle at skirts modestly covering piano legs for the sake of modesty. We snicker at those indomitable Victorian ladies who insisted the perfect hostess see that the works of male and female authors be properly separated on her bookshelves. Their proximity should not be tolerated unless the authors happen to be married. But no matter how hard they strove to ignore sex, sex did not go away for the Victorians. Nor will death go away for us.

We’ve pushed death as far into the corner as the Victorians ever pushed sex and with more serious results. Death no longer exists for us as immediate physical fact. We have great difficulty coming to intimate, personal terms with death because we no longer see it — no longer see our loved ones die, no longer wash and prepare bodies for burial, no longer sit up near the casket through the night, no longer dig and fill graves. We hide from death. We prettify it, falsify it. We displace it to TV, where we can watch it safely. We exile death to hospitals, to rest homes, to funeral parlors.

We manage simultaneously to be both too afraid of death and not afraid enough, and with our ambivalent fears deny ourselves the experience of death—the experience which may be, next to love, the most profound of human experiences.

In the face of death, my brother Rob says, “The beauties are all the more beautiful.” Wallace Stevens puts it almost as well: “Death is the mother of beauty.”²⁰ Would there be more of beauty in our lives were we more alive to death? I would not have us revel in death, but even if it were possible for us to

¹⁸ John Donne, “Seventeenth Meditation,” *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975), p. 87.

¹⁹ Yevgeny Yevtushenko, “People,” trans. Robin Milner-Gulland and Peter Levi, in *Someone Like Me: Images for Writing*, ed. Sheena Gillespie (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishing, Inc., 1973), p. xv.

²⁰ Wallace Stevens, “Sunday Morning,” *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), p. 69.

miss death altogether I'm not sure I would have us miss what death might do for our lives.

"Earth's the right place for love," Robert Frost rightly insists, "I don't know where it's likely to go better."²¹ Life is here. Life is now. And the longest eternity will never make that any different. Perhaps God gave us death to remind us to live. Virgil thinks so: "Death," he says, "tweaks my ear: 'Live,' death warns me, 'for I'm coming.'"²² "Sometimes," as Richard Sewall puts it, "nothing but death will remind us we're alive."²³

There is always a temptation to diddle around in life doing itsy-bitsy duties. There is enormous temptation to diddle around eating itsy-bitsy meals, going to itsy-bitsy meetings, mowing itsy-bitsy lawns, making itsy-bitsy livings for itsy-bitsy years. Annie Dillard won't have it: "The world is wilder than that in all directions, more dangerous and bitter, more extravagant and bright. We are making hay when we should be making whoopee; we are raising tomatoes when we should be raising Cain, or Lazarus."²⁴

I would wish you, as someone told me Crusaders wished one another, a good death — not an easy death, and certainly not a happy death — it takes far too miserable a life to make death happy — but a good death. And I would pray us the wisdom to confront that death honestly enough and soon enough to make a good life.

I used to think being "ready for death" meant welcoming it, like Walt Whitman: "Come lovely and soothing death . . . the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death."²⁵ Now I'm not so sure. Maybe those readiest for death are those least willing to go:

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light. . . .

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.²⁶

²¹ Robert Frost, "Birches," *The Complete Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Latham (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 122.

²² Virgil, "Copa," *Virgil With an English Translation by H. Rushton Fairclough*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. 474, loosely translated.

²³ Sewall, "Sense of the Ending," p. 645.

²⁴ Dillard, *Pilgrim*, p. 276.

²⁵ Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, ed. Harold W. Blodgett (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 335.

²⁶ Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," pp. 207–8.



Liahona and Iron Rod Revisited

Richard D. Poll

IN AUGUST 1967, I delivered a sermon in the Palo Alto Ward entitled “What the Church Means to People like Me.” *DIALOGUE* published it that winter and the *Saints’ Herald* reprinted it the following year. In response to an invitation from the John Whitmer Historical Association, I took occasion recently to reflect on what has happened to the Liahonas and Iron Rods of Mormonism in the last fifteen years.

The terms were proposed in 1967 in this language:

There are two distinct types of active and dedicated Latter-day Saints. . . . deeply committed to the gospel but also prone to misgivings about the legitimacy, adequacy, or serviceability of the commitment of the other.

The purpose of my inquiry is not to support either set of misgivings but to describe each type as dispassionately as I can, to identify myself with one of the types, and then to bear witness concerning some of the blessings which the church offers to the type I identify with.

Symbols for the two types came from the Book of Mormon — from Lehi’s dream, the Iron Rod, and from Lehi’s experience in the wilderness, the Liahona:

The Iron Rod was the Word of God. To the person with his hand on the rod, each step of the journey to the tree of life was plainly defined; he had only to hold on as he moved forward. In Lehi’s dream the way was *not easy*, but it was *clear*.

The Liahona, in contrast, was a compass. It pointed to the destination but did not fully mark the path; indeed, the clarity of its directions varied with the circumstances

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of the user. For Lehi's family the sacred instrument was a reminder of their temporal and eternal goals, but it was no infallible delineator of their course. . . .

The Iron Rod Saint does not look for questions but for answers, and in the gospel — as he understands it — he finds or is confident that he can find the answer to every important question. The Liahona Saint, on the other hand, is preoccupied with questions and skeptical of answers; he finds in the gospel — as he understands it — answers to enough important questions so that he can function purposefully without answers to the rest.¹

The balance of the article describes the strengths and weaknesses of Iron Rod and Liahona testimonies in neutral terms and then witnesses to what the gospel and the Church mean to one member of the Liahona persuasion. Clearly, the nomenclature intends to take the curse off such terms as “orthodox” and “liberal” as they occur in Mormon dialogue, and the purpose of the sermon is to promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

Of the 1967 article's impact in the RLDS community I know only that a handful of people wrote for reprints and one reader sent a sharply critical letter, followed a few weeks later by an apology. Like a number of other readers who identified themselves as Iron Rods, she saw the delineation of an alternative style of gospel commitment as a threat. Unlike most such readers, however, she took a second look, discovered that she was not being proselyted but merely invited to peacefully coexist, and decided that she could. As I have come to know more about some of the very hard questions that RLDS leaders were confronting in the late 1960s, I can understand why the *Herald* editor may have seen the article as appropriate for his readers.

Among the Latter-day Saints, the Liahona-Iron Rod symbolism took on a life of its own. Immodesty prompts me to mention that fifteen hundred reprints of the DIALOGUE article found their way into circulation, mostly through the Brigham Young University Bookstore, the LDS institute and seminary system, and Deseret Book Store. More recently the sermon has been reprinted in *Sunstone* and its argument figures prominently in the conclusion of Arrington and Bitton's *The Mormon Experience*.² Quite a few Latter-day Saints know about Liahonas and Iron Rods, and most of them know which they are.

The article did little, I confess, to make Mormons of the two tendencies feel more accepting of each other. Its most significant contribution — to the extent that it went beyond providing handy labels — was to help make the Liahonas more accepting of themselves. As one correspondent succinctly put it: “You'll never know how delighted I was to find out that I have a ‘nice’ name like Liahona. . . . I just wasn't aware that there were so many of us who questioned.”

¹ *Saints' Herald* 115 (15 Oct. 1968): 15–16; DIALOGUE: A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT 2 (Winter 1967): 107–17.

² *Sunstone* 5 (July–Aug. 1980): 15–20; Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), pp. 334–35.

That was fifteen years ago. What has happened to Liahonas and Iron Rods in the years since W. Wallace Smith, David O. McKay, and Lyndon B. Johnson were all presidents in the land of Zion?

Like the 1967 sermon, this presentation is a personal essay. It has no research base other than fifteen more years of living as a Mormon and the observations of several friends on the two questions I propose to consider here:

How has the concept of two basic types of committed Latter-day Saints stood up under scrutiny and reflection?

How does the recent record of Utah-based Mormonism look to “people like me”?

Reactions to the Liahona-Iron Rod dichotomy — then and now — fall into three groups. Some accept what they interpret to be the classification scheme, identify themselves as Liahonas, and find comfort and encouragement therein. One friend recently wrote: “I personally think your talk helped reassure Liahonas that they could remain in the Church in good conscience; many of them are now in leading positions in the Church.” A former member of a general board wrote from the mission field in 1968: “I can’t help being a Liahona, and it is important not to feel guilty about it. It is also important to accept the Iron Rods as they are.” A BYU colleague expressed the hope that “some ‘Iron Rods’ may read this and through it better understand the questioning mind.”

A second group was those who identified themselves as Iron Rods and had no intention of changing. However, their attitudes toward Liahonas were mixed. One stake president invited me to discuss the subject over dinner and accepted my assurances that the sermon was not intended to divide the Saints, or to provoke questions among the unquestioning, or to pass judgment on anyone. Others of the answer-oriented tendency were more critical — none more publicly than a counselor in the Church’s First Presidency. In a 1971 general conference address entitled “The Iron Rod,” he warned against those who “profess to be religious and speak of themselves as Christians, and according to one such ‘as accepting the scriptures only as sources of inspiration and moral truth,’ and then ask in their smugness: ‘Do the revelations of God give us a handrail to the kingdom of God, as the Lord’s messenger told Lehi, or merely a compass?’”³

The third group of responses came — and still comes — from people who object to being pigeonholed. Their perspective was well expressed by a recent respondent to my request for advice: “Is there not a continuum along which individuals may be categorized in terms of their interpretation and application of the gospel rather than being placed in a discrete category?”

Considerable discussion and reflection have brought me to these qualifying and hopefully clarifying observations:

1. In the metaphoric sense that I have proposed, the Iron-Rod-Liahona dichotomy has elements in common with, but not synonymous with, such classi-

³ Harold B. Lee, “The Iron Rod,” *Ensign* (June 1971): 7. The same sermon quotes with approval the definition: “A liberal in the Church is merely one who does not have a testimony.”

fications as dogmatism and empiricism, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, fundamentalism and modernism or even conservatism and liberalism. However, the identification is far from complete. Iron Rod Saints have demonstrated remarkable flexibility in regard to changes in theology that mean they see blacks in the temple, or to changes in policy that mean they stay home from church on Sunday evenings. Correspondingly, some Liahonas have defended evolution and the ERA with fervent dogmatism. The labels of Liahona and Iron Rod identify responses to religious authoritarianism in the sphere of Latter-day Saint testimony, not predictable positions on given issues, certain attitudes, or any particular behavior patterns.

2. The classification is not a separation of the good guys from the bad guys. Virtue and unrighteousness are found in individuals of both types. I freely acknowledge a special sensibility to Iron Rod sins and sinners, but I am well aware of some perils that particularly beset the Liahona path. One is a tendency to swing from self-doubt clear through self-acceptance to self-congratulation. In the words of one of my recent correspondents: “Liahonas see themselves as somehow *outside* the pale; over there are all the plodders, the iron rodders, clinging blindly to pull themselves through the fog, while over here are we liahonas, basking in the light of superior knowledge.” Another peril is poignantly described in a DIALOGUE article called “Some Sentimental Thoughts on Leaving the Fold.” For its author the Liahona concept was a halfway house to existential atheism. Others like him have followed their doubts to some destination outside the fold, usually without fireworks but not without pain.⁴

3. The Liahona-Iron Rod symbolism relates more directly to the quest for truth than to the pursuit of virtue. It is useful to recall that Joseph Smith defined truth in terms of knowledge, declared it to be very important, and suggested that its pursuit would extend far beyond this life.⁵ Thus, even the most knowledgeable Mormon lives with unanswered questions, with partial and tentative answers, and with authority-based answers that may not be persuasive to others. We should ask — Iron Rods and Liahonas alike — before entering into warm debate on any knowledge-related question: Is finding a “true” answer important to the business of Christ-like living? If we noted how often our response turned out to be negative, we might be more content to let our brothers and sisters treasure their tentativeness or cherish their certitude, as the case might be.

4. The distinction between Liahona and Iron Rod is most clearly discernible in responses to the question: Is the more reliable test of the validity of a statement its substance or its source? It involves differing perspectives on the dual approach to knowledge propounded by Joseph Smith: “Seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:14). The Liahona is a “by study” person; he relies on the tests of “prove all things” and “by their fruits” because he

⁴ Kent L. Walgren, DIALOGUE 13 (Winter 1980): 75–80.

⁵ See D&C 50:40; 84:19; 88:78–79; 93:23–36; 130:19.

regards no human authority as infallible. The Iron Rod sees some human authorities — prophets, scriptures and inner promptings — as sufficiently reliable to be accepted “by faith.” (Happily, the institutional Church accepts wide latitude of belief among its members. It emphasizes obedience, but it excommunicates for apostacy only those who challenge its authority in a public and hostile manner.)

5. The potential to be Iron Rod or Liahona is in each of us, but it is possible to be an active Mormon without making a conscious intellectual choice to be either. This is so because a typical LDS commitment is not to a set of rigorously examined “truth” propositions, but to a collection of activities, values, attitudes, hopes, customs, emotions, support systems, and verbal and visual symbols. The gospel, the Church, the scriptures, and the prophets are “true” in that they are seen as the sources of these personalized components of a Latter-day Saint life. Nonconforming behavior need not undermine confidence in the “truth” of these sources as long as such behavior can be self-excused by some form of the “I’m only human” rationalization. An active Mormon may, in other words, act and talk like an Iron Rod because he has never actually confronted a serious question that has tested his confidence in the validity of religious authority. One of my favorite Church leaders frequently quoted Will Durant: “No one deserves to believe unless he has served an apprenticeship of doubt.”⁶ It may be that the terms Liahona and Iron Rod should be applied only to those Mormons who have experienced that apprenticeship.

6. It may be that the most important single factor influencing whether one becomes an Iron Rod or a Liahona is vocational choice. Some occupations raise more questions and present more problems that seriously challenge religious authority than others. Education and emotional trauma also affect the outcome. As a consequence, among individual Latter-day Saints — converts as well as those reared in the Church — there is more movement from Iron Rod to Liahona than the reverse. Whether this is seen as a favorable or unfavorable trend, it is hardly surprising.

7. Certain characteristics of organizational behavior affect the way individuals of either persuasion function in the Church. The impression among most of the laity — much stronger in the LDS than in the RLDS Church — that the General Authorities agree on all matters of doctrine and policy — gives disproportionate influence to idiosyncratic views that are publicly and dogmatically expressed by individuals in the Church hierarchy. The institutional emphasis on compliance generates a certain bias toward placing Iron Rods in presiding positions at all levels of the organization, while calling Liahonas, as one of my correspondents wryly noted, “to teach classes, be Boy Scout leaders and do all kinds of things that require goodness and sensitivity, but not so much unquestioning obedience.” The primary criterion in the appointment process, however, is who — among the men and women available for prayerful con-

⁶ Eugene E. Cambell and Richard D. Poll, *Hugh B. Brown: His Life and Thought* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1975), p. 196.

sideration — is seen as most likely to get the job done. The consequence is a mixture of Liahonas and Iron Rods in offices and callings down to the ward level, and each member of the Church finds that his operating environment is affected considerably by whether his immediate file leaders happen to be one or the other. Finally, the desire for acceptance in a conformity-stressing church leads to a certain amount of role playing to conceal both doubts and disobedience.⁷ This blurs the distinction between Iron Rods and Liahonas and makes it easier for them to work together.

8. In the realm of both ideas and actions, Iron Rods and Liahonas can be quite utilitarian. Gospel “truth” may be eternal, but applications change in response to institutional and individual needs. Joseph Smith provided a rationale: “That which is wrong under one circumstance may be, and often is, right in another. . . . This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted — by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed.”⁸ Of the adaptiveness of the institutional kingdom something will be said later. How the children of the kingdom also reshape gospel questions and answers to the circumstances of their own lives is beautifully expressed in one of the research letters: “Each Saint, will he or nil he, lives in a private world of doctrine, shaped to a great degree by Joseph Smith and his reinterpreters, but shaped much more profoundly by his own experience and his own will, which have edited all doctrines and teachings into a private reality in which he dwells.”

Having said all this, I reaffirm my impression that at any point in time an active Latter-day Saint can be identified as a Liahona or an Iron Rod by his initial response to questions and answers that bear seriously on his understanding of the gospel. Those who need “true” answers and see religious authority as a reliable source of such answers are Iron Rods. Those who see truth as elusive and *all* authority-based answers as liable to scrutiny are Liahonas. The Iron Rods pray for confirmation of answers that they have received, and frequently it comes. The Liahonas pray for strength to cope with uncertainty, and it also frequently comes.

I further reaffirm that individuals may move from either category to the other, that within each is a range of knowledge and commitment, and that the outer limit of each is apostacy — with or without institutional formalities. The Saints who abandon the fellowship of Iron Rods and Liahonas take their private worlds of questions and answers with them. Only the labels lose their relevance.

Let me now begin the consideration of how recent developments in Mormonism look to “people like me” with an overall generalization. Within the LDS

⁷ A perceptive discussion of how active Latter-day Saints use “obstructionism, pouting, procrastination, intentional inefficiency or stubbornness to reflect the disagreement or hostility one does not express openly” is K-Lynn Paul, “Passive Aggression and the Believer,” *DIALOGUE* 10 (Autumn 1977): 86–91.

⁸ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1973 ed.), 5:135.

and RLDS churches we are still some distance from a “unity of the faith,” and in institutional terms we are moving in divergent directions. The official voice of the Reorganization sounds enough like a Liahona to give concern to some RLDS Iron Rods while the authorized voice of the Utah Church is more comfortable to those Saints who accept prescribed answers than to those who raise perplexing questions. However, the recent history of the LDS Church is far more complex than my one-sentence synopsis suggests.

For one thing, a striking development of the last fifteen years is that the Mormon Liahonas have gone public. They recognize each other readily and they fellowship openly in firesides, study groups, and a variety of conferences and symposia. They write for a growing number of publications. When *DIALOGUE* was an infant “journal of Mormon thought,” its survival was often in peril. Now it flourishes in a field of competitors — *Exponent II*, *Sunstone*, and *Sunstone Review* being prominent examples. *The Journal of Mormon History* and the *John Whitmer Association Journal* must also be considered. All publish material reflecting a broad range of individual viewpoints, but all clearly qualify in large measure as Liahona voices.

Concurrently, the formation of the Mormon History Association in 1966 led the way to organizations of LDS professionals in a number of disciplines — arts and letters, sociology, media arts, and family counseling among others. While membership ranges across the conservative-to-liberal spectrum, the nature of such activities is to address new questions and reexamine old answers. If one wants to broaden his circle of Liahona acquaintances, the gatherings and publications of these organizations provide opportunities matched only by the recently launched annual Sunstone Theological Symposium.

The Church university has grown in enrollment, faculty, football prowess, and importance as a forum for dialogue among Liahonas, Iron Rods, and observers of the Mormon scene. Conferences of remarkable scope are sponsored by academic departments and institutes. Women’s Week at Brigham Young University is an exciting reminder that the questions-and-answers business is becoming an equal opportunity employer. Despite its institutional connection, *BYU Studies* publishes more articles addressing open questions than proposing definitive answers. And the unofficial student-sponsored *Seventh East Press* gives wider-than-campus circulation to an unpredictable blend of investigative reporting, editorial page debate, up-beat features, and downright impertinence. The debate continues about whether a Church-related school can be a great university, while scores of Liahona and Iron Rod professors spend far more time and talent trying to make it so than they do tilting with each other.

It is my conviction that the growth of the Church and the continuing emphasis on education has generated a “critical mass” of Liahonas whose spiritual energy cannot be suppressed. It can be employed in the business of the kingdom or it can be excluded, but it cannot be confined. To be in touch with that energy is an exciting thing for “people like me.”

However, many of the Liahonas whom I know best see the recent past as “the day of the Iron Rod.” Certain developments in the institutional Church offer support for this view.

First are the increasingly strenuous efforts to promote uniformity and conformity in the wards and branches throughout the world. “Correlation” — the Mormon code word for standardization of curricula and elimination of competition and duplication in activities — has an eighty-year history, but only in the last fifteen years or so has it been the dominant concept in program building. One result has been the disappearance of many distinctive features of the Relief Society, Sunday School, and youth organizations of the Church. Another is a collection of committee-generated and committee-screened lesson manuals of singular blandness.

A coincident shift toward Christian fundamentalism is also apparent in the approach to the “standard works” incorporated in missionary plans, lesson manuals, official publications and the sermons of many General Authorities. The verbal infallibility of the scriptures is not explicitly asserted, and in specific instances — like the story of Adam’s rib — it is expressly denied. But the frequent and vigorous admonition to “search the scriptures” for authoritative answers to all gospel-related questions reverses a trend away from literalism that marked the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. One of my correspondents sees the 1979 edition of the Bible, with its mass of computer-generated cross references to other LDS scriptures and Joseph Smith’s revision, as “a serious mistake, as it encourages and facilitates the use of a proof-text method of reading the Bible that will only further diminish our understanding of it.”

The constant reminder to “follow the Brethren” is another Iron Rod characteristic of the past fifteen years. Implicit in the concept of living prophets, of course, is the idea that authoritative answers are available through chosen individuals, but the advice to depend upon Church leaders for guidance in what to think as well as what to do is more prominent at present than in many past periods of LDS history. The Church has not officially adopted the neo-Calvinistic theology or the dogma of prophetic infallibility that have been propounded by some Church leaders, but the authoritarian climate gives such doctrinal innovations widespread acceptance among answer-oriented Saints.

The downgrading of the study of Church history is a recent and — to many Mormons — regrettable consequence of the Iron Rod trend. Access to the rich archival resources of the Historical Division of the Church is more restricted than it was a decade ago, the research function of the division has been curtailed, its sponsorship of publications is being discontinued and one of the most important products of the enterprise, James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (1976), has been permitted to go out of print. The recent brouhaha involving several professional historians and an apostle who strongly advocates “safe” history has come to the attention of most of us.

It is arguable, however, that this accentuation of the authoritarian aspect of Mormonism is no more than a defensive institutional response to secular

trends in the world and the internal stresses generated by explosive growth in membership, intercultural differences, and great disparities in living standards, educational attainments, and gospel understanding. One of my “research” consultants notes the affinity between some Mormons and the Moral Majority: “Persons with Iron Rod mentalities . . . seem to agree that the world is going to hell in a handcart and that the only way to stop it is to establish hard and fast behavioral rules that everyone must obey.” Another letter writer sympathizes with those who wear the mantle of leadership:

The potential for our fragmentation is high. Even the vaunted organizational tightness of the ecclesiastical structure is really fragile. Lack of a widespread bureaucracy and very high turnover at the local level lay the entire Church open to the possibility of schisms. . . . We lean against that by emphasizing rhetorically “follow the prophet,” read the scriptures, etc. We cannot afford to recognize widely how much we follow Liahona because that recognition would encourage it to an unacceptable, disfunctional degree. Outsiders, and particularly intellectuals, hearing the rhetoric think we are far more constrained, authority-ridden, and channeled in thought and action than we are in fact.

That authoritarianism in the Utah Church is pragmatic and not wedded to tradition is well illustrated by significant recent changes that are at least as acceptable to Liahona Saints as to rank and file Iron Rod members. The abandonment of the policy of withholding priesthood from blacks is the most profound of these. But responsiveness to new circumstances may be seen also in the consolidated meeting schedule, the content of the *Ensign*,⁹ a new method for funding chapel construction, a redesign of temple garments, and a shortening of the missionary term — first for older couples and then for the young men and women who now proclaim the “only true gospel” in most countries of the free world. A study conducted by Correlation Evaluation to discover why so many converts do not remain active in the Church — like other data-oriented inquiries now in progress — may have important consequences for programs.

Nothing better illustrates the problems of developing an authoritative response to profound social change than the woman question. The Church emphasis on priesthood leadership and traditional family values is easier to express in sculpture than to apply in a world where Mormon women become psychiatrists and senators, adopt hyphenated names at marriage, and deliver their babies in the presence of their nervous husbands. The tactics of opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment generated a serious backlash among Mormons of both sexes, as did the short-lived experiment in restricting sacrament meeting prayers to priesthood holders. The process of institutional accommodation in so volatile a field is not measured by general conference endorsements of conventional answers but by the way Church publications, Social

⁹ Although the official Church magazine carries an aura of authoritarianism, external and internal evidence suggests that a number of its writers are Liahonas. Articles that deal with specific human problems are frequently suggestive rather than prescriptive in tone, as well as sensitive to the complexities of contemporary life that make some traditional answers irrelevant or difficult to apply.

Service agencies, and the Brethren as individual counselors deal with unconventional problems.

As we look toward the future, several factors sustain optimism and commitment in people like me.

One is the characteristic of Liahona testimonies that has been consistent since the 1967 sermon. They find in the gospel sufficient answers to enough important questions to function purposefully in the Church without answers to the rest.

The second is the historical record — generally better known among Liahonas than Iron Rods — that shows the tremendous capacity of the Institutional Church to accommodate new realities. When the mission of the Restoration is defined in terms of impact on the lives of people, every program, scripture, and prophetic pronouncement is subject to reconstruction or reinterpretation for the sake of that mission.

Furthermore, the limitations of authoritarian control operate as certainly and more swiftly in open communities like the Church than in states with plenary power to punish nonconformity. I am indebted to my brother, now bishop in the same California ward where the Liahona-Iron Rod concept was first proposed, for an illustration of the point:

Suppose I approached the brethren of the priesthood about home teaching as follows: "I'm sick and tired of your failing to visit all your families. Any elder or seventy or high priest who doesn't do 100 percent home teaching this month is going to have his district taken away from him. Now get out there and do it!"

Do you know how many families the bishopric would be home teaching next month? Two hundred and fifty. (That's a hundred and twenty-five for each counselor.)

And at the end of the second month do you know how many counselors the bishop would have? None.¹⁰

Finally, the trend of the last fifteen years has not altered the fact that the Church continues to be — as it has always been — a community of Liahona-type and Iron Rod-type believers. During this period my own research has given me a rather intimate acquaintance with two former counselors in the First Presidency — Hugh B. Brown and Henry D. Moyle. One was a Liahona, impatient with dogmatism. The other was an Iron Rod, impatient with opposition. Each was well-leavened with pragmatism, each was disappointed that the institutional Church did not follow the path that he would have preferred, and each was unquestionably "true to the faith." The tendencies in Mormonism that they represented did not die with them.

The same correspondent who noted that this is the "day of the Iron Rod" went on to remark: "The division into the two types is virtually universal in the Church. Sooner or later, Iron Rods will have to make peace with Liahonas. Else the church will split." Like this good friend — who happens not to be a Latter-day Saint — "I do not expect that to happen." On the contrary, I fully share the conviction of another good friend — a Mormon who knows as much about Liahonas and Iron Rods as anybody: "I have always believed that both can abide each other without difficulty as long as they have the spirit of Christ."

¹⁰ Carl W. Poll, "An Address to the Priesthood on Women's Day," Palo Alto First Ward, 21 March 1982. Copy in my possession.

The Renovation of Marsha Fletcher

Michael Fillerup

MARSHA CRUMPLED THE LETTER into a ball and hurled it across the living room. It caromed off the TV screen and rolled a few feet before settling in the middle of the carpet. Once again she inserted her fingers under the waistband of her bell-bottom jeans and began rubbing, very lightly, as much as she dared, her abdomen.

“Damn these stitches!” she complained, hoping Robert, shaving in the bathroom down the hall, would hear. It was Saturday and he’d just finished his mid-morning shower. In their twenty-nine years of marriage he’d rarely showered, let alone shaved, on Saturday morning. He always waited until late afternoon, just before taking Marsha out to dinner, or Sunday morning before church. Because they rarely went out anymore and hadn’t attended church for over ten years, it wasn’t unusual for Robert to go an entire weekend without shaving or showering until Monday morning, when he reported back to work at Douglas Aircraft. But for the past six weeks (Marsha had been keeping tabs), he’d showered and shaved every Saturday morning and, right around noon, had left the house, always with a valid excuse: three times to work overtime, twice to attend the San Diego State game (he’d even shown her his ticket), and once to get a tooth capped (Dr. Bunzel had verified the appointment). Today he was working overtime again.

The doorbell rang.

“Bob!” Marsha shouted down the hall. “Could you get that?”

Her husband’s electric razor droned monotonously.

Marsha managed to rise using the arm-rest and walked to the front door, limping like an injured athlete. She opened the door and wasn’t particularly surprised to see a Mexican standing before her. This close to the border, she saw a lot of wetbacks passing through the neighborhood. Generally, they wanted nothing more than a couple of dollars or a good meal and were willing to work. Although Marsha pitied them somewhat (she and Robert knew what

it was like to go without), she'd always distrusted them, convinced that their Chicano brothers were the catalyst for San Diego's social problems.

"Look at this, Bob," she remarked while glancing over the paper one evening. "A school bus went over the guard rail out by Fallbrook. Ten children were killed. Yep, I knew it: the driver was a Mexican. I bet he was drunk, too. . . ."

This one was about seventeen, with a mop of thick black hair covering his ears and forehead. His dark skin, unblemished, shone as if it had been lacquered. He was wearing a baggy white shirt and dingy white pants held up by a piece of twine knotted around his trim waist. His shoulders were broad and his forearms well muscled.

"*No trabajo*," Marsha said automatically.

The wetback, holding a straw hat against his belly, wrinkled his brow as if he didn't understand. "¿*Nada*?"

"No. *Nada*."

He forced a smile. Marsha noticed that his front teeth were dark and jagged, rotting away. She felt sorry for him. They all looked pathetic, with their smudged faces and rotting teeth, but he was so young. He turned quickly away and began trudging up the long driveway leading to the road at the top of the hill.

"Sorry!" Marsha called out after him. "¡*Lo siento!*"

The young man didn't seem to hear. Marsha closed the door and returned to the sofa.

Robert's electric razor droned on.

Marsha picked up the pen and pad of paper lying on the arm-rest. Letter-writing was about the only thing she'd been permitted to do since her last operation. It was her third day home, and during that time not once had she ventured beyond the oleanders that fenced off their lot from the rest of the neighborhood.

It annoyed her, being cooped up indoors. When her children were growing up, she'd always driven them here and there — to ball games, music lessons, Scout meetings, church socials. . . . Now that they were all married or living away from home, she liked to take long drives alone to the beach. "My therapy," she told Robert, half-jokingly. She loved the winding drive through Via de Dios Canyon and the smell of the salt air. It worked on her like a balm miles before the Pacific came into view. And she loved the sea: from a distance, a vast, silken gown fringed with white lace; up close, a mystery of limitless capacities in many shades and textures.

She preferred the beach in winter, when the hot dog stands were boarded up and the waters deserted save a few die-hard surfers. She loved the changing winter moods — sunny skies over blue-green waters one day, a thick fog painting it melancholy gray the next. She loved the relentless hammering of the surf: all day and night the waves rising and crashing down upon the shore, instants of thunder fading into silence, over and over and over.

Marsha stared at the blank pad of paper and then at the row of photographs on top of the TV. Five individual portraits, her three daughters and

two sons, were flanked by family portraits — the two older girls posing with their husbands and children. Marsha focused on Adelle, her youngest, her unmarried daughter, still living alone and sorting packages for the United Parcel Service, still taking three showers a day and karate lessons four nights a week, still despising men. Urgent, muscular, reclusive Adelle, who, up until the day she moved out, had gotten up at six each morning to jog with Marsha down at the high school track. Adelle. She would be the easiest.

Dearest Adelle,

As I sit here laughing, feeling very warm & special to be thought of & labored over, it occurred to me that Sarah must have felt just like I feel: “Am I, at 47 yrs., to have pleasure?” Slightly not verbatim, but justified. When I feel 1000 yrs. old, feeling sorry for myself, convinced pleasure will never come again, there you are, reducing me to a joyful teenager.

Marsha paused, glancing over what she had written. Not informative enough. Adelle liked facts. Hated “emotional drivel.” Or so she said.

Dr. Norman (“The Sadist”) while taking out the stitches from the first surgery, went on and on how I wrecked his back for life. “Pretty Boy” hates stripping veins because you have to keep turning the “cadaver,” as he calls it, and this is hell.

The worst part of the whole thing was the waiting room. One lady came out in a crouch clutching her breast with tears streaming down her face. She sat down to get enough strength to leave & apologized for the display & said she’d had a radical mastectomy & Dr. Norman just popped the swollen scar tissue by squeezing as hard as he could with his hands. The lady started sobbing hysterically & was saying things like, “My husband looks at me like I’m some kind of freak . . . he’s afraid of me . . . he won’t touch me . . .” I knew it was more than the scar. Men are all alike — give them their squirt of pleasure & your body suffers as a result. Then they despise you because of it. That poor woman. I guess she’s going to have reconstructive surgery in a month or so. I couldn’t handle that, living in a totally dehumanized condition.

Your Grandma Christiansen had a radical mast. & I know the hell she went through. Back then the surgeons made Dr. Norman look like Marcus Welby. They were all butchers. Spot a lump and hack the whole thing off, that was their motto. Did I ever tell you what the butcher who did the job on Grandma said? “What’s the big deal, lady? You’re 55!” If I’d been there I’d have kicked him where he lived. Then, “What’s the big deal, Doc? You’re 39!” Of course, today’s doctors think they’re all super-humanitarians. They smile so proud of themselves & their wonderful profession as they tell about all the options modern science has for poor diseased females: extended radical (very rare), halsted radical (also rare), modified radical (most reasonable, they say), simple or total (controversial), & the good old lumpectomy (the one Grandma probably could have gotten away with!!!). Some even prescribe radiation or chemotherapy, so if the cancer in your breast doesn’t kill you, the radiation & chemicals will. The plastic surgeons are even worse. They brag about how they can fix you all up afterwards — “much much better than new!” They miss the whole point.

Marsha turned suddenly, drew the drape aside, and looked out across the driveway. She thought she’d heard someone drive up but could see no one except the Johnson’s girl, a chubby ten-year-old riding by on her pinto pony, which seemed to sag in the middle from the child’s weight. Her own children had never been overweight. Tall, blonde, California girls. She’d never under-

stood the inferiority complexes that had nagged them through high school. They had been — still were — so beautiful: no fat, no acne. Blue-eyed Scandinavians, all of them. Adelle might be stocky but not obese.

With all the operations I've been having they're liable to put me in the Surgeon General's hall of fame. In case you've got nothing more exciting to record in your journal, here's the latest run down: Three months ago, strip the veins. Last week, the tummy tuck. Next week, the tooth & mouth job — the worst of the lot. Then I'll be all fixed up. Just call me the \$6 million housewife!

Thanks for the letter. That part about how you put down your boss when he started coming onto you, I couldn't stop laughing!!!! But for heaven's sake, don't worry about ME! I may look like death warmed over for the time being, but underneath I'm fit as a fiddle. I'll snap back. I always do. Write again when you have time.

XOXOXOXOXOXO

Mom

Marsha folded the letter, placed it in an envelope, and sealed it. This gave her a tremendous sense of relief, and for the next few moments, she gazed outside, admiring the morning. Earlier a coastal fog had shrouded the valley, but now the sky, rinsed clean with November sunshine, was glowing brightly, like silver-blue foil, and the day looked warm and inviting. She could tell by the sugary edges of frost on the dichondra that there would be a crisp autumn breeze, just enough to require a sweater if she drove down to San Elijo Beach that afternoon. Today the ocean would look like a postcard — smooth, glossy, rich with color.

The electric razor was silent. Just some metallic clicks as the cabinet door opened and closed and opened again. The sound of water.

He was washing his face again. He always rewashed his face after shaving. It was part of his ritual. Like the dab of cream he meticulously spread through his hair, silver-white now, parted conservatively on the left and combed back, exposing his entire forehead, solid, tanned, experienced. For a moment, Marsha pictured his naked body, big, broad, the shoulders rounded like a bear's, slumping forward more from bulk than poor posture, his chest carpeted with grizzled hairs. His muscles had softened as he'd worked his way up from baggage boy to supervisor. But his forty-eight years had compensated in other areas: the bright, metallic streaks in his hair gave him the look of a British aristocrat, and the wrinkles and tiny pouches under his faded blue eyes made him look more seasoned than old; vintage stuff. Marsha recalled an old TV commercial in which a graying man in a black tuxedo hands red roses to his slender, smiling, middle-aged wife: "You're not getting older, you're getting better. . . ."

This was true, for Robert. But what about *her*? Rippled blue legs and lumpy landscape. If the body was indeed a temple, then women — Mormon women especially — had permitted desecration. Sister Harper, her buttocks swaying like the Liberty Bell, conducting the monthly homemaking lesson. Fat and happy. Too fat and happy. Or the others who dropped by for their obligatory monthly visit — some even sincere with their bright smiles. Or worse, poor Sister Watson who at thirty-two with a scholar's mind and a grand-

mother's body was too intelligent to be fat. Or happy. Just used. No, Marsha didn't despise them. Pitied them, yes. Almost as much as they pitied her.

Marsha snatched the pen from the arm-rest and scribbled a hasty postscript on the outside of the envelope:

Woman is the nigger of the world.

She looked at the portraits on the TV set. Sherril Cozette Adelle Gary Stephen. Stephen would be next. Gary, the cumulative 3.84 G.P.A. computer science major who had lettered in three sports and served as student body president at El Rancho High, he could wait. Big, broad like his father, but more refined, more bookish. Always had everything under control: emotionally, academically, socially, athletically, financially. . . . But Stephen. What to do with Stephen? Eighteen, sharing an apartment with three potheads in Billings, Montana, working seven-to-seven in a warehouse shelving brake shoes for three dollars an hour. Her wayward son. Not prodigal. Not even a black sheep. Just missing. Gone.

From the beginning his teachers had pressured him: "You're sure not like Sherril!" "Why can't you read like Gary? That Gary, he was a reader!"

Sherril the valedictorian, Cozette the artist, Gary the all-league linebacker, Stephen the . . . pothead? And Adelle? The karate expert? The man-hater?

Marsha glanced around the room, paranoid, as if someone had lifted the lid off her mind and were peeking down at the image inside: Stephen's fifth grade teacher, a crew-cut drill sergeant type, warning her to get Stephen involved in more sports "or he may have a problem with his masculinity." It was absurd, of course. The man was absurd. And yet Stephen's ex-wife had never responded to him. She'd admitted this to Marsha, hushed, and Marsha had suggested a lubricant. But nothing had worked, and later Marsha had tried to explain to him that Dawn was "just one of those girls" who was too attached to her father to ever give herself to another man, "any other man. . . ." She'd read him very convincing passages from Janov's *Primal Scream*. But Stephen had moved out after a two-week R & R at home. As far as she knew, he hadn't gone out with a girl since the divorce.

Dearest Stephen,

We planned to do some research in some towns for future use. Chula Vista is getting so large, & we find ourselves jumping & flinching every time we drive into town, dodging all the maniacs on wheels. It could only get worse, so we may not want to retire here when your dad is 65. We have this U.S. catalog that lists acreage way out in the boondocks for each state. So far, the most beautiful sounding is Colorado. Your own trout stream, hunting, fishing, etc. in Delta, Colo.

She stopped. She wanted to say: your dad didn't mean what he said about you being a parasite. Just because we got married when we were your age and his father dumped him on the spot, he seems to think all birds have to leave the nest at the same time, but you know he really does love you, deep-down,

even if he doesn't act like it at times . . . Justifying, qualifying, apologizing, lying. And Stephen would know. Maybe not consciously, but he would know.

Someday I may get your dad in a 4-season climate wilderness. He's a little turned on by this catalog. I know it's hard for him, because I was raised in Utah until I was 17 & storms really turn me on. Dad has always lived in Calif. & storms make him feel like the sky is falling.

The bathroom door opened and Robert's voice echoed down the hall: "Did you call me, Marsh?"

"No, I didn't say anything."

"I thought you said something."

"No."

She watched his bear-like body, the towel wrapped around his waist, cross the hall and disappear into the bedroom. She hobbled into the kitchen, opened the refrigerator, and studied the shelves: a ten-pound horn of cheese, a bottle of bran, fresh fruits and vegetables, a jar of brewer's yeast, and on a separate shelf, a row of small bottles — cod liver oil, B-complex, vitamin E, rose hips. Marsha had always distrusted doctors, even before her operations. "Proper diet and preventive care," she'd always preached to her children, heaping vitamins on their breakfast plates.

She took two of the B-complex tablets and poured herself a glass of carrot juice. As she alternately popped the vitamins and sipped the juice, her eyes wandered out the window, beyond the redwood deck, and down into the Chula Vista Valley, spread out like a multi-colored fan. Split-levels with roofs of Spanish tile studded the hillsides, their backyard swimming pools gleaming like inlaid turquoise. In between, the precise rows of orange and avocado groves stood like green regiments. A narrow highway bisected the base of the valley, with either side furrowed dark or grass green. At the far end of the panorama, smooth, humped hills, like the flanks of palomino ponies, walled the valley, a soft contrast to the harsh brush and stubbled buttes immediately surrounding their home. Except for a small spotting of clouds and the bright, throbbing sun, the sky was immaculate blue. A perfectly unbothered blue, thought Marsha, setting her empty glass on the sink. She began scratching her abdomen, softly at first, then with increasing intensity.

"Marsh! Have you seen my blue socks?"

She stopped. Slowly removing her hand from her jeans, she clasped it, gently but firmly, with her free hand. "No, I haven't."

"Never mind. I found them."

His dresser drawer slammed shut.

Marsha looked back outside at the Johnson's orange grove. A man in white with a gunny sack slung over one shoulder was standing halfway up a ladder picking oranges. Was it the wetback? She hoped so. He'd looked hungry. She thought about him, his pure black hair and hard muscles, his face the color of the distant hills. What would his fine hair feel like? His soft face? It seemed so long since she'd truly embraced a child. Or a man. She realized

she was no longer looking out over the valley but instead at her own vague reflection in the window, pale and hollow, a premature grandmother.

Marsha gulped down another glass of carrot juice and returned to the living room. She glanced at the portrait of Cozette, standing beside her husband, an angular, boyish-looking young man of twenty-three with carefully sculptured hair, wearing a bright blue suit. Jerry's mouth was small, deceptively simple, lamb-like, with thin, unkissable lips. Painfully pro-Church, born into it, the son of a bishop who later became a stake president, he was a victim of the unbroken Mormon mold: baptized at eight, Eagle Scout, two-year mission in Ecuador, temple marriage. A real hand-shaker, thoroughly saturated with all the anti-birth-control-mother's-place-is-in-the-home-pay-your-tithing-with-a-smile-don't-ask-questions-if-ye-love-me-keep-my-commandments business the Church stood for. As fanatical about Mormonism as she had been while growing up in Salt Lake. As fanatical as she had tried to be her first few years with Robert.

Cozette. Tall and slender, like Marsha, with blonde hair hanging to her hips. She could have been a model. Or better, an artist. She was only twelve credits shy of her B.A. in art when she was "blessed with little Christopher" and had dropped out of school. Standing beside Jerry, smiling as she held her eight-month-old son, his tongue sticking out like a piece of wet taffy.

Dearest Cozette,

Are you sure the postage on that letter was only 16¢? Anyway, remember Mrs. Kiner from Fallbrook? She taught abroad. Denmark would be my pick too. Those other countries have to pay people to come to their pest holes, with terrorists under every rock. If they don't get you, the bacteria in their food will. Only greasy races can survive there.

Robert emerged from the hall fully dressed, flicking some lint from the sleeve of his navy-blue sport coat as he headed into the kitchen. He had a casual but lively gait, the creases in his flared slacks snapping to attention with each bouncy stride, his head bobbing slightly, as if fastened to a spring. She could smell his cologne. As he yanked open the refrigerator and began rummaging through the shelves, Marsha felt her body stiffen. She felt pale, almost faint.

I'm going into the slaughter-house again next week. This time for my teeth. If I didn't explain, they are going to uncover the entire bone & take an impression. In one week they take out the stitches, in one more week, they uncover the bone again, & insert an appliance over the entire bone. They sew you up leaving 4 protruding steel pillars exposed, welded to the bone appliance. Now the teeth will snap onto the pillars, & this remains fixed when I eat. This will prevent further bone loss since friction is now eliminated. The Dr. showed me how it works & it's as effective as implants into the bone in eliminating movement. The Dr. said the first couple of weeks I'd be sorry I did it, but after the mouth heals, it will really be worth the initial discomfort.

Robert dropped a glass or something on the kitchen counter.
"Bob?"

He peered around the corner, two big, surprised eyes, like a guilty little boy. “Marsh?” he said, overly concerned.

For a moment she recognized a bit of the old boyishness within the man, and she almost laughed. Marrying him she had hoped for a mind and spirit to match his strong man’s body. These were the sins of her youth: Faith. Hope. Shortsightedness. Naivete. Idealism. Still, in twenty-nine years he had matured. In some ways. Which was far more than she could say for his father, Oroville Fletcher, the granite-jawed retired building contractor who still gulped his morning cup of Yuban and carried a temple recommend in his wallet. Cocky, bald, muscle-bound, the king chauvinist who used to whip off fifty one-armed push-ups for his astonished little grandchildren. Always giving them gifts but always demanding. *Thank you Grandpa Fletcher thank you Grandpa Fletcher thank you Grandpa.* . . . Refusing to tend them as infants. Even for an hour. Instead, he sat on his tail watching TV while his corpulent wife tottered about the house cleaning up his filth. Occasionally slapping her around. For burning the roast, for over-starching his shirts. For the hell of it. Disciplining, *training* her. Because it was his right, he felt, by virtue of his sex or priesthood or whatever.

Robert had at least matured beyond a caveman conception of women. Which was quite remarkable, considering his upbringing.

Marsha set the pen and pad of paper gently on the arm-rest and smiled at her husband, still peering around the corner. “Could you get me that medicine in the bedroom?”

“Sure, Marsh.”

“It’s on the dresser.”

Marsha’s eyes followed him down the hall until he disappeared into the bedroom.

You know, when you consider the pain & expense when you allow tooth decay, until you can afford it, it makes you wonder why somebody didn’t warn you when you were too young to realize. I remember pledging \$500 to the Church building fund while my teeth needed work. What a dumb generation we were. Since I have always inundated each of you with info, it will be interesting to see if it goes in one ear & out the other, especially with Stephen since he’s probably the most naive about health care. The most important word in regard to health is preventive care. Traumatic, painful surgery would never be a factor if we ate properly & had our teeth checked regularly.

“Here you go!” Robert held out the bottle of medicine. “How are the stitches?”

“Okay.” Marsha unscrewed the cap and peered into the bottle as if she were looking down a well. “Thanks.”

“Well, I guess I’ll be seeing you.” Robert raised his big flat palm in an awkward farewell. “Need anything at the store?”

“No.”

“Well, we’ll see you then.” He bent down and kissed her forehead.

“Remember when we were first married?” she said. “Everytime you’d leave for work I’d come to the door.”

“And put your arms around me,” Robert said. “I remember.”

“You’d never leave without kissing me goodbye.”

“That’s right.” He chortled. “Sometimes I’d never leave.”

Marsha smiled. “You’d call in sick. And we’d stay in bed all day.”

She felt his hand settle gently on her crown.

“Do you have to go to work today?”

“They need someone with experience.”

“When do you think you’ll be home?”

“Probably around four. Maybe five.”

In spite of herself, she snapped at him: “That’s what I like about you, Robert — you’re always so damn decisive!”

“Five,” he said flatly.

Marsha shook her head, exasperated. “I’m sorry, Bob.”

“Sorry about what?”

“I don’t know. Everything. Hawaii.”

“Hawaii?”

“I was awful in Hawaii. Here we’d gone and saved all that money and the whole time I sat around and bitched.”

“It was the rain, Marsh. We didn’t expect it to rain the whole time.”

“But I bitched. I bitched at *you*, not the rain. When we were walking along Waikiki, I bitched because you were walking so slow.”

She noticed him sneak a glance at his watch.

“Look, Marsha, forget about Hawaii, okay? It was the menopause again. That’s what Dr. Norman said.”

“When in doubt, blame it on menopause. Do you think I should have taken that estrogen like he suggested?”

“Jeez, I don’t know.”

Marsha folded her arms and literally shivered. “The thought of putting all that junk into my body . . . when you know sooner or later it’s going to crop up in the form of cancer. . . .”

Robert shrugged. “I don’t know. From all I’ve read and heard, it seems if cancer’s going to get you, it’s going to get you. If not through hormone shots, then some other way — the water, the air, preservatives, diet drinks. . . . But if your number’s up, one way or another, it’s going to get you. And there’s not much you can do about it.”

“Get *me*?”

“You. Me. Us. The whole damn world. You know what I mean.”

“It’s not fair.”

“Who ever said anything about being fair?”

Robert glanced at his watch again, openly this time. “Look, I’d better get going.” He kissed her lightly on the cheek.

After his car pulled out of the driveway, Marsha got up and opened the drapes to the picture window. Briefly she scanned the landscape. To her left, in the Johnson’s orange grove, she noticed the same white figure she’d seen earlier, still picking fruit. Again, she wondered if it were the Mexican boy —

or rather, the young man. No, he was just a boy. Like Stephen. Had Thelma Johnson fed the boy? It was just like her to hire wetbacks dirt-cheap, fifty cents an hour, and not even feed them a decent meal. He'd probably been working all day without a break. Probably starving. Tell them about it in church, Thelma. Tell them about it Sunday when you bear witness of Jesus Christ. . . .

Marsha eased down gingerly on the sofa and angrily picked up the pen and pad of paper.

By the way, your letter about Stephen was absolutely perfect. With all the PIGS daddy works with who brag about kicking their kids out into the street, every bit of pressure for going the extra mile is needed to counteract the poison influence. Your dad needs generosity pumped into his veins every day.

Marsha wondered if she should give the details. How Stephen had suddenly showed up on the doorstep one morning, long stringy hair covering the collar of his Levi jacket, eighteen, broke, and already paying alimony; how Robert had answered her plea with a flat, emotionless "No"; the argument, she and Robert yelling in the bedroom while Stephen sat like a marionette in the kitchen, waiting to see who would pull his strings this time; Robert fuming as he stormed out, shouting over his shoulder: "Two weeks! That's it. Two weeks."

Stephen was talking for the first time in years. He talked about teachers doing jobs on him way back in grade school. His face got red. It really is shocking how little a parent knows of what a child is feeling.

Marsha paused. Her eyes wandered around the room — the seascape above the fireplace, a gray, windy scene, lifeless save for a distant diving gull, sketched in as an afterthought; the big brass sun, four feet in diameter, covering the wall opposite the grandfather clock — Robert's anniversary gift ("Twenty-five years of happiness" the card had read); the photographs on top of the TV: Sherril, her eldest, her tallest, the once blond hair now dark, her graceful figure already bulging; Elise, her six-month-old baby, posing like a statue in her lap; the other, two-year-old Bradley, standing soldier-like beside her; and Brian, her husband, six-four, athletic, in his double-breasted pinstripes looking very lawyer-like and churchy beside Sherril, her half-smile painfully exaggerated, Instamatic.

Marsha glared at the paper wadded in a ball in the middle of the floor. Sherril's letter, received that morning. Angrily she resumed her letter to Cozette, the letter Jerry would certainly read — he read all of Cozette's mail and she read all of his. They shared everything.

My only advice which is sound but totally against the tyrannical Church doctrine, is not to get pregnant again. It's your body, Cozette, if you really don't want a hanging leaky bladder etc. not to mention the outside hanging parts; (every pregnancy takes its toll) then assert yourself. After all, no one else is sacrificing *their* beautiful body. Sorry, Jerry, but think about it: you really *like* your body intact, don't you? Nothing personal, Jerry. You are No. 1 husband & father in my estimation. It's not your fault that you have a patriarchal hang-up.

Jerry wouldn't like it. She could already hear him, raging or chuckling (he was so unpredictable) over the letter: "What's she whining about this time? Birth control again? Cozy, what does the Church say?" Cozette obeyed him like a child. Hopeless. Cozette wouldn't listen, just as Sherrill hadn't — over-ruled by Brian, conditioned by the propaganda week after week, the joys of motherhood, a "woman's greatest calling," the red and white carnations on Mother's Day.

O.K. already, so stop asking advice, & I won't lay my militant attitude on you. Remember Cozette, I have always been capable of wielding a death blow where my children were threatened.

Death blows, yes. But life cries, too. Six years ago Stephen, trying to fetch the cat out of an oak tree, falling twenty feet, a head-first dive into a pool of concrete, his skull splitting dead center. As he lay there writhing like a severed tail, his brain showing through the chasm in his skull and the clear spinal fluid oozing out his nostrils, her knees had hit the concrete. And she, Marsha Fletcher, who had not partaken of the sacred bread and water for four years, she'd begged and pleaded, making all sorts of impossible promises, if only the Lord would heal her son, without reservation. Without paralysis or brain damage or other fine print. Calling Bishop Jones and begging him to administer to her son. She wasn't above begging on behalf of her children. Nor was she so grateful at the boy's recovery that she forgot to curse her husband for his impotent priesthood. Or later dismiss her promises as the frenzied utterances of a desperate mother.

Cozy, I can't handle you sacrificing your health & beauty. I get sick inside when I see that beautiful gifted Sister Watson a captive inside that abused body. Sherril is really vulnerable emotionally & I'm concerned at the toll this third pregnancy will take on her. That's right, in case you haven't heard already, Sherril is pregnant again. I got her letter this morning. She said for a whole year she's felt run-down. She is in some kind of turmoil. I don't know whether it's financial, emotional, or what, but I feel it.

Marsha's hand stopped, but her thoughts continued, meandering, stumbling through a labyrinth of memories: Robert, his fullback shoulders swelling his skin-tight t-shirt, blue jeans, the cuffs rolled high-tide style, standing beside his monster jalopy in the Jefferson High parking lot, laughing at his diploma on graduation day; driving all over L.A. on their wedding night, searching for a motel that wouldn't ask for I.D.; Robert fumbling with the luggage, fumbling with her spaghetti straps; a month later, her big dreams — happy marriage, big house, big happy family — crushed: in the tinted window of Angelo's Pizza Parlour, Robert sharing a booth with a chesty redhead, laughing as he inserted a thick-crust wedge into her cavern of a mouth. No confession, no remorse. Marsha, already pregnant, taking it like a good old broad, taking it as her mother had taken it, twenty years from her alcoholic brothel-hopping husband, hiding the pain and hurt and humiliation. All through Robert's lean years: bread and cheese in basement apartments, the children — one two three, bam! bam! bam! (the episiotomies hadn't even healed), a two-year break,

then four five, bam! bam! The blue worms growing on her legs, thicker, bluer, the muscles in her belly sagging further and further, once good supple healthy robust flesh, turned to flaccid dough. Which she hid from the world, public and private, dressing and undressing in the bathroom to spare herself Robert's queasy gaze.

Sherril's flute lessons. No money, but Marsha insisting. Demanding this much refinement for her daughter, her first child. Robert's conditional consent: "All right, all right! I'll work overtime!"

"You're already working overtime. I'll get a part-time job."

"Over my dead . . . what's the deal? You think I can't support my own family? I'll work double overtime if I have to . . . no, you're not going to work. . . .!"

Sherril with her flute and her lessons. At night, the children in bed, Marsha reading in the living room. Robert sneaking into the bathroom with the instrument, practicing simple tunes, barely audible beyond the bathroom walls. Marsha smiling at the thought of her big teddy bear blowing into a silver stick late into the night. A secret until one night little Stephen, up for a drink, opened the bathroom door. And laughed. "Daddy, what are you doing!"

At first, Robert laughing too. "What's up, Even Stephen? You want a drink?"

Turning on the faucet, filling a paper cup. The boy gulping thirstily.

"Okay, now go on back to bed."

The boy giggling. All the way down the hall, laughing, chanting, waking up the house: "Daddy's playing Sherril's flute! Daddy's playing Sherril's flute! Daddy's playing Sherril's. . . ."

Soon all five children standing at the door, giggling. Robert trying to smile, to laugh; trying to mimic the Pied Piper and convert embarrassment into humor. But breaking down, hollering at them: "Get the hell out! Get the hell out of here! All of you!" Glaring at Marsha, watching from behind. "You too! Get out!" Bashing the instrument on the sink, on the toilet seat, against the wall. Sherril weeping over the broken fragments, the other children scampering back to bed terrified, Marsha furious, suppressing her fury.

The next morning, stone-silence at the breakfast table. Cold eyes over cold oatmeal. But recovering. Surviving that night as they had others like it. Robert bringing home a new flute, some read-along books, candy, always something. Or taking the family out to Bob's Big Boy for hamburgers, or to the San Diego Zoo, or the beach. Always something to patch things up. Their marriage of scars and sutures holding together; somehow always healing before the next gash.

Robert's promotion. The Dream House. The kids all in school. Measuring day after tedious day with soap operas and game shows. Mechanically taking the sacrament, then not, then sleeping in Sundays while the kids, the youngest eight and the oldest sixteen, diligently attended their Sabbath meetings. Robert, the workaholic, up at 5:30 and home at 10:00, bringing the bacon and not much else. Too much time to think, to read, to remember —

her youth, her childhood. Growing up in Salt Lake City, so religiously and genealogically insulated from the coarse scheming world of men, when everything was directly or peripherally Church-sanctioned and everyone believed as she had, and the fragrances, colors, moods, and seasons were not much different than when her grandmother was a little girl standing on the porch of her pioneer home, watching the gay lights of Saltair burning in the distance. Pioneer Day picnics, summer evenings playing run-sheep-run and Red Rover-come-over on freshly mown fields, the winter snow parties, hot chocolate by a blazing fire in the Stoddard's cabin. Dance festivals, volleyball tournaments, the corny road shows. The many, many MIA excursions. Spring hayrides and weinie roasts up Big Cottonwood Canyon, with the boys in levis and crew-cuts flirting in their awkward adolescent self-conscious Mormon way. Back when she, as a young woman, a female, had felt at least equal to the young men, those gawky Aaronic Priesthood holders going about their Sabbath business in a sort of jovial stupor. But moving to California at seventeen and a year later marrying Robert, she'd suddenly been relegated to the office of "wife" — *the wife*, housewife, later euphemized to "homemaker" though still and always *the wife*, a title which had blackballed her, first for life, then three years later, following the sealing ceremony in the Los Angeles Temple, for time and all eternity. While he'd been designated the husband, the head, the poppa, the patriarch. And from that point on she was no longer on par but always supine, on or off the delivery table, legs spread, feet in the stirrups, a sacrificial lamb to the man-gods.

Too much time to remember, to relive. To fantasize: being not such a good old broad; being not wife, not mother, but physician or attorney or professor. Being not body-bullied. Being woman. Beautiful intelligent unapologizing uncompromising woman. . . .

Robert's first and last confession of what she knew was neither his first nor last affair — "Never again . . . I swear it!" Marsha driving recklessly down the highway, heading nowhere. An hour later parked on the surf-eaten cliffs of San Elijo, gazing down at the sunset reflection on the sea shining like stained glass. Watching the surfers in black penguin suits paddling in to shore and the couples, young and old, strolling along hand in hand — enamored silhouettes against the fiery western sky. Darkness smothering the last flicker of light. Then all night in her car listening to the monotonous surf, watching the stars ride each wave to a peak, then tumble into the madhouse of white water. Listening to each turbulence simmer to a hush; a brief, redeeming moment to recuperate, to poke your head above the rage and steal a bite of air. Then another breaker. Silence. Another. The inexorable cycle.

She was awakened by the melancholy cry of the gulls. Awakened to a thick fog; the ocean concealed, invisible. But still pounding away, constant as a pulse. The steady, reassuring voice of the sea.

Recovering. Surviving.

Night classes at Chula Vista CC. Intro to literature. The instructor, tall, bushy red beard, lean face, arms. Aesthetic. Or intellectual? Wire-rim glasses

on a starved nose, the tip crooked, as if it had been broken. Lecturing in a soft, mellow voice. Slouched in a chair in front of the class, both hands buried in his pockets, or sitting cross-legged, like a yogi, on the table. But a sensitive man, she'd thought. Long slender fingers, like a pianist's.

Sitting in the rear, hiding behind the black woman who borrowed her pen every other week, anonymous, she'd thought, until her midterm conference, an office conference, a personal conference in a cramped windowless room walled on three sides by shelves of books — some familiar to her: Milton, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Poe; others alien: Berryman, Shklovsky, Oates, Machado.

"You obviously agree with Browning's attitude towards male egoism."

She smiled, nodding slightly, self-consciously, glancing down at her hands, cupped on the notebook lying flat across her thighs. Feeling foolish — foolish for being so nervous. A woman ten, maybe fifteen years older than this man, yet behaving like a schoolgirl.

"Tennyson's *Princess* might give you a little different perspective on Victorian attitudes towards the male-female syndrome. You might read a few selections and try a comparison-contrast theme."

He leaned back in his swivel chair, tapping the eraser-end of his pencil lightly against her paper as his eyes pondered a paragraph, never looking up, absorbing it, oblivious, it seemed, to her presence.

She leaned forward, peering stealthily at her theme, as if she were cheating on an exam. His lips separated, his bushy beard quivering slightly as he whispered through the passage. He was nodding. Smiling and nodding. He flipped quickly through the remaining pages.

"Very good. Excellent." He penciled an A- on the paper and circled it.

"Thank you," she said, accepting the paper from him as if it were a gift.

"Thank *you*," he said. "It's not often I stumble across a theme I actually enjoy reading." The far corners of his eyes wrinkled when he smiled. He looked older than he was. Late twenties maybe. He looked thirty-five.

As she stood up and reached for the doorknob, he called her back.

Yes, it was rather late. Yes, maybe it would be a good idea if he walked her to her car. Yes, she would have a cup of coffee with him, no harm in that.

But it had been a sensuous experience for her, sitting in a secluded little booth having a cup of coffee with another man. A man who had joined her, not out of obligation or dull habit, but because he was attracted to her, physically, intellectually — at one point, she thought, even spiritually. They chatted for a good hour — literature, movies, overpopulation, women's liberation. During a lull, he casually reached across the table to take her hand, but she jerked it away, avoiding his eyes, which had been cross-examining her, not without compassion: You are married but are you happy? Why are you so dissatisfied, an attractive woman like you? What would make you happy? Don't worry, I know. I know. I know what you're feeling. I know what you're suffering.

When he said it out loud she suspected it was a line. But it was exactly the line she wanted — *needed* — to hear.

His apartment had been far more materialistic than she'd anticipated: a step-down living room with a tiny bar tucked away in one corner, the adjoining walls lined with shelves of wine; a stereo with monstrous speakers and a jungle of indoor plants; in the bedroom, a color TV, a digital alarm clock enumerating each green second, a water bed.

As he stood at the bar preparing their drinks, she became uneasy. A cup of coffee or glass of wine was one thing; this was quite another. What was she doing here? And why? Pouring the drinks, he looked over at her and grinned. She hated that grin. Cocksure.

She sat down on the sofa and tried to relax. But already she could feel what was coming: the unhurried warmth of his initial touch, his careful, artistic consideration as he proceeded down the length of her body. But after that, nothing — except his long lean fingers curiously exploring the rippled ridges of her doughy belly, and their mutual frustration as they made love in a catalog of different positions, none of which would satisfy either of them. Afterwards, he would shrug, exonerating himself: "Uptight, Mrs. Fletcher. Too uptight." While she would be left feeling humiliated, bitter, guilty about her sin against not only the God she was feuding with but her self, her sex. Ultimately admitting to herself: *I've been had*. . . .

As she watched him casually stirring the drinks, his pianist's fingers suddenly turned to icicles. What did this bearded man-child know about her anyway? Nothing. And what did he really want? A midnight discussion of Swinburne's love poems? Ha! The same thing they all wanted. No, she was not going to be an easy lay. Another feather in his cap.

She stood up. "I have to go."

Before he could even protest, she rushed out the door, leaving him slightly dumbfounded, holding two martini glasses in his dim-lit bachelor's den.

When she arrived home, Robert was waiting up, angry, ready to pounce, to interrogate. But she beat him to it: "Yes, I was out with another man. I'm ready to tell Bishop Myers about mine any time you're ready to tell him about yours. Good night!" Sobbing, she fled into the master bathroom and locked the door.

Thus ended *her* first and last fling.

Marsha picked her pen off the floor.

I just realized that I have a hang-up about pain tolerance. I was never able to stay around my brother Phil, because it was too hard on me emotionally — watching him jab an ice cream cone into his forehead while the other kids thought it was so funny. Is this what happens to overprotective mothers too? It's a terminal emotional drain.

Everything seemed quiet. Unbearably quiet. Marsha stopped and listened to the late afternoon silence that had become her enemy and ally ever since Adelle had moved out: the refrigerator humming, the fat Johnson girl calling to her pony, a jet purring across the sky. Silence.

This drug hangover is mentally lowering. I may have to go to the new Golfland we have in C.V. & vent my frustrations on the quick-draw games. You get to kill 6 gun-

slingers if you are fast enough, & I intend to cheat, rather than holstering my gun between each fight.

Marsha set the pen cross-wise on the pad and slouched down as if her body had suddenly collapsed. She remained limp, rag-like, until the little door on the grandfather clock popped open and the tiny wooden bird slid forward, cuckooing five times before retreating back into its grotto. Then five ominous tolls of the gong.

It's a good thing I have class next week. I'm taking real estate principles & income tax. Don't ask me why. Aunt Toots is getting married — again! I hope she is happy. She deserves it.

XOXOXO

Mom

P.S. XOXOXOXOXOXO for beautiful Laura. No one is hungry right after they wake up. Wait an hour & give her fresh air and exercise just before. It stimulates the appetite.

P.P.S. Sherril really likes Idaho but it sounds like they will be in the Salt Lake vicinity January where Brian will work.

P.P.P.S. Stephen is still looking for a used car, but he's still a bit shy after the Mustang trauma.

P.P.P.P.S. Adelle has some secret plan. She wrote & told me she's buying a lot of clothes & just made a down payment on some new furniture for her apartment.

Marsha hastily tore the scribbled pages from the note-pad and hurried into the kitchen to locate another envelope and seal the letter before she changed her mind. Shuffling through a drawer, she glanced at the kitchen clock: 5:45. Robert should have been home an hour ago. Two hours ago. She could phone his office, but what difference would it make? She looked outside. The sun was bleeding through the clouds on the horizon.

As Marsha watched the twilight settling like deep sleep over the valley, she tried to hate her husband. In the past, this would have been easier, when he would heave the boys against the walls for quarreling or scold her for not having them ready for church on time or wake her in the middle of the night to demand his nuptial rights. But over the years he had mellowed. No more yelling, no more violence, no more workaholic. No more kids, of course. That had a lot to do with it. Now he got up at 7:00, put in his eight hours, came home at 5:30, shoveled down dinner, and camped in front of the TV with a science-fiction paperback until 10:30 or 11:00, when they went to bed, and slept. He was mellow now. Perfectly mellow. And generous, too, now that he had some money to spare. She'd first suggested cosmetic surgery half-jokingly, certain he would veto the idea. But he'd surprised her:

“A complete overhaul? Sure. Why not?”

“Robert, you're not serious! It would cost a mint.”

Razor poised in his hand, ready to slide across his lathered face, he mocked: “There goes our trip to Europe! And your Mercedes!”

He lowered the razor, smiling. He was wearing nothing but a towel around his waist. With his frothy beard and grizzled chest, he looked like a Norse god. "If that's what you really want. . . ." He boldly stroked the razor across his left cheek, whistling, grinning at her inquisitive reflection in the mirror. "Actually, if I'd known that's all there was to it, I'd have had you on the operating table fifteen years ago."

"Ha! The truth comes out!"

"What truth?"

"That you think I looked *that* bad fifteen years ago."

"Not at all, Marsh." Another bold stroke, this time across his right cheek. "It was more like *twenty* years ago!"

He raised his big forearm, shielding his face as Marsha shoved him. She snatched the can of shaving cream and sprayed it in his face. He scooped her up, threw her over his shoulder, and toted her, laughing, squirming, into the bedroom where he flung her across the bed and plopped down beside her, pressing his frothy face against hers, the two of them laughing hysterically as he covered her cheeks with lathered kisses.

That had been the first time in what seemed ages that they had spontaneously frolicked. For those few precious moments wrestling with him on the bed she'd felt as if she really were falling in love again, as if there never had been a first time. And all of her sexual energy, past and present, expressed and repressed, culminated in a burst of passion that, for a very brief moment, as she spotted his face with kisses, wishing unguiltily that the bitter lather were whipped cream she could lick off of his face, his body — for a moment she thought fifty might be the apotheosis rather than the coffin of her womanhood. But that was as far as he'd gone, the kisses. He'd had to run — the football game; kick-off in twenty minutes.

"But what about Europe?" she asked as he relathered his face.

"Who needs Europe?" He set the razor on the wash basin, turned, and took her in his arms. "I'd rather pay a mint to make love to a renovated Marsha than look at some crumbling cathedral."

She saw that he intended the statement as a compliment, so she acknowledged it as such: "You're sweet, Bob. Thanks."

"Hey, don't thank me. I'm not the one who's going under the knife!"

The grandfather clock began sounding the hour, each haunting gong echoing through her head. Marsha wanted to lie down and sleep but knew she was not through. Not yet. She returned to the living room and once again took up the pen and pad of paper. Sherril. Her first, the last. The hardest.

Dearest Sherril,

They say an unbreakable bond exists between a mother & her daughters, especially her eldest, & I think I've always shared that relationship with you. Even as a little girl (somehow) you could always tell when things were going sour inside me. But for all your marvelous insights & visions, this time you missed the boat! No, I don't begrudge you another child. You know I've always wanted whatever would make you happy & it seems with Brian you've found happiness. Cozette, too, with Jerry. You both have

good faithful (if somewhat chauvinistic) husbands, & in this day and age that's really something. They're an endangered species. As for my returning to church, don't hold your breath. For you and Brian the church has worked out, so far. But you're both working together to make it work, & that makes all the difference. Your father & I never quite had that vision. During our courtship as he stood at the sacrament table, a husky crew-cut priest breaking the bread, we'd make eyes at each other. Our hearts & thoughts were in the back seat of his Ford, a far cry from Golgotha. But we saw potential in the church. We wanted you kids to have standards, avoid the mistakes we'd made. And the church seemed the best way.

No, I don't apologize for the way I'm living now, & I certainly don't expect you to. True, there was a time when I thought the church filled a major void in my life. When I was growing up in Salt Lake & everything we did was church this or church that, & everyone we met Brother X or Sister Y. But I'm not so sure anymore if it was the church or something else.

Marsha stopped, dissatisfied. She was evading what she really wanted to say. Talking about the Church, God's Church, it never came out right — ignoring the bad, spotlighting the good. Somehow she could never accurately express the ambivalence — the bad within the good. Mostly good. Good, she thought, for imperfect people in a theoretically perfect system. Bad for some. For women. Some women. But when she tried to communicate this, even to herself, it came out as just so much schizophrenia. Like her love-hate relationship with Robert. It was real — volatile, passionate, sometimes even violent. But where in the Church of the Peacemaker is there room for hate? Even within love? And where in the Church of a perfect God a place for imperfections? Sherril would accept none.

I was thinking the other day about you kids, how as a (much younger) mother watching you laughing on the rides at Disneyland or riding your rafts at the beach I always got a bigger kick out of it than you did. So maybe this is the real Fountain of Youth — God bless your children & grandchildren!

Did I tell you about my visiting teachers? Yes, apparently my name still hasn't been blotted off the records because they're still dropping by to deliver their monthly message. Don't worry, I'm civil to them, if opinionated. Sister Williams is about my age. A big heavy-set woman who looks like a veteran from the hand cart company. Stoic, hard-nosed pioneer look. Spiritually tough as nails. Her companion is a sweet young girl about 20 with her faith and figure still intact & a 6 month old baby. One of their monthly messages was on resisting the ways of the world, & Sister Williams used birth control as an example of how the world's standards differ from ours. I disagreed of course flat out. It really threw Sister Williams for a loop when Sister Mitchell started asking me about different kinds of b.c. "Well, Sister Mitchell, we'd better be going. We've got another appointment with Sister Quiner." Why some people want to keep you young girls in ignorance is beyond me.

The year before, when Sister Williams had a different companion, they had caught Marsha at a bad time, when things — no, nothing in particular, just "things," the cumulative chore of being female mother wife homemaker — had dog-piled on her. The sisters had caught her at her worst, and she had spilled everything.

"Me. I'm losing me. ME! It's like . . . I . . . I can't explain it."

“Have you prayed, Sister Fletcher?” was their counsel. “Have you confided in your Father in Heaven?”

Sniffing, she shook her head and promised to try. But later, alone, couldn't — couldn't even try — because her problem seemed so intangibly female that only a woman could begin to understand. For there was no appropriate analogy to it, her cumulative grief. And a man, because he is a man, regardless of the extent of his power knowledge and compassion, even a glorified, a deified man. . . .

Believe it or not there are some things even God doesn't understand. Not entirely. Pardon the blasphemy but it's true. So what good does it do to scream out for recognition? Marsha Fletcher crying Job from the confines of her \$100,000 home. Who gives a hoot if your breasts are sagging to your knee caps? Vanity, saith the preacher. People are starving in Cambodia, be thankful you've got tits period. Besides, you know how I've always despised public grief — the long countenances of the fasters & billboard martyrs. Don't worry. I'm a tough old bird. It'll take more than a few bloated veins and cellulite sag to put me out to pasture.

She glared at the pad, her usually neat cursive gone haywire, oblivious to the ruled lines. No, it wasn't even the Church she was squaring off with anymore. This was an inequity not of any system or organization but of life itself, the life cycle. Not political or social or environmental or ecclesiastical, but biological. Established from the foundation of the world, the heavens. As old and everlasting as the priesthood she and her female compatriots were somehow denied.

I'd better sign off now. I've passed on enough happy thoughts for one day.

But she didn't even sign the letter before tearing it from the pad, wadding it into a ball, and hurling it across the room.

She sat there several moments, silent, allowing nothing into her mind but the gray fog of that morning. Then she got up and strolled into the kitchen. She was tired, she wanted to lie down, she wanted to sleep. She felt as if she were standing upright in a huge cradle, rocking and rocking, complacent in her warm ease, her eyelids slowly closing out the view. Then she was struggling to maintain the obscurity. But the image emerged. A blonde this time, a platinum penthouse blonde. A busty divorcee with a phony Texas drawl, squeezing his sagging biceps, handing him a drink, snuggling up cozily beside him on the sofa, purring into his ear: *You ah the most aggressive may-un I have evuh known . . . you ah moh aggressive than Mistuh Mean Joe Greene, or the entah Dallas Cowboy front lion. . . .*

Marsha turned to the window. The sunless horizon was glossy pink, an infection. A solitary pair of headlights drifted down the highway. At the far end of the Johnson's orange grove an empty ladder was leaning against a tree.

She stared across the valley, waiting for it to darken. There was a clammy silence, a nothingness in the air. Robert. Twenty-nine years she'd waited for the angel to outgrow the ogre. Now that it had, she wondered, who was this man she'd fought and loved and slept with over half her life? Robert the only

child growing up lonesome in L.A. Inventing invisible brothers and sisters to escort him through grade school. He'd wanted kids until he had them. Then sat on *his* tail, like his father, giving orders. Then took off. Went a-whoring, first in spirit, then body. Now both. Yet he'd always defended her. Beaten her to a pulp emotionally, but when the kids had talked back to her or at an office party when Russ Hardy gave her a bad time, he'd threatened them with his sledgehammer fists: "Don't you ever . . . ever . . . ever . . . !" Who was this alien who had locked himself in the bathroom secretly with the flute?

But now she felt nothing but anger. Resenting him. Resenting the age-old equation he had perpetuated: WOMAN=BODY. A woman's worth depreciating from the first time she unlocks her thighs and lets the world in. Yes, he did have his reasons. "But damn them, Robert! Damn your reasons!"

She whirled around and fled down the hall and into her bedroom. Whipping off her blouse and Levis, then panties and bra, she studied her body, tall and naked in the full-length mirror. Three rows of stitches, chapped with scabs, furrowed her lower abdomen. Her "tummy-tuck." These, Dr. Norman had assured her, would heal in a matter of weeks. Further down, the veins — the thick, rippling veins that, like the stretch marks, had grown larger and uglier with each pregnancy — these too were gone. Aside from the suture marks patterned at even intervals like rungs on a ladder along the length of her calves, and the little black nubs she had to avoid in shaving, her legs looked quite attractive, more thirty-five than forty-seven. Her legs had always been her strong point and, for a nostalgic moment, she admired them.

Then she focused on the upper half of her body, where her skin was beginning to sag. Not excessively. Not a grandmother's droop. But noticeably — a doughy, celluloid sagginess that nothing, not vitamin E or Scandia Slim 'n Trim or scalpels and sutures or even fasting and prayer could redeem.

"This," she muttered bitterly, glaring at the stitches and the scars and the invisible scars, recollecting the strippings and the shavings and the drugs, the anesthesia and starving for days at a time. "None of it — not one bit of it for you, Robert. But me. For me and me and no one else. . . ."

She studied her breasts for some time before the fingertips of her right hand began massaging, very slowly, in a circular motion, the circumference of her left breast. Cautiously, her fingertips inched inward, towards the nipple, until about an inch short they stopped and pressed down firmly, two, three, four times, reassuring her of the lump that she'd let Dr. Norman examine, hoping that for once the odds would be in her favor. They were, on paper. But she lost anyway. The biopsy proved positive. Malignant. "Unusual," Dr. Norman had said, "though your records do indicate a history of breast cancer in your family. . . ." Then he very clinically reviewed her options: extended radical, halsted radical, modified radical, total. . . . But she wasn't listening. She was staring outside at the hazy blue sky, wishing it were an ocean she could drive into, wishing she could swim forever down to its pure black bottom.

"I'd like a second opinion."

"That's only reasonable."

Second opinion ditto the first.

“Let me think about it.”

“Of course, Mrs. Fletcher.”

“I’d prefer to tell my husband myself.”

“Of course.”

Staring at her naked self in the mirror, Marsha fingered the lump, pinching it several times — gently, curiously at first, like a scientist, probing. Then she began squeezing, harder and harder, wanting to gouge, to rip. Dr. Carlyle, the young plastic surgeon, had assured her with such beaming optimism that reconstructive surgery could provide her with a “very cosmetically attractive breast” — a breast, his eyes said as he showed her some before-after photos, much nicer than that shriveled, sagging sack you’ve got now. . . .

Then she had lied to herself. She had told herself there were alternatives; there were more important things than breasts, sex, self-esteem, womanhood.

Marsha squeezed the lump harder, harder, until the pain stung her eyes and her naked image melted on the mirror. Quickly, recklessly, she threw on her blouse and levis and hurried down the hall and into the kitchen, darkened with dusk. Laughing and weeping, she took the car keys from the rack above the counter and headed out the front door, pausing just outside to inhale the chilly night air. She glared up at the half-face of the moon, scarred, pitted, nimbused. She muttered defiantly, “I’m a tough old bird . . . I’m a tough. . . .”

Minutes later she was speeding down the Via de Dios Highway, heading towards the sea.

Repapering the Kitchen

Randall L. Hall

We probe and scrape and peel away the faded
Multicolored layers of a lifetime,
Like Schliemann
(Who? Grandmother asks)
Burrowing the many-layered Troy
Yearning for a reenactment from another time,
Such as comes to her like breathing.

There are fifty years and six or seven layers here :

Some full white flowers spangling a deep, yet muted pink
That even I recall

An ivory vase of tiny purple blossoms
Clustered there since just before the war

A simple cup and saucer and a china plate
Upon a background pastel blue.

As each new pattern breaks upon the light
The visions bud and bloom for her, and shimmer
Out, away
To bud and bloom and shimmer
Into bud and bloom

As she interprets to our blindness,
In anecdote and tale,
The echoed genealogies that linger here
Not far from flesh and blood.

Who can tell what time it is
In that one corner of the room
Where she sits in silence now
And who or what she sees outside the window
Or in the pale reflection hovering in the glass?

RANDALL L. HALL lives in Orem, Utah. A volume of his poetry, Mosaic, was published by the Utah State Poetry Society in 1979. His first novel, Cory Davidson, is scheduled for release by Ensign Productions in August 1983.

A Survey of Current Literature

Stephen W. Stathis

IF WE ARE TO BELIEVE what we see before us, we must conclude that authors interested in writing and selling books about Mormonism have boundless opportunities. Although most of the newly released volumes are modest works with little likelihood of becoming classics, they do in most instances offer pleasant, inspirational, and often interesting reading. What they do not do, or even propose to do, by and large, is consciously seek to broaden the reader's horizons or understanding.

While I readily recognize that each of us has widely diverse motivations and interests, we should still be able occasionally to share a truly exhilarating literary experience which transcends these differences. Those who are interested in this type of sensation should see Gene Session's *Mormon Thunder: A Documentary History of Jedediah Grant*, Mary Bradford's edition of women's essays, *Mormon Women Speak*, and Juanita Brooks's autobiography, *Quicksand and Cactus*.

The rest of us (myself included), who tend at times to be less demanding, will find among the accompanying selections several well-written worthy of attention. However — buyer beware — it is important to recognize them for what they are and not what their respective authors claim or believe they might be.

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Maverick Fiction

The Canyons of Grace by Levi S. Peterson. Illinois Short Fiction Series. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 135 pp., \$11.95 hardbound; \$4.95 paperbound.

Reviewed by Bruce W. Jorgensen who holds advanced degrees from Cornell and teaches literature and imaginative writing at BYU.

FOR ONCE THE LANGUAGE of bookhype might ring true: the publication of Levi Peterson's *Canyons of Grace* as one of the four volumes this year in the Illinois Short Fiction Series can be called "a literary event." Maybe not in the larger context of American writing and publishing, but at least in Mormondom. For one thing, *Canyons of Grace* is the first collection of stories by a Mormon writer to be published outside the Mormon circuit in a long time — if memory serves, since Virginia Sorensen's nostalgic *Where Nothing Is Long Ago* in the early sixties. For another, and more significantly, Levi Peterson's stories may be the first Mormon fiction in this generation to respond to Karl Keller's urging in his essay on "The Example of Flannery O'Connor" (*DIALOGUE* 9 [Winter 1974]: 62–71), that Mormon writers seriously grapple with Mormon theology in their fiction.

Before saying what I mean by that, a caveat or two. None of these six stories is exactly *Ensign* material (all but one has previously been published, either inside or outside the Mormon circuit, in *DIALOGUE* and *Sunstone*, in *Denver Quarterly* and *Ascent*), and some of their language and subject matter (fornication, homosexual guilt, abortion, blood atonement) will offend some Mormon readers.

Levi Peterson is a maverick. This shows obviously in the language of all but one of the stories' titles: "The Confessions of Augustine," "Trinity," "Road to Damascus," "The Shriveprice," "The Christianizing of Coburn Heights," "The Canyons of Grace." Such references beyond Mormonism to a larger Christian context may signify that the writer chooses, in Juanita Brooks's phrase, to "ride the edge of the herd," and perhaps this authorial positioning shows nowhere more trenchantly than in Peterson's use of Mormon ideas, Mormon theology. The idea that centrally engages his fictive imagination is one promulgated in the "King Follett Sermon" — that both matter and each human intelligence are as "self-existent" as God and hence qualify or limit God's omnipotence.

Fremont Dunham, the narrator-protagonist of "The Confessions of Augustine," puts it this way: "It is inchoate matter that troubles me. It is coeval with God. It does not owe its being to Him. It has an obduracy, an impulse of its own, a will to be other than what God wills." (p. 9) To orthodox Christianity, a profoundly heretical idea, and hardly less troubling to some states of mind in Mormondom. But to Fremont Dunham (and to the writer behind him) a sort of agonizing desideratum: "How do I otherwise account for myself at eighteen?" (p. 9) (I should say here that, to me, one of Levi Peterson's main achievements in the collection, and particularly in this story, is the creation of a narrative voice that can carry such discursive material without making it sound like the intrusive "explainer" that so often has marred Mormon fiction. Here, because Fremont Dunham *needs* such ideas

to account for himself, the ideas become not footnotes but part of the story's action.)

For one summer, logging in the Arizona mountains and loving a rancher's daughter, Fremont Dunham tries to ally himself with the benign wilderness of an earth that "seemed immense and absolutely free" (p. 14). But the accidental death of a coworker brings God down on Fremont with crushing force: "I perceived the mountains were not wild and vacant; I knew God was everywhere. I . . . stood paralyzed with surging terror" (p. 15). So even before he begins to make love with Annie, his wilderness has been invaded by divine judgment, and "for many weeks I existed in . . . a harrowing cycle of penance and fornication" (p. 20).

Finally, when he has decided to marry Annie he knows, "without warning or premonition," that he does not love her (p. 21). We can read this "revelation" several ways at once: unconscious self-serving rationalization (he doesn't want to marry an "impure" girl), curiously upside-down "return of the repressed" (not the inchoate id but the tyrannically ordered superego coming back with a clobbering vengeance), or the actual severe operation of grace. (That Fremont takes it the third way will seem to some readers to argue that the second reading is true; we seem caught in a circle here.) In any case, for Fremont, God has hung him "on a trellis of His own choosing" to "prune away that part" of him that loves Annie (p. 26). That this language hints castration perhaps suggests how violent the image of God may be in some corners of the Mormon psyche. That Fremont Dunham is telling his story twenty-four years after the fact and still finds comfort in knowing that "somewhere on the face of this broad earth" Annie and the son he made with her "are still alive," (p. 26) may imply how obdurate is the wilderness God rules.

All the stories in *Canyons of Grace* might be read as playing variations on either that tension between wildness and divine order (Jacob 5 also employs it in

the Book of Mormon) or that religious psychology. "The Shriveprice" begins abruptly: "Darrow's faith had returned to him without warning or solicitation" (p. 57) (another of Peterson's narrative virtues is in the clarity and sureness with which he establishes a story's central conflict) and goes on to show how Darrow Sevey, past seventy, finds his way, through conflicting and inconclusive evidences from his family's history, to the chilling solace of a conviction of his own need for blood atonement: "This very body, this rich hoard of pain, was his shriveprice, a sufficient collateral to buy off wrath, to unbond him from damnation. There was but a single technicality: his self-destruction must be a rite, a ceremony. It would have to proceed with propriety and order." (p. 78)

A similar, if less overtly violent, motion of the soul informs "Road to Damascus," in which Paul, a farmer married to a pious Mormon woman, Regina, goes to visit an old prospecting partner, Sam, after another partner, Christopher, has been lost and presumed dead in a deep fissure. Regina wants Paul to join the Church and packs her Book of Mormon with his provision; Sam wants Paul to go to Alaska because a farm has you "tied and thrown and ready for the branding iron and castrating knife" (p. 48). Paul keeps having visions of his dead mother that merge with Regina; and alone and deep in the mine where Christopher was lost he encounters either God or Death: "You have always known me, haven't you, Paul? . . . No one escapes me, do they, Paul? . . . It will not be long and I will come for you." (p. 51) To me the story seems too "managed" in its allusive references and symbols (it has a baptism and a dove, too), but this may simply reflect my preference for stories that are realistic rather than allegorical.

"Trinity" dissatisfies me in similar ways and probably for the same reason: it seems static and allegorical, rather like those tableaux or processions Hawthorne composed when he could not find a credible action to incorporate in his insights. The

story poses Mormon missionaries, Jamie Bolander and Laura Greenalgh, the first agonizing over his homosexual impulses, the second stark mad after aborting a fetus that she believes was the son of God, before a painting entitled *Trinity* which represents the Father holding “the limp, dangling body of the crucified Son” while “over them hovered the Dove” (p. 30).

In some ways, Jamie and Laura seem very real, but the setting of their encounter, their unrealistically stylized dialogue, and especially Laura’s calling herself Mary and him Joseph, turn our attention away from them toward what they signify. The mode here seems clearly didactic rather than mimetic. Still, what the story offers to teach is a departure, a breakthrough from the implicit theology of the other stories I’ve mentioned so far, from that wrathful, punishing God to something more concordant with another side of Mormon theology:

On the face of the Father there was no rancor, no threat, no vengeance. A colossal grief, galaxies wide, was wrung out upon the brow and cheeks of the very Father, the Sovereign of Infinity, the Everlasting, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. God the Sufferer. An unfamiliar comfort formed in Jamie’s heart. In the root of things, the suffering of the innocent was demanded, but at least they wept together, the three of them: Joseph, Mary, and the Father. (p. 34)

One of the most successful stories in the book, “The Christianizing of Coburn Heights,” once again pits a sort of wilderness against a sort of order and its mode shifts toward satiric comedy. Here it’s Stake President Sherman Colligan and Bishop Arthur Bosen, two good-hearted low-level church managers, versus Rendella Kranpitz, a deformed, retarded, fanatical, possibly mad heirless from the wilds of Southern Utah who owns a house in a prosperous east bench Salt Lake stake. To Sherman, Rendella will declare things like, “Some of the sermons that get preached in the fifth ward would puke a turkey” (p. 81). You can sort of guess from that how

things might go as Sherman valiantly strives, “by a bold application of Gospel principles,” “firmness and love,” to handle this administrative problem (pp. 90–91). This is easily the best comic Mormon short story I’ve ever read, and I know one bishop who says the same. Let’s hope Levi Peterson works this vein farther.

Another of the strongest stories in the collection is its title piece, “The Canyons of Grace,” which reprises the themes of “The Confessions of Augustine” in a different key and with a different resolution. Like Fremont Dunham, Arabella Gurney begins suspended between “God’s will” as she has been taught it by parents and church, and her own “unrelenting, desperate compulsion to persist in her freedom—to the point of perdition, if necessary” (p. 109). Two characters who help her work out the dialectic of this tension are Franklin, her colleague in a University of Utah archeological dig, and Reuben Millring, the prophet of God’s “authentic order” (p. 128), whose splinter group hides in one of the canyons; but the main force in the story is wilderness itself. It is after “the holy wild told her she was free . . . completely, . . . inviolably herself” that she makes love with Franklin, “not doubt[ing] her damnation” but choosing for the moment “to exult in her courage, to relish the taste of her daring” (p. 120).

Arabella has few illusions about wilderness: “if wilderness is the ultimate reality I will die forever” (p. 118). For her that possibility is a “horror,” so “there has to be a God. No one else can save me, though the price He asks is my integrity” (p. 119). If she’s right about her integrity, knows what it actually is (and one can’t help recalling Flannery O’Connor’s note that the integrity of Hazel Motes, the Christian *malgre lui* of her novel *Wise Blood*, lies precisely in his being unable finally to escape the God who pursues him), Arabella has put the dilemma of salvation about as acutely as it can be.

When Reuben’s henchmen abduct Arabella, the story takes another turn. She

confesses to Reuben, "I hate God," and pleads, "Help me" (p. 128). He declares her already his ninth wife and in effect rapes her. During this act she sees in his face "the face of God" — the angry, punishing patriarchal God she has always feared and rebelled against (p. 130). Awakened by ugly dreams near dawn, she tries to escape; and when Reuben tries to stop her, she cracks his skull with a heavy pitcher and kills him.

This act eventually sets her free: as she flees through the desert, her memory of "Reuben's inert, extinguished body persuade[s] her" that "God was dead. He did not exist. He was a mere fantasy, a domestication by which the human mind attempted to shelter itself against the terror of annihilation. . . . Death was forever" (p. 133). As the following morning spreads across the wilderness, Arabella finds herself "alive, and the universe . . . holy"; "an ephemeral predator upon a minor planet, she went forward free and filled with grace" (p. 135).

Here is not the place to work out the implications of this story (or of the others), but Mormons who read "The Canyons of Grace" didactically, I suspect, will perforce

find it heretical. Arabella is indeed a heretic in her rejection of the patriarchal God and her acceptance of wildness and annihilation; but her story can be read mimetically, not as advocating either acceptance or rejection of Mormon theology but as using it to envision the world and one possible curve that human thought, feeling, and action may trace in the world. To some degree, all the stories in *The Canyons of Grace* are "extreme," their characters "atypical": rather than mirroring the bland surfaces of ordinary Mormon experience, and not at all interested in replicating the happily adjusted active mannequins of church PR, these stories refract some of the potent and threatening shapes of our submerged psychological and spiritual tensions; they utter — make outward — things we might rather not know, and that makes them dangerous. But this is to say that, in R. P. Blackmur's formulation echoed some years ago by Wayne Carver (DIALOGUE 4 [Autumn 1969]: 65–73), they enact some of "the true business of literature" by reminding "the powers that be . . . of the turbulence they have to control." We may need, collectively and privately, this disquieting voice.

One Flawed View for Another

When Bad Things Happen to Good People by Rabbi Harold S. Kushner (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 149 pp., \$10.95.

Reviewed by Francine R. Bennion, Relief Society president of Brigham Young University Eleventh Stake.

A SILO COLLAPSED and buried my brother-in-law under tons of grain. At his funeral, a speaker offered comfort by saying that God "had need of Leon on the other side." One of Leon's young children whispered to me, "But I need him too."

A four-year-old could see problems

with the speaker's attempt to comfort the family by justifying their loss. Rabbi Harold S. Kushner analyzes what's wrong with this and a good many other traditional Jewish and Christian "comforts" — most of which will ring familiar to LDS ears, professed differences in theology notwithstanding: God is trying to teach you a lesson. God is testing you. God punishes those he loves. It's probably for the best. It could be a lot worse. God gives people what they deserve. Did you pray? Kushner's intent in *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* is to express empathy and compassion and help those good people make sense of their world

and their God when the bad things happen.

Though he declares repeatedly that any Job needs sympathy and compassion more than lessons in theology, his book is largely a nonacademic illustrated theological treatise. He can't keep theology out of comfort any more than most of us can. What we feel isn't divorced from what we believe.

Readers who've suffered well-meaning but hurtful advisers can find some solace in Kushner's demolition of the standard clichés and also in some reasonable alternatives he offers: for example, God doesn't cause everything that happens; people have choices about how they handle hurt; the natural world usually operates according to orderly laws; we can help each other and love each other.

However, Kushner's good ideas and insights are enmeshed with generalizations, contradictions, and assumptions which color the comfort he offers. His reasoning is sometimes as faulty as that which he decries. For example, he seems to take psychological theory as fact and generalizes about all people from his own experience: "Whenever bad things happen to good people . . . there will almost certainly be feelings of anger. It seems to be instinctive to become angry when we are hurt" (p. 104). Freudians will be pleased with the reference to "instinct," but there are other psychologists who won't.

Kushner also lacks sophistication about the physical world: "The world is mostly an orderly, predictable place . . . but every now and then, things happen not contrary to the laws of nature but outside them" (p. 52). One of the examples he cites for support is the path of a hurricane, because meteorologists can't predict it with certainty. Our present ability to predict their paths is hardly a measure of whether hurricanes operate according to any laws.

Furthermore, Kushner contradicts himself. In one chapter he defends the idea of agency and its part in human experience: "The murder and the robbery . . . represent that aspect of reality which stands inde-

pendent of His will" (p. 55). But later he writes, "Fate, not God, sends us the problem," and, "What good is He, then? God makes people become doctors and nurses 'to try to make you feel better'" (p. 129). If fate makes a robber beat me, and God makes doctors and nurses choose to treat me (I thought money had at least something to do with it), where's the agency Kushner claims for any of us?

Kushner assumes that what he doesn't know with certainty can't be known with certainty: "Neither I nor any living person can know anything about the reality of that hope [life after death]" (p. 28). How much can he know about every living person?

I like many of Kushner's ideas but have little admiration for his ways of constructing a world view from them. He critiques well the arbitrary orderliness some people attach to all events by attributing them to God's specific intervention; however, the only alternative he sees is chaos — not the specific apparent randomness of colliding subatomic particles, but the more comprehensive randomness of life without meaning in a universe without order. In the process of rescuing God from those who claim to know exactly what he's doing in our painful Utopia, Kushner would have us see him as a well-meaning but imperfect comforter whom we must learn to "love and forgive despite His limitations" (p. 148) if we are to make comfortable sense of the painful game of dice we call *life*. I think there are better ways of seeing God and life, with and without personal revelation.

The book has been on the best-seller list for months, suggesting that many people still want answers to the questions Kushner addresses. Whether readers feel satisfied with his answers will depend largely upon their own contexts for reading them, and their own invincible viewpoints. LDS readers in general are likely to sit up a little straighter upon reading ideas such as, "Having created the animals and beasts, He says *to them*: 'Let us arrange for a new

kind of creature to emerge, a human being in *our* image, yours and Mine" (italics his, pp. 72-73). . . . They [Adam and Eve] must leave the garden and *no longer* eat the fruit of the Tree of Life" (italics mine, p. 73).

We all, as Paul said, see through a glass

darkly as yet. We find and then usually defend and try to propagate our own glimpses of truth and our own brands of comfort. In my view, Kushner has produced a world view as flawed as those which he quite admirably critiques.

Marxism and Mormonism

Marxism: An American Christian Perspective, by Arthur F. McGovern. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980, 330 pp., \$12.95

Reviewed by John R. Pottenger, a Ph.D. candidate in government and politics at the University of Maryland.

MOST MORMONS, in fact Christians in general, would avoid reading a book on Marxism. Any mutually acceptable alliance has always been scuttled by equally mutual suspicion between Marxists and Christians. Carrying on the tradition of the Marxist-Christian dialogues of the 1960s, Arthur F. McGovern analyzes possibilities for philosophical accommodation and describes Christian movements that claim to have successfully combined their biblical values with Marxist social analysis. Significantly for Mormons or mainstream Christians, McGovern demonstrates that atheism and materialism, traditionally the most offensive elements of Marxism for religious readers, are not necessary elements of Marxist socialism.

Like Adam Smith and James Madison, Marx realized that a special and possibly crucial relationship exists between the economic and political realms and that a proper understanding of this relationship is essential for effective problem-solving. Sophisticated social theories have since evolved which retain initial Marxian insights and receive scholarly recognition alongside those derived from such social thinkers as Max Weber and Sigmund Freud. Unlike Weber and Freud, most Christians have dogmatically asserted the

impossibility of a Marxist-Christian alliance. Nevertheless, social theories within the Marxist philosophical tradition have revealed invaluable insights into the origins of current political, economic, and social problems both in the United States and abroad.

The current economic depression in the United States and the burgeoning membership of the LDS Church in Latin America have brought increased awareness among Mormons of the severe problems of unemployment, poverty, and even political oppression. That Mormons should line up against Marxism in the historical antipathy shown by other Christian churches is unfortunate. We have thus cut ourselves off from much perceptive and scholarly research. McGovern's book suggests a possible resolution of this problem that could be very valuable to Mormons.

Although sympathetic to a Marxist-Christian dialogue, McGovern accepts and critiques the challenges posed by various Marxist claims and Christian attitudes. He deals quite effectively with the three greatest objections that Christians have to Marxism: atheism, materialism, and the stinging accuracy of most Marxist critiques of modern societies.

McGovern begins by presenting an overview of the evolution of Marx's thought and that of his intellectual heirs, focusing particular attention on atheism and materialism. Fortunately, he sketches the intellectual development of Marx's own thought without using esoteric jargon. He reveals crucial qualitative differences among Marx, Engels, and Lenin. For example, quite early Marx recognized that

the loss of individual freedom was the most important issue of modern times; thus, he examined the institutions of religion that dealt directly and openly with freedom of conscience. His assessment of religion, like that of Thomas Jefferson and other earlier observers, criticized the importance given to ecclesiastical authority and blind faith at the expense of individual freedom and reason.

However, as McGovern points out, the issue of religion ended up occupying only a secondary place in Marx's thought. "By the fall of 1843 Marx had come to realize that religion should not be the main focus of his criticism. Religion was only a symptom of what was wrong, not a basic cause" (p. 248). The source of the problem lay, he felt, in the material basis of society. Marx (and later Engels) determined that organized religion had historically supported the prevailing political and economic power, even though it was potentially viable as an agent of reform. (Even a superficial study of Mormon history would reveal how Joseph Smith attempted, to the point of martyrdom, to reconstitute religious institutions upon a prophetic and moral foundation.)

McGovern further documents how Engels, but not necessarily Marx, outlawed metaphysical questions, including theological inquiry, from scientific investigation. Influenced by the successes of the natural sciences in explaining physical reality, Engels focused strictly on the material aspect of society. He attempted to systematize Marx's thoughts on economics by providing scientific grounding for them. Although neither Marx nor Engels moved openly against religion, McGovern maintains that "a more hostile and militant atheism did, however, arise with Marxism, and Lenin bears much of the responsibility for its development" (p. 264). In short, McGovern concludes that atheism and materialism are not *essential* elements of Marxist socialism.

In the next section of the book, McGovern contrasts two major approaches — "orthodox Marxism" and "critical Marx-

ism." He shows clearly that the influence on Engels's systematizing of Marx's writing greatly influenced Lenin and those who have followed Lenin in this tradition. Unfortunately, by comparison, his treatment of "unorthodox" variations of contemporary Marxism, such as critical theory, is less thorough. He focuses (briefly) on Jurgen Habermas and Herbert Marcuse, neglecting such crucial figures as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Erich Fromm. Yet despite his cursory treatment of critical theory, McGovern successfully demonstrates both the variety and the disparity among contemporary Marxist thinkers.

In discussing both the dynamics and the adverse effects of capitalism from a Marxist perspective, McGovern demonstrates that other approaches often merely describe social problems and thus lack sufficient explanatory power. Alternatively, "Marxists have long argued that there are *structural* reasons for these failures, that inequality, oppression, powerlessness, and false values are natural consequences of the very logic of the capitalist system" (p. 135).

Perhaps one of the most valuable insights of Marxist social analysis reveals not only the interrelatedness of such social problems as unemployment and capital accumulation, but also the *logic* that maintains and exacerbates these problems. "Expansion and profit-maximization are not simply a consequence of the greed of individual capitalists; they flow from the very logic of the system itself" (p. 137).

Certain similarities to early Mormon experiences come to mind as McGovern analyzes Catholic and Protestant developments that, criticizing capitalism, have experimented with communitarian societies. At the same time, like Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and George Q. Cannon, Catholic leaders from Leo XIII to Paul VI have emphasized the moral dimension of private property. McGovern points out that certain Christian thinkers have deplored the lack of a concept of stewardship in their critiques of laissez-faire economics, an aspect of economic theory of great interest to Mormons.

Mormon experiences during the Nauvoo period and the "Americanization" of Utah demonstrate the perplexing problems of reconciling individual moral responsibility with social obligation. The history of Christianity itself documents the endless search for conclusive guidance on political ethics. While no consensus exists among Christians on the appropriate use of violence, McGovern also demonstrates that political violence is not a necessary aspect of Marxist social analysis. McGovern's discussions while not offering definitive ethical solutions to contemporary social problems, do provide an adequate starting point for serious moral reflection.

McGovern accurately captures the essence of "liberation theology" and other Latin American movements which claim to embody a successful Marxist-Christian alliance. Theologians of liberation, for example invoke scriptural authority to support their call for liberating the poor and oppressed. Yet they note the lack of analytical perspectives in the scriptures which would help them assess the origins of and the solutions to modern social problems. Hence they combine Marxist social analysis with basic Christian values. McGovern effectively critiques this alliance.

The distinction between Marxist social

analysis and Communist ideology is crucial for McGovern, a distinction effectively displayed throughout the book. As a faithful Christian, he finds a holistic social analysis beneficial in the pursuit of a more just society, hence the necessity for public policies which lead to a form of "democratic socialism." (cf. early Mormon attempts to establish a "United Order.")

In conclusion, *Marxism: An American Christian Perspective* offers generally well-thought out and fairly effective arguments, only a small number of which have been alluded to above. At the very least, McGovern's work provides an introduction to Marxist thought from Marx to the present, to the major issues confronting a successful Marxist-Christian dialogue, to recent Marxist-Christian alliances in Latin America, and to the possibility that Christians could employ Marxist social analysis in the United States.

The perceptive Mormon reader may recognize that contemporary Marxist analyses of industrial and developing societies resemble those of nineteenth-century Mormon assessments of American society. Hence a ground of commonality may exist between Marxists and Mormons as both become aware of and struggle with modern problems of social injustice.

Cultural Reflections

The Culture of Narcissism by Christopher Lasch, New York, New York: WW Norton and Company, Inc., 1978, 268 pp., \$11.95.

Reviewed by L. Marlene Payne, a child psychiatrist practicing in Virginia.

THE CULTURE OF NARCISSISM is the product of an American historian who has borrowed a psychiatric syndrome to examine issues and to synthesize a picture of our culture. Narcissism, an ancient term with roots in Green mythology, can trace its current psychiatric significance to Freud who distin-

guished the primary, healthy narcissism of the newborn from the secondary, pathological narcissism of those whose earliest relationships had gone awry. Recent psychiatric theorists, most prominently Heinz Kohut, have greatly expanded our understanding of the narcissistic personality, a personality produced in a climate of indulgence combined with faulty empathic responses to the child's emotional needs. The child, highly valued as an extension of the parent, may be used to bolster the parents' self-esteem but is not valued for himself. This results in a person who has both low self-esteem

and a sense of superiority, one who idealizes some people while devaluing others. Relationships are shallow; the person is self-absorbed; life is impoverished because nothing beyond oneself seems worth one's interest. There is a sense of inner emptiness, depression, and anxiety. This narcissistic personality ranges from severely impaired to relatively healthy.

Lasch sees our current society as intensely narcissistic. Narcissism becomes the mode of success in the business world as the corporate executive exchanges the tools of concrete achievement for a successful image and the ability to manipulate the feelings of others. The media has made the public intensely aware of the image of success, of celebrity (i.e., visibility) rather than fame through personal achievement or character traits. In the theater, themes of emptiness and absurdity have replaced earlier "neurotically" conflicting themes of great drama. Politics has also become a spectacle. In sports, cooperation and loyalty among team members and competition against rivals has been replaced by celebrity noncompetitiveness. It is a narcissistic trait to avoid competition and to avoid realistic appraisal of one's abilities in favor of fantasied greatness.

Lasch claims that education has also become contaminated by narcissism as students avoid the difficulty of solid academic training for a potpourri of courses focusing instead on "self-discovery" and self-absorption. Teachers abdicate the role of authority figures to avoid antagonizing students. The result is an alarming "new illiteracy" in which youths prefer the easy entertainment of the media to the struggle of the learning process.

The collapse of school authority is paralleled at home as society assumes family functions in an ever-widening arena. For example, juvenile courts have assumed the right to judge families and take over their functions with children. Lasch feels that child and family therapy and books by experts have made parents less confident. The absence of fathers through divorce or work has led to a collapse of paternal authority

and hence an impairment in the development of conscience. The relationship between the sexes has also been invaded by narcissism as people flee intimacy for casual sexual relationships. Because sex brings no emotional commitment and hence no hope for the future, divorce becomes the easy way out.

Final evidence is our culture's attitude toward aging. Wisdom and experience are devalued in favor of youth. The old should find value in life by vicariously enjoying the accomplishments of their children, but narcissistic people are unable to reach beyond themselves in that fashion. We behave like a culture "that believes it has no future."

The strength of these chapters lies in their historical perspective. Lasch gives a fascinating account of the historical development of each theme he elaborates. He values independence, hard work, loyalty to others, respect for the nuclear family, and the authority of parents — values consistent with LDS values. His theory is attractive not only because it brings coherence to many of the problems of contemporary life, but also because it also provides scapegoats: the villains of bureaucracy, the media, and the therapeutic community.

However, his repeated attacks on therapy display a marked lack of understanding of both the process and the goals of psychotherapy. He accuses psychotherapy of exposing the "innermost secrets of the psyche to medical scrutiny," thus encouraging "habits of anxious self-scrutiny . . . rooted in anxiety . . ." and exempting the patient "from critical judgment and . . . moral responsibility." I believe that successful psychotherapy leads not to increased self-absorption (not the same thing as introspection) but to improved understanding of oneself and mature, more caring relationships. An important result of therapy is the improved self-esteem that follows greater independence.

Lasch contends that narcissistic personality disorders are on the rise. Are they? A rise in narcissistic behavior may actually

mean that society is encouraging the expression and the use of narcissistic traits as a means of success (in business, politics and the media, as Lasch has claimed), thereby making these traits more apparent.

Lasch's villains are bureaucracy, the media and advertising, and therapeutic ideologies which rob the individual of initiative and competence, stimulate an insatiable craving for goods and thrills to fulfill an inner emptiness and invade our personal life as the media bombards us with anxiety-provoking news and as authority figures tell us how to regulate our most intimate relationships. True, the narcissistic personality is formed in the earliest years by one's parents, but it is a simplified view of humanity to think that a parent's capacity for empathy, acceptance, and spontaneous emotional warmth toward one's child could be completely shaped by such outside forces as child guidance books. The process of par-

enting has much less to do with education than with unconscious processes, particularly the identification with one's own parents. It may be true that corporate monoliths increase dependency in the population at large, but even if this is so, it is a long way from saying that they are at the root of an upwelling of narcissistic personality disorders. The point is that it is very difficult to assess and validate causality for something so complex as changing patterns of society.

If one bypasses the question of childhood etiology—the origin of narcissism—and accepts the finding that there is increased expression and acceptance of narcissistic behavior in our society, then one can value this work as an excellent attempt to help us see ourselves and our culture. It reminds the reader to safeguard proper values, to analyze and change those forces in our society which contribute to the problem of narcissism.

Investigating the Investigation

Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses, by Richard Lloyd Anderson. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1981, xv+206 pp. illus.

Reviewed by William D. Russell, chairperson, Division of Social Sciences at Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa.

WITH OVER-GENEROUS PORTIONS of direct quotations, Richard Lloyd Anderson presents the reader with statements made by the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and statements made by others affirming their good character and the sincerity of their testimony regarding the gold plates. It is thus encyclopedic in its documentation but there is so much repetition in the book that the public might have been better served by a journal article.

Despite his doctorates in history and law, Anderson writes not as a detached historian but as a man of faith, with deep reverence for the eleven witnesses. His argu-

ment is essentially this: the Three Witnesses and some of the Eight Witnesses became disaffected in the late 1830s and spent most or all of the remainder of their lives outside the Church, yet they reaffirmed their testimony regarding the Book of Mormon as long as they lived. Their credibility as witnesses is affirmed by evidence showing that they were well respected in their communities, even though those communities were anti-Mormon and their former Mormon connections were known. Anderson suggests it would have been in their self-interest to renounce their original testimony. Since they did not, he concludes that the miraculous events they attested to literally happened.

However, all he really demonstrates is that the witnesses were known by their non-Mormon neighbors as honest men and that they reaffirmed their original position to the end. But it requires a "leap of faith" to reach the conclusion Anderson seems to

desire: that the plates actually existed and were the ancient record which the Book of Mormon claims to be. Alternative explanations — such as various psychological possibilities — are occasionally mentioned briefly but never seriously examined. For example, he fails to probe possible psychological implications of the fact that Cowdery, Whitmer, and Harris had an “overwhelming desire” (p. 52) to be among the three witnesses anticipated to meet the requirements of Deuteronomy 19:15. The hypnosis hypothesis is brushed aside because persons hypnotized “are normally aware of entering such a process” (p. 188). But he does not deal with the possibility that they were not aware they were hypnotized.

All of the departing witnesses had nearly a decade of active membership before leaving the Church. This gave them plenty of time to retell their story on so many occasions to so many people that the testimony would have been embedded in their minds and they would not likely change their story later. Anderson makes much of their reputation for honesty, but the witnesses could hardly fail to realize that to renounce their testimony would damage their credibility. Hiram Page recognized it would be foolish not to stick by his story: “As to the Book of Mormon, it would be doing injustice to myself, and to the work of God of the last days, to say that I could know a thing to be true in 1830, and know the same thing to be false in 1847” (p. 129). Thus I cannot agree with Anderson that it was contrary to their self-interest — once outside the Church — for them to stick by their story (p. 83). From the evidence Anderson gives us it appears they acted in their best interests when outside the Church: they were not inclined to create opportunities to affirm their testimony, but when asked by others they reaffirmed the position they had been publically committed to for many years.

With regard to Cowdery, Anderson dismisses the possibility of fraud because such an explanation is supposedly inconsistent with his reputation as a “responsible attor-

ney and public servant” (p. 53). But many men of honest reputation have committed fraud. The witnesses’ reputation for honesty is supposed to convince us of the truth of their testimony, but a local lawyer who was a politician involved in a scandal is a source Anderson uses to support Cowdery’s trustworthiness (p. 42). Another evidence of Cowdery’s public good reputation is his narrow loss in a political campaign in which he was attacked for his Mormon background (p. 44). The conclusion is that he must have been well respected to have run so close to the winner. But we are not given the information we need to know whether Cowdery really ran well. What was his party’s strength in the district? Was it an office a Democrat should be expected to win? Did Oliver run ahead of or behind his colleagues on the Democratic ticket? And how did Cowdery respond to those who criticized his Mormon past? Anderson says Cowdery maintained his testimony throughout his life, but he gives us no evidence that he affirmed his testimony during the years he spent as a lawyer-politician outside the fellowship of the Church.

As is characteristic of the “faithful historian,” sources that support Anderson’s thesis are given great weight while those that don’t are explained away. For instance, he too easily brushes aside three troublesome sources without footnoting them or giving the reader sufficient information on the circumstances of each to make a judgment (pp. 57–61). Without footnotes the curious reader will find it difficult to pursue the matter.

The sources Anderson gives greatest credence to are the sources that support the faith. Regrettably, he does not analyze possible bias in these sources. Statements by family members are relied upon a great deal and are deemed excellent sources because family members knew the participants well. But is there no problem of bias? Anderson relies on George Q. Cannon, who “had a remarkable intellect and a great capacity for accurate detail in his personal writing” (p. 60). This is the author who,

in his biography of Joseph Smith in 1888, admitted the “paltry things” were left out of his account of “men of God . . . pure and holy.” (See Marvin S. Hill, “The Historiography of Mormonism,” *Church History*, Dec. 1959, p. 420).

In his zeal for what he regards as the truth, Anderson makes such questionable statements as: “All scriptures promise the Spirit’s seal to those who sincerely hear, reflect, and pray” (p. 186). “Prophets independently substantiate other prophets” (pp. 2–3). “The blunt condemnation of current religions reported by Joseph Smith is a profound mark of credibility when read by the light of past prophets” (p. 2). “The average Latter-day Saint who asked Martin Harris about his testimony was not a naive believer who openly or subtly asked for mere confirmation” (p. 117). “If this vision was real to [Cowdery], there is a burden upon every informed person to face the great probability that the Latter-day Saints have indeed received modern revelation” (p. 53). (But we have no way of knowing whether the vision was real; and even if we did, Cowdery’s vision doesn’t prove that revelation occurred.) We are told that “early Christians were ‘of one heart and of one soul’ (Acts 4:32)” despite Paul’s fiery rebuttals of Peter’s position in Galatians. And finally, it is difficult to understand how Anderson can know that Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer had the emotional and intellectual capacity to know whether they had been deceived (pp. 53, 90).

Overstatements abound, such as: “Martin Harris was not surpassed in doubt by Thomas nor in absolute assurance by any apostle” (p. 107). Harris’s attitude toward church leaders at the time of his disaffection was “obviously immature” (p. 111). “Through the miracle of modern communication, [David Whitmer’s] testimony now transcends a community and confronts a world” (p. 90). Cowdery’s first missionary journey is “as spectacular as any of the apostle Paul” (p. 54). Regarding the testimony of the Three Witnesses: “nothing short of biblical Christianity furnishes such

a concrete statement of supernatural reality” (p. 53) and “no testimony of direct revelation in the world’s history is better documented than the testimony of the Book of Mormon witnesses” (p. 79).

Some statements are simply irrelevant pieties: “The Bible defender can be the offender, for in jealously guarding his limited collection of prophets, he often opposes more revelation with a few stock quotes” (p. 187). Regarding the witnesses who left the Church: “This is not to justify their very real rebellion against priesthood authority” (p. 128). Cowdery, absent from the church for a decade, would probably not have known some “important things revealed in his absence” (p. 185). Similarly, David Whitmer’s rejection of later Mormon doctrinal developments is described as “not advancing beyond the first revelations” (p. 167). Orthodox Mormons regard the later doctrinal developments as improvements. Whitmer, certainly, did not.

We learn that Martin Harris changed his religious position eight times during his disaffection from the Church, but every affiliation was with some Mormon group (p. 111). Then in the same paragraph Anderson contradicts himself by saying that Harris was bound by no Mormon ties during this period.

Perhaps one should not expect that a book about the witnesses to the Book of Mormon published by Deseret Book Company would be anything other than an attempt to strengthen the reader’s faith in the Book of Mormon. This book will be convincing to those already certain that the gold plates actually existed and that the eleven witnesses saw them. And even the detached reader will probably be convinced by Anderson’s research that the witnesses were honest men who sincerely believed their signed testimony and probably stuck by their story as long as they lived. But Anderson is really trying to have us conclude more than this. He would have the reader be convinced that because these men were honest and reaffirmed their testimony when asked, they actually saw and handled

plates which contained the records of an ancient people. I believe that Anderson — like the eleven witnesses — is an honest and sincere man when he writes: “After years of working with their lives and their words, I am deeply convinced that their printed testimonies must be taken at face value”

(p. xii). But I don’t believe that his research *by itself* requires this conclusion. As he admits, “spiritual truths must be spiritually verified” (p. 82). Believers must make a “leap of faith,” apprehending with their “spiritual eyes” rather than their “natural eyes.”

A Taste of Southern Utah

Quicksand and Cactus, by Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City, Utah: Howe Brothers Publishers, 1982), 342 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by Richard W. Sadler, professor of history at Weber State College.

IN A LETTER TO Bernard DeVoto dated 5 August 1944, Dale Morgan described a manuscript which would be published thirty-eight years later in 1982 as *Quicksand and Cactus*. Morgan, who had become a particularly good friend, confidant, and advisor to Juanita Brooks, author of the as-yet-unpublished book, explained,

On the one hand it is a narrative of her own life — born into a Mormon family on the southern frontier, grandchild of the upstanding polygamists she described in Harper’s ten years ago; of life in Bunkerville (described to some extent in Harper’s three years ago); the values the family and the community lived by; the relations with outsiders — and finally, and most of all, Juanita’s own story, growing up in this environment, going out for a schooling, and finally coming back to make her home in the Dixie country . . . I feel that it is a rich and heart-warming and lively and colorful book. But I think that it is a book that no one can read without a renewed sense of the worth of human living, and it is at the same time a book to be read with delight. (p. 342)

This volume, the first half of Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher Brooks’s autobiography, is a warm introduction to those who have not met Juanita, and it is pleasant reunion for those who have. It is colorful, humorous, suspenseful, entertaining, and well-written, but most of all, like Juanita, it is honest, unassuming, and straightforward. It is not

meant to be a scholarly, well-documented history of life on the southern Mormon frontier. Instead it is the personal narrative of a young girl’s exciting, eye-opening, and sometimes sorrowful passage to womanhood. That journey begins in Bunkerville, Nevada, and ends in St. George, Utah, with numerous stops in between, including Berkeley, Moapa, Brigham Young University, the Mountain Meadows, and New York City.

The reader is rapidly introduced to Bunkerville-eze, language of this frontier, and to the flesh and blood characters who inhabited this eastern Nevada community. The closeness of the Mormon families and their reliance on each other and the Church is made most apparent. Aunt Maria, the midwife, had a standard fee of three dollars per baby which could be paid in cash or produce and this included a ten-day stay with the new mother and baby. The digging of a cistern and its importance to the community is the focus of one chapter, Juanita’s first visit to Moapa the subject of another. Visiting Moapa with its railroad, hotel, and strangers was a momentous occasion, made even more important by seeing a “colored” man for the first time and putting the electric light in the hotel room in the bureau drawer overnight because she knew no other method of turning it off.

In revealing her innermost thoughts and embarrassments to the reader, Juanita becomes both very human and very understandable. No one can read of the embarrassment she suffered during her first visit to St. George and the ice cream store without gaining insight into her capacity to

understand the human condition. The trip to St. George was for business and pleasure including the delivery of salt, attendance at the autumn quarterly conference, visiting relatives, and being exposed to the St. George Fair. The trip and all side-events took ten days. While at the fair, Juanita, not yet in her teens, decided to buy some ice cream with the dime and three nickels which were securely tied in the corner of her handkerchief:

To my right, on tall stools by a counter, three young ladies were sipping something out of tall goblets with straws. They were beautifully dressed, these girls, with sheer white blouses and dark skirts and high-heeled shoes. This almost stopped me, but gathering courage I started to walk right in. To my surprise, a little, funny-looking girl came forward to meet me, her hair braided, her red calico dress trimmed with white braid, her too-large stogie shoes—HORRORS!!! It was me myself in a full-length mirror coming to meet me! I was so embarrassed that I could hardly answer the clerk when she came to say, "May I help you?" . . . My day was ruined. Maybe my whole life was ruined. (pp. 96-97)

Her affection and closeness for her father, her two husbands, Ernest and Will, and her first son Ernie are spelled out throughout the narrative as well as her difficult relationship with her first mother-in-law, Mang.

Many threads are woven throughout the volume, including her deep love of people, her love for the land, and her acceptance of and her closeness to her heritage. Her relationship to animals, particularly her horses Selah and Flax and her dog Old Griz gives an idea of the closeness of frontier people to animals and their interdependence.

Second only to Juanita's own role, personality, and experience as a subject in the book is the impact and importance of the Mormon Church.

Much as we loved and respected our leaders, it was easy to see that many of our folk were a little jealous or resentful of the fact that the people of the north lived so much better than we and at less effort. And yet the Church was every-

thing to us. It was for the Church that we were all here; it was the Church that had drawn our parents far from all the far countries. Even the building of the ditch and the dam, the graveling of the sidewalks, the planting of cotton or cane had its inception in the Church, for ours was a temporal gospel as well as a spiritual one. (p. 112)

And in speaking of a particularly good preacher in Mormon circles on the southern frontier she wrote that many congregations would be willing to pay for his services but "within our own Church there would be no chance for an appointment for which he would be paid; he had not the right name, and his wife was not from one of the right families" (p. 204).

Although questioning constantly the Church and its people, she was one of them, and at home, and often expressed her feeling that her life was directed by the Lord. Thus she becomes a link between the rather closed communities of the southern frontier and those national figures dealing with Utah and the West—Dale Morgan, Bernard Devoto, Fawn Brodie, and Nels Anderson. She reveals a closeness with the people, the church, and the land, but has ongoing questions about polygamy, including the Indian plural wives of Jacob Hamblin who are not generally acknowledged in public and the rumors of blood at the Mountain Meadows which seem to surface and annoy those who know of it. She wonders why those in the south work so much harder and have less than those in the church in the north who seemed to live so much better. She writes of moments of divine direction and spiritual healing and yet notes that in seeking a cure for her husband Ernest, "the constant changing of clothes, the getting up and sitting down" (p. 238) at the St. George Temple were not the answer to his illness as he tired easily. Some parts of the ceremony seemed medieval to her.

Juanita wrote much of this volume more than forty years ago, and she gives glimpses of how she began to gather materials and to write her earliest pieces. One

still wonders about what is not there — the struggles of the 1940s and 1950s with the elements of the massacre at the Mountain Meadows, John D. Lee, church members, her neighbors, and church officials. Much of this most intense drama in her life is only hinted at.

I had the opportunity in 1966 while

doing some research to spend several days at the same table with Juanita and asked her to autograph one of her many books which I had purchased. She signed her name and added “Good luck in your research! None of us will ever get it all.” But like her other volumes, *Quicksand and Cactus* comes very close.

Creative Speculation on the Creation

The Creation Scriptures: A Witness for God in the Scientific Age by William Lee Stokes (Salt Lake City: Starstone Publishing, 1979), 204 pp., \$5.95.

Reviewed by Howard C. Stutz, professor of botany and genetics at Brigham Young University.

WHETHER OR NOT ONE AGREES with all of the ideas presented by William Lee Stokes, it is not possible to read his little book *The Creation Scriptures* without being stimulated, entertained, and enlightened. Its bite-sized chapters make for easy reading and easy reference, and his writing is lucid.

Starting from the premise that the scriptures are literally the word of God, Stokes proceeds to accommodate them within the tenets of modern scientific discovery. In so doing he has come forth with some intriguing, even novel explanations. In considering the creation process as described in scripture in cosmic rather than earthbound perspective, he presents some satisfying interpretations of scriptures which otherwise might read as nonsense. Particularly intriguing is his explanation of the meaning of Moses 2:2 in which “God caused darkness to come up upon the face of the deep” before he caused light to appear. According to Stokes and others from whom he quotes, a relatively brief period of total darkness may have occurred after the initial energy from the Big Bang had become dissipated and before gravity drew together the dispersed matter into light-

generating bodies. Also novel is his description of heaven as the firmament, its relationship to the waters above and below and its physical location in our galaxy. He considers heaven as the center of our spiral-shaped galaxy, the waters under the firmament and the waters above the firmament referring to the two major arms of the spiral.

Most readers, however, will find some of his logic seriously defective. Several speculations are elaborately introduced and weakly defended. This is particularly true of the supposed origin of life in space rather than on earth, his explanation of how life could appear on earth before the creation of the sun, the generic treatment of night and day versus the specific periods during the remainder of creation, and the removal of the initial Big Bang period from the scriptural account. Among his weakest arguments are those which address biological phenomena. He erroneously assumes that seeds of plants cannot germinate in the light, when in fact, seeds of many species are unable to germinate without light. He also suggests that chloroplasts may have been present in interstellar plant life, an absurd postulate because of the inordinate complexity of chloroplasts and their interdependence upon nuclei and other cellular organelles.

Excessive stretching to accommodate a literal scriptural interpretation is common. For example, he says, “Accepting for the moment the thought that these scriptures,

like the creation account of Genesis, are deliberately vague, incomplete, and cryptic but still basically true, I take the position that they contain enough advanced information to prove that their source was the Creator himself. The task of full interpretation lies in the future," and "The seeming illogic of the Genesis story in having plant life appear before the creation of the sun may not be illogical after all. The Genesis order could well be essentially correct, another proof for a divine origin of the scriptures." Such hedging sounds weak.

Because the essay is specifically addressed to an LDS audience, it is unfortunate that the publishers who deal with LDS books were unwilling to print it. Not only would it have become more visible and available to those for whom it was written, but also it would have been greatly improved by careful editing. An editor could have removed the numerous, annoying typographical errors and the several incidents of redundancy. Despite its weaknesses, however, it is a delightful stimulating contribution that deserves to be read.

Feisty Lee—Still Enigmatic

Let 'em Holler: A Political Biography of J. Bracken Lee, by Dennis L. Lythgoe (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1982), 343 pp., \$17.50.

Reviewed by J. Keith Melville, professor of political science at Brigham Young University.

IN THE FALL OF 1971, Mayor J. Bracken Lee announced his retirement from public office. He said he was "sick and tired of politics and sick and tired of politicians." Such a statement seems out of character when you read Dennis L. Lythgoe's delightful political biography of Lee which portrays him as a perennial candidate (winning nine and losing eight elections) or office holder (mayor of Price for twelve years, governor of Utah for eight, and mayor of Salt Lake City for another twelve) from 1931 through 1971. Forty years of uninterrupted political activity clearly qualify Lee as "Mr. Politician" of Utah.

In Lythgoe's somewhat hyperbolic style, he claims Lee "became the most colorful and controversial politician in Utah history with, probably, a greater impact on the state and the nation than any Utah figure since Brigham Young" (p. 1). Of course many will resent the comparison of Lee to Brigham Young, a man who spent his last thirty years building and develop-

ing Utah. Lee's detractors admit Lee had a great impact on the state but more often characterize it as deleterious to Utah's growth and progress.

The author's biography of the feisty and bombastic Lee is a needed and important work, based on careful scholarship and written in a lively and interesting style. It not only clarifies many of Lee's strengths, weaknesses, and motives; but it adds another valuable dimension to Utah's political history—including the role of the Mormon Church in Lee's victories and defeats and in the political life of the state generally.

Lythgoe illuminates J. Reuben Clark, Jr.'s, well-known support of Lee in the 1948 gubernatorial campaign; without it, according to Lee, he would not have been elected governor. Church backing continued in the 1952 election; but by 1956, Mormon enthusiasm had cooled and Lee lost the election. Lee had vetoed the Sunday closing bill, resisted requests from Church leaders on a number of appointments and political issues, and most importantly attacked President Eisenhower and his policies—by inference, a criticism of Ezra Taft Benson, apostle and Secretary of Agriculture. Lythgoe calls this act "political suicide in Mormon circles" (p. 220). Lee, however, saw it as a personal issue and believed that he began to

lose support “when McKay demoted Clark” by appointing Stephen L. Richards as his first counselor.

Perhaps less well known were the measures the Mormon leadership took to influence public policies. On moral issues, the First Presidency applied political pressure overtly. But other General Authorities exercised “quiet influence” which may or may not have been instigated by the First Presidency. Thorpe B. Isaacson, then a member of the Presiding Bishopric, and several other General Authorities requested Lee’s consideration of political appointments or policies, frequently implying that Isaacson spoke for Clark or had the approval of other General Authorities, when in fact they were often personal views. In contrast, other Church leaders carefully wrote their political requests on personal stationery, attempting to “separate church and state.” Lee often interpreted these overtures as representing church positions; and, though the requests were sometimes irritating to him and he denied them, he worked to maintain a special rapport with Church officials. When someone asked how important the Church had been in his political career, Lee wryly said, “It was about as important as the Catholic church in Boston or the Baptist church in Texas” (p. 103).

However, the book is disappointing in some respects. When Lee announced his retirement, he added that his wife Margaret wanted him to stay in politics, indicating a significant role of Mrs. Lee in his political career. It is regrettable that Lythgoe includes only three brief references to Mrs. Lee. She is a charming woman who undoubtedly had a great impact on his political career.

Furthermore, those readers who expect a definitive assessment of Lee’s contested political contributions will not be totally satisfied with the book. The author frequently quotes from oral histories, newspapers, magazines, letters, and personal records and places quite dissimilar judgments in juxtaposition, often leaving conclusions to the reader. For example, “The

Tribune’s astute former political editor, O. N. Malmquist, . . . regarded Lee as ‘a good governor.’ Conversely, the *Deseret News’s* incisive former political editor, DeMar Teuscher, believed that penny-pinching in education unquestionably cost the state more later, creating a serious flaw in Lee’s contribution” (pp. 142–43). One wonders how an *astute* political analyst and an *incisive* political editor could arrive at such opposite conclusions? On this subject Lythgoe does draw conclusions of his own and he comes down on the side of Teuscher — I think — with this summation of Lee’s education policies:

[Lee’s] constant battling reduced the quality of education in Utah and did irreparable harm to teacher morale. Yet, it also demonstrated unequivocally Lee’s candor, his straightforward approach, his determination to plod ahead with his principles no matter what the political consequences — what most of his admirers proudly called “the courage of his convictions.” Such varying reactions to Lee reinforce his image as not only the controversial politician but the charismatic one as well. (p. 144)

Lythgoe clearly has mixed feelings on Lee’s contributions to Utah. He praises Lee for his economy measures but faults him on his education policies, lauds his state liquor control reforms but castigates his attitude toward the United Nations, applauds his sensitivity to the rights of the accused (the Don Jesse Neal capital punishment case) but condemns his support of McCarthyism and the anti-Communist hysteria in Utah, and admires his courage to fight the Internal Revenue Service but criticizes his opposition to urban renewal projects. The author, however, does not conceal his admiration for Lee’s forthright, plain-speaking, honest ways. “In the end,” Lythgoe concludes, “it was the personality of J. Bracken Lee that dominated all of his political offices and superseded most of his accomplishments and failures” (p. 331). Lythgoe quotes a Democrat, Wayne L. Black, to express his own summation: “Every county, state, and city needs a Brack Lee once in a while — *this* state and city needed Bracken Lee” (p. 332).

Voices from the Dust: Women in Zion

Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints 1830–1900, by Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1982), 448 pp. including chapter notes and index, \$9.95.

Reviewed by Elouise M. Bell, associate professor of English at Brigham Young University. Her specialties are creative writing and women's studies, especially journals and diaries.

THE SUBTITLE OF THIS BOOK indicates its primary shortcoming. This is, indeed, one more *history* of the *Mormons*. The chapter headings could be those of any similar work giving a general overview of the growth of the church in America: "Becoming a Mormon," "Kirtland," "Missouri," "Nauvoo," "The Trek Westward," "Immigration," "Colonization of the Great Basin," "The 1870s: A Decade of Collective and Personal Achievement," and finally "Persecution, the Manifesto, and Statehood." Though the subtitle claims that this is an untold history, in fact, the story we have is one we have heard many times; and it is not substantially different because it is being told by women. We must ask the question: What do we have in this book that we did not have in others? What have we learned that we did not know?

We must applaud the book on two counts: it does use the journal and letter genres to tell the story, and that is encouraging, giving these forms more attention than they have hitherto had; and it does record the voices of twenty-five women and make a start toward acknowledging women's roles in the settling of Zion. Certainly, getting bits of their stories between book covers does something towards greater recognition for our Mormon foremothers. But the significant question is: How much real understanding has been generated through *Women's Voices*?

Perhaps the problem is suggested in the introductory quote, "Upon these we bestow more abundant honour," taken from 1 Corinthians. It reveals the editorial bent of the book, and with that bent, its shortcomings. The women whose voices are heard here are, in the eyes of the editors, Latter-day Saints first, and women second. While this is a legitimate perspective, it is a perspective which determines the selection of material and, thus, the vision that results. The effort is to honor the valiant of Zion—this time the women. There is nothing wrong with that; yet had *Women's Voices* been weighted more toward understanding and less toward "honor," the book might have been more useful.

I have read Mormon women's journals and letters, and found therein a rich diversity of tone, attitude, experience, perception, and life view. That diversity is missing from *Women's Voices*, even though it covers a wide span and includes a wide cross-section of women. The reader who comes to *Women's Voices* to gain new insights about the experiences and inner lives of nineteenth-century Mormon women will find instead a concentration on the spiritual aspects of their lives. This concentration produces its beauties, but will not satisfy a scholarly interest in women's history. (See, for example, Joanna L. Stratton, *Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier*, published by Simon and Schuster, 1981).

In so saying, I must point out that the introductory essay, though brief and general, comprehensively identifies important common themes that emerge from the manuscripts. The role of the journal or of letters as "an outlet for frustration and grief" surely bears intensive examination in the plentiful private writings of Mormon women. The reality that Mormon women worked for pay is underscored, another subject meriting fuller exploration. The editors' observation that these women "lived much of their lives in a subculture separate

from men" (p. 9), could well have formed the organizing principle for the entire book. Interestingly, they note that "plural wives seem to be disproportionately represented among Mormon women whose writings have been preserved in archival collections." They theorize that these women "heeded the commandment to keep personal records as diligently as they heeded the commandment to enter into plural marriage. Or perhaps they or their posterity or archivists sensed the uniqueness of the experience and sought to preserve it." This correlation deserves a great deal more attention. Indeed, one who reads even minimally in the diaries and letters of nineteenth-century Mormon women soon discovers that the great story of polygamy is yet to be told. Surely this portion of our history deserves book-length treatment of its own without either apology or sensationalism.

The editors should also be commended for selecting materials that are truly primary and alive with immediacy. There are a few after-the-fact selections: Mary Ann Weston Maughan's from an autobiography

written in the 1890s, Martha Cragun Cox's, from an autobiography written in 1929, and Drusilla Dorris Hendricks's from a reminiscence dictated "sometime in the 1870s," giving an account of the years 1836–37. The rest, however, are from letters and diaries written in the white heat of the experience, and thus, from a scholarly perspective, of greatest value: Bathsheba B. Smith's lonesome Nauvoo letters to her missionary husband, George A., and Julina Lambson Smith, very pregnant on a mission—mostly housework—with Joseph F. in Hawaii.

The details of the manuscripts themselves are always worth reading. The honest, straightforward personal accounts of physical suffering, death of loved ones (especially infants and very small children), endurance in the face of privation and loneliness, and the bonding of women to mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends, along with tested dedication to the gospel are deeply moving. The selections are shorter than some might wish, but the editors chose to have breadth rather than depth. Given their perspective, that was probably the better choice.

Scripture Reviewed

The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; containing revelations given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, with some additions by his successors in the presidency of the church (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 294 pp., \$7.85 economy, unindexed, regular print; \$11.75 large print; also available in standard and deluxe styles.

Reviewed by Richard P. Howard, RLDS Church Historian.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS is to be congratulated for its latest edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. My personal copy of this volume—happily, a gift from Dr. Robert J. Mat-

thews of BYU—is in a handsomely crafted combination of three LDS scriptural works: the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The first aspect of this newly published compilation of the records of some of the revelatory experiences of Joseph Smith, Jr., is its readability. When compared with any previous edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, this present edition is vastly superior in several ways:

—The large, clear, crisp, bold type is a welcome change from earlier editions. This is true not only for the body of the text but for the footnotes and italicized introductions as well. The much larger type was made possible by reducing the margins all around, by increasing the vertical space used for

printing from 6" to 8½" and horizontally from 3⅞" to 5¼", and by increasing the number of pages from 257 to 294. If church members do not study this volume more diligently than ever, such neglect will not be due to any failure by church leaders to give them an eminently legible text.

— The footnote/cross-reference system at the bottom of the pages is far more usable than in previous editions. An example of this improvement is section 101, which in previous editions contained sixty-six footnote references, arranged sequentially below the text in alphabetical order. The first twenty-six carried letter designations, from a to z. The next twenty-six were indicated by numeral/letter symbols from 2a to 2z. The final fourteen were marked 3a–3n. All of those notations were laid out horizontally across the entire page in very tiny print, making meaningful use of them problematic to say the least. That notation system had been used in every printing since the 1921 edition.

The 1981 edition, by welcome contrast, arranges the notes in three columns beneath the text, uses much larger type, and keys each notation to the verse or paragraph as numbered in the text. For example section 101:25 has four notations — a, b, c, d — with fourteen references in all, to all four scriptural works and to the Topical Guide. The entire section contains 124 notations, most with cross references far exceeding in number those appearing in earlier editions. Clearly, painstaking work has been done on the system of notes and cross references.

— While former editions featured a large index and concordance its range of entries was much smaller than that of the 1981 edition, and its references were limited to the Doctrine and Covenants itself. In the new three-in-one edition of 1981, the index is comprehensively cross-referenced to each of the three books within its covers. Again type and format refinements make the new index far more usable than in former editions.

As in previous editions, this volume offers the "chronological order of contents"

as a way of explaining why some sections appear out of sequence. The new volume continues to date section 10 as the summer of 1828 although some notable evidence supports a date in May 1829. The new edition also lists section 99 as given in August 1833, in Hiram, rather than Kirtland, Ohio. Section 137 is shown in the chronological table bearing the date of 21 January 1833, although its place in the book is following the document from Brigham Young, given some eleven years later at Winter Quarters. In the heading of section 137, there is no indication of its introduction into the publishing editions for the first time — some 140 years later. The new chronological table includes two other documents added in more recent years. First, section 138, which Joseph F. Smith recorded in October 1918, was accepted by the General Authorities a few days later but not added to the canon until the late 1970s. The last one to be added is the "Official Declaration #2" dated June 1978 and accepted by the general conference on September 30 of that year as the word and will of God.

This procedure is somewhat similar to the RLDS practice: each inspired document prepared by the prophet-president is submitted to the quorums, orders, and councils of the church and also to the delegations sitting in World Conference for their action on it as embodying the word and will of God.

Many refinements and corrections in the section headings make this edition more accurate and reliable historically at those points of revision. Barbara and Scott Faulring noted many of those revisions in the 24 August 1982 issue of *Seventh East Press*, which nicely complements the statement in the "Explanatory Introduction" that the revisions reflect information in verified historical documents.

Four historical maps by the BYU Geography Department, located between the final document and the Pearl of Great Price, are a splendid addition, offering specific help to students wanting to know

the locations of various place names in the text. These are “The New England Area,” the “The New York-Ohio Area,” “The Missouri-Illinois Area,” and “The United States in 1847,” showing the Mormon trail from New York (1830) to the Great Basin (1847).

The relationship between the Book of Commandments (Zion: W. W. Phelps & Co., 1833) — the unfinished, and therefore unpublished first compilation of records of Joseph Smith’s revelations — and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, is much less satisfactorily set forth in this edition than previously. The earlier work is now treated as published although typesetting had actually stopped at the bottom of page 160 in the middle of 64:36 when a mob destroyed the press on 20 July 1833. The previous editions referred to the unfinished Book of Commandments but made no reference to the substantive editing and revision of many of the documents, including such sections as 1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 20, 27, 42, and 51. This new edition, sadly, makes no reference to these things either. While it is understandable that lack of space precluded extended treatment of the publication back-

ground, it would have been appropriate to include at least some reference to the matter, if only in an explanatory footnote.

In the interests of historical considerations, the omission of code names formerly found in section 78 — even though the omission is explained in the introduction — is to me a notable loss. In the earliest editions the Church leaders so identified by these symbols were not revealed. Later editions bracketed the modern names after the code names. Present and future generations will not even be aware that those code names were used, or why. The RLDS Church has handled this matter by giving the modern names in the introduction to section 78 (77, RLDS).

One historical help to the student of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants in future editions would be a table in addition to the chronological table, which would show the relationship of each section to previous editions back to the 1835 edition. Thus, the student could see that some twenty-six documents were added to the 1876 Salt Lake City edition and that several others were omitted. That in itself is an important development of this book of scripture.

Skulduggery, Passion, and Everyday Women

Women of the West, by Cathy Luchetti in collaboration with Carol Olwell (St. George: Antelope Island Press, 1982), 240 pp., \$25.00.

Reviewed by Sherilyn Cox Bennion, professor and chair of the Department of Journalism at Humboldt State University, Arcata, California. She has a strong research interest in the journalism of the old West, with a particular focus on Western women editors.

WOMEN OF THE WEST is a compelling tribute to the “everyday women of history,” as the jacket copy puts it. “Lively stories of courtship, love, inventiveness, humor, skulduggery, [and] passion” are told in the

words of eleven Western women who wrote diaries and letters between 1830 and 1910 interspersed with more than 140 contemporary photographs of women, some in formal poses but many in unusual settings which are much more revealing of their daily lives.

This is the second book to be published by Antelope Island Press. The first, *A Gift to the Street*, was a picture book of San Francisco’s Victorian architecture. Olwell, the photographer for *Gift*, chose *Women of the West* as her next project and moved the press to St. George, a central location from which to spend a year driving to towns and cities throughout the West, looking for photographs at historical societies, public

libraries, and university photo collections. She also designed the book. Her collaborator, Cathy Luchetti, a freelance writer and editor, found the writings which comprise the bulk of the book and prepared an introductory essay and a chapter on minority women.

Olwell and Luchetti have succeeded admirably in their goal of scanning in words and pictures diverse representatives of the 800,000 women whose neglect in most histories of the westward movement is just now beginning to be remedied. The first step in this process is simply to recognize their presence. The second is to examine and evaluate their contributions. This work makes progress toward both goals. It is not intended to be an academic history based on the political and social events of settling the West, as Luchetti notes in her preface, but a document of personal experience. It certainly provides raw materials for more academic analysis, however, and it also presents a bibliography that will be extremely useful to students in search of further information.

The eleven women featured range from Bethenia Owens-Adair, who, at age forty, left her Oregon home to get a medical degree at the University of Michigan, to Pauline Lyons Williamson, a black woman who emigrated from New Jersey to California where she struggled to support herself and her young son by nursing and housekeeping. Each quotation is introduced and concluded with biographical information as available.

The Mormon representative in the book is Priscilla Merriman Evans, a Welsh handcart pioneer of 1856. She and her husband, Thomas, settled in Spanish Fork, where they farmed and planted orchards. Her eleventh child was born in 1875, while Thomas was, for the second time, doing missionary work in Wales, splendidly attired in a "bottle green suit" that Priscilla had made from homespun, home-dyed yarn after he told her how tired he was of seeing everyone in gray.

An account by Sarah Winnemucca rep-

resents yet another kind of frontier experience. The granddaughter of a Paiute chief from Nevada, she became a translator for the U.S. Army, trying to prevent Indian uprisings even as she saw her people moved from one reservation to another by government forces. Her story is excerpted from her book, *Life Among the Piutes* (original spelling), edited by Mrs. Horace Mann, whose contribution may have extended beyond mere editing, as Luchetti acknowledges.

My main reservation about the book is its reliance upon already published works for half of the women included. Admittedly, some of these are not widely available, but others, like Elinore Pruitt Stewart's *The Letters of a Woman Homesteader*, are. Selections from the ample supply of unpublished materials might have been more valuable. That, of course, is the choice every editor faces.

I agree, however, with two additional editorial choices. My favorite quotation is from Keturah Penton Belknap, who moved several times with her parents on the Ohio frontier and then with her husband went to Iowa and California. She wrote, in her journal, "Those wer the days that tryed mens souls and bodys too, and womans constitutions they worked the mussle on and it was their to stay." The editors decided to retain the erratic spelling, punctuation, and capitalization for their freshness and charm. I appreciate this one too: "We have not introduced the feminist questions of our times, nor our own political views, because we felt it would be unfair to use the lives of others — who might have felt quite differently from the way we feel — for those purposes."

The introduction successfully ties together the threads of experience represented in the letters and diaries, adding quotations from other Western women to supplement them. In the chapter on minority women, Luchetti presents a good summary of the little that is known about the lives of Western women who were not Anglo-Saxon. An occasional misspelled

word or misplaced punctuation mark slipped by the editors in these essays, and in a photo caption Corinne, Utah, becomes "Corrine," but such errors are rare. In general, the writing is both clear and graceful.

The photographs are even better. They alone are worth the price of the book. As I write, many images cross my mind: Mrs. Smith, of Glenrock, Wyoming, with her rifle on her shoulder, holding the hind feet of a wildcat she had shot; a procession of eighteen men and one woman nearing the summit of snowy Chilkoot Pass in Alaska;

teamster Arizona Mary, standing on a dirt trail beside her seven yoked teams of oxen; Sarah Winnemucca, dressed in the elegant regalia of her tribe; twin Indian babies in their carriers, looking slightly apprehensive on one page, yelling open-mouthed on the next. I would be hard pressed to choose a favorite from this wonderful collection.

William Forrest Sprague wrote in his *Women and the West* that Western women were hopeful, ambitious, and enterprising (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1940, pp. 111-18). This work sturdily supports that conclusion.

A Stab at Self-Consciousness

On Being Human: The Folklore of Mormon Missionaries by William A. Wilson (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1981), 24 pp., \$1.60 (Sixty-fourth Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities).

Reviewed by Claudia W. Harris, Ph.D. candidate at Emory University in an interdisciplinary program combining anthropology, history, and dramatic literature including folklore. She is the mother of three returned missionaries and the grandmother of one potential missionary.

CRITICIZING THE PUBLICATION of William A. Wilson's 18 November 1981 Honor Lecture in the Humanities would be equivalent to rudely refusing to applaud a virtuoso folklore performance. Although claiming to play the role of a critic, Wilson uses missionary stories to punctuate his points in such a way that the lecture comes close to his own definition of folklore — "an artful rendering of significant human experience" (p. 6). The sharing of these stories or similar ones is an integral part of Mormon culture, but the structuring of Mormon folklore into a pattern from which to draw conclusions about Mormon culture is a self-conscious act which is usually avoided like a plague of critics. But it is just this some-

what daring stab at self-consciousness that makes this lecture worthy of comment.

Wilson chose a subject inherently intriguing to Mormons. The missionary experience is a vital ingredient of the gospel, and yet why missionaries, young and unschooled for the most part, achieve the success they do remains an enigma to the world at large and often to Mormons as well. Is it their very inexperience which makes missionaries an unthreatening subject for a study of universality such as this? No other Mormon subgroup could so easily and freely be discussed.

Anyone who has taken seriously the requirement "every member a missionary" has some sense of the frustrations present in the life of the full-time missionary. Wilson's analysis of their folklore reveals how missionaries not only deal with these frustrations but also enrich their lives at the same time. With the stated purpose of showing how folklore can "increase our understanding of the human condition" (p. 1), Wilson outlines four ways missionaries use folklore: "Through the performance of this lore they develop a strong esprit de corps; they relieve the pressures imposed by the rule-bound nature of the system; they channel behavior down acceptable paths; and, most important, they develop a pic-

ture of a world that can be overcome" (p. 2). He illustrates each of these uses with stories collected from returned missionaries at Utah State University and Brigham Young University. Because the problems addressed by this folklore are human problems not unique to Mormon missionaries, understanding folklore, Wilson claims, can help us understand human beings.

That global understanding would only be possible, however, with a more extensive analysis than the one offered, for this brief lecture tantalizes but does not satisfy. There is some relief that the Mormon oral tradition is being discussed in a scholarly fashion (even limited as it is here to missionaries), but the analysis is reductionistic. The missionary experience is revealed only in part by what Wilson discusses. Although he briefly outlines the broad range of experience which folklorists study, he does not include missionary practices which explore that breadth of possibilities. He gives no information about the choice of informants or methods of collection. But a lecture is not a book and something in this case is better than nothing. Besides, discussing the oral tradition by oral means is not only clever but appropriate.

Although nicely presented and certainly more carefully edited, this is the same lecture which was published in *Sunstone* (Jan.-Feb. 1982): 32-40. I would not want another reader to assume as I did that this must be the hoped-for book following the provocative article. Wilson and John B. Harris are planning a book but the project is still in the organization stage. Certainly, collecting the stories is the first priority of the folklorist, and Wilson and Harris fulfill a need if they go no further.

I shared Wilson's lecture with my son Derek who had been home less than a week from the Italy Catania Mission. It was delightful watching him read and

chuckle and then stop to tell me of similar experiences and stories. Derek told me of two missionaries who had been convinced by their senior companions that their length of service now entitled them to a P-week (a week off). They dutifully sent elaborate plans of their proposed vacation to Switzerland to the mission president for approval. This story combines the first three uses of folklore as "greenies" are initiated, vacations are contemplated, but mission rules are reinforced. Derek expressed relief that he had not been gullible enough to believe some stories Wilson recorded, but with chagrin admitted that he had so thoroughly believed others. He said he was glad that he now knew "the truth." But Derek believed, as do all good missionaries, because he needed and wanted to believe and because the performance of folklore creates its own truth.

Perhaps rightly, Wilson does not deal directly with this issue of truth. There seems to be an underlying assumption that as folklore these stories are shaped for a purpose and have no necessary basis in fact. But just as *myth* need not be narrowly defined as an untrue story, so folklore can embody symbolic truth, transcending insistence that a "true" story must happen just the way the teller specifies. What is often most interesting about human beings is how they interpret their experiences. That undoubtedly is the basis for the charm and much of the power inherent in the testimony meeting. Folklore can reveal these rich interpretations and increase our understanding of the human condition. Reading *On Being Human* will do for others what it did for Derek: the act of reading and pondering will delight, will recall similar incidents, and will cause valuable self-consciousness about the missionary experience which, in turn, will help explicate the experience of being human.

DIALOGUE