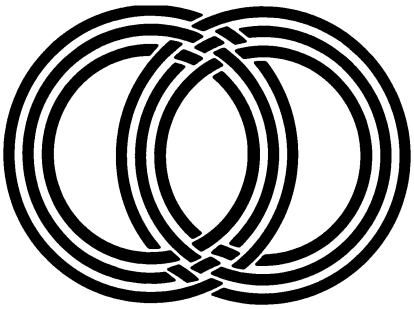
DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT



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 world religious 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 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or of the editors.

CONTENTS

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought is published quarterly by the Dialogue Foundation, P.O. Box 658, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84110-0658, 801-363-9988. *Dialogue* has no official connection with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Third class postage paid at Salt Lake City, Utah. ISSN 002-2157. Regular domestic subscription rate is $30 per year; students and senior citizens $25 per year; single copies $10. Regular foreign subscription rate is $35 per year; students and senior citizens $30 per year; air mail $55 per year; single copies $15. *Dialogue* is also available on microforms through University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-1346, and 18 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4EJ, England.

Dialogue welcomes articles, essays, poetry, fiction, notes and comments, letters to the editor, and art. Preference is given to submissions from subscribers. Manuscripts must be sent in triplicate, accompanied by return postage, and should be prepared according to the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* including double-spacing all block quotations and notes. For the reference citation style, please consult issues from volume 26 on. If the submission is accepted for publication, an electronic version on an IBM-PC compatible diskette, using WordPerfect or other ASCII format software, must be submitted with a hard copy of the final manuscript. Send submissions to *Dialogue*, P.O. Box 658, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84110-0658. Artists wishing consideration of their artwork should send inquiries to the Designer or Art Director at the same address. Allow three to six months for review of all submissions.

FORTHCOMING IN

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought

SPRING 1997

A special issue on
"MILLENNIUM APPROACHES: YOUNG MORMON SCHOLARS AND ARTISTS"
Guest-edited by
Joanna Brooks and Bryan Waterman

"Divine Reason,"
by John Armstrong

"Theology for the Approaching Millennium:
Angels in America, Activism, and the American Religion,"
by Michael Austin

"Touching the Hem,"
by Diane Brown

"Baptism for the Dead and the Problematic of Pluralism:
A Theological Reconfiguration,"
by Robert E. Clark

"A Place to Call Home:
Studying the Indian Placement Program,"
by Tona J. Hangen

"Mormonism in a Post-Soviet Society:
Notes from the Ukraine,"
by Tania Rands

"New Jack Mormons,"
by Juan de Santiago

"What You Walk Away From,"
by Holly Welker

"The Worth of Woman: Impressions of Proverbs 31:10-31,"
by Jana K. Riess

"Don't Fence Me In:
A Conversation about Mormon Fiction,"
with Joanna Brooks, Sam Cannon,
Sean Ziebarth, and David Seiter

Get Part of the Past

We have in stock a limited number of back issues of *Dialogue*. Some are extremely rare; only a few copies exist. Order today to get part of nearly three decades of great thinking and craft from such authors as Leonard J. Arrington, Lowell L. Bennion, D. Michael Quinn, etc.

Rare Issues: $15 each

___6:1	___12:2	___17:4
___6:3	___13:1	___18:2
___7:3	___13:4	___18:3
___9:2	___14:1	___18:4
___10:3	___15:4	___21:4
___11:1	___16:2	___22:4
___11:2	___17:1	

Recent Issues: $10 each

___19:1	___22:3	___25:3
___19:2	___23:1	___25:4
___19:3	___23:2	___26:2
___19:4	___23:3	___26:3
___20:1	___23:4	___26:4
___20:2	___24:1	___27:4
___21:1	___24:2	___28:2
___21:2	___24:3	___28:3
___21:3	___24:4	___28:4
___22:1	___25:2	___29:1
___22:2		___29:2

Please send the back issues to:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

ZIP _____ COUNTRY _____

TELEPHONE _____

TOTAL BACK ISSUES	$___
S&H $2 (1-4 ISSUES)	$___
$.50 EACH ADD'L ISSUE	$___
TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION	$___
GRAND TOTAL	$___

❒ Check enclosed
❒ MasterCard
❒ Visa

CARD NO. _____

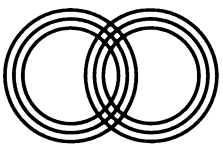
EXPIRATION DATE _____

CARDHOLDER'S NAME _____

Mail to:

DIALOGUE
P.O. Box 658
Salt Lake City, Utah
84110-0658

Telephone orders:
(801) 363-9988



DIALOGUE
A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

Get Part of the Future

For more than a quarter century *Dialogue* has published some of the most thoughtful, provocative, and cherished articles, short fiction, and poetry available on the Mormon experience. If you don't have a subscription, you have probably missed out on some of *Dialogue*'s best and now out-of-print issues. These include:

Spring 1993–"The Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology," by Lavina Fielding Anderson.

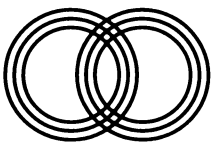
Spring 1994–"Nauvoo Roots of Mormon Polygamy, 1841-46: A Preliminary Demographic Report," by George D. Smith.

Summer 1994–"Toward a Mormon Theology of God the Mother," by Janice Allred.

Fall 1994–"'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism," by Michael W. Homer.

Spring 1995–"Sterling Moss McMurrin: A Philosopher in Action," by L. Jackson Newell.

Don't miss out on future issues. Subscribe today and perhaps order a gift subscription for someone who would enjoy *Dialogue*.



SUBSCRIPTION RATES	
New Subscription/Renewal	$30
Student/Senior Citizen	$25
Foreign (surface)	$35
Foreign: Student/Senior Citizen (surface)	$30
Foreign (air mail)	$55

Please send a subscription to:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

ZIP _____ COUNTRY _____

TELEPHONE _____

Please send a gift subscription to:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

ZIP _____ COUNTRY _____

TELEPHONE _____

TOTAL SUBSCRIPTIONS	$___
TOTAL GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS	$___
TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION	$___
GRAND TOTAL	$___

❒ Check enclosed
❒ MasterCard
❒ Visa

CARD NO. _____

EXPIRATION DATE _____

CARDHOLDER'S NAME _____

Mail to:

DIALOGUE
P.O. Box 658
Salt Lake City, Utah
84110-0658

Telephone orders:

(801) 363-9988

Language Usage vs. Moral Values

With respect to Douglas Campbell's article on hymns in the summer 1996 issue, in his Example 16 ("In our words and looks and actions lie the seeds of death and life") he suggests that "looks" was changed because we no longer think ourselves morally accountable for our appearance. But I believe looks there does not refer to appearance, but rather to outlook. My dictionary gives as one of the meanings of look "to direct or pay attention" and as another meaning "to expect or look forward to." We used to say, "He is looking to do good" and "You must look out for yourself" or "Look to your own interests."

If I am right, the change from looks to thoughts merely follows language usage, rather than reflects a change in moral values.

"If You Could Hie to Kolob" says, "there is no end to race." In context I think it means there is no end to mankind, the human race, but it is susceptible to meaning that the several races of mankind are immutable. To avoid that possible misunderstanding, I have suggested to the church music committee changing either that last clause to "nor to the human race" or "there is no end to grace" or substituting another rhyme for "space/race."

Edward L. Kimball
Provo, Utah

Challenging Conventional Thinking

I read with great interest Dynette Reynolds's "Youth, Sex, and Coercion: The Neglect of Sexual Abuse Factors in LDS Data and Policy on Premarital Sex" in the summer 1996 issue not only because Dynette is a friend, but because her topic is in one venue of my long-time research interest—the origins and evolution of Christian sexual ethics.

Dynette raises important issues. I hope she has opened a few eyes. The church's handling of sexual issues is appallingly uneven, often ignorant, and/or erotophobic. Sadly, well-intentioned but bungling local leaders sometimes increase the emotional and spiritual harm that usually accompanies sexual abuse, especially when victims are children.

I was shocked to read, however, statements that can only add to the church's confusion and to the pain of those who have been sexually abused. While trying to enlighten us, Dynette herself seems to fall victim to convolution regarding sexual purity.

She writes: "(It will be obvious that the numbers of young Mormons voluntarily disregarding church teachings on premarital sex are almost certainly lower than currently estimated.)"

In what sense can we *involuntarily disregard* church teachings on premarital sex? I can think of none. A person (whether a child or an adult) who is the victim of nonconsensual sexual acts does not by any perambulation disregard church teachings on premarital or extramarital sex. The concept of involuntary disregard of church teachings implies that victims must somehow bear guilt for what happened to them.

I know that Dynette doesn't believe that. Yet that is precisely the inescapable burden her rhetoric places on them.

We should be nonetheless grateful that Dynette has called major flaws in some studies to our attention, flaws that I suspect exist in almost all sur-

veys on premarital sex. In light of Dynette's excellent analysis of the Heaton and Chadwick-Top studies, we would be well advised to question data based on answers to questions involving ill-defined terms. I wouldn't myself know what the instrument meant by "involved in" or "premarital sex." I would imagine that some whose only involvement was involuntary would reply in the negative, while others having identical experience might reply affirmatively.

I'm not competent to judge the validity of Dynette's use of national data on sex abuse to adjust Heaton and Chadwick-Top data, but find it ingenious and thought provoking. Whatever, surely Dynette has her finger on something very important.

Finally, a quibble. I think Dynette is a little glib in accepting the assumption that boys are less frequent victims of sexual abuse than girls. This almost universally accepted assertion is, as far as I can tell, utterly without meaningful evidence. I suspect that at the very least sexual abuse of boys is much higher than any data now show. Perhaps attention to sexual abuse of boys will be the coming fad.

Whatever remaining faults we Latter-day Saints have in our approaches to sex, I feel quite strongly that we live in a generally healthier time than our forebears. At least we are beginning to discuss sexual ethics more openly, to acknowledge and address such problems as Dynette calls to our attention. Thank you, Dynette, for challenging conventional thinking.

Terence L. Day
Pullman, Washington

Evan Stephens and D. Michael Quinn

D. Michael Quinn's "case study" on "male-male intimacy" in the winter 1995 issue is a triumph of imagination over evidence. He infers a hidden homosexual component in the life and friendships of Evan Stephens, pioneer LDS musician and composer, and even suggests, without a trace of evidence, that church authorities condoned this. Why? Primarily because Stephens did not marry and was known to befriend and allow young men to board in his home from time to time while he fostered their academic and professional careers—or preferred, appropriately, to have a male traveling companion rather than to travel alone. Quinn's "evidence" is entirely circumstantial. He claims to have the "eyes to see" a "homoromantic and homoerotic sub-text." Relying on suggestion and strained interpretations of written sources, Quinn's article becomes to me a "case study" in the use of innuendo to vilify the dead. I prefer to rely on the judgment of people who knew Stephens.

The essential problem with Quinn's article is that it grossly misrepresents Stephens and other honorable men. If we were to believe his premise, he would make us interpret them as without integrity, insincere, and hypocritical, leading deceptive lives inconsistent with their public bearing—unfaithful to wives, families, friends, and to strict standards of fidelity and chastity required by their religion.

Quinn distorts Joseph Smith's views, claiming that having "same sex bedmates" was "advocated by the Mormon prophet." Quoting Joseph, he writes the prophet believed it acceptable for "friends to lie down to-

gether, locked in the arms of love, to sleep and wake in each other's embrace" (*HC*, 5:361). The language Quinn cites is from a funeral sermon on the resurrection, where Joseph advocated that family and friends should be buried near each other if possible, lying down in nearby graves, so that they may wake at the resurrection to rejoice together and embrace in celebration of God's goodness and love. He is referring to family members who *are* our dearest friends, and describing a scene of intense family joy. The "arms of love" is a scriptural allusion—the imagery of godly love as the Lord extends it at the resurrection and otherwise (see 2 Ne. 1:15; D&C 6:20, etc.). Similarly, he quotes George Q. Cannon out of context to give the impression that he advocated "male-male intimacy."

I am deeply concerned also about the way Quinn discusses Samuel Bailey Mitton. True, Mitton met Stephens in his youth and came to greatly admire him, his achievements, and his music. They had an abiding friendship; hence Quinn would have us assume that he was one of Stephens's "boy chums." From my own knowledge of Mitton's life and circumstances, I know this idea to be categorically false. Fortunately, there are many still alive who knew Mitton, including his children, grandchildren, and other friends. In addition, his life may be the best documented of anyone mentioned in the essay. He left numerous letters, a journal of many volumes, a taped oral history, and hundreds of poems, songs, hymns, and anthems, all of which make clear his values. These primary sources do not support Quinn's hypothesis. Yet Quinn seeks to implicate Mitton by clever suggestion as he does others.

I see no indication that Quinn made any attempt to interview people who knew Stephens or his friends for first-hand knowledge of them or their characters. Before his death in 1954, I spent hundreds of hours chatting with Samuel Mitton about his life and values, and heard him discuss his feelings, experiences, and the people he remembered—including Evan Stephens. Quinn's idea is preposterous and wholly inconsistent with Mitton's character and with his understanding of Stephens. Mitton's conduct and conversation were chaste and honest. He possessed an innocence of mind seldom seen today, and certainly not in evidence in Quinn's discussion. Mitton was greatly devoted to his wife, seven children, and large extended family (see V. L. Lindblad, *Biography of Samuel Bailey Mitton* [1965]). The affectionate and sensitive love letters of his courtship were known to Quinn but were ignored. Mitton's own sexual orientation is obvious by these and the many tender poems and songs he wrote for his wife throughout their sixty-six years together. His priorities are declared by his long and faithful church service as missionary, high councilor, choir director, organist, temple worker, and patriarch.

Why did Stephens never marry? Quinn correctly notes that Stephens was reluctant to speak about it. This agrees with what Samuel Mitton told me—that on several occasions he asked Stephens, and that he always avoided the question with a witty response. But Stephens's reticence is not evidence, and there are many reasons persons remain unmarried. Quinn does not mention that Stephens's recent biographer devotes an entire chapter to the question, reviewing

credible explanations (see R. L. Bergman, *The Children Sang: The Life and Music of Evan Stephens with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir* [1992], ch. 9). An early and very detailed recollection says Stephens was once deeply in love and engaged to a young woman who died and left him in extreme grief, having first received his promise that he would love her through his music (ibid., 186). These matters cry out for more than a simplistic assumption. Quinn's readers are not even informed that there are alternative explanations for his single life. Bergman, who spent two and one half years studying Stephens's life, says that he was heterosexual and that Quinn's "speculations . . . besmirch the reputation of an honorable man" (*Logan* [Utah] *Herald Journal*, 10 Apr. 1996, 18).

Quinn is very creative in finding homosexual allusions. Common terms and expressions of the day carry a sexual implication according to him. Likely Stephens is vulnerable to Quinn's approach because of Stephens's naivete on such matters, innocently expressing his native sincerity and simplicity, and his lasting and affectionate bonds of friendship—true and chaste brotherly love. Such admired qualities abound in the recollections of him by friends, associates, and church leaders, which contain no hint of unchaste behavior. I have read many of these comments. Quinn has not given any evidence whatsoever that Stephens's contemporaries, who knew his personality, ever suspected or imagined unchaste conduct.

Quinn makes much of an occurrence during a concert of Stephens's music in 1902, claiming that Stephens's "same-sex love song" was presented. But the account of it did not say it was by Stephens. Quinn assumes this. Actually, the verse quoted is a quatrain from the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, known to all at the time, as it is today, as most certainly a heterosexual expression. It was used to introduce two of Stephens's duets for a man and woman, expressing the "unrequited love" of parted heterosexual friends, songs that probably reflect Stephens's own loss in the death of his fiancée in his youth.

Stephens carefully cultivated "public relations" as evidenced in the letters he wrote to the newspaper when he was away from home. It is most unreasonable for Quinn to suggest that he peppered his published works with homosexual allusions or that editors allowed them to run, when the writings were directed to the church and public on which he was dependent for his livelihood and recognition, and where such allusions would have been shocking to the moral sensibilities of the community. It never would have occurred to Stephens nor his friends that his words could be misconstrued in Quinn's way. Considered in their entirety, his writings and music convey an exemplary innocence.

Stephens's care of young people is actually strong evidence of his fidelity and chastity. Along with the faithful woman who served as his housekeeper for thirty years, a number of young men, and some young women, boarded in his nurturing home while attending school or college. They helped care for the large home and gardens, and they often received their board and his assistance with school expenses. The housekeeper greatly admired Stephens, and would have been the first to know and be offended by anything irregular. These youth came from LDS fami-

lies taught standards of chastity, and it would be absurd to think that Stephens abused a whole series of them without anyone ever reporting it. He came to love them like a father, and this appears to have been his substitute for a family relationship. He referred to them as his "boys" and "girls" in public and in print.

Quinn admits that the "boys" married and had children. Stephens was a beloved avuncular figure who kept in touch with and visited the families and was proud of their achievements. They included two doctors, a dentist, a lawyer and judge, a mission president and public official, musicians, and successful businessmen. They and their families all seem to have retained great respect for Stephens. Harold H. Jensen, who knew Stephens and his youthful friends, was one "of numerous boys Professor Stephens' influence and life inspired to greater ambition." Jensen said that "great he was in stature, music and in heart. Few had the sympathetic understanding of youth as did he. Although ... father of none he was father to all," adding that "many boys would not have fulfilled missions" but for Stephens (*The Instructor*, Dec. 1930, 721-22). What church leaders thought may be typified in the praise from Elder John A. Widtsoe, who knew him for many years: "A lovable character ... kind, tolerant, a true friend who practiced the obligations of friendship." And the apostle noted that "He loved to seek out young men and become their helper and, as it were, their second father [in] numerous acts of God-like charity ..." (*Millennial Star* 92 [11 Dec. 1930]: 856).

What was the sexual orientation of Stephens's "boys"? Despite all of Quinn's suggestions, there is not a scrap of evidence that any of them had anything but a heterosexual orientation. Consider the one to whom Quinn devotes the most attention, Stephens's nephew who came from Idaho to board with him and attend LDS University. Harold Jensen referred to him as "put in the way of success by Professor Stephens," and remembered him as "a blonde Viking who captured the eye of everyone as a superb specimen of manhood" (*The Instructor*, Dec. 1930, 722). Why, from that, should we infer that he had homosexual tendencies? Quinn found his photograph in the college yearbook for 1914, and he was a handsome and mature looking man. He was also a popular and active student, having been in the debating club and a class officer and president. The caption, like that of other students, has a lighthearted comment: "Aye, every inch a king," and "Also a 'Queener'" (*The S Book* [1914], 12, 38).

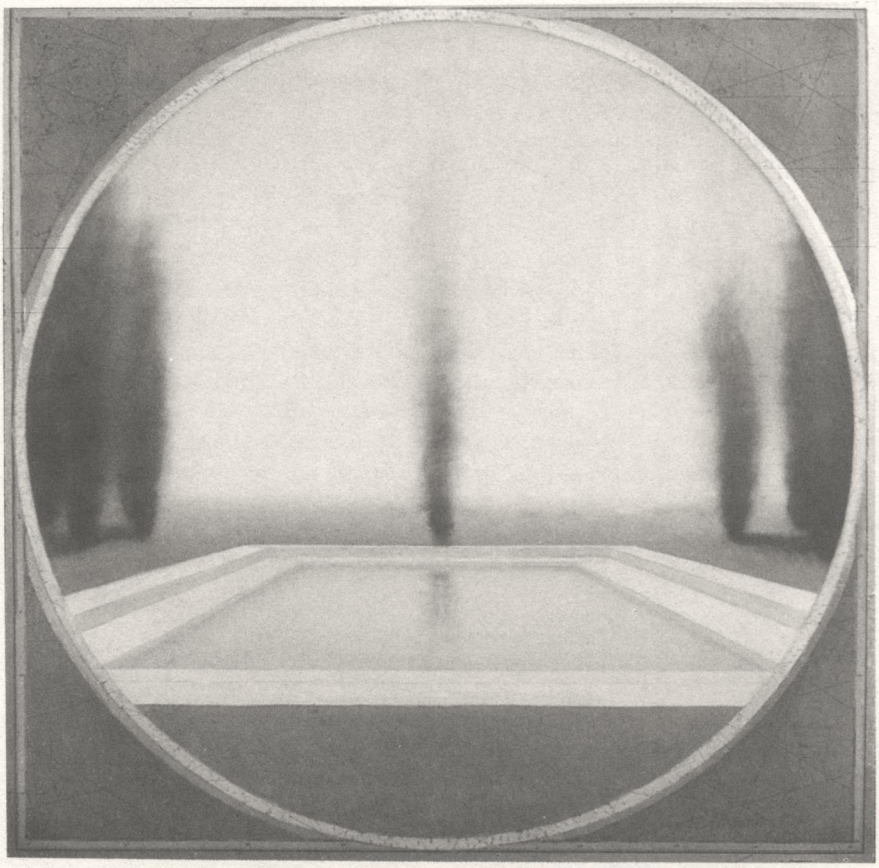
Quinn writes that the term "Queen" was "slang for male homosexual by the 1920s." But the term is "Queener," not "Queen." What did this word mean to students at the university in 1914? According to a student publication when Stephens's nephew was there, the term referred to someone who courted girls, as in: "Pretty girls in the class can be found there galore,/ Rhada, Marion, and Daphne, and some dozens more./ If you wished to advantage their 'Queeners' to see/ Just peep in the Library at two forty-three." The context clearly shows the pairing of men and women (*The Gold and Blue* [Commencement Number, 1912], 47). The same publication's alumni column later recalled the nephew as "the idol of all the girls" (Apr. 1916, 291). All

this agrees with more general studies that in colleges, circa 1915, "queen" as a verb meant "To go on a date or escort a girl" and "queener" was "A ladies man" (H. Wentworth and S. Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang* [1960], 415; compare usage at Stanford University where "Those students who find time to court the women are called 'queeners'" [*American Speech* 4 (Oct. 1931—Aug. 1932): 436]).

Nevertheless, Quinn uses "Queener" as a basis to launch into a striking discussion of things homosexual, thus creating a strong impression in the reader when there is really no such connection with Stephens and his nephew. He does this repeatedly. Thus, in 1916, Stephens wrote the newspaper at Salt Lake City a long and remarkable description of the musical scene from "Gay New York" (*Deseret Evening News*, 11 Nov. 1916, sec. 2, p. 3). Quinn's citation of this could be used to imply that Stephens used this phrase when it was the headline writer who wrote "Gay." Yet it is an apt term for the musical events described—in the basic sense of "Gay" which then had no homosexual connotation (*Webster's Word Histories* [1989], 90). "Gay New York" has been a cliché, at least since the 1896 Broadway musical *In Gay New York* with its title song. Yet the term affords Quinn the opportunity for another ultimately irrelevant sexual discussion. Again, an innocent stroll through Central Park becomes "homosexual cruising" by Stephens—a claim disgusting and absurd to anyone who has read the full letter in context. Stephens's hotel is within a few blocks of a known homosexual bathhouse and another raided years before! But what has this to do with Stephens, whose hotel is central and within walking distance of the musical performances he has come to hear? Finally Quinn has Stephens living with his nephew near Greenwich Village since the "boy" lived there later with his wife. Yet Quinn offers no supporting evidence for Stephens's residence there but instead uses this assertion to open a discussion of homosexuality near the Village. This is not history, for there is no demonstrable connection with Stephens in any of these instances or in other examples that I could cite. Much of Quinn's evidence does not stand up to even casual scrutiny.

It is not enough that Quinn has inserted protective disclaimers here and there which amount to "maybe it ain't so after all." Not when the overwhelming bulk of his article is couched in a confident, self-assured style, with stark language and imagery designed to leave a vivid and lasting impression. I have tried to write as dispassionately as possible, but Quinn's article is inaccurate and greatly abusive and hurtful to the families and friends of those discussed. Whether written maliciously or not, the result is the same.

George L. Mitton
Provo, Utah



The Miracles of Jesus: Three Basic Questions for the Historian

John P. Meier

ONCE UPON A TIME, down Mexico way—actually down in San Diego in 1988—an unsuspecting editor from Doubleday offered me a contract to write a book on the historical Jesus for the Anchor Bible Reference Library series. It was, of course, to be a one-volume work; so obvious was that to both sides that the point was never mentioned in the contract.

But the best laid schemes of mice and exegetes "gang aft a-gley." In 1991 volume one of my study, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, saw the light of day.[1] Its 484 pages laid out the methodology for a critical quest for the historical Jesus and also considered what we could say about his birth and early years before the public ministry. The public ministry was left for volume two—or, as it now turns out, volumes two and three.

In November 1994 all 1,118 pages of volume two of *A Marginal Jew* finally appeared.[2] Doubleday is already asking me to refer to volume one as that little pamphlet I wrote. And, in a sense, volume one *was* an introductory pamphlet on method, sources, and chronology. Only in volume two do we get to the heart of the matter, which, like Gaul, is divided into three parts: mentor, message, and miracles.

"Mentor" deals with John the Baptist, the person who had the greatest single impact on Jesus as he began his ministry. "Message" deals with Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God as both future and yet somehow present in his ministry. "Miracles" deals with the reports in the Gos-

1. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume One. The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (Anchor Bible Reference Library) (New York: Doubleday, 1991).

2. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume Two. Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (Anchor Bible Reference Library) (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

pels of Jesus' startling deeds of exorcism, healing, and other acts that go beyond mere human power. This third part, on miracles, includes an exegesis of all the miracle stories in all four Gospels and actually takes up half of the bulk of the volume. The reason for the 1,118 pages may be a bit clearer now.

My positions on these three major topics of mentor, message, and miracles have placed me willy nilly in direct opposition to many of the positions espoused by the Jesus Seminar in general and Professor John Dominic Crossan in particular.[3] Indeed, some observers are already referring to volume two as the *Summa* against the Jesus Seminar. This was not the intent of volume two, but it may be an inevitable result.

In this essay I would like to focus on the problem raised in the third part of volume two, namely, the miracles of Jesus. One goal of this essay is to hammer home the point that it is a hopeless mistake to try to plunge into a treatment of individual miracle stories in the Gospels before three major questions of method have been faced. For convenience' sake, I call these three problems "miracles and the modern mind," "miracles and the ancient mind," and "the global question of Jesus' miracles."

(1) In "miracles and the modern mind," I ask how a modern historian should approach the miracles reportedly worked by Jesus in the Gospels. What questions should be raised, and what answers can be reasonably expected?

(2) In "miracles and the ancient mind," I ask whether Professor John Dominic Crossan is correct in using parallels in ancient pagan and Jewish literature to claim that there is no real difference between miracles and magic and hence that Jesus was a Jewish magician.

(3) In "the global question of Jesus' miracles," I ask whether there is sufficient reason to judge that the historical Jesus actually performed startling deeds that he and his disciples considered miracles. In other words, do reports about Jesus performing miracles go all the way back to Jesus' own ministry, or is the idea that Jesus performed miracles simply an invention of the early church, an invention retrojected onto the historical Jesus?

I. The First Question: Miracles and the Modern Mind

Obviously, any scholar approaching the question of the miracles of

---

3. For the work of the Jesus Seminar, see Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, et al., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993). For the work of John Dominic Crossan, see his *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); idem, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994).

Jesus does so against the background of his or her own religious tradition or lack thereof. Especially in this postmodern age, honesty requires that each participant in a dialogue admit his or her religious or philosophical matrix. Let me begin, then, by admitting that mine is Roman Catholic. Now, Catholics of a certain age and a certain girth can remember how many of us went through traditional programs of philosophy and theology. In these programs we learned the arguments for and against the possibility of miracles. Catholic apologetics often felt obliged to defend the historicity of every single miracle of Jesus as reported in the four Gospels. Such an approach can still be found today, for example, in René Latourelle's book, *The Miracles of Jesus.*[4] On the other side of the dogmatic fence, non-believers who would pride themselves on their secular scientific historiography could hardly suppress a guffaw if someone raised the question of the historicity of Jesus' miracles.

Faced with these two fronts in a centuries-old battle stemming from the "Age of Reason" and the Enlightenment, we must take time to ask an initial and fundamental question: What should be the proper approach of a historian who is sincerely trying to be unbiased either way in his or her investigation of the historical Jesus? I would reply with two observations:

(1) In general, so-called quests for the historical Jesus have rarely been strictly historical investigations at all. Be they the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century quests of Reimarus, Schleiermacher, and Strauss,[5] or the twentieth-century quests of Günther Bornkamm and Ben Meyer,[6] most quests are actually philosophical or theological projects incorporating historical insights rather than purely historical research. These works are usually suffused with the pro-faith or anti-faith stance of a believing Ben Meyer or an unbelieving David Strauss. Rarely is anything like neutrality vis-á-vis the Christian faith observed. If we wish instead to conduct a true *historical* quest, then philosophical and theological stances, be they pro- or anti-faith, must be bracketed and put aside for the time being. Our investigation will, of course, have its presuppositions, like any scientific study. But they will be the presuppositions of modern historiography in general and the study of ancient history in particular, and not

---

4. René Latourelle, *The Miracles of Jesus and the Theology of Miracles* (NewYork/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988); in a sense, Latourelle continues in a more critical vein the apologetic tradition of H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (NovTSup 9) (Leiden: Brill, 1965).

5. These and other giants of the original "German quest" are represented in the "Lives of Jesus Series," published under the general editorship of Leander E. Keck by Fortress Press; see Charles Talbert, ed., *Reimarus: Fragments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970); Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Life of Jesus*, ed. Jack C. Verheyden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); David Friedrich Strauss, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

6. Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979).

the special presuppositions of a particular philosophical or theological world view, be it pro- or anti-faith.

(2) This leads naturally to my second point. Wide-ranging questions like "*Can* miracles happen?" and "*Do* miracles happen?" are legitimate questions in the arena of philosophy and theology. They are illegitimate—or at least unanswerable—in a historical investigation that restricts itself to empirical evidence and reasonable deductions or inferences from such evidence.

This stance may seem like a "cop-out" to both believers and agnostics, but permit me to explain my position. First, let us be clear on what I mean by a miracle. I offer the following definition: a miracle is (1) an unusual, startling, or extraordinary event that is in principle perceivable by any interested and fair-minded observer, (2) an event that finds no reasonable explanation in human abilities or in other known forces that operate in our world of time and space, (3) and an event that is the result of a special act of God, doing in a religious context what no human power can do. In this definition, I purposely avoid terms like "nature" or "natural law," since the question of what is "natural" is so debatable in both ancient and modern philosophy. I prefer to speak in general terms of what human beings cannot do and of what God alone can do.

This last point brings us to the nub of the whole problem. Anyone who claims that a miracle has happened is saying in effect: "God has acted here in a special way, beyond all human potential. This extraordinary event was caused directly by God alone."

Now, what is a historian to do when faced with such a claim? It is certainly possible that a historian might prove the claim false by pointing to overlooked human powers at work, or to new and previously unknown forces operating in our physical world, or even to trickery, hypnotism, mass hysteria, or psychological illness.

But what happens if the historian is able reasonably to exclude all these possibilities? Can the historian then say: "Therefore, this *is* a miracle. Therefore, God *has* directly acted here to accomplish what is impossible to humans"? My answer is no. I maintain that it is inherently impossible for historians working with empirical evidence within the confines of their own discipline ever to make the positive judgment: "God has directly acted here to perform a miracle." The very wording of this statement is essentially *theo-logical* ("*God* has directly acted . . ."). What evidence or criteria could justify a historian *as a historian* to reach such a judgment? To be sure, a professional historian who is also a believing Christian might first make a purely historical judgment: "This extraordinary religious event has no discernible explanation." And then the same person might proceed to a second judgment: "This event is a mira-

cle worked by God." But this second judgment is not made in his or her capacity as a professional historian. He or she has moved into the realm of philosophy or theology.

If the historian wishes to remain purely in the realm of the academic discipline called history, he or she may duly record the fact that a particular extraordinary event took place in a religious context and is claimed by some observers to be a miracle. But that is all the historian can say *as* a historian. I want to stress that the same limitation holds for a historian who is an atheist. The atheist, like the believer, may record the fact that, for example, a man born blind suddenly regained his sight at the command of a religious healer, and no adequate explanation can be discovered by science. The atheist might also make a further judgment: "Whatever the explanation may be, I am sure that this is not a miracle. God has not done this because God does not exist." The atheist's judgment may be as firm and sincere as the believer's. It is also just as much a philosophical or theological judgment, determined by a particular world view. It is not a judgment that arises simply, solely, and necessarily out of an examination of the evidence of this particular case.

By the way, the scenario of the believing and atheistic experts agreeing on the data but making opposite philosophical judgments about the data is not imaginary. The medical bureau at Lourdes, made up of doctors of different faiths and of no faith, would be the perfect setting for such a divergence of opinions.[7] The medical bureau, as well as the International Medical Committee in Paris, may at times reach the conclusion that a cure at Lourdes is "medically inexplicable." Quite rightly, the medical group does not presume to issue any judgment as to whether God has directly acted in any given cure. That is a judgment beyond the competence of scientific medicine, just as it is a judgment beyond the competence of scientific history.

Of course, some people, especially in academia, would consider all this talk about miracles to be ridiculous from the start and unworthy of serious consideration. They would devoutly repeat the credo of Rudolf Bultmann (usually not revised to avoid sexist language): "Modern man cannot believe in miracles."[8] This credo has dominated American academic circles for so long that practically no academician bothers to ask: "Is this credo *empirically* true?" Please note, what I am asking is not whether it is empirically true that miracles cannot happen, but rather

---

7. For full documentation concerning the origins of the Lourdes shrine, see René Laurentin and Bernard Billet, *Lourdes: Dossier des documents authentiques*, 7 tomes (Paris: Lethielleux, 1957-66).

8. For a short presentation of his views on the matter, see Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in Rudolf Bultmann et al., *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 1-44, esp. 5.

whether it is empirically true that "modern man" cannot believe in miracles. Given the great interest in sociology among biblical scholars today, one would have expected that some academics would have checked an opinion poll to see what "modern man" (and woman) *do* believe (and therefore *can* believe) about miracles. As a matter of fact, a 1989 Gallup poll found that 82 percent of Americans polled—presumably modern men and women—believed that "even today, miracles are performed by the power of God."[9] Bultmann and company cannot tell me what modern men and women cannot do when I have empirical data proving that they do it. This is a clear case where philosophical theory must give way to social fact. But to return to my main point: in what follows we will be pursuing the *historical* question of whether Gospel reports of Jesus' miracles go back to deeds Jesus performed during his lifetime, deeds he and his disciples *thought* were miracles. Whether they actually were miracles in the *theo-logical* sense I have outlined is beyond the purview of a historical quest.

So much for miracles and the modern mind. Now let us turn to miracles and the ancient mind.

II. The Second Question: Miracles and the Ancient Mind

The problem of miracles and the ancient mind is almost the opposite of that of miracles and the modern mind. Apart from a few skeptical elites, most people in the ancient Greco-Roman world readily accepted the possibility of miracles—indeed, all too readily for our tastes.[10] Muddying the waters still further is the fact that ancient people also often accepted the practice of magic. Indeed, especially in the more popular and syncretistic forms of religion, miracle and magic easily meshed. This has led recent scholars like the late Morton Smith of Columbia University, David Aune of Loyola University of Chicago, and John Dominic Crossan of DePaul University to claim that, in the light of the social sciences, there is no real, objective difference between miracle and magic.[11] Both Jesus and Hellenistic magicians used various words, gestures, and substances

---

9. See the detailed statistics in George Gallup and Jim Castelli, *The People's Religion: American Faith in the 90's* (New York: Macmillan; London: Collier, 1989), 58; see also 4, 56, 119.

10. See Robert M. Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1952); Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Patristic Monograph Series 10) (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983); Howard Clark Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (SNTSMS 55) (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University, 1986).

11. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper Row, 1978); David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Band II. 23/2* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 1,507-57; Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 136-67, 303-32. See also John M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (SBT 2/28) (London: SCM, 1974).

to effect healings and exorcisms. Both, claim Smith and Crossan, were equally magicians. To try to distinguish Jesus from Hellenistic magicians is to engage in Christian apologetics: my religious hero works miracles, while your religious heroes work magic—even though they basically do the same thing. This equation of miracle and magic, and this affirmation that Jesus was a magician, is one of the basic assertions of Crossan's recent books on the historical Jesus.

What is one to say about this claim? Is miracle simply magic performed by "our guy"? Permit me to make two observations.

First, if one is looking for a neutral, objective term to cover both Jesus and various Hellenistic wonder workers, "magician" is not a good choice. In both the ancient and the modern world, the word "magic," when used in a religious context of religious figures, usually carried and does carry a pejorative sense. Calling the deeds of both Jesus and Hellenistic religious figures "miracles" comes much closer to the supposed "neutrality" that academic studies espouse.

Second, and more to the point, I think it highly questionable to claim that there is no real observable difference between the stories of Jesus' miracles in the Gospels and the spells and techniques found in the magical papyri of the ancient Roman period.[12] If one studies the collections of magical papyri and then compares them to the Gospel miracles, perhaps the best way to express the differences yet similarities is to draw up a sliding scale, a spectrum, or continuum of characteristics. At one end of the spectrum would lie the "ideal type" of miracle, at the other end the "ideal type" of magic. In reality, individual cases might lie in between the two ideal types, at different points along the spectrum. But we can list the characteristics that, on the whole, distinguish the ideal type of miracle, as reflected in many of the Gospel miracle stories, from the ideal type of magic, as reflected in many of the Greco-Roman magical papyri. I stress that, at this point, I am dealing with two bodies of literature and the pictures they project, not with historical events that may lie behind the texts.

In my opinion, there are seven basic characteristics of the ideal type of miracle, as seen in the Gospel stories of Jesus' miracles:

(1) The usual overarching context for a religious miracle is that of an *interpersonal relationship* of faith, trust, or love between a human being and a deity.

(2) More specifically, the person in need often seizes the initiative by

---

12. The classical collection of the Greek magical papyri is that of Karl Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae,* 2 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928, 1931). A new edition, edited by Albert Henrichs, appeared in 1973-74. For an English translation of the magical papyri (without original texts) that includes the demotic spells of Egypt, see Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

asking for the miracle, and this in itself is a tacit expression of faith. Alternately, especially in the Gospel of John, Jesus seizes the initiative and performs a miracle to foster faith. In either case, the overall context in the Gospels is the *birth and growth of faith in Jesus.*

(3) Jesus usually grants the miracle with a terse but *intelligible set of words* spoken in his own language. At times the words are accompanied by a symbolic gesture, at times not. In a few cases, there is a gesture and no words. In any case, there are no lengthy incantations or endless lists of esoteric divine names or unintelligible words, charms, or recipes.

(4) There is *no idea that a petitioner can use coercive power to force* the miracle worker to perform a miracle against his will. Nor does the miracle worker try to coerce the deity.

(5) Specifically, Jesus' miracles take place within the *context of Jesus' obedience to his Father's will.* The overarching context is the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane: "Not my will but yours be done."

(6) Jesus' miracles stand in an *eschatological* and communitarian context. That is to say, they are not just isolated acts of kindness done for isolated individuals. Jesus' miracles are signs and partial realizations of the kingdom of God, the God who comes in power to save his people Israel in the last days through Jesus' ministry.

(7) Jesus' miracles *do not directly punish or hurt* anyone. This trait forms a stark contrast with some of the magical papyri, which include spells for causing sickness or getting rid of one's enemies.

At the other end of the spectrum of religious experience, the ideal type of magic, as reflected in the Greco-Roman magical papyri, is practically the reverse mirror image of the ideal type of miracle. Let me simply highlight the most important characteristics of the ideal type of magic:

(1) Magic is the *technical manipulation of various (often impersonal) forces or the coercion of a deity* to obtain a desired concrete benefit. A string of divine names and nonsense vowels is often used in the spell to coerce the deity.

(2) The benefits sought in magic are often surprisingly *petty* and often *obtainable by human means:* for example, winning a horse race or winning a lover away from a rival.

(3) The Hellenistic magician does not usually operate with a fairly stable circle of disciples or believers. Between the magician and the individual who consults him there are no lasting bonds that make them members of some community. The magician has *a clientele, not a church.*

(4) Especially important for magic is the secret magical *spell,* often made up of a string of esoteric divine names and nonsense syllables. So, for example, we find in the magical papyri tests like this: A EE EEE IIII OOOOO YYYYYY OOOOOOO, come to me, HARPON KNOUPHI BRINTANTEN SIPHRI—and many other words and names that are

equally unintelligible. The secret spell, known only to the practitioner, is of the essence of Greco-Roman magic. The magician keeps repeating all the secret names and sounds until he hits the right button and gets the desired effect. Efficacy was all that mattered. Magic was a kind of ancient technology, as it were; and so anyone who learned the secrets of the technique could perform the magic. Thus, magic was of its nature a *learnable technique,* provided you discovered the secret. You simply had to learn the right string of nonsense syllables and esoteric names. The terse, intelligible commands of Jesus, sometimes spoken before an audience, stand in stark contrast.

Admittedly, the two ideal types I have just described are two extremes. There are gray areas in both the Gospels and the Greek magical papyri. For instance, in the Gospel of Mark the story of the hemorrhaging woman who is cured simply by touching Jesus' cloak looks very much like magic. And some magical papyri have elements of prayer and personal devotion. But on the whole, the Gospels move in the direction of the ideal type of miracle, while the papyri move in the direction of the ideal type of magic. Hence I do not agree with Smith or Crossan in identifying miracles with magic and in labeling Jesus a Jewish magician. "Miracle worker" is the more correct label, and that is not just apologetics.

Actually, apart from these arguments about definitions and types, there is a simple, common-sense reason for not applying the label of "magician" to Jesus. The New Testament uses the words "magician" and "magic" (see Acts 13:6, 8-9, 11; 19:19), but these words are never applied to Jesus or his activities. According to the New Testament, neither Jesus nor his disciples ever used these words for self-designation. Nor, most significantly, did the adversaries of Jesus or of the early church in the decades immediately after the crucifixion attack Jesus with the precise charge of magic—though they certainly accused him of many other things, including being in league with the prince of demons. As a matter of fact, the first time we hear of Jesus being attacked with the precise label of magician is in the writings of Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century A.D.

III. The Third Question: The Global Question of Jesus' Miracles

Having gotten these two preliminary questions of method out of the way, we come at last to the miracles of Jesus globally considered. My question here is indeed *global:* Do the stories of Jesus' miracles come *entirely* from the creative imagination of the early church, which dressed Jesus in the robes of a miracle worker like Elijah in order to compete in the first-century marketplace of religion? Or do at least some of the miracle stories go back to events in the life of Jesus, whatever those events

may have been? Again, I stress that I am not asking the *theo-logical* question of whether Jesus' startling deeds were actually miracles worked by God.

The idea that the miracles of Jesus are largely, if not entirely, the creation of the early church was maintained by some historians of religion in the early twentieth century, notably Wilhelm Bousset in his book *Kyrios Christos* (1913).[13] A miracle-free Jesus is, of course, as American as apple pie and Thomas Jefferson, who produced an edition of the Gospels with all the miracles of Jesus cut out.[14] While Bultmann and his followers did not go so far, Jesus' miracles were definitely pushed to the sidelines, and the creativity of the early church was often invoked to explain them.

More recently, authors like Morton Smith and E. P. Sanders have helped redress the balance by pointing out the sheer massiveness of the miracle traditions in the four Gospels.[15] The large percentage of Gospel texts given over to miracles makes sweeping them under a respectable modern carpet unacceptable. Even if we do not count parallel narratives, the Gospels contain accounts of six exorcisms, seventeen healings (including three stories of raising the dead), and eight so-called nature miracles (such as the stilling of the storm), plus numerous summary statements about Jesus' miracle working, allusions to miracles not narrated in full, various sayings of Jesus commenting on his miracles, and accusations by his enemies that he performed exorcisms by being in league with the prince of demons.

Now this overview does not mean that all the items I just listed go back to the historical Jesus. Oral tradition in the early church plus the creativity of the evangelists did play their roles. But, at least at first glance, the miracle tradition seems too mammoth and omnipresent in the various strata of the Gospel tradition to be purely the creation of the early church. To move beyond this first glance and first impression, though, we must employ the usual criteria of historicity used in the quest for the historical Jesus and apply them to the miracle traditions.

The two criteria of historicity that are of pivotal importance here are the criteria of multiple attestation and of coherence. Other criteria supply only secondary support.

(1) For the miracle tradition of the Gospels, the single most important criterion of historicity is the criterion of multiple attestation of sources and forms.

---

13. An English translation is available: Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1970); see, in particular, p. 98.

14. For the texts, with a helpful introduction, see Dickinson W. Adams, ed., *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels. "The Philosophy of Jesus" and "The Life and Morals of Jesus"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1983).

15. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, passim; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 157-73; idem, *Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 132-68.

(a) As for multiple sources, the evidence is overwhelming. Every Gospel source (Mark, Q, the special Matthean material, the special Lucan material, and John), plus every evangelist in his redactional summaries, plus the Jewish historian Josephus in Book 18 of his *Jewish Antiquities* (published around A.D. 95) affirm the miracle-working activity of Jesus.

Let us take as a prime example the Gospel of Mark, the first Gospel to be written, ca. A.D. 70. Roughly 209 verses out of a total of 666 deal directly or indirectly with miracles—in other words a little over 31 percent of the Gospel treats of miracles. If one considers instead only the bulk of the public ministry in the first ten chapters of the Gospel, the number goes up to 47 percent. This is clearly not due just to Mark's creativity. Form critics of Mark's Gospel have isolated various blocks of miracle stories as well as individual isolated miracle stories with strikingly different styles and tones. These collections of miracles clearly reach back into many different streams of first generation Christian tradition. In addition, Mark contains sayings of Jesus commenting on his miracles.

Quite different from Mark is the so-called Q tradition, that is, the material common to Matthew and Luke but not present in Mark. The Q tradition is made up almost entirely of loose sayings of Jesus. Yet one of the very few narratives in Q is the story of the healing of the centurion's servant. Various sayings of Jesus also testify to Q's knowledge of his miracles.

The special traditions of Matthew and especially of Luke know of further miracle stories not represented in Mark or Q. The independent tradition of John's Gospel likewise knows of many "signs" Jesus performed. One also finds brief, retrospective references to Jesus' miracles in the sermons of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles.[16] Another brief reference is found in Josephus' quick sketch of Jesus' ministry in Book 18 of his *Jewish Antiquities* (18.3.3 @63-64): "At the time [of the governorship of Pontius Pilate in Judea], there appeared on the scene Jesus, a wise man. For he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Gentile origin." Notice: Josephus first gives Jesus the generic title "wise man" *[sophos aner]*. Then he unpacks that title by enumerating its major components: (1) Jesus worked startling deeds, *paradoxa*, a word Josephus also uses of the miracles worked by the prophet Elijah. (2) Jesus imparted teaching to people who were searching for the

16. Admittedly, the mention of Jesus' miracles in the kerygmatic speeches in Acts could be attributed simply to Luke's knowledge of Mark, Q, and L. However, at least some commentators see in these speeches pre-Lucan tradition. See Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte. II. Teil* (Freiburg: Herder, 1982), 63, for Acts 10:38; Ulrich Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte* (WMANT 5), 3rd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 126, for Acts 2:22-23.

truth. (3) This combination of miracles and teaching attracted a large following. Thus Josephus' independent witness basically parallels the picture of Jesus given in the Gospels.

(b) Besides multiple attestation of literary *sources,* such as Mark, Q, and John, miracles are also supported by multiple attestation of literary *forms.* That is to say, both narratives *about* Jesus and sayings *of* Jesus, two different literary forms that probably had their separate history of development in the oral tradition, testify independently to Jesus' miracle-working activity. Moreover, both the narratives and the sayings treat various types of miracles: for example, exorcism, healing the sick, and raising the dead.

In short, multiple sources intertwine with multiple forms to give abundant testimony that the historical Jesus performed deeds deemed by himself and by others to be miracles. If the multiple attestation of sources and forms does not produce reliable results here, it should be dropped as a criterion of historicity. For hardly any other type of Gospel material enjoys greater multiple attestation than do Jesus' miracles.

(2) The multiple attestation of sources is "backed up" by a second criterion, that of coherence or consistency. The inventory we have just run through shows that we have here a grand example of various actions and sayings of Jesus converging, meshing, and mutually supporting each other. For instance, the various narratives of exorcism cry out for some explanation, which the narratives themselves do not give. The explanation is given in the sayings material of both Mark 3:27 par. and Luke 11:20 par.—i.e., in both Marcan and Q material. Jesus' explanation is that the exorcisms are dramatic presentations and partial realizations of God's eschatological triumph over Satan through Jesus' ministry. Similarly, the various narratives of healing, especially prominent in Mark and the special Lucan tradition, receive their interpretation in a Q saying of Jesus found in Matthew 11:5-6 par. In this saying Jesus responds to the envoys of John the Baptist, who ask: "Are you the one to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus replies by pointing to his miracles, which, he implicitly claims, fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the time of Israel's salvation: then shall the blind see and the lame walk, lepers be cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead be raised and the poor have the good news preached to them.

What is remarkable in all this is how many different deeds and sayings of Jesus, though drawn from various sources and forming critical categories, converge to create a meaningful, consistent whole. This neat, elegant, and unforced "fit" of the deeds and sayings of Jesus, coming from many diverse sources, argues eloquently for a basic historical fact: Jesus did perform deeds that he and at least some of his contemporaries considered miracles.

The argument from coherence may be approached from a different angle as well, namely, the success of Jesus in gaining many followers. All four Gospels as well as Josephus agree (1) that Jesus attracted a large following and (2) that the powerful combination of miracles and teaching was the reason for the attraction. After all, John the Baptist was also a powerful preacher, but he worked no miracles. It may be no accident that his following sooner or later disappeared from the scene, while the followers of Jesus, who claimed to continue his miraculous activity, flourished despite persecution.

Multiple attestation of sources and forms *plus* coherence are thus the two major criteria favoring the historicity of the global tradition that Jesus performed deeds that he and others claimed to be miracles. While the other criteria of historicity are not as strong in this regard, they do in general favor the same conclusion.

Let us look first at the criterion of the dissimilarity or discontinuity of Jesus from his environment. The criterion of discontinuity or dissimilarity can obviously be of only limited use, since miracles were ascribed to many religious figures of the ancient Mediterranean world, Jewish and pagan alike. Yet many Jewish and pagan miracle stories differ in some notable ways from the miracle traditions of Jesus. Mark and Q, the earliest documents recounting Jesus' miracles, date roughly forty years after the crucifixion. In contrast, many of the pagan and Jewish sources, recounting the miracles of figures like Apollonius of Tyana, Honi the Circle Drawer, or Hanina ben Dosa, often come from centuries after the time these persons lived. Moreover, rabbinic figures like Honi and Hanina are not so much miracle *workers* as holy men whose prayers that God work a miracle are answered. To take another example: Josephus tells of various "sign prophets," who whipped up the Jewish populace just before the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70). But these prophets *promised* miraculous deliverance; they are never said to have performed miracles. The intriguing truth is that, despite all the scholarly claims to the contrary, it is very difficult to *name* another Jewish miracle worker in Palestine precisely during the time Jesus lived—to say nothing of giving an extended description of the miracle worker's historical activity and message.

(4) Let us move to the criterion that focuses on elements in Jesus' ministry that would have embarrassed or caused difficulty for the early church. The criterion of embarrassment applies at least to the special case in which Jesus' adversaries attribute one of his exorcisms to his being in league with the prince of demons (a charge that is found in both the Marcan and Q traditions: Mark 3:20-30; Matt. 12:22-32 par.). It seems unlikely that the church would have gone out of its way to create such a story and such an accusation, one which puts Jesus in a questionable light. The accusation and therefore the exorcism it seeks to stigmatize most likely go back to Jesus' own day.

Beyond these four criteria, some individual miracle stories have a few tantalizing indications of historical recollections. To appreciate this point, we should realize that most miracle stories in the Gospels have been quite generalized and schematized by the time they reach the evangelists. The stories usually contain anonymous persons acting in unnamed locales with no indication of a time frame, and the stories are told for the most part with stereotypical formulas.

All the more striking, therefore, are the few miracle stories with concrete, colorful details. For instance, it is in two miracle stories of Mark's Gospel that we hear the only Aramaic commands spoken by Jesus during his public ministry: *talitha koum* ("little girl, arise") in the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:41) and *ephphatha* ("be opened") in the healing of the deaf man with a speech impediment (Mark 7:34).

Similar to these occurrences are the rare cases when we learn the name of a petitioner or beneficiary of a miracle who stands outside the circle of Jesus' immediate disciples. In the Synoptics, the only cases are Jairus and Bartimaeus. The case of Bartimaeus is especially striking since his proper name is connected with the name of the city Jericho and the time of year just before Passover, when Jesus is going up to Jerusalem for the feast. The occurrences of the names Jairus and Bartimaeus cannot be summarily dismissed as examples of later Gospel traditions inevitably creating legendary expansions of earlier stories, since the later Gospel of Matthew drops both names when it takes over the two stories from the earlier Gospel of Mark.

The naming of a beneficiary of a miracle is just as rare in John's Gospel, despite the very lively and detailed nature of some of John's miracle stories. The only example of a named beneficiary outside the immediate circle of disciples is Lazarus. Here again, a place name, Bethany, is connected with the story, which occurs close to the final Passover of Jesus' life. To be sure, these concrete details do not automatically guarantee the historicity of the stories in which they appear. But insofar as they go against the grain of anonymity and bland stereotyped formulas found in the vast majority of Gospel miracle stories, they do demand serious attention.

Conclusion

To sum up, then: the historical fact that Jesus performed extraordinary deeds deemed by himself and others to be miracles is supported impressively by the criterion of the multiple attestation of sources and forms and by the criterion of coherence. Other criteria supply only secondary or "back-up" support for these primary criteria. But, putting it negatively, at least we can say that none of the other criteria runs counter to our two decisive criteria; all give at least weak support.

The curious upshot of our overview is that, considered globally, the tradition of Jesus' miracles is more firmly supported by the criteria of historicity than are a number of other well-known and often readily accepted traditions about Jesus' life and ministry: for example, his status as a carpenter or his use of *'abba'* in his own prayer to his heavenly Father.[17] If I may put the point dramatically but with not too much exaggeration: if the miracle tradition from Jesus' public ministry were to be rejected *entirely* as unhistorical, as a pure creation of the early church, then so should every other Gospel tradition about Jesus, and we should conclude by confessing total ignorance about the historical Jesus. For if the criteria of historicity do not work in the case of the miracle tradition, where multiple attestation is so massive and coherence so impressive, there is no reason to expect that these criteria would work any better elsewhere in the Gospel tradition. The quest for the historical Jesus would simply have to be abandoned. Needless to say, this is not the conclusion I have reached in this brief overview.

Rather, the massive presence of the miracle stories in the Gospel tradition is a vital clue to the mystery of how Jesus saw himself and presented himself to the people of Israel in the first century A.D. In the whole of the Old Testament, there are only three Israelites who are noted for performing a whole *series* of miracles: Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. Of the three, only Elijah and Elisha are reported, like Jesus, to have been itinerant prophets active in northern Israel and to have raised the dead. And only Elijah was expected by many in Israel to return to usher in the last days, when God would regather the scattered twelve tribes of Israel. In short, the miracle tradition of the Gospels points toward a Jesus who consciously chose to present himself to first-century Israel as the eschatological prophet clothed in the mantle of Elijah. What that means for our overall understanding of Jesus begins to be sketched in volume two of *A Marginal Jew,* but will be fully spelled out only in volume three. In the meantime, though, we have come to appreciate one vital point: if scholars search for the historical Jesus and yet insist on downplaying or ignoring the massive miracle tradition in the Gospels, they condemn themselves to repeating the mistake of Thomas Jefferson. In his truncated edition of the Gospels, Jefferson cut out all the miracles of Jesus and thus created a bland moralist supposedly more relevant to the modern age. The trouble is, as twentieth-century Americans have learned all too well, nothing ages faster than relevance. The historical Jesus, a first-century Jew from Palestine, will always seem strange, alien, and even offensive to us. He is a person who will never be immediately relevant to our little agendas. And in that consists his abiding.

---

17. For Jesus' status as a carpenter (better: a woodworker), which hangs on the thin thread of Mark 6:3, see Meier, *A Marginal Jew,* 1:280. For the classic treatment of *'abba'*, see Joachim Jeremias, *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 15-67.

Alaska Girlhood

R. F. Bartholomew

Eden was a winter
when gods skated the earth.
They'd warm themselves by the fires
that lit the man-high snowbanks
bounding primeval lakes.
Their shadows fingered the forest
under the black eternal sky.

I was a child and remember
the time before feeling died,
deep nights when
the auroras strode in columns
across heavens so clear
they crackled with danger.

And we were gods-in-making,
following the paths they'd forged
through the snow, sometimes to the edge
of the known ice, sometimes beyond.
Or, holding our toes to the flames,
breathing the dry pine heat,
we heard their laughter and their somber talk,
drinking it in with wassail and hot milk.

In our infancy we knew all things:
the sublime with the unspeakable, both
writing themselves in our formative minds.
We saw, accepted in our innocence
which was not innocent but
a great quilt of snow.

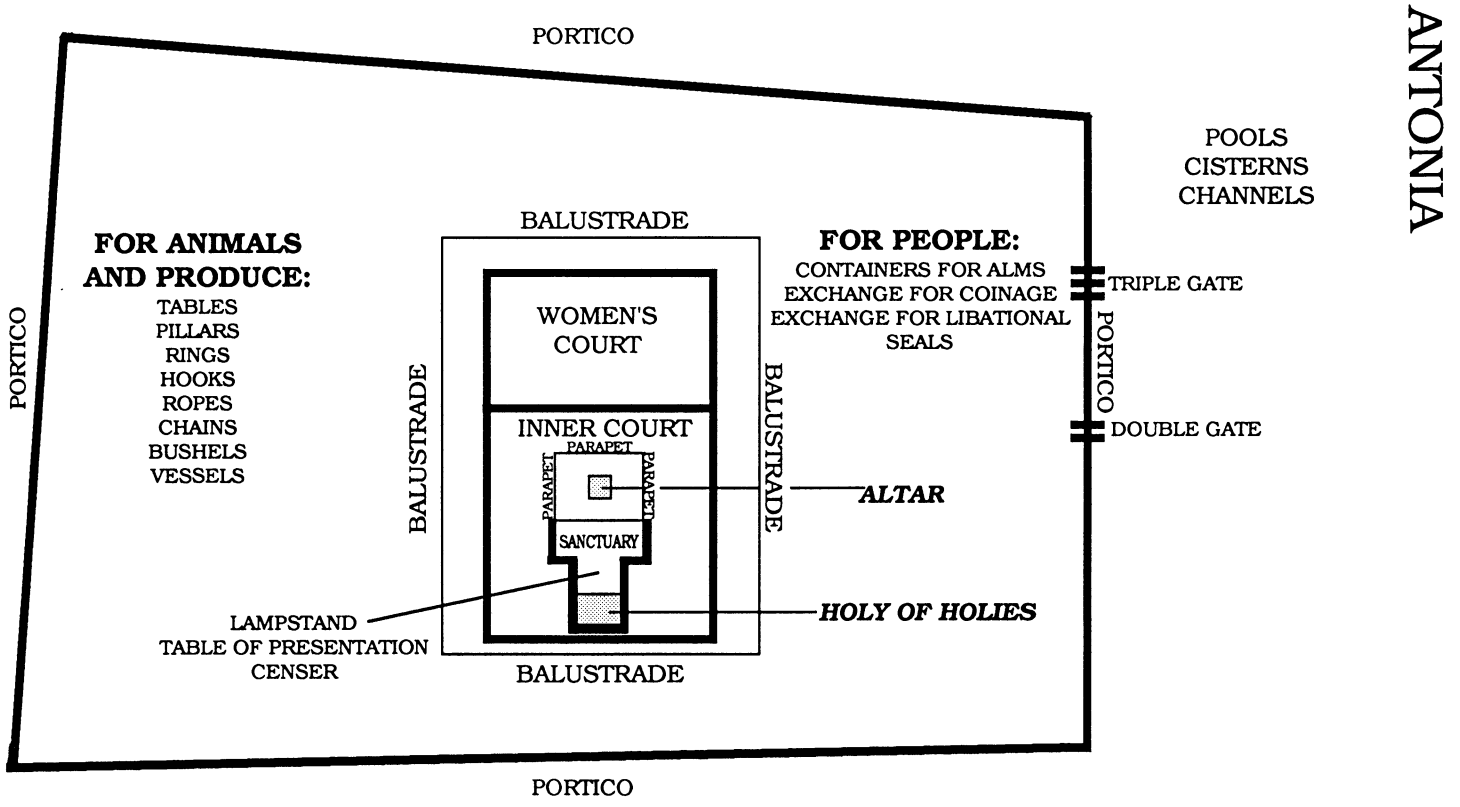
Jesus' Dispute in the Temple and the Origin of the Eucharist

Bruce Chilton

CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF JESUS throughout the modern period has been stumped by a single, crucial question. Anyone who has read the Gospels knows that Jesus was a skilled teacher, a rabbi in the parlance of early Judaism. He composed a portrait of God as divine ruler ("the kingdom of God," in his words) and wove it together with an appeal to people to behave as God's children (by loving both their divine father and their neighbor). At the same time it is plain that Jesus appeared to be a threat both to Jewish and to Roman authorities in Jerusalem. He would not have been crucified otherwise. The question which has nagged critical discussion concerns the relationship between Jesus the rabbi and Jesus the criminal: how does a teacher of God's ways and God's love find himself on a cross?

Scholarly pictures of Jesus which have been developed during the past two hundred years typically portray him as either an appealing, gifted teacher or as a vehement, political revolutionary. Both kinds of portrait are wanting. If Jesus' teaching was purely abstract, a matter of defining God's nature and the appropriate human response to God, it is hard to see why he would have risked his life in Jerusalem and why the local aristocracy there turned against him. On the other hand, if Jesus' purpose was to encourage some sort of terrorist rebellion against Rome, why should he have devoted so much of his ministry to telling memorable parables in Galilee? It is easy enough to imagine Jesus the rabbi or Jesus the revolutionary. But how can we do justice to both aspects, and discover Jesus, the revolutionary rabbi of the first century?

Although appeals to the portrait of Jesus as a terrorist are still found today, current fashion is much more inclined to view him as a philosophical figure, even as a Jewish clone of the peripatetic teachers of the Hellenistic world. But the more abstract Jesus' teaching is held to be—and the more we conceive of him simply as uttering timeless maxims and communing


PORTICO
POOLS
CISTERNS
CHANNELS
ANTONIA
BALUSTRADE
FOR ANIMALS
AND PRODUCE:
TABLES
PILLARS
RINGS
HOOKS
ROPES
CHAINS
BUSHELS
VESSELS
FOR PEOPLE:
CONTAINERS FOR ALMS
EXCHANGE FOR COINAGE
EXCHANGE FOR LIBATIONAL
SEALS
TRIPLE GATE
DOUBLE GATE
PORTICO
WOMEN'S
COURT
INNER COURT
PARAPET
PARAPET
PARAPET
SANCTUARY
ALTAR
HOLY OF HOLIES
LAMPSTAND
TABLE OF PRESENTATION
CENSER
BALUSTRADE
BALUSTRADE
BALUSTRADE
PORTICO
PORTICO

with God—the more difficulty there is in understanding the resistance to him. For that reason, a degree of anti-Semitism is the logical result of trying to imagine Jesus as a purely non-violent and speculative teacher. A surprising number of scholars (no doubt inadvertently) have aided and abetted the caricature of a philosophical Jesus persecuted by irrationally violent Jews.

The Gospels all relate an incident which, critically analyzed, resolves the problem of what we might call the two historical natures of Jesus. The passage is traditionally called "The Cleansing of the Temple" (see Matt. 21:12-16; Mark 11:15-18; John 2:14-22; and Luke 19:45-48). Jesus boldly enters the holy place where sacrifice was conducted and throws out the people who were converting the currency of Rome into money which was acceptable to the priestly authorities. He even expels vendors and their animals from the Temple, bringing the routine of sacrifice to a halt.

Such an action would indeed have aroused opposition from both the Roman authorities and the priests. The priests would be threatened because an important source of revenue was jeopardized, as well as the arrangements they themselves had condoned. The Romans would be concerned because they wished for political reasons to protect the operation of the Temple. They saw sacrifice there as a symbol of their tolerant acceptance of Jews as loyal subjects, and they even arranged to pay for some of the offerings.[1] The same Temple which was for the priestly class a divine privilege was for the Romans the seal of imperial hegemony.

The conventional picture of Jesus as preventing commercial activity in God's house is appealing but over-simplified. It enables us to conceive of Jesus as opposing worship in the Temple, and that is the intention of the Gospels. They are all written with hindsight, in the period after the Temple was destroyed (in 70 Common Era [C.E.]), when Christianity was emerging as a largely non-Jewish movement. From the early fathers of Christianity to the most modern commentaries, the alluring simplicity of the righteous, philosophical Jesus casting out the "money-changers" has proven itself attractive again and again.

As is often the case, the conventional picture of Jesus may only be sustained by ignoring the social realities of early Judaism. Jesus in fact worshipped in the Temple and encouraged others to do so (see, for example, his instructions to the leper in Matt. 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14). In addition, the picture of Jesus simply throwing the money-changers out of the Temple seems implausible. There were indeed "money-changers" associated with the Temple, whose activities are set down in the Mishnah. Every year the changing of money—in order to collect the tax of a half

---

1. See Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2:197, 409; *Against Apion*, 2:77; Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*, 157, 317.

shekel for every adult male—went on publicly throughout Israel. The process commenced a full month before Passover, with a proclamation concerning the tax,[2] and exchanges were set up outside Jerusalem ten days before they were set up in the Temple. According to Josephus, the first century Jewish historian (and priest),[3] the tax was not even limited to those residing in the land of Israel, but was collected from Jews far and wide. An awareness of those simple facts brings us to an equally simple conclusion: the Gospels' picture of Jesus is distorted. It is clear that he could not have stopped the collection of the half shekel by overturning some tables in the Temple.

A generation after Jesus' death, by the time the Gospels were written, the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and the most influential centers of Christianity were cites of the Mediterranean world such as Alexandria, Antioch, Corinth, Damascus, Ephesus, and Rome. There were still large numbers of Jews who were also followers of Jesus, but non-Jews came to predominate in the early church. They had control over how the Gospels were written after 70 C.E. and how the texts were interpreted. The Gospels were composed by one group of teachers after another during the period between Jesus' death and 100 C.E. There is a reasonable degree of consensus that Mark was the first of the Gospels to be written, around 71 C.E. in the environs of Rome. As convention has it, Matthew was subsequently composed, near 80 C.E., perhaps in Damascus (or elsewhere in Syria), while Luke came later, say in 90 C.E., perhaps in Antioch. Some of the earliest teachers who shaped the Gospels shared the cultural milieu of Jesus, but others had never seen him; they lived far from his land at a later period and were not practicing Jews. John's Gospel was composed in Ephesus around 100 C.E. and is a reflection upon the significance of Jesus for Christians who benefitted from the sort of teaching the Synoptic Gospels represented.

The growth of Christianity involved a rapid transition from culture to culture and, within each culture, from sub-culture to sub-culture. A basic prerequisite for understanding any text of the Gospels, therefore, is to define the cultural context of a given statement. The cultural context of the picture of Jesus throwing money-changers out of the Temple is that of the predominantly non-Jewish audience of the Gospels, who regarded Judaism as a thing of the past and its worship as corrupt. The attempt to imagine Jesus behaving in that fashion only distorts our understanding of his purposes and encourages the anti-Semitism of Christians. Insensitivity to the cultural milieus of the Gospels goes hand in hand with a prejudicial treatment of cultures other than our own.

---

2. See Mishnah, Shekalim, 1.1, 3.
3. See his *Jewish War*, 7:218, and *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:312.

Jesus probably *did* object to the tax of a half shekel, as Matthew 17:24-27 indicates. For him, being a child of God (a "son," as he put it) implied that one was free of any imposed payment for the worship of the Temple. But a single onslaught of the sort described in the Gospels would not have amounted to an effective protest against the payment. To stop the collection would have required an assault involving the central treasuries of the Temple, as well as local treasuries in Israel and beyond. There is no indication that Jesus and his followers did anything of the kind, and an action approaching such dimensions would have invited immediate and forceful repression by both Jewish and Roman authorities. There is no evidence that they reacted in that manner to Jesus and his followers.

But Jesus' action in the Temple as attested in the Gospels is not simply a matter of preventing the collection of the half shekel. In fact, Luke 19:45-46 says nothing whatever about "money-changers," and because Luke's Gospel is in some ways the most sensitive of all the Gospels to historical concerns, the omission seems significant. Luke joins the other Gospels in portraying Jesus' act in the Temple as an occupation designed to prevent the sacrifice of animals which were acquired on the site. The trading involved commerce within the Temple, and the Jesus of the canonical Gospels, like the Jesus of the Gospel according to Thomas, held that "Traders and merchants shall not enter the places of my father" (Thomas, saying no. 64).

Jesus' action in the Temple, understood as a means of protecting the sanctity of the Temple, is comparable to the actions of other Jewish teachers of his period. Josephus reports that the Pharisees made known their displeasure at a high priest (and a king at that, Alexander Jannaeus) by inciting a crowd to pelt him with lemons (on hand for a festal procession) at the time he should have been offering sacrifice.[4] Josephus also recounts the execution of the rabbis who were implicated in a plot to dismantle the eagle Herod had erected over a gate of the Temple.[5] By comparison, Jesus' action seems almost tame; after all, what he did was to expel some vendors, an act less directly threatening to priestly and secular authorities than what some earlier Pharisees had done.

Once we understand that Jesus' maneuver in the Temple was in essence a claim upon territory in order to eject those performing an activity he disapproved of, it seems more straightforward to characterize it as an "occupation"; the traditional "cleansing" is obviously an apologetic designation. The purpose of Jesus' activity makes good sense within the context of what we know of the activities of other early rabbinic teachers. Hillel, an older contemporary of Jesus, taught (according to the Babylo-

4. See *Antiquities*, 13:372, 373.

5. See *Jewish War*, 1:648-55; *Antiquities*, 17:149-67.

nian Talmud, Shabbath 31) a form of what is known in Christian circles as the Golden Rule taught by Jesus: we should do to others as we would have them do to us. Hillel is also reported to have taught that offerings brought to the Temple should have hands laid on them by their owners and then be given over to priests for slaughter. Recent studies of the anthropology of sacrifice show why such stipulations were important. Hillel was insisting that, when the people of Israel came to worship, they should offer of their own property. Putting one's hands on the animal about to be sacrificed was a statement of ownership.

The followers of a rabbi named Shammai are typically depicted in rabbinic literature as resisting the teachings of Hillel. Here, too, they take the part of the opposition. They insist that animals for sacrifice might be given *directly* to priests for slaughter; Hillel's requirement of laying hands on the sacrifice is held to be dispensable. But one of Shammai's followers was so struck by the rectitude of Hillel's position, he had some 3,000 animals brought into the Temple and gave them to those who were willing to lay hands on them in advance of sacrifice.[6]

In one sense, the tradition concerning Hillel envisages the opposite movement from what is represented in the tradition concerning Jesus: animals are driven into the Temple rather than their traders being expelled. Yet the purpose of the action by Hillel's partisan enforces a certain understanding of correct offering—and one which accords with a standard feature of sacrifice in the anthropological literature. Hillel's teaching, in effect, insists upon the participation of the offerer by virtue of his ownership of what is offered, while most of Shammai's followers are portrayed as sanctioning sacrifice more as a self-contained, priestly action.

Jesus' occupation of the Temple is best seen—along lines similar to those involved in the provision of animals to support Hillel's position—as an attempt to insist that the offerer's actual ownership of what is offered is a vital aspect of sacrifice. Jesus, as we will see, did not oppose sacrifice as such by what he did. His concern was with how Israelites acquired and then offered their own sacrifices.

Jesus' occupation of the Temple thus occurred within the context of a particular dispute in which the Pharisees took part, a controversy regarding the location of where animals for sacrifice were to be acquired. In that the dispute was intimately involved with the issue of how animals were to be procured, it manifests a focus upon purity which is akin to that attributed to Hillel.

The nature and intensity of the dispute are only comprehensible when the significance of the Temple, as well as its sacrificial functioning,

---

6. See the Babylonian Talmud, Bezah 20a, b; Tosephta Hagigah 2.11; Jerusalem Talmud, Hagigah 2.3 and Bezah 2.4.

are kept in mind. Within the holy of holies, enclosed in a house and beyond a veil, the God of Israel was enthroned in a virtually empty room. Only the high priest could enter that space, and then only once a year, on the day of atonement; at the autumnal equinox the rays of the sun could enter the earthly chamber whence the sun's ruler exercised dominion, because the whole of the edifice faced east. Outside the inner veil (still within the house) the table of the bread of the presence, the menorah, and the altar for incense were arranged. The house of God was just that: the place where he dwelled, and where he might meet his people.

Immediately outside the house, and down some steps, the altar itself, of unhewn stones and accessible by ramps and steps, was arranged. Priests had regularly to tend to the sacrifices, and male Israelites were also admitted into the court structure which surrounded the altar. Various specialized structures accommodated the needs of the priests, and chambers were built into the interior of the court (and, indeed, within the house) to serve as stores, treasuries, and the like. The bronze gate of Nicanor led eastward again, down steps to the court of the women, where female Israelites in a state of purity were admitted. Priests and Israelites might enter the complex of house and courts by means of gates along the north and south walls; priests and Levites who were actively engaged in the service of the sanctuary tended to use the north side.

The complex we have so far described, which is commonly known as the sanctuary proper, circumscribed the God, the people, and the offerings of Israel. Within the boundaries of the sanctuary, what was known to be pure was offered by personnel chosen for the purpose in the presence of the people of God and of God himself. Nothing foreign, no one with a serious defect or impurity, nothing unclean was permitted. Here God's presence was marked as much by order as by the pillar of cloud, which was the flag of the Temple by day, and the embers which glowed at night. God was present to the people with the things he had made and chosen for his own, and their presence brought them into the benefits of the covenantal compact with God. The practice of the Temple and its sacrificial worship was centered upon the demarcation and the consumption of purity in its place, with the result that God's holiness could be safely enjoyed, within his four walls, and the walls of male and female Israel. In no other place on earth was Israel more Israel or God more God than in the sanctuary. A balustrade surrounded the sanctuary, and steps led down to the exterior court; non-Israelites who entered were threatened with death. Physically and socially, the sanctuary belonged to none but God, and what and whom God chose (and then only in their places).

The sanctuary itself was enclosed by a larger court, and the edifice as a whole was referred to as the Temple. On the north side, the pure, sacrificial animals were slain and butchered, and stone pillars and tables, and

chains and rings and ropes, and vessels and bushels, were arranged to enable the process to go on smoothly and with visible, deliberate rectitude. The north side of the sanctuary, then, was essentially devoted to the preparation of what could be offered, under the ministration of those who were charged with the offering. The south side was the most readily accessible area in the Temple. Although Israelites outnumbered any other group of people there, and pious Jews entered only unshod, without staff or purse (cf. Berakhoth 9:5), others might enter through monumental gates on the south wall of the mount of the Temple; the elaborate system of pools, cisterns, and conduits to the south of the mount, visible today, evidences the practice of ritual purity, probably by all entrants, whether Jewish or gentile, into the Temple. Basically, then, the south side of the outer court was devoted to people and the north side to things; together, the entire area of the outer court might be described as potentially chosen, while the sanctuary defined what actually had been chosen. The outer court was itself held in the highest regard, as is attested architecturally by the elaborate gates around the mount.

The Gospels describe the southern side of the outer court as the place where Jesus expelled the traders, and that is what brings us to the question of a dispute in which Pharisees were involved.The exterior court was unquestionably well suited for trade, since it was surrounded by porticoes on the inside, in conformity to Herod's architectural preferences. But the assumption of Rabbinic literature and Josephus is that the market for the sale of sacrificial beasts was not located in the Temple at all but in a place called Hanuth ("market" in Aramaic) on the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron Valley. According to the Babylonian Talmud,[7] some forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the principal council of Jerusalem was removed from the place in the Temple called the Chamber of Hewn Stone to Hanuth. Around 30 C.E. Caiaphas both expelled the Sanhedrin and introduced the traders into the Temple, in both ways centralizing power in his own hands.

From the point of view of Pharisaism generally, trade in the southern side of the outer court was anathema. Purses were not permitted in the Temple, according to the Pharisees' teaching,[8] and the introduction of trade into the Temple rendered impractical the ideal of not bringing into the Temple more than would be consumed there. Incidentally, the installation of traders in the porticoes would also involve the removal of those teachers, Pharisaic and otherwise, who taught and observed in the Temple itself.[9]

From the point of view of the smooth conduct of sacrifice, of course,

---

7. See Abodah Zarah 8b; Shabbath 1Sa; Sanhedrin 41a.
8. See Mishnah Berakhoth 9.5.
9. See the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 11.2; Pesahim 26a.

Caiaphas' innovation was sensible. One could know at the moment of purchase that one's sacrifice was acceptable and not run the risk of harm befalling the animal on its way to be slaughtered. But when we look at the installation of the traders from the point of view of Hillel's teaching, Jesus' objection becomes understandable. Hillel had taught that one's sacrifice had to be shown to be one's own, by the imposition of hands; part of the necessary preparation was not just of people to the south and beasts to the north, but the connection between the two by appropriation. Caiaphas' innovation was sensible on the understanding that sacrifice was simply a matter of offering pure, unblemished animals. But it failed in Pharisaic terms, not only in its introduction of the necessity for commerce into the Temple, but in its breach of the link between worshipper and offering in the sacrificial action.

The animals were correct in Caiaphas' system, and the priests were regular, but the understanding of the offering by the chosen people appeared—to some at least—profoundly defective. The essential component of Jesus' occupation of the Temple is perfectly explicable within the context of contemporary Pharisaism, in which purity was more than a question of animals for sacrifice being intact. For Jesus, the issue of sacrifice also—and crucially—concerned the action of Israel, as in the teaching of Hillel. His action, of course, upset financial arrangements for the sale of such animals, and it is interesting that John 2:15 speaks of his sweeping away the "coins" (in Greek, *kermata)* involved in the trade. But such incidental disturbance is to be distinguished from a deliberate attempt to prevent the collection of the half shekel, which would have required coordinated activity throughout Israel (and beyond), and which typically involved larger units of currency than the term "coins" suggests.

Jesus shared Hillel's concern that what was offered by Israel in the Temple should truly belong to Israel. His vehemence in opposing Caiaphas' reform was a function of his deep commitment to the notion that Israel was pure and should offer of its own, even if others thought one unclean (see Matt. 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-44; Luke 5:12-14), on the grounds that it is not what goes into a person which defiles but what comes out (see Matt. 15:11; Mark 7:15). Israelites are properly understood as pure, so that what extends from a person, what one is and does and has, manifests that purity. That focused, generative vision was the force behind Jesus' occupation of the Temple; only those after 70 C.E. who no longer treasured the Temple in Jerusalem as God's house could (mis)take Jesus' position to be a prophecy of doom or an objection to sacrifice.

Neither Hillel nor Jesus needs to be understood as acting upon any symbolic agenda other than his conception of acceptable sacrifice, nor as appearing to his contemporaries as being anything other than a typical Pharisee, impassioned with purity in the Temple to the point of forceful

intervention. Neither of their positions may be understood as a concern with the physical acceptability of the animals; in each case, the question of purity is, What is to be done with what is taken to be clean?

Jesus' interference in the ordinary worship of the Temple might have been sufficient by itself to bring about his execution. After all, the Temple was the center of Judaism for as long as it stood. Roman officials were so interested in its smooth functioning at the hands of the priests they appointed that they were known to sanction the penalty of death for gross sacrilege.[10] Yet there is no indication that Jesus was arrested immediately. Instead, he remained at liberty for some time, and was finally taken into custody just after one of his meals, the last supper (Matt. 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:3-11). The decision of the authorities of the Temple to move against Jesus when they did is what made it the final supper.

Why did they wait, and why did they act when they did? The Gospels portray them as fearful of the popular backing which Jesus enjoyed (Matt. 26:5; Mark 14:2; Luke 22:2; John 11:47-48), and his inclusive teaching of purity probably did bring enthusiastic followers into the Temple with him. But in addition, there was another factor: Jesus could not simply be dispatched as a cultic criminal. He was not attempting an onslaught upon the Temple as such; his dispute with the authorities concerned purity within the Temple. Other rabbis of his period also engaged in physical demonstrations of the purity they required in the conduct of worship, as we have seen. Jesus' action was extreme, but not totally without precedent, even in the use of force. Most crucially, Jesus could claim the support of tradition in objecting to sitting vendors within the Temple, and Caiaphas' innovation in fact did not stand. That is the reason why Rabbinic sources assume that Hanuth was the site of the vendors.

The delay of the authorities, then, was understandable. We could also say it was commendable, reflecting continued controversy over the merits of Jesus' teaching and whether his occupation of the great court should be condemned out of hand. But why did they finally arrest Jesus? The last supper provides the key; something about Jesus' meals after his occupation of the Temple caused Judas to inform on Jesus. Of course, "Judas" is the only name which the traditions of the New Testament have left us. We cannot say who or how many of the disciples became disaffected by Jesus' behavior after his occupation of the Temple.

However they learned of Jesus' new interpretation of his meals of fellowship, the authorities arrested him just after the supper we call last. Jesus continued to celebrate fellowship at table as a foretaste of the king-

---

10. See Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15:417.

dom, just as he had before. As before, the promise of drinking wine new in the kingdom of God joined his followers in an anticipatory celebration of that kingdom (see Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). But he also added a new and scandalous dimension of meaning. His occupation of the Temple having failed, Jesus said over the wine, "This is my blood," and over the bread, "This is my flesh" (Matt. 26:26, 28; Mark 14:22, 24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:24-25; Justin, *Apology,* 1.66.3).

In Jesus' context—the context of his confrontation with the authorities of the Temple—his words can have had only one meaning. He cannot have meant, "Here are my personal body and blood"; that is an interpretation which only makes sense at a later stage in the development of Christianity.[11] Jesus' point was rather that, in the absence of a Temple which permitted his view of purity to be practiced, wine was his blood of sacrifice and bread was his flesh of sacrifice. In Aramaic, "blood" *(dema)* and "flesh" *(bisra,* which may also be rendered as "body") can carry such a sacrificial meaning. And, in Jesus' context, that is the most natural meaning.

The meaning of "the last supper," then, actually evolved over a series of meals after Jesus' occupation of the Temple. During that period Jesus claimed that wine and bread were a better sacrifice than what was offered in the Temple, a foretaste of new wine in the kingdom of God. At least wine and bread were Israel's own, not tokens of priestly dominance. No wonder the opposition to him, even among the Twelve (in the shape of Judas, according to the Gospels), became deadly. In essence, Jesus made his meals into a rival altar.

That final gesture of protest gave Caiaphas what he needed. Jesus could be charged with blasphemy before those with an interest in the Temple. The issue now was not simply Jesus' opposition to the sitting of vendors of animals, but his creation of an alternative sacrifice. He blasphemed the law of Moses. The accusation concerned the Temple, in which Rome also had a vested interest.

Pilate had no regard for issues of purity; Acts 18:14-16 reflect the attitude of an official in a similar position, and Josephus shows that Pilate was without sympathy for Judaism. But the Temple in Jerusalem had come to symbolize Roman power, as well as the devotion of Israel. Rome guarded jealously the sacrifices which the emperor financed in Jerusalem; when they were spurned in the year 66, the act was a declaration of war.[12] Jesus stood accused of creating a disturbance in that Temple (dur-

---

11. For a scholarly discussion of that development as reflected within the texts of the New Testament, see Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles* (Leiden: Brill, 1994). In a popular way, the question is also treated in Chilton, "The Eucharist: Exploring Its Origins," *Bible Review* 10 (1994), 6:36-43.

12. See Josephus, *Jewish War,* 2:409.

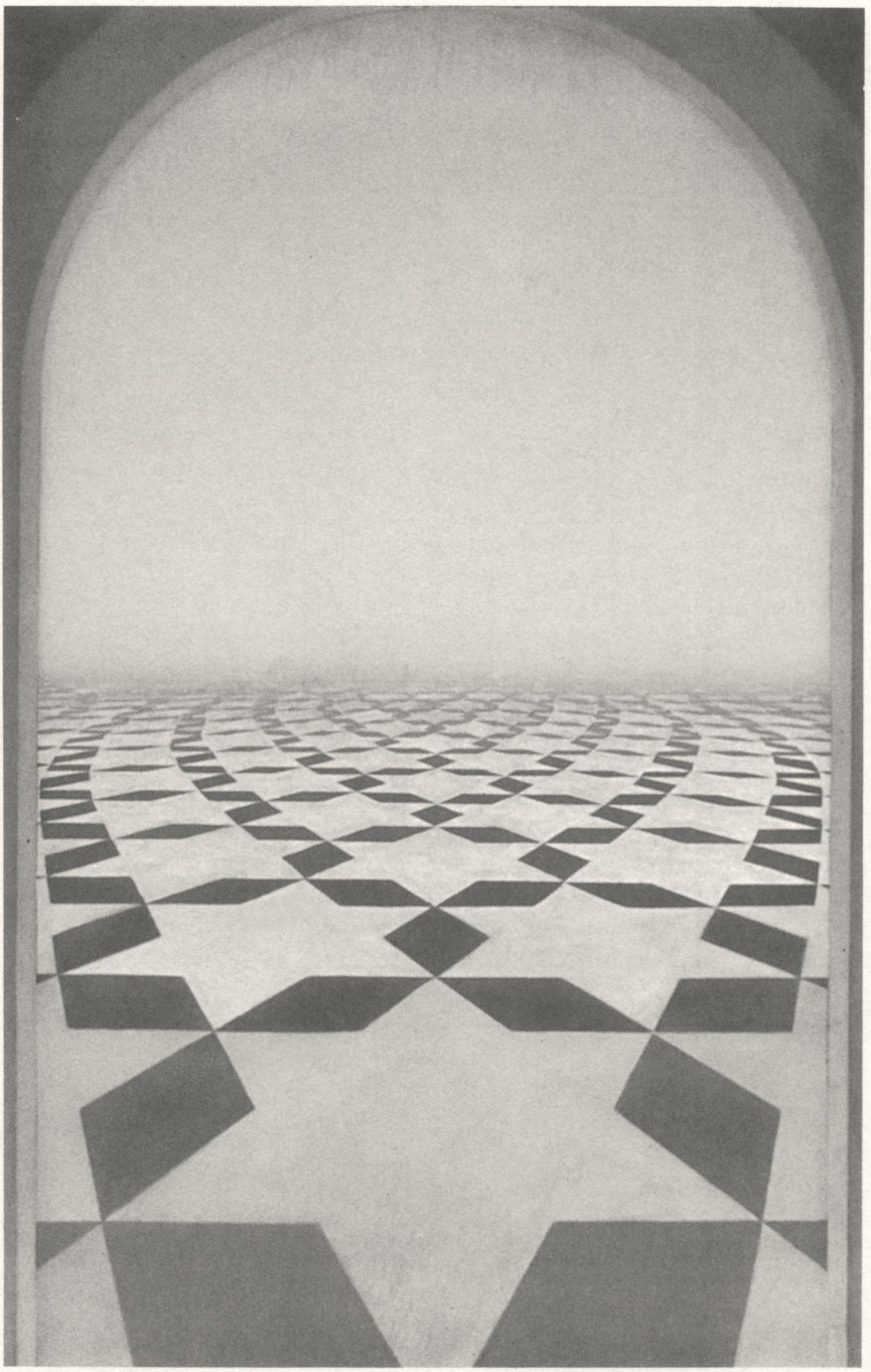
ing his occupation) and of fomenting disloyalty to it and (therefore) to Caesar. Pilate did what he had to do. Jesus' persistent reference to a "kingdom" which Caesar did not rule, and his repute among some as messiah or prophet, only made Pilate's order more likely. It all was probably done without a hearing; Jesus was not a Roman citizen. He was a nuisance, dispensed with under a military jurisdiction.

At last, then, at the end of his life, Jesus discovered the public center of the kingdom—the point from which the light of God's rule would radiate and triumph. His initial intention was that the Temple would conform to his vision of the purity of the kingdom, that all Israel would be invited there, forgiven and forgiving, to offer of their own in divine fellowship in the confidence that what they produced was pure (see Matt. 15:11; Mark 7:15). The innovation of Caiaphas prevented that by erecting what Jesus (as well as other rabbis) saw as an unacceptable barrier between Israel and what Israel offered.

The last public act of Jesus before his crucifixion was to declare that his meals were the center of the kingdom. God's rule, near and immanent and final and pure, was now understood to radiate from a public place, an open manifestation of the divine kingdom in human fellowship. The authorities in the Temple rejected Jesus, much as some people in Galilee had already done, but the power and influence of those in Jerusalem made their opposition deadly. Just as those in the north could be condemned as a new Sodom (see Luke 10:12), so Jesus could deny that offerings coopted by priests were acceptable sacrifices. His meals replaced the Temple; those in the Temple sought to displace him. It is no coincidence that the typical setting of appearances of the risen Jesus is while disciples were taking meals together.[13] The conviction that the light of the kingdom radiated from that practice went hand in hand with the conviction that the true master of the table, the rabbi who began it all, remained within their fellowship.

---

13. See Luke 24:13-35, 36-43; Mark 16:14-18 (not originally part of the Gospel, but an early witness of the resurrection nonetheless); and John 21:1-14.



Silver Footprints

Emma Lou Thayne

Neither masculine nor feminine a powerful
androgyny like wind surrounding shoulders
of a crowd, drawing in, along, persuasive as scent.

Bernadine the name of one pair
of palms and soles entreating me to follow
the footsteps in the snow, ice silver,
a soundless crunch, the path broadening,
the crowd absorbed, a vacuum pulling us
swirling in lightness, cheeks our only feature
at the corners of smiling. Nothing to see,
everything seen in the pulse between temples
that rise in acceptance breathing the slow wind
of sleep and the uncurious wafting of letting go.

Wakefulness puts coaxing arms about me;
the soles and palms of Bernadine are mine
resisting return, refusing the pale light of
open eyes, the sighs of reckoning with day a billows
on the floating, the gradual arrival where
for another while I have to be.

Heaven and Hell: The Parable of the Loving Father and the Judgmental Son

Todd Compton

RECENTLY I TAUGHT THE PARABLE of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) in priesthood meeting and was, as always, impressed by its beauty, simplicity, and profundity. It seemed to me as if this was the central passage in the New Testament, with its story of sin, repentance, compassion, forgiveness, heavenly joy; and with its almost frightening analysis of the opposites of compassion, forgiveness, and joy. It seemed as infinitely beautiful as it was infinitely terrible.

This parable has often been misunderstood, especially the "obedient son" who stayed home and "kept" his father's commandments. Some have taken comfort in this older son, feeling that if you stay home and keep the commandments, you will be better off than the person who sins and repents. But to Christ, the men and women who repent have equal status with those who feel they have not sinned, and people who feel they have not sinned are in fact in special danger. The older son symbolizes the Pharisee in the context of Christ's telling of the parable; on a more timeless level, he is an evocative symbol of eternal damnation, a damnation tragic and terrible because it is self-inflicted.

To understand fully this parable, it is important first of all to look at the teaching context in which Jesus told it.[1] In the beginning of chapter

---

1. My concern here is to interpret the parable as it is found in Luke, not to analyze the strata of oral tradition and editorial accretion in Luke 15, along with Luke's recasting of his raw material. But we should touch on these issues briefly, at least. This parable is found only in Luke, so there is no need to compare different synoptic versions. Scholars often see the settings of the parables as later accretions, reflecting the outlook of the early church after Jesus' death, rather than the actual environment in which Jesus told the parable. See Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus, Introduction and Exposition* (London: SPCK, 1966), 44-45. However, it is generally accepted that the historical Jesus did tell the parable of the Prodigal Son as a response to criticisms of Pharisees when Jesus shared table fellowship with sinners. Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2d rev. ed., trans. S. H. Hooke (New York: Scribners, 1972, orig. 1947), 124, 131; Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, 69, 73; Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 96. More generally, it is widely accepted that the parables in the gospels are the teachings of the historical Jesus; in fact, they are a large part of our evidence for the historical Jesus, revealing a teacher of compassionate moral vision and transcendent poetic and narrative skill.

15, we read, "Now all the tax collectors and sinners [*hoi telô~nai kaì hoi hamartôloì*][2] were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling [*diegógguzon*] and saying, 'This fellow welcomes [*prosdékhetai*][3] sinners and eats with them.'"

Thus Jesus eats with the hated tax collectors, who would exact taxes on behalf of the despised overlords, the Romans, often dishonestly extorting more than was required. He also eats with "sinners," which probably included Jews who did not keep the full law, gentiles, criminals, and sexual sinners, such as prostitutes and adulterers.[4] Eating with people was a charged symbolic act in Jewish culture at the time, and strict Jews, Pharisees, and priests, Sadducees, looked upon eating with gentiles, "sinners," the ritually impure, with disgust and distaste.[5] That Jesus not only taught these people, but ate with them, was a slap in the face of the Pharisees, who were trying to live exactly by the laws of ritual purity in the Pentateuch, to the detriment of larger issues of mercy and justice, the "weightier matters of the Law" (Matt. 23:23). Moreover, Palestine was an occupied country at the time, and anyone who associated with Romans was seen as a traitor to the native country and religion.[6] However, Jesus deliberately talked and even ate with gentiles, "sinners," and tax collectors.[7]

---

2. All translations are from the New Revised Standard Version. In my Greek transcriptions, ^ represents an elongated vowel (ô is omega; ê is eta); ' is the acute accent; ` is the grave accent; ~ is the circumflex accent. The letter chi is represented by "kh."

3. This probably means that Jesus invited sinners into his home, Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 227.

4. For the meaning of "sinners" here, see Luke 18:11, Matt. 21:32; Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983; Anchor Bible 28A), 1:591; Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 92-94. For Jesus associating with a prostitute, see Luke 7:36-50, cf. Jeremias' discussion in *The Parables of Jesus*, 126. One of Jesus' more shocking and offensive statements to Jewish religious leaders was Matt. 21:31, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes [*hai pórnai*] are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you." Luke 7:36-50 also suggests that the prostitute who washes Jesus' feet will gain heaven, while the Pharisee will not. These are not anti-Jewish sentiments; they apply to self-righteous formalizing lovelessness in any religion. Though the shock value of a tax collector as sinner is mostly gone in our culture, telling a prominent leader in a religious community today that a prostitute will be accepted in heaven ahead of him would still have a pronounced effect. So we see that Jesus was not a sentimentally mild teacher (though he had his gentle side). The conservative Jews in fact found his teachings and actions intolerable, in large part because he associated with sinners and gentiles, see Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 103.

5. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 204-206; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Lord of the Temple*, trans. Stewart Todd (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961; orig. 1942), 79-81; "Das Abendmahl," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 56 (1937): 217-26; Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 103-108; Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1971), 118.

6. Perrin emphasizes this aspect of Jesus' offense in *Rediscovering*, 103.

7. See, in addition to n4, John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 261-64; S. Scott Bartchy, "Tablefellowship with Jesus and the 'Lord's Meal' at Corinth," in *Increase in Learning: Essays in Honor of James G. Van Burne* (Manhattan, KS: Manhattan Christian College, 1979), 45-61, 57.

It is important to stress that Jesus did not associate with sinners out of love for their sins; the "tax collectors and sinners" draw near to him in a spirit of sincere interest in his teaching and in a spirit of repentance. For an example of a repentant tax collector, we have Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2-10), who promises, "if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Jesus also included a tax collector, Levi, among his twelve apostles (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). This would almost be an act of provocation against the nationalistic Jews, from one perspective; but from another, it would simply be an act of forgiveness and spiritual insight.

The Pharisees and scribes are entirely unconcerned with the issue of repentance, even though the concept is not absent from the Old Testament.[8]

In response to the Pharisees' contempt for Jesus when he associates with sinners, he tells three parables,[9] the last of which is the parable of the prodigal son. The first two parables are the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin. Both obviously emphasize recovering something lost. Another important idea in these two parables is that of the owner going out, leaving his comfortable central area of operations,

---

8. See, for example, Isa. 1:18-20; 44:22; 63:7-64:12; Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 33:10-19; 36:26; Jer. 7:5-7; 31:33; Dan. 9:4-19; Hos. 6; 14; Amos 5:21-24; Jonah 3:6-4:11; 1 Kings 21. In Jonah it is even gentiles who repent, after God sends a reluctant prophet to teach them. J. Milgrom, "Repentance in the OT," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), supp. vol., 736.

9. For interpretations of Jesus' parables, see especially the following: Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesus im Lichte der rabbinischen Gleichnisse des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1912), a landmark in modern parable interpretation. Jülicher attacked "allegorical" interpretation, insisting that each parable had one point alone, which was broadly ethical. While Jülicher was a necessary corrective to medieval allegorist interpretation, subsequent scholars have at least modified his positions. Recently, John Drury, *The Parables in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1985), flatly rejected Jülicher's "one point" interpretation, cf. Matthew Black, "The Parables as Allegory," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 42 (1960): 273-87, 282-84. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (Welwyn Garden City: Nisbet, 1935), saw the Kingdom of God as the unifying theme of the parables. His definition of parable is often quoted: "At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought." Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, originally published in 1947, was another landmark; his encyclopedic knowledge of Jewish literature and Palestinian culture placed Jesus' parables in their historical milieu, and the author strove to recover the historical Jesus through them. Robert W. Funk, "The Parable as Metaphor," in his *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), offered a literary-aesthetic approach to the parables, as did Dan O. Via, Jr., *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967). John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), combines a literary/critical viewpoint, an examination of metaphor in parable, with an interest in finding the historical Jesus. An overview of interpretation is Norman Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 89-193.

to find what was lost, actively searching ("search carefully" [*zêtei~ epimelô~s*], v. 8). Joseph Smith's Inspired Revision emphasizes this in verse 4: "and go into the wilderness after that which is lost." Clearly, the lost sheep or coin is the sinner, and the recovery is his repentance. This is made explicit by another important idea: the joy of the recoverer and his community when the lost is recovered. "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me [*Sugkhârêté moi*]; for I have found my sheep that was lost" (v. 6). Jesus then shows that this joy is an earthly reflection of heaven: "Just so, I tell you, there will be . . . joy [*kharà*] in heaven over one sinner who repents" (v. 7). "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (v. 10).[10] So these parables move from the personal level, the shepherd's relationship with the lost sheep, including recovery and joy, to the communal level, the community of Christians, who rejoice with the shepherd; to the eschatological, transcendent level, the community of heaven, and the joy felt there when sinner is transformed. These two parables, on their deepest level, define heaven as a place of joy. And the joy is defined by love for the outcast.[11]

There is no antagonist to contrast with the protagonist in these two parables. Such a character would not feel desire for that which is lost; he would not go out to find the lost thing; he would have no joy; he would

---

10. Perrin regards these summations of the parables as editorial accretions, not Jesus' original words, *Rediscovering*, 101, cf. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2:1,073, 1,075, who puts the summations at "Stage II" of the gospel tradition. See n1 above. Matthew's version of the parallel of the lost sheep (18:10-14) also has a summation, so the form of a summation can at least be seen as pre-Lucan. Matthew's summation ("so it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost") is not precisely the same as Luke's, though the central theme (love of the Father, in heaven, for the individual soul) is similar. Matthew's introduction "in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven" is quite close to Luke 15:10, sharing the theme of heaven as community.

11. So these two parables, and the parable of the prodigal son, can be seen as proclamations of the kingdom of God, which many interpreters regard as the keystone of Jesus' preaching. The kingdom of God, as taught by Jesus, welcomes the outcast and is in fact made up of outcasts to a great extent. See Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. Richard Hiers and D. Larrimore Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1971; orig. 1892); Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1926); C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 1,935; Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963). An overview of interpretation is Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom*; see also Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). Some interpreters (e.g., Weiss) have seen Jesus' Kingdom of God as essentially in the future, from Jesus' perspective; others (e.g., Dodd and Bultmann) have viewed it as more in the present. Perrin holds that Jesus' Kingdom of God is both present and future, and sees it as a symbol rather than a concrete reality. Bernard Brandon Scott, *Jesus, Symbol-Maker for the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), regards the Kingdom of God as a "tensive" symbol, a symbol with multiple non-exclusive meanings, just as parables are tensive, with complex meanings.

not feel joy within the community; he would not feel joy on an eschatological, transcendent level. He would, in fact, define hell instead of heaven.

This brings us to the parable of the prodigal son, which does have such a character. The "parable of the prodigal son" is a traditional title for the parable; Jesus himself, of course, did not give the parable any title. Many have felt that "parable of the prodigal son" does not do justice to the story, as it has three main characters, all of whom are important, and perhaps the repentant son is not even the central character.[12] Another title that has been proposed is "the parable of the two sons." But once again this does not include a key character, the father. Perhaps a better title is "the parable of the father's love,"[13] which highlights what may be the most important character and theme in the parable. But none of these titles or themes is wrong or exclusive. I propose as a possible title, "the parable of heaven and hell."

In this parable a well-to-do farmer has two sons. The younger of two asks for his inheritance (a common occurrence in Palestine, for the unproductive land caused many Jews to join the Jewish community in the Diaspora),[14] and the father gives it to him. The fact that the father allows this is an important point; he is not dictatorial, does not force his son to stay. Paradoxically, an important, if difficult, aspect of authentic love is, at some point, letting go, allowing a dependent freedom to make mistakes, freedom to sin, to have agency.

The son then leaves his home to live in a "distant country," where he wastes the money in "dissolute living [*zô~n asô'tôs*]." When the money is entirely gone, a famine comes to the country where he is living, and he is forced to work as a farm servant. He feeds pigs, a detail that would have particularly shocked the Jews, for swine are the most offensively unclean animal for members of the house of Israel.[15] This detail alone would have

---

12. Robert Funk, *Parables and Presence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 60-63, views the parable from three different perspectives, with different "determiners" (the prodigal son, the father), in an intriguing treatment. For a discussion of possible titles for this parable, see Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2:1,084. Marshall proposes "The Lost Son"; Easton, "The Waiting Father." Rubsys suggests "The Parable of the Forgiving Father," see C.F. Evans, *Saint Luke* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 589-90.

13. See Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 128.

14. Ibid., 129. Some four million Jews lived in the Diaspora; only half a million in Palestine.

15. Orthodox Jews regarded herders of any sort, even shepherds, as religiously suspect, see Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 128; *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1969) 303-12. Naturally, swineherds were utterly reviled. "Cursed be the man who breeds swine," states a Jewish text, b. Baba Qamma 82b, as quoted in Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 129. A good Jew is not to help a Jewish swineherd out of a pit, Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 96, cf. Hermann Strack-Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 6 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1922-61; 1928), 4:359.

caused the orthodox Jew to view the prodigal son as worse than a gentile; he has become an apostate. Moreover, the young man is so hungry that he covets the "pods" he is feeding to the swine. In this state of degradation, he decides to return to the farm of his father and work for him, not as a son, but as a servant. He prepares his speech: "I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." The son was probably nervous, tense, desperate as he traveled home. Perrin writes, after explaining the perceived apostasy of a swineherd, "This then is the crux of the parable as Jesus told it. As far as many of his hearers were concerned, and certainly as far as the ones to whom the parable was particularly addressed were concerned, at this point the son becomes dead in his father's eyes and any self-respecting Jewish father would have spurned him had he returned in such disgrace."[16]

He approached his home, but "while he was still far off, his father saw him, and was filled with compassion; he ran, and put his arms around him and kissed him [*éti dè autou~ makràn apékhontos ei~den autòn ho patê'r autou~ kaì esplagkhnísthê kaì dramô'n epépesen epì tòn trákhêlon autou~ kaì katephílêsen autón*]." Thus the father runs out of his home to receive his sinning son; he does not sit at home and wait to be approached. As in the parables of the lost sheep and coin, the protagonist actively goes out to reclaim the sinner. Jeremias notes that running is "a most unusual and undignified procedure for an aged oriental even though he is in such haste."[17] Perrin describes the father's actions as "extravagant," given Jewish culture at the time, "and no doubt the extravagance is deliberate." The father's forgiveness and love were probably seen as reprehensible by the listening Pharisees.[18] Far from excluding the sinner from the community, he runs out to draw him into it. He "was filled with compassion [*esplagkhnísthê*]"; he embraces his long lost younger son. It is important to note that even though the younger son had repented, the father did not know this when he embraced him. The repentant sinner causes joy; but the Christlike person loves all, the repentant and unrepentant.[19]

There are many elements with ritual resonances woven into this story; rituals are based on customary actions of everyday life which become heightened by religious use but which still retain their normal everyday meanings. The embrace and kiss is a common everyday action, yet embraces and kisses have been a part of rituals from time immemo-

16. Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 96.

17. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 130.

18. Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 96

19. Cf. T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus as Recorded in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke Arranged with Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM, 1971), 286. For the love of God equating with the love of a father, see Ps. 103:13; Isa. 64:7-8.

rial.[20] Here the embrace symbolizes love of a parent for a child; forgiveness and compassion for a wayward child; and, on a more transcendent level, the love of God for his children. That is not to suggest that Christ meant this to be seen as a ritual act, simply that all ritual gives heightened meaning to everyday occurrences.

The kiss here is also a sign of equality; the father embraces his son like an equal, not like a servant. He does not allow the son to fall to his knees and kiss his hand or feet, the normal gesture for a suppliant or servant.[21] The son begins his speech, but the father cuts him off before he can finish it. The loving parent's response rejects completely the son's statement that he is not worthy to be called a son anymore. The father directs servants to bring for the son the "best" robe (*stolê'n tê'n prô'tên*, the "first" robe), shoes, and a ring for his hand. The robe again has ritual resonance. Probably the returning son was dressed in rags; these would be set aside, and he would be dressed in new clothing. In most initiation ritual, old clothes are taken off, a liminal moment of nakedness, and then new clothes are put on.[22] They symbolize a new, sacred status—repentance, laying aside our sins to take on a new Christlike identity—and also represent God's forgiveness. The robe is also a symbol of authority and honor. "When the king wishes to honour a deserving official, he presents him with a costly robe," writes Jeremias.[23]

The ring has great significance here, for in antiquity the ring often served as an important emblem of authority—impressed in wax, it acted as the owner's signature. Thus the father restores his repentant son to his old status as a son and representative. Rings also had significance in ancient ritual as tokens of identity. Perhaps the best modern parallels would be driver's licenses, social security cards, credit cards, check books, and

---

20. See my "The Handclasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition," in *By Study and By Faith*, ed. John Lundquist and Stephen Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990), 1:611-42.

21. See Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus*, 77; Karl Bornhäuser, *Studien zum Sondergut des Lukas* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1934), 114.

22. For clothing changes in ritual, J. Gwyn Griffiths, *The Isis-Book* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 308-14, 356-57. Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), is a good general introduction to initiation ritual. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. M. Vizedom and G. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), and Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), emphasize liminality, passage, in ritual. Not surprisingly, the parable of the prodigal son was often referred to by early Christian fathers writing on baptism, Christian initiation (where the candidate took off his regular clothes, was baptized naked, then put on a new, white robe), e.g., *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, trans. R. H. Connolly, in *Texts and Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), 8.1: 39; Gregory of Nyssa, *De Oratione Dominica* 5 (*Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne [Paris: Migne, 1857 and onward], 44:1,184 B-D); cf. a translation by H. Graef (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1954; Ancient Christian Writers 18).

23. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 131.

documents giving power of attorney.[24] Jeremias astutely notes the Old Testament parallel for the robe and ring: when Joseph becomes grand vizier in Egypt, he is given "a ring, a robe of fine linen, and a golden chain" (Gen. 41:42).[25]

Some interpreters of this parable have suggested that the returning prodigal son does not regain his old status; the ring and the best robe do not support this reading. The sincerely repentant will be accepted into full fellowship in the community of church and heaven. However, some may ask, what is the good of not sinning if the prodigal son is returned to full status as son? The answer, of course, is that sin is existentially destructive, alienating, painful; the prodigal son experiences deep suffering, physical and psychic, before his return.

The father, then, orders the servants to kill the fatted calf, "and let us eat, and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Here we have the explicit link to the previous two parables: the lostness of the sinner and joy when he is found. And we also have the idea of death and resurrection, which again has theological and ritual resonances. Often rites of initiation (literally, "entrance") used symbolisms of death and life to symbolize newness of life.[26] Thus baptism is both a death and a resurrection.[27]

As in the previous two parables, the rejoicing is not private—it is a community event, "let us eat and celebrate." There is a joyful feast, in which the fatted calf is eaten. This is another detail with ritual resonance in the ancient world, for eating meat was a much rarer event in antiquity than it is today; often it took place only in times of festival, and it always involved the religious ritual of animal sacrifice.[28] The celebration also in-

---

24. See Gen. 41:42; 1 Macc. 6:15. This use of the ring as token of identity was commonplace in the ancient world: "Among the Greeks, the ring performed many of the functions of the signature in the modern world," A. W. Gomme and F. H. Sandbach, *Menander, A Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 336. It was used for securing property, "signing" documents, sealing messages, pledging bargains, see J. Henry Middleton, *The Engraved Gems of Classical Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), 22-34. For the ring in initiation ritual, see Susan Cole, *Theoi Megaloi* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 29-30, 115n242. In Samothracian initiation rite, a "ring became a token of the protection conferred on the initiate by his initiation." In the Gnostic Christian group, the Mandaeans, the ring was a symbol of priesthood, E. J. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 31, 36.

25. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 130.

26. Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*.

27. See Rom. 6:4: "we have been buried with him by baptism into his death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Cf. Col. 2:12.

28. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 56. "The sacrifice is a festive occasion for the community. The contrast with everyday life is marked with washing, dressing in clear garments, and adornment, in particular, wearing a garland woven from twigs on the head . . ." Of course, the Jews followed different specific ritual, but the general principle was the same; animal sacrifice was a sacred, festal event.

cludes "music and dancing [*sumphônías kaì khorô~n*]."[29] It is clear from the other parables in Luke that this lively, joyful scene represents heaven, just as in the previous two parables, joy in heaven among angels is explicitly mentioned. Here is Christ's definition of heaven: communal joy over the reception of the returning outcast and a feast with music and dancing. It is interesting that in Nauvoo Mormonism, church leaders danced in the Nauvoo temple. On 30 December 1845, in the temple, a violinist played, the hornpipe was danced, then Brigham Young himself led out the French fours. "The spirit of dancing increased until the whole floor was covered with dancers."[30] These were not stately hymns; the violinist was playing rhythmic dance music. By one view of heaven (Jesus'), this is entirely appropriate for temple worship; by a Puritanical view of heaven, it is shockingly inappropriate.

Another parable in Luke, that of the host and his "great feast" (14:16-25), provides an apt comparison. In this parable many are invited to a feast and refuse to come. When they use excuses and turn the host down, he sends his servants out to invite "the poor, and the crippled, the blind and the lame." Moreover, he sends the servants "into the streets and lanes of the town," then "into the roads and lanes," which probably indicates gentiles as the invitees.[31] Here again the feast symbolizes heavenly salvation, which the original invitees (many in the Jewish nation, many in the upper classes) will spurn and which the poor, the disabled, the gentiles will attend. This parable is much like the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:2-14. A central point of comparison for the prodigal son parable is the paradox of guests not wanting to attend the wedding feast, a joyful occasion, a celebration. Anyone who has attended modern Jewish weddings knows how joyful and unbridled they can be. There is no good reason why the guests of the parables should turn away from such a feast; nevertheless, pressed by business or everyday concerns, many turn away from music, dancing, making merry, drinking, feasting,

---

29. *sum-phônía* ("together-sound") may be music played by several instruments, or one instrument playing harmony, see Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and adapted by William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 781. If we take the former interpretation, it is an evocative symbol for community as producing something beyond the sum of its parts. In this chapter of Luke, joy reaches its fullness in community, just as in music the greatest beauty comes through combinations of instruments.

30. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1902-32), 7:557; William Clayton journal, 30 Dec. 1845, in *An Intimate Chronicle*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1981), 244; Juanita Brooks, *John Doyle Lee* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1992), 86-87. For dancing, cf. leaping for joy in Luke 6:23.

31. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2:1,053.

joy. Another important point is that the master of the feast eats with the poor and the ritually impure, the disabled and the gentiles, as did Christ, and that the original invitees do not attend the feast and are not found in heaven.

Thus the feast in the prodigal son parable is a remarkably non-Puritanical depiction of heaven: it includes music, dancing, making merry. There is nothing joyless, stern, inhibited, or strait-laced about this heaven; it is a spontaneous, collective celebration.

Another remarkable non-Puritanical element of the parable of the prodigal son is the father's attitude toward sexual sin. The older son will accuse the younger son of sexual sin, associating with prostitutes, which is probably an accurate charge. But in contrast the father is completely and immediately willing to accept the sexual sinner back into the community. In dealing with sexual transgression, Christ evidently would teach complete forgiveness and forgetting of the transgression for the repentant sinner; the value of the returning son is much greater than the fact that he has made mistakes. Furthermore, the loving father does not require the prodigal son to undergo an extended and humiliating public probation before he receives forgiveness; he is not accepted under a cloud; he does not have to wear a scarlet A on his clothes. Forgiveness, in this parable, is immediate and total.

We now turn to the oldest son, a portrayal of great psychological penetration. Here we have the theme of "staying away from the feast"—denying oneself joy and celebration—in the name of righteousness.[32] When the prodigal son returns, the oldest son is in the fields and hears the music and dancing. He questions a servant and learns that his brother has returned and that his father has declared a celebration feast. "Then he became angry, and refused to go in [*ôrgísthê dè kaì ouk ê'thelen eiselthei~n*]." Point by point, we can contrast the father and the oldest son, looking at how they respond to the return of the repentant son. The father runs out to welcome his repentant son; the older son will not even go into the house to meet him. The father embraces the younger son and shows compassion for him; the older son shows no love or compassion at all. The father restores complete sonship and authority to the younger son, and draws him into the community; the older son withdraws from a community including the younger son.

---

32. Some interpreters have regarded this part of the parable as superfluous, even added by later editors; Evans, e.g., in *Saint Luke*, 588, regards it as "a somewhat lame appendix." See also J. T. Sanders, "Tradition and Redaction in Luke 15.11-32," NTS 15 (1968-69): 433-38, and J. Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Lucae übersetz und erklärt* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1904), 81-85. But most commentators, myself among them, see it as central to the original parable, see C. Carlston, "Reminiscence and Redaction in Luke 15:11-32," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975): 368-90; Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968) 196; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 131; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2:1,085.

The next step in the drama is surprising and again shows the father's all-encompassing love. He learns that his oldest son is not joining the feast, and he leaves the comfort and joy of his home, leaves the celebration, to try to bring his elder son—who is erring like his younger son but in an entirely different way—into the feast. The ensuing conversation further develops the character of the older son. He protests to his father: he has served him many years, "And I have never disobeyed your command." But the father never gave him even a kid (less valuable than the calf) so he could have a party with his friends.

The stark lack of love for the younger brother combined with the boast, "And I have never disobeyed your command," is striking. One thinks of Christ stating that the two greatest commandments are to love God with all might, heart, mind, and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:36-39; cf. 23:23). (The second commandment is "like unto" the first; therefore, one cannot love God unless one authentically loves one's fellow man.) The oldest son is thus not faultless—he lacks brotherly love. He is a worse sinner than the younger son, for he thinks he is perfect but is entirely without love.

Here one thinks of the parable of the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee thanks God that he is not "like other people," unjust, adulterers, "or even like this tax collector." He boasts to God about how much he fasts and pays his tithing. But the tax collector stands "far off," will not lift his eyes to heaven, smites himself on the breast, and prays only, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus explains that, paradoxically, the tax collector is justified, not the Pharisee. The Pharisee uses his outward compliance with commandments to mask the fact that he does not love his fellowmen. Most importantly, the tax collector, who has undoubtedly sinned previously by his dishonesty, knows that he *has been* a sinner; the Pharisee does not know that he *is* a sinner. One thinks of Scott Peck's fascinating analysis of evil, *People of the Lie*, in which the truly evil are those who thrive on controlling and manipulating others, who cannot love, but who want to be seen as loving, and are often very skillful at exhibiting counterfeit love.[33] Such people, when parents, often destroy members of their families at the same time they want their families to be seen as models.

Like the Pharisee, the older son, after describing his own "complete" righteousness, throws his brother's sins at his father. "This son of yours ... who has devoured your property with prostitutes [*metà pornô~n*]."

---

33. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985). Dr. Herve Cleckley, a specialist on sociopaths, writes, "The observer is confronted with a convincing mask of sanity. We are dealing not with a complete man at all, but with something that suggests a subtly constructed reflex machine which can mimic the human personality perfectly." Quoted in Ann Rule, *The Stranger Beside Me* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), 403.

Though the older son may not have known exactly, it is reasonable to surmise that the younger actually did spend his money in this way. But it is an unjust accusation for the present time, because the "lost" son has thoroughly, sincerely repented of his sins, after great suffering. Like the Pharisees, the older son does not take this into consideration; once a sinner, always a sinner. Once a dishonest tax collector, always a dishonest tax collector. Comparable is the parable, troubling to readers who feel salvation is a matter of strict justice, of the hired laborer who works a full day getting the same reward as the laborer who comes late and works fewer hours (Matt. 20:1-16). This is clearly a parable emphasizing that the repentant sinner receives a reward equal to that of the person who has been living righteously, who has "not sinned." But the person who has not sinned, who has worked a full day, puts himself or herself in peril by protesting injustice and by being unforgiving.

A telling detail is the phrase: "this son. of yours [*ho huiós sou hou~tos*]."[34] In the older son's view, the younger son is not worthy to be called his brother, so once again, the lack of brotherly love is emphasized.[35]

The older son, then, is explicitly the symbol of the judgmental, separatist Pharisee, he who will not eat with the sinner and is contemptuous of those who do.[36] For sinners to repent and be allowed into full fellowship strikes them as unjust, an attack on their own righteousness. Christ, telling this story to the Pharisees, characterizes them (or, at least, his group of them) by the unforgiving, unloving, joyless character of the older brother. The contrast with the forgiving father is striking and is the main crux of the story.

The father's reply ends the parable: "Son [*téknon*],[37] you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." Here the father reassures his older son that he has not been disinherited, but the return of the lost brother merited celebration. This statement is clearly conditional. If the son wants to be "always with" the father, the father wants him and will receive him. But he must repent, just as, in a different way, his brother had to repent. He must learn to love his brother, join the feast, authentically celebrate with his father

---

34. *hou~tos* is contemptuous, Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 597; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 131.

35. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 131, refers to the Pharisees' "joyless, loveless, thankless and self-righteous lives."

36. This is generally accepted, cf. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 131. Contra: Evans, *Saint Luke*, 592.

37. Scott, *Jesus Symbol-Maker*, 56, translates it as "dear child"; cf. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 808. The father meets the elder son's contempt, anger, and lovelessness with calm, sincere affection.

and brother, and recognize his brother as full co-heir.

The story ends on an entirely ambiguous note, and we may end it however we wish. One wonders: did the older brother rejoin the feast? Judging from the context of Luke, and the Gospels, he did not. The Pharisees, in the Gospels, are not generally repentant. In the parable of the wedding feast, mentioned above, the first-invited do not attend. Jesus knows that it is difficult for someone who is judgmental, loveless, incapable of authentic joy or celebration to return to acceptance, love, joyful celebration.

Thus the picture of the older son is a carefully drawn evocation of hell. In heaven is the feast, with joyful, hieratic meal, celebration, dancing, and music. Presiding there is a forgiving, loving father; and there also are brothers and sisters who have sinned but who have repented.

Hell, on the other hand, is made up of those who feel that they are better than those at the feast; who remember only the former sins of the invitees and cannot forgive them. Their inability to forgive is an inability to love. And when the father goes out to bring them to the feast, they protest their complete righteousness and the sins of the repentant sinners at the feast. Thus they exclude themselves from joy and celebration. There is no more chilling view of hell than the loveless, joyless, judgmental, self-excluding hell depicted in the parable of the prodigal son.

Nevertheless, the father leaves the joyful celebration, "descends" to hell, far from the security and light of the home, to reclaim his judgmental son. He refuses "to allow him to reject his own sonship," and the older son "is offered grace," just as the younger son was offered it.[38]

So we come to realize that heaven is most centrally defined by the father's love. This is the love of God for all of us sinners, all of us making wrong decisions every day of our lives. God does not rejoice in excluding the sinner from heaven; in fact, he does all he can to reclaim him or her; he runs out to accept the sinning younger son and returns him to full fellowship in the family, in the community, even restores him to authority (as the ring shows). And when the other son sins in a different, more dangerous way (the sin of thinking you are fully righteous, which leads to a lack of love, a contempt for perceived sinners, an inner coldness), the father once again goes out of his way to try to reclaim him.

Jesus' parables are not mere aesthetic constructs, beautifully vivid and moving as they are; they are models for action, challenges to our spiritual limitations and inertia. If we follow Jesus' prodigal son teachings, we will seek to emulate the energetic, all-accepting love of the Father[39] and truly forgive our brothers and sisters. We will see them as

---

38. Scott, *Jesus, Symbol-Maker*, 57.

39. Cf. A. L. Rubsys, "The Parable of the Forgiving Father," *Readings in Biblical Morality*, ed. C. L. Salm (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 103-108. For the father of the parable representing the love of God the Father, see Black, "The Parables as Allegory," 284.

valuable even as they are lost—even when they are lost in a narrow, judgmental, self-excluding way, and are psychically destructive to the community.[40] And we will develop the capacity for the deep and joyful celebration of heaven.

40. This parable could be interpreted as Christ's message to his disciples that they must love the Pharisee. Recent research on the Pharisees has emphasized that, though the Gospels tend to view them unsympathetically, as one-dimensionally bad, the Pharisees began as a movement that tried to regain integrity of religious life by observing the purity codes of the Law, the Old Testament, which many Jews had forgotten. Many Pharisees were entirely sincere and idealistic in this effort, and many "Hellenized" Jews had become worldly, secular, even pagan. But the fact that extremist Pharisees, in a sincere, even heroic effort to live by legalistic minutiae of a divine standard of purity, could sometimes entirely misunderstand the spiritual heart of the book they were following, shows that appeals to "purity" can be rhetoric cloaking lovelessness. For a useful overview of interpretation of the Pharisees, see Anthony J. Saldarini, "Pharisees," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992); also Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadduceees in Palestinian Society* (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1988); J. Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); and Ellis Rivkin, *The Hidden Revolution: The Pharisees' Search for the Kingdom Within* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978).

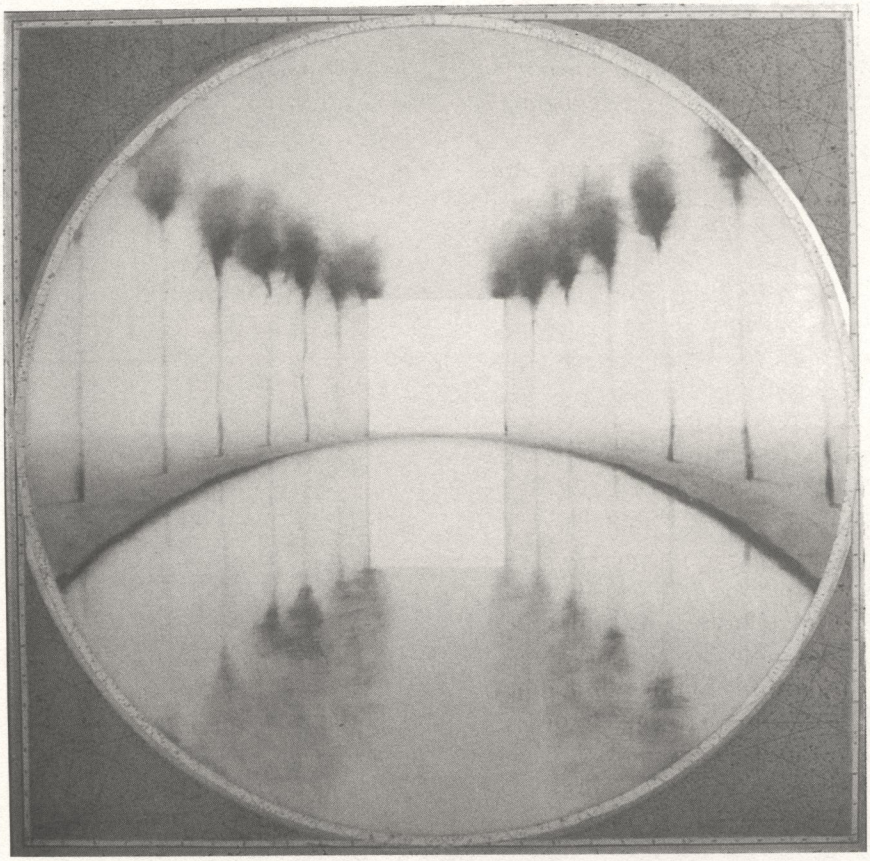
Life-line

Megan Thayne Heath

Tonight I wear your dress
like a shell to my most graceless springing.
The brown velvet shimmers with the folds
and the tucks hang like loosely gathered wind,
meeting the belt that inhales my heredity.
Buckled beneath this ageless fabric
I find you.

Was it the same?
Did grandpa's brawny forearm scoop you up
like weightless shucks of wheat
then hold you close to dance?
Did you worry about your slip showing
and laugh at his crooked tie?
Did the melody of the last dance stay in your head
late into the night?

I snap the cuff firmly against my wrist
and stretch my palm wide
to see it lined with merging life
and find you
once again unfold.



A Mosaic for a Religious Counterculture: The Bible in the Book of Mormon

Mark D. Thomas

THE BOOK OF MORMON HAS OCCASIONALLY been portrayed as a deficient first novel. Its characters appear flat and stereotypical; the plots and characters seem to lack moral subtlety; and so on. Should we wonder that today's high literary circles ignore it? Still we are confronted with the question why such a book remains one of the most influential texts written on the American continent. Its influence must be due to more than questionable reading taste. The astonishment experienced by many readers for over 150 years testifies that there is something elusive going on that its critics have missed. Its power has eluded us largely because we have not grasped the kind of literature it is and how it functions. It is a countercultural document with literary features and values at odds with the dominant culture when it first appeared. In the prayer of the elite Zoramites, in the story of Nehor, and in other places, the values and literary techniques of the dominant culture are mocked and parodied. The book flaunts its own plainness with pride.

The book's countercultural defiance can be found on its first pages.[1] Joseph Smith selected the term "visionary" to describe self-righteous heroes such as Lehi, in contrast to more reasonable villains such as Laman and Lemuel. The term "visionary" was often used to describe fringe prophets and superstitious imaginaries in the early nineteen century. "Visionaries" were often contrasted with the religious rationality of the educated and powerful. In the book's opening scenes, these visionaries find life in the desert. In one scene the heroic Nephi is commanded by God to commit murder to obtain the word of God. The initial shock of Nephi to

1. Perhaps the greatest shortcoming in its countercultural universality is that it is told entirely from a white male point of view.

this command anticipates the readers' shock. The irony is compounded when the Spirit alludes to Caiaphas' words as divine justification for the murder—it is better that one person die than a whole nation perish in unbelief.

Anyone who reads these opening pages as a polite set of platitudes offered by boring characters has missed the point altogether. The Book of Mormon places the pages of our culture in front of our faces and rips them to pieces. But it does more than rip—it takes pieces of an older world view and arranges them in new patterns, as a mosaic. Many of the pieces of this mosaic are from the Bible. My goal is to examine the artistry and complexity of this biblical mosaic in light of existing dominant and countercultures when it appeared.

One task the Book of Mormon sets for itself is to overcome the meaninglessness and powerlessness felt by its latter-day readers. It clearly appeals to those on the borders of society. It grants the reader meaning and power largely by reaching back to and universalizing its biblical past. Many of the pieces of this mosaic are from the King James Version of the Bible edited and rearranged to form new patterns. The diverse and complex intertextual use of the Bible makes latter-day readers enter a biblical world that has been enlarged to include all ages of the world—including the hostile and meaningless world of the reader. The Book of Mormon brims with biblical allusions. It speaks to readers who considered the Bible the ultimate authority. The biblical parallels cluster together in the Nephite text in meaningful ways and for a variety of purposes.

I will begin by summarizing the nature and functions of the biblical parallels. I will then compare these parallels with both dominant and socially marginal American biblical interpretation during the first part of the nineteenth century. This will provide a social and rhetorical setting for the audience that the Book of Mormon addressed. When discussing the early nineteenth century, I claim only that the Book of Mormon is best understood in light of the audience it originally addressed.

Before examining the use of the Bible in the nineteenth century, let us summarize the nature of biblical parallels in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon contains biblical quotations (many with textual corrections to what it sees as a corrupted biblical text), biblical paraphrases, biblical commentary, biblical allusions, and biblical echoes. (In addition, it contains writings which it presents as quotations of lost scriptural texts, as well as its own scriptural passages.) These categories of parallels are points along a spectrum from the most explicit (quotation) to the most subtle (echo). The more subtle the reference, the less discursive the parallel. At some point it is difficult to determine whether we are hearing an echo or creating our own connection. An allusion assumes that author and reader share a cognitive understanding of the place of a parallel. An

echo is a metaphor that does not rely on conscious intention and is more subtle. Yet echoes are no less important than direct quotations.

These categories at times blend imperceptibly. For example, it can be difficult to distinguish a quotation from a paraphrase or a commentary because the Book of Mormon does not see the text as independent and objective—it transforms the text for its own rhetorical purposes. The Book of Mormon treats the biblical text as a living voice that changes its tone as it appears throughout the Book of Mormon, not as a fixed text to be forever preserved with exactness. This is one of the reasons that it quotes the same text differently in different parts of the book. For the Book of Mormon, the text is a vehicle for addressing its audience. It presents the biblical text as corrupt, but it is not careful about preserving an original text. It is almost never interested in historical exegesis. Rather it emphasizes a proclamatory and revisionist view of scripture. It forces the reader to face life in light of the biblical text as the Book of Mormon presents it. In short, the Book of Mormon emphasizes relevance of text over objective preservation. In what follows I will emphasize those parallels that appear multiple times in the text to confirm our interpretive conclusions.[2]

The first task of analyzing the Bible in the Book of Mormon is to examine a comprehensive inventory of biblical parallels. The present study has relied on such an inventory.[3] Once an inventory is established, a careful analysis can be made of each parallel. The Book of Mormon employs biblical texts with enormous variety and, at times, surprising subtlety. At times the interest in citing the biblical text is to discover its objective meaning. Sometimes these parallels simply provide scriptural verisimilitude that predisposes the reader to accept the Book of Mormon as new scripture. But not every parallel is an attempt at interpretation. As John Hollander has stated: "the revisionary power of allusive echo generates new figuration."[4] The power of the use of the biblical parallel lies in the unstated points of resonance between the two texts. At times the subtlety of the parallel suppresses the points of resonance and cries out for the reader to complete the trope. In this circumstance the parallels act sug-

---

2. For methods of attaining validity in intertextual interpretation, see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 18-33.

3. The most complete published list to date can be found in *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference,* vols. 1-3 (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1984-87). The first volume is careful about footnoting most biblical parallels. But later volumes do not match the care and completeness found in this initial volume. Jerald and Sandra Tanner and Michael Marquart have published several lists of biblical parallels demonstrating anachronisms in the use of the biblical text in the Book of Mormon. My inventory includes and goes beyond these works.

4. Hays, 18-19.

gestively rather than declaratively.[5]

I will give examples of how a careful reading is essential to pick up subtle critiques of the dominant culture and to appreciate the elements in this biblical mosaic. To today's reader, the subtlety of some allusions and echoes is often missed due to our lack of familiarity with the Bible. For this reason, the Book of Mormon remains, to a large degree, undiscovered and unappreciated.

To begin to appreciate the biblical parallels, we must view them in the ahistorical light of the Nephite view of revelation. The pre-Christian Nephites often cite New Testament texts, sometimes explicitly. For example, in 2 Nephi 31:15, God *explicitly* quotes the words of Jesus to be delivered hundred of years later: "And I heard a voice from the Father, saying, Yea, the words of my beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (see Matt. 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13). Some Mormons have speculated that such anachronistic quotations are evidence of lost texts that were available to both Book of Mormon authors and New Testament authors. But this ignores the Book of Mormon's explanations of such anachronisms: "wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another" (2 Ne. 29:8). For the Book of Mormon, the Spirit speaks literally *the same words* to all ages, despite its occasional claims otherwise. For the Book of Mormon, the Spirit overcomes history and text.

A second feature of the use of the Bible is the clustering of related biblical passages in the Book of Mormon, like a mosaic, in meaningful patterns. In other words, related biblical parallels often appear in proximity in the Book of Mormon text. This requires us to interpret a large portion of the biblical parallels in a larger textual and intertextual context. These phrases from the Bible interpret each other and resonate against each other in both predictable and surprising fashions. I will first examine four types of biblical clusters and then provide concrete examples.

1. *Temporal Sequence Cluster.* This is a series of parallels in which each represents an event in time. For example, 1 Nephi 22 combines numerous biblical passages into an apocalyptic mosaic. Each biblical allu-

---

5. An example of such a subtle resonance or echo can be found in Moroni 10:27-28: "Did I not declare my words unto you, which was written by this man, like as one crying from the dead? yea, even as one speaking out of the dust, I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation." Here the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is said to be predicted by prophecy, and there is a clear allusion to Isaiah 29 in the reference to speaking from the dust. But I contend that the "hissing forth" echoes the hissing prophecy in Isaiah 5. If this is true, the Book of Mormon is suggesting that it is the fulfillment of this second prophecy.

sion represents an event in the last days. There may or may not be an intention to objectively interpret the particular passage cited in these clusters. There are a number of such apocalyptic mosaics, as well as other clusters of biblical parallels, that form a temporal sequence in the Book of Mormon.

2. *Clusters with a Common Theme or Theological Concern.* A number of clusters contain biblical phrases on prayer. Other themes include love, the devil, and the judgment of the wicked. Below is an example of one of them on the theme of riches.

2 Nephi 9:30
But wo unto the rich, which are rich as to the things of the world.

For because that they are rich, *they despise the poor,*

and they persecute the meek, and *their hearts are upon their treasures;* wherefore their treasure is their God. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also.

Luke 6:24
But woe unto you that are rich!

James 2:6 a
But ye have despised the poor.

Matthew 6:19-21(//Luke 12:33-34, Gospel of Thomas 76:3
Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

2 Nephi 9:30 is in the middle of a series of woes pronounced upon various sorts of wicked people. Those who fit these categories of wickedness are condemned to spiritually perish in the next life. The wo pronounced against the rich in 2 Nephi 9:30 is a kind of moral "argument" in which biblical parallels serve as both the premises and the conclusion. The conclusion ("wherefore") is the pronouncement that the treasures of the rich shall perish with them.

3. *Cluster of Related Images.* The cluster may contain a series of images of pathways, animals, the harvest, or the vineyard. They do not seem to interpret the fulfillment or theological significance of the particular passage. They simply evoke related images. They resonate with a kind of serious playfulness that remains fundamental to a close reading of the text. An example can be found in the allegory of the olive tree in the vineyard in Jacob 5 which combines numerous agricultural phrases from the Bible.

4. *Cluster of Catch Words.* Here a biblical passage may be cited in the text followed by another text that has a particular word found in the first parallel. Below is an example of this kind of cluster containing catch

words in Ether 13. The catch words have been italicized:

Ether 13:9-10
And there shall be *a new heaven and a new earth*; and they shall be like unto the *old*, save *the old have passed away, and all things have become new.* And then cometh the *New Jerusalem* . . .

Revelation 21:1-2
And I saw *a new heaven and a new earth*: *for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away;* and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, *new Jerusalem* . . .

2 Corinthians 5:17
Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: *old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

In Ether 13:9-10, the citing of a new heaven and earth and the passing of the first heaven and earth from Revelation 21 evokes the catchwords of old and new from 2 Corinthians. Both Revelation 21 and 2 Corinthians 5 are reinterpreted by being placed in a new context in this Book of Mormon latter-day drama. Some of these clusters based on catch words are the work of Joseph Smith's creativity and do not stem from an underlying text.[6]

The Nineteenth-century Setting

Once an inventory of biblical parallels in the Book of Mormon is established, we can examine parallels and clusters in light of how the book's original nineteenth-century audience would have used them. The American Protestant view of the Bible in the early nineteenth century cannot be framed with a single perspective. As with the attempt to characterize the historical thought processes of any age, it is incomplete and reflects the fact that we can deal only with written sources that reflect the power structures of the time. The characters most in tune with the countercultural sentiments in the Book of Mormon would not be in the cultural mainstream and rarely would appear in print. So it is with considerable caution that I approach a topic as complex as the American Protestant view of the Bible.

The first part of the nineteenth century was a period of innovation and creativity in biblical interpretation. Mark Noll argues that the notion of the sovereignty of the people during this period brought a crisis of reli-

6. In Ether 12:4-5 we find allusions to Hebrews 6:19 and to 1 Corinthians 15:58 which both share the catch word "steadfast." The combining of these texts based on a catch word only works in English. The Greek text of Hebrews 6:19 uses the words "asphale" and "bebaian" for "sure and steadfast," while 1 Corinthians 15:58 uses "ametakinetoi" for "steadfast." At least in this instance, the cluster is the work of Joseph Smith and is not an underlying text.

gious authority within popular culture. Many religious leaders were throwing away human creeds and returning to the Bible as the sole source of faith and practice.[7] Having said this, it would be a mistake to conclude that this was a uniform trend or that it was an absolute break with tradition.

In the first place, there remained strong pockets of interpretive conservatism. Even among innovative interpreters, biblical commentaries held an important place (even when they were being denounced). Up to this point, America was still in many respects a spiritual colony of Europe that served as the base from which it was rebelling. For example, Alexander Campbell, Elias Smith, Charles Finney, and Abel Thornton rejected biblical commentaries and were all part of innovative trends in biblical interpretation. Yet, paradoxically, they were all influenced by and quoted traditional commentaries to support their views on the Bible.[8] Even the most creative prophetic interpreters of the Bible, such as Robert Matthews, were influenced by biblical commentaries.[9]

There is evidence that in the early nineteenth century biblical commentaries were widely used by scholars, as well as lay people, on the

---

7. Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865," in Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds., *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A History of the American People*, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1975), 332-33, 574; Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," in *New York History* 61 (Oct. 1980); Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3-10.

8. For example, see Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System, in Reference to the Union of Christians, and a Restoration of Primitive Christianity, as Plead in the Current Reformation* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1839[?]), 202-30. The first edition of this book was in 1835. For Campbell's general view of scripture, see *The Christian Baptist* 2 (3 Jan. 1825): 26-29; William E. Tucker and Lester McAllister, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1975); Lowell K. Handy, "Where the Scriptures Speak, We Quarrel: Biblical Approaches in Disciples Founders," in L. Dale Richesin and Larry D. Bouchard, eds., *Interpreting Disciples: Practical Theology in the Disciples of Christ* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1987).

The relationship between Elias Smith and the commentaries can be seen in Elias Smith, *Sermons, Containing an Illustration of the Prophecies to be Accomplished from the Present Time, until the New Heavens and Earth are Created, when All the Prophecies will be Fulfilled* (Exeter, NH, 1808).

Charles Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 80-88. This work was based on a series of lectures delivered from 1830-35 and originally published in 1835.

Abel Thornton, *The Life of Elder Abel Thornton, Late of Johnston, R. I.: A Preacher in the Free-Will Baptist Connection, and a Member of the R. I. Q. Meeting* (Providence: J. B. Yerrington, 1828), 9-11.

9. In the 1820s Matthews had visions and read at least one commentary on the book of Revelation while preparing his own apocalyptic message. See Margaret Wright Matthews, *Matthias* (New York, 1835), 15-19. For events in Matthias's life in this same period, see William Stone, *Matthias and His Imposters: or, The Progress of Fanaticism* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835), 22-29; Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilenz, *The Kingdom of Matthias* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 69-90.

frontier and in rural areas.[10] All this evidence leads to the conclusion that we are justified in taking these early nineteenth-century commentaries as a necessary base that both reflected and helped create the primary elements of early American understanding of the Bible. From this traditional base American creativity sprang.

The commentaries were generally, but not always, in the theological center of biblical studies. In the next section, I will compare examples of the Book of Mormon's countercultural use of the Bible with these commentaries, which represented the traditional center of biblical interpretation.[11] I will supplement this with biblical views of selected evangelicals,

---

10. James Erwin was a Methodist circuit rider in the early nineteenth century in central New York State. One of the books he carried in his travels was Wesley's biblical commentary. These books were approved by the presiding elder of the church. He also states that typical books in Methodists' homes were Clarke's and Benson's biblical commentaries, Watson's *Institutes*, and the works of Wesley. See James Erwin, *Reminiscences of Early Circuit Life* (Toledo, OH, 1884), 20, 48-49. In addition, Nat Lewis, uncle of Emma Smith, wished to contest Joseph Smith's claims to translating the Book of Mormon with "the miracle-working spectacles." So he asked the prophet to read the sections with foreign languages in Clarke's commentary. Reportedly, Joseph simply walked away. (George Peck, *Early Methodism within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828* [New York: Carlton & Porter, 1860], 332-33.) The point is that Clarke's commentaries were readily accessible and acceptable near the rural areas of the prophet. In addition, there is a large body of literature in the early nineteenth century that appeals to biblical commentaries as authorities, such as Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (Poultney, VT: Smith & Lutz, 1825); and William Phoebus, *An Essay on the Doctrine and Order of the Evangelical Church of America; as Constituted at Baltimore in 1784* (New York: Abraham Paul, 1817).

11. The following early nineteenth-century commentaries published in America were consulted for this essay: Rev. Mr. Ostervald, *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments; with Arguments Prefixed to the Different Books, and Moral and Theological Observations Illustrating Each Chapter* (New York: Sage & Clough, 1803); Robert Lowth, *Isaiah. A New Translation; with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes Critical, Philological, and Explanatory* (Boston: Joseph T. Buckingham, 1815); Thomas Scott, *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments with Original Notes and Practical Observations* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1817-18); John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: William Woodward, 1817); John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1811); Philip Doddridge, *The Family Expositor; or, A Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament; with Critical Notes, and a Practical Improvement of Each Section* (Charleston, MA: Etheridge & Co., 1807); John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (New York: J. Soule & T. Mason, 1818); Joseph Priestley, *Notes on All the Books of Scripture* (Northumberland, PA, 1803); John McDonald, *Isaiah's Message to the American Nation. A New Translation, of Isaiah, Chapter XVIII with Notes Critical and Explanatory, A Remarkable Prophecy, Respecting the Restoration of the Jews, Aided by the American Nation* . . . (Albany, 1814); Ezekiel Cooper, *Critical and Explanatory Notes, on Many Passages in the New Testament, which to Common Readers are Hard to be Understood* (Canandaigua, NY: James Bemis, 1819); Alden Bradford, *Evangelical History: or A Narrative of the Life, Doctrine and Miracles of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and of his Holy Apostles; containing the Four Gospels and the Acts: with a General Introduction, and Prefatory Remarks to each Book, and Notes Didactic, Explanatory, and Critical. Designed Chiefly for those who have not leisure to peruse the larger works of voluminous Commentators* (Boston: Bradford and Read, 1813); Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with A Commentary and Critical Notes. . .* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1832[?] reprint); George Campbell, *Four Gospels, Translated from the Greek with Preliminary Dissertations, and Notes Critical and Explanatory* (Boston: W. Wells and Thomas B. Wait & Co., 1811).

primitivists, and prophets. The commentaries generally represented the Orthodox Protestant view of the perfection of the biblical text. The notion that the writing of scripture was "superintended" by God was a popular one. But one of the disagreements was whether God's superintendency allowed for minor grammatical error or whether such superintendency resulted in a perfect Bible. The reading of the biblical text was constrained by doctrines such as salvation through faith alone and the Bible as primary (if not only) source of revelation. The commentaries tended to focus on historical exegesis and some textual issues prior to interpreting the text.

On the other hand, prophetic figures in the early nineteenth century were descendants of the Radical Reformation. They were more likely to state that the biblical text was corrupted, in error, and required new revelation to understand. Unlike the commentaries, early nineteenth-century prophets focused on the way a biblical text spoke directly to and about them. For example, Malachi 4 speaks of the coming of Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord. The commentaries typically saw this as the coming of John the Baptist, in line with New Testament statements. Yet at least three early nineteenth-century prophetic movements saw the Malachi prophecy as referring to a person in their own movement.[12] Prophets in the early nineteenth century simply took a standard American practice to an extreme. Americans typically saw themselves as not just a sign of the Millennium, but as an intrinsic instrument to bring it about.[13] So Ethan Smith was probably typical in combining the historical view of the commentaries with direct American fulfillment. He saw the coming of Elijah as having a double fulfillment—first, in John the Baptist, second, the preaching of the gospel by the missionary angel of Revelation 14 prior to the Millennium.[14] Smith believed that this angel was a figurative representation of the preaching of the gospel in his own time.

This freedom to see biblical events reflected in one's own life was probably more pronounced among American prophets than among more mainstream Protestants and certainly more than among the commentators. This distinction probably reflects social and religious distinctions between these differing interpreters of the Bible.

---

12. These Elijahs include Elias Pierson of the Matthias movement; Daniel Hawley, the Presbyterian school teacher and prophet in Carmel, New York; and James and Jane Wardley among the Shakers. Also, in 1796, the minister/prophet David Austin declared himself to be John the Baptist to prepare for the coming of Christ.

13. James H. Moorehead, "Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880," in *Journal of American History* 71 (Dec. 1984): 532.

14. Ethan Smith, *Dissertation on the Prophecies Relative to Antichrist and the Last Times* (Boston: Samuel Armstrong, 1814), 236-40.

One interpretive dichotomy common to almost all nineteenth-century religious traditions is the distinction between "spiritual" or "mystical" level of meaning and the "temporal" or "literal" level. This distinction is one found in various sections of the Book of Mormon, as well. I will examine this distinction in Isaiah 52:7-10.

I will now examine four examples of how the Book of Mormon, as a biblical mosaic, addresses a broad nineteenth-century audience. I will begin by providing an inventory of particular biblical parallels in the Book of Mormon and then comparing the Nephite presentation of the passage to various nineteenth-century biblical views on the passage.[15] I will note significant clusters of biblical parallels as we encounter them.

Parallel No. 1: Hebrews 13:8

Biblical Text:

> Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Book of Mormon Inventory: 1 Nephi 10:17-20 (allusion/proof text)

This passage uses Hebrews 13 as a proof text to argue for the presence of God's revelations (in the visionary sense of the word) in every age. It is in the midst of a cluster of biblical parallels. This cluster includes the declaration that those who diligently seek, shall find (Heb. 11:6; Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-10). The other biblical parallel is a discussion of the way being prepared from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34; Luke 11:50; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3). All these parallels combine into a cluster that defends the idea of extra-biblical revelation in every age.

While the Book of Mormon tries to convince readers of the uniformity of the presence of revelation in every age, it attempts to fight against the Calvinist notion of predestination, which can be supported with these same biblical texts.[16] John Gill, the most prominent Calvinist of our commentators, uses Matthew 25:34 and Ephesians 1:4 as proof texts to defend predestination and unconditional election from "the foundation of the

---

15. The biblical text used in this work is *The Holy Bible: containing the Old and New Testament; together with the Apocrypha . . .with [C]Anne's Marginal Notes and References* (New York: Collins & Co., 1819), a widely distributed edition, printed numerous times in the early nineteenth century. The Book of Mormon text is from the 1830 edition, although the printer's manuscript and original manuscript will be referred to when they add important information.

16. Other passages in the New Testament speak of "from the foundation of the world." But they refer to Christ or truth hidden from the foundation. Hence, it is not likely that they would have been used as proof texts that the *elect* were chosen from the foundation, as the biblical texts cited above were used.

world." This interpretation was widely used among American Calvinists.[17]

2 Nephi 2:3 b-4 (allusion/proof text)

As in 1 Nephi 10, 2 Nephi uses Hebrews 13 as a proof text for revelation linked with an Arminian view of salvation.

2 Nephi 27:23; 29:8-9; Mormon 9:7-10; Moroni 10:19 (allusion)

These passages allude to Hebrews 13:8 as a proof text for revelation and other gifts of the Spirit. Mormon 9:7-10 adds a second proof text that is used for the same purpose (James 1:17, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning").

I now turn to the most unique use of Hebrews 13:8 in the Book of Mormon.

Alma 31:16-17 (allusion/parody of a proof text; emphasis added):

> Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known to us that there shall be no Christ; *but thou art the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever*; and thou hast elected us, that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee; and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God.

---

17. For examples of the Calvinist use of "from the foundation of the world" from Ephesians 1:4-5 as a proof text of the predestinarian doctrine of election, see Daniel Haskel, *The Doctrine of Predestination . . . A Discourse* (Burlington: Samuel Miller, 1817), 10-11; Ezra Stites Ely, *Contrast between Calvinism and Hopkinsianism* (New York: S. Whiting & Co., 1811), 26-27; Bangs, 23, 120-27, 215; Daniel Whitby, *Six Discourses* (Worcester, MA: Isaiah Thomas, Jr., 1801), 34-35; *Calvinism and Arminianism Displayed* (Wilmington, DE: Simon Kollock, 1806), 7-8; Josiah Hopkins, *The Doctrine of Decrees Essential to the Divine Character* (Middlebury, VT: T. C. Strong, 1812), 8-9; Weeks, 8, 28; R. H. Bishop, *An Apology for Calvinism* (Lexington, KY: Daniel Bradford, 1804), 5-6, 12-14; Gardiner Springs, *The Doctrine of Election* (Auburn, NY: James Beardslee, 1818). The last work is based entirely on Ephesians 1:4-5. The works cited above by Whitby and Bangs (a liberal eighteenth-century and a conservative nineteenth-century Arminian) reveal how some Arminians represented and rebutted this kind of Calvinist proof text. John Fletcher indicates that this kind of proof text was common among British Calvinists. See John Fletcher, *Checks to Antinomianism* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, n.d.), 1:110, 146.

This is a portion of the prayer of the Zoramites. It is unlike any other prayer in the Book of Mormon. It is formal, stilted, and repetitious. The hollow sound of the prayer matches the hollow religion of the Zoramites. Its pride stands in contrast to the simple, spontaneous prayer offered by Alma, just as the arrogance of the Zoramite worshippers stands in contrast to their poor. The prayer recalls the prayer of the proud pharisee in the New Testament, which is contrasted to the repentant prayer of the publican (Luke 18:9-14). This prayer reveals the smug doctrines of the social elite and their own view of election. Its hollowness turns the use of Hebrews proof text into a parody of the Zoramites.

The parody is enhanced by citing the Hebrews text in a manner that few in the early nineteenth century would have thought of—a repudiation of the doctrine of Christ. Hebrews 13:8, in fact, speaks of Christ and was often understood in the nineteenth century as a defense of his immutability. To use this text to *deny* Christ would likely have appeared outrageous to most readers, making the Zoramite doctrines ironic and absurd.[18] Hence, their doctrine of election is not only portrayed as arrogant and evil, but absurd by association with such an outrageous proof text. While the Book of Mormon believes in divine immutability, it uses it only to defend the sure salvation of those who die in infancy, not the Calvinist belief in general election, which it ridicules in Alma (Moro. 8:18-19).

This is the only time in the Book of Mormon that Hebrews 13:8 is intended solely as a defense of the immutability of God rather than a defense of the universality of a doctrine, such as revelation. The context of the proof text from Hebrews in this verse makes it clear that it is arguing that God is immutable, meaning that he is always a Spirit and therefore cannot appear as a man, such as Christ.[19]

Less certain is the possibility that this proof text parodies the Calvinist doctrine of election, as well as being an anti-Christian proof text. If one interprets the proof text as addressing election, then Hebrews 13:8 refers to the two main doctrines mentioned in the prayer—the doctrine of Christ and the unconditional salvation of the elect. This short prayer mentions election four times, and the immutability of Christ was a typical proof of the Calvinist doctrine of election in the early nineteenth century: God does not change, his course is determined from the foundation of the world; therefore, the doctrine of the immutability proves uncondi-

---

18. Clyde Forsberg believes this irony is intended to be humorous.

19. The word "but" prior to citing Hebrews 13 indicates that the phrase rejects the preceding phrase, which was a statement regarding the Nephite doctrine of Christ. This interpretation of Hebrews 13:8 in Alma as a proof text against Christ is supported by verse 15, which anticipates the Hebrews 13 proof text by saying that God was always a Spirit, is a Spirit, and will always be a Spirit—hence, he will not come as a human, as Christ.

tional election. (So the Calvinist argument went.)[20] This is the summary of the evidence that indicates that the allusion to Hebrews 13:8 may be a parody of the Calvinist doctrine of election.

But even if the Hebrews 13:8 proof text for immutability simply refers to the doctrine of Christ, it is at least juxtaposed to the doctrine of election. Therefore election is implied as part of the outrageous and ironic nature of the prayer. Even if the proof text refers only to the doctrine of Christ, the Calvinist doctrine of election is ridiculed by implication.

Summary

Nineteenth-century commentaries interpreted this passage as a reference to the immutability of Christ and/or the constancy of Christ's doctrines over time (see Scott, Clarke, Wesley, Gill, Priestly, and Doddridge). The Book of Mormon appeals to both interpretations. It parodies the Zoramite use of the phrase as a reference to immutability, and uses it to defend the constancy of doctrine over time, particularly the doctrine of revelation.

The belief that direct revelations and miracles ceased with apostles was prominent, though far from universal, when the Book of Mormon appeared. For example, pages 3-7 of the 1818 *Methodist Magazine* contains an editorial that stated, "It should never be forgotten that the age of miracles is past." And there was a whole host of positions on visions. Some accepted them wholeheartedly as the most fundamental revelation. Others accepted them cautiously as supplements to the Bible. Many rejected post-biblical revelations. Some even rejected revealed religion altogether. The Book of Mormon exploits the common inconsistency of many mainstream Protestants who used Hebrews 13 to defend the uniformity of the gospel in all ages and at the same time taught that revelations and miracles had ceased. The contradiction is apparent. That is one of the reasons that this passage from Hebrews appears so often in the Book of Mormon. It takes a standard proof text for the universality of the gospel and expands its use.

While unusual, this Book of Mormon expansion is not unique. Two prominent Shakers, Seth Wells and Calvin Green, also defended the necessity of revelation from the Spirit in all ages, using Hebrews 13:8 as a proof text. Revelations were to come in every age "in this day, as well as under former dispensations." It is the darkness of the spiritual race that blocks out revelation, "but the Spirit of God is 'the same yesterday, to-day

---

20. As an example of Calvinist use of the doctrine of immutability as a proof of election, see Haskel, 6-7. For a summary of the relationship of immutability and predestination in the thought of Parks and Edwards, see Frank Hugh Foster, *A Genetic History of the New England Theology* (New York: Russel & Russel, 1963), 264-65.

and forever.'"[21] Note how the Hebrews text quoted by Green and Wells has shifted—as it does in the Book of Mormon—from *Jesus* being the same to the *Spirit* being the same in order to appeal to the Spirit as the source of revelations. Both the Shakers and the Book of Mormon use this as a proof to demonstrate the need for revelation in modern as well as ancient times. Since the Book of Mormon uses the same textual modification and the same logic as Green and Wells, it appears that the Book of Mormon appealed to an extant early nineteenth-century biblical proof text for the universal presence of revelation from the Spirit (1 Ne. 10:17-20; 2 Ne. 2:3-4).

In summary, the Book of Mormon addresses the two major uses of Hebrews 13:8. It appeals to a proof text used by a countercultural religion; at the same time it parodies the misuse of the verse in defending immutability (with probable intentions to ridicule the Calvinist understanding of election). The Book of Mormon uses a biblical text to universalize biblical revelation. This doctrine of continuous revelation challenges mainstream Protestant authority and knowledge claims.

Parallel No. 2: John 10:16

Biblical Text:

> And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

Book of Mormon Inventory: 1 Nephi 22:24-25 (allusion)

The one fold of sheep represents the gathering of the righteous in the last days. 1 Nephi 22 also uses biblical imagery of animals to describe this gathering (calves of the stall, Mal. 4:2; God feeding sheep, John 21:16-17). Verse 27 makes it clear that all these latter-day events are to come to pass "according to the flesh" as temporal events, not as symbolic or internal spiritual events.[22]

3 Nephi 15:16-24; 16:1-5 (two quotes and commentary; emphasis added):

> And verily, I say unto you, That ye are they of which I said, *other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.* And

21. Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells, *A Summary View of the Millennial Church, or United Society of Believers (Commonly called Shakers)* (Albany: Packer & Van Benthuysen, 1823), 37.

22. For spiritual interpretation of this passage, see ibid., 174, 175, 189, 207-12, and Paulina Bates, *The Divine Book of Holy and Eternal Wisdom, Revealing the Word of God* (Canterbury, NH, 1849), 380.

> they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles: for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching; and they understood not that I said *they shall hear my voice;* and they understood not that the Gentiles should not at any time *hear my voice;* that I should not manifest myself unto them, save it were by the Holy Ghost. But behold, ye have both *heard my voice,* and seen me . . .

Christ here is speaking to the Nephites. He continues to speak about other separate groups of the House of Israel which will hear his voice and become part of the one fold even though they are of separate folds or locations at present. (Compare this passage with the echo of John 10:16 in 1 Nephi 19:11.) This statement is followed by a discussion of the conversion of Israel in the last days in conjunction with the fulfillment of Isaiah 52.

Summary

The voice of Christ in John 10, according to the Book of Mormon, refers to the literal voice of Christ. But both passages that cite John 10 in the Book of Mormon imply or state that the "one fold" is a physical gathering in the last days.

The consensus of nineteenth-century commentaries was that the "other sheep" to hear Christ's voice were the gentiles (see Ostervald, Scott, Clarke, Wesley, Gill, Doddridge, and Campbell). The Book of Mormon disagrees and attributes that view to the Jews at the time of Jesus. 3 Nephi states that this consensus cannot be correct since the gentiles never literally heard the voice of Jesus. John 10:16 thus becomes a prophecy of the visit of Christ reported in 3 Nephi. This daring interpretation does two things: It establishes the Bible as an endorsement of the Book of Mormon, which thereby becomes the source of the hidden words of Christ that sweep away the corrupt Christian culture experienced by the reader. This cluster of biblical passages evokes the image of a safe gathering place under God's voice. Such an eschatological gathering and new words from Christ would not be welcome by those in power.

Parallel No. 3: Luke 2:10

Biblical Text:

> And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

This angelic message is delivered to the shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus.

Book of Mormon Inventory: 1 Nephi 13:37; Mosiah 3:2-3; Alma 39:15-19; Helaman 5:11; 13:7; 29; 16:13-14 (echo)

In these passages a series of prophets are visited by angels and preachers who declare "glad tidings of great joy" which consist of the coming of the Messiah and his gospel.[23] These visitations prepare the recipient to receive the full gospel when Christ comes. The angelic announcement in Luke 2 has been transformed by the Book of Mormon into a literary form consisting of angelic revelation and preaching throughout all of history.

Alma 13:21-26 (echo; emphasis added):

> yea, and the voice of the Lord, *by the mouth of angels, doth declare it unto all nations; yea, doth declare it, that they may have glad tidings of great joy*; yea, and he doth sound these *glad tidings among all his people*, yea, even to them that are scattered abroad upon the face of the earth; wherefore they have come to us.

Summary

It is clear from Alma 39:19 that this phrase is intended as a defense of the visionary or prophetic tradition among readers of the book. So this new Nephite literary form goes beyond using the Bible as a proof text, as in the case of Hebrews 13:8. Several passages with parallels to Luke 2 universalize the phrase to apply to the necessity of angelic visitations in every age, both before and after Christ. This fits the Book of Mormon's universalizing of biblical texts and defense of revelation in every age.

The preparatory nature of this angelic visitation formula is mentioned in the Book of Mormon passages above—preparation of people for Christ. This form served as the basis for the later Mormon doctrine assigning the visitation of angels to the preparatory, or Aaronic, priesthood. And it clarifies its meaning as preaching to prepare the mind for Christ (see D&C 13:1; 84:26).

Parallel No. 4: Isaiah 52:7-10

Biblical Text:

> 7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that

23. The Book of Mormon angelic visitations announce *glad* tidings of great joy. (Wesley's and Timothy Dwight's biblical text of Luke 2:10, as well as Gill's and Ostervald's commentaries in Luke, use the phrase "glad tidings" instead of the Lukan "good tidings.") For Dwight's text, see Timothy Dwight, *Sermons* (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe, Durrie & Peck, 1828), 180.

> bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!
> 8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.
> 9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem:
> 10. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

The imagery here is that of a messenger running in mountainous territory arriving at Jerusalem to announce the reign of God. This message is received with shouts of joy from the city's "watchmen." It is clear from Mosiah 12 that the Book of Mormon considers these four verses a single literary unit. This is a particularly important biblical parallel because it provides an explicit interpretation and appears several times, offering an excellent case of multiple attestation. And because it appears many times in the Book of Mormon, it provides a clear window for understanding the uses of the Bible in the Book of Mormon, including less obvious parallels.

Book of Mormon Inventory: 1 Nephi 13: 37 (allusion)

Here the reign of God in Isaiah is changed to an *everlasting* kingdom of God and Zion is used as a type to represent those who bring forth the Book of Mormon. Here the publishing of peace refers to the distribution of the gospel in the last days in conjunction with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The phrases "publishing peace" and "good tidings" are clearly from Isaiah 52, and yet a similar phrase from Luke 2:10 ("good tidings of great joy") is weaved into this 1 Nephi 13 text. The angelic choir sings of peace on earth, as does the running messenger. This subtle echo indicates that the Book of Mormon, like several of our commentaries, understands both of these verses to address the universal gospel.[24]

Mosiah 12:20-24 (quotation)

Here one of the priests of Noah asks Abinadi to interpret the Isaiah passage containing buoyant hope. The clear, unstated intention of the priest is to question the legitimacy of Abinadi's prophetic message of

---

24. For more recent arguments against reliance of Luke 2 on Isaiah 52, see John A. Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1981), and Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1967), 2:107-15.

doom by asking him to interpret an optimistic statement from a respected prophet. Here the priest implies that Abinadi's message is illegitimate. The only major textual change is the replacement of "all the ends of the earth" for "all the earth" in verse 10. This addition emphasizes the breadth of the gospel's spread. Its context in the Book of Mormon clearly makes this a quotation.

Mosiah 15:14-31; 16:1(-15) (paraphrase, quotation, and echo)

Here Abinadi responds to the question of the priest in Mosiah 12. Mosiah 15:14-17 paraphrases Isaiah 52:7 and states that the messenger on the mountain who publishes peace and salvation are all those past, present, and future prophets (and possibly other preachers) who taught of Christ. The context of this paraphrase, and the use of echoes of the word "salvation" throughout the chapter, make it clear that the message of salvation and peace referred to in Isaiah refers to Christ's overcoming death and offering spiritual life.

In verse 18 a different interpretation is offered for the identity of the one "that bringeth good tidings, that is[,] the founder of peace; yea, even the Lord, who hath redeemed his people." In the prior verses, the messengers who bring the message of peace and salvation are preachers. But in verse 18 it refers specifically to Christ himself. Christ has brought salvation—he is the source of redemption. So in verses 14-18 we have two different explicit interpretations of the identity of the messenger. The chapter continues through verse 27 describing the nature of these "good tidings" of salvation through Christ. The general approach here has been to spiritualize the imagery of Isaiah 52 into a Christian view of redemption.

But then there is another shift from a spiritual to a temporal interpretation in verse 28: "And now I say unto you, that the time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Yea, Lord, thy watchmen shall lift up their voice." The passage continues to quote verbatim Isaiah 52:8-9. Note how the Book of Mormon adds, "Yea, Lord, thy watchmen," to the Isaiah text. This transforms the watchmen from being watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem to being servants of the Lord. In addition, this quotation of verses 8-9 from Isaiah 52 is placed in a latter-day setting when all will hear this message of salvation and in the final judgment when we "shall see eye to eye," as the echo of this phrase indicates in Mosiah 16:1. The end of chapter 15 and chapter 16 contain one of the formulaic phrases used in the Book of Mormon to interpret a temporal interpretation of a biblical passage: "the time shall come when . . ." Here we find that these verses from Isaiah 52 are given a temporal interpretation—referring to both the latter

day and to the Judgment. This interpretation is reinforced by eschatological images from the Bible (gnashing of teeth, first resurrection) and biblical images about life and death (Mosiah 16:7//1 Cor. 15:55; Mosiah 16:8-10//1 Cor. 15:53-54; Mosiah 16:9//John 1:4; 8:12; 9:5).[25]

Alma 36:26 (allusion and application)

In these words of Alma to his son, Helaman, he alludes to Isaiah 52 about seeing eye to eye as part of the conversion process. Alma's conversion included an angelic visit and a heavenly vision. This seeing eye to eye refers to the convert facing a heavenly being. The figure in Isaiah 52 is spiritualized and universalized. The imagery evoked by Alma's echo of Isaiah 52 supports both an evangelical view of conversion and a visionary view of the source of knowledge coming from visions. It seems to be more of an application of the text rather than an objective interpretation.

3 Nephi 16:17-20 (quotation)

This passage interprets Isaiah as a temporal event in the latter days.

3 Nephi 20:30-21:8 (quotation with interpretive comments added)

3 Nephi 20 contains a cluster of biblical prophecies, each introduced by the formula, "Then shall . . . " This formula appears nine times and temporally orders the biblical prophecies. A statement of the event is made, followed by the biblical quotation. The statement of the event interprets the quote that follows it. The sequence of prophetic events here is: conversion of the "remnants" of Israel, Native Americans to destroy gentiles if they do not repent (3 Ne. 20:15-23//Micah 5:7-8, 4:12-13; Acts 3:22-23), conversion of the Jews (3 Ne. 20:31-32//Isa. 52:7), conversion of the Jews to benefit gentiles (3 Ne. 20:27//Gen. 22:18), gathering of Jews to Jerusalem and their song after conversion to Christ (3 Ne. 20:33-35//Isa. 52:9-10; 52:1-3, 6), and finally words of the people of the Lord in Jerusalem who are gathered (3 Ne. 20:40-45//Isa. 52:7, 11-15). What we have in this chapter is a cluster of biblical parallels that forms a prophetic mosaic in which the parallels both interpret each other and form a temporal sequence.

There are other biblical echoes and quotations in this passage, but space does not allow a full analysis. From this passage, Isaiah 52 understands the seeing eye to eye as a reference to the latter-day conversion of

---

25. The Book of Mormon clearly relies on the wording and the concepts in 1 Corinthians 15. But the wording from 1 Corinthians 15:53-55 is itself a paraphrase of Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14.

the Jews. The use of the terms "*their* watchman" and "*their* voice" instead of the pronoun "thy" in the Isaiah text points to the watchmen being Jews. Clarke's commentary also suggests an alternative reading of "their voice."[26] The addition of "unto them" to verse 7 serves the same purpose of localizing the prophecy to the Jews.

Summary

One of the greatest overstatements made about the Book of Mormon is that it provides a literal interpretation of scripture. In fact, it explicitly states otherwise. Fortunately, the recent work of Philip Barlow has described the book as containing spiritual interpretations, while leaning toward the literal.[27] The Book of Mormon itself adopts a nineteenth-century two-tiered methodology in interpreting Lehi's journey, Lehi's dream, and the prophecies of Isaiah (see 1 Ne. 15:27-36; 22:1-3; Alma 37). It uses the usual terms "spiritual" and "temporal" to designate these two levels of meaning. Typology was considered a subset of this interpretive strategy.

In the passages above, we have seen how the Book of Mormon gives a temporal interpretation of Isaiah 52 as the conversion and gathering of the Jews in the last days. The spiritual interpretation is the preaching of the gospel and the conversion of sinners in all ages. Other than the visionary element in Alma, this dualistic interpretation could have been acceptable to a large majority of American Protestants. Clarke, Gill, Lowth, Ostervald, and Scott all explicitly appeal to the spiritual and temporal meanings of Isaiah 52.

Gill is clearly the most spiritual of our commentators. He relishes spiritual meanings. For example, he sees the cry to depart from Babylon as a cry to depart from sin and the whole of Isaiah 52 as a description of the conquest of sin in the church. Finney refers to preachers as "watchmen," and "seeing eye to eye" was used to describe the unity that he hoped to see among rival Christian religions.[28] Others emphasized literal fulfillment. Several referred to a latter-day fulfillment but tended to see

---

26. Recent works have argued that this alternate reading does not coincide with the KJV, but does coincide with ancient manuscripts. These studies take this as evidence of the antiquity of the Book of Mormon. However, this approach fails to consider that there were numerous alternate versions as well as textual discussions in the commentaries that must be examined before claiming evidence for antiquity. We have seen several times how the Book of Mormon varies from the KJV text and agrees with the variant reading in Wesley. These textual variants were often followed carefully because of their theological implications. Certainly Joseph Smith was not a trained textual exegete. However, he may have been familiar with verbal uses of such variants and the theological implications surrounding them.

27. Barlow, 32-38.

28. Finney, 144, 328.

temporal fulfillment in the return of the Jews from captivity.

It should be noted that the two-tiered interpretive methodology was not uniformly accepted. Priestly interprets Isaiah 52 as simply the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, with no mention of spiritual meanings. Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* argues against those in the early nineteenth century who denied the literal return of the Jews. He argues against those who interpret Isaiah 52 and other prophecies solely as referring to spiritual conversion.[29]

The Book of Mormon, in line with visionary interpreters, focusses interpretation on the latter days. But there is a hint that the Book of Mormon may also understand Isaiah's prophecies in an ancient temporal setting. The more obvious interpretations of Isaiah by the Book of Mormon are as events in the latter days and, spiritually, as the redemption of Christ. This passage from Mosiah 15-16 contains both echoes and explicit interpretations that at least some biblical texts are understood according to the spiritual/temporal dichotomy of the original audience and that there are multiple temporal and spiritual interpretations of this particular text. No other biblical passage is interpreted in the Book of Mormon in this detail or with this degree of complexity. It should serve as a guide to less explicit biblical interpretations.

Conclusion

The first impression that strikes me as I examine this inventory of biblical passages is how diverse and intricate the use of the Bible is in the Book of Mormon. Its complexity is surprising. This diversity of source and use has caused me to entertain the figure of a mosaic as an appropriate description of the use of the Bible in the Book of Mormon. The figure of a mosaic is useful for three reasons: the biblical parallels are clustered together in meaningful ways; the Book of Mormon uses the Bible in a variety of ways; and the Book of Mormon combines a variety of biblical usages both typical and unusual for the nineteenth century. It ranks with other early nineteenth-century American prophets as being among the most creative views of the Bible in early America. We have seen how the Book of Mormon repeats a nineteenth-century prophetic proof text and parodies Calvinism (Heb. 13:8); it universalizes and transforms a biblical passage into a new literary form (Luke 2:10); it gives an explicit interpretation at odds with existing interpreters (John 10:16); and it gives a stan-

29. See Ethan Smith, 56-60, 225, and Appendix as examples. Smith actually adopted the two-tiered method. Besides examples in Smith, a later visionary example of a strictly spiritualized interpretation of Isaiah 52 is found in Bates, 91-93. Bates does not believe in a physical resurrection or an eschatological new heaven and new earth. These are all spiritual events in the life of the soul.

dard spiritual/temporal interpretation of biblical prophecy (Isa. 52:7-10) with a touch of visionary radicalism.

In each of these instances the Book of Mormon either universalizes or lets the texts address latter-day readers directly. Its interpretive directness fits closer to the marginalized prophets than to the commentaries of the early nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century readers saw the Bible as two separate books: a source of universally valid insights about human nature and a typical history being repeated in America.[30] The Book of Mormon simply takes the typifying of biblical history to new visionary heights. All migrations to establish nations are like the Hebrew exodus. All nations have secret combinations and prophetic warnings in times of wickedness. All nations possess their own Bible and revelations. It is the universalizing of revelation that made the Book of Mormon possible, and makes it such a countercultural threat. The prophetic figures in the early nineteenth century were generally people who had been marginalized. An appeal to their message was therefore a countercultural statement.

The appeal of this countercultural mosaic lies in its ability to recreate the shattered world of those broken by the history they experienced; the Nephite biblical mosaic provides a new authority and world view. The Book of Mormon created a countercultural perspective from the pieces of inherited tradition surrounding the book's readers. This mosaic is one of the reasons that, as one prominent historian states, the book is "an extraordinary work of popular imagination and one of the greatest documents in American cultural history."[31] Yet the figure of a mosaic evokes an image of creation from destruction, and preserves the past in small remnants. It confronts us in the form of holy texts having the power of creative destruction. To save the gospel, we must therefore destroy the texts. This is both a beauty and a sorrow of the Book of Mormon. Mormons too often envision Joseph Smith as a prophet of the objective. Hence the Book of Mormon tells us facts about where people come from and how history works under God. Yet I relish the image of Joseph as a folk artist crafting mosaics of the soul—a prophet of meaning rather than a scientist of objectivity.

30. Noll, 43-44.
31. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," 381.

Retelling the Greatest Story Ever Told: Popular Literature as Scripture in Antebellum America

Clyde R. Forsberg, Jr.

TO EXPRESS A BELIEF IN MORE OR LESS than what Christians consider to be scripture has rarely evoked a tolerant or sympathetic response.[1] "Of the Holy Scriptures," the Westminster Confession of Faith says, "nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men."[2] The Confession does not deny that the Spirit testifies to the truth of holy writ, "bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts," and while not "all things in Scripture" are "alike clear to all," it freely admits, what is necessary to salvation is "so clearly propounded . . . that not only the learned, but the unlearned . . . can obtain a sufficient understanding."[3] "The authority of the holy scriptures," it further stipulates, "dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly on God."[4]

Indeed, the Book of Mormon is precisely the type of "revelation from the Spirit" the Confession and orthodox Christianity anathematizes. However, as New Testament scholar Krister Stendahl has argued, this new revelation freely modifies biblical revelations:

---

1. Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Images of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 47, 63, 67-74, 87, 106, 110, 350.

2. *The Confession of Faith; the Larger and Shorter Catechisms* (Inverness: John G. Eccles Printers, Ltd., reissued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1976), 22.

3. Ibid., 23.

4. Ibid., 21.

> the Book of Mormon belongs to and shows many of the typical signs of the Targums and the pseudepigraphic recasting of biblical material. The targumic tendencies are those of clarifying and actualizing translations, usually by expansion and more specific application to the need and situation of the community. The pseudepigraphic, both apocalyptic and didactic, tend to fill out the gaps in our knowledge about sacred events, truths and predictions. They may be overtly revelatory or under the authority of the ancient greats: Enoch, the patriarchs, the apostles, or, in the case of the Essenes, under the authority of the Teacher of Righteousness in a community which referred to its members as latter-day saints. Such are in the style and thematic vocabulary of the biblical writings.[5]

Stendahl locates the Book of Mormon at the end of the Judaeo-Christian extracanonical tradition: the small "p" pseudepigraphical tradition, originating in the intertestamental period.

The Book of Mormon as nineteenth-century targum, or pseudepigraphical work, is an intriguing idea. It is nonetheless misleading and, if not inaccurate, then certainly incomplete. While it may be true that "the laws of creative interpretation by which we analyze material from the first and second Christian centuries operate and are significantly elucidated by works like the Book of Mormon,"[6] scholars have not been as resourceful when it comes to identifying possible nineteenth-century literary antecedents.

The Book of Mormon makes a case for the Hebraic origin of the American Indians, a thesis that has suffered a number of scientific and anthropological setbacks. Nevertheless, and importantly, when the Book of Mormon appeared in 1830 it was very believable—the notion that native peoples had descended from one of the Ten Lost Tribes was in anthropological vogue.[7] Sanford Porter, for example, an early convert to Mormonism, thought the Book of Mormon was both plausible *and* "quite entertaining," a sacred work to be sure, but a good story all the same.[8] Long before he read the Book of Mormon, and like many of his "gentile" neighbors, Porter believed that America "had been settled, by some peo-

---

5. Krister Stendahl, "The Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi," in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1978), 152.

6. Krister Stendahl, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 33-34.

7. See Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), and Richard H. Popkin, "The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Indian Theory," in *Hebrew and the Bible in America*, ed. Shalom Goldman (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), 70-90. Cf. Cyrus Gordon, "The Ten Lost Tribes," in *Hebrew and the Bible in America*, 61-69. In fact, Gordon argues in favor of a transoceanic migration of Hebrews (and even Romans).

8. Sanford Porter, "Reminiscences," 171ff, archives, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

ple, at some time, that [sic] was [sic] a sivilised [sic] people . . . long before it was; [sic] Discovered, by, Columbus."[9]

Most of the Evangelical attacks against the Book of Mormon emphasized the alleged unrepublican character of the book's author. Smith was accused of plagiarism, of master-minding a confidence scheme, and even of adding to the Word of God,[10] behavior unbecoming a Christian and an American, and out of step with the Reform impulse. Evangelicals refused to take Smith at his word and continually questioned his honesty. His claims of discovering and translating an ancient history by supernatural means strained their credulity. When America's moral reformers questioned the Mormon prophet's sincerity, they saw all the signs of a man on the make.

Nonetheless, a more important question is what caused Porter and others like him to respond so positively to the book. And if the Mormon prophet was a born story-teller, what kind of story-teller was he? What was his literary agenda? Who was his intended audience? Whom did he wish to assail or attack? Only by rephrasing the question in this way can we begin to fathom why some readers responded so heartily to the narrative and others, especially America's elites, did not.

In the following essay I will argue that the Book of Mormon is a nineteenth-century manifestation of the revelatory freedom found in the Radical Reformation. From this tradition, the Book of Mormon inherited a belief in a corrupted biblical text and adherence to the inner Word of God. While targumic in the broadest sense of the word, the Book of Mormon is both a commentary *and* a translation of the King James Version of the Bible (possibly for America's native population). Interestingly, characterizations of the book as an antebellum novel and fictional apology for republicanism do not contradict this interpretation. Written with the edification of the common person and the condemnation of the religious status quo in mind, the Book of Mormon illustrates a new genre in American literature—retellings of the greatest story ever told. In short, the Book of Mormon is an American novel that addresses biblical issues from the twin perspectives of the Radical Reformation and nineteenth-century American popular literature.

The Book of Mormon provides an amended biblical text. But its text was inspired by and advocates direct revelation from God. In this respect, it is a nineteenth-century descendant of the Radical Reformation. Radical Reformers were a diverse group of Protestants who believed that mainstream reformers had not gone far enough. Many preached polygamy,

---

9. Ibid., 172.

10. See Robert Heys, *A third address to the members of the Wesleyan societies . . . on the romantic character of the Book of Mormon . . . on the profaneness and wickedness of adding to the Book of God* (Douglas: W. Walls and Co., 1840).

revelation, new books of scripture, a political kingdom of God, etc. The early South German-Austrian Anabaptists are one notable example of the Radical Reformation to believe in private revelation, or the "transhistorical inner Word." They were mystics in the tradition of Meister Eckhardt, John Tauler, and the *Theologia Deutsch*. Thomas Muntzer, Hans Denck, and Hans Hut played an important role in the revitalization and dissemination of medieval mysticism. "True" knowledge of God, they believed, was communicated by the Spirit which resided in the heart of every human. Yet they did not rule out scripture altogether as a wellspring of divine knowledge. Those of "living faith" could certainly strengthen their faith by comparing it with the experiences of others as recorded in God's Word.

Hans Denck hypothesized that, albeit sinful by nature, humans had a divine spark which helped them to resist evil, thus enabling them to know God without the aid of externals—medieval sacraments, scripture, even the substitutionary atonement of Jesus. Denck also held views that lessened the importance of the Bible.

According to his opponents, such as Johann Bader, Denck was not simply interested in guarding against equating the Word of God with biblical texts, but "gives people to understand that the man who has the Spirit no longer has need of the Scriptures."[11] Nevertheless, Bader's criticism of Denck was a distortion. Denck contrasted scripture with the preincarnate Word, the Word of God written upon the soul, which one could read and understand by means of the Spirit—what he called the "key of David."[12] He rejected the Lutheran correlation of hearing the Word and faith, not scripture per se. For Denck, scripture without faith, or rather the Spirit, was dead; and although faith might stand alone without the Bible, it need not do so since the testimony of the written Word functioned as a second witness. Objective authority, therefore, dwelled in the heart of the believer illuminated by the Spirit.

Hans Hut was a strong believer in private revelations from God communicated to the faithful by means of the Spirit in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. Hut even claimed a private revelation which confirmed that he was the infallible interpreter of prophecy. His Salzburg followers believed that he possessed an ancient book reserved for the last days—though Hut denied any knowledge of the mysterious volume.

Like Denck, Hut distinguished between the outer and the inner witness. However, he assigned the outer witness, the hearing of the Word, an interim role. Like Luther, Hut gave a higher priority to the written Word in the divine order of grace and salvation. Yet, like Denck, he emphasized

---

11. Warner O. Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977), 46.

12. Ibid., 56.

the whisperings of the Spirit, the necessity of suffering, and a conception of the inner Word in the human soul which precipitated "tried faith." Scripture was a dead letter and salvation null or void without the Spirit. "Prevenient faith," a direct result of hearing the Word, came first, followed by "tried faith," which was rooted in the mystical experience of the cross. Book of Mormon prophet Alma's "dormant faith" and "perfect knowledge" are roughly equivalent to Hut's "prevenient faith" and "tried faith."

Hut's was an argument for spiritualism that did not exclude biblicism. He was thus both spiritualist and literalist. As Warner O. Packull, a leading scholar of mystical Anabaptism, explains: "Hut could, therefore, accentuate the letter-spirit dichotomy when confronted by an appeal to Scripture. He could also insist on a literal interpretation, if it was the meaning the Spirit intended."[13]

The same logic is employed in the Book of Mormon, which compares the written Word to a "seed" the heart judges to be good or not. However, in numerous places in the Book of Mormon the spirit, not scripture, is the final arbiter of truth, though the two work hand-in-hand. The challenge at the end of the book, in which readers are assured that "by the Holy Ghost," or by means of the inner, it is possible to "know the truth of all things," or the outer, is another example. Throughout the Book of Mormon the righteous are those who follow the dictates of their hearts, not necessarily their heads, who are of a "broken heart and a contrite spirit."

This is consistent with the Book of Mormon's criticisms not of God's Word but of the corrupt written or outer Word. Moreover, in certain cases even the correct rendering may lack clarity and thus mislead the most diligent reader, such as the words of Isaiah which Nephi says are "of great worth" but nonetheless difficult to understand. In such cases, the Spirit is essential if one is to understand what Isaiah and others are saying and to whom their words are addressed.

When Jesus appears to the Nephites, it is noteworthy that they are convinced of his divinity first by means of the inner witness of "a still small voice," and yet they do not hesitate to do as Thomas did, and feel the prints of the nails in his hands and feet. This is another dramatic illustration of the symbiotic nature of the inner and outer Word—the spoken Word which Jesus communicates to the faithful via the Spirit and the physical Word, in this case the resurrected body of Jesus himself, a dual testament to his atonement and the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

Muntzer and Hut have been associated with revolutions—though I think one should distinguish between an unavoidable and unfortunate

13. Ibid., 73.

series of events, which found them in the proverbial wrong place at the wrong time, and their original intentions. And whether a synthetic understanding of "the inner and the outer" gave impetus to the revolution among early South German-Austrian Anabaptists is debatable. This is not the case, however, in the Book of Mormon, which clearly associates revolution with "the inner and the outer," referring to the righteousness of the individual and the world respectively. Captain Moroni, a Nephite commander of the same stripe as Gideon in the Old Testament, reminds his reluctant conscripts that "God hath said that the inward vessel shall be cleansed first, and then shall the outer vessel be cleansed also."[14]

The mystical and possibly revolutionary vision of sixteenth-century Spiritualists like Hut was rekindled during the First and Second Great Awakenings, especially among Mennonite dissenters in Pennsylvania. Beulah Stauffer Hostetler's *American Mennonites and Protestant Movements* chronicles several competing Anabaptist visions in America contemporaneous with early Mormonism.[15] Pennsylvania, she points out, was home to religious separatists of many origins: Mennonites, Quakers, German Lutherans, German Reformed, German Schwenkfelders, Amish, and Radical Pietist Separatists (the Contented of the God Loving Soul, the Dunkers or the German Baptist Brethren, Inspirationalists, and the Moravians).

Mormon scholars have long been aware that early Mormonism was of the same mystical and radical bent.[16] D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* identifies many theological parallels between early Mormon folk religion and the mysticism of Jacob Boehme and others.[17] Likewise, John L. Brooke's award-winning *Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*, traces the Radical Reformation to Joseph Smith's door step.[18] It is less well-known that American Mennonitica gave impetus to many like movements which dotted the frontier. Dunkers flocked to Alexander Campbell's movement in droves—some of whom left with Sidney Rigdon and later converted to Mormonism.[19]

---

14. Wilford C. Wood, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work: The Book of Mormon 1830 First Edition* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1963), 397.

15. Beulah Stauffer Hostetler, *American Mennonites and Protestant Movements* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987).

16. See Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 1-15.

17. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), for Jacob Boehme, 75, 176; for Johannes Kelpius, 14.

18. John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

19. See David Barry Eller, "The Brethren in the Western Ohio Valley, 1790-1850: German Baptist Settlement and Frontier Accommodation," Ph.D. diss., Miami (Ohio) University, 1976, 199-201. Fifteen Dunker churches joined Campbell's restoration movement. Cf. Bill J. Humble, "The Restoration Ideal in the Churches of Christ," in *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, ed. Richard T. Hughes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 226.

The Book of Mormon is thus a revelation not unlike those of the mystical branch of the Radical Reformation. While critical of the outer word, it does not abandon it entirely. Rather, it employs mystical or spiritualist means to literalist ends.

The Book of Mormon also satisfied a widespread longing for an American Bible translation. Ernest S. Frerichs, editor of a collection of essays entitled *The Bible and Bibles in America*, sheds much light and criticism on Joseph Smith's reliance on the English of the KJV in the Book of Mormon. He suggests why it makes sense to see the latter as an American Bible translation—albeit veiled in the myth of the Hebraic origin of the American Indians—or at least a work inspired by antebellum America's craving for a Bible translation of its own. Frerichs explains that a "persistent American appetite for the Bible . . . abetted by American zeal and ingenuity that matches particular translations to every American taste" combined to proliferate translations.[20] The premise of American Bible translations at that time, he notes, was that the reader does not know the original languages and, therefore, the focus "is more frequently on the reader audience and less on the intention of the original language, author, or authors."[21] Even more striking is what Frerichs calls "the reflection of doctrinal and sectarian emphases . . . conveyed in the language of translation."[22] America, he argues, was a "fertile ground for the growth of movements that have their own sacred literature."[23] Harold P. Scanlin, in "Bible Translation by American Individuals," also emphasizes the eccentric and duplicitous temperament of American translators, who were not averse to translating the Bible to suit their own theological fancies.[24] Thus Smith's use of the KJV as his primary source and his approach were typical of other American translators.

As early as 1818 revisions of the KJV appeared. Abner Kneeland, the Universalist minister, published his two-volume Greek-English edition of the New Testament. Notably, his Greek text was that of J. J. Griesbach, the German biblical scholar and text critic, who enclosed various passages in brackets and relegated others to footnotes. Although Kneeland was not the first to publish Griesbach's Greek New Testament in America, his diglot played an important role in disseminating the discoveries of textual

---

20. Ernest S. Frerichs, "Introduction," *The Bible and Bibles in America* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 2.

21. Ibid., 2.

22. Ibid., 4.

23. Ibid., 6.

24. Harold P. Scanlin, "Bible Translation by American Individuals," in *The Bible and Bibles in America*, 43-82.

scholars to a wide audience.[25] In 1833 Rodolphus Dickinson, an Episcopal minister, published his revision of the New Testament. Although Dickinson used Griesbach's Greek text, he was more interested in correcting the English text. In the preface, he writes: "The lapse of centuries has produced a revolution in the English language, requiring a correspondent change in the version of the scriptures; and I may add, that the errors in grammar and rhetoric, the harsh and indelicate expressions, dispersed through the generally adopted text, demand amendment."[26] Similarly, Noah Webster, the famous American lexicographer, published his own revision of the Bible that same year to correct and update the English.[27] Even Alexander Campbell produced a revision of the Bible because of his belief that "the common version was an exact representation of the meaning of the original [but] at the time in which it was made."[28] Indeed, Bible translation was not the strict purview of males. Julia Evelina Smith-Parker, American suffragist and Millerite, composed her own translation of the Bible.[29]

"Nineteenth-century America was marked by a diversity of religious interests that created a variety of religious writings," Scanlin explains. "Part of this creative, pluralistic concern," he continues, "was demonstrated in the production of special translation projects whose primary concern had a different thrust from most versions of the period, which aimed at producing a more readable and more accurate translation with the King James Version tradition."[30] Joseph Smith's Inspired Version of the Bible was one such special project, he argues—in the same class as a spiritualist edition of the New Testament, probably prepared by Leonard Thorn, entitled *Introductory Remarks and Explanations by the Spirit of Jesus Christ as Revised and Corrected by the Spirits*, published in 1861.[31] However, Scanlin seems unaware of the fact that the Book of Mormon can also be seen as translation or revision of the Bible. Moreover, it was the Book of Mormon that inspired Smith to undertake a revision of the Bible in the

---

25. Ibid., 46-47. See Abner Kneeland, *The New Testament; Being the English Only of the Greek and English Testament; Translated from the Original Greek According to Griesbach* (Philadelphia: William Frye, 1823).

26. Scanlin, "Bible Translation by American Individuals," 47. See Rodolphus Dickenson, *A New and Corrected Version of the New Testament* (Boston: Lilly, Wait, Coleman, & Holden, 1833), vii.

27. See Noah Webster, *The Holy Bible . . . In the Common Version: With Amendments of the Language* (New Haven, CT: Durrie & Peck, 1833).

28. George Campbell et al., *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ* (Buffalo, VA: Alexander Campbell, 1826).

29. See Julia E. Smith[-Parker], *The Holy Bible . . . Translated Literally from the Original Tongues* (Hartford: American Publishing, 1876).

30. Scanlin, "Bible Translation in America," 56.

31. Ibid., 57.

first place.[32] Thus Smith's Inspired Version of the Bible and the Book of Mormon are similar in many respects. The difference is that one purports to be a revision of the Bible, the other an Indian Bible and thus a synthesis of two complementary antebellum crusades: the redemption of a text *and* a people.

John Alden, in "The Bible as Printed Word," notes that the "first American Bible" was John Eliot's 1663 Cambridge Bible, a translation for Massachusetts Indians.[33] In 1816 Elias Boudinot, president of the New Jersey Bible Society, called for a general meeting and the American Bible Society was born. The prime directive of the A.B.S., as stated in its constitution, was "to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment."[34] Not the least of the society's undertakings was its mission to the American Indians. As Alden explains:

> With independence Americans had taken up, in the revivalist fervor that gave rise to the American Bible Society, a zeal for spreading the Gospel in their own terms. Of the numerous such organizations that were founded as a consequence of this movement, perhaps the most significant and enterprising was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, whose origins closely parallel those of the society.[35]

The first missionaries were sent to the Hawaiian Islands in 1820.[36] Nevertheless, the American board did not neglect opportunities at home. It established a mission to the Cherokees at Brainerd, the Choctaws in Mississippi and Arkansas, and, in later years, missions to the Ojibwas, the Crees, the Pawnees, the Nez Perces, the Dakotas—Sioux—and many others.[37]

Evangelicals were not the only ones interested in both the purity of the Bible and the salvation of America's native peoples. Thomas Jefferson's Bible, penned with Indians in mind, suggests that American Bible translation allowed for a great deal of latitude. F. Forrester Church, in "Thomas Jefferson's Bible," explains that Jefferson was critical of the Bible, which he considered to be incomplete. Influenced by Benjamin Rush, the Universalist whose principal contribution was in chemistry and medicine, and Joseph Priestly, the famous Unitarian minister and scientist, Jefferson was convinced of the moral superiority of Christianity but be-

---

32. See Robert J. Matthews, *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1975). Cf. Kent P. Jackson, "The Sacred Literature of the Latter-day Saints," in *The Bible and Bibles in America*, 163-91.

33. John Alden, "The Bible as Printed Word," in *The Bible and Bibles in America*, 15.

34. Ibid., 19.

35. Ibid., 22.

36. Ibid., 23.

37. Ibid., 23-25.

lieved, as did Priestly, that "the Gospel not only was obscured, but distanced from the lives of many persons who neither had the time nor the means to investigate it properly."[38] With Priestly's blessing, Jefferson set out to itemize the moral attributes and doctrines of Jesus by "extracting in his own words from the Evangelists, and leaving out everything relative to his personal history and character."[39]

On the cover page of his *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, Jefferson characterizes the work as "an abridgment of the New Testament for the use of the Indians, unembarrassed with matters of fact or faith beyond the level of their comprehensions."[40] Jefferson also boasts of restoring the scriptures to their original purity.[41] Jefferson was possibly more excited by the prospect of a rationalist reconstruction of the life of Jesus in accordance with his deistic beliefs than in facilitating the conversion of his native brothers and sisters. As Church explains, "Jefferson's search was not so much for the historical Jesus as for the intelligible Jesus."[42] The Book of Mormon, an American Bible translation, likewise endeavours to win converts to Christ by rendering the Jesus of history more intelligible, along deistic-rationalist lines.

The Book of Mormon can also be seen as an antebellum novel. Its historical claims, interesting, are in line with those of other popular works of fiction at the time. Not unlike Bible translation, fiction also had a religious agenda. The objective was the same in either case: to make the message of Jesus more accessible. However, fictional representations of the life of Jesus were certain to be criticized, indeed black-listed, if they did not purport to be "historical" in some sense.

Allene Stuart Phy, in "Retelling the Greatest Story Ever Told: Jesus in Popular Fiction," explains:

> the majority of the first American novelists, despite formidable opposition, valiantly defended their vocation by insisting that their stories were based on fact, which they then pretended to take pains to authenticate. . . . The novel was still suspect and only succeeded in gaining admittance into the more upright homes when it started assuming the masks of history, biography, and New Testament Christianity.[43]

---

38. F. Forrester Church, "Thomas Jefferson's Bible," in *The Bible and Bibles in America*, 145-61, 151.

39. Ibid., 151-52. See Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (Boston: Beacon, 1905), 10:70.

40. Church, "Thomas Jefferson's Bible," 154. See Henry S. Randall, *The Life and Times of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Darby and Jackson), 3:654.

41. Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), 15:244-45.

42. Church, "Thomas Jefferson's Bible," 160.

43. Allene Stuart Phy, "Retelling the Greatest Story Ever Told," in *The Bible and Popular Culture in America*, ed. Allene Stuart Phy (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 43-44.

Antebellum novelists, who used fiction to render Jesus and Christianity more palatable, attempted to avoid criticism by a number of means. For example, they prefaced their works with a disclaimer of fictional distortions, identified their purpose as moralistic in nature, and employed such literary devices as an epistolary form of narrative—the use of letters or epistles—which simulated reality. The Jesus of these dramatic and creative "retellings," Phy goes on to explain, was thus

> a Jesus of American culture, stripped of "theological accretions"—trimmings that have, the authors often believe, made him distasteful and incomprehensible, that have obscured the vitality of his personality and the force of his message. In this manner traditional Christianity has been sacrificed to a bland and colourless American religious pluralism.[44]

The Mormon prophet was one of the first writers of a new genre in American literature: the popular novel, specifically, retellings of the Jesus story which were drafted with the moral edification of the common people in mind. And he was not the only antebellum author to compel readers' assumption of historicity. Solomon Spaulding, the Congregational minister and author of *Manuscript Found*, also suggested that his story of a Roman ship blown off course onto the shores of America was historical. Fabius, Spaulding's protagonist, was a literal descendant of the illustrious Roman general of the same name.[45] However, even more remarkable is Spaulding's contention that he stumbled upon a "flat Stone" and "with the assistance of a leaver . . . raised the Stone . . . [and discovered] that it was designed as a cover to an artificial cave." Once in the cave he discovered an earthen box and, inside the box, "eight sheets of parchment . . . in the Latin Language," which he translated. Spaulding did not claim to be an author, but a translator.

Smith employed the same tropes to lend credence to his narrative. Nephi, a protagonist in the Book of Mormon, was a literal descendant of the biblical Joseph who was sold into Egypt. Like Spaulding, Smith recounted that he discovered an ancient document: a set of metal plates, sequestered in a stone box in a hill near his home, numbering in excess of eight and bearing inscriptions in an unknown language—which he also translated. Whereas Spaulding could, in fact, read Latin, his English manuscript is entirely of his own making. So is Smith's—which, incidentally, is true whether he possessed an ancient document or not. The Book of Mormon was one of many nineteenth-century American novels which, because of the mood of the public at the time, was veiled in history to fa-

---

44. Ibid., 76.

45. See Solomon Spalding, *The Manuscript Found*, also *Manuscript Story* (Liverpool: Millennial Star Office, 1910).

cilitate the realization of a religious agenda.

Phy credits two Unitarians, William Ware and Samuel Richardson, as co-founding a "flourishing genre in American popular literature."[46] The Reverend Joseph Holt Ingraham, the Mississippi Episcopalian and author of *Captain Kyd; Or the Wizard of the Sea* and *Lafayette, the Pirate of the Gulf,* who employed the same adventure formula in his dramatic portrayal of the life of Jesus, *The Prince of the House of David: Or, Three Years in the Holy City,* was another propagator of this new literary school. Indeed, Ingraham understood his role to be that of "editor" rather than "author." He also wrote *The Prince of The House of David* in the hopes of "convincing one son or daughter of Abraham to accept Jesus as the Messiah, or convince the infidel Gentile that He is the very Son of God and Creator of the world."[47] Apparently, Smith was particularly fond of Ingraham's *Captain Kid.*[48]

Of course, eighteenth-century travelogues were also notorious for purporting to be historical, when in fact they were not. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a case in point. Jonathan Swift's protagonist, Gulliver, is certainly fictional, and the name itself a play on words, a criticism of the gullibility of his unsuspecting readers.[49]

The Book of Mormon uses epistolary discourse, identifies its purpose as didactic and historical—an account of "real" persons and events. Presumably, Smith was only editor and translator of the divine will. The Book of Mormon also purports to be a witness to Jews and gentiles of the divinity of Jesus.

Smith credited divinity with both the idea and content of the Book of Mormon. In fact, such accrediting was common practice. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, the famous post-bellum author, averred that her book, *The Gates Ajar,* was an angelic revelation. Harriet Beecher Stowe, the famous ante-bellum author, went to her grave steadfast in the belief that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the fruit of divine inspiration.[50]

Critics have made much of the fact that the title page of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon identifies Smith as "author and proprietor."[51]

---

46. Phy, "Retelling the Greatest Story Ever Told," 45.

47. Ibid., 47.

48. Orsamus Turner, "Origin of the Mormon Imposture," in *Living Age,* ed. E. Littel (Boston: Littell & Co., 1867).

49. See the preface to *Gulliver's Travels,* entitled "The Publisher to the Reader," in George K. Anderson, William E. Buckler, and Mary Harris Veeder, *The Literature of England* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1979), 475.

50. See Edwin Cady, "As Through a Glass Eye, Darkly: The Bible in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel," in *The Bible and American Arts and Letters,* ed. Giles Gunn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 54.

51. The testimony of the eight witnesses (at the end of the 1830 edition) also identifies Smith as the "Author and Proprietor of this work."

Alexander Campbell was the first to do so.[52] However, the real significance of this has proven to be elusive. For one thing, Smith's identification of himself as "author and proprietor" must be read in connection with the rest of the title page which also contains the words—near the top of the page and in bold print—"AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY THE HAND OF MORMON, UPON PLATES TAKEN FROM THE PLATES OF NEPHI." Under this appear two more paragraphs which make unequivocal claims about the book's ancient origins and religious mandate.[53]

Ironically, the use of biblical language in the text is consistent with an interpretation of the Book of Mormon as both a biblical commentary *and* an antebellum novel. However, it is important to keep in mind that, as a novel, it should not be lumped together with American novels of high culture, but rather with those of popular or "low" culture.

Edwin Cady notes that in the tradition of the "high" American novel, biblical language and imagery was the exception rather than the rule. Except for Harriet Beecher Stowe and George Washington Cable, "even from the scenes of believing novelists, biblical speech sounds surprisingly seldom."[54] What Cady calls the "serious novel" of nineteenth-century America tended to avoid explicit references to biblical narrative. On the other hand, "the homelier the author, the likelier and more various the fiction's biblicisms."[55] Americans from all walks of life read novels. Yet the novels which appealed to middle- and upper-class Americans, Cady maintains, were not as ostensibly biblical as the novels which commoners read. While there are bound to be exceptions, the Book of Mor-

---

52. Alexander Campbell, *Delusions* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1832), 19-20. Campbell says, "And as Joseph Smith is a very ignorant man and is called the author on the title page, I cannot doubt for a single moment that he is the sole author and proprietor of it."

53. There are any number of plausible explanations for this apparent contradiction. It has been argued, for example, that Smith claimed right of authorship rather than authorship per se to obtain a copyright which was required by law. Esquire Cole (pseud. O. Dogberry) obtained access to the E. B. Grandin press, which was being used to print the Book of Mormon, and printed several sections of the book. When asked to stop, Cole refused. The matter went to arbitration and it was decided that Cole was in violation of the copyright. See Russell R. Rich, "The Dogberry Papers and the Book of Mormon," *Brigham Young University Studies* 10 (Spring 1970): 314-20. Without such a copyright, Smith would have had no legal recourse and thus been at the mercy of such unscrupulous publishers.

While there is some truth to this, it is important to remember that Smith's choice of titles was consistent with, and limited by, legal *and* literary conventions and requirements, which suggests that he neither lied nor contradicted himself. Author and translator were perhaps mutually inclusive roles in his mind.

In later editions Smith is identified as the book's translator. This is perhaps as Mormons have traditionally understood it, a clarification of his role rather than a shift in his understanding of the book and himself. Note that the testimony of the eight witnesses has also been emended to read, "the translator of this work."

54. Cady, "As Through a Glass Eye, Darkly," 35.

55. Ibid., 54.

mon supports Cady's argument in the main.

Perhaps no single writer of the antebellum era employed a "homelier" writing style than Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon, his first literary production, is saturated with biblical language and allusions to the KJV. Indeed, what Albert Gelphi said of Emily Dickinson's writing, that she "sought to speak the uniqueness of her experience in a personal tongue by reconstituting and revitalizing—at the risk of eccentricity—the basic verbal unit," might also be said of Smith's.[56] And while it makes sense that Smith wrote in the style of the "low" American novel, it is unfair to assume that by "low" is meant inferior. Rather, the Book of Mormon betrays the hand of an antebellum commoner, written in the language of the common people—akin to Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German—a veritable lexicon of the *volk*. Prosaic repetition of familiar biblicisms is not a weakness but a strength in the Book of Mormon and quite probably one of the reasons for its wide acceptance among a certain class of readers.

Interestingly, the Book of Mormon describes itself as "low" or of lowly origins, the fulfillment of a biblical prophecy which equates truth and simplicity with "lowness." Nephi, in his last great sermon before he passes the record on to his brother, Jacob, alludes to Isaiah 29 when he says that "they which shall be destroyed [his people] shall speak unto them [modern-day gentiles] out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust."[57] The prevalence of biblical language and imagery is a corollary to this. In Mormon thought, the Book of Mormon and the Bible complement each other. Ezekiel 37, which speaks of the coming together of the sticks of Judah and of Joseph, is the scriptural support to which Mormon exegetes turn: the Old Testament prophecy that Mormons believe is a cryptic reference to the Bible and the Book of Mormon and, more importantly, an affirmation of the complementary nature of the two. The context suggests a tribal reunification rather than a literary or textual rapprochement.[58] However, the important point is not whether Mormon exegesis is sound, but rather that the Book of Mormon has traditionally been defined in terms of two complementary ideas in the antebellum "low novel" tradition: low or common speech and an inordinate reliance on and reference to the biblical narrative.

However, it is possible to locate the Book of Mormon on the periphery of another fledgling antebellum American literary tradition, that of antinomian poets (who also relied on the Bible). A certain amount of

---

56. Albert Gelphi, *Emily Dickinson: The Mind of the Poet* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 147.

57. Wood, *The Book of Mormon*, 107-108.

58. See J. Kenneth Kuntz, *The People of Ancient Israel* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 371-76.

overlapping occurs when one considers that American poetry has traditionally been at odds with the demands and constraints of the dominant culture. In fact, Roy Harvey Pearce characterizes American poetry as animated by what he calls "the antinomian impulse." The power of American poetry, he argues, "has derived from the poet's ability, or refusal, at some depth of consciousness wholly to accept his culture's system of values."[59] Lionel Trilling has expanded this to include all modern literature. "The particular concern of the literature of the last two centuries," he avers, "has been with the self in its standing quarrel with culture."[60] Herbert Schneidau also emphasizes the employment of biblical symbolism and archetypes in much of the literature of protest.[61]

Who were the antinomian poets, harbingers of what Pearce called the "Adamic impulse"? Walt Whitman was one, and according to Pearce, his *Leaves of Grass* should be read as "a set of holy scriptures."[62] Whitman, as Schneidau explains, "regularly and recurrently thought of the poet as a prophet, and thought this concept included that of the classical *vates* or seer."[63] Whitman's heroes were Old Testament prophets. Like him, they are critical of the rich and mighty. As Schneidau explains, whereas the motto of the Old Testament is surely, "How are the mighty fallen!" in the New Testament its equivalent is "The last shall be first," both of which were underscored in Whitman's writings.[64] These same themes are frequently repeated in the Book of Mormon.

Emily Dickinson's Bible was her sole source of linguistic inspiration, as mentioned, and "she presents the extreme case of the familiar paradox." Schneidau comments: "the more antinomian the American poet, the more he or she falls back on the traditional guidebook."[65] Thomas H. Johnson, her editor, explained it this way:

> It [the Bible] was the primary source, and no other is of comparable importance. Even when she draws her figures of speech from the language of the sea, of trade, of law, or of science, they usually suggest that they have passed through the alembic of the King James version of biblical utterance. . . . It is not too much to say that in almost every poem she wrote, there are echoes of

---

59. Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Continuity of American Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 5.

60. Lionel Trilling, *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning* (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 118.

61. Herbert Schneidau, *Sacred Discontent: The Bible and Western Tradition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).

62. Pearce, *The Continuity of American Poetry*, 72n.

63. Herbert Schneidau, "The Antinomian Strain: The Bible and American Poetry," in *The Bible and American Arts and Letters*, 19.

64. Ibid., 22-23.

65. Ibid., 25.

> her sensitivity to the idiom of the Bible, and of her dependence upon its imagery for her own striking figures of speech. The great reservoir of classical myth she rarely drew on. . . . She found the Bible her key to meaning.[66]

Indeed, this is perhaps as fair a characterization of the Book of Mormon and Smith's other scriptures and writings as one could write. It suggests that if evaluated according to a literary standard of measurement that is germane to the text, a more favorable judgment of the Book of Mormon is possible.

For a variety of reasons, then, it makes sense to characterize the Book of Mormon as a novel of the "low" American type and a poem of the "antinomian" type and to emphasize that its employment of biblical language and imagery was consistent with both. Its intended audience was America's lower classes and other outsiders who had a bone to pick with the emerging middle-class, Evangelical consensus.

Finally, there is certainly a sense in which the Book of Mormon can be viewed as a republican history, or rather a political apology which is no less fictional. The Book of Mormon defense of the Republican ideal, like other apologies at the time, is "more of a caricature than a portrait."[67] Lester H. Cohen argues that the first histories of the Revolution were really "secular jeremiads," or didactic narratives. Historical writing following the war was thus "a process of inventing and fictionalizing."[68] By means of narrative presentation, historians tended to "improve the truth, or make of history a grotesque deceit."[69] Gordon Wood's assessment of the first histories of the new republic concurs with that of Cohen. "Their histories," Wood argues, "were rhetorical efforts in which the criterion of truth lay in the moral effect of the work on its readers. Such a criterion of truth . . . justified the historians' avoidance of a sometimes sordid reality and their omission of unpleasant facts about the Revolutionary heroes."[70] The justification for such historical license, Cohen argues, was the widely held view that the post-Declaration generation had fumbled the ball, that Federalist concessions had deformed the original Republican vision of their patriotic elders.

Mercy Otis Warren, the most vituperative of the anti-federalist historians, describes the constitutional aftermath in terms of a series of contradictions. "We have a Republican form of government," she defiantly

---

66. In ibid., 25-26.

67. Lester H. Cohen, "Creating a Usable Future: The Revolutionary Historians and the National Past," in *The American Revolution*, ed. Jack P. Greene (New York: New York University, 1987), 323.

68. Ibid., 326.

69. Ibid.

70. Gordon S. Wood, "Illusions and Disillusions in the American Revolution," in *The American Revolution*, 356.

writes, "with the principles of monarchy, the freedom of democracy with the servility of despotism, the extravagance of nobility with the poverty of peasantry."[71] The solution to the problem, Warren and others believed, was to invent a Republican consensus, a glorious past, in the hopes of reuniting Americans under the banner of a revitalized classical Republicanism. They emphasize three themes in their histories: dedication to ordered liberty within the context of law and balanced, representative government; an ethical commitment to the rational obligations of conscience and public virtue so that social intercourse is simple and felicitous and demarcated by industry and prudence; and a philosophical conviction which held that people are free, efficacious, and responsible.

The problem of national defense plagued the early republic. E. Wayne Carp, a leading American military historian, notes that Americans were reluctant advocates of a standing army. The debate about the need for a standing army was directly related to the debate about the powers of the central government. Federalists and Whigs favoured both; Republicans and Democrats demurred. The notion that the Revolutionary War had been fought and won by an army of virtuous agrarians was more fiction than fact—as the War of 1812 had proven when Americans were reluctant to take up the cause of liberty once more. Fiction was more compelling than fact.[72] History telling *and* story telling were blurred in the antebellum era.

The Book of Mormon discussion of colonial America is similarly more mythical than factual. To evaluate it in terms of the "reality" of Revolutionary rhetoric, as Richard Bushman does,[73] or to juxtapose Mormon communitarianism with Jacksonian individualism, as Marvin Hill does,[74] ignores the fact that the Book of Mormon is a romance and a jeremiad. Nathan Hatch documents the explosion in popular literature at the turn of the century and the belief that "the common people had the right, even the responsibility, to break into print."[75] Many such tomes, Hatch explains,

> combined the logic of an Ethan Allen, Tom Paine, or Elihu Palmer with radical strains of evangelical piety. The result was a powerful discrediting of the old order that nourished religious experience at the same time it allowed

---

71. In ibid., 315.

72. E. Wayne Carp, "The Problem of National Defense in the Early American Republic," in *The American Revolution*, 14-50.

73. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

74. Marvin S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

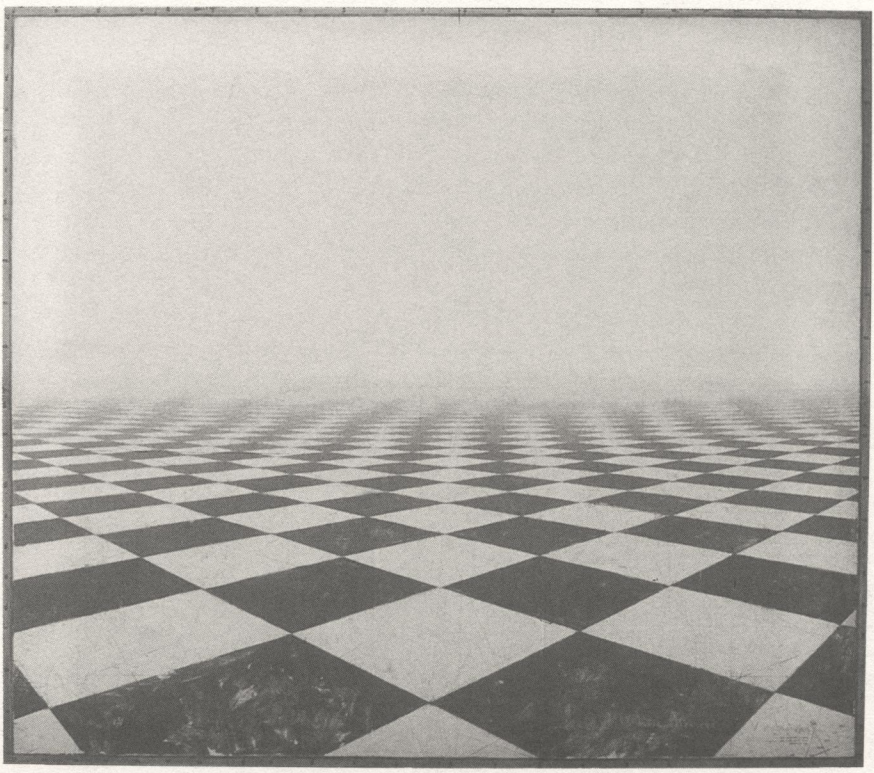
75. Nathan O. Hatch, "In Pursuit of Religious Freedom: Church, State and People in the New Republic," in *The American Revolution*, 392.

> people to see themselves carrying out the finest traditions of the American Revolution and exalting the American republic as the means to deliver the people from what Alexander Campbell called "the melancholy thraldom of relentless power."[76]

Joseph Smith's first testament to the world does not stand alone as a work of American literature or as a book of scripture. It does stand apart, however. Other antebellum re-tellers of the greatest story ever told could only dream of the successes of the Mormon prophet. By mystical and spiritualist means, in a manner reminiscent of the Radical Reformation, Smith claimed to have restored biblical texts, thus satisfying a craving for an American Bible translation. Not unlike sixteenth-century Anabaptist mystics, Smith employed spiritualist means to biblicist or literalist ends. Not unlike nineteenth-century antinomian novelists and anticlerical moralists, he used fiction to convince wayward Americans of the divinity of the historical Jesus. His book was also a defense of a mythical republic. To characterize the Book of Mormon as fictional is not to diminish the book. Fiction is a larger medium than history, encompassing larger truths. Joseph Smith exercised good judgment in the end when he chose the medium he did to communicate divine truth to a confused world.

---

76. Ibid., 401.



Black Moroni

Paul Swenson

Painted on the wall behind the seats where choir sings
See the shining figure in a steep green wood
Angel wears a shirtwaist robe, fabric wing as thin as filament
He looks downslope where Joseph kneels, treasure spread in dirt
Moroni's hair descends his neck in alabaster rolls
His bare feet tread the air above the forest floor
Light he sheds not only notches bark of pine and birch
It breaks the frame, transcends the painting
Falls on pews below where angel is

Made flesh: Curly-headed black child
Named Moroni for a prophet in his folks' new church
He's comfortable in cocoa-colored skin
Sensual curl of hip and thigh, framed to mother's breast
And like another baby, born in the meridian
Of Mormon time, his laugh is whole and unashamed
Lucid eyes obsidian, lashes thick, brows arched high
Something in this black Moroni prophesies
Of truce between the body and the soul

Scripture, History, and Faith: A Round Table Discussion

Participants:

Todd Compton: Ph.D., classics, University of California, Los Angeles.

Paul Edwards: Dean, Graduate Studies, Park College, Independence, Missouri; Director, Temple School Center, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Missouri.

Steven Epperson: Assistant Professor of History, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, specializing in American religious history and history of Christian doctrine.

Mark D. Thomas: Scriptural Studies Editor, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought.*

Margaret Toscano: Ph.D. candidate, comparative literature, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

David P. Wright: Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Thomas: **We live in a society that is increasingly secular and fragmented. Popular culture looks to Hollywood for its great myths. Given that this is our circumstance, how relevant are the concepts of canon and scripture in our time?**

Compton: Certainly canon and scripture are relevant to our secular and fragmented society. It is especially a secular, fragmented society that needs scripture. Hollywood, despite an occasional good movie, often does not provide us with the most morally perceptive, spiritually visionary myths.

Edwards: Scripture is both relevant and irrelevant. That which makes it scripture, its relevance for all time, makes me believe that scriptures available to the Mormon community are just as valid now as they would be in any other day and age.

Epperson: First of all, I'd question the assertion that our society is increasingly secular. I think that if you look at the statistics on belief, church and synagogue attendance, church contributions, and so forth, they tend to indicate that this is not a secular society. Quite the contrary. Also I would want to draw attention to the phenomena of fundamentalisms—Christian,

Islamic, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, etc., plus the growth of New Age religions. All of this indicates that ours is a very religious, very spiritual culture, but we haven't quite figured out what that means.

I think our society is more polarized than it is fragmented. I think we're very polarized between "haves" and "have nots," between multi-media-computer-literate people on the one hand, and those who are not on the other. We're polarized between fundamentalists and people who are more ecumenically minded.

As far as Hollywood is concerned, I think that Hollywood also draws a lot of its narratives from a small source of texts and myths. These include a state of primeval innocence, a fall from grace, the expulsion from the garden, and then the quest: you have the religious quest, the vision quest, pilgrimages, the journey home through contested territory. I think that Hollywood draws upon common sources that many of us plug into. That's one of the reasons why some Hollywood movies resonate with us.

Anthropologists point out that canon-making is a universal human activity, so the answer would be "Yes" to the question of whether canon, myth, and scripture are relevant concepts. They are relevant because we're surrounded by them. We're living in these canons and their myths. We're living out these scriptures today. For me, one of the big questions is the media by which those canons are being presented. I'm afraid that myth, canon, and a lot of what makes them complex (the ambiguity, the texture, the length, the orality, and the aurality of myth and canon) are being sacrificed on the altar of the two-dimensional media in movies and television. And my fear is that we think that if you can't lick 'em, join 'em. So we make *Legacy.* And we put the scriptures on film. We put the scriptures and conference on video. And that's going to end up being a substitute for encountering our myths, our canon, our scripture. That's what really concerns me, frankly, because the extended, imaginative, and rational engagement with the text flattens out.

Thomas: Steve, let me ask you to elucidate one point that you jumped over quickly. Essentially you were saying that you don't have to worry about religion, because we are essentially religious, and therefore religion will take care of itself. Therefore scriptures will always exist. Even though people may not pay attention to them, scriptures in some form will al-

ways be lurking out there somewhere. Is that the point?

Epperson: I tend to think that most people are innately religious. That is part of the historical record of humankind. But I would also argue that not all religions are conducive to the well-being of the human family. We come from a religious tradition (Christian and Jewish) that repudiates idolatrous religion. And so I think that even as all religions are not equal, so not all texts are equal.

Toscano: I think our society is both polarized and fragmented, which is not bad but inevitable in a free and diverse society. While secularism may be dominant, I agree with Steve that religion and scripture are neither waning nor irrelevant. As long as people try to make meaning out of their lives, there will be religion; and as long as people write about their religious, meaning-making experiences, there will be scripture. As Americans with a secular government which tries to separate church and state, we are inheritors of the rationalist/Enlightenment world view which popularized the notion that we were going to educate everybody and get rid of our religious superstitions. It hasn't worked. Here we are in the post-modern age, and religion was supposed to be passé by now. But it's not. I recently read a survey in a popular, nationally distributed magazine. They were asking people if they prayed, and if they believed in God and angels. I was absolutely astonished by the figures. The positive responses were in the 80-90 percent range. People believe in God. People are meditating or praying. People believe in angels. If a book like *Embraced by the Light* can become a national best-seller, you know that religious interest is not waning. New books on religion and scriptures are coming out all the time, and they sell well. Religion is still big business.

The real problem, as I see it, is not the survival of scripture and religion, but the absence of forums for intelligent, public, religious discourse, both in and out of our churches and universities. Because discussions about religion have been forbidden in public schools and have been considered taboo in the public arena, we have not developed acceptable formats for discussing religious beliefs while still promoting tolerance. Where is the forum and what is the vocabulary with which a spiritual and intelligent person can talk seriously about religion? Fantasy, science fiction, and novels and films written in the style of magical realism may be some of the few avenues left where a person can discuss religion freely and creatively. Even here the discussion is usually in a disguised form. Are

these the devotional genres of our age? A related problem is how to create a language that fosters discourse between polarized groups. For example, the terms "scripture" and "canon" are understandable in the context of traditional, Western religions, but do they work for other groups? It may depend on how broadly we define the terms. For instance, even in such an open-ended and loosely-defined group as the New Age religion, there may be a canon, if canon is defined as the films, books, and texts that express the unspoken consensus and describe the combined religious experience of the group. Such works are given an unofficial status. By understanding the tendency of religious groups to create even unofficial canons, people from polarized groups may find some common ground for discourse.

Thomas: **How do you define scripture?**

Compton: I define scripture as anything with great spiritual power, with a high concentration of spirituality. For instance, I include the short stories of Flannery O'Connor, a good general conference or Sunstone talk, Navaho myths, the *Odyssey,* the diaries of Patty Sessions, the essays of Lowell Bennion, the songs of Richard Thompson, Bergman's movie *Fanny and Alexander,* and the Tao Te Ching.

I do not see a strict scriptural/nonscriptural polarity, but rather a continuum, with gradations leading from high spirituality to low spirituality. No book has pure spirituality; every book has the limitations and imperfections of its individual writer(s) and the cultural limitations of the milieu from which it emerged. An important part of scriptural study is isolating those imperfections, so that they do not become imbedded in a religious community as absolute truth. For instance, there are misogynist elements in the Bible. If, like fundamentalist Protestants, we accept the Bible as entirely inerrant, we are stuck with defending and continuing misogyny, which is morally wrong and offensive to God. On the other hand, we should not throw away the Bible as scripture simply because some parts of it are misogynist. Other parts of the Bible contain important texts for the history of women, and establish equality and justice for women. A scripture can become canonized (formally accepted and referred to as scripture) for a certain group of people after it has proved its spiritual power to them for a certain length of time. But a text is scripture before it is canonized, because it contains spiritual power.

Wright: I would define scripture as any religiously oriented discourse

(written or oral) which is perceived as authoritative and/or foundational in some way. This definition includes more than the canon (for example, the Talmud, in addition to the Hebrew Bible).

An "in-house" definition of scripture would add that scripture is *inspired* discourse. This seems to be a secondary attribute, not necessarily that which makes it scripture. Inspiration can't be empirically demonstrated in a work. It is a judgment which a person accepting a work as scripture gives to it. The empirical test of inspiration often ends up being the correspondence the discourse has with preexisting belief.

Since scripture is authoritative religious discourse, the question arises regarding whence its authority comes. As with inspiration, authority is something attributed to a text. It is not necessarily inherent. It is true that a scriptural discourse may have a rhetoric of authority, but that only becomes incumbent upon someone when that person allows the discourse to be authoritative. Hence, in my definition I speak of perceived authority, not inherent authority.

That authority is attributed rather than intrinsic is in part demonstrated in the harmonistic and selective use that communities make of scripture. Scripture tends to contain diverse voices, having accumulated over time from different writers (even the writings of one individual over a lifetime may contain diverse views). A community of whatever character (conservative, liberal, fundamentalist, critical) cannot give equal weight to all that is written. Therefore, what might be judged as the plain meaning of a passage (its logical or contextual meaning) is disregarded and given what the community thinks to be a more suitable interpretation, or the section of scripture is effectively ignored or down-played as less relevant by the community. Thus readers dictate to the text, rather than the text dictating to the readers. The readers' will dominates. Authority is conferred.

Edwards: I define scripture as that body of knowledge which serves as an epistemological, metaphysical, and sociological tool in support of, and in defense of, one's testimony. That is, I believe that scripture is the revelation of God. As we accept and apply the word of God, we are enlightened and encouraged.

Toscano: Of course, the term "scripture" itself comes from the Latin root for "writing." Because certain religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are "People of the Book," scripture has come to mean the canonized writings of these groups and

their offshoots. Such a definition seems to imply that other religions don't have scripture and that scripture can only be defined by group consensus or official religious leaders. Like Todd, I like the section from the Doctrine and Covenants which states that whoever speaks when moved upon by the Holy Ghost speaks scripture (D&C 68:4). I like this definition both because it is expansive and open and also because it acknowledges the personal and subjective nature of determining scripture. This doesn't mean that I object to the use of the term "scripture" as authoritative text. Words often have more than one connotation. "Scripture" can belong to an individual or a group. We sometimes distinguish "canon" from "scripture" to show these two meanings—canon being scripture officially accepted by a group. I don't see us in the LDS church making much of a distinction between the two terms; both are used to refer to the four standard works, though the term "scripture" is also used sometimes to include talks and writings by general authorities. Unfortunately, the broad implication of the D&C passage is often overlooked.

Epperson: When I think of scripture, I think of four canonical books, and that they are a particular kind of book quite different from "the classics." What makes a book scripture is that we interact with it as an authoritative command. We feel addressed and commanded to do something: to repent, to experience a new life, and so forth.

To say that we believe in four books of scripture is also to say something very important, that is, that the canon expands. It wasn't set once and for all. And in that sense we partake of a traditional Jewish view that there is a written and an oral Torah. The whole Torah was given to Moses at Sinai, but the elucidation of that Torah goes on even today. Certain scriptures become more "canonical," more commanding, more relevant to individuals at one particular time in human history than at another. I think it has a lot to do with the way that human beings and human societies change. Otherwise, there would have been no oral Torah. There would just be written Torah, and it would be fixed, complete, with no additions.

Thomas: **What strikes me with each of these definitions of scripture is how different they are. David and Steve seem to see scripture in an objective, sociological way—scripture as authoritative text. Todd and Margaret seem to see scripture (as opposed to canon) in a subjective, phenomenological manner—scripture as manifestation of spiritual power. And Paul**

understands scripture in abstract, theological terms—as a "body of knowledge" which constitutes the word of God. But the profoundly moral understanding of religion (which is so fundamental to Mormon or Restoration theology) seems to be evident in most of your responses.

Epperson: Scripture places a particular kind of claim upon us. And it comes with an extraordinary sort of covenantal force and authority. I think that one of the reasons that we hear it that way is that we assume that there is a divine source to that voice, that divine voice is embodied in certain texts, and that those texts address us, confront us, with very powerful demands. Again, I think that some texts address us with greater authority and force than others. We encounter some more passionately and transactionally than others.

I think that a written canon plays a particularly important role in laying ground rules and guidelines; it is a sort of measure. And what's incumbent upon us is to find that portion of the canon which is particularly authoritative—those scriptures, that embodied authoritative voice, which stands over and against our words and our deeds. I feel that many of them will be weighed and found wanting. Some may be blessed.

Toscano: One of the important reasons for having a written and an oral Torah, from my perspective, is that it's a way of dealing with the tension between tradition and change. I agree that it's important to have the written canon as the standard against which you measure ideas and behavior. This standard is important because there's always the temptation to go along with whatever opinion fits with the current moral climate (for example, misogyny or feminism). But if you have a revealed tradition that sets out a standard of behavior, then I think it makes you ask some hard questions about your value system and the need for change. Does our tradition represent the eternal will of God, or do we need to change, either because we have misunderstood what was right in the past or because times and applications have changed? There can be problems either way. On the one hand, you can interpret the written Torah so strictly that you have a hard time adapting it to present circumstances, as is the case with most conservative groups. On the other hand, if the oral Torah is given precedence (relying on the living prophets in current LDS parlance), then scripture becomes irrelevant. It just slides out of consciousness, even if people are still giving lip service to it. While this may not seem so bad to some of us liberals who often equate

change with progress, we should remember that the church can also adopt current practices that we may find objectionable. I, for one, value the scriptural words of Jesus as a continual warning against our obsession with wealth and power in the church.

Jews consciously maintain an on-going interchange between the written and oral Torah; the written Torah cannot be changed, but it can be constantly examined and reinterpreted. However, in Mormonism (at least in Utah) we maintain a discourse that agrees to avoid dealing with any contradictions between the two. I see this as a real danger because it removes an important mechanism for self-examination, ethical decision-making, and added revelation. We talk about fixed, eternal principles. We talk about continuing revelation. We don't talk about the possibility that there may be contradictions between them, and that we've got to work through these problems if we want both to reach a moral position and to continue to assert the importance of scripture. As a result, we don't really deal with our texts (the revelation on priesthood and the blacks is an example). When new revelation comes, we simply go on without doing any exegesis of pertinent texts. No one really studies the scriptures and asks whether they were wrong in the past or might be in the present. This means that we never repent and acknowledge our sins as a group. We just ignore them along with the complexity and intricacy of our texts.

Thomas: **So fear is sometimes the guiding principle? Do we ignore our scriptures because we are afraid of contradiction, so we just sweep them under the rug, like a dusty voice?**

Toscano: I think that that's a large part of it. People are afraid of the implications of error, past or present. If our texts have errors, our current leaders might be wrong too. That's frightening both because it threatens the current church structure and also because it demands a lot of personal responsibility. But I think that it's more complex than simple fear. There are other reasons too. For example, a simple practical reason that we ignore scriptures is that they are difficult to read and understand. We also ignore them because we have a lay priesthood which is not trained in any tradition of exegesis. We have conference talks. But those are more often comprised of instructional stories and moral parables rather than the discussion of scriptural texts. At the same time, we have a strong authoritarian tradition which suggests that official leaders are the ones who

should give us the correct interpretation of scripture. But they don't. This leaves a void which everyone wishes were filled but is afraid to do so. This is true, for the most part, even of the BYU religion faculty. There is a very tight control on what is accepted discourse in the church, and neither scholarly scriptural exegesis nor private interpretations on the part of members is encouraged. Fear is a part of the reason that we ignore scriptures, but it's more complex than fear.

Thomas: **Given the fact that scripture is generally from a foreign historical setting, why should it, and how can it, be relevant to the current reader?**

Edwards: While I understand the influence of context on any historical awareness, I see no reason why historical setting has any undue influence on the message of scripture. As a cultural relativist—closet existentialist—it makes little difference to me where the action used to illustrate the method is conducted.

Wright: This question presupposes that a person critically realizes that the ideas and practices portrayed in earlier or ancient texts are foreign to the reader. Most untrained and traditional readers do not share this perception; it is something requiring education. At any rate, it seems to me that the true adventure and enjoyment of scripture only come after this gap is perceived. It forces the reader to explore the context in which the scriptural text was produced. The discovery that comes this way satisfies the soul and intellect. As a foreign text thus becomes clear, the modern reader can discover analogies to modern situations and thus find relevance.

Compton: Foreign scripture can be made relevant to an English-speaking reader through translation and through cultural interpretation. We should also develop our living scripture based on the tradition of archaic, foreign scripture. Interpretation of traditional, ancient scripture is a vital component of new scripture; Jesus can be seen as an interpreter of the Old Testament. This intertextuality both creates a new scriptural tradition and brings the old scripture to life.

Epperson: First, I think that we need to acknowledge that there have been many communities which have been physically, chronologically, and culturally distant from the setting and making of scripture, and yet they have not experienced the scriptures as essentially foreign at all. I would point your attention to African-American slaves, to liberation theologians, to fundamentalist Christians, to adult Jewish education courses, to post-Vatican II Catholics. I think particularly of African-American

slaves for whom biblical narratives were immediately and urgently real. I think what's happened now is that in our headlong rush into modernity, and in our assimilation of a consumptive and aggressively competitive lifestyle, many have been persuaded that something abiding and meaning-bestowing has been prematurely and foolishly discarded. And so many people are returning to the scriptural texts and attempting to make them less foreign. That they are so foreign to some is an indication of our own lack of fidelity to them. My question is who sued for divorce, and upon what grounds and were those grounds mature? Were they patient and long-suffering? I think scriptures become foreign if they are not read, or taught, if they are not measured critically up against contemporary demands, needs, and assertions. And if those things don't happen, they will remain or become increasingly irrelevant, arid, and estranged from us. If they are read, do they in fact address us authoritatively, with commands to healing deeds, just behaviors, and conversion to a new life?

But there is a second related issue. Some scriptures address the reader more urgently than others. Why do some scriptures seem strange, alien, maybe even repugnant? Why are others compelling, urgent, vividly alive? To answer these questions is an urgent task.

Toscano: I think the only way that the scriptures will not be foreign is if they're constantly being retranslated and reinterpreted. I see this as the religious and scholarly task that we face. Let me make a quick comparison. Everyone knows how difficult it is to read Shakespeare. How do you make people like his writings? It rarely happens without a good teacher or a good production to bring the plays to life. Kenneth Branagh has done this in his film versions of *Henry V* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. So has Zeffirelli with his recent *Hamlet*, or with his older *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Taming of the Shrew.* My daughters have learned to love Shakespeare through these films because the plays are interpreted and translated into a medium they can understand. I think this is what we have to do with the scriptures. (I'm not suggesting film as the preferred medium. I simply think we need better teachers, translations, and interpretations.) I'm always astonished that people read the scriptures fifteen minutes a day and still don't know a thing about what is in them. It's as though they're reading a foreign language without any comprehension.

I think we're at a point in time where the LDS church's use

of the King James Bible can be compared to the Catholic church's use of the Latin Bible at the end of the Middle Ages. Only an educated few easily understand the biblical language. Right now in the church the King James Version is a big stumbling block for most people. I love it. It has beautiful and poetic language. But I think it's a real mistake to be restricted to that one version, because its language is too foreign. It needs to be translated for our people now. We don't make non-English speakers read the Book of Mormon in English. Why should we make English speakers read the Bible in a foreign, obsolete language? That brings up the question of the Book of Mormon. Is it becoming too obsolete for English speakers to understand? Perhaps. Of course, Lynn Matthews Anderson has produced a version with updated language and has been chastised by leaders for her trouble.

Epperson: Foreign language translations of the Book of Mormon have tried to avoid the archaisms that we find in the English version.

Toscano: I feel the same way about obsolete prayer language. I don't like it because it creates an unnecessary barrier between the worshipper and God. Prayer and scripture are both meant to bring spiritual life. To keep canon and scripture vital, you've got to keep translating, keep reinterpreting, keep talking, keep making it fresh. It's amazing how compelling some of the biblical stories can be, how compelling they *are,* when they are read and told in the present idiom. They have not lost their force; they have only been obscured.

Thomas: **Your point seems to be that scholarship bridges the gap of meaning. David's point is that scholarship creates a gap of meaning. It appears that we have two perspectives here. One is that scholarship damages dialogue with the text. The other point is that scholarship creates a meaningful dialogue with the text.**

Toscano: I didn't understand David to mean that scholarship creates a gap which damages dialogue with the text. I understood him to be talking about a gap, or difference in perspectives between various cultures, which scholarship makes evident. I see the gap as a creative starting point, which scholarship may or may not bridge. Or maybe it will even damage our relationship with the text. Either way, scholarship forces us to encounter the text in various ways, which I see as positive, though I don't want to be limited to one approach. I appreciate the historical/critical method. But it is not the only way to interpret.

There are many ways of interpreting, translating, and making scripture relevant. Why limit ourselves to one kind of interpretation?

Epperson: There is an essential role that men and women perform when they take the findings of scholarship to reanimate them. For example, source criticism dismembers texts into pericope (small literary units). And what happens is that sometimes all that is left is contextless, segmented fragments of the text. I think that fifteen minutes of reading a day can dismember a text. We need people (I don't know what you call them)—popularizers, rabbis, preachers—who can try to say what we can learn from all of this scholarship. There is a way to put the story back together, but modified, corrected, illuminated by the work of scholars.

Compton: The ideal is to have the scholar-preacher. The scholar without spiritual guidance can be dangerous.

Thomas: **There is a tendency, especially in a church with lay leaders, to split ourselves. One group is at a university and their sole concern is with publishing, without relating their scholarship to the life of a church. And there is the church seemingly ignoring serious scholarship. That brings us to a current cultural concern. On their face, our scriptures seem to be patriarchal. If that is true, how can women approach scripture?**

Wright: My recommendations are for men and women. It is preeminently important for women and men to realize the extent to which women are excluded in scriptural writings. Women are not well represented in the Bible; they are represented even less in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. (See, for example, Lynn Matthews Anderson, "Toward a Feminist Interpretation of Latter-day Scripture," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 [Summer 1994]: 185-203.) This problem should be recognized.

I would recommend further that the reasons for this deficiency be examined. This requires developing critical abilities which allow readers to see that the visibility of one or the other gender is dependent upon culturally relative values.

I would suggest too that readers become aware of how approaches to and interpretations of scripture are tied to and reflective of gender interests. Certain methods may help women penetrate the masculinity of texts and their accepted interpretations. (Examples can be found in women's approaches to the Bible; see for example, *The Woman's Bible Commentary,* ed.

Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe [1992]).

Toscano: Actually, I want to turn the question around. Can men approach women with equality if women are subordinate in scripture? Why put all the burden on women? Women have approached, appropriated, and adapted scriptures to themselves for hundreds of years. Yes, it's been a problem for women to find their place, and damage has been done. But I think that women have been trained to identify with males, to read from a male point of view and still see the relevance of scripture for their own spirituality. I have this book, *Out of the Garden*, in which women use feminist readings of the Bible to find meaning for themselves in the texts. The more important question that I want to ask is this: Can men accept women as spiritual equals when scripture presents the patriarchal order as divine? Can men identify with women when women are too often absent or represented only from a male perspective? Can men see women as important subjects of religious discourse if women have no authoritative voice to create scripture or define canon? How can men learn to listen to women in this context? And how can women value their own voices and spirituality?

Epperson: I don't think the scriptures are inherently patriarchal, but our interpretations are. Our interpretations are often determined by institutions whose hermeneutics are patriarchal. It's an interpretation based on the suppositions of power. How are men going to see women in the scriptures? You start at the beginning, at Creation. Here man and woman are created in the image and likeness of God. They are created side by side as equals. God's intention is to give immortality and eternal life to all. A distinction between sexes is not made in the divine intentionality for the human family. Similarly, the covenant of Israel was with a community, not a group of males or of females. Joel Rosenberg's reading of Genesis points out the pivotal role of women. For him, it expresses the text's apparent delight in circumventing the most revered human conventions of power, status, and inheritance in order to highlight God's disregard for the trappings of human vanity.

Toscano: You have emphasized scriptures which can be interpreted as promoting equality. But there are many more misogynist texts. I think that most of our scriptures *are* inherently patriarchal, but I think that we can find interpretations that are liberating. What about the Book of Mormon on women? Although this book is for me a profoundly moving and religious text (I first

found grace there), still the absence of women in the book should disturb us. They're completely overlooked. "Ye notice them not" is the phrase used to condemn those who ignore the poor in the Book of Mormon. But women are noticed less than the poor. You talk about Genesis as a text which subverts power structures. I agree that many passages can be interpreted that way, but what about the phrase where the woman's desires are subordinated to her husband, or what about the rib story? You have to admit that there are also texts that seem to encourage a patriarchal view.

Epperson: That's why we have to develop a sense of what is canonical and authoritative for us, now. Every scripture, every law, prohibition, and narrative cannot be equally authoritative. There's a "canon within the canon." You can either repudiate the whole text or you can appropriate the language to include both men and women. This is what we are enjoined to do with the Creation narrative where the intention of God is for the well being of men and women, here and now, as well as in the world to come.

Toscano: You talk about appropriating the scriptural language to include both men and women. I think that it is ironic that the church admonishes us with the Book of Mormon passage to "liken" the scriptures to us. But if we do so, we are likely to get in trouble with the church. It was when I began to appropriate the language of scripture to include myself that I began to be curious about women and the priesthood. When I first started reading the Bible and the Book of Mormon seriously, I realized that I had to identify with men if basic principles such as faith, repentance, and spiritual rebirth were to apply to me. I was only included if I appropriated the male experience. So why shouldn't I identify with Abraham who wants the priesthood? Isn't he the father of all the faithful? But eventually such questions got me in trouble. So I think there is a dangerous aspect in what you're suggesting, Steve.

It's also because of such soul-searching experiences with the scriptures that I have decided it's a mistake to change the historical texts by using gender-inclusive language in translations when it's not in the text. Rather, I like the idea of letting the scriptures stand as witnesses of their own fallibility, while we read and interpret them from gender-inclusive perspectives. But I am in favor of changing the language for the purpose of teaching and for use in worship to include women. So I guess I should say I'm in favor of multiple translations that

show different ways to interpret. But I don't want to go back and completely change the historical text. That's why I like the distinction between the written and the oral Torah because it allows us to maintain the tension between the past and the present while encouraging us to constantly reinterpret. I think that there must also be the acknowledgement that the establishment of the canon in the first place was an interpretive act. What was included and what wasn't included was done in a way that disadvantaged women because of the cultural climate from which the text emerged. But that doesn't justify the continuation of such practices.

Epperson: As long as we place scriptures in the hands of young men and women, unmediated, the "danger" will be there. But the danger is worth it. Otherwise we would prohibit them from reading books and just have scripture preached over the pulpit on Sundays.

Compton: Mormon, and Judeo-Christian, canonized scripture has been strongly "patriarchal," in the sense that they focus chiefly on men (though of necessity there is a matriarchal thread in any human document, sometimes quite deeply buried). Women can approach Mormon, and Judeo-Christian, canonized scripture by mining the buried veins of matriarchal gold of the scriptures, and by recognizing the writing of women, even though they are not yet canonized. The uncanonized writings of women can be entirely worthy of the designation "scripture."

Maleness and femaleness both have capacities for good and evil; in reading archaic texts, feminists can appreciate the veins of male goodness (sometimes deeply buried). In my studies of nineteenth-century Mormon women, I have been impressed by how deeply women loved their sons, as well as their daughters. And men can receive revelation from a Mother in heaven as well as women.

Edwards: Yes, scriptures do tend to be patriarchal; that is, they reflect the male-dominated societies that produced them. This is equally true in Mormonism's "modern scriptures" as it is in biblical times. If I were a woman, I would find it extremely hard to use scripture because of that. We need, as a church, either to rewrite those scriptures we feel free to rewrite on the basis of our knowledge of the equality of persons. Or we need to come to some psychological agreement among ourselves which helps women accept this historical—though not necessarily accurate—presentation. Women surely recognize the value of

scripture, and if they can get beyond the point of being angry over years of improper treatment, they will find help in the scriptures. I for one do not feel the need to create a gender for God. I would be just as happy if I were to discover the feminine gender was a more appropriate use.

Thomas: **How do Mormons use scripture?**

Edwards: How do Mormons use scripture? They don't. It is my observation that very few Mormon ministers use scripture at all. When they do, they use it to give legitimacy to what they have already decided to do. In the RLDS church, most sermons are not exegetical, and a good many sermons are given which have no scriptural base of any kind whatsoever. I think Mormonism is in the unique position of making a great deal of fuss about the importance of its own scripture and, on the other hand, paying very little attention to it.

Toscano: In the LDS church too there is little exegesis, and scripture is mostly used simply as proof-text. However, various Mormon hermeneutics have emerged because people use scripture in different ways in different contexts. Nevertheless, we do not have avenues for understanding and discussing what we are doing in interpretation. At BYU there is a kind of schizophrenia. In the religion department it appears that they are supposed to talk about interpretation and avoid interpretation at the same time. I see a crisis in the church. When I was teaching Sunday school, I felt a hunger among the class members. They wanted exegesis and interpretation; they wanted someone to explain. At the same time there are no official instructions, and private interpretation is discouraged. People are adrift and afraid. The scriptures don't make sense to them, but where are the models for interpretation? I see a serious crisis in this area. Something is going to emerge to address this problem because the need is so great. I hope the response won't simply be restrictive.

Epperson: I don't know how we all interpret them. Anthony Hutchinson's "LDS Approaches to the Holy Bible" in the spring 1992 issue of *Dialogue* (99-125) outlined certain available methods as well as the practices of scriptural interpretation in Mormonism. What I learned from this and from observation is that there is not one model that is available, nor should there be one exclusive method as marching orders for the church. We should therefore avail ourselves of critical/historical methods, literary methods, general authorities, and other sources to try to make sense of these texts. Use them all. More power to you.

But in the end, we are told to "study it out in [our] mind" and then ask for the meaning.

Thomas: **What role does scholarship play and what roles should it play in the study of scripture? What research agenda do you support?**

Epperson: Scholarship is at the very heart of the divine injunction to study, to learn; it is at the heart of our devotional life, however ostensibly secular it may look or feel. The Doctrine and Covenants tells us to teach one another the doctrines of the kingdom, and then it goes on and instructs us to learn things above, below, and on the earth, of the past, of the future, events at home and abroad. It sounds almost like a university curriculum. That's the doctrine of the kingdom. It ought to bring the student and the scholar into a resemblance of the divine likeness. God is the prototype; his glory is intelligence. Intelligence comes from the Latin word for perception. It is simply perceiving the world, including its religious dimension. The ground of the scholar and of scholarship is holy ground. It is time for scholars to stop being defensive about what they do. The burden of proof should be upon those who question its role. Scholarship is part of our human equipment. God gave us minds to serve and to redeem. In the Creation story, God is depicted as having concluded, after surveying his handiwork, that "It is very good." If he wanted us to be merely instinctual animals, he would have given us different equipment. We have been given rational equipment for his glory and for the betterment of the people who live in this world. Scholarship is an essential part of the devotional life of this people.

Toscano: I agree, but how do we create a climate that is conducive to what you're describing? I feel torn. When I am at the university, I feel ashamed of my spirituality. In the church I feel defensive about my intelligence. I don't think I should, but I do anyway. In both contexts I feel I have to hide many of my feelings and opinions if I want to be accepted. Recently at the University of Utah when I took my doctoral exams, I was subtly attacked because I believe in God. Certain members of my committee who know that I'm a believer (although they don't know what I believe) assumed that this was tainting my work on medieval mystics. When I go to church, I'm seen as an intellectual who must therefore only see things from a secular, non-believing viewpoint. If they only knew me, they would understand that this is ludicrous. For me scholarship is a de-

votional experience because it stretches my experience and understanding. But I don't see a place where this merging of devotion and scholarship has happened. I feel people forcing me into one place or another. And I don't like it. But I don't know what the alternative is right now.

Epperson: I'm becoming impatient with both camps. To deny either rationality or spirituality is to deny me, period! To deny that of me is to repudiate what has been given me by the Creator. So I must say to scholars and colleagues who are doing that to me that they are doing something akin to assault or rape, because they are denying something that is absolutely essential to my personality. People who are doing this need to have it pointed out to them. But I think that it is also absolutely incumbent upon us to turn to our fellow believers and say that the glory of God is intelligence, and to quit trashing intellectuals and the scholarly life.

Our task is to increasingly conform ourselves to the divine likeness. One of the ways that we do that is by using the minds that God has given us to increase light and knowledge for ourselves and for our community. We do that in a variety of ways. It does not exclude what we do on our knees. But it does and it must include what we do in front of a text and when we stand in front of a classroom. We simply need to assert that the life of the mind is devotion. It is worship, period. We should tell our children as they go to school that what they are doing is absolutely essential to their life as a Mormon, as a Christian, and as a creature of God. I think we need to reinterpret the meaning of school. It's not just for the acquisition of knowledge so that we can become little consuming units. It's so that we can become increasingly divine, even while we're learning so-called secular or humanistic subjects. Then maybe we will become human beings. And it's only going to happen when people get up in church and start saying it. Enough of the warfare!

Wright: I take this question to mean what roles does and should scholarship play *in the church.* It's necessary to distinguish, for the moment, between three different types of scholarship (here I am simplifying a complex situation): (a) dogmatic-didactic scholarship, (b) tradition-supporting, apologetic scholarship, and (c) academically based and sanctioned scholarship. The first has the goal of elucidating the traditional view of scripture, often correlating statements of church leaders with scriptural passages. It is conservative and harmonistic in its

tendency. This is found in church manuals and books on scripture by, for example, some religious education professors at BYU. The second type uses many of the tools of the third but selectively employs them to support what the tradition already believes. It is conservative, and if revisionist, only to the extent that it ultimately sustains the major points of the tradition. This is found, for example, in the work of Hugh Nibley and in many of the works published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS). The third is marked by a willingness to discuss various solutions to problems, and it thrives where various solutions are set in competition with each other in the academic community. While flourishing in other religious traditions and at universities, it is attested more on selected scriptural subjects or in the margins of Mormonism *(Dialogue* and *Sunstone).* This approach is generally rejected by the church because of its non-conservative tendency.

But, in rejecting critical scholarship, the church is ignoring one of the most important sources of knowledge about scripture. Take Bible scholarship, for example. Over the past one hundred and fifty years new material and documentary finds as well as improved methods for studying texts have produced a revolution in the understanding of Israelite, Jewish, and Christian history, culture, and texts. Mormonism has, somewhat understandably, kept this study at arm's length because its conclusions generally conflict with the views of the church. But neglecting this study is analogous to rejecting the last one hundred and fifty years of medical, genetic, geological, and astronomical science. Just as Mormonism has generally embraced advances in these other fields, so it needs to come out of the past and embrace critical study of scripture.

How might the church embrace this scholarship? It need not codify its results. This would be replacing one list of dogmas with another. Rather, it could allow the work of critical scholarship to proceed at its colleges and university as part of the institutions' academic activities. The church could provide means, as it has in the past, to help its young women and men gain expertise at the top universities. It could encourage its scholars to "popularize" the conclusions of scholarship for the members of the church and bring these into lessons for perspective. It could encourage theological study, which will certainly be necessary to make sense of Mormonism's evolving tradition. General authorities, too, might educate themselves

better about non-Mormon biblical scholarship. The leadership's lack of training in these areas has made it, in my view, incapable of understanding and dealing effectively with scholarly issues surrounding scripture.

Compton: Scholarship establishes and preserves a text and helps understand its literal meaning. If there is serious interest in a book that has been accepted as scripture, scholarly tools must be used to preserve and understand it. Scholarship also helps us interpret the text, although this starts getting into theology. Good theology is dependent on good scholarship.

I propose that Mormons study their texts skillfully, seriously, and honestly on the philological, cultural, and theological levels. In addition, we should recognize other uncanonized scriptures within our tradition and apply the same tools to their interpretation. We ought to identify both the places of high spirituality and the places of imperfection in scripture. Finally, I think that we will not know Mormonism unless we leave it. So I am suggesting that we need to place Mormonism and its scriptures in the wider context of the history of religion.

Thomas: **What do you like and what would you change about the way we understand and use scripture?**

Wright: Critical study of scripture reveals that it is less the word *of* God and more the humans' words *about* God (even those parts which on the surface appear to cite God's words). It is thus that the host of contradictions as well as scientific and historical inaccuracies in it are to be explained. Being generally human reflection, scripture's value lies in showing how people throughout history have perceived the divine, and have sought to make sense of life and the world in which they live. The collective wisdom in these works becomes a guide and a foundation upon which readers in a later community can build. But, being human words, scripture is subject to questioning. While attempts should be made to understand it in the historical and cultural context in which it arose, what is morally questionable, for example, may be protested and even rejected. Such a struggle with scripture can be advantageous in that it can lead an individual or group to clearer moral perspectives.

Compton: I like the fact that we have the ideal of studying scripture seriously. I like the idea of an open canon. But I don't like our tendency to read only the canonized scripture, and the understanding that limits scripture to four books. And I don't

like our tendency to read the scriptures without learning about the socio-historical background of the text.

I don't like our almost exclusive use of the King James Version of the Bible. I liken this to going to the dentist and submitting to seventeenth-century dental techniques. The King James Version was translated from late, inferior texts, and so is often incorrect. True love of scripture will demand that we develop and use the best text available. I don't like our poorly annotated editions of the scriptures (compare them, for example, with the wonderful Oxford annotated *New Revised Standard Version).*

Epperson: What I like is that we are, in spite of everything, a community that is officially committed to these texts and to our engagement with them. We are encouraged to read them. We are encouraged to liken these texts to ourselves. We encounter them as authoritative for us. All of this is very, very good.

I'd like to see us, however, identify a hierarchy of norms within scriptural texts. To identify those texts which critically command and judge us. For example, the supreme norm of the Hebrew Bible is summarized in Deuteronomy 6:4-6, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God *is* one LORD." Here is a statement against idolatry, about the unity of God, which means that all human endeavor, devotion, intentionality need to be subordinated to God's will for the liberation and redemption of his children. Those kinds of norms in the Bible (getting back to this idea of canon) need to be set up against what we say and what we do which deviate from the norm. Do our actions correspond to it, do they promote it or militate against it? Are we eroding the will of God, the intentionality of God for human well-being? Are we likening ourselves and conforming ourselves to the divine likeness? And if not, then our words and deeds need to change.

Toscano: I like the Mormon idea of an open canon. I also like our idea that no text is free from error, even scripture. There are also two things that I would like to see changed. First, I would like there to be an admission that interpretation is inherent in reading. With this there should be the acknowledgement that interpretations have changed in the church over the years and that leaders have disagreed on how to interpret. Second, I would like to see the church accept the legitimacy and necessity of private interpretation of scripture. If people are reading the scriptures in any kind of meaningful way, they will come to their own conclusions. This doesn't mean that private inter-

pretations have to be accepted as official church doctrine; canon should be established in other ways. I would like to see encouragement for people to talk and write about scriptures because that is the only way scriptures can be relevant. So, in general, I would like to see greater openness and tolerance for differing approaches. I don't see this as harmful to faith but as a means of increasing individual and group spirituality.

Thomas: **Can one believe that the Book of Mormon is fiction and still be a good Mormon?**

Epperson: I thought that a tree is known by its fruits. Whether one is a good Mormon or not depends on the quality of that person's life.

Wright: From a technical point of view, one cannot openly believe that the book is not historical and have full rights and privileges in the Utah church. However, it is possible if one keeps his or her view quiet, as authorities made clear in the wake of the 1993-95 excommunications. If you want a moral answer to the question, I would say, "Yes."

Toscano: I think that it is interesting that you use the phrase, "good Mormon." What about, "Can you be a Mormon and believe that the Book of Mormon is not historical?" I wish that the answer were "yes." I wish that we didn't define membership with a narrow belief system or a simplistic, unthinking allegiance to church leaders. Unfortunately, the recent excommunications seem to indicate that this is present church policy. And while I wish that we didn't exclude people from the group because of their beliefs about what is historical and literal, as scholars we cannot get away from these questions entirely because of the claims of Joseph Smith and the Mormon belief in the literal nature of the spiritual realm. However, as scholars I wish that we would get away from our almost exclusive use of historical and literal readings of scriptural texts, and our simple dichotomies between history and fiction, and between belief and non-belief.

Compton: Right or wrong, non-historicist Mormons are profoundly loyal to the Mormon tradition and to God, who reveals all truth. They are courageous for trying to work out a faith without historicist Mormon scriptures. But they will not receive thanks from the fundamentalist core of the church.

The strength and vitality of a religious movement lies in its fundamentalists, not its intellectuals and scholars. Mormonism (and I am speaking of the Utah church) is committed to a fairly fundamentalist vision, and yet it strongly urges edu-

cation, honesty, and freedom of inquiry. These two poles are in conflict. Add to this a few fundamentalists at the top of a rigidly authoritarian ecclesiastical pyramid, and we have a modern Mormon bomb waiting to go off. The recent excommunications and the firings at BYU may be only the first rumblings of a major disruption in Mormonism.

Edwards: Can one believe the Book of Mormon is fiction and still be a good Mormon? I have no idea. If you mean by "fiction" that the Book of Mormon is a novel written for entertainment purposes, then I suspect that that thought would make it difficult for many people to take Mormonism very seriously. However, if you mean by "fiction" that it is mythological, telling us truths without telling us the truth, then I suspect you would be describing most scriptures. My personal feeling is that many people in the RLDS church do not have any feelings one way or another about the Book of Mormon, and yet find in Mormonism an extremely important religious conviction.

Thomas: **We are all aware of various scriptural narratives which are fictional forms, such as the parables of Jesus. Why then does Mormon research focus so heavily on when its scriptures were written?**

Edwards: I suspect it has something to do with proving one's identity. Mormonism, in all its phases, has gone to a great deal of effort to prove that its founding story is correct. For at least the RLDS, the movement now is to get away from historical verification and begin some serious theological undertakings. My guess is that if Mormonism, in all of its facets, ever comes to grips with itself, ever stops defending itself as an adolescent child defends a love affair, then we will stop trying to prove and to date scriptural behavior. After all, it makes little difference, doesn't it, when or where God speaks if, in fact, God speaks?

Compton: If we accept the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham as non-historical, are we not then faced with a view of Joseph Smith as lacking miraculous prophetic power, and in fact being deceptive, brilliantly deceptive, to some extent? Would not this view undermine the Mormon claims of being the only true church with true priesthood and authority on the earth?

I think that both avenues of research (historicist and non-historicist) research should be pursued energetically. And though Book of Mormon studies is not my research focus, I have found convincing evidence on both sides of the issue. I don't see the two different avenues as opposed to each other;

careful scholarship from both perspectives is useful.

If Mormon scripture is non-historical, it would be a bitter, tragic pill for conservative Mormons to swallow. Then the sooner Mormons start to deal with it, the better. It is very important for non-historicists who are working to stay within the community to express their viewpoint in positive, creative, compassionate ways.

Epperson: If Mormon studies focus heavily on when they were written, I would ascribe it the canons of biblical research which respond to the Enlightenment demand for evidence as a presupposition to informed faith and opinion. We tend not to say, with Tertullian, "I believe because it is absurd." To those who are doing historical research, or research on chronology or material culture, I would say, "Burn the midnight oil!" Then let them test their hypotheses in the light of day. The big mistake would be to mock what they are doing. Or to mock or deride the process of inquiry. One may criticize the results, but that is another matter.

Toscano: In addition to Enlightenment principles, I think that there is something about the practical nature of Mormonism as an American religion that comes into play here too. Mormon theology very much emphasizes the practical, everyday aspect of religion and the literal nature of things: we are the literal descendants of Abraham, a real Zion will be established, God has a body, there is a real heaven, there is a resurrection of real, physical bodies. Seeing things literally means that you will ask when and where events happened or will happen, even spiritual events. While part of our literal-mindedness can be connected with a fundamentalist strain, another part can be connected with the modern and progressive American reaction against European traditions which put God and the spiritual realm out of popular reach. I see both positive and negative tendencies in our approach. The fact that we are literal-minded means that we don't denigrate, at least in theory, the body and the physical earthly realm. Of course, in postmodern discourse the body is everything! I see Mormon theology as being very forward looking in this way. Also, because of our literal-mindedness, the here and the now is emphasized, and we believe that this life is important in itself. We don't spiritualize everything away or defer all solutions to the next life. This can lead to social and political activism. Although this doesn't always happen, our theology gives us this possibility. The negative aspect of our literalism is that we

have a terrible understanding of symbolism and anything other than historical exegesis in the church. This is true of both scholars and the membership of the church at large. On the whole, we do not do well with the mythical/symbolic mode of interpretation.

Wright: We focus on historical setting of scripture for at least three reasons: (1) Mormonism is based on miracle and this involves supposed historical records. It may not be necessary for the endowment story or the parables of Jesus to be historical, but it is different with the historical claims which are part of a miracle. If their claims are not borne out, the grand miracle disappears, at least one that is immediately tangible and visible. (2) The historical claims behind the miracle are in fact open to doubt. This creates a need to focus on this problem. (3) Joseph Smith, apart from his scripture, founded much of his teaching upon acceptance of the Bible as a more or less accurate historical record (he had a quasi-fundamentalist view of scripture). This historical view of scripture informs Mormonism.

Some have said that, given the problems with the Book of Mormon's historicity, it should be approached much like a parable and be read ahistorically. This approach would, for me, be unsatisfying. The meaning of a text is tightly bound up with the context in which it was produced. Meaning would be lost if the context is not brought into play.

Thomas: **If you were asked by the church to serve on a committee to revise the canon, what would you add and what would you delete? Or would you keep them as they are now? Why?**

Edwards: If I were asked by the church to serve on a committee to revise the canon, I would refuse. But, I suppose if I could wave a magic wand and make some things happen, I would delete sexism, racism, violence, organizational and human resource statements, and clean up as many of the inconsistencies as I could. However, if I did that, there would be so little left it would hardly be worth the effort to keep them.

Toscano: I'm the kind of person who doesn't want to delete anything—even stuff that I absolutely hate. In fact, for me one of the wonderful things about our current scriptural canon is that it contains many contradictions. This should make us think about how those contradictions came to be, and about the complexity of religious and textual history. It should give us a sense of irony about ourselves and about our tradition. I did a Sunday school lesson once on Doctrine and Covenants 121, which contains things that I both hate and love. It has the memorable ad-

monition, which we are all fond of quoting, against the abuse of priesthood power; it's also filled with the rhetoric of divine revenge and anger. I love the fact that the revelation contains both, because it makes me face my own desires for both revenge and justice, mercy and kindness. It cautions me against seeing righteousness in sterile, one-sided ways. Dealing honestly with the hard passages in the scriptures makes us question our basic assumptions; it asks us to be humble and to admit our mistakes, individual and institutional; and it suggests that God is maybe bigger than any of our narrow interpretations. Though I don't want to delete anything, I would like to add new material (and thus increase the possibility of contradiction!). I wish we had a way of seeing the writings of women as sacred, scriptural and canonical. I wish we could at least discuss the possibilities and questions. For example, the hymn "O My Father," by Eliza R. Snow, is it canonical or not? And what does that imply?

Wright: Mormonism has a belief in an open canon. This could be used to advantage to rectify some of the deficiencies of the present canon. The main deficiency is the lack of women's voices and examples presented in women's own words. President Spencer W. Kimball encouraged Latter-day Saints to write in their journals because someday their writings might become scripture. The leadership could make good on this and add experiences from the journals of exemplary women. If it is objected that a story is not a fitting genre for scripture, that scripture should be revelation, it should be noted that much of the Bible and Book of Mormon is presented as story, not revelation. Augmenting the canon with example rather than directive could be quite salutary. And if one moves in this direction, one could think that the stories of minorities and, yes, even *lay* men could be included.

I would also encourage a movement to a critical approach to scripture. Part of this would be making available the basic results of scholarship. I would like to see scripture editions produced much like the *New Oxford Annotated Bible,* the *New Jerusalem Bible,* or the *New American Bible,* with short introductions and exegetical notes (a short commentary) incorporating the conclusions of scholarship. I would also like to see Mormons produce their own scholarly translation of the Bible.

Epperson: Heaven forbid that committees alone would decide what is canonical and not canonical. I would never serve on one. Canon is determined over time by consensus of the commu-

nity. Informal canonization and decanonization is going on all of the time as the community appropriates, as it reads, as it reflects upon scripture. That reflects the reality that scriptures must be interpreted, and the act of reading and appropriating is transactional. That is precisely the reason I fear televised or cinematic versions of scriptures, history, and worship. Television and films induce passivity. And you don't learn when you're just sitting there.

I really feel that there was a divine wisdom in the formulation and redaction of scripture, of Israel's scripture, of the scriptures of the church, both primitive and contemporary. As Margaret pointed out, scripture includes what is seemingly adversarial, models of covenant, multiple Creation accounts, querulous prophets, priestly codes, poetry. All of them are lumped together. We are thereby enjoined to engage them and to get involved in this wonderful conversation, this great convocation of voices of people who have been trying to come to grips with their own view of reality and life with God and each other.

Compton: I'd like to discuss Steve's idea of scripture as authoritative texts. I don't know if I just have problems with authority in Mormonism, but I think that scriptures should go beyond our little scriptures. In practice, we only have four books. We do not believe in anything but four texts. Isn't canon a straightjacket?

Epperson: The very reason that we need a written canon is *because* there is a problem with authority. We have a written canon for a reason, and the reason is extremely important. I think that there needs to be a defined and limited text to which a community has consented, by which it is governed, burdened, afflicted. Then that community must determine what in that canon is most expressive of the divine command to them at a particular time. It is important, because there are a lot of texts in that canon that would enjoin us to live a kind of life that should *not* become models for behavior. There are also all kinds of contemporary texts that should *not* be considered as models for behavior. That's the reason why it's so important to have a criterion, a written canon, and a contemporary hierarchy of norms that stand over and against attempts to convince us to behave heartlessly, violently, maliciously. The criterion for Christians is the life, the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

Toscano: What Steve is outlining is a sophisticated and open-minded approach. I don't observe this actually happening. Do people

see that there are contradictions or that all scriptural texts should not be binding on us in the same way, or that some stories may be advocating something that is wrong? I'm glad such problems are there though. As long as they are there and we hold these texts to be sacred, maybe eventually we will deal with the contradictions and problems involved in defining texts as authoritative.

Epperson: I think the task of an oral Torah, or of contemporary revelation, is to find ways in which the criterion within the written Torah can be made concrete, vivid, and compelling in contemporary circumstances. That's the responsibility facing people who grapple with these texts. Then they begin the work of exposition, persuasion, and consensus-building.

Toscano: But that's not how I see them used. Nor do I see many people grappling with them. Usually the scriptures are used as proof-texts to validate whatever idol we're most fond of at the present time. And of course that's true of not only Mormonism, but of religions in general. We justify the things that we want to justify by using the authority of scripture and the name of God.

Epperson: That's why it's so important for each generation to determine after a great deal of humility, research, and sweat, what is authoritative from that scripture.

Toscano: But who sheds any blood, sweat, and tears? I don't see much scripture study in the church. The important thing is that you read them for the prescribed amount of time to show that you are active. God forbid that you should actually understand something that you read! That's the first step to apostasy. For most members, the scriptures are authoritative because they back up church policy. I hear people in the church say all the time, "We know that this is true because the scriptures say . . ." And you ask, "Where is that in the scriptures?" And of course it isn't there, but members think that it is because they think that the canon is there to back up the authority of the LDS church. That's what they mean by authoritative text. We use the scriptures to reinforce whatever we want to reinforce.

Thomas: **Scriptures, then, are being used merely as tools for power?**

Epperson: Proof-texting is as much an emasculating of the body of scripture as is recondite source criticism that is not connected to the life of the church. We need to determine the whole message of the text. Are our words, our lives, and our deeds judged, corrected, and inspired by those words? If they're not, then there is something wrong with us, not with the text (not if we accept

that text as canonical).

Toscano: I see a contradiction here. Why can't there be something wrong with the text? And who has the right to make that determination? The fact that it may be canonical and compelling doesn't mean that there can't be something wrong with it. Aren't we all compelled by what empowers us?

Epperson: Then the canon is really one's prejudice and not an inspired text. The norm within the written canon must be used to shoot down false canons and norms.

Thomas: **Thank you all for a very thought-provoking discussion.**

Leaving

Stanton Harris Hall

Leaving you
leaves me wishing that I could hold you
like a small stone in my pocket

An agate
velvet smooth and clear
to caress and hold to sunlight
whenever longing stirs.

"White" or "Pure": Five Vignettes

Douglas Campbell

IN 1981 THE FIRST PRESIDENCY of the LDS church changed 2 Nephi 30:6 in the Book of Mormon from "and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a *white* and delightsome people" to "and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a *pure* and delightsome people . . . " In the following essay I present five vignettes as background to the change from "white" to "pure" in official LDS scripture.

VIGNETTE 1. RESTORING A PLAIN AND PRECIOUS TRUTH

Our story begins with the 1830 first edition of the Book of Mormon. After LDS missionaries had exhausted this first edition, Joseph Smith had Parley P. Pratt publish a second edition in 1837 in Kirtland, Ohio. Three things happened in 1839 that affect our story: (1) Joseph Smith sent the Quorum of the Twelve to England; (2) missionary work exhausted the second edition of the Book of Mormon by December 1839; and (3) on 29 December 1839 the Nauvoo, Illinois, High Council voted to publish a third edition of the Book of Mormon. After delays in fund raising, Ebenezer Robinson published the third edition in October 1840 in Cincinnati, Ohio. In this 1840 edition, for the first time, 2 Nephi 30:6 reported that the Lamanites became "a *pure* and delightsome people" rather than "a *white* and delightsome people."

Not knowing that a third edition was being planned 4,000 miles away (the trans-Atlantic telegraph was not in operation until 1866), the Twelve held their April 1840 conference in England and voted to publish the Book of Mormon in England by the end of the year. The Twelve faithfully reprinted the second (1837) edition. Due to delays, this edition did not appear until January 1841. The church thus had two different editions at the same time: the American 1840 Nauvoo and the English 1841 edition.

Based on the English 1841, not the American 1840, edition, three more major editions of the Book of Mormon followed: 1852, 1879, and 1920. A member of the Quorum of Twelve supervised each major edition: Franklin D. Richards, in 1852; Orson Pratt, in 1879; and James E. Talmage, in 1920. The 1837, 1841, 1852, 1879, and 1920 editions retained the 1830 "white" instead of the 1840 "pure" in 2 Nephi 30:6.

In the 1970s the First Presidency established the Scripture Publication Committee composed of some members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. Its charge was to produce printed materials to help members understand the Bible and to improve doctrinal scholarship in the church. Elders Thomas S. Monson, Boyd K. Packer, and Bruce R. McConkie were among its members. A group of faculty members from Brigham Young University carried out the project. Among its members was Ellis Rasmussen, dean of the College of Religion. During their work the committee reported the 1840 "pure" versus "white" variant. The First Presidency restored this 1840 change to the Book of Mormon in 1981.

This "plain and precious truth" was restored exactly 141 years after it had been lost.

Vignette 2. Two Non-LDS Editions: 1858 and 1908

Consider the following three events of 1858 that affect our story:

1. Brigham Young, using guerrilla tactics, had earned headlines along the East Coast by successfully resisting Johnston's Army which U.S. president Buchanan had sent to Utah in 1857 to subdue the Saints.[1]

2. The twenty-eight-year non-renewable copyright for the Book of Mormon had expired.[2]

3. Hoping to capitalize on public interest in the Utah War, James O. Wright, a non-Mormon publisher in New York City, printed in 1858 a commercial version of the now-out-of-copyright Book of Mormon. For unknown reasons, Wright skipped the 1830, 1837, 1841, and 1852 editions and reprinted the 1840 edition (with "pure," not "white") in November 1858.[3]

---

1. See Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 169.

2. The twenty-eight-year, non-renewable copyright law was passed in 1790, in line with English law. In 1909 Congress enabled the copyright owner to renew copyright for an additional twenty-eight years.

3. Hugh Stocks, "The Book of Mormon, 1830-1879: A Publishing History," M.L.S. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1979, 19.

Wright's edition did not sell well. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has tried to *give* the books away during a mission. Wright should have heeded Orson Pratt's advice to Brigham Young in September 1853: "There is no more prospect in offering our publications in the eastern cities, than there would be in offering so many cobblestones."[4]

Wright had printed, but not bound, about 4,000 copies. His edition began with an advertisement and featured a long anti-Mormon introduction on the origins of the Book of Mormon.

What could Wright do with his 4,000 unbound copies? Turn them into a pro-Mormon edition and sell the entire printing to an LDS splinter group. Wright removed his long anti-Mormon introduction and had Zadock Brooks, a schismatic Mormon elder who controlled the abandoned Kirtland temple, write a short pro-Mormon introduction. He then sold the entire set of newly bound copies to Russell Huntley, another schismatic Mormon appalled by the Utah church's practice of polygamy. By 1862 the Huntley-Brooks faction had disbanded. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints inherited and used Huntley's copies of Wright's 1858 reprint of the 1840 edition for their worship needs.[5] In 1874 the RLDS church removed Brooks's introduction and faithfully reprinted this 1858 (1840) edition as their first official edition of the Book of Mormon.[6]

Jump now to 1906, the year the RLDS church decided to print a new edition of the Book of Mormon in response to three events with LDS connections.

1. In 1879 Orson Pratt divided the various books comprising the Book of Mormon into shorter chapters, and divided its long narrative paragraphs into short verses. This LDS version was easier to use; its verses now looked like Bible verses instead of a novel.

2. When Oliver Cowdery separated from the LDS church in 1838, he kept the printer's manuscript[7] of the Book of Mormon. Cowdery rejoined

---

4. Pratt to Young, 10 Sept. 1853, Brigham Young Papers, archives, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

5. Stocks, 20.

6. Richard Howard, *Restoration Scriptures* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1969), 53.

7. There were two manuscripts of the Book of Mormon: the original dictated manuscript and a back-up copy, the printer's manuscript. This second copy could be left overnight with the printer since the original was still in Joseph Smith's possession. In the printer's manuscript, the printer and others marked paragraphs, added punctuation, established capitalization, and cleaned up the grammar. The original dictated copy was placed in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House where over time it was severely damaged. Portions of the original manuscript are now in the possession of the LDS church and the Marriott Library at the University of Utah.

the LDS church in October 1848. However, before he died at the home of his brother-in-law David Whitmer in 1850, he gave the manuscript to Whitmer. When Whitmer died in 1888, the printer's copy passed to George Schweich, his grandson. In 1901 William F. Benjamin offered it through Samuel Russell to the LDS church. In a 19 March 1901 letter to Russell, LDS president Joseph F. Smith declined to purchase it.[8] In 1903 the RLDS church bought it from George Schweich for $2,450.

3. From 1904 to 1906 the U.S. Senate conducted hearings to decide whether Reed Smoot, a monogamous Mormon apostle, could serve as senator from Utah. The hearings focused on polygamy, an issue for which the RLDS church had considerable antipathy.

With this background, the RLDS Council of Twelve Apostles charged a committee to produce a new edition of the Book of Mormon with (1) better versification, (2) a text as nearly as possible consistent with the printer's manuscript, and (3) restored anti-polygamy verses (see, for example, Jacob 2:6). The RLDS church therefore removed words from the 1840 edition not found in the 1837 version or in the printer's manuscript. In particular, the 1908 RLDS edition replaced "pure and delightsome" with the original "white and delightsome." In fact, in their preface, they list this change as the first of six[9] scriptures restored to their earlier, more pristine state. Subsequent RLDS versions have kept this reversion. Thus while the LDS church had accidentally omitted the 1840 wording, its cousin had used the words for forty years, then deliberately altered them.

---

8. Smith to Russell, 19 Mar. 1901, Samuel Russell Collections Correspondence, 1863-91, Archives and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Smith wrote:

> The manuscript in the hands of Mr. Benjamin possesses no value whatever. It has been repeatedly offered to us and numerous false reports have been put in circulation with regards to our desire to obtain possession of it, but we have at no time regarded it of any value, neither have we ever offered any money to procure it, all the stories to the contrary notwithstanding, for we have always known it was not the original, as aforesaid, and as many editions of the Book of Mormon have been printed, and tens of thousands of copies of it circulated throughout the world you can readily perceive that this manuscript is of no value to anyone. There is no principle involved in its possession, there could be nothing lost if it were utterly destroyed, it can neither add to or diminish aught from the word of God as contained in the printed work which has already gone to the world and been translated into many languages. Indeed, it is not worth the time and paper I am using to convey these thoughts to you.

9. Other changes included: wading to wandering, inherit to enter, where to whence, and armies to servants.

VIGNETTE 3. TEXTUAL VARIANTS AND PRINTING TECHNOLOGY

Readers today may better understand the rise of textual variants in the Book of Mormon editions of 1830, 1837, 1840, 1852, 1879, 1920, and 1981 by learning something of the state of printing technology during these years.

The 1830 Edition

When the church exhausted the 5,000 copy print run of the 1830 first edition, why did they produce a completely retypeset second *edition*, rather than simply order a second *printing* of the first edition? To answer this question, I will review how Egbert Grandin, a small upstate New York printer, printed the 1830 first edition. Grandin handset the type for each sixteen-page signature, proofread these sixteen pages while printing the 5,000 copies of that signature,[10] broke up the signature, and salvaged the type to set the next sixteen-page signature. Grandin could *never* issue a second printing; he salvaged its type every sixteen pages.

The 1837 Edition

So why does Parley P. Pratt's 1837 Kirtland edition of the Book of Mormon have over 3,000 textual changes from the first edition? The 1837 preface explains: "Individuals acquainted with book printings, are aware of the numerous typographical errors which always occur in manuscript editions. It is only necessary to say, that the whole has been carefully re-examined and compared with the original manuscript . . . "[11] Consider the following five reasons for the existence of textual variations in the second edition of any book having both a printer's manuscript and a printed first edition.

1. *Time pressures.* Scarce money-generating resources encourage quick proofreading. A sixteen-page signature takes up space in a small print shop; signatures consume the limited supply of each type face and font size. The sooner a printer finishes corrections, the sooner he can print a signature; the sooner he prints a signature, the sooner he can salvage the type; the sooner he salvages the type, the sooner he can accept additional

---

10. Corrections were made during the run, creating many variants. Before binding, the sheets were collated but in an unknown order. Since each of the 5,000 copies was bound from sheets each containing different variants, constructing *the* "true" text of the 1830 edition has not yet been done. In this sense we do not have a copy of *the* 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. Instead, we have possibly 5,000 different textual copies. Royal Skousen of Brigham Young University is currently working on the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project whose goal, among others, is to produce a list of all 1830 variants.

11. The one-and-a-half page preface was signed by Parley P. Pratt and John Goodson.

print jobs; the sooner he accepts additional print jobs, the sooner he can make money; and time is money.

2. *Complicated proofreading.* Book of Mormon proofreaders were not able to line up old pages and new pages and compare line to line and word to word. The page height of the 1830 Book of Mormon is 15.5 centimeters. That of the 1837 edition is 12.5 centimeters. The 1830 edition has forty-three lines per page; the smaller 1837 edition has forty-seven lines. The page width of the 1830 edition is 9 centimeters; that of the 1837 edition is 6.5 centimeters. The 1830 edition averages sixty characters per line; the 1837 edition averages fifty-four. In addition, the greatly reduced font size of the 1837 edition hampered proofreading.

3. *Precedence.* When the 1830 edition differed from the 1830 printer's manuscript, which took precedence? Even more problematic, during the years after 1830, Joseph Smith recorded some grammatical and doctrinal corrections directly on the original printer's manuscript. Thus the printer's manuscript contained corrections made *before* the 1830 printing and corrections made *after* the 1830 printing. The 1837 text could differ from the 1830 printed version, from the printer's manuscript, from the pre-printing corrections to the printer's manuscript, from the post-printing corrections to the printer's manuscript.

4. *Modernized language.* Joseph Smith modernized some of the language of the 1837 edition, changing (1) "which" to "who" 707 times; (2) "saith" and "sayeth" to "said" 229 times[12]; and (3), after revising the Bible and deciding he had overused the term "and it came to pass," crossed-out that phrase on many pages of the printer's manuscript.[13] Continuing Joseph Smith's trend to modernize the language of the Book of Mormon faces an uphill battle. Elder J. Reuben Clark of the First Presidency wrote the book *Why the King James Version* to discourage use of modernized Bible translations. In his April 1993 general conference address, Elder Dallin Oaks discouraged modernizing the language of prayer and encouraged the continued use of a "special language of prayer."

5. *Doctrinal clarification.* Joseph Smith had many additional revelations from 1830 to 1837. During these years his understanding of the nature of the Godhead developed. Some changes in the 1837 edition were made to clarify his concept of the Godhead.

The 1840 Edition

The first edition, which lasted seven years, took six months to typeset

12. Howard, 41.
13. Ibid., 38.

and proofread. The second edition, which lasted two years, took one winter to typeset and proofread. To reset and proofread the Book of Mormon all over again just to print another couple of thousand copies was both tedious and time consuming. Fortunately, a new technology from England had made its way to the American Midwest: stereotyping.

In stereotyping, the printer sets the text in type, presses a mat into the type, pours metal into the wetted mat, and produces a metal plate. After the type is salvaged, the plate continues to exist. Stereotyping separates the typesetting process from the printing process. Stereotyped plates last a long time, provide economies of scale, permit identical printings of the same edition, and permit printing by different printing companies.

The 1852 Edition

The plates to the stereotype edition printed in Nauvoo, Illinois, were lost during the Saints' 1846 exodus west.[14] Franklin D. Richards arranged for new plates while presiding over the church in England. For almost thirty years, from 1842 to 1871, the LDS church printed its copies of the Book of Mormon in England and shipped them to the United States.[15]

The 1879 Edition

In the early 1870s the Deseret News Press in Salt Lake City began to assert itself as the primary source of printed material for the church.[16] The 1852 stereotype plates were shipped to Salt Lake City. After a few years, however, the heavily used plates were unusable. Again, technology came to the rescue. England had developed electroplating to produce longer lasting plates. But, again, new plates had to be made from scratch. Elder Orson Pratt went to England to have the plates set again.

The church used this opportunity to change the page layout. As noted, Pratt divided the internal books of the Book of Mormon into shorter chapters, and divided the long narrative paragraphs into short, memorizable verses.

---

14. Stocks, 15.

15. In January 1853 Orson Pratt was on a mission to Washington, D.C. With the confirmed loss of the Nauvoo stereotype plates, Brigham Young instructed Pratt to get copies for the Utah Saints. After obtaining estimates for printing the Book of Mormon in New York City, he wrote to Young: "The printing and binding can be done in England and the books transported to this country and the duties paid on the same, as cheap, if not cheaper, than to have it done in this country."

16. Stocks, 8.

The 1920 Edition

Electroplates do not last forever. Forty years later the First Presidency stated: "So many imprints have been taken from the several sets of old plates that all of these have become defectively worn, and the preparation of a new set of electrotypes was deemed imperative."[17] No new technology was involved in the 1920 edition, but new plates had to be made. The church again used this opportunity to alter the page layout. They placed the verses in double columns, making it look more like the King James Bible. A committee under Elder James E. Talmage was charged with correcting textual variants.

The 1981 Edition

Printing technology did not directly change the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon. The 1973 Bible Aids Project at Brigham Young University had created aids for the Bible and other LDS scriptures.

> It soon became evident that computer assistance in the collection of the information, collating, sorting, and printing the organized data would be helpful . . . A complete tape file of the Standard Works . . . has been extremely helpful in speeding up entries, avoiding errors, and reducing the necessity of proofreading.[18]

How did the committee, charged with producing biblical aids, take on the Book of Mormon? Church officials had instructed the Scripture Publication Committee to oversee the addition of a vision of Joseph F. Smith and a vision of Joseph Smith to the Pearl of Great Price, and turned to the BYU Bible Aids Project for the legwork. The BYU committee asked Elder Bruce R. McConkie if they should add footnotes to these revelations similar to those already used in the triple combination or use the new system that had been devised for the Bible. McConkie was adamant: "Don't use the old Pearl of Great Price cross-reference system. It drives me crazy!"

The old triple combination cross-reference system used lower-case letters that were not tied to a specific verse. To find the verse to which the cross-reference "v" corresponded, readers had to search through the whole chapter looking for the tiny super-scripted letter. As one who now uses trifocals, I can commiserate with Elder McConkie and others who found this an infuriating process.

With McConkie's encouragement, the committee prepared the two

---

17. Official Announcement, *Deseret News*, 25 Dec. 1920.
18. Committee Notes on Bible Aids Project, manuscript copy; copy in my possession.

new revelations for inclusion in the Pearl of Great Price under the new system that had been established for the Bible. After the work began, church leaders decided that the two visions would not be put in the Pearl of Great Price but would be placed in the Doctrine and Covenants instead. Approval was given to re-do the entire triple combination with the new cross-reference system.

Early in the project on Bible aids, the BYU faculty committee began to incorporate cross-references to Joseph Smith's Inspired Translation of the Bible. Although committee members can no longer recall the exact sequence, at some point they also began to include Joseph Smith's known revisions of the text of the Book of Mormon. In the course of identifying the textual variants, the committee reported the 1840 "pure" versus "white" variant.[19]

VIGNETTE 4. WHY NOT THE 1852, 1879, 1920, OR 1966 EDITION?

I know of no account of the revision process left by those people in charge of the 1852, 1879, and 1920 editions. Nevertheless, a paper trail exists, one that we can verify. We will summarize the textual variants listed by Jeffrey Holland[20] for selected verses from the 1830, 1837, 1840, 1852, 1879, and 1920 editions.

The 1852 Edition

Holland identifies four verses in the 1852 edition which are identical to the 1840 edition but which are not in the 1830 or 1837 edition:

1 Nephi 8:18, p. 50[21]:

> And it came to pass that I saw them, but they would not come to me *and partake of the fruit.*

---

19. I am a professor in the BYU Computer Science Department with a background in natural language text processing. This background was one of the reasons that I investigated the topic of this essay. Considering the extensive use the Bible Aids Committee had made of computers, I had assumed that the following standard computer techniques for natural language text processing were responsible for the discovery of the "pure" versus "white" variant: (1) Put the printer's manuscript, the 1830, 1837, 1840, 1852, and 1920 editions onto computer readable tapes; (2) Write a program to find and print out all textual variants; and (3) Visually inspect the output, looking for significant variants. I was surprised to learn that these well-know techniques were not used; the different editions had not and have not yet been converted to machine readable form.

20. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "An Analysis of Selected Changes in Major Editions of the Book of Mormon—1830-1920," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, Aug. 1966.

21. Page numbers refer to pages in Holland's thesis.

Alma 20:4, p. 91:

Now Lamoni said unto him, Who told thee that *thy* brethren were in prison?

Alma 46:40, p. 99:

to remove the cause of diseases *to which men were subject* by the nature of the climate.

3 Nephi 21:16, p. 109:

and I will cut off witchcrafts out of the *land*, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers.

The 1879 Edition

Holland identifies six verses in the 1879 edition which are identical to the 1840 edition but which are not in the 1830, 1837, or 1852 edition:

1 Nephi 10:18, p. 52:

for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and the way is prepared *for all men* from the foundation of the world.

2 Nephi 7:4-5, p. 66:

He waketh mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath *opened* mine ear, and I was not rebellious.

Jacob 5:21, p. 72:

How comest thou hither to plant this tree, or this branch of the tree? for behold, it was the poorest spot in all the land of *the* vineyard.

Mosiah 5:4, p. 76:

And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king *has* spoken unto us, *that has* brought us to this great knowledge.

Mosiah 26:23, p. 82:

and it is I that granteth unto him that believeth *until* the end, a place at my right hand.

Alma 56:5, p. 101:

it *sufficeth* me that I tell you that two thousand of these young men *have* taken their weapons of war.

He also identifies two verses which overturned the 1852 corrections based on the 1840 edition:

1 Nephi 8:18-19, p. 50:

And it came to pass that I saw them, but they would not come unto me [omitted *and partake of the fruit*].

3 Nephi 21:16, p. 109:

and I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy *hand*, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers.

The 1920 Edition

Holland identifies four verses in the 1920 edition which are identical to the 1840 edition but which are not in the 1830, 1837, 1852, or 1879 edition:

1 Nephi 18:18, p. 60:

yea, even they were near to be cast, *with sorrow*, into a watery grave.

1 Nephi 20:1, p. 61:

Hearken and hear this, O House of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, *(or out of the waters of baptism)*, who swear by the name of the Lord.

Alma 11:19, p. 87:

Now an antion of gold is equal to three *shiblons*.

Ether 13:31, p. 118:

all the people upon the face of the land were shedding blood, and there was none to *restrain* them.

He also notes that the 1920 edition re-overturned the 1879 edition's overturning of the 1852 corrections based on the 1840 edition: 1 Nephi 8:18-19, p. 50, and 3 Nephi 21:16, p. 109.

Although only twelve years had passed since the RLDS church identified the "pure" versus "white" 1840 variant, the 1920 LDS committee did not make a marginal notation for this verse in its revision copy of the Book of Mormon.[22]

Perhaps a perusal of three hymns from the 1927 LDS hymnal can re-

22. Part of the donation made by the James Talmage family to Brigham Young University, now housed in the Lee Library, was a 1911 edition of the Book of Mormon which had been used as a "manuscript" for changes to be made to the 1920 edition. On the inside front cover is written, "Committee Copy—Containing all changes adopted by the Book of Mormon Committee—April, 1920."

create certain cultural attitudes of the period.

O stop and tell me, *Red man* . . .
to *idle Indian* hearts
And quit their *savage* customs.[23]

Great Spirit, listen to the *Red* man's wail
Not many moons shall pass away before
the *curse of darkness* from your skins shall flee[24]

the *red* untutored Indian
seeketh here his *rude* delights.[25]

This may not have been the time to restore the verse. But what about 1966?

On 5 August 1966 Jeffrey Holland finished his master's thesis at Brigham Young University on selected changes in the Book of Mormon text: "[T]his study has been limited to 'selected changes,' defined as major modifications in format and addition, deletion, or change of words within the text which could alter the meaning of the passage."[26] Although he examined 156 major[27] modifications, he made no mention of the "pure" versus "white" variant. Two factors may explain this omission.

1. Some members of the Quorum of the Twelve preached that a physical change would turn the skin of Indians from red to white. Six years before, Joseph Fielding Smith had published: "When the Lamanites fully repent and sincerely receive the gospel, the Lord has promised to remove the dark skin. . . . Perhaps there are some Lamanites today who are losing the dark pigment. Many of the members of the Church among the Catawba Indians of the south could readily pass as of the white race."[28]

2. On 31 May 1966, two months before Holland's thesis, the *Arizona Republic* had run a four-part article[29] on BYU's policy of not recruiting blacks for its athletic teams. The 1960s were a time of national concern over blacks and civil rights; the church had been under considerable

---

23. 1927 LDS hymnal, no. 64, "O Stop and tell me, Red Man," vv. 1, 3, 4.
24. Ibid., no. 77, "Great Spirit, Listen to the Red Man's Wail," vv. 1 and 9.
25. Ibid., no. 118, "For the Strength of the Hills," v. 4.
26. Holland, 1.
27. Holland (121) identifies 97 changes in the 1837 edition, fifteen in the 1840 edition, fifteen in the 1852 edition, six in the 1879 edition, thirty-five in the 1920 edition, and six changes between the 1920 and 1966 editions.
28. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1960), 3:122-23.
29. See the articles by Dave Hicks, in the 29-31 May and 1 June editions.

pressure to explain its practice of denying black men the priesthood. The church's explanation—"We don't know why"[30]—complicated BYU's position. Within days of the Arizona articles, BYU's president Ernest L. Wilkinson took BYU into a defensive mode. The situation escalated; Stanford and the University of Washington refused to play BYU; major disruptions occurred at Wyoming and Colorado State games. Confrontations declined with the appointment of Dallin Oaks as president of BYU in 1971. Under his leadership, the university made a concerted effort to stress black civil rights. BYU changed its unwritten athletic policy and actively recruited blacks for its athletic teams.

In 1974, when Stan Larson's BYU master's thesis[31] re-investigated the topic of textual changes in the Book of Mormon, he spent considerable time discussing the "pure" versus "white" variant. Two years later he published an article in *Sunstone* in which this variant was one of the passages examined.[32] Two years later worthy black males were given the priesthood. Three years after that the First Presidency replaced "white and delightsome" with "pure and delightsome."

Vignette 5. What About the Rest of the Book of Mormon?

While this scripture has changed, people have not. As I have shared the above vignettes with friends, neighbors, and colleagues, I have repeatedly encountered those who quoted, in no uncertain terms, Book of Mormon scriptures that (1) righteous Lamanites had their skin changed to white (3 Ne. 2:15-16); (2) Jesus and Mary were white-skinned (1 Ne. 11:13; 3 Ne. 19:30); (3) gentiles who came to the Americas were white-skinned (1 Ne. 13:1); (4) white skin is physically and spiritually desirable (2 Ne. 5:21; Mormon 9:6); and (5) in the resurrection the whiteness of our skins will be an indication of our righteousness (Jacob 3:8). "Ignore the small changes and follow the broad themes of the Book of Mormon," they said. So I have.

As translator, Joseph Smith used the word "white," "whiter," and "whiteness" twenty-eight times in the Book of Mormon. I have arranged the twenty-eight references into six usages: (1) robes and garments, (2) fruit, (3) stones and hair, (4) Mary and Jesus, (5) gentiles, and (6) white Nephites.

---

30. See, for example, the First Presidency statement, dated 15 Dec. 1969, and published in the *Church News*, 10 Jan. 1970: "Negroes . . . were not yet to receive the priesthood for reasons which we believe are known to God, but which he has not made fully known to man."

31. Stan Larson, "A Study of Some Textual Variations in the Book of Mormon, Comparing the Original and the Printer's Manuscripts and the 1830, the 1836, and the 1840 Editions," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974.

32. Stan Larson "Early Book of Mormon Texts: Textual Changes to the Book of Mormon in 1837 and 1840," *Sunstone* 1 (Fall 1976): 44-55.

The first involves clothing: garments and robes.

1 Nephi 8:5	he was dressed in a *white robe*
1 Nephi 12:10	*garments* are made *white* in his blood
1 Nephi 12:11	*garments* were *white* even like unto the Lamb of God
1 Nephi 12:11	These [garments] are made *white* in the blood of the Lamb.
1 Nephi 14:19	dressed in a *white robe.*
Alma 5:21	*garments* are washed *white*
Alma 5:24	*garments* are cleansed and spotless, pure and *white.*
Alma 5:27	*garments* have been cleansed and made *white* through the blood
Alma 13:11	*garments* were washed *white* through the blood of the Lamb
Alma 13:12	*garments* made *white,* being pure and spotless before God.
Alma 34:36	*garments* should be made *white* through the blood of the Lamb.
3 Nephi 11:8	clothed in a *white robe.*
Ether 13:10	*garments* are *white* through the blood

These verses suggest that "white" garments are metaphors for purity and cleanliness. A physical cleansing agent removes stains, soils, dirt, disease, and impurities from clothing. Clothing washed in physical blood does not appear white. Just as the washing of clothing in the Blood of the Lamb is metaphorical, so the whiteness of clothing is a metaphor for cleanliness and purity.

The second usage involves fruit.

1 Nephi 8:11	*fruit* thereof was *white* to exceed all the *whiteness* that I had ever seen.
1 Nephi 11:8	(*fruit*) the *whiteness* thereof did exceed the *whiteness* of the driven *snow.*
Alma 32:42	*fruit* thereof which is most precious, which is *sweet* above all that is *sweet,* and which is *white* above all that is *white,* yea *pure* above all that is *pure.*

"White" fruits are metaphors for luminosity. Yellow peaches, red apples, green grapes, blue blueberries, orange oranges, black blackberries, and purple plums are desirable. A brilliant fruit that glows, dazzles, radiates, and shines is certainly an alluring symbol. But few people like pale, unripe, paper-colored, washed-out, leprous, ashen, or cadaverous-like fruit.

The third usage involves stones and hair.

Ether 3:1 *stones;* and they were *white* and clear even as transparent glass.
3 Nephi 12:36 thou canst not make one *hair* black or *white.*

Transparent glass is not white; it is clear. White glass is opaque.

The fourth usage involves two historical personages, Mary and Jesus.

1 Nephi 11:13 [Mary] was exceedingly fair and *white*
1 Nephi 11:15 [Mary] was most beautiful and fair [not white]
3 Nephi 19:25 they were as *white* as the *countenance* and also the *garments* of *Jesus* and behold the *whiteness* thereof did exceed all the *whiteness,* yea ever there could be nothing upon earth so *white* as the *whiteness* thereof.
3 Nephi 19:30 and behold they were *white,* even as *Jesus.*

I suggest that "whiteness" for Mary and Jesus refers to a countenance that is exquisite, radiant, awe-inspiring, and not to blue-eyed, blond-haired, white-skinned Aryans.

The fifth usage involves gentiles.

1 Nephi 13:15 [Gentiles] were *white* and exceedingly fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain.

The "whiteness" of gentiles is also metaphorical. To see this, consider the question, who are the gentiles in the Book of Mormon? The prophet Mormon gives us an answer on the title page. As did the Jews, Mormon divides the world into two: Jews and gentiles. Gentiles are the non-Jews. Black Africans, brown Hispanics, yellow Vietnamese, black Melanesians, fair-skinned Scandinavians, or olive-complected Italians are not Jews. Lehi spoke of gentiles in 2 Nephi 1:6: "Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophecy according to the Spirit which is in me, that there shall *none* come unto this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord." Negro slaves, Vietnamese refugees, Irish potato famine people, Japanese sugar cane laborers, Chinese railroad workers, Haitian boat people, El Salvadorean sanctuary refugees have been brought to this land. And "none come unto this Land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord." In what way, then, are they, the gentiles of 1 Nephi 13:1, "white like unto my people before they were slain"? Black-skinned gentiles, brown-skinned gentiles, yellow-skinned gentiles, and white-skinned[33] gentiles are white like

33. The only white-skinned people are albinos. They can be found as descendants of any racial group. Caucasians may be pinkish, tanned, ruddy, or swarthy, but they are not white-skinned. When Caucasian explorers and slave-traders penetrated Africa, they were referred to as "red-skinned" by the inhabitants.

unto the Nephites in that they have been brought here by the hand of the Lord to become beautiful, pure, and righteous.

The sixth usage involves white Nephites.

2 Nephi 5:21 as they were *white*, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a *skin of blackness* to come upon them

Jacob 3:8 I *fear* that unless ye shall repent of your sins that their skins will be *whiter* than yours, when ye shall be brought before the throne of God.

3 Nephi 2:15 and their curse was taken from them, and their *skin* became *white* like unto the Nephites.

3 Nephi 2:16 and their young men and their daughters became exceedingly *fair*, and they were numbered among the Nephites.

White-skinned Nephites and *black*-skinned Lamanites are metaphors for cultures, not for skin color. The church teaches that the descendants of the Lamanites inhabited the Americas when Columbus arrived. But Lamanites are not black-skinned; they are not even red-skinned. As the "skin of blackness" is a metaphor, so too is the white skin of the Nephites. Perhaps 3 Nephi 2:15-16, in which the Lamanites have the curse taken from them, fulfills 2 Nephi 30:6. In these verses the Lamanite has become "white and delightsome" not "pure and delightsome."

I do not believe the Lord changed their physical skin to white in the twinkling of an eye. These Lamanites lived with city-dwelling Nephites and became cultural Nephites. The significance of 3 Nephi 2:16 is that the historian of 3 Nephi, raised in a culture preoccupied by racial differences, records that the Lamanites, who could be distinguished from the Nephites on physical grounds, were nevertheless numbered among the Nephites.

Let us look at two final instances of white in the Book of Mormon: Mormon 9:6 and 2 Nephi 26:33. These verses capture Joseph Smith's cross-cultural translation of white:

Mormon 9:6 ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and *white*, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb,

It is Moroni in Mormon 9:6 who gives this fervent prayer as to what our condition may be on the day of resurrection: spotless, pure, fair. And white, not white skinned. Not Aryan. Not Caucasian. But cleansed by the Blood of the Lamb.

> 2 Nephi 26:33 He denieth none that cometh unto Him, *black* and *white*, bond and free, male and female.

This verse relates salvation to sets of opposites. Salvation transcends gender, social condition, and race. Christ's gospel is intended to overcome our narrow biases.

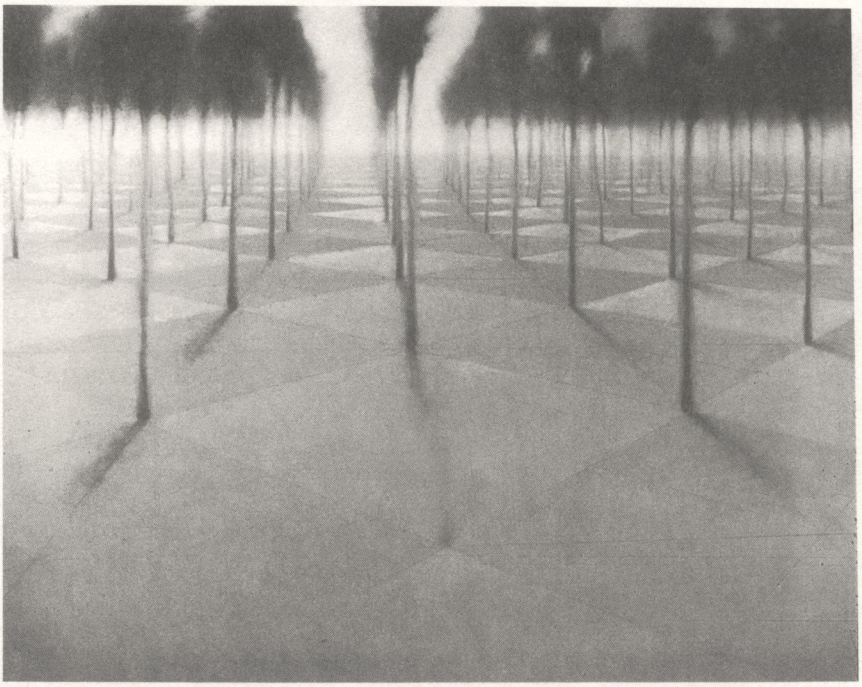
In the words of Spencer W. Kimball, former president of the LDS church, who approved all changes to the Book of Mormon text in 1981, who was known as the apostle to the Lamanites, and who extended the priesthood to black males,

> From the dawn of history we have seen so-called superior races go down from the heights to the depths in a long parade of exits. . . Is the implication of Mrs. Anonymous justified that the white race or the American people is superior? John the Baptist, in forceful terms, rebuked a similar self-styled superior group: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3:9).[34]

Why this final vignette? Because words change. Meanings and significance change, and old meanings can hurt. Even when words describe the physical world, they may have associations that go beyond the literal. They may do evil even when used unconsciously or unintentionally.

---

34. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Evil of Intolerance," 6 Apr. 1954, *Improvement Era* 57 (1954): 423.



The Fire of God: Thoughts on the Nature of Divine Witness

Vincent C. Rampton

FOR MANY MEMBERS OF THE LDS CHURCH, the word "testimony" calls up images stretched over a lifetime: fervent declarations uttered in half-darkness around waning campfires, quiet successions of stories and assurances in sunwashed chapels, moments of silent illumination while poring over passages of leather-bound holy writ.

How often, though, does "gaining a testimony" become just one doctrinal topic to occupy a Sunday's worth of priesthood or Relief Society lesson time, a matter limited to reiteration during monthly fast services? We sometimes regard the matter of testimony (even if with utmost respect) as one more gospel subject, "on the shelf" with the Atonement, the Plan of Salvation, the Law of Tithing, and so on.

We often fail to see testimony for what it is: the means for integrating all gospel truths—in fact, all truths, regardless of their source—into a unified understanding of things as they are, were, and are to come. If all gospel principles affect our salvation, the gift of divine witness is our means of truly knowing them, understanding them, and seeing them as fundamental to the life we live. The truths of the restored gospel are the path to eternal life, but, until they are real to us, they offer no more than vague comfort. Once our understanding of the doctrines of the Kingdom are fired by the witness of the Spirit, they illuminate, challenge, and guide (and sometimes drive and goad) us, the heart and core of a new and expanded reality.

Testimony—the "more sure" knowledge of God's plan of salvation, of the restoration of his gospel, and of "the truth of all things"—unlocks the essence of the Latter-day Saints' faith. The witness of the Spirit has been held out to all men and women in our time, offering us

a means of understanding all realities closed to our natural eyes. It is a new and more perfect mode of learning, not just spiritual things, but all things.

> Mother of us all, O Earth, and Sun's all-seeing eye, behold,
> I pray, what I a God from Gods endure.
> Behold in what foul case
> I for ten thousand years
> Shall struggle in my woe,
> in these unseemly chains.
> * * *
> For I, poor I, through giving
> Great gifts to mortal men, am prisoner made
> In these fast fetters; yea, in fennel stalk
> I snatched the hidden spring of stolen fire,
> which is to men a teacher of all arts,
> Their chief resource. And now this penalty
> Of that offence I pay, fast riveted
> In chains beneath the open firmament.
> * * *
> The foe of Zeus, and held
> In hatred by all Gods
> Who tread the courts of Zeus:
> And this for my great love,
> Too great, for mortal men.
>
> —Æschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

One of the most powerful stories taken from Greek mythology tells of the titan Prometheus who, alone among the gods, loved mortals enough to share with them the secret miracle of fire, "th[e] choice flower . . . the bright glory of fire that all arts spring from," the key to the divine vision of the gods themselves. For this blasphemy, Zeus chained Prometheus in the mountain heights of Caucasos, there to suffer for ten thousand years.

In *Prometheus Bound*, Æschylus retold the story in a way which has captivated Western thought for centuries. Æschylus modified and deepened the Promethean myth by casting Prometheus (whose name translates loosely as "forethought") as the son of Themis, Mother Earth, and therefore blessed by birth with divine foreknowledge—the gift of prophecy. Zeus is portrayed as a young god (Prometheus' nephew, in fact), newly exalted over the titans, devoid of foresight and driven by power and vengeance, who has determined that the human race is unworthy and must be destroyed. It is Prometheus' foresight which instills in him

enough belief in mortal man's salvageability to prompt his theft of fire's divine power from Olympus.[1]

Scholars have struggled for generations over the rationale behind Zeus' unbending condemnation of Prometheus.[2] Some point out that *Prometheus Bound* is the first, and only surviving, of a trilogy of plays, in the last of which Zeus forgives Prometheus and is reconciled to the wisdom of his acts. Others see Zeus as nature's god, bearing down without reason or mercy on the efforts of human deity personified by Prometheus—reason, intelligence, and enlightenment—to wrest control of the world.

Perhaps, in Zeus' blind vengeance against Prometheus for bestowing fire on mortals, the ancient Greeks personified their own guilt, projecting onto their gods their own all-too-human ambivalence at the sharing of those divine gifts which have been so bountifully bestowed on humanity; their self-perceived inability, fear, and unworthiness (their great desires notwithstanding) to wield the Fire of God.

I

Mortality, in fact, has always imposed upon humanity just such a confounding paradox. Cut off from God by the Fall, isolated—in part, at least—in mortality (our "probationary state" [2 Ne. 2:21; Alma 12:24]), we are at once both lost to God and lost without him. In many ways we are complete beings, finding fulfillment in our lives through things we can see, touch, and experience. On a more fundamental level, though, our makeup is shot through with incompleteness—and longing. However self-contained our natural perceptions may seem, we are laden with deeper sensibilities that stretch our awareness beyond our senses. It is that part of us, for instance, which responds so profoundly, without knowing why, to unbearable beauty and soul-stirring majesty. Who has not watched a beautiful sunset, listened to the thunder of a stormy sea at midnight, gazed at the silent perfection of a mountain meadow at dawn, and not felt the presence of a perfection behind what our senses tell us? We are, at heart, a maze of thoughts and desires which fades to the edge of physical reality and aches to move beyond. All that seems perfect and wonderful in our world takes on even greater beauty when we look more closely and begin to realize that it is only the faintest echo of something more perfect and wonderful—and real; something perhaps outside our experience and full comprehension, yet central to our nature.

---

1. See Warren D. Anderson, trans., *Prometheus Bound* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1963), xv-xxii; C. John Herington, trans., *Prometheus Bound* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 6-18; D. J. Conacher, *Æschylus' Prometheus Bound: A Literary Commentary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

2. See summary in Conacher, 120-37.

We are, in short, filled with whisperings of our own divine origin which, as we focus on them, fan the spark of God's fire in each of us. C. S. Lewis's writings speak of the "inconsolable longing" which, to him, strongly denoted the divinity of the human soul:

> There have been times when I think we do not desire Heaven; but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else. . . .
>
> All your life an unattainable ecstasy has hovered just beyond the grasp of your consciousness. The day is coming when you will wake to find, beyond all hope, that you have attained it, or else, that it was within your reach and you have lost it forever.[3]

For some, this divine spark fires a drive for understanding. Every answer for such individuals gives birth to a hundred questions, each leading to a wellspring of questions of its own. These are the lucky souls for whom a lifetime of learning and intellectual enrichment becomes a consuming passion. Yet, even for them, the overpowering need to understand creation as a whole leads to the outer bounds of human learning, then leaves them to gaze into an unknown which, for all our advances, is only scarcely less vast than it was for our earliest ancestors.

Others, the professed "realists," deal with divine murmurings by hacking them off at their roots, an act of spiritual self-mutilation in which they engage as part of some misdirected passage into adulthood. At some point, they shut their hearts to the notion that the physical world is the visible aspect of something grander than they see, and conclude that what human hand can take hold of and deal with is really "all there is." Theirs is a blindness which they view as part of "growing up." Condemned to a self-imposed truncation of their own natures, they waver between gaiety and despair, and assume that the hope for, or belief in, anything more is childishness—not seeing that they have imprisoned themselves in perpetual spiritual adolescence.

The rest of us continue to reach for the divine in the perceivable. The entire history of human thought may be viewed, in a way, as our effort to grasp at and bind off these threads of a divine origin in the world around us. The ancients, from the beginning of history, crafted myths (some simple and straightforward, some complex and enigmatic) around the single theme of bringing the human spirit into harmony with nature and its Author. Einstein spent the final years of his life trying to knit together a co-

---

3. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (London: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1943), 148.

herent model of reality,[4] as did Alfred North Whitehead.[5] Some have emphasized the experiential over the theoretical, such as Thoreau, who explained his two-year hermitage on the shores of Walden Pond as a simple attempt to live the essence of life denied men in more hectic and careworn walks: "I went into the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."[6]

But ultimately these "divine whisperings," wonderful though they are to contemplate, give us little real illumination if taken by themselves, no matter how rearranged or reexamined. Indeed, without more, they seem almost to taunt us, hinting at a grander reality than we can grasp, offering only enough of it to engender frustration.

In fact they are far more. They are invitations.

The restoration of the gospel has brought with it a quiet, blessed response to our age-old yearning for divine contact. It explains that we were never intended to exist apart from our spiritual nature. Neither, though, were we to be left to our own devices to glean from the perceivable world around us (and our deductions therefrom) who and what we are. We are intended, "built," to know—to know fully and directly—our transcendental nature as offspring of God. Until we do, what else we know is rough and unfinished, like Prometheus' view of men without the fire of Olympus: "Like the shapes of dreams they dragged through their long lives and handled all things in bewilderment and confusion . . ." We are complete, we can function properly and fully, only when illuminated by the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. Through its teachings and testimony, we come to know ourselves fully, to understand the world in which we find ourselves, and find both strength and wisdom to deal with the life we are given to lead. And unlike Prometheus, whose act of sharing the divine fire was heresy in the eyes of the gods, the Holy Ghost shoulders a divine, eternal commission to bear witness to every soul of the Fire of God that burns within them.

II

From the beginning, the prophets' teachings have revolved around the individual quest to cultivate the witness of the Spirit. King Benjamin spoke to the Nephites of those impulses in the human soul—"enticings of

4. See, for example, Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938).

5. See, for example, Alfred North Whitehead, *Essays in Science and Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1948).

6. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (New York: George Macy Companies, Inc. 1939), 97.

the Holy Spirit" (Mosiah 3:19)—which prompt us to reach for God. Only by yielding to these enticings, he assured them, could one "put off the natural man" (ibid.)—that is, the incomplete being each of us is when trying to live cut off from our heavenly parents.

During his earthly ministry, the Savior labored to bring his apostles to an understanding of the Spirit as the only sure means of insight into spiritual things. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Christ drove home the fact that, absent faith in the words of the prophets, no miracle—even one rising from the dead—would make a believer of an unbeliever (Luke 16:20-31). Yet when Simon Peter, trusting in the Spirit's voice, declared Jesus the Son of the Living God, Christ rejoiced and proclaimed that Peter had been visited with divine knowledge: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. 16:17).

Paul likewise assured the saints at Rome and Corinth of the reality of the Spirit's witness:

> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16).

> But God hath revealed [them] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.
>
> For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.
>
> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.
>
> Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
>
> But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned.
>
> But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.
>
> For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? *But we have the mind of Christ* (1 Cor. 2:10-16; emphasis added).

The prophets of the Book of Mormon likewise turned the minds of their listeners to the Spirit's voice. In bearing testimony to the people of his land, Alma assured them of the divine source of his wisdom:

> And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?
>
> Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit

> of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me (Alma 5:45-46).

In our own dispensation, the Lord spoke through his prophet to reveal, in personal detail, the nature and process of spiritual illumination:

> Oliver Cowdery, verily, verily, I say unto you, that assuredly as the Lord liveth, who is your God and your Redeemer, even so surely shall you receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive a knowledge concerning the engravings of old records, which are ancient, which contain those parts of my scripture of which has been spoken by the manifestation of my Spirit.
>
> Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.
>
> Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground. . . .
>
> And, therefore, whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, and you shall have knowledge concerning it.
>
> Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith (D&C 8:1-3, 9-10).

To twelve elders assembled at Kirtland, Ohio, in February 1831, the Lord gave assurance of their right to personal revelation, again offering an intriguing characterization of spiritual insight: "If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal" (D&C 42:61).

This, then, is the ultimate promise of testimony, of divine witness. If we ask, if we knock, if we disenchant ourselves for a moment from our own cleverness and insights and embrace the possibility of a reality beyond our natural eyes, there awaits each of us a revelation of the mysteries of heaven—"the peaceable things"—which is nothing less than the eyes and mind of God himself.

III

All this brings us back to the dilemma framed in the Promethean myth. Why is it so hard for many of us, both inside the church and out, to accept the proffered gift of divine witness? Among Mormons and gentiles alike (albeit for different reasons), there is a common tendency to confine, to trivialize, the nature and scope of divine witness, either to dis-

credit those who espouse it or to simplify and render it more comprehensible.

Critics of gospel doctrines often dismiss the holding of testimony as simply one more variation on religious conviction. They characterize the witness of the Spirit as the internal reinforcement of our credo, a self-induced reaffirmation of teachings and traditions given by our forebears. Our beliefs feel good to us, they explain, because they are an extension of ourselves, our heritage, our upbringing, our values. We simply extend the familiar into the realm of the cosmic, so the argument goes, in order to make the cosmos more comfortable.

Now there is surely a degree of reaffirmation of belief and tradition inherent in spiritual witness. It is the calling of the Holy Spirit, first and foremost, to bear record of the Father and the Son.[7] But the vista seen through the eyes of the Spirit need not, and must not, end there. Spiritual witness, even in its first faint whisperings to an untried and uncertain believer, is far wider and deeper than the unbeliever imagines. It is not limited to promptings that we believe in virtuous or "right" things, nor a reaffirmation of Christ's divinity and the gospel's truth. Often it visits us with insights into the inner workings of our world, showing us clearly all-embracing truths never suspected by those confined to empirical reality, for whom such things are "foolishness . . . because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). At other times the witness offers us glimpses into the intimate parts of our own makeup as God's offspring, bringing us into closer harmony with our true nature and with nature as a whole.

But it is always too unexpected, too "outside" of ourselves, to explain away as a mere extension of our own wishes. Indeed, a defining characteristic of divine witness is the keen, sharp awareness that we are receiving something from outside ourselves, from somewhere—and someone—else. If divine witness were only an extension of ourselves, no more than a projection of our own ideas and preconceptions, its manifestations and promptings would undoubtedly appear more familiar, more in harmony with our natural side. Why, when it comes, is it often jarring, demanding that we be something more than we are? It is precisely when the promptings of the Holy Ghost propel us in an unexpected, counterintuitive direction that we most sense its "otherness," its otherworldly and divine impact on our worldly doings.

It may, in fact, be this very uncertainty that often creates a stumbling block to well-meaning souls in Christ's church. For many, such startling intrusions are the last thing they want from their faith. These are the Saints who hope to shelter behind the gospel to avoid growth or change.

---

7. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:38.

They seek not spiritual enlightenment but doctrinal blinders; not illumination but rigid constancy to spare them the discomfort of change or growth. Both the stretch entailed in attaining spiritual insight to begin with, and the uncertainties once it has been given, are unwelcome disturbances from what they view as the rightful source of calm, peace, and constancy in life.

It may seem harsh to dismiss such longings as wishful thinking, but that is ultimately what they are. It is natural enough for us to seek the comfort and predictability of a set of fixed (and hence controllable) rules defining spiritual reality—after all, we take comfort in our ability, as rational beings, to predict and manipulate the laws of nature for our benefit, and part of us would have the same qualities in our God. But spiritual truths refuse to behave that way. Quoting again from C. S. Lewis: "If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end: If you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth—only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin with, and, in the end, despair."[8]

Those willing to listen to and learn from the witness of the Spirit, finally, must leave behind notions of comfort and predictability. That is the last thing a discoverer should expect. Spiritual truth is like any other: stubborn, multi-dimensional, unexpected, uncooperative, unwilling to mold itself around our preconceptions. Truth, all truth, is "knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24), in all their obstreperous and independent wonder. Voyagers into the realms of spiritual knowledge must brace for unexpected jolts—some joyous, others less so—before journey's end. Spiritual eyes, no less than worldly eyes, must be willing to shed illusions in order to see clearly.

IV

Where, then, does one start in kindling divine fire? We have been blessed, in our day, with the word of God. The Restoration has placed at our fingertips scripture from both the Old and New worlds; modern revelation through early latter-day prophets has augmented the body of ancient scripture with words intended specifically for our day; living prophets and apostles speak directly and plainly to the challenges and questions of the present-day world. Ironically, we find ourselves, in this secular age where so many doubt the divinity of any writ or message, beneficiaries of an unprecedented outpouring of God's word, his "blueprint" for spiritual understanding. Those willing to make the trial need never lack for raw materials.

But raw materials are really what such matters are. Scriptures, con-

---

8. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1943), 39.

ference addresses, sound though their counsel may be, useful as their guidance clearly is to living a good life, are given for guidance and impetus, not witness. It has been said that the whole purpose of the gospel's teachings is, first and foremost, to get us on our knees before our Maker. The Savior condemned the Pharisees for the slavish devotion to holy writ which blinded them to the identity of its Author and Finisher: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). Paul labored to shift the attention of the early saints away from the letter of the law to its spirit: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24).

The principles and teachings of the gospel furnish the fodder for the divine fire of spiritual awakening; it is our willingness to petition in prayer for a personal witness that sets the spark. Alma knew well what was at work in the hearts of the Zoramites when, having planted the seed of gospel truth in his listeners, he implored them, "If ye can no more than desire to believe, let that desire work in you" (Alma 32:27).

> Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me (v. 28).

What Alma was urging is a willingness to step back from the reality against which we are commonly pressed flush and peer around its edges. Until we are willing to listen to our more fundamental selves, and to believe, or even just to hope, that there is more to our world than what meets the eye, we will be slaves to the empirical, and no larger spiritual reality will have place in our perceptions. Only when we accept that there is another way to view things, another vantage point from which we may take on a different countenance, can the voice of the Spirit whisper confirmation and open the panorama to our gaze.

If we have thus prepared the ground properly, the witness of the Spirit, the fire of God, breathes life into the doctrines of salvation and drives home the reality of the restored gospel. With its coming, in what for some is a sudden rush of pure illumination from beyond ourselves, and for others an imperceptibly slow-growing realization, we understand: the teachings of the gospel, the comforting assurances of God's love and concern and of life everlasting, are not mere security blankets offering shelter from a cold world. They are glimpses of a reality beyond

our natural field of vision. It is all *really out there.* And it is breathtaking.

With time, the presence and input of the Spirit's voice can, and should, become a central facet of existence. Every marvel in creation takes on new significance, new depth, as a confirmation of what he has spoken to us.[9]

V

Where to from there? Once the Spirit's prompting has become our tutor, our own limitations mark its only confines. It has already been mentioned that the scope of spiritual vision sweeps wide, instructing us in far more than God's reality alone. But how wide? What limits are there to the things we can know through the Holy Ghost?

According to the prophets, there are none. During mortality the Savior gave assurance without qualification: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8). Nephi assured diligent seekers to find "the mysteries of God. . . . unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Ne. 10:19). The Lord, speaking through Joseph Smith, gave similar assurances to those who fear, love, and follow him:

> And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom. Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them (D&C 76:7-8).

Moroni, even in the wake of utter destruction of his people, offered assurance to generations to come: "And whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth" (Mormon 9:25). In the final words of his lonely record, Moroni, typically straightforward, summed up the scope of divine knowledge: "By the power of the Holy Ghost," he stated simply, "ye may know the truth of all things" (Moro. 10:5).

The truth of all things. If we ask in faith, believing that we shall receive, each of us has the promise that there is—ultimately—no wisdom that will be denied us. Far from buttressing a narrow range of preconceptions and confining us to rote revisitation of a handful of aphorisms, real spiritual insight explodes our horizons, letting us glimpse the entire firmament of revealed truth in seamless completeness.

Now there will no doubt be those for whom these sweeping assur-

---

9. See Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. 1986), 50.

ances, however faith-promoting and grand they sound, ring hollow in actual experience. Perfect knowledge is hardly the norm among the Saints, after all. Even the best mortals see only so far. Local and general authorities regularly chafe under the foibles and limitations common to all humankind. Even when the righteous seek divine guidance in certain particulars, it is not always forthcoming. Who among the faithful has not sought wisdom in prayer, yet turned away bewildered?

The entire vision of eternity is not instantly ours (see, e.g., D&C 9:7). The scope of our spiritual sight is always subject to our own limitations. No degree of faith is going to open our eyes to mysteries and marvels beyond our comprehension. If the time is not yet, the comprehension too tenuous or the pain too deep, for the truth, knowledge will be lovingly withheld until it can truly illuminate without overwhelming. "The truth of all things" is our legacy, but it must to a degree come in the Lord's time, as his children are ready to receive. Growth in wisdom, experience, and ability to reflect God's plan in our actions brings increased vision until, in the end, knowledge cannot be withheld from us—like the brother of Jared, we will see all because nothing can keep us out (Ether 3:20). "[H]e that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24).

VI

"Whole sight," wrote John Fowles in the voice of his fictional alter ego, Daniel Martin, "or all else is desolation."[10] The ultimate weakness of the human condition is our inability to experience reality in context, to "see nature whole."[11] Perceived reality is disjointed, often oppressive, inexplicably harsh, conducive to depressives and cynics, but very hard on all but the most irrepressible idealists.

It is the vision of the Spirit which offers mortals whole sight. Even if, at the outset, we are not given a full understanding of every facet of that reality, yet what we do see is bathed in pristine illumination. And that, perhaps, is the ultimate gift of the Spirit: a view of our world in the light of God, bright beyond any despair or cynicism, whole and complete past all efforts at analysis and dissection. If every question does not have an immediate answer, the unspeakable assurance that we have someone to put the questions to and that, in time, we will understand "the truth of all things" carries us past doubting and fearing and sets us, hesitant and halting, on the path of learning. For the Fire of God brings not blindness,

10. John Fowles, *Daniel Martin* (New York: Doubleday & Co. 1977), 1.
11. John Fowles, "Seeing Nature Whole," *Harpers* 259 (Nov. 1979): 45-59.

but sight, knowledge, and wisdom at our most profound level.

Contrast the curse of the Greek gods upon Prometheus with the Father's efforts to pour the light of the Spirit onto the heads of his children. "God is giving away the truths of the universe," said Elder Neal A. Maxwell, "if only we will not be offended by his generosity."[12] The gospel is the truth; the Spirit will let us see it and, through it, everything else. It is real, all of it. It is there for us if we will seize it, drink it in, let it transform us, and find the courage to live in and through its illumination.

12. Neal A. Maxwell, comments at the dedication of the Bountiful temple, 8 Jan. 1995, notes in my possession.

The Soon-to-hibernate Bear Addresses His Public

Karl C. Sandberg

Slow way down.
Get off the freeway.
Park the car.
Stop racing the engine.
Turn off the key.
Go in the house.
Shoot the picture tube.
Smash the chip.
Stop pacing back and forth.
Don't crack your knuckles.
Sit down.
Stop that fidgeting.
Listen carefully:
"No."

W. H. Chamberlin and the Quest for a Mormon Theology[1]

James M. McLachlan

IT IS TIME TO RESURRECT W. H. Chamberlin. Chamberlin lived the life of an intellectual and spiritual pilgrim. With little money he filled a mission to the Society Islands and later served as mission president there. When he returned, he did what no Mormon of his time had done: he studied the Bible at the University of Chicago and then studied with some of the greatest American philosophers of his age. His pilgrimage took him to the University of California where he studied with George Holmes Howison. Howison's pluralist City of God with its sympathies for pre-existence and a divine democracy appealed to Chamberlin's Mormon faith. Then, practically penniless, he headed to Harvard to study with Howison's chief idealist rival, Josiah Royce. At a time when other Mormon writers were advocating innovations such as pre-Adamites to accommodate the latest scientific theories, Chamberlin was optimistically penning "The Theory of Evolution as an Aid to Faith in Christ and the Resurrection." He created a consistent and Mormon theological vision that retains its power today though few have heard of him or encountered his writings.

---

1. To remain true to the subject of this essay—the theology of W. H Chamberlin—I should say something about the quest for a Mormon theology. The indefinite article "a" is important here as opposed to "the" Mormon theology. Chamberlin thought, and I agree, that one of the essential claims of Mormonism is that God's revelation is ongoing. Theology is the effort to explain revelation in contemporary, rational terms; thus theology historically follows the development of religion, but it is also logically subsequent to and dependent on the development of the revelation and will never exhaust it. Thus Chamberlin's is "a" Mormon theology not "the" Mormon theology, and there are, and hopefully will be, other Mormon theologies spawned as Mormons reflect on the meaning of what has been revealed and what will continue to be revealed.

Chamberlin should be resurrected not only for his thought, but because his life could assume hagiographic proportions for a new generation of Mormon intellectuals. His relationship to the institutional church could be a story from Kafka, complete with a belated offer of a job only when he lay at death's door. But there is no evidence that Chamberlin himself ever viewed his relation to the church with Kafkaesque irony. He retained an active, even militant, faith, not only through the labyrinthine pilgrimage of studies from California, to Chicago, to Harvard, but throughout his experience with the institution in Utah that forced him to resign and blacklisted him.

Biographical Introduction

The tragic life of Mormonism's first professionally trained philosopher and theologian, William Henry Chamberlin, has been described elsewhere.[2] But for the uninitiated, I will briefly outline his biography. William was born in Salt Lake City in 1870 and was an active member of the church. He served a mission to the Society Islands and became mission president. He also translated the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants into Tahitian and wrote a number of tracts.[3] He returned to Utah where he was an instructor of mathematics, geology, and astronomy at LDS College and later at Brigham Young College in Logan.

He left in the summer of 1901, during his tenure at Brigham Young College, to study at the University of Chicago. Instead of enrolling in geology, he enrolled in courses in Hebrew and philosophy. He returned in 1902 for the spring and summer terms, and only occasionally visited courses in mathematics. Instead, he spent most of his time in courses in ethics, Hebrew, New Testament Greek, Old Testament literature and history, and "The Life of Christ." He returned to Chicago again in 1903. That year he had transferred to the department of theology at Brigham Young College.

---

2. The most complete story is his brother Ralph V. Chamberlin's 1925 biography, *The Life and Philosophy of W. H. Chamberlin* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press). E. E. Ericksen, one of Chamberlin's students who became head of the philosophy department of the University of Utah and president of the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association, wrote a thoughtful essay: "William H. Chamberlin: Pioneer Utah Philosopher," *Western Humanities Review* 8 (1954): 4. Chamberlin's embroilment in the modernism controversy and its relation to his attitudes toward evolution and critical approaches to the Bible that shook Brigham Young University in 1911 have been recounted in several places. One account is Richard Sherlock's "Campus in Crisis: BYU 1911: Evolution and Revolution at the Mormon University," *Sunstone* 4 (Jan.-Feb. 1979): 10-16. Phillip Barlow devotes an excellent chapter on Mormon responses to higher criticism at the turn of the century in his *Mormons and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 103-47.

3. Chamberlin kept a detailed journal of his mission experiences in which the sincerity of his commitment to Mormonism is apparent. These are available in LDS church archives in Salt Lake City.

In 1905 and 1906 he took leave from his teaching to travel to the University of California at Berkeley to study philosophy with George Holmes Howison, one of the great personalist philosophers of the golden age of American philosophy. In 1906 he received a master's degree in philosophy and wrote his thesis: "The Ultimate Unity for Thought is the Society of Minds." Personal Idealism would permanently mark his thought. He returned to Chicago in the summer of 1907 to study metaphysics, psychology, Hebrew, and Old Testament Literature.

From 1907 to 1908 he was again away from Logan. This time he went to Harvard to study with Howison's famous rival, the great American Idealist Josiah Royce. Ralph Chamberlin, William's brother and biographer, notes that William's relationship with Royce was close because he shared Royce's deep interest in the religious questions of philosophy:

> During this year at Harvard, W. H. Chamberlin presented his general philosophic view in papers on "The Conception of God," "The Highest Good," and "On the Nature of Truth,"... Professor Royce, according to the notes preserved with the papers, was much impressed by the Pluralism, or "Socio-Ethical Idealism," "clearly and beautifully stated as a doctrine"... Professor Royce strongly urged him to devote himself to the fuller development of the doctrine, to the critical examination and presentation of its grounds, and to the inquiry into and meeting of opposing positions.

Chamberlin was unable to develop his ideas at that time as financial constraints forced him to return to Utah in 1908.[4]

In 1910 it seemed as though financial hardships would be behind him when he was offered a position at Brigham Young University. But Chamberlin's hopes soon started to come apart in 1911 when he, his brother Ralph (a biologist), and two other members of the faculty were charged with "accepting and teaching certain findings of modern research in Biology and Psychology, and in Historical and Higher Criticism of the Bible."[5] Three days after being charged, Chamberlin published the essay "The Theory of Evolution as an Aid to Faith in Christ and in the Resurrection" in a student publication, *The White and the Blue*, to explain that evolution did not threaten Mormonism but harmonized with it.[6] Three of the accused left the university that year, but William Henry hung on until 1916. He published another piece that year, "An Essay On Nature," in a further attempt to bridge the gap between modernism and his religion by means of an idealist personalism he called "Spiritual Realism." In 1916,

---

4. Chamberlin was never financially well to do. He also was supporting a family at the time. R. Chamberlin, 118.

5. Ibid., 121.

6. William Henry Chamberlin, "The Theory of Evolution as an Aid to Faith in the Resurrection," in Supplement to *The White and the Blue*, 14 Feb. 1911.

after years of having his courses dropped from the catalog, in spite of the fact that they were almost always full, the Department of Philosophy was eliminated and Chamberlin resigned. His brother Ralph claimed that this experience broke his brother's health; he died five years later at age fifty-one.

In 1917 William returned to Harvard to attempt to finish his doctorate. Royce had died in 1916 and Chamberlin was urged to study with William Ernest Hocking, an idealist, who had been Howison's younger colleague at Berkeley. But, "idealistically," Chamberlin wanted to test his ideas with a trial by fire and, instead, chose to study with Ralph Barton Perry, a neo-realist philosopher fundamentally opposed to personalism. Though he wrote a dissertation, "Berkeley's Philosophy of Nature and Modern Theories of Evolution," his failing health and family finances once again did not allow him the time to finish the degree and he returned to Utah the next year.[7] It had been suggested that he seek a position outside of Utah, but he refused to consider that possibility: "I had never thought of it; but for me it would be quite impossible. If I cannot live in the mountains and work among the people I love it may as well be all over."[8]

Back in Utah in 1917 he was unable to find a permanent position. He was banned from teaching in LDS church schools. He taught extension classes for the University of Utah, worked odd jobs, and whatever else was necessary to take care of his family of seven children. During this period he wrote his most comprehensive exposition of his position, *The Study of Philosophy: An Outline,* as a text for his extension classes. Then in 1920 he returned to Brigham Young College in Logan for the 1920-21 academic year. That year he published a booklet *The Life of Man: An Introduction to Philosophy* for his courses. In 1921 he came down with a severe attack of influenza and was too feeble to recover. He received word on his deathbed that he had been chosen to teach religion in the summer school at BYU. He replied, "It is too late, all that can mean nothing now." And after speaking to his children, he said only, "I must go now," and died.[9]

Five years after Chamberlin's death, attitudes in the church had changed. Apostle David O. McKay wrote to Ralph V. Chamberlin in a letter dated 17 February 1926:

> That a lofty, sincere soul like W. H. Chamberlin's should have been com-

---

7. Choosing to study with Perry over Hocking could not have been a "tactically" good move. Perry was a vehement opponent of personal idealism and surely would have slowed Chamberlin's progress toward completion. But Chamberlin's quixotic life is not filled with tactically correct moves.

8. R. Chamberlin, 257.

9. Ibid., 275.

> pelled to struggle in our community and to have been misunderstood by those who should have known him best, seems to me to be nothing short of a tragedy . . . I wish it had been my privilege to know him intimately. For one thing, however, I am thankful, namely, that I had no reservation in mind when it came my privilege to recommend that W. H. Chamberlin's services be again secured for the Church Schools.[10]

At about the same time, Adam S. Bennion, new superintendent of the church's education system, distributed Ralph V. Chamberlin's biography of William Chamberlin from his office and wanted every church schoolteacher to read it.[11]

E. E. Ericksen attributed the direction of his own life's work to his studies with Chamberlin. In 1954 Ericksen wrote an essay for the *Western Humanities Review*, "William H. Chamberlin: Pioneer Mormon Philosopher." In it he compared his old teacher to Socrates and Jesus who refused to leave their people:

> He endured three years of waiting, of disappointment, of lecturing here and there to small and immature groups and unresponsive extension classes in some parts of the state. He felt crushed. He was isolated without banishment; he was denied the opportunity to communicate with those who could understand and benefit by his message. Reduced to downright poverty he died like Socrates, who refused to run away, and like Jesus, loving and forgiving.[12]

Ericksen thought that Chamberlin had given Mormonism a well reasoned "statement of the Mormon concept of the spirits of men as co-existent and co-eternal with God." Chamberlin had attempted to provide a theology that found a balance between science and religion. Ironically, his effort to help Mormonism led to his personal and professional downfall.[13]

The Struggle of Religion and Modernism

The intellectual history of Christian denominations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is filled with conflicts like the one at BYU.

---

10. McKay to Chamberlin, 17 Feb. 1926, in possession of David C. Chamberlin, William Chamberlin's great-grand-nephew.

11. Frank K. Seegmiller, member of the presidency of Latter-day Saints High School, to Ralph V. Chamberlin, 25 June 1925, David C. Chamberlin Collection, cited in Barlow, 138.

12. Ericksen, 284.

13. "His lifelong devotion to his community and to the cultural heritage of his group only deepened the tragic pathos of his closing years when, like that other saint and scholar, Roger Williams, he found himself a victim of intolerance, rejected by his own" (ibid., 285).

One of the key thinkers in the personalist movement, the Methodist philosopher Bordan Parker Bowne, was tried for heresy in 1904 after he defended a colleague in the Department of Old Testament at Boston University School of Theology who advocated "scientific findings about evolution, coupled with the higher biblical criticism." But Bowne was acquitted unanimously after arguing that free speech was the moral and spiritual thrust of the attempt to find the meaning of issues essential to religious integrity.[14]

An earlier, more famous "heresy" case is that of German theologian David Friedreich Strauss. His experience parallels the experience of many others in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in several respects and illustrates the tension between rising modernism and traditional belief and what were perceived as unacceptable theological efforts to bridge the chasm between them. In 1835 Strauss published *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*. It created a small firestorm and Strauss almost immediately lost his position. When, in 1839, the liberal government of Zurich offered him a professorship, the people of the city rebelled and the government fell.

What bothered people was Strauss's distinction between the Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History, a distinction many Christians found, and still find, disturbing. Strauss himself also saw the results of his work as potentially devastating for Christian piety. He found that the results of his critical history "have apparently annihilated the greatest and most valuable part of that which the Christian has been wont to believe concerning his Saviour Jesus."[15] But Strauss was not an Enlightenment skeptic, or even primarily a critical historian, but a committed Protestant theologian who wished to defend piety against attacks on his Christian faith. He argued that the Christian faith still subsisted as "an Eternal Truth" despite the most audacious criticism, and that he would restore theologically what had been destroyed historically.[16]

It is one of the ironies of intellectual history that Strauss is remembered for the historical destruction of the faith he loved, not for his attempt at a theological reconstruction which he thought to be much more important. Such are the dangers of theology. But the typical Christian be-

---

14. Peter A. Bertocci, "Bordan Parker Bowne and His Personalistic Theistic Idealism," in Paul Deats and Carol Robb, eds., *The Boston Personalist Tradition in Philosophy, Social Ethics, and Theology* (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 1986), 56. Bowne himself was not uncritical of modernism; he saw personalism as a way to accept the insights of modern historical and scientific scholarship while rejecting materialism and positivism. Bordan Parker Bowne, *Personalism* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1908), 1-54.

15. David Friederich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 742.

16. Ibid., 757.

liever found it difficult to recognize Strauss's Hegelian reconstruction of belief as Christian. Strauss's argument was that the Christ of faith was different from the Jesus of history who symbolized the historical realization of the universal divine in humanity. In short, it was not necessary for the Jesus of history to have been the Christ of faith. What was important was that the universal idea, the divine, revealed itself as immanent in humanity. Humanity itself was divine. It was not surprising to anyone, except perhaps Strauss, that Lutheran Christians did not warm to his message, though later those two famous atheists Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx would. Strauss's work thus not only initiated the famous "Quest for the Historical Jesus," but he also participated in the ongoing "Quest for a Philosophical Jesus" that began with Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone.*[17] The philosophical and theological quest was an effort to reinterpret the faith against the assault of both reason and science. The difficulty then and now has been to create an interpretation that does not simply desert the faith in favor of the most recent intellectual trends.[18]

Chamberlin is in no way as theologically radical as Strauss, and his creation of a Mormon theology in personalist terms is not as alien to Mormon sensibilities as Strauss's Hegelian theology was to Lutherans. But, like Strauss, Chamberlin's studies, first in the sciences and then in biblical criticism, led him to believe that a philosophical articulation of Mormonism was necessary for Mormon students, who, like him, were confronting modernism. As Ephraim Ericksen put it:

> His spiritual realism is a reasoned statement of the Mormon concept of the spirits of men as co-existent and co-eternal with God. The personal nature of God and the social relations between God and men argued for in his philosophy are no different for Mormon conceptions. Nor, of course, is the concept of immortality, which, for both Chamberlin and Mormonism, is a logical consequent of the metaphysical ultimacy of persons.[19]

Chamberlin's "Spiritual Realism": A Theology of Mormon Belief

In 1906, after three years of study at Chicago, Chamberlin chose to study for a master's degree at California under George Howison. He must have known that Howison's "Personalist Idealism" would not be

---

17. Vincent A. McCarthy, *Quest for a Philosophical Jesus: Christianity and Philosophy in Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Schelling* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986).

18. Recent battles over the historicity of the Book of Mormon are another round in this fight.

19. Ericksen, 284.

unsympathetic to his Mormon faith.[20] Howison had been a Hegelian but had repudiated Hegelian monism for an idealistic pluralism. In his major work, *The Limits of Evolution*, Howison gave a systematic statement of his position that persons were co-eternal with God.[21]

Chamberlin's years with Howison clearly influenced his vision of Mormon doctrine. His master's thesis, "The Ultimate Unity for Thought is the Society of Minds," is a fusion of Howison's idealism and Chamberlin's Mormon belief, and this metaphysical and pluralist personalism deepened in later years, modified by his own mature thought and studies in psychology and pragmatism at Chicago and the more traditional ideal-

---

20. Howison coined the term Personal Idealism in his famous debate, *The Conception of God*, with Josiah Royce at the University of California in 1895. The debate brought together four philosophers: Royce, Jacob Laconte, Edward Meyes, and Howison. It was later published as a book. Howison's essay in *The Conception of God*, "The City of God and the True God at its Head," criticized Royce's idealistic monism that Howison thought ended up in destroying the freedom of human being and thus the relation between God and Humanity. George Holmes Howison, ed., *The Conception of God* (New York: Macmillan, 1898).

21. In the preface to *The Limits of Evolution*, Howison set forth a ten point outline of his Personal Idealism. First, all existence is either the existence of minds or the experience of minds; existences that are known as material consist of certain types of these experiences. Second, time and space owe their existence to the correlation and coexistence of minds. This co-existence is not spatial or temporal but must be regarded as an internal relation, each is a logical implication of the other. This recognition makes their co-existence a moral order. Third, these many minds form the eternal "unconditionally real" world. They constitute what Howison called the "City of God." Each has the common aim of fulfilling one rational ideal. God is the fulfilled type of every mind, the "living Bond of their union, [and] reigns in it, not by the exercise of power, but solely by light; not by authority, but by reason; not by efficient, but by final causation." Fourth, the members of this "eternal republic" have no origin other than the purely logical one they have in reference to each other. This includes their relation to God, which means they are eternal. However, according to his fifth point, they are not independent of each other; they exist only through the mutual correlation, and are the ground of all temporal and spatial existences. They are thus, in his sixth point, free in reference to the natural world and to God. Seventh, this pluralism is held in union by reason. The world of spirits is the genuine unmoved that moves all things. It is the final cause of all activity. Eighth, this movement of changeable things toward the goal of the common ideal is the process of evolution. And the world of spirits, as the ground of the project, can therefore not be a product of evolution itself, nor subject in any way to evolution except that "every mind has an eternal reality that did not arise of change and that cannot by change pass away." Ninth, all these conceptions are founded on the idea of a world of spirits as the circuit of moral relationship and they carry within them a profound change from the traditional idea of God. Creation is no longer an event. Rather, it is ongoing. God, who is a person, also represents the realized final cause. Without this goal "they would be but void names and bare possibilities." Finally, the final cause is here not merely the guiding principle but the grounding and fundamental principle of all other causes. The reference to every other mind brings us into relation to the divine mind. In this way mutual recognition is essential to all minds. God is the type of all intelligence. God is the final goal, the ideal by which all are influenced, which is the only causation in the moral world. George Holmes Howison, *The Limits of Evolution, and Other Essays Illustrating the Metaphysical Theory of Personal Idealism* (New York: Macmillan, 1901).

ism of Royce at Harvard. But the fundamental pluralist and personalist idealism remains.

The essential features of Chamberlin's personalist idealism can be summarized in the following five statements.

1. Persons are eternal, they are ontologically and metaphysically ultimate. This personalism is tied to a pragmatic theory of knowledge in which truth is determined in relation to its outcome and the interests and purposes of persons.

2. Community and sociality is an essential feature of the being of persons. The moral meaning of the world grows out of the relation of eternal co-dependence of persons in community. At the head of this community is God.

3. God is a person and is the ultimate example of personal existence. God is dependent on the other members of the community of minds.

4. God's revelation in the world is limited to the capacity of human truth; it must be stated in human terms.

5. Evolution is a true and explanatory principle through which we can come to understand the development of the "Kingdom of God." Evolution must be viewed as a teleology reflecting God's design and not as a string of efficient causes.

Eternality and the Ultimacy of Persons

Persons are eternal, they are ontologically and metaphysically ultimate. This personalism is tied to a pragmatic theory of truth in which truth is determined in relation to the interests and purposes of persons.

Chamberlin's "spiritual realism" is based on the proposition that persons are the ultimate ontological unity.[22] The individual is *a self-organizing unity or principle* whose activity results in progressive expansion and complication of life. The individual has a measure of freedom and this is the foundation of ordinary intercourse.[23] All reality evolves out of the interaction and development of persons. Chamberlin thought personal ide-

22. It has often been noted that the Mormon view of the world is linked to materialism. But Chamberlin is an idealist. His idealism is based on the assumption that a Mormon view of the universe should be an ethical view in which matter is subject to moral and religious concerns. Chamberlin is an idealist if one holds by idealism that mind is fundamental in the world and there is no reality that is not supplemented or connected with mental and spatial activity. But if idealism is taken to be the denial of the objective world, then Chamberlin was not an idealist.

23. For personalism, the category of "person" extends beyond the human to any being that projects its interests on the world. These could include divine beings, animals, even plants.

alism or spiritual realism was actually the most concrete philosophical position. All abstractions, like our notion of matter, require the interaction of persons, they have no meaning in themselves.[24] For example, the concrete experiencing person is more fundamental than the abstract notions of either brains or minds. Persons presuppose brains, not brains persons. We often turn concrete experience around and take the abstract explanation for the concrete existent. We should not make the concrete reality dependent on the abstract one simply because the abstraction is more simple than the concrete. Persons cannot give an account of their world without some acknowledgement of the spiritual (mental) reality.

Chamberlin explains that we live in language and any attempt to explain experience is shot through with mental constructs.

> When viewed most concretely, then, the world-whole of which our lives form a part is a natural federation of lives or persons. Persons of various degrees of intelligence in a natural unity should come to be regarded as the great independent real. Man is not a reality within his skin looking out through the window of sense upon a world which is foreign to himself. . . . Persons come to be seen as the concrete, the obvious, the basic and static reality, by those who would understand their lives.[25]

Our awareness of the world is to a large extent determined by our interests or purposes. These need not only be conscious but are also habitual and unconscious. But our interests also support the interests of others. Other lives support our own and are integral parts of us. This interaction of lives is the most concrete reality. Our understanding of the world in filtered through our purposes. Time, space, and exteriority exist because of the interactions of personal beings. "Time and space and matter are absolutely real, and co-eternal with the mind; but the mind must be thought of as embracing them and therefore as their eternal author."[26]

Unlike Aristotle, but like his own turn-of-the-century contemporaries Nietzsche, Bergson, and James, Chamberlin did not believe that philosophy began with wonder. He thought that only as we are presented with difficulties do we begin to reflect and that human notions of truth are tied to their usefulness in fulfilling our interests and purposes.[27] Different types of life require different instruments of truth, and truth is tied to interests and purposes. There is no strictly disinterested thinking. Like the Romantics, Chamberlin distinguished between reality, which defies being reduced to concepts, and truth, which is definable in human concepts. All

---

24. Chamberlin, *The Study of Philosophy: An Outline*, 21-22.
25. Ibid.
26. William H. Chamberlin, *An Essay on Nature* (Provo, 1916), 10-11.
27. Chamberlin, *The Study of Philosophy: An Outline*, 3.

truth is human truth. "Truth and reality are not identical. Truth does not pertain to the absolute; it is a quality of idea or act and is relative to utility." There are different ways that truth is expressed: these depend on the interests and purposes of the people in question and the historical situation in which they think. The results determine the truth value of the ideas employed. One of the problems of modernism is its failure to recognize the value in the ideas of other times and peoples, and its inability to see its own limitations.

> In this we fail to recognize that the ideas and acts of a child or of any other person are the means only, a means ephemeral and vanishing, of growth for far more fundamental attitudes toward the world. But foolishly identifying the abstract aspect with the very concrete reality, we often despise the life for its ideas, falsely regarded as false, and a cause or a people that are nourishing the truest attitudes towards God and man and nature, we reject for no truer reason. One's interests require a simple tool, another's will require a most complex and delicate one, the only test of the validity of the idea or of the tool that most men can or do employ is the outcome. By fruits, by good works, far more than by beliefs or ideas, are men and causes to be properly judged.[28]

Community and Interdependence

Community and sociality is an essential feature of the being of persons. The moral meaning of the world grows out of the relation of eternal co-dependence of persons in community. At the head of this community is God.

Unlike Nietzsche, Chamberlin, a personalist, was not willing to historicize and relativize morality in the same way he relativized and historicized theoretical truth. In fact, like Kant, Schelling, and his teachers Howison and Royce, Chamberlin sought to ground metaphysics and epistemology in an ethical and eschatolaogical vision of the "eternal community." Thus the idea of eternally existing free persons presupposes the relation between them and a view of reality based on these relations that is, at its most basic level, a moral view. The moral meaning of life is what remains eternal. This moral meaning is tied to the idea of a community of intelligences.

> The world-whole, the world of persons seems to permit of no greater values than those which are embodied in moral and religious interests, the religious being but the moral extended to embrace the greatest person of all,

28. Ibid., 37.

> even God. Moral and religious interests grew out of the organic and the prudential. The latter are tested first and are trusted as the most concrete and practical.
>
> All other objects in time vanish, and interests supported by them must fail unless they can be made to support the interests of others and so the interest in others. Moral and religious interests are the truly concrete and the practical.[29]

Without the love of others, the promise of the world proves false. Because of these higher values, the lower ones acquire meaning.

Thus Chamberlin, true to the Mormon idea of eternal beings, argued that ethical rules arise from the concrete situation of the relation of persons. Basically, the argument runs, the most fundamental element of these intelligences is their freedom and upon that freedom purposes depend. Even though some are more gifted and powerful than others, the possibility of freedom as basic to each gives dignity and creates the basis of an ideal of non-coercive relations between persons. This notion of freedom is related to creativity and also governs the hierarchy of values that exist in the world. Our highest values are spiritual values which involve the least constraint but give meaning to lower values. For example, in religious belief, friendship, or love there is a higher element of choice and the need for community based on respect than there is in natural functions such as the need to eat. Though my need to eat is absolutely necessary, it only has meaning in relation to the higher values that involve choice. For Chamberlin, the purpose of the universe is as a stage for the interactions of intelligent beings.

> Nature, then, is a vast social organism. The experience of each one is a sample of the Intelligences, beings with the power to do, to know and to feel, who constitute Nature. These Intelligences differ among themselves in this power as the sun and stars differ from one another in brightness. These Intelligences co-exist so that one who is in every way superior to the others, not withstanding his superiority, was not in existence before the others, each and all of them being ultimate and eternal.[30]

Of these, one stands superior to them all and is inseparably connected with each of the others and supplies a large portion of their environment. This being is God. It is God's purposes that sustain the world. But these other Intelligences, in turn, constitute God's environment. We are parts of a social organism, but the organism is not ultimate, the individuals whose relations form the organism are. Love is created; it can only exist between persons, not without them. Personality is created only

---

29. Ibid., 32.
30. Ibid., 44.

in relation to others. Our existence as people always presupposes the community of persons: "As the reflected face presupposes the real one, so the effort to know others and their relationships presupposes their prior existence and a lived and profound knowledge of them."[31]

Chamberlin thinks that God is experiencible and knowable, though not in the sense that I understand ideas. But just as people can be experienced and known while their dynamic character cannot be finally reduced to concepts, similarly God cannot be reduced to a concept.[32]

God, the Ultimate Person

God is a person and is the ultimate example of personal existence. God is dependent on other members of the community of minds.

Chamberlin argues that God, as a person, must be a free living individual. "Unless we co-exist with God, there is no ground for his living and growing." Neither can we think of God as unchanging for then God ceases to be personal. "But we cannot love the impersonal and changing. . . . Persons, only, the ultimate and abiding environment, can nourish our life and growth, sustain our efforts and yield a moving and satisfying equilibrium."[33] At the highest level our activities must be directed toward others and must be seen in those terms as affected by and dependent upon others. "Our powers are logically prior to God's creative task."[34] God differs from humans only in degree, not in kind. God is far in advance in power, knowledge, and love. Chamberlin refers to the environing world as God and the heavenly host. It exists for and through the development of persons.

> But among all these Intelligences some are more intelligent than others, and God is more intelligent than they all. Upon God all of us depend . . . in a special way, though our dependence on each other is clear. But God also depends upon us and without us would have no environment, no adjusting attitudes, and so no personality. And so, although God is immanent in our lives, we are, in the same sense, immanent in His life, and like Him, save in the degree of His power and intelligence.[35]

---

31. Ibid., 45.

32. "The ultimate reality is unknowable only in the sense that one of our ideas or attitudes, while it experiences itself in living, cannot be so known by another attitude, save in the external and picture process. The latter effort or attitude does not deny the former but presupposes it. Of the relationships of persons to each other and to our Father we are immediately aware. We are inextricably knit to one another and to God, our Father" (Chamberlin, *An Essay on Nature,* 44).

33. Ibid., 32.

34. Ibid., 24-25.

35. Ibid., 24.

The idea that God and others are immanent in us is a repudiation of a subjectivism that maintains that the self is cut off from others. We find ourselves in a world we did not create but one we constantly modify, speaking a language that we did not make but one we constantly use and change. The goal of the spiritual evolution of God and children is toward freer, deeper, and fuller relation. God is the ultimate example of this goal, the embodiment of the highest expression of our strivings.

Revelation and History

God's revelation in the world is limited to the capacity of human truth, it must be stated in human terms.

The development of relation to others and the environment is a history of adjustments to concrete realities. Adjustment to God is called religion. There is a dialectical development toward more adequate understanding of God, though our understanding will never be complete. From nature worship in Baalism with its lack of personality to a fully developed concept of the personal God, God's revelation is always through human beings and in human terms. Revelation is tied to the historical culture in which it is given. There is in every revelation a set of attitudes that was necessary at the time to the cultivation of a particular attitude that God desired to cultivate in us. These are like a husk, and, unfortunately, they are often conserved when they are no longer useful. But in their time they were necessary to the revelation.

God's revelation is limited by the habits and attitudes of any given age. God can only communicate to us in ways that we would understand. Only by a slow evolution do we arrive at a true relation with God. Chamberlin writes:

> If one is anxious to train others in a belief that God is the creator of the world, he will have to use the Hebrew or Greek idea of the world in one age, the Ptolemaic idea in another, or the commonly accepted Copernican idea of the world in this age. Now all of these ideas are, from the point of view we are taking, false; and yet through them men have in different ages had established in their lives the same vital and fundamental belief that God is the creator of the world. Now granting that God can influence the interests of men he must in doing so make use of the ideas of men, ideas always different in different ages. His aim must be, like that of the teacher, to establish fundamental attitudes rather than the truth of the passing ideas used by him. He must even use one set of ideas at one time, and another set at another time, all of which may be false in the sense that they could not be used successfully now, to awaken the same vital attitude.[36]

---

36. Chamberlin, *The Study of Philosophy: An Outline*, 38.

The scriptures may express numerous ideas that are now believed to be false. But at the time, these were the most adequate ideas for that environment.

Even so, Chamberlin argues, the scriptures reveal the highest human values. In the life of Jesus, he thought, God is revealed most fully. "God could only reveal His character and the nature of the most satisfactory living to man through a human life fundamentally like his own."[37] Chamberlin's idea of the nature of God and the mission of Christ is revealed in his love of the parable of the prodigal son. Jesus gave the *message of God* as immanent in the world, but when he wanted to reveal the *character of God*, he chose the image of a loving parent waiting for the return of a lost child.

Chamberlin is traditional in his treatment of the life of Jesus. He believes that he was the literal son of God. His birth was the result of "a special act to meet the needs of an Intelligence of such great promise that he could use the advantage thus given him." But Jesus' claim to be the "son" of God accords most closely with the universal love that characterized his life. This love enabled him to constantly lay down the interests that are so important to most men and women. And finally this love gave him the power to reveal God's love for us in that he could not withhold the life of his body. He voluntarily gave it up in order that nothing might be lacking in his efforts to realize the fullest life of humankind and, at the same time, give to God the greatest possibility for continuing his work in creating eternal lives.[38]

Teleological Evolution

Evolution is a true and explanatory principle through which we can come to understand the development of the "Kingdom of God." Evolution must be viewed as a teleology reflecting God's design and not as a string of efficient causes.

Chamberlin, like many thinkers at the turn of the century, was an evolutionary thinker. He saw evolution as a principle that was part of Mormonism. His view was not driven by Darwin's idea of natural selection but closely followed George Holmes Howison's modified Aristotelian teleology. This was a religious evolutionism. In fact, like the other personalists of his age, Chamberlin opposed agnostic evolutionism. Personalism reacted against the "cut throat" evolutionism of Herbert Spencer and the cosmic evolutionism of John Fiske which it saw as antithetical to Christianity.

---

37. Ibid., 39.
38. Ibid., 41-42.

Chamberlin viewed the history of religion as the evolution of more and more adequate attitudes and conceptions of God. Natural history has been God's painstaking effort to create the "Kingdom of God" as a society of minds. His effort to express his belief at BYU culminated in his essay "The Theory of Evolution as an Aid to Faith in God and in the Resurrection." In this essay he begins with a quote from Doctrine and Covenants 88 that Christ is in "all things" and that the universe is the visual image of God's effort to further the society of eternal beings. The creation of the human body is one of the culminating events of this evolution that makes communication and love between persons possible. Therefore God would not have gone through this painstaking effort merely to see love destroyed. He ends the essay in an ecstatic vision of the resurrection.

> There is nothing that science contends for in the way of an obstacle to belief in the resurrection of the body; and, through the above discussion, we are helped to believe in future stages of activity in which we may "partake of the fruit of the vine" with the Lord Jesus and with the great and good of every age, and in the society of all those loved ones who have made life so sweet here and who have passed or shall pass to their glory in those happy worlds; and there we may hope to stand in the presence of the Ancient of Days, the Adamic Being who, perhaps, as we have suggested above, headed the race of man, and who, through his devotion to immortal spirits, his children, won the resurrection of the body and with our heavenly mother, presides in the celestial world from whence he secures with Christ the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, who is in and through all things to the end that we might win the fullest lives here and companionship with Him in the eternal world hereafter.[39]

Conclusion

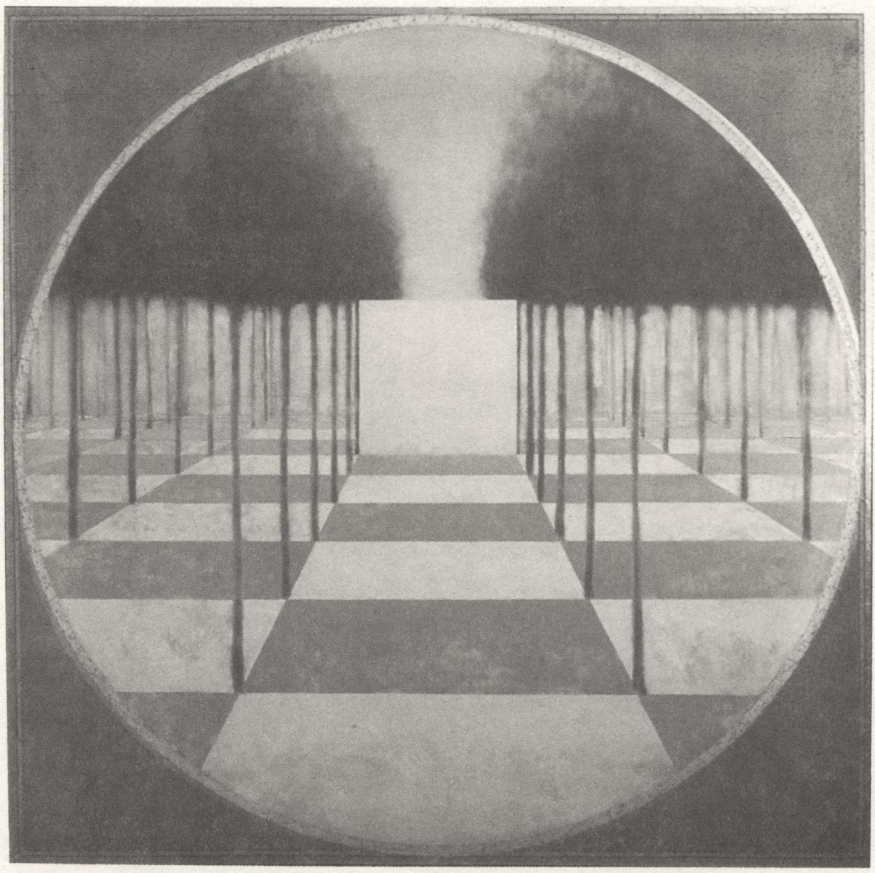
William H. Chamberlin accomplished a reasoned statement of Mormon belief in philosophical terms that should be remembered and examined by Mormons with similar interests. There are few comparable. To paraphrase Sterling McMurrin, Chamberlin may be the best philosopher/theologian Mormonism has produced.[40] This "Mormon Socrates" would prefer to be remembered for his ideas that reflected his love of Mormonism and its people, not merely as a casualty in the chronic uneasiness between the church and its intellectuals. Besides leaving us with an important philosophical-theological legacy, Chamberlin exemplified

---

39. Chamberlin, "The Theory of Evolution as an Aid to Faith in God and in the Resurrection," 4.

40. Remarks during a panel discussion on "A Mormon Socrates: William H. Chamberlin" at the 1993 Sunstone Symposium.

what Mormon theologians should be doing. Though he had more to complain of than most, he got on with his work to present, given the conceptions of his age and his own limitations, the best interpretation of the revelation of God he could give. This interpretation was written under great personal strain, but he did not desert his belief or his people. To the end he held a belief in the Mormon revelation. His work deserves to be read, for though theological reflection should not be the center of Mormon religious life, it can be an important tool in keeping the revelation vital. It may be that religions do not have "Theological Foundations" but instead have "Theological Implications" and can give birth to a variety of theological interpretations of the central revelations. Chamberlin's is one of the most fruitful of these; it deserves to be revived and remembered.



Lavina Fielding Anderson and the Power of a Church in Exile

Levi S. Peterson

OVER THE YEARS LAVINA FIELDING ANDERSON'S FRIENDSHIP and approval have helped me understand I am a real, if irregular, Mormon. It is therefore ironic that she, who believes so devoutly, has been excommunicated while I continue to enjoy the privileges of membership. She has told me of a friend who partakes of the sacrament twice each Sunday, once for herself, once for Lavina. May we all in some such manner support Lavina in her exile.

Lavina's parents are Herman and Maud Dial Fielding, who made their living by farming and who presently serve as ordinance workers in the Seattle, Washington, temple. Lavina was born in 1944 in Idaho. When she was twelve, her parents moved to Warden, Washington, near Moses Lake, where Lavina lived till college age. She attended Brigham Young University for three years, then served a Swiss French mission for the church. Returning to BYU, she received a bachelor's degree in 1968 and a master's degree in 1970. She earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of Washington, writing her dissertation on landscape in western travel literature. In 1973 she was appointed women's editor of the church's official *Ensign* magazine. For the next eight years her place of work was in the church office building. Here she enjoyed a lunch-time association with colleagues from the historian's office, which, during the early part of this period, was headed by Leonard Arrington.

In 1977 Lavina married Paul L. Anderson, a historic architect and museum designer. The couple bought an older house on Roberta Street in Salt Lake City from Marybeth Raynes and quickly evolved the tradition of sending an annual Christmas card bearing a sketch of the house or yard by Paul and an informative message by Lavina. Their son Christian was born in 1980.

In 1981 Lavina was dismissed from the *Ensign* for attempting to mail to *Sunstone* magazine a copy of a general conference speech by Elder Hartman Rector which had undergone a mandatory revision for publication in *Ensign.* (Interestingly, Elder Rector himself was sending out copies of his unedited talk to anyone to requested one.) Since 1981 Lavina has been self-employed under the professional title Editing, Inc. Working from her home in Salt Lake City or her summer home in Lamb's Canyon up Parley's Canyon, she writes and edits family and regional histories. She also does much voluntary editing and serves on many boards and committees. She is editor of the *Journal of Mormon History* and a member of the board of directors of Signature Books, Inc.

Her article "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology" was published in the spring 1993 issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought.* In the same issue appeared an announcement, co-signed by Lavina and Janice Allred, of an organization called the Mormon Alliance whose purpose is the documentation of cases of "ecclesiastical or spiritual abuse." Both documents figured in Lavina's excommunication, which occurred on 23 September 1993. Immediately following her excommunication, Lavina filed a thirty-seven-page appeal with the First Presidency, which the latter refused to review. She also returned to her ward as if nothing extraordinary had occurred. Since the time of her excommunication, Lavina has continued to be as active in her ward and stake as she is permitted to be. She has pushed forward the work of the Mormon Alliance and its *Case Reports.*

In a recent interview I asked Lavina to recount important incidents that had changed her into a dissenter. Though she was reluctant to specify single incidents, it became apparent there had indeed been incidents or episodes of an especially disillusioning quality.

One important disillusionment was her discovery at BYU that a faith-promoting story that had been told with sincere emotion by her seminary teacher during high school days was based on a historical fabrication. A more gradual disillusionment was her awakening, while she served in the Swiss French mission, to the fact that she was prohibited by her gender from exercising certain intellectual, social, and spiritual competencies. It was not merely that she was supervised by male zone and district leaders who sometimes seemed her inferiors. "It was the abstract fact that when a job needed to be done, before any question could be asked about who the best person would be to do the job—whose gifts, talents, experiences, and desires provided the best match for the demands of the job—not quite half of the people in the mission were automatically excluded."[1]

---

1. Lavina Fielding Anderson to Levi S. Peterson, 8 July 1995.

I asked Lavina whether her preemptory firing from the *Ensign* had been disillusioning. She said no. To the contrary, she was actually happy to escape the restrictions of a job where all materials had to be approved by Correlation. Her greatest disillusionment while working in the church office building had to do with the knowledge, acquired from her friends in the historian's office, that Mormon women in the nineteenth century had freely practiced the gifts of the spirit. They had spoken in tongues, held prayer circles, and healed the sick. What was especially disillusioning was the realization that knowledge of these gifts had been obliterated within a single generation of Mormon women. At issue was not only the practice of spiritual gifts by women but the knowledge that such a practice had once existed.

For Lavina, a campaign against knowledge is the most ominous and reprehensible of endeavors. For her, knowledge and truth are one and the same, and she cannot countenance a suppression of truth even when other spiritual values appear to be served by its suppression. Hence the final disillusionment of which Lavina spoke during our interview was inevitable, that being the 1991 announcement of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve against participation in symposia and other unauthorized gatherings where religious topics are discussed. It seemed to Lavina that the same suppression that had obliterated the knowledge of spiritual gifts among nineteenth-century Mormon women was now being directed against general historical research on Mormon topics and against an open, two-sided discussion of Mormon issues.

It was at this point that Lavina determined upon the course of action that would result, two years later, in her excommunication. She began recording attempts by the official church to suppress the enablement of women, historical research, and open discussion of Mormon issues, dating from the appointment of Leonard Arrington as church historian in 1972. This she assembled as a chronological listing of announcements and incidents with little narrative coherence between them. To this chronology she added opening and concluding statements reflecting her personal views. She read an early version of this essay at the main Sunstone symposium of 1992. As I have said, it was published in *Dialogue* during the spring of 1993, leading to her excommunication in September of that year.

In her opening statement Lavina characterizes the incidents of her chronology as a "clash between obedience to ecclesiastical authority and the integrity of individual conscience."[2] Some of her entries are therefore

2. Lavina Fielding Anderson, "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Spring 1993): 7.

declarations by general authorities against the perceived dangers of historians, intellectuals, and feminists. One such entry reads:

> *5 April 1991.* President Hinckley warns Regional Representatives "to be alert" to "small beginnings of apostasy" and cites prayers to Mother in Heaven as an example. Days earlier, a student had prayed to "Our Father and Mother in Heaven" at BYU commencement.[3]

Most of the entries recount disciplinary actions of one kind or another. Lavina grants that her recording of these incidents is "lopsided," having been told from the point of view of individuals in conflict with authority. Admitting these individuals could well be guilty of provocative actions, she still characterizes them as "victims of ecclesiastical harassment," and it is clear that she strongly favors the integrity of the individual conscience over obedience to authority. The following minor incident will serve as an example:

> *Fall 1979.* Paul and Margaret Toscano are asked to speak in sacrament meeting on reverence. Before the meeting begins, Bishop Sheldon Talbot tells them their former stake president, Curtis Van Alfen, telephoned Talbot and warned him they had "apostate" leanings. "If you say one word I disagree with," Talbot states, "I will close the meeting." Shaken, the Toscanos deliver their talks without incident.[4]

Lavina's liberal point of view becomes entirely apparent in her concluding statement, where she enumerates the response the Mormon intellectual community should make to the suppression of individual conscience. The following sentences, which serve as headings for seven items, summarize Lavina's call to action:

> First, we must speak up.
> Second, we must protest injustice.
> Third, we must defend one another.
> Fourth, we must protest, expose, and work against an internal espionage system that creates and maintains secret files on members of the church.
> Fifth, we must be more assertive in dealing with our leaders.
> Sixth, we need to support, encourage, and sustain ecclesiastical leaders who also value honesty, integrity, and nurturing.
> And seventh, we must seek humility as a prerequisite for a more loving, a less fearful, community.[5]

---

3. Ibid., 35.
4. Ibid., 11-12.
5. Ibid., 61-63.

The brief announcement regarding the Mormon Alliance, co-signed by Lavina and Janice Allred, which appeared as a letter to the editor in the same issue of *Dialogue*, was even more provocative in its diction. "Spiritual abuse or injury," it said, "occurs in a religious system when individuals act without adequate accountability, using position, 'special' status, or presumed special understandings of the gospel in ways that violate the agency, injure the spiritual growth, coerce the compliance, damage the self-esteem, and/or demean the dignity of others, whether leaders or members."[6]

Rarely have more revolutionary documents been published among the Mormons. Certainly no one should be astonished that higher authority quickly instructed her stake president, Marlin S. Miller, to initiate disciplinary proceedings. These proceedings may be documented from Lavina's appeal of her excommunication to the First Presidency and from appendices to that appeal, which she has made available. Of special interest are Lavina's notes about her only face-to-face interview with President Miller, held on 2 May 1993, and the letters which she subsequently exchanged with him.

It is clear that Lavina and President Miller held irreconcilable premises. The letters of each show frustration and sorrow over not being understood by the other. A number of the letters show Lavina's attempt to articulate the issues in a manner satisfactory to both parties, which the following excerpt will illustrate:

> For me [writes Lavina], the important issue is that some members of the Church have experienced spiritual abuse at the hands of leaders who have exercised unrighteous dominion over them. They are hurt, often devastated. For you, the important issue is that bringing such cases into a public form "shames and defames" the Church, violates the confidentiality of Church leaders on the ward, stake, and general level, and infringes leaders' privacy.[7]

From the beginning, President Miller did not admit the possibility of abuse in the disciplinary system of the church. In response to her assertion that the system "left members no recourse if it wasn't working," President Miller "said flatly that he thought they did have recourse: they should go back to the bishop or the stake president [with whom they were having conflict]."[8]

It is noteworthy that, at the moment of the interview, the discipline

---

6. Lavina Fielding Anderson and Janice Allred to the Editor, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Spring 1993): ix.

7. Lavina Fielding Anderson to Marlin S. Miller, 6 May 1993.

8. Lavina Fielding Anderson, Notes on a meeting with the Wells Stake Presidency, 2 May 1993.

envisioned by the stake president, should Lavina continue to uphold her *Dialogue* article and maintain her activities with the Mormon Alliance, was the surrender of Lavina's temple recommend. The letters that follow the interview show Lavina not only upholding but elaborating upon the article. Very likely President Miller interpreted this as intransigence on Lavina's part and in time settled upon the more drastic eventuality of excommunication. A particular matter that undoubtedly influenced his decision was her refusal to surrender her recommend. In mid-July she objected to giving up her recommend on the ground that it would be an admission of unworthiness on her part. She offered instead what seemed a reasonable compromise, already in effect: "I voluntarily suspended my temple worship after our meeting on May 2. I did so because I respect the order of the Church that provides a system of shared responsibility for determining temple worthiness. I will continue to suspend my temple worship until a resolution of this matter is reached."[9]

President Miller was apparently less than happy with this compromise. In early August he wrote Lavina that he had given notice that her recommend was not to be honored at the temple. In the same letter he adopted a warning tone that undoubtedly let Lavina know it was only a matter of time before she would be excommunicated.[10] After deliberating for almost a month, Lavina responded: "I was shocked and affronted that you would consider my promise inadequate on a matter as sacred and serious as temple worship." Noting that President Miller has "persistently defined the issue as a 'local' matter of my obedience to your instructions," she asserts, "This is *not* a local matter."

Behind this defiance is her frustration over the refusal of Elder Loren C. Dunn, President Miller's area president, to meet with her. During their interview in May, President Miller admitted that his investigation had been instigated by Elder Dunn. Now, rebuffed again in her attempt to speak with Elder Dunn, Lavina insists, "The fact that the matter was originally called to your attention by a General Authority automatically means that it is not a local matter but a general matter." She goes on in this long, fervent letter to define spiritual abuse in yet greater detail. She ends her letter with a declaration that seems to accept the inevitability of her excommunication:

> You have control over some aspects of my life as a Mormon, President Miller. You have already deprived me of temple worship. You can restrict or eliminate callings for me. You can disfellowship or excommunicate me. But you do not have control over my spiritual life, my relationship with the Savior, or my identity as a Mormon. I will always be a Mormon, whether I am a member of the Church or not.[11]

---

9. Lavina Fielding Anderson to Marlin S. Miller, 14 July 1993.
10. Marlin S. Miller to Lavina Fielding Anderson, 3 Aug. 1993.
11. Lavina Fielding Anderson to Marlin S. Miller, 2 Sept. 1993.

President Miller's next letter was a brief summons to a disciplinary hearing, which Lavina did not attend. Following that, dated the evening of the hearing, came his letter announcing her excommunication.

Lavina's thirty-seven-page appeal to the First Presidency is dated 23 October 1993. The appeal has three parts: an assertion of procedural irregularities, a clarification of spiritual abuse, and a declaration of Lavina's loyalty to Mormonism. The first section enumerates thirteen procedural irregularities. Of these, the ninth, "Involvement in the Process by General Authorities," receives the most detailed treatment. Extending her discussion to other disciplinary cases, Lavina establishes the probability that elders Boyd K. Packer and Loren C. Dunn have orchestrated a series of punitive actions by various stake presidents, including Lavina's. In conclusion, Lavina argues that this and the other irregularities have denied her a fair trial. A lack of a fair trial, she asserts, is itself evidence of the spiritual abuse she has accused the church disciplinary system of fostering.

She moves then to the second and, according to her own estimation, most important part of her appeal, a further clarification of spiritual abuse, which she also calls "unrighteous dominion" and "ecclesiastical abuse." Having defined seven traits which characterize spiritual abuse, she asserts her thesis with unflinching candor:

> I believe that the Church is not currently able to address the problems of ecclesiastical abuse for two reasons: (1) Very few, except those who have suffered ecclesiastical abuse or seen their loved ones endure its anguish and humiliations, are willing to believe that it can happen in the Lord's church. There is enormous denial of the problem and a defensiveness about protecting the leaders that prevents accurate analysis of the situation; and (2) The organizational structure of the priesthood pipeline works *against* correcting abuses and actually plays into the hands of abusive leaders.[12]

By December Lavina learned her appeal had been denied. I for one cannot believe she ever hoped that it might succeed. Long and articulate, it must stand as an elaboration of the article for which she had been excommunicated in the first place.

In concluding, I would like to emphasize two matters, Lavina's profound spirituality and her continuing involvement in her ward and stake.

I am impressed by the sincerity with which Lavina made up her mind to persist in her assertion of abuse within the church disciplinary system. In her article she writes: "I prayed, fasted, went to the temple, performed my callings with new exactness, and was newly attentive in

---

12. Lavina Fielding Anderson to Presidents Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson, 23 Oct. 1993, 27.

meetings. From the bottom of my heart, I wanted to avoid self-deception or intellectual pride."[13] In the long letter to President Miller where she seems to have resigned herself to the inevitability of her excommunication, she writes:

> I have a deep love for the Savior and a profound testimony of the power of his atonement. I know the power of prayer and priesthood blessings. I love the Book of Mormon and draw strength daily from reading the scriptures. I am thankful for my baptismal covenants, which I can renew weekly. I am thankful for the opportunity to have served a mission. My temple marriage is precious to me. . . . I have a profound love for the Prophet Joseph Smith and a firm testimony of his inspired calling. I sustain his successors as prophets, seers, and revelators.[14]

Those who know Lavina personally understand that the foregoing is not mere rhetoric. Few Latter-day Saints are more sincerely devout than Lavina Fielding Anderson.

That sincerity shows in the second matter I wish to emphasize, Lavina's continuing involvement in her ward and stake. In her appeal she declares her determination to remain active: "I know that there will be difficult moments, but I'm committed to being in church every Sunday and being as active as I'm permitted to be—this year, next year, forever."[15] In a later discussion of this decision, Lavina cites the example of Juanita Brooks, who, though never excommunicated, was reprimanded by general authorities and ostracized by her local ward for having published a history of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. "If Juanita Brooks . . . could do it, so could I," Lavina writes. Then she recounts her reception by her ward:

> The first Sunday after my excommunication, I sat on the second row from the back in Relief Society, listening to someone else play the piano. When the lesson was over, a half-dozen older women crowded around me to hug me. "We love you," one them murmured. "Keep coming," said another. "Did you see how many were in opening exercises at Sunday School?" asked a third. "I think it's because of you. You're making people search their souls. I know I'm searching mine."
>
> The bishop was standing at the door to the chapel. He took my hand and pulled me into a hug, smiling warmly. Paul was on the stand that day, leading the choir. Christian was sitting with the deacons until after the sacrament was passed. I would have to walk alone to the third row back, north side,

13. Anderson, "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership," 8.
14. Anderson to Miller, 2 Sept. 1993.
15. Anderson to Benson, Hinckley, and Monson, 34.

> and sit there alone, at least until after the sacrament was over and the choir had sung. It was a very long walk, but it wasn't a hard one. People kept stopping me, hugging me. When I sat down, it took a minute to realize what I was feeling. Pride. I was so *proud* of my ward. They were behaving exactly as you'd hope a Christian community would behave.
>
> *We can do it,* I thought. *How long was it for you, Juanita? Thirty years? We can do it.*[16]

Lavina is convinced she will be reinstated within her lifetime. She believes she has had a spiritual witness to this eventuality. While waiting, Lavina wishes to make her simple presence a compelling statement. In a recent speech, Lavina characterizes the eloquent testimony of those who protest, not by words, but by their loving presence. This is the testimony that she, now silenced, plans to bear among her fellow Latter-day Saints: "I want that testimony to say, 'I'm here. I've been excluded from fellowship for speaking the truth and following my conscience, but I'm still here. Don't be afraid. We don't have to hide our history, silence our scholars, abuse our members, and marginalize our women.'"[17]

I also believe that Lavina will be reinstated. I do not know if it will be in her lifetime. Sometime in the next century, I believe the church will have admitted that it must enlarge the role of women in its rituals and administration. I believe it will have discovered it can weather adverse historical fact without needing to suppress it. I believe it will have granted that its disciplinary system has indeed benefitted from more checks and balances and from a clearer application of due process.

In my judgment Lavina will exert a far stronger influence on this process of desirable change than if she had not been excommunicated. Some have wondered if we should compare Lavina with Joan of Arc. Obviously we are not to make too much of this comparison. For one thing, it is far too early to beatify Lavina. Lavina herself has warned us against making her out to be a saint of the traditional Christian sort. She asks simply that her case and the cases of other Mormon intellectuals excommunicated near the same time be considered with candor: "people should say what they honestly see in the case, in me, in any of us, the disciplined. I have confidence that hagiography and vilification will both produce counterreactions that will be closer to the truth, and I trust the process of that give and take."[18]

Yet those who have excommunicated Lavina may have well created a

---

16. Lavina Fielding Anderson, "Sacrament Meeting, Whittier Ward," 18 Feb. 1995, unpublished manuscript.

17. Lavina Fielding Anderson, "A Testimony of Presence," speech delivered at Pilgrimage conference, 13 May 1994, 5.

18. Anderson to Peterson.

martyr. I have been surprised by how many rank-and-file members of the church know of Lavina's case and regard her punishment as unnecessarily severe. Certainly those who wish to propose constructive change within the church will find Lavina a compelling model for their own behavior. By refusing to be angry, by refusing to withdraw from the society of her ward and stake, by continuing to provide as much loving service as the authorities will allow, Lavina has largely disarmed the terrors of excommunication.

During the next decade I expect to see the emergence of an informal church in exile. It will be informal because it will be without head or organization. It will be spread among hundreds of wards. It will be composed of faithful excommunicants, who, like Lavina, persist in participating as fully as possible in the life of their ward and stake. At the same time, on the battle fronts of liberal Mormonism, in gatherings, symposiums, and journals, they will persist in pressing for the constructive reform for which they have been excommunicated.

The genius and blessing of Lavina Fielding Anderson is that she offers an example to follow. She teaches a pattern of passive resistance that will work. She demonstrates that excommunication is not, after all, an effective weapon against a sincere and prayerful conscience.

To Sleep with the Ineffable: Inviting My Sweet Informants

Emma Lou Thayne

(Information: a non-accidental signal used as an input to a computer or communication system)

Cheek to pillow I slide my scalp up
away from my ear the way I lifted the mother of pearl stem on the silver lid
that closed and opened to disappear under itself
and reveal the engraved soup tureen Father
brought to Mother from New Orleans in 1940
to grace our sideboard, filigree legs
daintily holding its weight on the great
handled tray also on legs where the scalloped silver ladle
lay too big to fit the hole provided in the round
immensely smooth coming together of cover
and oval holding the steaming potato soup
dotted with butter and sprinkled with cheese, parsley, and
paprika, the ultimate savor for Christmas Eve.

Is that where I learned it, the uncovering of what
held in the steam and aroma, tantalized the hunger,
promised sating in its creamy lumpy richness?
What difference now that tantalized I raise my scalp
and open up the inverted feasting that the night provides
gentle ladlings from what the day and wakefulness obscure
to fill my waiting head with savor, nourishment
and answers brewed in councils I can join
only at a distance but intimate as sleep itself
that lavishes my dreams and wakings with all I need to know.

Awake to the Ineffable: Some Would Call It Kundalini

Emma Lou Thayne

For I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
In my downsitting and my uprising I am known,
my thought understood from afar. From Psalms 139

Out of sleep
Levitation
Stirrups of light
Palms aglow
Like hands and feet of Christ
Pierced with resurrection
Tingling afresh with awakening
Pulsing with the access of sleep
The return of goods
Another lifetime holds
No body extant
No head shoulders knees toes
Only arches and fingerless cups
Of warmth passing understanding
Weightless tokens from there to here.

FICTION

Sister Dallon Gets Tattooed

Derk Koldewyn

Johnny take a walk
With your sister the moon
Let her pale light in
To fill up your room
You've been living underground
Eating from a can
You've been running away
from what you don't understand
—U2, "Mysterious Ways"

SISTER ALICE DALLON STOPPED JUST OUTSIDE the safety-glass door, took a deep breath, and walked right in (as the sign suggested), dragging her companion, Sister Mary Kowalski, after her. The interior of the Subdermal Thermal, one of about fifty small tattoo parlors that had sprung up in the general vicinity of 17th Street and Atlantic Boulevard, Virginia Beach, was surprisingly clean. All those images of bead curtains and silver-studded leather, of peeling wallpaper and marijuana smoke were wrong, she guessed, and little wonder—the article that morning in the *Times-Register* had said that tattoos were becoming socially acceptable and that the fastest-growing element of the tattoo crowd was young career women.

Which wasn't, however, the reason she and Sister Kowalski were there. No, Sister Dallon had seen a vision, had dreamed a dream; in short, she had no idea why a tattoo was necessary, she only knew it was.

The night before, safe in her down quilt and flannel nightgown, dreaming in a small corner of the basement of a split-level ranch just off Virginia Beach Boulevard near Hilltop, a distinctly female form had walked in on her recurring, only slightly sexy fantasy involving herself and Elder George A'Deau watching the sun come up over the Atlantic and a returning carrier battle group bound for Norfolk Naval Base.

The female form, more like a grandmother than a sex goddess, had been walking up the beach, carrying an open umbrella and tossing huge chunks of white bread to either side of her, a cloud of seagulls spinning around her, mostly obscuring her spacious body. As the form walked closer, Sister Dallon got distinctly uncomfortable about where George's hands were and where they were going, and squirmed free, jumping to

her feet right in the path of the female form and an unfortunate gull.

Feeling like Tippi Hedren in *The Birds*, except she wasn't in a boat, Sister Dallon rubbed her head where the bird's beak had grazed her and fell in behind the form marching down the beach, although just a little wary of the wheeling gulls. Whereupon the scene shifted and Sister Dallon was sitting in front of a large black desk on a hard, straightbacked—she twisted around to check, yep, Chippendale—chair. The female form was sitting, lounging really, in a huge leather chair behind the desk, wearing a gaudy print dress, almost a muumuu, that, when she looked closely, Sister Dallon realized was covered with gray and white representations of the same seagulls on the beach, along with a few realistic-looking streaks of gull guano.

The form watched her disinterestedly for several minutes, in which time Sister Dallon began to wonder what was going on, and to wonder what the climate control system in the room was trying to do, it being freezing one second and steamy the next.

Finally the form leaned forward to speak, and when she spoke, she spoke with the quiet authority that (in the Mormon church at least) only priesthood leaders and Relief Society presidents could pull off on a regular, routine basis.

"Sister Dallon, I've been sent here to your dream—which, by the way, we don't much approve of, on account of that Elder A'Deau being uglier'n a fencepost—to give you a message. A real important message."

Sister Dallon, who had by this time gotten herself thoroughly confused by asking herself whether this was an actual vision or if her subconscious was making it up to entertain her, suddenly remembered that there was a test for angels, D&C 129 or 130, couldn't remember which, but it was there, nonetheless—ask her to shake hands.

"Uh, I see you know my name, what's yours?" She stuck her hand out across the desk. The form's eyes twinkled.

"Handshake test, eh? Well, why not? Might as well give you some sign that I'm on the level—though I might remind you that seeking signs is the mark of an adulterous generation. Put 'er there, sport," and she grabbed Sister Dallon's hand with the kind of I-dare-you-to-cry grip that her district leaders and various lecherous men, both young and old, usually met her with when she was out knocking on doors. But that was the sign, and if Sister Dallon was remembering her scriptures correctly, that meant the form was a translated being, not just a spirit—a little higher than an angel, in fact. Pretty impressive, even if she hadn't gotten her name yet.

"I hate to interrupt, ma'am, but I still don't know your name."

"Didn't I do that part yet? I keep forgetting—that's supposed to go first. My name is Sariah."

Sister Dallon's eyes went wide. "You mean . . . ?"

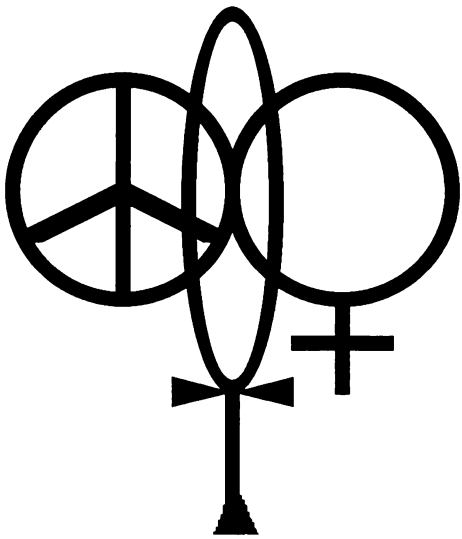
"No, dear, not either of the Big Two, but a distant relative of the second one. Do you think either of them would have this assignment, child? I mean, Sarah the first has near half a billion real children populating the world she and Abraham made together, with well over a billion spirit kids just waiting to go. And Sariah, my namesake, well she's got, shall we say, more important things to do? I'm it for you, honey. And to tell the truth, the sooner we get done with this, the better you'll feel. Remember what happened to Joseph Smith the day after Moroni visited him the first time—fainted going over a fence, not a real pretty sight. We don't mean to keep you that long tonight, though."

Sariah paused significantly, and when she spoke again, it was apparent that these were not her words, and that the agent that carried them to Sister Dallon's heart was higher up even than a translated being.

"Alice Dallon, I have been sent to call you to the position of flagbearer in the Sisterhood. This position holds the responsibility of gathering a spiritually powerful force of sisters together. It is not an enviable position, for you will have many serious challenges to your work. This is the first of many messages you will receive. Good luck, Sister."

Sister Dallon dropped back in her chair, mouth open like a flounder. What was *that* all about?

"Oh, and Alice? There's one more thing. Tomorrow morning, first thing, you're to go down to the beach, to a tattoo parlor, the Subdermal Thermal, taking your companion of course, and you both will get a tattoo on your right ankle like this," raising her hand to reveal a white symbol on the black desktop in the form of an interlinked peace sign, feminist symbol, and ankh, thus:



"This action, Alice, will signify both your acceptance of your call and your first recruiting success. You weren't given Sister Kowalski for nothing, you know."

Sister Dallon struggled to the surface of her thoughts and trying to show some semblance of religiosity began to say, "But I am but a lad, and all the people hate me" (Moses 6:31), at which point Sariah broke in with "First off, Sister Alice, you're not a lad, you're a full-blown woman, and second, hardly anyone *we've* found hates you—you're a natural charismatic, that's why we picked you. Now I'm going to put you back in your dream, okay?"

And the desk dissolved into a lapping ocean and a sliver of sun way back past the clouds and gulls. She looked up to find that she was not being held by Elder A'Deau, but by Jean-Claude Van Damme, hero of several action-adventure movies (all of which she'd seen), the worst of which, *Cyborg*, had dropped her deep into a crush she'd never really recovered from, and who was wearing only swimming trunks and a great tan.

From there the dream got infinitely more sexy than A'Deau had ever been, and then Sister Dallon woke with a crash to find her companion, Sister Kowalski—most of her 200-pound frame quivering—standing beside her bed with all of Dallon's sheets and her quilt in one hand.

"What's up?" Sister Dallon tried to nonchalantly extricate her left arm from under her back, where it was, for some reason, twisted, her left hand in a hard fist under her shoulder blade, which was itself in a fairly twisted state.

"You." Sister Kowalski continued to quiver, looking at Dallon like she'd lost a limb, which it perhaps looked like from her point of view. "I came in to wake you up—it's already seven—and I swear it looked like you were *levitating*. You must've been a foot above your bed. What's going on?"

Sister Dallon, having by now freed her slightly numb arm, began to remember her dream, most of her recollection being however obscured by the almost billboard-sized immediacy of Jean-Claude's lips, which she reluctantly shook out of her head to get at the kernel of her vision that seemed most important at the time, given Kowalski's demands and her almost obscene quivering.

"Well, it's like this . . . " She tried to assume an air of high seriousness, which was immediately hampered by her realization that she had, somehow, gotten her nightgown on backwards.

"I've had a vision, Sister Kowalski."

"You have? Wow! That's so neat!" Sister Kowalski looked hugely relieved, like she'd been looking for any plausible answer for levitation and visions that fit her expectations perfectly. However, it wasn't so much

that as confirmation that her own odd dream that night hadn't been blasphemous and that Sister Dallon was, in actual fact, the prophet or, in biblical parlance, prophetess that she, Mary Kowalski, was to follow and assist.

Dallon, feeling acutely aware the whole time of her nightgown and also of a feeling that all this was a little too easy, told Kowalski about her dream, judiciously leaving out the first bit about Elder A'Deau but telling a few of the juicy details involved with Jean-Claude's participation, which Sister Kowalski didn't quite understand in the context of a sacred message, but which she stopped thinking about when it became clear that it was a subject too deep and too complicated to pursue.

She could, however, comprehend and even internally debate a little the request or call or command to get tattooed, which she finally determined was a call, convinced, as Sister Dallon was also, by the too-close-to-be-a-coincidence coincidental publishing of a five-page pictorial feature in that morning's *Times-Register* about tattoos, featuring a sidebar ranking the top ten Tidewater area tattoo parlors or, as they prefer to be called, body decoration boutiques, ranked in terms of cleanliness, artistic aplomb, and relative price, of which the Subdermal Thermal ranked first, with perfect "5"s in every category. It was settled—they had to go.

The next decision was not as easy, because it was, simply, what to wear to a tattooing, and neither Dallon nor Kowalski had any experience fashion-wise with this sort of thing. And to make things more difficult, each of them wanted to wear something different than her counterpart. Sister Dallon, by this time reflecting on the serious nature of her call, wanted to wear regular proselytizing clothes, maybe even her best floor-length skirt and linen blouse, complete with the "I'm a Molly Mormon" oversized bow in her hair, while Sister Kowalski, a little embarrassed (to say the least) by the thought of appearing anywhere near a tattoo parlor with a nametag on announcing to the world in general that two representatives of the Mormon church were there and were on a mission to get tattooed, wanted to wear her new Preparation Day attire, which was a powder-blue velveteen sweatsuit with matching sweatband, earrings, and socks, instead.

They settled on a compromising agreement. They would wear their worst proselytizing attire, the old, ragged skirts long slated for Goodwill or, worse, the blouses they'd stained innumerable times at dinner appointments, mission and zone conferences, all-you-can-eat lunch specials at Pizza Hut, the flats they'd scuffed and repolished hundreds of times, scuffed going up irregular, crumbling concrete stairs, running from German shepherds, Dobermans, the odd man with the distinct asthma problem who'd followed Kowalski half a mile when she was in Welch, West Virginia, with Sister Manning, tracting shingle-covered pine shacks filled

with dirty-faced naked children, fat women sheathed in thin cotton housedresses, old men half-dead with emphysema and black lung disease; wearing, that is, those clothes most filled with memories both good and worse, mostly worse, to a place both of them were getting increasingly wary of, to the Subdermal Thermal which was, they discovered, not really worth the anxiety they'd invested in it.

The door opened into a small but comfortable waiting area, soft neutral colors on the walls and floor, contrasting pastel colors in the furniture, which was Early Postmodern Functional, squared, cloth-covered foam-rubber and hardwood couches, teak minimalist coffee table covered with the requisite magazines, though the Subdermal Thermal's taste in magazines was slightly more eclectic than the doctor's office it resembled. On the long coffee table, arranged in fan-fashion, were: the last three swimsuit issues of *Sports Illustrated,* a worn copy (Dallon looked to check—latest issue, actually) of *Thrasher,* the last two weeks of the *Christian Science Monitor, Time, Mother Jones, The Nation, Rolling Stone, The Atlantic, Playboy, Arizona Highways, Easy Rider, Jack and Jill, Reader's Digest, Backpacker,* and, almost buried—Kowalski gasped when she recognized it—the *Ensign.*

They had sat down in front of the table because the receptionist's window was empty and a hand-scrawled sign advised them to "Take a Load off—I'll be Back in Five Minutes! Thanks!" Which they did, waiting almost twice the time suggested, the sign more than a little vague concerning when the five-minute break had begun, waiting exactly long enough, Dallon noticed, for Sister Kowalski to start her toe-tapping, which she usually practiced at breakfast on the linoleum floor of their kitchen, but which the carpet of the Subdermal Thermal muffled so much that she stretched over and tapped on the leg of the coffee table, waiting that is, for anything to stop Kowalski's nervous habit, which the arrival of the receptionist did.

The receptionist was tall, female, what some might call well-proportioned and others sniff at as too much plastic surgery, black, wearing a starched white nurse's uniform straight out of *Marcus Welby, M.D.,* except in this case the nurse's cap was not perched on six inches of round-as-a-bowling-ball Afro, but on neck-length dreadlocks. She smiled faintly at the young women in the lobby, as she liked to call it, and asked what they were interested in.

"Tattoos, mainly," Dallon said, wondering what kind of question was that?

"Have anything special in mind, or didja want to look at the books?" Gesturing towards a bookcase in front of her window/cubicle filled with black notebooks all labeled down the spine "tattoos." The receptionist beamed her best smile, sensing somehow that these young women

would be good customers and might even be interesting to talk to, the usual crowd being about sixteen years old mentally, whatever their physical age might have been. (The article in the *Times-Register* notwithstanding, most customers were, actually, lowlifes or drunk sailors or bikers looking to increase the amount of printed acreage on their bloated bodies.)

No, these two weren't that type, though they looked a little like college students, they didn't look like they belonged there—they weren't exactly the type she ever thought would be sitting in the lobby of the Subdermal Thermal thumbing through *Arizona Highways* and *Thrasher.* Actually they looked like, an awful lot like, the young women who were always over at her neighbor's townhouse, the receptionist living, as did half of Virginia Beach, in a townhouse hardly larger than the cubicle she worked in, one of millions of identical townhouses stuck together tightly with epoxy and roofing staples in multiples of ten or twelve, complexes stretching across hectares of old orchards, soybean fields, swamps in the dull shine of vinyl siding and quick-drying concrete, complexes too tightly packed, packed so tightly in fact that a good Molotov cocktail or even an incendiary flare might take out an entire zip code before the authorities knew what was happening.

The two women might just be those religious types her neighbor was always talking about, just couldn't shut that woman up sometimes, especially since she looked down on tattoos and "them kinds of people." Nurse Caddy, as the receptionist liked to be called—had it stitched in red right above her left pocket, above where she kept extra pens and a lozenge or two—decided to ask, make sure.

"You ladies know Helga Jackson? Lives over in Pointe Woods?"

Kowalski dropped her *Arizona Highways* and her jaw at the same time. "Uh, no. Why, should we?" Quickly covering her *faux pas* with a big fat lie.

"No reason. She's just my neighbor, y'see, and I thought you two looked like some preacher ladies she's been telling me about. Anyway, what type of tattoo you want? George'll be back in a few minutes, and he's got a long afternoon ahead of him, three or four regular customers need touch-ups, expansions, y'know."

Well, they didn't know, but it was pretty easy to show her what they wanted. Dallon got up, walked over, took out a pen and drew, clumsily, from memory, the symbol Sariah had shown her in her dream.

"That all? You both want one of these?"

"Yes, ma'am." Dallon's eye caught on the red stitching above Nurse Caddy's left pocket.

"Caddy? That's a unique name."

"Yep, it sure is. Guess you wanna know where it came from?"

"Sure." Why not, anyway? They evidently had nothing better to do than sit around a tattoo parlor listening to the genealogy of this woman's name.

"Well, you see, it all starts out with my Grandpa Jones. My full name's Cadillac Euphoria Jones. I don't know quite why my daddy stuck that Euphoria in there, thought it sounded nice, I guess, kept the rhythm up, anyhow. But Cadillac, now that comes from a joke Grandpa Jones heard some cracker sheriff's deputy telling a barber one time—Grandpa Jones, y'see, never did have a good education and therefore no good job in his life, just went around odd-jobbing. Anyhow, this one time he was working as a shoeshine boy in this barbershop out in Hopewell, heard this joke. The way Grandpa told it, the sheriff's deputy had just got a brand-spanking-new Pontiac patrol car, had it sitting out on the curb, and so he tells the barber this joke: Whaddya think 'Pontiac' stands for?"

The sisters shrug.

"Stands for: Poor Ole Nigger Thinks It's A Cadillac. And girl, I mean to tell you, Grandpa, he'd just keel over laughing at that every time he told it. Mainly it was because he never did see what all the fuss was about cars. He didn't, I don't think, ever need one except for the one time he moved from Hopewell out here to Virginia Beach. Said it was about time he spent his reclining years right and be near the ocean, 'stead of up in Flatland there near Richmond. Yep, he walked everywhere he went, and he couldn't understand why a man would knock himself out day after day just to buy a piece of metal said 'Cadillac' on it. Anyhow, that's where my name comes from, just old Grandpa Jones's idea of a joke, that's all."

"Thank you—that was such a good story!" Dallon beamed into Nurse Caddy's face, wondering where is that George guy? Isn't he supposed to be here by now?

Sister Kowalski muttered, "Depressing story if you ask me," under her breath, turning another glossy page of *Arizona Highways*, an article on the aesthetic quality of old junked '57 Chevy trucks, how every xeriscaped yard from Flagstaff to Yuma seemed to be sprouting rusty hulks lately.

Just then, as if on cue, George himself, all 350 pounds of him, most of that bulk (the exterior anyway) covered in exotic body decorations, including a miniature representation of an Uncle Sam recruitment poster on his left cheek, rumbled through the door and belched. He was, besides grossly overweight for his height (5'6"), wearing black plastic-framed glasses, U.S. serviceman's issue, what the military (those with a sense of humor, anyway) calls "birth control glasses." His hair was black, shoulder-length, greasy, curly at the bottom, almost permed. He wore the kind of clothes you might expect a tattooist to wear: black heavy metal T-shirt,

too small (1978 KISS World Tour); XXL Lee jeans, the fabric a thick dark indigo stressed fantastically at the seams; leather Roman sandals without socks, his fat hairy toes poking out over the front edge; a string of ghost beads at the bottom of which dangled a large uncut crystal.

"These gals would each like a tat like this on their right ankles." Nurse Caddy looked almost apologetic, like George might just be a volatile man, capable of swift but sure mood swings, which he wasn't, really, but he always had and would look that way—can't really ever be too sure about that kind of thing, she thought.

"Uh-huh." George looked at the drawing, then at the missionaries. "Ain't you Mormons?"

"Yes."

"No."

Dallon looked hard at Kowalski, who'd just lied for the second time. She was sure that being called to do something like this involved telling the truth, so she spoke up again.

"Sister Kowalski here is kinda shy. Yes, we're Mormons all right. Does that surprise you?"

"Nu-uh. Fact, it kinda scares me. Yuh see, last night I had this real weird dream. Some crazy woman swoops down out of a dark red sky, tells me that at work tomorrow two Mormon women are gonna want tattoos. She tells me that's why for the past six months I been getting that there *Ensign* magazine, couldn't cancel it if I tried, and I did try, believe me. I've had more business leave cause of that magazine than even the *Atlantic,* for hell's sake. Yeah, I know all about Mormons now, from reading it on my lunch break. What I want to know is what the devil are you getting a tattoo for? From what that magazine says, you folks are stricter'n Baptists. I know no Baptist would be getting a tat."

"All I can tell you, George, is that the same woman was in our dream last night, and that we were told to come here. We wouldn't have believed it ourselves if we hadn't seen that article this morning in the *Times-Register.*"

"Yeah. That was pretty good, huh? Ol' George Brimset hisself runs the best tat joint in all Tidewater. Cost me a lot of lunches with that lady reporter for her to say so, though. Hunh. Well, can we get to it? I've got a day ahead of me."

George led them into the tattooing area, which followed the waiting area's lead of resembling a doctor's office. Small cubicles lined the walls, each cubicle possessing a doctor's tissue-covered examining table, a small stool for the tattooist, and a complete set of inks and needles. An antiseptic mist lingered in the air, just enough to remind Dallon of the dentist's office back home. Her teeth hurt.

Alice Dallon was feeling positively wicked now, like the one time in

high school she'd sneaked out of the house and went with her new friend Cathi to a real party, one with boys and alcohol and loud music, one that she'd never forget, her first acquaintance with cheap beer ending with all she'd drank suddenly deciding to go back the way it came, taking her lunch of potato chips and M&Ms with it, splashing all over the black leather couch she'd collapsed on, her party etiquette not yet to the point where, when you recognized "the urge," you found plant life immediately (shrubs, philodendrons, a self-invited nobody) and hopefully you had a good friend who would hold your hair back out of the way so it wouldn't end up, as Alice's did, matted and stinking of beer and vomit and the cheap cologne of the nameless, faceless jock who'd caught her from behind in the hall, mumbling drunkly in her ear, "Hey babe, let's go back and get in on," all the while groping at her breasts with his left hand while his right fumbled with the fly of her jeans—no, she'd never forget that, the only motivation she'd ever needed for being a good girl. She wasn't, however, going to let that stop her now.

George motioned Dallon into a cubicle, then Kowalski into another. He followed Dallon in.

"Take off your shoe and sit right up there." He puttered around with the equipment, donning rubber gloves, putting on a fresh, clean needle, filling up on ink.

"Okay, now. What you're gonna feel won't hurt no worse'n getting a paper cut. Just sit tight, try not to move the leg too much, and we'll be done in a pinch. 'Kay?" He winked at her.

Dallon nodded, and George bent over her outstretched leg. She felt a little dizzy. She made herself watch as George put the pen-like apparatus on her skin. He pulled the pen back, the pain shot up her leg, the room lost contact with gravity, whirled, and went dark.

She was lost in the blackness for a few seconds, groping for a lightswitch, until a faint yellow glow began to seep in, gradually filling in details, corners, edges, grains of sand, hotels lining the beach, the hot sun rising over a cold, still ocean, the tanned well-defined arm around her waist leading up behind her back to the tanned neck and All-American gap-toothed grin of Elder George A'Deau.

Elizabeth, and Dying Wishes

Daniel Austin

ALL WINTER AND INTO SPRING Charlie Sutton tended his wife as best he could. It was awkward from the start, knowing that the outcome was never really in doubt. The cancer that Bettie defeated six years ago was back, and would not be denied this time. The disease progressed quickly; diagnosed in early summer, Bettie was bedridden by November. In severe pain almost continually, soon unable to take food through her stomach, and with a long decline as her only prospect, Bettie made a decision that seemed to some as utterly ghastly, even blasphemous, but to her was perfectly rational. On the morning of Valentine's Day, Charlie noticed that the intravenous tube had come out of Bettie's arm. He said something about it, and went over to put it back in.

"No," Bettie said with a smile. "I won't be needing that anymore." There was a quiet pause.

"Oh, Bettie," Charlie started, "you can eat again?"

"No, I can't eat any more," Bettie replied, almost matter of factly.

Charlie didn't understand. "Then you need the tube again, don't you?"

It was a hard situation for him to face—it seemed so ominous and morbid. But leaving is always harder for those who stay, and Bettie had been thinking about leaving for a long time. After they talked awhile, Charlie agreed she was right. He had always *wanted* to make her happy, it was just that he had never been much good at it. Bettie's mother endowed her with an abundance of self-fortitude, and she had learned early on that the greatest obstacle to fulfillment in life is one's own self. When Charlie showed himself satisfied with the limited prospects of a factory job, Bettie borrowed money and enrolled in home economics at a local college—not easy for a woman with a baby in blankets and another on the way. Bettie not only finished first in her class, but she was also active in student government, and got herself elected student body president, the first woman—and the only mother—to ever hold that office.

Bettie landed a job teaching in the same high school she had attended, and the additional income was enough for them to purchase a small but solid house in the near suburbs. Bettie soon became an institution in the new neighborhood, where her expertise in sewing and handicrafts was eagerly sought. When she and Charlie were tracted out by Mormon missionaries, she prevailed on Charlie to have them all join the church. The Suttons were faithful members from that point on, and by the time of her first bout with cancer, they had been in the ward longer than anyone else. Bettie's circle grew ever wider helping generations of girls sew their wedding and temple dresses. She and Charlie raised three boys and a girl in their little house, and all but the youngest son stayed active in the church. The two older boys both served honorable missions.

Now, in the sunset of their life together, Bettie was getting ready for the sun to go down. And Charlie at last came to accept it. "My bags are packed," she told the stream of visitors to her bedside. Ward members and friends subtly vied with each other to see who could get the latest from Bettie, who had visited and talked with her most recently. Charlie had to do some aggressive doorkeeping to ration Bettie's waning strength; but each day they both sensed how she was getting inexorably closer to the end. Rumors of what was afoot with Bettie were whispered among the ward, and many were indignant. It was unnatural, some members said; whatever our burden, we must endure to the end. Even the bishop told Bettie that she must "wait on the Lord" in all things.

But Bettie saw it from a different angle, that of a woman who had lost her second fight with cancer and who, the doctors assured, was going to die within a few months. Despite the best intentions of her husband and church brethren, the several priesthood blessings given to her failed to indicate otherwise. So, with children grown and on their own, and a quiet voice within her soul telling her all was well, Bettie was of a different mind than she might have had she not been the one who was sick. Would it be "waiting on the Lord" and acting "natural" to dope up her body and dull her mind with pain-killing drugs? Or did the Lord really want her to endure slow months of agonizing pain? Christ suffered for all, she reflected, and sometimes, in the moments when her pain was most intense and the seconds seemed an eternity, she thought she saw him suffering—first as he prayed in silent anguish in the garden: "Couldn't you wait with me one hour?" he seemed to ask her, as he had his disciples. Then she would envision him at Calgary, writhing in open torment on the cross and crying aloud for the ages to hear, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These scenes came to her many times, and after each, when the pain subsided, there was a final vision of warm, open arms, and a loving countenance which beckoned the invitation, "Come unto me, Elizabeth, ye heavy laden, and I will give thee rest." She had always

believed that heaven was a place of peace and rest, and for Bettie, to come literally unto Christ now seemed the most natural thing to do.

While a slow painful demise was not something she desired, Bettie did harbor two last wishes before she died. She made these known one day late in March, when she was surprisingly energetic and in full command of her mental faculties. At Bettie's request, Charlie called the Relief Society president, Jess Neeley, on the phone and asked her to come over. In the presence of both of them, Bettie announced her wishes. First, she wanted it to snow again—a big, heavy white blanket. Charlie and Jess threw a glance at each other. It had been a very dry winter, with unseasonably mild weather. What little snow there had been all melted back in January, and with April only a week away, there was little hope of any more again this year. But Bettie waited patiently for one more snowfall, to see the yard and the fence adorned a final time in a shimmering white blanket.

Second, Bettie handed them the written program for her funeral. What was unsettling was the clear instruction that Jess, as Relief Society president, conduct the funeral service. Not just sit on the stand, but conduct it from beginning to end.

The Neeleys had been in the ward for only five years, but the two women had grown close through their time as visiting teaching companions. When Jess was called as Relief Society president last year, she asked Bettie to serve as her counselor. For the first time in her life, Bettie turned down a calling. She knew deep down it was not for her. Now she had a calling to ask of Jess.

"You'll do it, won't you?" said Bettie.

Jess gently took Bettie's hand, but did not answer.

"Of course, she'll do it," said Charlie cheerfully. "She'll do it, no matter what."

Jess was not sure what to say, and preferring not to disappoint her friend, she said nothing, only smiled. Over the next few days, Bettie shared her wishes with each visitor that Charlie allowed upstairs. Once again a troubling rumor made its uneasy rounds through the ward.

Due to the lateness of the year, the sudden snow storm on April 1 was all the more remarkable. Overnight, a foot of wet snow was dumped on the city, and, as Monday morning dawned, airports, schools, and mass transit were socked in. It clung to the trees and pulled down utility wires. And in the early afternoon, as the sky cleared and a radiant spring sun began to melt the snow, the yard outside Bettie's window had never looked more resplendent. She beamed as Jess came by to visit. Bettie was very weak now, and could only speak in the softest of voices.

"I'm responsible for this," she whispered proudly. "I wished for it,

and look—the Lord blessed me with my wish." Bettie turned her head towards the window and gestured slightly with her hand. A triumphant smile lit up her face, and a sparkle gleamed in her eyes. Hers was not a countenance of gloating, but of satisfaction and farewell, because both women knew in their hearts that Bettie's life would last only as long as the soft, swiftly melting snow. "My bags are packed," she smiled weakly, and drifted off to sleep amid the warm companionship of her beloved sister.

On Tuesday Charlie was vacuuming the living room when Bettie's sweet voice suddenly called his name. He quickly ran upstairs, forgetting that it had been weeks since Bettie had the strength to say anything louder than a whisper. The months of creeping around the house quietly, going up to her room with uncertain expectation—even the recent weeks of serving his partner and companion of forty years, knowing as they both did of their conspiracy to steal a march on death—these had not quite prepared Charlie for the grief of her passing.

Bettie died in that long, late afternoon moment when the sun still casts shadows, but can only be seen if the horizon is clear and you know where to look. He was with her when she left. "See there?" Charlie said quietly, as he stroked her cold hand. "There's your aunt Alice, and there's your sister Claire . . . your mother, and that must be Dad." By now tears were streaming down his face, and Charlie knew Bettie was gone. But he did not feel alone, despite his grief, and for this he was very grateful.

"I know how you must feel, Bishop. She was a member of the ward for over twenty-five years. Don't think I don't realize that." President Mansfield was genuinely sympathetic. "I've been around here longer than you have," he continued. "I've known Bettie Sutton for years. Not all that well, but I knew her."

Royal Mansfield sat across the table from Bishop Birch Cullen in the stake president's office. Not only was Cullen the youngest bishop in the stake, his was the largest ward as well, a mixture of city and working-class suburbs where poverty, social distress, and church inactivity were high. Both men knew that many members owed their activity, in part, to Sister Sutton.

The issue was the program for tomorrow's funeral. It was important because dozens of mourners, members and non-members, were expected to pay their last respects. Bishop Cullen had just learned that Elizabeth Sutton expressly wanted the Relief Society president to conduct her funeral. This, as Royal Mansfield reminded Bishop Cullen forcefully, was squarely against protocol.

"But it's her dying wish," Bishop Cullen insisted. "She asked that Sister Neeley conduct the funeral. In fact, we have it in her own handwrit-

ing. What's so wrong that we can't we honor that?"

"You don't understand," President Mansfield replied with a heavy sigh. "I'm not saying that anything is 'wrong' about it, but it is contrary to church policy. As it states right here—"

Bishop Cullen cut him off. "Yes, yes, you've read it to me twice already. I read it before, anyway. Look, I don't really like having a sister conducting a church meeting either, but this is not a regular church meeting, and what harm will it do?"

The stake president paused to let tempers cool.

"Funerals are to be conducted by the bishop, you know that's how it is," he said softly.

Bishop Cullen stared out the window.

"You know Bettie had another wish before dying," he said finally.

"Another wish?"

"Yes, she had two wishes before dying. She got her first wish—she wanted to see snow one last time. And after a such a mild winter, the Lord granted her wish and we had snow, and on the first of April at that. Not a bad reward for forty years of unstinting Christian service." Bishop Cullen paused and turned in his chair. "She was an active member of this ward before I was even baptized."

For a long time neither man spoke. Royal Mansfield lowered his eyes; to his surprise, they were filled with tears. He was feeling something in his heart, and it told him he had been exactly right in choosing Birch Cullen as bishop. His face opened into a sad, faraway smile.

"Well," Royal Mansfield began slowly. "It would appear that he who made us all granted Sister Sutton her wish with a snowstorm in spring. Of the two wishes, that's the hardest for sure, and we couldn't have helped on that one."

He continued in a humble voice. "Now I suppose we have the power to do something about the other wish. And I can't help but think that our Father in his mercy would want us to. Just make sure you sit on the stand, Bishop. And let's hope this doesn't start a precedent."

Seconds Coming

Casualene Meyer

Entering St. John
Population 1440

Leaving St. John
Visit Us Again!

Two sides of the same sign.

Space contracts.
Space is time,
time, the sign.

I am not elect,
but feel the shortening
of days.

In the calendar factory
paper feeds through so fast
December is only half-printed.

A Mature and Polished Treatise

The Truth, The Way, The Life, An Elementary Treatise on Theology: The Masterwork of B. H. Roberts. Edited by Stan Larson; forewords by Thom D. Roberts and Leonard J. Arrington; introductions by Sterling M. McMurrin and Erich Robert Paul (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994).

The Truth, The Way, The Life, An Elementary Treatise on Theology by B. H. Roberts. Edited by John W. Welch; introductions by John W. Welch, Davis Bitton, Gary Layne Hatch, Doris R. Dant, Truman G. Madsen, David L. Paulsen, William E. Evenson, William J. Hamblin, David Rolph Seely, Andrew C. Skinner, Richard C. Roberts, Michael D. Rhodes, and James B. Allen (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1994); reissued in 1996 with changes in the introductory essays, which were placed at the end of the book rather than at the beginning.

Reviewed by Kent E. Robson, Professor of Philosophy, Utah State University, Logan.

WHAT ARE THE GREATEST BOOKS ever written within Mormonism? Without question, one would name *Jesus the Christ* and *The Articles of Faith* by James E. Talmage. Alternatively, one might think of *Evidences and Reconciliations* by John A. Widtsoe, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* by Spencer W. Kimball, or *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* by LeGrand Richards. *Gospel Doctrine* by Joseph F. Smith might be mentioned because of its use in priesthood lessons, or *The Seventy's Course in Theology* by B. H. Roberts used for five years in priesthood classes but now hard to find. There are others, of course, but these are important sources—they are continually used and considered relevant.

To a great extent, these books are examined and considered to be sources of doctrine. We don't define them as scriptures, but many of them are important for their doctrinal and theological implications. Because of that, we don't even ask when they were written. To some degree, they are timeless.

To the above list, we should now add this wonderful, mature treatise by B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life.* This is a book that should be in the hands of all members of the church and should be used regularly by them. After all the books written by Roberts for the church, this is his most mature and most polished treatise on the essential doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is also the way Roberts viewed his work, and, as a member of the seven presidents of the Seventy, his views carried enormous weight. I believe they should still be given enormous credence.

Furthermore, I believe Roberts was essentially right. This book should be used alongside of *The Articles of Faith* (and others), and should

never again be neglected. There is only one section of chapters that is controversial, and that can easily be skipped by members as speculative. It is tragic that others did not feel that members of the church are intelligent enough and capable of discrimination, so that this wonderful book might not have been held back for over sixty-five years. Many have said the work is outdated, but would we say that *Jesus the Christ* is outdated just because it was written so long ago? Surely not! As John Welch says in his introduction, this work is an "encyclopedia" (xvi). It surpasses the new *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* in its brevity, clarity, and profound insight into issue after issue. This is a book that must be referred to time after time, and used by all serious members of the church. My only disappointment has to do with how long it has taken this book to be published.

The fact that two different publishers and editors have brought the book out now is wonderful, for it helps to indicate the enormous interest that this treatise generates. That it has not been previously reviewed in these pages only indicates the enormity of the importance of the work and the fact that the two editions together exceed 1,300 pages of subtle complexity and interesting discussion. Also, two of the commentators of the work, Sterling M. McMurrin and Erich Robert Paul, are now deceased, and this represents an immense loss within Mormonism.

Introductions in the Stan Larson version take up 67 pages. They include forewords by Thom D. Roberts and Leonard J. Arrington and then the superb essays by McMurrin and Paul. Although McMurrin is discouraged with the "biblical literalism" of Roberts, he concludes that "B. H. Roberts's high level of sophistication as a historian, his sagacity as a philosopher, his profound insight as a theologian [and] his commitment to the worth of scientific knowledge" mark his work as bringing to the world a serious "inquiring into the nature and meaning of Mormonism" (xxiii-xxv). Paul focuses on Roberts's views about science, and in item after item his views still stand, for example, on the indestructibility of "matter-energy." Here we see that Roberts was in a line of Mormon scientists-philosophers-theologians that included Orson Pratt and Orson Hyde and that had almost died out before McMurrin and Paul.

Here Roberts has many important things to say that can be largely lost on those interested solely in history. In this way, Roberts's work is profoundly distinguished from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* with its largely historical emphasis. (There are some exceptions in the encyclopedia.) A superb introduction is provided by Stan Larson, and it is careful, accurate, and detailed. It also describes an attempt to work together with John Welch, but Welch decided against a joint effort.

Welch has provided about 207 pages of introduction in his volume and emphasized that Roberts is one of the "great intellects of the Church" (xxvi). Davis Bitton is too dismissive, but Truman Madsen, with his deeper understanding of theology, etc., is more laudatory, for example, when he discusses Roberts's views on "Spirits and Intelligence" (lxxxiv, for example). David L. Paulsen also appreciates and understands Roberts's importance as a theologian, has important discussions of Eternalism and Causality, and has understood the

pivotal importance of the problem of evil and how Mormons may address it. There are also criticisms of Roberts by scientist Evenson, but his work contains important confusions and inadequacies, for example, when he talks of "beautiful and consistent mathematical theories" (cxix). Kurt Godel showed us in 1931 that all mathematical theories are complete only if they are inconsistent, and consistent only if they are incomplete. James B. Allen publishes an extremely important account as to why and how Roberts's work was not previously published. All in all, these essays are an important introduction to this vitally critical work.

Finally, little can be written in a review of this wonderful and important treatise. Let me draw attention to one example to illustrate the importance of this publication. In chapter 2, for example, Roberts describes man "as existing" (22, Larson; 29, Welch). This is important, for we see that man is not "created" as other denominations claim, and this makes it possible to seriously claim that man is free or has "free agency" (24, Larson; 31, Welch). Roberts is addressing something most critically important here and he picks it up in chapter 8 when he talks of the "Eternity of Intelligences" and says that "intelligences are eternal—are among the uncreated things—and the indestructible things" (81-83, Larson; 81-83, Welch).

This one example alone shows the sophistication and depth of Roberts, and his insight should continually guide our understanding of Mormonism.

Hypertextual Book of Mormon Study

Book of Mormon Reference Library, CD-ROM for Macintosh and Windows (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1995).

Book of Mormon Studybase, for Windows (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995).

LDS Classics CD-ROM, CD-ROM for DOS (San Diego: Research Applications International, 1995).

LDS Collectors Library 1995 Edition, CD-ROM for Windows (Provo, UT: Infobases, 1995).

Sunstone on Disk: 1974-1994, 3.5 Disks for DOS (Salt Lake City: Sunstone Foundation, 1994).

Ultimate LDS Library on CD-ROM, for Windows (American Fork, UT: Portals, 1995).

Reviewed by Brent Lee Metcalfe, Senior Online Information Specialist, Novell, Inc., editor of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology.*

BOOK OF MORMON CRITICISM IS entering an era envisioned by hypertext pioneer Vannevar Bush in 1945 in which

> [w]holly new forms of encyclopedias will appear, ready-made with a mesh of associative trails running through them ... The historian, with a vast chronological account of a people, par-

> allels it with a skip trail which stops only at the salient items, and can follow at any time contemporary trails which lead him all over civilization at a particular epoch. There is a new profession of trail blazers, those who find delight in the task of establishing useful trails through the enormous mass of the common record. The inheritance from the master becomes, not only his additions to the world's record, but for his disciples the entire scaffolding by which they were erected.[1]

Bush's futuristic "trails" mimic what he dubbed the "intricate web of trails" that rapidly conveys associative thoughts in the human brain. Unlike the mind, however, Bush's mechanized trails could never forget. This is the essence of hypertext—an accessible web of indelible information.

Several computer-oriented LDS resources using principles of hypertextual design are now available. With powerful search engines at their disposal, Book of Mormon students can explore linear texts in nonlinear ways. All of these electronic resources are dissimilar enough in content to warrant separate use by serious students of Mormon scripture. Noteworthy product features include:

* *Book of Mormon Reference Library*—A collection of Deseret Book publications on the Book of Mormon. Folio for Windows user interface (UI) with search capabilities, including search tracking via a Query history. Users can electronically mark important text or insert "sticky notes" using the Highlighter and Notes features. From the Customize menu, users can create their own cross-references with jump or pop-up links. Runs under Windows 3.1x or Windows 95.

* *Book of Mormon Studybase*—Includes prominent Book of Mormon publications from Bookcraft. Folio for Windows UI with extended search capabilities. In addition to customizable cross-referencing tools, *Studybase* lets users search their personalized references. Runs under Windows 3.1x or Windows 95.

* *LDS Classics CD-ROM*—First electronic resource to include the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, 1833 Book of Commandments, and 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. TextWare for DOS UI that is full-text search enabled. Users can create and search bookmarks. Runs under DOS 2.0x or Windows 95 (DOS).

* *LDS Collectors Library 1995 Edition*—An extensive collection of Mormon works critical to Book of Mormon studies, including early Mormon periodicals and journals. Folio for Windows UI with full search capabilities. *Collectors Library* lets users customize and search cross-references, bookmarks, and research notes. Users can access context-sensitive Help by pressing F1. Runs under Windows 3.1x or Windows 95.

---

1. Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think," originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1945 (when Bush directed the Office of Scientific Research and Development). The essay is available on the World Wide Web @ **http://www.isg.sfu.ca/~duchier/misc/vbush/.**

* *Sunstone on Disk: 1974-1994*—Ninety-four issues of *Sunstone* and twenty-seven issues of *Sunstone Review*, searchable in a Folio for DOS UI. Runs under DOS 2.0x or Windows 95 (DOS).

* *Ultimate LDS Library on CD-ROM*—A comprehensive library of Mormon sources that includes hypertext access to illustrations in works such as the Book of Abraham. WordCruncher for Windows UI with a powerful, efficient search engine. Customizable bookshelves let users arrange *LDS Library* contents to facilitate research needs. Runs under Windows 3.1x or Windows 95.

As useful as these resources are, users should always check electronic references against the original documents, especially if they intend to publish any quotations from these sources. I have discovered transcription errors ranging from transposed letters to omitted text.

Hypertext stands to blur nostalgic distinctions between reader and author because its design involves a myriad of conduits through which users can rapidly access and disseminate information. Imagine digital nonlinear texts—collaborative products—cultivating reader participation and contribution. Such texts, accessible via the Internet, challenge basic assumptions about language, learning, authorial-intent, reader-response, creativity, proprietorship, and the stability and autonomy of the academy.[2] Although electronic LDS resources have only begun to harness the possibilities of hypertext, their potential to alter the path of Book of Mormon studies is immense. Let me briefly illustrate.

Originally students of Mormon scripture laboriously combed through vast depositories of documents, culling relevant data such as when a Book of Mormon theme was first understood a certain way or what the implications are of Book of Mormon literary devices. Now complex queries such as these are more easily explored with the aide of hypertext tools.

---

2. There is a growing corpus of literature exploring hypertextuality. See Espen J. Aarseth, "Nonlinearity and Literary Theory," in George P. Landow, ed., *Hyper/Text/Theory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 51-86; Kathleen Burnett, "Toward a Theory of Hypertextual Design," *Postmodern Culture* 3 (Jan. 1993, **http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc**); J. Yellowlees Douglas, "'How Do I Stop This Thing': Closure and Indeterminacy in Interactive Narratives," in Landow, *Hyper/Text/Theory*, 159-88; Robert M. Fowler, "The Fate of the Canon in the Electronic Age," *Forum* 9 (Mar./June 1993): 151-72; Edward M. Jennings, "The Text Is Dead; Long Live the Techst," *Postmodern Culture* 2 (Jan. 1992, **http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc**); Michael Joyce, *Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); George P. Landow, "What's a Critic to Do? Theory in the Age of Hypertext," in Landow, *Hyper/Text/Theory*, 1-48; George P. Landow, *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Gunnar Liestøl, "Wittgenstien Genette, and the Reader's Narrative in Hypertext," in Landow, *Hyper/Text/Theory*, 87-120; Adrian Miles, "Hyperweb," *Postmodern Culture*, May 1996, **http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc**; Mireille Rosello, "The Screener's Maps: Michel de Certeau's 'Wandersmänner' and Paul Auster's Hypertextual Detective," in Landow, *Hyper/Text/Theory*, 121-58; Greg Ulmer, "Grammatology Hypermedia," *Postmodern Culture* 1 (Jan. 1991, **http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc**).

For example, in my essay "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity,"[3] I noted that some Book of Mormon students had incorrectly identified the *earliest* Mormon references to "Mahonri Moriancumer" and "Cumorah." BYU religion professor Kent P. Jackson had suggested that George Reynolds uttered the earliest reference to "Mahonri Moriancumer" in 1892. I cited sources from 1878 and 1874 that used "Mahonri Moriancumer" and one from 1835 that called Jared's brother "Moriancumer."[4] Yet using the search feature of an electronic LDS resource, I located within seconds an additional source that would have taken weeks—if not longer—to find. On 25 July 1868 Brigham Young told a Mill Creek congregation:

> You recollect reading of the brother of Jared, *Mahonri Moriancumer*, who saw the Lord. If he had not kept the commandments of God he would not have had power to see the finger of the Lord. But he was faithful in all things, and this gave *Mahonri* such exceeding great faith that he had a right to the blessings he asked. If we were to keep the commandments of God, as he did, we would have the right to claim the blessings even as *Mahonri* had.[5]

Similarly, Book of Mormon archeologist David A. Palmer and FARMS board member William J. Hamblin have claimed that Oliver Cowdery first christened the upstate New York hill "Cumorah" in 1835.[6] I cited a source from January 1833 in which William W. Phelps explicitly identified the New York drumlin as "Cumorah."[7] I located that reference after reading all Mormon periodicals published during Smith's lifetime. Again, using a hypertext resource, I discovered a reference that had escaped my attention. In February 1833 Phelps printed a hymn mentioning Cumorah:

> An angel came down from the mansions of glory,/ And told that a record was hid in *Cumorah*,/ .../ When you hear these glad tidings.// A heavenly treasure; a book full of merit;/ It speaks from the dust, by the power of the Spirit;/ .../ When you hear these glad tidings./ .../// .../ When you hear these glad tidings.[8]

Readers are reintroduced to Book of Mormon language through hypertext. Edgar C. Snow, for example, suggests that the phrase "or rather" (e.g., Alma 1:15; 53:10) was a corrective or reiterative literary device ("[statement] or rather [restatement]") used by Nephite writers because they lacked methods for erasing words on metallic plates.[9] Accordingly, "such

---

3. *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Fall 1993): 153-84.
4. Ibid., 159n20.
5. *Journal of Discourses*, 12:244, emphasis added.
6. Hamblin subsequently corrected this mistake.
7. *Evening and Morning Star* 1 (Jan. 1833): 8, cited in Metcalfe, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions," 160.
8. *Evening and Morning Star* 1 (Feb. 1833): 9, emphasis added. In an 1842 letter Smith gave a recital of early Mormon epiphanies, a portion of which echoes Phelps's phraseology: "And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment [sic] of the prophets—the book to be revealed" (D&C 128:20).
9. "Book of Mormon Musings: Reformed Egyptian Druthers," *Sunstone* 19 (Mar. 1996): 16-17. Snow omits an obvious way to "erase" words on metal: scratch them out.

grammatical backpedaling should not be viewed as a weakness; on the contrary, it should impress us with the skill of the authors in creating a complex document on metal—in apparently only one draft—with so few instances of grammatical back-pedaling [sic]."[10]

Hypertext offers a panoramic (re-) presentation of such literary phenomena; a search of "or rather" reveals that it appears once in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible (Gal. 4:9), twelve times in the Book of Mormon—ten of those in Alma[11]—and periodically in Joseph Smith's other writings.[12] A hypertext search also confirms that the phrase is one among several corrective or reiterative devices used in the Book of Mormon.

A closely related Book of Mormon literary device is "{or} in other words."[13] While a hypertext search reveals that this phrase is absent in the KJV, it appears repeatedly in Joseph Smith's texts. Smith uses the phrase in the Book of Mormon,[14] the Doctrine and Covenants (and parallels in the Book of Commandments),[15] the Joseph Smith (Bible) Revision,[16] the Lectures on Faith,[17] the Book of Abraham and its predecessor, the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar,[18] as well as his diary and private correspondence.[19]

Hypertextual data on "or rather" and "{or} in other words" elicits reader response. If ancient Nephites authored the literary devices, why are they almost never used by ancient Hebrew biblical writers? Why would these phrases be favored by diverse Book of Mormon authors over such an extended time period? If Smith authored the literary devices, in what way would Book of Mormon historic-

---

10. Snow, "Reformed," 17.

11. See Mosiah 7:8; 8:17; Alma 1:15; 2:34; 17:18; 30:9; 32:16; 36:14; 39:16; 50:32; 53:10; 54:5.

12. Joseph Smith to Silas Smith, 26 Sept. 1833, in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), 298; Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge et al., 30 Mar. 1834, in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 315; Lectures on Faith 5:5 (modern versification).

13. "[O]r rather" and "{or} in other words" are conflated in Alma 32:16: ". . . or rather, in other words . . ." Both phrases were used by other early nineteenth-century writers.

14. 1 Ne. preamble; 8:2; 10:4; 19:7; Mosiah 7:27; Alma 13:7; 32:16; 40:2; 40:19; 46:21; 48:15; 3 Ne. 3:6-7; 6:20.

15. D&C 10:17(//1830 Book of Mormon Preface); 42:37; 42:69; 42:74; 58:20; 59:13; 59:14; 61:23; 63:42; 78:8-9; 82:8-9; 82:17; 83:5; 88:127; 93:36; 93:45; 95:17; 101:12; 104:5; 104:68-69; 107:65-66; 128:8.

16. JSR Gen. 14:36; JSR Mark 9:3; JSR Luke 6:29; 14:26; 17:37; 23:32.

17. In Lectures scholars believe Smith authored. Lectures on Faith 5:5 (4 occurrences); 7:7 (3 occurrences).

18. Abr. Fac. 2:5; EAG, 29.

19. Joseph Smith Diary, 9 Nov. 1835, in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 75; Joseph Smith Diary, 17 Dec. 1835, in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 108; Joseph Smith to William Smith, 18 Dec. 1835 (Joseph Smith Diary), in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 114; Joseph Smith to William Phelps et al., 18 Aug. 1833, in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 285; Joseph Smith et al. to Hezekiah Peck, 31 Aug. 1835, in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 345; Joseph Smith to Caldwell county Mormons, 16 Dec. 1838, in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 375; Joseph Smith et al. to Quincy, Illinois, Mormons, 20 Mar. 1839, in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 403; Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, 22 Mar. 1839, in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 420.

ity remain intact? Was Smith then also author of the corrective or reiterative statements? If not, why not? If so, was he also author of the initial statements preceding "or rather"/"{or} in other words"? And isn't a corrective/reiterative literary device more conducive to an oral tradition—such as Smith audibly dictating the Book of Mormon—than a literary tradition—such as ancient Nephites arduously inscribing metallic plates? How readers will resolve this type of data depends on the methods and assumptions each is willing to embrace.

Precisely what effects hypertextual Book of Mormon study will engender remain to be seen—undoubtedly they will be profound. Book of Mormon students would be remiss if they failed to use LDS hypertextual tools.

Properties of Water

Nancy Baird

In the dark,
a cat will fly on rain-slicked blacktop
like a bat,
hydroplaning, flicking malevolence sideways
out of fluorescent eyes.

Nevertheless,
the streets will wash clean here,
as in the desert they never do

never have
except once
in visions, holy water
crept, silent as a shroud
down the steps of an altar,
seeped under an east gate like
smoke through a brass grate,
steadfastly claimed carved steps,
parched land,
salty sea,
washed them clean as fish.

From the air, islands are scaled,
silver and emerald, and beyond them
the great waters of the planet tip
like gleaming wings.
The seas roll on hidden reefs and
stream to the west
in shifting gold and indigo planes,
drawing in the racing light as a fistful
of sins, cleaned and clarified.

On this island in March,
the sea is vengeful
and murderous,
but the rain is steady on the back roads;
and on your flesh pours
a streaming second skin,
quicksilver, trailing as you run,
sloughing off your smallness;
for in Hana,
seven drops of rain
will fill your hand.

CONTRIBUTORS

DANIEL AUSTIN is a lawyer and professor of political science at Edinboro University, Edinboro, Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Wendy, who teaches composition and technical writing, have four children.

NANCY BAIRD was named Utah Poet of the Year in 1996 for her book *The Shell In Silk.* Her poems and essays have appeared in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Ellipsis,* and elsewhere. She lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

R. F. BARTHOLOMEW is the author of *Audacious Women: Early British Mormon Immigrants* and currently lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

DOUGLAS CAMPBELL is a professor of computer science at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

BRUCE CHILTON is Bernard Iddings Bell Professor of Religion at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. His *The Temple of Jesus* (Penn State Press, 1992) deals in greater detail with the topic discussed in "Jesus' Dispute in the Temple and the Origin of the Eucharist." He is the author of many other books, including *Beginning New Testament Study* (Eerdmans, 1987) and *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible* (Glazier, 1984).

TODD COMPTON holds a Ph.D. in classics from the University of California, Los Angeles, and is the author of *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Signature Books, 1996). He thanks Mark Thomas for his suggestions which greatly improved "Heaven and Hell: The Parable of the Loving Father and the Judgmental Son."

CLYDE R. FORSBERG, JR., holds a Ph.D. in American history from Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, where he has worked for the past two years as an adjunct assistant professor.

STANTON HARRIS HALL lives in Seattle, Washington, with his wife, Sharon. He is an orthodontist and teaches part time at the University of Washington. He is bishop of a young single adult ward in Seattle.

MEGAN THAYNE HEATH lives in El Paso, Texas.

DERK KOLDEWYN resides in North Salt Lake City, Utah, and manages Waldenbooks #1458 in Sandy, Utah. "Sister Dallon Gets Tattooed" is the first chapter in a novel-in-progress titled "Conspiracy Theories." It also won the 1993 Ann Doty Memorial Fiction Award at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

JAMES M. MCLACHLAN is an associate professor and chairs the philosophy and religion department at Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina. He is the author of *The Desire to Be God: Freedom and the*

Other in Sartre and Berdyaev and is working on a book on William H. Chamberlin's theology. He would appreciate any information readers might have on Chamberlin.

JOHN P. MEIER, a Catholic priest from New York City, is Professor of New Testament in the Department of Biblical Studies, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. He received his License (Master's) in theology at the Gregorian University in Rome and his doctorate in sacred scriptures at the Biblical Institute in Rome. He is the author of numerous articles and books, most recently volumes one and two of a trilogy on the historical Jesus entitled *A Marginal Jew.* "The Miracles of Jesus: Three Basic Questions for the Historian" is a revised version of a lecture delivered at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California, on 31 October 1994.

CASUALENE MEYER holds an M.A. degree in English from Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and a Ph.D. degree in English (creative writing) from the University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg. She lives in Purvis, Mississippi, with her husband, son and five horses.

LEVI S. PETERSON, a professor of English at Weber State University, Ogden, Utah, is the author of *The Canyons of Grace, The Backslider, Juanita Brooks: Mormon Woman Historian, Night Soil,* and *Aspen Marooney.* "Lavina Fielding Anderson and the Power of a Church in Exile" was delivered at the 1995 Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, Utah, in a session on "Saints for All Seasons: Lavina Fielding Anderson and Bernard Shaw's Joan of Arc."

VINCENT C. RAMPTON is a practicing attorney in Salt Lake City, Utah, father of six children, and a counselor in the Parley's Fourth Ward bishopric.

KARL C. SANDBERG is DeWitt Wallace Professor Emeritus at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

PAUL SWENSON's first published poem appeared in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* in fall 1993. His work has since appeared in *Quarterly West, The Crossroads Anthology, Ellipsis, Weber Studies, Wasatch Review International,* and *Etudes.*

EMMA LOU THAYNE is the author of *Things Happen: Poems of Survival* and lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

MARK D. THOMAS, scriptural studies editor for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,* is an investment banker with Progressive Capital in Lynnwood, Washington. He also serves as a founding director of the Mormon Studies Seminar, a non-profit organization devoted to Mormon scriptures and theology.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I believe in the emotional power of the arts whether positive or negative. I am an idealist and am concerned with the potential that art has for the good. The negative in our world is obvious and ubiquitous; it is tiresomely exploited and constantly confronts our awareness in the arts. Art with a message of hope, peace, and faith is what I want to create.

My latest work is about gardens or oases as places of rest, rejuvenation, and contemplation for the viewer and traveler. In our mortal sojourn, those places where we find solace and refuge from the opposition and apparent barrenness of the world can be literal or figurative, physical or mental, real or imagined. After a trial or a test of our beliefs, we are given a gift of renewal; we return to a restored home or a new home. These places of peace can be found or we can create them.

In some paintings I use collaged maps to represent guides for our life journeys. We use maps, guides, charts - literally and figuratively - to navigate our way, finding solace along the way in the peaceful and the sublime.

Although the work contains many personal symbolisms, I hope it also has a degree of universality in that people from many divergent beliefs can sense the emotion and meaning that come from my art. My goal is to seek after and produce work that is virtuous, lovely, praiseworthy and of good report. Hopefully it will play a positive role in the lives of those who view it.

—Ron Richmond

PAINTINGS

Front : "The Secrets," 70"x 42" oil/canvas, 1995
Back : "Altar I," 36"x 36" oil/board, 1995
p. *x*: "By Day," 36"x 36" oil, collage/board, 1994
p. 29: "Nativity," 44"x 36" oil/board, 1995
p. 46: "Close and Hard to Grasp," 48"x48" oil, collage/canvas, 1995
p. 87: "Navigation V," 32"x 36" oil, collage/board, 1995
p. 136: "Grove," 54"x 66" oil/canvas, 1994
p. 168: "Grove III," 70"x 70" oil, collage/canvas, 1995

PHOTOGRAPGHS OF ARTWORK COURTESY OF DOLORES CHASE FINE ARTS

DIALOGUE
A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

P. O. BOX 658
SALT LAKE CITY, UT, 84110-0658

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SALT LAKE CITY, UT
PERMIT NO. 4559