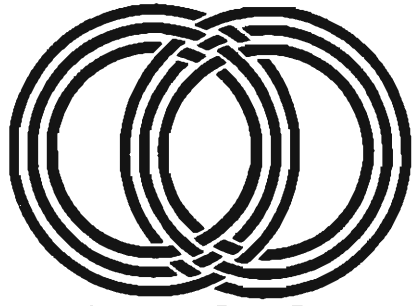
DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT



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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.

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The Price of Money

Re-reading an old issue (vol. 20, no. 4, winter 1996), I went through the long article by Bruce Chilton, entitled "Jesus' Dispute in the Temple and the Origin of the Eucharist." There is much detail about what went on in this ancient, magnificent temple (King Herod's "sop" to the Jews—remember, he was an uncircumcised Idumean), and the article explains the temple tax and the reason for the money changers. Chilton mentions that the adult Diaspora Jews also had to pay the annual ½ shekel head tax, and he also mentions Jesus' approval of, and worship in, the temple.

Despite all this, he seems to have completely missed the point of Jesus' outrage and of his tipping over the tables of the money changers. Since only Jewish coins without a "graven image" were acceptable for temple tax, all other coinage had to be exchanged—as today visitors from foreign countries have to convert their money into dollars when they visit and spend in the USA. And also just as today, exchange rates varied daily, and those who exchanged the monies did so for a fee. In a monopoly exchange such as existed in the temple, the temptation to make a "good profit" was apparently irresistible. Jesus' anger at the money changers was not for the legitimate religious exchange of money, but for making the temple "a den of thieves," making huge profits and, essentially, stealing from the worshippers. Insight into this situation gives the event pertinent meaning for us in our day.

Lew W. Wallace
San Gabriel, California.

Rationalizing with Class

I recently read "My 'Word of Wisdom Blues'" by Garth N. Jones (*Dialogue* 30, no. 2). While it is not true that every Mormon who argues against the "Word of Wisdom" is trying to rationalize his or her own sins, that's the way the smart money bets. Just go into an Alcoholics Anonymous or Overeaters Anonymous meeting, and you will hear Brother Jones's Story from those who are on the road to recovery, but have not quite caught the vision. What I liked about Brother Jones's version was that he said it so well. The very smart and well educated have much better arguments to justify their actions.

Richard F. Mittleman
Rancho Santa Margarita,
California

Oh! and one more thing . . .

The Winter 1997 *Dialogue* (vol. 30, no. 4) contains my essay "Joseph Smith's Emendation of Hebrew Genesis 1:1." I recently stumbled upon some further evidence that relates to the arguments I made there. On page 28 of The Gospel Kingdom, John Taylor wrote the following:

> What shall we say then, to make Moses', Jesus', and Peter's words true? We will say that Jesus Christ had a father and mother of his spirit, and a father and mother of his flesh; and so have all of his brethren and sisters: and that is one reason why he said, "ye are Gods"; or that Isaiah prophesied: "Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it to-

gether" (Isaiah 41:23). In fact, "the gods," in old times, was common intelligence. Satan, in his first sectarian sermon to Adam and Eve, told them if they would eat of the forbidden fruit, they should become as "gods," knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5). This is not all: the first line of Genesis, purely translated from the original, excluding the first Baith (which was added by the Jews), would read: Rosheit (the head) baurau (brought forth), Elohim (the Gods) ate (with) hah-shaumahyiem (the heavens) ueh-ate (and with) hauaurates (the earth). In simple English, the Head brought forth the Gods, with the heavens and with the earth. The "Head" must have meant the "living God," or Head God: Christ is our head. The term Elohim, plural of Elohah, or ale, is used alike in the first chapter of Genesis for the creation, and the quotation of Satan. In the second chapter, and fourth verse, we have this remarkable history: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were brought forth; in the day that the Lord of the Gods made earth and heavens." The Hebrew reads so.

There is no way of knowing whether this articulation reflects Taylor's original understanding of Joseph Smith's treatment or a view that he developed over time.

In general this statement is consistent with my thesis. It shows that John Taylor knew some Hebrew. It also suggests that his knowledge of Hebrew was rudimentary. That Taylor felt comfortable giving an articulation of the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1 that was influenced by, but varied from, Smith's is certainly consistent with my theory that Taylor played an important role in shaping the way Thomas Bullock portrayed Smith's treatment of that text.

Taylor's statement also suggests a possible modification to one of the arguments I made in my article. In order to grasp fully what Taylor is saying here, we need to walk through his statement carefully. He begins by saying that, just as Jesus Christ had a father and mother in the flesh, so also Jesus was begotten of a divine father and born of a divine mother in the spirit. The same is true of all of us. This establishes the context in which Taylor will use Hebrew Genesis 1:1. Following a couple of scriptural quotations illustrating the plural use of 'elohim, he then turns to Genesis 1:1 itself.

He begins by following Smith in dropping the preposition (the "first Baith") as having been added by the Jews. The first Hebrew word he recites as "Rosheit," which he translates as "the head." Interestingly, he does not give the Hebrew as "Rosh," but retains the termination, as we saw Clayton and Bullock do in the original manuscript reports. (I had argued that the traditional assumption that the termination should be deleted is wrong.)

Taylor clearly understands the verb "baurau" (given with the proper Seixas transliteration) as meaning "brought forth," and the object "Elohim" as meaning "the Gods." His solution for connecting these words to the remainder of Genesis 1:1 is to understand the word 'et not as an accusative particle marking the direct object, but as a conjunction meaning "with." (Hebrew does have a conjunction 'et that is identical in form to the direct object marker 'et.) His simple English rendering is "the Head brought forth the Gods, with the heavens and with the earth."

In the next sentence he states that

the "Head" must have meant the "living God" or Head God, and then notes that "Christ is our head." The meaning of this sentence is not clear. When I first read it, I thought he was saying that the "Head" is Christ, which struck me as odd. Upon rereading, however, I noticed that Christ is our (lower case) "head," apparently distinguishing him from the Head God. This sentence seems to be a reflection of the hierarchical conception of the Gods that was common in the latter half of the 19th century. Therefore, presumably the Head is either God the Father or, possibly, a God senior to the Father in the hierarchical conception. Finally, he quotes Genesis 2:4, which he calls a "remarkable history."

After sifting through all of this, I believe that Taylor understood bara' as a verb referring to an act of creation in a special sense: that of siring or bringing forth spirit children. He renders the verb as "brought forth" (wording from the King Follet discourse), but understands that verb to mean "to beget" or "to bear." I would understand Taylor's "the Head brought forth the Gods" as meaning that a divine father begat and a divine mother conceived and bore the spirits of Jesus Christ and of all his brethren and sisters.

I reach this conclusion based on three considerations: First, the first half of the second sentence, which we have already suggested establishes the context of this discussion. Second, the final two sentences, which quote Genesis 2:4 and describe the passage as "remarkable." What is remarkable about it? Taylor understands the KJV's (King James Version's) "the LORD God" as "the Lord of the Gods," but such 'elohim passages were common (Taylor himself had just quoted two of them) and not particularly remarkable. I believe Taylor was focusing on the first part of the verse: "the generations of the heavens and the earth, when they were brought forth." Taylor gives his rendering "brought forth" for a niphal (passive) form of bara', which is translated "created" in the KJV. I suggest that what particularly struck Taylor here was the word "generations" (Hebrew toledot), which is usually used to refer to families in human genealogies. The Hebrew literally says "these are the begettings of heaven and earth." Taylor replaced the KJV "created" with his own "brought forth" to emphasize this generative principle. Presumably, he recognized this as metaphorical in the case of the creation of heaven and earth, but I submit that he perceived it as literal in the case of the "Gods" (that is, the antemortal spirit children of the Head).

Third is the support for this idea Taylor may have found in the work of the famed Hebrew lexicographer Wilhelm Gesenius, whose writings may have been known and used by some of the early brethren. On page 139 of the Gesenius lexicon I cited in my article, Gesenius gives one possible meaning of the verb bara' as "to beget." He gives no examples in the qal (active) verb stem, although he does point to the late Hebrew word bar "son." In the niphal (passive), however, he gives several examples, including Ezekiel 28:13 and Psalm 104:30.

Thus, I would understand Taylor's simple English rendering of Hebrew Genesis 1:1 as follows: "The Head brought forth the Gods [by begetting them; by literally siring them], with the heavens and with the earth

[by begetting in a metaphorical sense only]."

I had suggested on page 127 of my article that Taylor was essentially forced into understanding bara' as the verb "brought forth" simply because there did not appear to be another verb available. The statement analyzed above suggests another possibility: that Taylor understood bara' in not only a creative but a generative sense, and so to him "brought forth" as an English translation of bara' was perfectly appropriate.

While this statement offers a refinement to our understanding of Taylor's approach to the verse, it does not appear to add anything meaningful to our knowledge of Smith's treatment of Hebrew Genesis 1:1 (although Smith presumably would have approved of Taylor's reading as a conceptual matter had he known of it). Smith understood the Hebrew verb bara' as meaning "to organize," and the English verb "brought forth" in the sense of a call to assembly, as shown by his adding "in the grand council" to his initial clause ("the head one/heads of the Gods brought forth the Gods"). I see no evidence that Smith understood either verb in a generative sense. That Taylor is interpreting Hebrew Genesis 1:1 in his own fashion is shown by his independent treatment of 'et as a conjunction where Smith clearly treated that word as an accusative particle (taking "the heavens" and "the earth" as objects of the verb "organize").

The evidence described above, while suggesting a modification to my argument, supports my thesis that John Taylor substantially influenced the way Thomas Bullock portrayed Joseph Smith's treatment of Hebrew in the King Follett discourse, and that Taylor misunderstood the details of that treatment.

Kevin L. Barney
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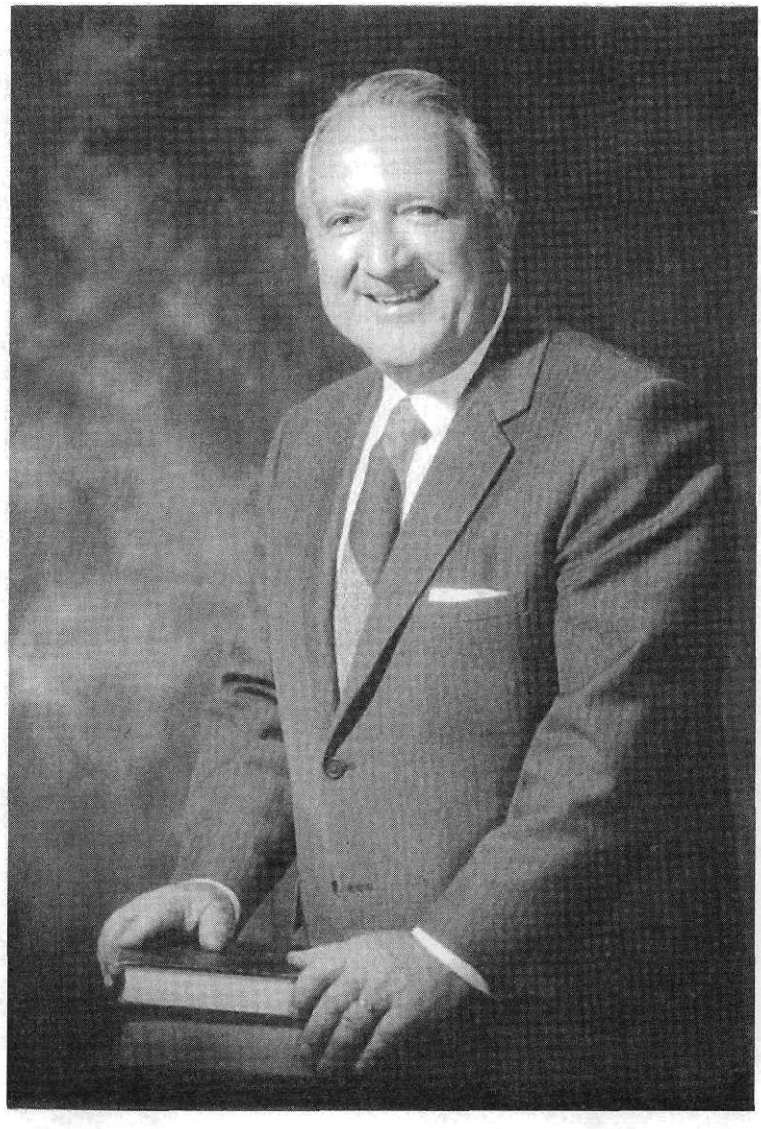

Leonard J. Arrington: Reflections on a Humble Walk

Maureen Ursenbach Beecher

HISTORY ITSELF—AND HISTORIANS IN PARTICULAR—will for years to come continue to assess the importance of Leonard J. Arrington to Mormon and western thought. From 1972, when he was appointed Church Historian, to his retirement as a member of the faculty of Brigham Young University in 1997, I worked with Leonard as editor, researcher, and writer, one of a staff which ranged between eight and fourteen in the production of the history of the Latter-day Saints. Elsewhere, notably in his recent autobiography, *Adventures of a Church Historian*,[1] is recounted the administrative circumstances under which we worked. Here I offer my own immediate and personal perspective on the man, cameos, if you will, or film clips—moments observed and experienced in the life of this man, who was both a keystone and lodestar to the scholars and thinkers of Mormondom.

Because Leonard was always busy with his various projects, speeches, articles, books, and administrative necessities, and because of his innate modesty, he seldom took time to share with his staff at the History Division the philosophical underpinnings of his faith and work. So for our own celebration of a particular event in Mormon history, we invited him to "preach us a sermon." The place was significant—the top of Ensign Peak, just north of Salt Lake's Temple Square. By its pyramidal shape Brigham Young had recognized the valley as "the right place"; thence he had brought his intimates of the Twelve just days after their arrival, not merely for a better perspective of the territory, but to thank God in the true order and to endow one of their number who had missed the opportunity in the Nauvoo temple. Recently a path to the peak has been paved, but at the time we went, access was up a steep trail made rugged

1. Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

by spring run-off gulleys and sliding stones. Leonard struggled his way up with the rest of us younger staff, and there he revealed to us his thoughts on the role of the historian in interpreting to the Church and to the world the sacred history of the Latter-day Saints. We sat, literally and figuratively, at his feet, disciples to his leadership.

I don't remember so much what he said on that occasion. What remains for me as though encapsulated in that moment are the values he espoused, the faith which motivated him, and the devotion he brought to the writing of Mormon history.

All his life, every opportunity that presented itself, Leonard turned into an education. Tending chickens became study of the economics of the poultry industry; shoveling "gold dust," as he called the dung from the cow barn, to earn his way through college fed his curiosity about agricultural economics; and questions about his own religious background took over his life until he could answer them in what became his doctoral dissertation and *Great Basin Kingdom*, standard work on Mormon life and history for a quarter of a century. Four hundred articles and twenty-odd books later, Leonard still honored his rural beginnings. In retrospect, he seems a genetic and environmental anomaly. Not that his parents were unintelligent, nor his growing up less than enriching—but what are the odds that a child, third of eleven, on a poor farm in Idaho will develop into the intellectual center point of a society of ten million people?

From the beginning of my work with this Idaho chicken farmer, I regarded him with a mixture of awe and delight. Leonard refused titles of honor or regard and observed hierarchical protocol only when it would serve the advancement of the History Division. "Call me Leonard," he would say to anyone he met. "How shall I answer the phone?" I asked as I filled in for a secretary not yet hired. "'Dr. Arrington's office'? 'Brother Arrington's office'? 'Office of the Church Historian'?" "Just say 'Leonard Arrington's office,'" he compromised. Then as I was leaving for the day, he answered the phone himself: "Millard Fillmore," he intoned with a wink to me.

"All chiefs and no Indians," complained the Church's personnel department of our history division. Leonard's style of leadership was so democratic as to be near anarchy. Each of his staff worked at his or her own pace on projects we had chosen ourselves—with his approval, of course—and made regular reports, not only to him, but to each other in staff gatherings around his desk. Perched on the arm of the tan vinyl sofa or leaning against Leonard's ample bookcases, we would discuss each other's research, sharing files and findings, and adding to our mutual understanding. It was revelation to me, coming from academia where scholars' research notes are their well-guarded stock in trade, to see the cross-fertilization which Leonard fostered among Mormon historians. Of

all Leonard Arrington's legacies, that commitment to sharing and enrichment of research and scholarship might well be the most lasting. It didn't matter to him what persuasion researchers brought to the work. LDS, RLDS, and non-LDS scholars—as long as they were honest and fair and diligent in their efforts—would receive liberally of his time, his ideas, his files, and his monetary resources.

And all with good humor. If the eleventh commandment reads, "Thou shalt not take thyself too seriously," Leonard obeyed it along with all the others. His weight, for instance. A delivery person brought a pile of white pastry boxes past our desks and into Leonard's office one summer afternoon. Immediately he called us in for what we assumed would be another staff meeting. "I just topped off two hundred pounds," he exulted, "so celebrate with me." Whereupon he opened the boxes to reveal chocolate pies, his favorite, and served huge pieces to us all.

Promoting a more responsible telling of the Mormon story by church magazines and manuals, Leonard and his senior staff met weekly with editors, gently leading them to more scholarly reporting. He persuaded them first to allow footnotes in historical and theological articles; then to admit that Joseph Smith's and Brigham Young's poor spelling had nothing to do with anything that mattered, so we could publish their holographs; then to let the unspoken be said: polygamy, law of adoption, varying accounts of the first vision. Under his patient coaxing, the editors grew in their faith that the Mormon story, taken whole, warts and all, was a splendid story deserving to be told honestly and openly.

Leonard had a lively sense of fairness. It was not just to keep me on task as editor that he challenged the LDS church employment policy against hiring mothers of small children. I was pregnant and had been warned that I would lose my job the moment my baby was born. Carefully Leonard campaigned, first to make an exception for me and then to change the policy permanently in order that mothers and fathers, not personnel officers, make the decision about the mother's employment. He won. My Jane Doe case overturned a policy discriminatory against women. Leonard's sense of justice was satisfied.

Not that Leonard was a feminist—at least not at first. It was the accuracy of his reading of the documents, not the mode of the day, which led him to include in his histories women and their activities alongside men and theirs. Leonard anticipated the coming into being of women's history by publishing in 1955 an outline of women's contributions to the economy of Mormon communities. His famous "Blessed Damozels" piece in the pink Dialogue[2] and the dedication "To Leonard Arrington: he takes

2. Arrington, "Blessed Damozels: Women in Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1971): 22-31.

us seriously" in *Mormon Sisters*,[3] the book which marked the beginning of the new Mormon women's history, identified him early with the feminist cause.

Refining his thinking was a constant with Leonard. Like the time during general conference when one of the members of the Twelve had devoted his address to well-worn platitudes "honoring" women. "Wasn't that wonderful?" Leonard enthused to Jill Mulvay and me at our desks the next morning. In unison we blurted, "No, Leonard, it wasn't." Without hesitating, Leonard plunked himself into a chair and demanded an explanation. In stereo, Jill and I, both his juniors and his subordinates, lectured our boss on the damage done to women by just such paternalism.

I wonder if we who have so richly benefitted from Leonard's generous sharing of himself realize our debt to Grace and their children and later to his second wife Harriet, who were perforce deprived of his time with them. Saturdays spent in the Church Archives turning page after page of the Journal History are lost to children who might have wished their father at home.

Not that Leonard neglected his children. All three, James, Carl, and Susan, told in funeral remarks of his attentions to them. Tenaciously eager that every kid get all the opportunities, he coached baseball. "Run 'er down, Carl-waynie," he would call to encourage his second son.[4] James, his first-born, was a young Laurence Olivier in his father's eyes, though James recounted to us that he knew of the arrival of his parents for his San Francisco opening as King Lear when, on his entrance in the role of that demanding old man, he heard a muffled chuckle from the fifth row center. Theirs was an intensely loyal family. Ever in my mind is the memory of Leonard, sitting in the mourner's bench at Grace's funeral, hardly waiting through the last "Amen" to rush to the rostrum and embrace his pregnant daughter Susan in tears at her mother's passing. Decorum be darned—his Susa-belle needed comforting, and so did he.

There was in Leonard, however, one selfishness which endured to the end. His core optimism would not permit him to share, even with his most intimate friends and colleagues, his deepest concerns for the office and the task of Church Historian. He would come back from meetings or conferences, call us together, and tell us whatever laudatory comments he had heard of our work. Criticisms, whether justified or not, he kept to himself. During the last years of Camelot—that golden decade so named by Davis Bitton for the opening of the archives of the Church and the minds of the Saints—Leonard faded noticeably. We saw it happening, but

3. Claudia Bushman, ed., *Mormon Sisters* (Cambridge, MA: Emmeline Press, 1976), 25-41.
4. Funeral Address by Carl Wayne Arrington, Hyde Park, Utah, 17 February 1999.

were basically ignorant of the exact situation, and powerless to forestall the inevitable. Even his wife Grace, whom Leonard loved with a story-book passion, was no sharer in those heavy secrets. We watched her weaken and die, a seeming sacrifice to the cause. "My heart is breaking for Dad," she wrote to their son Carl in 1980 as the former holder of the office of Church Historian, sustained by the body of the church in the 1972 general conference, was renamed simply director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute and then transferred to BYU as a professor of history. "The Church Historian is dead."[5] Grace never sent the letter—she, too, had learned to carry her burdens unaided.

My last letter from Leonard Arrington, written just before he died,[6] closed with, "I've been ill for a while but trying to get better." You dear and splendid man, I thought then, how could you possibly be any better? No one of my acquaintance answers better Micah's rhetorical definition of the righteous person: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

Walk on, Leonard. You have shown the way. We follow.

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5. Grace Arrington to Carl Wayne Arrington, 16 October 1980, photocopy courtesy Susan Arrington Madsen.

6. Leonard Arrington to Maureen Beecher, 27 January1999, in author's possession.

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Scriptural Chastity Lessons: Joseph and Potiphar's Wife; Corianton and the Harlot Isabel

B. W. Jorgensen

I'M GOING TO RISK starting with an impression I will not try to document but suspect many Mormons would share: that in the church, when we attempt to teach chastity to youth (say in Sunday School, Aaronic Priesthood, Young Women, Seminary, BYU and Institute religion classes), the two prime scriptural examples we use are the story of Joseph in Egypt, resisting and fleeing the lustful wife of Potiphar (Gen. 39: esp. 7-12), and the story of Alma's wayward missionary son Corianton, or rather his father's exhortation to Corianton (Al. 39-42, esp. 39:3-14).[1]

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1. For the Potiphar episode, I will use the text of the King James or Authorized Version (AV), since that is the standard version in LDS discussion, with occasional glances at the Revised English Bible (REB). Use of this episode of the Joseph story as an example of chastity has very ancient roots; James Kugel's *In Potiphar's House* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), which I consulted late in my fourth draft, briefly traces how "the adulterous proposal of Potiphar's wife, and Joseph's virtuous refusal to cooperate, came to loom larger and larger in the imagination" of "ancient readers" (22) through several apocryphal texts (21-26) before taking up "narrative expansions" of the story in rabbinic midrash.

I deliberately wrote the first two drafts of this essay without referring to any secondary sources to see what I could say; I wanted as innocent or unsponsored or uncontaminated a reading as I could manage. I knew that Reynolds Price's translation in *A Palpable God* (New York: Atheneum, 1978; San Francisco: North Point, 1985) had aroused my suspicion that this was a more complicated story than our didactic uses of it acknowledged; but I also found when I reviewed Robert Alter's discussion in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981) that I had assimilated several of his specific readings; I'd consciously emulated his method and practice of close reading, especially his attention to the relation of dialogue and narration. For this draft of my essay, besides Price, Alter, and Kugel, I have consulted com-

I mean to question whether either of these instances is simply about chastity; this should not necessarily defeat their usefulness as examples in discussions of chastity, but it will complicate that usefulness and may enlarge it in surprising ways.

For the first thing to say is that neither Joseph's nor Corianton's story is unambiguously or simply a story about keeping or breaking what we call "the law of chastity," though clearly enough, each story does have something to do with what we call chastity.

* * *

In the case of Joseph, notice first the terms in which he initially refuses Potiphar's wife's plea (or does she hope he will take it as a command?), "Lie with me" (39:7). He says:

> Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;
> there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? (8-9)

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mentaries or translations in the following sources: David Rosenberg, trans., *The Book of J*, interpreted by Harold Bloom (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990); E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1964); Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985).

My understanding of St. Augustine's sense of "lust of the eyes" in Book 10 of his *Confessions*, trans. John K. Ryan (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), partly prompted my re-reading of the exhortation to Corianton; but, aside from confirming my sense of the doctrinal prooftext use of Alma 39:5 with glances into the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), Joseph F. Smith's *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1939, 1986), Joseph Fielding Smith's *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), and Spencer W. Kimball's *Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), I have not consulted any secondary sources on Alma 39-42. I suspect that a review of, say, all LDS General Authority references to the passage might prove hugely redundant. Yet by the time of the third draft of my essay, thanks to a suggestion from my colleague Richard Cracroft, I'd seen that B. H. Roberts, in his operatic short novel *Corianton* (1888-89, 1902), portrays Corianton as thinking to convert Isabel at one point in the plot; Roberts's fictionalization of the story, though it has most of the faults and few of the virtues of nineteenth-century fiction (and after all, it is a "first novel"), works out a rather ingenious and plausible interpretive intertwining of the Korihor story, the Zoramite mission, and Corianton's sin. It might be both interesting and useful for someone to trace the history of interpretations of Corianton's sin in Mormon discourse. Roberts himself may be responsible for popularizing the view that Corianton did fornicate (not very successfully) with Isabel, who, in Roberts's story, quickly grows bored with the virginal young man and then reveals more sinister motives for her involvement. For a helpful summary and (in my view, too encomiastic) discussion of Roberts's *Corianton*, see Richard H. Cracroft, "The Didactic Heresy as Orthodox Tool: B. H. Roberts as Writer of Home Literature," in *Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature*, ed. Eugene England and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1996): 125-30.

Undeniably, Joseph regards what she invites him to do as "great wickedness" that would lead him to "sin against God."[2] Joseph doesn't make any explicit appeal to a code of chastity[3] (at least not to chastity as a form of personal purity), though of course he may well understand that such a code applies to the act she has proposed and he is refusing; the wife may not think or admit that it does apply, and his answer to her may show he knows this by appealing to a code he hopes will matter to her. Notice, then, the grounds he does make explicit: he is a servant or slave ("bought" as we've already learned in 39:1), though he has risen to a personal attendant (39:4: "he served him") and then "overseer" (39:4) or top slave; his master has "committed all that he hath to [Joseph's] hand" and has not "kept back any thing from [Joseph] but [her], because [she is] his wife." Whether or not he tacitly judges the situation in terms of a chastity code, vocally he judges it in terms of a master-slave relationship, and in terms of what "things" among the master's property have been committed to the slave's hand; perhaps quite literally, what things he may and may not touch.[4] For a slave to touch property which the master has not "committed to" the slave's hand may well be, to Joseph, "great wicked-

2. I take "sin" as a verb here since that creates a dual predicate of balanced parallel phrases, rather than a dual direct object with unbalanced and non-parallel phrases; but perhaps the preference does not matter much. Speiser translates the last phrase here as "stand condemned before God" (301); Rosenberg, as "show contempt for the gods" (125); in both cases the concluding predicate seems a result or culmination, not a restatement, of the preceding statements: to violate these conditions of slave status and property would offend deity; von Rad (365) emphasizes that Joseph's ethical appeal is ultimately God-centered. "God" represents the Hebrew plural *elohim*, hence Rosenberg's quite literal English plural. Speiser (303) notes that here, instead of the name Yahweh (or its substitute Adonai), the term "God" is used apparently because Joseph is addressing an Egyptian; again, Rosenberg's plural seems validated, though Speiser does not explain his preference for the capitalized English singular.

3. Kugel discusses the "rabbinic commonplace" (100-101) that the patriarchs, including Joseph, anachronistically studied the Torah before the law was given on Sinai, so that Joseph here may be understood as referring to the commandment against adultery, which he had learned from his father.

4. Bloom calls Joseph's "grounds" here "essentially pragmatic" (230). Even von Rad, who finds "God" the final and central term of Joseph's appeal, also emphasizes his appeal to "universal human decency which is unwilling to break a trust" (365). Alter notes the repetitions of "master" by both Joseph and the narrator (109), again stressing the issues of slave status, property, and trust. None of these commentators will reduce the situation to the application of a single moral rule (unless that rule is trust). Which is not to suggest that any single moral rule (any, that is, which did apply) would not have saved at least some part of the situation. Still, it's worth noting, too, that Joseph's verbal appeal to ethical standards fails utterly to change the wife's behavior for the better. It's possible that she does not really arouse sexual temptation in Joseph—she may be much older, unappealing to him in various ways, so although she clearly invites sex, he need not be so inclined. Our notion that he consciously meets and resists sexual temptation is very much our own option, not strongly obliged by the text.

ness" and thus a way to "sin against God." I believe (though I'm not prepared now to document) that in the ancient world, such would be the case; the little I know about the ancient gods (the Hellenic ones; I don't know the Egyptians) suggests that one class of things that would offend them would be a servant's disobedience or transgression of the limits of his stewardship under his master. I'm not aware of any texts pre-dating Joseph that would clarify the Hebrew God's attitude in these matters.

The least the text obliges us to say, I think, is that, though he is young and apparently inexperienced with women (sexually, I assume, but more importantly, morally and psychologically), and though as the outcome will show, he is seriously unprepared to deal with this particular woman, Joseph does grasp the situation as something more complex than simply the choice to "lie with" or not to "lie with" a woman who does not belong to him; he sees the situation as something more than that, or even as something other than that, a risk of transgressing his status as a servant and the limits that places on what he can do with his master's property. He may be wrong, of course; but that would oblige us to show how we know, from this text, that he is wrong. I think he's at least partly right, though again, he doesn't know enough, isn't shrewd enough, to gauge what this woman's response will be (nor do we, until we put it together, too late). The least this text, so far, obliges us to say about it as an example of chastity preserved is that the protagonist grasps his situation in other terms and in a more complicated way than we do when we use his story as an example in support of keeping the law of chastity. That might give us pause. It might provoke us to think harder about how the scriptures invite us to think about, and to act in, human situations.

What else might give us pause must be that, for Joseph, the issue of sexual right and wrong in his situation seems to be an issue of property, of what "things" are committed to the servant's hand and what "things" are not. It must at least slightly trouble us that Joseph's speech seems almost to locate the woman among the other "things," "all that [Potiphar] hath." Is chastity finally and fundamentally an issue of property? and specifically of which man a woman is the property?[5] Joseph's speech does distinguish the woman from the rest of Potiphar's property, singled out as not left in his hand "because thou art his wife." But that will not make either of these questions go away: the woman may be, at most, a special (and in Potiphar's case, since he seems not to keep a harem, singular) *kind* or *item* of property. These are questions I do not hope to answer but cannot help raising, since Joseph himself provokes them in his explicit, if inadequate, grasp of his situation. Again I emphasize: the

5. von Rad comments rather extensively on ancient Israelite and pagan views of adultery, which permitted masculine sexual relations with concubines, slaves, or captives but required absolute fidelity of women to their husbands. He stresses the "proprietary" view of pagan cultures, but acknowledges a similar element in the Israelite view as well (365).

scriptural story, looked at even slightly more closely, is more complicated than our use of it to illustrate the application of a single moral criterion.

Uses of Joseph's story as a chastity lesson generally, I believe, stop at verse 12, when the young hero has "fled, and got him out" ("go ye and do likewise," we tell the youth), though the lessons often go on to suggest that his chastity must be a factor in his later success, a loyalty to divine law that keeps "the Lord . . . with Joseph" (39:21).[6] I didn't think of this in my youth, but lately it has come to seem somewhat ironic that chastity lessons using Joseph don't go on to note the immediate consequence which might have troubled the young man: his adherence to divine law lands him in jail (actually a light punishment[7]); or to put it in terms closer to those of his own story, which it might be hard for him to ignore, once again he's stripped and in the pit.[8] The first time it was his brothers' envy and resentful anger; this time it is his master's wife's lust and resentful anger, but the ends are much the same. Of course, though it takes a while and costs one man's life, Joseph's prison term does lead to his great chance to interpret Pharaoh's dreams successfully and thus rise once again, this time to become "ruler over all the land of Egypt" (41:42-43). And Joseph might well regard any hole in the ground that gets him out of the Potiphar household as a step up. But I'm getting ahead of the story.

What Robert Alter calls "Joseph's longwinded statement of morally aghast refusal" (72) has failed, and Potiphar's wife goes on "day by day" to speak to Joseph,[9] but "he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her" (39:10). Here, "hearkened not" may recognize an aspect of command as well as a plea in her bluntly reiterated "lie with me."[10] (That way of putting it, by the way, might be a Jacobean translator's euphemism, as the Revised English Bible's "come, make love to me" seems a modern euphemism for the Jacobean one. A contemporary seductress

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6. Alter contrasts this episode with the tale of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 as "a tale of seeming defeat and ultimate triumph through sexual continence" (10), though his later discussion of the episode (107-11) does not stress simply that view of it.

7. Speiser, 304; von Rad, 366-7.

8. Alter (111) notes this ironic parallel.

9. Speiser reads "cajoled" (301) but notes the literal "spoke to" (303); von Rad reads "spoke to" (363); Alter, "coaxed" (108); Rosenberg, "appeal to" (125). It seems best to be scrupulously literal here, as the AV, von Rad, and Price (128) are; the neutral tone of "spoke to" may be a touch of characterization, the wife either not pressing Joseph with intemperate lust, or strategically maintaining a temperate manner until she finds the right moment, or varying the terms of her appeal, or sometimes not appealing (sexually) at all. The neutrality of the J writer here and elsewhere allows a complex range of possibilities and invites our active, constructive, and self-revealing guesses.

10. Alter notes that "the brevity of [her] sexual proposition" may suggest "the peremptory tone she feels she can assume toward her Hebrew slave" (73)—momentarily ignoring that he is not *her* slave, and that this fact, together with her imperative tone, suggests the triangular struggle of which Joseph is only partly aware.

might try to put the point across minimalistically with just two words of one syllable.[11]) The shift from her "lie with" to the narrator's "lie by" may suggest the kinds of occasions he avoided, once warned by her first frank request: reclining near her for meals or conversation, when she might have asked for the pleasure of his company (for "be with her" the REB reads "be in her company").[12] At any rate, given a favorable opportunity, when Joseph, instead of avoiding her, "went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within" (11), she tries one last time. The empty house seems to fulfill Joseph's earlier words, "my master wotteth not what is with me in the house" (8), and she seizes the moment by laying a hand on the master's property. Or almost: ". . . she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me" (12). The gestures that accompany her "lie with me" here and earlier contrast sharply: the first time, she "cast her eyes on Joseph"; here there is no look, no attempt to meet eyes, only grabbing, and we may accordingly hear "lie with me" in quite different tones.[13] Is "garment" here a general term for a Hebrew word the translators cannot render more specifically? or does it mean he is wearing only one garment, stripped to a "loincloth" (as the REB renders it) to oversee fieldwork?[14] Whatever, his "business" in the house has overridden Joseph's erstwhile caution, and he's caught.

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11. Alter twice stresses the wife's "two-word sexual bluntness," (in the Hebrew) (72-3, 108-9).

12. Speiser reads "beside" (291); Rosenberg, "attend her" (125). Perhaps we are to bear in mind that Joseph is Potiphar's personal attendant or body-servant. And again, taste could be among Joseph's motives here, as well as moral scruples of whatever sort.

13. The contrast may be even sharper if we take Price's literal translation "lifted her eyes to" (128), which Speiser had noted but rejected because in other Biblical uses the phrase implies trust (303). But of course: "trusting" might be exactly the tone the wife would give her first invitation; and if we don't insist on seeing her as a practiced seductress (a view for which even her later violent accusation does not give sufficient evidence), it might be genuinely the tone she feels, an impassioned woman taking a sizeable risk. And yet again, prudery or disgust as well as prudence might play a part in Joseph's repulsion; readers who suppose he feels any desire for her may be simply projecting their own attitudes onto the protagonist. That seems entirely consistent with J's narrative rhetoric, which so often leaves motive and feeling open to our guess and imputation, so the story reveals as much about us as it does about its characters.

14. According to von Rad, the garment "was actually the undergarment, a long shirt tied about the hips," so that "Joseph fled completely undressed, at once disgracefully and honorably" (366). Kugel discusses Joseph's "business" or "work" and his "garment" more extensively in terms of rabbinic midrash (94-8), exploring the ancient case for "Joseph the Guilty": "For to hold that Joseph was not tempted for a minute by Mrs. Potiphar is, as it were, to put him outside the range of normal human emotion. But to say . . . that Joseph was indeed tempted, and that events indeed brought him to the very point of complying—this is to present a Joseph of flesh and blood with whom others can identify, and whose example of sudden repentance others might seek to emulate" (98). I've presumed a mainly naive and innocent Joseph, yet that does raise questions, and the text does not strictly necessitate such a reading.

Faced with the violation of chastity or his servant status or his master's property (both himself and the woman), Joseph does the only thing he can do: "he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out" (12).[15] Apparently she won't let go (if she can't "lie with" him, she'll look at him), and he's not going to stay for a tug-of-war; he'll cut and run. Maybe he recognizes even that won't save him entirely.

He seems not to suspect just how much hell will break loose. Left holding his empty garment, she swiftly calls "the men of her house" and accuses Joseph, in a scene which Joseph cannot have witnessed, though he might have pieced it together later from servants' gossip, and which the writer therefore has clearly constructed for our benefit. Mainly the wife just bears false witness of what we've been told actually happened:

> . . . he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. (14-15)

She falsifies Joseph's reason for coming into the house, imputes her sexual intention to him, and claims to have responded, before Joseph fled, as a dutiful wife and chaste woman should, by "cr[ying] with a loud voice" (possibly a legal requirement to avoid the imputation of consent).[16] They did hear her, did they not? So what took them so long to answer? There is some risk here that one or more of these servants might have seen Joseph going into the house clothed and fleeing it naked before they heard her outcry. Still, I doubt these "men of her house" would have questioned her claim, since the phrase that refers to them suggests they are slaves committed to her. "Her house," though, raises other small questions which Egyptologists and scholars of Biblical Hebrew would be qualified to address: is she here thinking of "the house" as "her house" (after all, she's the wife), or does she have a separate dwelling on the estate? If so, did her climactic lunge at Joseph occur there? If so, what was his "business"

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15. Alter notes how "left in her hand" here echoes Joseph's uses of the same phrase in his earlier refusal speech (109). Again I suspect an undercurrent of stress on property: she reached for Joseph as for something to possess, but is left with a lesser thing than she reached for.

16. Alter (109-10) and Sternberg (424) both discuss her swift and skilful rearrangement of crucial evidence, including her claim that Joseph left his garment "by" or "near" her rather than "in her hand," so he will seem to have stripped himself. Sternberg (423-27), in the closest reading I have seen of the episode, subtly and persuasively analyzes the wife's "art of poisonous repetition" (423) both in this scene, starting with her reiterated claim that she cried out, "designed to insinuate into the audience's mind a sequence of screaming that extends from the moment of attempted rape to their own arrival on the scene" (425), and in the next, with Potiphar.

there? Or, as I think more likely, was she lying in wait for Joseph in "the house," the main house or master's dwelling, and does that explain why "the men of her house" were not immediately at hand and had to be "called unto" (14)? Obviously they were within hearing and did hear the outcry she raised, so it's clear she's willing to risk the circumstantial lie with them: perhaps she's sure they would not dare speak against her; she does, after all, have some power in "her house," whatever Joseph may think about "none greater in this house than I" (9). And power, specifically the sexual power politics of the Potiphar household, now begins to look like the main issue for the wife, though Joseph seems not to have had a clue.

For just as this entire small scene must seem in excess of a simple chastity lesson (which is, I suspect, why church instruction generally ignores it), so the first part of the wife's accusation to the men of her house looks oddly in excess of her situation: "See," she says, "he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us" (14).[17] What's going on here, in this part of the story that Joseph, who "got him out," can't know unless it's reported to him later? Whatever we may want to make of Joseph's heroic youthful chastity—and there's no question that he has preserved his chastity in this episode, whatever his conscious motives were—the teller of the tale has other fish to fry as well. Here, it's at least the situation and psychology of the villainess of the piece, one of our culture's favorite badwomen, arch-seductress or proto-seductress; and beyond that, as I've suggested, the sexual politics of Potiphar's house. The wife, though Joseph may never know it, turns out to be much more than the simple, generic, sexual temptation she is in our instructive uses of the episode;

17. The Hebrew verb which the AV translates as "mock" here seems to have a tricky range of possible senses, making its use in this speech and the speech to Potiphar quite problematic and obliging translators to make interpretive choices that can vary widely: Alter reads "to dally with us [or, to mock us]" (108, 109); von Rad translates as "insult" in both speeches (363) and notes the senses of "play" and "erotic play" or "fondling" as in Gen. 26:8 (366); Speiser renders it "make love to" (302) in both speeches, notes the erotic "nuance" of its use in 26:8, and says "the possible alternative 'to toy with us' is not favored by the context" (303); Rosenberg uses "handle" in the first speech, "fondle" in the second (125); Sternberg uses "to play games with" in both speeches (423); Price, whose translation I think piqued my entire curiosity about this scene, uses "trifle" in both speeches (128-29). It occurs to me that English has offered, since well before the time of the AV, a four-letter word that, at least in some of its modern idiomatic uses, could provide a similar range of senses, including one to cover "lie with," though translators' and commentators' reluctance to use it is perfectly understandable, and not only on grounds of the potentially distracting shock and offense of obscenity. All this does suggest, though, that in these problematic contexts it may be not the wife and the J writer but the scholars who are euphemizing. The currently "definitive" source on the unused obscenity is Jesse Sheidlower, ed., *The F Word* (New York: Random, 1995), which cites its "earliest known appearance in English" ca. 1475 (xxv, 101) and exhaustively represents its variants, idioms, euphemisms, etc.

more than either Joseph or we could guess from her repeated imperative "lie with me." What she reveals of her mind after the fact, we are invited now to read back into the earlier scenes of the episode, tangled with what had seemed a simple if stubborn case of predatory female lust.

"See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us" (14). She first accuses Potiphar of intending to "mock us" by bringing Joseph into the house—unless the translators' "to" imprecisely renders a construction that means "with the result of." Does her "us" mean herself and the men of her house as Egyptians (hence her stress on "an Hebrew"), or as possessions of Potiphar, his slaves and his wife, over whom this Hebrew has been lifted, as Joseph all innocently reminded her in his first refusal: ". . . he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I" (8-9)? Why not both? And in reaction to this, as much as to Joseph's sexual refusal, she shows herself as what hell hath no fury like.[18]

Yet not quite so frankly to Potiphar. When Joseph's and her "lord came home" (16), she revises the first part of her accusation to fit this face-to-face confrontation with the master of the house: "The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me" (17).[19] The rest, somewhat condensed and slanted, is the same deposition she made to her servants. As to them, she stresses to Potiphar Joseph's alien origin, Hebrew, but now adds a stress on his status, servant. She's speaking now to the master, not to other slaves; and she may wish to hint that no servant should be "greater in this house than" the master's wife.[20] She seems to weigh in Joseph's "Hebrew servant" status to increase the offense to her own status as an Egyptian wife. And her words for the offense, "to mock me," displace and shift the meaning of the word "mock": to the servants she claimed Joseph "came in unto me to lie with me" (the REB renders this "to rape me"), but to the master she presents herself as a dutiful wife too chaste to mention sexual mat-

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18. Speiser (303), Alter (109), and Sternberg (424-5) all note her arousal of ethnic and social prejudice against Joseph as an upstart Hebrew slave; von Rad explains that the term "Hebrew . . . originally said nothing about what national group a person belonged to, but rather told something about his social and legal status" as a member of a "lower, de-classed level of the population" (368). Alter and Sternberg particularly stress how her "us" designedly opposes herself and her servants to Potiphar and Joseph.

19. Alter (110) and Sternberg (426) note the sexual innuendo of the idiom "came in unto me"; Sternberg's rendering of the syntax of this speech suggests how carefully the wife plays that innuendo: "There came in unto me the Hebrew slave that thou hast brought us . . ." (426)—first the hint of intercourse, then the prejudicially charged identification of the accused slave, then the subordinate clause that tilts the blame toward the master.

20. Again, Alter (110) and Sternberg (425) note how in this speech she tries to build solidarity between herself and the master as against the Hewbrew interloper. It's a delicate business, since she has to deflect any suspicion from herself and arouse her husband's anger against his favorite servant, yet seems unable to keep from accusing Potiphar as well.

ters;[21] to the servants her word "mock" referred mainly to the offense of "an Hebrew" being placed above all others in this Egyptian household, but to her husband the word must do duty for the sexual offense a good wife cannot bring herself to name directly, though that offense is also against her dual status as Egyptian and wife, suggesting an aristocratic attitude that a slave's sexual approach to the master's wife gravely insults her status. Last, in this speech, "mock" cannot directly accuse Potiphar of intending to scorn her and the rest of the household, so her sentence makes "came in unto me to mock me" a sequel or result of "thou hast brought unto us": the accusation of Potiphar still hovers here, implicit in the hinted causality, but it will have to be his interpretation, not her declaration.[22] She knows how far she can't afford to go, and she shrewdly curbs her resentment toward her lord and master. In the one more line we hear of her voice, the last we shall ever hear of her (a direct-discourse echo which also displays Potiphar's grasp of her accusation[23]), perhaps she pushes that limit a bit more insistently: "when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me" (19). Her furious but crafty little script works: "his wrath was kindled" (19) against his servant for precisely the breaches of high trust and exclusive property that Joseph had futilely warned of when the wife first approached him.[24] "And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison" (20). The wife's one possible accuser is out of the way, and presumably she has saved her own status in the household.

We will learn no more about the marriage or the later careers of the Potiphars. But if we've paid attention to some earlier clues, we can venture to guess a little further as to just how and why the wife felt mocked by Potiphar and Joseph. At the first mention of Potiphar in the Joseph story, we are told that "the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard" (37:36). Thus the Jacobean translation reads (and the REB essentially repeats this reading); but the current LDS edition glosses this verse: "officer" translates as "HEB eunuch (which often designates a royal official)." And the Bible Dictionary

21. Plainly or euphemistically, depending on the translator, as I've noted earlier.

22. Alter (110) and Sternberg (426-7) both make this point, Sternberg analyzing the wife's "ambiguous subordination" of "the purpose-phrase 'to play games with'" (426) and painstakingly laying out her subtle management of innuendo and implication.

23. Here Sternberg's analysis of this "extremely odd" repetition is most helpful, showing how the quoted dialogue reflects the master's point of view, and noting its crucial stress on the phrase "thy slave" (427). Potiphar has swallowed his wife's accusation whole, including the implied reproach to himself for bringing Joseph into the household in the first place, and all his anger seems kindled against his favored slave.

24. Again, Sternberg has made this point (427), also noting the forceful return of the term "master," which Joseph had stressed in his speech to the wife.

in current LDS editions defines "eunuch" as "a class of emasculated men attached to the courts of eastern rulers. They were employed to watch over the harems, and also were often given positions as trusted officials." Commentators note the literal sense of the Hebrew word here yet seem reluctant to take it literally;[25] but why not take it so? The sequence of titles identifying Potiphar then may actually condense his history: a eunuch, castrated so he would pose no threat to the royal wives or the royal bloodline, he has been elevated to a guards' captaincy, which the current LDS edition glosses with "HEB chief of the butchers, or the cooks; probably the chief steward." That seems a preferable reading,[26] especially in view of the later statement that "he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat" (6). This might refer merely to ritual cleanliness,[27] yet it could as well suggest a character trait. An apt man for the job of chief butcher or cook (or maybe the job has reduced or magnified him to fit it), Potiphar appears to be mainly a glutton with little interest beyond his appetite for food. As a eunuch, he may be uninterested in or incapable of sex or at least of begetting children. He has a wife, but perhaps only for reasons of ceremony or protocol; a court official needs a wife for state functions; she might be a sort of ornament, like a badge or some item of full-dress uniform, little more. And as glutton or gourmand, Potiphar might have even less sex appeal than he might as a lean and healthy eunuch. No wonder the wife is a furious woman: like it or not, she's little more than an object in the house, possibly surrounded by eunuchs of her own. And then the master brings in this young Hebrew slave, who sheds prosperity on everything he touches, so that Potiphar takes a fancy to him and makes him his personal attendant and then overseer of all the other slaves. Above all, having inherited his mother's beauty, young Joseph is "a goodly person, and well favored" (39:6; cf. 29:17).[28] Small wonder that "his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and . . . said, Lie with me" (39:7). She's sexually neglected and resentful; already mocked (structurally if not emotionally) by her marriage and now by the presence of this healthy and virile servant who is not hers to command and has, in fact, risen to a status that rivals or exceeds her own, and who, as a male and an overseer, would seem to have more sexual opportunity than she has. (Would it even occur to her that Joseph

25. Speiser 289, 291; von Rad 355. Alter translates the term as "courtier" (107). Price renders it literally, "eunuch" (127), and it was his translation that set me thinking about this aspect of the situation. Kugel also takes the term seriously and discusses its implications (75-6).

26. Speiser (291-2) explains the term and cautions against its confusion with a similar term which roughly means "captain of the guards."

27. See Speiser (303) and von Rad (364).

28. Speiser (303) and von Rad (364) both note the echo of the earlier description of Rachel. Price translates the description with the word "beautiful" (128). Speiser stresses that Potiphar "took a fancy to Joseph, and made him his personal attendant" (301; cf. 303).

might have any commitment to a code of chastity?) She is in a position to envy Joseph both in himself and as her master's personal attendant. The situation is a layered and highly charged triangle.

No wonder at all, then, that Joseph's first refusal, couched in terms of servant status and property and showing a clear grasp of those components of his situation but complete naiveté about the wife's quite different relation to those same factors, would begin to heat her ire more than cool her lust.[29] And small wonder that his protracted "day by day" avoidance and climactic flight would boil that resentment into fury. On the face of the narrative, Joseph seems hardly to have a clue as to just how complex, especially how bound up with resentment and violence, the wife's so directly-expressed and seemingly simple lust is. The clues he does have, he first tries to use to deflect her, but they don't help because they refer to the very structure of status and property that arouses her violent lust; and his last desperate recourse, to leave "his garment in her hand, and fle[e], and g[et] him out," at once sexually rejecting her and insulting and jeopardizing her status, burns out her lust and leaves her anger blazing. His flight does preserve his chastity, though it preserves nothing else he might have wanted to preserve. The abandoned garment and Joseph's nakedness may, if we wish, symbolize the status he has lost, top slave, and the identity he has saved: simple Joseph, clean and bare, falling again yet bound to rise.

It is a story in which chastity—right or wrong sexual choice—plays a part; yet when we read it more closely, the issues the story foregrounds in its language will make it hard to read so simply in terms of that single issue. We may take it up, as we like or need, into the simplifying mode of moral exhortation; but both the protagonist and the teller of the tale rather clearly grasp the story in more complicated, less easily reduced ways than that. If we try to take it up in their ways, then, what does it tell us about chastity and how to keep it? Maybe less than we would like to know and more than we suppose the youth need to know. This at least: that no human moral situation or act is ever quite so simple as its description in terms of any single moral rule, although to act in such a situation from fidelity to any single moral rule, whatever rule we think applies, may well save something worth saving. And that we can never determine all the consequences of our acts, wrong or right. But that is in God's hands anyway.

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After so much narrative density, puzzlement, and plexity, some of us may find ourselves spelling R-E-L-I-E-F as we turn to Corianton. Here at

29. Von Rad notes how quickly she goes "from desire to hate" (366).

last, we suppose, will be plainness, a flat-out declaration that sexual sin is next to murder. Alas, although that idea has the status of Church doctrine, Alma 39:5 does not simply and unambiguously yield a proof-text for it. I regret to bear bad news, if this is bad news, but I did not write the news, and I only know what I think I read on the pages. I do accept the doctrine, promulgated in a 1942 First Presidency statement and often reaffirmed since;[30] but Alma's words to Corianton are not that specific, and in fact leave us enough room to wonder and guess that we may well need prophetic specification of Alma's meaning. The father first rebukes his son for some quite specific acts:

> Thou didst do that which was grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel.
> Yea, she did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted. (39:3-4)

Then, to reinforce the gravity of "that which was grievous unto me," he generalizes:

> Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost? (39:5)

It's a troublesome proof-text, and the first trouble is the plural "these things": in this immediate context Alma is not speaking only of chasing a harlot, so what else is next to murder? Still, the generalized plural doesn't exclude sexual sin, and in fact allows plenty of room for that specification. But now the next trouble arises: on what sexual sin has Alma accused Corianton? Thereon should have hung a tale; but it's a tale we have not been told and will not be told in the Book of Mormon as we have it, so we have to infer it as cautiously and justly as we can from the words Alma said to his son. We hear only one side of a conversation, or we read a closet drama for two actors, with all the speeches of the second actor excised.

We are on the verge, then, of more narrative-interpretive difficulty, doubled by our having to try to trace what we can of the story through its refraction in the sentences of a quite different kind of discourse, a sustained moral exhortation and doctrinal exposition that comprise four chapters of the text (I will restrict my reading largely to ch. 39). This prompts a digression. Some LDS scriptural commentators sometimes ac-

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30. See, for instance, Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., 309-10; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 2.92; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., 124, 709; Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, ch. 5, "The Sin Next to Murder," esp. 61-2; and Bryce J. Christensen, "Chastity, Law of" in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.

claim the doctrinal-expositional "plainness" of Latter-day scripture as preferable to the frequent difficulty and sometimes downright narrative or poetic obscurity of the Old and even the New Testament. They imply that we are to be congratulated for having outgrown a need or taste for complex narratives about complex human actions, for having grown into a capacity to take our doctrine (as if that were all we needed) in doses of straight exposition without the admixture of sweet or sour story or the thin candy-coating of superb prose or poetic style. But I'm not so sure the expositional mode of the Doctrine and Covenants, or the prominence of exposition even within the narrative structure and continuity of the Book of Mormon, is a compliment to our intellectual maturity so much as a concession to our loss of narrative intelligence or our suspicion of complex stories. The Book of Mormon, though an ancient record, was finally, when the people to whom it belonged as a cultural tradition had set about destroying themselves, written for our day, and the redactor whose severe abridgement we have been given may have seen that we would no longer be capable of receiving human or divine wisdom told in stories. We don't have the whole contents of the Nephite plates, perhaps especially the "more history part" (2 Ne. 4:14) or "the more particular part of the history" (2 Ne. 5:33), because we're not ready to read them, in more ways than one.

To use Corianton as a bad example, a violator of the law of chastity, it would be nice to have his more particular history, so we might see more clearly how he sinned, how he came to sin, and how he repented and went on to serve after his father's exhortation. (After Alma 39-42, Corianton is mentioned only twice more, in Alma 63: once obliquely, in "and also did his brother" [2], i.e., Corianton, like Shiblon, "was a just man, and . . . did walk uprightly before God; and . . . did observe to do good continually, to keep the commandments of the Lord his God"; once directly, in "Corianton had gone forth to the land northward in a ship, to carry forth provisions unto the people who had gone forth into that land" [10].) We can only guess at the story's general outline and at some of its inner dimensions of motive and self-deception and self-justification. Yet even such faint tracings may yield us a Corianton who, like his long-ago kinsman Joseph, turns out to be a more complicated example than we had thought. In the Joseph episode, the complexity was mostly in the situation, including the psyche of the temptress; in this, most of it is in the psyche of the tempted and sinning young man.

How did Corianton sin? More ways than one, if we trust his father's plural words "things" and "crimes" (39:7). And maybe not in the specific sexual way we have supposed, again if we trust the words Alma does say, and don't presume too far on his silences. Alma charges Corianton particularly with "go[ing] on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom" (39:2); with having "forsake[n] the ministry" to go "after the harlot

Isabel" (39:3); with having gone "after the lusts of your eyes" (39:9); with having suffered himself "to be led away by [a] vain or foolish thing" and having suffered "the devil to lead away [his] heart . . . after those wicked harlots"; and last, with having brought "great iniquity . . . upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words" (39:11). Except for a later charge of "offense . . . upon . . . points of doctrine," which I believe Corianton incurs by questioning a point in Alma's counsel (41:9-10), as far as I can tell, that's the complete list, and its half-dozen particulars do justify Alma's use of the plurals "these things" and "your crimes."

Yet nowhere, in what looks like an attempt to be quite particular about those crimes, does Alma specifically charge Corianton with the sin of which our chastity lessons usually accuse and convict him without a hearing: fornication. Why not? Perhaps Alma has a compunction (something like that of the pretended-chaste wife of Potiphar) about using specifically sexual terms, but it's hard to believe this of Alma, who otherwise seems to mince no words in his forthright denunciation of his wayward son. Perhaps, even so, he wants to spare his son's feelings at least a little bit—after all, he does say, "I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good" (39:7). Maybe plainly naming a sexual sin would dwell too heavily, harrow too fine and deep, though we might think otherwise.

Or maybe Alma does not know whether Corianton fornicated or not, and thus stays scrupulously within the limits of what he does know: Corianton "did go after the harlot Isabel" or "after those wicked harlots" (granted, "go after" might mean to adopt the ways of, yet it might mean hanging around taverns and red-light districts); this much the Zoramites saw and took as an occasion to ignore Alma's preaching, and the rest must be conjecture and a decent silence which waits for Corianton's full confession. That would be another more particular part of his history that our abridgement does not tell us. Maybe it's all right for us to suppose what we will, as long as we don't mind being in the morally awkward position of accusing Corianton of more than his father does, accusing possibly innocent blood. I do mind. I think the most severe reading I can let myself give this passage is that Alma does make exactly the accusations he has grounds for making, "justice exercis[ing] all his demands" (42:24); and declines to make any others. As to whether Corianton did or did not fornicate, or did or did not confess having done so, Alma and the text are strictly silent, and our judgment or our suspicion reflects more on us than on his sinning son. That may even be one of the reasons the text is constructed just as it is: to oblige us to confront our own suspicions and decisions in the absence of complete evidence, and to judge ourselves in the light of the judgment we mete; also to oblige us to identify with a father and priesthood leader in this specific situation of judging and counseling an errant son. We do well to judge mercifully, as we would be

judged, and as I believe Alma, for all his severity, does judge his son, whom he loves and will not disown. Over and over he repeats "my son," ten times in chapter 39 alone, half of those in verses 3-9 as he lays out his charges: confirming their inextricable bond, claiming the young man as he later tells him "mercy claimeth all which is her own" (42:24). That must matter as much as anything else he has to say to him. That might be another thing worth learning from this episode; worth more, perhaps, than learning which sin, or sins, may be "abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost."

Thus far I've deferred the possibly sexual phrase "lusts of your eyes" (39:9), partly because, if it does signify sexual sin, it signifies something less than fornication, and partly because it's a problematic term that need not have a specifically sexual connotation. It would help to know precisely what it denoted in Joseph Smith's time, and even in his personal vocabulary, since we must trust that it adequately renders the sense he understood from the plates. The 1828 edition of Webster's *Dictionary* explains that "the primary sense [of *lust*] is to extend, reach, expand, to stretch forward. It is the same as *list*," and the same dictionary cites three current senses and a fourth "not used": "longing desire; eagerness to possess or enjoy"; "concupiscence; carnal appetite; unlawful desire of carnal pleasure"; "evil propensity; depraved affections and desires"; "vigor; active power." Current LDS Bibles do not gloss "lust of the eyes" where it occurs in 1 John 2:16 as one term of a triad summing up "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," and condemning these as "not of the Father, but . . . of the world." "Lust of the flesh" does sound like sexual lust; but then does "lust of the eyes" simply collapse into that as one more manifestation of the same desire, or is it a distinct mode of desire or pleasure (the older Germanic senses of the word denote mainly pleasure, which of course is something often desired)? I think the terms in John's triad name distinct though related modes of secularity that turn or "list" from God. That would make "lust of the eyes" sinful enough, though not sexual in our sense. (In the ancient Greek and modern Freudian senses of the word, yes, *erotic;* but desire or attachment in that sense hasn't, as far as I know, been treated as categorically sinful in Mormon discourse.)

For St. Augustine, who adopted the triad from John's Epistle as the partial basis of a rigorous self-examination in *Confessions* 10.30-36, "concupiscence of the eyes," which he saw as "rooted in the appetite for knowledge" (10.35 [54]), meant an attachment to corporeal or natural beauties and to the very "corporeal light" by which they shine, and a sort of visual "curiosity" which could swell into a reckless desire for novelty or experience for its own sake. In either sense, that would be sinful enough for Augustine, since it would distract the soul from fixing its desire purely on God. But lust of the eyes is not a sexual lust for Augustine; for him, both are, at the root, forms of misdirected human desire-as-such,

which does not know that its ultimate and only true object is God. His examples of this lust include having his eye caught by a hare running across a field or by a spider spinning a web. (Is Alma, four centuries before the Bishop of Hippo, an Augustinian? In some respects, I think so, but that would be another essay and not one I'm tempted now to work out.)

Well before the nineteenth century, as a survey of the senses and citations of the term in the OED quickly reveals, "lust" in English had acquired its specific and strongly pejorative sense of "sexual appetite or desire. Chiefly and now [1878-1928, when the OED was compiled and published] exclusively implying intense moral reprobation"; yet it still retained its equally well-established "Biblical and theological use," signifying "sensuous appetite or desire, considered as sinful or leading to sin," and in this sense was often used in the plural, especially in "lusts of the flesh" or "fleshly lusts." This restates the ambiguity, a potent sense of the term beginning to stain all its other uses by Joseph Smith's time: lust of the eyes might be mainly sensuous, but it might also be sexual. And to translate Alma's language with the plural, "lusts of your eyes," might be unusual but not unprecedented in the English religious vocabulary available to Joseph Smith; it could suggest multiple and different kinds or objects of visual desire or pleasure. In more than forty years of regular activity in the church, I can't recall hearing the phrase "lust of the eyes" used in any warning against sin, unless it was quoted (and not discussed) from Alma or John I, until fairly recent condemnations of film and television,[31] which Augustine would have seized upon, along with tourism, as evidence that our generation was wholly swallowed up in this sin (he'd have loved to pun on Latin *video*, "I see"). Yet Alma includes it in a list of things "most abominable" in which he sternly warns Corianton to "cross yourself": "for except ye do this ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God" (39:9).

The trouble is thicker than ever: not only do we *not* find Alma specifically and unambiguously chastising Corianton for any obvious sexual sin

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31. President Ezra Taft Benson, in the Priesthood Session of General Conference on 5 April 1986 did take up Alma's term: "'The lusts of your eyes.' In our day, what does that mean? Movies, television programs, and video recordings that are both suggestive and lewd. Magazines and books that are obscene and pornographic. We counsel you, young men, not to pollute your minds with such degrading matter, for the mind through which filth passes is never the same afterwards. Don't see R-rated movies or vulgar videos or participate in any entertainment that is immoral, suggestive, or pornographic" (*Ensign*, May 1986: 45). It seems clear that "lust" here is used in its most narrow sexual sense, and that "eyes" watching suggestive, lewd, pornographic, or obscene movies or video are functioning as organs of specifically sexual lust, not of any more general visual pleasure or curiosity. It's also interesting that "the lust of your eyes" applies also to "books," as if reading words were identical to seeing pictures or actual bodies. President Benson's counsel has been echoed, sometimes without citing the phrase "lusts of your eyes," by a number of General Authorities, including Gordon B. Hinckley (*Ensign*, Nov. 1992: 51-52), Joseph B. Wirthlin (*Ensign*, Mar. 1993: 71), and H. Burke Peterson, (*Ensign*, Nov. 1993: 43).

like fornication, but we find him excoriating a visual sin that we have hardly bothered to think about (until the recent proliferation of visual media), and which even he may regard as a "vain and foolish thing," empty and trivial. And even if we take lust of the eyes as a sexual sin, Corianton as sinning by looking at Isabel with "lust" or pleasure, and apply Jesus' declaration that "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mt. 5:28), all that does is widen the already plural category and catalogue of "next to murder" sins to a rather burdensome breadth. "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out" (Matt. 5:29). These are hard sayings, but they've been said, and this is the news I read on the pages; this is the little I understand of Alma's exhortation so far, and the little less I understand of Corianton and how he sinned so grievously as to call down so severe a warning from his father and spiritual leader in the mission to the Zoramites.

Again, as with the Potiphar episode, the least the text obliges us to acknowledge if we read it a little more closely is that, as an example for our chastity lessons, so far it is distressingly non-specific, or puzzlingly over-precise, about sexual sin; and worse, it stubbornly resists any attempt to reduce it so as to illustrate the application of a single, simple moral rule. Like Joseph and the teller of Joseph's tale, Alma is less simple than our lessons would have him be; he insists on complexly grasping a complex human reality, which he knows intimately but does not claim to know totally. And unlike the teller of Joseph's tale, Alma (or Mormon editing and abridging his account) does not tell us a story; he exhorts and expounds. But in his exhortation and exposition he implicitly analyzes, and what he analyzes, not totally, not exhaustively, is the soul of Corianton. He performs a kind of psychology, or even reconstructive psychosurgery. We can trace his analysis briefly and generally.

First, Alma says Corianton did "not give so much heed unto my words as did thy brother, among the people of the Zoramites" (39:2). Corianton might have taken his older brother Shiblon as an example of attentive obedience to his father's words, and that would have been a good example to the Zoramites; but, perhaps caught up in the novelty of being among a foreign people in a foreign place, he did not. And more crucially, "thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and thy wisdom" (2): Corianton had too much self-esteem, was too self-reliant. Next he forsook the ministry and followed the harlot Isabel "over into the land of Siron, among the borders of the Lamanites" (3): he pursued novelty or strangeness into farther reaches, geographically, culturally, socially, and perhaps sexually. (I take it that Alma here claims, "I know where you were seen, and with whom"; we could take the geographic/cultural specifics as supporting a claim that Corianton kept company with the harlot, yet "after" need not specify even that.) Since Alma cites this adventure after citing Corianton's excessive self-reliance, we may suppose excessive self-reliance allowed him to believe he could take these risks without seri-

ously endangering his soul or anyone else's. And besides, we can imagine him saying in the silence after his father names Isabel, he wasn't the only one who found her attractive. Yes, I know, his father might be answering, "she did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee, my son" (4): either he cannot justify his bad example by appealing to anyone else's (so much for self-reliance!), or Alma strongly doubts he bothered to make that excuse for himself when he forsook the ministry. The phrase "steal away the hearts" sounds like a cliché of junk romantic fiction, and that may have been its provenance in the vocabulary of Joseph Smith; but it translates a fatherly concern of the highest order. The heart is at stake here, the seat of thought, desire, and volition in Biblical usage; and to Alma, Corianton's rash act seems to have suggested his heart had grievously strayed from the ministry it was called to, and for a "vain and foolish thing" at that: "suffer not the devil to lead away your heart again" (11): his salvation hangs in the balance, not yet for any specific and acted sexual sin, unless lust of the eyes, but (as it would in Augustine's moral theology) for a sinful misdirection of the heart away from God, from God's work, and from God's words as given through his father and mission leader. "The harlot Isabel" may well have been a highly paid and notorious courtesan, quite beyond Corianton's means,[32] who might not even have given this young foreigner a second glance; she may

32. This might account for Alma's otherwise incongruous later warning, "Seek not after riches" (39:14), though unequal distribution of wealth is part of the Zoramite complex of sins. "The harlot Isabel" does sound, as a phrase, rather like a well-known popular appellation. The name Isabel itself looks like an embarrassing anachronism or mistranslation, since English dictionaries identify it as being of French or Spanish origin and probably derived from Elizabeth, which is originally a Hebrew name (but that would oblige us to suppose identical and improbable-looking paths of sound shift in two different cultural traditions). My hunch is that Isabel among the Nephites derives from Jezebel, which in Hebrew looks phonetically similar to begin with, and could have shifted toward a set of phonemes that Joseph Smith might transliterate as Isabel. If the name had passed down among Nephites and Zoramites orally or by way of the brass plates (on which I suppose Ahab's reign was recorded), it would make sense for a community to apply that name to a cult prostitute or a professional harlot, or for such a woman boldly to adopt the name of Ahab's famously wicked queen, the daughter of the king of Sidon (1 Kgs. 16:31), a place name also used in the Book of Mormon, though Siron sounds oddly like that as well.

John Gray, in *I and II Kings: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), says "The name Jezebel ('izebel) as pointed in the MT [Masoretic Text] is an obvious parody" based on "*zebel* ('dung')" and that the "first perversion of the name may have been *'i-ze-bul* ('No nobility')" (332-33). He also conjectures a link to words meaning "'Where is the Prince (i.e. Baal)?' . . . actually a cultic cry of those who mourned the eclipse of Baal as a vegetation deity" (333). Elsewhere he notes that Jezebel's "harlotries" were of course "ritual prostitution" (493). Jezebel's father Ethbaal was a priest of Astarte, the Canaanite fertility goddess and consort of Baal, so this all seems probable. Some Bible dictionaries etymologize her name as meaning "un-cohabited" or "un-husbanded," which might be taken to mean "chaste," but might also signify a dedication to the goddess and to her worship in acts of ritual intercourse. My hunch about Isabel/Jezebel thus might suggest that Corianton's pursuit of the harlot put him in danger of idolatry, the "abomination" of pagan fertility cult-worship.

not even have guessed what was happening, may not have flung any specific seductive looks or charms wittingly at this boy's eyes; she need have been little more than the occasion for his error, a hare running across his path.

We might let our guesses reach a little farther here. Though Alma need not know or suspect this, Corianton might have been telling himself, boasting in his own strength and wisdom rather than trusting his father and God and staying where he was called "among the Zoramites," that he could convert the harlot and her entourage, not to mention some Sironites and Lamanites. But that was not his business and his father tells him so: "Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted" (4). This is conjecture (as in B. H. Roberts's novel), plausible but not conclusively arguable. Less conjectural might be the hunch that the plural "lusts of [his] eyes," including but not limited to sexual curiosity, were what led Corianton across the borders, no matter what higher motives he may have boasted to himself. Why else would Alma make so much of that "vain and foolish thing," warning Corianton, in words that do echo his earlier "go . . . after the harlot": "go no more after the lusts of your eyes, but cross yourself in all these things" (9)? Again, the plurals invite or allow us to suppose that more than sexual temptation was involved, though we can also, if we wish, take "all these things" as referring to any and all forms of sexual temptation. That works all right in this one verse; but in the fuller context of the chapter it will not do, since it ignores every other item in Alma's list.

This about sums up what I see Alma saying about the etiology of Corianton's sin. He has not, so far, described the young man as a fornicator, but only as a brash and rash youth who overreached himself, transgressed some borders, for "vain and foolish" reasons he probably hid from himself under a varnish of highminded self-esteem. So doing, Corianton surely did put himself in the way of serious sexual temptation and transgression; that is a harlot's stock in trade, though harlots have been known to repent, and Jesus once declared they would "go into the kingdom of God before" the chief priests and elders (Matt. 21:31). I think Corianton's "lust" (it would be naive to suppose he didn't have any) amounted more to curiosity than sexual passion, as many of us could testify is largely true of adolescent lust (but which doesn't make it any less dangerous). And I think that Alma sees him this way, and swiftly, justly, and mercifully seeks a means to prevent worse damage than Corianton has already done himself and others. For me, this makes Corianton almost useless as a clear example of unchastity and what to do about it, but a much more interesting and complexly understood case of a sinful action, partly driven by incipient unchastity, that involves the full dimensions of a complicated human psyche, including the intellectual or doctrinal points that "worried" Corianton's "mind" (40:1; 41:1; 42:1, 29-30).

But Alma's implicit analysis doesn't limit itself to etiology, nor even to symptomatology; his diagnosis of Corianton's sin goes well beyond the direction of the youth's heart and his wanderings into strange territory, into the effects that straying had on others whom Corianton seems not to have given a thought: the Zoramites.

> Behold, O my son, how great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words.
> And now the Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me: Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction; therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities;
> That ye turn to the Lord with all your might, mind, and strength; that ye lead away the hearts of no more to do wickedly; but rather return unto them, and acknowledge your faults and that wrong which ye have done (39:11-13).

Here, I suggest, we do approach a form of sin, a burden that will be upon Corianton's soul because he was called to the ministry, that we can take seriously as next to murder, near to the shedding of innocent blood: Corianton's bad conduct, forsaking the ministry and running off to the borders, has made him like the harlot and like the devil, one who "lead[s] away the hearts of many people to destruction" (12). Spiritually this is near to murder, for murder takes away the life of the body and cuts short the "space for repentance" (Alma 42:5) that God grants to every soul in the world, and this leading by bad conduct does delay and may prevent the repentance of those whose hearts are led away: "they would not believe in my words." The Spirit's dramatic intrusion into Alma's discourse at this point seems to confirm that this is indeed the heart of the matter: "Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many."

This leading away is a sin Alma has good cause to comprehend and abhor as "grievous," for he committed it in his own young manhood, as we know having read that story twice before we reach this point in Alma's record, once in the third person (Mos. 27:8-10) and once in the first person when Alma tells it to Helaman (Al. 36), not long before his exhortation to Corianton. The language of both those accounts of Alma's youthful sins strikingly anticipates the language he uses with Corianton. To cite only the three most salient instances: the account in Mosiah 27 says that Alma, an unbeliever and flashy young rhetorician, "became a great hinderment to the prosperity of the church; stealing away the hearts of the people" (9); and the confessional account to Helaman admits, "Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away into destruction" (Al. 36:14), and says that during his three days' and nights' paralyzed insensibility his "soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree" (36:12; cf. 36:17). Can we doubt, then, that to Alma a sin next to murder is

anything—self-esteem, unchastity, anger, riches, or any vain or foolish thing—by which I let my heart be led, or by which I lead the heart of another, away from God? All sins, for Alma, seem to be ultimately forms of idolatry, whoring after strange gods rather than loving and being faithful to the God who knows us. During his torment for his sin, Alma knew "the pains of a damned soul" (36:16), "eternal torment" and "the pains of hell" (36:12-13), or of living "without God in the world" (Mosiah 27:31; Alma 41:11), so acutely that he longed to "become extinct both soul and body" (36:15). That, he seems to feel, is the ultimate description of those whose hearts are distracted or led away from God; and that, I think, is his understanding of sin not simply as rule-breaking but as a fundamental action and condition.

We can, if we wish or need, use Alma's exhortation to Corianton to support a chastity lesson, for chastity, or at least the risk of risking chastity, is an issue in it; but even its first chapter presents us with an insistently larger and more complicated case than that. Like the teller of Joseph's tale, Alma (and Mormon abridging him) has other and bigger fish to fry. Alma's grip on the root nature of sin is every bit as profound and severe as Augustine's, and his analysis of Corianton's sin, searching its dark and tangled ways in the psyche of his son, declines to reduce its human moral and spiritual complexity to the simple keeping or breaking of any one moral rule. Unless that rule is keeping trust.

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Once again, no relief from complexity, this time not even where we thought we'd found it in the apparent "plainness" of moral exhortation and doctrinal exposition. As a source of examples for the lessons we wish to teach, the scriptures will yield up just about anything we want—if we want it badly enough to "wrest" it, to reduce it to the simplifications we think we need. But in their hard and dense resistance to our reductions, the scriptures testify, perhaps, that they and their divine and human authors think we need something more. And they stand more than ready to yield that, too, to our patient, dogged, fierce, and generous attention.[33]

One of my friends who read the first draft of this essay said, So what's your conclusion? I hadn't worked out any at the time, and in a sense I still haven't. A conclusion closes, and I had wanted to open some

33. Against the presumption that the Hebrew Bible is "didactic," as also against the presumption that it is "literary" or "historical" (in our usual senses), see Sternberg's dense and rigorous argument in the first chapter of his *Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (1-57, esp. 37-38). For Sternberg, it appears "beyond doubt that the whole idea of didacticism is alien, if not antipathetic, to the spirit of Israelite storytelling and has been imported from later philosophical and religious traditions that it would reject" (38).

scriptural texts that I felt had already been closed too long. Still, I can and should try to explain some of the implications—outflatten the infoldings—of the openings I think I've made into the texts.

Another friend, a counselor in my ward bishopric, to whom I gave a copy of the second draft, said, with what I took as a mock-rueful smile, You've taken our tool away. I said maybe I'd shown what a precision tool it was. He's a doctor who reads a lot, and if I'd had any wit ready I might have said I'd shown that a scalpel could be used for more delicate work than testing patellar reflexes. Something like that.

That might be the first thing to take up: what has all my unravelling of complications done to the moral-instructive uses of these stories? Joseph's temptation in Potiphar's house might help us to show young people just how complicated is the world of sexuality, and how dangerously violent, how structured and fractured by possession, gender politics, and resentment it is. Almost seventy years ago, Freud remarked

> That the education of young people at the present day conceals from them the part which sexuality will play in their lives is not the only reproach which we are obliged to make against it. Its other sin is that it does not prepare them for the aggressiveness of which they are destined to become the objects. In sending the young out into life with such a false psychological orientation, education is behaving as though one were to equip people starting on a Polar expedition with summer clothing and maps of the Italian Lakes.[34]

Joseph's encounter with Potiphar's wife surely does show that sex is more than an invitation to a campout, or a picnic in Disneyworld; it shows sex as thickly entangled with aggressiveness, a danger anyone risks who enters into a sexual relationship, illicit or licit. It might also suggest that resisting or fleeing a temptation to sex won't necessarily insulate one from violence. It might suggest above all that anyone's possible sexual partner has a complicated situation and psyche that are quite simply beyond one's knowledge, let alone one's power to predict or control—and this is true for both Potiphar's wife and Joseph: neither knows the other or can predict what the other will do. I'm suggesting, then, that read more closely, this story might become an even stronger, if less simply emphatic, caution. It might also become a less immediately comforting illustration of the notion that if you just keep your "virtue," everything will turn out all right for you; after all, Joseph keeps his and goes to jail, while the wife compromises hers and stays home (for all the good that may do her).

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34. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey, The Standard Edition (Vienna and London, 1930, 1931; New York: Norton, 1962, 1989), 97-98, n.1. (I own two different paperback printings, both by Norton, of this "Standard Edition," but differently paginated, so it may help to indicate that the footnote quoted is note 1 in chapter VIII.)

My reading of Alma's exhortation to Corianton, as I've already suggested, will make Corianton less useful as an example of sexual misconduct, since it's not at all clear that anything more sexual than lust of the eyes was involved in his sin. Yet here, too, Corianton might become a stronger example of something we seriously need to teach and learn: that any sinful act arises out of a complex chain of circumstances, causes, motives, self-deceptive rationalizations, etc., and ramifies into consequences, exterior and interior, far more broad and grave than the agent in the act can know. What we can discern of Corianton's story can lead us into a deeper doctrine of sin than we usually discuss: sin not simply as rule-breaking but as an act in which we run counter to God's will to love us and to be known and loved in return.

And as I've also suggested, the largest example in this story may be not Corianton, whose voice after all we do not hear, but his father Alma, whose voice speaks out of the depth of his own experiences of sin and anguish and forgiveness and dedication. It's ironic that we to whom this example pertains—parents and teachers and leaders—have so largely ignored this visible and audible example and wrested from it an invisible and inaudible one, Corianton the fornicator, to wield as a tool of persuasion on youth. Perhaps there's a lesson in that, too: we who lead and correct others stand ourselves in need of correction.

Paying more heed to Alma, we might learn not to accuse—or intimidate or interrogate—beyond the limits of our evidence, while being forthright about what we do "have against" an errant soul. We might learn to speak steadily the love that binds us—a bond that may be all the stronger and deeper in Alma as he recognizes his own sin, leading hearts away, passed down to the next generation. We might learn to stop insisting on punishment, penalty, pain, beyond the obligation which Alma urges on Corianton: "return unto them [the Zoramites] and acknowledge your faults and that wrong which ye have done" (39:13). That seems to suffice Alma; at the very end of his long exhortation, he simply calls his son back to full engagement in the ministry: "go thy way, declare the word with truth and soberness, that thou mayst bring souls unto repentance, that the great plan of mercy may have claim upon them" (42:31). At least in this instance, I see no sign in Alma, despite the severity of his doctrine of sin, of any notion that "sinners must suffer," or more specifically that leaders must impose suffering on them in the form of penalties beyond the ethical obligations of the situation, or humiliation beyond what comes of hearing a counselor speak frankly of their wrongs. Alma himself suffered three days and nights of hell, but (or because of that) he will not put his son through it. Alma knows by experience that sinners—in his deep and strong sense of the word—do suffer, and that above all they need to hear, or need to recall having heard, a word that can call them out

of the suffering of being in the world without God.

These scriptural examples, I think, are not very helpful in defining or refining a concept of chastity; for that we simply have to consult other sources. In the Joseph story, chastity seems very much, even too much, a matter of property, specifically of which woman belongs to which man; yet there may also be an idea of "moral cleanliness" or "purity" implied in Joseph's sense that, to violate the codes of property and slave status he appeals to, would make him "sin against God." In the Book of Mormon, too, some texts (Jac. 2:28; Moro. 9:9) seem to suggest that chastity belongs as a sort of property or value to women; so Corianton has seemed perhaps the one strong illustration of unchastity as a reproach to a male (but see also the reproach in Jac. 2:22-35). We can still take him as that, but now in a sense at once more subtle and more severe: Corianton's unchastity is incipient, in the lusts of his eyes, yet it is not less serious to Alma, and calls for severe, delicate, and loving counsel, for even in this form it is a "leading away" from God.

Another serious question arises: have I challenged or undermined any fundamental doctrine in reading these scriptural examples as I have? I don't think so. Yet it's true that, on my reading of Alma 39, sexual sin is not *the* but only *a* or *one* "sin next to murder." Perhaps that is damaging, since it spreads "next to murder" over so many possible sins—every one you can think of, and all the ones you can't—that it spreads it too thin, where we'd wanted it laid thick on just one category of sins. If that is bad news—and it may be, to some—then again all I can say is that I didn't write the news, I just read it. Maybe I should have kept it to myself. But as I've said elsewhere, I speak as a scribe and not as one having authority. What has had authority here is the scriptural text; and "Exegesis," as Joachim Jeremias put it, "is obedience."[35]

We've recently seen in the church at least one change in doctrinal *language*—the replacement of "free agency" by "moral agency" or just "agency"—that might shed light on the doctrinal-language implications of my reading of Alma 39. The term "free agency" does not appear in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* but it does appear, though only with cross-references to "Accountability; Agency; Fall of Man," in recent LDS topical guides to the scriptures. In 1990, Elder Boyd K. Packer said, "The agency the Lord has given us is not a 'free' agency. The term 'free' agency is not found in the revelations. It is a *moral agency.* The Lord has given us freedom of choice . . . ." Similarly in 1992 he said, "The phrase *'free* agency' does not appear in scripture. The only agency spoken of there is *moral agency.*" In both cases he cites D&C 101:78, where the phrase "moral

35. I don't know where this may occur in Jeremias's work; I've seen it only as an epigraph in Jonathan Bishop's little-known and hard-to-find *Who is Who?* (Ithaca: Glad Day Press, 1975), 185.

agency" does occur.[36] The textual remarks are precisely right: the term or phrase "free agency" does not occur in the canonically accepted revelations, the standard works. Yet in both cases the collateral claims—"not a 'free' agency"; "the only agency spoken of there"—do not seem fully warranted by some scriptural contexts and by the concepts that occur in them:

> Wherefore the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. (2 Ne. 2:16)
> And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves. . . . And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, . . . or to choose captivity and death. . . . (2 Ne. 2:26-27)
> Therefore cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life. (2 Ne. 10:23)
> . . . being placed in a state to act according to their wills and pleasures, whether to do evil or to do good—. . . . (Alma 10:31)
> . . . for behold ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free. (Hel. 14:30)

Other citations might be made, but these sufficiently show that a *concept* that *sounds like* "free agency" is indeed "spoken of there"; and the close connection in such passages between the terms "free" and "act," especially in "free to act," suggests that the agency the Lord has given us may be *termed* a "free" agency. We are "free to choose" and "free to act" for ourselves, and thus we are accountable, moral agents. I really have no quarrel with the substantive point of Elder Packer's declarations, and only a small puzzlement at the rhetoric in which they are embedded. I have long preferred (and used, especially in my literature and writing classes as well as in religious contexts) the term *agency*, finding it sufficient for my needs.

What does pertain more closely to my reading of Alma 39 here is the protocol of interpretation implied in Elder Packer's remarks: if a "term" or "phrase" does not appear in scripture, does that mean that a doctrine usually expressed in that term or phrase, in those words, has no scriptural foundation? If so, then "sexual sin is the sin next to murder" rests on a narrow and uncertain foundation, since Alma 39:5 does not use those words, and in context appears to say, more broadly, that sexual sin, along with several other sins, is a sin next to murder. The *concept* remains, but the *words* in which we have discussed it seem to have far less scrip-

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36. See "Mormon-Correct Language," *Sunstone* vol. 16, no. 2 (August 1992): 68; and Boyd K. Packer, "Our Moral Environment," *Ensign*, May 1992: 67.

tural warrant than does the phrase "free agency." I can live with that. I see my reading of Alma 39 not as suggesting any change in doctrine, but only as offering a scribe's clarification of the scriptural context usually cited as the source of that doctrine.

For me, the largest point my essay makes—and I've said this already, too—is that we read the scriptures poorly when we flatten their stories into flannelboard cutouts to illustrate some one moral rule or other. I'm flattening them right now as I try to summarize these implications, and I herewith repent of using the language of "example" in doing so. I do think the scriptures have far more to teach us than our own instructive or didactic biases may let us grasp. Increasingly, over the past couple of decades, I've pondered Moroni's conditional clause, which I memorized in my teens, "And when ye shall receive these things" (Moro. 10:4). I memorized the whole thing back then. But now, as befits a middle-aged reader who often stalls mid-sentence, whether reading silently to himself or aloud to a class, I can't get past that first clause. I know I've received a lot, and asked about it, and gotten what has seemed like generous manifestation of the truth; yet I can't help asking if I've fully received what's offered. I think this essay is suggesting that in our simplistic reduction of scriptural stories to examples of rules, we are declining to "receive these things" fully, and thus deferring the manifestation of truth. I hope the kind of reading I've done here does that a little less.

Our sacred texts prompt us to "liken all scriptures unto us" (1 Ne. 19:23); yet the closer we attend to the stories they tell, to the weft of their words, the more difference we discover, the more stubborn singularity we strike. Joseph is not me, Corianton not you; they are themselves, acting their own ways in their own sets of circumstances, unrepeatable in the details that make them singularly who and what they are. As the paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould once remarked, sounding like a heretic to science (if we think that science only seeks out simple and ultimate general descriptions and universal laws), "our empirical world" is such that "everything interesting happens only once in its meaningful details."[37] That could appall us, drive us to despair of ever connecting. And if to connect we turn to generality, reduction, and simplification, we connect too sparsely, too loosely—we only connect the dots, when we need a much more detailed and shaded picture. Yet we do connect, and connect much more than dots; we connect all the more intricately, thickly—it's like getting stuck with burdock, as any attentive reader will tell you—the farther we reach into the more particular story of this one person who, in density of detail, is finally like no other. I might even risk likening the re-

37. In a review of Freeman Dyson's *Infinite in All Directions*, in the *New York Review of Books* vol. 35, no. 16 (27 October 1988): 32.

mark of the architect Mies van der Rohe to our situation as readers of scriptural stories and of our own lives: "God hides in the details."[38] And he means to be found.

38. Widely familiar in the form, "God is in the details" (and as of March 1998 used by Elder Neal A. Maxwell in slightly modified form, "God is in the details of our lives," and often echoed by local leaders in my BYU Stake), this remark attributed to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe occurs in *Chambers Dictionary of Modern Quotations*, ed. Nigel Rees (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1993), with a citation to the New York *Herald Tribune*, 1969, and the caution, "but said earlier, possibly by Flaubert" (277). I first read it, in the form I quote, on the last page of a novel, Robb Forman Dew's *Dale Loves Sophie to Death* (New York: Farrar, 1981), 217.

The Zion University Reverie: A Quantitative and Qualitative Assessment of BYU's Academic Climate

Paul M. Rose

ON JUNE 5TH, 1996, Assistant Professor Gail Houston of the Brigham Young University English Department was denied tenure and promotion at BYU.[1] In compliance with typical university procedures, Professor Houston quickly appealed the decision.[2] Members of the BYU chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), upon hearing the reasons for Houston's dismissal, became concerned that Dr. Houston's academic freedom may have been violated and subsequently contacted the national AAUP for assistance in handling the matter appropriately.[3] Within several weeks, the association's general secretary approved an investigation of the status of academic freedom at BYU.[4] In their eventual January 23rd-25th, 1997, visit, Professors Linda Pratt of the University of Nebraska and Bill Heywood of Cornell College met with over 120 faculty, administrators, and students as part of the investigation.[5]

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1. L. R. Pratt and C.W. Heywood, "Academic Freedom and Tenure: Brigham Young University" [electronic document] (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1998- [cited April 1998]). Available from http://ucs.byu.edu/BIOAG/Botany/Rushforth/www/AAUP/natreport.htm.

2. Ibid.

3. S. Abbott, B. Evenson, S. Howe, D. Jeffery, S. Rushforth, and B. Siegfried, "Report on the BYU Campus Visit by the National AAUP Investigative Committee" [electronic document] (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1998- [cited April 1998]). Available from http://ucs.byu.edu/BIOAG/Botany/Rushforth/www/AAUP/invst.htm

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

The AAUP investigative committee eventually published a lengthy report in the September/October 1997 issue of *Academe* (the AAUP's journal) with the following conclusion: Much more than an isolated violation of academic freedom, the investigating committee's inquiries into complaints at BYU have revealed a widespread pattern of infringements on academic freedom in a climate of oppression and fear of reprisals.[6]

As a result, debate between some of the university's faculty and several members of the administration over the status of BYU's academic climate has steadily increased. University leadership has taken several steps to counter the critical AAUP report. First, it has sought to defend its previous decisions by affirming that Houston's denial of promotion and tenure was not a simple case of dismissing someone who advocated unpopular ideas. Rather, they have argued that Houston engaged in a "pattern of publicly contradicting fundamental Church doctrine and deliberately attacking the Church."[7] In a recent issue of *Brigham Young Magazine*, Associate Academic Vice President Jim Gordon reported that Houston "publicly endorsed the practice of praying to Heavenly Mother," and he implied that this was one of the reasons for her dismissal.[8] He also said that "some of her students complained about her behavior in class."[9] However, details in the AAUP report contradicted the implication that students disliked Houston. Houston, the AAUP reported, had an average student evaluation rating of 6.35 out of 7—an uncommonly high score.[10]

Second, the university has also chosen to undermine the significance of the AAUP's review. Both Alan Wilkins (the Academic Vice President) and Jim Gordon have repeatedly emphasized that only 5 percent of all professors in the United States are AAUP members.[11] Gordon has also drawn attention to the fact that, while it may censure a university's administration, the AAUP is not an accrediting body.[12]

Third, some members of the administration have not only under-

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6. Pratt and Heywood, "Academic Freedom and Tenure."

7. "The Issue of Academic Freedom: an Interview with Jim Gordon." *Brigham Young Magazine* (Winter 1997): 30-31.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Pratt and Heywood, "Academic Freedom and Tenure."

11. "The Issue of Academic Freedom: an Interview with Jim Gordon." See also: A. L. Wilkins, "Campus Memorandum from Alan L. Wilkins to BYU Faculty and Staff, September 12, 1997" [electronic document] (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1998- [cited April 1998]). Available from http://ucs.byu.edu/BIOAG/Botany/Rushforth/www/AAUP/wilkinsmem.htm.

12. "The Issue of Academic Freedom."

mined the significance of the AAUP's judgement, but they have publicly speculated as to its motives. In a memorandum distributed to BYU faculty and staff, Vice President Wilkins revealed his belief that the AAUP has a "goal to impose a secular model on religious colleges and universities."[13] Gordon has echoed this suspicion by suggesting that the AAUP's censure of both BYU and the Catholic University of America exposes their "antipathy toward religious colleges and universities."[14] Of course, the administration's expressed negativity toward the AAUP and the AAUP's severe evaluation of BYU do little to prove whether BYU's academic climate is really satisfactory or whether this climate is maintained ethically. Realizing this, the BYU chapter of the AAUP has, in turn, criticized the administration's condemnation of the national AAUP. Professors who compose the BYU chapter of the AAUP have suggested that Alan Wilkins's and university President Merrill Bateman's statements implying that the AAUP and the media are conspiring to secularize BYU manifest "a certain paranoia."[15] In another letter from the same group, several professors, apparently perceiving themselves on the defensive, expressed their hope that they would not be branded "advocates of the adversary" (a designation President Bateman used in a newspaper article to describe those who opposed the university's mission) as they sought improvements at BYU.[16]

In the midst of this debate, many of us in the BYU community wondered what BYU professors as a whole might have to say about these issues if they were given sufficient voice. In my judgment, an assessment of professors' attitudes toward the academic climate at BYU might tell us significantly more about BYU than either an evaluation by the AAUP or a series of memoranda from the university's administration. But strangely, in the midst of this controversy, no independent assessment of professors' attitudes had been conducted. Or, if such an assessment was ever conducted, the results have not been made public, so statements regarding BYU's academic climate have been tossed to the public without empirical support. Eventually, I determined that a careful collection of both quantitative and qualitative data could prove instrumental in revealing

13. Wilkins, "Campus Memorandum."

14. "The Issue of Academic Freedom: an Interview with Jim Gordon."

15. S. Abbott, G. Bryner, W. Evenson, S. Howe, D. Jeffrey, S. Rushforth, and B. Siegfried, "Memo to BYU Faculty, Staff, and Administrators from the BYU Chapter of the AAUP, 15 September 1997" [electronic document] (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1998- [cited April 1998]). Available from: http://ucs.byu.edu/BIOAG/Botany/Rushforth/www/AAUP/facmemo997.htm.

16. S. Abbott, G. Bryner, W. Evenson, S. Howe, D. Jeffrey, S. Rushforth, and B. Siegfried "Memo to BYU faculty, staff . . . 15 September 1997" [electronic document] (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1998- [cited April 1998]). Available from: http://ucs.byu.edu/BIOAG/Botany/Rushforth/www/AAUP/facmemo997.htm.

the opinions of BYU professors and, secondarily, provide some flavor of the strengths and shortcomings of BYU's academic environment. Furthermore, I supposed that if BYU's academic climate was in need of improvement, a carefully conducted study of this sort might prove helpful in suggesting goals for the university's progress.

Method

I randomly selected 295 BYU instructors holding the titles professor, associate professor, or assistant professor from a 1997-98 faculty list and invited them to respond to a 15-item questionnaire (see Table 1 for questions). Faculty from all departments (including the ROTC program, the law school, etc.) listed in the 1997-98 academic catalog were selected to participate. After collecting the responses, I eliminated one survey item from analysis because of its ambiguity, so only 14 items are analyzed and discussed here. For simplicity's sake and greater control, faculty holding titles other than those stated above, such as professor emeritus, associate clinical professor, research professor, part-time lecturer, etc., were not invited to participate. To prevent any possible complications, department chairpersons were not invited to participate either. Although this is unfortunate since department chairpersons might have a great deal of insight into the issues explored here, a negative reaction from any one in this position might threaten the rate of response from their entire department. The 295 faculty who received the surveys represent approximately 25% of all BYU professors who hold the three standard titles mentioned above.

To encourage adequate representation from different academic fields, I stratified the sample of potential respondents by department. Paralleling the general composition of my sample, I invited approximately 25% of the faculty in each department to respond. I also corrected the sample to insure that every department with 12 or more faculty members had at least one representative from each professorial rank. For example, in cases where two professors and one associate professor had been selected to represent a department, I randomly eliminated one of the professors and randomly selected an assistant professor in her/his place.

I addressed and stuffed 295 envelopes with the survey and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. All of these surveys were delivered either directly to the professors' offices or to their mailboxes over the course of four days. I received the returned surveys in a post office box over the course of four weeks.

While I authored the survey, I asked several friends to review it and point out any biases I had overlooked. These survey reviewers hold undergraduate and graduate social science degrees from BYU and have par-

ticipated in survey research before. I state this seemingly superfluous detail for the benefit of the small number of respondents who were apparently angered by the questionnaire and questioned my research competence. Of course, claiming bias in questionnaires is a fairly typical method that assumptive respondents use to belittle researchers engaged in controversial research (e.g., see Ester Yu's March 23rd, 1998, *Daily Universe* article for another example of a BYU survey that many faculty dismissed as biased).[17]

The survey I used has a forced-choice format (meaning that "I don't know" or "not sure" responses were not permitted). I hoped that this would make the data more meaningful by preventing respondents from ignoring subtle inclinations that they had in either direction. Each survey item was a statement leading in one direction or the other. I assumed that respondents would have an easier time expressing their level of agreement if each statement clearly advocated one side of the issue only. Of the 12 statements that ask respondents for their level of agreement, 7 might be interpreted as favorable to BYU leadership, and 5 might be interpreted as unfavorable to BYU leadership. Hence, the 12 statements used represent a near balance in statement directionality.

Some of the questionnaire items include quotations from other documents. The final item includes a quotation from the previously mentioned AAUP report. All other quotations were extracted from BYU's own academic freedom document.

To acknowledge BYU's position, I should make clear that the university did not approve this project. I conducted this study using my own finances, interest, and education as a social scientist. At the outset, it seemed unwise to try to approve the study through typical BYU committee reviews, and the reactions of a few angry respondents and two letters from the university's research office confirmed my doubts that I could ever conduct a fair assessment with the university's supervision. Hopeful of seeing the study through to fruition, however, I made sincere efforts to follow the ethical guidelines necessary for this type of research without endangering the anonymity of my respondents.

Results

Quantitative:

Out of 295 distributed questionnaires, 221 were returned, representing a phenomenal response rate of 75%. As noted in Table 1, only 10% of the respondents surveyed were female. While this small female represen-

17. Ester Yu, "Faculty Question Survey," *Daily Universe*, 23 March 1998, Campus section.

TABLE 1.
Percentages of Strong Agreement, Agreement, Disagreement, and Strong Disagreement Sorted by Item

Item Content	*Percentages*					
	Male			*Female*		
a. Sex [of respondent]:	88.7 (n = 199)			10.0 (n = 22)		
	Yes			*No*		
b. I have familiarized myself with the AAUP's report on the investigation they conducted at BYU.	91.9			7.2		
	SA	*A*	*D*	*SD*	*[A]*	*[D]*[†]
1. The administration has given adequate attention to the academic freedom concerns that arose after the AAUP's (American Association of University Professors) investigation at BYU.	72.4	13.6	6.8	5.9	86.0	12.7
2. I am satisfied with the methods that BYU Professors currently have to express their concerns to the administration.	68.8	15.8	7.2	7.7	84.6	14.9
3. Sometimes I feel that if I speak out for changes at BYU, I may limit my opportunities for continuation or advancement here.	7.7	10.4	14.0	66.5	18.1	80.5
4. Sexual discrimination probably occurs more at BYU than it does at most other universities.	2.7	8.6	21.7	66.1	11.3	87.8
5. BYU professors should not conduct even sound research that may draw into question church or university procedures.	54.3	11.8	21.7	6.8	66.1	28.5
6. The BYU administration adequately discusses and negotiates pertinent policy issues with faculty.	57.0	23.1	10.0	9.5	80.1	19.5
7. BYU leadership ensures a university environment where I have "the freedom to discuss and advocate controversial and unpopular ideas."	55.7	17.2	15.8	7.2	72.9	23.0
8. The ecclesiastical endorsement policy required of LDS faculty at BYU contradicts the "posture of trust" that university leadership has advocated.	5.4	7.2	14.5	71.5	12.6	86.0

	SA	*A*	*D*	*SD*	*[A]*	*[D]*†
9. The phrase ". . . expression . . . that contradicts or opposes, rather than analyzes or discusses, fundamental church doctrine or policy . . ." clearly delineates what BYU professors may and may not express.	10.4	25.3	11.8	50.2	35.7	62.0
10. At BYU, hiring and rank and continuation procedures are conducted as fairly as can reasonably be expected.	67.4	21.3	5.9	5.4	88.7	11.3
11. "Much more than an isolated violation of academic freedom, [at BYU] there is a widespread pattern of infringements on academic freedom in a climate of oppression and fear of reprisals."	4.1	3.6	11.8	80.1	7.7	91.9
12. Lack of faculty academic freedom is probably one of BYU's most significant problems.	2.3	6.3	13.6	76.9	8.6	90.5

† The [A] column represents the combination of agreement and strong agreement percentages from the first and second columns. Similarly, the [D] column represents the combination of disagreement and strong disagreement percentages from the third and fourth columns. Where row percentages do not sum to 100%, some respondents had left the item blank.

TABLE 2.
Significant Sex Differences on Select Items

Item Content	*Percentages*†			
	Male		*Female*	
	A	*D*	*A*	*D*
Sexual discrimination probably occurs more at BYU than it does at most other universities.	10.3a	89.7a	23.8a	76.1a
At BYU, hiring and rank and continuation procedures are conducted as fairly as can reasonably be expected.	90.8b	9.2b	77.2b	22.7b
"Much more than an isolated violation of academic freedom, [at BYU] there is a widespread pattern of infringements on academic freedom in a climate of oppression and fear of reprisals."	6.2	93.9	13.6	86.4

† In this table, as in columns 5 and 6 of Table 1, agreement represents the combination of strong agreement and agreement as reported in Table 1, while disagreement represents the combination of disagreement and strong disagreement. Where row percentages do not sum to 100%, some respondents had left the item blank (a. $p = .08$, b. $p = .05$.).

tation may seem to jeopardize the validity of the sample, 10% is not exceedingly distant from the actual percentage of female faculty at BYU (17%, according to the BYU Fact File).[18] Also, it is likely that a noticeable portion of the 17% reported by BYU hold alternate titles (part-time lecturer, etc.) that I excluded from my sample. Hence, I am confident that my random selection of respondents resulted in an adequate representation of both female and male faculty holding assistant professor, associate professor, and professor titles.

The response data are summarized in Table 1 to demonstrate the number of respondents who answered "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree." I chose to present the data in percentages so that the data are quickly interpretable by a wide audience. Table 2 outlines notable response differences between sexes on 3 items. The between-sex difference on the first item in Table 2 (related to sexual discrimination) was marginally significant ($2 = 3.06$, $df = 1$, $p = .08$), but the second (related to fairness in hiring and rank decisions) was even more so ($2 = 3.85$, $df = 1$, $p = .05$). The difference related to the third item in this table was not statistically significant ($2 = 1.74$, $df = 1$, $p = .19$).

The intriguing differences presented in Table 2 will be discussed in further detail later.

Qualitative:

All respondents were encouraged in their instructions to write helpful comments on the back of their questionnaires. I have presented these comments below and have categorized them by item number. (Of 12 items, numbers 9 and 12 did not elicit helpful comments.) Other miscellaneous and humorous comments are listed last in the section labeled "General Comments." I have included every written comment I received, although some were edited (i.e., I retained the main ideas and details, but eliminated redundant or unnecessary explanations). The only comments I have totally excluded are a few complaints about my questionnaire and several insults I received.

I have a number of reasons for supplementing the survey data with these added remarks. Hopefully, the significance of these issues for many BYU professors will become evident as my readers examine the respondents' comments. Also, many of the comments may serve as suggestions for improvement in administrative procedures, faculty attitudes, or both.

I should forewarn my readers and ask them to be cautious in their consideration of the generalizability of any individual remarks; each

18. "BYU Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Personnel," *BYU Fact File* [electronic document]. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1998- [cited April 1998]. Available from: http://www.byu.edu/news/factfile/faculty.html.

comment is best understood in the context of the quantitative data presented earlier.

Item #1: "The administration has given adequate attention to the academic freedom concerns that arose after the AAUP's (American Association of University Professors) investigation at BYU."

1. "The administration's only visible efforts have been justification of their actions rather than solving the problems that resulted in the AAUP investigation."

Item #2: "I am satisfied with the methods that BYU professors currently have to express their concerns to the administration."

1. "There are no methods!"
2. "The FAC [faculty advisory committee] is a slow-moving bureaucracy with no more than advisory authority. It should always be used, but trying to express concerns now by any other way is viewed as disloyal."

Item #3: "Sometimes I feel that if I speak out for changes at BYU, I may limit my opportunities for continuation or advancement here."

1. "I can honestly say that being sensitive to the politics of the administration was far more an issue for me in my previous faculty position than it is here at BYU . . . The politics and policies of the administration is [sic] always an issue regardless of one's place of employment. When we make a decision to join an institution, we have made a decision to abide by certain policies. If I were not content with the policies here, I would find another university that had a better fit for me . . . That isn't to say the administrative policies are perfect at BYU, but they aren't at other universities either."
2. "Anyone who does not have continuing status or wishes to be promoted in rank is advised to keep their [*sic*] mouth shut and be viewed as a loyal supporter of the status quo."

Item #4: "Sexual discrimination probably occurs more at BYU than it does at most other universities."

1. "As a woman, if I aspired to a high-level administration [*sic*] position, I would probably leave and go elsewhere, because leadership here is intrinsically linked to the priesthood and Church leadership. One should expect in an institution such as BYU the mirroring of Church doctrine and policy."
2. "Curiously, your missive follows directly upon the 'closure' of a gender matter I was forced to bring to the attention of certain BYU officials. Official results of the 'investigation' record that I imagined everything."
3. "The view that LDS mothers should not work outside of the home is an added burden."

4. "I expect that sexual discrimination at BYU is probably comparable to that at other universities. Sexual harassment, however, occurs more at other institutions—I have been there and heard the comments and seen the joking by both genders about both genders."

Item #5: "BYU professors should not publish soundly conducted research that may draw into question church or university procedures."

1. "Responsible research should not reach such a conclusion."
2. ". . . I suppose if I were asked not to publish my research, I would be disappointed, but I would trust that there is a good reason and that those in authority would carefully discuss with me the implications of my research and that my findings would be addressed at some level. It seems to me that those faculty who may have been disappointed in this regard have, as a priority, an axe to grind rather than supporting the mission of BYU."
3. "Those [so] inclined should move on and not draw their livelihood from sacred tithing funds."

Item #6: "The BYU administration adequately discusses and negotiates pertinent policy issues with faculty."

1. "I object neither to the written policy nor the standard, only the way it is implemented."
2. "After negotiation and approval of the policy on temple worthiness, the Board of Trustees unilaterally changed the implementation procedure without any consultation, rendering useless months of careful work. Then, when administration implements policy differently than had been expected, there is no adequate way to handle problems. Policy is one thing but implementation is more important since the administration is answerable only to the Board of Trustees rather than to the faculty as well. There is no faculty governance at BYU! Faculty are just employees."

Item #7: "BYU leadership ensures a university environment where I have the 'freedom to discuss and advocate controversial and unpopular ideas.'"

1. "No, and that is good!"
2. "Why should it?"
3. "'Advocate' too nebulous"
4. "[Yes,] such as religion and God."
5. "Should we have a university where one could promote drug addiction?"
6. "Faculty are free to discuss and advocate whatever they wish, as long as they are prepared to go elsewhere."
7. "I found the BYU leadership to be a lot more open-minded than the AAUP investigators!"

8. "I have taught at state universities in two other states. It has been my experience that BYU offers more academic freedom than other universities. BYU faculty are free to discuss much in the classroom that would be censored at other universities."

Item #8: "The ecclesiastical endorsement policy required of LDS faculty at BYU contradicts the "posture . . . of trust" that university leadership has advocated."

1. "There is a total lack of trust on the part of the administration towards faculty."
2. "The written policy is fine, but interpretation and implementation are wholly vested in the administration and the Board of Trustees and, thus, open to capricious action based on rumor and incomplete information. BYU professors must always assume that someone will be offended by their work and complain to the Brethren. One person I know was called in by their Stake President to justify a paper that defended the church's position, but some did not understand it this way. This creates a climate of self-censorship which prevents much useful work."

Item #10: "At BYU, hiring and rank and continuation procedures are conducted as fairly as can reasonably be expected."

1. "The review process is never fair at any university. The departmental reviews by those who personally know the candidate are mostly fair. College and university committees who reverse lower decisions based on ignorance, hear-say, and prejudice are the biggest problems."

Item #11: "Much more than an isolated violation of academic freedom [at BYU], there is a widespread pattern of infringements on academic freedom in a climate of oppression and fear of reprisals."

1. "This is patently ridiculous."
2. "I can honestly say that I have more academic freedom at BYU than I had in my previous appointment. . . I feel much freer now to talk about values because I can include spiritual and religious values, and I can share more of my own personal feelings. BYU is a good fit for me."
3. "The AAUP conclusion is no surprise. The surprise is the administration's attempt to belittle the AAUP (whose recommendations they have carefully followed for years) rather than solve the problems."

General Comments:

1. "Which enemy of the university helped you put this together?"
2. "I hope you can make your results and these comments available

to the BYU administration. Under the present climate, faculty members are not able to register their opinions and complaints without fear of reprisal, or at least being viewed as disloyal."

3. "After 31 years teaching at BYU and 4 years at [a state university], I am totally satisfied and pleased with BYU."
4. "Do you have an axe to grind?"
5. "I feel perfectly free to do my research and indeed well supported by the university. However, there is a severe lack of communication between faculty and administration. I do feel restrained in the opinions I can voice relative to the performance of the administration . . . To me there are two main issues: 1) lack of trust by the administration of the faculty and 2) lack of communication between faculty and administration. I can give examples of each. To purchase a computer one needs 8 signatures on a purchase order form. This is even with a researcher's own grant money. Clearly a lack of trust."
6. "Private problems do not need public airing."
7. "If you don't get the inflammatory results you want, I assume you won't publish [this study] . . ."
8. "Many administrators consider their procedures church doctrine."
9. "BYU still has many advantages. My department has no problems related to academic freedom, but many of my friends are looking to find positions elsewhere."
10. "I was a tenured faculty member at [a state university] before coming here. They have a proud tradition of academic freedom. I feel as much or more academic freedom here. That BYU is criticized by the AAUP tells me more about the AAUP's arrogance and alienation from principles of fairness, tolerance, and objectivity than it does about BYU's status. That BYU occasionally fails to grant continuing status to probationary faculty who fail to merit it is a sign of BYU's growing maturity and higher expectations . . . I feel that the expectations of faithfulness and loyalty found here are appropriate in light of the institution's dependence on mine and others' tithing, as well as the expectations of students and parents of students who come here."
11. "Although my answers may reflect somewhat negatively on BYU, my responses stem mainly from a general feeling rather than so much a personal one in some instances. In other words, I have been relatively little affected by lack of academic freedom at BYU when other colleagues have been greatly affected."
12. "Having been on the faculty of three very 'prestigious' universities before joining the BYU faculty, I have more academic free-

dom here than any of the other three universities. No one has told me what my research interests should be here at BYU. They did at the other universities!"

13. "I have been on the faculty of 3 other institutions. BYU is by far my favorite work place."
14. "One concern I have is that there are several members of the administration who seem to stretch or bend the truth to fit their own agendas. Too much is done in secret."
15. "The problem with some faculty is they don't know how to present and discuss. Too many want to have all their positions taught dogmatically and fully accepted and teach that way."
16. "We have several real turkeys on campus."
17. "... Fortunately, I feel comfortable with my faculty position. I feel respected and valued by my Chair, Dean, and Academic Vice President. I also feel that they would listen carefully to anything I had to say, but that is because they know that I am completely supportive of the mission of BYU."
18. "The belly-achers should teach somewhere else."
19. "The problem of academic freedom is mostly a problem of the administration being out of touch with the faculty. This is expected in a top-down hierarchy, but the administration can easily take steps to improve the situation. They think the problem is a few dissidents when it is actually the way we treat each other."
20. "I believe that BYU has the procedures and the mechanism to provide academic freedom. I also believe that its mission can be interpreted as defending and promoting academic freedom. There are, however, several problems with academic freedom at BYU. One, there is a significant minority that believes that any "new" or discomforting information will bring down the university and the church. Second, there are administrators who see their main function as being gate-keepers who stand between the integrity of the church and the infidels seeking to destroy. Thus, everything is seen in that light. Third, there is a large group of students and professors who are intimidated by what they believe will happen to them, and they create an environment of fear. Fourth, there is a minority of professors who have a social, political, doctrinal, or personal conflict with the church and they use every opportunity to embarrass the church. ... These four elements then create a dilemma for what I believe is the largest group at BYU—those who believe in academic freedom that is responsible and honest!"

Discussion

In this section, I will review several important trends evident in the data, consider the limitations of this study, raise a few considerations regarding sundry perceptions of BYU's academic climate, and suggest several additional questions that should be addressed in future research.

A Response to Some of the Preliminary Assessments of BYU's Academic Climate:

In light of the results reported here, it is difficult to believe either of the extreme notions of "a widespread pattern of infringements on academic freedom" or "a zion university"[19] with respect to the academic climate at BYU. As one who put considerable time and finances into this study, I feel the need neither to exaggerate the challenges present at BYU nor to ignore the reality of problems that deserve more attention than they have received in the past.

The data presented in this article provide little support for a perception among BYU faculty of "a widespread pattern of infringements on academic freedom in a climate of oppression and fear of reprisals." What the data do seem to suggest is that the majority of BYU professors do not, in a general sense, feel that their academic freedom is restricted or that academic freedom is a significant problem at BYU. A minority, however, does report perceiving some instances of academic freedom violation, and comments indicate some agreement over what these problems are. Clearly, the definition of academic freedom varies among respondents; however, a notable minority of respondents (23%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had the freedom to "discuss and advocate controversial and unpopular ideas"—and this very notion is a part of the definition of academic freedom that is provided in BYU's own academic freedom document.

Response Differences Between the Sexes:

As summarized in Table 2, three particularly interesting differences emerged between men's and women's responses. The first two items, when considered in concert, might be understood as a measure of the perceived level of fairness in advancement (or promotion) decisions made about women at BYU. With the two items considered together, these data support the dismaying conclusion that nearly a quarter of BYU's female faculty perceives a lack of fairness in hiring and advance-

19. Bateman, Merrill. "A Zion University and the Search for Truth," *Brigham Young Magazine* (Winter 1997): 25.

ment decisions made on their behalf. There are at least two ways to consider this finding. First, a quarter may be high or low depending on how it compares to similar data from other universities. Second, a quarter is too high regardless of what is occurring at other universities. For those who believe that data from other universities should be considered before interpreting this percentage, an avenue of telling research is open.

A Climate of Self-Censorship?

Through the many interesting results to emerge from the data, hints of faculty self-censorship also deserve further comment. At least one respondent felt that what he or she perceived as a climate of self-censorship prevented "much useful work." Another respondent, commenting on the appropriateness of conducting research which may draw into question church or university procedures, implied that self-censorship should be expected: "Those [so] inclined should move on and not draw their livelihood from sacred tithing funds."

Indeed, 66.1% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that BYU professors should not conduct research that calls into question church or university procedures. If this item is representative of a pattern of self-censorship, the academic climate at BYU becomes a little more complex than some might have realized. This is an important avenue for future study on these issues. How prevalent is self-censorship at BYU, and what sorts of ideas might be restricted? If self-censorship is common in BYU professors' work, does it influence their scientific or creative as well as their religious thought? Is such self-censorship beneficial or detrimental to the university's mission? All of these are intriguing questions that, if addressed, might clarify the nature of BYU's academic climate and spark an intriguing dialogue on the ethical considerations associated with self-censorship at religious universities.

Other Limitations of This Research and Suggestions for Future Study:

Because I did not want my respondents to feel jeopardized in any way, they did not indicate either their professorial rank or their department on the survey. As a reviewer of this article pointed out, it is extremely likely that both the department that one belongs to and one's academic rank strongly influence faculty perceptions of academic freedom problems at BYU. For example, do faculty in the humanities and biological and social sciences hold a poorer perception of BYU's academic climate than those in mathematics or business? This question and others related to it could illuminate some avenues of improvement in faculty-administration relations at the university.

Also in need of attention is the reason or reasons that women perceive greater unfairness than men in hiring and advancement decisions at BYU. As suggested earlier, it may also be helpful to compare data from BYU to that of other universities when considering women's perceptions of the university's academic climate.

In fact, most (if not all) of the data reported here are difficult to interpret in the absence of similar data from other universities. Many will undoubtedly read this report and wonder how BYU professors' responses might compare to those from professors elsewhere. On the other hand, many other readers may interpret these findings through comparison to some institutional ideal--perhaps a mental conception of a "Zion-like" university.

Is BYU Progressing in the Fulfillment of Its Mission?

In my judgement, it is naive to suggest that BYU has graduated above the problems that are typical of faculty-administration relations at most other universities. Even if there are only certain groups that appear to have been affected, there is some degree of agreement that BYU, in spite of its affiliation with the church, has from time to time strained or even violated the academic freedom of its faculty. However, in any dialogue concerning BYU's academic climate, one must also acknowledge the obvious fact that the majority of BYU professors do not feel that BYU has serious academic freedom problems.

Recently, an issue of *Brigham Young Magazine* carried a telling script under a photograph of a statue of Brigham Young on the cover.[20] Unlike the title of the cover story within the magazine which reads "A Zion University and the Search for Truth," the script on the magazine's cover reads "*Toward* a Zion University" [italics mine].[21] BYU is, of course, continuously growing. It has not arrived at some ideal, and some would even question whether it is growing toward an ideal. Given the stakes for this institution, however, those of us who care about its future would do well to consider what BYU is becoming and by what means it is getting there. These two matters involve choices for which administrators, faculty, alumni, parents, and students should all feel responsible.

20. *Brigham Young Magazine*, Winter 1997.
21. Bateman, "A Zion University," 25.

Ella Smyth Peacock*: Seeking Her Place in the West

Kathryn J. Abajian

LIKE THE EARLY MORMONS whose beliefs she would eventually adopt, landscape artist Ella Smyth Peacock early on sought refuge in the west.[1] She was born in 1905 in Germantown, near Philadelphia, a city created in 1681 by god-fearing visionary William Penn as part of a "holy experiment" to provide a sanctuary for the religiously persecuted. As Joseph Smith would nearly 200 years later, William Penn—a multi-talented man with radical ideas and a determined spirit—designed a city with streets laid out in a grid, in precise symmetrical right angles. However, unlike the Salt Lake valley, this eastern land, which originally was inhabited by the Algonquin Indians, lay between a bay and a fresh water lake. It was rich with river valleys, gentle mountain slopes, and dense forests.

Despite the land's natural amenities, Ella long wanted to leave the east coast. She didn't care for the fertile, intensely green land and didn't value the refined lifestyle her 17th-century American ancestors had bequeathed her. She disliked the dance cotillions and afternoon teas that asked for so much in propriety and appearances, and she eschewed the proper and "self important" Philadelphia society. At a young age she felt anxious in groups outside her family and, as she matured, felt out of place, living an unconventional life that had not lead directly to college and a marriage befitting her family. But as Brigham Young had once advised the Mormon faithful, Ella's father coached his young daughter to follow her own light. She envisioned a different, less controlled land, a place she could live free from others' expectations. Thus inspired to seek her own purpose, she imagined life outside Philadelphia society and eventually—though not for fifty years—escaped the east for that space and autonomy in the western desert.

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1. This essay is based on numerous interviews I have conducted with Ella Smyth Peacock since July of 1987. Interview notes and photocopies of various documents are in my possession.

*Editors note: Ella Smyth Peacock passed away on June 27, 1999. She was 94 years old.

Young Ella was raised in a religiously conservative atmosphere next door to her maternal grandparents, Mary Emily Munhall and well-known evangelist, Leander W. Munhall. She was her parents' third child; two more would follow, making her the middle child in an accomplished and remarkable family. And she had some of the traits middle children often bear: a tendency toward insecurity, a feeling of being overshadowed by the competence of the older children and the charm of the younger.

Perhaps because of these personal uncertainties, all her life Peacock admired strong and independent-minded men and women, eventually modeling her life after their qualities of self-reliance and unconventionality. Most memorable were her grandfather and her father, both strong men with sensitive spirits and clear convictions.

When she was in her ninetieth year, Peacock remembered Grandfather Leander W. Munhall as "quite a lively person who had entered the Civil War as a drummer boy, survived thirty-three battles and mustered out as a lieutenant." She admired his innovative lifestyle, carried out at the same time the LDS church sent missionaries around the world. Grandfather Munhall—a Methodist evangelist who traveled widely, knew the Bible "from front to back," and wrote extensively about his conservative, religious opinions—went on his final mission to California to preach with Aimee Semple McPherson. It was 1933, and he was ninety-one. As a child Ella loved sitting with her brother and sisters at her grandfather's knee, listening to lively stories of the Civil War and his proselytizing experiences; he was an outspoken man, convinced that society and especially Methodist doctrine were becoming too liberal.

Weighed down by the complexities of society, Ella's father George Albert Smyth impressed Ella deeply with his understanding and encouragement. He was a man with artistic sensitivity who had capitulated to his parents' demands that he become an attorney. Knowing he couldn't bear a lifetime of criminal law, he became a corporate lawyer, working part of the time for Young Smyth Field Company, his family's Philadelphia wholesale import/export firm, and escaping to the research library as often as possible. In her father Ella found a soul mate, another who objected though he sometimes succumbed to the pressures and expectations of others. But after he'd had his second nervous breakdown, Ella's mother, who was also challenged with a new baby, sent the "nervous" Ella to her maiden aunt Dibbie for calming. Here the six-year-old Ella learned to make pincushions by stitching together small circles of felt and cardboard; she gave one to her father, who kept her gift in the breast pocket of his suit coat.

Though he died tragically when she was just thirteen, Ella's father marked her profoundly with his belief in self-direction and his passion

for honest work. Most critical to Ella, however, was the license her father gave her to value herself and to do what she felt she had to do, advice liberating to a young woman who "back in Philadelphia was supposed to do just what she was told." He told her to "choose just what you want to do in life and go after it." She took his counsel to heart, but, as it turned out, could not do wholly what she wanted for five decades. When her father died, Ella was enrolled in the private Quaker schools she had attended from the beginning, strict, refined, and academically sound institutions that gave her a classical education. Yet within two years, the family business collapsed and Ella's mother, Adelaide Munhall Smyth, was left bereft of her comfortable life. Ella was then forced to attend a public high school, a place she "couldn't stand" because the students shocked her with their disrespect and frivolity. So she quit in December of her senior year, simply refusing to abide the personal discomfort it caused her. Thus, at the brink of her adulthood in 1923, she established what would become lifelong habits of willfulness and self-direction.

Obliged to survive with a very limited income, Adelaide Smyth modeled for her daughter the take-charge courage of truly independent women. She sold the family's summer home on the New Jersey shore, the site of Ella's fondest childhood memories, and turned the family home in Germantown into rental apartments. And she raised her younger children alone for the next sixteen years.

Ella Smyth's subsequent decision to attend art school seems founded more on default than on response to a calling because she had had no art instruction or experience. Instead, her mother had encouraged her to study music. She remembers, "I loved music and loved playing the piano, but that wasn't on my mind. I tried studying music at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, but decided I didn't want to do that. I got to talking with another girl who was going to art school, and that just sounded to me like what I wanted to do. I just hoped I could do it." "Gillmer," as she was then called, studied art for one year at the Maryland Institute in Baltimore, financed by a "private scholarship" from her mother's good friend. The next year she enrolled in the Philadelphia School of Design for Women, a small private school that had been founded in the 1840's as an "experiment in training for the useful and beautiful." Her work here reinforced the work ethic that had been modeled for her in her childhood home and established in her own mind an image of herself as a quiet rebel against many of the restrictions common to her culture.

She attended three years on a school scholarship, working during the school year and summer breaks to pay for her supplies. Gillmer's education at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women established her opinions about art education: Here she learned from practicing artists,

not from instruction in theory and technique, but from weekly critiques and hours of individual, independent work. She learned, too, of her love for painting outdoors, frequently leaving during class time—against the rules—to paint outside. She graduated in 1927 with a degree in Illustration and quickly secured her first postgraduate job working for a sculptress—posing nude in an outdoor garden beside a live deer.

The Depression made her stronger and formed a conviction she would hold long into her old age that taking government handouts was wrong. Gillmer Smyth supported herself and later her family at a variety of jobs, including painting, for the next seventy years. She spent the Depression years expanding her art experience: painting portraits on commission, sketching at the Philadelphia wharf, taking a few courses at a teachers' training college, and—importantly—driving out west pulling a trailer, sometimes collecting antiques along the way. But she also worked hard to persevere through the rough times of the thirties, continually employed at a colorful variety of jobs, all design related: She carved frames and applied gold leaf to them, created decorative wooden brooches she sold to Saks Fifth Avenue, updated antique jewelry for a Philadelphia jeweler (a painful task for her aesthetic), painted designs on lampshades, and, finally, ran a business with a former art school friend—remodeling and decorating basement recreation rooms for wealthy families in Germantown. The carpentry she spent so much time doing toughened her hands, eventually making them too stiff to play the piano and contributing to her arthritis.

Recalling only one childhood "crush" on a boy, Gillmer claims she never dated in high school or art school. Perhaps the challenge of virtually supporting herself for the fifteen years after her family's financial ruin had toughened Ella's resolve to remain autonomous; perhaps her constant self-effacement and insecurity about her appearance ("I've always had too much nose," she told me) preempted the usual expectations about marriage held dear by most young Philadelphia women in the thirties. At any rate, Ella Gillmer Smyth Peacock remained clearly ahead of her times as an independent woman. In fact, she did a man's work and broke male barriers throughout her life, experiences that developed qualities that would later help her survive and would influence the quality and production of her best work.

Gillmer Smyth was a 34-year-old woman who "wasn't looking for a husband" and who claimed she "wasn't ever going to get married" when she met an Englishman named William Francis Bailey Peacock "over a hammer and saw." Against her mother's warning that Bill Peacock was "beneath" her socially, Gillmer married Bill in 1939. She was thirty-four years old and he was almost forty. Bill, whom Peacock remembers as "calm and good for me," had left school at age fifteen to join the British

army at the start of World War I in 1914. The carpentry skills he'd learned since the war and those Ella was developing gave the newlyweds their start. They lived in one of the apartments her mother had made in the family home, remodeled more space into apartments, and eventually bought the apartment house from Ella's mother Adelaide, who by then was in her sixties. Two years later in 1941, Ella answered the country's call for women to support the war effort and enrolled in a vocational high school to learn drafting. She learned quickly and worked as a draftsman for most of the next thirty years, earning the main part of her family's income.

In 1949, when their only child Bailey was five years old, Ella and Bill moved out of the city for Bill's health, to Wayne County, Pennsylvania, where they bought a barren dairy farm though they "didn't know a thing about cows." The barn was dilapidated, and the cows they bought were diseased. So they bought a new herd and both Ella and Bill worked the farm side by side—milking the cows and running the dairy machinery. Bill enjoyed the farm life and the country air, but Ella remembers, "I always had it in the back of my mind to move out West." The dairy enterprise wasn't profitable enough to support their family, so Ella left for six months to work as a draftsman in New York City, commuting home on weekends to see Bill and Bailey. She remembers her work environment:

> The fellows were very nice, easy to work with, and there wasn't any problem though I was the only woman in the room. But one man from Pennsylvania told me a married woman shouldn't have that job, that it should be a man's job. He called me "sir" all the time and I called him "mam"! I sat beside him and one time caught him studying my drawing; I was a better draftsman than he was; I knew that. My supervisor said when he wanted a job done right, he'd give it to me.

Though women could easily find work doing a "man's" job on the east coast in post World War II years, discrimination was clearly an issue. For one year in 1954, Ella taught a correspondence course in drafting, mostly evaluating students' work on programmed assignments. She signed only her initials to her critiques because the school didn't want it known that all the instructors were women who had been hired because they would work for less money—$50.00 a week in this case.

The Peacocks found the Mormon church during their days in Wayne County, but their connection to Mormonism had actually begun much earlier. Just before Ella's father died in 1919, a distant relative, the Mormon apostle and convert Richard R. Lyman,[2] had contacted him, seeking genealogical information. So, on one of Ella's trips west with her mother

2. Ordained in 1918, excommunicated in 1943, re-baptized in 1954.

during the 1930's, she and Adelaide drove to Salt Lake City, curious to see the Mormon headquarters and meet their relative. Apostle Lyman took Ella and Adelaide Smyth upstairs to meet apostle George Albert Smith, who was standing at a lectern speaking to the women of the Relief Society. Apostle Lyman "introduced Mother as Mrs. George Albert Smyth. That got a laugh from everyone."

Thirty years later in 1962 when Bailey was finishing high school, Bill and Ella contacted the Mormon church again, this time to ask about the colleges in Utah—"not wanting to be missionaried," but curious and thinking it might be nearing time to sell the dairy farm, so Bill could retire and the family could finally move west. They had recently read an article about the Mormon missionaries and had spoken of their interest to a clerk at a local A&P, who, in turn, had mentioned it to the local missionaries, Salt Lake boys Greg Hawkins and Gary Workman. The young men found the Peacock's dairy farm on a country lane, quite close to a small Catholic monastery, outside the town of Honesdale. Only Bill was home, but the missionaries remember he was "tickled pink" to meet them and introduced them to the Peacock menagerie that included sheep, chickens, rabbits, ducks, and dogs.

Elders Hawkins and Workman met with the Peacocks weekly for four weeks, teaching them the Mormon gospel. Ella remembers both she and Bill were especially intrigued by the plan of salvation. They changed their habits, according to Peacock's recollections, in order to join the Mormon church. Ella quit cigarettes "cold," and Bill gave up the drinking "he'd picked up in the army" and "the tea he was raised on." After they were baptized on February 25, 1962, Ella says she remembers thinking the Methodist church women's organization was a "cooking and baking club" and she expected that the LDS Relief Society might be different, "but it's too much of that too," she said. "I didn't go for Relief Society very much; I still don't, but it isn't necessary."

The Peacocks finally sold their dairy farm and moved west in 1964 to Salt Lake City where Ella worked for four years. They lived on "C" Street, finding friendships in the church and worshipping regularly in the Salt Lake Temple. Although she had long desired to move west, Ella ran into some practices in Utah that conflicted with her upbringing and art training. While in Salt Lake, Ella took a figure drawing class because she "wanted to get back into painting and wanted to get some criticisms." At a time when most schools across the country were using nude models for life classes, this one was still unsure about the practice. She doesn't remember the school, but she remembers: "They had a nude model, but the trouble was the instructor didn't know how to run it. You know, the model poses for a certain amount of time and then rests. It's professional for the model to put on a robe and walk around then. They don't walk

around without any clothes on and talk to people. But this model didn't know that and the instructor didn't know that. It wasn't professional at all."

Peacock was more disturbed, however, by the sexist hiring practices she encountered in Salt Lake City. All the private engineering firms she applied to refused to consider her for employment. She remembers one in particular: "They wouldn't look at a woman draftsman and even told me so. I asked, 'Would you tell me why?' He said, 'You have to be extra good if you're a woman and if you're that good, the men don't want you around.'"

Despite her rebuff from private firms, Ella did get hired for part-time civil service work with the Veterans Administration Hospital in 1964 and was quickly promoted after taking the exam for a permanent position, earning two raises and advancements while working there. After living in Salt Lake City for four years, the Peacocks read about the small farming community of Spring City, a National Historical District about 100 miles south of Salt Lake City in Central Utah's Sanpete County. They drove down one Saturday to see the town and fell in love with the area and a one-hundred-year-old adobe house that was for sale just off Main Street. They bought it, but before moving into their newly purchased house, Ella realized she could reap more retirement benefits if she worked longer, so Bill and Ella drove an airstream trailer to Miami where she continued to work two more years for the V. A. Hospital. When the Peacocks returned to Utah in 1970, they immediately moved to Spring City and lived in their trailer on the property while they fixed up their new home.

In Spring City, Ella seemed to become herself, to settle finally into the westerner she was meant to be. "You can see the sky here, and you can't see the sky in Salt Lake, you know," Peacock insisted. And it's true. Because Sanpete County is at least a thousand feet higher than Salt Lake City and because it escapes the inversion layer that obscures the air in the northern counties, the sky—sharply blue and alive with clouds in the summer and crisp azure between storms in the winter—seems vaster, the horizons lower and wider. Ella remembers, "I just thought I could paint around here for the rest of my life." And she nearly did. She spent most of the next twenty years out looking—especially when the sky was "doing something"—and documenting vanishing old homesteads and arid desert mountains.

It was here in Spring City that Ella established herself as the "matriarch of Utah artists," and it was here that most collectors of Peacock's paintings learned to love her work and admire this woman who is so much like her interpretation of the desert. From 1970 until late 1997, Ella lived at 12 East Third South in her taupe-colored adobe house built in the

1860's. Large fir trees shade this old pioneer home and the struggling sagebrush Ella and Bill transplanted from the desert. Ella opened her old Mormon pine door to many over the years—local artists and good friends Lee and Joe Bennion, close friend Helen Madsen McKinney, artist and devoted neighbor Osral Allred. Strangers appeared too: collectors hoping to buy her art, Memorial Day visitors touring the historical homes of Spring City, and the curious from out of town wandering over from the Horseshoe Mountain Pottery across the street.

My first tentative knock at Ella's door in 1984 followed a serendipitous stop at the pottery. When I showed my pleasure at finding such good art in this small out-of-the-way town, Joe Bennion pointed across the street, "Why there are lots of artists in town. Ella Peacock lives over there and next door is Osral Allred," he began. Just then, cater-cornered from the pottery, on the porch of her adobe house, a tall, thin woman wearing paint-splattered work clothes, her long gray hair wrapped around her head and held back with a black headband, called sharply, "Jeff! Jeffrey! You come back here!" Her Golden Retriever dashed ahead of her from the porch and toward Main Street. A few minutes later I was on her porch at her one hundred-year-old, hand-grained front door, which she opened, allowing me in to a sudden sensual treat: earthy smells of oil paint and turpentine, soft light illuminating dove gray walls carefully painted with a waist-high frieze featuring Native American motifs, parched antlers in a window alcove, birds' feathers tucked here and there, and, prominently, in the dining room studio, Ella's old paint splattered wood easel, her brown wool fedora perched on its top. Paintings hung, stood, and leaned everywhere—portraits from her art school days, a "nearly finished" painting of the Manti Temple, the small treasure *First Sight of the Desert*, and many documents of Sanpete's gentle landscape. The room was a study of the earth's sage grays, blued greens, and warm ochers; here was clearly the home of an artist in place and at home with herself.

For eight years, "Rollo," as her husband called her (perhaps after the English sweet), and Bill established their place in Spring City together, participating with other couples in church and community activities. They also explored the old mining towns and massive fiery rock walls in southern Utah, places where Bill could fish and Ella could paint. They took road trips all over the country: back east to visit all their previous homes in Pennsylvania, throughout the western states and into Mexico. According to Ella's recollections, Bill, "a strong, manly-looking man," was "good with people, always talking to somebody" if they went somewhere he couldn't fish or hunt. And she remembers hunting with him, satisfied that she'd always failed to kill any animal.

When he died of a brain aneurysm in 1978, Ella lost her soul mate

and best friend. He had motivated her "to do things" and—like her father—encouraged her to do just what she wanted. He had done most of their cooking because she didn't like to, though he eventually taught her to cook pot roast and bake an apple pie. Still, she didn't cook much after he died, and she never returned to their four poster bed, preferring to sleep instead on the sofa bed in the living room.

At ninety-three Ella still stands nearly all of her five feet, eight inches in height; she has remarkably large blue eyes and waist-long gray hair, always pulled back and knotted into a bun. For the past thirty years, she has worn a headband, not for effect, but just to keep her hair away from her face. In her days in Spring City, Ella usually wore men's clothes: khaki slacks or jeans, long sleeved shirts, boots, and various caps and hats when she was outside. She was well known in town for her driving and "looking" habits: She would drive throughout the 15 miles of the Sanpete Valley—usually from Indianola on the north to Manti on the south—anytime the "sky was doing something," accomplishing her "full time job of looking" at the landscape. Whenever she would settle on a spot to paint, she would pull off to the side of the road, sometimes all the way into the drainage ditch to avoid curious motorists. Here she would paint inside her car all year long. Well known in Spring City are her crashes—the times she looked too long at a particular spot and rolled her car or swerved into the ditch. Fortunately, passing motorists always rescued her. Of course, sometimes she was offered rescue when she was intentionally in the ditch, painting some barn or house about to be demolished or just some sagebrush against the mountain.

She did most of the work on her paintings outside, first sketching briefly with her brush. A thrifty painter, she applied paint sparingly with broad brush strokes in the grayed colors of the parched desert, sometimes in her last years leaving spaces of bare canvas. She was particular about where she settled down to paint and sometimes, on returning to work again on a painting, grew frustrated if she could not remember where she had been sitting when she began the painting. She said she had found the perfect place to paint the Lehi Roller Mills, one of her famous subjects outside Sanpete Valley. She could sit under the freeway overpass and still get a good view without anyone stopping by to watch her. She would usually return to her studio to finish her work and there evaluate her paintings with a critical eye, questioning if this one "worked" or if it was merely a "flopperoo." In the corner of her kitchen, she would make the frames she had hand carved since her days in art school; simple and with natural lines, they are tinted with the colors from her "slime jar" of palette scrapings.

After Bill died, she still took road trips to scout out places to paint, often with her close friend Helen Madsen McKinney. One time when they were given an inferior motel room in southern Utah, Helen remembers

Ella marching right to the front office and telling the clerk, "We may look like two old ladies who can be taken advantage of, but we aren't." She insisted on and got a better room. Helen admired her friend's directness and honesty: "She understands a person; she's been impatient with me when I've let someone take advantage of me and has said it's my own fault. She tells you what you need to know."

Although Bishop Osral Allred referred to the Peacocks as "a breath of fresh air in the community" when they moved to Spring City, Ella knew many in town saw her as an "eccentric outsider," always a "newcomer." One home teacher told her she "should do Relief Society work and then, if I had time left, I could paint." Despite her unconventional opinions, Ella kept her feistiness into her old age, persisting at being herself—something often hard to do in a small town—and protesting whatever seemed to her artificial: She objected, for instance, when some women recited the adage that "every girl looks better with a curl." She commented to a friend that the Mormon Tabernacle Choir singers looked "unnatural," so perfectly coifed and made up. She wondered why the Relief Society women at a Salt Lake City art exhibit were smiling so much. She objected to the new lawn and trees planted on the Manti Temple grounds, "spoiling the composition—green trees and the desert mountain background; it's not good."

When two young women wrote a letter to the local paper *The Pyramid*, complaining that no one in the valley had stopped to help them change their flat tire on the highway, Peacock responded with her own letter to the editor, suggesting that drivers should be required to be able to change a tire in order to get a driver's license. She also wrote letters to *The Pyramid* protesting the "distinct hazards" of pedestrians jay walking, objecting to local residents slaughtering deer in areas of new development, and calling the sarcasm in a political column "the lowest form of communication."

She addressed her most formal and pointed complaint to the LDS church. In 1978, at the height of the controversy surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment, the LDS church spoke against it, assuring women they did not need the ERA, that it would be to their detriment. Fourteen years after she had first sought employment in Utah, Peacock's memories of rejection resurfaced. She objected to an editorial in the Church News section of the *Deseret News*, entitled "The Place of Women," that told of Joseph Smith's advocacy for "liberty for women in the purest sense . . . to fully express themselves—as mothers, as nurses for the sick, as proponents of high community ideals and as protectors of good morals. What more can any woman want for herself? What more could any man want for his wife?"[3]

3. *Deseret News*, 11 March 1978, Church News section.

Some church members in the late 1970's agreed with this attitude and some bristled at it, but most did nothing about their reactions. Peacock drove two hours to Salt Lake City to hand carry her letter of response to the Church, hoping to speak to Mark E. Peterson, whom, she understood, had written the editorial. She thought if she could "have a conversation with him, to bring things up," she could explain herself, but he wasn't available; instead, she was only able to talk to his secretary, who promoted, "the glorification of womanhood, that women shouldn't be draftsmen; they should do women's work."

Ella left her response to the editorial's questions. What more could any woman want or any man want for his wife? In Ella's opinion *a lot* more: "The liberty to engage in the kind of work that she is fitted for and that she wants to do."

> On moving here from the East I tried to get employment in the kind of work that I had been doing for several years and that was what I was fitted for. I was a senior draftsman, doing some design work in architectural drafting and also in pressure vessels. No one in Salt Lake City [in private firms] would even consider me, and I was told that a woman would not be hired in that field. I finally got a job because it was temporary. Was kept on and advanced from there to be an engineering technician. Why was this considered not the 'Place of Women'? I wish I had an answer for this.
>
> Thank you, hopefully, if you would set my mind at rest on this question."

The task of replying to Peacock's letter fell to Janath R. Cannon, First Counselor in the Relief Society, who told Ella she did "not know why you were not given a job by the Mormon men to whom you applied back in the 1960's." Cannon defended the church's "emphasis on the value of women's unique contributions in childbearing and homemaking" and included "some official Church statements that may be helpful." Ella kept Cannon's letter, but never understood these affronts because, as she often emphasized, "I could have had my choice of three jobs back east."

That she had an abiding interest in women's issues is evidenced in the clippings file she kept in her Spring City kitchen. Peacock was in the habit of cutting out news articles that interested her. Often she would write on the clipping, usually correcting errors in biographical information that accompanied reports of her own exhibits. In this file she also kept two news articles about Brigham Young University professors in the mid 1970's. One told of Janice L. Tyler's support for the ERA and another of Eloise Bell's concern that at BYU "women were pushed into areas of Child Development and Family Relations rather than being encouraged in the areas of their interests and abilities." Peacock also kept a clipping citing Brigham Young's often quoted belief that "women . . . should stand

behind the country, study law or physics, or become good bookkeepers and be able to . . . enlarge their sphere of usefulness for the benefit of society at large."[4]

Although she was long peeved about these sexist attitudes, which were fairly common at that time in the rural states that lay between the two coasts, Peacock rationalized that "the civilization on this continent runs from east to west; it gradually crosses the continent, but the West is certainly way behind the East in women doing their own thing." Although she never, to my knowledge, espoused feminist causes formally, she was certainly determined in her honest reactions.

Peacock's objections to these sexist attitudes are refreshingly straightforward. Without the "born under the covenant" mind set of women raised in the church that makes any church policy a given, Peacock questioned these practices without the guilt commonly experienced by more conventional Mormon women.

She spoke just as vociferously against what she saw as the architectural errors of the community. Once, she drove by an old house in Spring City, making a "thumbs down" gesture at the workmen about to demolish the structure, and later she returned to paint *Being Demolished,* one of her best works. She objected to many of the new houses built "for show" in Spring City, "probably by people kicked out of California," and she especially admired the old Chester stone school house that Ann and Paul Larsen dismantled and reassembled in Spring City. She admired the lifestyle of the Bennions, good friends who subsist on their land and art. She admired women who "do things," who are productive and energetic. She valued trustworthy and supportive friends like Lee Bennion and Helen Madsen McKinney, and she honored hard work, always paying the Allred children next door "like professionals," they reported, for waxing her car or mowing her yard.

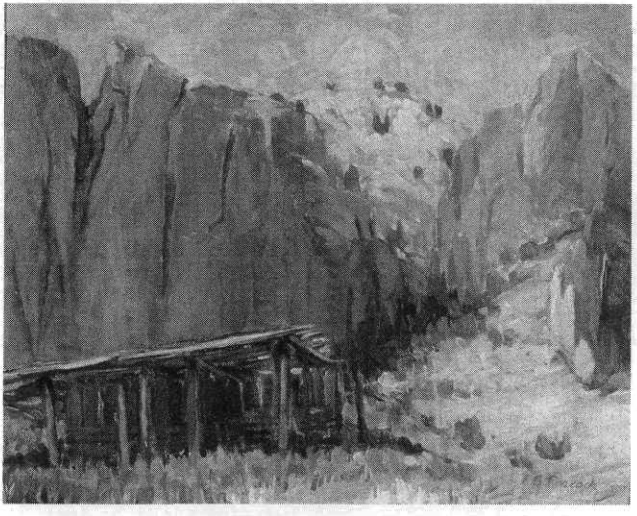
Here was a woman who seemed timeless, like the desert, as though she had always been there. Ella Peacock was so much a part of the landscape in this secluded valley, she seemed to resemble her paintings. It seemed she had come to her final resting place when she came here; it seemed right that she should finish out her days in Spring City.

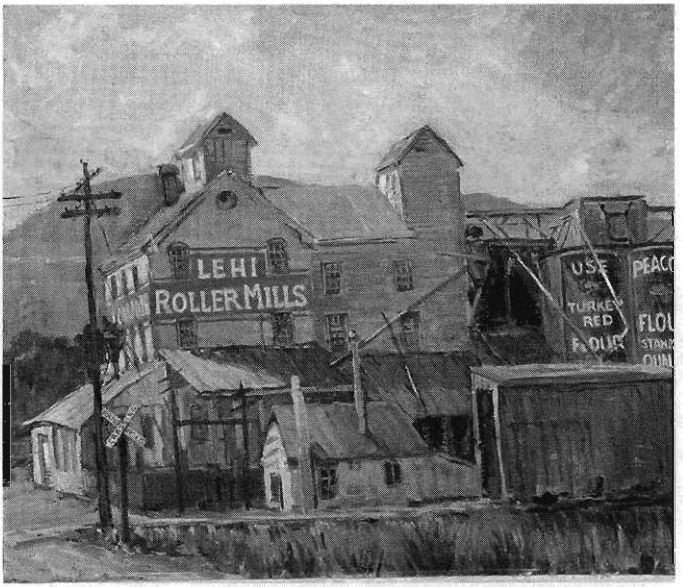
But in November of 1997, on a looking trip to Ephraim, Ella became confused in her directions and could not find her way back. She was ninety-two years old and still driving her car, the gray 1988 Chevy Nova with the untinted windows, the interior splattered with the colors of her palette. A few months earlier she had confessed to me that she was driving without a license ("You won't tell on me, will you?"), and I knew people in town gave her lots of room when they saw her car speeding down

4. Journal of Discourses

the highway. In recent years she had been fond of saying that her "forgettery" kept improving or that she felt "fine—from my neck down." So, because she needed assistance at home and on the road, she had to be moved out of her desert element and to the east again.

She lives there today in Gaithersburg, Maryland, with her son and daughter-in-law, not far from the Washington, D. C., Beltway and half a day's drive from Philadelphia. Now the three Peacocks live in a small apartment—the walls are decorated with Bailey and his wife Jan's collection of nature photography—near the Shady Grove Metro stop in a tidy and carefully landscaped complex. On summer Saturdays Bailey takes Ella to nearby Walkersville in Frederick County to paint for two hours while he grocery shops. She has been dutifully working on the same painting since she arrived, a farm scene, clearly showing the east's duller light, all the work done outdoors because of Jan's allergies to oil paint. Ella drifts through her days, often disoriented in her son's apartment, "without my car, you know." Bailey and Jan attend carefully to her needs and encourage her to keep active with the task of washing the nightly dinner dishes. During her first month in Gaithersburg, when I asked if she was still painting, she said, "Yes, but it's too green here."

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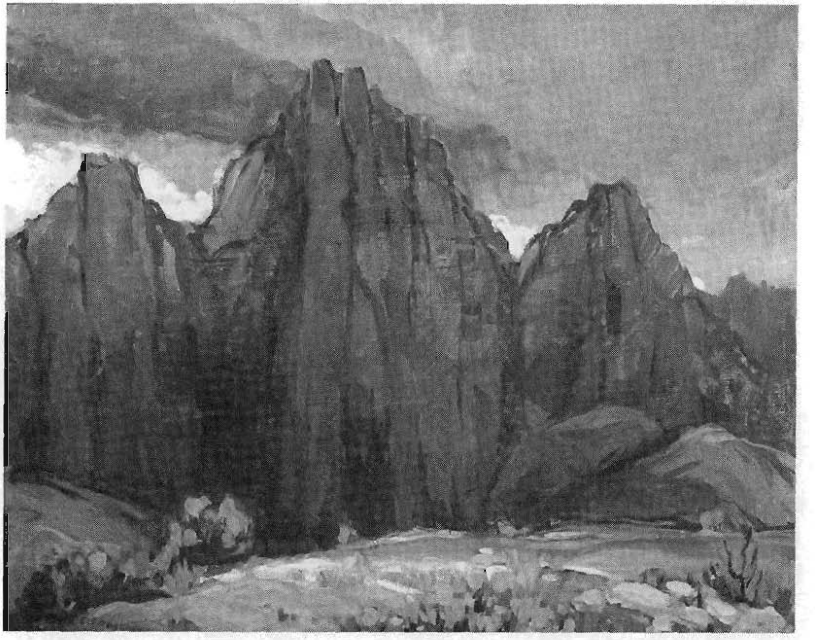

Good Literature for a Chosen People

Eugene England

VERY EARLY IN OUR HISTORY, we Mormons began to identify ourselves symbolically with ancient Israel as a *chosen* people. We too, we believed, were heirs to the covenant and blessings of Abraham because of God's restoration, through the Church, of the ancient order of salvation. As we were driven from place to place, finally from our city beautiful, Nauvoo, across a river into the wilderness, the identification became very literal.

When ancient Israel, under Moses, camped near Sinai after crossing the Red Sea and prepared for their journey through the wilderness to a promised land, the Lord declared, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine" (Ex. 19:5-6). In October 1845, just after Brigham Young, faced by increasing mob activity, committed the church to leave Nauvoo by spring, he and the Twelve wrote to the church in the name of the Lord, "The exodus of the nation of the only true Israel from these United States to a far distant region of the west . . . forms a new epoch"[1] and on the morning of February 16, 1846, when he rose in his wagon to address the assembled Saints who had crossed the river with him the day before, he cried with a loud voice, "Attention! the whole camp of Israel."

We still see ourselves that way, and my concern in this essay is to describe what might be a good, even great, literature for a people who see themselves as modern Israel—chosen by God, called and set apart from other human beings for a special mission, anointed inheritors of special blessings and responsibilities.

To Moses God said, explaining why he was giving him the law, including such things as dietary restrictions and payment of tithing, "For

1. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2nd ed. Rev. (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1955), 7:48.

thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14:2). Clearly there is a strange complexity, even paradox, in being chosen. It means, as Lehi, another Israelite, told his sons, being "a choice and favored people of the Lord" (2 Nephi 1:19), but it also means, as God explained to Moses, being required to live God's law, to meet a higher ethical standard. The complexity is increased when we listen to the implied *reason* for God's choosing a people: To Abraham God said, "I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:2). Here being "chosen" seems not so much being *choice*, better than others, but rather being *called or selected* and then asked not only to live better than all the others, but to try to be a blessing to all those others too.

The Israelites had trouble with this complexity. They liked the *choice* part of chosen and often forgot the *called* part. Thus, John the Baptist rebuked the Jews: "Bring forth . . . fruits worthy of repentance, and begin 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" (Luke 3:8). To the Pharisees Jesus said, "If ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). Perhaps the central burden of the so-called literary prophets of the Old Testament is to remind Israel that they are chosen by God in order to serve him in a special way so they can bless others, that rather than favoring or excusing them, he holds them especially accountable.

The classic example is Amos, a "herdsman" from the hills just south of Jerusalem, who about 750 B. C. was called by God as a prophet to preach repentance to the Israelites, the chosen people. He went to Bethel in the Northern Kingdom, whose people thought themselves, because chosen, not only superior to the non-Israelites, but also better than their cousins, the people of Judah in the south. In what might be called the "Amos strategy," the Lord through his prophet uses the people's pride in being chosen to set them up to be especially affected by his message of repentance. God first condemns the *Gentiles* for their idolatries: "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof" (Amos 1:3), he declares, and then he continues the refrain to condemn all the Israelites' pagan, idolatrous neighbors, Gaza, Ammon, Tyre, Moab. We can imagine the crowd murmuring its agreement: "Amen, brother Amos, amen." Then the Lord condemns their neighbor *Israelites*: "For three transgressions of *Judah*, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments." We can imagine the shouts of assent at the threatened punishment of their hated relatives: "I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem." (Amos 2:5)

But now the prophet, at the height of the chosen people's self-satisfied judgment of others, turns the judgment of God on *them*: "For three transgressions of *Israel*, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor" (2:6-7).

Isn't that a remarkable image of insatiable exploitation by the rich of the powerless poor, not leaving them shoes, not even the dust on their heads? And now God points out why the sins of Israel are worse than those of others: "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against the children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt [Here the Lord is reminding the northern Israelites that both they and their southern neighbors of Judah are part of the chosen people, one family which he brought out of Egypt, and he says to both nations], You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (3:1-2).

Being chosen, in this view, means being the ones known and taught by the Lord and, thus, the ones most responsible to keep his commandments and to be punished if one does not. It does not mean being better than others, by definition more righteous and blessed. It does not even mean simply knowing the correct forms of worship and having special priesthood power to perform them as the core of one's religion. The Lord makes this painfully clear by saying, through Amos: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offering, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take you away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. . . . Woe to them that are at ease in Zion . . . That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall . . . but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (5:21-24; 6:1, 4, 6). In other words, religious worship, even in the approved forms and with authority, is an offense to God if it is not accompanied by intense social morality—that is, by aggressive caring for justice and mercy in society, by compassionate grief for the afflictions of the poor and exploited.

Joseph Smith made this point by playing on the double meaning of "chosen" in his letter from the depths of his own afflictions in Liberty Jail: "There are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much on the things of this world" (D&C 121:34-5). God calls many of us, but we usually default on his label of "chosen" because of our selfishness and pride. We are satisfied with the one part of chosen, where, for instance, God calls us "the only true

and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I . . . am well pleased" (D&C 1:30), but we forget the other part: "Ye only have I known among the nations of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). Our best writers, I believe, address themselves to both parts of chosen, our specialness and our special responsibilities. They both comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable and, at their best, do the comforting in part to be more effective at the afflicting.

For instance, President Kimball used the "Amos strategy" on Latter-day Israel in what I think was his finest sermon, *The False Gods We Worship*, which was actually a personal essay and remains one of the finest pieces of Mormon literature. Its setting was part of the strategy. It was given as the First Presidency Message in the June 1976 *Ensign*, when most Americans, including most of us American Mormons, were quite smugly celebrating our Bicentennial—200 years as a chosen, special, and divinely-favored nation.

President Kimball begins with a very personal and poetic passage that lulls his audience a bit, first by talking about his pastoral childhood in Arizona and the beautiful earth God has given us, then by talking about dark clouds of wickedness that intrude—but clouds that at first seem to be only the wickedness of others and "the general state of wickedness in which we seem to find the world in these perilous yet crucially momentous days. . . . the dark and miserable practices of men . . . vulgarity, stealing, lying, pride, blasphemy . . . fornication, adultery . . . and abuses of power."[2] We readers, at this point, like the Israelites listening to Amos, tend to nod assent ("Amen, Brother Spencer, Amen!"), thinking about all the evils of the Gentiles. Then President Kimball turns on sinful Mormons, but still Mormons *other* than us readers, we think, because they are committing those same awful Gentile sins: "that such things should be found even among the Saints to some degree is scarcely believable. . . . [They have] submitted themselves in one degree or another to the enticings of Satan and his servants and joined with those of 'the world' in lives of ever-deepening idolatry."[3] Well, we know he isn't talking about us because, though some Mormons might, we don't blaspheme or fornicate, and we certainly don't worship idols.

But then President Kimball does turn on us, *all* of us, as Amos did the Israelites: He declares, "I use the word *idolatry* intentionally . . . . Whatever thing a man sets his heart and his trust in most is his god; and if his god doesn't also happen to be the true and living God of Israel, that man is laboring in idolatry." He reminds us of the *called* meaning of chosen:

2. Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *The Ensign* 6, no. 6 (June 1976):3-4.
3. Ibid., 4.

"Where much is given much is expected . . . [the sins of the Saints are] scarcely believable, for these are a people who are in possession of many gifts of the Spirit, who have knowledge that puts the eternities into perspective, who have been shown the way to eternal life."[4] Then he names our two greatest sins, the idolatries of materialism and militarism, emphasizing with the pronouns "us" and "we" that he is talking about us chosen people, not the Gentiles: "I am afraid that many of us have been surfeited with flocks and herds and acres and barns and wealth and have begun to worship them as false gods, and they have power over us . . . forgotten is the fact that our assignment is to use these many resources . . . to build up the kingdom of God [5]. . . . We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan's counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior's teaching: 'Love your enemies . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.'. . . Can we not take the Lord at his word . . .? Our assignment is affirmative: . . . to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies."[6]

Just like Amos, this modern prophet has harrowed up our souls by tempting us toward pride and vengeance. He comforts us with reminders of our own special chosen-ness and of the sins of others, and then he points out our own more serious sins, our actual idolatry, worse than that of others *because* we are chosen. It is one measure of our uneasiness with being chosen in the sense of being called to a higher law and special responsibilities that we have utterly forgotten, perhaps even hidden, President Kimball's sermon. Though it is arguably the greatest prophetic discourse in this century and one of the most skillful and poetic, in the twenty years since it was given, I have never seen or heard it quoted in our Mormon meetings or publications. (On the other hand, perhaps one sign of our maturing towards becoming a genuine world church is that Deseret book re-published this sermon in a small paperback booklet in 1997.)

One of our finest Mormon poems also uses the "Amos strategy" and, thus, sets a standard for what might be good literature for a self-consciously "chosen" people. "Advent," by Clinton Larson, lulls us a bit at first, the way President Kimball did. The speaker's voice is that of all of

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 6.

us chosen people, thinking about how Christ will come in his second advent, in gentle acceptance and reward, to his own people. In fact, he will come just as we have often talked about him coming, when we ask, in lessons and talks, if our homes and our manners are clean and polished to receive and entertain him like an honored dinner guest:

> The gentle God is our guest;
> His staff will prompt us to the door.
> The table is set in the oak-paneled room:
> Goblets are rinsed and set out,
> The warm vapor vanishing around them;
> The silver, withdrawn from felt-lined red mahogany
> Is counted and burnished to mercurial white
> And set on immaculate linen,
> Sleek with crystal and rococo ware.
>
> The table is set for the Guest
> Near the imminent door.
> The servants stalk
> Each gray indiscretion to be rent
> On the merciless rack of their decor. . . .
> The supper will please the gentle God
> Who surely comes like the breath on a veil.

Each of us can imagine such a home, where the table is magnificently set and the manners mercilessly polished to receive Christ, where chosen people, certain they are chosen in part because they have been blessed with the riches to set out such a spread, stand with pleased smiles to receive him. Comfortably sitting in my home in Provo, Utah, I can think of certain multi-million dollar homes up in Oak Hills or Indian Hills or on Osmond Lane—or others out in the valley in the new luxurious developments behind locked gates where people's wealth and orthodoxy make them certain of how and where Christ will come again. And while I'm thinking about the self-satisfied people I know and then realizing the narrator is one of them, the poem—as if in response—abruptly changes direction:

> But out of the East the breath is fire!
> Who comes with temblor, sound of hurricane?
> Who rages on the portico?
> Who claps his vengeful steel on stone?
> Who comes to dine?
>
> The servants cower like quail in the anterooms.
> Who blasphemes in the shuddering halls?
> Who rends the imminent door?

The surprise, even fear, in the narrator's questions, his cowering along with the servants, gives way to whining, as in the last line he expresses his complaint that Christ did not come as he was expected to, did not come as he had the first time:

> Our guest is a gentle God, a Lamb.[7]

What do we feel about all this? When I first read this poem I felt elated that a Mormon poet had used Mormon theology to undermine traditional Christian ideas about how Christ would come again. I thought of our hymn that warns, "Jesus once of humble birth, now in glory comes to earth. . . . Once all things he meekly bore, but he now will bear no more." Then I felt justified in my judgment of many Mormons. They were too materialistic and self-satisfied in assuming that Christ would come to us chosen ones first and that we could best prepare for him with a faultless decor, perfect piety, businesslike order, and discretion in our dress and manners. I imagined Christ not bearing such people any more—partly because I couldn't bear them. I assumed Larson was exposing "them" to ridicule, and I laughed smugly at the surprised, whining voice at the end that represented them, "But our guest is a gentle God, a Lamb."

Do you feel some of those same things? Well, after some rereading and reflection, I began to reconsider, and then to realize with shame that Larson had worked the Amos strategy on me. I had been guilty, like the Israelites, of rejoicing in the comeuppance of the Gentiles for their ignorance and unpreparedness concerning Christ's advent and then of taking satisfaction in the poem's condemnation of the materialism and arrogance of certain Provo-East-Bench Mormons for being prepared too much and in the wrong way. I had forgotten that my own sins of pride and vengefulness are the most offensive to Christ, certainly as offensive as any sins of those others, and that I have no better idea than they do how and where he will come to judge the world.

And that, of course, is the point. The poem is suggesting that we'll all be surprised and may whimper in fear and that the best preparation is simple openness, clean hands, and a contrite heart. In fact, read a different way, the last line may suggest Christ really will come in mercy, even to those under- or over-prepared: After all, "Our guest *is* a gentle God, a Lamb."

So, in our claim to be modern Israel, the inheritors of the label "chosen," we have inherited both burdens of the label. We are a *choice* people and a *called* people, and our writers, as Larson shows in "Advent," can

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7. Clinton F. Larson, "Advent," *The Lord of Experience* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1967), 5.

use that complexity to work wonderfully textured ironies, even to call us to repentance. But what can such analysis as I have done of scriptures and poetry suggest about some critical tools and ideals for Mormon literature, past and future? Can we see how the complexities of being chosen and writing for a chosen people have enriched our literature, or have I simply created another set of labels with which to pigeonhole what we don't like, a dichotomy for Mormon critics—and critics of Mormon critics—to argue about? Let me try to move us away from such a temptation. I believe that doing so will require that we accept affirmatively both parts of being chosen and that we learn how each part can be exemplified or promoted in our literature—and finally that we learn how to write and give our highest praise to literature that manages to promote both values in their full complexity and in a variety of ways.

Mormon literary history can, in fact, be imagined as a continual struggle between the two concepts of chosen in literature that encourage one kind of writing at the expense of the other. One can set the "home literature" of the late nineteenth century, which emphasizes our being choice and favored, over against the "lost generation" literature published with national presses by Mormon authors in the 1940s, which focuses on our failures and need to repent. Or, as I have done, one might devalue the "jack-fiction" of both home literature and lost generation works in comparison to some more recent work which takes our theology more seriously. Recently, BYU Professor Richard Cracroft has set "mantic" literature, which encourages our sense of being uniquely spiritual and focused on "a sense of God in our lives," over against "sophic" literature, which places us too firmly in the real world around us. Meanwhile, his colleague Bruce Jorgensen's nearly opposite reading affirms the superiority of a literature that opens up to the sacredness of all people and their experience, capturing differences rather than being focused solely in Mormon essences.[8] John Bennion, another BYU literature professor, has tried valiantly to value both what he calls "popular" or "faithful" fiction, with Jack Weyland as an example, and what he calls "literary" or "ambiguous" fiction, like that of Maurine Whipple, but he still sees them as essentially different in kind.[9]

Let me try to show how we might value our best literature, without sharp distinctions in kind which tend inevitably to devalue one or the other, by examining how good Mormon literature is informed by the way it handles the matter of chosen-ness. Early Mormons were very conscious of being chosen and called out of the world by their conversion experiences and the literal establishment of a Zion, a promised land with a

8. See their essays in *Sunstone* 16, no. 5 (July 1993): 40-97.

9. See his essay in the 1995 *AML Proceedings*, reprinted in *Brigham Young University Studies* 37, no. 1 (1997-1998): 159-182.

River Jordan, in Utah. Their diaries, letters, sermons, and hymns capture, sometimes in moving detail and often in homely but spiritually empowered rhetoric, both the costs of discipleship and the experiences and convictions that made people able and willing to pay those costs. My favorite is from the journal of Joseph Millett, who tells of his name being read out as a missionary in the Salt Lake Tabernacle in 1852, of making his way as a nineteen-year-old, alone and mainly on foot, across the continent to Nova Scotia, learning the gospel and making converts essentially on his own, choosing one of them as a wife and making his way with a group of Saints back to Utah and then on to a colonizing mission in Spring Valley, Nevada. Near the end of the journal, he records a crucial, self-defining experience from the first days in Spring Valley when his daughter had died and many suffered great sickness and hunger:

> One of my children came in, said that Brother Newton Hall's folks were out of bread. Had none that day. I put . . . our flour in a sack to send up to Brother Hall's. Just then Brother Hall came in. Says I, "Brother Hall, how are you out for flour." "Brother Millett, we have none." "Well, Brother Hall, there is some in that sack. I have divided and was going to send it to you. Your children told mine that you were out." Brother Hall began to cry. Said he had tried others. Could not get any. Went to the cedars and prayed to the Lord and the Lord told him to go to Joseph Millett. "Well, Brother Hall, you needn't bring this back if the Lord sent you for it. You don't owe me for it." You can't tell how good it made me feel to know that the Lord knew that there was such a person as Joseph Millett.[10]

This sense of being special, of God knowing us by name, favoring us with his voice and special direction and responsibility, is crucial to the Mormon identity and central to our best literature from the beginning. But in my view, the quality of this passage is more than doubled by the way it opens out to the other meaning of chosen—called out of the world to bless the world. God knew Joseph Millett's name not because he was partial to him, but so God could, with perfect confidence, tell his neighbor Brother Hall to go specifically to Joseph Millett for help.

I read recently *Behind the Iron Curtain: Recollections of Latter-day Saints in East Germany, 1945-1989,*[11] compiled and translated by Garold N. Davis and Norma S. Davis, BYU faculty members who served as missionaries in East Germany in 1989-90. This is a fine example of modern home literature, full of moving accounts of a chosen people suffering for their faith and triumphing with God's special blessings. Edith Krause tells of the

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10. See my essay on Millett in the *New Era* 5, no. 7 (June 1975): 20-28; reprinted in *Why the Church is as True as the Gospel* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1986), 17-30.

11. Garold N. Davis and Norma S. Davis, eds., *Behind the Iron Curtain: Recollections of Latter-day Saints in East Germany, 1945-1989* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1996).

terrible, totally pointless—except as revenge—bombing of her city of Dresden by the allies in February 1945 when the war was essentially over, and of the suffering, miracles of survival, efforts to keep the two branches functioning (even though the *Altstadt* Branch building had been destroyed). She demonstrates in her reminiscence both meanings of chosen:

> It was a time of great testimony because the Lord helped us to help one another. Many refugees from the East were passing through Dresden, and we took up to as many as fifteen people into our small . . . apartment. Everything was shared; many things were sacrificed. Firm friendships were established which still exist today, beyond continents and oceans. We sat in the Church meetings and in the classrooms huddled in coats and blankets . . . but we were thankful and full of hope because the Lord will not forsake his own, which includes all humanity.[12]

Such "pioneer" experiences will continue as the Church grows into new areas and Mormons explore the new territories in their own hearts, especially through the personal essay. The ability to capture the unique warmth and self-sacrifice and determination that come from being choice, favored of the Lord, selected, will always, I believe, give the best Mormon literature its flavor. But the very best will also always be reaching out, as Edith Krause does, to all humanity. Even the first self-conscious effort to create a Mormon literature, the "home literature" movement of the 1880s, which was unabashedly provincial, designed to be written by and for Utah Mormons in order to protect and enhance Mormon values, had as its champion a man who seems to see, though perhaps only intuitively, that larger vision. In the manifesto of the movement, his lecture on "Home Literature,"[13] Orson F. Whitney set out the highest goal of Mormon literature in a phrase that still rivets us and moves Mormon critics to exalted hope in the future or despair about the present: "We shall yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own."

What this future apostle may have only intuited, but we must never forget, is that Milton and Shakespeare were in some ways devoted to encouraging and promoting rather small groups of chosen people—Milton the Puritans and Shakespeare the English Anglican Royalists. But they were also, among the world's writers, two of the most radically subversive of the narrowly partisan values of their own people and were universalist in their vision. Both of them created Christian literature that was designed not only to teach religious truth, but to actually change their au-

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12. Ibid., 12.

13. In *The Contributor*, July 1888; reprinted in Richard H. Cracroft and Neal S. Lambert, eds., *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1974): 203-7.

dience of chosen people—to move them to repentance and healing, especially to move beyond their partiality.

For instance, as American literary critic Stanley Fish argued thirty years ago in the monograph that launched what we now call reader-response criticism, "Milton's purpose is to educate the reader to an awareness of his position and responsibilities as a fallen man, and to a sense of the distance which separates him from the innocence once his."[14] As the fine young Mormon critic Michael Austin explained in a 1996 essay on our AML-list network, "[According to Fish] Milton created a majestic, articulate Satan who comes closer than any other character in the poem to the classical heroic ideal. But when we as readers begin to sympathize . . . , Milton pulls the rug out from under us and reveals him as a liar and a fiend. [We cannot] blame Adam and Eve for being persuaded by Satan's rhetoric since [we], at one time or another throughout the poem, were very likely persuaded by it as well. . . . Milton's way of teaching people about the consequences of Adam's sin was experiential rather than academic—he made sure that the process of reading *Paradise Lost* would be an allegory of the Fall."[15] No wonder (as my University of Utah English teacher Jack Adamson put it) that Milton "darkened the Sunday afternoons of generations of Puritan preachers." If we are to have Miltons of our own, they must have a similar ability to afflict the comfortable, the chosen, as well as to comfort them.

Similarly Shakespeare moves us to identify strongly with funny, beautiful, or witty and articulate characters who have strong justification for wreaking revenge on someone who deserves it. For instance, in *The Merchant of Venice* the romantic Portia disguises herself as a lawyer to save her husband's friend Antonio from the bloodthirsty Jew, Shylock. Then just as we are caught up in what might be called a "bandwagon effect" of justified anger at the Jew and rejoicing at his defeat by Portia, Shakespeare subverts our identification. He shows Portia to be a racist, like all of the good Christian Merchants of Venice, one who preaches mercy and then shows none as she forces Shylock to become a Christian. At this point we should be moved to powerful shame and a desire to get off the bandwagon of anti-Semitic revenge Shakespeare has tempted us to climb aboard. I believe that experience which Shakespeare often creates of shame and reconsideration, like the one Larson's Amos strategy induced in me, has a unique ethical and religious power to move us toward repentance.

If we are to have Shakespeares of our own, they must be able to make us feel, through our identification with persuasive characters, great temp-

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14. Stanley Eugene Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in* Paradise Lost (London: McMillan; New York: St. Martins Press, 1967), 344 pp.

15. aml-list@cc.weber.edu

tations to violence and revenge. They must show us the attractions and easiness of misuse of power—man over woman, white over black, wealth over poverty—and then hold out persuasive hints of alternatives, of the redemptive power of grace, even of worldly foolishness, of sacrificial love, of yielding to each other.

But, like Shakespeare, the best Mormon writers must also do well what those do who write mainly to encourage the chosen in their feeling of being choice and favored. For instance, Gerald Lund, in the first volume of *The Work and the Glory,* is perfectly open about his didactic purpose, aimed directly at our chosen-ness: to tell "as accurately as possible, the story of Joseph Smith and the rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," to move us to consider "how would I have reacted" had I been there, and to be moved to answer like the heroes of the story, the Steeds.[16] Based on the reports, printed on the covers of subsequent volumes, of those people the first book, *Pillar of Light,* moved to join the Church or to regain their testimonies—and based also on the reactions of most of my students—Lund succeeds very well. I, for one, am certainly moved by his retelling, through the eyes of fictional characters with whom I can identify, of the great events of the Restoration, which reveal God's special dispensations of power and knowledge to his chosen people. I already believe in the reality of those events, but Lund helps me emotionally relive such experiences as the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the Kirtland Temple dedication where I watch with the Steeds, at the end of Vol. II, as angels gather on the roof of the temple.

But Lund is best, I believe, when he moves out a bit from merely reinforcing our sense of being set apart, unique, and blessed, to challenge us implicitly with God's equal love for all his children. For instance, Nathan Steed repeats to his mother Mary Ann the remarkable story he has just heard from Joseph of the First Vision. She responds with surprising emotion. She tells him for the first time, "For many years I've felt like the Bible, as wonderful as it is, is not enough. I've felt there has to be more," and she reveals that the reason she has never joined a church, though she was seeking the right one, is that God had told her what he told Joseph: "I didn't read James, but I came to the same conclusion. I decided I had to pray. Without God's help I couldn't know for sure which one was right. . . . I prayed a great deal about it . . . I never went off into the woods, but hardly a day went by I didn't ask God the same question Joseph asked him. . . . One morning I had gotten up early to pray. . . . Thoughts just came into my mind. . . . I suddenly felt—very strongly—that for now I was to join one of the churches."[17] Mary Ann thus shows she is a

16. Gerald Lund, *Pillar of Light* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1990), viii.
17. Ibid., 87-89.

"Seeker," one of millions who were touched by the Spirit in the early nineteenth century with a desire for and intimation of the Restoration—only a few ten thousand of whom joined the church, but all of whom were moved toward goodness and truth. For me this is an effective reminder that God was and is working through his grace with all his children to lead them to truth, calling them, and that all who respond, whenever and wherever and however, are thereby chosen.

Just as Lund, a writer in the home literature tradition, focuses on the choice and separate part of chosen with an occasional reach out to the called and universal part, so the best Lost Generation writers, Virginia Sorensen and Maurine Whipple, tend to emphasize the responsible part and God's universal concerns, but sometimes reach out to emphasize our specialness, even bear testimony of it. In *The Giant Joshua*, Whipple makes clear in her preface her didactic double purpose: "Perhaps . . . it is natural for our generation to deify [the Mormon pioneers]. . . . But I believe we detract from their achievement when we paint them with too white a brush. These people . . . are my people and I love them, but I believe that what they did becomes even greater when we face the fact that they were human beings by birth and only saints by adoption."[18]

Whipple clearly shows the problems and failings of the pioneer polygamists, such as abuses of male power and position, tendencies to violence, and mean-spirited jealousies, and she promotes her own liberal ideals, such as the possibility of learning about beauty and non-violence from Native Americans like Chief Tutsegabbet: To keep the protagonist Clory and her friend Pal from running away from the hardship and bleakness of Zion in St. George, the friend's husband David promises to show them one thing of beauty. On the way Tutsegabbett, who is serving as guide, tells them the legend of Neab and Nannoo, two lovers who had tried to stop their people from burying the sick and older Indians in caves to die. When Nannoo becomes sick, the tribe, despite Neab's pleas, takes her to be put in a cave, and Neab goes in with her:

> His people begged him to come out, but when the women rolled the boulder back into place, Neab was there to keep Nannoo company. . . . The voice stopped. . . . Tutsagabbett pulled up his pony and waited for the others to catch up with him. . . . [He] spread wide his arms: [God], pleased with his servant, set his footprint before the cave of Neab to show his stubborn people the way.[19]

Then he shows them a huge basin in the lava rock filled with sego lillies: "Sown as thickly as a desert sky with stars. Poised like heavenly butter-

18. Maurine Whipple, *The Giant Joshua* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941), xi.
19. Ibid., 173.

flies there on the grim lava surface as if they needed no roots, would float upward with a breath." Tutsegabbett continues: "The [tribe] resolved never to fight on a battlefield where sego lilies grew: thus the sego lily became an emblem of peace. . . . [God] and his mighty footstep before the cave of Neab. Neab, who did not run away."[20]

Whipple also praises unstintingly what she calls the (capital I) Idea of Mormonism—in the word chosen by a well-educated, articulate, visiting Gentile: "Togetherness," he says very softly. "You were persecuted because you had *togetherness*, but it also gave you your strength."[21] Whipple has Erastus Snow review the achievements of living the United Order and praise "above all, something you can't see but is worth much more to a man—a sense of responsibility toward his neighbor, an armor against selfishness and greed."[22] In letters to her editor, Maurine wrote of the Mormon idea of brotherly love that she believed would triumph over the success ideal, partly through the influence of her book. But she could also comfort her Mormon readers with a sense of their own special connections to deity. She believed absolutely that God inspired the design of the diversion tunnel system that finally stopped the disastrous flooding of the Virgin River, and she shows that clearly in the novel. And she has the second wife, Willie, as she is dying, tell the story of her heroic crossing of the plains with the doomed handcart companies and finally bear her testimony to Clory in words that I believe reveal Maurine's own heart:

> "A voice, not a whisper, but still and low said to me: 'If you will leave your 'ome, father and mother, you shall have Eternal life." I 'ave heard the same voice since, not in dreams but in daylight, when in trouble and uncertain which way to go; and I *know God lives* and guides this people called Mormons."
>
> Her eyes, already filled with the mystery of the last long trek, were dark with faith.
>
> "Don't never knuckle under to life, Clory. Don't never knuckle under, if you 'ave to crawl—all—the—way!"[23]

Since about 1960 there have emerged two generations of writers among whom I find many who can both comfort and afflict us chosen people. They can celebrate our peculiar heritage and unique religious life, which Richard Cracroft is right in calling "full of [the] supernal expectation" of people who "consciously cultivate a sense of God in their lives."[24] And they can also call us to repentance and to the risky openness

20. Ibid., 174.
21. Ibid., 364.
22. Ibid., 520.
23. Ibid., 498-9.
24. Cracroft, *A Believing People*, 52.

to strangers, to all of God's children, that Bruce Jorgensen advocates. These writers that I recommend as models of what good literature for a chosen people can be like often seem to emphasize one pole or the other in the paradox of chosen-ness—choice or called, special or sent forth—but in their best work they combine or relate the two notions in powerful ways.

Orson Scott Card's essays collected in *A Storyteller in Zion,* his introductions to books published by his Hatrack River press, and his sermons in his *Vigor Newsletter* and to his America Online community sound very much like the preaching of a very conservative Latter-day Saint, intended to comfort the orthodox chosen people and to afflict liberals and academics in and out of the church. And he has created, in his *Alvin Maker* and *Homecoming Series* and in his novels about Mormon experience, moving descriptions of what it might be like to be a prophet or to be chosen for contact with spiritual reality. But in 1985 a remarkable thing happened. Card, already prominent nationally for his science fiction, none of which was obviously Mormon, rewrote his award-winning first story, "Ender's Game," into a novel, and the expanded ending made Ender Wiggins into a "speaker for the dead," a historian and advocate for the alien, insect-like race he had been trained to destroy. Ender tells, imagining it in the old hive-queen's words, that race's story—the nature of their intelligence and multiple-staged life, the reasons for their first attack on humans and their desire for forgiveness, their hope to live anew and in peace:

> Here are our failures, and here is our greatness; we did not mean to hurt you, and we forgive you our death. . . . If only we could have talked to you. . . . But since it could not be, we ask only this: that you remember us, not as enemies, but as tragic sisters, changed into a foul shape by Fate or God or Evolution. If we had kissed, it would have been the miracle to make us human in each other's eyes. Instead we killed each other. But still we welcome you now as guestfriends. Come into our home, daughters of earth; dwell in our tunnels, harvest our fields; what we cannot do you are now our hands to do for us. Blossom, trees; ripen, fields; be warm for them, suns; be fertile for them, planets; they are our adopted daughters, and they have come home.[25]

That is one of the great moments in Mormon literature and, if Card succeeds in his present project to get *Ender's Game* into movie form, essentially intact, it may be one of the great moments in American cinema. That new ending, besides changing Ender into a Christ figure, also turned Card himself into a speaker for the dead and the different, an interpreter and defender of little-known and often misunderstood lives, in-

25. Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game* (New York: Tom Doherty, 1986), 354-55.

cluding Mormon lives. With that development in 1985, he moved firmly into a larger moral and religious context, taking on issues of diversity, unconditional love for the "other," and thus the possibility of giving and accepting grace in the Atonement—and thus Card came fully into his own and out into the open as a *Mormon* writer.

For instance, Card went on in the Ender series to explore what it could mean to love and to respect the processes of salvation and resurrection developed by hamster-like beings called piggies—as well as to save those intelligent insects called buggers. In *Xenocide*, Card even expands the challenge of love for the "other" to include a being who exists only in the faster-than-light web of connections that make up the intergalactic internet. In the second book of the Alvin Maker Series, *The Red Prophet*, Card transposes to frontier America Book of Mormon materials like the story of the mass slaughter of the Lamanites converted by Ammon, who refused to shed blood to defend themselves and thus destroyed their enemies in the only way that works—in President Kimball's words, "by taking the gospel to them that they may no longer be our enemies." He thus speaks for the dead and destroyed native peoples, the "Lamanites," of America and brings home to Mormons with emotional and ethical power our part in their destruction and our continuing responsibility to their descendants, many of whom are right here in "Zion" and still live dispossessed and marginalized lives.

Just as in *The Red Prophet*, Card tells America's story from the Lamanite point of view, so in *Prentice Alvin* he tells that story from the point of view of African-Americans—both the story of unimaginable degradation as owners force themselves on slave women, producing children and selling them like cattle, and also the story of courageous endurance and intelligent spirituality as one such product of white sin becomes a younger black companion and mentor to Alvin, the figure based on Joseph Smith. In the third volume *Journeyman Alvin*, Card uses Peggy, the analogue of Emma Hale Smith, to begin to introduce gender issues that come to the fore in the next volume where he must deal with something like polygamy. But he has already explored gender issues with remarkable openness in his *Homecoming Series*, a voyage in space analogous to the Book of Mormon story, where the Lehi and Sariah figures are both powerfully spiritual leaders of rival religious groups and Nephi's wife is a seer, so spiritually capable that Nephi goes through a fascinating period of male anxiety—fear that his manhood will be at risk in such a marriage! But Card doesn't stop there, in later volumes exploring even homosexuality with what might seem to some surprising empathy and continuing his examination of the central religious duty to embrace those who are "other," the aliens. The space voyagers return to earth to find the only intelligent life there in two antagonistic groups evolved from bats and rats.

Later volumes, which parallel the Book of Mormon story through Mosiah, create a strong subtext in the slow struggle of the people of Alma to overcome racism and sexism as a condition for the future coming of the Keeper of Earth, who is obviously Christ. Card clearly understands that he is chosen and is using his extraordinary gifts to teach the chosen that what that means is to be a speaker for all the "unchosen," whom God loves just the same.

There are many others we could discuss with more space. Terry Tempest Williams appears to many to come from the other, more critical view of the chosen, to push, sometimes punch, Mormons toward greater openness to all God's creation, even to embrace literally the natural world in almost pantheistic adoration. In her national prize-winning bestseller, *Refuge*, she combines the story of her mother's death with an elegy for loss of bird-life and habitat when the Great Salt Lake flooded in the mid-1980s. She also explains, in her own challenging way, the Gospel basis for respect for wilderness:

> Wilderness courts our souls. When I sat in church throughout my growing years, I listened to teachings about Christ in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights, reclaiming his strength, where he was able to say to Satan, "Get thee hence." When I imagined Joseph Smith kneeling in a grove of trees as he received his vision to create a new religion, I believed their sojourns into nature were sacred. Are ours any less?[26]

But Williams can also remind us powerfully of our special connections to God as his chosen people. She tells of when her mother first had breast cancer, with only a twenty percent chance of living. At a stake conference to change the presidency, her father, a member of the high council, is interviewed by President Thomas S. Monson:

> He asked him, if called would he serve as stake president? My father's reply was no. . . .
>
> "Brother Tempest, would you like to explain?"
>
> My father simply said it would be inappropriate to spend time away from his wife when she had so little time left.
>
> President Monson stood and said, "You are a man whose priorities are intact."
>
> After conference President Monson calls Brother Tempest aside and says,
>
> "Brother Tempest I feel compelled to tell you your wife will be well for many years to come. I would like to invite you and your family to kneel together in the privacy of your home at noon on Thursday. The Brethren will be meeting in the holy chambers of the Temple, where we will enter your wife's name among those to be healed."

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26. Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge* (New York: Vintage books, 1992), 148-49.

Williams continues:

> That Thursday, my brothers and I came home from school to pray. We knelt in the living room together as a family. No words were uttered. But in the quiet of that room, I felt the presence of angels.[27]

Levi Peterson has a clear, almost didactic, project: to help his fellow Saints overcome the pernicious effects of our frontier past when our isolation in provincial chosen-ness and the very hardships and consequent brutality of our ancestors' lives inflicted on Mormon culture an obsession with God's punishment for our sins and failings and a tolerance for violence that are still with us. He tries to stretch us towards tolerance for ourselves and others, towards grace. But he can also produce the most believable spiritual visions by any Mormon writer, from those that capture Paul in "Road to Damascus" to the one of the Cowboy Jesus, who brings grace and a thoroughly orthodox Mormon salvation to Frank Windham in *The Backslider.* Despite its unorthodox form, one clearly intended to communicate Christ's willingness to assume various shapes and guises in order to best communicate with each of us in our different conditions, I still believe that vision of the Savior coming as an answer to Frank's wife's prayer for grace, with a "face as kind as an August dawn" to save Frank from his despair over sin, is one of the most lovely and believable epiphanies, not just in Mormon literature but in all literature.[28]

Margaret Young writes fine home literature, such as her novel *House without Walls*, which is full of spiritual comfort for us chosen people, but she has also afflicted us in her story "The Outsiders"[29] with the most complete and devastating examination of the hurt and confusion, the blackness, that was in us Mormons when we did not give Blacks the priesthood—and may still be in us. At the same time she clearly conveys her father's and her own clear faith in the gospel and the church. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Emma Lou Thayne, both national prize-winning writers, have produced a collection of essays together, *All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir*, that moves easily from the powerfully faith-confirming story of how Emma Lou Thayne's mother got her testimony as she listened to and watched Helen Keller in the tabernacle to Laurel's uniquely Mormon feminism, and it calls to us chosen people to leave behind our "lusterware" beliefs—plaster coated with silver that will break when it drops from the high shelves in the mind. Phyllis Barber has a

27. Ibid., 196-97.

28. Levi Peterson, *The Backslider* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1986), 354.

29. Margaret Blair Young, "Outsiders," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 147-155; reprinted in Eugene England, ed., *Bright Angels and Familiars* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1995), 295-304.

wonderful personal essay in the fall 1996 *Dialogue* that traces her attempts to walk away from her chosenness, her narrow, merely inherited Mormon faith, towards a faith in God that she makes and chooses for herself. It also tells how she continues to feel a stitch in her side that pulls her back to undeniable Mormon miracles and truth, a stitch put there by God, who stitches her both to her own people and to all people.[30] William A. (Bert) Wilson, our premier Mormon folklorist, has both preserved and explicated the many tales we tell of God's special providences among us chosen Mormons, from the helpful Three Nephites to appearances by newly endowed spirits in the temples, but he has also done something unique in my experience, criticized his fellow academic folklorists, including himself, for not giving attention, in addition to such dramatic spiritual events showing God's favor, to the stories of acts of simple kindness and love that might best characterize a chosen people.[31]

In his rebuke through the prophet Amos, the Lord was most offended with those of his chosen people who were at ease in Zion, who slept on luxurious beds, partook of the best food and drink, had leisure to listen to music and invent new instruments, wealth enough to perfume themselves and who all the while were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, the poor and dispossessed. Recent studies show that the United States over the past twenty years, whether led by Democrats or Republicans, has been returning to the huge gap between rich and poor of one hundred years ago. The very rich and very poor are increasing in percentage, the top 1% holding a bigger and bigger percentage of the wealth—and we Mormons are right there in the national point spread with our billionaires and millionaires and our struggling two-job families, desperate single mothers, and elderly. The Lord told Joseph Smith that "it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin" (D&C 49:20) and that as long as his Saints, his chosen people, were not equal in earthly things, they could not be equal in obtaining spiritual things (D&C 78:6). He revealed that he intended to provide for all his people and that the way it was to be done is "that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low" (D&C 104:16). These revelations have never been repealed, and though the formal law of consecration, administered by the Church, is in abeyance, our covenants of consecration, made in the Temple, are not—and I suspect that nearly every one of us is in violation to some degree.

Few writers have taken on this particular part of being chosen. Card has written a remarkable story, "Christmas at Helaman's House," about a

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30. Phyllis Barber, "The Precarious Walk Away From Mormonism, All the Time With a Stitch in my Side" in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 120-129.

31. William A. (Bert) Wilson, "The Study of Mormon Folklore: An Uncertain Mirror for Truth," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 95-110.

man who is led to consecrate his luxurious home by giving it to the bishop to use for needy families.[32] Hugh Nibley has warned constantly that we have caught the Nephite disease—the sick trust that because we are prosperous, we are righteous and that because we are chosen, we will not fall.[33] Eric Samuelson has recently written a play on this subject, called *Gadianton!*, which was performed at BYU in the winter term, 1997. Eric explores what might happen if a Mormon-owned company with a largely Mormon labor force was suddenly sold at a huge profit and then down-sized, throwing many Mormons who are barely over the poverty line out of work and facing the Mormon bishop foreman with terrible decisions. It was fascinating to see how a Mormon audience, in a community full of Mormon-owned and occasionally down-sizing companies, responded to this excellent play—from demands for censorship to hearty, repentant appreciation.

God seems to me quite clear that he chooses people in very special ways and with direct spiritual outpourings at various times and places, but that he also affirms again and again that this strange choosing does not make him partial. He does not play favorites, does not reward people for their pre-existent or even earthly righteousness with skin color or privileges or wealth, does not favor his chosen people over others. The most important decision we children of God ever made, we made together, in the Great Council in heaven when *all* of us, black and white, man and woman, conservative and liberal, bond and free, Jew and Gentile, future Mormon and future non-Mormon, raised our hands in support of the great plan of agency and responsibility. As a result, as Joseph Smith said in the King Follett discourse, "All the spirits that God ever sent into the world are capable of enlargement and improvement."[34] God treats us all alike, as if we were all capable of godhood, and he expects us to treat each other that way, too, as infinitely precious.

Caught up in our undeniable chosen-ness, we Mormons tend to forget this, but our best writers do not. We tend to forget Richard Bushman's suggestion nearly thirty years ago that if we want the best model for writing Mormon history we might look to the scriptures, which again and again tell the story of a chosen people, whether the Israelites or Jaredites or Nephites, not as a story of continual opposition between the chosen and the Gentiles, with God on the side of the chosen, but as a con-

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32. In *Christmas for the World: A Gift to the Children* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Aspen, 1991), 9-32.

33. See especially Nibley's last chapter in *Since Cumorah* and his essay, "But What kind of Work?" in *Approaching Zion*, Vol. 9 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley: Education, Politics, and Society* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1989), 252-289

34. Joseph Smith, Jr., "King Follett Discourse," in *Brigham Young University Studies* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 204.

stant effort by God to call people and lift them to chosenness—thwarted by the chosen people's constant failures to do so and consequent sufferings and sorrows.[35]

No Mormon historians that I know about have taken up Bushman's challenge, including Bushman. But our Mormon writers have. They tell us not only what it feels like to be chosen, but what our culture looks like when we fail to live like chosen people and how the whole world might look if we accepted the call to bless all nations of the earth with our righteousness.

35. Richard L. Bushman, "Faithful History" in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1969): 11-25.

Poetic Aspirations

Robert Nelson

I want to be the Mormon Allen Ginsberg
I'll howl about the September Six
and the firing of BYU professors
I'll stay up all night
on Diet Coke
I'll hold placards in the street
to protest the splitting of wards
or the latest high council talk
I'll grow a moustache
or even a beard
I'll listen to the music
of the sexually impure—
Mozart, Beethoven, even
Tchaikovsky—
And I'll read books by
Known liberals—
Lowell Bennion, Gene England
even Hugh B. Brown.
I'll take it all
and turn it into words
not the caw caw caw of crows
but of gulls circling crying
to the Lord Lord Lord.

Hard Day for Professor Midgley: An Essay for Fawn McKay Brodie

Glen J. Hettinger

THE YEAR 1998 FOUND THE NATION in the grip of a sex scandal in the White House, a sex scandal in which a president (named for Thomas Jefferson) flatly denied "improper sexual relations," believing, evidently, that no physical evidence could link him to the alleged deeds. Into the middle of this storm broke a piece of news. The DNA of Thomas Jefferson's paternal uncle had been compared to the DNA of the descendants of Sally Hemings, one of Thomas Jefferson's slaves. The results would dramatically shift the ground in a long debate over Jefferson's relationship to Hemings and to her children.[1] With one notable exception, historians and biographers had dismissed, even denounced claims and rumors that Jefferson had been sexually involved with a "mulatto" slave. The exception was Fawn McKay Brodie. She had already published *No Man Knows My History*, a biography of Joseph Smith, which, while well received generally by critics and scholars, had provoked outrage in the Mormon community. Her Jefferson biography, by contrast, came almost universally under attack for its scholarship and methodology, but most especially for its central assertion that Thomas Jefferson had, in fact, had a long sexual relationship with Sally Hemings and, moreover, had fathered one or

1. Eugene Foster, et al., "Jefferson Fathered Slave's Last Child," *Nature*, 5 November 1998, 27-28. Evidence from the recent DNA tests is not conclusive in the sense of logically excluding any chance that Jefferson was not the father of any of Hemings' children. As has been pointed out by the authors of the original *Nature* study and their critics, the possible logical universe of fathers for Hemings's child Eston Hemings is now limited to Thomas Jefferson, his brother Randolph Jefferson, Randolph Jefferson's five sons, and a slave child in the Jefferson line (Gary Davis, "The Thomas Jefferson Paternity Case," *Nature*, 7 January 1999, 32; David M. Abbey, "The Thomas Jefferson Paternity Case," *Nature*, 7 January 1999, 32; Foster, et al., "Reply: The Thomas Jefferson Paternity Case," *Nature*, 7 January 1999, 32).

more of her children. The swift establishment response pronounced Brodie's book both reckless and wrong.[2]

Now, however, twenty years later, DNA testing has re-opened the debate with a vengeance. No longer can Brodie be dismissed merely as sex-obsessed and incompetent. Jefferson scholars must now reconsider her work, not in terms of whether she dishonored a national icon, but in light of the evidence: documentary, circumstantial, and DNA. Interestingly, the reopening of the Jefferson debate also has important implications for Brodie's work on Joseph Smith and for the community of LDS scholars.

The feelings of Professor Louis C. Midgley on the subject of Fawn Brodie are well documented.[3] Brodie, in his view, was an atheist, and a biased one at that, who had been given a pass by the larger American academic community because her target was Joseph Smith. The narrow parochialism of establishment scholars blinded them to the truth, according to Midgley, that Brodie was a bad historian who concealed her hidden agendas behind clever rhetoric and assumptions that did violence to the real Joseph Smith.

Thus, Midgley was delighted when some years later the American historical establishment aimed its intellectual cannons at Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate Biography*.[4] To be sure, Midgley had had his own clash with the establishment. By his account, as a young doctoral candidate at a prestigious Ivy League school, he was set to storm the citadel of east-coast religious thought with a powerful doctoral dissertation on Paul Tillich. In taking on Tillich, Midgley viewed himself as a lonely warrior about to do battle with one of the key icons of the establishment. Furthermore, Tillich was the central character in the work of the young Midgley's graduate advisor. Motivated by the desire to stop this would-be Quixote in his tracks, the advisor met with Midgley (in the professor's "plush office") to discuss Midgley's dissertation proposal. When the young student entered the office, he found himself confronted with a naked desk, except for one item, a copy of Brodie's *No Man Knows My His-*

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2. See, for example the interviews of Joseph Ellis of Mount Holyoke College, Annette Gordon-Lee of New York Law School, and Daniel Jordan of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, each of whom offers a perspective on professional historians' change of heart after the DNA evidence came in (PBS, "News Hour with Jim Lehrer," 2 November 1998, "Thomas Jefferson's Legacy," interview by Margaret Warner).

3. This essay deals with two articles by Midgley on Brodie: Louis C. Midgley, "The Brodie Connection: Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 1 (1979): 59-67 and Louis C. Midgley, "F. M. Brodie—'The Fasting Hermit and the Very Saint of Ignorance': A Biographer and Her Legend," reprinted from *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 8, no. 2 (1996): 147-230 available at http://www.farmsresearch.com/frob/frobv8_2/midgley.htm (citations are to this version).

4. Fawn Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975).

tory. Clearly this was intended as an ambush, a maneuver to intimidate the Mormon, but rising to the challenge, Midgley tells the professor that the Brodie work is "bad," sparing not the chance to highlight the fallen nature of the author, "Fawn McKay Brodie." A discussion ensues in which Midgley invokes the name and arguments of Hugh Nibley against Brodie, and just when one expects the professor to reveal himself as Charles Anthon and declare, "I cannot read a sealed book," the conversation ends unresolved. Midgley comforts the reader, however, by concluding the story with the same professor signing off on Midgley's doctoral dissertation, acknowledgment evidently that Midgley has refuted both Tillich and the professor's attempt on Mormonism.[5]

This trumping of the academic establishment would not be his last. In 1979, after Fawn Brodie had published her now somewhat famous and controversial Jefferson biography, another chance to throw sand into the face of the American intellectual establishment presented itself to now Professor Midgley. In an article in *BYU Studies*, Midgley seized the chance to show that the historical profession had caught Brodie cheating on her Jefferson biography in just the same manner in which she had cheated in her book about Joseph Smith where, however, historians had neglected to condemn it. She had committed the same offenses against Jefferson that Hugh Nibley had accused her of committing against the Prophet Joseph Smith. Nibley and Midgley had been right all along! Brodie was a bad historian! The establishment's failure to see this in the first instance was just another example of the closed-minded failure of the intellectual elite to give a fair hearing to the embattled Mormons. In 1996 Midgley returned to the same topic, presenting an expanded version of this argument in an all-out attack on Brodie's work.[6]

I.

Both of Midgley's essays on Brodie make the same essential points about her work on Jefferson: she handles evidence badly, distorts facts, engages in unwarranted speculation, and focuses obsessively on sex. She also pursues a personal agenda of painting Jefferson in a long-term emotional and sexual affair with a slave. Midgley's technique in both essays is to string together quotations from the pantheon of Jefferson historians, using their words, usually remarkable for their sarcasm or overwrought rhetoric, to make his case. Midgley summarily dismisses any favorable

5. Midgley, "The Brodie Connection," 59.

6. Midgley dubs Brodie the "Very Saint of Ignorance" in typical Midgley fashion, repeating the insult in bold letters then carefully directing the reader to the real source of the slander. See Midgley, "The Fasting Hermit," note to the title.

review of Brodie's work as motivated by crass commercial concerns or as the work of anonymous and, therefore, unreliable critics.[7]

In his 1979 piece, Professor Midgley quotes review after review to build the indictment against Brodie, the biographer of Thomas Jefferson:

- She is mistaken in portraying Jefferson as a "lusty 'ladies-man.'"[8]
- She "is at her best when there is no evidence whatsoever to cloud her vision. Then she is free to speculate."[9]
- She fails by attempting to prove Jefferson's involvement with Hemings "less by any single unqualified historical fact than by a fine web of subtle references."[10]
- She relies on "inaccuracies" and "shaky evidence."[11]
- She has a hidden personal agenda: "It is because of Mrs. Brodie's own clear commitment to ideals of racial equality that she wishes to depict Jefferson as setting the taboo [against miscegenation] aside."[12]
- Brodie has an "obsession with all the things she can find or invent about Jefferson's sex life" and "ought to have given her book a better title. Why not 'By Sex Obsessed?'"[13]
- Brodie uses "bad psychology."[14]

Throughout his attack on Brodie, Midgley goes to some pains to exhibit the lofty academic credentials of his surrogates—the august names of Columbia, Berkeley, MIT, and Harvard are all invoked against Brodie. He focuses intensely on the Hemings affair as the prime indicator of Brodie's sloppy work and cavalier method—he mentions or refers to Hemings' affair with Jefferson at least ten times in the short essay. He sums up with a sneering quote from Garry Wills, who condemns Brodie's *Jefferson* as "involv[ing] heroic feats of misunderstanding and a constant labor of insignificance. This seems too high a price to pay when the same appetites can be more readily gratified by those Hollywood fan magazines,

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7. Midgley, "The Brodie Connection," 60.

8. Ibid., 61, quoting Edwin M. Yoder, Jr., "An Unshaken Hero," *National Review*, 10 May 1974, 542.

9. Ibid., 64, quoting David Herbert Donald, "By Sex Obsessed," *Commentary* 58, no. 1 (July 1974): 98.

10. Ibid., 60, quoting Alan Green, "The Inner Man of Monticello," *Saturday Review/World* 1 (6 April 1974): 23.

11. Ibid., 62.

12. Ibid., 63, quoting Max Beloff, "The Sally Hemings Affair," *Encounter* (September 1974): 53.

13. Ibid., 64, quoting Donald, "Sex Obsessed," 68.

14. Ibid., 63, quoting Winthrop D. Jordan, book review in *William and Mary Quarterly* (July 1975): 511.

with their wealth of unfounded conjecture on the sex lives of others, from which Mrs. Brodie has borrowed her scholarly methods."[15]

In his 1996 essay, Midgley again makes the Hemings affair the centerpiece of his attack on Brodie, beginning his essay with a broadside against Brodie's treatment of Jefferson, titling this section of the essay "The Jefferson Debacle."[16] He admits that his earlier essay was a work written to establish his "vindication" and chides "cultural Mormons" for their vain efforts to brush aside Nibley's criticisms of Brodie.[17] Further, he criticizes Brodie for not heeding the criticisms of her *Jefferson* from the cadre of professional historians, with language that is painful to read in light of subsequent developments:

> [These] criticisms were rejected [by Brodie] as merely an effort by what Brodie derisively labeled "the Jeffersonian establishment" to protect [Jefferson's] image, just as she had discounted the criticisms of Latter-day Saints for somewhat similar reasons.[18]

Midgley then resumes quoting others, excerpting the most vitriolic criticisms of the Jefferson illuminati to set the stage for his own attack on Brodie as a biographer of Joseph Smith:

- Brodie is the "mistress of the iffy sentence."[19]
- "Brodie's treatment of the miscegenation issue will only confirm the skeptic's complaint that psychohistory is nothing but a form of suppositional history."[20]
- Brodie, using "tedious and ridiculous" methods, "discovers sexual references in nearly everything Jefferson wrote."[21]
- "[T]wo things, each wondrous in itself, combine to make this book [*Jefferson*] a prodigy—the author's industry and her ignorance."[22]
- Brodie employs "a wide range of the most amateurish psychological clichés."[23]

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15. Ibid., 65-66, quoting Garry Wills, "Uncle Thomas's Cabin," *New York Review of Books* (18 April 1978): 26.

16. Midgley, "The Fasting Hermit," text in note 37.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., text after note 40.

19. Ibid., text in note 46, quoting Cushing Stout, *Pacific Historical Review* 44, no. 2 (May 1995): 266.

20. Ibid., text in note 48.

21. Ibid., text in note 51, quoting T. Harry Williams, "On the Couch at Monticello," *Reviews in American History* 2 (December 1974): 524.

22. Ibid., text in note 56, quoting Wills, "Uncle Thomas," 26.

23. Ibid., text in note 44, quoting Larry R. Gerlach, *Utah Bicentennial Post* 1, no. 4 (May/June 1974): 5. Midgley inexplicably goes to some length to note that Mr. Gerlach was trained at Rutgers.

Finally, as though the whole episode were not loaded with enough irony, Professor Midgley decides to have a seat in Dr. Freud's chair, placing Brodie on the couch to examine her reaction to critics of *Jefferson*. In a surprising resort, he invents a new psychological category, the "hater," to denounce Brodie's motives. "[She] appears to have been a good hater," he says, and then asks rhetorically, "what happened to the honest and open pursuit of truth?"[24]

To be sure, Midgley also attacks Brodie in less personal terms, but here too relies on the Jeffersonian historians. At length, he compiles their complaints that Brodie has made factual errors in *Jefferson*:

- He quotes Richard B. Morris, who, he carefully notes, held "the Gouverneur Morris Chair of American History at Columbia University" and who comments that "at times [Brodie's] slips are embarrassing, confusing the vote on and the signing of the Declaration of Independence" and incorrectly concluding that Jefferson refused an appointive office as peace commissioner.[25]
- Midgley quotes Mary-Jo Kline, dismissing the importance of Brodie's discovery of a newspaper interview with one of Jefferson's children by Hemings for reasons that are painfully ironic in retrospect—the supposed bias of an African American family in trying to lay claim to the Jefferson heritage.[26]
- Midgley quotes a historian who notes that the illegitimate son made "at least four" errors in the "ten lines in that part of his reminiscences reproduced" in Brodie's *Jefferson*.[27]

Midgley adds these errors to those he had cited in his earlier article—such as the complaint of one historian who solemnly intoned that, "Mrs. Brodie confuses 'Light Horse Harry' Lee with Richard Henry Lee . . . and with 'Black Horse Harry' Lee . . ."[28]—to portray Brodie as a shoddy practitioner of the historian's craft. Errors of fact are, of course, damaging to any historian, but Brodie's ultimate failure is demonstrated with finality for Midgley in her treatment of Jefferson's affair with Sally Hemings:

> Those supposed secrets [revealed by Brodie] involved, among other things, fathering illegitimate children with a young quadroon slave girl who accom-

24. Ibid., note 57.

25. Midgley, "The Brodie Connection," 61, quoting Richard B. Morris, "The Very Private Jefferson," *New Leader* 57, no. 11 (27 May 1974): 25.

26. Midgely, "The Brodie Connection," 62, quoting Mary-Jo Kline, book review in *New England Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (December 1974): 624.

27. Midgley, "The Brodie Connection," quoting Holman Hamilton, book review in *Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 1 (February 1975): 108.

28. Ibid., 62, quoting Hamilton, 108.

> panied him and his daughter to Paris. Thus, she devotes five chapters and an appendix to the *old tale* about Jefferson's supposed "affair" with Sally Hemings.[29]

Midgley has thus marshaled his arguments, in many cases twice, each time hammering Brodie with all the weight of academic consensus. Professor Midgley even goes to the trouble of cataloging by name 36 "distinguished experts and other professional historians and other academics who published unfavorable reviews of [Brodie's] *Thomas Jefferson.*"[30] Secure that the Jefferson establishment concurs with his estimation of Fawn McKay Brodie's method, her agenda, and her style, he turns to demonstrating that historians have failed to notice the very same shortcomings in her work on Joseph Smith. His resentment is tempered, but unmistakable:

> In 1946, when Hugh Nibley first attempted to challenge Ms. Brodie's scholarship, he was denounced as flippant and his arguments were discounted; but there were some rather remarkable similarities between his objections to *No Man Knows My History* and the current scholarly criticisms of *Thomas Jefferson,* which complain as Dr. Nibley did of Ms. Brodie's *manipulation* and *tangling* of evidence, of her *obsession* with *sex,* of her *ignorance* of the larger background of the subject she is treating, and of her *special "intuition"* into the minds of people. Perhaps it is time for non-Mormon historians to examine once again Fawn M. Brodie's still-respected earlier work, *No Man Knows My History;* for that book may suffer from the same faults now so *painfully* evident to the reviewers of *Thomas Jefferson.*[31]

II.

Midgley and the reviewers he quotes had leveled their criticisms at Fawn Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson* without, of course, ever thinking that physical evidence might some day render comic their absolute confidence that Brodie had erred. For Jefferson's biographers the DNA test revelations were embarrassing; many have virtually made careers out of denying even the possibility of an affair between Jefferson and his slave. For Professor Midgley, in many ways, the case is worse. He walked into this argument, not for the purpose of discovering the truth about Jefferson, but to reveal to the world the methodological and character defects

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29. Midgley, "The Fasting Hermit," text after note 42 (emphasis added).

30. Ibid., in note 75.

31. Midgley, "The Brodie Connection," 66-67 (emphasis added). I have italicized the loaded language because Midgley accused Brodie of being motivated by hate. Surely Midgley did not entertain the conceit that his own writing on Brodie represented dispassionate scholarship.

of Fawn Brodie and, thereby, conclude that a writer of such "bad" history would not be reliable when she wrote about anyone, including the prophet of Midgley's deeply held faith.

When the DNA evidence came in, it forced the historical community to reassess the many heated condemnations of Brodie. Defenders of the Jeffersonian image are, of course, already at work, but, for the moment, are themselves the ones sounding "speculative." And where does the new evidence leave Midgley's project? In trouble. Fawn McKay Brodie, who was so obviously, overwhelmingly wrong, appears now to have been right. At least, the greater probability in light of scientific evidence is that Jefferson did indeed have a sexual relationship with his slave mistress.[32] Brodie's methods, criticized as "intuition" and "amateur conjecture," had led her to conclusions that seem now in serious danger of holding up. Had her *Jefferson* contained factual errors as her critics insisted? Certainly. Yet, Brodie's gift was seeing through facts and past establishment proscriptions to a central truth about Jefferson the man that others could not or would not see. In light of this, their punctilious criticisms of her factual errors seem richly ironic. One is reminded of Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees, "blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."[33]

Brodie had not gotten it all right—the DNA tests establish that Jefferson did not father the child Hemings conceived in Paris as Brodie thought.[34] Yet, this is scant consolation to Professor Midgley's case. He himself points out, this time without a trace of irony, that Brodie seems not in the least bothered by the fact that "no other Jefferson biographer," all of whom had access to her sources, took "these tales of his sexual prowess" seriously.[35] This criticism, meant to be damning, turns out to be high praise.

Consider the daunting challenge that Brodie faced. Thomas Jefferson is among the most revered of all Americans. Countless biographies had dismissed the Hemings affair as idle gossip, the supposedly unreliable myth of African-Americans, or as malicious political slander. The authors of these biographies occupied the upper seats in the ivory towers of America. According to Midgley himself, this powerful group, with a vast stake in their versions of Jefferson's life, rose up almost uniformly to condemn Brodie. Midgley—who began his 1979 essay with the story of his own battle with the Tillich establishment dragon—might have sensed

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32. Above, note 2.

33. Matthew 23:24.

34. Eugene Foster *et al.*, "Jefferson Fathered Slave's Last Child," *Nature*, 5 November 1998, 28. Brodie thought that Jefferson had fathered the first of Hemings's children in Paris. (Brodie, *Jefferson*, 293).

35. Midgley, "The Brodie Connection," 64, quoting Donald, "Sex Obsessed," 97-98.

more than anyone that such adamant and vitriolic criticism by establishment historians was itself suspicious. For, if Brodie were right about the "quadroon," the "mulatto" (the terms used in Midgley's essays), then hundreds of pages and countless hours of investment in denying the Hemings affair would be lost. Historians who had devoted careers to Jefferson would have to admit that their strident denials were vast overstatements. And their creation Jefferson, the icon of rationality, would have to make room for Jefferson, the carnal and not altogether admirable man.

By taking sides with the Jefferson establishment, Midgley made Brodie's method in *Jefferson* a test case for her treatment of Joseph Smith. In the same essay in which he congratulates himself for confronting academic arrogance, he abruptly switches sides to align himself with the arrogant. He even treats Brodie as deluded when she blames closed-mindedness for the rejection of her Jefferson biography.[36]

Such opportunistic side switching is not uncommon in the world and not surprising. Professor Midgley, along with other LDS scholars, has made his own career with a stout defense of traditional orthodox teaching about Joseph Smith. Midgley, Nibley, and other Brodie detractors have been pillars of the Mormon establishment, revered as defenders of the faith in Priesthood Quorums and Sunday Schools, at Church Education Weeks, and Know Your Religion Series.[37]

Brodie knew what she was up against in writing about Joseph Smith; it is Midgley who reminds us that she was Fawn *McKay* Brodie. She knew that she was subjecting to examination the foundation stories of a people that had pulled handcarts across the barren plains. She knew that she was confronting powerful men with vested interests. Yet, she wrote a history of Joseph Smith that, for better or for worse, followed her sense of truth.

The Jefferson establishment's lambasting of Brodie's *Jefferson* presented Midgley with a seductive call. He would let the secular historians

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36. Midgley, "The Fasting Hermit," 40. Indeed, as Annette Gordon-Reed has made painfully clear, Brodie was exactly right about the biased history written by the Jefferson elite about the Hemings affair. See Ms. Gordon-Reed's powerful *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1997), in which she builds a compelling case that Jefferson historians often couched arguments against the thesis that Hemings and Jefferson had a relationship in terms that reflect clear race and class bias.

37. See David B. Honey and Daniel C. Peterson, "Advocacy and Inquiry in the Writing of Latter-day Saint History," *BYU Studies* 31 (Spring 1991): 271n1 who opine that "Louis Midgley has been the most vociferous defender of the faith from the inroads of 'revisionist' historiography, as he terms it." See also Kent P. Jackson, book review in *BYU Studies* 28 (Fall 1988), who, while stating reservations about Professor Nibley's methods maintains that "[i]n his role as a defender of the faith, Nibley has served extremely well and deserves our highest admiration and praise."

show up her shoddy methods and dubious conclusions. But Midgely is no secular historian, and he often decries their "naturalist" assumptions. In his historiography God appears to an adolescent New York farm boy, angels deliver ancient records, and ancient emissaries arrive to give the boy supernatural powers. What appears absurd to the naturalist is perfectly normal to the believer. This is a comfortable position from which to argue because the historian employing "naturalistic" assumptions must deal with verifiable events and use arguments that stand or fall on verifiable evidence. With a supernatural worldview, Midgley need not fear rational argument because his most important claims are, at their root, not subject to rational proof or disproof. Arguing from this perspective allows him to take the "naturalist" historian sternly to task for the inevitable holes in argument that result from an incomplete, incoherent, and imperfect historical record or from the unavoidable constraints of time, place, and historical perspective. When confronted with incoherence in his own chain of evidence, he can call on supernatural explanations that cannot be refuted because they cannot be verified.

However, in confronting Brodie in league with conventional historians, Midgley loses his supernatural recourse. Either Jefferson had sex with Sally Hemings, or he did not. Either the Hemings family descendants carried the Jefferson family DNA, or they did not. These, as it turns out, are largely verifiable facts and not forever beyond the reach of rationality as are, for Midgley, the central claims of Joseph Smith. Here he has picked a fight that it is possible for him to lose. And so, long after celebrating what seemed an early and devastating rout, he must learn that although he had rhetorically mauled Fawn Brodie, she had withstood his assault.

Conclusion

At the moment Fawn McKay Brodie, imperfect historian, has emerged from her battle with Louis Midgley and the Jefferson elite ahead on points in an ugly struggle. She has been badly bruised, but emerges in the lead because she dared tenaciously to follow her own stubborn insight. The altercation has been brutal and is not over. Her conflict with those who have vested interests in preserving one view of Joseph Smith will be tougher still, perhaps hopeless, because like Midgley, they have taken up positions immune, finally, to rational challenge. Even so, it may be that Professor Midgley owes the late Ms. Brodie an apology. I do not make it my place to insist on this, and, in fact, I hardly think apology is enough. Is it enough to apologize after decades of venomous personal invective? There is, however, an important lesson for all of us who care about historical events and personalities, about methodology and pre-

mises and "the open and honest pursuit of truth." We must, I think, reconsider the way in which we conduct our discussions and disagreements and retaliations. A bludgeoning is a bludgeoning, even if the rage that drives it is outrage, even if the outrage is justified or motivated by deeply held beliefs. Apologies do not follow bloodbaths, nor would they help much. How could he admit? And how could she forgive? Where does the pursuit of truth go from here? Ms. Brodie's own passions did not much spare the deep convictions nor, for that matter, insecurities of faithful Latter-day Saints. But the kinds of truths at stake are surely not dependent on her destruction. If we learn anything from this turn in events, it should be humility. The truth "listeth where it will." Historical truth, for instance, now includes the fact that much of the documentation in *No Man Knows My History,* once so angrily denounced, has been vindicated and must now be acknowledged or even incorporated by faithful LDS historians. That is, of course, another essay, but as Midgley once demanded that scholars reappraise Fawn Brodie's work on Joseph Smith in light of her *Jefferson* critics, perhaps fairness and loyalty to truth now ask that we assess *No Man Knows My History* again in light of her vindication.

Clay

Philip White

On the sill, torsos wrenched out of clay
still bore the sculptor's mark, the print

of cocked thumb and nail. Tortured, vaguely
female, they shamed us. We crowded in,

snickering, hands over mouths, and Sister Larson
said, Hush. In the dark corner the man

looked up from wrists deep in slurry.
He moved over, slammed a grey plug on a wheel,

and hunkered down. What he made stilled us.
Something in long fingers grazing the perfect

lip, drawing shapes out of the clay, shapes
we'd have sworn we'd seen—but where?

Storybooks? Dreams? What else did we know?
He punched them down, got up. Quiet,

we filed out past the breathing kiln, shelves
lined with green ware drying, shrinking in

whitening, waiting to be hardened in fire.

Essay for June 9, 1998

Margaret Blair Young

TODAY IS JUNE 9, 1998. I have been forty-three for two days. My father, Robert Wallace Blair, is teaching spring term; he will retire when the term ends after thirty-four years as a linguistics professor at BYU. One of my most important mentors, Eugene England, retired from the English department this past April.

Twenty years ago on this day, I was in Mexico City. Very much my father's daughter, I had learned some Russian, but was now working in Spanish, teaching literacy via the Book of Mormon with a wonderful English professor named Dorothy Hansen. I was writing some of the lessons and trying hard to be a good writer though, to be honest, I was pretty lousy. Still, I was sure I had some writing talent. There was no proof of this; I certainly hadn't published a thing, but I was sure it was in me somewhere.

We were five college coeds and Dorothy, and we were doing a remarkable project: Teaching Isaiah to barefoot, illiterate Indian women, who would bring fresh tamales to our lessons.

"What do you think this means?" we would ask, directing our students to Moroni 10:31: "And awake and arise from the dust and put on thy beautiful garments." Why does Moroni include this scripture from Isaiah? What "beautiful garments" is he referring to?

"*Pues hermana,*" an Indian sister answered once, "*pienso que se refiere al templo.*" "I think it refers to the temple."

I was amazed at the insights these unlettered, long-braided women had. In their simplicity, they could understand things that intellectual *gringos* often complicated beyond comprehension. How I loved writing and giving those lessons! How I loved those Indians!

We were picking up keys to a chapel, I think, when we went to the bishop's house on June 9, 1978. It was the bishop's wife who told us the news, weeping: "*El profeta ha recibido una revelación! Todos los hombres dignos pueden recibir el sacerdocio—ni importa el colór de piél. Todos! Incluso los negros!*"

The prophet had received a revelation: All worthy males might now receive the priesthood, regardless of race. This meant the black race too.

I remember closing my eyes and saying simply to God: "Thank you."

The issue mattered deeply to me. It had for years.

Some of the most dominant images of my childhood come in black and white. I must have been six years old when I heard my father talking about getting chased by someone or a group of someones at Indiana University (where Dad was getting his master's degree). That would have been 1961. It was a brief incident with no repercussions; I doubt Dad even remembers it. But for a six-year-old girl, it was a stark image: her invulnerable father getting chased by people who apparently wanted to hurt him. The reason for the chase: Dad was a Mormon. I associate this memory with the Civil Rights movement, though I can't be sure the "chase" was connected to it.

The next most prominent image from my childhood is circa 1963, not long before President Kennedy's assassination. My Mormon friends, Darlene and Diane Midgley, and I are playing in Hoosier Courts, picking wild chives to line our "fort" (a little space between some lilac bushes). A black girl approaches, her hair all tight braids. There is an innertube swing hung between nearby willows, and we swing on it. An argument of some sort ensues. One of us (not me!) hits the black girl, who howls.

Somebody must have tattled, for Dad was there almost immediately, wearing a face I had never seen him wear. As I picture it now, his face seems halfway between rage and agony. He is, for a moment, speechless.

We Blair kids always knew when Dad meant business. The business he meant now was more serious than anything I had ever before registered from his expressions. He finally asked the guilty party—in a voice that seemed burnt to a thread, "Did you hit this girl?"

Too scared to lie, the guilty one nodded.

Dad was close to tears, his face still that unfamiliar, livid one. When he finally found his voice, and it arrived very strong: "You will never hurt a Negro child. You will NEVER hurt a Negro child."

He left, taking very big steps. The incident was over.

Another night, I remember inviting that same black child home for a piece of cake, then saying to Dad afterwards, "I like her. She's nice." Just to be sure he knew that I would never hit her.

They say children are color blind, unaware of races. I was not. I knew very well that this child was black and that, because I was Mormon, her blackness meant something. I didn't quite understand what that something was.

The next year, we moved to Chicago. My teacher at Murray Elementary in the Hyde Park district was the very white, very old Mrs. Reif, al-

ways overdressed—often wearing a camel-colored gown with a gold sequin dickie. On the first day of class, Mrs. Reif asked us all to introduce ourselves by stating our name and (I swear!) our religion. By the time it was my turn, it was clear there were no other Mormons in the class. I was shy about admitting my religion, but after some prodding, whispered, "Mormon." Mrs. Reif laughed and said, "Really! I thought we got rid of the Mormons in Illinois!"

There were two black boys in my class. (In those days, the word was "Negroes.") They seemed to be always getting into trouble. I recall watching Mrs. Reif standing the two of them before the rest of us and berating them. I recall it vividly even now. One boy was fat, the other lanky, both hanging their heads and trying not to giggle. But I knew there was something wrong in what my teacher was doing. I don't believe I'm exaggerating my eight-year-old reaction: "Why is Mrs. Reif picking on them just because they're Negroes?" Instinctively, I knew their treatment was a racial issue, not a behavioral one. It was one of those luminous moments where an unexpected truth becomes undeniably clear—as when you realize your parents don't actually know everything or that even a child can die. It was startling to realize—in one bright moment—that my teacher was doing something wrong.

My parents didn't talk much about Civil Rights to us kids though certainly the topic was in the papers and on the t.v. news. I knew the name Martin Luther King and that he had led a march of black people in Washington, D.C., but little more than that. Still, I was becoming aware of racism just because of where I was and what was happening around me.

At this time, my father was working with Mayan Indians, several of whom lived with us over the years, or at least visited with some frequency. I saw Dad's friendly interaction with these short, brown-skinned, beardless men; heard all of them (including Dad) speak words I couldn't understand—not because they were difficult, but because they were a different language. I knew it was a good thing to speak different languages because I saw Dad studying various grammars. Our shelves were filled with two kinds of books: Books on Mormonism and books on languages. I knew that Dad could shift into a vocabulary which only brown-skinned people understood and that this was something I should be proud of.

That was my early childhood, spent in Bloomington, Indiana, and Chicago, Illinois, with one summer in Yucatan. When Dad was hired at B.Y.U., I came to all-white Provo, joining the last month of Mrs. Champions's fourth grade class at Wasatch Elementary. There were two good days in my new class, and then, with no warning, I was completely ostracized. It was weeks later that a classmate relented and told me why the class had taken up this "fight" against me. ("Fight" was her word.) She

gave me a two-page list of my unlikeable characteristics. For one thing: I talked funny (Chicago accent?). For another: I had red hair, which most people just plain didn't like. And, of course, there was much more, but for a full month no one in my class spoke to me. Even in my primary class, my fellow "Gaynotes" would always arrange the chairs so mine was separate.

That year, I quit talking much to anyone but my family. I may be wrong, but I'm personally convinced that the emotional trauma was serious enough to affect me physically. I don't think it's a coincidence that shortly after returning to Provo, my eyesight became very poor. (I am now legally blind without glasses or contacts—the only one in my family with this problem.) I truly believe my whole physical and emotional system was so shocked by my treatment that it started turning me blind—maybe as a ploy to get attention or to prod compassion from my persecutors.

Was my own "segregation" because of my appearance and accent another way I was sensitized to racism? It may well have been. I know now that I was precociously aware of racial issues when I began my first year of L.D.S. seminary.

My seminary teacher, whom I won't name, was in his late fifties or early sixties. A former bishop with a full head of silver hair that made you think, "Prophet!," he was gifted in theatrics and could imitate a diabolical laugh well enough to give us ninth-graders the willies. He liked to tell stories about angels and near-death experiences or sentimental tales ala *Especially for Mormons*. Once, in a marvelously understated performance, he announced that he had received a letter from the First Presidency that morning: the time had come, he stated soberly, for the Saints to return to Missouri. By the afternoon, "the Russians will have bombed out all highways, so we'll have to take handcarts." He went on like this for a half hour before saying, "Aren't you glad this isn't true? But don't you want to be prepared for the day when it IS true?" During another class period, he read us an oath from The Knights of Columbus, testifying that his own life would be in danger if the Catholics knew he had this document, but we needed to understand just how dangerous the Catholics were. He also claimed that if a person was righteous for many years, the devil would finally just give up on him and quit tempting. "By the time you reach my age," he announced, "the devil knows you won't yield, so he pretty much leaves you alone."

Brother X knew the Book of Mormon well, quizzed us on the meaning of each symbol in Lehi's vision with a well-drawn picture of a tree and a skyscraper where we were to fill in the blanks. He bore a testimony that seemed sincere, but still Oscar-worthy. He knew just how to use the theatrical pause, just which words to emphasize, when to whisper, when to shout.

And he used the term "nigger" without any hesitation at all.

It was stunning to me. No one had ever told me we didn't use that word; I just knew we didn't. And here was this man, my very dramatic Book of Mormon instructor, a church authority as far as I was concerned, dropping it like common punctuation.

Near the end of the year, Brother X asked us to evaluate him as a teacher. "Now I truly want you to be honest," he said, passing out the evaluation forms. "If there's anything better I can do as a seminary teacher, I want to do it! And don't sign your names—this is all anonymous." He smiled righteously, reminding us and the devil, no doubt, that he was beyond temptation. Maybe even beyond criticism.

Silly me. I thought he actually wanted our evaluations. So I wrote what I really thought, in these words, which I remember verbatim: "I think you sometimes say things which could incite racial prejudice."

The next class period Brother X was somber. He had the evaluations in his hand. "I want to read you one of these," he said. "And I know who wrote it." He fixed me with a cold squint, then read my words. I didn't flinch.

"You little Utah kids," he sneered, slapping the evaluations to his desk and employing a dramatic pause worthy of Charleton Heston. "You have no idea what it's like to work with niggers. Well let me tell you, I've worked with them, and I tell to you with all the power of my soul, the nigger IS inferior. There's a reason God doesn't want the nigger to have the priesthood."

Strong words. I wonder if my face showed the same rage my father's had when he said, "You will *never* hurt a Negro child!" For I knew at age thirteen that what this religion teacher was telling me was absolutely wrong. I knew he was absolutely wrong for saying it. I knew the "testimony" he had just born was absolutely false.

I went home and told my father what had happened. Dad was likewise enraged. The next year, I told another seminary teacher—and this one I will name: Don Black—what had happened and admitted I wasn't sure I wanted to attend seminary. Brother Black demanded I tell him who had said that terrible, untrue, racist thing, and I told. Shaking his head, Brother Black said, "I have prayed next to Alan Cherry and felt like a babe in arms."

I knew who Alan Cherry was, of course—the courageous, black author of *It's You and Me, Lord* and (for me equally important) a member of the rock band "The Sons of Mosiah," a group of Mormons (including the gorgeous Dave Zandanati and the really cute Richie Ellsworth) who sang songs about Jesus and repentance with a drumbeat good enough to dance to. I knew Alan Cherry was a deeply spiritual man, and I knew he was deeply cool, too.

I never fully recovered from my first seminary teacher's misbegotten testimony. I finally dropped out of the seminary program, and here I am, all these years later, writing about the experience on the anniversary of the date the priesthood was extended to all worthy males—certainly including Alan Cherry.

I have often wondered if Brother X remembers the day he bore his testimony to my class that blacks were inferior. I have wondered how he responded to the revelation of June 9, 1978.[1] I have pondered his idea that after many righteous years, a man has earned freedom from temptation, and I've wondered if he ever grasped his self-deception, if he ever realized that the most dangerous, most tenuous place of all is an enclosed system where all things are set and known—or pretend to be so. If opposition has ceased and self-examination has ceased, then growth has ceased. The inertia invited by a desire for absolute certitude and closure is either the setting for the second law of thermodynamics—the tendency towards chaos—or it is simply death. I have wondered if my seminary teacher ever understood that the gospel is not an enclosed system, but the opening of all systems through divinely prescribed keys, that the moment we box up anyone—including ourselves—is the moment we become slaves.

Another piece of my own history bears mention here. The summer before my conversation with Don Black, Dad trained Peace Corps volunteers set for Brazil. The training happened in Alta, Utah, and I—with my college-aged friend Judy—went there with him. I served as a bus-girl. There, a black man, a potential Peace Corps volunteer, confronted my father about the Mormon priesthood policy. Knowing my father for the generous, loving person he is, the man said, "You surely can't support that policy!" I heard my father, with pain and faith, answer clearly: "I support that policy." The black man threw a tantrum, culminating with the repeated shout, "You've never been a slave! You've never been a slave!"

When I finally began publishing stories, I wrote up this memory and titled it "Outsiders." As a retrospective side note, the editors who accepted it for *Dialogue* were Ruth and Robert Reese, close friends of Gene England's and later missionaries who served with my father when he presided over the Baltic States mission.

"Outsiders" is fiction. My protagonist, a "Utah Mormon," has never known any black people. My own father, unlike my narrator's, served his mission to Finland, not Brazil. And in real life, I never kissed Ernie the dishwasher.

As a coming of age story, "Outsiders" doesn't reveal what finally

1. Though the revelation was given on June 8, it wasn't announced until June 9.

happened to the black man—or to my narrator's father. The true history is this: The man who shouted, "You've never been a slave!" was not allowed to go to Brazil because of that tantrum, which a psychologist determined to be a manifestation of emotional instability. And Dad, after receiving many Peace Corp contracts for Indian languages, had his grants abruptly stopped because (according to my mother) "he represented B.Y.U. and the church."

I was seventeen years old when I read Lester Bush's comprehensive treatise on the history of the black priesthood policy, published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.[2] I found it enlightening and troubling. Afterwards, I read my very first Eugene England essay "The Mormon Cross"[3]—his response to the Bush article—and liked his idea that the policy was in fact a test of faith—not just for black Mormons, but even more for white Mormons.

I have since heard Gene discuss the policy as "the lesser law." Just as the ancient Israelites weren't worthy of the whole law from Sinai and so received the lesser law, we Latter-Day Saints, because of our prejudices, weren't worthy of the fully inclusive priesthood, which the Lord surely wanted to give us.

I like that idea. It vindicates us to a great extent, but I don't totally buy it. My own faith includes room for fallibility even in ecclesiastical leaders. I personally find Brigham Young's definitive statement on the policy born more of his time than of inspiration:

> How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse? . . . That curse will remain upon them and they never can hold the priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the priesthood and the keys thereof.[4]

That quote is quite similar to other leaders of other churches during that same time. For example, Reverend Samuel Seabury, a New Englander like Brigham Young, writes this on the eve on the Civil War (1861) in an effort to get his fellow Northerners to leave the South and southern slavery alone:

> I desire it may be considered that children . . . follow the condition of their parents as, for example . . . that the natives of New England are not savages, like the aboriginal Indians, but . . . an enlightened, civilized, and Christian people, after the fashion of their Puritan forefathers. . . . The posterity of

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2. Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, no. 1 (spring 1973): 11-68.

3. Eugene England, "The Mormon Cross," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, no. 1 (spring 1973): 78-86.

4. *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 7, 290-1, quoted in Stephen G. Taggert, *Mormonism's Negro Policy* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1970), 71.

> Abraham inherited, by this Divine providence, the privileges which their father's faith had earned for them, as well as for himself; and the descendants of Ham have been born to the curse pronounced on their progenitor. . . .[5]

Reverend Seabury explains that slavery is, as the title of his book suggests, "justified by the law of nature," that a slave is made for servitude, that it would be as unjust to deprive the master of his slave's lifelong service as it would be to deprive:

> the man of the subjection and service naturally due to him from the woman . . . It would be inexpedient, because it would subvert the foundation of that order which is essential to the peace and happiness of human society, and which Nature has laid in the physical and mental superiority of the man.[6]

Even slaves themselves explained their situation by the same tradition Brigham Young grew up with, as this quote from *Lay My Burden Down*, a folk history of slavery as told by former slaves themselves, indicates:

> God gave religion to Adam and took it away from Adam and gave it to Noah, and you know, Noah had three sons, and when Noah got drunk on wine, one of his sons laughed at him, and the other two took a sheet and walked backwards and threw it over Noah. Noah told the one who laughed, "You children will be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the other two children, and they will be known by their hair and their skin being dark." So, Miss, there we are, and that is the way God meant us to be. We have always had to follow the white folks and do what we saw them do, and that's all there is to it. You just can't get away from what the lord said.[7]

It's hardly surprising that a religious leader in nineteenth century America would echo such well-accepted thoughts in his own theology. It *is* rather surprising that the first Mormon leader, Joseph Smith, was as radically anti-racist as he was. It's true, he also used the "servant of servants" motif during the Missouri years when the church was suspected of agitating slaves and inviting Blacks into Missouri—contrary to the Missouri Compromise. But Joseph Smith's position evolved. In the 1840s and especially during his presidential campaign, he said some remarkably egalitarian things:

> Change their situation with the whites, and [the blacks] would be like them.

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5. Rev. Samuel Seabury, *American Slavery Distinguished from the Slavery of English Theorists and Justified by the Law of Nature* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861), 127.

6. Ibid., 78.

7. B. A. Botkin, ed., *Lay My Burden Down* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 15.

> They have souls, and are subjects of salvation. Go into Cincinnati or any city and find an educated negro, who rides in his carriage, and you will see a man who has risen by the powers of his own mind to his exalted state of respectability. The slaves in Washington are more refined than many in high places, and the black boys will take the shine off many of those they brush and wait on.[8]

If we follow the progression of Joseph's Smith's ideas on slavery, we certainly see his direction towards full acceptance of all God's children. Brother Joseph prophesied that "People from every land and from every nation, the polished European, the degraded Hottentot, and the shivering Laplander—persons of every tongue and of every color shall with us worship the Lord of Hosts in his Holy temple."[9] This, of course, didn't happen for a very long time.

Perhaps Gene England is right that the priesthood ban for blacks was "a lesser law." But if so, it was certainly our slavery, not the black man's, which made us unworthy of the greater law. The slavery of prejudice, of permitted hatred, is slavery of the heart and is more damaging than any literal chain. The Israelites—even on the path to their "Promised Land"—built Egyptian gods, never understanding the freedom the true God had for them. They knew no other way. They knew no other God, for they had not walked far enough with Him. They had not left their slavery far enough behind.

Certainly we are capable of similar idolatry, similarly false traditions. We may not understand the freedom God intends for us, a freedom wherein we hold our own educated consciences, never surrendering them to ungodly, culturally myopic customs. In the promised land God offers us, we are liberated to view all men and women in the light of their eternal promise, and as we do, to understand our own light and promise as well. Indeed, the land becomes "promised" because each inhabitant is "promised."

The same year I read Lester Bush's article, I read the book which probably destined me to study literature (after trying five other majors). The book was *The Brothers Karamazov,* focusing especially on "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" in which an inquisitor holds the Savior himself captive, assuring Him that the very people who had just knelt at His feet would—at the slightest gesture from the inquisitor—heap up embers and burn Him to death.[10] He tells Christ, "Thou didst think too highly of

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8. Quoted in Dennis L. Lythgoe, "Negro Slavery and Mormon Doctrine," *Western Humanities Review* 21 (1967): 330.

9. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1978), 4:213.

10. Feodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. Constance Garnett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 135.

men, for they are slaves . . . and who can rule men if not he who holds their conscience . . . in his hands?"[11]

Dostoevsky's indirect observation that we humans are all too willing to surrender our consciences to our leaders—political or ecclesiastical—is not far afield from Brigham Young's:

> I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by Him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way. Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates, or not.[12]

Joseph Smith said something quite similar. He never suggested that Mormon people should cease following prophetic leadership, but that "*depending* on the prophet" [emphasis mine] would result in "darken[ing] in their minds, in consequence of neglecting the duties devolving upon themselves. . . ."[13]

For myself, I will not state either that I believe the priesthood policy was inspired or that it was uninspired. I do know that God never renounced his position as Father of all his children. If the policy was a trial of faith, I wonder if that trial is as much for my generation as for the previous one. Can we of this generation read racist statements of our former prophets or general authorities and forgive them? Can I forgive my seminary teacher? As a temple worker, I have presented women of many races and languages at the veil. I have felt nothing but love for them. Could I help a woman I knew to be a racist and love her as I do these other sisters? Could I stand in a prayer circle with the man who once bore his testimony to me that blacks were inferior? This is my own cross and is perhaps as heavy as the one Gene referred to in the first essay of his I read.

So now it's June 9, 1998, and I'm forty-three. I have been writing and publishing for nearly a decade. I'm certainly not famous, but there are small groups of people who seem to value my work—largely because of Eugene England and his encouragement not only to Mormon writers, but to Mormon readers. I can't fully articulate how it feels to have arrived at

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11. Ibid., 133.
12. Journal of Discourses, 9:150.
13. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church*, 5:19.

this date and this place with Gene two months gone from the BYU English department. The race issue has had particular importance to him, and thus to his students. Gene is not replaceable. But I hope whoever teaches Mormon literature—at any university or college—will have the same convictions he does: that the best Mormon literature—and it must become more multi-cultural—can, with its expansive vision, open our hearts to our brothers and sisters and help us understand and love them better.

And my father in two weeks will leave the BYU department he founded and chaired. This is another time-marker I find hard to pass. I have inherited wonderful things from Dad, whom I automatically associate with his BYU office where his bookshelves are still filled (just as I remember from my childhood) with texts on various languages—some authored by Dad—and books on Mormonism. It is Dad's example and the gift of languages, which I and some of my siblings have received from him, that have made my life as full as it is.

Now, twenty years after the priesthood revelation, as these two very important men in my life retire, I feel myself being thrust from a nest. Perhaps it's no coincidence that I am beginning what is surely the most presumptuous project I have ever done. Let's see if I can fly with this one! I don't anticipate finishing it for at least three years, perhaps five. I am writing a historical novel about black pioneers. Darius Gray, the current president of "Genesis" (a church-sponsored group for black Mormons and their friends), is my very insightful editor. President Gray and I feel very strongly about our work. We want black members to know that there were blacks with us from the very beginning of the church, that they played key roles, and that—despite past policies—they matter in our history and not just as footnotes to "the priesthood ban." We plan to take the novel (or perhaps novel trilogy) through Darius's genealogy, from his ancestor Louis Gray, who was a slave near Independence, Missouri, at the time the Saints were expelled, up through 1992 when Darius attended a meeting in the upper room of the Salt Lake Temple to honor those pioneers who had built it. When at that meeting the congregation was invited to think of those builders, Darius's mind went to Elijah Abel, who had worked on the Kirtland, the Nauvoo, and the Salt Lake temples though he was never allowed temple blessings beyond the washing and anointing he received in Kirtland.

As a fiction writer, guided by Darius Gray's insights, I am free to imagine and fill in the spaces between the historical facts in Elijah Abel's life. Who was this man, who, despite being denied temple blessings, finished his life by filling a third mission for the church? Elijah came home sick from that mission and died two weeks later. Who were Jane Manning James, Green Flake, and Samuel Chambers? Wonderful historians

and sociologists like Ron Coleman, Dennis Lythgoe, Newell Bringhurst, Lester Bush, Armaund Mauss, Henry Wolfinger, and William Hartley have given us vital facts about these people. Through Bringhurst's work, for example, we know not only that Elijah Abel was ordained an elder in 1836 and a seventy shortly thereafter, but that he was called by Joseph Smith to be Nauvoo's first undertaker.[14] We know that he sat at the death bed of Father Smith, who had given him his patriarchal blessing, which stated "thou has been ordained an Elder. . . . Thou shalt be made equal to thy brethren . . . and thy robes glittering."[15] But whereas a historian might be restricted to "just the facts, ma'am," a fiction writer may imagine the stories between the facts.

I have been imagining what it must have been like for Elijah Abel, a descendant of slaves and likely a former slave himself who escaped via the underground railroad,[16] to serve as an undertaker for all the white people of Nauvoo. At first I wondered why a trained carpenter, such as he was, would be called to be an undertaker. When I read about funeral customs of the day, it became obvious: in the first half of the nineteenth century, undertakers were principally coffin makers. Common ads of the day read: "Carpenter/Upholsterer/Undertaker." So this black carpenter was called to deal with his white fellow-Mormons in their most vulnerable moments. There would be no pretensions in his white "customers," no insistence on master/servant protocol. Surely such things would have become ridiculously trivial and meaningless as Elijah guided them through the details of burying a loved one. I quote from the current draft of my novel, as yet untitled:

> So here he was: Elder Elijah Abel, black man, carpenter for a temple of God, former minister of the Mormon gospel, now called by the prophet to carve out coffins from pitch pine because God said.
>
> It was babies first—those that didn't make it out of the womb breathing, and those that caught the whoop before their cheeks got fat. Then it was the old women and old men. Come July, with the steady hum of the mosquitos down the swampland and the pulsing jeers of the cicadas, it was everybody dying.
>
> Elijah didn't have to do the laying out; the midwives did that most often—almost always when it was a woman dead. Sister Sessions was the best. She'd get the body cleaned up even under the fingernails, dress it in good clothes, get coins on the eyelids to keep them shut, tie a cloth around the face

14. Newell G. Bringhurst, "Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks Within Mormonism," in *Neither White nor Black*, eds. Lester E. Bush, Jr., and Armand L. Mauss (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1984), 133.

15. Quoted in Richard Van Wagoner and Steven Walker, *A Book of Mormons* (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1982), 2.

16. Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine," 33.

> to keep the mouth closed, and everything would be set by the time Elijah arrived with his wagon, hauling a coffin so new there'd still be sawdust in the corners. He'd pick the body up, lay it in its box, then—alongside the family men—carry it first to the sitting room (if the family had one) where mourners could weep over the corpse and snip off mementos of hair before it was nailed shut, then to the grove, finally to the grave.
>
> He didn't know most of the people he coffined, so their deaths didn't melt or wreck him. He simply stood back and watched grief settle into the mourners' face lines. Death was the ultimate slavery, that was it. A living, breathing soul became a thing to get boxed up, not even human anymore. And he, Elijah, was supervising the process: measuring the cadaver, cutting the wood, putting the box together with strong nails to withstand the weight of centuries. He was the carpenter measuring out the division point—brothers divided from sisters, husbands from wives, children from parents. He took the money for his pains and theirs, and watched the white folk become one mass of weeping humanity, hardly any distinctions between them: all dressed in black, all teary.

And, though a historian would be restricted, there's nothing which keeps a fiction writer from imagining Elijah Abel in his later travels, happening upon an articulate former slave who is delivering a rousing, abolitionist discourse. Elijah and this man were historical contemporaries in Maryland. As I picture it, Elijah would know the orator as Fred Bailey. But Fred Bailey has received a new name, one disassociated from his master (Bailey) and, hence, from slavery itself. Fred Bailey's name has become Frederick Douglass. Think of what a new name would mean to a slave, whose name often changed according to who owned him!

Jane Manning James may have pondered this. While laundering Joseph Smith's clothes in Nauvoo, she "found Brother Joseph's robes."[17] As she says:

> I looked at them and wondered, I had never seen any before, and I pondered over them and thought about them so earnestly that the spirit made manifest to me that they pertained to the new name that is given the saints that the world knows not of.[18]

To the descendant of slaves, a "new name" would have great significance. Jane must have longed for a "new name" and to wear "robes" like Brother Joseph's. But these were blessings she would not receive in her lifetime.

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17. Quoted in Henry Wolfinger, "A Test of Faith: Jane Elizabeth James and the Origins of the Utah Black Community," *Social Accommodation in Utah*, ed. Clark S. Knowlton, American West Occasional Papers (Salt Lake City, Utah: 1975), 153.

18. Ibid., 154.

Jane's relentless pleas to church authorities for her temple blessings are heart-wrenching. Her first letter to John Taylor, after reminding him that this is the fullness of times where all nations are to be blessed, asks, "Is there no blessing for me?"[19] The query comes as part of a run-on sentence; the letter has many spelling and punctuation errors and was probably not written by Jane herself, but dictated, inasmuch as Jane could not write and often signed her name with an "X."[20] Yet there sits that poignant question, full of biblical resonance, echoing Esau's cry to his father on learning that his brother has apparently cheated him of his father's blessing: "He took away my birthright, and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. . . . Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" (Gen. 27:36). As the daughter of a slave, Jane had indeed had her birthright taken away. Would the church she loved and had sacrificed for (she came across the plains in one of the first pioneer companies) now withhold its full blessings as well?

There is much, much for a fiction writer to play with here. And I'm very aware that among the many men and women who have influenced and blessed me so that I can play in this way, two important ones are at a departure point. Surely I would not have become as aware of racial issues, as open to other cultures and peoples as I am, had I not been raised by a man who made it his life's work to find ways to open himself up to, and to communicate with, people unlike himself—often illiterate, usually brown, almost always very poor.

And I have been blessed to be Gene England's student, friend, and colleague. My English professor husband, Bruce, introduced me to him shortly after our marriage, telling me, "You're going to just love this man! He writes the most wonderful essays!" At the time, I wasn't aware that it was Gene's essay I had read at age seventeen in my search for answers to this very difficult priesthood problem.

My husband was right. I love Gene England and cherish the influence he has had on my life from long before I met him.

I had the honor of being the last visiting writer in the last BYU English class Gene taught—Mormon literature, of course. I finished my presentation with the scripture I came to love twenty years ago in Mexico, and which illiterate Indian women helped me understand:

> And awake and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayst be no more confounded, that the covenants of the eternal father, which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled (Moro. 10:31).

19. Ibid., 148.
20. Ibid., 127.

Afterwards, there was a line of students wanting to know where I had found that scripture. I was surprised. Didn't everybody know that one? Why, it was a concluding scripture of the whole Book of Mormon!

And Moroni couldn't have concluded the book better. It's a good way to conclude an essay, too.

"Awake and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem!" Leave worldly accumulations, the dust that settles through inertia and death, the meaningless—or even wicked—traditions that take up heartspace and hoard sunbeams. Leave behind whatever sullies the shine of a holy anointment.

"Yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion." Go to the temple. Dress yourself in power and love to receive a blessing in one hand and to give a blessing with another until you are endowed with power such that you can claim your unimaginably full inheritance with both your hands and all your soul. Learn the eternal promises for you and for all men and women: resurrection, continuation, progress. Forever.

"And strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever." To other skin colors. To other nations. To Godhood. Let no mortal line separate you from what God would have you be. Create no border in your own life which would keep your heart from receiving others. Present yourself at the border—or we may say the veil—of another land or people. Extend a hand of faith and fellowship, believing in the goodness, even the godliness, of the hand that takes yours. Magnify your vision of your fellow beings, and shrink not—not from them, nor from your own possibilities. There is no one here who cannot bless you with further light and knowledge.

"That thou mayest no more be confounded." Be free from the slavery of mind and heart. Retain your name and all the good it signifies, but receive a new name as well which has nothing to do with any slavery hidden in your family traditions or perceptions. Be free from the idols of Egypt where you were in bondage. Be free, and thank God almighty that you are free at last.

That was how I answered the news of June 9, 1978, and that is how I answer it again twenty years later: "Thank you, God."

Temple II

Michael R. Collings

There is a certain look—across a tatted lace—
A certain look—a light—that passes, silent,
Between tall mirrors centered face to face—
That without words initiates consent—

There is a gleam that touches soul to soul,
Entwines twin eyebeams—penetrates the heart
of Each—of two creates a single Whole,
Eternal, greater than its mortal parts—

There is a whispered word—a phrase—that binds
More intricate than lace—more bright
Than inborn hopes to swell through singled minds—
Consenting to their place on Heaven's height—

There is a look—a gleam—a whispered word
That signifies consent before the Lord.

The Mark of the Curse: Lingering Racism in Mormon Doctrine?

By Keith E. Norman

THE TEACHER OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS for 15-year-olds was fairly new to our ward, so he did not anticipate the danger when he brought up the topic of the Priesthood recently. For lurking within that collection of tranquil and lethargic minds was a young proto-feminist, ready to pounce on his first unwitting profession of patriarchy. The budding liberal was, in fact, my daughter. I am not sure how she became such a radical thinker in the bosom of our conventional Mormon family. My wife was a stay-at-home mother until the kids were all in school, has served as a Relief Society president, and has never burned her bra. For my part, none of the women in my life has ever accused me of being the sensitive, nurturing type. I have consistently resisted becoming a house-husband, even for some brief periods of unemployment. (Okay, I did do the shopping at times, but the kids *hate* it when I buy the food). What's more, I drive a pickup truck.

So how did my daughter—I'll call her "Katy"—come to this heretical state of mind? It seems to me that she has always been tainted with feminist doubts. I can only conclude that it is either a congenital defect or something she picked up in the pre-existence. For as long as I can remember, she has been miffed whenever a Boy Scout camp-out or fathers and sons outing was announced. She could not fathom what was so special about boys that only they could pass the sacrament. She noticed that in almost any class—church or school—more attention would be given to, and more slack cut for, the boys than for the girls. And why were church leaders so insistent that she sacrifice her career aspirations to an early and preferably fertile marriage? She has no intention of giving up her name to some guy just because they might be getting married. And why shouldn't she pray to Heavenly Mother as well as Heavenly Father? For a

while, she did. Maybe she still does, although not openly. Ironically, she is the only one of my children who has ever stood up to bear her testimony in Fast Meeting. I had thought she had weathered the worst of the crisis and was learning to endure, at least, the gender inequality so often flaunted in church.

But on that Sunday, her consciousness rose to a new field of injustice. By the end of the class, she was in tears, feeling she had been ambushed and beaten up. It was not the subordination of women that upset Katy in this discussion. This she knew about and could deal with after her fashion. No, when the unsuspecting teacher was telling them about how all worthy male members could now receive the Priesthood, his focus was on race, not gender. Solemnly he related how, against all expectation, the Lord in 1978 had revealed to the prophet Spencer W. Kimball that black males should no longer be denied ordination on account of their race. Now, I don't believe that this is the first time my daughter had ever heard of this change, but it may be the first time it really struck her. Why was the Priesthood *ever* withheld from anyone because of race, she wondered out loud. How could the true church practice such blatant, racial prejudice?

The teacher, however, was prepared. He explained how the Priesthood had often been restricted to certain groups of people, including at various times only the prophets, Hebrews, Jews, or Levites. During the Dark Ages of the Apostasy, it had been removed altogether from the earth. Of course, it had *never* been available to the unworthy or to women. Katy ignored the foot in his mouth. Yes, but, she insisted, that was back then when the Israelites were the exclusive chosen people. But wasn't the Gospel of Jesus Christ supposed to go out to all nations, and especially when it was restored? Why should we single out blacks to discriminate against?

Ah! the teacher replied, there are good reasons for that, which he proceeded to explain at length. Perhaps he thought of this as a "teaching moment." He reminded them of the war in heaven in the pre-existence, how we all chose up sides, and how some spirits, even though they had voted for Christ's plan against Lucifer, were less valiant in the cosmic struggle than others. Our circumstances and conditions of mortality, he continued, are dependent on our actions and our stage of progression in the pre-existence. This was obviously only just and right. Therefore, we know that those of us in the Lord's church today, whether by birth or by being in a position to hear and willing to accept the missionaries, were those who were valiant and had reached a higher state of progression in the pre-existence. Those who were least valiant in the pre-existence and, presumably, were at the bottom of the class, eternal progression-wise, were not ready to receive the Priesthood, and thus the Lord in his mercy had

decreed they must wait until he declared they were ready, which he did in 1978. How blessed we are to have a living prophet to receive that revelation!

Katy sat stunned, hardly able to process this information. If what she understood her teacher was saying was correct, Mormons officially believed that blacks were inferior to every other race, and especially to Mormons. Her religion was racist. Could this really be true? In desperation she glanced around at her classmates. Surely they would share her shock. To her dismay, they were all smiling and nodding in agreement, apparently well versed in the logic and divine justice of this earthly hierarchy. "But . . . but, how do we *know* this about blacks? And, I mean," she stumbled, "how did we decide whose skin is really black? And how dark did they have to be?"

"Ah, good question," he replied. "Actually, it's based on lineage, descent from Cain. You've heard of the curse of Cain? When Cain killed his brother Abel, the Lord cursed him and his posterity as to the Priesthood. The black skin is really only the mark of the curse. Here, let me read about this to you from *Mormon Doctrine.*"

Mormon Doctrine? my daughter wondered. This stuff is in the official book of Mormon doctrine?

The teacher turned to the entry on "Cain" and read as follows:

> As a result of his rebellion, Cain was cursed with a dark skin; he became the father of the Negroes, and those spirits who are not worthy to receive the priesthood are born through his lineage.[1]

There was a cross reference to "Negroes," which the teacher duly looked up:

> In the pre-existent eternity various degrees of valiance and devotion to the truth were exhibited by different groups. . . . Those who were less valiant in the pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the *Negroes.* . . . Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty (Abr. 1:20-27). . . .
>
> The present status of the Negro rests purely and simply on the foundation of the pre-existence. Along with all races and peoples he is receiving here what he merits as a result of the long pre-mortal probation in the presence of the Lord. . . .
>
> The Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are [*sic*] concerned, particularly the priesthood and the temple blessings that flow therefrom, but this inequality is not of man's origin. It is the Lord's doing. . . .[2]

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1. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine,* 2nd edition (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 109.

2. Ibid., 526-7.

"So, you see," the teacher smiled, "when you understand the plan of progression, it is obvious that the church is not really racist, despite what outsiders may say. Is that clear to everyone now?"

Alas, the Norman girl's hand was up again. "But you just read, 'the Negroes are not equal to other races.' How is that not racism?"

"As Brother McConkie explains," the long-suffering teacher replied, "this is not man's doing . . ."

"Yeah," Katy interrupted, "he blames it on God. Who *is* this McConkie guy, anyway?"

The teacher described the late apostle, what an authority he was on the scriptures, and how inspiring his talks and books were. People all over the church benefitted from *Mormon Doctrine*, which was an inspired and invaluable reference tool. He related how the first edition had contained some errors, but, at the request of the First Presidency, had been modified for subsequent editions. His was a second edition copy, he pointed out, so it could be relied upon. Anything objectionable had been removed. This was, in fact, Mormon doctrine.

Unfortunately, my daughter was still having trouble with the association of skin color and cursing by the Lord. However, both the teacher and other class members cited passages from the Book of Mormon, which explicitly state that the Lord cursed the Lamanites with a dark skin. For example:

> And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity . . . wherefore, 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.[3]

Further:

> And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression and their rebellion. . . .
>
> And this was done that their seed might be distinguished from the seed of their brethren, that thereby the Lord God might preserve his people, that they might not mix and believe in incorrect traditions which would prove their destruction.
>
> And it came to pass that whosoever did mingle his seed with that of the Lamanites did bring the same curse upon his seed.[4]

"I hope you caught that reason for the curse of a dark skin," the

3. 2 Nephi 5:21.
4. Alma 3:6, 8-9.

teacher noted. "It was to prevent intermarriage between the races, which would likely result in the apostasy of the Nephites. Now listen to this: the curse could be removed." He read:

> And it came to pass that those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites; And their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites;[5]

"But couldn't that just be the prejudice of the Nephites who were writing about their enemies?" Katy objected.

"Oh, no, the Book of Mormon is inspired. The Lord would not have allowed his prophets to make such mistakes in writing scriptures." On this point the class was in firm agreement against my daughter. The equation was clear: dark skin = wickedness and divine cursing; white skin = highly favored of the Lord.

Katy was distraught, unable to hold back her tears. "That just can't be right," she protested. Some of the other girls tried to comfort her. Their advice, in line with that of the teacher, was that she should pray about it, so that her mind could be enlightened and she could understand and accept these truths. But she didn't *want* to accept them. Despite the loving arms and concerned words of her classmates, she felt very alone. She realized that she must be very wicked to be resisting the combined testimonies of the scriptures, the express doctrinal pronouncements of a General Authority, her teacher, and her classmates.

A short while later, as Priesthood opening exercises were breaking up, the long-suffering teacher accosted me in the halls, briefly to explain the problem my daughter was having and suggest that I might want to talk to her about it. I'm afraid he was not expecting the reaction he got from me. Let's just say I did not side with the majority in his class.

In reflecting on this incident, I realize that I have been somewhat naive in my assumptions about where the church is on the issue of race. I had supposed that the 1978 revelation on the Priesthood had not only changed our practice, but had moved us beyond the speculative rationalizations we had been repeating to each other about it. But the apparent fact that every other adolescent in our ward freely espouses those same teachings implies that this theoretical racism is what they are being taught in their homes by my peers, their parents. A couple of years earlier, one of the adults I home taught expressed dismay over this very situation: that despite the fact that we would now ordain blacks, the previous policy, combined with our doctrine of the pre-existence, still means we are racist. Just in the past few weeks I had a similar discussion with a

5. 3 Nephi 2:14-15; cf. 1 Nephi 12:23; 2 Nephi 30:6; Jacob 3:8; Mormon 5:15.

fairly well-read adult ward member. She had never heard of any doctrinal correction or re-interpretation on the reason the priesthood had been withheld from blacks.

I do not think my ward is atypical or radically right wing, at least on the Mormon spectrum, a suspicion bolstered by my son, who is currently serving a mission in the bosom of the church—Salt Lake City South. There, he has run into a number of both members and missionaries who share the doctrinal assumptions and understanding my daughter encountered here in the wilds of Ohio. In fact, Jessie Embry cites several black members who reported being taught the Cain/pre-existence rationales even after the church began to ordain blacks.[6] And a web page entitled "Blacks and the Priesthood" maintained on the internet by an amateur Mormon scholar uses selective quotes from the 19th century to try to establish the priesthood ban's origin in revelation to Joseph Smith.[7] I suspect most members assume that the 1978 revelation is similar to the Manifesto: it is a change in practice only, and does not affect the underlying doctrine. So just as we apparently still believe in plural marriage in heaven, we seem bound to accept the ultimate inferiority of the black race. The church's silence on this issue loudly supports the assumption that the change has been in practice only, not theory.

I believe that, for historical, doctrinal, moral, and practical reasons, the church needs to officially and emphatically repudiate the pre-1978 rationalizations for withholding priesthood ordination from blacks. However, the church recently declined to do just that in response to rumors that we would observe the 20th anniversary of the change by disavowing previous racist explanations of the priesthood ban. The 1978 official declaration, according to President Hinckley, "continues to speak for itself." Unfortunately, the news story did not include the declaration; rather, the headline included the summary, "racial statements part of doctrine."[8] I suppose it is unrealistic to expect a PR-wary bureaucracy to publicly proclaim our past ignorance, but the consequences of not doing so may hurt us more in the long run. Without such a disavowal, not only will the press continue to assume the worst, but our own ill-considered doctrinal speculation will continue to infect our faith with racial prejudice. To overcome this block, we need to re-establish and clarify the principle of *progressive* revelation, as opposed to the notion of prophetic infallibility,

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6. Jessie L. Embry, *Black Saints in a White Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 75-76.

7. See www.mormonlinks.com. Cf. Alan Cherry and Jessie L. Embry on "Blacks" in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 1, which soft-pedals the issue while implying that any ordination of blacks in the 1830's was an aberration. See below, pp. 11-13.

8. "Mormon teachings won't be changed," by Mike Carter, Associated Press, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 19, 1998.

which seems to have become so widely assumed if not precisely articulated. It is time that, at least individually, if not yet as a Church, we repent in our minds and in our hearts of esteeming our brothers and sisters less than ourselves. Otherwise, we can scarcely claim to be disciples of Christ, much less saints.

Our culture places little value on historical studies or understanding. For too many of us, our attitude toward the past is summed up by the dismissive phrase, "You're history!" History is about dead or irrelevant people; history is dead. Except for a few genealogists and Mormon history buffs, most of us in the church are blissfully ignorant of our past outside the anecdotes and panegyrics we encounter in correlated lessons. We have little or no sense of the development of Mormon doctrine and practice or its relationship to the environment in which it grew. Change is controversial and potentially disturbing, particularly when it concerns religious beliefs. As this applies to the racial restrictions on the priesthood, all but a few courageous dissidents assumed that this was taught by Joseph Smith as it was revealed to him. Apparently, most of us still believe that. Fortunately, history decidedly refutes that version.

I remember when I first came home from my mission—it was the late '60s in the full flower of the civil rights ferment—a former companion was telling me about a class he was taking at the Institute at the University of Utah. Lowell Bennion was explaining to them how the ban on priesthood ordination of blacks originated in political and social difficulties faced by the early Mormons, and was not a revealed principle. I was aghast at such impudence and rebuked my wavering friend accordingly. He was obviously on the road to apostasy to entertain such thoughts. And who was this Lowell Bennion character, anyway? I was thankful I would soon be returning to BYU where such heresies were not countenanced.

A few years later Lester Bush's article came out in *Dialogue* laying out the historical evidence point by point with ample documentation.[9] By now I was in graduate school back east, besieged by activist fellow students, and had moved to a more open-minded or, at least, wishy-washy position. Bush documented Joseph Smith's sanction of the ordination in March, 1836, of Elijah Abel, a free black, to the office of Elder and later in the same year to Seventy. Abel continued to exercise his priesthood even after the church stopped ordaining other blacks.[10] Bush demonstrated that the church's pull-back from extending full fellowship to blacks origi-

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9. Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 11-68.

10. Ibid., 11. See esp. Newell G. Bringhurst, "Elijah Abel and the Changing Status of Blacks within Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1979): 23-36.

nated as an attempt to defuse the charges of abolitionist sentiment against the Mormons in Missouri by their slave-holding neighbors during the volatile period following the Missouri Compromise of 1820.[11]

There was no worse charge against someone in that part of antebellum America than that of abolitionism. Mark Twain portrays this ethos in the agonizing guilt of Huck Finn over his failure to turn in his raft-mate Jim, who was attempting to escape from slavery. But when Jim is betrayed by someone else, Huck has to face what he is doing. Realizing he is incapable even of praying because of his sinful compliance in a slave's escape, Huck gives in to his conscience and writes a note to Jim's rightful owner, revealing his whereabouts.

> I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking—thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell.[12]

Unfortunately for Huck's peace of mind, he kept on thinking. After recalling all the good times and troubles they had shared and Jim's gratitude for saving him from capture, he reconsidered the piece of paper he had signed.

> It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:
>
> "All right, then, I'll go to hell"—and tore it up.
>
> It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head, and said I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again, and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.[13]

Raised in that culture, Huck could not justify abetting Jim's escape from slavery; he knew he was a moral degenerate and a coward for doing so.

To demonstrate that the Mormons were not abolitionist troublemakers and, thus, that they were being unjustly persecuted or threatened,

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11. Ibid, 11-22. See also Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: 1979), 48-49, 322.

12. Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 316-317.

13. Ibid., 317-8. Cf. Oliver Cowdery's estimation of schemes of emancipation as "folly . . . destructive . . . [and] devilish" in Bush, "Negro Doctrine," 15.

William W. Phelps, the editor of the local Mormon newspaper, declared in 1833 that blacks would not be admitted into the Church, not even free blacks.[14] Later, Joseph Smith himself published the objections to abolitionism, alluding to the biblical curse pronounced on the presumed ancestor of the Negro race: "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."[15] In his article Joseph specified that these were "the views and sentiments I believe, as an individual";[16] he did not claim to be speaking as a prophet. His assumptions about blacks carrying a divine curse were common coin in nineteenth-century America and, in fact, extend hundreds of years back in Christian tradition. Only secondarily was the curse on blacks linked to Cain in an interpolation also picked up by Mormons, tracing the lineage of Canaan back to the first murderer through the wife of Ham, one of Noah's three sons who was also the father of Canaan. This latter point is important because, whereas the curse on Cain was ambiguous in the biblical text, that on his supposed descendent Canaan, recorded in Genesis 9:25 (just cited), was specifically understood to doom his posterity to slavery. Defenders of that view could, therefore, declare the enslavement of blacks to be God's will and decree.

In this context, it is striking that during all of this discussion, there was no suggestion that the curse pertained to the priesthood. Many years later Zebedee Coltrin claimed that the prophet had instructed him as early as 1834 not to ordain Negroes as he was preaching to them in the south. But since Coltrin is the same man who ordained Elijah Abel to be a Seventy two years later, this proscription, if genuine, cannot have been generally applicable to the race. It was an expedient to reassure slave owners suspicious of Mormon motives in proselytizing in their midst.[17] In fact, persons of every color were officially invited to worship in the Kirtland Temple in 1836, and later in the Nauvoo Temple.[18]

In fact, by the time the church had established itself in Nauvoo, there was no more rhetoric in support of slavery by Joseph Smith or the Mormon press. In 1844 the prophet boasted that there were no slaves in Nauvoo and included in his short-lived presidential campaign a plan for emancipation which was vigorously disseminated by missionaries throughout the country.[19] Bush concludes his review of this era with the statement that:

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14. *Evening and Morning Star,* "Extra" [1833], quoted in Bush, "Negro Doctrine," 12.

15. Genesis 9:25. See *Messenger and Advocate,* 2 (April 1836), cited by Bush, "Negroe Doctrine," 14.

16. Bush, "Negro Doctrine," 50n21.

17. Ibid., 17. Coltrin made his statement in 1879. See ibid., 59n113.

18. Ibid., 17-18.

19. Ibid., 19-20.

> There is no contemporary evidence that the Prophet limited priesthood eligibility because of race or biblical lineage; on the contrary, . . . he allowed a black to be ordained an elder, and later a seventy, in the Melchizedek priesthood.[20]

Although Joseph Smith can be described as a progressive in the area of race relations,[21] his survivors were not so liberal. Brigham Young revived the idea that the Hamitic curse justified Negro slavery, and the 1860 census listed Utah as the only western territory with slaves.[22] President Young stated privately in 1849 that "the Lord had cursed Cain's seed with blackness and prohibited them from the Priesthood," and published the prohibition in the *Deseret News* in 1852.[23] In that same year, in an address to the Territorial legislature, he declared, "any man having one drop of the seed of [Cain] . . . in him cannot hold the Priesthood, and if no other Prophet ever spake it before I will say it now. . . ."[24] It seems clear from the historical record that it was indeed Brigham Young, in contrast to Joseph Smith, who decreed that blacks were to be categorically excluded from ordination to the priesthood. This was based on the popular view of biblical genealogy, to which Young interpolated his idea that Cain and his posterity were being punished for depriving his brother Abel of the possibility of having *any* descendants.

This punishment of the sons for the sins of the fathers was clearly at odds with the Mormon rejection of original sin on the principle that men should be punished only for their own sins and not for another's transgression. Speculation about a connection of racial restrictions to worthiness in the pre-existence began as early as 1844 with Orson Hyde and was elaborated upon by Orson Pratt in 1853. Initially this was in reference to slavery, not the priesthood.[25] The later interpretation came about toward the end of the 19th century by various church authorities, notably George Q. Cannon and B. H. Roberts. Roberts was also apparently the first to cite the Book of Abraham from the Pearl of Great Price:

> Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first pa-

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20. Ibid., 21-22.

21. In contrast to the general, low opinion of the innate capacity of blacks, the prophet attributed their failings to their enslaved condition. But like most of those in his age who were similarly enlightened, he advocated strict racial segregation at such time as they might be liberated. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [hereafter *TPJS*], ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 269-70.

22. Bush, "Negro Doctrine," 25.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 26; cf. 31.

25. Ibid., 27.

> triarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of the Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry.[26]

This passage is confusing in several ways, not just syntactically. In the initial verse Pharaoh, although righteous, was cursed by Noah "as pertaining to the Priesthood," but in the following verse the priesthood restriction is due to his lineage. Even more striking, there is no mention of race or color here. Bush details a number of other problems in making this the scriptural linchpin of the church's policy. But by the time this citation came into vogue around the turn of the century, the belief that blacks were descended from Cain via the wife of Ham, Noah's son, had become well established and was assumed to be the background for this scriptural passage.[27]

Additional discussion ensued among church leaders over how much "Negro blood" a person had to have to be considered tainted and how this was to be determined. Eventually the brethren reverted to the opinion of Brigham Young and ruled that "no one known to have in his veins negro blood (it matters not how remote a degree) can either have the priesthood in any degree or the blessings of the Temple of God; no matter how otherwise worthy he may be."[28]

As President Hinckley pointed out to Mike Wallace, all that is in the past. But it is our past, and it is not a pretty sight. Can anyone seriously deny that we as a church and as a people, however innocent our intentions, have been racist? The real question is: where do we go from here? For it is past time to move on. If we had been listening carefully to our leaders, not to mention the Spirit, we would have long since done so.

Already in 1969, the First Presidency issued a statement that the priesthood restriction concerning blacks was "for reasons which we believe are known to God, but which He has not made fully known to men."[29] In 1978, a few weeks before President Kimball announced the change, a church spokesman declared to the press that "[a]ny reason

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26. Abraham 1:26-27.

27. Bush, "Negro Doctrine," 35. Note that Abraham 1:23-27 does *not* establish, as claimed by the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism's* entry on "Blacks," that "the descendants of Cain were to be denied the Priesthood of God." See note 7 above.

28. First Presidency pronouncement, cited in Bush, "Negro Doctrine," 38.

29. Quoted by Embry, "Black Saints," 70. There are several indications that President McKay considered the priesthood ban to be policy, not doctrine, but was unable or unwilling to push his views onto his colleagues in church councils. See Armand Mauss, "The Fading of Pharaoh's Curse," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 11, 32.

given . . . [for priesthood denial] . . . except that it comes from God, is supposition, not doctrine."[30]

However, the most explicit statement to come from a church leader about the error of our past doctrinal speculations was from Bruce R. McConkie himself. Two months after the announcement of President Kimball that priesthood ordination would henceforth be "without regard for race or color," Elder McConkie spoke to a gathering of Seminary and Institute teachers as follows:

> There are statements in our literature by the early brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things. . . . All I can say to that is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world . . . We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept. We have now had added a new flood of intelligence and light on this particular subject, and it erases all the darkness, and all the views and all the thoughts of the past. They don't matter any more. It doesn't make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before. . . . It is a new day and a new arrangement, and the Lord has now given the revelation that sheds light out into the world on this subject. As to any slivers of light or any particles of darkness of the past, we forget about them.[31]

When Brother McConkie admonished us to *forget everything* that he or any other authority has said on the subject contrary to the new revelation, I think he meant "everything": an unequivocal repudiation of the long history of speculations on race, lineage and the pre-existence. Our new knowledge erases "all the views and all the thoughts of the past."

Unfortunately, this statement has not been widely or officially publicized. Nor did Elder McConkie bother to revise his printed views on "Negroes" in order to correct his own admitted errors on the subject when *Mormon Doctrine* was reprinted in 1979. The book is commonly and disparagingly referred to as "McConkie Doctrine," but it remains oft-cited and popularly authoritative, as my daughter recently discovered. His retraction seems to have died with him. And it is very difficult to document any other statements supporting a non-racist doctrinal revision. I recall reading or hearing early on that President Kimball had counseled members in a stake conference that we should stop speculating about the pre-existent status or earthly curse on blacks, since we now

30. Cited by Mauss, "Fading Curse," 27.
31. Quoted in ibid., 34-35.

knew that they were *only* speculations and that they were in error. But I have been unable to track this down.[32]

The church's reticence to speak out in a way that would expose past error is understandable, given our claim to be guided by the Lord through revelation to a living prophet. But we ask too much of this doctrine. We want to be more Catholic than the Papists. Consider the irony: Roman Catholic doctrine proclaims the pope to be infallible, but most Catholics don't really believe it; whereas Mormon doctrine rejects the idea of infallible leaders, but we Mormons refuse to accept that. The Lord's Anointed, we insist, will never lead us astray; and by this we seem to mean that there is no room for learning through their mistakes or expressing flawed personal opinions. To be fair, the Catholics have the disadvantage of a longer history to dampen their zeal regarding their leaders' virtues. With our fresher perspective, we can view our entire history as an unwavering march toward fulfillment and perfection.

Unfortunately, this folk belief does not stand up to scrutiny. The so-called "New Mormon History" has shown our historical progress to have been a complex weaving and tacking, trial and error, that the sanitized official histories obscure. Some examples: the failure of the Missouri prophecies; the devious and free-wheeling beginnings of plural marriage, including pre-Manifesto prophecies that we would never relinquish it, and equally devious post-Manifesto attempts to perpetuate polygamy; the Adam-God doctrine; and, more recently, the largely failed Indian Placement Program and the general disappointment in the Lamanite missions in spite of Book of Mormon prophecies to the contrary.[33]

Joseph Smith had to remind his followers that "a prophet was only a prophet when he was acting as such";[34] he was obviously not always sure when that was until after the fact. Brigham Young warned that one of his greatest fears was that the Saints would "settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders" without thinking or praying for their own confirmation and understanding.[35] Despite our fervent desire for infallible leaders, the Lord has given us human ones, who, although they are undeniably good men and occasionally transcend the usual limitations of the veil over mortality, mostly struggle to cope with ambiguity along with the rest of us. They grow up with cultural biases, and their thinking is structured by

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32. But see his condemnation of white superiority in "The Evil of Intolerance," *Improvement Era* (1954), 423.

33. See, e.g., Tona J. Hangen, "A Place to Call Home: Studying the Indian Placement Program," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 71-96.

34. *Documentary History of the Church* 5:215-216. See also *Joseph Smith: Selected Sermons and Writings*, ed. Robert L. Millet (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 22, 24; and *TPJS*, 315.

35. *Journal of Discourses* 9: 150.

human language. When God speaks to them, he must do so "in their weakness, after the manner of their language," as the Doctrine & Covenants tells us.[36] We should not be surprised that Joseph Smith, although himself a progressive on race, did not question the American cultural mythology about the descent of Negroes from Cain, or that Brigham Young amplified the curse they supposedly inherited from skin color to exclusion from the priesthood, or that subsequent Mormon leaders elaborated on these themes. But neither should we attribute such bias to God, who has repeatedly insisted on the equality and eternal value of every person in his sight. The truth was there before us; we did not have ears to hear.

Although there are hints of universalism in the Old Testament, for the most part the focus is on Israel as the chosen race. Jesus combated such a birthright mind set in the parable of the Good Samaritan, as well as in his repudiation of the Jewish attitude that they were righteous by virtue of being descended from Abraham.[37] But elsewhere Jesus indicated that his mission was limited to the House of Israel,[38] and it was not until after his death that Christianity moved decisively beyond racial exclusivism.

The realization that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" came as a revelation to Peter, literally and figuratively.[39] Even after that experience, Peter struggled to implement the incorporation of Gentiles into the body of Christ. The most radical exponent of universalism, and at times an adversary of Peter on that score, was Paul, who stated emphatically that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."[40] The Gospel obliterates all such temporal distinctions.

Ironically, it is the Book of Mormon which applies this principle to skin color, already implicit in Paul's statement. The Lord, declares Nephi,

> . . . inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.[41]

One could scarcely imagine a more explicit repudiation of racism. But

36. D&C 1:24.
37. Luke 10:25-37; John 10:33-59; Matthew 3:9 (=Luke 3:8).
38. Luke 10:5-6; 15:22-28.
39. Acts 10:34-35; cf. 15:5-11.
40. Galatians 3:28; Romans 10:12. For the dispute with Peter, see Galatians 2, esp. vs. 11-14.
41. 2 Nephi 26:33.

what about all the other passages in the Nephite scripture, which seem so clearly condemnatory with regard to dark-skinned people. Were the Book of Mormon writers racist, as my daughter suggested? There is plenty of evidence to support the charge, and if it is true, they share this sin with the vast majority of the human race. Perhaps we ought to forgive them for it and move on.

But is it possible that we are reading our own racism into the Book of Mormon text? In 1981, the First Presidency changed 1 Nephi 30:6, which had read, "and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people," so that it now reads "*pure* and delightsome people." This is in accordance with a correction made for the 2nd edition of the Book of Mormon in 1840, but the change did not make it into the third and subsequent editions. Douglas Campbell recently analyzed this change and the usage of words implying skin color such as "black," dark," and "white" in the Book of Mormon text. He notes that Lamanite skin is no more black than it is red, as our culture has categorized Native Americans, nor is Caucasian skin actually "white," at least not until it is time to call the undertaker. Campbell concludes that the Nephites used the color white and white skin as a metaphor for purity and righteousness, and black or dark skin as metaphors for depravity. He cites particularly Mormon 9:6: "ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb."[42] This symbolism should not be hard for us to grasp, with our baptismal and temple clothes, not to mention the white and black hats for those of us who remember cowboy movies. I believe that when our hearts are purified of racism, we will read the Book of Mormon with non-racist eyes and hearts, despite any remnants of racism that may remain in the text. I am not convinced that Campbell succeeds entirely in exonerating the Nephite prophets, but the 1978 revelation to President Kimball reaffirms that God is not a racist. Any indications to the contrary, whether in scripture or from the pulpit, are, in Book of Mormon terminology, "the mistakes of men."[43] Any group which proclaims itself to be a chosen people, set apart and favored of the Lord, faces the temptation to look upon those outside the group as less valued or worthy, and therefore deserving of whatever lower status or ill fortune they are called upon to endure. The rationale for denying blacks the priesthood, particularly with regard to the pre-existence, is a classic example of this tendency. I once had a small taste of what this might be like for them. A few years ago I read a paper at a Sunstone Symposium about the need for some changes in the temple

42. Douglas Campbell, "'White' or 'Pure': Five Vignettes," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 119-135.

43. Title page and Mormon 8:12, 17.

ceremony.[44] I had few illusions about the obscurity and futility of my presentation. Imagine my surprise when I learned that those very changes, along with some others, were being implemented that same weekend. (Naturally, I took this as a confirmation of the inspiration of the Brethren). Shortly thereafter, I, along with several others, was contacted by the national media for comments regarding the changes. I was quoted favorably with respect to what the church had done, as were the others. Eventually, all of us were called in by local authorities for varying degrees of reprimand or discipline. In my case, my bishop, who had read my Sunstone paper before I delivered it, and found nothing objectionable, now informed me that my temple privileges would be revoked for a year, but could be restored after that time if I repented. When I asked him what I needed to repent of, he said he didn't know, but that he would ask the stake president. When he did, he was told only that "the decision has been made; there will be no discussion." I was left to conjecture about what I had done wrong and what repentance was needed.[45]

Now imagine you are a black person converted to the LDS church prior to 1978. You soon learn that the priesthood is absolutely necessary to attain the highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom, for which every Latter-day Saint should strive. Then you are told that your skin color indicates that you were born into a lineage which cannot hold the priesthood or receive temple endowments or eternal marriage because of something you either did or failed to do in the pre-existence. Of course, because of the veil you cannot remember in what way you sinned or neglected your duty, nor can anyone else, and there is no revelation to enlighten you on your past failing. The Atonement, which otherwise removes all guilt from every child born into this world up to the age of accountability,[46] somehow does not fully apply to you. You are anxious to grow and progress, willing to forsake all your sins, but it is impossible for you to repent since you do not even know of what to repent. You are stuck with the consequences indefinitely, and have only the vague prospect that in the Millennium or the next life, after everyone else has had the chance, you might get yours.

Amazingly, a few of those souls endured the worst of that era and remained with us. Thankfully, they did not have to endure to the end in that state of Mormon limbo. But the question remains, why did they have to wait so long? If, as history indicates, the Lord did not dictate the policy

44. A version of the paper was published as "A Kinder, Gentler Mormonism: Moving Beyond the Violence of Our Past," *Sunstone* 14, no. 4 (August 1990): 10-14.

45. See Lavina Fielding Anderson, "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 33-34.

46. Moroni 8:11-12.

of withholding the priesthood from blacks, why didn't he inspire the leaders of his church to restore those privileges sooner—say, after the Saints had left Missouri?

I believe the scriptures, mingled again with history, provide the answer. Mormonism subscribes to the principle of continuing and progressive revelation, as stated in the 9th Article of Faith: "We believe all that God . . . does now reveal, and that he will yet reveal many . . . important things. . . ." The Lord unfolds his word to us through his prophets, line upon line and precept upon precept, only as we are able to receive it.[47] Until recent years, we as a people were not prepared to accept full racial equality. As we have noted, the early Saints, even those sympathetic to abolitionism, shared most of the racial prejudices of their age. Elijah Abel stands out precisely because he was an exception, and not just regarding ordination. If Joseph Smith's views were ahead of his time, they are nevertheless anachronistic, judged by today's standards. And Brigham Young's ideas on race, a considerable step back from his predecessor's, were probably much more representative of the Mormon people as a whole. The Saints, concerned with establishing a civilization in the western wilderness and then surviving the anti-polygamist onslaught, were hardly concerned with pioneering racial egalitarianism. In their isolation, improving race relations was not high on anyone's agenda. Even after Little Rock, we Mormons, at least those of us in Utah, were still a pretty conservative and sheltered lot. I must have been about 12 (in the late '50s) before I saw an actual black person pass through my home town of Lehi. My wife Kerry recalls that her grandmother used to panic whenever she saw a "colored" stroll along her Ogden sidewalk. She had been brought up to think of them as sub-human, if not downright evil.

It was not until the civil rights era, which coincided with the worldwide missionary expansion, that Mormons started to think seriously about the "problem" of blacks and the priesthood. There is no indication that any president of the church before Spencer W. Kimball petitioned the Lord on the issue, although certainly President McKay began to move to a more liberal interpretation of the policy.[48] As the Lord and experience have told us, we are not likely to receive if we don't ask.[49] The church was not ready—yet.

My generation, latter-day baby-boomers, grew up with the civil rights movement. For many years we were besieged, but valiantly resisted the logic of critics of the Church's policy on blacks. Finally the protests and boycotts hit BYU sports. *That* got our attention. Our consciousness at last was raised, our consciences pricked. By 1978 we were ready.

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47. Isaiah 28:9-10; 2 Nephi 28:30, 29:9; D&C 98:12, 128:21.
48. See Bush, "Negro Doctrine," 45-48.
49. 2 Nephi 32:4.

Every American of my generation remembers vividly two public events: Kennedy's assasination and Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon. Mormons recall a third with equal clarity. I was in the bursar's office at Duke University, explaining why I needed another extension on a bill, when a news bulletin was read matter-of-factly on the radio in the background: the Mormon church would no longer deny priesthood ordination to blacks. No one else in the office raised an eyebrow, but I was speechless with excitement. I rushed out to the car where Kerry was waiting. "You'll never guess what was just on the news," I said. "Think of the most fantastic thing you can imagine."

"Russia just renounced Communism?" she ventured.

"Don't be ridiculous," I said. "Come on, something at least conceivable."

"The Millennium is here," she joked.

"Close!" I exclaimed. Then she figured it out.

"No!" she said, and she was right. It really *was* supposed to wait for the Second Coming. But then, so was Communism.

I think of the Millennium as a time of universal brother/sisterhood when peace and righteousness will reign, when we will esteem every neighbor as ourselves. It still has not arrived. Nor will it, I am certain, until we repent of our racism and learn to judge others not by the color of their skin, but by their characters. We must get past our myths about ancestry and speculations about pre-earth life to the revealed truths of our spiritual kinship, the worth of souls, and the efficacy of baptism and the Atonement. If there is neither black nor white with the Lord, neither can there be with us. To claim to be his disciples otherwise is hypocrisy; it is *we* who are marked with a curse. Let us turn our hearts to the greater light and knowledge that we have received and forsake the darkness of the past.

Companionship

Derk Koldewyn

We'd had problems, especially lately:
Just last week I snapped at him
and found myself staring into the outraged eyes
of a former national rugby star, his one fist
wrapped around my tie, the other only feet away
shaking with restraint.

He didn't hit me. He did, for half an hour,
sit in the car with the phone. But we reconciled—
fully, tearfully, completely.

But just now, as we finish a dinner appointment
by admiring the family gun collection, George,
a gruff old son of the South, hands him a .22
Like the one Dad's had since he was twelve.
He shoulders it, grins, swivels, and points it at my head—
stopped in mid-turn by Sarah, who'd been out of the room
a moment before. She yanks it away
and jacks six cartridges onto the tan shag carpet.

We watch as they arc, tumbling,
slick steel edges glinting, falling
dull on the floor:

He, sober.
I, amazed.

Caught Gull, Plowing

Derk Koldewyn

At five, standing at the edge of the field,
Dad up there on the great green Deere,
I must have been scared he'd leave.
He made me an offer: Catch me a seagull
and I'll pay you five dollars. Then he roared
off, casting up a deep wake of firm earth.
When the gulls descended, I stalked, stretched
out in the valley of the furrow, inching toward
those nervous birds, intent. They'd flap, or
quickstep off, flustered. But there was one:
Unflappable, or dense, or careless, who knows?
I was there: one small mound of dirt and rock
between us: I held my breath, and lunged:
I came up empty, that gull skittered into the sky.
Dad tells it today for the inevitable laugh:
little boy blinded by greed crawls on his belly,
follows the plow. I tell it to tell you:
I almost had that gull by the throat.

On Meditation

Marion Bishop

> . . . for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength.
> Mosiah 4:27

I USED TO RUN. Fast and furiously, always anxious, always thinking I should be quicker, go farther. I had friends who had run marathons and competed in 10Ks. I envied them and wanted to be like them: longer legs, faster times, thinner limbs. I counted calories and measured miles. I ran, but never liked it, didn't like the way I beat myself up while I was running—"faster! faster!"—nor the fact that I dreaded the next run before the current one was even done.

Then I stopped. One spring morning I decided I couldn't run anymore. My life had gotten too complicated. I was pushing myself to do a lot of things: to excel at a job, to save a failing marriage, to finish a doctoral dissertation. I could no longer also push myself out the door.

I feared I would get fat. I feared my cholesterol level would rise. I feared turning into a slug who never left the sofa or the television. But none of these things happened. I stopped counting calories and fat grams and I lost weight. I stopped trying to push myself to be something I had never wanted to be.

I also began walking. Long walks. Walks that took more time than any of my runs ever had, two-hour loops along the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachussetts, trips around and around Concord's Walden Pond, and hikes through the Blue Hills Reservation on Boston's south shore. Walks that made me slow down. Walks that made me understand myself and my environment in new ways. I soon began seeing things I had never seen before: interesting architecture on the Victorian homes that line the streets in my neighborhood, blossoms clinging to trees in late June, and the Boston skyline from forest preserve trails miles away from the city. I also began feeling things I had not felt before—the way my body moved into and against city streets, and how it felt to brace against the cold in winter or sweat out anxiety in the summer.

Walking also brought me to myself. On winter nights or summer afternoons, I had only myself to walk with. No longer pushing myself to run, I was free to hear what I had to say, and I found that in these walks I often wrote. I composed essays and finished my dissertation. I resolved relationship issues—figured out how to deal with a difficult colleague or why a family member pushed my buttons. I also healed. I found early on that walking did not cure sadness, but that it did help me move through or with it. I walked to mourn my mother-in-law's death and the end of my marriage. Once, when I was longing for Utah, I calculated how many miles away it was and how many days it would take me to walk there if I headed in a straight line west instead of walking around and around Cambridge. Daily walks were then filled with the comfort that each day I was getting a little closer—if only figuratively—to home.

A few months ago I was talking to a friend, another walker, about what it has meant to slow down in this way. "I think the only thing I've done well in the last year is walk," I said to him. "Then you've lived well," he replied. A year and a half ago, I wouldn't have known what he meant.

This spring I went to London. I did not get on the Tube the entire time I was there. To ride the train was to hurry, was to feel in a rush, was to not experience the city on its own terms. It was March: daffodils and tulips were blooming. People were out and about after spending the winter inside. I moved into and around and between them, walking through parks and city streets and common places, stopping to eat sandwiches and drink Diet Coke when I got hungry, and to notice light and trees and buildings when they called to me. One afternoon I ended up in Westminster Abbey and sat with the crowd through the Evensong service. When the choir had finished and the church emptied out, I sat alone in the Abbey and wept. I felt the presence of a million prayers—prayers of people who had walked a million miles and made a million journeys to worship, just like me.

> . . . stand ye in holy places and be not moved . . .
> D&C 87:8

I used to be unable to hold still. Perhaps it is genetic. My father is a constant putterer, an emergency room physician who, when he cannot fix people, must be fixing things: plumbing, automobiles, electrical wiring, cabinets. My mother is no different. After raising a family, she started a business based on the needlework she used to do in her spare time. I have never seen her sit down without a child in her arms or a project in her hands.

In my own way, I followed suit. But whereas my parents' busyness came from a desire to mend or create, mine came from a nagging sense

that to sit still was to have no worth. I went to school and then more school. I worked too many jobs. I made too many dinners for people and over-killed church callings. I was busy, but had no life. I was defined by the things I did and not by the person I was inside. This is because I had no inside. There was no one to come home to when I finished working late at night.

This realization terrified me, but the remedy scared me even more. I knew that the only way to get an inner life was to stop and face the things I was working (literally) to avoid. Soon, I had no choice. I had been running on empty for a long time. I burned out and had to take a year off my graduate program. I still had to work to support myself, but my time off was no longer occupied by studying. For the first time in my life, I began watching television and reading books for fun.

Soon I turned off the television, put down the books, and turned inside. I would come home from teaching my classes and lie down on the couch or get in the tub. I lit candles and put on music. Most of the time I felt guilty, indulgent. But after a while I learned that something magical was happening in those moments, in those ten or thirty minutes, or one or two hours when I held completely still. I found that I could have a conversation with myself, indeed, that I had a fascinating inner world I had never known existed. I had opinions about politics and relationships and God and the church. I had a sense of who I was and of where I wanted my life to go that I had never had before.

After a while, I found that holding still had its own rewards. I had more energy when I got up or got out of the tub. I could write more and teach more effectively after a day spent staring at the ceiling. I started to understand quiet-time, alone, as necessary and important, rather than indulgent. Now, when I feel stressed-out or harried, I ask myself "Marion, what do you need?" Sometimes the answer is food, or a nap, or a conversation with friends. But at least half of the time, the answer is two simple words: hold still.

That is what I was doing in Westminster Abbey this March when the Abbey's chaplain approached me. I was alone on a back bench in a corner staring at stained-glass. I had wrapped my arms around myself and was rocking slightly. "Do you need anything, Miss?" the man whispered in a soft, British accent. He must have seen me crying.

"No. I'm okay," I said. "But thanks for asking. I just needed a minute or two to hold still."

> Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save.
> Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him.
> Cry unto him when ye are in your fields, yea over all your flocks.
> Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening.

> Yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies.
> Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness.
> Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them.
> Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase.
> But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness.
> Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.
>
> Alma 34:18-27

"What have you been praying for?" my father asked me when I was visiting my parents a few months ago. I had had a couple of bad weeks: work on my dissertation was bogged down, and I was weary and wounded from the end of my marriage. I had decided to ask my father for a blessing. He, my mother, and I were sitting around the kitchen table. My parents had listened to me and comforted me when I cried. My father's question came, I think, by way of trying to understand where I was, what I needed from him and from God.

The question struck me as odd. It was also hard for me to answer. "My prayers are more conversations," I heard myself say. "I don't think I'm praying for anything. It's more that I just tell God what I feel and ask Him to help me understand."

My prayers have not always been this way. For years I was at odds with God, simultaneously believing that He loved me, but that I could never please Him. I asked for things, but figured I did not deserve them and so He would not give them. I had enough faith in God to pray, but not enough faith in myself to believe I could get an answer. But juggling graduate school, a career, and a debilitating marriage required that my prayers grow up. I started assuming God wanted to talk to me and that I was worth answering. When I did not believe this—which, at first, was most of the time—I pretended. After I finished praying, I required of myself that I hold still and listen. Often nothing happened. But sometimes, something did.

Soon I started praying all the time, everywhere. At the end of each day, I would come home, curl up on the bed, gaze out the window at the city scape below me, and talk to God. Like settling in for a conversation with a good friend, I looked forward to these visits. I would talk and talk and talk and talk, filling up the empty room and dark night sky with my recollections of the day, my hopes for the future, and my request that God hear what I had to say. Then I would get up in the morning and begin all over again—silently, of course—at the bus stop and while waiting for faculty meetings to begin. I have prayed in stalls at public restrooms, in theaters waiting for films to start, and while sitting in my boss's office

waiting for my annual review.

And I pray about anything. I tell God what delights and thrills me. I tell Him when I'm sad, angry, tired or fed-up. I have even told Him when I'm angry at Him. But I also tell Him when I'm grateful, and I tell Him that I love Him, and that I'm glad I have a friend like Him in my life.

When I teach writing and have my students read each others' papers and offer feedback, I tell them, "It is not your job to tell the people who read your paper how they've misread it. Your job is to understand why they've come to read it in the way they do." Indeed, this says something about how I am trying to understand God in my life: I'm trying to find less fault with myself and the way my life has turned out and to understand better why things sometimes turn out the way they do.

I marked my progress this spring in Westminster Abbey. Standing in that holy place where millions of people have prayed for hundreds of years, I felt my singleness. My solitariness. The stones under my feet had been worn smooth by pilgrim after pilgrim bringing pain and trials and faith before God. I felt the weight of their sorrow at my back and the still coolness of their hope against my face. I looked at stained-glass windows and flying buttressed ceilings above me and at the needlepoint-covered benches at my feet. "Heavenly Father," I said, "thank You for bringing me here. Thank You that I could walk this many miles, feel this many pains, and celebrate so many joys. Thank You for taking care of me and for teaching me how to take care of myself."

"You're welcome," I thought I heard Him say, for I was holding still enough that He had a chance to speak.

Metaphysics over lunch

Linda Sillitoe

English professor and rebel:
Off campus, our sentences race
the tabletop, garbed in wit and color.
By the time food comes, our ideas dance
in lines, weaving outrageous figure,
slapping hand on hand. Nothing can get you
if you don't believe in it, you say
from safety. And I believe you.

Tribal leader and painter:
An apple in the truck, and we stand
at noon before your glassed-in relative,
dead and reconstructed, her history
on a card. Dug-up death pours off her
and I move away; you stand and read.
Filter, you tell me back in the truck;
stare down what you see without eyes.

Lawyer and fairytale expert:
Now you, astride in your own light,
enjoy lunching in the mountains
where it all sings—snow, mist, or sun.
Your talk treks the high trails;
I inspect shadows where, you say,
nothing we acknowledge can overtake us.
Look out, I say as protection.

Afterword
Except when the tab is paid, we don't
consider your long legs bent under
table or steering wheel. We never recall
those priestly hands passing on powers
you may ignore. Is it only my hidden stance
in Bible and constitution that senses
all the hollows, where everything waits and yearns.

Sparrow Hunter

Douglas Thayer

AT FOURTEEN, when I could legally hunt game birds, I became a serious hunter. I hunted ducks and pheasants, but also rabbits, crows, rock chucks, hawks, owls, eagles, coyotes, rodents, and rattlesnakes. I never killed an eagle or a coyote, but I did kill hundreds of creatures in total. The animal I longed to kill when I finally became sixteen and could buy a license was a big mule deer buck. Mule deer, unlike the buffalo and grizzly bear, weren't dangerous, but they were the biggest, most beautiful animal I could kill. Elk were bigger, but you had to enter a drawing to get a permit, and I had no hope of that.

Hunting pleased me greatly and was the thing I liked best to do. It was incredibly intense at times, for it created great anticipation, satisfied my boy's blood lust, made my life adventurous and primitive, and filled me with an early sense of the beautiful. It pleased me to kill birds and animals. I was a hunter; I felt no regret. I did not believe that other creatures had a spiritual life or were necessarily entitled to live. I did not feel their deaths, as I would later, growing increasingly aware of my own mortality.

Tarzan helped get me started as a hunter. Sitting in the dark Uintah, Academy, or Paramount, I did not doubt Tarzan's life in the jungle. Tarzan was real, and I envied him his jungle. In the trees along Provo River I searched for vines to swing on, with lions and leopards waiting for me to fall. I envied Tarzan his loin cloth, his jungle, and his tree house. Mostly though I envied Tarzan his big knife and the animals he got to kill with it. I wanted to wrestle with a lion, a gorilla, or an alligator, and kill it with my big knife.

But Tarzan didn't hunt for food. He never brought back to Jane in the tree house a gazelle or a wildebeest to cook for supper. He always brought her fruit or coconuts, most of them picked by Cheeta, his faithful chimp. Tarzan never got blood on his hands. He stayed clean. Most of the animals he killed he killed to rescue Jane, and later Boy, who were always getting into dangerous situations. I, however, didn't kill to rescue anybody; no animal I hunted was big or dangerous enough to rescue anybody from.

I was a boy just before and during the Second World War, and I grew up in Provo, Utah, a small pioneer Mormon town. I longed for the old west of a hundred years earlier when buffalo existed in vast uncountable numbers and the magnificent, fierce grizzly bear made life dangerous and worthwhile. I regretted deeply not being an Indian, or at least a mountain man.

The first thing I hunted was sparrows with a Daisy BB rifle, my first gun. Before that I hunted with a flipper, a bow, a spear, or rocks, but I was not effective. To hunt I had to have a gun; my story of hunting is a chronology of guns—BB guns, .22s, shotguns, rifles. Part of the joy of hunting was the love of sheath knives, ammunition, and guns. Guns were particularly beautiful.

In the Sixth Ward a boy was known in part by the guns he owned or that his father owned. In grade school boys talked about the guns they owned, or their fathers or uncles owned, hunting being more important than money or girls. My father and mother were divorced. My father lived in an old uptown hotel and owned no guns; he didn't hunt.

My friend David Nelson, with whom I hunted most, was the best BB-gun shot in our whole neighborhood. His Grandmother Luke paid him a penny apiece to shoot flies off her front screen door. Sometimes two or three of us hunted sparrows together. It was not unusual to see boys hunting the trees with their BB guns. A tube of BBs cost five cents.

Intense, happy, Dave and I listened for chirping or watched for game flying between trees or across the open backyards to light on fences, the roofs of old outbuildings, clotheslines, or telephone wires. I liked telephone wires because they provided a clear shot and the sparrows fell a long way, like a downed Messerschmitt or Zero. No adult ever told us we shouldn't shoot sparrows. It wasn't wrong. It was wrong to shoot robins and other song birds, but not to shoot dusty, chirping sparrows.

Although I didn't have Tarzan's jungle, I did have places to hunt—Utah Lake, Provo River, the Wasatch Mountains, the Mud Lake sloughs, and a whole valley of farms, which all seemed made for boys. And all this was close, within the range of bicycles, which was very important. Without that proximity I would not have spent so much time as I did shooting animals and birds. They had to be handy. Provo before the war was only ninety years old. In some ways it was still a pioneer village.

The fields and the lake were so close to the south edge of the Sixth Ward that, going to and from school in the fall, I heard the duck and pheasant hunters shooting. But I had to be walking, not on my bike. I always stopped, turned to face south, listened, longed to be out hunting too.

The Wasatch Mountains were very close. I was always stopping to look at the mountains; they made me think of hunting deer, which filled

me with suspense. In *Outdoor Life, Field and Stream,* and *Sports Afield,* I read about wonderful deer hunts and saw pictures of the kind of huge bucks I wanted to shoot and bring home to my mother to eat. I regretted that all the Utah grizzly bears had already been killed. I believed I would find a secret canyon where grizzly bears lived. I wanted hunting to be dangerous. I wanted to hunt all my life.

The mountains, fields, sloughs were all open, free, vast, and beautiful—sunrises and sunsets, sky, clouds, storms, and mountain vistas, all filled with new textures, colors, sounds, and smells. No-trespassing signs didn't exist. With so much space and so few hunters, there was very little to protect; land was not particularly valuable. No one talked about managing wild life resources. The sole purpose of a game warden was to catch you taking more than a limit and to arrest you. As boys we feared and scorned them.

My friend Dave introduced me to real guns and helped make me a hunter. I went to Dave's house after school, and he brought out his father's guns for me to hold—cleaned, oiled, and smelling of Hoppes #9, a cleaning solvent. I liked to hold the guns as if my hands were made for that; I liked the heaviness, the smoothness, the lovely, dark, warm, oiled walnut and the cool, blued steel. I liked the names, too—Winchester, Remington, Ithaca, Colt, Browning; I repeated these names simply to hear them. These were the best makes, the guns that had helped tame the west; Stevens, Savage, and Marlin weren't as good as these.

We talked about what were the best kinds of guns and the best calibers, and what kinds of shells were best. We took shells to school in our pockets to show each other. Sometimes boys wore their hunting knives hidden under their coats, slipping them out of the scabbard secretly in class to show other boys and scare girls. Knives were important. With your knife you could kill a bear or a mountain lion if it attacked you and knocked your gun out of your hand.

Dave, who was a year older and lived in an old pioneer adobe house, had his own .22 and shotgun long before I did. His father took him hunting when Dave was very young. Dave sometimes gave me an empty shotgun shell to smell the open end and take home. I carried it in my pocket for days to take out and smell the burned powder, which stirred my blood.

Before the end of the war and the big influx of new people into Utah Valley, there was still game for a Provo boy to shoot. People had a pioneer attitude toward hunting. Some of the Mormon pioneers were still alive, although very old. Mr. Nelson, Dave's dad, and other men told stories of the wonderful hunting when they were boys and of the still more wonderful hunting their fathers and grandfathers had enjoyed. Birds and animals were not thought to be more beautiful alive than dead.

Boys grew up expecting to hunt and were only disappointed they couldn't have been mountain men or Indians and hunted everything. The last grizzly bear in Utah had been shot only twenty years before, in 1922. A splendid and terrifying animal, he had stood nine feet tall and weighed nearly a thousand pounds. You hunted to rid the country of dangerous beasts and to provide food for your family. I couldn't understand why every man in Provo didn't hunt. Hunting gave me something to be good at, something I could do although I was never a superior shot. I learned to call ducks, to set out decoys, build a blind, learned what kind of cover deer like, what passes they used, how to gut a buck, learned what pheasants fed on, where they would be at first light when the season opened, how to push them out of cover even if you didn't have a dog, learned all about the right kind of guns and shells to use. I could name the ducks, identify both male and female: mallards, widgeons, pintails, gadwalls, spoonbills, golden eye, and green-wing, blue-wing, and cinnamon teal.

Hunting also made equipment necessary, things for me to possess or to imagine possessing, filling me with desire: hip boots, hunting coat with game pockets, sheath knife, binoculars, tent, Coleman stove and lamp, shell vest, shells, and many guns. And all of these had to be of a certain quality and brand. Dave and I searched the Sears, Montgomery Ward, and Herter's catalogs for things to want; we read the advertisements in the hunting magazines. We went weekly to the Provo sporting goods stores to see and touch the things we could not buy. Hunting equipment was more complicated, bigger, heavier, more powerful, and more expensive than fishing equipment.

A little before I turned fourteen and could hunt ducks and pheasants legally and buy my first shotgun, I bought a .22. Dave had a Remington pump, and I wanted a Browning automatic, a perfect .22, but all I could afford was a Winchester Model 100, a single shot. We didn't have to wait for any seasons to hunt with a .22, and we didn't have to have a license for anything we killed.

A .22 was a mountain gun because a slug could carry for miles in open fields. We had to shoot against hills and sides of ravines or out in the unpopulated sagebrush flats west of Utah Lake. East of Provo we hunted Slate, Rock, and Little canyons, Camel Pass, Maple Flat, and the foothills. Boys carrying .22s, riding their bikes or walking, going east toward the mountains, were a common sight in Provo. If they could not find game, they shot bottles, cans, trees, and rocks. No adults went with us, except Mr. Nelson, but he didn't go very often because he had to work at Ironton. Free, we spent whole summer days hunting.

Our game was ground squirrels, chipmunks, rock chucks, lizards, rattlesnakes, rabbits, and hawks, eagles, and magpies. We wanted to kill coyotes, wildcats, mountain lions, wolves, and black bears, but we never

saw any, although we watched for their tracks ahead of us on the trail. We hoped, too, somehow, to find grizzlies or a small band of buffalo, or some sign they had once existed.

We always examined our game closely to see where the bullet had entered the body; we looked for blood. A little blood seemed necessary although we didn't like a lot of blood. Head and heart shots were the very best and proved your skill as a hunter. We did not take this game home for food. We set the bodies on big rocks, tried to make the birds and animals look alive.

We couldn't have any real fun in the mountains unless we carried .22s. We liked the heavy weight in our hands. The heavy rifle gave us something to do, a purpose, made us hunters at thirteen and capable of facing any danger. We had to have at least a box of shells apiece, fifty to a box, or, better still, two or three boxes or maybe a whole carton of ten boxes among two or three of us. We shot shorts, longs, long-rifle, but the best shells were the long-rifle hollow points. The long-rifle was the most powerful, and the hollow bullet exploded on impact.

Alone in our boy's world, we killed without regret. Killing was a competition; your reputation depended on making good shots. The best part was when the animal or bird fell. It was wonderful to see, thrilling. Everybody yelled, sometimes gave the Tarzan yell. We shot at the splendid soaring eagles and great hawks, but we never hit one. We never got close enough to the perched eagles and hawks to kill one on the set. They lit too high in the cliffs. For us their only value was that they could be killed; it did not enter our minds that these creatures were too beautiful to kill, might some day be endangered, or could have spirits although Mormon theology taught they did.

The best hunting with a .22 was for jackrabbits. To hunt jackrabbits successfully took at least seven or eight of us plus an older boy or somebody's dad who had a car. We had to travel out to the big sagebrush-covered valleys across Utah Lake west of Provo, which were too far for a bicycle. The hot summer air full of the smell of sage, we formed a line to drive the jackrabbits ahead of us. We shot them as they jumped out in front or tried to get back between us. Unless you made a head-shot or hit shoulder bone, it could take four or five shots to kill a big jack with a .22. We laughed if they squealed. We never took jackrabbits home to eat; people ate jackrabbits during the Depression, but not after the war started.

The most fun was to get a jack running across open patches in the sage, so you could see where your slugs kicked up dust. Sometimes three or four of us shot at the same running jack, hollering not to let him get away, shouting as we fired, claiming hits. We pretended sometimes the jacks were German or Japanese tanks. We killed sometimes fifty or sixty jackrabbits in a day. We didn't ever talk about the rabbits' right to live or

what good they were. Our only concern was if we had enough shells. Because of the war we couldn't buy all the shells we wanted. Mr. Nelson was the best shot with a .22 I ever saw.

I hunted because in my boy's heart I wanted to be an Indian, as well as Tarzan, and totally free. Younger, with my friends I'd played Indian, but had no Indian belief in the spirits of animals. We made our own bows and arrows and hunted with them, killed spring-spawning carp in the shallows of Utah Lake with our homemade spears, wearing our undershorts as loincloths, or we ran naked if we were far enough away from houses and roads. We looked for arrowheads on the lake shore and along the river, and, hunting and hiking in the mountains east of town, we looked for secret Indian caves and cliffs with pictographs although we found none. And we hoped to find in the mountains a band of Utes who still lived wild and free and who would adopt us.

Deer antlers, some white with age, hung in rows on garages and barns above the big doors, and sometimes on backyard telephone poles. The telephone company didn't care. Hunters smoked the venison in strips for winter meat; their wives bottled it; they had it cut up and put it into lockers at the ice plant to freeze. The hunters nailed the hides to outside walls. Dogs fought over the discarded heads of deer and dragged them across front lawns like dogs might have in an Indian village. The antlers filled me with desire to kill bucks with huge sets of sharp antlers. My only regret was that mule deer didn't charge the hunter like a grizzly bear or a wounded buffalo.

The opening days of duck, pheasant, and deer season were the most important days of the year, more important than even Christmas. I measured my life by these days, believed opening days would come every fall forever, the fall the very best time of the year. The hunting seasons helped very much to keep my life exciting, gave me something intensely emotional to look forward to, made my life worth living. Standing on a ridge the opening morning of the deer hunt, I waited for light, for the first shot, hoping it would be mine. My heart pounding so hard it took my breath away, I raised my rifle a dozen times to aim at bushes and rocks I thought were big bucks.

We did not harvest animals as hunters do today. We hunted, shot, and killed them. We did not deal in euphemisms; we knew none.

Already in August I began to watch the east mountains for the first patches of maples turning red. I watched the store windows for hunting displays and the *Daily Herald* for hunting articles and for advertisements filled with pictures of hunting coats and hats, boots, decoys, knives, shells, and guns. In early September men began to wear their red hunting hats and shirts to work. I waited for the first smell of fall, that wonderfully sharp, clean, cold smell you could smell some early mornings going to Dixon Junior High School the first weeks in September.

It was very difficult for Dave and me to wait for the opening days. We talked about it all the time, about where we would hunt, the guns we would have, how many birds and animals we would kill. We hurried home from school in the September afternoons to change our clothes and each get four or five of Dave's dad's hand-carved and painted decoys in a gunnysack. We rode our bikes down to the fields to set out the decoys on the edge of small ponds and then hid to watch the evening flight of local ducks come in.

The ducks were beautiful coming in from Utah Lake, their wings whistling, the setting sun silhouetting them against the lovely evening sky. We would jump up sometimes and pretend to shoot them, make the sound of the gun, bam, bam, bam, watch the ducks flare, our hearts pounding. Walking back through the evening fields toward our bikes, we stopped only to listen to whistling wings of ducks, the evening world soft and beautiful. It was the first time I knew ducks were beautiful, yet I still killed them.

The pheasants I killed were beautiful, too. All summer down in the fields, Dave and I watched the pheasants, counted the roosters, knew where they fed in the corn and wheat fields, knew the cover they liked best, the bulrushes and patches of heavy willows. Knowing these things, we planned how we would hunt and kill them. I liked to shoot pheasants. They didn't decoy like ducks nor fly in flocks; you couldn't watch them come in, circle, drop lower and lower. You had to jump them out of the weeds, high grass, and corn stubble. You never knew when one would flush, scaring you with its shrill cackle and loud beating wings so close, trying to get away. Excited, almost terrified, you shot and shot, trying not to let the rooster get away, to knock it down in a great puff of feathers, and then you started running, yelling to everybody, "My bird! My bird!" You held up the beautiful bird, smoothed the feathers, stroked the long tail, and held it up for the others to see before you put it in your game pocket, told them how the shot made you feel. The heaviness in your big, blood-stained game pocket was a comforting feeling.

Mr. Nelson was the best hunter I ever knew, even better than Dave. Other men were not like Mr. Nelson. He carved and painted his own duck decoys, and he also bred Labrador retrievers, built his own duck boats, painted hunting pictures, and called ducks with just his lips, didn't have to use a wooden duck call.

Mr. Nelson was the best wing shot I ever saw. With his double-barreled ten-gauge Ithaca shotgun, he could kill ducks at eighty and ninety yards. Shooting his twelve-gauge Remington automatic, he never missed ducks coming into decoys, sometimes killing three out of a flock with three separate shots. You had to plug your gun magazine hunting ducks if the gun held more than three shots; the federal government only

allowed three shots on ducks. I envied Mr. Nelson greatly. He was the first man ever to take me hunting. I wanted to be as good a hunter as he was and bring home a lot of food.

Shooting ducks over decoys brought one of the most intense emotions of my life before I was sixteen and old enough to hunt deer, although I liked also to jump-shoot the big, gaudy rooster pheasants in the fields below Provo. I hunted because of the feeling; nothing gave me so much feeling, not basketball, movies, money, girls, fishing—nothing. Just carrying my gun and wearing my hip boots and hunting clothes, my pockets and vest full of shells, was a good feeling, even if I didn't shoot even one duck. The limit was fifteen; a few years earlier it had been twenty-five.

But I liked most to see the ducks coming, to crouch in the blind waiting, looking out through the rushes. I watched the ducks circle, get lower, get closer, and closer, my heart pounding with the excitement, my hands gripping my shotgun tightly, my finger sliding down to slowly push off the safety.

I stood up fast with Dave and his dad to shoot, shot and shot, felt the kick, worked the action of my Winchester Model 12 pump, heard the sound, smelled the burned powder. I watched the flying ducks crumple, go all ragged in the air, fall, crash into the water like downed enemy fighter planes. It was as if the explosions were in my own body, a wonderful rich, sharp feeling, which I could repeat over and over again, and it would always be exciting and wonderful.

I did not feel the death of the birds as I would later, grown aware of human pain and death; I did not feel the lead shot going into their bodies. I did not at fourteen regret killing them. Unlike Tarzan, I did not make birds and animals my friends; I wasn't interested in talking to them. It seemed incredibly important to stop the ducks, not let them get away, to stop their flying, bring them back to earth. We tried to kill only the drakes. It was important to kill the drakes and not the hens, just as it was important to kill the big rooster pheasants. To kill hens (or does when later I hunted deer) was not what good hunters did. Females were not as beautiful, smart, strong, nor as dangerous as males.

If the ducks were not flying, I shot passing snipe, crows, and herons. I shot into the flocks of wheeling blackbirds to see how many I could knock down with one shell. But I did not take any of these birds home to eat.

I hunted because I liked to be outside and away from town, away from buildings and houses, alive in a boy's world. I had time to live in that world. The beautiful river, lake, fields, and mountains were a better world than town, freer with secret places to find which only the Indians had known about. I liked distance, space, the suggestion of wilderness. I

particularly liked hunting ducks in storms, which pushed the ducks off the open lake and up onto the sheltered ponds. A blizzard was the very best. I liked blizzards. They excited me, cut me off from the world, threatened me, convinced me I was in the wilderness, convinced me I could die tragically and bravely, but not for a long, long time. I liked the cold.

Even if it didn't storm, the evenings were beautiful, the red sun going down over the west mountains and the crimson lake, everything quiet except for the shooting and maybe a train whistle far away so that you felt alone on the earth. It was beautiful. I hunted because things were beautiful. As a boy of fifteen or sixteen, I recognized beauty, knew when something was beautiful. The birds and animals were still beautiful after I killed them. I liked to look at them, touch them. I had to kill them to own them. Once I'd killed them, they were mine.

The war helped make me a hunter. All the boys my age envied their older brothers and the other older neighborhood boys who got to fight in the war. We went to all the war movies and saw every Saturday the Movietone newsreels about the war. Going hunting was like going into a battle. But we wanted the war to be over, so we could buy a semi-automatic M-1 or a sniper's rifle with a scope to hunt deer. We wanted walkie-talkies, too, for talking from ridge to ridge, so we could surround the deer. But mostly we wanted a four-wheel-drive Jeep for hunting. A Jeep was the best vehicle in the world for hunting, we thought. We also would have liked to have bazookas and machine guns for hunting deer and jackrabbits, but we knew they would never be declared surplus.

We did not anticipate ATVs, the luxury four-wheel drives, the campers and house trailers, the slick hunting magazines, the commercial hunting clubs, game farms, no-trespassing signs hung every hundred yards along miles of fence, the managed wild life. That all lay in the future when life became crowded, dishonest, and less happy.

When Dave and I came back from duck hunting in the evening, we always went to his house. His father always asked us all about our hunt and what we had killed. His mother always had something good to eat and a hot drink to warm us up. Dave's family was the only family I knew that ate everything Dave or his dad killed. Mrs. Nelson knew how to cook game so it tasted good. She picked all the breast feathers off the ducks to use for pillows and ticks. Even his sisters liked to talk about hunting.

I liked being in the kitchen next to the hot coal stove. Mr. Nelson always talked to us and told us stories. Hunting gave me something to tell stories about, and I got to listen to the stories other hunters told. Hunters like to tell stories about their best hunts, their best shots, about the biggest buck they ever killed, about how much smarter they were than the deer or ducks. You went back to the same places hunting every season, so

you had more stories every year. You had friends like Dave who were with you and to whom you could tell the stories. Then they could tell you the stories back. Hunting was the only thing I had to tell stories about except fishing, but hunting stories were better than fishing stories. I knew I would hunt forever.

Telling stories meant you could relive everything and make it all wonderful or funny, which made memory and the past important so that my life took on another dimension. Mr. Nelson told stories about when he'd hunted as a boy and about when his father and grandfather had hunted in the same places Dave and I hunted. This connected me to the past. I liked that. It was wonderful to tell stories. Boys who didn't hunt didn't have stories to tell.

Although after my BB gun I owned a .22 and a shotgun, the gun I looked forward to owning was a deer rifle. The deer hunt was the best hunt, but you had to be sixteen, the same age as for getting your driver's license. Killing a big buck meant you were a man; or you thought it meant that. The bigger the spread of antlers, the more points, the more of a man you were. The sporting goods stores ran contests and gave prizes for the biggest spread of antlers. The winner got a prize and his picture in the *Herald* holding the buck's head and smiling.

A deer was a big animal, and a deer rifle was bigger, heavier, and more powerful than other guns. We filled our pockets and ammunition belts with the lovely, long, brass shells, the hundred-and-eighty-grain slug built to mushroom against heavy bone. I liked to wear a heavy ammunition belt and my red hat and sweatshirt. Carrying my 30-06 Winchester, I felt important, invincible, brave, capable of dealing with any danger I met in the mountains. With my 30-06 I could hunt tigers in India, lions in Africa, and grizzlies in Alaska, just like the hunters in the sporting magazine stories did.

Remington and Browning made the best shotguns, Dave said, but Winchester made the best rifles. For weeks before the hunt, men told their deer hunting stories. Waiting for the opening day was the hardest thing I ever did.

We had a two-day school holiday for the deer hunt. I first hunted deer with Dave and his dad and then later with Harold Jones, my former scoutmaster. We hunted the long draws in Hobble Creek, Lake Fork, Dairy Fork, and in Blind, Dry, and Diamond Fork canyons, some places only a half hour away from town by pickup truck, good places. And even better places were farther away—Blanding, Beaver Mountain, Fish Lake, Fillmore. One town even had an arch of antlers across its main street.

We left Provo on Friday afternoon and camped, or we drove up early Saturday morning in two-wheel-drive pickups and old cars. We had deer carts to bring the deer out on. I liked to camp, cook on the old Coleman

stoves, drink cocoa, talk, tell stories around the fire, everybody wearing a red hat and sweatshirt, and I liked to sleep in a tent on a mattress of fresh straw; I prayed for a good hunt. In the morning we had breakfast in the dark, then hiked to the tops of the ridges and basins to find our favorite spots and wait for first light.

Standing on a ridge, what I wanted most in life was to see a big four-point, my heart already pounding hard, my mouth dry. I wanted to shoot, hear the explosion, feel the kick, work the action fast to throw in another shell, aim again, shoot, do it all together, my whole body clean and hard and tight, doing what I'd waited all year to do, this feeling the best feeling I'd ever had.

We gang hunted, so one hunter could kill all the bucks if he saw a string of them moving out, could fill every permit in camp, which is what I wanted, to knock down four or five bucks, one right after the other. You could buy special permits and shoot two and three deer a season; these permits were usually for does.

I wanted to hit a buck running hard, not standing or walking, not bouncing, but running flat and low, wanted to see him somersault, pile up, roll. I wanted a fantastic shot right through the heart. Sometimes a buck was hit three or four times before he finally went down, gut shot or with a leg blown off. If a buck was shot in the back, he would rise up on his front legs, trying to get away, and he had to be shot in the neck at ten feet.

The first one to the downed buck cut his throat, spilling the bright blood on the dry, brown scrub oak leaves. To clean a buck you had to roll your red sleeves up past your elbows because you got blood that far. You reached up to grab the severed windpipe to pull out the lungs, heart, and guts. You cut out the penis and the testicles covered with soft brown hair. With sticks you propped open the rib cage that looked like your own. The eyes, bigger than yours, turned milky. You talked about the good eating and having your winter supply of meat. Mr. Nelson bought special deer permits to shoot plenty of meat for his family. Mr. Nelson would never quit hunting.

The three-day pheasant season and the best of the long duck season came after the deer season was over, so there was still plenty of hunting. And after duck season, we hunted crows. I liked to hunt crows in the late afternoon and early evening, find a roost and build a blind there under the cottonwood trees. The crows came in by the thousands, came in very high sometimes then swirled down to the roost, making a noise like a wind.

There was no season and no limit, and the day didn't close at sunset, so you could shoot black crows all night, if you wanted, against the win-

ter moon, keep them circling the roost. You could kill a thousand if you wanted to, shoot a case of shells, wear out your gun barrel. Crows, like the buffalo, were endless and forever.

Above the Estuary

(Before the trail closure through Cascade Preserve)

Dixie Partridge

The river's long curve
enters the bay in streak between meadow
and forest—algae green of freshwater,
kelp green of salt.
We've come up alone
through the gradual unfolding of alder
and spruce, over the opening slopes
to grasses bowed slightly toward us, tall
as our youngest last year at twelve—always ahead
on a trail—his dark hair bobbing above reedgrass
with each spring in his step.

From this view the river's blue-opal glaze
melts rather than flows into sea level.
Small curvatures signal a white grace
of egrets—they wade easy in mud
through summers far back
to our daughters like water birds
skirting high tide.
Always attending,
mists turn in morning
to single drops on tips of pine
where we've hiked coastlines with toddlers
packed on our backs, voices buoyant
with wings of snow-plovers
through tangible air.

We sit hugging our knees on steep ground
until light slants low and lacy
through hemlock, roots muscular in the grip
of Pacific slopes.

O preserve
this host of plants
and sky, the drift of silence
over limpet and pool . . .
And admit our rim
of remembrance, the maritime constance
in small rills of the heart.

Afterward

Dixie Partridge

Once on the porch I asked
great-grandfather Porter a question
loudly and he said *wait*
though he was just sitting still
his face raised to low sun
eyes half-open

his answers were usually
to questions we hadn't asked
but made us laugh and feel better
almost deaf he still spoke to great-grandma
buried before I was born
and I had to ask if those gone
are really anywhere if they know
we're still here

so I sat with him on the west porch
and smelled beets my mother was pickling
my hands red from topping them
and his white with no spots except one
the shape of a moth across a knuckle
gripped over his cane that could reach us
if we crept too near

the sun sank into sky the color
of blueing waters from my mother's laundry
and I heard some kind of bird tremble
branches in the poplar over the attic
I felt my heartbeat
pass into another season and I thought
for the first time of summer ending

something left it slipped
through my hands and went
out of the yard and into the hills
dark with trees and I looked at grandfather
who looked as if he was listening
to music and he never turned back to me
but as night came
he hummed the faint lullaby he used to sing
when I was small

The Last Code Talker

Michael Fillerup

DZEH-NESH-CHEE-AH-NAH-TSIN-TLITI-TSAH-AS-ZIH. Elk-Nut-Eye-Match-Yucca.

His grandfather used to say the bilagaanas always come in twos.

The first time he was barely five years old, playing on a sand dune near their hogan west of Valley Store.

He was the first to see it: a black speck crawling like a giant beetle across the empty valley. He called to his grandfather, who was mending a bridle in the shadehouse: "Shicheii!"

The old man hobbled out into the summer glare, visoring his eyes with a gnarled hand. He watched the speck grow bigger and bigger until he knew that it wasn't a horse or a wagon but something altogether different.

"Chidi," he said, because the word echoed the sound of the machine: *chid chid chid chid.* The cloth band circling his head was as blue as the desert sky. His silver-streaked hair was bound with white yarn in a tight little bun just above the nape of his neck. Black and shiny as a crow's wing, the boy's hair was long like his grandfather's, and he wore it in the same manner, with pride.

The boy's mother rose slowly from her loom. A few feet away, his baby brother was strapped snugly in a cradleboard, quietly observing the activities of day's end.

The chidi stopped, and two bilagaana men climbed out. Both wore black cowboy hats and droopy mustaches, and both carried long-guns with grace and ease, as if they were natural extensions of their bodies. They offered no greeting, no token *ya'at'eeh.* They marched towards the sheep corral silently, side by side, like shadows of each other, like snake-eyed gunslingers in a TV western. The taller man loosened a wire loop and pulled back the gate. The shorter man slipped inside, braced the butt of the long-gun against his shoulder, and fired.

A scarlet dot appeared on the white flank of the boy's favorite ewe. Within seconds it blossomed into a big red sun.

The rest was a blur, or a bad dream: more gunshots, more red suns. The sheep crowded desperately into the far corner of the corral, crying

out like children being punished for something they hadn't done.

His grandfather staggered forward, flailing his skinny arms like a scarecrow come to life, pleading in a language the bilagaanas would never understand: *Why are you doing this evil thing? Why are you killing my children?*

The taller man shoved the barrel of his long-gun into the old man's belly and snarled at him in the dog-bark tongue of the bilagaana: "Step aside! Unless you wanna join the animals!"

The boy's mother was screaming, and his grandmother too, charging out of the hogan, waving her arms like sticks: "*Doo-da! Doo-da!*"

The short man kept firing while the tall man blocked the gate.

And then it was over. Blood was splattered everywhere, like a rainstorm in red. The boy's grandfather cradled the head of a fallen sheep, groaning: *Why are you doing this evil thing? Why are you doing this to my family?*

The shorter man sidled out of the corral, while the taller one secured the gate. They marched back to their machine in silence, their long-guns angled earthward, their boots gouging the red sand.

The bilagaanas called it Livestock Reduction, and they did it to save the Indians.

"I do not understand this thing that you call sin."

"It is when you do something bad. Like lying or cheating or stealing."

"What happens if you make a sin?"

"You will be punished. God will punish you."

"I am confused. You say God loves us. Then why would He want to punish us?"

"He punishes us because He loves us. Like a father who punishes his children."

"I never punished my children. Not like your God punishes His children."

"You never—"

"No. If my children did something wrong, I would just put my arm around them and talk to them. I would tell them a story. I would say, 'Look at this thing that you did. This is what has happened because of the thing that you did. Why did you do this thing? You have embarrassed yourself and your family.' Why can't your God talk to his children this way, instead of punishing them all the time? Instead of getting mad and burying everybody under water? Why can't your God control his temper?"

Dzeh-A-chin-Dibeh-yazzie-Tkin-Klesh-A-woh-Ah-nah-Lha-cha-eh. Elk-Nose-Lamb-Ice-Snake-Tooth-Eye-Dog.

One thought went through Elder Dawson's mind as the Chevy LUV pick-up banged its way towards the sunburned mesa: it's a long way

from the beaches and shopping malls of southern California.

And that distance seemed to double by the minute. Since exiting the main highway over two hours ago, Elder Buck had followed one dirt artery into another until they seemed hopelessly lost in a maze of unmarked crossroads. At every fork, Dawson recalled with irony the Robert Frost poem he'd memorized in freshman English: "Two roads diverged in a narrow wood, and being one traveler long I stood . . ."

Except there were no woods here. Sagebrush, plenty. And tumbleweed, lizards, gramma grass, Pennzoil cans ("Navajo sunflowers," Elder Buck quipped) scattered across an eternity of desert.

His Grandpa Charles had spoken nostaglically of the good old days when whole families had traveled by horse-drawn wagons to the trading post. Adorned like postcard portraits, mother and grandmother would exchange their hand-woven rugs for flour, sugar, coffee, salt, lard. Candy, too, from a glass jar on the counter. Closing his wattled eyes, drifting back, Grandpa Charles had described the seasonal fairs and rodeos, the yeibicheii dances, the Old People telling winter stories late into the night. He had extolled their wit, their sense of humor: "Dirt poor in the things of the world, but wonderful people! Humble! Spiritual! God's children all!"

"An inspired call!" he had declared, re-reading the crisp stationery signed by the First Presidency.

Carl Dawson had countered softly, "Aren't all mission calls inspired?"

Sensing a kindred spirit (for he too had marched to the beat of a wayward drummer in his youth), the old man had smiled. "Yes, but this one was double-inspired!"

He had reminded his grandson that he had served an early mission on the rez and that his Great-Uncle Leland had labored among the Lamanites with Jacob Hamblin. "It's in the blood!" he had beamed.

Grandpa Charles had not told him about the aloofness of the people, frozen frowns on sandstone faces. He had not forewarned him about the *adlaanis* begging for "a couple dollars" to buy bread or gas or Pampers, an offering that translated into a trip to Billy the Bootlegger. He hadn't spoken about the six-inch cockroaches that God had endowed with eternal life, no matter how many times you smashed them with your shoe, or the mud up to your knees every time it rained, or the end-of-the world loneliness of staring into a sandstorm so thick you couldn't see your hand in front of your face.

And he hadn't mentioned self-righteous, know-it-all senior companions, who subjected you to their personal grail of accumulating numbers.

Two years, Dawson brooded. The world will pass me by.

His horsey teeth clenched with resolve, Buck downshifted into sec-

ond as the Chevy dipped into another arroyo, the rear bumper scraping against a half-buried boulder. When the road split again, he shamelessly spun the wheel to the left, sending them (once again) back from where they had just come. Dawson lost it: "Hey, is this eeny-meeny-miney-moe or what?"

Buck's blue eyes remained on the road, as if he were double-sighting down the barrel of a rifle. "Just following the Spirit," he said. Adding a laugh. "Trying to anyway."

"Right," Dawson grumbled. "Straight to Zanzibar."

But within five minutes, something happened that would forever grant Elder Leon Buck at least partial redemption in Dawson's eyes and give credence to the rumor that his senior companion had been born with the Liahona stuck between his ears.

Tsa-e-donin-ee-Wol-la-chee-Tkin-Gah-Than-zie-Dah-nes-tsa-Be-la-sana-Be-Dzeh. Fly-Ant-Ice-Rabbit-Turkey-Ram-Apple-Deer-Elk.

After that, whenever the boy saw a chidi approaching, he would scamper behind the sand dune or the outhouse and wait until the bilagaanas gave up and drove away. When they asked, his mother shrugged: *I don't know! I don't know!* This worked for almost two years.

She wanted to keep him at home as long as possible because he was her firstborn. His grandfather wanted to keep him because he was different. His upper lip was twisted and he ate with his left hand. The grandmother said it was because her daughter had accidentally looked at the full moon when the boy was still growing inside her. There was nothing they could do about his lip, but they tied his left hand behind his back, forcing him to use his right. Instead of curing him, it made him ambidextrous, which would prove a blessing on the basketball court. In time he would mature into the best point guard in the history of Talking Rock Boarding School.

There was something else, though. He had magic ears. Anything he heard he remembered. One day while he was singing by the sheep corral, his grandfather asked, with more astonishment than curiosity, *"Where did you learn that song, my grandson?"*

The boy confessed: *"I heard you singing in the hogan during the Blessingway."*

After that, any time his grandfather performed a ceremony, he told the boy to sit by the hogan. He couldn't see inside because of the blanket hanging in the doorway, but he could hear everything. Whenever they slid an empty pot outside, he would run and fill it. Everyone thought: That's why he's there, to fetch water. But the real reason was for him to learn the sacred songs.

When he was seven, the bilagaanas came again. This time it was Mr.

Forrester, the trader and a government man. Mr. Forrester wore a brown hat and limped like a tired old horse. He was carrying a new pair of shoes, shiny black ones like the bilagaana women wore to church.

Grandfather watched quietly from the shade house while the mother stepped forward to meet the two men. She was wearing a pleated skirt and a velveteen blouse the color of late autumn. She called to the boy, who was hiding behind the sheep corral. When he didn't come, she called again, roughly: *Hago!* She called a third time, and the fourth time he had to oblige.

The trader said something in Navajo. The government man opened a small metal box with a black pad inside. The mother pressed her thumb on the black pad and then on the sheet of paper the government man held out to her. The trader nodded and handed her the shoes. She leaned down and whispered to the boy: *"You have to go with these two men now. If you don't, they're going to put me in jail."* She had been in the shadehouse making fry bread over a campfire, and her hands were coated with flour. When the trader shook her hand, the boy could hardly tell hers from his—it looked so white.

The government man smiled, his mouth sparkling gold and silver.

A-kha-Na-as-tso-si-Ah-nah-A-chin-Klesh. Oil-Mouse-Eye-Nose-Snake.

Almost five summers had passed since the fog in his eyes became permanent, and he could no longer read symbols in the sky. On a good day, though, he could still discern one blur from another, especially one in motion. That afternoon, as he whooshed his sheep back into the corral, he noticed a peculiar red speck circulating around the valley. For an hour he watched as it crossed and re-crossed its path in redundantly intersecting circles. Then, suddenly, like a horse that senses the corral on its homeward journey, it began barrelling across sagebrush and sandstone towards his plywood home. Thomas shook his head, muttering to himself. *"Bilagaana doo yaa shoon da!"* Crazy whiteman!

Dibeh-Shi-da-Bi-so-dih-Dzeh-Gah-Cha-Ah-jah-Dah-nes-tes-A-kha. Sheep-Uncle-Pig-Elk-Rabbit-Hat-Ear-Ram-Oil.

He'd been young and stupid and thought he was invincible. Thought if he got in a head-on doing a hundred and twenty, at worst he'd be in a coma for a week maybe. Then he'd snap out of it, good as new. He was going to be a hero. He'd show those Gooks which end was up. He was going to come home covered with medals. Strut in front of every girl that ever shafted him in high school. They'd see.

His first month out he was too scared to take his boots off. He wanted to be ready to run just in case. On day thirty-one he finally peeled off his socks. He found three layers of skin inside and a stench like rotten

bananas. That scared him more than the machine guns. And the damn monsoons. He was always wet, drenched to the skin—marching, sleeping, eating. The rain was worse than bullets falling from the sky.

Ah-nah-Be-No-da-ih-Moasi-Wola-la-chee-A-woh-Yeh-hes-Tlo-chin-Tsah. Eye-Deer-Ute-Cat-Ant-Tooth-Itch-Onion-Needle.

It was August, always August, and the heat and sweat and sockless feet of the fifty other boys and girls filled the bus with an over-ripe smell that would always remind him of late summer. Through the fog-dust he watched in awe as buttes and mesas raced by. The red rock cliffs became Monster Slayer, Child Born of Water, Changing Woman. He wondered how they could move so quickly without legs, like a fast horse. Like a human.

At first he was too full of curiosity to be scared. He pressed his hand against the glass, the metal paneling, the cracked vinyl seat. He glanced at the boy sitting next to him, touched the hot chrome frame. "*Sido*," he said. Hot. The other boy nodded. "*Aoo*," he replied. "*Sido.*" He pinched the little red thread on the box of Crackerjacks he'd been hiding under his shirt, pulled back the top, and filled the boy's cupped hand with carmel-coated peanuts and popcorn.

They arrived after dark. There were four long, flat buildings, big boxes with rows and rows of yellow eyes. A fat bilagaana met them as they got off the bus. His head looked like a melon, and he spoke as if his mouth were asleep, trying to wake up, so they called him *Atsi' Ta'neesk'ani ligaii*, Melon-Head. He couldn't understand what Melon-Head was saying the first time, but that was okay because he said the same thing every year. After the third time, he knew his routine by heart:

"Ya-ta-hey! Ya-ta-hey! Welcome to Talking Rock Boarding School! There's lots of things you need to learn, lots of things that aren't your way. But that's why you're here, to learn the right way and forget the old way. That's why we don't talk Navajo here. Do you understand? We don't talk Navajo at school."

Mr. Chee wore a silver belt buckle that was half-hidden by his belly. He told them everything in Navajo. His translation wasn't word for word, but it was much more accurate: "*Look at White Eyes when he's talking to you. If you don't, he's going to get mad and beat you. Do you want him to beat you? Then you'd better look him in the eyes. He's a mean old man and he'll do mean things to you if you don't do everything he says. . .*".

That night the conditioning began. The girls went one way, the boys the other. They were herded like sheep into a room with a wall like frozen water: when you looked at it, you saw yourself looking back. A bilagaana as big and hairy as a bear pointed to a wooden folding chair, and a Navajo man told the boy to sit down. The boy heard a loud buzzing sound,

like a hive of angry bees, and a hot iron branded the back of his head. He tried to run, but the bear grabbed his neck and slammed him back into the chair: "Got a wriggler here, Jimmy!"

The boy lowered his eyes and watched as his black hair rained onto the floor. When the buzzing stopped, he looked at the wall of frozen water and felt sick: his head was naked, naked and ugly like Mr. Melon-Head's. He tried to hide it with his hands. The hairy bear held up his bun, still tied with white yarn, and laughed, his mouth big enough to swallow a jackrabbit, or a little boy.

Next they filed through a room with lots of shelves. A big, scowling woman slapped a folded blanket onto the counter and pointed to the number printed in black on the corner. "Bee-four-five!" she barked. "Remember that: you're bee-four-five!" And he saw it everywhere: on his toothbrush, on his underwear, on his socks, shoes, shirts, bedsheets, everywhere he looked all the time: B 4 5 . . . B 4 5 . . . B 4 5.

Then they gave them each a name—Billy, Sam, Bob, Jim. Boring bilagaana names that didn't mean anything. They called him Thomas. *Bilii Lizhini* wasn't right anymore. Too long, too hard to pronounce, too full of wonder. "Black Horse." Too strange. Too something.

They slept in a long room, in bunkbeds. Mr. Melon-Head told them everything in English while Mr. Chee explained it in Navajo:

"You will get up at five o'clock sharp every morning. You will make your beds, you will wash, and then you will report to the cafeteria for breakfast. You will leave the dormitory together, marching in single file. . . ."

The first night there was lots of crying. The boy in the bunk below him cried first: *"I want to go home!"* he sobbed. *"Why are they doing this to us? Why are they doing this terrible thing?"*

Thomas climbed down from his bunk and knelt beside him. *"It's all right,"* he whispered. *"My grandfather told me that the Earth knows us. Wherever we are, the whole Earth knows the bottom of our feet."* He began singing one of the songs of his grandfather. As his voice traveled down the barracks, the sniffling and whimpering gradually faded away. He sang for an hour, maybe longer, until the younger boys had all fallen asleep and a peaceful silence filled the room.

Moasi-A-kha-A-chin-Than-zie-Be-la-sana-Ba-goshi-A-woh. Cat-Oil-Nose-Turkey-Apple-Cow-Tooth.

He recognized them right off: white shirts, dark pants, Sunday shoes, bristly hair, TV smiles—always smiling, as if they were permanently posing for a picture, "Say cheese, please!" And so young. Kids, really. They weren't government men, *Waashindoon*, and that was good. They were *Gamilii*, the Ones-Who-Talk-With-God, which could be even worse.

They were no different from the other do-gooders. Always trying to sell something or other. If it wasn't gas or flour or life insurance, it was religion. Well, he'd have a little fun with them.

He waited for them to climb out of their baby truck before stepping out of the shadehouse. They *ya'at'eehed* him, exchanged a hand touch, introduced themselves. The older one, Elder Buck, asked about his family, where he was from, how many years he'd been on the mesa. He spoke pretty good Navajo for a bilagaana, but he was just showing off. How many times had he told that joke about his name? *I belong to the Deer Clan. My Father's clan is Buck, my mother's clan is Doe. . .* He reminded Thomas of a used car salesman in Gallup who once tried to sell him a pick-up at twenty-five percent interest.

The other guy was quiet. His smile came slowly and uncertainly. He was a listener maybe, liked to tiptoe his way around until his footing was more secure. He also looked like he didn't want to be there.

Buck was telling him, in Navajo, that they had a very important message. Had he ever heard of Jesus Christ?

Thomas smiled. Buck had pegged him as an old medicine man who'd never left the mesa. Blue jeans, turquoise bracelet, silver hair tied in a Navajo knot, red headband. He looked the part. He could play it, too, pretend he didn't speak any English.

"Who is this man you call Jesus Christ?"

Buck's eyes bubbled as he told about Our Big Brother in Heaven who loves us so much he died for our sins.

Thomas nodded, his brow arching gravely. *"Is Big Brother watching?"*

Buck looked confused. Dawson smiled to himself, relishing Buck's frustration.

Thomas asked if he knew *tsin bee na'al'eeli to hahadleeh?*

Buck wrestled briefly with the words, his neandrethal forehead furrowing. "Oar . . . well?" He laughed. *"Orwell! Yes, yes. I know him! I read his book. But Jesus Christ is a different kind of Big Brother."*

Thomas was impressed. It took most bilagaanas a lifetime to learn even baby-talk Navajo. Still, his expression remained neutral, showing nothing. He spoke slowly and austerely: *"Before you tell me about Jesus Christ, or anything else, I just want to know one thing: Did you come here to take away my children, like the others?"*

Buck who understood everything shook his head, *"N'daga."* Dawson deciphered only one word, *alchini*, children, but it was enough. He nodded solemnly, *"Aoo."*

Thomas laughed. *"You say No, you say Yes. Who do I believe?"*

The two young men traded eyes, then answered simultaneously: *"Me!"*

Gah-Dzeh-Bi-so-dih-Dibeh-yazzie-Wol-la-chee-Moasi-Ah-jah-Na-as-tso-si-Ah-nah-Tsah-A-woh. Rabbit-Elk-Pig-Lamb-Ant-Cat-Ear-Mouse-Eye-Needle-Tooth.

First they told them, then they showed them everything: how to eat, sleep, walk, talk, look, act, think, live, believe. And they heard it all the time. *It's not right to eat with your fingers. It's not right to go dirty and not bathe. It's not right to sleep in your clothes without pyjamas. It's not good to talk Navajo. It's not right to be afraid of Skinwalkers and witches and yeibicheeis or to pray to stick figures in the sand.* It wasn't right and they weren't right; they were wrong. And the bilagaanas were going to fix them.

They called it Education, and they did it to save the Indians.

Gloe-ih-A-kha-Gah-Dibeh-yazzie-Be-A-keh-di-glini-Tkin-Dzeh-Gloe-ih. Weasel-Oil-Rabbit-Lamb-Deer-Victor-Ice-Elk-Weasel.

"I don't get it. He's smart, he's educated. And the Gospel's so logical!"

"Logical to us maybe, because we were raised on it."

"Speak for yourself. I'm a convert."

"Okay, but western logic. The great Judeo-Christian tradition."

They were driving home following another late session at Brother Yazzie's shack on the mesa. This time he had offered them mutton stew and fry bread, which Buck interpreted as a change of heart.

They had sat cross-legged on a mattress on the splintered floor, eating in the light of a kerosene lamp. A woodstove sat dormant in the corner, serving as a temporary storage shelf for a bag of Bluebird flour, a cast-iron skillet, and a bucket of Snow Cap lard. Two Mexican felt paintings covered the north wall, one featuring a high mountain lake, the other an Indian maiden, reclining on a buffalo robe. The south wall was covered with school certificates and family photographs in plastic frames: shy-eyed children, smiling graduates, young men in uniform. One 9x12 featured Brother Yazzie holding a lamb beside his late wife Hazdezbah, a wiry woman with a chin like a saddle horn. She was gripping the metal bars of a walker, her eyes like holes punched in crepe paper.

The meal time conversation had been amiable and innocuous. Then Brother Yazzie set his tin plate aside and began wiping his greasy hands on his Levis. "Hey, I hear you missionaries get a thousand dollars for every person you baptize."

Buck unfolded his gargantuan legs and leaned forward defensively. "Wait a minute. Where did you hear that? The church doesn't believe—"

"Relax, John Wayne. I just want you to know, if that's true, you can baptize me tomorrow!"

"Tomorrow?"

"You bet! As long as I get fifty percent!"

Dawson chuckled; Buck impaled him with his eyes.

Brother Yazzie saw a green light. He was just warming up. "Sure, you can ba'tize my 'hoo family—kits, grantkits—" He laid on the Navajo accent extra thick, heavy on the glottals, hard on the consonants. "You gimme fifty percent, and I'll get the 'hoo chapter house in the water."

Later, as their Chevy bounced along the dirt road leading back to town, Buck muttered something about throwing their pearls to the swine.

"Swine? I wouldn't call him—"

"You're the one to talk! Encouraging him like that! Why didn't you just stand up and lead cheers?"

Dawson stared at the moon above the mesa. Desert critters scampered across the zone of headlights.

"Maybe he's just not interested."

"Of course he's interested! Do you think it was on accident that he just happens to be Crystal's grandfather? Do you think it was on accident that Crystal's mother says she can go on Placement if her grandfather says okay? Do you think we found his house in the middle of nowhere purely on accident?"

Buck's eyes darted back and forth between Dawson, the road, Dawson, the road.

"Well, do you?"

Dawson sighed wearily. It was almost ten o'clock. They had been driving around non-stop since noon, fruitlessly knocking on the doors of any shacks or hogans they happened to find. He had exactly six hundred and forty-four days remaining on his mission. He wanted to tell his senior companion that this wasn't the Marines, thank you very much; that people still had their free agency the last he'd heard; that you can't force the Gospel on people no matter how much you fast and pray.

"I guess my view of the cosmos is a little different from yours," he said.

Dibeh-Tkin-Nash-doie-tso-Ah-jah-Tsah-Moasi-Dzeh. Sheep-Ice-Lion-Ear-Needle-Cat-Elk.

The first time they caught him speaking Navajo he got a warning. He was filing through the food line and the kitchen aide had just dropped two sausage links onto his tray. Pointing with his lips, the boy next to him whispered, *"What's that?"* Thomas replied: *"Lechaa'i bichaan."* Dog turds.

Mrs. Porter who had ears like a jackrabbit snapped her fingers and hissed across the room: "No talking Navajo!"

But the moment her back was turned, Thomas leaned down to his friend and muttered defiantly, *"Ma'ii bicheii"*—She's Coyote's grandfather—not realizing that the one they called *Yeitsoh*, the Monster Giant,

was standing behind him.

The next thing he remembered, fingernails were digging into the back of his neck, and a voice was ringing like a cowbell: "Mrs. Porter! Mrs. Porter! This one's talking Navajo again!"

Mrs. Porter with the tumbleweed hair waddled across the room, her mouth an iron frown. "So you like talking Navajo, do you? Well, we'll see about that! Grab hold of him, Dotty!" The Monster Giant pinned his skinny arms behind his back and hauled him out of the cafeteria and into the bathroom. Mrs. Porter squeezed his cheeks until they made a big O. She shoved a bar of soap into his mouth.

"We'll see how much you like talking Navajo now!"

Thomas stuck out his tongue, resisting, but Mrs. Porter crammed the bar in harder, deeper. She ground it against his gritted teeth, twisting and shoving, back and forth, in and out, until the boy thought he might swallow the bar whole.

"That's right, that's right, chew it up good now. Maybe next time you'll think twice before talking that dirt language. Okay, that's good. Let him go, Dotty."

His arms flung out like wings when the Monster Giant released them. Thomas tucked his head into his shoulder, refusing to look the bilagaana woman in the eyes.

"Drink this," Mrs. Porter said, offering him water in a paper cup.

Thomas gulped eagerly, thinking it would help erase the bitter taste. Instead his mouth began foaming like a dog's. He grimaced, gagged, pushed the cup away.

"All of it!" Mrs. Porter commanded.

He sipped slowly, wincing, trying not to confess the pain.

"That's right," Mrs. Porter said, gently now, like a mother comforting her injured child. "Taste good? Maybe we learned a lesson now, didn't we? That's what school's for, isn't it, Mrs. Benally? To learn the lessons of life."

Ma-e-Be-le-sana-Ah-losz-Ah-jah-Gloe-ih-Dzeh-Dibeh-yazzie-Ah-jad. Fox-Apple-Rice-Ear-Weasel-Elk-Lamb-Leg.

Tuesday, August 4th

I think it must be hell sending your kids away. Hell for the kids too. We promise them flush toilets and swimming pools, but what's that to a kid who's never had them before? Shakespeare was wrong: there's nothing sweet about parting. I'll never forget the look on Mom's face when I said goodbye. Dad gave me his manly handshake—"You can turn your life around, son!" Mom gave me a kiss and wiped the imaginary tear from my cheek ten minutes before it even appeared. When I turned to board the plane, she started crying like a baby. I cried, too, but in secret

later on. And I'd wanted to leave home so bad I could taste it—not on a mission, just to get away. It's been four months and I'm still homesick. Still feel like a fish out of water. The language sounds like a string of grunts and glottals, signifying nothing. And the people stare at you like they're angry all the time. Elder Buck says to take it one day at a time. Sure. Like a jail sentence.

Jeha-A-kha-Chindi. Gum-Oil-Devil.

On Sundays he went with his friends to the Catholic church because there was nothing else to do and they always got cookies after. They sat on wooden benches in a rock building, dark and cold like a cave. Cloaked in a grim gown, Father Bob paced up and down the aisles, rustling sheets of paper in one hand, clasping a wooden pointer in the other. And heaven help the poor kid who dozed off under the mumbly-grumbly spell of his long-winded words.

That was the boy's introduction to formal religion. God. Jesus. And all of the suffering wooden people along the walls made him wonder why anyone would worship a God who looked so pale and skinny and weak and miserable. One thing he would always remember: no one in that church, not even Father Bob, ever looked happy.

Moasi-Tlo-chin-A-chin-A-keh-di-glini-Dzeh-Gah-Dibeh-Tkin-Ne-ahs-jah-A-chin. Cat-Onion-Nose-Victor-Elk-Rabbit-Sheep-Ice-Owl-Nose.

He had entered the mission field with a profound conviction that the church was the only true escape from poverty, disease, hopelessness: the truth shall make you free. The rez had tested his hypothesis in ways that even the jungle couldn't. Each dirt yard had a wood pile, a junk pile, and a broken pick-up. Babies having babies. Hangovers for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Peyote drums pounding through the night. So different from back home.

Home. He'd gone from the Marines to the Mission Training Center. Traded one boot camp for another. He was only seventeen when his mother signed the papers. The goon was tapping his foot in the bedroom, waiting for his nightly delights: big lawyer man in a flashy car. It was her one shot at a life of leisure, Caribbean cruises and Wednesday luncheons with the doctors' wives. Salvation from shelving discount jeans at Target. Her window, his door, closed quietly behind him.

He was almost twenty-two when the missionaries told him they had a very important message from his Father in Heaven. Still woozy from a night of bar hopping, he had invited the clean-cut young men to come in, have a seat, a beer. (No thanks on the beer.)

Reading their book, he had experienced the most incredible thing. Like the feeling you get when a hundred thousand people cheer you to-

wards the end zone, or when you're utterly in love. He had never been cheered to an end zone, and he certainly had never been in love. But he imagined this is what it must feel like, because nothing else in his life had ever come close.

Later, the missionaries told him it was the reassuring Spirit of Truth.

Moasi-A-kha-A-chin-Be-Tkin-A-woh-A-chi-Tlo-chin-Tsah-Yeh-hes-A-chin-Ah-tad. Cat-Oil-Nose-Deer-Ice-Tooth-Intestine-Onion-Needle-Itch-Nose-Girl.

They marched everywhere, in single file: to the cafeteria, to the dorm, to class, to the playground, a dirt field with a chicken wire backstop and a jungle gym. In class Mrs. Lynn held up a yellow stick and said, "This is a pencil. Repeat, please." And they would all repeat, "This is a pencil." She held up a small pink thing: "This is an eraser. Repeat, please." And they did. "This is a book. . . . This is a pencil. . . . This is a table. . . . This is a door. . ." Over and over and over again, all day long, ten moons. Summer, fall, winter, spring. Fire, wind, snow, wind, and fire. One day they all boarded the bus for home, but everything had changed forever.

"Explain it to me again."

"All right. Again. He is like the Holy People—the head of the Holy People. We call him God. He is our Father in Heaven."

"He is the Great Spirit?"

"Yes, He is like the Great Spirit. Except he has a body of flesh and bones like us."

"Does he bleed like a man?"

"No, He is God. If He could bleed, He could die. He cannot die; He is immortal."

"Why do you say that he died for our sins?"

"Jesus Christ died for our sins. He is the Son of God. He came to Earth like a man, and He died for our sins. Then He came back to life after three days. We call it the Resurrection. Because of this, we will all come back to life after we die."

"Your God killed Death?"

"Yes. He killed Death."

"Then he is a very powerful God."

"Yes. Very powerful."

Cha-Ne-ahs-jah-Na-as-tso-si-Dzeh-Maosi-A-kha-Tsin-tliti-A-chin-Klizzie. Hat-Owl-Mouse-Elk-Cat-Oil-Match-Ice-Nose-Goat.

His first day back his mother was making fry bread in the shade-house, just like the day he had left home. He quietly observed her familiar movements as she molded a lump of dough into a white ball, patting it back and forth until it flattened into a tortilla. Pleated skirt, dirty white socks drooping around her ankles, velveteen blouse. She looked the same

except for one thing: a thread of gray in her black hair. Just one, but after that every time he looked, they seemed to multiply, like a spider slowly spinning its web.

He thought about Mrs. Lynn, who painted her lips red and smiled like desert flowers and could add and subtract and play the guitar. He spoke English now, and no one else did. He was used to taking showers, but there was no running water. Or toilets. Or books to read or beds to sleep in. He missed the warm water spraying his face and Mrs. Lynn reading stories before and after recess. His grandfather told stories, but he couldn't read them. Not from a book with pictures.

Tsah-Shi-da-Na-as-tso-si-Shush-Dzeh-Gah-Klesh. Needle-Uncle-Mouse-Bear-Elk-Rabbit-Snake.

"I think we can still meet our quota."

Elder Buck spread peanut butter onto two slices of Wonderbread and smashed them together like cymbals. His jaw dropped, and half of the sandwich disappeaared.

Quota. Dawson hated that word. Quotas meant numbers, bean counting, feathers in some bureaucrat's cap. You did quotas when you sold cars or manufactured potato chips. Quota was the voice of his father, the suit-and-tie executive. Quota was so many light years removed from Christ's gospel, he didn't even want to think about it. Feed the hungry, clothe the poor, visit the widows.

"What quota?"

"Two more baptisms this month. I wrote it in my letter to President Baxter. I really think we can do it. If we give Crystal two discussions this week and one on Saturday, we can still make the August deadline. And Brother Yazzie, he'll come around."

"Like I said, what quota?"

"Okay, so maybe quota's the wrong word. Goal. Call it a goal."

Dawson spread a thin layer of strawberry jam on a slice of bread.

"You've got to have faith, Elder. If I've learned anything on my mission, I've learned that. You've got to set a goal and then do it, whatever it takes. No excuses. Like Nephi. God doesn't give a commandment unless He provides a way."

With a paper towel, Dawson wiped the knife clean, like a dipstick. "God's not the one I'm worried about."

Klizzie-yazzie-Tsah-Ne-ahs-jah-Maosi-Ba-ah-ne-di-tinin-Tlo-chin-No-da-ih-Than-zie. Kid-Needle-Owl-Cat-Key-Onion-Ute-Turkey.

The third time the bilagaanas came Hitler was goosestepping across Europe, the Japanese were swarming like locusts all over the South Pa-

cific, and Thomas had just beaten the hell out of a bearded blond giant in the American Legion boxing ring on a sweltering afternoon in Gallup. Ducking between the ropes, he hopped onto the dirt and elbowed his way through the throng of Sunday drunks and soldiers on leave to the private shade of a tarp.

Two men were waiting for him, both in uniform. Khaki shirts and slacks, vertical caps, private's stripes. One was tall, blond, and rangy; the other short and swarthy. They asked his name; he said, "Yazzie." They asked if he was Navajo; he said, "Why?" They asked if he wanted to join the United States Marines; his grin twisted wickedly: "Why in hell would I want to do that?"

They said to defend your country; he said, "You mean *your* country." They said it was a special assignment: communications. That was all they could tell him. He smirked: "You mean like Top Secret?" They said, "Yes. Top Secret."

He thought about the twenty bucks he had coming for knocking out the Viking, barely enough to keep him liquored up for a week. He thought about the day he'd heard the news via the Air-That-Tells-A-Story: *Imperial Empire of Japan . . . Pearl Harbor . . . Day in infamy . . .* And he thought about the day after, how his people had come in droves, the line at the recruiter's table outside the trading post so long you couldn't see the end of it, teenage boys and old men bearing rusted rifles from a century ago. He thought about that night in the hogan, the way he had barked at his grandfather: *"Why do we fight the white man's war?"* He thought about the intense disappointment on his grandfather's face, and his soft reply: *"Is this what they taught you at the boarding school?"* And he thought about how incredibly far he had traveled from the Beautyway of life, although he was less than ninety miles from home.

He shrugged. "Sure. Why the hell not?"

Shush-Gah-A-hka-A-woh-Lin-Dzeh-Dah-nes-tea-Dibeh. Bear-Rabbit-Oil-Tooth-Horse-Elk-Ram-Sheep

"I had a week to go and I was counting the days. Things started happening, weird stuff.

"One day I was in a bamboo thicket when a mortar shell explodes ten feet away. The bamboo shatters like glass. There's nothing left except me sitting in this big, smoking ring of grass, checking myself for holes. The next morning I'm on my belly, under fire. I'm grabbing the dirt, trying to pull myself right into it because a machine gun's sweeping across the field, chopping up my buddies. One by one I see their bodies spasm, like mice caught in traps. It's getting closer, closer, and then it's my turn. I'm praying like crazy to someone or something. And it stops.

"Something like that gets you thinking. There's got to be a reason.

God must be keeping me alive for something. So how about you? Why did you go on a mission?"

"Truthfully?"

"You asked me to level with you. Your turn."

"Heritage."

Dah-nes-tsa-Ah-nah-Bi-so-dih-Nash-doie-tso-Wol-la-chee-Tsah-as-zih. Ram-Eye-Pig-Lion-Ant-Yucca.

First thing off the bus there was Drill Sargeant Driscoll roaring like a lion, so loud and fast they couldn't understand half of what he was saying, but it was something like empty-your-pockets-everything-on-the-ground-all-of-it-not-tomorrow-not-yesterday-NOW-I-mean-NOW!

Pocketknives, sticks of chewing gum, combs, eagle feathers, bits of turquoise and quartz crystal, quarters, pennies, cigarettes, chewing tobacco. Thomas stealthily palmed his pouch of corn pollen, a farewell gift from his grandfather.

Next the Marine Corps shaved their heads as Driscoll told them they weren't worth the dirt ants piss on. They gave them each a number, stamped on metal tags they wore around their necks like animals. They filed through a room where a crew-cut man with August sweat dripping from his jowls gave them each the once over, grabbed pants, shirts, socks, et cetera, off of the shelf and slapped them onto the counter.

They slept in bunk beds, rising way before dawn and eating at long tables in the mess hall. All day they marched and drilled and barked, "Yes, sir!" and "No, sir!" and marched some more and drilled some more, and eight weeks later they all agreed on two things: they were glad it was over, and it really hadn't been that bad: They had all been there before—at the boarding school.

"How do you pay for this thing you call sin? Do you give sheep and goats or blankets?"

"No, we don't pay like that. We pay with our hearts. We pay with our sorrow."

"I think sorrow is cheaper than sheep."

"Then you have not known deep sorrow, my brother."

"Does your God know sorrow?"

"He lost one-third of his children to an evil man."

"Then your God indeed knows sorrow. I have lost five children to the boarding school."

Moasi-A-chi-Gah-Ba-goshi-Ah-jad-Dzeh-Dibeh. Cat-Intestines-Rabbit-Cow-Lamb-Elk-Sheep.

They were ushered into a room with pendant lights in wire cages.

The commanding officer set them at ease. He commended their performance in boot camp and their willingness to serve their country. Then he cleared his raspy throat and told them they had been recruited to develop a secret military code based on the Navajo language.

At first there was dead silence; then a few of them laughed, thinking it was a joke. Others stared in quiet disbelief. Thomas raised his hand.

"Yes, Private?"

He spoke slowly, sarcastically, slurring his words: "While we're s'posed to be makin' up dis coat you're talkin' 'bout, are we allowt to talk Navajo?"

The officer looked surprised, confused. "Why, yes. Of course. How could you possibly develop the code without using your—"

"Or are they going to wash our mouths out with soap?"

Gloe-ih-Be-la-sana-Ah-losz. Weasel-Apple-Rice.

Night was the worst because just when you thought the war had finally exhausted itself, out of a black nowhere they came, howling like coyotes gone mad. They were ghosts, phantoms, the evil *chindii*, and bullets seemed to pass harmlessly through them. They just kept coming, didn't care how many fell or how quickly, just kept coming and coming because that was their way. And the whole time your heart was like a bomb exploding over and over and over again.

Then the captain grabs your arm, throws you to the ground, hot young breath hollering in your ear: "Get on the horn! Send reinforcements to quad two-four-zero, I say again, send reinforcements to quad . . . !" As he scrambles to his feet, a machine gun cuts him in two.

It's your first message in true combat and your mind goes blank. You've got five hundred words stashed in your head, but you can't remember where. You grip the mike and holler into it: "Arizona! Arizona!" Because that's the signal for code talkers. You remember that much. You also remember Sargeant Driscoll warning you this might happen: stay calm, relax, clear your mind. . . . Relax? Sure. With bullets bouncing off your helmet, sawing your buddies in half. You close your eyes and try to think, focus, concentrate. That's the real problem, isn't it? *This is a pencil. . . . This is a book. . . . This is a desk. . . .*

You see nothing but winter sky.

More voices: "Indio! Get that message the hell through to HQ! We're dying out here!"

You try again. You close your eyes and try to see the words in your language because that's how the code works, you say the word in Navajo and the other guy translates it into English. He takes the first letter of each word and strings them together: *Dibeh. Sheep. S. Dzeh. Elk. E. Tsah. Needle. N.* Like that. Or there was the other way, where the words were

metaphors for the thing: *Besh-lo. Iron-fish. Submarine. Ni-ma-si. Potato. Grenade. Oh-behi. Pick 'Em Off. Sniper. Gini. Hawk. Dive Bomber.* Slowly the fog in your head begins to clear, and through the mist you see the silhouettes of animals and objects from your homeland: *Klizzie. Goat. Ca-yeilth. Quiver. Shush. Bear. Lha-cha-eh. Dog.* Soon the words come automatically: *D-ah-Tlo-chin-Dii-Ashih-hi-Tsa-e-donin-ee-Gah-A-kha-Tsin-tliti-Ba-goshi-A-woh-Taa-A-la-ih. . .* TO 4th Division FROM CT 18 SEND REINFORCEMENTS. . . Faster than a fast horse, faster than the bullets flying around you.

An instant later you hear from the other end one word: *Gah!* Rabbit. Roger. Message received. And within minutes that still seem like hours you hear them charging to the rescue. Arms, legs, rifles, helmets. A six-foot-six Marine crashing through the jungle. He rams his bayonet into the belly of a Jap, lifts and heaves him aside like a bale of hay.

But it's not over: You turn, see a skeleton in light brown sprinting through the smoke, bayonet lowered, and an American boy ten feet away twisting to fire but a moment too late: he rolls over, stares blankly at the kaleidscope of black and gray, a fang of blood hanging from his mouth. And the Japanese soldier is still coming, his mouth a giant hole. You tear back the flap on your holster, discharge your .45 without aiming because you can see the silver point of his bayonet coming at you like a star of destruction. He stops, flies backwards as if he'd jerked the reins of a horse galloping full speed. He rolls onto his back beside the dead American.

Later, you will remember two things: A young officer patting you on the back, "Good work, Geronimo! You saved our butt!" And the faces of the blue-eyed boy and the Japanese soldier who killed him, lying side by side, like young lovers. Taking silent inventory, you note how much more you look like the Jap than the American.

You won't be the only one to think so.

Ne-ahs-jah-Cla-gi-aih-Bi-so-dih-Tlo-chin-Klesh-Tkin-A-woh-Yeh-hes-Tlo-chin-A-chin. Owl-Pant-Pig-Onion-Snake-Ice-Tooth-Itch-Onion-Nose.

Another late nighter at Brother Yazzie's. This time Dawson was at the wheel.

"I thought it went well tonight," Buck said.

"Sure. . . if you like army talk."

"He asked about Captain Moroni."

"So you spend the rest of the night talking about Boot Camp?"

"At least we know he's reading the book. And how was I supposed to know he was in the service?"

"So now you two are all buddy-buddy, semper fi."

"I'm sorry if you felt left out."

"I didn't feel left out."

"Then why are you acting weird all of a sudden?"

"I'm not acting weird all of a sudden."

"Half of that's a true statement."

"Suddenly you're Don Rickles?"

They covered the next mile in silence, Dawson grinding his teeth, a nervous habit that manifested itself whenever he wanted to pick a fight.

"Have you ever asked yourself why the church of eternal families is taking kids from their real families and sending them off to live with strangers? I mean, don't you find that just a little ironic, not to mention hypocritical?"

"No, I don't find the Indian Placement Program ironic—or hypocritical. Or any other program that was inspired by God."

"*Was* is the million dollar word! *Was* inspired! Placement started when boarding schools were the only game in town."

"Better a good Mormon home than a government boarding school."

"Right! But now they've got day schools. They don't have to—"

"Sure, like that junkhouse in Nazlini."

"That's not the point!"

"Then what is the point?"

"The point is taking Navajo kids from their homes and turning them into book-toting, movie-going bilagaanas! The point is tearing Navajo families apart!"

"We're not tearing them apart. We're trying to seal them together—for eternity. They can't be saved in ignorance."

"Sometimes I think we're the ones who are ignorant!"

"And sometimes we have to make sacrifices now to reap the fulness of the blessings later. You've seen what their culture's gotten them. A dirt floor, an outhouse, and a monthly check from Washington. The church is their only hope—"

"The church! You say that as if the church is some person who can wave a magic wand and make everything all better. The church is an institution run by men—"

"Who are inspired by God, Who really can make everything better—if we do His work!

"Look, if Crystal gets baptized and goes on Placement, maybe she'll go to BYU and marry in the temple. Then her children will be born in the covenant. She could do temple work for her ancestors clear back to the beginning of time! She could be the first link in Malachi's eternal chain. Isn't that worth a little homesickness? A temporary separation?"

Dawson rested his forehead on the steering wheel and momentarily let the pick-up guide itself. "Elder, have you ever once in your life not talked like a scripture?"

"We made a sacrifice coming on our mission, but it's worth it, isn't it?

You wonder sometimes, especially at first. Maybe you're wondering now. But if you tough it out, thrust in your sickle—"

"I'm nineteen; she's twelve."

"The principle's the same."

"I just wonder how those Mormon moms in Provo and Salt Lake would feel about shipping *their* ten-year-olds off to another state. Maybe they wouldn't be so quick to call it inspiration!"

They coasted around a long, sloping curve flanked on one side by a whale-shaped rock. Near the shoulder, a flock of crows was feasting on the innards of a side-swiped cow. Buck spoke softly, gently, as if he were trying to calm a spooked horse.

"Elder, who's paying for your mission?"

Dawson replied cautiously, smelling a trap. "My dad. Why?"

"That' s what I thought."

"Why do I have the sneaking suspicion this is all due to the fact that you've got ninety-eight baptisms and you're going home in two weeks?"

"That's got nothing to do with it!"

"It's got everything to do with it! Sure it does! Elder Buck gets one hundred baptisms, which means that Elder Buck is a super missionary, which means that Elder Buck's calling and election are surely made sure! Never mind that ninety-nine percent of those baptisms were eight- and nine-year-old kids who had no idea what they were getting themselves into."

"That's a lie!"

"Count 'em, chief!"

Buck stared at the windshield where the night bugs were committing suicide in spookily stellar patterns. He began mentally connecting them: Orion, the Big Dipper, Sagittarius . . .

"Okay, and why do I have the sneaking suspicion this all has something to do with the fact that while I was risking my butt for my country, you and your chicken pals were waxing your surfboards at Malibu?"

Dawson exploded. He was hyperventilating. "You—you—you don't know what the hell you're talking about! You are so far off the mark right now you couldn't find the bull's eye if it was painted on your nose!"

"Elder—"

"Don't call me Elder!"

"Okay. Fine. But just answer me one question: what gives you the right to deny Crystal or anyone else the blessings of eternity?"

"I still do not understand."

"That is because I did not explain it well the first time. Sin is when we destroy harmony between God and man."

"That is not good to destroy harmony with the Holy People."

"No, that is not good."

"Is this why you must be put under water?"

"Yes. We are baptized to restore harmony with God. We promise God we will live in peace and beauty always."

"And what happens if we destroy harmony after we go under the water?"

"That is why we have a Savior. We call Him Jesus Christ."

Klizzie-Tse-gah-A-kha-Dibeh-A-woh-Klesh. Goat-Hair-Oil-Sheep-Tooth-Snake.

The night after Brother Yazzie's sixth missionary discussion, Jacob Hamblin appeared to Elder Dawson in a dream. He had just stepped out of the shower and was hooking a towel around his waist when the bearded frontiersman materialized. He spoke kindly but firmly: "You're doing it all wrong, Elder."

"Doing what wrong?"

"This." He reached up and made a sharp pulling motion with his fisted hand.

Dawson shook his head, tongue-tied. "I don't . . . understand."

"Of course you don't. You speak it but you don't think it yet. You've got to feel it first—here." He tapped his fist against his chest.

Suspecting the midnight visitor might be an evil spirit, Dawson raised his right arm to the square, to command him to get lost.

Brother Jacob ripped the towel from Dawson's body. "Don't trifle with me, son."

Dawson covered himself with both hands, like a soccer player defending against a goal kick.

"The way you feel right now, that's how they feel—that's how they've been feeling for a hundred and fifty years."

Dawson tried to square his shoulders, stand tall.

"You still don't get it, do you?" Brother Jacob plucked a six-shooter out of the air, aimed it at Dawson's crossed hands, and cocked the hammer.

"I get it," Dawson said.

Brother Hamblin lowered the pistol. "Just remember. It's their book—Mannaseh. Ephraim can read it too, or whoever else, but it's written to them. We're just playing piggy back. You understand?"

Dawson nodded stiffly.

"Is that a yes?"

"Yes, sir."

Klizzie-Dah-nes-tsa-Be-la-sana-D-ah-Tkin-A-woh-Shi-da-Be-Ah-jah. Goat-Ram-Apple-Tea-Ice-Tooth-Uncle-Deer-Ear.

He was sitting on the dirt floor watching as the snow slowly buried his mother's hogan. She called to him from the other side of the wood-

stove: *"Shiyaazh? What's the matter, my son? What's troubling you?"*

He shrugged, muttered. He had been home for over a year and still nothing. He had even gone to the boarding school where a bearded Paul Bunyan scrutinized his application. "Sorry. I'd like to help you out, but I don't have a thing." Turning, Thomas had noticed a smile hatching in the dirty nest on Paul Bunyan's face. "Now if the janitor quits on me . . ." Slipping his hand inside his shirt, Thomas had felt for holes. Found a scar. Old, oozing. That he was in uniform had only salted the wound.

"It hurts me to see you this way," his mother lamented. *"It is not good for you."* The winter-stripped cottonwoods looked like old women in mourning; the wind was their voices wailing for the dead. He closed his eyes.

It started as a distant purr that seemed to brush against him seductively, like a lover's caress. As it gained volume, he realized it was not the gentle sound of female rain, but the crazed voice of war. He watched as their banner crowned the snow dunes: a big blood stain on a white field. It was followed by a plague of giant insects in black boots and khaki, bayonets and sabers flashing. Angry holes emitted a terrible word: *Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!*

He heard his grandfather calling from the shadehouse where winter had suddenly vanished. The old man staggered outside, waving his black felt hat at the sheep moving all too slowly towards the corral.

Then bugles and thunder. Bluecoats on horseback gained the ridge, angling towards a point midway between the corral and the attackers. Thomas's heart soared at the sight of the stars and stripes rippling at the forefront. Fist clenched, shaking it: "Get 'em! Get the bastards!"

But the two swarms didn't collide in a frenzied mix of smoke and blood. Rather, it was a beautifully choreographed blend of tan and blue that rolled like a great wave towards the corral.

He heard the first shot, saw the red dot blossom into a bloody sun. His grandfather waved his arms desperately: *"Why are you doing this? Why are you killing my children? Why are you doing this terrible thing?"*

Tkin-A-chin-Than-zie-Dzeh-Gah-Bi-so-dih-Dah-nes-tsa-Ah-jah-D-ah-Ah-nah-Ah-losz. Ice-Nose-Turkey-Elk-Rabbit-Pig-Ram-Ear-Tea-Eye-Rice.

Sometime after midnight Elder Buck was awakened by a persistent scratching at the door. Cracking it, he was surprised to see the little town sleeping under a blanket of snow.

I'm dreaming, he thought, reminding himself to write everything down as soon as he woke up: his patriarchal blessing had promised that, if he kept himself unspotted, he would interpret dreams even as Joseph of Egypt.

This one was easy: the white field ready for harvest. God's lost children waiting for the Gospel. He simply had to thrust in the sickle of

sweat, faith, and perseverance.

A red spot appeared in the middle of the field, quickly spreading into a circle: the Lamanite rose blossoming.

But not so fast. The smooth surface began to buckle. Cracks appeared as it split into multiple, fluttering parts.

Chickens, he thought, amused at first. Little white ones. Millions. It reminded him of those PBS specials where a pink savannah suddenly transforms into flamingos in flight.

But the fluttering grew frantic as a dark shadow stretched across the valley like an alien invader. Looking up, Buck was relieved to see that the eclipsing agent was a giant hand swooping down to scoop up the birds.

He smiled. Fear not, little flock. How often have I come down to gather you up as a hen gathereth her chickens, but ye would not . . .

The rose became liquid, bubbling. A fountain of blood.

Then he heard the first of many screams, not human, but not animal either. Certainly not a chicken sound. He watched in horror as the thumb and forefinger of the condescending hand pinched a chicken's body until its head popped like a pimple. It pinched another, squeezed, and another. A screaming snow-flurry filled the screen in Buck's head as the hand continued reaching, squeezing, popping.

Buck grabbed a shovel and charged the murdering hand. He buried the blade between the thumb and forefinger. As he withdrew the blade, a slit appeared. It slowly widened into a mouth which spoke: "Forgive him, Father, he doesn't have a clue."

The next morning Buck cut himself shaving five times.

Dibeh-Dzeh-Ah-jah-Gah-Sheep-Elk-Ear-Rabbit.

His last trip to the city he was standing alone outside Wal-Mart waiting for his daughter. He thought he must look like one of those wooden Indians he used to poke fun at outside the old curio shops on Route 66. Smiling, he closed his eyes and enjoyed the warmth of the sun on his wrinkled face.

It wasn't long before his peace was broken by the noxious sound of war: loud, pounding words and music without meaning. A pick-up rolled up in front of him, the noise blasting out both windows. The passenger door swung open, and a Navajo boy climbed out. One side of his head was shaved to the skin, the other side was long and droopy. He was wearing baggy blue jeans, like a rodeo clown, and a black t-shirt with a dagger buried in a skull. Two gold pins winked in his nose. He waddled towards the storefront with sunken shoulders, his belly jiggling.

Thomas knew better, but he couldn't help it. As the boy approached, he spoke to him in Navajo: *"Hello, my grandson! Hello! My grandson, I want to ask you a question. Why are you doing these things to yourself? Why are you*

behaving this way? Do you not respect yourself and your family? Why are you doing these things to your face and your hair and your body?" The boy stared at him strangely. His smile twisted into a smirk, and Thomas realized he didn't understand a word he had said. Ya'at'eeh maybe. Nothing more.

Dibeh-yazzie-Tkin-Klizie-Lin-Than-zie. Lamb-Ice-Goat-Horse-Turkey.

Thursday August 25

Today we're fasting for Brother Yazzie. In Elder Buck's words, so his heart will be softened, so he'll John Hancock the papers for Crystal to go on placement. I don't think "soften" is the right word. Eventually you realize there's laughter beneath those faces. If their mouths appear to twist downward, I think we can thank history for that. Things taken and never returned.

Elder Buck sees it differently: the Book of Mormon prophecies come true. A degenerate people scourged by the gentiles. Only the Gospel will save them. But just because something has been prophesied, does that give one group the right to harm and humiliate another? The Bible said the Jews would be persecuted? Was that a justification for death camps. We think we corner the market on truth, but the other day as we were leaving Brother Yazzie's, a rattlesnake coiled up in the doorway. He said something to it in Navajo—softly, as if he were talking to a pet. It uncoiled and slithered away. Don't tell me that's the devil at work. There's got to be something amazing, something deeply good in that. When he speaks Navajo, it sounds like a prayer, even if he's just calling to his sheep. Elder Buck's praying for Brother Yazzie to see the light. I'm not sure what I'm praying for, but I think it's the opposite.

"Tell me again about the bread and the water. You pray to your God, then you eat a piece of bread and drink a tiny bit of water, and that is all. Hardly enough to fill even a small child's belly. I do not understand."

"The bread and the water are called the sacrament. It is a ceremony, like the Blessingway or the Nightway."

"You have sacred songs and sandpaintings?"

"We have special prayers, and like your special prayers, every word must be perfect."

"And this is how you restore harmony, when someone makes a sin?"

"Yes, this is how we restore harmony. Jesus Christ made this possible when he sweat blood for us in the Garden of Gethsemane."

"Why did he do this thing for us."

"He did it because He loves us. He did it because He is our older brother."

"That is a very great thing."

"Yes. Very great."

"Because He is our older brother and He loves us."

"Yes. Because he loves us."

Bi-so-dih-Gah-Ne-ahs-jah-Na-as-tso-si-Tkin-Dibeh-Dzeh. Pig-Rabbit-Owl-Mouse-Ice-Sheep-Elk.

Thomas rose from his mattress and limped out to the hill behind his home where he usually said his morning prayers to Talking God. Gazing up at the heavens, he thought about his grandfather, who had been a star-gazer. People used to come to him to learn the cause of their ailments, and he would read their answers in the sky. His grandfather used to say the stars were the fires of the Holy People, and he had taught Thomas how to connect them to make pictures, each one telling a story. The pictures were a milky blur now, and he wondered if it was just his old man's eyes, or were the fires of the Holy People dying, and if so, who could possibly re-light them?

Thomas knelt down as Elder Buck had instructed. He was supposed to ask the Great Spirit if the gamilii book was true. He was supposed to ask if it was all right for Crystal to go away to school and live with a gamilii family. He bowed his head; he closed his eyes. But instead of the bearded white God of the bilagaanas, he saw the sad face of his father the day he returned home from the boarding school. He was passed out in a ditch by the trading post. One hand was pinned beneath his hip, the other was clutching the neck of a brown bottle. His shirt was ripped open, his face was scrunched against the sand, and his eyes were closed forever.

Wola-la-chee-A-woh-Ne-ahs-jah-Tsah-Dzeh-Na-as-tso-si-Ah-jah-A-chin-Than-zie. Ant-Tooth-Owl-Needle-Elk-Mouse-Ear-Nose-Turkey.

The third night of his fast, Elder Buck couldn't sleep. Shortly after midnight, he slipped outside, hiked to the top of a nearby butte, and presented his case to God. The evening rain had relaxed the grip of the earth, releasing the scent of wet sagebrush. The scattered lights of town looked like boats anchored in a still harbor.

He knelt down, his knees sinking into the soft clay. He bowed his head but couldn't bring himself to break the exquisite silence. He knew how to begin—*Father in Heaven*—but he didn't know where to go. Should he repent, apologize, plead for faith, hope, patience? Or a miracle?

He gazed down at the little town, wondering how God perceived it from on high. Was it just another collection of lights smeared across the windshield of eternity? Or did He truly know every hair on every head? Did He see drunks kissing the sand, their only treasure the glitter of broken glass on bootlegger hill? Or the old women weaving spider magic on their wooden looms? Or both?

Buck wept: he had wanted to baptize hundreds, thousands. He had

thought that if he could just show them the book, read them passages in their language, they too would feel the gospel miracle and the Spirit would spread across the reservation like wildfire. But now it seemed so futile! Hopeless! The kids—the kids were their only hope, and *their* only hope was to get off the rez, into a good Latter-day Saint home: carpets, Family Home Evening, scripture study. Skateboards and high school proms, Boy Scouts and Superactivities. Structure, discipline, a peek beyond the mesas. Wasn't that right? Wasn't it? Didn't the children of Israel have to wander forty years in the wilderness until the old people all died off, victims of the false traditions of their fathers? Only then could the younger generation, unperverted by the Egyptian fleshpots, move in.

Buck remained on his knees: twice the clouds devoured the moon, sprinkling water on his head. When he opened his eyes, a dark red line divided the mesa from the sky. It widened slowly, like lips parting. An answer, he thought. But it became a lizard tongue, quickly licking up the stars.

Dibeh-No-da-ih-Tsah-Moasi-Cha-Wola-la-chee-Klesh-Dzeh-Gah. Sheep-Ute-Needle-Cat-Hat-Ant-Snake-Elk-Rabbit.

Thomas turned to the east where a red crack had appeared along the mesa. He sprinkled white corn pollen, first to the east, then to the south, the west, and finally to the north. Stretching his arms to the eastern sky, he thanked the Holy People for the beauty of the Earth, for wood to build a fire, for sheep to clothe and feed his body, for rain to nourish his cornfield. He thanked them for the honor of being a warrior and a father and a friend. He thanked them for the good times, memories, the all-night ceremonies and town trips and long winter nights with Hazdezbah. He thanked them for the simple joy of teaching his children how to ride a horse, swing an ax, throw a rope.

It had been years since he had joined the early morning runners on their jaunt east to greet Dawn Boy, and he never saw one these days. But he began trotting down the rugged slope leading towards town. At first his old bones seemed to crack with each footfall, and the rocks bit right through his K-Mart sneakers. Sucking in the smell of after-rain and predawn fire, he saw his daughter Verna at age twelve running to meet the rising sun on the final morning of her *kinaalda*. The voices of the medicine man and his singers were chanting as her buckskin calves moved swiftly through the morning air. She was wearing turquoise and silver jewelry and a velveteen blouse as red as the sky. She was yelling as she ran, her younger brothers and sisters and cousins running along behind. She was yelling to Dawn Boy, to White Shell Woman, to Talking God and the other Holy People. She was yelling to make her voice powerful and running to make her body strong; her hair flowing behind her like a black

banner, a flag of anything but surrender.

Thomas jogged past the Begay's hogan where the sheep in the corral stared dumbly at him. A rooster screeched, and another. He continued running, gathering speed, towards the cottonwood trees choking the mouth of the canyon. He cut across the paved highway and headed up a long, barren stretch. He ran boldly now, counting cadence in Navajo: *t'aala'i . . . naaki . . . taa . . . dii . . . ashdla . . .* He wondered if he would see Elder Buck or Dawson along the way or the Man-Who-Talks-With-God they call Moroni. Anyone. Anyone at all. He would go, lead or follow. His lungs were gasping , but he felt no fatigue; his feet were bleeding, but he felt no pain. He was running, running, running towards a golden notion growing in the sky.

Dragging Fanny

for Fanny J. Crosby (1820-1915)

Paul Swenson

Her last hymn in the book—and they're dragging it.
Behold, her royal army's old. Band of stragglers,
banners furled, tired voices buckling the pews.

Say what you will about Fanny
with her military metaphors
and her pentecostal zeal.
She rode like a Valkyrie
through the placid
field of male
menopausal
music
we call
The Songs of Zion.
She put her ass on the line.

Victory, victory, through him
that redeemed us. Victory, victory
through Jesus Christ, our Lord!
Victory, victory, victory . . .

The song's a deathmarch now.
She didn't know the foe
advancing would stab
her with her own
baton there on
the field
of battle. No knife, no sword could cut like this.

She'd rock 'n roll her grave to save
"A Royal Army" from this drag-ass beat.

Wandering Souls in a Familiar Valley

The Tabernacle Bar. By Susan Palmer (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997).

Reviewed by Sally Bishop Shigley, Associate Professor of English, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah.

IN PROSE THAT CAN HUM ALTERNATELY with the wry empathy of Barbara Kingsolver and the lyricism of Leslie Marmon Silko, Susan Palmer's *The Tabernacle Bar* explores the spiritual dilemmas of the citizens both in and outside of the Mormon fold in Bridger, a thinly disguised version of Logan, Utah. As Jessie Cannon, the novel's protagonist, runs short of the bullying bravado that has sustained her in a one-woman resistance movement against the Mormon hegemony of her happy family, she searches for something else to give meaning to her life. Living as a thirty-year-old, single, alcohol-using, sexually active woman with the venerated family name of Cannon, Jessie feels at the novel's opening as if she has almost run out of things to do to shock her family. Having defined her life for so long as one who was not Mormon, not reverent, not worthy, she begins to have an identity crisis when her behavior ceases to rankle.

Lucky for the reader, her grandfather, a stake patriarch famed for his wisdom and prescient patriarchal blessings, dies and, to her family's horror, leaves her his house and all of his assets. Initially horrified at the thought that he is working from the grave on some elaborate plot to bring her back into the fold, Jessie uses her inheritance as the perfect opportunity for the *coup de grace* of her anti-establishment behavior. She not only buys the infamous Tabernacle Bar, just a stone's throw from its religious namesake, but in an act of blasphemous defiance, orders a stone replica of the angel Moroni to sit above its door.

The ensuing turmoil fuels the bulk of the novel's subsequent action and provides the synecdoche for the spiritual struggles of all of the main characters in the story. Like Jessie, they have all found that the strategies that have patched together the first halves of their lives are not close enough to sustain them into middle age. Their various quests cross paths at the door to Jessie's infamous watering hole. Nephi, Jessie's high school sweetheart and sometime lover, is a Native American of mixed blood who faces the trauma of his abandonment and his mother's alcoholism through a haze of Jim Beam and marijuana. Melody Stardust (one of Palmer's more heavy-handed names), daughter of a New Age psychic, comes to the desert with Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* as a map and finds herself in a whirlwind romance with both Jessie's returned missionary brother Daniel and the Book of Mormon. Max Logan, ex-navy submariner and active Lothario, comes to Bridger to score

with the blonde Utah beauties who starred in the stories of his fellow sailors and finds himself lost without the rules of the military to order his life. Ben Cody, Korean War vet and Zen bartender, tries to find serenity in the splash of the water in the bar sink, but needs more than his Tai Chi and Bridger can offer.

Palmer's strength is her characterization, as she deftly plots the paths of her searchers without creating a Cache Valley *Pilgrim's Progress*. She makes especially good use of her omniscient narrator, taking us on one particularly illuminating journey into the dreams of all of the central characters. The dreams themselves are recounted in lush, fantastic detail and, they provide leading, but not obvious, foreshadowing to the novel's falling, final action. Jessie, especially, recalls Taylor Greer from Kingsolver's *Bean Trees* and *Pigs in Heaven* as her defiant, tomboy exterior only partially masks the troubled female heart that is easily and often wounded. Early in the novel, Palmer seems to almost overdo the sarcasm that Jessie levels at the Mormons and, for a couple of pages, the reader (even a non-Mormon one raised in Utah) feels almost compelled to defend them against her venom. As Jessie's character evolves, however, Mormonism is totemic of the search for a kind of instant meaning that all of the characters seek. Neither Mormonism nor Buddhism, nor alcohol, nor any packaged remedy is going to cure the spiritual nausea that these characters feel. It is only through their various and individual combinations of vulnerability and action and faith that these characters start down paths that feel genuine to them.

The Tabernacle Bar could verge easily into the kind of novel that preaches, but it doesn't. Although at times the plot dances around the edges of melodrama, Palmer saves us from this soapy fate by putting believable, human doubts and rages and confusions into the mouths of her characters. Maintaining a perfect level of ironic distance from her initially anti-Mormon protagonist, Palmer adroitly questions the place of spirituality, divine guidance, and faith in the lives of people at the end of the twentieth century. Mormonism in the novel receives its share of criticism, especially for the kind of judgmental version Jessie's family tends to practice, but the Buddhism of Ben, the shamanism of the ironically named Nephi, and the hedonism of Max leave them equally empty. Nephi's Native American mentor at one point in the novel muses that Nephi doesn't know where he hurts and that is why he cannot make any spiritual progress in his life. All of the characters share the same fate. Each one must acknowledge what hurts and make peace with the paths the others take to find relief before any of them can stop fighting with themselves and move on.

Palmer's narrator takes an ecumenical view of things spiritual, believing in the power of spirituality itself, but never really privileging the paths of organized channels people choose as a route to the spirit. She provides an insightful and often hilarious, often sad look at the wandering souls in a valley that looks physically familiar to Utahns, but contains profound and complicated spiritual and psychological mystery that is definitely worth a second look.

A Test Case for Heresy and Gender Discourse

The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy. By Terry L. Givens (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

The Antipolygamy Controversy in U.S. Women's Movements, 1880-1925: A Debate on the American Home. By Joan Smyth Iversen (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997).

Reviewed by Jana K. Riess, Ph.D. candidate in American religious history, Columbia University, New York City.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY saw the rise and fall of many "crusades" that have been painstakingly examined by scholars, including abolition, temperance, and nativism. Yet the equally important campaigns to eradicate polygamy and stem the tide of Mormonism have been sorely neglected by historians. In 1997 two outstanding books appeared which correct that oversight by examining different aspects of anti-Mormonism in the nineteenth century.

The first, Terryl Givens's *Viper on the H rth,* successfully blends cultural history, literary criticism, and social theory. Givens's book fills a real void in the often insular field of Mormon history by illuminating broad connections between early Mormonism and American culture. Givens is far more interested in the portrayal of Mormonism than in traditional Mormon history. Often, he says, it is people's *perceptions* that determine the course of events. It is these perceptions—how Mormonism was constructed and subsequently demonized by outsiders—which form the core of this book. Mormonism becomes a case study for the much larger story of how those in power construct categories of "heresy" to define their adversaries.

Givens uses fiction as a lens to gauge the depth and nature of the anxieties of non-Mormon Americans in the nineteenth century. He draws important literary connections between anti-Mormon literature of the nineteenth century and literature that excoriated other groups, especially Catholics. Similar tropes appear, such as the concern with libidinous sexuality or the fear of untempered ecclesiastical tyranny. Givens's key agenda is to determine what identity Mormonism's detractors derived from presenting Mormons as heterocultural. Givens transcends earlier studies by not simply noting how novelists used the same rhetorical devices to castigate both groups, but in exploring the ways in which Mormons resisted the ethnic stereotypes so easily heaped onto antebellum Catholics. Mormons were, as Givens tells us, only "quasi ethnic." Part of American culture's discomfort about Mormons resulted from what anthropologists might term their "liminality"; as an indigenous American religion, nineteenth-century Mormonism occupied the dangerous interstices between American and un-American, Christian and apostate, civilized and heathen. Mormons looked too much like their neighbors to be easily exoticized.

Givens insists that Mormons were excoriated from the beginning for religious reasons, more than for the social or cultural differences that are generally blamed for anti-Mormon sentiment (58). Givens downplays the

impact of social practices such as polygamy, which was not publicly acknowledged until 1852, arguing instead that Mormonism was dangerous for its radical reinterpretation of accepted religious truth. This is an important assertion, but Givens may deemphasize polygamy too severely as a reason for hating Mormons. Although Mormons denied the charges that they were practicing polygamy throughout the 1840s, and the *Nauvoo Expositor* was destroyed to publicly prove their point, the very fact that they were forced to deny such charges demonstrates that such rumors were common. Even far-off Adventists evidently heard these rumors; an editorial in the 26 August 1846 edition of the *Advent Herald* wrote of the late Hyrum Smith's "being covetous of [another man's] wife" whom he succeeded in seducing and "making . . . his victim." Rumors were circulating about polygamy for almost a full decade before 1852. And as Givens himself tells us, rumor is "an active ingredient" in shaping public opinion (14).

Another criticism of *Viper* is that this topic deserves more conscious attention to gender issues. In chapter 6 ("Ground in the Presbyterian Smut Machine"), Givens points to a number of elements which combined to give rise to the success of anti-Mormon fiction, including changes in print media and the explosion of the penny press. But he misses a key aspect of this revolution, which is the new role of women as both consumers and producers of this new literature. Even a partial list of some of the authors Givens cites—Harriet Beecher Stowe, Maria Monk, Mary Martha Sherwood, Victoria Metta Fuller, Ann Radcliffe, Grace Kennedy, Maria Sedgwick, Cornelia Paddock, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Orvilla Beslisle, Jennie Switzer, Alfreda Bell, and so on—indicates that *women* helped to set the tone of anti-Mormon discourse. Moreover, women's fears about Mormonism sometimes differed from men's.

Our other book under consideration deals explicitly with gender and its impact on the anti-Mormon crusade and, as such, makes for a valuable companion volume to *Viper.* Joan Smyth Iversen's *The Antipolygamy Crusade in U.S. Women's Movements* explores nearly half a century of American women's changing discourse about marriage, womanhood, and suffrage. As part of a series on the development of American feminism, this book's primary concern is to employ gender analysis to understand the antipolygamy crusade.

As Iversen points out, Mormonism continually muddied the clear waters of Victorian gender discourse. Mormon women were "supposed" to be oppressed by polygamy, yet they exercised suffrage half a century before women could vote nationally, owned property, and enjoyed lenient territorial divorce laws. Suffrage advocates could not agree on how to address the complex issues raised by Mormon women. Iversen traces woman suffrage on a national scale and in Mormon Utah, where plural wives like Emmeline Wells sought to forge alliances with national suffragists like Susan B. Anthony.

The woman suffrage movement, already divided after the Fifteenth Amendment granted the vote to black men but not to women, experienced further discord over the presence of polygamous suffragists. An antipolygamy crusade, led and mobilized by women, gathered force in the 1880s

with petitions, rallies, and a national network of various antipolygamy groups. Iversen explores the way antipolygamy split the already fragile suffrage movement. In the 1882 Edmunds Bill, for example, Mormon women were disfranchised as well as polygamous men, and antipolygamists (who were often suffragists) could not agree on whether disfranchising Mormon women was a step forward for moral womanhood or a defeat for woman suffrage.

Iversen has clearly read widely in Mormon history and U.S. women's history, and is aware of the major historiographical issues in both fields. One of her richest chapters explores the discourse of antipolygamy; like Givens, she uses fiction and "proto-pornographic" anti-Mormon tracts as windows to understand the anxieties of American culture (135). Iversen follows the story through the early twentieth century to examine how antipolygamy discourse changed. Whereas the antipolygamy campaigns of 1882 and 1898 flourished and attracted widespread popular support, women's efforts to expel Reed Smoot from the Senate in 1905 failed because the discourse of Victorian womanhood had shifted. In its place, Iversen, drawing on the work of Gail Bederman, argues a "masculine backlash" appeared which heralded the strength of manliness as the crux of civilization. President Theodore Roosevelt publicly defended Smoot and Mormonism in a national magazine, much to the disappointment of antipolygamy activists. Antipolygamy soon faded as a national preoccupation "because its fundamental assumptions about womanhood and marriage were themselves transformed" (255).

Iversen's book is not as theoretically nuanced as Givens's, and many of the complex issues she raises could use further development. However, it is clearly presented and impressively researched in both primary and secondary material. (Unfortunately, its $60 price tag may keep it out of reach for individual readers.) Both Iversen and Givens have made great contributions to our understanding of anti-Mormonism as a test case for larger issues, such as the construction of heresy and the framing of gender discourse.

Celebrating Utah's Centennial

Charter for Statehood: The Story of Utah's State Constitution. By Jean Bickmore White. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996).

Reviewed by M. Guy Bishop, adjunct instructor of Utah history, Salt Lake Community College.

CHARTER FOR STATEHOOD chronicles Utah's constitutional history from its territorial days through the present. Dr. White, emeritus professor of political science at Weber State University, employs her vast skills in state and local history and constitutional law to

tell the often intriguing and occasionally frustrating tale of Utah's evolution from the generally distrusted Mormon commonwealth of Deseret through nearly fifty years of undesired territorial status to the final achievement of statehood in 1896.

Readers of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* may wonder why this book, clearly Utah history, *not*, strictly speaking, Mormon history, is being reviewed here? I pondered this question myself at first. But, in many ways, Utah history and Mormon history are inextricably joined. Simply put: you can't have one, this reviewer concludes, without the other. True, the physical region that is today's Utah would exist with or without the Latter-day Saints, but would it really be the same place?

As Jean White makes abundantly clear throughout, the contributions of Mormon culture and beliefs are readily apparent in Utah's constitutional history from 1847 on. One fascinating aspect of *Charter for Statehood* which should appeal to both Utah and Mormon historians (it's my assumption that the two are divisible) is the author's thorough biographical sketches of the delegates to Utah's constitutional convention (see the appendix).

A majority of the delegates was, predictably, LDS. The non-Mormons ("gentiles") were dominated by the presence of mining interests, lawyers, and Protestant clergymen—notably Park City mining magnate Thomas F. Kearns, attorney Dennis Eichnor, and the Rev. George P. Miller, a Methodist Episcopal minister from Sevier County. The Mormon church was represented by several high-ranking churchmen like John Henry Smith, Moses Thatcher, Presiding Bishop William B. Preston, and Brigham H. Roberts. Smith was unanimously elected to preside over the meeting. Many lower-ranking church leaders were also numbered among the delegates. These varied representatives—wealthy and middle class; Mormon and gentile; farmer, stockman, banker, and merchant alike—all primarily sought the attainment of statehood. None wished, in the author's words, to "jeopardize" this goal (54).

Of the Utah state constitution, White observes, "it clearly was a product of its time and place" (46). It diligently tried to address issues like the state's aridity (through favorable land and irrigation laws), concerns over natural resources (particularly water, minerals, and timber), the separation of church and state, and attempted successfully to bridge the often troubling gap between Utah's Mormon and non-Mormon residents.

White's concluding chapter, "Fitting the Constitution to the Future," addresses many issues of present interest to Utahns—taxation and revenues, funding of public schools, pay for state legislators, and the urban-versus-rural distribution of political power and the state's economic resources. The many efforts at constitutional revision, so evident in the twentieth century, are also treated in this chapter.

Charter for Statehood is generously illustrated with many appropriate, yet relatively unknown, photographs. It contains a selected bibliography of the topic which should prove useful for future students of Utah constitutional history. As part of the University of Utah Press's Centennial Series, this book provides a fine addition to the

state's one-hundred-year celebration. Jean Bickmore White and the press are to be congratulated on their efforts. This book makes a solid contribution to the literature of Utah's statehood centennial.

If the Din of Cities Makes the Moon

M. Shayne Bell

If the din of cities makes the moon
shine dimly in the night;
if the touch of concrete and tin
drowns the sound of water;
if the sight of cheap billboards
masks the fragrance of all daisies
or the taste of chokecherries
picked on hot, fall days:

Put down the basket and walk away.
Stand silent through the blush of dusk,
and later, in the cold of night,
kneel on desert rock to touch it;
hear your fingers move across
its ancient surface—put your ears
to the rock and smell, again,
the bright, sharp taste of life.

KATHRYN J. ABAJIAN has long taught high school and community college English in the San Francisco Bay area. Currently she is on leave, traveling and studying in Southeast Asia. She also follows the art and culture of Utah where her children live and where she has come especially to admire the landscape and lifestyle in Sanpete County.

MAUREEN URSENBACH BEECHER was hired in 1972 by then Church Historian Leonard Arrington as editor in the Historical Department of the church. She remained as part of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University until she retired in 1997. A charter *Dialogue* subscriber who served on its editorial board for many years, she now lives in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, where she writes and edits in addition to promoting Global Forum projects.

M. SHAYNE BELL has, in addition to his poetry, published a novel, essays, and a great deal of short fiction.

MARION BISHOP has a Ph.D. in English from New York University and has taught in New York, Chicago, and Boston. Her articles on women's journals and diaries include, most recently, the forthcoming "Confessional Realities: Body-Writing and the Diary of Anne Frank." Her essay "Hymn" appeared in the fall 1997 issue of *Dialogue*. Recently she left the east coast and teaching to return to school as an undergraduate science student in preparation for applying to medical school. She resides in Millville, Utah.

MICHAEL R. COLLINGS is a professor of English, director of creative writing, and poet-in-residence at Seaver College, Pepperdine University. He is the author of a number of poetry collections, in addition to scholarly studies of Orson Scott Card, Stephen King, and other fantasy/science-fiction writers. He is also the organist in his Thousand Oaks, California, ward. He and his wife Judith have four children.

EUGENE ENGLAND is a critic, essayist, teacher, and leading scholar of Mormon letters. In 1966 he co-founded *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, an important venue ever since for Mormon literature and criticism. He co-founded the Association of Mormon Letters and has promoted Mormon writing and writers through reviews, anthologies, and critical writing. He taught Mormon literature at Brigham Young University for many years and currently teaches Mormon literature at Utah Valley State College.

MICHAEL FILLERUP lives in Flagstaff, Arizona, with his wife Rebecca and two of their four children.

GLEN J. HETTINGER is a graduate of Brigham Young University and Columbia University School of Law. He lives with his wife and children in Rowlett, Texas where he practices corporate and securities law.

B. W. JORGENSEN lives with his family, teaches, serves, reads, and (too infrequently for his wishes) writes in Provo, Utah. A much earlier and briefer version of this essay was presented at the Sunstone Symposium on 13 August 1993.

DERK KOLDEWYN lives in North Salt Lake where he writes fiction and poetry. In 1993 he won the Ann Doty Memorial Fiction Award at Brigham Young University.

ROBERT NELSON lives in Vancouver, Washington.

KEITH NORMAN earned a master's degree at Harvard Divinity School and a Ph.D. in Early Christian History at Duke. He and his wife Kerry live in Solon, Ohio, with two children at home and two off on missions.

DIXIE PARTRIDGE has published two collections of poetry, *Deer in the Haystacks* and *Watermark*. Her poems and essays have appeared in *A Circle of Women* (Viking Penguin, 1994) and in the 1995-96 *Anthology of Magazine Verse and Yearbook of American Poetry*. She lives in Richland, Washington.

PAUL M. ROSE is a graduate of Brigham Young University where he studied social research and analysis.

LINDA SILLITOE, in addition to several non-fiction books and her many contributions to journals and anthologies, has authored two novels, a volume of stories, and *Crazy for Living*, a collection of poetry. She lives in Mesa, Arizona.

PAUL SWENSON is collecting poems for a book that will emerge when his published work exceeds his collection of rejection slips.

PHILIP WHITE lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

MARGARET BLAIR YOUNG teaches writing at Brigham Young University. She has published two novels and two story collections; the most recent, *Love Chains: Stories*, was published by Signature Books this past year. She and her husband have four children.

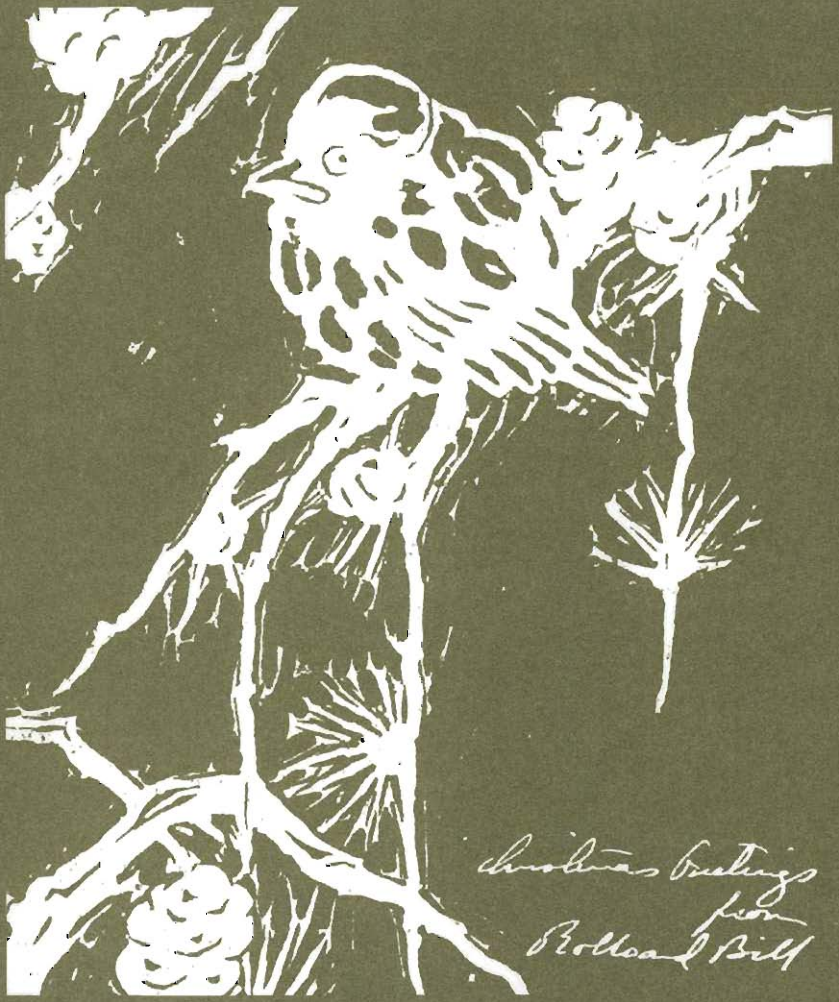
LOOKING FORWARD TO DIALOGUE

The Summer 1999 Issue will begin a lively three-part series on the remarkable history and adventures of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* by Devery S. Anderson

With guest editors Gideon Burton and Neal Kramer of the Association of Mormon Letters, the Fall 1999 Dialogue will look at the state of Mormon literature and arts: the achievements, the players, the issues and controversies.

For a look at recent research and new thinking on the founder of Mormonism, look for the Winter 1999 Dialogue focus issue on Joseph Smith.

New Scholarship, Reflection, Creative Work, and Reviews in Every Issue



ART CREDITS:

This issue features the art of Ella Smyth Peacock, whose life and work are summarized in a tribute by Kathryn J. Abajian, beginning on page 53.

Cover: "Being Demolished," 18 x 22 oil painting

p. 51: "Building at Calleo," 24 x 32 oil painting

p. 52: "Self Portrait," 18 x 22 oil painting

p. 66: "Route 89 Below Joseph," 16 x 20 oil painting

p. 67: "Lehi Roller Mills," 20 x 24 oil painting

p. 68: "Zion," 24 x 30 oil painting

Inside Back Cover: "Christmas Card," linoleum cut, 5 x 6

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