

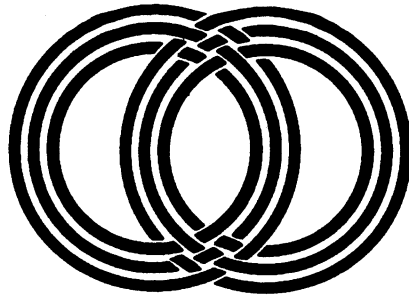
# DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT









# DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

*is an independent quarterly  
established to express Mormon culture  
and to examine the relevance of religion  
to secular life. It is edited by  
Latter-day Saints who wish to bring  
their faith into dialogue with the  
larger stream of world religious thought  
and with human experience as a whole  
and to foster artistic and scholarly  
achievement based on their cultural  
heritage. The journal encourages a  
variety of viewpoints; although every  
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accurate scholarship and responsible  
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The Church of Jesus Christ of  
Latter-day Saints or of the editors.*

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Editors' error: In "Ella Peacock: Seeking Her Place in the West" (Vol. 32, No. 1), page 53, the sentence "As Joseph Smith would 200 years later, William Penn . . . designed a city" should read "As Brigham Young would. . . ." The comparison that follows is to Salt Lake City, not Nauvoo.

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## LETTERS

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Dear Dialogue editors,

I received my *Dialogue* magazine April 19, 2000. I have enjoyed it very much, especially "Bearing Your Sanctimony" by Neal and Rebecca Chandler. Rebecca's enthusiastic sharing of *Exponent II* in Relief Society meeting and the response she received is the kind I receive too. I love her desire to share women's initiative expressions of personal thoughts.

"The History of *Dialogue*: Part I: The Early Years, 1965-1971" by Dev-ery S. Anderson is a record of faithful endeavors by many honest members wanting to share their gifts of the spirit and succeeding valiantly.

"Mormon Psychohistory" by Mark Koltko-Rivera is excellent. I especially enjoyed it because I am a "Joseph Smith convert" too. When will we be able to believe the truths he taught without being assumed to be troublemakers? I prefer to believe truth with evidence instead of prefabricated doctrines that denounce the revelations to Joseph Smith. "It hasn't been revealed yet." So they say!

Mrs. Rhoda Thurston  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Dear Editors,

I am writing this as a "Letter to the Editor"; however, I shall use the format that I used for ten years when I was writing "Among the Mormons" for *Dialogue* (see vol. 3, no. 1, 1968). It is in response to Devery S. Anderson's fine article, "A History of *Dialogue*. . . ."

AMONG THE MORMONS

by  
RALPH W. HANSEN

THE EVIL THAT MEN DO  
LIVES AFTER THEM,  
THE GOOD IS OFT INTERRED  
WITH THEIR BONES.  
Shakespeare, Julius Caesar  
Act 3, sc. 2, 1, 78 (Antony)

Devery S. Andersen's [sic] article on the founding and first years of *Dialogue* was very comprehensive and brought back many memories which are not included in his piece. I would like to complete the record for your readers by offering some personal recollections. First the author notes that among others who participated in the founding years was Ralph Hansen. I will gladly give him back his "O" if he will give me back my "E."

In 1965 I was the University Archivist and Manuscripts Librarian at Stanford University, and, because of Stanford's munificent salaries, I was also required to hold a part-time, paid position as Palo Alto City Historian, duties which occupied two evenings a week and all day Saturday. I confess that I was completely in the dark about the subversive movement which resulted in *Dialogue* when a young man (who is now only six years younger than I am) approached me in the rotunda of the Stanford Library. He introduced himself as Eugene England and said that he was working on a new journal to be produced by the Mormon students and faculty at Stanford. He wanted me to help him obtain library addresses so they could solicit subscriptions.

Well, I told him if they were depending on library subscriptions to help the journal get off the ground they best think again. Then this sage and older librarian told Gene that journals come and go, and that the chances of success were modest, at best. So much for sage. Then England's



"charisma" (Anderson's description) kicked in. Not discouraged by my heartening advice, Gene asked me if I would be willing to write for *Dialogue*. He said that what the founders had in mind were bibliographical essays on recent Mormon publications, be they books, periodicals, dissertations or whatever. At this time in my life, all I needed was another assignment, but having had a life-long inability to say "no" I agreed to do what I could, and thus was born "Among the Mormons" as a regular feature of the journal.

Gene also asked me to look up *Dialogue* and see if the title was already in use. It was, but as Anderson explained, complaints by the Lutherans notwithstanding, the title would stand. I did not feel so bad about appropriating the title "Among the Mormons" from a recently published book.

It was decided that "Among the Mormons" would be published in each quarterly. The spring issue would cover books, pamphlets, records and photo-reproductions or reprints. The summer issue would list dissertations and theses, and the winter issue would be devoted to periodicals, including newspaper articles, if significant. The autumn issue would consist of bibliographical essays, either by guest writers or, if none could be found, by me.

As any bibliographer would know, an attempt at such a survey would be a formidable task, but I would be crass not to admit that I had a "secret" ally. Some years before *Dialogue* was conceived, Chad Flake of the Special Collections Department at BYU had organized librarians at the Church Historian's Office, the Salt Lake Public Library, the Utah State Historical Society, and the library at Utah State University to participate in sharing new information about the broad subjects of "Mormonism" and "Utah." This in-

formation was then compiled by Chad and shared with the participating libraries through a semi-monthly newsletter, which Chad kindly sent to me. With this as a basis, I was on my way and only had to spend some lunch hours and late after-work evening hours doing additional bibliographical research, which I then shared with Chad. The newsletter was called MOR-MON AMERICANA and had a very limited circulation. While this plagiarism may seem dishonest, I gave my source and Chad frequent credit for the assistance I received. I produced four columns a year for ten or so years, about 40 columns.

At some point I also became book review editor for a brief time. This was a position for which I was eminently unsuited, but when a journal must be published with volunteer help, one does what one has to do. The biggest problem, in brief, was that the students who were so eager and essential for the start-up years had the nerve to graduate and drift away. As Anderson described, founding board members also left and in 1970 Gene England went to St. Olaf's College. Wes Johnson found himself under an incredible workload, which is true, which hardly describes our plight. Not mentioned was the fact that *Dialogue's* headquarters were now in a frame cottage on fraternity row, and during the "war" years, this was often the location of confrontations between the war protestors and the police. When, one night, shots were fired in the vicinity of the office, Wes decided not to use the office after dark.

During this period *Dialogue* was close to collapsing for the want of human assistance. I remember one night, sitting with Wes in the *Dialogue* office, staring at a pile of unread manuscripts and wondering how we could

cope with only the two of us, and then came the final blow: Wes was leaving Stanford. Fortunately Robert Rees of UCLA came to the rescue and a limping *Dialogue* moved to Los Angeles. Current files with all necessary equipment were sent to UCLA, but then we had the problem of what to do with the "archival" records, which were quite voluminous. We boxed them up and placed them in my VW van to transport them to the Johnson home on the campus. Wes was actually selling his home and soon questions arose as to where we could store the archives. We had only a few days before the movers were to come and it was left up to me as what to do with the files. Stanford and the church were at odds over the race question, and I decided not to offer them to my own institution. BYU and the Church Historian's Office, for obvious reasons, did not have strong appeal, so I arbitrarily contacted Everett Cooley at the University of Utah, who agreed to accept the *Dialogue* archives.

Through the grapevine I heard that there was some dissatisfaction with my decision, but I was only a bit player, and the final curtain was falling on the Stanford stage. Action was needed, and I have never feared

plunging ahead. There was no longer an audience at Stanford, so I took my silent bow as the curtain closed.

My work was done, or so I thought, but Editor Rees asked me to continue my efforts, which I did for five additional years until a new editor, Mary Bradford, was appointed in 1975. I had earlier requested my release, but I assured Robert that I would stay on until Mary found a new bibliographer. When this was accomplished, I was free at last. Unfortunately, "Among the Mormons" did not survive and was ultimately dropped from *Dialogue*.

It didn't sink in until recently that five years before I met Eugene, I wrote a column for *BYU Studies* (3:4) called "Mormon Bibliography 1960." What goes around comes around! Did Gene know about this column when he approached me? Probably not, but when he met me at Stanford, I was a librarian/archivist, and as we all know, "librarians know all the answers!"

Ralph W. Hansen  
Boise, Idaho



# Was Jesus a Feminist?

*Todd Compton*

THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, "WAS JESUS A FEMINIST?" depends on how you define feminism. Just as we have come to realize that there was not just one monolithic "Judaism" in Jesus' time, but many "Judaisms," so there are many varieties of feminism today, and Latter-day Saints, even liberal Latter-day Saints, will be more comfortable with some of these than others. For instance, there is a kind of Gnostic feminism, in the sense of viewing male and female as absolute polarities—men are complete evil and women complete good. Obviously, Jesus was not that kind of feminist.

## DEFINING FEMINISM

So defining feminism is a problem. Some women and men embrace the word, giving it their own definitional resonance, breadth, and limitations; others are uncomfortable with it because it has been associated with perceived extremists in the women's movement. But many of the women who dislike the label would be angry if they were treated as second-class citizens because of their gender. Rebecca West wrote: "I have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Much has been written on definitions of feminism. But for the purposes of this short essay, I am thinking of a moderate definition of feminism—the idea that women share psychological and spiritual equality with men and should be treated equally, that our civilization and social structures have been almost unconsciously built on the foundation of viewing women as less than equal with men, and that this is harmful to both men and women.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, in my view, women and men

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1. "Mr. Chesterton in Hysterics," in *The Clarion* (14 November 1913), reprinted in Rebecca West, *The Young Rebecca*, ed. J. Marcus (London: Macmillan, 1982), 219.

2. Elouise Bell, "The Implications of Feminism for Brigham Young University," a BYU Forum Address, in *Brigham Young University Studies* 16 (Summer 1976): 527–39, 530, has a

have some psychological differences, and these differences can complement each other.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, some feminism devalues women in the home, which, I think, can be just as unhealthy as anti-feminism that demands that women stay only in the home.

#### THE PROBLEM OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

There are also preliminary issues relating to the study of the historical Jesus within the context of his culture and environment that should be at least touched on briefly. First, it would be a mistake to see Jesus as calling for overt, immediate revolution in the structure of his political culture. In many ways he was working within a very patriarchal social system. So he did not choose a woman as one of the original twelve disciples or as one of the seventies. In the same way, he did not call for the immediate overthrow of slavery, although slavery is without question antithetical to the gospel. Jesus' teachings, in which the full humanity of the oppressed and outcast was often emphasized, were implicitly anti-slavery. As people became fully converted to Jesus' teachings in the early centuries of our era, they would quietly give up their slaves. In the same

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similar definition: "In my understanding a feminist is a person, whether man or woman, who believes that historically there have been inequities in the education and treatment of women in several or many spheres of society and who is interested in correcting those inequities as he or she sees them." For an introduction to the different "feminisms," one can consult general surveys such as Julie Mitchell and Ann Oakley, eds., *What Is Feminism?* (New York: Pantheon, 1986); Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1988); Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller, eds., *Conflicts in Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, eds., *Feminisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). For the historical background of the term, see Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach" in *Signs* 14 (Autumn 1988): 119–57. For a feminism of motherhood, see Offen, 122–125. Virginia Woolf tried to destroy the word "feminism" by "symbolically incinerating its written representation" (Offen, 120, citing Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London, Hogarth, 1938), 184–250).

3. I am aware how problematic this issue is within the different currents of feminism. The most influential book supporting this view is Carol Gilligan's controversial *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982). Gilligan was named by *Ms.* magazine as woman of the year; see Lindsay Van Gelder, "Carol Gilligan: Leader for a Different Kind of Future," *Ms.* 12, No. 7 (Jan. 1984): 37–40, 101. "Post-Gilligan, it will be much harder for researchers to equate 'human' with male and to see female experience as simply an aberrant substratum" writes Van Gelder (38). However, some feminists regard Gilligan as simply anti-feminist, and Susan Faludi flatly cites her as an example of the "backlash" against the women's movement (*Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991), 327–32). One interesting exchange on Gilligan is in a roundtable on conflicts within feminism, in which feminist critic Marianne Hirsch stated that "the hysteria around her [Gilligan's] work has prevented many from grappling with the radical potential it has in spite of its problems" (Jane Gallop, Marianne Hirsch, Nancy K. Miller, "Criticizing Feminist Criticism," in Hirsch and Keller, *Conflicts in Feminism*, 349–69).



way, I will argue here that Jesus' teachings were often implicitly feminist, and, therefore, as people became fully converted, they would quietly understand and live the implicit message and change their personal actions and their social structures accordingly.

Second, libraries have been written on Jesus' life, often from very different points of view. You need only read Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*<sup>4</sup> to understand how scholars through the ages have read their own biases into the personality and teachings of Jesus—you have the Catholic Jesus, the Protestant Jesus, the rationalistic Jesus, the "liberal" Jesus, the "existential" Jesus, the "eschatological" Jesus. So one must always be careful to avoid reading one's biases into the record of the gospels. In the present case, one should be wary of making Jesus into an up-to-the-minute, *au courant* feminist—he was Jewish and lived in the first century of our era. Nevertheless, it is the argument of this essay that there is clear evidence in the gospels to show that Jesus went against the grain of his culture's pronounced patriarchalism in interesting, definable, and crucial ways. Again, this would be consistent with his constant, repeated concern for the full humanity of the oppressed and outcast.

Finally, in this short essay, I will necessarily pass over many problems of historicity and editorial construction in the gospels. The gospels, like all history, contain contradictions, editorial elaborations and accretions and biases, though the oral traditions of the historical Jesus lie behind them. I tend to have an "historicist" bias,<sup>5</sup> but the story of the woman anointing Jesus (see below) shows how completely contradictory

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4. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, 3rd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1954, orig. 1906). This has been updated by Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus As a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998); Charlotte Allen, *The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus* (New York: The Free Press, 1998); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Marcus Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1993). Recent influential books on the life of Jesus are John Dominic Cross, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); a "radical" critic, and the more moderate John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991–1994). See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); idem., *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Press, 1993); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins, eds., *Whose Historical Jesus?* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997); Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994); Harvey K. McArthur, ed., *In Search of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969).

5. In the controversy between those who accept the historicity of most events described in the New Testament and those who would interpret many of the actions and

some incidents in the synoptic gospels are. However, even when the gospels flatly contradict each other, and it is uncertain which is most closely historical regarding specific incidents and words, each gospel has individuality and validity as a record of specific oral traditions within early Christian communities.

#### JESUS AND FEMINISM

I became interested in the subject of Jesus and feminist issues years ago when I was sitting at the back of the Westwood chapel in Los Angeles just after another ward had departed, and I noticed a xeroxed article lying on one of the pews. I picked it up out of curiosity and found that it was titled, "Jesus Was a Feminist." I immediately read it, found it intriguing, but put it back down, and in just a few days I regretted that I hadn't written down where it appeared, because that brief reading had a deep impact on me.<sup>6</sup>

I have continued to think about that article and to ask whether Jesus was a feminist and, if so, what kind of feminist he was. This is a subject that is of overwhelming importance for us in the modern Mormon church. Our church has been standing at a crossroads and continues to stand at a crossroads—if feminism is part of the gospel, will we stand with neo-conservative or extremist conservative anti-feminist elements in America, or will we align ourselves with the kind of feminism that is just, compassionate, Christ-centered, and eternal?

Having asked that question, I now turn to the gospels for a brief overview of situations in which Jesus showed a high regard for the full personhood of women, rather than treating them as inferior or ignoring them. I believe that the gospels do portray Jesus as challenging his society's taboos in this respect. Central to Jesus' teaching and actions was his valorizing of "marginal" humans—non-Jews, Samaritans (who were viewed as Jews corrupted racially and religiously by Gentile influence), Jews who were viewed as Hellenizers (two of Jesus' twelve apostles had Greek names, which shows that these apostles' families had tendencies toward mixing culturally with Gentiles),<sup>7</sup> sinners such as tax collectors and prostitutes, the disabled and sick, the poor, children, and women.

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statements of Jesus in the gospels as non-historical, I lean toward the historicist camp. See preceding note—I would be more comfortable with Meier than with Cross, though Cross has much to offer.

6. I have subsequently identified that article tentatively as Leonard Swidler, "Jesus Was a Feminist," first published in *Catholic World* (Jan. 1971), 177–83; also in Kenneth Aman, ed., *Border Regions of Faith: An Anthology of Religion and Social Change* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 30–38.

7. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966, 1970), 1:82.

Time and time again his teachings and actions, as he treated all those people as fully human, fully loved by God, startled even his closest followers and angered his opponents in the extremist sects of the Jews. We should note in passing that many of these Pharisees and Sadducees were good people who were sincerely trying to follow a well-intentioned program of religious renewal. Today, the parable of the good Samaritan seems a commonplace to us, but it is difficult to comprehend how revolutionary it was in its time for Jesus to describe how a half-breed, heretic Samaritan (from a group that was hated and loathed with both a ritual and a racial contempt by typical orthodox Jews) was more truly a follower of God through his humane compassion than were temple-attending priests. It is still revolutionary today when we understand it fully. It is a moving story of compassion, but it is also a frightening analysis of apathy, spiritual coolness, and loss of true, divine, and humane feeling, of how people can use a religious life to cloak a lack of a true religious center.

I believe Jesus' teachings and actions with relation to women were just as revolutionary. As Jesus' concern for marginalized humans was central to his teaching, it makes sense that he would give women higher value than his surrounding culture would.

#### WOMEN IN JESUS' CULTURE

It is important to understand that there were some pronounced anti-feminist currents in the Judaism of Jesus' time. The prayer of the grateful rabbi is often quoted in this regard: "Praised be God that he has not created me a gentile; praised be God that he has not created me a woman; praised be God that he has not created me an ignorant man."<sup>8</sup> Rabbi Eliezer taught, "Let the books of Torah be burnt rather than be given to a woman."<sup>9</sup> He also said, "If any man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law it is as though he taught her lechery."<sup>10</sup> Rabbis did not have women pupils, did not teach them. The ritual impurities such as menstruation and childbirth that kept women from becoming priests also

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8. Quoted in Swidler, "Jesus Was a Feminist," 31.

9. Y. Sota 3:4, 19a, as cited in Leila Leah Bronner, *From Eve to Esther: Rabbinic Reconstructions of Biblical Women* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 5.

10. Sotah 3:4, in Herbert Danby, tr., *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 296; cf. Ben Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 6, 134n. The extent to which women were not supposed to formally study the Law is debated, but it is certain that they were not given formal or rabbinic teaching (Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 161–62). Though women were not explicitly denied synagogue attendance and observance, they were often not allowed to participate or were discouraged, "excused" from participation (see Wegner, 150–56).

kept them at a lower level of holiness by the standards of the era.<sup>11</sup> However, we should not think of the Judaism of that day as grossly misogynist. Rabbi Joseph said, "One who has no wife remains without good, and without a helper, and without joy, and without blessing, and without atonement."<sup>12</sup> However, while Joseph praises the woman as wife and housekeeper, he might agree that she should not learn Torah in a systematic way like men. One rabbi made this explicit: Rabbi Phineas ben Hannah said that a woman atones for her house just as does the altar if she "keeps chastely within the house."<sup>13</sup> There were rare occasions when women, through the force of their will, learned the oral and written law. In fact, "Rabbi Nahman's wife was said to vex him continually because of her expertise in Jewish matters."<sup>14</sup> However, Witherington, author of an important book on Jesus and women, after his chapter survey on the subject of women in Jesus' culture, writes, "It is fair to say that a low view of women was common, perhaps even predominant before, during and after Jesus' era. . . . G. F. Moore's evaluation that women's legal status in Judaism compares favorably with other contemporary civilizations is also questionable . . . there was no monolithic entity, rabbinic Judaism in Tannaitic times and . . . various opinions were held about women and their roles, though it appears that by the first century of the Christian era a negative assessment was predominant among the rabbis."<sup>15</sup>

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11. See Wegner, 162–65.

12. The Midrash, Rabbi Jacobs, commenting on Gen. 2.18, as cited in George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 2:119; cf. Ben Witherington *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 6, 7.

13. Mishnah Tanhuma Wayyishlah sec. 36, as cited in Claude Goldsmid Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 509, num. 1434; cf. Witherington, *Women and the Genesis*, 6.

14. Quoted in Witherington, *Women and the Genesis*, 7.

15. Witherington, *Women in the Ministry*, 10. Though not strictly applicable to the specific incidents I focus on in this paper, there were inequities in Jewish marriage law, in which men could obtain divorce easily while women could not. In addition, a daughter usually had little choice when her father espoused her. See Wegner 45–50. Witherington also cites polygamy as an institution that lessened a woman's rights and basic legal security (*Women and the Genesis*, 4; *Women in the Ministry*, 3–4). Though polygamy was not widespread in Jesus' culture, it was not unknown (S. Lowy, "The Extent of Jewish Polygamy in Talmudic Times," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (1958): 115–38, 129–30). Jesus's injunction against divorce (Mark 10:9; Matt. 5:31–32; 19:3), though it seems impractical today, protected women from casual divorce. See Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 85: ". . . it seems probable that, in deplored divorce, he was defending the feminist interest." See also Witherington, *Women in the Ministry*, 28.



## JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

First we will look at Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in John 4.<sup>16</sup> Samaritans, of course, were the descendants of Jews who had intermarried with Gentiles, whom the king of Assyria had brought into Palestine. "Orthodox" Jews believed that Samaritans practiced a religion that syncretized Judaism and paganism—in other words, the Samaritans were racially mongrelized and religiously corrupt for the Jews. Samaritans, in return, tended to feel understandable hostility for Jews. So in his dealings with a Samaritan woman, Jesus broke taboos that were racial and religious in addition to taboos relating to her gender.

Jesus often traveled from northern Palestine, Galilee, to Jerusalem and back, and as Samaria was located in between, he had to travel through it. So one day early in his ministry his disciples left him at a well in Samaria while they went to find food. A Samaritan woman approached to draw water, and Jesus simply asked her for a drink, which surprised the woman. She answered, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"<sup>17</sup> John adds a parenthetical explanation here: "(Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)" A Jew typically would have avoided eating or drinking with Samaritans. Now, as John relates, Jesus took this literal situation as an occasion for teaching spiritual symbolism. "Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink," you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'" The woman, like many characters in John, misunderstood Jesus's spiritual teaching in favor of a literal interpretation (his twelve disciples often did the same thing), but this should not cause us to forget that he is teaching a woman now, which was a very unorthodox thing to do. Jesus then testified that his water "will become in them [his followers] a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." She continued to see only the literal sense.

Then the conversation jumped to her marital history. After she told Jesus that she had no husband, he responded, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband;' for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband." Thus, this woman would have been seen as immoral—Jesus in talking to this "fallen" woman was breaking one more taboo. However, the woman answered, "Sir, I see that you are a

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16. For the question of the historicity of the gospel of John, see John A. T. Robinson's challenging *The Priority of John* (London: SCM Press, 1985); C. H. [Charles Harold] Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); and Raymond Brown's *The Gospel According to John*.

17. For quotations in this paper, I use the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible; see *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

prophet." Despite her literalism, this was an insightful statement. Jesus then continued to teach her concerning spiritual realities. When the woman said that she looked forward to the coming of a messiah, Jesus straightforwardly told her, "I am he."<sup>18</sup>

At this point, "his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman. . . ." This important statement shows that when Jesus viewed the woman as a possible disciple, as an intelligent, valued person, it took the twelve by surprise. In fact, the Greek word for astonished, "*thaumázō*," is very strong. The twelve were stunned that he would take the trouble to talk seriously with a woman—let alone a Samaritan woman of bad repute. Raymond Brown, in his commentary on John, translates *ethaúmazon* as "were shocked." Imperfect tense, he writes, shows more than a momentary shock; it continued for awhile. "Sir ix 1–9 describes the care to be taken lest one be ensnared by a woman; and rabbinic documents (*Pirque Aboth* i 5; *TalBab 'Erubin* 53b) warn against speaking to women in public."<sup>19</sup> Haenchen cites Rabbi Nathan as saying, "One does not speak with a woman on the street, not even his own wife, and certainly not with another woman, on account of gossip."<sup>20</sup>

The woman, meanwhile, went to her village and testified that Jesus had prophetic insight and might be the Messiah. "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word." So the woman served as Jesus' messenger and helped to convert a number of Samaritans.

#### MARY AND MARTHA

A second tableau is the well known story of Mary and Martha from Luke (10:38–42).<sup>21</sup> "Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.

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18. Some scholars doubt that Jesus would openly identify himself in this way. However, Brown suggests that he might have identified himself to a Samaritan more readily than to a Jew because the Samaritan Messiah was less of a political figure (Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1:173). The phrase, with its suggestion of the name of God ("I am"), is found in the synoptic gospels, which makes it less likely that it is a Johannine invention (*ibid.*, 538).

19. *The Gospel According to John*, 1:173.

20. *Aboth* Rabbi Nathan 2 (1d), in Ernst Haenchen, *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1–6* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 224. Cf. Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, 6, who writes that the concept of modesty (Ps. 45:13 is often cited) led to women being sequestered in the home, having their movements and conversation limited. One thinks of the veil in Arabic countries today.

21. For a special study, see Barbara Reid, *Choosing the Better Part?: Women in the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), whose close reading of this

She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying." I interpret here from the context of the story that Jesus was not making small talk—he was teaching on religious matters. Note the phrase, "sat at the Lord's feet," which is typical of a teacher/student relationship.<sup>22</sup> So here we have Mary breaking a taboo, acting as the disciple of a rabbi. Jesus is also allowing the taboo to be broken, as he often did. So there is room for a conservative challenge here. It comes, interestingly, from another woman: "But Martha was distracted by her many tasks. . . ." One imagines her preparing food in the kitchen, arranging the logistics of feeding Jesus and his twelve disciples.<sup>23</sup> She looks around for her sister, and she is in the front room with the men! She is angered by Mary's presumption and irresponsibility. Her next move shows that Martha was a force to be reckoned with—she goes into the main room and confronts not Mary, but Jesus himself: ". . . she came to him and asked, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work [*diakoneîn*] by myself?" She then gives Jesus orders as to what he should say and do. "Tell her then to help me." Martha did have some persuasive arguments on her side. The food did need to be prepared, possibly for fifteen to twenty people, and it may have been a daunting task.

But Jesus, of course, defended Mary. One imagines him smiling: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things [*merimnâis kai thorbázēi perì pollà*]; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." [*Mariàm gàr tē'n agathē'n merída exeléxato hē'tis ouk aphairethē'setai.*] Beyond Jesus' upholding the value of the "impractical" part of life, we should not lose sight of the fact that he was encouraging a woman to break out of a culturally defined gender role. Though service in the kitchen is not bad per se, a woman could also be a disciple and sit at the feet of a rabbi, a teacher. In fact, there is an imperative for a woman to do this. For a woman as well as for a man, becoming a disciple was overwhelmingly important.

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passage is useful, but whose "pro-Martha" reading of this text I find unconvincing. Schüssler-Fiorenze also has a "pro-Martha" reading, in which Martha represents "active" women who were leaders in egalitarian early Christian congregations (*But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 51–78). However, I agree with Green that the contrast in this story is "not between 'service' (namely, women's active leadership in the community) and 'listening' (namely, the passive role of women in the community), but between 'hearing the word' (namely, discipleship) and 'anxious' behavior (namely, the antithesis of discipleship)" (Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 436n). See also Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke and Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).

22. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2 vols. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1981), 1:739, on Luke 8:35.

23. The context suggests that this was the kind of work Luke had in mind.

In this drama, a conflict between a woman in a traditional household role vs. a woman taking part in a rabbi/disciple relationship, Jesus upholds Mary as the better model. Though this incident should not be interpreted as demeaning traditional household roles and service, Jesus is emphatic that these roles should not deny women their opportunity to be students and disciples.

In this connection, the women traveling with Jesus, Luke 8:1–3, come to mind: “Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out; and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them [variant reading, “him”] out of their resources.” For Luke, it was important that his readers know that Jesus traveled with women who, like the twelve, were disciples. Scholars have suggested that this raised eyebrows in Jesus’s environment. Witherington writes, “There is little reason to question the authenticity of the information that women traveled with and served Jesus and the disciples since this conduct was unheard of and considered scandalous in Jewish circles.”<sup>24</sup> Fitzmyer writes that this episode is “a recollection about Jesus which differed radically from the usual understanding of women’s role in contemporary Judaism. His cure of women, his association with them, his tolerating them among his followers (as here) clearly dissociates him from such ideas as that reflected in John 4:27 or early rabbinical writings. . . .”<sup>25</sup>

Here we are introduced to Mary Magdalene (as usual, listed first; she was a charismatic follower and witness of Jesus), who becomes so important in the resurrection accounts. Scholars have debated about what the service was these women provided Jesus and the apostles. Some believe that these were wealthy women who gave financial support. But they probably also served in traditional roles for Jewish women, such as preparing and cooking food.<sup>26</sup> Some suppose that these women were generally single or widowed, but Joanna, the wife of Chuza, is an example of a married disciple.

Jesus did not include a woman as a member of the twelve apostles. Yet, as Paul shows, not all apostles (the word simply means “messenger,” “one sent”) were members of the twelve. We will see that Mary, as resurrection witness, certainly had apostolic functions. As Acts 1 shows, having known Jesus, as all these women did, was an important qualification for apostolic witnessing and missionary work.

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24. Witherington, *Women and the Genesis*, 110.

25. *The Gospel According to Luke*, 1:696.

26. Witherington, *Women in the Ministry*, 118.



## THE ANOINTING OF THE MESSIAH

The next tableau is the striking scene of Jesus being anointed (Mark 14:3–9; Matt. 26:6–13; John 12:1–8; Luke 7:36–50). The word “Christ,” *Khristós*, simply means, “the anointed [one],” or “he who has been anointed” (as does the Hebrew word “Messiah”). Anointing, of course, was a ritual that had many meanings, but it is essentially a symbol of transformation, changing from the dust of the road to the comfort of a home, from a lower sacrality to a higher sacrality—it was used to consecrate kings, but also to consecrate prophets and priests. For Jesus, of course, his role as political king was much less important than his role as priest, prophet, and revelation of God the Father.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, it is probably significant that this is the only record of Jesus actually being anointed, and the anointer is a woman. In Old Testament history, the anointer is invariably a priest or prophet. This is a point of contact with the women in early Mormonism, who were often washing, anointing, and blessing each other, and, on occasion, doing the same for men. It was for them an important part of their spiritual power, an integral component in some of the great charismatic experiences in Mormon history.<sup>28</sup>

This story is told in Mark, Matthew, and John, and a similar anointing story in Luke is viewed by some Biblical scholars as a separate incident and by others as another version of the Mark/Matthew/John story. So we must consider variations in the retelling, which cannot be sorted out in detail here.<sup>29</sup> John locates the story in the house of Martha, who serves the dinner, a point of continuity with our last story. (In Matthew and Mark, it takes place in the house of “Simon the leper,” otherwise unknown. In Luke, the host is a Pharisee named Simon. All except Luke place the incident in Bethany, as Jesus’ death was approaching.) In John,

27. For Jesus as revelation of the Father, see Matt. 11:27; John 5:19; 15:9–11.

28. See Linda King Newell, “Gifts of the Spirit: Women’s Share,” in Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 111–50; Claudia Lauper Bushman, “Mystics and Healers,” in Claudia L. Bushman, *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 1–24. For the influence of this passage on Mormon ritual, see Heber C. Kimball journal, April 1, 1844, as cited in Gregory Prince, *Power from on High* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1995), 177.

29. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 128, correctly states that the traditional history of this story “is far from being adequately resolved.” Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 7–21* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 88, speaks of two stories “interpenetrating” each other at numerous points. Other scholars see one original story. See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke 2:684–92*, in whose view Luke is not reworking Marcan material, but is reporting one of three strands of oral tradition (Mark/Matthew, Luke, and John). Fitzmyer regards the anointing of the feet as the most primitive version of the story, arguing from its oddity, but other scholars accept the more natural anointing of the head as the more primitive element.

Mary then anoints his feet. (In Mark and Matthew, a nameless woman anoints Jesus's head.) In John, Judas objects to the costly perfume being expended; in the other accounts all of the disciples "scold" her. But Jesus defends her as anointing him for his approaching death. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus gives her one of the most positive tributes he ever awarded to a man or a woman in his earthly ministry: "Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

For our purposes, in Matthew and Mark, we have the theme of the woman (possibly Mary, as in John) criticized by the twelve disciples, but Jesus upholding her spiritual insight. Not only that, he clearly sees her anointing of him as an event of extraordinary significance. Wherever the gospel is preached, her anointing will be recounted, and she will be remembered. Massey writes that if Matthew and Mark correctly record that [Mary] anointed Jesus on the head, "Christ may have regarded the incident as a symbolic anointing to the spiritual offices of prophet, priest, and king. If such was the case, Mary's humble and obscure ministry to Christ must be regarded as highly significant, for she officiated in a great ceremony of initiation."<sup>30</sup>

In the Lucan anointing tradition, Jesus had been invited into the home of a Pharisee, Simon, to eat—a situation charged with possible drama. As they recline at the meal, a woman "in the city, who was a sinner" gains entrance somehow and anoints Jesus's feet with ointment, then with her tears. The Pharisee thinks to himself that if Jesus had really been a prophet, he would have known that the woman was a sinner. (This shows the cultural assumption that Jesus would never have anything to do with a sinner, would never allow himself to be defiled by one who was impure.) Jesus, as he often did, then tells a pointed parable in which a debtor who is forgiven of a large debt is more thankful than the debtor forgiven of a smaller sum. Then he turns to the Pharisee: "You did not anoint my head with oil [which is a typical courtesy of hospitality], but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven loves little." Jesus tells the woman her sins are forgiven, and "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

"[A] woman in the city, who was a sinner." It is possible that this woman was a prostitute,<sup>31</sup> and it is certain that reformed prostitutes

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30. Lesly Massey, *Women and the New Testament* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., Inc., 1989), 21. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 3:445 also regard anointing on the head as a royal motif.

31. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 267; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 207.

were numbered among Jesus' converts (see Matt. 21:31). However, there are other possibilities. A sinner could have also been a person who had a job in which he or she dealt with Gentiles.<sup>32</sup> But you can make a good case that she was a prostitute. Simon's instant recognition of her might argue for that.<sup>33</sup> In any case, Simon regarded her as unclean and expected Jesus to shun her. But Jesus accepted her touch, her anointing, and forgave her sins. Then he frankly contrasted her humility with the Pharisee's pride and lack of contrition, as well as with his simple lack of hospitality.

This story brings to mind the story of the woman taken in adultery, John 8:1–11, probably an authentic tradition of Jesus that was not written by John, but was later inserted into his gospel.<sup>34</sup> An extremist faction of Pharisees wanted to use her to set a trap for Jesus, so dragged her before him to have him pronounce the death sentence. The man who must have also been taken in adultery (who is also condemned to death, Lev. 20:10) is not mentioned. Jesus' response is well known. When her accusers disappeared, he asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way and from now on do not sin again."

In these two cases of women who have sinned, we are, of course, dealing with the issue of Jesus and sinners, and the gender of the sinner might be seen as a side issue. However, society often treats the female sinner with special harshness and injustice, as the story of the woman taken in adultery shows, so we should not forget gender dimensions of these incidents.

#### JESUS AND WOMEN VIEWED AS RITUALLY IMPURE

As we have seen, Jesus often ignored cultural barriers that prevented orthodox Jews from associating with women. In Judaism, these barriers were often based on women's being seen as ritually impure because of menstruation and childbirth (e.g., Lev. 15:19–32).<sup>35</sup> However, Jesus systematically reinterpreted the purity codes of contemporary Judaism, even to the extent of rejecting them (Matt. 15; Mark 7:1–23; Luke 11:38–41). Often, these codes were "the traditions of the elders,"

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32. For sinners in the gospels, see Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 127–28; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 264–68; literature cited in my "Heaven and Hell: The Parable of the Loving Father and the Judgmental Son," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 29, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 31–46, 32.

33. See Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke*, 2:689.

34. See Massey, *Women and the New Testament*, 16; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2:333; Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), 96.

35. See Wegner, *Chattel or Person*, 162–65.

elaborate oral laws that had been added to Biblical practices.<sup>36</sup> Jesus' rejection of these codes would logically allow him to have more frequent association with women. So some scholars, reasonably enough, suggest that Jesus' rejection of the strict purity code was the basis for his openly traveling with women, teaching them, and healing them, treating them as fully human.<sup>37</sup>

Witherington notes that Jewish women were excluded from most synagogue worship and from many religious feasts, probably because of purity issues.<sup>38</sup> We remember that in the hierarchy of sacred space in the temple, we have 1) Holy of Holies (open to [male] high priests alone); 2) inside the temple (for [male] priests); 3) court of the (male) priests; 4) court of Israelite men. Only then do we have, 5) court of Israelite women. Only 6) Court of Gentiles is lower in sacrality.

Funk writes, "Among the more obvious things that defiled were the touch of an unclean person, such as a 'leper,' or a woman suffering from vaginal bleeding, or a corpse. . . . There were also restrictions on the ingestion of foods deemed unsuitable for consumption, either because they were inherently unclean or because they had not been properly prepared. By extension, observant Judeans refused to share a common table with those who did not follow purity regulations, for fear of contamination. . . . [Jesus] ignored, or transgressed, or violated purity regulations and taboos."<sup>39</sup>

Clearly, if you were not supposed to touch the diseased or women who might be menstruating, this would have prevented healings Jesus performed in which he often used touch. The miracle story of the woman with "chronic uterine hemorrhage"<sup>40</sup> (Mark 5:24–34; Matt. 9:20–22; Luke 8:42–48) is often discussed in this connection. Because she suffered from this condition, she was always ritually impure and had been for some

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36. See Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees*, 3 vol. (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 3:288; John Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 98; Marcel Simon, *Jewish Sects at the Time of Jesus*, tr. James H. Farley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 36.

37. For Jesus' reinterpretation or rejection of purity codes, see Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 73–144, 96–99; John P. Meier, "Reflections on Jesus-of-History Research Today," in *Jesus' Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus in Early Judaism* (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1996), 84–107: "This practice of sharing meals (for Orientals, a most serious and intimate form of social intercourse) with the religiously 'lost' put Jesus in a continual state of ritual impurity, as far as the stringently law-observant were concerned." James H. Charlesworth points out how offensive it would have been for orthodox Jews when Jesus stayed at the home of a leper before entering Jerusalem (Mark 14:3), (*Jesus and the Jews: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 73).

38. *Women in the Ministry*, 78.

39. Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 204.

40. See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:709.



twelve years, so some scholars suggest that she might have been shunned by her community. Therefore, she did not dare to ask for a healing, but felt that if she touched Jesus' clothing, she would be healed. As part of a crowd, she touched Jesus' robe and was healed, but Jesus immediately recognized what she had done. When he asked who touched him, she confessed, and instead of rebuking her for breaking the taboo and making him impure, he commended her for her faith, singling her out for public approbation.<sup>41</sup>

The story of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31; Matt. 8:14–17; Luke 4:38–41) presents a case where Jesus intentionally broke ritual codes for the greater good of helping the sick. When Peter's mother-in-law suffered from a fever, Jesus, after preaching on a Sabbath, healed her immediately, without waiting for sundown (thus, breaking a Sabbath taboo); he also touched a person who was ill and healed a woman by touching ("He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up"), thus, breaking a taboo against touching women.<sup>42</sup> When the woman then began to serve Jesus ("she began to serve them"), this possibly again broke a taboo against working on the Sabbath.

#### MARY AND OTHER WOMEN AS RESURRECTION WITNESSES

The resurrection narratives are enormously complex, full of contradictions and difficulties (including two endings for Mark, the earliest gospel). Nevertheless, they are of transcendent beauty and their contradictions somehow contribute to their enigmatic power. Their variations in emphasis and detail show different theological currents in the early Christian communities, some of which are clearly more "feminist" and less "authority-oriented" than others.

For our purposes, we can only note briefly that Mary Magdalene and the other women occupy center stage as the original prophetesses and messengers of the resurrection. In all four gospels, women receive the first revelations that Jesus has been resurrected. By the account in John, Jesus appeared to Mary first, before any of the twelve, a very non-hierarchical, non male-centered action. This appearance certainly was built on a close relationship Jesus had with Mary when she was his disciple before his death.<sup>43</sup> Luke even goes to the lengths of portraying the disciples as disbelieving these prophetic women, for their words "seemed to them

41. See Swidler, "Jesus Was a Feminist," 35; Witherington, *Women in the Ministry*, 72–73.

42. For taboos against touching women, see Witherington, *Women in the Ministry*, 67.

43. See Gerald O'Collins and Daniel Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness to Jesus' Resurrection," *Theological Studies* 48 (1987): 631–646. Also, Reid, *Choosing*, 203; Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993); Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 139. There is an intriguing gnostic tradition that Jesus

[the twelve] an idle tale." The Marcan appendix also portrays the apostles as disbelieving the women's good news (Mark 16:11), for which lack of faith in the women and their general faithlessness Jesus later upbraided them (Mark 16:14).

From the viewpoint of hierarchy and male-centered organization, the resurrection is as paradoxical as many of Jesus' parables and teachings. The first come last, and the last come first. The women come before the men, and the men after the women. Jesus obviously did not reject the apostles; he energized them, and they became powerful missionaries and leaders. He appeared to them a number of times. But we should also not forget or underrate the importance of women as first revelators in this transcendent event.

#### CONCLUSION

For these and many other reasons, I accept Jesus as what we would call feminist (by my tentative definition of feminism), accepting women as whole human beings in social situations when they were not typically noticed or valued or in which they were even despised and avoided as unclean. Jesus' actions in this regard continually challenged, surprised, and even shocked his followers—he even defended one woman as having the right to be a disciple in a rabbi/disciple relationship when another woman wanted to pull her back into a traditional gender role of kitchen work.

As further support for the thesis of this paper, I quote from two writers who are not in the mainstream of Biblical criticism—first, Michael Grant, who reviewed the gospels from the standpoint of a Roman historian. He wrote,

As every Gospel agrees, Jesus' female followers remained conspicuously faithful to him right up to and after his death, exceeding in loyalty and understanding not only the single apostle Judas who betrayed him but all the other apostles as well, including Peter who was declared to have denied him three times. Since this superiority of the women's behavior was so embarrassing to the Church that its writers would have omitted it had it not been irremovable, there is every reason to regard it as authentic, setting the seal on the exceptionally close relations they had enjoyed with Jesus throughout his ministry, which has been reflected in the leading part women have always played in Christian worship. "In Jesus' attitude towards women," C. G. Montefiore rightly remarked, "we have a highly original and significant feature of his life and teaching."<sup>44</sup>

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married Mary Magdalene, but the gospels are silent on such a marriage, and there is no solid Biblical evidence for it.

44. *Jesus: An Historian's Review*, 85.

Second, the distinguished Canadian novelist, Robertson Davies, who when asked if he believed that religion had fostered discrimination against women, replied, "The Jewish and Christian religions have been hard on women. When you read how Orthodox Judaism looked at women you realize what a gigantic revolution was ushered in by Jesus."<sup>45</sup>

Jesus' teachings and actions give clear support for action. For instance, one tenet of contemporary anti-feminism is that married women should stay in the home only, instead of having the choice to work. In recent years, there have been moments when neo-conservative currents in Mormonism have caused women to drop out of school and plan only for life in the home. However, the Martha and Mary incident shows that Jesus would not confine women to domestic roles. Judging from this encounter between Jesus and the sisters, one would expect that he would encourage women to be fully educated in order to serve fully. One remembers nineteenth century Mormon women gaining doctor's degrees in the east, then serving as doctors in Utah.<sup>46</sup>

The traditions in the gospels also give us the basis for believing that women should be disciples and serve as significant disciples, fully as much as men. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that women would have equal organizational status, a situation that is far from realized in the LDS church. The argument that the church does not need women's formal insights and talents organizationally clearly has no merit; and the argument that is sometimes used to justify this—women do not have the priesthood because they are more righteous than men and, thus, do not need priesthood—is also sorely lacking. (By this argument, the best people are excluded from influence.)

If Jesus were living and teaching among us today, his feminism would probably surprise and even shock us just as much as it shocked his disciples during his earthly ministry. Jesus' radical inclusiveness, his viewing all humans as equally valid, including sinners, the disabled, children, the poor, and women, remains a challenge for us today. Whether we follow Jesus' quiet, yet profound feminism or fall back on a neo-conservative anti-feminism is one of the most important choices our church will make in the new millennium.

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45. J. Madison Davis, ed., *Conversations with Robertson Davies* (Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1989), 138. Davies went on to remark that contemporary Christianity was in need of a further revolution: "I think that the bringing of the feminine principle, feminine values and insights into greater prominence in Christianity will be the greatest revolution in the faith in the last 1,000 years."

46. See Chris Rigby Arrington, "Pioneer Midwives," in Bushman, *Mormon Sisters*, 43–66, 58–61.

# The Basic Tune of the Sparrow

*Marilyn Bushman-Carlton*

Outside the glass that keeps us warm,  
the sparrows,  
most common of creatures,  
of whom the promise is made  
that none will be lost,  
are content,  
releasing out from themselves  
the basic, expected  
tune of sparrow.  
They intone through the snows  
that flesh the limbs  
and starch white the ground  
where in rust and green seasons  
they forage for food,  
take in stride the wider design  
be it snow, or rain, shards of sun,  
the discontent of wind.  
They expect nothing more,  
accept even less.  
Brown feather, small bone, unsung  
as late love, bare light bulbs,  
a white cotton slip,  
they yield.  
No murmur no envy no pain  
leaks from their beaks.



# Social Forces that Imperil the Family<sup>1</sup>

*Tim B. Heaton*

## IS THERE CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

Since mid-century, dramatic changes in family demographics have characterized patterns of parenthood and sexual partnerships in America. As age at marriage has increased, the age at initiation of sexual intercourse has decreased so that adolescents and young adults are spending several years sexually experienced but not married. Cohabitation is becoming a common experience during this stage of their lives. The age at which people start having children has not changed as much as has age at marriage so that an increasing proportion of children are born to single parents. At the same time, marriages have become much less stable so that adults are spending more time single after marriage, and children are more likely to live at least part of their lives with a single parent. The conjunction of sexual intimacy, parenthood, and legal commitment that characterized families in the 1950s is not now nearly so obvious.<sup>2</sup>

Economic changes have compounded the process of family change. A period of sustained economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s created widespread expectations that people's standard of living would improve from year to year and that children would be better off when they started their families than their parents had been. The American dream of a house, car, and some modern appliances became a reality for larger

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1. The author appreciates comments from Cardell Jacobson, Kris Goodman and an anonymous reviewer, but they are not responsible for any errors or the author's own interpretation of data.

2. Andrew J. Cherlin, ed., *The Changing American Family and Public Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 1988); David Popenoe, *Disturbing the Nest* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1988); Tim B. Heaton, "Family Decline and Disassociation: Changing Family Demographics Since the 1950s," *Family Perspective* 27, no. 2 (1993): 127-146; Bruce A. Chadwick and Tim B. Heaton, eds., *Statistical Handbook on the American Family* (Phoenix: The Oryx Press, 1999).

segments of the population. In the mid-1970s, the economic trend leveled off. But expectations continued to remain high. Many couples found that the simplest way to keep up with expectations was for the wife to go to work. Women entered the labor force in record numbers. Indeed, the greatest percentage increase in employment was among mothers of preschool children. Of course, a number of poor women, often single mothers and minorities, has always worked out of economic necessity. The end result of these trends is that the model of a stay-at-home mom and a working dad no longer fits a majority of families. Economic restructuring combined with increases in both single parent families and dual earning couples also created a widening gap between rich and poor.<sup>3</sup>

Ideological movements further challenged beliefs regarding family life.<sup>4</sup> The sexual revolution destroyed the norm of restricting sexual expression to marriage. The feminist movement questioned the homemaker model for women. Greater emphasis was placed on self-fulfillment while promotion of diversity challenged the notion that one type of family is good for everyone. The gay rights movement rejected the widespread belief that homosexual behavior is immoral. In combination, demographic, economic, and ideological changes have created a vastly different context within which people make decisions about becoming sexual partners and parents. This shift is illustrated by the movie *Pleasantville*, where a stereotypical 1950s family is portrayed as sterile and restrictive of individual growth.

Given the widespread changes that have occurred, the deterioration of the family can be blamed for a variety of social ills from school shootings, to drug use, to rising welfare rolls, to abuse. Indeed, you can blame any bad thing you want on the family, cite the above noted trends, and some people will agree. Despite these popular perceptions, the influence of "family decline" on the quality of children's lives is debated by family scholars.<sup>5</sup> In this paper, I first review responses to these trends by LDS scholars. Then I examine trends in several aspects of family behaviors and attitudes, comparing the U.S. and Mormons, and briefly assess their impact on the quality of family life. I conclude that the response by LDS scholars may have focused rather narrowly on a few issues and neglected other issues that have a greater impact on families.

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3. Reynolds Farley, *The New American Reality* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996); Urie Bronfenbrenner, Peter McClelland, Elaine Wethington, Phyllis Moen, and Stephen J. Ceci, *The State of Americans* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

4. David Popenoe, "American Family Decline, 1960-1990: A Review and Appraisal," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55, no. 3 (1993): 527-542.

5. Sharon K. Houseknecht and Jaya Sastry, "Family 'Decline' and Child Well-Being: A Comparative Assessment," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58, no. 3 (1996): 726-739.

## THE RESPONSE

Changes in the nature of family life have generated a variety of responses. Some of these responses seem to be motivated by self-interest or political agendas. Opportunistic politicians try to get votes by talking about family values. Once in office, they hotly debate the extent to which government should try to influence different aspects of family life. The entertainment industry changes its depiction of family life and sexual behavior. Some extreme feminists say "good riddance" to the family.<sup>6</sup> Religious leaders reconsider policies about the roles of women and homosexuals. Scholars refer to such changes to obtain research funds and get published.

A variety of responses from prominent Mormons is presented in the book *Charting a New Millennium*.<sup>7</sup> Richard G. Wilkins,<sup>8</sup> a law professor at Brigham Young University, is concerned with the feminist agenda evident at international conferences. He says that core elements of this agenda are support for same-sex marriages, a pro-choice position on abortion, and government support for child care, so women can pursue careers. He has spoken out against this agenda in several speeches, has established NGO Family Voice to speak up for traditional family values including heterosexual marriage, mothers staying at home to care for children, and pro-life policies. BYU is now co-sponsoring World Congresses on the Family which support his views.

Camille Williams,<sup>9</sup> a graduate of BYU's law school and part-time faculty member, is concerned with a legal trend that favors the rights of individuals over family stability. This trend includes liberalization of divorce, non-enforcement of laws prohibiting some types of sexual behavior, and protection of homosexuals. Corresponding with these legal changes are ideological changes favoring self-fulfillment at the expense of family commitment.

Kathleen Bahr,<sup>10</sup> a professor of family science at BYU, and Cheri Anderson Loveless, author and Young Mother of the Year in 1983, are

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6. Judith Stacey, "Good Riddance to 'The Family': A Response to David Popenoe," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55, no. 3 (1993): 545–547.

7. Maurine and Scot Proctor, eds., *Charting a New Millennium* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1998).

8. Richard G. Wilkins, "The United Nations, Traditional Family Values, and the 'Istanbul Miracle,'" in Maurine and Scot Proctor, eds., *Charting a New Millennium* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1998), 123–144.

9. Camille S. Williams, "The Family, the Law, and the New Millennium," in Maurine and Scot Proctor, eds., *Charting a New Millennium* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1998), 147–171.

10. Kathleen Slaugh Bahr and Cheri A. Loveless, "Family Work—in the 21st Century," in Maurine and Scot Proctor, eds., *Charting a New Millennium* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1998), 173–204.

concerned that family work is seen as a burden to get out of the way rather than as a means to positive family interaction. They believe the concern with efficient dispatch of household tasks, so people can pursue leisure has supplanted God's plan that families work together. Not surprisingly, since the authors have BYU ties, their arguments are generally consistent with a conservative position that families are changing for the worse and that we need to look back in time for better models.

The Proclamation on the Family issued in 1995 is an official church statement reflecting concern with family trends. The proclamation covers many topics. It contains unequivocal support for elements of the above noted agenda including opposition to same-sex marriage, restriction of sexual activity to married couples, support for distinct gender roles with father as provider and mother as nurturer, and reaffirmation of the importance of marriage and childbearing. Although the Proclamation does not explicitly refer to abortion, it does affirm the sanctity of life. The church's position opposing abortion except in the cases of rape and endangerment of the mother's life is well known. The above noted authors take positions consistent with and often drawing from the Proclamation. Careful reading of the Proclamation also lends support to issues that are often seen as part of a liberal agenda. These issues include abuse, gender inequality—husbands and wives are supposed to be equal partners even though they have different roles—and poverty—families are to provide for the physical needs of their children.

When asked about trends that pose a serious threat to the family, Mormon professionals give a variety of responses. I interviewed an LDS pediatrician from Houston, Texas, who is concerned that more of children's leisure time is spent in front of the TV and less of it is spent reading or interacting with other family members. He is also concerned about the number of preschool children who spend long periods of time each day under the care of someone who does not give them love and affection. A former researcher for IBM who recently joined the faculty at BYU is concerned that we are getting too rich and materialistic. Our wealth creates greater concern with consumption than with quality family life. An historical economist is especially concerned about the growth of single-parent families. A social worker who has worked with abused children has observed many problems arising from parental abuse of drugs and alcohol. In short, there is a wide variety of views about trends that threaten the family.

#### STATISTICAL TRENDS

Obviously, the two major threats to good families are poor parenting and poor partnering. Taking an empirical approach, I present trends for which quantifiable information is available. Available statistical trends

reflect the combination of (1) interest by policy makers and scholars, (2) the establishment of agencies and funding to collect information, and (3) the process of preparing and releasing this information. Unfortunately, these processes neglect several important trends affecting the family.

Several national social surveys include information on religious affiliation, making it possible to compare self-identified Mormons with the national population. Caution should be exercised, however, in using these data. Even though a sample is statistically representative of the nation, such may not be the case for the LDS sub-sample. In the first place, the number of Mormons is generally small. Moreover, some of the samples have multiple stages. In the first stage, geographic areas are selected. If areas in Utah are selected, then the number of Mormons is comparatively large, but overly representative of Utah Mormons. If Utah is not selected, the number of Mormons is comparatively small but overly representative of non-Utah Mormons.

**Declining Marriage:** In a recent presidential address to the Population Association of America, the major organization for demographers in the Americas, Linda Waite<sup>11</sup> outlined several benefits that are derived from marriage. These benefits include fewer alcohol related problems, less risk taking, better health, more frequent and satisfying sex, more wealth, lower school dropout rates and poverty among children, and higher wages. This list indicates that marriage has a broad range of benefits for partners and their children. Having a partner to give support and encouragement, to share household and parental responsibilities, and to spend leisure time with can enhance many aspects of our lives. Waite recommends that family scholars have a responsibility to inform the public about the benefits of marriage and to promote policies that increase the likelihood of marriage.

Given this litany of benefits, declining rates of marriage should be high on our list of threats to the family. Marriage rates have declined substantially in the last several decades, even to the point that some authors have referred to the "retreat from marriage."<sup>12</sup> Results from two recent national surveys demonstrate this trend (see Table 1). The General Social Survey (GSS) has interviewed about 1,500 adults on an annual or biannual schedule since 1972. The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) interviewed over 10,000 women aged 15-44 in 1995. According to the NSFG, the percentage of women who are still single by their 26th birthday has nearly doubled from around 30 percent for women born in the 1950s, to almost 60 percent for women born in the 1970s. If this trend continues, a substantial percentage of the population will never marry.

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11. Linda J. Waite, "Does Marriage Matter?," *Demography* 32, no. 4 (1995): 483-507.

12. Robert Schoen, "The continuing retreat from marriage: figures from 1983 U.S. marital status life tables," *Sociology and Social Research*, 71, no. 2 (Jan 1987): 108-9.

**TABLE 1.**  
**Trends In Marriage by LDS Membership**

		Percent ever married by given age			
		1995 National Survey of Family Growth		1972-1998 General Social Survey	
<i>Year Born</i>		<i>LDS</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>LDS</i>	<i>National</i>
<b>Before 1940</b>	Age 18	—	—	13.3	9.6
	22	—	—	56.2	48.4
	26	—	—	82.0	75.4
	30	—	—	93.0	86.7
	(N)	—	—	(128)	(11886)
<b>1940-1949</b>	18	—	—	12.8	8.8
	22	—	—	61.6	51.4
	26	—	—	92.6	76.3
	30	—	—	96.3	84.6
	(N)	—	—	(86)	(5927)
<b>1950-1959</b>	18	27.7	11.0	6.7	7.6
	22	69.9	47.5	50.5	42.6
	26	90.4	68.3	82.4	63.4
	30	95.2	79.0	86.5	73.3
	(N)	(83)	(3792)	(88)	(4605)
<b>1960-1969*</b>	18	7.3	7.0	4.5	3.4
	22	51.2	34.9	38.0	21.1
	26	72.0	59.2	81.8	37.0
	30	84.3	72.8	81.8	44.8
	(N)	(82)	(3831)	(88)	(4605)
<b>1970-1979</b>	18	4.6	3.9	—	—
	22	33.9	26.7	—	—
	26	66.0	42.1	—	—
	30	—	—	—	—
	(N)	(81)	(2967)	—	—

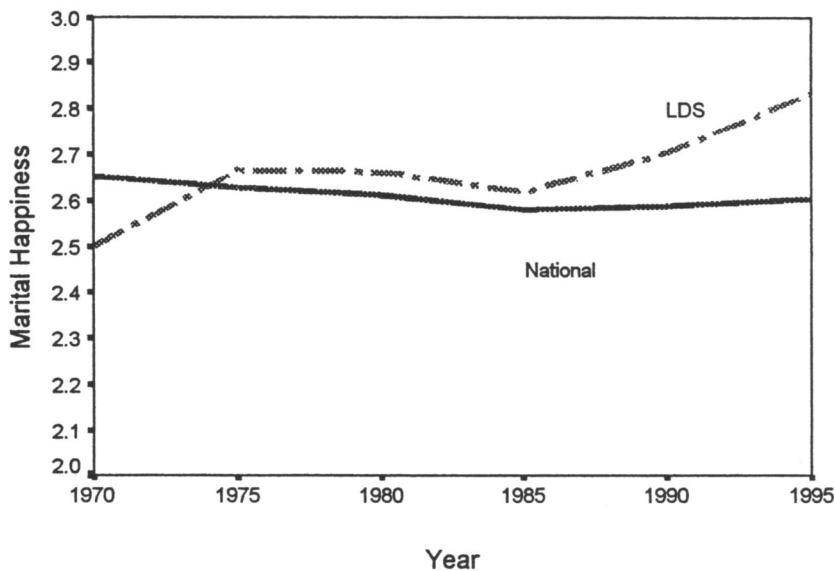
\*1960-1979 for the General Social Survey

Marriage rates are higher among the LDS population. About forty percent of LDS women were still single by their 26th birthday. The trend in declining marriage among the LDS population is clearly following the national trend, but two surveys suggest somewhat different results. In the NSFG, the LDS pattern of marriage parallels the national pattern for each cohort. In the GSS, however, the gap between the Mormon population and the nation increases over time because the decline in marriage is lower for the LDS population. Whether or not the LDS/national gap is widening, the difference implies that LDS members are benefitting from their emphasis on marriage.

But are these marriages happy? One might think that as divorce has

become more acceptable, then those who remain married are happier. Such is not the case. A plot of trends in marital happiness since 1972 based on the GSS (see Figure 1) indicates, if anything, that marital satisfaction has declined a little. With all of the emphasis on improving sex, making your partner happy, and improving your marriage, little has changed. There is, however, a bright note for LDS members, where the recent trend in satisfaction is upward.

**Marital Instability:** A dramatic rise in divorce and marital separation is one of the most often noted indicators that the family is in decline. Increasing marital disruption is assumed to reflect lower commitment to long term relationships and greater emphasis on individual fulfillment. Marital disruption can have serious consequences for those involved. As noted above, simply not having a partner can be detrimental. In addition, the trauma of disruption can be harmful to partners and children. Of course, some scholars note that children may be better off with a single parent than in a conflictual relationship.<sup>13</sup>



Based on a 3-point scale with 3 being "very happy"

FIGURE 1. Trend in Marital Happiness, GSS

13. Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., and Andrew J. Cherlin, *Divided Families* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

Here there is good news. After rising for several decades, the national divorce rate has reversed and is now declining. The decline is not steep, so it would take several decades to reach the low divorce rates of the 1950s, but the decline is not trivial.<sup>14</sup> Data for Mormons from both the NSFG and GSS suggest that the decline in LDS divorce may be even greater than the national average (see Figure 2). Research in the 1980s concluded that LDS divorce rates were not much different than the national average,<sup>15</sup> but this conclusion needs to be reexamined in the 1990s.

Ironically, one of the reasons for the decline in divorce is the decline in marriage. This is not simply because there are fewer people at risk of divorce. Rather, as people delay marriage to a more mature age, their marriages tend to become more stable. Rising levels of female education are also favorable to marital stability.

**Same-sex Relationships:** As noted above, the legitimization of same-sex relationships has been viewed by some as a major threat to the family. I have yet to see compelling evidence for this claim. In the first place, only a small minority of the population has ever been involved in a same sex relationship. According to the GSS, less than six percent of adults say they have had a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex since they were 18 years old (5.5% of men and 4.5% of women). This percentage has been quite stable since 1989 (see Figure 3). The percentage for LDS women is 3.4%, somewhat lower than the national rate. Of the 60 LDS men responding to the GSS since 1989, not one said he had had a same-sex relationship. Although this result is not statistically different from the national percentage of 5.5, it does raise room for speculation. Are LDS gay men leaving the church at a high rate, are they unwilling to report their experience in national surveys, or is this just a statistical fluke? More research is needed to understand the experiences of Mormons who are attracted to partners of the same sex.

Legitimization of same-sex relationships clearly challenges the belief that sexual intimacy should only be expressed in heterosexual relationships. Beyond this challenge to sexual norms, it is not clear how legitimization would undermine the family structure of society. Research indicates that some gay men do not adhere to the ideal of monogamy.<sup>16</sup> One argument for legitimizing same-sex relationships is to promote stability. In short, the costs and benefits to legalizing or in other ways legit-

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14. Tim B. Heaton, "Factors Contributing to Increasing Marital Stability in the United States," Presented at the Conference on the National Survey of Family Growth, Washington D.C., 1998.

15. Tim B. Heaton, "Demographics of the Contemporary Mormon Family," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 25, no. 3 (1992): 19.

16. Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz, *American Couples* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1983).



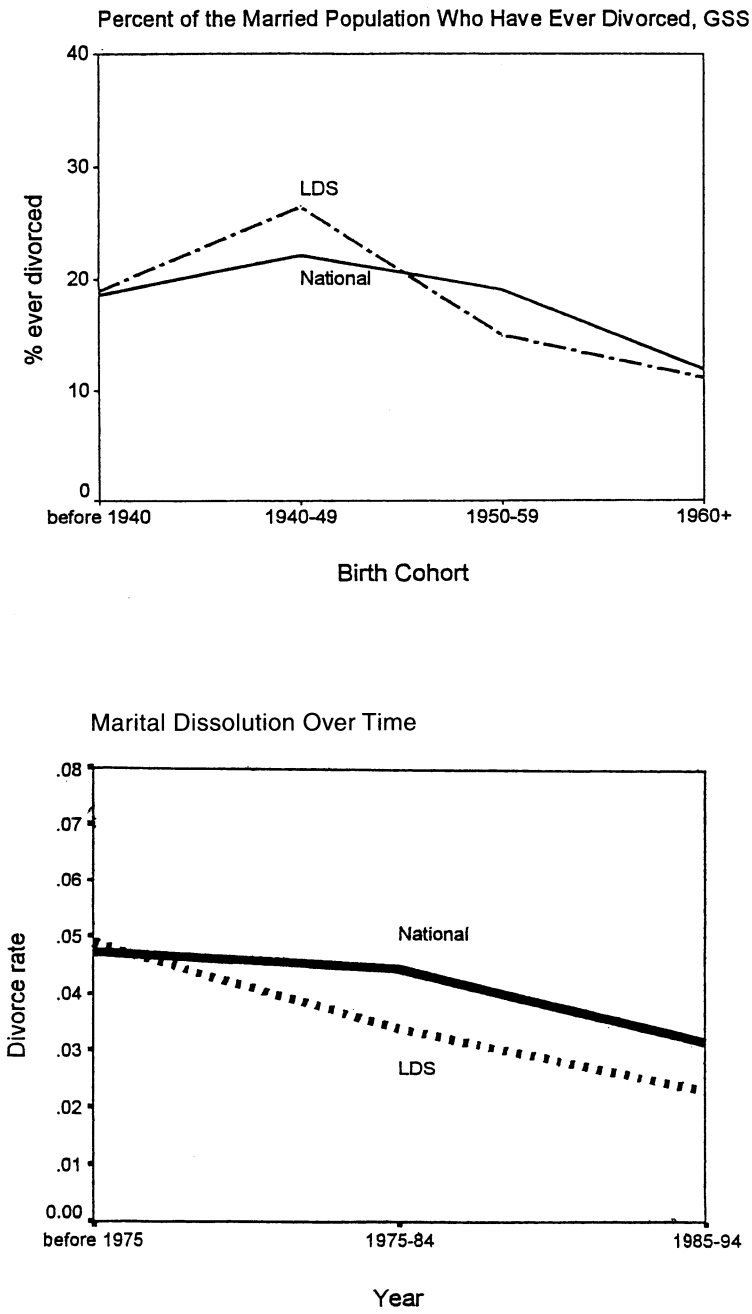


FIGURE 2. Trend in Marital Dissolution for Mormons and the Nation, GSS

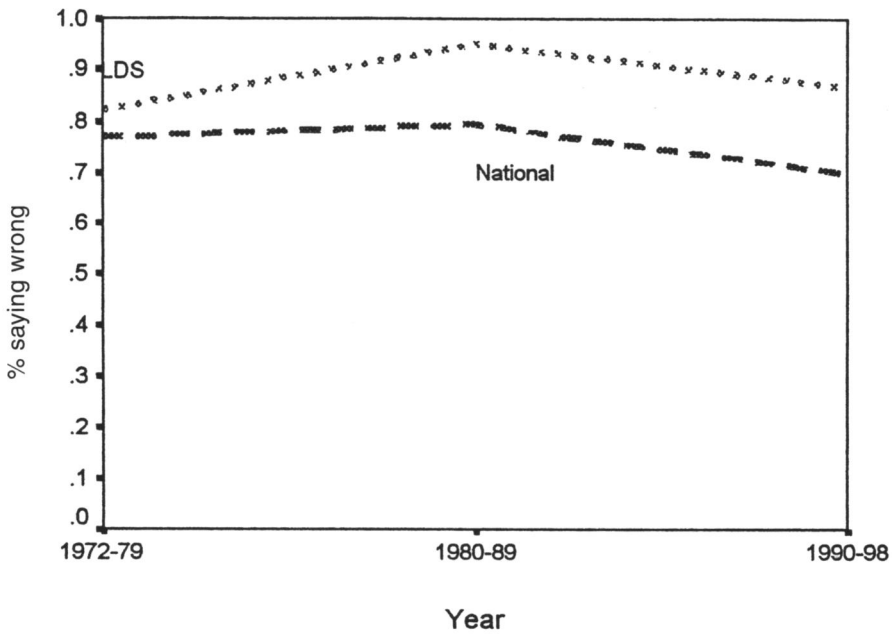


FIGURE 3. Percent Saying Homosexual Relationships are Always or Almost Always Wrong, GSS

imizing same-sex relationships have not been empirically demonstrated. Given this lack of clear evidence and the small percentage of the population involved, I would not place same-sex relationships on the list of major threats to family life.

**Abuse:** In 1996, over two million cases of child abuse and neglect were reported and investigated, and nearly one million cases were substantiated.<sup>17</sup> About half of these cases were for neglect, a fourth for physical abuse, 12 percent for sexual abuse, and less than ten percent involved emotional maltreatment or medical neglect. There are numerous consequences of abuse for spouses and children. Beyond immediate spousal physical damage, spousal abuse is associated with lower self-esteem,<sup>18</sup> depression,<sup>19</sup> and post-traumatic distress disorder.<sup>20</sup> Consequences

17. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998*, 118th edition (Washington, D.C., 1998).

18. M. Cascardi, and K. D. O'Leary, "Depressive Symptomatology, Self-esteem, and Self-blame in Battered Women," *Journal of Family Violence* 7 (1992): 249-259.

19. B. Andrews, "Bodily Shame as a Mediator Between Abusive Experiences and Depression," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 104 (1995): 277-285.

20. W. J. Gleason, "Mental Disorders in Battered Women: An Empirical Study," *Violence and Victims* 8 (1993): 53-66.

of abuse for children may be even more dramatic and of longer duration. One recent study shows that children who have sexual contact with adults are more likely to begin voluntary intercourse before age 16, to have a child as a teenager, to contract a sexually transmitted infection, and to be sexually coerced in adolescence or adulthood.<sup>21</sup> Psychological consequences include low self-esteem, learning problems, social withdrawal, adolescent delinquency, and depression.<sup>22</sup>

Limited data suggest that sexual abuse is about as common for LDS members as is the case nationally. In the NSFG, 16 percent of LDS women said they had been forced to have sex compared with 20 percent nationally. Of the sexually experienced women in that survey, 7.9% of the Mormons and 6.6% of the total sample said their first sexual intercourse was involuntary. Respondents to the Preparation for Marriage Survey conducted by several universities around the country, including BYU, were asked, "At times sexual activities occur in families such as touching children in inappropriate places or performing sexual acts with children. Did these things ever happen to you while you grew up?" About 12 percent of the Mormons said yes. This percentage was a little lower for Catholics and Protestants, and a little higher for other religions and those with no religious preference.

Less is known about physical abuse of LDS children. LDS parents are a little more likely than others to report spanking or slapping children,<sup>23</sup> but this could be explained by the number and ages of children. Spanking is generally not considered to be abusive under most circumstances. Mormons are not very different in reports of marital violence as indicated by hitting or throwing something at a spouse and arguments that

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21. Christopher R. Browning and Edward O. Laumann, "Sexual Contact Between Children and Adults: A Life Course Perspective," *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 4 (1997): 540–560.

22. Victoria L. Banyard and Linda M. Williams, "Characteristics of Child Sexual Abuse as Correlates of Women's Adjustment: A Prospective Study," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58, no. 4 (1996): 853–865; H. P. Martin and P. Beezley, "Personality of abused children," in H. P. Martin, ed., *The Abused Child* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1976), 105–111; A. H. Green, "Child Abuse and the Etiology of Violent Delinquent Behavior," in R. J. Hunner and Y. E. Walker, eds., *Exploring the Relationship Between Child Abuse and Delinquency* (New Jersey: Allenheld and Schram, 1981), 152–160; C. C. Tower, *Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1999); C. T. Wang and D. Daro, *Current Trends in Child Abuse Reporting and Fatalities: The Results of the 1997 Annual Fifty-State Survey* (Available from the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, 200 S. Michigan Avenue, 17th floor, Chicago, IL 60604).

23. Tim B. Heaton, Kristen L. Goodman, and Thomas B. Holman, "In Search of a Peculiar People: Are Mormon Families Really Different?," in Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young, eds., *Contemporary Mormonism Social Science Perspectives* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 87–117.

get physical,<sup>24</sup> suggesting that rates of physical abuse may be similar for Mormons and the national population.

Part of the reason abuse is of great concern is because the consequences are long lasting and affect other members of the family. Because abuse affects a fairly large segment of the population and can have very traumatic long-term consequences, I would place it high on the list of factors which detract from family well-being.

**Poverty:** Poverty is clearly a family issue. Forty percent of the poor population are children (defined as people under age 18). Children are more likely to be poor than any other age group, and the gap in poverty rates for children compared to all persons has increased since 1970. In 1970, children were 18 percent more likely to be poor than was the average person. By 1996 the gap increased to 45 percent.<sup>25</sup> Poverty has many negative consequences for children. Poverty increases infant mortality and the chance that babies will fall below the desirable birth-weight. Growing up in poverty increases the likelihood that children will not complete high school and that females will have a non-marital birth, thus, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.<sup>26</sup> Poverty has also been found to be correlated with anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and antisocial behavior of children.<sup>27</sup>

The GSS suggests that rates of poverty have increased among LDS church members as well (see Figure 4). The NSFH suggests that LDS poverty rates are comparable to the national average.

Poverty is an even greater concern when we consider the global picture. Eighty percent of the earth's population now lives in less-developed countries.<sup>28</sup> LDS membership is growing most rapidly in these less developed regions, especially Latin America. Poverty in less-developed countries implies lack of access to sufficient food, safe drinking water, basic health care, and literacy. These basics will be among the greatest concerns to a growing number of LDS families. Thus, providing "the basics of physical life and protection" is of growing concern to families in the church and the world at large.

**Single-parent Families:** In many ways, the consequences for children in single-parent families are the converse of those in two parent

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24. Ibid.

25. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998*, 118th edition (Washington, D.C., 1998).

26. Greg J. Duncan, et. al, "How Much Does Childhood Poverty Affect the Life Chances of Children?," *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 3 (1998): 406-423.

27. Donald K. Routh, "Impact of Poverty on Children, Youth and Families," *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology* (1994).

28. Population Reference Bureau, 1999 *World Population Data Sheet* (Washington, D.C.).

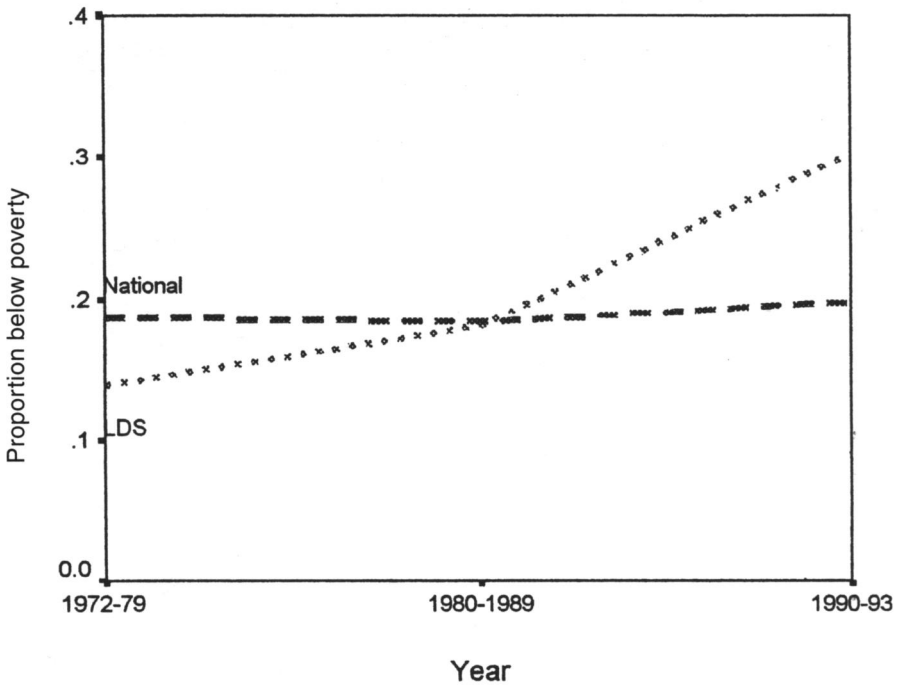


FIGURE 4. Poverty Rates by Religion, GSS

families. Children with a single parent are more likely to be poor, to drop out of school, to become unwed parents, and to later divorce themselves. Although the consequences of poverty and having a single parent are interrelated, each risk factor has some independent effects on negative outcomes.<sup>29</sup> As with poverty and abuse, the consequences of growing up in a single parent family extend beyond a single generation.

In 1968, 85 percent of all families with children (under 18) included both parents. By 1997, this figure dropped to 68 percent.<sup>30</sup> An even smaller percentage of children, probably less than half, will spend all of their childhood in a two-parent family.<sup>31</sup>

29. Urie Bronfenbrenner, Peter McClelland, Elaine Wethington, Phyllis Moen, and Stephen J. Ceci, *The State of Americans* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); Susan Mayer, *What Money Can't Buy: The Effect of Parental Income on Children's Outcomes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

30. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998*, 118th edition (Washington, D.C., 1998).

31. Sara McLanahan and Larry Bumpass, "Intergenerational Consequences of Family Disruption," *American Journal of Sociology* 94, no. 1 (July 1988): 130-52.

Given current demographics, single-parent families are generally created by premarital births and marital disruption. As noted above, rates of marital disruption are high, but have moderated somewhat in the last several years. In 1950, 4 percent of births were to unwed mothers. This figure has increased steadily throughout the 1980s and 1990s. By 1995, the figure increased to 32.2%.<sup>32</sup> In other words, one in three children is born out of wedlock. But births to teenage mothers have remained fairly stable. The biggest factor contributing to unwed parenthood in recent decades is not that more teenagers are getting pregnant. Rather, people are deciding not to marry, as noted above. Thus, it is impossible to separate the increase in single-parent families from the retreat from marriage.

LDS households are more likely to include a married couple and children than is the case nationally, according to the GSS (see Figure 5). Among Mormons the ratio of single parent families to married couples with children is much lower than the national average. According to the general social survey, the national ratio increased from 1 single parent family for every 5 married couples with children in the 1970s, to nearly 1 for 2 in the 1990s. In comparison, the ratio for Mormons increased from 1 for 20 in the 1970s to 1 for 5 in the 1990s. In other words, LDS families are now about where U.S. families were in the 1970s. Single parent families are less common among Mormons largely because Mormons are more likely to be married when they begin having children. For example, in the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, 84% of Mormon children were born to a married couple compared with 60 percent nationally.

**Family Roles:** In 1960, 18.6 percent of married women with children under age 5 were employed. The percentage increased steadily until 1990 when it reached 62 percent. Since then it has remained fairly stable.<sup>33</sup> This shift signals a fundamental change in the role of women over the last half-century. Of course, women's economic roles went through an equally important shift because of industrialization. Most women contributed to the household economy before the industrial revolution, but this was not seen as a threat to the family because the household was often the location of production. There was not nearly so great a separation of economic and parental roles. It was only after the location of childcare and economic production were separated that women's roles as the caretakers of children became a critical issue.

LDS women are about as likely to work as is the case nationally according to the GSS (see Figure 6). Research suggests that LDS employment is higher among singles and lower among married women. Part-

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32. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998*, 118th edition (Washington, D.C., 1998).

33. *Ibid.*

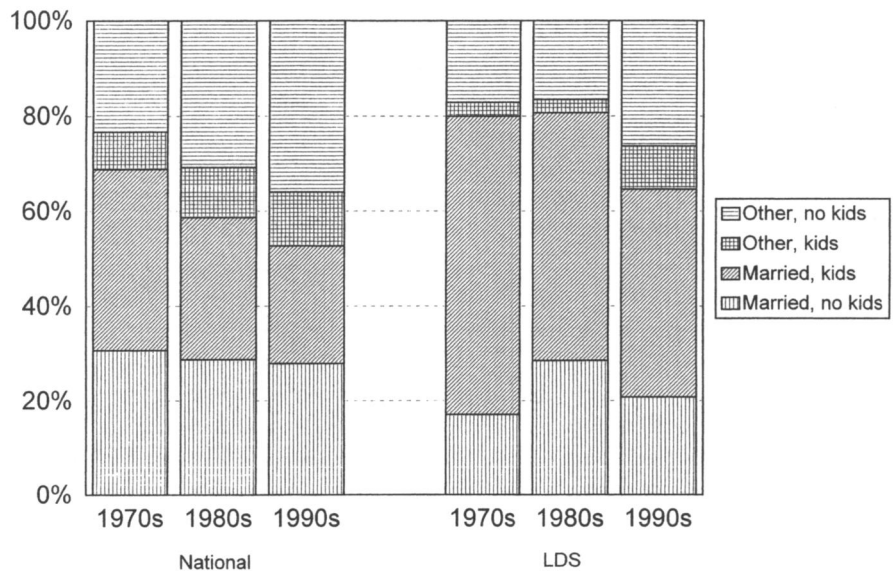


FIGURE 5. Household Structure in National and LDS Families, GSS

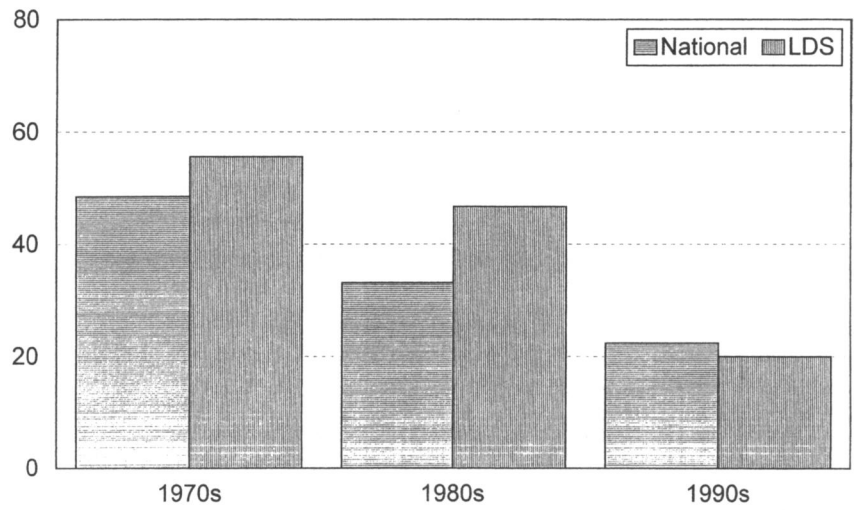


FIGURE 6. Percent of Mothers Who Are Keeping House, GSS

time work is also higher among LDS women while full-time employment is lower.<sup>34</sup> Although members of the LDS church tend to be conservative in their attitudes regarding gender roles, they are similar to the national average in some important respects. In particular, Mormons are more likely to see a problem with working mothers, but are not more opposed to women working or getting involved in politics.<sup>35</sup>

Research on the impacts of mothers' employment on the well-being of children and marriage is complex. Consequences depend on factors such as the quality of child-care, age of the child, and support from other family members. Women with more economic resources find it easier to leave a marriage, but their income is also a stabilizing factor in low income families.<sup>36</sup> Children who are very young may suffer if they are placed into child-care, but older children may benefit from contact with other children.<sup>37</sup> The major consequence of maternal employment may be a reduction in time spent with children.<sup>38</sup> Overall, the evidence does not now support the conclusion that maternal employment poses a serious threat to the family.

**Abortion:** In 1995, an estimated 1.4 million abortions were performed in the United States. The Guttmacher Institute estimates that 46 million abortions are performed worldwide each year.<sup>39</sup> That is about one abortion for every three births both in the U.S. and worldwide. The abortion rate has dropped about 20 percent since the 1980s in the U.S. and there is some indication that it may be declining in other areas of the world.

In the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, women reported that 13.5 percent of their pregnancies ended in induced abortion. The comparable figure for Mormon women was 5.2 percent. Mormons are also more likely to be opposed to abortion than is the case nationally, except in

34. Tim B. Heaton, "Familial, Socioeconomic, and Religious Behavior: A Comparison of LDS and Non-LDS Women," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27, no. 2 (1994): 169–183.

35. "Peculiar People," *Sunstone* 20, no. 4 (1997) 108: 13.

36. Hiromi Ono, "Husbands' and Wives' Resources and Marital Dissolution," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60, no. 3 (1998): 674–689; Stacy J. Rogers, "Wives' Income and Marital Quality: Are There Reciprocal Effects?," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61, no. 1 (1999): 123–132.

37. Jay Belsky, "Parental and Nonparental Child Care and Children's Socioemotional Development: A Decade in Review," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52, no. 4 (1990): 885–903; Jay Belsky and David Eggebeen, "Early and Extensive Maternal Employment and Young Children's Socioemotional Development: Children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53, no. 4 (1991): 1083–1098.

38. Chandra Muller, "Maternal Employment, Parental Involvement, and Mathematics Achievement Among Adolescents," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57, no. 1 (1995): 85–100.

39. [http://www.galwayforlife.ie/global\\_figures.html](http://www.galwayforlife.ie/global_figures.html)



cases of rape or endangerment of the mother's life which is consistent with the church's official position.<sup>40</sup>

The abortion issue is so politically charged that much more is written about its politics than about its consequences. Moreover, it is difficult to sort out the consequences of the abortion from the negative conditions that gave rise to the decision to abort. Abortion obviously deprives the fetus of life. To my knowledge, the LDS Church has not described the consequences for the spirits that may have been assigned to those fetuses, but abortion has been likened to murder. Possible consequences for the mother include post-abortion syndrome,<sup>41</sup> higher likelihood of abusing subsequent children,<sup>42</sup> and psychological distress.<sup>43</sup>

The high rate of abortion and the drastic consequences for the fetus imply that abortion should be of great concern. The lack of knowledge about the consequences for the mother and potential spirit leave some question about the severity of the problem.

**Non-marital Sex:** Perhaps no cultural change has had a greater impact on what we think of as family behavior than has the sexual revolution. According to the GSS, a majority of the U.S. population no longer thinks premarital sex is wrong (see Figure 7). Mormons are more likely to say premarital sex is wrong, but a substantial minority does not. Among respondents to the NSFG, about 80 percent of women are not virgins at their first wedding (see Figure 8). The norm of fidelity after marriage remains strong, however.<sup>44</sup>

Changes in sexual attitudes and behaviors have challenged the norm of premarital chastity. What is wrong with people having sex? Consensual sex is gratifying, has no victims, and hormones create strong sexual urges. Premarital births and sexually transmitted diseases are obvious concerns, but these can usually be resolved with proper contraception. Young adolescents may not yet be ready to make mature judgements about intimate relationships and may not contracept effectively, so maybe we should encourage some delay. The average age at first intercourse for women in the U.S. is about 18.

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40. "Peculiar People," *Sunstone* 21, no. 1 (1998) 109: 17.

41. Peter Doherty, ed., *Post-Abortion Syndrome* (Cambridge: Four Corners Press, 1995).

42. Philip G. Ney, Tak Fung, and Adele Rose Wickett, "Relationship between induced abortion and child abuse and neglect: four studies," in Peter Doherty, ed., *Post-abortion Syndrome* (Cambridge: Four Corners Press, 1995), 83–101.

43. Mary Parthun and Anne Kiss, *Abortion's Aftermath: Psychological Effects of Induced Abortion* (Ontario: Human Life Research Institute, 1987); Jamems L. Rogers, "Psychological Consequences of Abortion," in James K. Hoffmeier, ed., *Abortion* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987), 177–193.

44. Robert T. Michael, John H. Gagnon, Edward O. Laumann, and Gina Kolata, *Sex in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994).

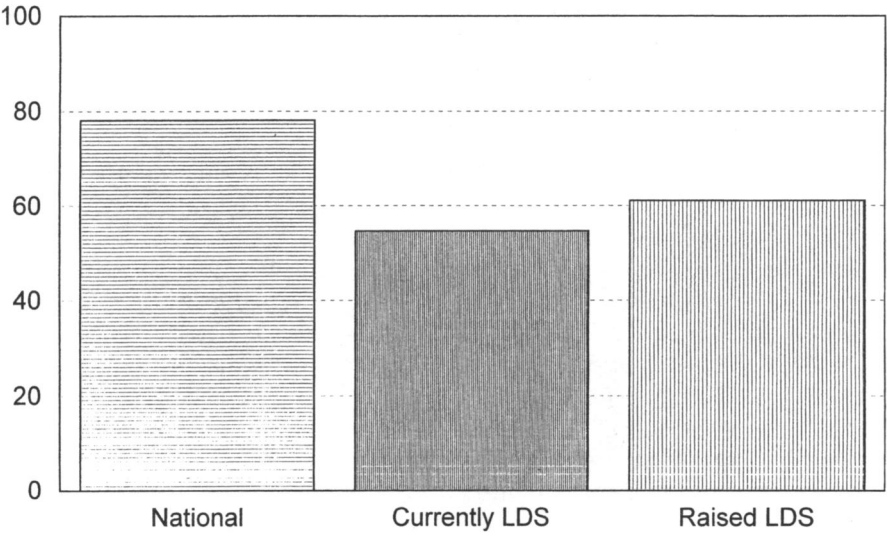


FIGURE 7. Percent Having Premarital Sex by Age 22, GSS

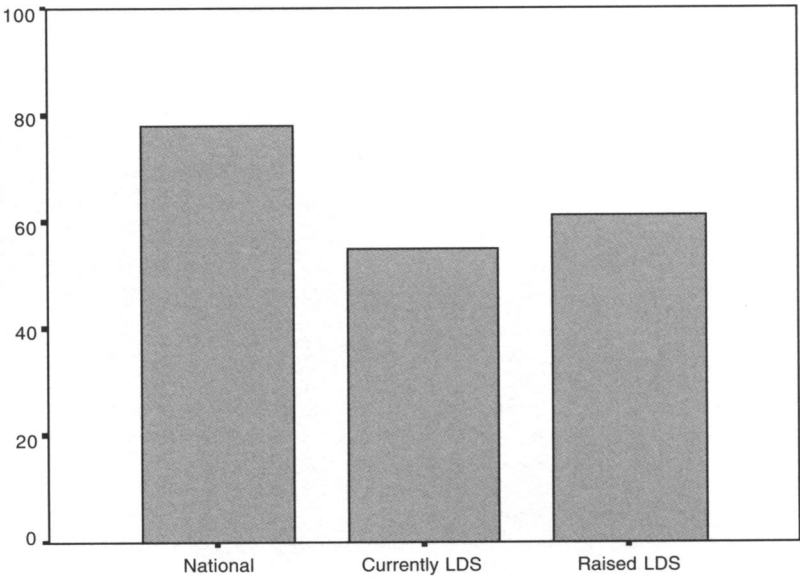


FIGURE 8. Percent of Women Not Virgins at Their First Wedding, GSS

Some family scholars believe that premarital sex may inhibit the ability to build committed stable intimate relationships. Premarital sex and cohabitation are correlated with marital instability. The explanation for this correlation, however, is debated.<sup>45</sup>

According to the National Survey of Family Growth, 78% of women nationally and 55% of LDS women have had sex before marriage (see Figure 8). Mormons are more likely to say premarital sex is wrong and are less likely to have sex before getting married. As a side note, an earlier report of high levels of premarital sex among Mormons<sup>46</sup> was criticized because it was based on affiliation at the time of the survey. It is possible that some people are unchaste in adolescence and later convert to Mormonism and follow church teachings on chastity. The 1995 NSFG asks both current and childhood religion. Interestingly, those who were raised LDS have higher rates of premarital sex than those who are currently LDS. Apparently, those who disaffiliate are more likely to be sexually active than those who convert to Mormonism. Harold Christensen has studied the sexual behavior of Mormon college students, comparing them with students in the Midwest and Denmark. He found substantially lower rates of sexual activity among Mormons, but also found that sexually experienced Mormons were much less sexually active.<sup>47</sup>

**Childlessness:** Families are much smaller than they used to be. The average number of children in many European families is approaching one.<sup>48</sup> Some have expressed concern that people are so self-focused that they do not have time for or interest in having children. According to LDS doctrine, raising children is a critical part of God's plan, and families are the divinely appointed way to do so. In the GSS, less than two percent of the population thinks the ideal family would have no children (see Figure 9). A small percentage expect not to have any children themselves. Moreover, the trend does not suggest an increase in childlessness. Not surprisingly, childlessness is less common among Mormons than is the case nationally. Of course, some people expect to have children but

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45. Lee A. Lillard, Michael J. Brien, and Linda J. Waite, "Pre-Marital Cohabitation and Subsequent Marital Dissolution: Is It Self-Selection?," *Demography* 32, no. 3 (1995): 437–458; Joan R. Kahn and Kathryn A. London, "Premarital Sex and the Risk of Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53, no. 4 (1991): 845–855; Tim B. Heaton, "Feedback: Comment on 'Premarital Sex and the Risk of Divorce,'" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55, no. 1 (1993): 240–241.

46. Tim B. Heaton, "Family Decline and Disassociation: Changing Family Demographics Since the 1950s," *Family Perspective* 27, no. 2 (1993): 127–146.

47. Harold Christensen, "Stress Points in Mormon Family Culture," *Dialogue: a Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, no. 4 (1974): 20, and "Mormon Sexuality in Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10, no. 2 (1977): 62.

48. Population Reference Bureau, 1999 *World Population Data Sheet* (Washington, D.C.).

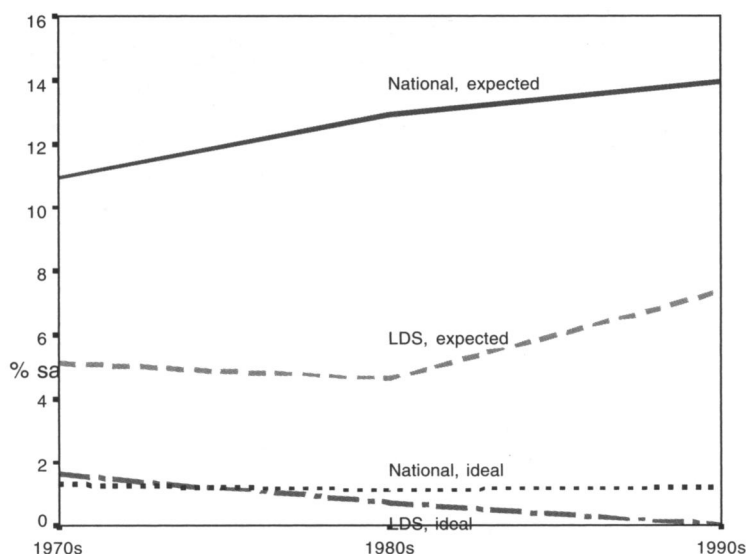


FIGURE 9. Childlessness Trends by Religion, GSS

continue postponing childbearing until it is too late.<sup>49</sup> There is no indication, however, that a substantial segment of the population will decide not to have children.

**Sexism:** Sexism poses a serious threat to families.<sup>50</sup> The Proclamation on the Family states that husbands and wives should be equal partners. Evidence from around the globe demonstrates that we are far from this goal. Female infanticide and selective abortion on female fetuses, giving more food or educational opportunities to sons than to daughters, male property rights and control over personal income, and male dominance of political processes reveal widespread gender bias. Data sources used for this research do not include good measures of sexism or male dominance within the family and this paper does not review the vast literature on this topic. Even though feminism's critique of the family may seem to be anti-family, the feminist movement and broader movements in support of women's rights offer solutions to the problem of sexism.

49. Tim B. Heaton, Cardell K. Jacobson, and Kimberlee Holland, "Persistence and Change in Decisions to Remain Childless," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (May 1999): 531–539.

50. Tim B. Heaton and Tamilyn Bodine-Heaton, "Is Feminism a Threat to the Family?," *Sunstone* 17, no. 2 (1994): 14–17.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, I have made a list of demographic trends affecting the family (see Table 2). Given the incomplete state of knowledge and the focus on demographic trends, I offer this list as a working hypothesis for discussion, not as a definitive statement. Many other issues could be considered for inclusion such as the media and pornography. My empirical criteria for making the list of greatest threats include: (1) the trend affects a large number of people, (2) the trend has large and inter-generational impacts on the ability to be good parents and good partners, and (3) the trend indicates deterioration in the quality of family life.

Poverty meets these three criteria and belongs toward the top of the list. The Proclamation on the Family clearly states that families have a responsibility to provide for the physical needs of their members. Poverty limits the family's capacity to provide, thus, reducing life chances for children and the quality of life of parents. Poverty is increasing due to patterns of world population growth. This will be an increasing problem for the LDS membership as the church continues to expand in third-world countries. As we try to strengthen families, elimination of poverty should be high on the agenda. Abuse is another potentially critical issue because of its severe inter-generational consequences, but there is little evidence regarding trends.

A second group of trends has far-reaching consequences, but may not be quite as serious as poverty and abuse. These include interrelated trends of non-marriage, divorce, premarital sex, and single parents. Finally, three issues that appear to have less serious impacts on the family are working mothers, childlessness, and same-sex relationships.

One of my original motivations for preparing this presentation was to respond to conservatives who want to restore some version of the 1950s family. But this image of the ideal was probably a mythical version rather than what most families were actually like. Now I realize I was inclined to do the same thing I have criticized others for doing—using the family rubric to support my own ideological preferences. As long as we are using the family arena to pursue our own agendas, we will end up creating more debate than action. I think the above list includes issues that would make some groups at either end of the ideological spectrum agree and disagree. Some want abortion and single-parent families to be at the top of the list of problems while others want poverty and abuse to have high priority. Some want to conclude that same-sex relationships are not the problem while others want to conclude that working moms are not the main issue. I have tentatively suggested that neither of these issues should have top priority. So, one of my main conclusions is that standard ideological agendas or narrow focus on one issue may not get us very far in addressing problems that imperil the family.

TABLE 2.  
Working Hypotheses about Family Trends

	U.S. rate	LDS rate (in U.S.)	LDS global	Consequences	Trend	
					Short term	Long term
<b>Poverty</b>	15% cross-section 25% long-term 30-40% (?)	a little lower	much higher	large, multi-dimensional inter- generational	up	down
<b>Abuse</b>		similar	?	large, multi-dimensional inter- generational	?	?
<b>Non-marriage</b>	10-15%	lower	low	large, multi-dimensional inter- generational	up	up
<b>Single Parents</b>	10-15% cross-section 50% lifetime	lower	lower	large, multi-dimensional inter- generational	stable	up
<b>Divorce</b>	50% lifetime	lower	30%	not as great, but inter-generational	down	up
<b>Abortion</b>	30%	lower	30%	large impact on fetus	down?	up
<b>Prenatal Sex</b>	80%	60%	lower	some consequences for later stable marriage	up up world- wide	up
<b>Working Mom</b>	75%	a little lower	lower	relatively small	stable up world- wide	up
<b>Same-sex Couples</b>	5%	a little lower	?	relatively small	?	?

A second conclusion is that while there is cause for concern, not all of the trends are in the negative direction. Modest improvements in marital stability and declines in the abortion rate give some hope to optimists. Trends in abuse and sexism are less discernible. Greater attention to these problems could yield substantial improvements in the quality of family life. Ironically, attention to these issues is often based on an ethic of individual rights which some critics believe undermines the ethic of commitment to the family as an institution. Solving family problems generally requires some balance between individual and familial needs.

Finally, recent trends provide some good news for LDS members. Incidences of abortion, single parenthood, and premarital sex are lower for Mormons. The decline in marriage may be lower for Mormons and the increase in marital stability appears to be greater. These statistics reaffirm the benefits of emphasis on the importance of families. At the same time, other statistics suggest that there is still substantial room for improvement. In areas such as abuse, Mormons may have as severe a problem as does the nation. In other areas, they fall short of their high ideals. These results imply that LDS members should build in areas where they have a high quality of family life, while seeking to find answers to the problems faced by some families.

# Under the Faultline

*Philip White*

The night before, the earth had jolted us,  
A ripple in our sleep till Dad called it  
A quake and brought to life the massive plates  
Beneath us gnashing the ages. It was

Christmas, 1969, night, snowing.  
Tensed over the wheel, he steered us under  
The faultline on the icy highway home. Mom  
Sank into herself beside him, cradling

Diana, and sang one last lullaby from the time  
When God was a child in the world. In back,  
Vernon pressed his fist against the window  
In fetus-shape, touched his finger five times

Above it, made footprints of miraculous  
Accuracy on the glass. Half singing  
With Mother, half remembering other years,  
I watched him. What was it we sang? Past

Springville the road gouged the hill, a black maw  
Slavering ice. Lurid in taillights the world  
Reeled past as we watched through prints a child  
Had made on a pane clouded by our own breath.



# Mormonism and Determinism

*Blake T. Ostler*

MORMONS HAVE HISTORICALLY REJECTED any form of universal causal determinism because it appears to conflict with its basic commitment to free agency. However, Rex Sears has recently argued that (1) free agency and causal determinism are compatible; and (2) Mormon commitments square better with causal determinism than the opposing view of libertarian free will.<sup>1</sup> He further argues that metaphysical conceptions of moral accountability are misguided and suggests an alternative which views accountability as a feature of demands arising in interpersonal relationships. It is my purpose to show that Sears has sold out to a view that is difficult at best to reconcile with fundamental Mormon commitments. I intend to argue that none of his arguments in favor of determinism are compelling and that his answer to arguments against determinism are weak or simply miss the point.

I will first consider arguments which Sears raises against the libertarian view. Sears argues that foreknowledge is inconsistent with libertarian free will, so Mormons should reject libertarianism and construct a notion of “agency” consistent with foreknowledge. He then argues that the reconstructed notion of agency is also consistent with causal determinism. While I agree with Sears that infallible foreknowledge is inconsistent with libertarian free will, I suggest adopting a view of foreknowledge that fits better with libertarian free will and the scriptures in the Mormon canon.

Sears argues that libertarian free will is inconsistent with Mormonism’s rejection of creation out of nothing. I review his argument and suggest that his argument does not succeed. Sears also argues that libertarian free will is inconsistent with Mormonism’s commitment to materialism. I suggest that the libertarian view of free will can easily accommodate a materialist metaphysic. To this point my arguments are in defense of libertarian free will as consistent with Mormon commitments.

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1. L. Rex Sears, “Determinist Mansions in the Mormon House,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 115–141.

I then go on the offensive to argue that Sears's arguments in favor of determinism are flawed. In particular, I argue that causal determinism, even if modified so that causes may be eternally internal to intelligences, is not consistent with any view of free will worthy of the name "rational agency" in particular and Mormon views of agency in general.

#### DETERMINING THE TERMS

Perhaps it would be best to clarify a few of the notions at issue. Sears affirms what I will call necessitarian causal determinism, or nc-determinism. That is, Sears asserts that for every event that happens, there are previous events and circumstances, whether internal or external to persons, such that given those events and circumstances it is impossible that the event should not occur. Thus, all events are necessary in the sense that they could not fail to happen given prior conditions. There are two commitments implicit in nc-determinism: (1) every event has a cause; and (2) all causes necessitate their effects. That is, causal relations are universal (the "universality criterion") and given prior events, one and only one world is possible (the "necessity criterion").<sup>2</sup> Both of these commitments are controversial and neither has been shown to be true by scientific evidence or other means.

On the other hand, those who affirm libertarian free will hold that there is more than one state of the world possible, even given all prior causal conditions. Libertarians affirm that persons can do otherwise than they actually do when they act freely. Sears assumes that libertarians must reject both the universality criterion and the necessity criterion. But this assumption is not quite accurate. A libertarian can affirm the universality of causal relations, but hold that given the prior causal conditions, several effects could follow (a position I will call "universal cause libertarianism" or "uc-libertarianism"). Thus, causal conditions must be adequate for whatever occurs, but do not necessitate their effects.

The conjoint assumptions of universal and necessary casual determinism appear to be false given our present scientific theories. Quantum mechanics has demonstrated that prior conditions do not always necessitate their effect. There is a certain indeterminacy in events among subatomic particles—though whether the same indeterminism holds at the macro-level in events such as neural connections in the brain has not been shown. No less an authority than neuroscientist Roger Penrose has argued that quantum effects create an indeterminacy at the macro-level

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2. In my view, the best arguments for nc-determinism are set forth by Bernard Berofsky, *Determinism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 64–70; and John Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: Princeton Hall, Inc., 1964 ed.), 221–275. Both are compatibilists and adopt David Hume's view of causation as constant conjunction.

in synaptic connections in the cerebral cortex.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Sears's assumption that there are no macro-level quantum effects is at least questionable. At the very least, quantum mechanics has demonstrated that it is quite reasonable to believe that prior causal conditions do not necessitate a single, predictable outcome.

There are also libertarians who believe that some human actions are chosen and performed by the agent without there being any sufficient condition or cause of the action prior to the action itself.<sup>4</sup> In other words, free human choices initiate causes but are not themselves caused (a position I call "pure act libertarianism" or "pa-libertarianism"). That is not to say that human decisions pop into being from nothing but simply that the organization of energy and matter or whatever else might be involved in making free decisions is not fully explained by reference to prior conditions. Sears does not seem to be aware that there is a distinction between uc-libertarianism and pa-libertarianism.

#### THE ARGUMENT FROM DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

Sears presents three arguments to support his view that Mormonism squares better with nc-determinism than with libertarianism. The first argument is based on God's foreknowledge.<sup>5</sup> Sears accepts the argument that, given God's *infallible* foreknowledge, the future is as fixed as the past and, thus, persons are not free to do other than what they do. Thus, if God has foreknowledge, persons cannot be free in a libertarian sense. Sears then suggests that belief in God's foreknowledge is more fundamental to Mormonism than libertarian free will, and, thus, Mormons must reject libertarian free will.

The notion of foreknowledge of itself does not motivate acceptance of nc-determinism, for it is quite possible to affirm God's foreknowledge without affirming that the *basis* of divine foreknowledge is complete awareness of causal effects. While it is true that Thomists and Calvinists affirm precisely that God foreknows in virtue of his complete knowledge of himself as First Cause, Arminians affirm that God foreknows in virtue of having seen the future. However, Arminians expressly hold that free human actions are not caused by either God or by natural causes. Thus, belief in divine foreknowledge does not entail that nc-determinism is true.

Sears argues that the Mormon position is best represented by James Talmage, who held that God knows our future free acts *not* because God causes our acts, but because God has become so acquainted with us over

3. Roger Penrose, *Shadows of the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1994), chap. 7.

4. This position has recently been elucidated and defended by Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

5. Sears, 120–21.

eons of time in the pre-existence that he simply knows with certainty what we will do in the future.<sup>6</sup> Sears observes that God's knowledge of the future is, thus, not logically necessary, but it is empirically certain. Thus, God is not infallible in the classical sense that logically he cannot be wrong about any belief, but is merely empirically certain. Sears then observes that this explanation of *how* God knows our future acts assumes determinism "because it depends on there being laws of spiritual and human nature that describe how individuals with certain characteristics will behave in certain situations."<sup>7</sup>

Now I believe that Sears is correct that divine foreknowledge is inconsistent with libertarian free will, for it entails that the future is as fixed as the past and, thus, there is only one possible future, given God's foreknowledge.<sup>8</sup> Libertarianism of any stripe requires that there are at least two possible futures open to our free acts. Further, I agree with Sears that Talmage's explanation of how God knows the future entails a certain type of character determinism (though not necessarily *nc*-determinism). If my character is so fixed that given a knowledge of my past there is only one possible future open to me, as Talmage and Sears argue, then some type of determinism is called for. I also agree that God must be regarded as all-knowing or omniscient in some sufficiently robust sense.<sup>9</sup> However, I believe that Sears is incorrect that libertarian free will is not more fundamental to Mormonism than Talmage's particular view of God's foreknowledge. Moreover, commitment to this type of character

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6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. The valid and, I believe, sound argument to show that foreknowledge is incompatible with (libertarian) free will is as follows:

(1) It has always been true that I will sin at *tn* (Assumption: Omnitemporality of Truth).

(2) It is impossible that God should hold a false belief or fail to know any truth. (Assumption: Infallible Foreknowledge).

(3) Therefore, God has always believed that I will sin at *tn* (from 1 & 2).

(4) If God has always believed a certain thing, then it is not in anyone's power to do anything which entails that God has not always believed that thing (Assumption: Fixed Past).

(5) Therefore, it is not in my power to do anything that entails that God has not always believed that I will sin at *tn* (from 3 & 4).

(6) That I refrain from sinning at *tn* entails that God has not always believed that I will sin at *tn* (from 2 and the Principle of Transfer of Powerlessness).

(7) Therefore, it is not in my power to refrain from sinning at *tn* (from 5 & 6).

(8) If I act freely when I sin at *tn*, then I also have it in my power at *tn* to refrain from sinning (Assumption: Libertarian Free Will).

(9) Therefore, I do not act freely when I sin at *tn* (from 7 & 8).

9. We can define God as omniscient if God knows all things it is logically possible to know at the time of defining the present.

determinism is inconsistent with bedrock notions of Mormonism, including the possibility of repentance and being born again.

It seems to me that the notions that a person can develop character and that a person can change past character through repentance are at variance with determinism. For how could I predict what a person will do if my observations are based upon a past which has been relinquished through repentance to become a new person, born again in Christ? Talmage's position seems to be as follows: God knows my future because he has seen that whenever I was in situation *s* in the infinite past, I did action *a*, therefore, in the future whenever I am in situation *s* I will *a*. But these assumptions are problematic for several reasons. (I will refer to these assumptions as "character determinism."<sup>10</sup>) First, all situations are unique because none of them included my additional experience that brought me to the new situation. For example, even if confronted as an adult with the same situation I had as a child, the situation necessarily includes something new—me as an adult having already confronted the situation and possibly having learned from it. I may choose to do something different precisely because I do not want to repeat the past. Thus, there simply is no situation *s* identical to any that I have been in before. Therefore, no situation can be used as the basis for predicting future behavior even if character were somehow fixed.

Second, if I can act out of character or change my character so that, when I am in *s*, I refrain from doing *a*, then my past is not a prediction of my future. In contrast, Sears' argument in support of determinism assumes that character is fixed and utterly unchangeable and is, thus, a reliable predictor of future acts. However, if I have put off the natural man that I was in the past, then my past acts are not a predictor of my present acts, for I have changed radically. Thus, it seems to me that the doctrine of character determinism is inconsistent with the doctrine of repentance.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the very notion of the "natural man" is interesting in this connection. Could it be that the very characteristic of a natural man is that such persons are always an effect and never really free as a first cause of acts? Could it be that the *natural* man truly is governed by *naturalistic* forces whereas the person who has put off the natural man is free because he acts for himself? It seems to me that this is precisely the distinction that Lehi makes in his discussion of how persons become free

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10. The best treatment of "character determinism," in my view, is C. A. Campbell, *In Defense of Free Will* (Glaskow: Jackson & Son, 1938).

11. I also have reservations about Sears's use of scripture. Sears assumes that scriptures can be reduced to philosophical propositions without any hermeneutic theory. I am doubtful that scriptural language can be so easily reduced to propositions. However, if we adopt a Calvinistic-Arminian optic to view the language in earliest Mormon scriptures, as Sears appears to do, then Mormon scripture seems to be at odds with causal determinism.

"to act for themselves and not [merely] to be acted upon" (2 Ne. 2:27). Lehi distinguishes between things which are merely "acted upon" and those which "act" (2 Ne 2:14). This distinction then becomes the basis for a further distinction between those persons who are free and those who are captives to the devil: "And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon. . . . Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh . . . and they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity of the devil. . . (2 Ne. 2: 26–27). Thus, the distinguishing characteristic of persons who are free is that they act for themselves. They have a choice between two genuinely open options, good and life or evil and death. Those who are not free are merely "acted upon." It seems to me that the Book of Mormon teaches that persons who are merely effects of the natural causal order, or "acted upon," are not free. In contrast, those persons who break free of the realm of effect and become causes to act for themselves are free.<sup>12</sup>

Is not this an implicit rejection of causal determinism by Mormon scripture? If determinism is true, then I am always merely an effect of prior causes; I am merely acted upon. On the other hand if libertarianism is true, then I am sometimes the initiator of causal sequences. That is, if libertarianism is true, I act for myself and I am not merely acted upon by causes.

Sears ignores these Mormon doctrines and claims that foreknowledge is non-negotiable for Mormons because it is asserted in scripture and presupposed by the Mormon doctrine of foreordination. However, he cites only two scriptures to support his view, neither of which is persuasive.<sup>13</sup> For example, Sears asserts that according to Joseph Smith God knew and ordained the biblical prophet Jeremiah before he was conceived (Jer. 1:45) and Christ was also foreordained as our Savior. However, neither of these doctrines presupposes foreknowledge. I am unaware of any Mormon source that holds that "foreordination" either necessitates or even makes certain the success of the person fore-

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12. The language of the Book of Mormon here is translated in terms drawn from the Arminian-Calvinist debate. I have explained my hermeneutic of this interpretation elsewhere (Blake T. Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no.1 (Spring 1987): 87–100). The Book of Mormon consistently adopts an Arminian perspective which rejects causal determinism and salvation by grace alone. Sears would have the Book of Mormon argue in favor of Calvinism which accepted causal determinism. However, unlike Calvinists, Sears argues that God does not causally determine; rather, material laws are supreme on Sears' view rather than God. See "The Development of the Mormon Concept of Grace," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 24 (Spring 1997): 57–84.

13. Sears, 121.

ordained. Rather, the foreordained person is called with a “conditional calling.” The realization of the calling depends on whether the person is faithful to the calling in this life. In Joseph Smith’s interpretation, Jeremiah could be foreordained before birth not because of God’s foreknowledge, but simply because he already existed in the pre-existence as an actual person.<sup>14</sup> Such an action no more entails foreknowledge than the act of ordaining a person to the priesthood in this life.

This last point is critical. Though Joseph Smith was foreordained a prophet, no prediction regarding any individual act in a certain situation is remotely implied in the doctrine. For example, Joseph Smith was told by God that he was “chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou [Joseph] art not aware thou wilt fall” (D&C 3:9). Thus, there is always the possibility of “falling” even if one is foreordained as a prophet.

To imply determinism, foreordination would have to entail a single act necessitated by causal conditions at a given time. Even if it is assumed that a prophet (or anyone else) is foreordained to perform specific tasks in his lifetime, such an assumption in no ways entails that the specific acts to fulfill that task must happen at any particular time *tn*. Thus, even if Joseph Smith had been foreordained to translate the Book of Mormon, such a task in no way implies that the task must happen at *tn*. Thus, at *tn* Joseph could still have alternative courses of action open to him though the task is certain to be accomplished prior to his death at some later time, say *tn*+5. Moreover, the Mormon scriptures rather clearly state that Joseph Smith could have failed in his foreordained calling and another would have been called “in his stead” (D&C 35:18). The Mormon doctrine of foreordination not only does not guarantee a specific act at a given time, it does not even guarantee that the person foreordained will fulfill the calling! Thus, Sears’s argument seriously misrepresents the Mormon doctrine of foreordination.

Indeed, the central, pivotal and bedrock doctrine that defines Mormonism over against predestinarian schemes is precisely that there are no guarantees to success in this life. The primordial story retold in the Book of Moses and D&C 29:35–43 is the basis for the Mormon view of foreordination. According to these sources, the key to God’s plan was free agency. Satan would have saved all persons at the expense of their agency, but God’s plan entailed the risk that not all would be saved (Moses 4:1). The primary reason that Satan’s plan of guaranteed salvation was rejected was that it destroyed agency (Moses 4:3). The primary characteristic of agency was that it presented a genuine option among open alternatives, to choose among good and evil, bitter and sweet (D&C

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14. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 365.

29:29; 2 Ne 2:23). The distinctive facet of the Mormon view, as I see it, is precisely the risk entailed in mortality and God's unconditional commitment to respect the freedom of human agency even at the expense that some persons could be eternally lost if they so chose.

Of course, if Sears is right about determinism, God knew who would succeed and fail, and we are merely going through the predetermined motions to carry out what God foresaw. There is no risk in Sears' view. God could have guaranteed salvation to those he foresaw would be caused to be saved and also guaranteed damnation to those he foresaw would not. Indeed, given causal conditions existing even prior to our mortal existence, our salvation or damnation was already in the causal cards before this life. God should have told those he knew would not be saved (i.e., those of whom the scripture in D&C 76:32 says it would be better for them never to have been born) not to bother with mortality. Why would God put us to the test "to see if" we will keep his commandments, as the Book of Abraham states (Abr. 4:25), if the outcome had already been causally determined?

Sears also argues that the notion of "suitability for membership in the various kingdoms of the hereafter" based upon a judgment of past acts somehow "carries the same deterministic implications as the doctrine of foreordination."<sup>15</sup> However, I fail to see how the notion of judgment based on past acts implies either foreknowledge or determinism. To carry out the judgment, God need only know what we have done in the past, not what we will do in the future. Sears apparently means to argue that, because the judgment is a prediction of what we are fit for in the future based on the past, it must be deterministic. However, is the judgment really a prediction of what we will do in the future on Mormon doctrine? I don't see how. The Mormon view is that whatever degree of light quickens us in this life is the degree of light to which we will rise in the resurrection (D&C 76 and 88). However, whether there is further progression to yet greater degrees of light or whether persons can move between kingdoms seems to me to be unsettled in Mormon thought. Moreover, the fact that I may be saved in a particular kingdom in no way entails that I will do any specific acts in the future as determinism requires. Sears's evidence simply doesn't support his conclusions.

#### DOES SCRIPTURE REQUIRE FOREKNOWLEDGE?

Sears argues that the scriptures are incompatible with the view that God does not infallibly foreknow all free acts of humans. This assumption is quite common among Latter-day Saints. How then do those who believe God's foreknowledge is limited explain biblical prophecy and

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15. Sears, 121–122.



faith in God's certain triumph over evil? God can ensure triumph over evil though the future is not absolutely foreknown because he is like a master chess player. Even though he does not know exactly which moves free persons will make, he knows all possible moves that can be made and that he can meet any such moves and eventually win the game. God may lose some pieces during the games, just as some persons may freely choose to reject God and thwart his plans as far as they are concerned individually, but God can guarantee ultimate victory. Those who reject infallible foreknowledge affirm these propositions about God's knowledge of all possibilities:

1. God is omniscient in the sense that he knows all that can be known, but it is logically impossible to know future acts that are free.
2. God knows all possibilities, including the present probability of any future event.
3. God knows now what his purposes are and that he will achieve them.
4. God does not know now, in every case, precisely which contingent possibility will be chosen or become actual.
5. God knows now how he will respond to whichever contingent possibility occurs to ensure the realization of his purposes.

Thus, God can ensure ultimate victory and the realization of all of his purposes not because of his omniscience, but because of his almighty power. These features of God's knowledge ensure that God knows all possibilities and future events which are now certain given causal implications (propositions 1 and 2). This view also allows for free choices among genuinely open alternatives (propositions 2 and 4). These provisions suggest that God knows all possible avenues of choices (propositions 2 and 5) and, coupled with God's maximal power, entail that God's plans and declarations of future events will be realized (propositions 3 and 5). Thus, a complete picture of God's providence is possible even though God does not have infallible and complete foreknowledge.

Nevertheless, can limited foreknowledge be squared with scriptural predictions of the future? I will argue that: (a) scripture is consistent with limited foreknowledge, and (b) a number of scriptures require limited foreknowledge.<sup>16</sup> There are several different types of prophecy, each of which is consistent with God's limited foreknowledge:

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16. I want to be clear that I am *not* claiming that the scriptures plainly state that foreknowledge is inconsistent with free will. It seems to me that the scriptures are pre-critical and do not address such philosophical issues. It can be argued that some scriptures, e.g., Alma 13, assume that free will and election based on foreknowledge are compatible. However, the election addressed in Alma 13 is merely "preparatory" to the possibility of obtaining the priesthood in this life and in no way implies any specific act at a specific time as required by causal determinism. I do claim, however, that the living interaction between God

1. *Predictions about what God will bring about through his own power regardless of human decisions.* God can clearly predict *his* own actions and promises regardless of human decisions. If human cooperation is not involved, then God can unilaterally guarantee the occurrence of a particular event and predict it ahead of time. For example, God can guarantee that his plan will be fulfilled because he will intervene to bring it about. Thus, God can show prophets a panoramic vision of his plan from beginning to end. God can declare that he knows the beginning from the end in terms of his plan and what he will bring about himself: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do my pleasure . . . yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isaiah 46:10–11). A perfect example of a scriptural passage showing that God knows the future in virtue of what he will bring about through his power is found in 1 Nephi 9:6: "But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of his words."

However, the fact that God's plan will be carried out does not mean that he has to know each individual's free actions beforehand. God has prepared a plan to save all persons *if they will keep his commandments*. However, not all persons will be saved, despite his plan, because they are free to reject him. God's plan will be realized, but it is possible that not every person will be finally exalted. God's plan, thus, involves a risk that not all persons will be saved. There is a clear contingency in God's knowledge with respect to the future free acts of individuals. From the Mormon perspective, one of the primary purposes of life was that God wanted "to see if" persons would keep his commandments when granted significantly free will (Abraham 3:25). This desire to learn whether persons would do what God commanded assumes that God does not have complete foreknowledge.

2. *Conditional prophecies.* Numerous prophecies express what God will do *if* certain conditions obtain. For example, several prophecies are predictions as to what will happen if human beings behave in one way rather than another. Jeremiah 18:7–8 (Revised Standard Version, RSV) is an example of a conditional prophecy: "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do to it." Conditional prophecies are numerous in the Book of Mormon (e.g., 2 Nephi 1:7). Conditional prophecies do not require absolute foreknowledge because God

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and prophets demonstrates that God's foreknowledge is provisional, subject to changes in plan and, therefore, his foreknowledge is not absolute.

waits upon conditions to occur before a course of action is finally decided. Indeed, conditional prophecies are incomprehensible if God has complete foreknowledge. There would be no "ifs," only absolutes.

3. *Prophecies of inevitable consequences of factors already present.* If God's knowledge of present conditions is complete, it follows that he knows all things that are inevitable as a causal result of present conditions. He also knows the probability of any future event based on current conditions. For example, a skilled physician can predict the death of certain individuals because the causes of that death are already present. Similarly, God can predict future events that are causally implicated by present circumstances or otherwise inevitable. For example, at the time Christ prophesied that Judas would betray him, Judas had already betrayed him by accepting thirty pieces of silver and by promising the Jewish authorities to identify Jesus at the designated place.

4. *Absolute election of nations and conditional election of individuals.* A number of passages in the New Testament speak of God's foreknowledge in the context of election or foreordination. The New Testament uses a family of words associated with God's knowledge of the future such as "foreknow" (*proginosko*), "foresee" (*prooraō*), "foreordain" (*proorizo*), "foreknowledge" (*prognosis*), and "foretell" (*promarturomai* and *prokatan-gello*; see 1 Peter 1:2, 20; Ephesians 1:4–5; Romans 8:28–30; Acts 2:23, 4:28). For example, Ephesians 1:11 discusses God's foreordination of persons, "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined (*prooristhentes*) according to the purpose (*prothesin*) of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (*kata ten boulon tou thelmatos autou*)." This passage does not speak about what persons do to earn election; rather it focuses exclusively on God's decision to choose a certain group of persons. Now if individual persons were "predestined" or "elected" to salvation on the basis of God's own counsel alone, then free will would play no role in individual salvation. God would arbitrarily damn some and leave others to damnation for no act of their own. Thus, it is problematic to assert that such passages relate only to God's action to elect individuals to salvation as Calvin and Luther claimed.

However, passages speaking about God's election do not address individual election; rather, they speak of the corporate election of Israel, or the church, or of God's people as a whole. In a sensitive and careful analysis of the doctrine of election, William G. MacDonald demonstrates that the biblical doctrine of election invariably refers to corporate rather than individual election. The same conclusion was reached by William W. Klein.<sup>17</sup> Election is not a reward for an individual exercise of free will,

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17. William G. MacDonald, "The Biblical Doctrine of Election" in *The Case for Arminianism*, Clark H. Pinnock, ed. (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1989), 207–29; William Klein, *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990).

but a divine decision unilaterally made to elect a group of people as his "chosen" or "promised" people. Although the election is certain, the promises made to any individual member of the elect group are conditional upon faithfulness to God. Such corporate election is not inconsistent with individual free will.

It is, of course, true that God sometimes foreordains individual persons to specific callings. Yet the foreordination of individuals is conditional. For example, God's foreordination of Samson as a chosen vessel did not imply that it was inevitable that Samson would fulfill that calling. In fact, Samson failed. Moreover, individual calls represent a summons to service and not a guarantee of individual salvation based upon acts of free will. Thus, no prediction is made about individual acts when an individual is elected or foreordained to a particular calling.

#### SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR THE OPEN VIEW OF GOD

The biblical record gives strong indications that God's knowledge of future free acts is not complete. For example, when God speaks in scripture he uses terms implying uncertainty such as *if* (Heb. *'im*) or *perhaps* or *maybe* (Heb. *'ûlay*). Other scriptures demonstrate that though God had expressed an intention to carry out a certain judgment, he changes his mind when the people repent. Certainly, it is impossible to change one's mind if one already knows what will occur.

Some rather strong indications exist in scripture that God does not know all future contingencies. First, even though some scriptures present Jesus as omniscient, it is clear that others do not. Indeed, Jesus seems to have expected the kingdom of God to come in power and glory before the end of his contemporary generation, even before all of the seventy returned from their missions throughout Judea. But it makes no sense to argue that Jesus must have known that the kingdom was not coming that soon because he was omniscient, for the scripture expressly states that the Son of Man did not know when the kingdom would come. Jesus does not know all things.

In the Hebrew scripture, the word *'ûlay*, meaning "perhaps" or "maybe," is used in divine speech. For instance, God is portrayed as saying:

Son of man, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage,  
and go into exile by day in their sight. . . . Perhaps  
[*'ûlay*] they will understand, though they are a  
rebellious house. (NSV Ezekiel 12:2-3)

Thus says the Lord: Stand in the court of the Lord's  
house, and speak. . . . It may be [*'ûlay*] they will  
listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I

may repent of the evil. ( RSV Jeremiah 26:2–3; for other uses of *'ûlay*, see Jeremiah 36:3 and 7, 51:8, Isaiah 47:12, Luke 20:13).

How shall we understand such passages? Terence E. Fretheim, professor of Old Testament at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, suggests that it:

... seems clear from such passages that God is quite uncertain as to how the people will respond to the prophetic word. God is certainly aware of the various possibilities regarding Israel's response. One might even say that God, given a thoroughgoing knowledge of Israel, knows what its response is likely to be. ... Yet, in God's own words, God does not finally know.<sup>18</sup>

That Fretheim is correct and that God actually was uncertain as to what Israel would do is supported by RSV Jeremiah 3:7 and 19:

And I thought,  
 "After she has done all this she will return to me";  
 but she did not return. . . .  
 I thought,  
 how I would set you among my sons,  
 and give you a pleasant land,  
 a heritage most beautiful of all nations.  
 And I thought you would call me My Father  
 and would not turn from following me.  
 Surely, as a faithless wife leaves her husband,  
 so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel.

Fretheim observes of this passage: "Here God is depicted as actually thinking that the people would respond positively to the initial election or that they would return after a time of straying. But events proved that God's outlook on the future was too optimistic. The people did not respond as God thought they would. God's knowledge of future human actions is, thus, clearly represented as limited."<sup>19</sup> Perhaps those holding that God has absolute foreknowledge will interpret this passage in a manner consistent with the belief that God actually knew what Israel would do and assert that we have an example of the dreaded anthropomorphism of the Old Testament in this passage. Fretheim observes that such readings "buy us an absolute form of omniscience at the price of

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18. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 45–46.

19. *Ibid.*

placing the integrity of the text and coherence of all of God's words in jeopardy: does God mean it or not? These tests show that Israel's future is genuinely open and not predetermined. The future of Israel does not only not exist, it has not even been finally decided upon. Hence, it is not something that even exists to be known, even if the knower is God."<sup>20</sup> It seems to me that the only way to preserve the integrity of this text is to admit that God experienced, nay suffered, disappointment when he discovered that Israel would reject him, especially after expecting that Israel would love him as a son loves a father.

Exodus 32:7–14 (cf. Deuteronomy 9:13–29), where God is portrayed as changing his mind after a consultation with Moses, is of similar import. Yahweh told Moses that he intended to destroy Israel for having made the golden calf, and Moses objected and actually argued that such a course would be unworthy of God. The key to understanding the encounter is God's response to Moses: "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against [Israel]" (v. 10). God had actually formed an intention to execute wrath; it was something that "he thought to do" (v. 14). This passage shows that, while God had decided to destroy Israel, "the decision had not yet reached an irretrievable point; Moses could conceivably contribute something to the divine deliberation that might occasion a future for Israel other than wrath."<sup>21</sup> Remarkably, Moses persuaded God to recant what he had decided to do: "And the Lord repented of the evil He thought to do unto His people" (v. 14). The most faithful way to understand this passage, it seems to me, is to view Yahweh as having formed an intention to do one thing—and, thus, at one time having believed that he would do it—and at a later time changing his mind and coming to believe something different. Yet if God did not know at the time of his conversation with Moses whether Israel would be destroyed, then certainly there were a good many things about the future that he did not know. Some Mormons may point out that when Joseph Smith revised the Bible, he changed all of the passages suggesting that God repented—implying that such changes were made because the Prophet Joseph Smith believed that repentance could not be appropriate to a being that cannot possibly be mistaken about any belief or sin in any way. Nevertheless, the Joseph Smith translation of this passage makes God's change of mind even more explicit, and, thus, recognizes that God changed his mind: "The Lord said unto Moses, If they will repent of the evil which they have done, I will spare them. . . . Therefore, see thou do this thing that I have commanded thee, or I will execute all that which I had thought to do unto my people" (JST Exodus 32:13–14).

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20. *Ibid.*, 47.

21. *Ibid.*, 50.

Still other passages suggest that some predictions of future events are conditional and that God does not know precisely what will happen, though he intends to persuade people to freely repent. A good example of such a conditional prophecy is found in RSV Jeremiah 22:4–5: “If (*‘im*) you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David. . . . But if (*‘im*) you will not heed these words . . . this house shall become a desolation.” Numerous similar conditional prophecies occur throughout the Old Testament, the Book of Mormon, and modern Mormon scripture. Is the *if* in such passages to be taken with full seriousness? For example, the book of Abraham suggests that one of God’s purposes in establishing his plan and this earth was to learn something about humans: “We will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see *if* they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:24–25). It seems to me that this passage doesn’t make any sense at all if the future is already determinate and God already knew from all eternity exactly what we will do without actually “seeing if” persons will do what he has commanded. Indeed, the very earnestness of mortality in Mormon thought derives its force from the view that the future is genuinely open and as yet undecided and therefore truly up to us to declare to God who we will be—a fact he is waiting with loving interest to discover along with us. God is waiting on us to see if we will be faithful.

One final type of text may be taken as evidence that God’s knowledge is dependent upon what actually happens. In the book of Jonah, the prophet Jonah declared that “yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4). In response to this proclamation, the city of Nineveh proclaimed a fast and repented of its evil ways. “The word of the Lord” came to the king of Nineveh: “Who can tell if (*‘im*) God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?” (Jonah 3:9). In response to the repentance of the people of Nineveh, God changed his mind and decided not to do what he had declared he would do: “And God saw their works, and they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not” (Jonah 3:10).<sup>22</sup> Jonah’s response was undoubtedly similar to what a believer in absolute foreknowledge might experience when expectations about God have been shattered by concrete dealings with God involved in an open future that can have results unanticipated even by God: Jonah was “very angry” with God. Jonah complains: “O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? . . . I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness,

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22. The JST Jonah 3:10 reads: “God saw their works, that they turned *and repented*; and God *turned away* the evil that he had said he would *bring upon them*.”

and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:1). This picture of God presented by patience, kindness, and mercy is possible only within a genuine relationship in which all responses and outcomes are not already determined before the responses and decisions are made. Moreover, if such decisions are not already made, then how can it be that God infallibly knows beforehand what the decision is? Perhaps the book of Jonah can teach us something about God—maybe even something unexpected and outside our preconceived notions about how God must be. As Abraham Heschel comments, "This is the mysterious paradox of Hebrew faith: The All wise and Almighty may change a word that He proclaims. Man has power to modify His design. . . . God's answer to Jonah, stressing the supremacy of compassion, upsets the possibility of looking for a rational coherence of God's ways with the world."<sup>23</sup>

Nor should it be assumed that indications of God's limited knowledge of the future are found only in the Old Testament. There are several instances in modern revelation indicating that God's knowledge is limited. For example, the *Church News*<sup>24</sup> observed that Jonah's revoked prophecy has important implications:

This incident is instructive because it shows that a specific prophecy or decree from God through one of His servants is not necessarily irrevocable. Indeed, He revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, "wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good." (D&C 56:4)<sup>25</sup>

The article notes that the revelation contained in section 56 of the Doctrine and Covenants was given after Ezra Thayne had been appointed to travel to Missouri (D&C 52:22); however, he was unable to go due to involvement in a controversy in Thompson, Ohio. (See D&C 54 and 56.) The article also notes another example where the Lord revoked a prior word. In 1832 the saints were commanded to build a temple in Jackson County, Missouri (D&C 84:4). However, the Lord later revoked that command due to persecution by mobs (D&C 124:49, 51). The *Church News* observes:

That the Lord occasionally does alter decrees in no way means He is changeable or capricious, or that the servant through whom His words come is a false prophet. It only means that in His infinite wisdom, He adapts His directives according to the righteousness, wickedness or changing circumstances of mortals and according to their use (or misuse) of their own agency.<sup>26</sup>

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23. Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 2:66–67.

24. "Lessons of Nineveh: God Commands and He Revokes As Seemeth Him Good," *Church News*, 1 August 1998, 14.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*



Of course, these instances of the Lord revoking his prior word also imply that his knowledge of the future is adapted to changing circumstances. That is, God's knowledge of the future is not absolute or fixed; rather, God's knowledge is constantly growing as the future unfolds. As Clark Pinnock observed:

According to the Bible, God anticipates the future in a way analogous to our own experience. God tests Abraham to see what the patriarch will do, and then says through his messenger, "Now I know that you fear God" (Gen. 22:12). God threatens Nineveh with destruction, and then calls it off when they repent (Jonah 3:10). I do not receive the impression from the Bible that the future is all sewn up and foreknown. The future is envisaged as a realm in which significant decisions can still be made which can change the course of history.<sup>27</sup>

#### THE ARGUMENT FROM MATERIALISM

Sears's second argument is that the Mormon view that all reality is a form of matter (including spirit) entails nc-determinism. However, his entire argument rests on the *assumption* that must be proved, i.e. that materialism entails nc-determinism. His argument, thus, severely begs the question. Sears asserts: "Theoretical advances that have led physicists to reformulate deterministic causal laws as statements of high statistical probability do not affect what I see as essential: according to Mormonism, human thoughts and actions are as fully prefigured prior to their occurrence as any other observable events; whatever freedom human beings have does not exempt them from being as regular in their development as the rest of nature."<sup>28</sup> That's the entire argument—a mere argument of assertion without proof. The very question to be proved is assumed, i.e., that the material world is governed by nc-determinism.

Sears's argument is problematic, moreover, because the only evidence which he discusses is a powerful counter-example to the assumption of universal and necessary causal relations. Sears notes that quantum mechanics seems to be a counter instance to his theory of determinism. However, he dismisses quantum mechanics as a counter-instance to determinism because it may not apply on the macro level, that is, the world of everyday experience. But the point is simply that no one has come remotely close to showing that the natural world, even the macro world, is universally governed by necessary causal connections. Indeed, in the realm of the human "sciences" such as psychology, no one

27. Clark Pinnock, "God Limits His Knowledge," in *Predestination and Free Will*, David Basinger and Randall Basinger, eds. (Donners Grove, Ill: Inter Varsity Press, 1986), 157.

28. Sears, 123–124.

has even suggested that we could possibly develop a working theory to predict individual actions—and certainly not with the type of precision implicit in nc-determinism.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, Sears seems to be assuming an argument something like the following:

- (1) Mental events such as human choices supervene on physical events, in particular, neural events.
- (2) Any neural event which occurs without a necessitating cause by prior physical events must occur randomly or without reason.
- (3) If our decisions occur randomly they are not free acts but uncontrolled occurrences.

However, no libertarian holds that free acts are merely random events, and thus, premise (2) is to be rejected. Random indeterminism is not the only alternative to determinism as Sears assumes.<sup>30</sup> It is quite possible to consistently adopt a materialistic metaphysics which is consistent with libertarian free will. A libertarian could adopt a process view of freedom where a free act is a creative synthesis of the prior states of the world. Thus, there are causal relations or nexus from which a free act flows; however, there are several different outcomes for which the causal conditions are adequate but not sufficient.<sup>31</sup> Such an explanation of free will has always appealed to me as an attractive model from which to explore Mormon thought—and I am hardly alone in this view. Moreover, process thought is thoroughly materialistic and, thus, congenial to

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29. See Mark Balaguer, "Libertarianism as a Scientifically Reputable View," *Philosophical Studies* 93 (1999): 189–211.

30. It has long been argued by compatibilists that "if it is a matter of chance that a man should act in one way rather than another, he may be free but he cannot be responsible" (A. J. Ayer, "Free Will and Moral Responsibility," *Mind* 52 (1948): 46). The same argument is made by Robert Hobart, "Freewill as Involving Determinism," *Mind* 43 (1934): 1–27. However, the argument was long ago answered by Phillipa Foot, "Free Will as Involving Determinism," *The Philosophical Review* 66, no. 4 (October 1957): 439–450. Galen Strawson has recently resurrected this argument in "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Studies*, 75 (1994): 5–24. However, his argument has been persuasively answered by Robert Kane in *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 140–146.

31. See, for example, Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 88, 212–215; Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Books, 1962), 20; John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 24–28; Robert B. Mellert, *What is Process Theology?* (New York: St. Paul Press, 1975), 29, 72–73. When I say that "condition P is adequate for the occurrence of an event Q," I mean that a "minimum potential threshold for the actuality of Q has occurred, but that the P is also an adequate minimal potential threshold for the occurrence of R, S, T . . ." When I say that "P is sufficient for the occurrence of Q," I mean that "the non-occurrence of Q is impossible given the occurrence of P."

Mormon assumptions in metaphysics. Unless it can be shown that process thought is incoherent, which is quite doubtful, then Sears is mistaken to assume that materialism entails determinism.

Further, science has progressed well beyond the vulgar billiard ball model of causation to explain the natural world in its totality. In particular, the emergence of chaos theory suggests that the natural world is subject to universal law-like behavior which is in principle not fully predictable. The human sciences have given up on the view that compares causation to coercion, including the view that causes necessitate their effects. Instead, causation is viewed merely as an explanatory relation of events. Most of our experience is not of causes which necessitate their effects, but of law-like relations of self-organizing chaotic systems. Moreover, chaos theory has demonstrated that biological systems are dominated by chaos. Chaos theory entails that many systems that were otherwise unexplainable are subject to law-like explanation. However, due to the sensitivity of initial conditions, the prediction of the behavior of chaotic systems is in principle impossible, given our epistemological limitations. Whether these limitations should also be affirmed to be ontological realities cannot be demonstrated by science.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the very existence of chaotic systems demonstrates that science does not and cannot establish a fully predictable system of deterministic explanation. As Paul Davies writes:

The conclusion must be that even if the universe behaves like a machine in the strict mathematical sense, it can still happen that genuinely new and in-principle unpredictable phenomena occur. If the universe were a linear Newtonian mechanical system, the future of the world would, in a very real sense, be contained in the present, and nothing genuinely new could happen. But in reality our universe is not a linear Newtonian mechanical system; it is a chaotic system. If the laws of mechanics are the only organizing principles shaping matter and energy, then its future is unknown and in principle unknowable. No finite intelligence, however powerful, could anticipate what new forms or systems may come to exist in the future. The

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32. John Polkinghorne argues that chaos theory spells the end for the theory of causal determinism because prediction is epistemically limited for science and, thus, a meaningless hypothesis. He suggests that we should take the epistemological limitations as ontological fact. See his "The Metaphysics of Divine Action" in Robert John Russell, Nancy Murphy, and Arthur Peacock, eds., *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Berkeley CA: The Center for Theology and Natural Sciences, 1995), 47–56. Langdon Gilkey argues that chaos theory is inconsistent with causal determinism in "The God of Nature," *Ibid.*, 211–270. Wesley J. Wildman and Robert John Roselle argue that chaos theory supports determinism because it shows that cases we previously thought do not exhibit law-like behavior are subject to law-like explanation. However, their observations at most support uc-libertarianism and *not* nc-determinism. See "Chaos: A Mathematical Introduction," *Ibid.*, 49–90.

universe is in some sense open; it cannot be known what new levels of variety and complexity may be in store.<sup>33</sup>

Sears has erected a false dichotomy, claiming that the only alternative to causal determinism is random indeterminism. There is a third notion of human agency that is neither the necessary effect of the causal past nor merely a random occurrence. It is the notion of agency as "creative synthesis." Human consciousness is a synthesis of unorganized stimuli into an integrated experience, and freedom arises from this creative act. Human freedom consists of a synthetic unity of experience not present in the stimuli or causes from which consciousness arises. Human creativity is the additional element which must be added to the totality of past causes necessary to explain human choices.

I suggest that human agency be viewed as a creative synthesis of the causal influences that form the limiting of scope of human agency together with a creative, organizing input from the agent. Unlike billiard balls, free agents are proactive in their interaction with reality.

A conscious mind reacts differently to stimuli than an unconscious mind. The difference is that humans act upon the data of experience to fashion it into integrated experience. Such a view of agency is required by the Mormon view that persons are not determined by a fallen character, they are not stuck with their past, but are free to change their character. For unless choices both arise from and also shape character, no such character development or soul-making is possible. Persons are free to choose either good or evil, and are not pre-determined by causal antecedents.

Moreover, this notion of agency as a creative synthesis of prior (causal) data is supported by brain research. For example, studies conducted at Berkeley suggest that unconscious or inactive brain states are characterized by "chaos" or non-linear patterns. However, when a conscious person engages in sensory perception, an underlying order in brain activity arises from the chaotic function and forms patterns of brain activity. At the moment of perception, vast collections of neurons shift abruptly and simultaneously from chaotic and random activity to complex activity patterns.<sup>34</sup> In essence, the brain is like other chaotic systems that exhibit random behavior which evolves into a hidden underlying order of brain activity. The insight that the brain is a chaotic system which is self-organizing suggests that free choices arise from the self-ordering, self-cause initiating systems of underlying chaos. Thus, the mechanistic world view underlying Newtonian physics and a clock-

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33. *The Cosmic Blueprint* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1988), 55–56.

34. Walter J. Freeman, "The Physiology of Perception," *Scientific American* 264, no. 2 (Feb. 1991): 78–85.

work, deterministic universe gives way to self-organizing complexity and novel order. As Freeman concluded in his study: "In short, an act of perception is not the copying of an incoming stimulus. It is a step in a trajectory by which brains grow, reorganize themselves and reach into the environment to change it to their advantage."<sup>35</sup>

Now I am not claiming that any of this *scientifically proves* that determinism is false and libertarianism is true. We just don't know enough about how our material bodies, in particular our brains and neural systems, interact with prior causes. We are simply phenomenally ignorant about such matters. We know even less about how a "finer-material" spirit body works and interacts with causal forces. However, we can emphatically state that science has not proven determinism to be true. Thus, it cannot simply be assumed that it is true to prove that Mormonism squares better with determinism because of its materialist metaphysic.

#### THE ARGUMENT FROM CONSERVATION OF MASS-ENERGY

Sears next argues that libertarians view free choices as uncaused and, therefore, as popping into being from nothing. Thus, he concludes that libertarianism violates the conservation laws of mass-energy and amounts to creation out of nothing. He then argues that because Mormonism rejects *creation ex nihilo*, it should also reject libertarian free will.<sup>36</sup>

However, after giving his argument he concedes that a libertarian could hold that pre-existing energy is consumed in making choices or that existing matter is simply organized in novel fashions. Thus, he admits that this argument is not a knockout punch to libertarians. Nevertheless, he regards such views as "*ad hoc*" and concludes that the relation between the Mormon view rejecting *creation ex nihilo* and determinism is "undeniable."<sup>37</sup>

Frankly, these claims are puzzling. Just why it is *ad hoc* for a libertarian to hold that making free decisions uses pre-existing energy he never says. Once again, the argument is nothing more than sheer assertion. I have always felt that it is quite natural to believe that free will arises from organizing chaotic energy into novel order and complexity. Indeed, this view is precisely the position of free agency as a "creative synthesis" that I have already briefly outlined. Thus, Sears's argument is a non-starter.

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35. Ibid., 85.

36. Sears, 124–125.

37. Ibid., 125.

## SEARS' ATTEMPT TO REFUTE ARGUMENTS AGAINST DETERMINISM

Sears turns next to answer arguments which he asserts have been used to discredit determinism. The first argument is that determinism somehow implies predestination.<sup>38</sup> While it is true that predestination implies divine determinism, I agree with Sears that it is not true that determinism implies predestination. For predestination requires that *God* be the determiner of individual salvation, whereas causal determinism can arise entirely from naturalistic causation.

However, Sears states that I present an argument that creates a "similar confusion" by arguing that petitionary prayer is pointless if God foreknows the future.<sup>39</sup> Sears argues that God is not stuck with the future he "sees" because part of what he sees are his own choices and the human choices that cause the future. Sears asserts: "The future God foresees may well be shaped by God's foreseen response to our foreseen prayer: the prayer then is not an irrelevant side show but rather an essential causal nexus significantly shaping the future."<sup>40</sup> However, I believe that Sears has not fully realized the dialectical situation here.

It can be admitted that what God foreknows includes his own responses to human prayers without affecting the conclusion that God is powerless to answer a prayer if he has foreknowledge. It remains the case that it is incoherent to suppose that God uses his knowledge of future events either as a basis for his own decisions (say to answer prayers) or as a guide to proper exercise of the divine power. For if God sees all effects of all causes that lead to his responses to prayer, then the causes are logically prior to any divine response, for these effects of the causes are supposedly already known prior to God's response. The effects of the causes must already be known *prior to* God's response for they are somehow already "there in the causes" to guide the divine decision. But if the effects of the causes are known before God can even deliberate or decide, then there is never a time before which God already knows what he will do. Thus, God is stuck with what he sees the effects of the causes will be before he can deliberate about it. Moreover, how could God change what he has seen the effects of all prior causes (supposedly including his own choices and human prayers) will be? Remember, for Sears, God is a part of the fully pre-determined world because God too is a material being. Thus, everything God thinks or does is always the pre-determined effect of prior causes.

We can say that *x* logically precedes *y* if the truth of *y* depends on, or is contingent upon, the truth of *x*. Given God's foreknowledge based on

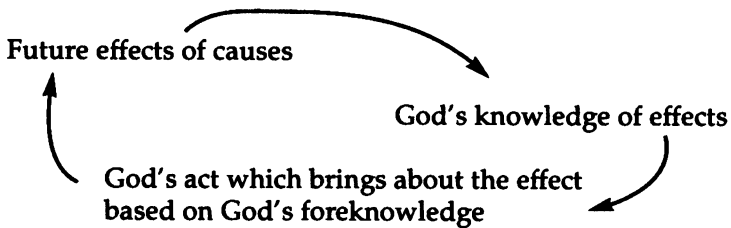
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38. Ibid., 126–28.

39. Ibid., 128.

40. Ibid.

knowing the prior causal order, God knows what he knows because all effects are included in the causes known to God; the effect does not occur because God knows it. Thus, God's foreknowledge is logically dependent on the actuality of the future effect already present in the causes. God's providential acts such as answers to prayer and miracles, in turn, depend on and supposedly are causally explained by God's acts done in dependence on all-encompassing knowledge of the future. God supposedly knows what to do because he knows the effects present in the already existing causes and has arranged and ordered his acts in light of what he knows will occur. But these divine acts are also part of the causal chain which will bring about the future events foreknown to God. We, thus, have a logical and perhaps causal circularity: the effects of divine providence causally depend on God's acts, and God's acts depend on God's foreknowledge, and God's knowledge in turn depends on the effects of divine providence. That is, the determined future logically precedes God's knowledge, which logically precedes his acts, which logically precede the determined future. We, thus, have a vicious circularity which renders the entire scheme incoherent:



The future effect explains God's foreknowledge of the effect, and God's foreknowledge explains God's act to bring about the effect, and God's action explains why the effect is brought about. This same type of vicious circularity is involved in the example of the son who goes back in time and kills his father and, thus, brings it about that his son never existed! Sears's explanation of how determinism is compatible with petitionary prayer is itself incoherent.

Sears's view also has the consequence of binding God to a determinate future before he can providentially get involved. It follows that God cannot plan or deliberate about the future—or even his own future acts. Why would anyone plan for something when he already knows with absolute certainty how it will be because he has seen it in present causes? Planning presupposes that future events are not yet determined and must be ordered to bring about desired results. It presupposes a time when the future is not absolutely certain to occur in the way that will be planned. Further, planning presupposes that the future can be otherwise unless the planning is done. But God's decisions themselves are a part of the predetermined order which he foresees! For God is as much a part of

the causal order as everything else in Sears's view. Thus, there was never a time before which God's own decisions were not already a part of the causal order. For any act God performs there is *no* time prior to that act at which God does not already know every future event in detail, including which acts he is already causally determined to bring about.

Thus, God cannot act to answer a prayer unless it is already in the cards of the causal order to answer the prayer. It follows that God does not answer the prayer *because of* the prayer, but only because it was already a necessary effect of pre-existing causes.

#### DETERMINISM AND FREE AGENCY

Sears also argues that determinism does not undermine free agency, which includes both free will and moral responsibility. Sears accepts the position which previously has been articulated by both Truman Madsen and Kent Robson that Mormonism's commitment to eternal intelligences undermines a key argument against determinism.<sup>41</sup> The "consequence argument" against determinism basically concludes that if determinism is true, then we can trace the *external* causes of behavior to a time before the person existed. For example, suppose that a person, we'll call him Rock, desires to steal a Mars bar from a 7-Eleven. Rock has these desires, he mistakenly thinks, because he likes Mars bars and doesn't like to part with his money. However, if determinism is true, then Rock's desire to steal is the causal result of his brain chemistry and environment, and these in turn are the result of antecedent causal events which can be traced back, ultimately, to causal events and circumstances over which Rock had no control, for they existed long before he was born. Is Rock morally responsible for stealing the Mars bar? How could he be? The act of stealing is fully explained by events over which he had no control. It follows that he had no control over whether he desired to steal the Mars bar. Rock is no more responsible for stealing than he would be for having a congenital birth defect.<sup>42</sup>

Sears concedes that this "consequence argument" is a strong reason for rejecting determinism as it is usually conceived. However, the Mormon belief in the eternal intelligences alters the consequence argument. Sears argues that if a person has always existed, then the causes cannot

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41. Truman Madsen, *Eternal Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 63–70; Kent Robson, "The Foundations of Freedom in Mormon Thought," *Sunstone* 7, no. 5 (Sept.–Oct. 1982): 51–54. Robson appears to adopt uc-libertarianism, for although he maintains a form of causal determinism, he asserts that "there are adequate causal circumstances for me to act in *several* different ways."

42. The consequences argument is critiqued and revised by Thomas S. McKay, "A Reconsideration of an Argument Against Compatibilism," *Philosophical Topics* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 113–122.



ultimately be traced to *external* events over which the person had no control; rather, some of the relevant causes are always *internal* to the person: "Since intelligences are uncreated, each individual has always been able to influence the course of events; nobody is entirely the product of past circumstances over which she had no control; 'man has never been totally a product.'"<sup>43</sup>

I agree with Sears that the consequence argument is undermined by the belief that some causes are always internal to the agent. Indeed, Sears can even speak of "self-determination." Although every decision is determined by prior causal events, I have always been around to influence those events. Sears goes on, at least partly, to ground both free will and moral responsibility in the ability to deliberate and reason. Moreover, he points out that we can deliberate and reason even if determinism is true (as long as we are in fact ignorant of the actual causes leading to our behavior).<sup>44</sup> "[P]eople can deliberate about what to do, can think about and weigh outcomes, make decisions, and act accordingly; whether or not history determines the outcome of that deliberation does not matter."<sup>45</sup>

However, Sears appears to overlook the fact that deliberation and reasoning are merely a façade if determinism is true. Consider the nature of deliberation and rational thought. If I act *based upon rational thought and deliberation*, then I act *because I recognize that the action is a rational conclusion* of my thinking and deliberation. I act for the reasons that I have considered. However, if determinism is true then I never act based solely on the reasons I have considered.

Let us suppose with Sears that human thinking is determined in the sense that every thought or belief accepted by a person is a necessary result of the prior causal events whether internal or external to the person. Is it not evident that on such a view that rational thought is impossible? It cannot be true that anyone's thinking is guided by rational processes; rather, it is guided entirely by laws of cause and effect which proceed with no regard to whether the thought processes they generate correspond to the principles of sound reasoning. If I have a thought, it is not because it was a rational conclusion, but because it was determined by prior causes. Thus, the thought I now have is the result of prior causes, and I can never trace any act or thought to one that is not merely the result of prior causes, whether internal or external to me. If I have a thought and determinism is true, it is not because it is the result of rational process but because it is the upshot of the prior states of the universe.

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43. Sears, 134, quoting Truman Madsen, *Eternal Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 65.

44. Sears has an inconsistent view, for he asserts that God knows all of the causes past and future and yet God deliberates and is free.

45. Sears, 138.

If determinism is true, no one ever thinks rationally, but merely has thoughts caused by prior circumstances. Our belief that we are capable of rational thought, that we can act because of our rational insight, is merely an illusion if determinism is true. Of course, this includes the determinist's own thinking. If he is right, Sears was determined to be a determinist long before he had any thoughts about it! How could Sears' commitment to determinism be the result of rational thinking when he was causally determined to believe in determinism long before he thought about it?

This conclusion is not changed simply because some of the causes may have been eternally internal to me. Assume that all human thinking, deliberations, acts, and choices are fully determined by my prior internal decisions. Suppose that I decide to go to the opera in 1960 among other things. In 1999 I must decide whether to steal a Mars bar from a 7-Eleven. If my decision whether or not to steal is explained by my prior decisions, including my prior decision to go to the opera in 1960, then it seems that I do not act responsibly when I rob the 7-Eleven. For I did not appreciate the causal consequences of deciding to go to the opera in 1960—I didn't know I was also causally determining myself to steal in 1999. I contemplated the wrong consequences when I decided to go to the opera. I thought I was deciding to enjoy Mozart when in reality I was also deciding to enjoy a purloined Mars bar. Unbeknownst to me, when I decided to go to the opera, I was also unwittingly causally determining my later "choice" to rob the 7-eleven.

It, thus, follows that none of my decisions are the result of the reasons I think. I am unaware of the actual causes of my thoughts and actions if determinism is true. How could I be morally responsible for my thoughts and the acts that issue from them when I failed to appreciate the real causes of acts? How could I be rational in my deliberations when the decisions that I consider in the moment were all causally determined by causal events long before I thought about the decision? It seems to me that these are strong reasons for rejecting even Sears' particular version of eternal, partially internal, causal determinism.

It may be responded that my argument confuses *reasons* for belief with *causes* of belief. It may be claimed that a conclusion may be supported by reasons even though those reasons are causally determined. If an act is supported by reasons, then it is a rational belief. However, this response fails to grasp the fact that no one ever accepts a belief *because* she sees that it is supported by good reasons if determinism is true; rather, the reasons entertained are merely a façade for the underlying causes that go back far before any of the reasons were considered.

It should be noted also that Sears sometimes speaks as if an act is not wholly an effect; instead, he speaks as if something new and not already determined is added by the agent. For instance, he claims that Truman

Madsen is a "proponent of a deterministic interpretation of Mormon doctrine" because he asserts that the "Gordian knot" of determinism is solved by a belief in the eternal intelligence.<sup>46</sup> However, Sears misreads Madsen. When Madsen states that the traditional dichotomy between determinism and indeterminism is "cut not by indeterminism, but by *self-determination*," Sears takes Madsen to be affirming determinism after all. Indeed, Madsen does affirm universal cause-effect relationships, but he also states that "man is, and always has been, one of the *unmoved movers*, one of the *originating causes* in the network."<sup>47</sup> Sears also quotes Madsen with approval when he asserts that "man has never been totally a product."<sup>48</sup> However, such affirmations show that Madsen is actually a libertarian, though he fails to distinguish between uc-libertarianism when he affirms universal causation, and pa-libertarianism when he affirms that the will is uncaused. For Madsen clearly believes that the human will is uncaused, for it is an *unmoved mover*, that is, the will is not sufficiently explained by reference to any prior causes. For Madsen, the will is an "originating cause," meaning that no prior causes were necessary to create it. However, if nc-determinism is true, then man *is* totally a product of the past whether the causes are external or internal. There is nothing genuinely new added by persons, but mere products of the past, for every event was already written in the past causal states of the universe long before it happened. Sears wants to affirm that persons "have always had something more to contribute to the network of causes and effects than that which they received from *outside influences*,"<sup>49</sup> but such a position hardly affirms that anything new is added when the past internal states of the person are added to the equation. Indeed, Sears also affirms that any truly *new* force in the universe would violate the second law of thermodynamics, the law of conservation of energy. Thus, if causal determinism is true, we do not really originate anything that is truly new; rather, we merely effectuate what the prior causes dictate.

#### *The Immediate Experience of Free Will.*

Sears admits that causal determinism seems to be at odds with our immediate experience and intuitive grasp of making free choices and that "we are able to do other than we do." In my immediate experience, I am able to choose to do a thing or refrain from doing it. In the moment of choosing, I am deciding in that moment what I will do; what I will do is

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46. Ibid., 133.

47. Madsen, 65.

48. Ibid.

49. Sears, 131.

not decided until I decide it.<sup>50</sup> According to Sears, however, this intuitive view and our immediate experience are mistaken; we are never able to choose other than we do.<sup>51</sup> Sears attempts to soften the counter-intuitive impact of causal determinism by observing that whether or not "determinism is true, we still, in Kant's phrase, must act under the idea of freedom."<sup>52</sup> He maintains that "determinism does not change what deliberation looks and feels like from the point of view of the person trying to decide what to do. . . ."<sup>53</sup> However, it must be pointed out that this "idea of freedom" could as easily be translated as the "illusion of freedom" given causal determinism. While, according to Sears, I must act as if I were free to do other than I could when I deliberate, if Sears is correct, then the idea that I can, in fact, do other than I do is illusory.

It seems to me that Sears *assumes* determinism to be true and then argues that since determinism is true, our internal deliberations must look the same whether determinism is true or not since we obviously deliberate and feel that we can do otherwise than we do. However, Sears makes an unwarranted epistemological leap in his argument, for he cannot know what it feels like to deliberate, given the truth of determinism, unless determinism is true. But he doesn't know that; he merely assumes it. The truth of the matter is that if determinism is true, then our immediate experience is illusory and misleading. It is not true that what I will do is decided by me in the moment of deliberation and decision, as my experience reveals; rather, it was determined long before I deliberated and decided. It is not true that I could choose to go to the opera or stay home in the moment I deliberate, for it was determined that I would go to the opera long before I deliberated about it.

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50. Whether free will and/or moral responsibility require "power to do otherwise" has been much debated in recent philosophical literature. Based on "Frankfurt-style counterexamples," many have argued that the ability to do otherwise is not necessary for moral responsibility. See John Martin Fischer, *The Metaphysics of Free Will: An Essay on Control* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994). However, I believe that the better position is that responsibility, moral or otherwise, requires freedom to refrain from doing an act. I doubt that Frankfurt-style counter-examples are even possible in a world that is not completely deterministic. See David Widerker, "Libertarianism and Frankfurt's Attack on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (April 1995): 274–261; and "Libertarian Freedom and Avoidability of Decisions," *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (January 1995): 113–118; David Widerker and Charlotte Katzoff, "Avoidability and Libertarianism: A Response to Fischer," *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (July 1996): 415–421. The best treatment of the subject, in my view, is Robert Kane, "Response to Bernard Berofsky, John Martin Fischer and Galen Strawson," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61 (January 2000): 157–167 and *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); and William Hasker, *Emergent Dualism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), chap. 4.

51. Soft determinists maintain that I am able to do other than I in fact do *if I had chosen to do so*, but I am *not* able to choose other than I do given past circumstances.

52. Sears, 129.

53. *Ibid.*, 130.

It is precisely this violence to our immediate experience that strongly argues against acceptance of causal determinism. It seems to me that the gospel is predicated on the view that I am free to make choices in this life that were not determined long before I was born—even if I was around when the determining causes were set into motion. This life is a “state of probation” to allow us to declare what we stand for and who we really are based upon the choices we make in this life when confronted by genuine temptation and challenges in concrete situations. It wasn’t already in the cards before we got here. This is an aspect of the Mormon view of things that is at its very core. It is a vital part of the Mormon gospel that I for one am loath to abandon in favor of causal determinism.

#### CONCLUSION

It seems to me that Sears has failed to identify any good reasons for adopting determinism. Mormon theology (if there is such a thing) militates *against*, not in favor of, accepting causal determinism. Further, his responses to arguments against causal determinism seem to me to be unpersuasive. Therefore, I freely choose to reject his view regarding causal determinism. Of course, if Sears is right, I was determined by causes long before I even thought about it to reject his views on causal determinism. Thus, if there are errors in this response to his views, the fault is not in my reasoning, but in the collocation of atoms in my past. You see, given what occurred in the past, I literally could not do otherwise; every word of this article was causally determined long before I was born—if Sears is right.

# Through a Glass Darkly

*E. Leon Chidester*

In their projected restoration, contractors  
pulled down aging plywood, discreetly  
placed to hide remnants of the stained-glass  
window shattered in the fifties by a bevy  
of jets too low in passing, their sonic  
droppings witnessed in the crystal face  
of shops cracked the length of town.  
The choice, now forty years more ecumenical,  
was not to reproduce the common icons  
of the faith—Joseph kneeling,  
angel, trumpet.  
The glassmaster has lifted, in their place,  
his abstraction of the very world that holds  
this Sunday hall: high desert landscape starkly done  
in yellows, gold, umber; shades of sagebrush drab  
and piñon green; a distant white.  
Geology of mesa, canyon; flats left open  
to an arch of variegated blue. Above,  
a didactic sunburst to reassure the congregation  
that Deity has graced their efforts among these arid  
lands, that this day's paths are clearly marked and sure.

September mornings, early, sycamores outside  
this window urge foilage higher than the compass-  
measured orb itself; alternately open for oblique rays  
to touch the panes, then close to hold a quiet space for leaf-  
shadows to project through this transparent text, speaking  
darker tongues and clearer truths;  
shifting corners of life's surface left unilluminated,  
tomorrow's promise faint and unfulfilled, desperation  
as Sabbath search for mottled meanings of this House.  
These walls, filled again with subtle hue, soft among  
the absolutes of light and shade where the faithful labor  
in wonder, undefined, between ocher stains of slow doubt  
and carnelian thrust of pentecostal flames that dance,  
glass-enhanced, across the heads of those that hope.

# Did Christ Pay for Our Sins?<sup>1</sup>

R. Dennis Potter

If we had kissed, it would have been the miracle to  
make us human in each other's eyes.

Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*.

AMULEK ASKS US A RHETORICAL question, "Now, if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother?" (Alma 34:11). Obviously the answer is no, and Amulek says as much. We don't think it is just to punish innocent people for crimes they did not commit. And we are right to think so. But Amulek concludes, "The law requireth the life of him who hath murdereth therefore there can be nothing short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world" (Alma 34:12). Somehow Amulek thinks that from the principle that we do not punish innocent people for what guilty people have done, it follows that there needs to be an infinite atonement. This seems baffling to me. After all, by "infinite atonement" we are referring to the fact that Christ *has paid for our sins*, aren't we? And isn't Christ innocent? Not only does the principle that we don't punish the innocent not entail that Christ *must* atone for our sins, but it seems to entail that he *cannot* atone for our sins.

Let us try to make this paradox explicit. Amulek seems committed to a general principle, which I will call the *innocence principle*. It states that *if X is guilty of crime A, then for all Y not identical with X, Y cannot be justly punished for A*. In other words, anyone who has not committed a particular crime should not be punished for it. We aren't just committed to this principle because we believe everything we read in the Book of Mormon. It is obviously true. The very foundations of our judicial system rest on such a principle. We are always appalled when we learn of persons who have been wrongly convicted of crimes. We are appalled because we believe the innocence principle.

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1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Salt Lake City Sunstone Symposium in July 1998.

On the other hand, we Mormons also believe that for every sin there is a punishment affixed. After all, Alma says so (Alma 42:18). And someone must pay for our sins. We can't. So, Christ does. In other words, you and I accept the *penal substitution principle*: *Christ, who is innocent of every sin, paid the price (suffered the punishment) for every sin*. So, take one of the sins you have committed. You are guilty of committing that sin. The innocence principle says that if you are guilty of committing sin A, then for all Y not identical to you, Y cannot be punished for A. Christ is someone who is not identical to you (unless you happen to think like David Koresh or Jim Jones). Hence, it follows that Christ cannot be punished for your sin. Yet, the penal substitution principle states that he can. And logically we cannot accept them both.

You might wonder whether I have abandoned ship too soon. After all the innocence principle speaks of *crimes*, and we are now talking about *sins*. Perhaps different standards of justice apply to sins and crimes. To see why this objection is wrong, consider *the case of the pelagian world*. Pelagius (my favorite heretic) thought that people could live sin-free lives if they tried hard enough. So, suppose that he is right in some alternate universe, and there are some people (albeit very few of them) in this alternate universe who live sin-free lives. Now, in this other world, the punishment for sin is severe physical pain. And suppose that the deity in this other world decides that it does not matter who suffers punishment as long as someone does. So, he decides to punish all the sin free people for what the sinners have done. What should we think of such a deity? Obviously, we should think that such a deity is unjust, and we should think this because we believe a version of the innocence principle that uses the word "sin" in place of the word "crime."

Of course, the sin-free people punished in the case of the pelagian world did not suffer such punishment voluntarily. Christ did suffer punishment voluntarily. So there is a difference. However, consider *the case of the Timothy MacVeigh sympathetic world*. In that world there are plenty of people who hate the federal government and would like to blow up as many federal buildings as they can. These people are sympathetic to MacVeigh. In that world, just as in ours, MacVeigh is found guilty of murdering federal agents and is sentenced to death. Yet, in that world one of MacVeigh's admirers tells the judge that he would like to be sentenced in MacVeigh's place. The judge allows it. What should we think of the judge? Clearly, we should think that she has failed to carry out justice. And this holds even though the penal substitute is a volunteer.

A paradox is an apparent contradiction derived from apparently true assumptions. To solve the paradox, we must either show that there is no contradiction (i.e., show that the innocence principle and the penal substitution principle can both be true) or show that one or the other of the apparently true assumptions is false. The above objections are attempts



to take the latter tack. If we can show that the innocence principle is false (i.e., there are exceptions to the rule), then we can defend our theory of the atonement. Before we go on to pursue this task a bit more, let us consider our theory of the atonement in context.

It is a hazard of philosophy that when one finds a new paradox, one inevitably realizes that others already knew about it. I wish I could say that I was the first to see the problem that I have pointed out here, but I can't. The theory of the atonement which claims that there must be a payment for sin and Christ offers this payment is traditionally attributed to St. Anselm in his *Cur Deus Homo* (of course, it might appear that Amulek and Alma beat the great medieval philosopher by more than a millennium). Hence, this theory of the atonement is prominent in Catholic circles. And so it should not be surprising that Catholics have seen the problem with it. Phillip Quinn, for example, says "[T]o the extent that we think of serious sins as analogous to crimes and respect the practices embodied in our system of criminal law, we should expect the very idea of vicarious satisfaction for sin to seem alien and morally problematic."<sup>2</sup>

Eleonore Stump puts it in a different way. She says, "Suppose that a mother with two sons, one innocent and one very disobedient, inflicted all her disobedient son's justly deserved punishment on her innocent son, on the grounds that the disobedient one was too little to bear all this punishment and her justice required her to punish someone. We would not praise her justice, but rather condemn her as cruel and barbaric, even if the innocent son had assented to this procedure."<sup>3</sup>

Both Stump and Quinn eventually reject the penal substitution aspect of the Anselmian theory of the atonement. And this rejection is for the very reason that it contradicts something like the innocence principle. Nevertheless, the idea that the atonement is some sort of vicarious punishment holds much sway in Christian thought, and especially so in Mormon thought. I don't need to cite examples since the reader will be familiar with many of them.<sup>4</sup> It seems that this theory holds such sway in Mormon circles due to the debt metaphor that inevitably accompanies it. So, let us explain this aspect of the theory and see why it may seem to help when in reality it does not.

One might think, as Anselm actually did, that in sinning against God

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2. Phillip Quinn, "Aquinas on Atonement," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, edited by Cornelius Plantinga and Ronald Feenstra (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 172.

3. Eleonore Stump, "Atonement according to Aquinas," in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, Thomas Morris, ed. (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 62.

4. Even so, see James Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), 77–78.

we incur a debt. This debt is very large for some reason,<sup>5</sup> and so it is not a debt that we can pay. Creditors can cancel debts, but that would not be just in this case. But they can allow the debt to be paid by a third party. So, in steps Christ to pay our debt incurred by sin. He is like the charitable benefactor who intervenes and saves us from financial ruin. The sinner-as-debtor theory solves our original paradox by showing how penal substitution might hold (and hence how the innocence principle might fail).

Clearly, it *is* just for a debt to be paid by a third party. Or at least that is the practice. So, something like the penal substitution principle is true of debts—call it the *debt substitution principle*: it is just for X to pay Y's debts to Z, even when X is not identical to Y. And if we assume that every state of sin is just a state of debt, then it might seem that we would get the penal substitution principle out of the more minimal debt substitution principle. Of course, even assuming this, there are problems with the above picture. First, it is not at all clear that it is unjust for a creditor to forgive a debt without payment. Clearly, the creditor does nothing wrong by deciding that she does not want her money. Yet it does seem to be the case that justice is not served if a sinner goes unpunished. Second, the above picture does not make sense out of the idea that God forgives us. Indeed, if I forgive a debt I do not require that it be paid. But apparently God does require that the debt be paid, and so in what sense can it be said that he is forgiving?<sup>6</sup> A third problem is that it is not clear who the creditor is. Is it Satan? Is it God? Or is it someone (something?) else? And what is it that we owe? It is certainly not currency! But if not then can it properly be called "debt"?

One response to the first problem says that it is both just for God to forgive the debtor and for him not to do so. God has chosen the more severe of the two routes of justice. On this modified version of the theory, God could forgive our debts without an atonement, but he decides not to do so. I will deal with something like this option later in the paper. Another response says that creditors *can* typically forgive debts (without payment) justly, but this does not hold in the case of a debt due to an action that is wrong. Indeed, sometimes our incurring of a debt is not due to something we have done which is wrong, but just due to our need for money. Other times the incurring of a debt is due to our doing something wrong, e.g., in the case of a parking violation. Perhaps one can say that the incurring of a debt by a wrongful action is not forgivable without payment. Such a debt is usually called a fine.

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5. One might think that it is large because sinning against God is sinning against an infinite being, and so the debt must be infinite. I do not think this will work for Mormons, since God is not infinite in the requisite sense. I do not know what reason could stand in its place.

6. See Stump, 62.

We might employ the same strategy in answering the second of the above problems. It might be said that there is a sense in which one is forgiven for one's offense (e.g. a parking violation) once one has paid the fine, although one really isn't forgiven the debt *per se*. This version of the above picture makes the atonement like the payment of a particular kind of debt: the debt incurred by doing something wrong. Before we discuss the third problem with the sinner-as-debtor theory, let us examine more closely where our responses to the first two problems leave us.

Now it is natural for Anselm and the other medievals to think the "debt" of punishment to be like a pecuniary punishment. For in medieval legal codes, the debt of punishment for even the most serious of crimes was pecuniary.<sup>7</sup> And this is where we find ourselves after trying to solve the first two problems posed for this theory: the debt we incur by sin is like a fine we receive for a crime we commit. Clearly, fines *can* be paid by third parties, i.e., innocent parties.<sup>8</sup> But the real question is whether or not such fines *should* be paid by third parties. Indeed, the fact that fines can be paid by third parties is less a function of what we think is just than it is a function of expediency. It would take too much to ensure that fines are paid by the guilty party. Indeed, it would probably be impossible to ensure such a thing due to our practice of allowing gifts.

It probably does not seem unjust to us for a third party to pay our parking fines. However, if a fine were the means of punishment for murder, would we say the same? Clearly, we would not say that an innocent person should be punished, even if voluntarily, for a murder committed by another. We don't want murderers to get off scot-free. And any system in which they can get off scot-free is unjust by our lights. Such is the medieval system of justice which informed Anselm's theory. It is simply not a just system of punishment, and that is why we don't use it. But if it is not a just system of punishment, then how can we accept the claim that the sinner is really just in debt to the celestial department of transgression? If we think it unjust to allow the murderer to walk, don't we think a God is unjust who allows someone else to pay the fine incurred for his crime?

We have seen some reason to undermine the innocence principle. It is a practice of our society to allow innocent people to pay the fines of guilty parties; and insofar as these fines are themselves punishment for the crimes committed, then it seems that the innocence principle does not hold universally.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this is in itself reason to reject the paradox that I have stated at the outset of the paper. If one thought this, however,

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7. Quinn, 57.

8. See David Lewis, "Do We Believe in Penal Substitution?" *Philosophical Papers* 26 (1997): 207–208.

9. On this point see Lewis, 203–209.

one would be wrong. Indeed, we have shown that even if there is an exception to our innocence principle, it is not enough of an exception to allow for a violation of the principle on the scale of the sort required for Anselm's theory of the atonement. Indeed, Christ, it is said, *paid* for all our sins—whether it be a parking violation, a theft, or even a murder. Unless we think it is okay to violate the innocence principle in all of these cases, the Anselmian theory of the atonement is really in a bad way.

Of course, we might even claim that the innocence principle isn't being violated in the case of paying fines. We might argue that fines are not really punishments after all. Indeed, it hardly seems to be the case that parking fines are punishments. They are just fees that we must pay if we wish to park in such locations for a longer period of time. The quantity of the fees serve to deter our doing so, but they aren't really appropriately called a "punishment." In response to this objection, David Lewis admits that parking fines are not punishments, but points out that we nevertheless *do* use fines for more serious violations of the law—in this respect maybe we are more like the medievals than I admitted above. And even if we try to keep such persons from having friends pay their fines, we cannot do so since friends can always give gifts of the amount for the fine.<sup>10</sup> This raises the issues in *the case of the popular and unpopular criminals*.

In the case of the popular and unpopular criminals, we have a man who is not extremely wealthy, but has many friends who are. This man repeatedly gets busted for drug use and each time incurs fines as a result (perhaps in addition to community service or even jail time). His friends always pay his fines for him. On the other hand, we also have a street urchin who also uses drugs and is convicted several times. He receives exactly the same punishments as his more popular counterpart. Now the law allows the popular criminal's friends to pay his fines. The unpopular criminal has to pay them himself. Is this just? It seems not. But it is legal. So, with respect to how our legal system treats penal substitution relative to fines, we might wonder whether it is just. Indeed, we might think that the same reasons for thinking that the medieval system is unjust apply to the aspects of our current system which mirror it. There must be some reason other than ensuring justice for the use of fines in our penal system. It is clear what this other reason might be: money. The system itself needs cash flow. And what better way to increase this than to tax the persons who make the system necessary? Given the need for cash flow, we can tolerate a little infringement on justice in order to keep it coming.

It might seem that even in the limited cases of fines as punishments the innocence principle is still a condition of what is just even if it is not a condition on what is expedient. David Lewis sees the possibility, and

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10. Lewis, 208–209.

he connects the thinking behind such expediciencies to the belief in the Anselmian theory of the Atonement:

Here we have the makings of an explanation of why we sometimes waver in our rejection of penal substitution. It would go something like this. In the first place, we tolerate penal substitution in the case of fines because it is obviously impractical to prevent it. Since in the case of punishment by fines, the condition of being sentenced to punishment is the condition of owing a debt—literally—, the metaphor of a ‘debt of punishment’ gets a grip on us. Then some of us persist in applying this metaphor, even when it is out of place because the ‘debt of punishment’ is nothing like a debt in a literal sense. That is how we fall for such nonsense as a penal substitution theory of the Atonement.<sup>11</sup>

Lewis doesn’t really buy this explanation, since he thinks that it involves too much sloppy thinking to be plausible. I am not so sure.

We can see that there are some serious problems with using the debt metaphor to bolster our acceptance of the penal substitution principle. These problems are magnified when we consider the third of the previous problems posed for the theory. The problem is with filling out the theory. If the Atonement is the payment of a debt that we have incurred, then there must be someone to whom the debt is owed. Really, this is not much of a problem. It seems clear that our creditor could be God, since our sinning offends God. Some have suggested that the creditor is Satan, since by sinning we have borrowed from Satan.<sup>12</sup> But this would entail that Satan justly holds us in debt and that God pays Satan off to get us back. This picture is inconsistent with the idea that God and Satan are at odds. Instead, God and Satan, like a bank and a creditor, are just trying to work out a just arrangement. It is hard to believe such a picture.

Instead we might say that God is the creditor. In that case, we might wonder about the fact that he himself pays the debt. Indeed, traditional Christianity says God himself pays the debt that he himself demands. This seems odd, but perhaps not any odder than the doctrine of the Trinity itself. Whatever the case, Mormons need not worry about this as we assert the separate identity of the creditor and the benefactor.

The real problem comes with explaining what it is that is owed. Is it currency? Obviously not. But then what is it? We might think that what Christ *paid* with was pain. Perhaps pain is the currency of celestial economics. Perhaps when we sin we are spared a certain amount of pain that we should have “paid” and, thus, we incur a debt. Finally, Christ pays off this debt for us by suffering our pain for us. But this seems

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11. Lewis, 208.

12. Ronald Heiner in “The Necessity of a Sinless Messiah,” *BYU Studies* 22 (1982): 5–30.

patently wrong since one of the main reasons we are given for avoiding sin is that it brings pain to the sinner as well as others. And the above picture requires the opposite to be the case. I don't know how the defender of the debt metaphor can get out of this problem, although I am willing to entertain suggestions.

So far, we have considered a way out of the central problem of this paper by attempting to deny the truth of the innocence principle. This way out appears to be a dead end. Instead, we might try to reconcile the apparent contradiction itself, i.e., show that we can accept both the innocence principle and the penal substitution principle. Although he does not explicitly acknowledge the possible paradox involved, Stephen Robinson does offer a theory that might appear to reconcile the two principles. In *Believing Christ* he says,

Jesus Christ did not just assume the punishment for our sins—he took the guilt as well. The sin, the experience itself with all its negative consequences and ramifications, and not just the penalty for sin, became his. . . . [H]e becomes the guilty party in our place—he becomes guilty for us and experiences our guilt.<sup>13</sup>

It appears that Robinson argues that Christ becomes guilty for us and is, thus, justly punished for us. The substitution is not just penal but “culpable” as well. Thus, the innocence principle is not violated since an innocent person is not punished. This has strange implications. First, it seems to imply that Christ was not innocent. But even worse, by my lights, it implies that Christ was not innocent even though he did nothing wrong, that is, that generally speaking a person can be guilty without having done anything wrong. In my view, this is to misunderstand the meaning of the word “guilt.” Indeed, a guilty person, by definition, is someone who did something wrong. Robinson's claim is, thus, false by the very meaning of the terms employed.

Now perhaps Robinson means to be referring to that psychological state in which we “feel guilty” or “feel bad” about something we have done. He asks:

How can the savior understand human beings if he has never experienced human sin and guilt?<sup>14</sup>

and he says:

In Christ there is a real transfer of guilt for innocence. Through the oneness of our covenant relationship, my guilt becomes Jesus Christ's guilt, *which he experienced* and for which he suffered.<sup>15</sup> (my emphasis)

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13. Stephen Robinson, *Believing Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1994), 117.

14. Robinson, 116.

15. Robinson, 117.

So, it seems to be clearly the case that by “guilt” Robinson means the feeling that someone has when one believes that one has done something wrong. And clearly it *is* the case that someone can have this sort of guilt without ever having done anything wrong.

To see this point consider *the case of the amnesiac*. The amnesiac does not remember anything she did before today. She is told that she drove her car into a day care center, killing several children. She may feel very bad about this. She feels guilty, i.e., she thinks she did a very bad thing and has negative feelings as a result of this belief. But since she has been lied to and has in reality not caused any harm to anyone, the belief that underlies her feeling of guilt is in error. And hence her having that feeling itself is in error. Perhaps Robinson wants us to say that Christ can feel guilty for something he did not do. Christ is like the amnesiac. Of course, then Christ is wrong for having the experience of feeling guilty, since he is not really guilty. But, more importantly, this move does nothing to help solve the paradox. The innocence principle applies to people who feel guilty but are innocent just as much as it does to people who do not feel guilty and are innocent. Indeed, we should not condemn a man just because he thinks or feels that he is guilty. We need evidence for the claim that he really is guilty.

Now, I conjecture that since the experience of guilt can be had by someone who has done nothing wrong, and since it is easy to identify the experience of guilt with objective guilt (the state of actually being guilty of some crime or sin), it could be easy to make the mistake of assuming that Christ could be objectively guilty for our sins. This is a mistake, since being objectively guilty of something requires that one has done something wrong; and Christ has not done anything wrong.<sup>16</sup>

We have tried to reject the innocence principle and although we found some reason to doubt it in certain limited cases, these doubts were not enough to save the penal substitution principle. Next via Robinson’s theory we made one attempt at showing that the two principles can be reconciled. It seems to me that both of these routes have been dead ends. I think the best option (and maybe the only option) is to reject the penal substitution principle. I think we must say that Christ did not literally pay for our sins. This sounds like a fairly heretical claim, and so it would be good if I could mitigate the heretical effects of such a claim. To do so, I will first show how we can still make sense out of a significant and miraculous atonement without accepting the Anselmian model. Second,

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16. To be fair to Robinson, I must point out that he was not trying to solve this paradox. So the fact that his theory does not address the paradox does not show that his theory fails in its purpose. Nevertheless, the problems of identifying and defining guilt and determining whether Christ can have our guilt remain problems his theory must encounter. I think it is clear that he can only say that Christ has the experience of guilt and not the objective (or actual) guilt for our sins.

I will argue that the Anselmian theory really isn't in the Book of Mormon after all.

As a result of considering the paradox that presently concerns us, Phillip Quinn, a Catholic philosopher, rejects the penal substitutionary aspect of Anselm's theory of the atonement. He offers an alternative understanding:

One might suppose that God would have required condign satisfaction for the debt of punishment of all human sin as a condition of abolishing this debt if Christ has not reconciled us to God by his sacrifice, but that God does not in fact require condign satisfaction just because Christ's passion is such a pleasing sacrifice. On this view, Christ's passion works by prevailing upon God not to be severe in his dealings with sinners. Its effect is not to remove the debt of punishment for sin by paying it but to forestall the severe demand that the debt be paid in full. Rather than being severe, God is merciful toward some sinners; he forgives that part of the debt they cannot pay.<sup>17</sup>

Now this way of looking at the atonement may seem a bit foreign to Mormons, but I think that there is something right to it. Indeed, it strikes me as right that God can decide to forgive without punishment. Mormons might think that this idea is wrong because they are insistent on the idea that justice must be satisfied. After all, if it were not, then God would cease to be God! But this problem is easily disabused once the correct distinctions are drawn.

Mormons tend to identify justice with law. And the law is then identified with the commandments and their respective punishments. This is a very natural identification. However, there is a similarly natural understanding of justice in which the offended can forgive the offender without the need for the offender being punished. In *Les Misérables* the priest keeps Valjean from being prosecuted for stealing the former's silver. So, the letter of the law is not followed. Is the priest violating the demands of justice? Certainly not. It is perfectly permissible for the priest to forgive without the requirement of recompense since the priest is the victim of the crime. Of course, it would also be just for the priest to demand that the law deal with him to the fullest extent possible. The priest in the story has the option of being *severe* in fulfilling justice or being *merciful* in satisfying it. In Quinn's picture God has this same option. So, justice can be satisfied even if the law is not.

Of course, there is the problem of knowing when it is best to forgive someone's trespass and when it is best to demand that he or she be punished. Quinn's idea is that Christ's passion is such a pleasing sacrifice that it convinces God to forgive all those who recognize and accept it. It

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17. Quinn, 174.



is this idea in Quinn's theory that is in error. The problem can be seen again by considering our intuitive ideas about justice. The question is whether Jesus' sacrifice is the sort of thing that could justly convince God to pardon sinners. Pardoning a criminal usually takes into account two sorts of factors: (i) the circumstances which led the criminal to crime, i.e., whether they are mitigating or not, and (ii) the degree to which the criminal is remorseful and has reformed. So, an obvious problem arises. Why should facts about what Jesus did convince God to pardon *us*? Jesus' sacrifice tells God much about Jesus and nothing about us, much less anything about whether we should be pardoned. Instead, if Jesus wanted to help us to convince God not to be severe he should have helped God to understand why we did what we did and how remorseful we are for our actions.

So, it would seem that we need to have a theory of the atonement which both (i) explains why Jesus' sacrifice was necessary in order to convince our judge to pardon us and (ii) yet does this convincing by an appeal to our circumstances and the state of our repentance. This task is not as difficult as it may seem. Indeed, I think the answer is located in another very traditional Mormon understanding of the atonement. Unlike the Mormon belief in the substitutionary aspect of the atonement, the Mormon belief that Jesus endured a great deal of suffering in Gesthemene and that this suffering helped him to understand our suffering is more particular to Mormons (as far as I know).<sup>18</sup>

I believe this idea, properly understood, can solve our problem. Notice that Jesus is among those who will judge us.<sup>19</sup> For a judge to pardon a criminal, the judge must know about the criminal circumstances, i.e., what led him to commit the crime. Can one person know the heart of another? Well, we say that Jesus can know our hearts. But how does he do this? I claim it is through the atonement. The suffering in Gesthemene is a miraculous event in which Jesus experiences exactly what each of us experiences in our sinning. Only then can he fully understand why we do what we do. Only then can he fully understand the circumstances of our crimes. Only then can he know our remorse, and know whether our hearts have changed. The anguish that we feel at having wronged others weighs heavily on his heart. It is the bringing to his understanding the hearts and minds of humanity that is the atonement. The miraculous aspect of this experience is that Jesus feels as another does (something which we surely cannot do—and indeed seems to be impossible in some sense) and that he feels this for every other human being in the history of the world.

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18. That Jesus suffers in Gesthemene and that it is through this act that Jesus "pays" for our sins is evident in James Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 568.

19. Alma 11:44.

Being one of the judges himself, this understanding of our hearts allows him to justly pardon us in the event that we feel remorse for our sins. And via his understanding and the fact that Jesus and the Father know each other's hearts, the Father can understand us as well. The atonement convinces the judge because the atonement makes the facts about our circumstances known to the judge. Thus, the atonement is necessary *and* the convincing of the judge is done by a knowledge of facts about the sinner.<sup>20</sup> So, this theory satisfies our above criteria. We might call this the *empathy theory* of the atonement.

Now one might accept the empathy theory of the atonement as a philosophically consistent model but yet reject it on the basis of revelation. Indeed, remember it was from the Book of Mormon that we first raised the issue about the Anselmian theory of the atonement. So, isn't it the case that although the empathy theory may be more philosophically satisfying than Anselm's and may even be present in our traditional discourse, it is not what we find in revelation and so we should reject it? Actually, I think that the answer to this question is no. The notion that the Book of Mormon contains the Anselmian theory of the atonement comes from reading the text from Amulek with certain presuppositions which we need not accept.<sup>21</sup> I will offer an alternative reading that shows the text to be consistent with the empathy theory.

Let's recall the text in question:

Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another. Now if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay. But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdereth; therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Note that this can also explain why it is said in Alma 11:44 that we are "judged according to [our] works." If we think that the atonement convinces God to pardon us based on what we have done, both by way of leading up to sin and by way of repenting for it, then we are surely judged by works.

21. I think the idea that the Anselmian theory of the atonement is in the Book of Mormon descends from the fact that certain prominent Mormon theologians like James Talmage (e.g., in *Jesus the Christ*, 20ff) and Bruce McKonkie advocated such a theory and used Book of Mormon passages to substantiate it. Additionally, anti-Mormons and others who want to show that the Book of Mormon is theologically anachronistic have emphasized the dependence of its soteriology on thinkers like Anselm and Arminius (e.g., see Melodie Moench Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, Brent Metcalfe, ed. [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993], 88). I don't think these passages entail the Anselmian theory. Indeed, I think that Amulek explicitly contradicts an assumption of Anselm's theory.

22. Alma, 34:11–12.

This text has been read in the tradition of the penal substitution theory of the atonement for so long that it is hard to see how it could be read in any other way. Indeed, it seems to say that humans cannot pay for each other's sins and so there must be a non-human (someone who is infinite) who pays for them instead.

But let us be a bit more careful. Notice that it says that the law requires the life of the one who murders. It *does not* say that the law requires the life of the one who murders *or the life of an infinite God*. This implies that even though the infinite atonement is made, the law continues to require the life of the murderer. If the law is to be fulfilled, the atonement will do no work. So, the one who murders cannot pay for her sins unless she is to perish (verse 9). The purpose of God is to save us and to avoid our perishing. Therefore, Amulek claims, it follows that there must be an infinite atonement. On the traditional theory, the reason there must be an infinite atonement is that Christ must pay for our sins. Since we are rejecting this, what is the answer to the question as to why there must be an infinite atonement? The answer is that the atonement obviates the need for the law to be satisfied (Quinn's point). Consider another passage from the same book but a different prophet,

But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.

But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement. . . .<sup>23</sup>

Here it seems quite clear that the law inflicts the punishment only if repentance is not granted and mercy claimed. Indeed, Alma uses the locution "otherwise" here, which indicates two distinct cases. The first case is the case in which someone repents; and in this case mercy makes her claim. In the second case, and only in the second case, does the law claim and then inflict the punishment. It seems clear that the law only has claim over the individual in the event that the individual has not repented of her sin. So, punishment is not inflicted come what may, but only on the condition of recalcitrance. Apparently, something has convinced God to take the less severe route regarding his just options in cases where people repent. And from the last sentence it is clear that it is the atonement that has done the convincing. Moreover, both mercy and the law are the "works of justice", i.e., justice is satisfied by forgiveness or by punishment. But the atonement is necessary for a satisfaction of justice by the means of mercy.

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23. Alma 42:22–23.

Clearly, Alma is saying that the law and mercy are mutually exclusive and conjointly exhaustive options for justice. Either way justice is satisfied, and justice must be satisfied one way or the other. But an atonement is necessary for the way of mercy to even be an option. The atonement obviates the need for punishment. Why should the atonement open up the possibility of mercy? Perhaps because the atonement makes our judge aware of our reasons for sinning (i.e., the mitigating circumstances), of our intense remorse for the harm that we have done, and of our willingness to change our hearts.

Now I admit that in the last step this reading goes a little beyond the actual text. Really, this text alone does not make it clear why the atonement paves the way for mercy. This is also the case with the penal substitution theory. Indeed, the Anselmian must assume that the reason the atonement paves the way for mercy is that it satisfies the law by punishing someone for what has been done. But this is to go beyond the text as well, since mercy is said to satisfy the demands of justice but not those of the law.<sup>24</sup>

So, let us review our progress. We have seen that there is a paradox that arises for those who would accept the penal substitution principle and the accompanying theory of the atonement. Moreover, we have seen that attempts to solve the paradox will probably be in vain. However, we have also seen that there is an alternative theory of the atonement (the empathy theory) which does not commit itself to the substitution principle. This theory is based on traditional Mormon claims about what happened in Gesthemene. And moreover this theory is consistent with the very passage from the Book of Mormon which is so often cited in defense of the penal substitution theory—indeed, not only is it consistent with that passage, but much of it follows from the passage, once it is read without the assumptions of the penal substitution theory. So, it seems as if we should abandon Anselm's theory of the atonement since the Book of Mormon never really taught it and since philosophically it is very problematic. I recognize that it might seem problematic to some Mormons to get insight into our theory of the atonement from ideas formulated by a contemporary Catholic philosopher. But given the philosophical problems with the penal substitution theory, I think it is much better than getting our whole theory from a medieval Catholic philosopher! Of course, the real work to be done is to see whether there is a philosophically coherent and substantive account of the atonement in the Book of Mormon as a whole. It would be interesting to see how our substitute for the substitutionary theory would stand up.

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24. Alma 34:16.

# The Authorship of the Pentateuch

Thomas B. Dozeman

THE PENTATEUCH INCLUDES THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). These books separate into two unequal parts: Genesis and Exodus-Deuteronomy.<sup>1</sup> Genesis traces the ancestral origins of Israel. No single character dominates the story. Genesis 1–11 presents a panoramic view of creation, including the formation of heaven and earth and all humanity. The time span from the creation of Adam (Gen. 1:26–27) to the birth of Terah, the father of Abraham (Gen. 11:24), is 1,876 years.<sup>2</sup> Genesis 12–50 narrows in scope to chronicle the family history of Israel through a series of migrations. Israel's story begins in Ur of Babylon with Terah. The main subject matter concerns the three original generations of Israelites represented by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose stories take place primarily within Canaan, the land promised by God to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:1–4). Genesis ends with the fourth generation of Israelites (i.e., Joseph and his brothers) settling in Egypt (Gen. 47:9). The time span of Genesis 12–50 is 360 years (year 2236). Israel lives in Egypt an additional 430 years before their exodus in the year 2666 (Exod. 12:40–41).

Moses emerges as the central character in the second part of the Pentateuch, which tells the story of Israel's salvation from Egyptian slavery and the establishment of Yahwistic worship in the wilderness. Exodus-Deuteronomy are framed by his birth (Exodus 2) and death (Deuteronomy 34). His dates according to the Pentateuch span the years 2586–2706. Thus the vast majority of pentateuchal literature is confined to the 120 years of

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1. Rolf Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Substance, Method, and Cases* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 351–79.

2. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 47–50 for an overview of the chronology within the Pentateuch. See also J. Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology*, JSOTSup 66 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1990).

Moses' life. During his career Moses liberates Israel from Egypt (Exodus 5–14), leads them into the wilderness (Exodus 15–18; Numbers 11–21), and mediates divine law at the mountain of God (Exodus 19–Numbers 10) and on the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy). The author of the Pentateuch is not identified within the literature. Yet it has become closely associated with Moses because of his central role in Exodus–Deuteronomy.

Mosaic authorship is reinforced by scattered references to writing in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Only God and Moses write in the Pentateuch. God writes laws (Exod. 24:12), the architectural plans for the tabernacle (Ex. 31:18), names of the elect in a special book (Ex. 32:32), and the tablets containing the ten commandments (Ex. 34:1; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; 9:10; 10:2–4). Moses writes four distinct genres of literature: prophecy about holy war (Ex. 17:14), laws (Ex. 24:4, 34:27–28; Deut. 31:9, 34), the history of the wilderness journey (Num. 33:2), and a song (Deut. 31:9, 22). Mosaic authorship is most likely extended in Deut. 31:24–26 to include the entire book of Deuteronomy, described as the “book of the torah,” meaning “book of the law.” Josh. 8:31–34 identifies the “book of the torah” as the “torah of Moses” (see also Josh. 23:6; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 2 Kgs. 14:6, 23:25). “Torah of Moses” most likely refers to the book of Deuteronomy throughout these citations. But over time the designation came to represent all pentateuchal literature. Thus when Ezra, the scribe, returns from Persia after the exile (sometime in the fifth century B.C.E.), the “torah of Moses” which he reads publicly may be the entire Pentateuch (see Ezra 3:2, 7:6; Neh. 8:1; and also 2 Chr. 23:18, 30:16, 34:14). As a result “Torah” and “Torah of Moses” became traditional titles for the Pentateuch, reinforcing Mosaic authorship of the literature. In the process Moses is also idealized as an inspired author. Thus, his authorship becomes important for attributing divine authority to Torah. It also lays the foundation for the belief that the Pentateuch contained one unified message because it had one divinely inspired author.

Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was assumed in Jewish Hellenistic, Rabbinic, and early Christian writings. Philo, a Hellenistic Jewish author writing in the first century of the common era, provides an example. He writes in his commentary on creation, “Moses says . . . ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’”<sup>3</sup> Josephus also asserts that Moses authored the first five books.<sup>4</sup> The Rabbis, too, state, “Moses wrote his own book.”<sup>5</sup> Its origin was divine.<sup>6</sup> A similar perspective is also expressed by early Christian writers. The Apostle Paul refers to the

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3. Works of Philo, op. 26.

4. Flavius Josephus Against Apion 1:37–40.

5. Talmud, B. Bat. 14b

6. Talmud, Sauh. 99a.

Pentateuch as the “law of Moses.”<sup>7</sup> The author of the Gospel of Luke expresses the same thought when the Pentateuch is indicated by simple reference to its author “Moses,”<sup>8</sup> later described as the “law of Moses.”<sup>9</sup> The examples indicate two important developments. First, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch emerges within tradition and not from historical-critical study of its literary composition. And, second, Mosaic authorship becomes important for attributing divine authority to scripture. The rabbis provide illustration when they conclude: God spoke Torah to Moses, who wrote down the words.<sup>10</sup>

Questions about Mosaic authorship arose, even with the absence of historical-critical literary study. The Rabbis, for example, continued to debate whether Moses could have written the account of his own death in Deut. 34:5–12.<sup>11</sup> Jewish medieval commentators noticed other problems. Abraham Ibn Ezra, a twelfth century C.E. Spanish interpreter, notes in his commentary on Deuteronomy that Moses could not have written the following phrases: “beyond Jordan” (Deut. 1:1)—Moses never crossed the Jordan River; the “Canaanite was then in the land” (Gen. 12:6)—assumes the expulsion of the Canaanite after the death of Moses; the naming of Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:14)—occurs during the monarchy period; the description of Og and his iron bed (Deut. 3:11)—assumes a much later date than the time of Moses. Ibn Ezra also concluded that the statement indicating all writings of Moses were inscribed on stones (Deut. 27:1–8) does not allow for five entire books, and that third-person references to Moses (such as “Moses wrote” in Deut 31:9) also assume another author.<sup>12</sup> Doubts about Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, however, remained at the periphery of interpretation. They did not provide a hermeneutical starting point for evaluating pentateuchal literature. Thus, in spite of a variety of literary problems, the authoritative teaching of tradition concerning Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was accepted without serious or widespread opposition. As a result Jewish and Christian interpreters sought a unified message in Torah from its single author, Moses.

#### CRITICAL EVALUATION OF MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH

The Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation introduced a more critical stance toward religious tradition and authority, expressed in the

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7. 1 Cor 9:9.

8. Luke 24:27.

9. Luke 24:44.

10. B. Bat. 15a.

11. B. Bat. 15a; Menah. 30a.

12. For discussion see C. Houtman, *Der Pentateuch: Die Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung*, Biblical Exegesis and Theology 9 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994) 22–27; and Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 2–3.

manifesto *sola scriptura*.<sup>13</sup> This claim meant that, for the reformers, only scripture, not traditional teaching, represented divine instruction on all questions of faith and practice. The study of scripture, therefore, was used as a counter voice to papal authority.<sup>14</sup> Such a use of scripture required a more historical-critical hermeneutic in order to illustrate the misuse of pentateuchal literature through past interpretation by the Roman church. The reformer's critical stance toward tradition would eventually call into question Mosaic authorship, since it too rested on the authority of traditional teaching, rather than arising from historical-critical study of pentateuchal literature. John Calvin (1509–64) and Benedict de Spinoza (1634–77) illustrate the emergence of historical criticism of the Pentateuch and the eventual rejection of Mosaic authorship.

Calvin never questioned the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. In the "Preface" to *The Four Last Books of Moses in the Form of a Harmony I*, Calvin states that "what was dictated to Moses was excellent. . . ."<sup>15</sup> And in the introductory "Argument" to *The First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, he makes clear his quest to discern the intention of Moses as a source of divine revelation.<sup>16</sup> Uncovering Mosaic intention often served polemical purposes, refuting the claims of papal authority. Historical study of the Aaronide (or Aaronic) priesthood, for example, indicated that Christ, not the pope, represented Aaron.<sup>17</sup>

Historical-critical study of the Pentateuch also brought literary repetitions and potential contradictions into clearer focus. For example, Calvin is aware of two creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2, and of the name changes for God from Elohim (in Genesis 1) to Yahweh (in Genesis 2). Such repetition is not "superfluous," according to Calvin, but it certainly does not prompt questions about Mosaic authorship, nor does it challenge the assumption that the Pentateuch contains a unified message about creation. Instead the two creation stories are for emphasis, inculcating "the necessary fact, that the world existed only from the time when it was created. . . ."<sup>18</sup> The change from Elohim to the more personal

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13. For discussion of *sola scriptura* as it developed in Martin Luther's Leipzig Disputation of 1519 and subsequently through Calvin see Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969) 6–9.

14. Ibid.

15. John Calvin, *The Four Last Books of Moses in the Form of a Harmony I*, translated by Charles William Bingham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), xiv. For a summary of Calvin's use of the Old Testament, see David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

16. John Calvin, *The First Book of Moses Called Genesis I*, translated by John King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 58–9.

17. John Calvin, *The Last Four Books of Moses in the Form of a Harmony II*, translated by Charles William Bingham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950) 21.

18. *Genesis I*, 109.



name Yahweh is neither a contradiction nor an indication of distinct authorship, but "is here at length expressed by Moses, because his [God's] majesty shines forth more clearly in the completed world [of Genesis 2]." <sup>19</sup> Repetitive accounts of Abraham (Genesis 12, 20) and Isaac (Genesis 26) presenting their wives as sisters to foreign kings is recorded by Moses because it happened three times. <sup>20</sup>

Calvin solved more glaring contradictions by harmonizing different accounts rather than by exploring the possibility of authors other than Moses, who might represent distinct traditions with conflicting messages. The two statements concerning the duration of the flood (40 [Gen. 7:17] versus 150 [Gen. 7:24] days), for example, indicate two periods of activity, according to Calvin, rather than two versions of the flood story. The water rose for 40 days and then maintained its present height for an additional 150 days. <sup>21</sup> Distinct accounts concerning Moses' father-in-law (as Jethro in Exodus 18 and as Hobab in Numbers 10) were harmonized through genealogy in order to avoid contradiction. Those who sought to identify the two names as referring to the same person were "grossly mistaken." Hobab, according to Calvin, was actually the son of Jethro. <sup>22</sup> Thus, in the end, Calvin maintains the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Single authorship reinforced Calvin's desire to achieve a unified interpretation of the Pentateuch's many repetitions and contradictions. As indicated in the title of his commentary, his aim was to harmonize the diverse literature of the Pentateuch.

Benedict de Spinoza shared the reformer's rejection of traditional religious authority. He states in the "Preface" of his *Theologico-Political Treatise* that blind adherence to religious authority without free rational and critical inquiry is nothing more than superstition rooted in fear, resulting in prejudice and violence. <sup>23</sup> The reformer's claim of *sola scriptura* opposed such tyranny. Thus, Calvin sought to discern the intentions of Moses in the Pentateuch to counter the authority of the Roman church. Spinoza agrees with the claim of *sola scriptura*. He writes, "Scriptural interpretation proceeds by the examination of Scripture, and inferring the intention of its authors as a legitimate conclusion from its fundamental

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19. Ibid., 108–9.

20. Ibid., 363, 521; John Calvin, *The First Book of Moses Called Genesis II*, translated by John King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) 60–1.

21. *Genesis I*, 277–78.

22. John Calvin, *The Four Last Books of Moses in the Form of a Harmony IV*, translated by Charles William Bingham, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950) 10–12.

23. Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise Containing Certain Discussions Wherein is Set Forth that Freedom of Thought and Speech not only May, Without Prejudice to Piety and the Public Peace, be Granted; but also May not, Without Danger to Piety and the Public Peace, be Withheld*, translated by R. H. M. Elwes (1951), 7. For a discussion of Spinoza's use of scripture, see Kraus, 61–65.

principles."<sup>24</sup> But Spinoza went far beyond Calvin and the reformers. He rooted the superstition of religious tradition in the interpretation of scripture itself. The clearest evidence of this was the claim of Mosaic authorship.

"The author of the Pentateuch," writes Spinoza, "is almost universally supposed to have been Moses."<sup>25</sup> But such a belief is "ungrounded and even irrational."<sup>26</sup> Spinoza reviews the problems stated by Ibn Ezra, indicating non-Mosaic authorship. He adds further problems. Spinoza expands examples of third-person references to Moses (i.e., "Moses talked with God . . ."; "Moses was the meekest of men . . ."). He notes anachronisms in the comparison of Moses to later prophets (i.e., "there was never a prophet in Israel like Moses . . ."). And he highlights problems of geography (i.e., the mention of Dan in the story of Abraham pursuing his enemies [Gen. 14:14] is not possible historically because the city is not named as such until after the death of Joshua [Judg. 18:29]). The conclusion, writes Spinoza, is "clearer than the sun at noonday that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but by someone who lived long after Moses."<sup>27</sup>

Spinoza introduced a whole new problem for the interpretation of the Pentateuch. It is that "the history of the Bible is . . . untrustworthy."<sup>28</sup> Calvin never entertained such a possibility. For Spinoza the defense of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch advances the unreliable character of the Bible, and those who advocate for it provide one more instance of the superstition of traditional religious authority. In view of this he writes that the new aim of biblical interpretation is to uncover "a trustworthy history of the sacred writings."<sup>29</sup> Three principles shape his new approach to the Pentateuch. First, a reliable history must be built on a study of the Hebrew language. Second, knowledge of the Bible must arise only from a study of the text and not from traditional teaching about it. And, third, the interpreter must identify the genuine authors of the biblical books, who were channels of divine revelation.<sup>30</sup> Thus Spinoza continues to maintain the divine inspiration of scripture. But interpretation of the divinely inspired Pentateuch became a quest for anonymous authors. Interpretation of their intentions would reveal the true, rational, and divine principles of scripture.

Spinoza concluded that Moses wrote only limited portions of the

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24. Spinoza 99.

25. *Ibid.*, 120.

26. *Ibid.*, 126.

27. *Ibid.*, 124.

28. *Ibid.*, 120.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, 101–3.

Pentateuch: an account of war with Amalek (Ex. 17:14; cf. also Num. 21:12); the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 21–23; cf. Ex. 24:4); and law in Deuteronomy. The majority of the Pentateuch was written by a later historian who incorporated Moses' writing within a history. Connecting phrases, moreover, indicate that the Pentateuch was part of a larger history, extending through Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Spinoza provides the following evidence: "[A]s soon as he has related the life of Moses, the historian thus passes on to the story of Joshua: 'And it came to pass after Moses the servant of the Lord was dead, that God spoke to Joshua,' and, so in the same way, after the death of Joshua was concluded, he passes with identically the same transition and connection to the history of the Judges." Spinoza suspects Ezra (Ezra 7:10) to be the author of this history. Contradiction between similar accounts in the histories of Chronicles and Genesis–Kings (i.e., the account of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18:17 and in 2 Chr. 32:32) led Spinoza to conclude further that Ezra did not actually write the histories, but compiled them.<sup>31</sup>

#### THE PENTATEUCH AND ITS SOURCES

##### *The Identification of Anonymous Authors in the Pentateuch*

Rejection of Mosaic authorship introduced a new start for interpretation. The past belief that pentateuchal literature was unified in theme with a single author was replaced by new assumptions. Interpreters began to presume that many anonymous authors contributed to the composition of the Pentateuch, and that the literature could not be harmonized into a single, unified message. As a result interpreters now sought to identify the Pentateuch's anonymous authors, requiring new, historical-critical methodology. Two goals comprise the core of historical-criticism. First, repetitions and contradictions were separated, not harmonized, into different bodies of literature ("sources") in order to identify authors with distinct religious world views. And, second, interpreters sought to arrange the order in which the authors wrote, thus fashioning the history of Israelite religion. Locating literary contradictions to identify authors and establishing their chronology became the building blocks for historical critics to establish the "trustworthy history of the sacred writings" advocated by Spinoza. Some shared Spinoza's belief in divine inspiration; others did not. But, in either case, the quest for anonymous authors created tension with the traditional teaching that God had communicated a unified message in Torah at one time and through one author, Moses.

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31. Ibid., 133–9.

*The Literary Methods for Identifying Authors*

The identification of anonymous authors arose from an inductive study of pentateuchal literature, especially the book of Genesis. Literary repetition, contradiction of content, and disruptions in chronology were considered indicators of different writers. Divine names emerged as an important starting point for tracing the literary thread of distinct authors. In some stories the deity is named Elohim (translated "God" in the New Revised Standard Version=NRSV), while in others Yahweh (translated "Lord" in the NRSV). The opening chapters of Genesis provide an example. The deity is Elohim throughout Gen 1:1–2:4, while the divine name Yahweh is used in Gen 2:5–25. Calvin saw this already in his commentary on Genesis, but interpreted it as a literary technique by Moses for emphasis. Historical critics, by contrast, judged the different divine names to be a contradiction, revealing authors with distinct views of deity. Jean Astruc (1684–1766) provides one of the earliest illustrations. He separated the literature in Genesis 1–Exodus 2 into sources A and B, based on the divine names.<sup>32</sup> The author of A used the divine name Elohim, while B preferred Yahweh. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Astruc illustrates early historical-critical literary methodology. The separation of divine names is his primary, but not sole, criterion for identifying anonymous authors. Additional literary criteria also influenced his interpretation. Thus he identified ten additional literary fragments. Two prominent examples are sources C and D, neither of which contains divine names. They constituted separate sources because of literary repetitions, contradictions of content, and problems of chronology. The C source included portions of the flood—the height of the water and its 150-day duration (Gen. 7:20, 23, 24). The D source included Abraham's rescue of Lot (Gen. 14), the birth of children to Lot (Gen. 19:29–38) and Abraham (Gen. 22:20–24), the genealogy of Ishmael (Gen. 25:12–18), Esau's marriage to Hittite women (Gen. 26:34–35), the genealogy of Esau (Gen. 35:28–36:43), and Onan's refusal to fulfill the levirate law (Gen. 38:6–9). The difficulty inherent in such literary judgments is illustrated by the story of Dinah's rape (Gen. 34). Astruc attributes this story to both the C and D sources at different locations in his study.

Examination of parallel episodes in sources A and B illustrates the variety of ways in which the distinct sources are combined in the Pentateuch. The two creation stories (Gen. 1:1–2:3 and 2:4–25) are placed side by side as doublets. In this case two conflicting views of creation are juxtaposed. The author of Gen. 1:1–2:3 envisions Elohim creating through a

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32. Jean Astruc, *Conjectures sur les memoirs originaux dont il paroit que Moyse s'est servi pour composer le livre de la Genese. Avec des remarques, qui appuient ou qui eclairissent ces conjectures* (Brüssel, 1753). For a summary of Astruc's work, see E. O'Doherty, "The Conjectures of Jean Astruc, 1753," CBQ 76 (1953): 300–4; and Houtman, *Der Pentateuch*, 63–70.

**TABLE 1**  
**ASTRUC'S A AND B SOURCES BASED ON THE DIVINE NAMES:**

	<b>Author A (Elohim)</b>	<b>Author B (Yahweh)</b>
<b>CREATION (Genesis 1-11)</b>		
Creation	Gen. 1:1-2:3	Gen. 2:4-25
Adam, Eve, Eden		Gen. 3
Cain & Abel		Gen. 4
Adam's Genealogy	Gen. 5	
Noah & Flood	Gen. 6:9-22	Gen. 6:1-8
	Gen. 7:6-10, 19, 22, 24	Gen. 7:1-5, 11-18, 21, 24
	Gen. 8:1-19	Gen. 8:20-22
	Gen. 9:1-10, 12, 16, 17	Gen. 9:11, 13-15
Noah/Vintner		Gen. 9:18-29
Noah's Genealogy		Gen. 10:1-32
Tower of Babel		Gen. 11:1-9
Shem's Genealogy	Gen. 11:10-26	
<b>ABRAHAM (Genesis 12:1-25:18)</b>		
Call of Abram		Gen. 11:27-12:9
Sarah/Pharaoh		Gen. 12:10-20
Abram/Lot		Gen. 13:1-18
Covenant/Offspring		Gen. 15:1-17:2
Circumcision	Gen. 17:3-27	
Sodom/Gomorrah		Gen. 18:1-19:28
Sarah/Abimelech	Gen. 20:1-17	
Birth of Isaac	Gen. 21:2-32	Gen. 20:18-21:1, 33-34
Sacrifice of Isaac	Gen. 22:1-10	Gen. 22:11-19
Death of Sarah	Gen. 23	
Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah		Gen. 24
Death of Abraham	Gen. 25:1-11	
<b>JACOB (Genesis 25:19-38:30)</b>		
Birth of Jacob/Esau		Gen. 25:19-26:33
Blessing of Jacob		Gen. 27:1-28:5
Jacob at Bethel		Gen. 28:10-22
Marriage of Jacob to Rachel/Leah		Gen. 29
Birth of Jacob's Sons	Gen. 30:1-23	Gen. 30:24
Conflict with Laban	Gen. 31:4-47, 31:51-32:2 [=1 Eng]	Gen. 30:25-43, 31:1-3, 48-50
Jacob at the Jabbok River	Gen. 32:24-33	Gen. 32:3-23
Jacob meets Esau	Gen. 33:1-16	
Jacob at Succoth/Shechem		Gen. 33:17-20
Birth of Benjamin/ Death of Rebekah	Gen. 35:1-27	
Genealogy of Esau	Gen. 37	
Judah and Tamar		Gen. 38
<b>JOSEPH (Genesis 39-50)</b>		
Joseph and His Brothers		Gen. 39
Joseph in Egypt	Gen. 40-48	
Jacob's Last Words	Gen. 49:29-33	Gen. 49:1-28
Death of Jacob	Gen. 50	
<b>ISRAEL IN EGYPT (Exodus 1-2)</b>		
Israel in Egypt	Exod. 1-2	

process of separation from wet chaos to dry land, while in Gen 2:4–25, Yahweh moves in just the opposite direction, fashioning life from dry desert by adding water. The accounts of the patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac, falsely presenting their wives as sisters to foreign kings are distributed more widely in Genesis 12–26, yet the distinction in divine names continues. When Abraham first lies to Pharaoh about Sarah (Gen. 12:10–20), it is Yahweh that plagues the Egyptians. Thus, it is an episode in Source B, according to Astruc. But when Abraham repeats this action with Abimelech (Gen. 20:1–18) Elohim, not Yahweh, threatens the king with disease and death, indicating a story in Source A. The divine name, Yahweh, returns in the account of Isaac, Rebekah, and Abimelech (Gen. 26:1–16), making it an episode in Source B, along with the first story of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (Gen. 12:10–20).

The flood (Genesis 6–9), by contrast, illustrates how different sources can be interwoven, rather than placed side by side, or distributed throughout larger blocks of literature. Astruc identified two introductions to the flood. In Source B, Yahweh sees that the inclination of the human heart is thoroughly evil (Gen. 6:1–8), whereas in Source A, Elohim sees that the earth is corrupt (Gen. 6:9–22). Here the two introductions are combined into one story. The two versions continue to be interwoven, with Yahweh (i.e., Gen. 7:1–5) and Elohim (i.e., Gen. 7:6–10) providing slightly different instructions to Noah about the ark and its cargo of animals. And the distinctions continue into the conclusion. In Source B, Yahweh ceases the flood, smells sacrifice, and promises never to curse the ground again because of the evil inclination of the human heart (Gen. 8:20–22), repeating the theme that introduced this version of the story. In Source A, by contrast, Elohim blesses Noah (Gen. 9:1–10).

Astruc's use of divine names, literary repetition, and contradiction of content as clues to anonymous authors became a building block for later interpreters.<sup>33</sup> Debate over the separation of literature into distinct sources continues into the present time. Yet in general most interpreters agree that the Pentateuch contains similar stories by different authors. Additional examples include multiple interpretations of covenant (Genesis 15 and 17),<sup>34</sup> two interpretations of Hagar's expulsion (Genesis 18 and 21),<sup>35</sup> two names for the mountain of God (Sinai and Horeb),<sup>36</sup> two

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33. For a more detailed illustration of historical-critical literary methodology, see Norman Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

34. George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doublday, 1992), 1179–1202.

35. Thomas B. Dozeman, "The Wilderness and Salvation History in the Hagar Story," *The Journal of Biblical Literature* 116 (1998): 23–43.

36. Thomas B. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19–24*, SBLMS 37 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

accounts of the revelation of the divine name (Exodus 3 and 6),<sup>37</sup> several interpretations of the exodus (Exodus 14–15),<sup>38</sup> two versions of the Decalogue (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5),<sup>39</sup> two designations for the people of God (“children of Israel” and the “congregation”),<sup>40</sup> two identifications for the indigenous population (“Canaanites” and “Amorites”),<sup>41</sup> several accounts of Israel’s fear of conquest and loss of the promised land (Numbers 13–14; Deuteronomy 1),<sup>42</sup> at least two views on warfare (Numbers 31 and Deuteronomy 20),<sup>43</sup> several conflicting cultic calendars (Exod. 23:14–17; Leviticus 23; Numbers 27–28; and Deuteronomy 16),<sup>44</sup> competing views of proper worship—especially sacrifice (Leviticus vs. Deuteronomy),<sup>45</sup> and differences concerning the appropriate sanctuary (i.e., the tent of meeting in Exodus 33, the tabernacle in Exodus 25–31, 35–40, or the place of the name in Deuteronomy).<sup>46</sup> These and many other repetitions confirm the existence of several anonymous authors in the Pentateuch with divergent views of God, community, and worship.

But new questions arose. The identification of authors, the nature of the literature, and the process by which the Pentateuch was formed were far from settled. Astruc’s sources, for example, quickly took on the names of deity prominent in each. Thus scholars such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827) referred to Elohist (E) and Yahwist (J=the German spelling of the letter Y in Yahweh) sources, instead of A and B sources.<sup>47</sup> And there was even debate whether sources indicated authors at all. Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1859) suggested that the different divine names may represent periods of writing or perhaps distinct schools of thought, rather than discrete authors.<sup>48</sup> Still other ques-

37. Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974).

38. Thomas B. Dozeman, *God at War: Power in the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

39. F.-L. Hossfeld, *Der Dekalog: Seine späten Fassungen, die originale Komposition und seine Vorstufen*, OBO 45 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1982).

40. Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, translated by Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 183.

41. Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 183.

42. Thomas B. Dozeman, *Numbers*, NIB (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

43. *Ibid.*

44. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, translated by Menzies and Black (1883 Reprint; New York: Meridian Books, 1957).

45. Moshe Weinfield, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

46. Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

47. J. G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung ins Alte Testament* (Leipzig, 1780–3).

48. W. M. L. de Wette, *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Halle, 1806–7); and *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die Bibel Alten und Neuen Testaments I: Die Einleitung in das Alte Testament enthaltend* (Berlin, 1844).

tions followed, arising from refinements in methodology and from the limitations in the work of the early historical critics like Astruc and Eichhorn. Three problem areas continue to influence interpreters of the Pentateuch into the present time.

First, the focus of study on Genesis 1–Exodus 2 by early critics was too narrow to provide a model for the authorship of the entire Pentateuch. Thus, the extension of the sources became a pressing question. Do the Elohist and Yahwist sources continue on through the Pentateuch, or even further into the book of Joshua where the conquest of land is narrated? Those who advocated the continuation of sources into the book of Joshua often spoke of a six-book Hexateuch (Genesis–Joshua), rather than a five-book Pentateuch (Genesis–Deuteronomy). Martin Noth introduced yet another term—Tetrateuch—by arguing that the book of Deuteronomy should be separated from Genesis–Numbers, and read as the introduction to the history of Israel in the land contained in the books Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.<sup>49</sup> The history of Israel’s life in the land (Joshua–Kings) became known as the “Deuteronomistic History,” indicating its close ties to the book of Deuteronomy. The exclusive focus on narrative in Genesis also did not address the role of law or the relationship of law and narrative in the formation of the Pentateuch. Thus later interpreters turned their attention more to Exodus–Deuteronomy to investigate the origin and authorship of the many laws in the Pentateuch.<sup>50</sup>

Second, the character of the literature and the process by which distinct writings were combined in the Pentateuch remained a matter of debate. Astruc used the word “sources” to describe continuous, independent and parallel narratives, woven together by editors also called redactors. Alexander Geddes (1737–1802) and Johann Severin Vater (1771–1826) disagreed, advancing a fragmentary theory of the literature. They envisioned the Pentateuch to be a collection of many individual stories combined into larger groupings.<sup>51</sup> Still other scholars advanced a

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49. Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1981); and *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, translated by B. W. Anderson (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981). For discussion of the debates surrounding the proper boundaries of a Tetrateuch, Pentateuch, or Hexateuch see A. G. Auld, *Joshua, Moses and the Land: Tetrateuch–Pentateuch–Hexateuch in a Generation Since 1938* (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1980); and Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 241–48.

50. Frank Crüsemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*, translated by Allan W. Mahnke (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

51. Alexander Geddes, *The Holy Bible or the Books accounted Sacred by Jews and Christians: otherwise called the Books of the Old and New Covenants* (London, 1792), and *Critical Remarks on the Hebrew Scriptures: Corresponding with a New Translation of the Bible*, Vol. I, *Containing Remarks on the Pentateuch* (London, 1800); Johann Severin Vater, *Commentar über den Pentateuch, Mit Einleitungen zu den einzelnen Abschnitten der eingeschalteten Übersetzung von*



supplementary hypothesis in which a foundational source was expanded with the addition of parallel documents. Heinrich Ewald (1803–75) represented this position early in his career, arguing that an E source, extending from creation in Genesis 1 to the conquest of land in the book of Joshua was supplemented by a J source.<sup>52</sup> These debates continue into the present time. Advocates for source criticism include Richard E. Friedman<sup>53</sup> as well as Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien.<sup>54</sup> John Van Seters<sup>55</sup> and Rolf Rendtorff<sup>56</sup> favor in general a more supplementary approach for interpreting the growth of pentateuchal literature.

And, third, interpreters also began to identify more than two authors from the divine names. Already in 1798 Carl David Ilgen suggested a three-source theory of composition in Genesis with two Elohistic authors.<sup>57</sup> Fifty years later (1853), Herman Hupfeld (1796–1866) addressed the problem anew with his separation of Elohist one (E1) and two (E2). E1 was a foundational document, according to Hupfeld, beginning with creation in Genesis 1 and continuing through the book of Joshua, while E2 had a more narrow focus on the patriarchal literature beginning in Genesis 12.<sup>58</sup> Later scholars would follow the lead of Hupfeld, but rename this foundational document the Priestly (P) source.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the recognition that the book of Deuteronomy was also a distinct and independent source by Eduard Riehm,<sup>60</sup> a student of Hupfeld, laid the groundwork for the documentary hypothesis, in which four distinct bodies of literature are identified in the composition of the Pentateuch: P

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Dr. A. Geddes merkwürdigen critischen und exegetischen Anmerkungen und einer Abhandlung über Mose und die Verfasser des Pentateuchs, Vols. I–III (Halle, 1802–5).

52. Heinrich Georg August Ewald, *Die Komposition der Genesis Kritische Untersuchung* (Braunschweig, 1823).

53. Who Wrote the Bible? (New York: Summit Books, 1987).

54. *Sources of the Pentateuch: Text, Introductions, and Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

55. *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992); and *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

56. Rolf Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*, BZAW 147 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977).

57. Carl David Ilgen, *Die Urkunden des Jerusalemischen Tempelarchivs in ihrer Urgestalt also Beytrag zur Berichtigung der Geschichte der Religion und Politik aus dem Hebräischen mit kritischen und erklärenden Anmerkungen, auch mancherley dazu gehörigen Abhandlungen Theil I: Die Urkunden des ersten Buchs von Moses* (Halle, 1798).

58. Herman Hupfeld, *Die Quellen der Genesis und die Art ihrer Zusammensetzung* (Berlin, 1853).

59. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, 6–7, is one of the first to write that the “main stock” (Grundschrift) source is better described as the Priestly Code.

60. E. Riehm, *Die Gesetzgebung Mosis im Lande Moab* (Gotha, 1854). His work builds on earlier research by scholars like W. M. L. de Wette (see below).

(Priestly source), E (Elohistic Source), J (Yahwistic source), and D (Deuteronomy). Table 2 highlights some of the more important texts that have historically been attributed to the distinct authors (or "sources") of the Pentateuch, known as P, J, E, D.<sup>61</sup>

The literary character and central themes of the four sources, P, J, E, and D, can be summarized in the following manner. The Priestly source uses the divine name Elohim in Genesis, hence its early designation as E1. Initial interpreters identified the Priestly source as beginning with creation in Genesis 1 and continuing through land distribution in Joshua 18–19. Its style of writing is formulaic. Genealogies and dating organize the literature in Genesis.<sup>62</sup> Covenants with Noah (Genesis 9) and Abraham (Genesis 17) are central themes in P. The life of Moses in Exodus–Numbers is organized around the revelation (Exodus 24–31) and construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 35–40), the creation of its sacrificial cultic system and priesthood (Leviticus) and the social organization of the wilderness camp (Numbers 1–10).<sup>63</sup>

The Yahwistic source parallels P. It begins with creation in Genesis 2, focusing on the garden of Eden. Its style is less formulaic. Stories in the opening chapters of Genesis include Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden, the murder of Abel by Cain, the flood, subsequent stories of Noah as an intoxicated vintner, and the tower of Babel. The ancestral literature is organized around the divine promise of land and descendants (Gen. 12:1–3), conceived as covenant (Genesis 15). J literature is also prominent in the story of Moses, including accounts of his birth and early years, the exodus, revelation at Sinai, wilderness wandering, and perhaps also stories of the conquest in Joshua.<sup>64</sup>

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61. The table follows in general the listing of the sources in "Translator's Supplement: Analytical Outline of the Pentateuch," compiled by B. W. Anderson in Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. B. W. Anderson (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 261–276. For the sake of clarity, the table does not include all literature in the Pentateuch. For a complete analysis of pentateuchal sources, see Antony F. Cambell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

62. Priestly writers organize history around genealogy, as in the phrase, "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 2:4a). See the repetition of this phrase in Gen. 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, etc.

63. For discussions of the priestly literature in the Pentateuch, see Jacob Milgrom, "Priestly ('P') Source," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 454–61; Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 204–8; Sean E. McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer, AB 50* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971); R. B. Coote and D. R. Ord, *In the Beginning: Creation and the Priestly History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); and J. Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," *CBQ* 38 (1976): 275–92.

64. For discussions of the Yahwistic source see Albert de Pury, "Yahwist ('J') Source," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1012–20; Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Yahwist," *Int* 20 (1966): 129–58; R. B. Coote and D. R. Ord, *The Bible's First History* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989); and Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 199–204.

TABLE 2  
PENTATEUCHAL AUTHORS (OR SOURCES) P, J, E, D:

	P	J	E	D
<b>Creation</b> (Gen. 1-11)				
Creation	1:1-2:4a	2:4b-25		
Eden		Gen. 3		
Cain/Abel		Gen. 4		
Adam's Genealogy	Gen. 5			
Noah/Flood <sup>1</sup>	Gen. 6-9	Gen. 6-8		
Noah/Vintner	9:18-27			
Noah's Genealogy <sup>2</sup>	Gen. 10	Gen. 10		
Tower of Babel	11:1-9			
Shem's Genealogy	11:10-26			
<b>The Ancestors</b> (Gen. 12-50)				
Abraham:				
Call of Abram	12:1-4a, 6-9			
Sarah/Pharaoh	12:10-20			
Abram/Lot		13:1-18		
Covenant/Offspring		15:6-12, 19-21	15:5, 13-16	
Flight of Hagar		16:1-14		
Covenant/Circumcision	Gen. 17			
Sodom and Gomorrah		18:1-19:28		
Sarah/Abimelech				20:1-17
Expulsion of Hagar			21:8-21	
Sacrifice of Isaac			22:1-19	
Death/Burial of Sarah	Gen. 23			
Marriage of Isaac/Rebekah		Gen. 24		
Genealogy of Ishmael	25:12-17			
Jacob:				
Birth Jacob/Esau		25:21-26:33		
Stolen Blessing		27:1-45		
Dream at Bethel			28:11-22	
Marriage of Jacob/Leah and Rachel		Gen. 29		
Jacob's Children <sup>3</sup>	Gen. 30	Gen. 30		
Conflict with Laban <sup>4</sup>		Gen. 31	Gen. 31	
Wrestling with Angel		Gen. 32		
Rape of Dinah		Gen. 34		
Jacob's Sons	35:22b-26			
Isaac's Death	35:27-29			
Esau's Genealogy	Gen. 36 <sup>5</sup>			

1. P=Gen. 6:9-22; 7:6, 11, 13-16a, 17a, 18-21, 24; 8:1, 2a, 3b-5, 7, 13a, 14-19; 9:1-17. J=Gen. 6:1-8; 7:1-5, 7-10, 12, 16b, 17b, 22-23; 8:2b, 3a, 6, 8-12, 13b, 20-22.

2. P=Gen. 10:1-7, 20, 22-23, 24, 31-32. J=Gen. 10:8-19, 21, 25-30.

3. J=Gen. 29:31-35; 30:4-5, 7-16, 20-21, 24, 25-43. E=30:1-3, 6, 17-19, 22-23.

4. J=Gen. 31:1, 3, 17, 19a, 20-23, 25b, 27, 30a, 31, 36a, 38-40, 46-49, 51-53a. E=Gen. 31:2, 4-16, 19b, 24-25a, 26, 28-29, 30b, 32-35, 36b-37, 41-45, 50, 53b-55.

5. Source critics distribute Gen. 37-50 primarily between J and E. P provides a list of Jacob's offspring (Gen. 46:6-27) and notice of Jacob's death along with burial instructions (Gen. 49:29-33; 50:12-13).

**TABLE 2 (continued)**

	P	J	E	D
<b>The Life of Moses</b> (Exodus–Deuteronomy)				
Birth and Call of Moses:				
Israelite Oppression	Ex. 1:1-7, 13-14	1:8-12		
Midwives			1:15-21	
Birth/Flight		2:1-22		
Call/Revelation of Divine Name	2:23-25; 3:1-6:1 6:2-7:7	3:9-12; 13-15		
Plagues and Exodus				
Plagues	7:8-13 (snakes) 8:16-19 (gnats) 9:8-12 (boils)	Ex. 7-11		
Passover	12:1-20, 28, 40-51	12:21-39		
Victory at the Red Sea <sup>6</sup>	Ex. 14	Ex. 14	Ex. 14	
First Wilderness Journey:				
Manna <sup>7</sup>	Ex. 16	Ex. 16		
Water from Rock		17:1-7		
War with Amalek		17:8-16		
Jethro's Instruction			18:1-27	
Cultic Revelation at the Mountain of God:				
Theophany		Ex. 19:18	19:16-17, 19	
Decalogue			20:1-21	
Tabernacle	24:15b-18; Ex. 25-31			
Golden Calf		Ex. 32-34	32:1b-4, 21-24	
Construction of Tabernacle	Ex. 35-40			
Ordination of Priests/ Sacrificial System	Leviticus			
Selection of Levites/ Organization of Camp	Num. 1:1-10:10			
Second Wilderness Journey :				
Departure	10:11-28	10:29-36		
The Seventy Elders		Num. 11		
Miriam, Aaron, Moses	Num. 12			

6. P=Ex. 14:1-4, 8-10, 15-18, 21-23, 26, 28-29. J=Ex. 13:20-22; 14:5b, 6, 13-14, 19b, 20, 24, 25b, 27aa, 30-31. E=Ex. 13:17-19; 14:5a, 7, 11-12, 19a, 25a.

7. P=Ex. 16:1-3, 6-27, 32-35a. J=Ex. 16:4-5, 28-31, 35b, 36.

TABLE 2 (continued)

	P	J	E	D
Spy Story/Loss of Promised Land <sup>8</sup>	Num. 13-14	Num. 13-14		
Cultic Law	Num. 15			
Korah, Dathan, and Abiram Revolt <sup>9</sup>	Num. 16	Num. 16		
Aaron's Rod	Num. 17			
Priestly Duties	Num. 18			
Corpse Contamination	Num. 19			
Sin of Moses	20:1-13			
Conflict with Edom		20:19-20	20:14-18, 21	
War against Sihon/Og			21:21-35	
Balak and Balaam <sup>10</sup>		Num. 22-24	Num. 22-24	
Census	Num. 26			
Inheritance	Num. 27			
Calendar/Sacrifice	Num. 28-30			
War against Midian	Num. 31			
Land Distribution	Num. 32			
Canaan/Cities of Refuge	Num. 34-36			
<b>Moses' Teaching on the Plains of Moab</b>				
Teaching				Deut.
Death of Moses	Deut. 34:1a, 7-9 <sup>11</sup>			

8. P=Num. 13:1-17a, 21, 25-26, 32-33; 14:1a, 2-3, 5-10, 26-38. J=Num. 13:17b-20, 22-24, 27-31; 14:1b, 4, 11-25, 39-45.

9. P=Num. 16:1a, 2-11, 16-24, 27a, 35-50. J=Num. 16:1b, 12-15, 25-26, 27b-34.

10. J=Num. 22:3b-8, 13-19, 21-37, 39-40; 23:28; 24:1-25. E=Num. 22:2-3a, 9-12, 20, 38; 22:41-23:27, 29-30.

11. Scholars have also identified the pentateuchal sources in the books of Joshua and Judges. For an outline of this literature, see Otto Eissfeldt, *Hexateuch-Synopse. Die Erzählung der Fünf Bücher Mose und des Buches Josua mit dem Anfange des Richterbuches* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1922).

The Elohist source represents the remaining stories where the divine name Elohim occurs. It is less formulaic than P, emphasizing instead a more prophetic interpretation of Israel's origins. Central examples include the second episode of Abraham falsely presenting Sarah as his sister to Abimelech of Gerar (Genesis 20), where Abraham is idealized as a prophet. The testing of Abraham in the divine command to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22) is also attributed to E. Source critics also identify E in Exodus-Numbers. Examples include the use of the name Elohim in the call of Moses (Exodus 3) and in the theophany at Sinai (Exodus 19). The limited literary basis for E has raised questions about its independence from the Yahwistic source. As a result later interpreters often simply refer to JE as one body of literature in the Pentateuch.<sup>65</sup>

The D source is confined to the literature of Deuteronomy, which divides between sermons and laws presented by Moses in a single day. Central themes include covenant, the need for Israel to be distinct from surrounding nations, centralized worship, and the danger of idolatry.<sup>66</sup>

*The Date and Chronology of Anonymous Authors and the History of Ancient Israelite Religion*

The identification of anonymous authors required interpreters to arrange them chronologically in order to fashion a history of Israelite religion. Thus, for example, interpreters sought to determine when the two accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 were written and in what order. Dating anonymous authors proved to be a much more ambiguous undertaking than identifying distinct bodies of literature in the Pentateuch. Historical linguistics, archaeology, comparative religion, the cultural history of the ancient Near East, and current hypotheses concerning the nature of religion and the history of Israelite religion all play a role in determining the historical setting and chronology of pentateuchal literature.<sup>67</sup> Astruc, for example, sought to confirm the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch through his study of sources A and B. He argued that the sources were pre-Mosaic and used by Moses in composing the Pentateuch. Astruc's dating was initially followed by Eichhorn with respect to Exodus-

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65. For discussion of the Elohist source, see Alan W. Jenks, "Elohist," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 478–82, and *The Elohist and North Israelite Traditions*, SBLMS 22 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977).

66. Moshe Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy, Book of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 168–83 and "Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist School;" and see Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 219–33.

67. For overview and summary of the distinct methodological approaches for interpreting the Pentateuch, see *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters*, edited by Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker, Society of Biblical Literature: The Bible and Its Modern Interpreters I (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985).

Deuteronomy. The impossibility of such theories only came to light gradually as the results of historical-critical research accumulated.

Three insights have become pivotal for determining the date and chronology of pentateuchal authors and the development of ancient Israelite religion: first, W. M. L. de Wette's study of Deuteronomy; second, Julius Wellhausen's dating of the Priestly source, and, third, more recent re-evaluations of the Yahwistic source. The following chronological outline of ancient Israelite history will provide background for the subsequent discussion:<sup>68</sup>

The Mosaic Period	(1300–1200 B.C.E.)
The Tribal Period	(1200–1000 B.C.E.)
The Monarchical Period	(1000–586 B.C.E.)
The Period of the Exile	(586–538 B.C.E.)
The Post-Exilic Period	(538 B.C.E.)

#### 1. The Josianic Reform and the Author of Deuteronomy.

The Pentateuch presents Moses mediating divine law twice. First he mediates law at Mount Sinai in the year of the exodus (Exodus 19–Numbers 10) and a second time, forty years later, on the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy). Thus, the historical setting for the revelation of law in the Pentateuch appears to be in the Mosaic period. But the revelation of law in the Pentateuch raises a number of questions. Why are there two separate law codes, revealed at distinct locations? Why are there differences in content between the two bodies of law? Do the differences in content indicate particular periods in ancient Israelite history other than the Mosaic period? W. M. L. De Wette provided new direction in pentateuchal studies by identifying the author of much of the pentateuchal laws as reflecting the social and historical circumstances of the late Monarchical period, not the Mosaic period.

De Wette focused on the second body of law contained in the book of Deuteronomy in two studies: first in his dissertation and more thoroughly in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*.<sup>69</sup> He noted that the story

68. See J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986). The chronology is based on Christian dating. B.C.E. translates "Before the Common Era." The Common Era (C.E.), that is the era of both Judaism and Christianity, commences with the birth of Jesus.

69. W. M. L. de Wette, *Dissertatio critico-exegetica qua Deuteronomium a prioribus Pentateuchi Libris diversum, alius cuiusdam recentioris auctoris opus esse monstratur; quam . . . auctoritate amplissimi philosophorum ordinis pro venia legendi AD XXVII* (Jena, 1805), and *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Halle, 1806–7). For a detailed study of de Wette see John W. Rogerson, *W. M. L. de Wette Founder of Modern Biblical Criticism: An Intellectual Biography*, JSOTSupp 126 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

of Moses comes to an end at the close of Numbers. The land of Canaan is divided (Num. 26:52–56), Moses' impending death is confirmed (Num. 27:12–14), and Joshua is appointed as successor (Num. 27:15–23). Then somewhat unexpectedly Deuteronomy begins the story anew by repeating much of the material that occurs in Leviticus and in Numbers. New law is given (Deuteronomy 4–5, 12–25), the story of Israel's wilderness journey is retold (Deuteronomy 1–3), many specific laws repeat (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28), Joshua is appointed a second time to succeed Moses (Deuteronomy 31), and God tells Moses again of his impending death (Deuteronomy 31, 34). The repetitions suggest that the history of Moses is completed at the close of Numbers.

De Wette also noted that the style of writing and religious outlook in Deuteronomy were unique. The language was more reflective and theologically sophisticated than the literature in Genesis-Numbers. It contained distinctive phrases (i.e., "that you may live in the land which Yahweh our God gives you"). And the book presented a unique view of the cult. Images were strictly forbidden (Deuteronomy 4–5), and all worship was required to take place at a single sanctuary (Deuteronomy 12). The demand for centralized worship meant that Passover became a national festival celebrated at the central temple (Deuteronomy 16). The vision of centralized worship in Deuteronomy was at odds with the biblical portrait of Israel as having many sanctuaries throughout the Mosaic (i.e., Exod. 20:24–25) and monarchical (i.e., Saul in 1 Samuel 13; David in 1 Samuel 21; and Solomon in 1 Kings 3) periods. As a consequence de Wette argued that Deuteronomy could not have been written by Moses. No trace of its wilderness vision of community and worship was evident when Israel entered the land and lived under judges and monarchs.<sup>70</sup> De Wette concluded that the earliest portions of Deuteronomy were written in the closing years of the Monarchical period, during the Josianic reform (621 B.C.E.). The most important innovation of the Josianic reform was the centralization of worship (2 Kings 22–23) advocated in Deuteronomy. Thus this book, with its command for one sanctuary and centralized worship, must have been the "book of the law" (1 Kgs. 22:8) that guided the reform of Josiah. Its original author, according to de Wette, wrote at the close of the Monarchical period, with later writers adding even more literature in the Exilic and post-Exilic periods. De Wette's fixing of the date of Deuteronomy at the end of the Monarchical period

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70. Wellhausen (*Prolegomena*, 4–5) describes de Wette as "the epoch-making pioneer of historical criticism." The reason, according to Wellhausen, is that de Wette perceived how "disconnected are the alleged starting-point of Israel's history and that history itself. The religious community set upon so broad a basis in the wilderness, with its sacred center and uniform organization, disappears and leaves no trace as soon as Israel settles in a land of its own, and becomes, in any proper sense, a nation."



became a fulcrum point for establishing the chronology of the remaining literature in the Pentateuch.

## 2. *The Post-Exilic Theocracy and the Author of the Priestly Source.*

The Priestly source begins with creation in Genesis 1 and runs at least through Numbers, if not Joshua. It focuses on cultic law associated with the wilderness tabernacle (i.e., Exodus 25–31, 35–40; Leviticus; Numbers 1–10). Prior to Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), interpreters identified the Priestly source as the oldest body of literature in the Pentateuch. Its presumed antiquity was indicated by the various designations, E1, the Older Elohist, the foundational document, the main stock, and the German word *Quelle* (Q)—meaning spring, source, or origin. It was considered the foundational text upon which other documents were added. As a result interpreters assumed that the revelation of law, the tabernacle cult, and its priestly hierarchy were part of the earliest history of ancient Israel, preceding even the prophets and kings of the Monarchical period. This was de Wette's position. He assumed that Deuteronomy was a reinterpretation of the tabernacle legislation. Julius Wellhausen proposed just the reverse, that the Priestly source was dependent upon Deuteronomy, and that its author wrote after the Josianic reform in 621 B.C.E., probably as late as the post-Exilic period (i.e., the period after the sixth century B.C.E. exile).<sup>71</sup> Wellhausen argued in *The Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* that the Priestly source was the latest body of literature to enter the Pentateuch. De Wette provided the clue. He had demonstrated that centralized worship was an innovation in Deuteronomy. The new demand of centralized worship during the Josianic reform was evident in the polemical tone of the book of Deuteronomy. Repeatedly in Deuteronomy multiple sanctuaries are condemned, while the law of a single sanctuary is carefully outlined. The priestly author, Wellhausen contended, is so dependent on Deuteronomy that there is no need for further argument about centralized worship at a single sanctuary. It is simply assumed. The absence of conflict indicated to Wellhausen a much later document, written during the post-Exilic period, when Israel was a theocracy, organized around one sanctuary and ruled by priests. Further evidence of the post-Exilic theocracy in the Priestly source, according to Wellhausen, is the separation of Aaronide priests and Levites, something that is also lacking in Deuteronomy, and most likely emerged in the post-Exilic period. Wellhausen's late dating of P to the post-Exile provides the basis for the classical theory of the documen-

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71. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*. For discussion of Wellhausen's work, see Julius Wellhausen and His *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, edited by D. A. Knight, Semeia 25 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983).

tary hypothesis, in which the order of the sources in the Pentateuch is J, E, D, and P.

Wellhausen's research on the Priestly source has far reaching implications for interpreting the history of ancient Israelite religion. Neither Mosaic authorship nor even the Mosaic period play a role in his interpretation of the Pentateuch. Instead the writing of the Pentateuch begins in the Monarchical period with the J and E sources. He judged J to be a history written in the southern kingdom of Judah, while E was a later, northern version. (Israel became two nations in 922 B.C.E. after the reign of Solomon: Judah, the southern kingdom, and Israel, the northern kingdom). Both J and E precede Deuteronomy and the Priestly source. They assume multiple cultic sites, worship is closely tied to agrarian life, and there is a minimal role for law. Wellhausen placed the two histories in the early Assyrian period (9th-8th century B.C.E.). Other interpreters would locate J as early as the United Monarchy Period (the 10th century B.C.E.).<sup>72</sup> The D source remained firmly fixed as the document of the Josianic Reform in the late 7th century B.C.E. And now P was judged to be a late history from the post-Exilic period, no earlier than the 5th century B.C.E.

The chronology of authorship was evident in the festivals, according to Wellhausen. J and E were organized around harvest festivals (Exod. 23:14-17; 34:21-23). In D (Deuteronomy 16) and especially P (Leviticus 23) worship became more abstracted from nature until their festivals were no longer attached to harvest cycles. The central role of law envisioned in D and P, moreover, emerges late in the history of Israel, not at its origin in the Mosaic period as the pentateuchal story suggests. As a consequence the prophets, according to Wellhausen, represent an older form of religion, prior to the legal traditions of D and P. Wellhausen's conclusion was that Moses, the law-giver at the wilderness tabernacle in P, is a literary fiction, meant to lend authority to the priestly theocracy and cult of the post-Exilic period. In fact a minimum period of seven hundred years now separated the author of the P source from the subject matter of Moses, the exodus, and the wilderness wandering.

Wellhausen's hypothesis concerning the time, place, and religious outlook of the priestly author has undergone extensive criticism and revision. Scholars believe that priestly law was most likely in formation already in the Monarchical period and, thus, not an innovation by post-Exilic writers as Wellhausen concluded.<sup>73</sup> And Wellhausen's develop-

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72. See for example Gerhard von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, translated by E. W. T. Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 1-78.

73. See the criticism of Wellhausen by Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, translated and abridged by M. Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

mental view of religion as a progression from simple and free charisma to more complex ritual has also been rejected, along with his negative view of priestly ritual as lacking the religious depth of the prophets. More recent research has demonstrated the dynamic character of ritual, law, and priestly hierarchy throughout the religious development of ancient Israel.<sup>74</sup> Yet the basic insight of Wellhausen concerning the late date of the Priestly source has remained a building block in the modern identification of pentateuchal authors.

### 3. *The Exile and the Author of the Yahwistic Source.*

The most recent debate among pentateuchal interpreters concerns the authorship and date of J. Debate concerning the independence of an E source from the J source has been ongoing in twentieth century biblical scholarship. Many writers refer simply to JE. Yet throughout the modern historical-critical period of interpretation, there has been a strong consensus for dating the Yahwistic source (or JE) to the early monarchical period. Wellhausen placed J in the 9th-8th centuries B.C.E. More recent scholars like Gerhard von Rad pushed the date of J to the 10th century B.C.E. In either case there was agreement that ancient Israel began to write historical narrative early in the monarchical period—if not during the renaissance of the United Monarchy (10th century B.C.E.), then shortly thereafter (9th-8th centuries B.C.E.). Scholars debated questions of genre. Could such writing be called history, or were other categories such as epic, myth, legend, or folklore more appropriate?<sup>75</sup> Within this debate, however, there was general agreement that some form of historiography emerged during the early monarchical period. This consensus strongly influenced the interpretation of ancient Israelite religion in at least two ways. First, an early date for J allowed interpreters to use it as an avenue for discerning the social and religious world view of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon (the 10th century B.C.E.).<sup>76</sup> Second, the presence of historiography during the early monarchical period also accentuated the uniqueness of Israel within its larger cultural setting, since no other contemporary culture had produced anything like

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74. See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus*, AB 3A (New York: Doubleday, 1991); and Frank H. Gorman, Jr., *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology*, JSOTSup 91 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1990).

75. For discussions of history writing, see Thomas L. Thompson, "Historiography [Israelite]," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 3, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 206–12; and A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, The Sather Classical Lectures 54 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For summaries of the myth and history debate; see C. Kloos, *Yhwh's Combat with the Sea: A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986); and J. W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*, BZAW 134 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974).

76. See, for example, von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*.

the J source.<sup>77</sup> The closest parallels to such historiography appear much later in the ancient Near East, with the early Greek historians like Herodotus, writing during the Persian period in the fifth century B.C.E. and later.<sup>78</sup>

Contemporary interpreters are increasingly arguing for a late date to the Yahwistic source. The central arguments surround its relationship to Deuteronomy (D) and the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings). In 1976, H. H. Schmid undertook a fresh literary study of Yahwistic stories, terminology, and themes.<sup>79</sup> He discovered similarity between the J literature in Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers and prophetic themes and genres in the Deuteronomistic History (i.e., the commissioning of Moses in Exodus 3-4 is a prophetic genre repeated in Judges and Samuel). Schmid concluded that the "so-called" J literature was formed by deuteronomistic writers during the Exilic period, accounting for the thematic emphasis on blessing, nationhood, and the promise of land. John Van Seters has also argued that the J source originates in the exile and is later than Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History.<sup>80</sup> Like Schmid, his study focuses on terminology and the relationship of literature in Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers to Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History. But Van Seters has also added the comparative study of historiography in the ancient world to argue against an early monarchical date to the J source. He, too, favors an Exilic date for J, closer to the emergence of Greek historiography in the Persian period (beginning with the Persian capture of Babylon in 539 B.C.E.). Rolf Rendtorff and his student Erhard Blum have reached somewhat similar conclusions to Schmid and Van Seters with regard to the date of J literature, employing more tradition-historical methodology.<sup>81</sup> They also argue for the original formation of pentateuchal historiography in the Exilic period by deuteronomistic writers and editors.

Debate over the formation of pentateuchal literature and the best designation for the anonymous author(s) is far from settled. Interpreters continue to argue both for sources and for a process of supplementation

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77. For a discussion, see R. Gnuse, *"Heilsgeschichte" as a Model for Biblical Theology: The Debate Concerning the Uniqueness and Significance of Israel's Worldview*, College Theology Society Studies in Religion 4 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988).

78. For an overview and comparison, see John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University, 1983).

79. H. H. Schmid, *Der sogenannte Jahwist: Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976).

80. Van Seters, *In Search of History*.

81. R. Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*; and E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, BZAW 189 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990).

to account for the formation of the Pentateuch.<sup>82</sup> Van Seters continues to use the term Yahwist to describe an Exilic history, while others have dropped the name altogether. Blum, for example, prefers the designation, D-Composition for traditional J literature, accentuating closer ties to Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History.

Dating the Yahwist to the Exilic period will undoubtedly have implications for interpreting the history of ancient Israelite religion. Three issues are already beginning to emerge.

First, there are new historical questions. Werner Lemche, Thomas L. Thompson, and others are presently questioning the biblical portrait of the United Monarchical period as a golden age under David and Solomon.<sup>83</sup> Past theories of a renaissance during the reign of kings David and Solomon during the 10th century B. C. E. were supported, in part, by the location of the J source during this period. The removal of the J source from this period is certainly one factor in the current debate surrounding the development of Israelite culture in the 10th century B.C.E. These authors are now questioning whether ancient Israel ever experienced a renaissance under kings David and Solomon. Some question altogether the historical portrait of David and Solomon as builders of a strong Israelite state.

Second, the cultural and religious uniqueness of Israel during the Monarchical period will also require re-evaluation when the J source is relocated to the exile. The J source supports a theology of salvation history in which Israel's relationship with Yahweh is portrayed as radically distinct from the religious practices of the surrounding nations. The Pentateuch presents the history of Israel as a series of elections in which the ancestors and the nation of Israel are separated from their neighbors. The very notion of a history of salvation may be a late theological development in the history of ancient Israel. The emergence of historical writing and a historical consciousness in ancient Israel only in the late Monarchical period may signify much more similarity between Israel and its neighbors during the early Monarchical period than was previously assumed. In this case the message of prophets like Hosea (late 8th century B. C. E.) that Israel abandon the worship of Baal for a more exclusive worship of Yahweh may not be a call to an ideal past, but an innovation in the history of Israelite religion.

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82. For a summary of current debate, see A. de Pury and T. Römer, "Le pentateuque en question: Position du problème et brève histoire de la recherche," in *Le pentateuque en question: Les origines et la composition des cinq premiers livres de la Bible à la lumière des recherches récentes*, Le monde de la Bible (edited by A. de Pury; Genève: Labor & Fides, 1989).

83. Niels Peter Lemche, *The Canaanite[s] and Their Land: The Tradition of the Canaanite*, JSOTSup 110 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1992); and Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources*, Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

And, third, the late dating of pentateuchal literature suggests that the creative period for the emergence of the Yahwism represented in the Torah is the Exilic and post-Exilic periods, not the Monarchical period as scholars have traditionally assumed. This shift in focus is prompting more intense study of the Persian and Hellenistic historical eras—the time of the post-Exile. Such a hypothesis is the opposite position of Wellhausen and most other 19th and early 20th-century interpreters, who viewed the history of Israelite religion as a process of decay from the charisma of prophets in the Monarchical period to post-Exilic priestly ritual.

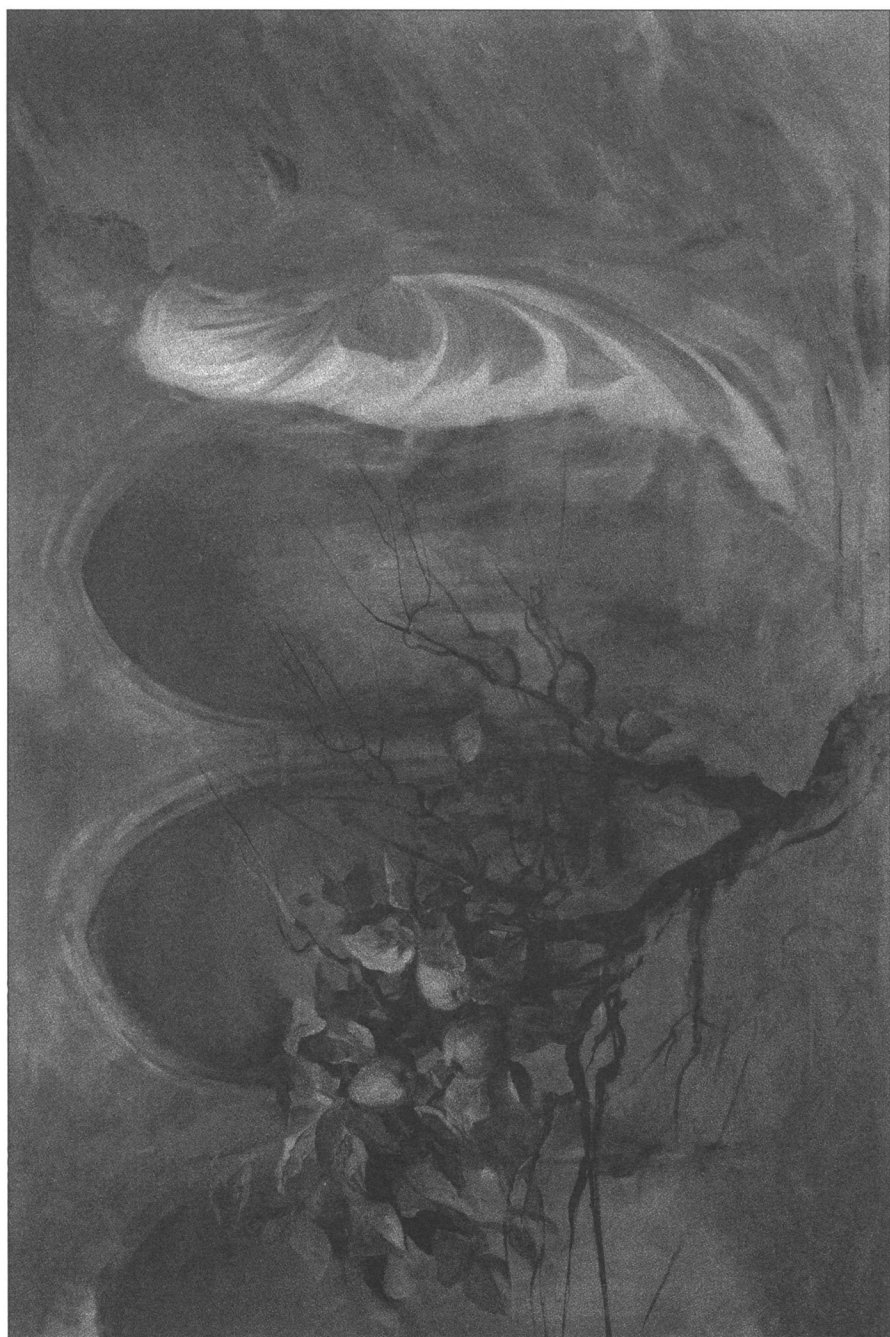
#### SUMMARY

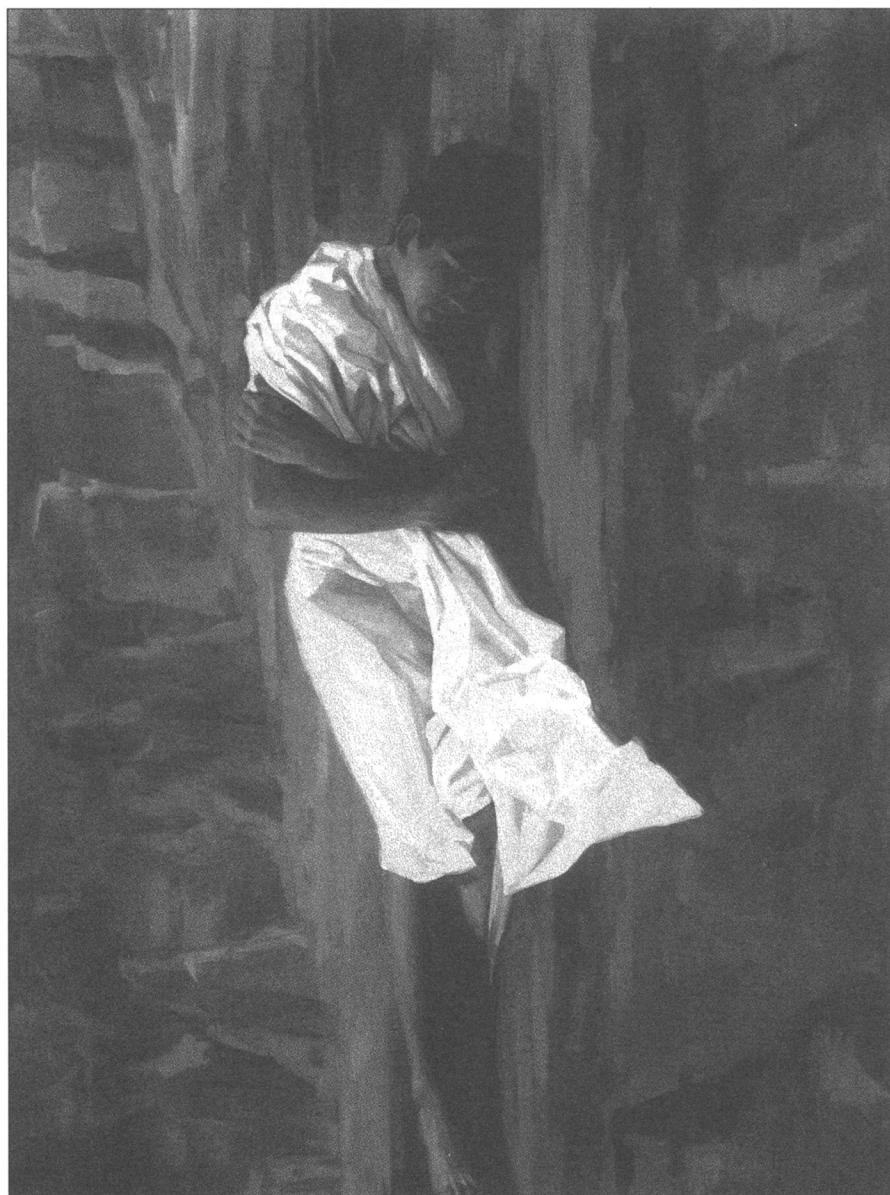
The preceding overview has sought to demonstrate the dynamic and incomplete character of the search for pentateuchal authors. Many important contributions have been overlooked, especially the study of oral tradition and folklore as a form of anonymous authorship.<sup>84</sup> Yet even our brief overview illustrates that only in the modern period have anonymous authors replaced Moses as the assumed writer of the Pentateuch. The survey of modern interpreters, moreover, indicates a trend toward progressively later dating in identifying the authors of the Pentateuch. Early hypotheses about authorship moved initially from the Mosaic period to the Monarchical period as the setting in which the Pentateuch was written. Current debate now focuses on the Exilic and post-Exilic periods as the social setting of the pentateuchal authors.

The later dating of pentateuchal literature creates wider gaps between the biblical presentation of ancient Israelite history and contemporary reconstructions of it. Early historical critics disputed the biblical presentation of the Mosaic period in biblical literature. Contemporary interpreters are disputing the biblical portrait of the Monarchical period, especially the historical character of the 10th century B. C. E. United Monarchy under kings David and Solomon. The ever increasing separation of pentateuchal literature from the history it presents raises new literary questions of genre (What kind of literature is the Pentateuch?) and religious questions about authority (In what way is the Pentateuch reliable literature for faith and life when its authority does not arise from Moses' inspired authorship?). These questions are dynamic and open to revision through the history of interpretation as biblical interpreters seek to identify the anonymous authors of the Pentateuch.

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84. See Herman Gunkel, *Genesis*, 8th ed (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1969 [reprint of 3d. ed. 1910]); Axel Olrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," in *The Study of Folklore*, edited by Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965 [1909 original]); and Ivan Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament*, translated by John T. Willis (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1969).







# Stealing the Reaper's Grim: The Challenge of Dying Well

*Paul R. Cazier*

That your dying be no blasphemy against man and earth,  
my friends, that I ask of the honey of your soul.  
In your dying, your spirit and virtue should still glow  
like a sunset around the earth.  
Friedrich Nietzsche

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED DEATH at age three when my infant brother, after only one day of life, succumbed to respiratory failure. I have few memories of the viewing, but do recall the delicate blue veins on the side of his infant scalp. There was great sorrow in the chapel. But, as the years passed, his death became an abstraction. Now, over three decades later, after witnessing a fair amount of human suffering and death, both through personal experiences and my professional role, the process of dying is no longer an abstraction to me. I have, in fact, become a reluctant authority.

As a 35-year-old physician, I approach the new millennium with the knowledge that I will not see much of it. I first stared at my terminal illness on November 12, 1998 when I stepped out of an MRI scanner in El Paso, Texas, and was the first to see my tumor, the first to realize my life had changed forever. Clearly, the malignant glioma in my brain had existed sometime before that day, but the process of "dying," at least to me, began with the realization that the beast was there.

The world I knew one year ago is closed to me now. I was then a board-certified radiologist, performing angiograms and other procedures, interpreting MRI images of the brain and spine, and moving into a five-bedroom home with my wife and three young children. Today, a new reality frames my world: I am an unemployed, disabled veteran. And last week I found myself at Brown Monument and Vault in Logan, Utah,

looking at different designs for a headstone to put on my grave. I like the Georgia granite best. And no elk. I do not want elk or too many flowers on the marker. Just name, birth and death dates. Nothing ostentatious.

As of this writing, I am some distance off from my last breath. Of course everyone on the planet is journeying to that point from the day he or she is born. We are fellow travelers to the graveyard. I simply know that I am much closer than the vast majority of people around me. And I have not yet given up on life, though the odds of my surviving this are monumentally small, not unlike the chance of winning a multi-state lottery. Each day has become more important as I try to savor the time I have left. Moreover, each day I face the challenge of facing death.

Much of the impetus to write these words comes from the excellent 1997 book, *On Dying Well*, by Ira Byock, past president of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine and a prominent advocate of educating people and physicians about effective hospice care for the dying.

From his years as a hospice physician, Dr. Byock has learned that with modern and effective pain management, with trained physicians who are not afraid aggressively to treat the dying, and, most importantly, with supportive family, friends and health workers, dying need not be an agonizing nor a lonely event. "Physical suffering can always be alleviated,"<sup>1</sup> he asserts. The book was comforting.

Byock also writes about personal and spiritual growth that can occur in the patient, his family and friends. At first, I recoiled at the idea that merely taking a last breath in relative peace was not sufficient to have a good death. I thought that was already asking a lot. But I learned I had to do much more. I'm not sure it is possible to issue a blueprint for "dying well." Aside from suicide or euthanasia, none of us can choose how we die. If a "good death" implies a peaceful transition at the age of 90 in the middle of the night and incident to old age, then I will fail miserably, both because of my relative youth and the modus of my exit. Others die quickly, through trauma, homicide, an acute myocardial infarction, or stroke which prevent them from "preparing."

I remember well the 45-year-old woman I followed as a medical student who had end-stage esophageal cancer. She was beautiful and seemed to accept her fate with grace, and she was surrounded by friends and family. Yet, late one evening in her hospital room, her cancer eroded into a large artery, forcing her to start coughing up blood. She bled to death, alone, that evening. It is tempting for me to label her death as perhaps the most blatant case of "dying poorly" I know of, at least in its final stage. Nevertheless, through her unusual acceptance of her disease and

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1. Ira Byock, *On Dying Well: Peace and Possibilities at the End of Life* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), xiv.

approaching death, she herself remains free of any responsibility. This is simply the fate of some despite all their best efforts to plan otherwise. For many, however, especially those like me with an aggressive, inoperable cancer, there are things we can do to increase the likelihood of dying well.

What follows is infused both with my medical bias and with the experience I've had within my Mormon culture. I wish I could document all of my dying: the final days and hours, the pain management, the level of anxiety, the agony of separation from those I love, whatever degree of acceptance I will have achieved. I would even attempt a vivid description of the notorious "tunnel of light," should it be waiting for me. But obviously much that I would willingly share will go unsaid.

#### MY STORY

Even the beginnings of my story will doubtless be incomplete. There was paresthesias or a tingling in the first three fingers of my left hand. My wife Leesa and I and our three children had moved to El Paso just a few months prior as part of an assignment to serve in the radiology department at William Beaumont Army Medical Center. I had just completed eleven years of medical training, the last two as a neuroradiology fellow at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). The symptoms I was having in my hand were very worrisome to me. I was concerned that I might either have a cervical disc herniation or, worse, multiple sclerosis. As the chief of the MRI section at the hospital, I had ready access to the MRI scanner, and, during a lull in patient needs, I put myself into the scanner. Sometimes I wish I had not.

That, as an expert in the interpretation of brain imaging studies, I should discover my own brain cancer is, by itself, an almost literary irony. But fate seemed to have packaged a bewildering array of attendant ironies: I had just passed the Army's physical fitness test as well as my final neuroradiology boards just days before the MRI; I was already scheduled to conduct the first neuroradiology conference at William Beaumont the day after my MRI; I had given a lecture at the National Brain Tumor Foundation Annual Meeting in March 1998 in which I had spoken to brain tumor patients and their families about how we, as neuroradiologists use CT and MRI technology to help diagnose brain tumors; and in the summer 1998 issue of *Dialogue*, an article of mine appeared in which I praise our human flesh as co-equal with our spirit because of its marvelous origins, its central role in human suffering and disease, and the pivotal role the human brain plays in this existence despite its perilous proximity to chaos in the form of tumor, stroke, mental illness, or dementia.<sup>2</sup> I felt as if I had been set up.

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2. Paul R. Cazier, "Embracing the Flesh: In Praise of the Natural Man," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31, no. 2 (Summer, 1998): 97–107.

The drive home on that November day to tell Leesa the news was extraordinarily difficult. I knew all too acutely that my disease would affect others, including our three beautiful children. When I could get Leesa alone in our bedroom, I told her about the scan and ended equivocally with, "I think I have a brain tumor." I might as well have plunged a knife into her chest. We cried for some time, but talked openly that evening about the implications. I read a couple of extra bedtime stories to Katie, Andrew, and Miranda, trying to fight back hard emotions with each page. That evening, for the first time, I had the sickening feeling that I had suddenly become less a member of the family.

Calling my father was particularly difficult. He had been struggling with the full-time care of my increasingly confused and physically limited mother, who had Parkinson's disease and associated Alzheimer's-type dementia. The news I relayed gave his already melancholy outlook an even darker cast. I called a few others: my in-laws, Allan and Kaye; my brother John; and a couple of friends. News travels fast when you are relatively young and dying. Almost immediately I started receiving calls from people I had not heard from in years. It was a revelation to me how such news affects people. It jars them. Those of us with a terminal illness are an oddity to the living: we have entertainment value. Still, it was genuine concern I heard through the receiver. Offers to help in any way rolled in. And, though I felt it was premature and embarrassing, I was humbled when the El Paso 13th Ward held a fast for me just a few days later.

Shock and disembodied numbness followed me around those first days. Almost immediately I had recognized that I was going to die, that the images before me on the film represented an inoperable "glioma," one of the most common and most deadly brain tumors in adults. As my hospital's expert in neuroradiology, I took it upon myself to dictate—with some morbid fascination—the report of my own MRI. I concluded the report stating it was most likely a glioma, mentioning a few benign things the lesion could represent, but conceding that "this would be wishful thinking on my part." It would be one of my last dictations as a radiologist.

I did not look at those images of my brain in a vacuum. I sent copies of my films to my former neuroradiology attending physicians at UCSF and to radiologists at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. For a few days, I held out the unlikely hope that this was a rare presentation of multiple sclerosis, a terrible disease, but one with which I could live. But other doctors only confirmed my own initial impression: The prognosis was not a good one.

I flew to Washington, D.C., and Walter Reed Hospital for evaluation and a decision about what should come next, and stayed with my close friend Ted Swallow and his wife Ruth. Ted, a neuroradiologist at Walter Reed, and I are nearly identical twins with unusually commensurate his-

tories from sharing a locker in high school to attending Utah State as undergraduates and the University of Chicago for medical school. Somehow the Army assigned us both to Walter Reed for radiology residencies, and there we served as chief residents together. Finally, we both chose neuroradiology as a sub-specialty. It has, in fact, been our mutual respect and unusual convergence of interests that have kept us on parallel paths. Nonetheless, and despite our long history together, I have advised him to forego the brain tumor.

It was no surprise when the tests at Walter Reed did not change the diagnosis. Ted said that my MRI looked "ominous." This was not news but, coming from him, was hard to hear. It was not easy on Ted or Ruth either. It scared them. They made adjustments in their life insurance policies. It was, in fact, just this kind of response from fellow physicians which finally confirmed for me in real terms that I had become fodder for worms: The chief of radiology back at William Beaumont gave me the classic 1969 book *On Death and Dying* by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross;<sup>3</sup> the physician in charge of radiology assignments for the Army told me he would be happy to send Leesa a packet of information on death benefits for surviving spouses; and the chief of radiation oncology at UCSF, where I decided I would receive medical therapy, told me, "Paul, you're sitting on a time-bomb."

This all happened in the first week after my MRI. The unusual medical insight I had from the outset was, in my mind, a blessing. I could approach the disease realistically. I already knew the implications and the risks of a brain biopsy, that my tumor's location in the right Rolandic region put both sensation and motor control of my left hand, arm, and face into jeopardy, and that I would have to undergo the unpleasant side effects of radiation therapy and probable chemotherapy. I had participated in many neuro-oncology conferences in which patients with gliomas like mine are discussed and where radiation oncologists and neurosurgeons and neuro-oncologists debate the next option for patients with dismal prognoses. Oncology is at present an inexact science, but these conferences do help to ensure that patients get the care that will most likely prolong quality life.

I could play at being objective. I certainly had the tools. Still, no one, not even a doctor, is taught how to die. And despite my knowledge, I was very, very scared. Immediately I began struggling to balance measured hope against the likely reality that I would never reach my 40th birthday. I had known from day one that I would fight this thing, give it no advantage in destroying or in shortening my life. I wanted the most effective, most current treatments; I wanted the old college try. This I decided to do as much for myself as for those around me. My wailing

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3. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: MacMillan, 1969).

and gnashing of teeth I did at home and alone. And during those first nights, I was forced to address what role, if any, God might be playing in this disaster. I adopted the premise that this was none of his doing.

And so, my medical therapy began. Every dying person has a unique medical history and experience with the struggle to find a cure. To briefly review mine, I underwent a brain biopsy in January 1999 at UCSF, which revealed I had an anaplastic astrocytoma, a malignant glioma or, in other words, brain cancer. I then received six weeks of radiation therapy, during which time I was plagued by seizures. Unfortunately and quite surprisingly, my tumor responded poorly to the radiation. As a consequence, I had to undergo a frightening awake craniotomy to “de-bulk” the tumor and to place I125 radioactive seeds into the tumor bed in an attempt to control the growth of the tumor left behind. I suffered a stroke during the surgery, which resulted in significant weakness to my left side and set me up for blood clots in my leg and, subsequently, my lungs. I spent three weeks in a rehabilitation hospital relearning to walk. I completed four cycles of chemotherapy with a new chemotherapy drug, and though there was initial evidence the chemotherapy was working, the most recent MRI shows interval growth of the tumor. I am having increased headaches which will require that I go on corticosteroids to reduce the swelling around the tumor. And I will try at least one more chemotherapy regimen.

A rough framework of how much time I have left suggests only this: far less than I had anticipated in January. But I will try to fight this until I feel it is no longer in my best interest to do so. Meanwhile, I understand the importance of continuing to live a day at a time. It is my belief that the simple yet important things of life do not necessarily perish with the diagnosis of a terminal illness. There will, I hope, still be opportunities to go on trips, play with the kids, do the dishes, pay the bills, listen to music, help with the homework, attend a couple of football games, go to movies, do a little bit of writing, share happy moments with my wife and family, renew friendships with some people and reach closure with others, search for spiritual meaning in and acceptance of the life I have lived, and search for healing even in the absence of cure.

#### A PHILOSOPHY OF THE REAPER

I knew I was mortal for the first time when I broke my clavicle at football practice in 9th grade. It forced a paradigm shift in my nascent sense of justice in the universe. I’m not sure I ever recovered. No matter how sophisticated or wise we may claim to be, this discovery of our own mortality is invariably painful. Death, when it occurs beside us, brings a rude awakening. Our society does not help as it implies that with more vigilance, a more intense morning workout, a judicious search for polyps

or lumps and elaborate medical intervention, death can be avoided or indefinitely postponed. This we assume even in the face of thousands crushed in an earthquake or the tortured dying of a neighbor from cancer. Somehow those deaths do not apply to us.

Hence, when death or the process of dying hits home, there is outrage. Much of this reaction comes because death, for the most part in the western world, is hidden. We have been sheltered from death. Dr. Lewis Thomas, the great medical essayist, describes our failure to appreciate death's ubiquity:

It is a natural marvel. All the life of the earth dies, all the time, in the same volume as the new life that dazzles us each morning, each spring. All we see of this is the old stump, the fly struggling on the porch floor of the summer house in October, the fragment on the highway . . . I suppose it is just as well. If the earth were otherwise and all the dying were done in the open, with the dead there to be looked at, we would never have it out of our minds. We can forget about it much of the time. . . . But it does make the process of dying seem more exceptional than it really is, and harder to engage in at the times when we must engage.<sup>4</sup>

When confronted with our own death, our response and ability to cope is determined by our matrix of experiences. Those entirely sheltered from death and human suffering will undoubtedly undergo great shock. Without some prior personal experience, the dying must grapple with difficult questions at a time when, emotionally, they are least capable of doing so. It is hard to know how to teach death when people don't want to see it. As a physician, I have seen death on a few occasions, but the death which burns still in my memory is the first one I experienced as I attended an elderly man in a nursing home the year before I started medical school. I can still hear his labored breathing, see his wife and daughter at his side. It was my bathing his dead body and helping the mortician to place it into a red velvet bag that made tangible and moving for me the experience of death.

Some time later I spent a night assisting a man, a friend of my parents, who was dying. I recorded the event in my journal on April 26th, 1987:

This week I turned a year older. Last Monday night, my birthday, I spent the entire night at Bryant Smith's home in River Heights. Bryant and Linda, his wife, are good friends of my parents, he being a member of the faculty at Utah State University . . . Bryant is also dying of brain cancer.

Mom, knowing that I had some experience from working at Sunshine Terrace, offered my services to Linda, who needs help standing, moving,

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4. Lewis Thomas, *Lives of a Cell* (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), 115.

and toileting her husband. Bryant has undergone chemotherapy and radiation treatments, but the cancer is not responding. He suffered a massive stroke several months ago, which surprised everyone (considering he is only in his early forties). The stroke was apparently caused by his growing brain tumor, which was detected thereafter.

He has lost most of his motor control on his right side and is unable to speak. . . . He has become incontinent and requires help moving to his portable toilet. . . . Friends and relatives have come in to help as much as they can.

The house was beautiful both inside and out. Linda was there to greet me and introduce me to Bryant in the upstairs bedroom. His face showed little signs of the malignant tumor inside his head. But his eyes revealed a resignation of sorts. He was fairly alert and seemed to enjoy watching TV, but he said very little the whole night, except yes and no responses to my questions. . . .

I helped him to the toilet twice during the night, but I slept only an hour at the most. Every time he would stir in bed, my heart would jump. He is still independent and has fallen in his attempts to move. . . . I would hear him move, and I supposed the worst each time. His sleep was not restful.

His internist has given him only a couple months to live. . . . His steady loss of function must surely be proof enough to him of the inevitable end.

I don't know where Linda has derived the strength to continue. . . . She has a great sense of humor. . . . Leesa had a class at Utah State with her this year and she enjoyed Linda's friendship.

I felt guilt that night. I felt an implied indignation coming from Bryant as I helped him to the toilet, as if I were being discourteous in flaunting my health in front of him as he withered away. Helping the aged at Sunshine Terrace, I am free of any such condemnation: They are old and are expected to be falling apart, losing their minds. The middle-aged Bryant Smith, on the other hand, should have years in front of him. Even though I gladly offered my assistance, my mere presence in his home seemed, for some reason, presumptuous on my part: as if I were saying to him that I had any more right to be alive.<sup>5</sup>

Those are haunting words for me. But Bryant gave me a gift. By allowing me to serve him that one short evening, he initiated my own preparation for dying of brain cancer in my 30s. We best prepare for our own death by observation of, and, more importantly, participation in the dying of others.

This education becomes more acute when we participate in the death of a loved one, a family member. My mother, whom we placed into a nursing home the week before Christmas 1998, had fallen in the nursing home, broken her hip, and subsequently developed an infection. She passed away on February 16, 1999, three months after I discovered my brain tumor and the same week I learned that my tumor was growing despite radiation therapy. It was a rough week. The Alzheimer's-type

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5. Personal journal, 254–5.



dementia which is seen in up to 15% of older patients with Parkinson's disease robbed my mother of much of her connection with the world at her death. It was difficult to watch her slowly fade over three years. But none of us gets to choose the illness that will strike us down.

Despite all that, I believe my mother died well. Her method of preparing was years of unwavering commitment to her Mormon faith; a belief in resurrection and renewal; an amazing ability to cultivate friendship with others; and participation in the lives of family and friends who rallied around her during her last months, weeks, and days. She had a personal conception of death, which, for those around her, made her passing more a celebration, less a shock. It was emotionally hard for me to sit by her side over several days, to hold her hand, occasionally to kiss her moist brow, and to watch her breathing become more labored, but it was a sacred privilege. I looked to her for an example of how to face what lies ahead of me.

And it has been three generations of dying that I have now witnessed. My maternal grandmother died in the late 1970s of pancreatic cancer after languishing in a nursing home. I have vague memories of visiting her there. Those memories would have remained sealed had I not recently discovered in my father's home, tucked into an old set of scriptures, the now yellowed and slightly ripped talk he gave at her funeral. He praised my grandmother for her "quality of dying":

What meaning can be derived or purpose served from being confined to a bed, half-paralyzed, for months on end, with full knowledge that death is the only escape? This is the question that always emerges when prolonged human suffering is confronted in any form. Bitterness, rancor, even verbal cruelty are not uncommon attributes in those who must carry the heavier burdens of mortality. They lash out at the . . . injustice of life, and in that lashing, they often strike those they love most. Probably the ultimate tragedy for some who are called to suffer is that they only have themselves for focus. Not Blanche Anderson.<sup>6</sup>

I have come to believe that whether we have had an experience with dying or not, we will finally benefit greatly if, at some level, we have already established our own "philosophy of the reaper." My personal journal has been a crucible through which I have struggled with the idea of human suffering and death. I think these late night tapings on the computer keyboard have helped prepare me for the loss of health, the injustice of dying young, and given me a better understanding of what lies ahead. In October 1995, I wrote in my journal that I had been lucky to have good health:

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6. Stanford Cazier, "On Dying Well: A Tribute to Blanche Anderson," talk in my possession.

I use the term “lucky” instead of “blessed” because I seriously question how much God gets involved in assigning the cancers or curing the gout. I think of health less as a gift or blessing we receive and more as a personal treasure that we stumble upon. As Job learned, that treasure can be lost in an instant. It is, therefore, an elusive treasure. We can attempt to lock it away in a vault, but some day, for all of us, the treasure is no longer there.<sup>7</sup>

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross describes what have now become the classic “stages of grief,” which the dying person may encounter as he or she processes the reality of loss: denial (the patient refuses to believe he or she is confronted by a terminal illness); anger (raises the universal question: “why me?”); bargaining (attempts magically to postpone death by making promises to God); depression (succumbs to the sense of great loss and to the fear of death, pain, dependency, and expensive, uncomfortable medical treatments); acceptance (the patient ultimately finds some inner peace and is able finally to place his or her death in a larger context).<sup>8</sup>

Many have been critical of these stages of grief for being too formulaic. And indeed, some patients may skip stages, return again and again to a particular stage, or experience two or more stages at the same time. In my own case, I have found myself going backwards. Due, I think, to my medical background, I began with an unusual acceptance of the inevitability of my death. Since then, I have experienced equal and concurrent waves of anger and depression. I do not think I have ever bargained with God, trying to make a disingenuous, shady backroom deal: “I will stop being skeptical in exchange for a miraculous healing.” Even now, I know better. But I have had flashes of denial during this nightmare, especially when lost in the moment, playing with my children.

I have tried to divine the etiology of my cancer, a particularly futile and frustrating undertaking. As a physician, I know there is no one clear and well-documented cause of malignant brain tumors, although many have been proposed: genes, ionizing radiation, exposure to toxic chemicals or pesticides, diet, prior viral illnesses, head trauma, artificial sweeteners, electromagnetic fields, and many more.<sup>9</sup> Still, I find my self asking, what did I do wrong to forfeit half a lifetime? Maybe I should have chosen the spinach instead of the corndog in the lunch line as a third grader. Maybe I swam too often in the slightly cloudy Chico creek as a boy. Perhaps I am simply defective. This self blaming is perhaps the worst form of anger.

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7. Personal Journal, 700.

8. Kubler-Ross.

9. Margaret Wrensch, “Who Gets Brain Tumors and Why?” *Search-National Brain Tumor Foundation*, no. 37 (Fall 1998): 1–2.

Depression has also hit hard at times. For me it is the knowledge of how much I've lost. It is my altered state, my suddenly "devalued" status in the pragmatic eyes of society that eats at my self esteem. In fact, my greatest concern during that first week following my MRI was not that I was going to die, but that I would never be a radiologist again. For some time after my diagnosis, I held out the dwindling hope that after my initial treatments I would return, if only for a short time, to work .

#### MEDICAL THERAPY: BUYER BEWARE

During all this adjustment to the news and the reality that one is dying, there is an immediate and continuous necessity to seek reliable, accurate information—even for a physician. The process of death is a spiritual journey for all people, but it is also defined by and remains within the domain of medicine. The words "your illness is terminal," or "you have six months to live" should be a sounding cry to fight. The patient needs access to vital data relating to treatment options, side effects, and prognosis. This may come from the physician, but there are also other sources: second opinions from other physicians, fellow patients who have undergone prescribed treatments, national organizations and support groups, or perhaps independent research.

When traditional therapies do not work, the patient should consider new protocol medications, procedures, and "peer-reviewed" therapies that are being tested. Patients who chose to do so become brave pioneers who may prove the efficacy of new treatments. This is the basis for advancement in medicine. I hope one day this courage to try new therapies will lead to a more effective treatment for deadly malignant brain tumors. I applaud those who seek second opinions, conduct their own research, set up "war rooms" in their homes, and refuse to give up hope.

But there is also a cautionary tale to tell. Not long ago in San Francisco, I met two auto mechanics in the waiting room of the radiation oncology department at UCSF. Tom was the younger and he was leading a frail Randy, who spoke little and could only walk with a walker. We exchanged histories, and I learned that Randy had widely metastatic small cell lung cancer to include brain involvement (a sure death sentence). But Tom produced a piece of paper containing "research" he had gleaned from the internet showing that with a dose of 5-10 cloves of garlic a day plus assorted herbs that could be ordered directly on-line, "any cancer could be cured in ten days or less." Tom was excited about this. Tom said he and Randy had decided to try this "radiation stuff" suggested by Randy's doctor, but they were both looking forward to getting back to work soon. "After all," Tom said, "this can't be nearly so difficult as that '92 Nissan we fixed with the nasty intake valve . . . isn't that right Randy?" Randy nodded his head in agreement.

I paused for a moment, smiled, and wished them luck. The internet can be an excellent source of medical information (70% of Americans will search for medical information on the internet before they visit a doctor<sup>10</sup>), but the internet is also a breeding ground for quacks. The Federal Trade Commission recently warned that at least 800 websites make unsubstantiated claims to cure, treat, or prevent cancer, heart disease, AIDS, diabetes, arthritis, and multiple sclerosis.<sup>11</sup> There has, in recent years, been an explosion of "alternative" medical therapies attractive to patients whose chronic illnesses do not yield to treatment by mainstream medicine. The list is endless: herbalism, homeopathy, chiropractic, massage therapy, naturopathy, folk medicines, magnet therapy, aroma therapy, colonic therapy, Ayurvedic medicine, chelation therapy, Qigong, Reiki or "touch" healing, yoga, and on and on.<sup>12</sup> It is true that insurance agencies are beginning to cover some of these treatments, and government agencies have established national offices to begin, albeit inadequately, to investigate their claims,<sup>13</sup> but many, perhaps most, of these therapies are rooted in fantasy, Shamanism, and market economics. Websites tout treatment with magical catch phrases such as "painless," "all-natural," "non-toxic," "all-herbal," "rejuvenating," "miraculous cure," "secret ingredient." The cruel result is that many terminally ill patients, turning to alternative medicine out of desperation, spend thousands of dollars on misplaced hope.

There are some simple techniques such as music therapy, massage therapy, and the meditation of yoga which have been shown to promote relaxation and an "inner healing" in terminally ill patients. I personally think that dixieland jazz is the ultimate alternative medicine, especially after a recent trip on which Leesa and I stayed in the French Quarter, the "Vieux Carre," of New Orleans. I found true healing in the Palm Court Jazz Café. That, of course, is a testimonial, a shared personal experience, but the terminally ill must realize, as they search for medical therapy and information, that testimonials are for revivals, not a basis on which to make important and costly medical decisions.

Mormons, unfortunately, have a history of being attracted to the medical fringe. I have had several, well-intentioned LDS people, who, knowing my medical background, sheepishly approached me with suggestions of special herbs, acoustic light wave treatments, contact dermal reflexology, even coffee enemas<sup>14</sup> (my wife and I joke that such a cure

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10. "'Operation Cure All' Targets Internet Health Fraud," *Federal Trade Commission Response Center Press Release* (June 24, 1999).

11. *Ibid.*

12. Jeff Miller, "Is Well Enough?" *University of California, San Francisco Magazine* 17, no. 1 (April 1997): 1-5.

13. *Ibid.*, 1-21.

14. I had a neighbor offer me a brochure from "BioPulse," a company run from a

would violate the Word of Wisdom). Dr. Lester Bush, in his excellent book, *Heath and Medicine Among the Latter-day Saints*, explains that this dubious LDS attraction originates in the 19th century when Mormon leaders encouraged members to seek "herbal remedies" when blessings failed.<sup>15</sup> Clearly this made sense at a time when medicine was still in its infancy, and the medicinal treatments and bloodletting then employed were frequently worse than the disease. However, writes Bush, "even today a legacy [of this thinking] remains evident in the practices of a significant segment of Mormon society."<sup>16</sup> Because of this legacy and the tendency of some quacks to use the names of LDS authorities in their literature, the church issued formal statements in 1977:

Sick people should be cautious about the kind of care they accept. . . . Some unprincipled practitioners make extreme claims in offering cures for the sick . . . and in some cases harm them. . . . At times they assume to speak in the name of the Church and even give "official" interpretation related to health.<sup>17</sup>

When a dying person is left to the machinations of an "unprincipled practitioner" or, even worse, to someone who truly believes in a product that is useless, the results can be to hasten death or to preclude the possibility of dying well.

#### MEDIAN NOT THE MESSAGE

Once I had a plan of attack established for my own illness, and once my chosen therapy was initiated, it was difficult not to become fixated on the time I had left. This can be an obsession for the dying, though one that is not necessarily addressed openly. Often patients with a terminal condition and physicians discuss only the seriousness of the illness and dance around the question of life expectancy, a cold, impersonal, and frightening sounding concept. This can lead to an unhealthy and persistent denial on both the patient's and medical practitioner's parts. Consequently, needless, invasive, and painful therapies may be initiated and important family and personal issues and decisions delayed until later in the game than they should.

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Sandy, Utah, office that offers alternative treatments at a "clinic" in Tijuana, Mexico. For \$10,800 I could receive three week's worth of "chelation therapy" (long since debunked by the scientific community) and potentially injurious multiple high-volume colonics. The clinic and its Utah connection were examined in a recent *Salt Lake Tribune* article: Norma Wagner, "Does Web Site Offer Patients False Hope?" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 September 1999, Section B, 1, 5.

15. Lester E. Bush, *Health and Medicine Among the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993), 90–91.

16. *Ibid.*, 89.

17. L. Kay Gillespie, "Quackery and Mormons: A Latter-day Dilemma," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12, no. 4 (Winter 1976): 80.

On the other end of the spectrum is the dying patient who accepts the "median time" left as an absolute number, somehow divined by the physician, which predicts the day and hour he or she will succumb. Much of this confusion is due to our generally poor understanding of statistical concepts. The median life expectancy (or the time when 50% of patients with a given condition are alive and 50% dead) is a mathematical construct. It is derived from the data of hundreds, even thousands of patients with a similar diagnosis. The data allow for the patient's age, the stage at which the disease was discovered, the "grade" of tumor (if there is one), and the patient's overall physical status. But how long a given patient will live is highly individual and dependent on each patient's history, his response to and compliance with therapy, the use of new protocols, and more ethereal things such as the will to live, a need to resolve personal or family issues, or perhaps the desire to reach a certain anniversary or milestone. Not to be overlooked are emotional support and counseling from family and professionals. One study conducted at Stanford University examined the effect of psychological support on the seriously ill. Women with metastatic breast cancer were divided into two groups. In one group, the women were encouraged to take control of their lives and examine their fear of dying while the other group received no formal psychological support. The supported group experienced less pain and lived, on average, 18 months longer.<sup>18</sup>

A median life expectancy allows a patient to get a general idea of the aggressiveness of a certain cancer, but the median life expectancy can change during treatment. I entered radiation therapy with the hope, based on my own reading and on what I was told by my neuro-oncologist, that I had a median life expectancy of 36 to 42 months. But cancers do not read text books. When my cancer turned out to be more aggressive than anyone had predicted, I had to adjust painfully that seemingly fixed and non-negotiable median downward. It was like shaking the foundations of heaven. At the time of my surgery, my neurosurgeon and radiation oncologist explained that my median life expectancy would now be much shorter still. The exact number of weeks I was given is not important (although the concept of "weeks" got my attention). But this time, I was able to avoid marking a certain date in the year 2000 as my mortal terminus. Or, given my cancer's behavior, to even anticipate surviving into the new millennium. I would like to say that I had learned the importance of the old saw about living day to day, proceeding with the assumption of life and with gratitude for whatever time I have left, but that was not always true.

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18. David Spiegel, "Psychosocial Treatment and Cancer Survival," *The Harvard Mental Health Letter* 7, no. 7 (1991): 4-6.

## PLANNING: THE ADVANCED DIRECTIVE

At some point, we, the dying, need to put our houses in order, and the necessary planning should be conducted with loved ones: a spouse, family, and close friends, anyone who needs to know our dying wishes. It should include details of personal finances, of how we would like to die, funeral arrangements, and our hopes for those who survive. My wife and I did all this. Still, we have had to laugh when people ask us, "What are your plans?" Before this tumor entered our lives, our plans were clear: stay in the Army a few more years; move to a nice community somewhere in the western states; enjoy a comfortable life; proceed with a satisfying career; raise our three well-adjusted, highly successful children; and continue to do the Saturday soccer thing.

Now, our plans change daily with my evolving clinical status, the uncertainties of our financial future, the needs of the children, the incomprehensible military and VA medical retirement and benefits procedures, and the availability of health care. Planning to die is not easy, but Leesa and I have talked openly about perhaps the most important aspect: an advanced directive. This is a formal document which outlines, as clearly as possible, my wishes regarding medical care should I become unable to make further decisions for myself. This includes my desires about nutrition, hydration and tube feedings, pain management, the continuation or cessation of diagnostic tests, the use of medications that may prolong my life, the medical procedures—if any—I would allow, and the use of cardiopulmonary resuscitation should my heart stop beating.

This document, although very important, should not be viewed as set inviolate. The patient's clinical status may change. And some may find it uncomfortable to write down specific instructions, choosing instead to rely on the experience of the doctor, a hospice organization, or on family wishes. But no matter how detailed an advanced directive may or may not be, it will communicate between the dying person and his or her family. This single step should be taken early. It will help ease the fear, confusion, and overwhelming sense of responsibility family members face as they watch a loved one approach the end of his life.

## QUASIMODO: THE ALTERED SELF

I've already mentioned the depression that ensues from a profound sense of loss, not a small part of which is loss of the familiar self while a very altered person gradually emerges. For many, this change is not gradual, but occurs due to some devastating event, like a major stroke. I, however, felt deceptively great the day I discovered my tumor. I felt healthy and looked normal to others, no outward sign that I had a "time-bomb" in my head. I was forced to accept a gradual change in who I was

and in my ability to function. By mid January the tumor had already begun to rob me of the use of my left hand: I could tie a necktie and my shoes only with great difficulty. I noticed early that my speech was being affected. Motor control and sensory input on the left side of my mouth and tongue diminished, and I was introduced to the terror of seizures that would attack at any moment, making my left hand and arm shake in a violent manner. These seizures, however, rarely generalized so that my whole body was convulsing. Then, after the major surgery in March, I awoke having had a stroke. My normal walking gait was gone forever, and I was profoundly weak and had only diminished sensation on my left side.

I have come to call this change of self the "Quasimodo Factor." Some days I feel so deformed I belong in a bell tower. But even more disturbing than the physical deterioration are the changes in mood and personality, changes that are especially troubling for loved ones. These may occur due to grief or as a consequence of therapy or medication. And the medications I've taken have had significant side effects: The anti-seizure drugs make me feel sedated; the steroids, manic; the radiation therapy, fatigued; the chemotherapy, green; and for a while the radioactive I125 seeds, implanted at the time of surgery and dangerous to others, made me feel like a pariah. My poor wife did not know which one of these moods she might encounter on any given day.

Accepting such changes in myself as a necessary part of dying has been overwhelming at times. Perhaps I never will. A year ago, at this time, I performed a cerebral angiogram on a 15-year-old who had been in a motor vehicle accident. I diagnosed a traumatic aneurysm of the anterior cerebral artery. Today, I worry about unwittingly drooling ice cream out the left corner of my mouth.

#### IN THE CATHEDRAL

I have mentioned that during that initial shock of learning I had cancer I did not blame God nor ask him for an explanation. I've even maintained the assumption that he loves me, and this has been a blessing. Establishing and maintaining this attitude has been my greatest triumph thus far and it is the most important advice I can give. It avoids an unnecessary, early barrier between the dying person and his Creator. My belief in a divine force in the universe was not destroyed on November 12, 1998. It was my fascination with the Creator's universe that had brought me to science and medicine as ways to grapple with its many mysteries. Faulty DNA, cancer, and, yes, death I accept as parts of the universe. I cannot claim wonderment with all the natural processes around me and then deny that I am inextricably enmeshed in these. It is a package deal.



This does not mean that I've let God off the hook. When I learned I would die, I returned like a prodigal son to my Mormon experience, not to find God, but to rethink his role in my life. Only once during that first week in November 1998, did I kneel and ask God to heal me. But never since. God is aware how much I love this world and would love to stay. I know that if he could, and it were in the cosmic cards, I would stay. But I believe God's ability to alter natural processes is limited. My conclusion then is a view of God as a partner in this process, someone who understands.

Instead of approaching God as an incessant petitioner, asking him to serve as my neuro-oncologist, I have for some time enjoyed prayer more as communion. When I was receiving radiation therapy over a six-week period at UCSF, Leesa and I stayed in a temporary apartment. On several occasions during this time, I would walk the block and a half north to St. Dominick's Catholic Cathedral. This is a beautiful building which was damaged in the 1989 Bay Area earthquake, requiring that flying buttresses be placed around the cathedral (an ancient design remedy for a new threat). As I stepped into the cathedral on some nights, I would pass several homeless people sleeping on the back pews, covered in newspaper. I would find myself a secluded spot and spend several minutes looking up at the vaulted ceiling and the elaborate celebration of Christ's life around me. Then I would thank God for all I have been able to see and experience during my life and ask for his understanding, forgiveness, and comfort. In my experience, those who ask God to influence neutrophil counts or the size of lymph nodes are setting themselves up—if he fails to deliver—to force a wedge between themselves and God. It makes each medical test or procedure a test of God's love.

Although my belief is that God can only do so much, I have welcomed other people's faith in intercession. I accept friends' and family's promises to pray for a "miracle" (which for me would be simply one more good day without a seizure). I appreciate and find humbling Mormon friends who have placed my name on the prayer rolls of temples. I find comfort in the sentiments of my Jewish friends in San Francisco and of my Catholic friend in El Paso, who tells me she prays for me to the Virgin Mary. I even learned that an angiography technologist I'd worked with during my residency placed my name on a prayer roll in his Buddhist temple.

As magnanimous as all this sounds on my part, there are comments people make that rub me wrong—cliches like "keep the faith." It's a flip-pant remark that even the well-wisher has not thought through. During my mother's illness, more than one person suggested arranging a blessing from a higher LDS ecclesiastical authority, as if there were a hierarchy of blessings which would, of course, depend on the status of one's personal contacts. Such a suggestion presupposes the blessings I

had already received, even touching personal blessings from my father, were somehow inadequate.

Will miracles occur for me? Will this cancer simply dissolve and leave me wiser but whole? I wish it would, but the few formal blessings I have received I recognize, not as interventions, but as messages of love and concern. They have brought peace during a turbulent time in my life, helping me to heal from within. Meanwhile, the modern LDS approach to healing the terminally ill appears entirely pragmatic; that is, we go through the motions of healing, of invoking divine power, but it is mostly ceremony. The patient is really left to God's apparently capricious mercies and also with the telephone number of a good surgeon. This pragmatism emerges from the reality of the natural course of human disease and the limits of modern medicine. It also comes from experience. A couple of years ago, I sat in a Priesthood meeting in the Golden Gate Ward in San Francisco, listening to a lesson on "gifts of the spirit," including the gift of healing. At one point the instructor, a third-year dental student, asked if any one had a personal example of any miraculous healing by the laying on of hands and the anointing of oil that he would like to share. There was a very long, awkward silence. Then one person said he thought there were healings, but that they were either too sacred for those involved to discuss, or the healings occurred in a way no one recognized. Another person told an anecdotal story of a healing that he had heard a friend of a friend relate. I did not have any personal examples either.

From the beginning, Mormons have accepted a certain degree of failure with healing the sick and have deferred to the ultimate power of the almighty.<sup>19</sup> "Some are much tried," writes Wilford Woodruff, "because all are not healed that they lay hands upon but I do not feel so. I had a case during Conference concerning the case of Sister Baris. She was sick & I laid Hands upon her & blessed her with life & health & went to meeting. In an hour I had word that she was dead. It did not try me. The Lord saw fit to take her & all is right."<sup>20</sup> We are often told to heal the sick, that we have the power. In my experience, that power to alter the course of disease is limited at best. The consequent LDS pragmatism was perhaps summed up best by Apostle Neil Maxwell speaking at the Utah Cancer Survivors Rally held on June 6, 1999, in Salt Lake City. At this writing, Elder Maxwell's own health is seriously threatened by a recurrence of leukemia. But he has served as an example of poise and hope for cancer patients. In his talk, he mentioned his oncologist and also divine healing, but only as footnotes to his theme, which was that we should not ask the question "why me?" but instead live with "cheerful insecurity."<sup>21</sup>

19. Bush, 75.

20. *Ibid.*, 76.

21. Bob Mims, "Utah Cancer Survivors Rally to Share their Hope," *Salt Lake Tribune*, Sunday, 6 June 1999, Section C, 1, 6.

I find the insecurity part easy. It is, after all, the human condition, and even those of us not facing terminal illness cope with our fear of living by simply not thinking much about what lurks in the shadows. There is an illusion of security that is born out of necessity: No one could survive for long emotionally if each day were spent consumed by the knowledge that ours is a universe that strikes down even righteous people in horrid ways. Yes, in the back of our minds we know that the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike, yet we want to think that, if we play by the rules, we will somehow be protected, rewarded even. Yes, daily we see the reality of divine justice gone amuck in the mindless suffering of the innocent, yet we hope that there is a special cosmic clause exclusively for us. We don't have the energy to play the rebel, at least while our cattle and kids and skins are intact. With strained smiles, we will live the lie, hoping that the dark angel will pass us by.

But the angel always comes. It's that certainty that can nudge toward insanity. And the "cheerfulness" Elder Maxwell describes, and of which I have enjoyed a measure, is surely a manifestation either of emerging madness or a true miracle of divine healing.

#### ARGENTINEAN PEARS: THE GIFT OF OTHERS

Meanwhile, the people around me have blessed me most by their concern and their many acts of service. From that first flurry of telephone calls from family, friends, ward members, and neighbors, Leesa and I have received warmth and love and support. For two relatively shy people, this has been sometimes overwhelming. Approaching someone with a serious, life-threatening illness can be terribly awkward. It is also embarrassing to the one who is ill. I remember my own hesitation and often failed attempts to connect with a woman dying of a brain tumor in my Maryland ward. I am no paragon of charity, but I know that people want to heal, to make the bad thing go away. Since they cannot do that, they feel perhaps disingenuous when they offer to help "in any way they can." But those words alone can, in fact, bring a great sense of peace, and supportive people do play an enormous role in anyone's attempt to die well. I owe a staggering debt to my wife, who could never have guessed she would have to face such a burden so early in her life. Leesa has led the way with unconditional care and loving attention to my many, many needs. This illness has transformed our relationship, increased our reliance on each other. It has also increased our reliance on the words of other people and on the little and not-so-little acts of service that have humbled us and forced us to wonder how we will ever repay.

I cannot possibly list all the generous and thoughtful acts. They seem endless, and I'm sure I've forgotten the majority, but they include rides

to the airport, babysitting, Argentinean pears from a friend I had not seen in 12 years, help on a camping trip with my son, a visit to a four-star restaurant, dinner dates, a ride across the Golden Gate Bridge in a '62 Corvette the day before my surgery, heartfelt letters, a long line of visitors in hospitals in San Francisco and El Paso, a recipe for ginger pancakes, a generous disposable fund set up by friends in Maryland, a double date to see *Dr. Strangelove*, grapes from a neighbor's vine, words of love and encouragement to my father, a trip for my kids down the Logan canal, next-door neighbors who epitomize Christian service, and phone call after phone call after phone call. The list continues to grow.

Of course I would gladly give up all the trips and kindnesses and calls, the money and the gifts (except perhaps the Argentinean pears) if I could stay a little longer. A full lifetime would be nice. But these moving expressions of solidarity and love make the journey less lonely. And because of my situation, perceived rightly or wrongly as tragedy, others have freely divulged to me very personal stories of their own suffering or the suffering of their loved ones: tales of cancer and cancer deaths, which they felt I could understand and appreciate. Everyone seems to have a story to match or to exceed the anguish of my own. I consider such confidences to be a great privilege as they have reminded me of the obvious, sobering reality that I am not in this alone.

#### THE HEALING SMILES: ONLY THE GOOD DIE YOUNG

Leesa and I have found humor to be a powerful ally during our ordeal. Early in our relationship Leesa learned to expect dark humor and scatological banter from her medical student then physician husband, even during dinner. It didn't take her long to return in kind, and on occasion she surprised and outdid me with her own needle insights and her readiness to face my illness with biting sarcasm. This is not a form of denial, a tortured attempt to exorcize a morose circumstance. Humor has always been a part of our lives. Why shouldn't it bring us a measure of pleasure and exuberance now. After all there are upsides to my situation: I do not have to worry about seat belts, red meat, butter, or the so-called "Y2K" problem, and because this cancer will take me at a relatively young age I do not have to worry about bifocals, buying a late model Cadillac, wearing Bermuda shorts with black socks, irregularity, or Viagra®. I can leave instructions to play Billy Joel's "Only the Good Die Young," at my funeral.

I affectionately call my radiation therapy the "Homer Simpsonization of my brain." Leesa and I blame my hair loss on a radical haircut in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. Before I went under the knife last March, she asked my surgeon to at least preserve my ability to do dishes. After the surgery, I asked her to hold up a picture of for-

mer Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, and told her that if I cringed, she would know they had not taken out too much brain. (I passed the test).

The need for a good laugh, or at least a smile, extends to others as they offer comfort to the terminally ill. I do not believe there is some requirement for those dealing with the dying to pause and check humor at the door before entering and only to speak in hushed voices. Obviously the dying should set the tone for any conversational exchange, but I at least have found mostly healing in laughter. I even encourage my kids, who call the T-shaped scar on my head the "T for tumor." When I grew weary of their talking about my "bad" left side (after all, I hadn't done anything evil to merit a stroke), we decided I have "superman" on my right and "linguini man" on my left.

#### CLOSURE: DYING AS A GROUP EVENT

I have, at this point, a vague idea of what "closure" means. Evidently this is something vital the dying person must go through with those around him. To me it seems very frightening as it represents the penultimate step to the grave. It also implies some grave responsibility, and that is hard to take.

The point seems to be that dying is a group activity, with the inner circle of loved ones needing to heal and reach resolution with the dying person. They too experience the stages of grief, the suffering and loss. In this sense it is not "my" tumor or "my" seizures or "my" fears and frustration alone. This kind of thinking may be a mistake. Perhaps closure with friends and extended family will require only a smile, a touch, some recognition that our lives were interwoven. For those closer, I foresee a much more difficult culmination. This is especially true of my wife. At some point I must say good-bye to her. I cannot fathom what that will be like. How do I "close" a relationship with my soulmate, a relationship I thought would last forever? Somehow, before I finally let go of her, we must prepare to go separate ways.

Hospice organizations have a list of five things that must be said during the process of closure. They are: "I forgive you"; "forgive me"; "thank you"; "I love you" and "good-bye."<sup>22</sup> In theory this sounds helpful, a tidy list. But I don't know exactly when I'm supposed to say these things or how or to whom. What is clear to me is that closure is not an event or a single conversation. It is a process, often painful, of reaching for a definitive, hopefully rewarding capstone moment with those who have walked closest to me. But for Leesa, I must do and say all this and so much more. I must not only reach closure, but let her know that with

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22. Byock, 139–140.

my passing, new doors will open for her, not the least of which is the possibility of remarriage to someone with whom she can grow old and walk the full distance of life. I will have to say goodbye and know that I am also letting her go.

At some point, I will need to reach closure with my father and two brothers. I have a vastly different relationship with each. It is not clear to me how much my oldest brother David, who suffers from chronic schizophrenia, understands of my illness or its seriousness. Closure with him will be difficult only because his illness has prevented any meaningful openness for nearly two decades. My brother John has been deeply affected by my illness, and I have appreciated his words of consolation. John is the only brother left now to seize the day and live a full, meaningful life. Closure with him must include my sincere wish that what has been denied to David and me will be granted to him. And as for my father, I feel the omnipresent need to ask forgiveness for the pain this illness has caused. I never wanted to misfire in the revolver of life. His anguish is testimony enough of the enormity of his love.

What closure will entail with my children is a big black box right now. More and more I feel as though they have been on loan to me. And while they have all been very conscientious about my needs and limitations—helping me carry things, opening packages, forgiving me when I need to rest—each has responded to my illness differently. Little four-year-old Miranda always blesses Daddy's "bad leg," as if its healing would solve all my problems. Six-year-old Drew told Leesa this summer that he loved her, but that he loved Daddy more, "because he has a brain tumor." And nine-year-old Katie, who understands best, has graduated to the formulas of adult wisdom. Not long ago, I was muttering to myself about how life was unfair. "Well," she responded, "whoever said life was fair?" Whatever I finally say to them, as I try to let go of everything I so desperately want to hold on to, I know I must not make up stories or assume they do not know what is happening. Honesty will, I hope, best prepare my children for this separation I fear most. What impact my passing will have on them I cannot say, but I can hope that Kubler-Ross is prophetic when she writes:

Children who have been exposed to these kinds of experiences—in a safe, secure, and loving environment—will then raise another generation of children who will, most likely, not even comprehend that we had to write books on death and dying and had to start special institutions for the dying patients; they will not understand why there was this overwhelming fear of death, which, in turn, for so long covered up the fear of living.<sup>23</sup>

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23. *Ibid.*, 248.

## MORPHINE: THE IMMEDIATE EMBRACE OF GOD

Perhaps the greatest fear that must be faced as the end draws near is pain. Many assume that pain, even excruciating pain, is common and to be expected, especially in cancer patients and those at the terminal stages of chronic illness. Fortunately, with very rare exceptions, pain can be effectively managed. The blame for failing to do so for so long can be placed squarely at the stone feet of the medical establishment. Until quite recently there has been a tradition of misinformation about and misuse of opioid (morphine-like) painkillers by otherwise competent physicians. Many physicians have expressed concern that a dying person might become "addicted" to morphine, or they have worried about depressive effects on respiration that may hasten death.<sup>24</sup> Thus, physicians have made the conscious decision that profound anxiety and desperation due to intractable pain are somehow preferable to "giving the patient too much painkiller."

Fortunately, the tide has shifted and most doctors who work with the terminally ill understand how to prescribe adequate narcotics. Ira Byock writes:

Medicine, especially the emerging discipline of palliative care, has devised a wide array of medications and techniques to alleviate even the most profound and persistent pain. Eighteen years of clinical hospice experience has [sic] taught me . . . that physical distress among the dying can *always* be alleviated. Medical care for the dying stops working only when we give up. Pain is uncontrolled until it is controlled.<sup>25</sup>

I caught a glimpse of the importance of pain management when I was treated for the severe pain of a deep venous thrombosis of the leg and pulmonary embolism ( blood clots in the leg and in the lung) after my surgery in March. The medical team working with me set up a PCA (patient-controlled anesthesia) pump through an IV line that allowed me safely to self-administer morphine. More importantly, the team listened to my complaints. Pain, I know indelibly, is what the patient says it is. There were exceptions to this positive experience. Once I was off the PCA pump and on oral morphine, I had at times to use my diminishing clout as a physician to terrorize nurses who had let me wait over an hour for pain medication while they were on break. When patients feel they are begging for pain relief, they become anxious, fearful, irritable, and

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24. Although the so-called "double effect" of morphine, in which death may be hastened in a patient due to respiratory depression, is real and must be addressed openly by the physician and, if necessary, the patient's family, some patients in extreme discomfort experience *improved* respiration with morphine as their level of anxiety is reduced.

25. Byock, 215.

sleepless, none of which makes it easier to die gracefully. But when morphine or morphine-like medications are given correctly, the dying patient feels in control and is more likely to die well. From my own experience I can say morphine is the closest thing we have here on earth to the immediate embrace of God.

As an intern, I was once challenged to assist a patient with end-stage rectal cancer in his wish to die at home. Because of his cancer, which had begun to eat through the skin of his perineum, he was in excruciating pain, requiring large amounts of morphine. Through the help of an anesthesiologist, however, and home health services, we successfully discharged him with the largest amount of outpatient morphine ever recorded by the hospital. The authorizing premise was that there is no maximum dose of pain medication. The right amount is that which relieves the pain.<sup>26</sup> It was with a great deal of satisfaction that I learned he had died peacefully two weeks later in his home. Mission accomplished.

#### WIPING THE ASS

There will come a time in my dying when I must rely on others to shepherd me to that last breath. Meanwhile, I am acutely aware that I must lose much more function, independence, and ultimately awareness as I approach the final moment. At some point I will be wheelchair bound, then bedridden as slowly I go to ground. I will require increasing doses of decadron, a corticosteroid used to decrease swelling around my tumor. This will make my appearance change as my face will become fuller, the typical Cushinoid "moon" face of chronic steroid use. I may become severely disabled from a stroke or intractable seizure. And I will undoubtedly experience progressive mental decline.

Eventually, like all dying patients, I will surrender to others the management of basic bodily functions, including waste elimination. To the dying, such loss of dignity and control is very frightening. They are embarrassed and aware of how uncomfortable they make others feel. In the popular book *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Mitch Albom records his ailing college professor's thoughts on life and dying as he fades from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease). In an interview with Ted Koppel on ABC-TV's "Nightline," Morrie Schwartz was asked what his greatest fear was as slowly he lost the ability to care for himself. "Well, Ted," he responded, "one day soon, someone's gonna have to wipe my ass."<sup>27</sup>

Although I share Morrie's concern, my greater fear is that I will not

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26. While 20mg of morphine every four hours is the usual upper limit needed to treat patients in pain, some patients may require much more (equivalent to several hundred mg per hour) without the risk of respiratory depression.

27. Mich Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, A Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 22.



be aware the wiping has taken place. This loss of awareness is what I most fear about dying. It is the inability to interact, to voice concerns, to know what is going on. And, in fact, what I dread most may be my precise fate when finally I die. And perhaps that is just as well. I am probably too much of a coward, despite my claims to theoretical and professional preparation, to face the Reaper head on.

Whatever our personal fears about the final stages of dying (pain, loss of dignity, loss of awareness), healthcare givers and caring families who rally around the dying do not dwell on what a dying person may look like or how often he or she must be changed. There is dignity in death. Although difficult, we must relinquish the idea that our bodily functions, the smell and reality of our humanity, are something for which we must apologize. I remember well a young teenager dying of lymphoma in the ICU at the University of Chicago. His parents wanted everything possible done for him. Although his body had already given up and he did not even look human, with fluid oozing from him at every point, his parents never gave up hope, never ever turned away in disgust.

#### KENOSIS AND LETTING GO

M. Scott Peck uses the theological term *kenosis* or the "emptying of oneself" to describe that final act. It is a process of giving in to a higher force, acknowledging our participation in a greater plan:

The process of *kenosis* . . . is not to have an empty mind or soul, but to make room for the new and even more vibrant. The kenotic individual in Christianity is that of the empty vessel. To live in the world we must retain enough ego to serve as the walls of the vessel, to be any container at all. Beyond that, however, it is possible to empty ourselves sufficiently of ego that we become truly Spirit-filled. The goal is not the obliteration of the soul, but its expansion.<sup>28</sup>

After my medical discharge from the Army, as I made my final journey from El Paso to Utah, we stopped at the Grand Canyon. I recalled the week I had spent as a boy scout, hiking from the south rim to the north rim and back. It had been an inspiring event for a 13-year-old. Our insignificance and short perspective were etched in the ancient multilayered rock on the canyon walls. I was somber on this, my last visit there, aware perhaps for this first time of just how much I will give up with my death. Could I let go of this world? Perhaps *kenosis* was not for me, not for me to turn my back on the canyon and the aching material beauty

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28. Scott M. Peck, *Denial of the Soul: Spiritual and Medical Perspectives on Euthanasia and Mortality* (New York: Harmony Books, 1977), 180–81.

of the world, but somehow instead to turn toward the canyon, step over the rail, and let go. This is my hope, my counter-kenosis, my surrender to the ravishing mystery of *this* world to *fill up* with it. It is my hope that my family, who are obliged to watch me at the rail, will let me fall.

This may mean taking action. Depending on an advanced directive, the family may choose to withdraw life support, even to the point of malnutrition and/or dehydration in the loved one. Contrary to perceptions, and as those in hospice know, neither is a horrible way to die. Malnutrition and dehydration do not increase a terminally ill person's suffering and can contribute to a comfortable passage from life.<sup>29</sup>

Of course, if death can be made physically comfortable, then the logical next step for some becomes euthanasia, literally the "good death." I have pondered at what point and under what circumstances I would consider euthanasia, and whether it would amount merely to a cheap substitute for the more "noble" kenosis which Scott Peck describes. Would I be cheating myself and my loved ones of some important opportunity for personal and spiritual growth? For me all answers to this and related questions are riddled with unresolved issues. Peck himself points out there has been little meaningful debate in society about the issue of assisted suicide. Emotion often interferes with understanding. The true role of euthanasia in our culture is obscure as we apply it both to the terminally ill at the end of life and to the chronically, profoundly debilitated where it raises even more vexing questions.<sup>30</sup>

One night I spoke with a 35-year-old woman, the mother of two teenage sons, who, for a brief time, shared a room with my mother in the nursing home. She has had multiple sclerosis for over 12 years, is nearly completely blind, can hardly move, and is totally dependent on others for all her care. She and I—as 35-year-olds might do—compared notes, and I had to conclude that it is surely easier to die of a terminal illness than to live with a debilitating chronic disease and the consequent intolerable suffering. I could not, in my heart and conscience, reserve my own right to assisted suicide and deny that same right to someone suffering as she was.

Meanwhile, the LDS position on euthanasia is clear. The *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989) says that "a person who participates in euthanasia—deliberately putting to death a person suffering from an incurable condition of disease—violates the commandments of God."<sup>31</sup> Yet, the same handbook gives freedom to its members to use "passive" euthanasia by withdrawing various forms of life support and not undertaking so-called heroic measures to save such a life. And though there

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29. Byock, 179.

30. Peck, 115.

31. Bush, 38.

are no formal "last rites" in Mormonism, members often pray and blessings are sometimes given for a dying person to be "released" from this world.

While I cannot speak to the larger issue, I can say that for the terminally ill, this forced choice between euthanasia and needless suffering points up our lack of awareness of hospice care. If people understood adequate hospice care where the concerns of pain management, dignity, home health care, and, most importantly, family and person are adequately addressed, there would be no rush to euthanasia. Death may well be hastened through aggressive hospice care, but so too dies our fear of dying.

#### THE QUESTION OF SOUL

Unlike most in my faith, I separate my belief in a Creator, a divine force concerned for my welfare, from the necessary existence of my soul. Perhaps this is my medical bent, my biological degree, rearing its ugly head. I have spent little if any time over the past year worrying about my immortality and this is supposed to be the most vexing question for the dying. But for now I recognize it only as a question, ultimately impossible to resolve, though its importance may soar in my mind as I come closer to death.

Mormonism teaches that we are intelligence wrapped in spirit, encased in corruptible flesh. It is the spirit which will rise from the dust. Like my mother, most Mormons have affirmed the question of soul long before death ever comes their way. Conversely, others outside the church may be convinced beyond shadow that the grave is absolute, final extinction. Either way, such people appear to avoid existential worry about personal annihilation, the *angst* at the end of life. But avoiding such *angst* is nearly impossible when we confront the death of innocent children. From a Mormon perspective, the response to this unbearable pain is clear: The child lives on in a spirit world and, more importantly, the bereaved parents will find opportunity to raise that child in the next life. What a great promise for grieving families. Belief in eternal families is indeed a central tenant of Mormonism and one that stands in stark relief to the prospect of a death in the family.

In contrast, however, I am also moved by T. H. Huxley, who, when faced with the tragic death of his three-year-old son, was forced to reexamine his steadfast loyalty to scientific method and to agnosticism, a term he himself had coined. He turned for consolation to the man he respected yet perhaps disagreed with more than any other, the liberal clergyman Charles Kingsley, who saw no conflict between science and the Christian doctrine of the immortality of souls. In a private letter, Kingsley encourages Huxley to reconsider his doubts and to live his life so as

to prepare for a reunion with his son. Huxley responds and thanks Kingsley for his kind words, but questions whether hope in the resurrection is enough. He cannot believe in a thing merely because he likes it. "My business is to teach my aspirations to conform to fact."<sup>32</sup> Huxley then describes the "agencies" which have anchored his life: noninstitutional religion for morality, science for factuality, and love for sanctity, and, in a poignant ending, he writes:

If at this moment I am not a worn-out, debauched useless carcass of a man. . . . If I feel I have a shadow of a claim on the love of those around me, if in the supreme moment when I looked down into my boy's grave my sorrow was full of submission and without bitterness, it is because these agencies have acted upon me, and not because I have ever cared whether my poor personality shall remain distinct from the All from whence it came and whither it goes.<sup>33</sup>

To be "full of submission and without bitterness" in the face of the terror of my own death is to me the ultimate challenge of the dying.

In Mormonism, the terror of death is most often glossed over. We concentrate on the principalities, kingdoms and dominions we stand to inherit after death, contingent on our worthiness. We focus on the important "work" that awaits us. By so doing, we make death and resurrection into catechistic checklist items. In the words of Claudia Bushman:

Perhaps no group is as sanguine and cheerful about death as the Mormons. We visualize a simple passage through a veil. We will climb the sky and wander off into the clouds to continue life as we have lived it on earth. Death is not a state, but a threshold we cross to another place to live our lives uninterrupted.<sup>34</sup>

In his excellent essay, "A Christian By Yearning," Levi Peterson admits viewing the LDS sacrament differently than most other Mormon faithful. Instead of a ceremony to encourage faithfulness, so that we might one day attain "celestial" glory, Peterson looks to the sacrament as a statement of hope:

If Christ has indeed purchased eternal life for humanity, I for one will awaken to this gift with an immeasurable gratitude. . . . In the meantime, I will make it the center of my Christian worship to anticipate that gratitude when I partake of the sacrament. . . . It seems a pity to be so sheltered from

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32. Stephen J. Gould, *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 39–40.

33. *Ibid.*, 41–42.

34. Claudia Bushman, "Light and Dark Thoughts on Death," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 4 (Winter 1981): 169.

the terror of death that one's gratitude for the resurrection is merely dutiful and perfunctory. Perhaps truly there are advantages to doubt. Perhaps only a doubter can appreciate the miracle of life without end.<sup>35</sup>

Some have tried to allay any concerns they assume I might have by suggesting I read various books on "near-death" experiences. I have politely declined. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence, and these accounts fall considerably short. Alternate explanations seem as believable: changes in brain chemistry, perfusion at the time of death, medications used in surgery to include dissociative anaesthetics such as the ketamines, or atropine, which can cause the sensation of flying.<sup>36</sup>

I do have hope in the resurrection, that through Jesus Christ I will live again. And even if only to toil at some menial desk job in an obscure corner of the cosmos, simple awareness after death—with or without a body—would be the most amazing gift I could imagine. But that which mollifies my fears of death more than anything else is not this hope, but the simple fact that it's been done before by billions of souls before me. What I am soon to do is not novel. The death of a sentient being is a riddle for those sentient beings left behind. On the bedroom wall of one of Dr. Byock's patients, a man who, in his opinion, "died well," a message reads: "Every death is a door opening on Creation's mystery."<sup>37</sup>

#### THE CORRUPTIBLE FLESH

We are much concerned about the disposition of the soul at death, but the dying person must also decide what is to be done with the flesh left behind. Ideally, he or she will have communicated this decision so clearly that loved ones need not agonize over funeral arrangements. One might assume that since I have been writing more or less in praise of the natural man, I might be partial to displaying my corpse encased Lenin-like as a monument to its ascension from clay to DNA. The opposite is true. I recognize my flesh as atoms, molecules, and cells which, although a marvelous symphony, will naturally dissolve into the soup from which they came. I find the powerful western cultural reliance on the mortician's art where hair is styled, color added to lifeless cheeks, and lips sewn shut, grotesque and, in fact, a lie. It is an attempt to reverse the specter of death through smoke and mirrors. Couple with this the price gouging and high pressure sales that funeral homes often use, and the result is a good deal of unnecessary additional anxiety for newly grieving families.

Though not encouraged by my Mormon faith, cremation will be my

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35. Levi Peterson, "A Christian by Yearning," *Sunstone* 12, no. 5, 20–22.

36. Carl Sagan, *Broca's Brain* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), 355–57.

37. Byock, 234.

request, an affirmation that the flesh is transitory and that what is to become of me is not in my hands, but will be decided by nature or by nature's God. Even the venerable James E. Talmage concedes: "Whether the dissociation process [of the body] occupies ten, fifty years, or more in the grave of corruption, or as many minutes in the rosy bed of the crematorium, yet in either case the inevitable decree is obeyed: dust thou art, and unto 'dust shalt thou return.'"<sup>38</sup>

In the end dying well may require sensitivity to prevailing cultural practices, which, though ceremonial and expensive, provide comfort to those struggling with the death. I must consider the needs especially of three small children who have seen funerals and might expect and might actually need the closure provided by the presence of a casket. Hence, while I stand grimly on principal here, I also equivocate, loving my children far more than my indignation.

One day, however, cremation will become standard in the western world if not for any other reason than the limitations of space in cemeteries. In the meantime, family members should know that there is time to spare before calling the mortician. In fact, the only law on the books in most states requires that a body be buried, cremated, or refrigerated within 24 hours of death.<sup>39</sup> This allows the family, if it chooses, to linger with the body, a practice which has been nearly lost in the western world. It also may lessen the felt need for a formal "viewing" later when the mortician has transformed the body into an alien facsimile through artifice and moulage. Such lingering with a washed and covered body might allow for a more peaceful and gradual sense of closure before cremation.

#### THE PURPOSE OF MY TRAVELS HERE

After living twelve and a half years away from Cache Valley in Utah, it was painful for me to move back this past summer, knowing that I had come here to die. I am sometimes still overwhelmed by loss. Cancer is robbing me of half a lifetime, stealing my wife, taking from me the chance to watch my children grow and graduate and marry, the chance to hold a grandchild. In a few years I will even begin to fade from memory as new people enter their lives. Cancer has taken my life's work, the use of my left hand, my ability to walk normally, and daily it continues to diminish me in countless other ways. Worst of all, it has taken my sense of worth and purpose. I had so much more to offer. Cancer forces me to ask, "Why was I here?" And it is because such questions linger that I worry I will not die well.

I remember a family outing in 1996 to visit Jack London Square in

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38. Bush, 32.

39. From a telephone conversation with the director of the Nelson Funeral Home in Logan, Utah, September 4, 1999.

Oakland, California, where the famous author lived. There, at the foot of a statue of London near the edge of the bay, is one of his most famous quotes:

I would rather be ashes than dust!  
 I would rather that my spark should  
 burn out in a brilliant blaze  
 than it should be stifled by dryrot.  
 I would rather be a superb meteor,  
 every atom of me in magnificent glow,  
 than a sleepy and permanent planet.  
 The proper function of man is to live, not to exist.  
 I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them.  
 I shall use my time.—Jack London (1876–1916)

At first, I thought this quotation could serve nicely as an anthem for all those who die too early, but one would have to assume every young person's flame was intense enough to justify its early extinction. Those who know me, know that while I have lived productively, I have not lived life in "magnificent glow." I have spent a great deal of time reviewing this, and it is sobering. So much of my time has been spent pursuing education, training, and more training. When finally I was in a position to start, to make a difference, this tumor got in the way. For me it raises the question of chaos, even calls into question the "plan of salvation." I accept the calamity that can arise in a world of natural law, but no one should expect me to find meaning in this disaster. This facet of acceptance I fear I will never achieve. For my LDS funeral, I will request that no one conducting or speaking imply that I was "taken because God had important work for me to do," as if there were anything more important than raising my children, loving and supporting their mother. God is not that kind of schmuck. I do know we live in something far from the "best of all possible worlds" and that Voltaire's injunction, therefore, to "cultivate our garden"<sup>40</sup> may still be the best advice. In a journal entry from 1997 I wrote my hopes and fears for my children. These might also serve as a benediction on my life:

A couple of Saturdays ago, we went to an unusual picnic. It was the 6th annual Dahlia Garden Party. . . . Its history is quite unique. Erik Gaensler, a former neuroradiology fellow at UCSF and currently a neuroradiologist in private practice, is the founder of the group.

Several years ago, while he was still a resident in radiology at UCSF, he ran into an old Japanese man who was in charge of planting the dahlias in a

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40. Voltaire, *Candide* (New York: Bantam Books, 1959), 119–120.

large garden near the Conservatory in Golden Gate Park. . . . Each year Erik helped more and more until one year the old Japanese man told Erik he was too old, his back ached too much, and it was time to give it up. Thus was born the Dahlia Society. Erik has assembled quite an eclectic group of people to both help him plant the dahlias and to simply enjoy them during a yearly gathering at the garden for a pot-luck picnic.

And the flowers are beautiful. Leesa and I tried to remember some of their names: Cameo, Crichton Honey, Erik the Red, Santa Claus, Juul's Cosmos, Red Velvet, Barberry Gem. I must say, I am impressed with the dedication and time Erik must have put into all of this. I have a hard time getting grass to grow. And I'm sure it would be difficult to find 50 or 60 friends to help me. There is something frightening to me about gardening. All those beautiful flowers, so dependent on me for everything, light, good soil, protection from varmints. It is a daunting responsibility.

No less so than raising kids I suppose. The three "flowers" in my garden are each a precious and beautiful marvel. Attending to these dahlias is my greatest responsibility. Katie Ba is the most challenging, with growth occurring in all directions, sometimes at a frightening pace. . . . Cock-a-doodle Drew requires the most watering by far. And the needs of Mysterious Miranda are always changing. I worry that the neighborhood kids will get to them. Perhaps the gophers will nibble at their roots in the middle of the night. And there are a million questions that come to me each day as I kneel at their side at night: Should I be concerned that the traits I see in them are not developing according to the garden text book? Am I being too protective? Have they been adequately nourished through wise gardening?

Fortunately, I have a co-gardener who has done most of the work, attending to the dahlias. I get to come home and admire the garden most days, after she has spent the morning in the hot sun. Hopefully, between the two of us, our dahlias will survive and even flourish.<sup>41</sup>

In my struggles to die well, the garden we have planted is perhaps my best chance for solace. I hold out hope that my three dahlias and their principle gardener will find joy in life. I hope my death will be viewed less as grisly and more as a natural event, a part of the continual pruning that goes on around us. I believe that with more preparation and with help from the many who have come to assist, there will be less grim to the Reaper as he strolls into our rich garden, past my children and wife, to escort one of the gardeners away.

*Paul Cazier died January 1, 2000. This article was edited in collaboration with his wife Leesa.*

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41. Personal journal, 1021.



# Hosannah

*Sheryl Cragun Dame*

"I LOOKED IT UP LAST NIGHT." Elaine stopped conducting our choir practice to ask if we knew what *Hosannah* meant.

It was dark out, almost 10:00 p.m., and the canyon winds blew cold for October even on the Alpine bench. At the church, sixteen of us were practicing the "Hosannah Anthem," which we would sing for the dedication of the Mount Timpanogos Mormon temple in four days. It was our fourth practice that week, our seventh week of practices. Rick, my husband, had remained at the church after an evening of youth activities and made the practice on time. But I had arrived twenty-five minutes late after trying for an hour to calm our crying two-year-old, Madeleine after calling our babysitter, who had forgotten to come.

"Praise?" "Glory?" "Thank you?" A few choir members answered Elaine. Their sounds overlapped before sinking into the mustard-toned upholstery on the pews.

"That's how we seem to use it," said Elaine. "But it means *save now*."

Laurie Winn turned to me. She'd looked it up too, she said, and told me our Hosannah ritual—waving our white handkerchiefs while shouting *Hosannah!*—was like the people of Jerusalem waving palm fronds as Christ rode past them on a donkey, in that entrance we call triumphant, that spirited beginning of His atonement.

"*Save now*," Elaine said again. "Just think of that, singing it: *Save now. To God and the Lamb*."

It soothed me to think of it, to imagine singing forte in our holy place, praying to God in harmony. *Please save me now. Please save us now. Please save our dead now. Please save us all. And, oh God and Christ, please save me. Please save me.*

I wanted to feel whole, to be made whole. The previous weeks and months had been like the hour before practice, an abnormal incessance of problems and commitments. I had started a new semester the same week choir practices had begun, taking a full class load while still trying to consider school a part-time commitment. Madeleine had developed a mystery illness, and for two weeks she had needed constant attention,

constant medication for pain. She slept little and couldn't eat, wavered between lethargic cries and irrational toddler screams. I had become a different person, arriving consistently late to my classes, forgetting doctors' appointments I'd rescheduled after forgetting them before, forgetting to pick up assigned readings on campus, and even forgetting, once Madeleine was well, to leave campus in time to pick her up from her caretaker. We hadn't vacuumed, hadn't cleaned our bathrooms for two months. We had just paid our bills a week late, and we suspected our checking account was below minimum balance.

It was no one dramatic thing, really. Just too many of those small things that ate little ragged-edged chunks out of me until I was consumed by insect bites. I could feel that slow onset of flu in my throat and head, that familiar soreness that increases incrementally over hours, a fatigue that made me yearn for soft places to lay my head.

But I had been enjoying the singing. Running from my car to class one day, I found myself humming "Sweet is the Work." Another day, I caught myself singing "Thanks be to God for His Eternal Mercies" as I lifted Madeleine to the counter top to zip up her red coat before rushing her next door to the sitter's. It was no Snow White thing, no whistle while you work, for even when singing I was tired and cranky, nervous and curt. But I thanked God for the chance to sing in the temple.

Sweet is the work, my God, my King,  
To praise thy name, give thanks, and sing.

Elaine had us sing our four hymns again. As we put on our coats to leave, our organist Paul Jenks said we were to practice at the temple again in two more nights. The committee over the dedication music, he said, thought our last dress rehearsal had seemed "unstable."

Our rehearsals had seemed unstable to me, too, and to Rick, Laurie, and Elaine. Our full choir, as arranged by the dedication committee, included thirty-four of us from Alpine and twenty-six from another stake. Although Elaine conducted our Alpine rehearsals, our main conductor was Sister Morris from the other stake.

In our second combined practice, one week before our dress rehearsal, Sister Morris had lined us up in two rows, women in front, men in back, tallest in the middle and shortest on the ends. A few of us women spilled back onto the ends of the men's row, and that is where I stood, with Elaine on one side of me and Laurie on the other. We practiced marching to the back of the chapel, then to the front, and then we started singing.

Between verses, Sister Morris stopped us.

"OK," she said. "Now let's try the second verse." She was unfamiliar with the organ interludes. She mouthed words different from the printed text. She rarely cued clear cutoffs or showed us when to carry phrases

over without breathing. When she did cue us, she cued us in different spots than before.

For one hymn, the men were to sing the second verse, maybe in unison, maybe in harmony; Sister Morris hadn't decided. Our Alpine group had experimented and had liked unison better. But some men from the other stake had been practicing a harmony. At the end of practice, after someone asked Sister Morris to make a decision, two men suggested that the men could sing the verse in four-part harmony. The men mumbled back and forth.

"Just sing whatever part you want to sing," Sister Morris said. "I don't want anyone to have bad feelings this close to the dedication."

The men sang their verse, most of them in unison but a few trying to sing other parts. With so little balance, the harmonies sounded like background noise, so that even men singing the correct notes sounded as if they didn't know the music.

I don't know about the men, I thought, but this is giving *me* bad feelings. Was I the only one bothered by this indifference to quality, especially for such an important event? I felt angry that God's spirit would be used as an excuse for mediocrity, felt isolated wondering if I was the only one who felt this anger. Elaine, sitting beside me, had said nothing the entire practice. I chose my words and leaned toward her.

"I imagine it's hard to watch someone conduct the pieces so differently than you did," I whispered.

"The spirit can work miracles." She answered without looking at me. Her voice was flat. I felt embarrassed and looked back at my music.

We started practicing the Hosannah Anthem. In one vital, exposed section, Sister Morris consistently brought us in incorrectly. Two half-beats late. One-and-a-half beats late. One half-beat late. Then three half-beats early. I wanted us to sing our best for God and for the thousands of church members who would be watching the session. A conductor was supposed to know the music, I thought. She was supposed to be clear and decisive.

Maybe she was doing the best she could, I told myself. But I felt angry to have worked so hard on the music, then have the conductor keep us from performing well. The Spirit might work miracles, I thought, but it needed something to work with. But then, didn't I also believe the Spirit would move more freely through good feelings? I didn't want to feel antagonism in the temple.

"My problem," I told Rick after practice, "is that I'm a music snob. I have to get over this."

A week before the dedication, we had our first dress rehearsal in the temple. We met in the small Relief Society room of a nearby church and sat in our places in two long rows curved into circles to fit the room. Two men from the temple music committee looked us over.

"Is anyone worried about what they are wearing?" asked one committee man. I raised my hand with several other women. We had been told for weeks that the men should wear dark suits and the women conservative dresses, below the knee, with sleeves, in conservative colors. Sister Morris had warned us against red specifically, but we didn't know about other colors. Conservative meant Wall Street to me, and I had pictured my tailored navy blue dress, which hadn't fit me since my pregnancy. So I stood there in a creamy sage-green check, pleated to my ankles. It brought out my eyes.

"I don't see anyone who doesn't look all right," the other man said and showed us our seating chart. In the temple, he explained, we would sit in the small hallway where temple veil workers usually stand, facing the end of the hallway in twos like passengers in a narrow airplane. There would be a chart taped to the back of each chair, listing the order of the speakers and our songs. Ushers would signal us to stand at the right moment and we would walk into the celestial room in our rows, to stand behind the prophet and other general authorities. After each song, we would file back out to our little hallway, where we could watch the session on closed-circuit television.

"Remember you can't take purses with you into the temple," one of the committee men told us. "You can wear coats and carry umbrellas if you need to, and you can leave them under your chairs." No water bottles, he continued. They might spot and stain the carpet. No heels on women's shoes. No music or 3x5 note cards to remind us of our words and music. "Be sure to remember your white socks and white handkerchiefs," he said.

The committee men walked us across the street to the temple, through a back door and up a double flight of concrete steps. There were shoe coverings waiting for us on the landing. We pulled them on and went into the carpeted temple proper, then walked to the celestial room where we reassembled our rows. Brother and Sister Long, in charge of the choirs for the dedication, were there to listen to us.

"We're going to watch your singing," Brother Long said. "We'll be looking for all kinds of things."

The Longs sat down, and we sang through our hymns from memory. I discovered which musical lines, which words, I didn't know well. I could barely hear the men at all, and I saw a man near me just mouthing words, the wrong ones entirely. He smiled at me.

Brother Long stood up. We should make sure to look directly at Sister Morris the entire time, he said, even when we weren't singing. We should smile as we sang and smile when we didn't. The TV cameras would be scanning the choir, he said, and each one of our faces would fill the screen at some time. Arms straight by your sides, he said. Hands loose. Smile. Smile. Don't scratch your face. "Wait until you go back to your seat to pick that hair off your friend's shoulder," he joked to a so-

prano. His mild voice softened the long list of directions. It was a lot to remember, he said, but this was our offering to God.

Sister Long stood up. "It might seem like we are concerned about too much detail," she said. "But President Hinckley visited the temple two nights ago to inspect it before the dedication. He walked through the celestial room and looked at each piece of furniture and all the moldings. He just stood there and took it all in for a while. Finally he said, 'Yes. I think this is good enough for the Lord now.'"

Sister Long said our papery shoe coverings would rustle too much as we filed in and out of the celestial room. We would need to wear white socks over our street socks, clean as new, no holes or wear, men's socks with cuffs, women's anklets without. She had us practice marching out and in. In and out. Out and in, one row through one door, the other row through the opposite one. We crossed in the middle behind the prophet's chair, like a marching band. When Sister Morris put her hands down after a song, said Sister Long, we were to immediately start our march out, each member turning his or her shoulder as the person to the side started walking. A ripple just like the Cougarettes, said Brother Long, but no head flip.

We sang through our songs again. The Longs asked us to come back the next morning, Saturday, at 8:00.

That night, Rick sang at our piano until 11:00 p.m. I went over the words and notes in my head as I brushed my teeth and washed my face before bed, sang as I showered and dried my hair the next morning, my open *Choirbook* on the counter beside the bathroom sink.

"You men have been practicing," said Brother Long on Saturday morning, after we had sung our first hymn. "That's why we wanted you to come back this morning."

But Sister Morris continued to mouth some wrong words and cue our breathing inconsistently. When she missed the exposed Hosannah entrance entirely, some choir members came in as written in the music; others, hearing the singers who entered correctly, jumped in on the next beat. Then Sister Morris brought in those of us who had waited for her cue.

The next night, Sunday, Rick and I car-pooled with Laurie to a special practice. "The question we most need to ask," I said, "is the one we can't say. I mean, how do you say, 'Sister Morris, when you miss that entrance, do you want us to just count and come in where we're supposed to? Or do you want us to wait for your cue?'"

For a week I had tried to think *what's important is that we all sing together, balanced, together*. Elaine had said her bishop had asked the people in her ward to purify themselves. I had tried to purify myself too. Madeleine, who we'd left with a babysitter during all our practices, had been whining a lot, and I tried to keep my cool even when she wiggled

and squalled so much that it took me forty-five minutes to cut her toenails. I had asked God to help me forgive two men who had hurt my career four years before, to help me see them wholly, as human beings He loved. And I had asked God to help me see Sister Morris, to help me see her abilities and efforts. She was an enthusiastic conductor, I thought. I would remember the breathing and words on my own, I decided, and follow whatever Sister Morris did, whenever she did it.

Still the nature of the music and text made that Hosannah entrance essential.

"But you just can't ask that kind of thing," I said.

In the practice, though, another woman did. "Should we follow you, or come in when we're supposed to?"

"Follow me," said Sister Morris. "No matter what."

Near the end of the practice, choir members raised their hands and asked to review lines they were unsure of. We had missed the Hosannah entrance throughout our rehearsal, so I raised my hand and asked if we could practice it five times in a row.

"Oh, yeah," said Sister Morris. "Those first three pages are really hard. Let's sing through them again."

"No," choir members spoke out. "Let's go through that entrance again and again." By the third time, Sister Morris brought us in right. By the end, we all felt it together.

In one temple rehearsal, Sister Long had reminded us that some of us might get emotional during the dedication. Angels would probably join our singing, she said, and we might have trouble singing ourselves.

"But you have been asked specially to help the members at the dedication feel God's spirit and the importance of the day," she said. "You have a right to ask God to help you fill your calling, to help you bless them. He would want this. Pray throughout the week to be able to sing."

Rick and I drove to *Papa's* for a sandwich after that practice.

"Everyone always says that angels sing with the dedication choirs," I said as we drove. "And I guess I like to think that. I don't doubt that some people hear angels." I waited. "I can't say they don't."

But I was never one to hear or see angels. I grew up thinking everyone else did, from the stories I heard in church meetings and read in LDS books. Heavenly manifestations. God intervening in everyday life. I believed these things happened, but to other people, not me. Yet I had felt prophecy during my wedding to Rick, though I had expected nothing. After nearly breaking our second engagement, we instead said "yes" to the sealer; and there at the altar I felt light and heat and quickness, my head swinging through the sealing promises. I also sense God's tracings in new ideas and morning walks, Madeleine's smirk and Rick's hands. Still I do not have striking spiritual experiences. Maybe because I'm too

much a cynic, too analytical. Maybe because I'm unworthy. I've just never felt God was much aware of me. I have supposed it is part of my nature. My personality, my spirit. Belief and commitment over regular doubts. But not manifestations. No sense of God's love.

Rick put his hand on my knee. "Yeah." He smiled. "The angels will be there helping everyone but you."

We love thy house, O God, wherein thine honor dwells.  
The joy of thine abode all earthly joy excels.

The night before we were to sing in the dedication, we returned to the temple for our last rehearsal. There had already been six days of dedication services, and when we entered, the security men looked at our tickets marked "choir" and had us pile our shoes near their desk. In every room we passed, we saw people cleaning—rubbing woodwork, reattaching the small white booties that covered chair feet, gathering loose papers, shampooing the carpet and setting industrial fans to dry it. We were wearing Sunday clothing, but the security men and many of the cleaners wore jeans. Two men wore tan janitor's jumpsuits. The clothing seemed strange to me at first, too informal for the temple until I watched them move. What do you wear, after all, for cleaning floors?

As we stood at the doors to the celestial room, watching another choir finish its practice, a man from the dedication committee walked in wearing faded jeans and a black polyester suit jacket. When the other choir sang the Hosannah Anthem, we sang "The Spirit of God" with them, as if we were the congregation. Then, as we lined up to practice, they moved to the congregation seats so they could sing it for us.

From where I stood between Laurie and Elaine, I could see Rick lined up with the men. Elaine had told us she would look at Sister Morris's contagious smile and smile back, integrate it into her own singing. Sister Morris put up her hands. I looked at her and smiled back, and we all sang together.

After the practice, after we all said "Amen" to a closing prayer, the committee man wearing jeans and the black jacket stood up. "Listen to us," he said. "We didn't even say an audible amen. Remember that the Hosannah shout is a *shout*. Everyone will be watching you at the front of the room. Be sure to shout."

He offered to show us a picture in the temple chapel of Christ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Rick, Laurie, and I stayed in the celestial room. We sat in the chairs for a while, talked with Elaine, the Longs, and some neighbors—temple workers who had walked into the celestial room to hear the choirs rehearse. Someone knocked over one of the cut flower arrangements by the podium, and green dust from the florist's block floated in a puddle on the cream-colored carpet. As Rick, Laurie,

and I left the celestial room, the temple matron rushed in to look at the spill. She sounded calm, so I stopped worrying about the carpet.

When we walked past the temple chapel, we heard the man in jeans talking and saw a small group of choir members from the side. "Just look at this guy," he said. The man was pointing to a picture I couldn't see. I didn't want a guide's interpretation of the picture, didn't want a pep tour. But when the group moved away, I moved closer to the picture.

A child ran alongside Christ, touching the donkey. A woman clapped. Two men grinned and talked to each other as He passed by. Other women spread cloths in front of the donkey's feet. Another man, tall and dark, led the donkey and looked at the people watching the procession. In one raised fist, he gripped a palm frond and punched into the air, shouting, guttural, from his diaphragm. "Hosannah! Yes!" Yes.

I walked back to Rick and Laurie. No one asked us to leave or pointed where we should go, and I imagined walking from room to room for hours. As we walked out, the cleaners in each room moved ritually, dusting and wiping, looking at us then moving back to their motifs in that peace of the accessible, that magnificence of the open.

On this day of joy and gladness,  
 Lord, we praise thy holy name;  
 In this sacred place of worship, we thy glories now proclaim!  
 Alleluia, Alleluia. Bright and clear our voices ring,  
 Singing songs of exultation to our Maker, Lord and King.

The day of the dedication, Rick and I woke early to shower and prepare our bodies, to go through all the physical rituals we might consider. We were to commune with the holy, to receive God and project spirit through our imperfect bodies. Rick had ordered a new white shirt, which he had picked up with my jumper from the cleaners the night before. I had washed our white handkerchiefs and my embroidered blouse, had bought new temple garments, new slip and bra and hose. Rick spot-cleaned his blue suit with a damp cloth, then starched and ironed my blouse and our handkerchiefs. I shaved my legs, took extra time styling my hair and applying the makeup I wear so infrequently, then helped Rick shave the back of his neck.

Did we have everything on our list? The clean white socks, handkerchiefs, our special parking permit, our entrance tickets marked "choir." I checked the pockets of my coat: hairbrush, throat lozenges. We drank milk and ate a few bites of bagel and pear, fed the cat, woke Madeleine. When my sister arrived to watch her, Rick grabbed our umbrella and we left in our car to pick up Laurie.

We met the rest of the choir in the church near the temple again, sat in our circular rows until everyone was there. We warmed up our voices by singing the Hosannah Anthem in the chapel. We put on our coats to walk



to the temple, then stood lined up in our rows again while two women escorts from the dedication committee gave us final instructions.

"The restrooms are down the hall," said one of our escorts. "You'll have about five minutes before we have to leave." Elaine went into the hallway and brushed her long hair, using the glass of a display case as a mirror. I asked around for chapstick, and a man I didn't know offered me his. I applied it with my finger, then passed it down to one of three men now waiting near the chapstick's owner. Our escorts led us in our two ordered rows, down the street and through the parking lots like a kindergarten class, each escort carrying a sign that read "Choir." The dark water on the road splashed up onto our dresses, and the wind flapped our hair around.

It was all very strange, this intense focus on the physical on a day that was to be holy. But the weather had changed; my skin and lips and throat were flaky and dry from the season's first furnace nights. The tendinitis in my heel had flared up badly, and I had to concentrate on walking regularly. I had started my period the night before and worried I would spot my clothing; I had developed a cold and a sore throat, and I wondered how I would sing without a drink. I had come to feel as the committee did: that every detail mattered.

When we arrived at our choir seats behind the celestial room, there were a pitcher of water and mints for our throats. Forty-five minutes early, we stretched, folded our coats to fit under our chairs, took off our shoes and put on our white socks. I smoothed my handkerchief on my lap with my fingers, folded two Kleenex into rectangles, and placed them below my chair before Elaine, Laurie, and I went to the restroom.

During the dedication, when we weren't singing, we sat unnaturally silent in our waiting area. After 1 1/2 hours, after singing three songs, I was thirsty and craved water. An usher walked by to check if each of us had a white handkerchief. We were to sing the Hosannah Anthem soon.

"So if I want a drink, I'd better get it now?" I whispered to the usher as he bent down to hear me. He nodded. But the water pitcher was at the other end of our long hallway, and no other choir members had walked back for a drink during the dedication. Though I knew a drink would help me sing better, I dared not disrupt the quiet with the noise of my slip brushing my legs, the water pouring into my cup, my swallowing.

A few minutes later, the usher stopped by my chair.

"Did you want a drink?" He leaned down to hand me a paper cup half full of water. I smiled at him and took the cup. I offered some to Elaine and Laurie, then lengthened each swallow I took myself.

When we stood to walk into the celestial room, we all shook our shoulders loose and stretched up our arms as if picking apples. The men adjusted their suit jackets and ties; we women pulled at the waistbands of our hose, straightened the straps of our slips.

As I turned to exit our hallway, one of the last in our row, I could still see the TV monitor at the end of the hall, could see on it the other choir members walking to their places behind the prophet. Our entrance had become one of our rites, for attention to detail can become a manifestation of the spiritual. We were supposed to use our voices—our human, needy bodies and our human, needy selves—to convey God's spirit to the congregation. And to make our bodies places where God and Christ could dwell and emanate from: we had to become temples ourselves.

Hosannah, Hosannah, Hosannah  
To God and the Lamb.  
Amen, Amen, Amen.

May our offering by him be accepted.  
May our offering by him be accepted.  
Amen, Amen.

Thanks be to God for his eternal mercies,  
Thanks be to God for endless liberty.  
Hosannah, Hosannah in the highest,  
Hosannah in the highest, Amen and Amen.  
We'll sing and we'll shout with the armies of Heaven,  
Hosannah, Hosannah, to God and the Lamb.

I had not realized, until the moment Elder Packer demonstrated the Hosannah shout, that we would sing the words of the shout exactly. I stood behind him with the rest of the choir, then waved my handkerchief with the congregation throughout the temple. I swung my arm wide, moved my handkerchief in a broad circle, shouted. "Hosannah! Hosannah! Hosannah!"

When the congregation sat down, Sister Morris walked to her place in front of us, smiled wide, and nodded to Paul at the organ. He played the fanfare introduction and we began singing. "Hosannah. Hosannah. Hosannah." Then the ominous entrance. Normally crisp and exact, Paul hit an extra chord, but Sister Morris brought us in precisely. "To God and the Lamb." She lifted her eyebrows as if laughing at herself, moved her hands to maintain our volume. "Amen. Amen." Now soft. "Amen."

Earlier that morning, both Rick and Elaine had remarked how well our songs seemed to fit their places in the dedication. Sister Morris had matched each slot with just the musical mood, just the text needed to reflect the moment. As we sang, I thought of my late grandfather, a voice teacher and gifted baritone who would have watched me sing if he could. Elaine forgot a low interval jump. An alto in front of me tried to suppress one of those ticklish coughs that gets all the worse for being stifled. I forgot a variation in a line. But I didn't care; it did not matter. By

the end of our practicing, we had hoped most for balance between our voices, a blending of our individual sounds. And finally, it was the effort and movement I cared about.

I sang, having felt inadequate for months, unimportant to God for years. And as I sang, I prayed. *Hosannah, Hosannah. Save now, Lord. Forgive me and make me whole. Cleanse me, please. Save me now. To God and The Lamb. Amen. Amen. Amen.*

In spite of Sister Long's advice to pray to control our emotions, I had not worried much about weeping. I don't usually have trouble controlling my emotions, especially when singing. But as the congregation sang the second verse of "The Spirit of God" and, with the choir, I continued the Hosannah Anthem over and around them, I could not sing. And then I tried to control my weeping.

I tried to sing again, but could not sustain the pitch. Tried again, but sounded like a frog—thick-throated, flat, no tone. I stopped singing, breathed deeply, swallowed hard, tried again. Blinked and blinked my eyes, tried to smile. But I could not sing. I would sing the *Amen's* at the end, I thought, where the congregation would stop and the choir would continue. I hit the first note, but my voice cracked and I could not support it. Finally I stopped trying to sing and just stood, looking straight at Sister Morris, listening to Elaine finish the *Amen's* beside me.

When Sister Morris put her hands down, I bowed my head for the closing prayer and sobbed. I shook. I wiped my nose with my handkerchief and tried to stay quiet as Elaine reached her arm around my waist. I stretched back my fingers to touch hers and left my hand there until the prayer finished.

I did not want to talk to anyone, wanted no end to this feeling that saturated me until I could not hold it. And yet I knew I could not bear it, that feeling, for so long, for I was overwhelmed with both desire and exhaustion. My body would fall, I thought, my bones melt, to feel that without rest.

My voice may depend upon my body, but it moves through my soul. I sometimes hear undertones and overtones I can't anticipate, tones which resonate most deeply when my voice flows freely with the voices of others, as it did in the temple that day.

And now I sing God's praises, because in that moment of my human offering, expecting nothing, deserving nothing, I knew communion and grace.

Oh let glory to them in the highest be given  
Henceforth and forever. Amen and amen.  
Amen, Amen.

# Jesus, Lost

*Paul Swenson*

Do you know this picture, asks the magazine. Yes, I've seen this man before. I'm sure that clean, bronze brow, those dark eyes' intensity surprised me in the blank, sterile whiteness of Junior Sunday School. Sallman's Jesus had both the sorrow and the sensuality of the sinner, and the passion of saving grace.

He's the Jesus of my childhood but he's lost now. They're looking for him, the advertisement says. Or, looking for someone who remembers where he hung, at home, or school or church, or if (still) sometimes at night, he lurches in their hearts.

The Jesus on Channel 3 has red hair and cocked eyebrow. He's both sad and sardonic, yet ain't it more than a little ironic that he's more real than Judge Judy or Geraldo? I like it when he shares the screen with Dragon Lady, who wears a huge hive of dark hair with a lightning streak, and a face so soft that the lines in it look like rivers.

Sallman's Jesus is masculine in a way that's not yet in style. His smile's so deep it is internal; you can only see it in his eyes. This is not Ascetic Jesus; he won't please our self-denial. He's a thinker and a feeler, and he requires intimacy as his first and only commandment.

Why is Jesus lost? They didn't ask that question on Good Friday, or the Day of Pentecost. But in the latter day, we just don't know. We cannot seem to find him. Once saw his name and image on a poster—wanted for anarchy, sedition, vagrancy, conspiracy to overthrow.

I look for Jesus in the faces of the children in a sixth-grade class. That dark-eyed one with bangs and freckles; her look of reckless tenderness. But I'm confessing that I haven't found him—not completely. The ad says scholars want to study him; perhaps they miss his lost caress. Should he arrive, should you find him, copy this address: Valparaiso, Indiana, Box 55.

# Give Me That Old Time Testimony Meeting

*Glen J. Hettinger*

MAYBE IT IS JUST SENTIMENTAL MUSING, but I think that I remember a time when things were, well, messy. I remember testimony meetings where the eccentric ramblings of older members consumed large chunks of time, providing both a challenge to the constitution of the deacons dutifully assembled on the front row and ample fodder for laughing family conversations traveling home from church. I could count on the monthly musings of one older sister, speaking in English heavily accented with her native German, proclaiming that she “loved her *fate*.” I can still see my bishop rising reluctantly to correct the meanderings of one brother who held a distinctly apocalyptic view of the world and the immediacy of Christ’s second coming. The proverbial sister who would regularly rise to tell the congregation of her travails with her run-down automobile, always attributing its lack of dependability to Lucifer himself, actually lived in my little ward.

Fast and testimony meetings today are a tame affair. No, not tame—bland, predictable, homogenized, boring, and, above all else, neat—very, very neat. The primary difference that I notice is that the older eccentrics seem to be missing. When I was young, we had a Junior Sunday School that met separately from adults each Sunday. During Junior Sunday School, children were encouraged to file to the podium to “bury their testimonies,” as we said. No children were ever heard from in the Fast and Testimony Meeting; that time was reserved for the adults. Not so now. My ward’s fast and testimony meeting is now dominated by young children, ages ten and younger, who are pressed to the front of the congregation to “bear their testimonies.” Inevitably, beginning by assuring us that they love their parents, these youngsters, perhaps fulfilling the prophecy of Joel (for the third time?)<sup>1</sup>, then proceed to, shall I say, recite,

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1. See Joel 2:28 (“I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”); Acts 2:16; Joseph Smith History 1:41.

a rote set of catechisms: they know this is the “true church;” they know that Gordon B. Hinckley (the uniquely middle-initialed adult in their young world) is a “true prophet;” they know that the Book of Mormon is “true;” they know that Joseph Smith was a “true prophet;” *etc.* Often the child’s testimony is aided by one of his or her parents stage whispering the words into the ear of the repeating child.

When the children are not reciting, the adults still speak. But, they do not bear the testimonies that I remember from my youth. Astonishingly, with rare exception, the testimonies of the adults follow the pattern of the children’s. The same set of “I knows” follows the only variance from the children’s testimony—adults will usually preface their remarks with a maudlin tribute to their spouses. Gone are the days memorialized in the Grondahl cartoon where the beleaguered bishop arises after an elderly sister’s testimony to thank her for “her beautiful testimony and update on her cats.”<sup>2</sup> With the seeming precision of a drill team, the adult members of a congregation file forward to say essentially the same thing, albeit with an occasional rhetorical flourish: “I would indeed be ungrateful if I did not stand before you this day. . . .”

What has happened to my Old Time Testimony Meeting?

### *I. Bearing vs. Having*

Three great truths must be included in every valid testimony: 1. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world; 2. That Joseph Smith is the Prophet of God through whom the gospel was restored in this dispensation; and 3. That the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.”

Bruce R. McConkie  
*Mormon Doctrine*<sup>3</sup>

The concept embodied in this typically authoritarian quotation from the late Elder McConkie forms, I believe, the basis for the movement to restrict the expression of idiosyncratic views in the modern Mormon testimony meeting. The argument from Elder McConkie’s thought runs as follows: (1) The fast and testimony meeting is a meeting for bearing testimonies; (2) one should not engage in activities for which a testimony meeting is not intended; (3) a testimony has these three elements; (4) therefore, one ought not to speak of items that fall outside of these three elements. I have heard and read local lay members, local leaders, general authorities, and professors of religion make this argument or a form of it

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2. Calvin Grondahl, *Freeway to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: The Sunstone Foundation, 1982).

3. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 786.

from the pulpit, in quorum meetings, in missionary training, and in religion classes at BYU for at least 20 years. As a result, the "testimonies" heard each month in fast and testimony meetings have become highly standardized.

This unfortunate consequence, in my view, is completely unnecessary because the reading of Elder McConkie's statement that has yielded this fruit is, I believe, not warranted. A close reading of the entire entry in *Mormon Doctrine* shows that the purpose of Elder McConkie's statement was not to restrict the range of permissible expression in fast and testimony meetings (although one does wonder if he would not have been pleased with the result). For, Elder McConkie's statement was based on a unique use of the term "testimony" in the Mormon culture.

In common usage outside of Mormon culture, the term testimony is the public profession of a religious experience or belief. In common usage one "bears," "relates," or "gives" testimony. Mormons use the term testimony in this sense frequently. "I feel moved to bear my testimony." "The spirit would not let me sit here today without bearing my testimony." "Bishop, I will need a box of tissues before I can bear my testimony." In this common usage, the term testimony does not imply the substantive content of the testimony that is borne. The content of the testimony is the spiritual experience or belief that the person relating the testimony wishes to convey to a listener.

There is, however, an oddly Mormon usage of the term "testimony" that Elder McConkie employs in his *Mormon Doctrine* entry. Mormons frequently think of a testimony as a set of core beliefs, and can be heard to say, in this sense, that they "have" a testimony; have "lost" their testimony; are "struggling" with their testimony; or "have a weak" testimony. In this sense, a testimony is not the thing that is "borne" or stated to another, but is the *belief in the basic set of principles* that is, in some person's view, necessary to be a true Latter-day Saint. Thus, in the *Mormon Doctrine* entry, Elder McConkie speaks of "receiving" a testimony or "having" a testimony. That is, Elder McConkie is circumscribing the minimal set of principles that he thinks is necessary to be a good Mormon. The quotation above is nothing more than his simple summary of these core principles as he understood them.

It is this uniquely Mormon double usage of the word testimony that allows those who would restrict heterodox speech in Mormon testimony meetings to point to Elder McConkie for authority. Elder McConkie was laying out his view of the *minimal* set of beliefs that one had to *receive* or *have* in order to be a believing Mormon. Those who want to limit what is said in testimony meeting take the quotation from this uniquely Mormon context, where a testimony represents a minimal set of beliefs, and place it into the context of a testimony that one *bears* or *expresses* to conclude that one may not, bearing a valid testimony, stray beyond the

bounds of what constitutes a “valid testimony.” This, to put it bluntly, is a mistake of sloppy thinking and careless usage, exploited by those who simply would suppress the dynamic, extemporaneous, charismatic, and idiosyncratic nature of the religious experience that may be expressed in a testimony meeting. To put it another way, simply because Elder McConkie’s minimal set of core beliefs is limited to three items, one need not conclude that the only beliefs or experiences that can be talked about in testimony meeting are those three things.

## *II. Kierkegaard’s Garage Sale*

It seems that in modern Mormondom, the concept of faith has been greatly cheapened. This stems from two competing concepts of faith and the triumph of the lesser form in contemporary thinking among lay Mormons. To begin, consider the two formulations of “faith” that Mormons usually refer to in discussing the concept.

The first articulation comes from the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”(11:1). Much has been written about this passage by non-Mormon writers, but because this learning is seldom repeated in Mormon circles, I will summarize it here. The first key element of faith to the author of Hebrews is its object: one has faith in “elpizo” or something that is desired or wished for and in “things not seen.” That is, the object of faith must be something uncertain that the believer believes in despite its uncertainty. The second element of faith to the author of Hebrews is hidden to many modern readers of this passage by the archaic use of the words “substance” and “evidence” in the King James translation. The Greek text uses the words “hupostasis” and “elegchos” for these concepts. “Hupostasis” is literally an object that has been placed under another as a basis or foundation. Thus, the “hupostasis” is the basis or foundation of belief. “Elegchos” is used only twice in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11 and 2 Timothy 3:16. In 2 Timothy, the word is translated as “reproof,” indicating its base meaning of “conviction” in the sense of being convicted of a crime or accusation. Thus, for the modern reader, perhaps a better rendering of this verse would be: “Now faith is the basis for hoping and the conviction in things that we do not see” or “faith is the foundation for hoping and proving the reality of the unseen.”

The purpose of the foregoing analysis is to make clear the view of faith set forth in Hebrews, that “faith” is hope for things of which one cannot be certain. It is the spiritual and psychological state of acting on premises that one cannot be sure of—of hoping and believing firmly in goals that lie forever beyond the horizon. The remainder of Hebrews 11 builds upon this conception of faith and hope by giving a series of examples of the heroes of faith and how they exercised faith by doing great



acts to realize their hope in the goodness of an unseen God. In Hebrews, this conception of faith and hope is the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, among the highest goals to be striven for: "And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three. . ." (1 Cor 13:13)

The second conception of faith, and the conception that dominates modern Mormon thinking, is found in the Book of Mormon. In Alma 32, we find a description of faith that anticipates (by more than a century) the very words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "if ye have faith, ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true." The Book of Mormon exposition, however, quickly departs from the conception of faith found in Hebrews by portraying faith, not as the ultimate spiritual goal to be achieved, but as an interim step between the weakest form of belief and "perfect knowledge." In an analogy that is oft quoted and discussed in Mormondom, the passage in Alma compares the achievement of sure knowledge to the planting of a seed (belief) that, when nourished, begins to grow into a state of faith, and that, when fully matured, replaces faith with a "perfect" knowledge, rendering faith "dormant." Faith in the Book of Mormon is a mere rest stop on the straight and narrow path to perfection.

Unfortunately, in my view, in our testimony meetings the Book of Mormon's view of faith has carried the day. Everyone *knows* everything. Worse, many know everything "beyond a shadow of a doubt" or with "every fiber of [their] being"! Even three-year-olds are coached by parents to say that they *know* that "this is the only true church." I must wince and return to Hebrews 11 where the author, so acutely aware of the anxiety that must follow every step of the person of faith in a world of sorrow, disappointment, pain, and suffering, recounts the heroics of the greatest exemplars of faith, and can only admiringly allow:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims in the earth. (Heb. 11:15)

How is it, one must wonder, that these people, young and old, all "know" all of these things while Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spent all of their days in a *vain* search for a city having foundations whose builder and maker is God? How can we, one after another, stand and recite the same three things that we *know*, when these heroes of faith had to resign themselves to being strangers, foreigners, outcasts, and pilgrims?

Soren Kierkegaard lamented in his time:

Not merely in the realm of commerce, but in the world of ideas as well, our age is organizing a regular Clearance Sale. . . . In our time, nobody is content to stop with faith but wants to go further. It would perhaps be rash to ask

where these people are going, but it is surely a sign of breeding and culture for me to assume that everyone has faith, for otherwise it would be [odd] to be . . . going further. In those old days it was different, faith was a task for a whole lifetime, because it was assumed that dexterity in faith was not acquired in a few days or weeks. When the tried oldster [Saint Paul] drew near to his last hour, having fought the good fight, and kept the faith, his heart was still young enough not to have forgotten the fear and trembling that chastened his youth, which the man held in check, but which no man quite outgrows . . . except as he might succeed at the earliest possible opportunity in going further. Where these revered figures arrive, that is the point where everybody begins to go further.<sup>4</sup>

Let me suggest that if the Danish existentialist was witnessing a clearance sale on faith, he was lucky. For, in Mormondom, faith has been reduced to a garage sale trifle, a hasty souvenir stop on the way to the "perfect knowledge" proclaimed every month from our pulpits. One can sit through dozens of Mormon meetings and never hear any member say in any context "I believe that this church is true" or "I have *hope* that my faith in Christ is not in vain" or "I have *faith* despite my doubts and weaknesses." I can count on one hand the number of times that I have heard anyone say in any public context in a Mormon meeting that they believe one of the "minimal" elements of "testimony" in the face of any expressed doubt. In our testimony meetings faith is not adequate; everyone has joined the mob from Kierkegaard's day to rush beyond faith.

In short, virtually the only permissible expression of belief in a contemporary Mormon testimony meeting is phrased as "I know." As David Knowlton has pointed out, ritual rhetoric in religious communities actually can *create* belief systems.<sup>5</sup> Where virtually all expressions of religious conviction are preceded by an expression of absolute knowledge, any speaker who wishes to express his or her "mere" faith, belief, or hope will feel subtle but certain pressure to refrain from standing before the congregation. As this behavior is repeated over time, members of a community will come to believe that in order to maintain standing in the community, they must always speak in terms of absolute surety. Gradually those who express doubt will be viewed as heterodox and pushed to the edges (if not over the edge). Members are forced to confront their doubts, their disappointments, their fears, and their struggles where nobody can see. The act of doubting or struggling in itself becomes a token of weakness or evil. This pattern is begun at a young age in Mormondom as young children, who could not distinguish Moroni from, say, the latest

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4. Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), 23.

5. See David Knowlton, "Belief, Metaphor, and Rhetoric: The Mormon Practice of Testimony Bearing," *Sunstone* (April 1991): 20–27.

television action figure, are taught to proclaim that they “know that the Book of Mormon is true.” We then see the nightmare of Kierkegaard enacted before our eyes. Faith is no longer developed in the crucible of anguishing doubt and struggle. Hope is no longer nourished in a community of uncertain seekers striving for truth. Charity is not forged in the struggle for love in a world filled with disappointment and tragedy where frail humans share one another’s burdens. Moses’ mother does not weep as she tells of hiding her son in the reeds to avoid execution. Noah does not tell of building an ark in the desert. Abraham does not tell of raising his knife to murder his son before the face of God who has commanded human sacrifice. No, all of the struggle, the angst, the fear and trembling are swept away, banished from our thoughts by our counterfeit proclamations, recited from our infancy, that we already “know” what *Noah, Abraham, and the mother of Moses* died only hoping. We have surpassed the great strangers and pilgrims of the earth by proclaiming it so!

#### CONCLUSION

Mormons have learned since a young age the *first* principles and ordinances of the gospel. We have discounted the *greatest* principles of the good news—faith, hope, and charity. Let me suggest that our faith would be strengthened and our spiritual experiences deepened if we simply dropped the artifice of proclaiming in our meetings that we “know” everything and if we ceased to prod our children to do the same. Let me further suggest that our ability to bear one another’s burdens and build a Christian community would be enhanced if we did not restrict the content of our spiritual discourse to the “three great truths” of Elder McConkie. Would there be unpleasant results from allowing doubt and fear to be expressed, of permitting members to say they merely *hope* that their faith is not in vain? Would our meetings be different if our testimonies were filled with stories of the human struggle for hope in the face of anxiety? There would be odd moments, awkward glances at the podium, giggling deacons, just plain dumb utterances. Things would be . . . messy. I believe, however, that we would all be richer for the clutter.

# Russell

*Philip White*

You'd been the one taken out and talked to during stories of Jesus.  
On the scuffed pew you stuffed the blessed bread  
in your mouth and blew it out, laughing.  
So when they found you in blood at the foot of the stairs,  
the bullet you'd swallowed trenched in your brain,  
I judged you. With your last, held breath,  
you'd made flagrant, perpetual boyhood—and I?  
A bland mortality? Eternal life?  
Even Jesus could not save you now, sprawling there  
in the dark hall, a shock of crow-black hair and eyes.

# The Use and Abuse of Anti-Semitism in the Scriptures

*Keith E. Norman*

IS IT NOT WONDERFUL how modern discoveries confirm previously known gospel principles? A recent, in-depth, scientific study of high school students solemnly concluded that teenagers are not morning people. Latter-day Saints have known this ever since early morning seminary was invented. During the 1998–99 school year, I was the early morning seminary teacher in the Solon Ward of the Kirtland, Ohio, Stake and consequently, I have greatly strengthened my own testimony of this principle. We started at six a.m. to accommodate the schedules of students from four different high schools. This time of day was properly known as “O-dark-thirty” when I was in the Army. Some days, with the snow swirling in the darkness outside, it has been difficult to detect life in the forms huddled around the tables set up in the Relief Society Room. Yet there they were, at least in body. Early morning seminary attendance represents the triumph of conscientiousness over consciousness.

That time of day, however, with its attendant stupor of thought, gives a certain advantage to the teacher. The normal teen instinct to resist or challenge instruction lies dormant at that hour. Neither rowdiness nor nit-picking was a problem with my students that year. Moreover, visits from CES coordinators are quite rare. Basically, you can get away with saying just about anything in early morning seminary. Even if one of the students somehow picks up some heretical statement and reports it at home, the parents will likely dismiss it as the confusion of a befogged brain. They know their adolescent posterity is mentally prostrate at that time of day. Consequently, I made it through the whole school year without getting released or excommunicated.

Thus we endured to the end in obscurity and receding darkness. By late April, the snow had receded and dawn’s early light illuminated our drive to seminary. Things were looking brighter all around. But suddenly our optimism was shattered by events in Littleton, Colorado.

High school students nationwide were shaken from their comfort zone. A week later devastating tornadoes ripped through Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. Gaunt refugees from Kosovo arrived on American shores, looking bewildered and beaten. And scarcely a week before Littleton, a deranged immigrant had walked into the Family Research Center in Salt Lake City and started shooting. The world had turned suddenly sinister.

We were just finishing our course of study, the Doctrine & Covenants, and had been discussing the nature of God as revealed to Joseph Smith, particularly during the Nauvoo period. Coincidentally, one of the surviving students from Columbine High was interviewed on TV about how the tragedy had affected his belief in God. "If there is a God," he said, "I can't begin to tell you how angry I am at him for allowing this to happen." A witness of the Oklahoma tornado told a reporter, "This was not a tornado, this was God taking a giant baseball bat to our homes." I reminded students of the Holocaust, perhaps the *most* faith-provoking tragedy of our times, and how so many people, including most philosophers and even theologians, were at a loss to explain why God would allow six million plus innocent people to be slaughtered like that. I pointed out that if you view God as the only self-existent being who brings everything else into being out of nothing, the Creator *ex nihilo* of traditional Christianity, you must then see him as ultimately in control of, or at least responsible for, everything, evil as well as good. An all-powerful and infinitely good God should have done a better job of it. Why does he create or allow evil? This insoluble paradox is the legacy of traditional theology and perhaps the major cause of atheism in our day, especially among thoughtful Jews.

At the mention of the Holocaust, I noticed one of my students, among the brightest and probably the most indoctrinated in Mormon thinking, come to life. She raised her hand and said, "Well, I've always heard that the Holocaust was part of the punishment of the Jews for rejecting the Savior and crucifying him." I must have given her a look, because then she stuttered, "Or something like that, I think."

I said, "So you mean, it was like God had to hit them over the head really hard to get their attention before they would repent and recognize what they had done wrong in rejecting Jesus?"

"Yeah, something like that, I guess." She sensed I was ready to pounce. "But I haven't heard that since I was little," she added hastily. I was glad, I suppose, to hear we are confining anti-Semitism to Primary children now.

"Well," as Aunt Pearl Farley would say, "What would *you* 'a done?" How would you respond to the implication that the Jews had been justly slaughtered for rejecting and killing their God, that this is the Lord's way of bringing them, so to speak, to their knees? This seems to be what

Nephi prophesied concerning the future of those who remained in Jerusalem. After they reject and crucify him,

the Jews shall be scattered by other nations. And, after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations . . . until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, . . . and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Taken at face value, Nephi attributed to God the role of instigator of the persecution of the Jews.

Such a view would not have surprised anyone in nineteenth-century Christian America, heir to a long history of blaming contemporary Jews for their ancestors' presumed deicide. Europe's shameful record in this regard—highlighted by the Inquisition, various pogroms, and the Holocaust—is fairly well known. But Europe did not invent anti-Semitism, and a fair case can be made for tracing it back to the New Testament. Of course, that is precisely what the persecutors of Jews have done over the years. The Book of Mormon only added scriptural fuel to this fire, at least when read superficially. I propose to review the biblical basis for anti-Semitism, highlight some of the historical consequences of that interpretation, and then examine what the Book of Mormon adds to the equation. After noting the non-traditional way Joseph Smith and some of his early followers approached these scriptures, I will argue for a more balanced and charitable way to read them.

All of the Gospels exhibit to some degree an anti-Jewish bias in their portrayal of Jesus' ministry, and all of them emphasize Jewish responsibility for the crucifixion, downplaying the role of the Roman overseers who actually carried out the execution. Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as the new Moses contrasts with that of the Pharisees, who challenged Jesus' actions at every turn. "*Truly I say to you,*" Jesus excoriated the Pharisees, "*the tax collectors and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.*"<sup>2</sup> Modern scholars attribute this adversarial tone to the situation the Christian community faced at the time the Gospels were being written, some 40–60 years after the death of Christ. Just as the "Jesus movement" was establishing a separate identity from—and increasingly in opposition to—Judaism, the Pharisees were emerging as the leading Jewish religious party after the destruction of Jerusalem. But whereas Matthew and the other Synoptics (Mark and Luke) focused blame on the Jewish na-

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1. 2 Nephi 25: 12–16; cf. 10:6, and 1 Nephi 13:39.

2. Matthew 21:31; cf. 8:11–12, which asserts that the Gentiles will oust the Jews, and 15:6–9, where Jesus applies Isaiah's castigation of apostasy to the current Jewish leaders. Cf. also Matthew 15:11, 17–20, 21:33–46 (=Luke 20:9–19), 22:1–4 (=Luke 14:16–24), 23:1–4, 27, 29–33; Mark 12:12, 38–40, 15:39; Luke 11:42 et pas.

tional leaders for the death of Christ, by the time John was written, probably in the last decade of the First Century, it was simply “the Jews” who opposed Jesus and caused his execution.<sup>3</sup> John repeatedly contrasts the temporal, fallen aspects of Judaism with the eternal, spiritual realm of Christ. In John 8, the Jews are characterized as children of the devil, which is why they won’t hear God’s Word.<sup>4</sup>

This attitude is hard to attribute to Jesus, whom even John quotes as saying “*salvation is of the Jews*.”<sup>5</sup> Certainly the first Christians had no thoughts of establishing a separate religion from Judaism. They started out as one Jewish sect among many. However, a major theme in Acts is the developing separation of the incipient Christian church from its Jewish roots. According to Acts 1, the early disciples asked the resurrected Lord if he was now going to restore the Kingdom of Israel to its former Davidic glory, but this expectation of Messianic Judaism did not last long in the church. Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7 on why the Law of Moses and the temple were superseded implied they were false idols, a blasphemy that got him stoned by his Jewish audience. Acts 15 recounts how Jewish-Christian leaders in Jerusalem acceded to Paul in allowing gentiles to be baptized without becoming fully observant Jews. It was not long before gentile Christians outnumbered their Jewish counterparts. This new majority was too preoccupied with working out their faith within their Hellenistic culture to be concerned with preserving the Old Covenant.

But the earliest preserved writings from the new Christian movement were Paul’s epistles. Preceding the Gospels by at least two decades, they provide a unique window into the situation. Paul blamed “the princes of the world” for crucifying the Lord, by which he may have meant demonic powers as well as Roman and Jewish political ones.<sup>6</sup> This relative restraint regarding the culpability of the Jews is all the more remarkable because, despite his background as a Pharisee, Paul was clearly estranged from his Jewish, religious roots, albeit conflicted by that estrangement. He describes the era of the Torah as a “dispensation of Death,” which became a curse due to Israel hardening its heart under the old covenant.<sup>7</sup> He angrily rebuked the Jewish Christian leaders who resisted his de-Judification of the church.<sup>8</sup> But Paul was a complex man who pondered and agonized over God’s failed promises to his chosen

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3. Cf., e.g., Mark 11:18 with John 5:16. Cf. also the alternate blame within Acts where Peter charges the “men of Israel” with slaying Jesus in 21:22–23, but in 5:30 he lays the deed at the feet of the high priest and (Sanhedrin) council.

4. John 8:44, 47. Although this is attributed to Jesus, it more accurately reflects John’s view.

5. John 4:22.

6. I Corinthians 2:8; cf. Ephesians 6:12.

7. 2 Corinthians 3:7–18; cf. Galatians 4:8–10, 28–30; Colossians 2:16–17.

8. Galatians 2:1–14; I Corinthians 9:1–7.



people, and cannot be simply dismissed as an anti-Semite who poisoned the church forever against the Jews. As we will see, he points to a more subtle view which found room for them in God's overall plan.

Nevertheless, Paul unquestionably pushed the church in the direction of separation from Judaism, and external events contributed to that process. In 132 C.E. radical Jewish political aspirations centered on Simon Bar-Kochba, proclaimed as the Messiah in many quarters. After he executed a number of Jewish Christians as traitors for their refusal to support his unsuccessful revolt against Rome, mutual enmity and polemics reached a new level, which has scarcely abated since.

Second-century Christian apologists developed the theme of Jewish apostasy and unfaithfulness to their own covenant in rejecting the true Messiah. Jews were blamed en masse for their culpability in the death of the Savior,<sup>9</sup> a theme which only gained strength over the years in the writings of the Church Fathers.

Through the entire Patristic period, the Church Fathers created a whole genre of anti-Jewish literature in which Jews were portrayed not just as having rejected Christ, but as apostates from the time of Moses: idolaters, depraved drunkards, gluttons and debauchees, even infant killers and cannibals. In interpreting the Old Testament, the Fathers tended to apply the prophetic denunciations to the Jews, and the promises of future vindication and divine favor to Christians. St. John Chrysostom, the fourth-century Bishop of Damascus renowned for his oratory, sounded a common theme when he excoriated the Jews as beastly sub-humans:

The synagogue is not only a whorehouse and a theater, it is also a den of thieves and a haunt of wild animals. The Jews . . . [are] no better disposed than pigs or goats, they live by the rule of debauchery and inordinate gluttony."<sup>10</sup>

Many of the Church Fathers took satisfaction from the exile and persecution of the Jews as evidence of God's wrath for their rejection of his Son. Their only hope was to convert.<sup>11</sup>

Of course, church officials did not limit themselves to the pen in their war against Judaism. The ascension of Constantine as Emperor of Rome in the early fourth century marked the beginning of a long period of leg-

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9. See, e.g., Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho XVI," in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1973), vol. I, p. 202; and Tertullian, "An Answer to the Jews VIII," in *Ibid.*, p. 160.

10. Quoted in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Crucified Jew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), 27–28. Much of the following history of anti-Semitism is summarized from this book.

11. An example of Patristic attitudes to Jews include Cyprian, "Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. V, 507–557.

islative and judicial suppression, including civil and legal rights, confiscation of property, and restrictions on worship. By the time of the Crusades, zealous Christians en route to the Holy Land massacred thousands of Jews for refusing baptism. Those crusaders who actually reached their destination were surprised to learn that Moslems had the wherewithal to resist similar treatment. In the fourteenth century, Jews were popularly blamed for the Black Death. Conversion of the Jews was a major goal of the original Inquisition established in 1233 by Pope Gregory IX, which led to further persecution, fines, and imprisonment. The Spanish Inquisition of the fifteenth century went a step further: suspecting that many Jewish converts were insincere, its charge was to torture former Jews, get them to confess that they were still practicing Judaism, then burn them as a penance.

Martin Luther, at first hopeful that reform of Christianity would lead to Jewish acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, became bitterly disillusioned when they failed to respond to his call to baptism. He characterized the Jews as anti-Christ, worse than devils, and advocated their expulsion from Germany and torching of their synagogues. In fact, at various times Jews were expelled *en masse* from Germany, France, England, and Spain. Only with the Enlightenment did the almost universal Christian anti-Semitism abate somewhat, as skeptical rationalism diluted the religious zealotry that underpinned Jewish repressions. Traditional Christian assumptions about Jewish guilt and divine retribution persisted, however, particularly among the general populace, and leading intellectuals such as Kant, Fichte, and Hegel continued to attack the Jews in print.

Despite such nineteenth-century champions of Jewish emancipation as Disraeli, the Prime Minister of England, the general movement toward nationalism intensified racial and ethnic conflict. The myth of the Wandering Jew, driven from his home in punishment for killing Christ, became a staple of French literature. German nationalism's standard of racial purity was exacerbated by composer Richard Wagner, whose obsessive hatred of the Jews was perhaps not exceeded until Hitler, who idolized the composer. "I regard the Jewish race as the born enemy of humanity and everything that is noble in it," Wagner wrote, adding that they were "getting control of everything."<sup>12</sup>

Anti-Semitism was equally strong in Russia, where pogroms in 1881 decimated the Jewish population. Ironically, Jews were condemned by the Bolsheviks following the Russian Revolution for their presumed anti-revolutionary resistance, while outside Russia they were widely charged with fomenting the revolution. After World War I, the publication of the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* reinforced ideas about an

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12. Quoted in Cohn-Sherbock, 164.

international Jewish conspiracy to take over the world. Nazism arose and flourished in a world well prepared for its anti-Semitic sentiments.

Despite the cursory nature of this survey of the development of anti-Semitism, it is clear that such sentiments have been nurtured primarily among Christians, whose sacred texts provide the fodder for this shameful history. How does Mormonism, which arose in a culture saturated with biblical thought, fit into this milieu? And particularly, what does the Book of Mormon, which in many ways serves as a commentary on New Testament ideas, have to add on this sensitive subject?

First of all, let me state that I am not concerned in this paper with the issue of the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Whether you consider it to be a genuine text from pre-Columbian America or a production from the fertile or inspired mind of Joseph Smith, its contribution to the anti-Semitic tradition of Western Christianity is crucial to Latter-day Saints. As a self-proclaimed additional witness for Christ, it has plenty to say about the character and place of Israel in general and Jews in particular in God's overall plan, as well as their role concerning the death of Jesus.

The declaration on the title page of the Book of Mormon, translated from the plates, that it is written "to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD," is itself problematic in terms of anti-Semitism. Christianity's record of proselytizing Jews with the sword on numerous occasions was reduced to "baptism or death." Having resisted threats ranging from cultural assimilation to extermination for millennia, Jews are understandably suspicious of any attempt to convert them. This should not be news to Mormons, whose notorious missionary zeal raised stringent opposition to the construction of the BYU Jerusalem Center. Even more recently, the church found itself accused of an onslaught against Jewish identity in the afterlife by its proxy baptisms for the dead. On the surface it would seem to be an innocuous, even silly, ceremony from the point of view of a non-believer, until you consider that many of the "recipients" of these vicarious ordinances to Christianize them died in the Holocaust. To be seen as going after these victims of anti-Semitism, even after death, was the ultimate insult to many of their survivors who have vowed that these martyrs to Judaism shall not have died in vain. Christians, Mormons included, do not endear themselves to Jews cognizant of their heritage by trying to "save" them, since this would require them to abandon the faith for which their people have suffered so much.

But the proselytizing stance of the Book of Mormon is only the beginning. In a number of crucial passages, it echoes the attitude of the gospel writers that the Jews had incurred God's disfavor by their rebellious attitude. This is particularly true of Nephi, and his views are intermittently reflected in later passages. "The Jews" in I Nephi who mock Lehi and then try to kill him remind the reader of "Jews" as described by

John in the New Testament: the religious establishment in Jerusalem seems to be in the background manipulating the populace.<sup>13</sup> Nephi prophesies that the Jews will dwindle in unbelief and will reject and slay the Messiah.<sup>14</sup> Much later Mormon insists that the Lamanites in the latter days will need to acknowledge that Jesus Christ "was slain by the Jews."<sup>15</sup>

In some cases the Book of Mormon goes even further than the New Testament in its apparent anti-Semitism. 2 Nephi 10:3 asserts that the reason God would come down among the Jews is that they are "*the more wicked part of the world . . . there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God.*" Their destruction and scattering would be the consequence.<sup>16</sup> This negative portrayal is most blatant in 2 Nephi 25, which we referred to earlier. Nephi explains that he avoided teaching his people much about the Jews, "for their works were the works of darkness, and their doings the doings of abominations." They will reject and crucify the Only Begotten because of their iniquities, hard hearts, and stiff necks, resulting in their scattering. Subsequently, the Lord would "scourge" the Jews by other nations for many generations until they stop looking for another Messiah and accept the one rejected by them, Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever one may think about the accuracy of Nephi's prophecy, one can scarcely characterize it as a shining example of religious or ethnic tolerance. When I was a missionary and encountered someone of the Jewish faith, I naively brought out the Book of Mormon, thinking it would be the perfect tool to establish a bridge of understanding. I guess I had not read it very carefully.

Nevertheless, I have painted a very one-sided picture here. The first thing to be said in amelioration of Nephi's anti-Semitism is that he considered himself and his own people to be "descendents of the Jews" in the larger sense of being members of the House of Israel.<sup>18</sup> For him, it was a family quarrel. Secondly, having experienced first-hand persecution due to his father's outspoken prophecies against the establishment and *status quo* in Jerusalem, and then having had to flee the city to avoid imminent destruction, his outraged attitude toward his ethnic kinsmen should be somewhat understandable. It should also be noted that the

13. I Nephi 1:19–20, 2:13, and 17:44; cf. 4 Nephi 31. Cf. also 10:2–3 where the destruction of the Jews refers to Jerusalem, and 2 Nephi 10:5, which attributes the crucifixion to "priestcrafts and iniquities" and the stiff-neckedness of the Jews.

14. I Nephi 10:11, 15:17.

15. Mormon 7:5.

16. 2 Nephi 10:6.

17. 2 Nephi 25:2, 12–18 et pas. Cf. Jacob 4:14–15, which characterizes the Jews as a stiff-necked people, blinded by "looking beyond the mark" [presumably this refers to Jesus Christ], who killed the prophets and would reject the stone upon which they would build a "safe foundation."

18. 2 Nephi 30:4; cf. I Nephi 15:17–18.

Hebrew view of God's providence in general tended to be considerably more fatalistic than that of modern Mormonism. Whereas we might see a divine role in bringing good out of the evil done to God's chosen people by their persecutors, an Old Testament Israelite would likely see God as the causal agent of evil as well as good, and look for overall outcomes for the group rather than focus on individual casualties. Perhaps Nephi, when he says the Lord will scourge the Jews through generations to bring them to the true Messiah, is imposing this limited viewpoint on the vision he relates.<sup>19</sup> He sees the end result as good, and so assumes that God must be the means.

But more importantly, Nephi is anything but one-sided in his attitude toward the Jews. He points out that the Bible, containing the covenants of the Lord, came from the Jews in purity, and was only later corrupted by gentiles.<sup>20</sup> Later he accuses the gentiles of giving no thanks or acknowledgment to the Jews, the Lord's ancient covenant people, for their "travails, labors, pains and diligence" in bringing salvation to the gentiles.<sup>21</sup> Then Nephi, speaking prophetically in the voice of God, blasts the gentiles for their anti-Semitism:

O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay, but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads; for I the Lord have not forgotten my people.<sup>22</sup>

The gentiles who reject the Book of Mormon are hypocrites for claiming they don't need another Bible because they despise the Jews who gave them the original one.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Nephi insists, in words reminiscent of the Sacramental prayer, that the Lord really did covenant with the House of Israel, including the Jews, and will always remember them.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Mormon warns that we, the future readers of his compilation, "need not any longer hiss, nor spurn, nor make game of the Jews" because the Lord will fulfill his promises to them.<sup>25</sup>

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19. Contrast, however, 1 Nephi 13:39, which indicates the Lord will bring good out of the dispersion of the Jews, but is silent about the Lord's hand in causing it. See also 2 Nephi 26:19, which foretells that "those who have dwindled in unbelief [in this case the latter-day Lamanites] shall be smitten by the hand of the Gentiles."

20. 1 Nephi 13:23–30; 2 Nephi 29:6.

21. 2 Nephi 29:4.

22. 2 Nephi 29:5. Cf. Mormon 5:10: the Gentiles should care for the House of Israel, "whence their blessings come."

23. 2 Nephi 29:4, 6. Cf. 2 Nephi 33:14: the words of the Jews will condemn those who reject them.

24. 2 Nephi 29:14. Steven Epperson, in *Mormons and Jews: Early Mormon Theologies of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 31, asserts that Nephi's extensive Isaiah quotations are meant to "affirm Israel's covenant."

25. 3 Nephi 29:8.

But for Nephi, ultimately, God stands ready to accept and bless whoever will give heed to his words. The covenant people are those who repent and believe.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, "all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile."<sup>27</sup> This phrase, of course, echoes Paul's famous dictum in Galatians 3:28 that "there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ."<sup>28</sup>

Both Nephi and Paul, despite their belief that God does not play favorites based on race or national origin, retain a special place for the Jews or Israelites as the chosen people. The gospel is the power of salvation *first* to the Jews, then to the Greeks, Paul maintains.<sup>29</sup> In a classic rumination on God's apparently failed covenant with the Patriarchs (Romans 9–11) Paul agonizes over the refusal of his people to accept Christ. Asserting that God's promises have not failed, Paul has three answers to this puzzle, not necessarily consistent with one another. First, he argues, the children of the promise—the chosen or covenant people—are those who obtain righteousness through their faith, not those who are descended through the flesh. Outsiders can be adopted in.<sup>30</sup> Second, although Israel as a whole has stumbled by its reliance on works over faith, a remnant will be saved. This remnant is like leaven, which will eventually make the whole batch of dough holy.<sup>31</sup> Finally, and most importantly, Israel's current stumbling over the rock of salvation is only temporary and is part of God's plan to open up election into the people of God to the gentiles. By seizing on this opportunity for salvation, the gentiles will make Israel jealous and provoke it to return to even greater glory.<sup>32</sup>

Paul attributes the hardening which has come upon Israel to God's providence towards the outside converts, "*until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.*" Then "*all Israel will be saved.*" Jews may temporarily be enemies of God vis-à-vis the gospel, but they are still beloved as regards election because of their ancestors. The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable. Thus, gentiles have no cause to boast; they are only branches grafted in. Israel remains the root.<sup>33</sup>

Paul seems to conclude that, because of the promises to the Fathers, Jews will be saved without giving up Judaism. At least they are not required to accept Christ just yet. Similarly, Nephi suggests that Jews can

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26. 2 Nephi 30:2.

27. 2 Nephi 26:33.

28. Cf. Romans 10:12, 2:11.

29. Romans 1:16.

30. Romans 9:6–26, 10:20–21.

31. Romans 9:27–31, 11:5–7, 16.

32. Romans 11:11–13.

33. Romans 11:17–30. Similarly, Epperson points out that gentiles become beholden and beneficiaries of Israel's blessings, and not vice-versa. *Mormon and Jews*, 31.

remain Jews and still attain salvation through Christ. In a passage of remarkably similar context, Nephi predicts that his branch of Israel ("the seed of my brethren") will dwindle in unbelief, followed by the day of the Gentiles, who will be instruments in bringing them back to God. None are denied, he insists. "Behold, doth he command any that they should depart out of the synagogues?" he asks pointedly. "Behold, I say unto you, Nay."<sup>34</sup> Of course, conversion to Christianity entails just that: leaving the synagogue.

I live near an area of a large concentration of Amish, a people whose simplicity of life, exemplary faith and community attract almost universal curiosity and admiration. When the Mormons were headquartered in nearby Kirtland, Joseph Smith reportedly instructed the missionaries not to proselytize them. Whether he believed they should be left alone because they had suffered enough persecution or had too much of value to sacrifice, or just because they had a special dispensation is not known. But perhaps something similar applies to the Jews, whose scriptural credentials as the people of the Lord are impeccable. And if, as Paul says, the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable,<sup>35</sup> then the elect cannot unilaterally cancel their covenant by neglect or misunderstanding. This refusal of God to divorce or disown wayward Israel is a familiar theme among Old Testament prophets.<sup>36</sup>

Does this mean that Israelites are ultimately excused from coming unto Christ because of their ancestry? While neither Paul nor Nephi would go this far, they share a distinction from other scriptural authors on this point. Their vision of the eventual reconciliation of the Jews with the true Messiah nullifies the efforts of the gentile believers. Rather, it will come to pass through the actions of God.<sup>37</sup> One recent study points out that when the Book of Mormon speaks of restoring Israel to its full covenant status, it sets the essential precondition as "territorial"—return to the Promised Land—rather than conversion to Christianity.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, the Jews remain beloved of the Lord, to be redeemed in His own due time. There is simply no room for anti-Semitism in this scheme, no matter how benign.

The pioneering study on Mormon attitudes toward the Jews is Steven Epperson's *Mormons and Jews: Early Mormon Theologies of Israel*, published in 1992. He notes that, although nineteenth-century American Christians were grimly determined to overcome Jewish resistance to con-

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34. 2 Nephi 26:26. Strictly speaking, the reference to synagogues is anachronistic for Nephi's time. Perhaps Joseph Smith recognized that he was taking liberty as a translator when he added the clarifying phrase "or out of the houses of worship."

35. Romans 11:30.

36. E.g., Hosea 3:1, 11:8–9; Isaiah 44:22; Jeremiah 24:7.

37. Romans 10:21, 11:23; 1 Nephi 13:42; cf. D&C 77:15.

38. Epperson, p. 30.

version, Joseph Smith and some of his most devout followers took a remarkably enlightened outlook toward Judaism.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the most notable was Orson Hyde, who, compelled by the Spirit and commissioned by the Prophet Joseph, traveled to Jerusalem in 1841 to dedicate the Holy Land, not for the preaching of the gospel of Christianity, but “for the gathering of ‘Judah’s scattered remnants,’ for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its Temple, and for the restoration of a distinct, independent Jewish nation.”<sup>40</sup>

Both Paul and the Book of Mormon support the contention that we, the gentile church, are secondary appendages to Israel, and Joseph Smith’s program of gathering, temple building, priesthood rituals and theocracy indicates that he was building the Kingdom of God on a Hebrew model. Nineteenth-century Mormon converts saw themselves as transformed into literal Israelites,<sup>41</sup> a view echoed in the continuing practice of assigning patriarchal blessing recipients to a tribe of Israel.

So, returning to my far-off somnolent high schoolers, reciting their received prejudices about how the Holocaust and other persecutions were the Lord’s way of bringing the recalcitrant Jews around to accept Jesus as the Christ, what *would* you ‘a done? Keep in mind that it was getting late, and the first rule of early morning seminary is *Let Out on Time*. Besides which, I hadn’t yet done the research for this paper. I had to wing it—and fast. Well, here’s what I done.

I said, “I think there are some problems with that way of thinking from a gospel point of view. First of all, it does not quite fit with the principle that we will be punished for our own sins and not for our ancestors’ transgressions. I think you’ll agree that those Jews who died in the Holocaust were pretty far removed from those who were around for Jesus’ crucifixion.” They agreed. “Furthermore, I don’t know of a single Jew who, in contemplating the Holocaust, has come to the realization that Jesus was the Christ after all. So if God was indeed trying to get them to accept Christianity by imposing genocide on them, not only was it a pretty crude and cruel way to accomplish that goal, but it failed dismally.” They seemed to realize the logic of this as well. “And finally,” I added, “it can be very dangerous to think that way, because that kind of reasoning has led to countless anti-Semitic persecutions over the last 2000 years, culminating in the atrocity of the Holocaust.”

Okay, I probably didn’t say “culminating” that early in the morning, but you get the gist. Latter-day Saints identify themselves as “the new Israel,” meaning the heirs of the covenant to be God’s people, just as did

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39. Ibid., 10–13; viif.

40. Ibid., vii.

41. Melodie Moench, “Nineteenth-Century Mormons: The New Israel,” *Dialogue* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 42–54. Cited in Epperson, p. 59.



the early Christians even as they became overwhelmingly non-Jewish. But we remain Israel only by adoption; the original heirs have not been disinherited. Reading the scriptures in isolation and without the Urim and Thummim of the whole gospel, taken in context, is liable to abuse. We who lay claim to greater light and knowledge should show forth the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."<sup>42</sup> I think all this implies, not just that we need to guard against anti-Semitic attitudes and actively oppose expressions of such prejudice, but that we need to give our spiritual kin, the Jews, space to nurture and preserve their heritage. Our mission now is to our fellow gentiles, not the Jews. God will speak to them now and in times to come, just as he has in the past. Surely we can exercise *that* much faith in his promises.

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42. Galatians 5:22.

# Trajectory at the End of Winter

*Emma Lou Thayne*

Back from a walk along the Big Wood River in early May

I am the river alive with spring run-off  
one moment rushing to be where the calling calls,  
the next a pool reflecting or an eddy at play.  
Cascades of findings secret me over the stones

and fling me swirling the light out from clouds.  
I inch up banks and slosh into marshes, tease  
grasses to question their colors, seep into roots  
for sap to carry and wave at the sun. The straw of

last year's mulch softens in silence,  
the crunch of winter pulled into the earth.  
Over the bedrock of seventy, nudging the sides  
of what I believe, I flow, no obstacle not to be

wrapped around, passed, part of my laughing, coming,  
sobbing, exulting. On and on I caress what is there  
my aim as certain as the child from and then  
into the woman I still am becoming.

Or the live force that will welcome her home.

# from *Falling Toward Heaven*

(Excerpt from the novel, forthcoming from Signature Books in fall 2000)

*John Bennion*

THE NEXT MORNING ALLISON dropped Howard at the Mormon church in Rockwood, which, except for the thin spire, was shaped like a large, suburban house. Though he had asked, she refused to go inside with him. For all she knew, he might stand and confess his sin; the women in town might sew a red "A" onto the front of his white shirt.

Main Street was wide for such a small town. She could see only three businesses—a feed store, a gas station, and a grocery. Houses along the side streets were mostly wooden, painted white or green. The newer houses were red brick; the very oldest were Victorian in style, with walls made from manila colored brick. Some lawns were bright green, others had been burned yellow-brown. Two dry years in a row and the town would blow away.

When she came to the main highway, she turned westward. Up out of the valley, the ground was even drier—tumbleweeds, gray brush, sparse yellow grass, wire fences with gray posts, dusty air. A giant black raven sat on the crossbar of a power pole, waiting for a car to hit a jackrabbit. Allison drove a few miles and suddenly received a gift from heaven—a bar, Willy's Wet One. Neon beer signs, unlit, were in each window.

Inside were five dusty men, wearing work boots or tennis shoes. The room had half a dozen round tables, grease stains on the top, and a bar along one wall, with red, padded stools. The men turned their faces toward her, frowning, and every beer disappeared.

"Hello," she said. She felt like a character in a movie—Sigourney Weaver as Clint Eastwood. "Can I have a whiskey?" What else could she say? Four of the men were middle-aged; one looked to be Howard's age. She didn't know how to read them: Were they desert bums, drinking away their Sunday, or profitable ranchers stopping off for a nip before a hard day at it?

They continued to stare. "No whiskey here," the man behind the bar said. "We only sell beer. And we don't sell that on Sunday." Every man

had his hands under his table. "You have to wait until tomorrow and drive to the state liquor store in Hamblin to get whiskey."

"I should have just stopped at the grocery store," she said.

"No whiskey there. No beer anywhere in the state on Sunday." He looked out the window at her car. "This is Utah."

"No atmosphere in the grocery," said one of the men; he wore suspenders, a white shirt, and had a pot belly.

"Vern," said the young man. "We'd need some music before you could call this atmosphere." He stood and walked toward a juke box, a quarter extended in his fingers.

"No!" said all the other men. "None of that stuff." The young man shrugged his shoulders and returned to his seat.

"You lost?" another man said—levis, cowboy boots, and a toothpick. He grinned at her, an old flirty guy. "Or just passing through?"

"Passing through to where?" she said. Their laughter came sudden and loud as if the joke had been told before. "I'm visiting Howard Rockwood. He went to church, but my nose led me here." She sniffed and looked under Cowboy's table. "Well what do you know, a beer in Utah on Sunday."

He lifted his bottle, taking a swig and grinning. "Walter's Howard?"

"Are there two Howards in this town?" she asked.

"I thought he was on a mission."

"He just finished," she said. "I gave him a ride back."

"I thought he had to come home and get released before he went anywhere with a woman," said the man wearing the white shirt.

"You're one to talk, Vern, about obeying the finer points of the law," said a man in overalls. "That isn't a bottle of milk you have clutched between your knees." Everybody laughed again.

The door opened and Walter walked in. He started when he saw Allison but recovered and sat on the stool next to her. The bartender put a coffee in front of him. "Thanks, Willy," said Walter. He turned to Allison. "Mormons don't drink coffee. So Emily won't let me have it in the house. I have to come out here to get a cup."

"Howard better not try something like that on me," she said.

Willy took a beer from under the counter and put it in front of her. "We just left Utah," he said. The other men put their beers back on the tables.

"Unless the mission president released him before he left," said Vern.

"That's Vernon Todd," said Willy. "He's got only one train of thought, and that one's generally late." Everyone laughed except Walter and Vern.

"So how's life at home?" said Cowboy. He grinned at Walter.

"Don't ask. It's like my wife has become a different woman."

"She woke up to herself," said Allison.

"That's right," said Walter. "I'm just having trouble getting used to it."

"Howard was in Texas, wasn't he?" said Vern. "He was writing steady to my niece, Belinda. According to her, they was about ready to send out wedding announcements."

This town is so small it's nearly incestuous, Allison thought. "Texas is where I met him."

"You're a Texan," said Vern. "You met Howard down there?"

"You're a curious man," she said.

"Howard's a good kid," said Willy; he was watching Walter, who slowly drank his coffee. "You're lucky to have met him."

"Yes, I am." She took a drink. "I'm on my way to Alaska."

Willy looked from her to Walter.

"She's got Howard thinking he wants to go with her," said Walter.

"And the sons of Israel wanted to take away Benjamin," said Willy, "the light of Israel's eye."

"I'm not forcing him," said Allison softly.

"Not hardly," said Walter. "It isn't your will or words that's constraining him."

"Willy's a frustrated preacher," said Overalls. "He came here twenty years ago to save all us Mormon heathens. Couldn't find any takers, so he opened up a bar. Been thriving ever since."

"This is thriving?" said Willy.

"Wet Willy's Desert Chapel," said Cowboy. "Last chance at salvation."

"I was in Alaska one summer," said the young man. "Beautiful country."

"You're going to have to offer Howard a higher salary," said Willy to Walter. "Give him an incentive to stay and help you run your place."

"Can't even pay myself what I'm worth," said Walter.

"And that's only two bits a year." There was more laughter.

"Offer them the honeymoon cottage," said Cowboy. "Let them move into Max's old cabin. How can she refuse an offer like that?"

"I have a job in Anchorage," said Allison. "Writing software."

"Writing software," said Willy. "I need to buy a computer to track my finances."

"Willy, you don't need a damn computer," said Overalls. "You could figure your finances on the toes of a one-legged man."

"Can I get a computer that flashes a red light above the door when a deadbeat comes in?"

"That red light would be flashing all the time," said Cowboy. "People would think you've turned this place into a bawdy house."

"So two bits and the honeymoon cottage won't cut it?" Willy asked her.

"Does this cottage open onto the beach?" she asked. "Does it have cable TV?"

"Mice and an outhouse," said Cowboy. "A bucket for drinking water. But it has a beach. Down the valley is a murky hot springs with dead Goshutes floating in it."

"Just Howard's style," she said.

The young man lifted his can. "To your success."

"Whose success?" said Walter.

"Her success, and Howard's. He was in my graduating class. May you have a damn good time together in Anchorage."

"When's the wedding?" asked Vernon.

Walter looked at his coffee cup.

"No wedding," said Allison.

"But—"

"Vernon Todd," said Willy, "put a fist in it."

"Your train was just derailed," said Overalls.

"To pleasure, prosperity, and long life," said Cowboy, lifting a can.

"Some of my sons are scoundrels," said Walter, staring at his coffee cup. "But Howard has a pure heart."

Allison raised her beer. "To Howard, the pure of heart. May it always lead him to someone who will care for him."

Walter lifted his cup high. "To Howard." Then he turned his stool toward the men sitting at the table. Allison drank another beer, listening to their talk about the drought, the Hunsaker woman whose husband had left her a month before she bore him twin boys, the threat that the Forest Service might raise range fees, and the fact that Gerald L. Hansen should never have been called as bishop because his kids were too wild, not proper examples.

Howard walked alone into the crowded chapel and saw Belinda across the room. He was surprised by the rush of affection for her. In some other universe, he was sitting next to her, planning their wedding in a couple of weeks. A hundred years earlier, he could have married both women. But he couldn't imagine Allison and Belinda lasting five minutes in one house: What is the definition of critical mass?

His last time inside the church, he had given his farewell talk. His eyes brimming with tears, he had gripped the pulpit and looked down into the faces of the ward members, people who had been as constant as trees to him: old farmers in suits, their wives in dresses, his friends, including Belinda, who had come to wish him well.

"All things are possible to them who believe," that younger self had said. "If I have enough faith, I can baptize hundreds, like Paul or Wilford Woodruff." He had left town swathed in glory, a soldier in God's army. Then as now, he smelled the varnish on the oak floor and benches, trailed his fingers across the white plaster walls.

Brother Harker waved. "Howard," he called. "I mean, Elder Rockwood. It's still Elder Rockwood." People surrounded Howard: Sister Stukey, Brother Anderson, the Petersons. "Good to have you back. You look great. Nothing like seeing a strong returning missionary to give my own testimony a boost. I missed you." He felt odd that his life had transformed and they couldn't see it in his face. How would their smiles fade when the word had time to spread?

Belinda sat across the room between her parents. She turned when he entered but jerked her head forward again. The day before when she had first seen him and Allison together, she had swung her car around, nearly running him down.

Brother and Sister Jenkins, his parents' neighbors to the north, entered from the foyer. They scanned the congregation and hurried to greet him. Brother Jenkins gripped his shoulder. "It's good to have you home. Talk to you later." Howard walked to the stand and sat next to Brian Samuelson, who had returned from his mission as Howard was leaving. Sister Jenkins, who had taught him Sunday School when he was in high school, took his hand in both of hers. "I can hardly wait to hear all about it," she said. He still felt her touch on his hand as she sat next to him on the bench. Allison thought he had come to church out of a desire for self-flagellation. She was partly right, but he realized that one motive was rebellion—the desire to shock the pious. He supposed he should pray for a spirit of contrition, but that would require him to leave Allison, because she wouldn't marry him. The thought of leaving her was terrifying.

Howard's mother moved through those who stood waiting for the meeting to begin; she saw him, nodded, and turned away again. Women walked across the chapel to talk with her. She laid her hands on their arms, smiling. She glanced at him again, frowning. Then her face became animated, laughing at something one of the women said.

Bishop Hansen rushed in and stood behind the pulpit. "I'm pleased to welcome you to sacrament meeting." He pointed toward the back. "As you can see Howard Rockwood has returned from his mission." The people in the congregation turned again and looked at Howard and Sister Jenkins sitting together. The bishop smiled at him then read the announcements.

Under his breath Howard said, "He's going to ask me to come up and talk. I can't do it."

"You'll do fine," Sister Jenkins whispered. "All that practice in the mission field."

The bishop turned the time over to the chorister, who led the congregation in singing "Zion Stands with Hills Surrounded." Barney Thompson stood to say the invocation. While Barney prayed, Howard watched Belinda from partly closed eyes. She didn't bow her head; she bit her lip, seeming—what?—frightened, angry, hurt? As he had driven to Allison's

apartment, he hadn't thought once about Belinda. He wished he had been smart enough to avoid hurting her or anyone else but immediately realized the impossibility of such a pure and insular sin.

After the prayer came the sacrament song, "Behold the Great Redeemer Die." The deacons, one of them Belinda's little brother, moved down the rows with trays of broken bread, emblem of Christ's broken body. The room was quiet except for a few fussing babies. He told himself that a person ate damnation when he took the sacrament unworthily, but the thought came from outside, as if from God or the town. He felt inflexible, even ironic about his own grasping for guilt, as if shame could make up for what he had done.

A deacon stood in front of him, the tray of bread extended. He passed it on to Sister Jenkins, who stared at him before taking a small piece. He knew Christ could take his sin away if he repented and gave up Allison. He knew he wasn't ready for repentance. The second priest flipped his hair back out of his eyes and said the blessing on the sacramental water. After the prayer, before the tray of cups could come to Howard, he left his seat, aware that everyone was watching, and went into the hallway. He paced back and forth. One kind of damnation, he thought, was being unable to feel the horror of his own sin.

He leaned against the door jamb, just out of sight, until the sacrament was over and the bishop stood again behind the podium. Having been a missionary and having received the Melchizedek Priesthood, he would be excommunicated for his fornication with a woman who might leave him at any time. Around the edge of the door, he saw his mother frown and look back at the bench where Sister Jenkins sat alone. He could walk out through the foyer and across the lawn, never have to face anyone in Rockwood again.

Why had he coupled himself to Allison? The answer, unlike his futile efforts to feel shame, was clear. She rose two-handed before the net and caught the soccer ball. She undressed him in the motel room, quiet hands moving across his skin. She sat on the couch in her apartment, face intent, body inclined forward. She boiled the air with her profanity. She was as sudden as lightning, as crisp as a crack of thunder. Still, when he walked back to his seat and the members of the ward turned their faces toward him, white coals burned in his chest.

Bishop Hansen was still talking. An excommunication court is a court of love, they used to say. Now they called it disciplinary action, but the function of both was to flush sin into the open. Perhaps that repudiation would allow him to reconnect to his former self, a self he wasn't sure he wanted. If he refused to go with Allison to Alaska, if he stayed to help his father, she would leave. He would confess his sin to the stake high council.

In 1930 Solomon Rockwood, James Darren's son, had been excom-



municated from the church for taking a fourth wife, a woman twenty years his junior. By then members of the church had adopted the nation's revulsion against polygamy; he could keep his three legitimate wives, but taking a new one had been an act of apostasy. Kids who went to the cemetery for a thrill said they could still hear him moaning. He was warning others against his mistake, they said. Once Howard had read part of Solomon's diary. "August 15, 1934. It has been over three years since anyone in Rockwood has spoken to me in friendship." Death was not the ultimate isolation.

At the pulpit, the bishop finally finished his testimony. "We're going to hear from Elder Rockwood later, I know." Howard's mother shook her head slightly. "But I thought you'd like to hear briefly from him now."

I spent two years serving God, thought Howard. He stood and without moving to the front, prepared to speak from his seat, as people often did when bearing their testimonies. One of the counselors, a man Howard didn't know, was whispering something in the bishop's ear. The bishop shook his head vigorously.

"In Navasota, Texas," Howard said, gripping the bench, "lives a widow and her children, three of them, the Valdez family. We had passed her apartment many times on our bicycles; the kids were always dirty and running wild. We knew later from talking to her neighbors that she saw men in the evening for money." He looked across the ward. Sister Sorenson, Brothers Jenkins, Hurst, and Wilkins, Belinda, her parents, Sister Jenkins—all the people he had wanted to see again. Not even the babies were making noise. "One day we passed her house and had the feeling we should knock. No one seemed to be home. Then a small child answered." He took a deep breath and went on. "She was sitting inside on the couch with her boy, bathing his forehead with a damp rag because he had a high fever. We told her who we were, and she didn't want to talk to us. 'Go away,' she said. 'Can't you see I have a trouble today?' I told her about the power the priesthood has for healing the sick. Then she let us lay our hands on her child's head. When we passed again the next day, she was waiting in the street. 'My son is well,' she said." Howard looked over the people, remembering the weeks they had taught Sister Valdez. Her eyes had grown brighter and clearer as she learned the truths of the gospel. "She began surprising us. When we came to teach, she would give us the gifts of her sacrifices. 'I told the men to stay away. They are no longer welcome here,' she said one night. 'Today I took my wine and poured it out in the garden. I smashed the bottle.' One day she said nothing, but her place had been scrubbed, the children bathed." One by one she had packaged the sins of her life and laid them aside, an arduous labor. Watching from the outside, he knew her steps were firm, steady, as she moved toward her own salvation. She had been a simple and sure woman, believing everything they said. Still

gripping the back of the bench, Howard let her clear spirit fill him and he spoke to the people of Rockwood from that feeling. "Jesus took her sins away. He can take away my sins and all of yours. Jesus takes away our sins." As soon as he sat down, the clarity left.

Sister Jenkins reached to touch his arm. "Very nice," she said. "Exactly right."

He breathed the smell of wood varnish. Out the open back window the cottonwood leaves rustled. All his life he had been taught that the universe was simple and unitary; now he knew it was not. Opposites were true, paradoxes were as commonplace as stars. As an act of faith, he chose the church and Allison both, both light and desire, and finally, impossible sweetness, he felt true before God.

## CAUTION: *Men in Trees*

*CAUTION: Men in Trees*. By Darrell Spencer. (University of Georgia Press, Athens and London, 2000).

Reviewed by Phyllis Barber, novelist and author of *How I Got Cultured: A Nevada Memoir*, winner of the Associated Writing Programs Award for Creative Nonfiction in 1991.

*CAUTION: MEN IN TREES*. Hmmmm, one might say. Are these men swaying from limb to limb like the perennial hero, Tarzan? Are these men going out on a limb or barking up the wrong tree? Are they roped to the trunk of the tree to hold them safe in a world subject to wind and weather? What have we here? Simians in their element? Men at risk? Wiry young boys working for a tree removal company? In Darrell Spencer's writing, one can never tell.

"Caution: Men in Trees," the title story in the collection, is narrated by a character named Bobby "Best Buy" (BB) Brooks, a man who owns an outdoor advertising company in Las Vegas. He's just turned fifty and doesn't believe in Superman, the Lone Ranger or Bugsy Siegel anymore, even though he wants to. And Bobby suspects that while Polly, his wife, seems to be in agreement with him and says things like "they've killed off the real Superman. The Lone Ranger's on kiddie shows, fat and lumpy in dippy Kmart reading glasses" (p. 92), she still can be conned by the hope of heroes. Throughout the story, Polly, her daughter Alice

who happens to be deaf, and the grandkids are lined up on the family room sofa, entranced with the video, *Bugsy Siegel*, while Bobby's father, Lewis, is telling Bobby of his real-life encounter with Siegel. The "real Siegel" had put a gun to Lewis's head. The "real Siegel" came to Vegas with a wife and children, mob money, a certain degree of mystery, but absolutely no glamour. For sure, no visions, as Hollywood hyped. But, Polly interrupts her video-watching and their conversation to insist, "The man's handsome as a movie star." "The man," Bobby counters, "is rotting in a grave, is full of bullet holes" (p. 91). Polly pretends to swoon and returns to the more exotic world of The Movies with its larger than life heroes.

No surprise, Bobby is disillusioned with his own life. He has to deal with people like Archie Cohen, a minor thug/casino owner who "lives with a surgeon's precision the advertisement of his life" and who doesn't like the way Bobby's sign company has misspelled the word "Intertainment" on his rented billboard. In addition to this irritation, Bobby's daughter is deaf. Bobby's father, in his seventies, "gathers together the bits and pieces of his threadbare yet still lethal body and heads for Caesar's Palace on The Strip" (p. 90) to hobnob with the "old crowd" yet again. And Bobby is aging. Wondering what happened:

What Bobby saw in the mirror was not funny. He was one of those

linen dinner napkins folded in the fancy restaurant way, then unfolded, and no way did Bobby know how to get it back the way it was. He felt like one of Polly's sad-sack Americans listening to an old song he loved, but some New Age star was singing it differently, more slowly, and Bobby was for the first time actually hearing the words, and they were dumb words, real dumb" (p. 94).

Dissatisfied, Bobby is having an affair with a deaf woman. "Deaf daughter, deaf girlfriend. . . . What would a shrink say?" (p. 104). When he asks himself what he wants from her, he realizes he wants her world rather than the one in which he lives: "When June talks, when her hands cut and paste, the world is cinematic. It's dance and music, and he walks into it. He's been invited to the party. Her hands are smart. They're hands he imagines a potter would have."

In the end, after a second run-in with Cohen, Bobby tries to shimmy up one of the steel girders that support the billboard sporting Cohen's casino ad. When he realizes he's climbing like a tadpole, not like one of the young, virile construction workers he's witnessed doing the same thing, and that he'll never make it to the fifteen-foot mark where steel bars are welded to the girder to make a ladder, he knows he's hanging on to the girder for his actual life. A man in a tree of sorts. Holding to the trunk of the tree without the rope. A tree without branches, no less. A man marooned.

My initial interest in *CAUTION: Men in Trees* comes from recently being asked by a midwest university to write an external review of Darrell Spencer's work. During the busy Christmas season, I read a Darrell Spencer bedtime

story every night. *A Woman Packing a Pistol, Our Secret's Out, So You Got Next to the Hammer* (a novella), and *Caution: Men in Trees*, the 1999 winner of the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction. (Do these sound like bedtime stories?) I had more than a passing interest in reading the new and re-reading the old as Darrell and I both grew up in Las Vegas, went to Las Vegas High School within four years of each other (he was in my younger brother's class), attended the Las Vegas Fifth and Sixth wards respectively in the same building. We both studied with Francois Camoin at the University of Utah, lived in Utah where we wrote and taught writing (Darrell a BYU professor), taught together in the Vermont College MFA in Writing Program (non-residency), and then moved to the midwest. (We also both have sheep dogs.)

I always find it fascinating to see the arc of a writer-in-progress, especially the arc of someone I know. The younger Darrell seemed influenced/enchanted with the minimalist approach—the in-thing with aspiring writers in the academy at the time. While the early stories showed promise and a great facility with language, I found myself drawn to the maturation in *Caution: Men in Trees* where the stories have more meat on their bones and seem to trust themselves more. It reminded me of the older Artur Rubinstein, who, when he lifted his arms above the keyboard, did so in a manner that suggested he'd been there a million times before, that he was confident of what he was about to do and that he understood the magic of music wasn't in the pyrotechniques or the "Aren't I Amazing" School of Pianists vein. In the current spectrum of Darrell Spencer's body of work, there is a movement from self-consciousness and

linguistic pyrotechniques to a more refined mastery of prose.

Spencer's writing is too evasive, too humorous, too painful, too paradoxical, and too tightly written to package it in any particular way. The writing flirts with philosophy and kicks it in the knees at the same time ("It's a Lot Scariest If You Take Jesus Out"). It has its own brand of Flannery O'Connor weirdness/saving graces in the multifaceted prisms of the major characters, notably the alcoholic Uncle Stuck in "Please to Forgive Sloppiness." He often uses characters whose lives seem innocent enough, and yet there's a lurking, pacing, high-strung violence around them which could rage through the front door at any time and decimate those innocent lives ("Park Host," "There's Too Much News," and "Late-Night TV"). The most interesting aspect of this peripheral violence is that the reader isn't so sure what the "innocent" characters will do or how they'll react when and if that violence makes an appearance. There are no easy blacks and whites here; no cowboys and Indians; no cops and robbers—something I admire about the work.

Spencer is an excellent commentator on the pop-eyed condition of contemporary life, which, after all, is too diverse to reduce to any one explanation. Take the Columbine High School tragedy, for example. Commentators tried over and again to explain that tragedy, but came up, in the end, with empty hands/empty platitudes. No one could or can say why, and Darrell Spencer doesn't say why either. He addresses disturbing themes in this book such as natural disasters and illnesses that don't seem possible in our highly-technological times, violence bred by the media and so-called harmless people who pack pistols.

"Late Night TV" deals with neighbors who've actually become characters from late night TV movies: "the ones full of desert and blowing sand and a sun that does nothing but scorch the earth. There are roaming tribes of people who don't wear anything but rags and who were once decent to each other. They drive vehicles held together by luck and need. Everything so bleak you get heartsick" (pp. 119-20). "Park Host" portrays a retired man and his wife who volunteer every summer as hosts for Canyon Glen Park east of Provo, Utah. Husband Red Cogsby volunteers as Santa Claus in Bountiful, Utah, at Christmas time. He even attended Tom Valent's famous Santa Claus School in Midland, Michigan, where he learned the basics: "Never Flirt, Never Drink, Never Smoke." Yet Red is obsessed with guns, with wearing a shoulder holster complete with Colt when he needs to make an impression on his job as park host. And in "Blood Work," one of his stories that mentions Mormonism directly, Spencer writes of Flora, the Mormon and believer in The Happy Family, who can't/won't see that her son has run away from her home of goodness and is in trouble up to his eyeballs. Spencer doesn't proffer any easy or pat answers, any "and they lived happily ever after" scenarios.

The poet Charles Wright said something to the effect that one should begin with a region, with a place, with a vantage point, from which one can begin to tell a story. Darrell Spencer uses the world in which he grew up and the places in which he resides to tell his stories. Much of his writing comes out of the Las Vegas experience with its casinos, trailer parks, golf courses, business offices in the towers of Circus Circus, etc. He also writes stories based in southern and central

Utah, and most recently, in his Midwest habitat. I especially appreciate his perspective of Las Vegas—that of an insider who knows the living, breathing world of southern Nevada (“except for the Strip, Las Vegas is as dark as any town at night,” p. 136), though he sees into the heart of any location where he’s lived, I think. Gets at the paradoxes. The territory between the cup and the lip.

Writers the world over have tried to write from their sociological fascination with Las Vegas, but not many comprehend the true nature of the beast. They approach it from a mythical, bigger-than-life vantage point, while, truth be known, Las Vegas may only be pretending to be Las Vegas. Spencer is privy to that little known fact. He writes about Sin City with proficiency, wry wit, and sleight of hand. A Twenty-One dealer at heart. Maybe growing up Mormon in Las Vegas has a way of making one into an oyster, one whose soft lining gets irritated by paradox until a strange pearl is formed. One can’t refuse to see the wider world growing up in that wind-blown city. It’s Sensurround in the Nude. Spencer is a pearl of a writer influenced by this global, as well as parochial, environment and by his involvement with Mormonism that plays at the edges, and on occasion to the left of center, of his work.

The epigraph to *Caution: Men in Trees* reads “Did you say Kryptonite?”

—Superman. There’s also a line from “Please to Forgive Sloppiness” in which the exasperated narrator says: “Where’s Superman? Where . . . is Superman?” These two quotes come as close to also anything that might represent what Spencer’s work is about. “About” is taboo in the world of post-modernism and deconstruction, but nothing ventured, nothing gained.

In addition to a wicked sense of humor and a keen eye, Darrell Spencer has a tender heart and finally, I suspect, a desire to fix everything and protect the innocent, even from their own Achilles’ heels. This is exemplified by the husband trying to shield his fragile wife, May, from the out-of-control Billy Fix in “There’s Too Much News,” and by Woods, the narrator in “It’s a Lot Scarier If You Take Jesus Out,” who bundles himself in an insufficient number of cotton shirts to keep out the pain of his girlfriend Jill’s suicide.

Most of us may be powerless to change much (including the real Superman), but it’s moving to watch someone wishing things could be different, even someone trying to make a difference. From “It’s a Lot Scarier If You Take Jesus Out”:

The sky is sinking, and I’m tall enough, if I could do what’s necessary to get off my butt and onto my feet, I could touch it. It’s low. Maybe I could keep it in its place (p. 172).

## Wayward Saints: The Conflict of Opposing Visions

*Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young*, by Ronald W. Walker (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 450 pp., \$49.95 cloth/\$25.00 paper.

Reviewed by John Sillito, Professor of Libraries, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah.

RONALD W. WALKER'S STUDY *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* is a valuable contribution to recent Mormon scholarship. Among other things, the book illuminates important questions and concerns of both past and present. Walker recounts the story of the Godbeite revolt, which broke out in 1869 and was led by two able and fascinating individuals: William S. Godbe and E. L. T. Harrison. The movement ultimately attracted a larger cast of characters to its banner, most notably Edward W. Tulledge, former apostle Amasa M. Lyman, Fanny and Thomas Stenhouse, Henry W. Lawrence, Eli B. Kelsey, and William Shearman.

Calling the revolt "an important event in the making of modern Mormonism," Walker notes that the movement appealed to those who:

believed that Brigham Young had gone too far in defending his Great Basin Kingdom during the crisis-filled months following the completion of the transcontinental railroads. Nor was the opposition of these wayward Saints confined to words. . . . [T]he men and women of the New Movement established a rival church, founded an opposition press, and built . . . the most comfortable lecture and meeting hall in the territory. . . .

As it turned out, the New Movement's threat to established Mormonism did not last long. Like a Great Basin thunderstorm, Godbeitism was sudden and menacing at first, but it quickly passed. In the process, however, it raised important questions (p.xiii).

Walker has raised important questions as well. Who were these dissenters? What issues did they raise? Why was their challenge so menacing? Why did it pass so quickly? How does their story help us better understand Mormonism past and present?

As Walker demonstrates, Godbeite leaders comprised a small group of intellectuals, representatives of 19th-century "British Mormonism" who prized city life, were drawn to ideas, relished public debate, emphasized a religious tradition featuring simple biblical doctrines and spiritual gifts, and came from a tradition which was used to challenging the status quo. These Saints found themselves uneasy with the Utah theocracy of Brigham Young, who envisioned an agrarian, practical kingdom stressing conformity, obedience, and unity. For Young, Zion constituted a "piece of practical social engineering" designed to improve and elevate immigrant converts "drawn from the lower and lower to middle classes of European Society" (p. xv). The Godbeites, however, were more representative of the Victorian age which prized freedom—where "every man and woman supposedly was the captain of his or her soul" (p. 77). As Walker realizes, while the Godbeite reformers may have overstated the differences between British and American Mormonism and overlooked the many "beliefs and prac-

tices" they shared, clearly the milieu of 19th-century England provided "the potential for making some British converts indigestible chaff for Brigham Young's Zion" (p. 78).

Having said this, what was the Godbeite vision? As with many dissenting movements, there was probably more unity in dissent generally than in a well-formulated world view. Still, the Godbeites were interested in the meaning of religion in the modern world, especially the question of religious authority. Central to this debate was the very presence of Brigham Young. Fundamentally, the dissenters "defended personal conscience in religious matters" while Brigham Young and other church leaders asserted "the claims of institutional authority" (p. xiii). In part their problems with Young were economic: many of the Godbeites were merchants, and Young's retrenchment policies hit them in the pocketbook. But the disagreement was cast in larger concerns. For Eli Harrison, the issue "in Utah's theocracy [was] where did Brigham Young begin and end and when did Gospel teaching take over?" (p. 61). When asked by Wilford Woodruff if he believed that Young had the right to dictate "to you in all things, temporal and spiritual," Godbe responded that he had:

followed Young's business advice in the past—sometimes against his own judgement—and matters had turned out badly. On theological questions, he said he was no more sure of the president's leadership. Rather than depend on the counsel of a single man for all of God's people, Godbe believed that a better guide might be found in the "light of God in each individual soul" (p.8).

This was an import denial of institutional authority. Godbe's assertions, Walker realizes, raised generic questions that confront all religious organizations: Did God's voice come only to leaders? Could followers listen, learn, and act on the light of their own revelatory knowledge? What role did reason play? In the final analysis weren't people personally responsible for their own actions? Obedience, William Shearman asserted, must be thoughtful and complex, not lockstep (p. 179). "I do not believe in going along without asking any questions," argued Henry W. Lawrence, "I do not believe in being forced" (p. 173). Moreover, the Godbeites realized that there must be a recognition of the respectability, even necessity, of dissent. Without it, thinking men and women became "alienated and frustrated" (p. 179).

What then were the Godbeites' methods? Initially, they represented an effort of internal reform to purify Mormonism. Eventually, the dissenters called for a new Mormonism, a second birth blending the old and the new into a new church. The Godbeites also realized the power of the spoken and written word to convey their dissent. Indeed, one of their real contributions was the creation of publications like the *Peep O'Day* whose columns articulated their views and polemics.

I must confess all of this had a familiar ring. While the situations are not completely similar, the issues, methods, and goals of the Godbeites resemble the various efforts at internal reform within Mormonism in the last two decades. During that time, too, there were challenges by intellectuals to the notion of authority; these issues found expression in new publications and forums; the question of individual conscience was at the center; and the



dissenters often struggled with whether or not to remain within the fold. As was the case in the 1870s, a century later there were calls for a new church. Some dissenters, then and now, cared so much they couldn't leave the faith. Others took the course expressed in the lines of an old country

song: "We didn't know what to call it, so we just called it quits."

Well researched and clearly written, *Wayward Saints* is an important and insightful look at tensions within Mormonism. It deserves a wide and thoughtful reading.

# Planting Day

*Quinn Warnick*

Behind the weathered barn, I crouch  
among burlap bags full of this year's  
seed. These kernels promise before  
they prove, and I have no choice  
but to trust them, turn under  
the hard crust, smooth the deep cracks,  
clear weeds and rocks and dead birds,  
and finally count measured handfuls,  
each of the infinite granules  
packed tight with failure or success—  
they will not say which.

I think all morning of our autumn life  
and the four-month gamble that begins  
today. The sun scorches my neck,  
sweat runs salty into the corners  
of my mouth, and at home  
my whole family practices a day  
of penance. I am alone in this  
field of clay, trembling on a wooden bench,  
my fissured hands clenching the reins  
that nudge along two horses.

# From Under Ground

*Lisa Garfield*

From under ground  
you can hear them stomp,  
a chaotic cacophony  
amplified by mud and bone,  
deep-sunk despair  
become a dance of fear,  
anger in the air,  
blood below.

From under ground  
the rotten roots lie  
exposed  
to those brave enough  
to wrap compassion 'round them  
like arms.

Few are willing to dig so deep.  
To die, you have to trust dirt.

From under ground  
the papery winter of  
lilies and daffodils  
reveals its faith in patience.  
Roots are right to grow down  
while eager shoots burst into sunlight  
all surprised.

From under ground  
you can see and believe  
how love could live,  
how courage prevail.  
Upside down  
is the only way  
to see the way  
to right the world  
of wrong.

# Hop Hornbeam

*R. A. Christmas*

In the Sacred Grove  
near Palmyra, New York,  
there's hardly a tree  
old enough to have been  
around when Joseph  
Smith envisioned the  
Father and the Son;

except for this 350-  
year-old ironwood  
somewhat off the path  
by the west boundary—  
dark and nearly leafless  
under the canopy, with  
limbs raised to the

square like some ghostly  
authority—monstrous  
branches that in 1820  
might have been just  
what a fourteen-year-old  
prophet would swing on,  
but now I can't reach.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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JOHN BENNION writes short fiction and novels about the western Utah desert and the people who inhabit that forbidding country. This selection is taken from *Falling Toward Heaven*, forthcoming this fall from Signature Books, which also published *Breeding Leah and Other Stories* in 1991. He is currently working on *Avenging Saint*, a nineteenth-century murder mystery, and *Second Wind*, a young adult novel. An associate professor at Brigham Young University, Bennion teaches creative writing, the British novel, Mormon Literature, and Wilderness Writing, a course in which students hike and backpack and write personal narratives based on their experiences. He lives in Springville with his wife Karla and their three youngest children.

PAUL R. CAZIER, M.D., was serving as the Chief of MR Imaging at the William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Texas, when he diagnosed his own brain tumor in November of 1998. After a year of intensive medical treatments, he was hospitalized with pneumocystis pneumonia late Christmas Day, 1999. For one week, he remained unconscious on a ventilator without showing much improvement. His family then chose to honor his advance directive and discontinue life support measures. He died under heavy sedation on January 1, 2000, the first evening of the new millennium. He was 35. His surviving wife and three children are grateful to have the legacy of his 1,200-page journal.

TODD COMPTON received his Ph.D. in classics from UCLA and is the author of *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*. He lives in Santa Monica, California.

SHERYL CRAGUN DAME, formerly the senior manager of documentation for WordPerfect Corporation, has a master's degree in English and creative writing. A violinist since childhood, she also has training in voice, and in church she is usually singing with children or conducting choirs and congregations. She lives in Alpine, Utah, where she gardens with her husband, Rick. They have two small children.

THOMAS B. DOZEMAN is professor of Old Testament at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. He is the author of several books on the Pentateuch, including *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology, and Canon in Exodus 19-24*, *God at War: Power in the Exodus Tradition*, and the commentary on *Numbers* in the New Interpreter's Bible.

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## *ABOUT THE ARTIST*

Judith Mehr was born May 5, 1951, in San Francisco, California. In 1969, she received an art scholarship to Brigham Young University and graduated with a BFA degree in 1974. By 1978 her career included illustration and portrait commissions from the LDS church and other private and corporate clients in Utah. She began to achieve a reputation for portraiture and genre-scenes and has exhibited oil and watercolor landscapes, still-lives, and genre scenes in galleries and arts festivals. Commissions for the LDS church include a 74-figure mural of "The Eternal Family through Christ" for the Family History Library, and twelve medieval court-life murals for the restoration of the Hotel Utah, now known as the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. In 1990, Judith also had a landscape painting "Morning in Zion" included in the National Arts for the Parks 100 juried show.

Judith continues to be highly active in art creation and exhibition in Utah. Her work can be found in government, corporate, and individual collections across the United States and in Japan.

## *PAINTINGS*

*Cover:* "Clarinet Player." 28" W x 40" H. Oil on canvas, 1975.

p. 113 "Abnegation" (Self-Denial). 65" W x 43" H. Oil on canvas, 1994.

p. 114 "Waiting for the Voice." 60" W x 48" H. Oil on canvas, 1994.

p. 201 "Draped Sky." 40" W x 28" H. Oil on canvas, 1993.

Inside back cover: Self portrait. Line drawing.

*Back:* "A Rose Repeated." 20" W x 16" H. Oil on canvas, 1992.







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