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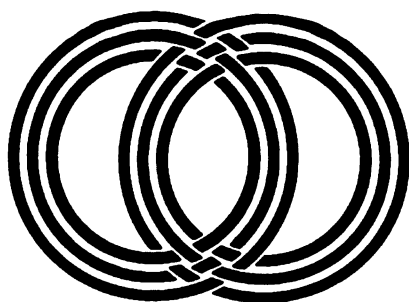
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DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

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

I feel sad that *Dialogue* has lost its appeal. I'm a good barometer and believe I'm reflecting a systemic problem: not provocative, not thoughtful, not courageous. . . .I will review the magazine at the library, and if it improves to the old ability, I will renew.

R. Gallagher
Salt Lake City, Utah

The Problem of Miracles

R. Dennis Potter's "Finitism and the Problem of Evil" is the finest essay I have seen on the subject yet. I wish he had also dealt with the existential problem of evil, but as he said, that is not truly a philosophical problem.

Lately, I have found the problem of evil to be less engaging than what I call the problem of miracles. Potter briefly touches on the subject, but does not go into much detail. Briefly stated, the finite God of Mormon tradition can and does perform miracles. If God is wholly good and has the ability, he could and should eliminate many evils present in the world today. So why are miracles so uncommon if God has the power to eliminate these evils and wants to minimize the amount of evil in the world?

Potter's response makes a beginning toward answering this question. I can grant we do not know what evils are soul-building. However, whether an evil is the consequence of free will seems irrelevant to me. Suppose I

come upon a robbery in progress, and I intervene to prevent injury to the innocent victim. Have I thereby interfered with the criminal's free will? I think not. Likewise, free will should not, therefore, prevent God from deterring or minimizing evil done to innocent bystanders because of a person's free will.

Additionally, while the case of the over-burdened doctor may address the logical problem of miracles, it does not help the evidential problem. The problem here is that the doctor will use rational principles in deciding what lives can be saved under the circumstances. If the doctor is repeatedly placed in such situations, we can discern how he decides. Indeed, the medical community has developed a system for that purpose. Similarly, if God is rational, then we could probably discern such a pattern with miracles.

This is certainly not the case. Despite our attempts to discern when a miracle is forthcoming (based on such things as faith, worthiness, paying tithes), miracles, if they occur, seem to be utterly random. They happen or fail to happen to people of different faiths and to those of no faith. Surely alleviating a famine or preventing the Holocaust should take precedence over an individual's withered hand or cancer!

We could assume God is irrational or not wholly good. With either possibility, the case of the over-burdened doctor would fail in solving the logical problem. In the latter case, we need no longer suppose God is finite, since if God is not wholly good, then the problem of evil goes away without further

positing he is finite. Presumably, preserving God's omnibenevolence is the point of finitism.

Timothy A. Griffy
Phoenix, Arizona

Rescued

At first I thought that Egyptologists Robert K. Ritner¹ and Edward H. Ashment² had dropped the Book of Abraham deep into a dark hole. But along came Bradley J. Cook³ to rehabilitate the work, using the Robert Patterson "Green Eggs and Ham" method⁴ so dear to Hugh Nibley. Now surely the church is busy printing copies of the *Pearl of Great Price* to be distributed free by the missionaries. Watch for TV ads.

Rustin Kaufman
Rexburg, Idaho⁵

Rare Combination

After reading your recent issue's three very instructive essays on "The Book of Abraham" (see vol. 33, no. 4), I figuratively stood up and cheered. Together, they were uncompromisingly objective and, with Bradley J. Cook's addition, sensibly faith-affirming. That combination rarely occurs either in our general discourse or in most published forays on religious issues, anywhere.

My euphoria was further sus-

tained by reading the three personal essays—two by dear friends, Bessie Clark and Cherie Woodworth. (I'd already heard Bess read hers at the recent reception commemorating her and Marden's 60th wedding anniversary.) The piece by Bryan R. Warnick, whom I don't know, "The Road to Emmaus," 'made' both my Easter and Good Friday.

Thanks for an excellent issue. Gene England would be very pleased.

Tom Rogers
Bountiful, Utah

Brushes with Gene

My best and most-lasting memories of Gene England are virtually unknown to most readers. During the 1980s Gene had a faculty study on the 4th floor of the Harold B. Lee Library at BYU, away from well-meaning but pestering students, friends, family, and readers who were continually at his JKHB office, classroom, and home. It was in this humble office where many of his writings came to fruition. Occasionally the need arose for me to summon him from his study so that he could answer an important phone call at the History/Religion Reference Office. (And I was always amazed that his insightful writings could originate from a room of chaotic piles of papers!) In fact, many of these "important" phone calls were from (or to) his dear wife Charlotte, for they consisted of

1. Klaus Baer was right, back in 1968.
2. One of the copies of the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar is in Joseph Smith's own handwriting.
3. There are Book of Abraham parallels to Islamic writings.
4. *Dialogue: a Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 163-168.
5. A.k.a. Joseph Jeppson, Woodside, CA.

a panoply of romantic and familial endearments.

For me, the Mormon Literature class I took from him in the 80s, an enlightening evening with his family and friends, and my association with him and *Dialogue* for over 20 years were also meaningful, but these “little” brushes with Gene are what I will remember most about the inspired proponent of quintessential causes and eternal ideas.

Gary Gillum
Springville, Utah

Poetry of Trust

Here is a poem I wrote for Gene England when he was in the hospital last year. Gene and I go way back. In 1964, when I had my first teaching job at Idaho State in Pocatello, I wrote a poem called “To Joseph Smith” and sent it to my childhood friend, the poet James McMichael, then in grad-school at Stanford. Jim showed it to the only Mormon he knew—besides me—his fellow grad-student Gene England.

“Who is this crazy guy?” Gene wanted to know. He liked the poem, and I loved his response. And so we became acquainted without being acquainted. “To Joseph Smith” was later published in one of the first issues of *BYU Studies*.

The next year, 1965, I was back in grad-school at USC. I don’t remember how, but I heard about this Mormon journal Gene was starting, called *Dialogue*. Somehow, I was invited to contribute. I wrote a critical piece, called “The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt,” and Gene and the other editors accepted it. It was published in the first issue. Boy, was I puffed up about

that. Turns out it was the only article I ever published in my checkered academic career, and I have Gene and *Dialogue* to thank for it.

I didn’t meet Gene and Charlotte until 1967. I was protesting the Vietnam War—wasn’t everybody?—and I decided that my presence was required at the big march in San Francisco during the so-called “summer of love.” My wife and I were pretty broke, so I got a hold of Gene and Charlotte, and they invited us to stay at their place in Palo Alto. They even took care of my very pregnant wife while I marched. To say that we were impressed by the generosity and friendship of the Englands is to put it mildly.

The next year, 1968, I began teaching English at San Jose State, just down the freeway from Stanford. Wouldn’t you know, Gene immediately invited me to join the *Dialogue* staff as a book review, copy, and “letters to the editor” editor. Wow, I was runnin’ with the big dogs—Gene, Wes Johnson, Joe Jeppson. On Wednesday nights I’d drive up to Stanford and hang out with the staff in Wes’s makeshift *Dialogue* office in History Corner and pretend I was making Mormon literary history myself.

In 1969 I left the Bay Area and took a teaching job at Southern Utah State College in Cedar City (now SUU). Gene kept in touch, and for the next couple of years or so I continued to work with *Dialogue* in small ways, reviewing, editing, and attending staff meetings, which were often held at Paul Salisbury’s home in Salt Lake. I would drive up to Paul’s late at night and sleep in my Chevy van in his driveway, so I could attend those meetings. I don’t remember anything that was done or decided or if I ever made any contribution; but it was an honor—and great fun—to be invited.

After Gene got his degree and left

for the Midwest to teach, we were out of touch for a long time; and my relationship to *Dialogue* became that of a contributor of poetry and fiction. This relationship has continued, off and on, up to the present. It has been my privilege and pleasure to have published some of my finest work in the journal that Gene founded and loved.

In 1994 my family and I returned to live and work in the Provo area. The first week we were there I attended Clinton Larsen's funeral. I had studied under Clint during my short stint at BYU, and I knew that Gene would be there. He was. He gave me a big hug and welcomed me back to Utah. Every year after that, up to his death, he invited me to read my poetry—either to his Mormon literature classes at BYU and UVSC or at the July 24th celebration readings he hosted at Wildwood in Provo Canyon. Several times he and Charlotte invited my wife Carol and me up to the England cabin on South Fork for good conversation and ice cream. Welcome—that's how the Englands always made us feel, no matter how busy they were with family or their many, many friends.

Gene and I did go fishing—once. On the "flying" trip referred to in the poem, Gene and I drove to Henry's Fork, Idaho, and back in two days; and we didn't catch a thing. Jim McMichael, our mutual poet friend, has a cabin there, and so we were—the three of us—all together for the first and only time. To be with these expert fly-fishermen—Jim the finest poet I've ever known, and Gene, the finest man—it was a thrill.

On the way up, Gene insisted we pull off the freeway for a guided tour of Downey, Idaho, his hometown. We drove slowly through the small, semi-dark streets while Gene pointed out

the co-op founded by his father, the family homes, and other places that were obviously very dear. I felt privileged to have him share these memories with me. Downey can be right proud that Gene grew up there.

When I heard that Gene was in the hospital and that his illness was grave, I responded in the only way I know—by writing a poem. Our relationship began with a poem, and it sort of ends with one, although I did see Gene in the hospital and a few times after he went home before my wife and I left on an LDS mission to California. It was there I learned that Gene had died. Although I was prepared for that possibility, it still seemed so impossible—such a loss for Gene's family, friends, the church, even the world. That sense of loss stays with me because, like so many others, I loved Gene—not only for the fine man he was, but partly because from the very first he loved my poetry and always encouraged me to keep writing. The fact that he loved my poetry, published it, and trusted my artistic instincts absolutely, is one of the reasons I have kept writing all these years. I have trusted in his trust, and it has sustained me. I have Gene England to thank—and love—for that.

More important than the poetry is the example Gene set for me, for all of us, spiritually. His testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel and of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was a beacon to me. Gene showed me that I could be an intellectual (so to speak), a fearless artist, and a humble, serving Saint—all at the same time—because that's what he was, is, and always will be.

Elder Robert A. Christmas
California-Riverside Mission

Critical Condition

for Gene England at Utah Valley Hospital, 2001

R. A. Christmas

When I heard about Gene's surgery, I
thought, "Even with half a brain he'd still
be ten times smarter than me!"

Of course the church is probably
praying the doctor got a few things. . .
(O.K., just leave us *him*).

Gene has so many friends that for years
I opted for something I thought more
special—"significant acquaintance"

(I was neither)—but even if we were
more competitive (that's a laugh) than
close, we had some times—

like the blessing he gave me
after a rough night (mine)
on the wrong side of Salt Lake

and our flying fishing trip
to McMichael's cabin on Henry's Fork
when I about rolled his SUV.

That's about it—and maybe it'll have
to do—Gene's in critical condition,
and so are we without him.

Balsamic Vinegar

David K. Isom

I didn't go for vinegar
but for the smell of life
for organic tomatoes
not mall tomatoes of feldspar
or other inorganic stuff

I went for narrow aisles
to brush against purple leeks
galvanized tubs of flowers
so intense their blues
need more than eyes to smell
crimsons more than tongue
and pores to see.

Cheeses and mushrooms
and other mold
with French and Danish names
chocolate
dark and tart and strong
fruit to eat and suck and paint

A place too simple for America
but right here just the same

As if fresh were a new idea
exuding from squash
not yet dead,
not pandering of orange juice
concentrated and calcified

Sure.

I was vulnerable to vinegar
not steeled against seduction

But I had not planned
even to think of four ounces
of balsamic that cost more
than some make in a day

A bottle in a wooden box. (I
had hesitated to buy an upgrade
casket for my father that
would just be buried anyway.
People knew my love for him
did not need gilded coffin.)

Vinegar dearer for
its hardwood case, reared
for generations in casks of
mulberry, juniper, chestnut
and cherry wood
as lovingly as wine,
but no inebriation,
except of soul

I bought the pedigreed,
handcrafted gall
to celebrate new life
awake and clear

For Eugene

William A. "Bert" Wilson

I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PAY TRIBUTE to my life-long friend, Eugene England, but my need to honor him properly may lie beyond any hope of my doing so. I feel Eugene's loss so keenly and have shed so many tears that words to express my feelings will not come easily. A few hours before Hannele and I left on our mission, Eugene and Charlotte came to our house to talk with us and to embrace us one last time. The thought that I would not see Eugene again in this life would have devastated me. I am devastated now. A glorious light that shone in the darkness has gone out, and we are all poorer for its loss. In the poetry and essays he left behind, however, that light will continue to glow. And in the hearts of those of us who knew and loved him, Eugene's light will never grow dim.

Charlotte—Eugene's beloved Charlotte—I pray you will realize that Eugene's noble spirit lives on, hovering near—loving you, praying for you, watching over you. Mark, Eugene's favorite son, Katherine, Jody, Jennifer, Becky, Jane, and all you grandchildren—I pray you will feel the presence of your father's spirit through all your lives. He loved you; he worried about you; he was your enthusiastic cheerleader.

Most of you here today knew Eugene as the eminent Mormon intellectual, the poet and essayist, the organizer and promoter of Mormon studies, the teacher without peer, the compassionate organizer of projects like Food for Poland. I knew the boy who became that man. I claim the distinction of having known Eugene longer than anyone here, with the possible exception of his sister, Ann. In March of 1939 my father, a Union Pacific Railroad section foreman, moved our family from Montana to Downey, Idaho, where Eugene's father was a dryland wheat farmer. That fall, with faces scrubbed and wearing new bib overalls, Eugene and I entered first grade in the newly completed Downey Elementary School. You will notice that I refer to him always as "Eugene," rather than "Gene." In Downey he was always Eugene; he became Gene only after his family later moved to Salt Lake City.

Our friendship grew slowly because we lived on the wrong side of

the tracks in a railroad company house, and Eugene and his family lived in the upper part of town. But gradually we recognized in each other soul companions. Still very young, we decided to play heroic and camp out on the England farmstead above town. We pitched our tent, spread our blankets, then built a fire and roasted hot dogs. Eugene sat so close to the flames his pant leg caught fire, and he had to jump into the nearby stream to extinguish the blaze. He spent the rest of the night and the next morning in wet shoes. When we were just about to fall asleep, a creature came roaring out of the bushes behind us and frightened us nearly to death. It was Eugene's father—come, he said, to check on some farm equipment.

Eugene was full of mischief, and I didn't lag too far behind. My mother, one of Eugene's Sunday School teachers, never could contain his restless energy and buoyant spirit though, as she somewhat ruefully admitted, she could never come up with a question he couldn't answer immediately. Our fourth grade teacher, Miss Salvesen, punished our misbehavior by having us copy a page from our history book for each of our transgressions. At day's end, we would sometimes have many pages of history to copy before we could go home. When we discovered that Miss Salvesen did not actually read our pages but simply counted them, Eugene and I memorized the shortest page in the book and then wrote out as many of these as we could in our spare time—sort of like putting misbehavior in the bank for future need. In the sixth grade, all we boys fell in love with our pretty young teacher, Miss Gilbert, and tried to win her attention with silly antics, which pleased her on the one hand but forced her to punish us on the other. When our first report card came out, Eugene had straight A's in all academic subjects, but a D in "comportment"—a circumstance that did not quite please Eugene's rather stern mother. My grade in comportment was C, about the only time I ever got a better grade than Eugene in anything.

Instead of selling his grain through middlemen, Eugene's father purchased a grain elevator near the railroad tracks, added a third bin, or silo, and stored his grain there until he could get the price for it he wished. At a very early age, Eugene became the operator of the elevator, turning it on each time the hired man brought a truckload of grain Eugene's father had cut at the farm, and turning it off when the grain had emptied out. The elevator was across the tracks from our railroad house. Eugene knew almost exactly how much time he would have between loads, so shortly after he had emptied the first load, he would show up at our house, or I would make my way over to the elevator. We spent most of the harvest time together. Before the new silo was filled with grain, Eugene and I and other neighborhood boys would crawl through the trap door at the bottom with our rubber guns. Some of us would stand against one wall of the silo, the others against the opposite wall. Then we

would carefully aim our weapons at each other, guns constructed from spare pieces of lumber, from clothing pins, and from rubber bands cut from old inner tubes. Eugene would shut the door. We would reposition ourselves in complete darkness. Someone would yell, "Fire!" Then rubber bands would fly across the silo producing yelps of pain from those hit. I wonder still that we didn't blind each other.

Though Eugene would remain always my fast friend, I soon realized that his embrace was too large to include just me. He was on the way to becoming one of those rare individuals whose driving intellect, magnetic personality, and compassionate concern for all he met would make him stand head and shoulders above the rest of us. Even as a boy Eugene was always different from most of the youth in our rural farming community. He read books, he loved ideas, and he loved to talk about them. Probably he converted me to literature as we slept out under Idaho's star-bright skies and talked deep into the night of the brave new worlds we had found in books. He was different in other ways as well. In all the years I knew him, years when many youth attempted to prove their manhood by using foul language, I never heard a smutty story, an obscene word, or a vile phrase cross Eugene's lips. In a community where physical intimacy was far too common among the young people, Eugene never veered from the path of virtue. In all ways, his conduct pointed the rest of us toward the road we should follow.

And this is how he has spent his life, pointing out the roads the rest of us should follow. Driven by divine discontent, he could never be satisfied with the status quo. He wanted all of us, himself included, to be better than we are—to be more loving, more charitable, more inclusive, more accepting of differences. However many mistakes he may have made, and he made some, Eugene's motivations have always been pure: to build the kingdom and to perfect the saints. I can only regret that some of his critics have denied themselves the blessing of knowing and loving this remarkable human being.

Each of us, I am sure, knows Eugene in a different way. Let me tell you briefly about the Eugene I know, the Eugene I have always known.

First, Eugene was both a thinking man and a believing man. Like Shakespeare's Hamlet, he could not believe that God would have given us "godlike reason to fust in us unused." He understood that faith untempered by reason can spill over into superstition and that reason untempered by faith can dissolve into sophistry. We must have them both. He believed in dialogue, in the spirited exchange and defense of ideas. Like John Milton, he could not believe that "truth" had anything to fear from a free and open discussion of important issues. On the contrary, out of such discussion, opposites could be reconciled and progress could occur. What we did have to fear was the suppression of dialogue, the protection of the status quo by simply not allowing the other side to be heard.

But as strong as was Eugene's mind, his faith was still stronger. From the time we were young boys, I have never seen that faith falter. Few have written more eloquently about the atonement of Jesus Christ and about our Savior's redeeming love. Eugene did not live a compartmentalized life. The thinking Eugene and the believing Eugene were the same Eugene. In fact, many of his essays grew out of what he believed most deeply. Over and over again, he looked at issues that trouble some church members and in his writings tried to lead them to solutions that would keep them in the church and at the same time live more comfortably there. Some argued that he was trying to create a new theology. He wasn't. He just didn't want anyone to get lost. Although he preached many sermons in his essays, his most eloquent sermon was his life itself. Through all the abuse, humiliation, and pain he suffered in recent years at the hands of those who misinterpreted or almost wilfully misunderstood him, he remained true to the faith and encouraged others to do likewise.

Second, Eugene was an obedient man. Some will disagree with that statement, but those who knew his heart of hearts will not. He loved and respected the general authorities and wanted few things more than their approval. He especially loved President Hinckley and in his final months wrote poems about him and for him. When I asked Eugene why he had defended practically everyone else in the world but himself, he responded simply, "I can't. I cannot take a stand against those I believe to be called of God." Some may see this as capitulation, as selling out his ideals for expedient ends. It was not. Obedience to the servants of God was an essential part of that faith he held dear.

Finally, Eugene was a kind man, surely the kindest and most loving man I have ever known. Those who know this best may be his students, who have felt his love and concern for them in every class he taught. Having served six years as Eugene's English Department chair, I read student evaluation after student evaluation expressing gratitude for Eugene's kindness and for his having helped struggling young people stay in the church. This loving care for all people extended beyond the classroom. Shortly after Hannele and I left home, Eugene, in the midst of his busy schedule, took over my grandfatherly role and taught my grandson Kory to fly fish. When my daughter Denise and her husband Ralph were building a home and were pressed for help, Eugene and Doug Thayer spent a day helping with their wiring. I will never be able to walk into the mountain cabin I have been building forever without feeling Eugene's presence as I look at the tongue-in-groove, six-inch pine boards we pounded into place nail by nail. Although Eugene always had about ten irons in the fire, at no time did he ever say he was too busy when I needed help. Those who could repeat that same story are legion. When Denise, who had also been Eugene's student, heard of his death, she

wrote me: "As I drove home and thought about Brother England (I still don't feel really comfortable calling him Eugene) for a few moments I felt wrapped up in love, as if he were giving me one of his big hugs. Then I thought about everyone's loss and just felt extremely sad. I like to think, though, that Brother England's large, energetic, uncontainable spirit is racing the earth now, hugging everyone—even undeserving, very distant friends like me."

Shortly before his collapse in February, Eugene wrote me saying he had been thinking about events of recent years in which the two of us had been involved and worrying that he himself might have done more to avoid conflicts. Then, in a statement I'll always cherish, he said he was repenting in his heart and in his prayers. What a marvelous lesson to leave us! No judgmental statement here, no bitterness. Only an attempt to reconcile himself fully with his God. Can those of us who love Eugene do any less? If we want to honor him and what he stood for, we must not let bitterness rancor our souls. Let us follow his example and bring all people into our circle of love, even those who may have caused us great pain.

About an hour before Eugene left us, Donlu Thayer sent me an email message with the subject heading "On his way." I have thought much about those words. On his way where? The prophet Alma answers that question, pointing out that after they have returned to that God who gave them life, the spirits of the righteous—and surely Eugene's spirit is one of these—"are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow." What then, after this state has passed? Alma again gives the answer, in a passage that Eugene recently told me he liked very much and that in my judgment can almost serve as his epitaph. Speaking of those who wish to become members of the church, Alma states that these are they who are "willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life."

Now, brothers and sisters, please indulge me as I say goodbye, directly, to my friend.

Dear Eugene, dear sweet, loving, gentle, loyal friend—oh, how I will miss you! With every particle of my body and soul I would have fought to keep you here had I possessed the power to do so. I had to yield to a higher power. But you got it all wrong, you dummy. You were supposed to deliver my funeral sermon—you with your boyish good looks, your boundless energy, your enthusiasm and love of life; me with my crumbling, old, decrepit body. I could never have believed I would outlast

you. Kory says that the day you took him fishing you reminded him of a twenty-year-old.

I want to thank you, Eugene, for all you have given me and taught me over the years. I thank you for your unconditional love, in spite of my many frailties. I thank you for your kindness, your goodness, your tender mercies. I thank you for teaching me to hold onto faith in the face of adversity. I thank you for your wry sense of humor. I thank you for demonstrating by example a love that encircled people of all colors, creeds, and persuasions. I thank you for sixty-three years of the best friendship a Downey boy could ever hope for.

Last June in rural Finland, I stopped by a field for some time and watched a farmer disk deeply plowed furrows into ground ready for planting. Most fields were already planted. Winter wheat was up eight to twelve inches, spring wheat two to three. I picked up the smell of the freshly-disked soil and thought of you, thought of our time together in Downey, thought of a time forever gone but forever in our hearts. We've come a long way, my friend, since we faced each other with loaded rubber guns across the dusty floor of your father's grain silo. But it's been a good trip. About the same time I was watching the farmer disk his field, you wrote the last letter I received from you. You said: "I think of you all the time and am grateful to God for all the good memories we share. . . . Through my sleepless, lonely nights, thoughts of you come like a sweet melody." That same melody, Eugene, sounds clearly in all my thoughts of you. One day we will play it again together. Until then, "Good night, sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

Salvaged for Mormonism

Levi S. Peterson

I FEEL GREATLY HONORED to be asked to speak at this memorial service. I hope I can add a dimension to our mutual recognition of Gene's virtues and qualities. I suppose that Charlotte and the children discerned a good many foibles in Gene. Perhaps he habitually failed to put down the toilet seat after relieving himself, or perhaps he failed to rinse his dirty dishes and stack them in the dishwasher as agreed upon in family council. But such foibles were invisible to me. In my presence Gene projected an aura of amiability, gentle humor, and benevolence. Benevolence, a desire that good prevail, was rooted deeply within Gene's spirit. It was, in fact, the essence of his spirituality.

I was aware of Gene as a co-founder of *Dialogue* before I met him personally. My admiration for that journal, which continues unabated to the latest moment, predisposed me to admire him. I first met Gene personally when he left St. Olaf's College and returned to Utah. About 1978, he and I became colleagues on the board of the Association for Mormon Letters. During the 1980s, he published affirmative interpretations of some of my fiction. I could wish that every author had an interpreter and critic like Gene. Throughout the later 1980s and well into the 1990s, Gene invited me about once a year to speak to his Mormon literature class at BYU. Almost invariably, some earnest student would inquire why I felt the need in my fiction to treat sex frankly and add vulgarities to the dialogue of my characters. I'm not sure I had a satisfactory answer. Nonetheless, a year later Gene would invite me to return.

My affection for Gene—and for Charlotte too—was deepened when, during the early 1990s, they joined a writing group to which Althea and I belonged. The group included four other couples over an eighteen-year period. We met once a month for dinner at the home of the writer whose turn it was to have previously mailed a manuscript for our critique. Althea and I regarded all the couples as dear and intimate friends with whom we felt utterly comfortable. It was only after Gene and Charlotte joined this writing group that I became aware that in their youth they had wed and forthwith departed on a mission to Samoa. I am not sure

that Gene, comforted for months by the presence of his wife, was properly tested by his mission. Thanks to my association with Gene and Charlotte, I gradually came to know their children as well, who, like Gene and Charlotte, are warm, intense, and creative personalities, deeply religious yet tolerant of the tensions between faith and reason.

Among many lessons close association with Gene has taught me is the ability to embrace men whom I love. Upon arriving at our house for dinner and an evening of discussion, Gene approached me with open arms and gave me a warm hug. I was raised to be reticent about such demonstrations between men. Tutored by Gene and others in our writing group, I overcame that reticence.

I will call Gene a liberal Mormon. I consider myself a liberal Mormon, too. However, whereas I am a liberal jack Mormon, Gene was a liberal good Mormon. In common Mormon parlance, a good Mormon is one who goes to church, pays tithing, keeps the Word of Wisdom, performs church assignments, and attends the temple. Gene was a Mormon of that sort. But as I say, he was also a liberal Mormon. A liberal is often defined as a person who desires change within an organization. I for one am the sort of liberal who would propose changes within the church in the name of civilization, civilization implying a dynamic process by which one culture adopts a desirable improvement or change for the better from another. Obviously, the Mormon church is a part of this large dynamic process, its members commingling with the members of sister cultures on a daily basis, influencing and being influenced by them. In my view, the person within the church best suited to propose desirable change is the faithful Mormon liberal, who by virtue of wide reading and a curious, rational mind is instinctively attracted to the expanding edge of civilization, where the old is constantly transformed into the new in science, art, morality, and dozens of other categories. To my thinking, this was exactly the role Gene fulfilled. However, I am aware that Gene would not have explained his proposals for change within the church in terms of an advancing world civilization. He would have explained them in terms of leading a Christ-like life.

Every faithful Mormon desires to be Christ-like, and every faithful Mormon will urge a more Christ-like life upon fellow church members. What distinguished Gene's concept of a Christ-like life was that it was not punctilious. It was not concerned with jots and tittles, with dotting your i's and crossing your t's. It was concerned with the spirit, not the letter, of the law. It did not assume you can quantify righteousness.

I would like to read a paragraph from Gene's introduction to *The Best of Lowell L. Bennion: Selected Writings 1928-1988*, a book Gene compiled and published in 1988. Besides being a tribute to the spiritual qualities of Lowell Bennion, the paragraph reveals much about Gene's own spiritual qualities. These are Gene's words:

I remember a class at the institute in about 1953 on the nature of God. A student asked why, if God is no respecter of persons, as the scriptures and common sense clearly indicate, a difference existed in God's church between blacks and all others. I immediately answered, as I had been taught all my life, "Well, God is also a God of justice, and since blacks were not valiant in the preexistence, they are cursed with the just consequences." In the discussion following my remark, Brother Bennion—who in my experience never mentioned this issue except when directly questioned—pronounced no answers, quoted no dogma. He simply asked me how I knew blacks had not been valiant. When I had no answer but tradition, he gently suggested that the God revealed in Christ would surely let blacks know what they had done wrong and how they could repent, rather than merely punishing them—and since God had done no such thing, it seemed better to believe that blacks had been, and were, no different spiritually from the rest of us. As I thought about this, my way of thinking about the gospel was changed, and not merely concerning this issue. I came to realize with stunning clarity that many of my beliefs, ones that profoundly affected my relationships to others, were based on flimsy and unexamined evidence and were directly contradictory to great gospel principles like the impartial Fatherhood of God, the universal brotherhood of humankind, and the unconditional atonement, which offered sufficient power to all to repent and be both saved and exalted.¹

Gene propagated those "great gospel principles" on many fronts over a long and influential career. I recall the excitement I felt at a regional Sunstone symposium in Seattle in 1989 where Gene boldly asserted that when the *Book of Mormon* speaks of the brown skin of the Lamanites as a curse from God, it should be interpreted as a statement of racial prejudice on the part of the Nephite prophets who wrote the *Book of Mormon*. This excited me, as I say, because I believed Gene's interpretation made it easier for a reasonable person to believe in the *Book of Mormon*.

The most important thing about Gene for me was that he made me feel more like a true Mormon. Whereas many readers have felt that the vision of the Cowboy Jesus which occurs to my character Frank Windham in *The Backslider* is blasphemous, Gene called it "one of the most lovely and believable epiphanies I have encountered in modern fiction." He went on to say in the same review that, while I have often called myself a backslider in public places, my novel suggests that I have, as he put it, "backslid a bit from backsliding."² Actually, I have not got over the

1. Eugene England, ed., "Introduction" in *The Best of Lowell L. Bennion: Selected Writings 1928-1988* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1988), xiv.

2. Eugene England, "Beyond 'Jack Fiction': Recent Achievement in the Mormon Novel," *BYU Studies* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 101, 102.

feeling that I am an irretrievable backslider. Yet I recognize that my association with persons who are both good Mormons and liberal Mormons has made me feel that I am, good or bad, nothing less than a Mormon. Many of them are present in this building today. I admire such persons greatly and believe I do well to add my effort to the cause of making the Mormon church a comfortable home for such worshipers as they. Gene was among the foremost who salvaged me for Mormonism. In his benevolent presence, I felt my inadequacies diminished and my qualities enhanced.

I have written that I am a Christian, if not by faith, at least by yearning. I have said that my fellow Latter-day Saints often seem so intent upon exaltation—a condition of celestial reward and glory to be earned by earthly valor and vigilance—that they appear to pay only a perfunctory respect to salvation, the gift of eternal life, given to all freely by the atoning death of Christ. As for celestial reward and glory, it would seem that a backslider should expect little. All the more reason for me to rely on the simple promise of eternal life. Still I somehow expect that if, after I have awakened from the darkness of death into the miraculous light of eternal life, I need someone to speak a good word for me, Gene will step forth to do it. I know I can rely on Gene to assert that my soul is more worthy than I ever imagined.

The Long Cast

Douglas Thayer

I WANT TO TALK ABOUT GENE as a fisherman, with a slight metaphorical emphasis. Gene's father was a meat fisherman who believed in catching big fish and lots of them, using whatever method or bait was necessary, which is where Gene got his start. Gene's father had connections, and one day they fished some private ponds and caught some four and five pound brook trout, which are very large brookies.

Coming home, the driver—a friend of Gene's father—fell asleep and rolled the car, scattering the contents, including the occupants and the fish on the highway. People stopped to help. Of course, being from Utah, the first question they asked as they approached Gene, who sat holding his unconscious father's bleeding head on his lap and giving him a blessing, was, "Where did you catch the fish?" Good fishing holes are at a premium in Utah.

Unlike Gene's father, Gene and I were fly-fishermen, and we didn't fish for meat. We fished small streams because there are often lots of fish, not very many fishermen, and the fish are relatively dumb. We were not consummate fly fishermen, just fly fishermen having fun. We fished Diamond Fork, South Fork of the Provo, South Fork of the Weber, and Corn, Gooseberry, Fish, Nebo, Salt, Currant, and Hobble Creeks, and the small Stawberry River below the dam. Creeks, along with their other virtues, have an intimacy, beauty, and character that larger waters don't have. One of the things Gene liked most was finding a new creek to fish; he liked the sense of discovery.

Creeks are also relatively safe. You're not likely to get swept away, which is an advantage wives appreciate as fly-fishermen grow older. Yet creeks can be tricky. One late afternoon I left Gene fishing a hole on Gooseberry Creek, and five minutes later he appeared through the brush soaked to his chin. When I asked him what on earth had happened, he said he was climbing up the bank, slipped, and kind of floated or planed on his back out onto the hole he'd been fishing and sank. It takes a certain skill for a full-grown man to immerse himself completely in eighteen inches of water. Of course Gene went on fishing.

We fished dry flies, usually rather large because vision begins to fade after sixty, and you often have to see the fly to see the strike. We used barbless hooks and released nearly all our fish, except for the two or three Gene sometimes took back for either Bert Wilson or Leslie Norris. A dry fly floats of course, or is supposed to. The theory is that the fish, thinking the floating artificial is a real insect, will strike at it, and you get that unique experience of having proved that you're smarter than the fish.

There is something wonderful about being on the right creek with a good friend at the right time of day, fishing the right fly, and dropping it in the right way at just the right spot. It can be a kind of momentary perfection. Again, pushing the metaphor a little, Gene, with Charlotte, was a person who sought all his life to live life in the right way, according to the rules of the gospel, which might be all the perfection one can expect in this life.

The first time I went fly-fishing with Gene, we fished his then-favorite stream, the South Fork of the Ogden River, which is a small creek filled with six- to eight-foot-high rock and log jams. Gene, energetic as always, vaulted over these. He was an eager fisherman. I followed him, watching for his wet footprints on the rocks and logs. It was a little like trying to follow a very large squirrel.

Gene was a leader all his life. As a scholar and writer, Gene was undoubtedly one of the leading experts, if not the leading expert, on Mormon literature and culture. Most of his fourteen books, over sixty articles and book chapters, and countless talks and papers are on Mormon subjects, although he also published on Shakespeare and other writers, and wrote fine poems and personal essays (his bibliography comes to fourteen single-spaced pages). He knew and felt Mormon theology, culture, and history deeply. He was always seeking new understanding, new ways to live and apply and teach the gospel of Christ. He was a devout disciple.

The one- or two-hour drive out to the "creek of the day" was one of the chief pleasures for me when fishing with Gene. We talked about everything, and not always in subdued tones—families, the church, school, the gospel, friends, literature, theater, our writing, which is not to say that we always were right, although we often agreed.

During one trip down to Corn Creek, we parked and started hiking up the creek. But the creek had dried up. A spring-fed creek that had been flowing since long before pioneer times was down to a trickle. Ever hopeful, we hiked on. We crossed the creek several times, until, stopping, one of us remembered that we had never had to cross the creek before. We looked around, pondered, and decided that whatever the trickle was, it wasn't Corn Creek. Six college degrees between us, and it took us half a mile to realize we were in the wrong canyon.

Gene was a compassionate fishing partner, and fishing is a sport not known for fairness and compassion among partners. He brought me cookies to eat (baked by Charlotte), shared his apples and sandwiches with me (made with Charlotte's wonderful bread), bought me drinks and ice cream for the journey home, and took me in his Toyota Land Cruiser (a birthday gift from Charlotte).

Sometimes I saved the best hole for Gene, and sometimes he saved it for me. On Lower Fish Creek he once caught twenty trout from a hole I saved for him while I stood by almost in tears. Trout migrate to deeper holes when the water is low; that hole was full of fish that had moved from shallower water, and Gene, with my help, had hit a glory hole, as we called them.

Gene's life, along with Charlotte's, has been compassionate, caring for the sick, poor, distraught, needy, and the doubting. He and Charlotte often had impoverished foreign students (most of them seemed to be Polish) living in their house, and then would support them on their missions once they graduated. Gene had a unique ability to help highly intelligent students, honor students, who were wavering in their faith, to stay in the church. Gene often told me that the essence of the gospel was caring for the poor and the needy.

Gene did more than simply fish. It was an education to go with him; he was a teacher in and out of the classroom. He was always stopping to point out flowers and birds along the creeks, naming them for me. He would draw my attention to a particularly splendid cloud formation in the blue sky, or hues and colors of canyon walls. He loved the gold marking of German brown trout. Gene would hold a brown to admire its coloring and then watch the brown as he opened his hands under the water to let it swim away, vanishing in its perfect camouflage. In a sense that's what Gene was doing in his long months of suffering, nursed and loved so well by Charlotte and his children and grandchildren, vanishing for a while from our view. How often during that long time he would say he loved you and ask you to kiss him.

Although I had a lighter cast than Gene, he had a longer one. Nothing delighted him more as a fly-fisherman than a long cast that brought a smashing strike. Gene's influence, like his cast, reached out. He regularly got invitations from groups around the country to come and talk to them about the gospel, literature, and Mormon culture. He and Charlotte had friends all across the country. I've never known a couple with more friends. These groups valued Gene's thinking, scholarship, spirit, hopefulness, and Charlotte's graciousness and strength, and her ability to keep fine-tuning Gene a little.

Gene and Charlotte built their pioneer house a block away from the BYU campus. Numerous times through the years they invited students, faculty, and friends to enjoy musical performances and talks and read-

ings on a wide variety of topics. Their home was a center of culture, enlightenment, and discussion. I've never known another couple that did more than Gene and Charlotte to bring people together.

Gene was quite an aggressive fly-fisherman. He developed what I named the "Gene England Creep": Slightly bent forward, constantly false casting to dry his fly so it would float better, he would move up the hole stealthily and terribly intent. He didn't like trout to get away. Once on Salt Creek in Nephi Canyon, we spotted a trout in a hole impossible to cast to because of heavy brush, but Gene said, "I'm going to catch that guy" (a term he often used to refer to fish). Gene climbed up the high, steep, brushy bank, vanishing for about five minutes, and then I saw his rod sticking out against the skyline, just his rod, not any part of him, and the fly slowly being lowered to the water, where the trout struck. Gene hooked him and came crashing down through the brush laughing, fighting the trout all the way. (I have all this on video tape, should anyone doubt my word.) Metaphorically speaking, Gene never avoided the difficult task.

Gene liked to fish by logs. If we came to a hole with a log in it, the log was his. He had an uncanny ability to lure fish out from under logs. When we returned to a stream, he always remembered where the good logs were.

Part of the fun of fishing with Gene was remembering previous trips, what fish were caught and in what holes, what size, what the fight had been like. Sometimes we would fish a hole alone, but mostly we fished side-by-side, both casting, waiting for the strike, talking, kibitzing, laughing, suggesting where the other might try one more desperate cast.

Gene was certainly the most complimentary fisherman I've ever fished with. "Good for you, Doug, good for you," he would say when I hooked a trout. He would stop to admire my trout before I let it slip out of the net and back into the deep. Slowly, somewhat reluctantly, I learned to compliment him on his trout.

Gene had an incredible ability to get hung up, snagged in the trees and brush, which was inevitable because he fished a nine-foot rod (the tip was perpetually falling off and the handle was loose) and made long casts. But he also had an equally incredible ability to get those snags undone without losing his fly. He was a hopeful fisherman. By that same token, Gene was very aware of human frailty (particularly his own) and the incredible ironies and tragedies in our lives that would seem to mock faith.

One day, fishing the Strawberry River below the dam, we ran across a lone fisherman on a hole. He told us how he'd fished that hole for forty years and about the incredible fish he used to catch as a boy fishing with his beloved father. He fished the hole and caught nothing, and then invited Gene to try. About this time I noticed that our fisherman wore a

holstered pistol under his jacket. In the meantime Gene caught a nice brown. The fisherman didn't say anything. As Gene stepped back, I whispered, "He's carrying a gun." Gene looked at me and said, "If I'd known that I wouldn't have caught his fish." We moved on. You never know how a fisherman will react to somebody catching one of his fish.

In some ways Gene was innocent, for he believed that others were just as interested as he was in discussion, dialogue, in doing their best thinking, and in finding and knowing, which might somehow lead to the truth, or some approximation of it. So on more than one occasion there were snags, snarled leaders, lost fish in his life—the metaphor goes a little too far here perhaps. And Gene knew his moments of despair, but with Charlotte there to help him, he never gave up. Even toward the end of his illness, he would try to write lines of poetry and whisper I love you.

When we were on the way home from one of our creeks, Gene would always stop and call Charlotte to tell her we were headed back. I usually drove, and he would take a nap. Charlotte preferred that I did all the driving, for Gene was not famous for his good driving. Bert Wilson often commented somewhat negatively on Gene's driving.

Once when we were headed for Currant Creek, Gene pulled out to pass and then swerved back to avoid an imminent head-on with an approaching white pickup he hadn't noticed. In my terror I shouted out, "Jesus," which wasn't blasphemy, but the beginning of a prayer, or perhaps the name of the individual I expected to see next, although that might have been somewhat presumptuous on my part. But then all roads are hazardous, and we all drive dangerously at times.

Gene's early death is bewildering. We can't make sense out of it, but then I imagine we're not supposed to. Viewed rationally, reality doesn't give us much hope. Faith is the foundation of hope, and a belief in grace is also vital. The Gene England I fished with was a faithful, hopeful man, and a man who believed more and more in the need for grace offered through Christ. In that name, amen.

A Brief Tour of England: My Year with Gene

Stephen Carter

WE IN UTAH VALLEY STATE COLLEGE's Center for the Study of Ethics were sardines, but we were happy sardines. Our office (formerly a mythical beast called a "faculty lounge") housed the chair of the humanities department, the director of the Ethics Center, Melanie (the ultra-competent secretarial glue that held the office together), and me (a research assistant). We didn't mind being crammed together in the little room, considering ourselves lucky to have anything that resembled an office in space-tight UVSC, where all unoccupied nooks were being metamorphosed into offices. Not even bathrooms were safe. Fifty feet down the hall, in a converted broom closet adjacent a pair of the few remaining bathrooms, stood the outer satellite of the center: Gene England's office.

Though Gene didn't spend much time in the Ethics Center itself, his presence still permeated our office. Our closet burst with the lawn signs he had made by the dozens to advertise the writer visits and conferences he sponsored on campus, and my ever-ringing phone provided a constant background noise to the office activity.

When people familiar with his projects discovered I worked for Gene, then the Writer in Residence at UVSC, most of them assumed I must spend my days talking theology with him or researching his next essay for *Sunstone* or *Dialogue*. It is true that I talked with him a lot—maybe once every three minutes. Gene's mind, I found, works on the fly. He called me to talk about everything that came into his mind—the moment it came into his mind. I could hear Melanie giggling sometimes when my phone rang for the thirtieth time that day from Gene's office.

"Steve? Gene here. I want you to get fifty more copies of the conference flyer and put them in my box. Oh, and I want to change the lawn signs this time to include the time and place for the keynote speaker. Do you think you can get Gustav to do that? Thanks, Steve."

Five seconds later the phone rang again. Gene had remembered that

he also wanted engraved invitations for the local dignitaries, a copy of an article on the Bear River Massacre that may have been published in October by the Salt Lake *Tribune*, and addresses for three people who'd just moved.

By the time I had opened a word processor to print out a flyer, Gene was on the phone trying to remember if the conference participants had been paid and if, by any chance, I had found that *Tribune* article yet.

Eventually I started treating myself to a liberal use of the campus voice mail system when Gene's assignments piled too high. However, I could only buy limited time with that maneuver. Failing to get me on the phone, Gene would come find me. He knew my tactics.

None of the foregoing should be construed to mean that I didn't love working for Gene. Everyone who has had personal contact with him can attest that his tremendous tolerance and genuine charity made up for all his eccentricities. Gene is the only boss I ever had who hugged me almost daily.

During the first six months I acted as his assistant, Gene kept me busy with the kind of work only he could produce: the impossible kind.

He would dash into the office an hour before the last mail pick-up and earnestly inform me he wanted his list of 300 friends and colleagues to get one more invitation to his latest conference. I started the work with the blunted enthusiasm I would use to humor the whims of an insane man. But Gene's tidal wave of faith, which he could produce spontaneously in concert with his latest project, had already caught me up to its crest, though I was oblivious to it. Carried by this invisible tsunami, we somehow completed Gene's harebrained projects nine times out of ten. We printed address labels, made copies, and folded and stuffed envelopes faster than Vaughn J. Featherstone can spit out a talk. Then Gene would run outside just before the last ten envelope flaps were licked and have his engine running, poised to snatch the batch of envelopes—still-moist—from me as I ran out into the parking lot. His 4Runner sometimes left a little rubber on the pavement as he sped off to the campus mail-room, where all the elements combined to pull off yet another miracle for the man. When he got to the mail room, Gene's puppy dog eyes, mixed with his plush teddy bear eyebrows and his absolute confidence that the clerk would let him send the mail just a few minutes after the deadline, did it every time. Sometimes I wondered if Gene had some obscure genealogical connection with the Biblical Joshua, inheriting a small bit of the ability to stop time when something really needed to get done.

After these ordeals, I would often slump, temporarily exhausted, into my chair, small paper cuts on my fingertips, envelope glue still coating my tongue, and say to myself, "Oh ye of little faith."

We pulled off other huge stunts, too, like the time Jan Shipps came to UVSC. The Regan Theater, which had been completely booked for the

next year, just happened to have as its only free night the very evening Jan came—Valentine’s Day. I snagged the theater only one day before her arrival.

Though a good 99.9 percent of Gene’s frenetic projects actually worked out, he still worried like no one I have ever known. Sometimes at 10 p.m. the night before a conference, a harried Gene would call me at my home confessing, “I can’t sleep, Steve. I don’t know if anyone is going to come tomorrow. So pray for us, all right?” Along with being my only hugging boss, Gene was also the only boss I ever had who told me to pray on a regular basis. It was practically a part of my job description.

Perhaps to assuage his hyperactive worry gland, Gene advertised prolifically. His lists of friends and contacts were voluminous, and every one of them usually received at least two separate invitations to Gene’s to-do’s, as well as extra copies with a small note asking them to hand the extras around to their friends. We badgered local reporters, plastered posters all over the UVSC and BYU campuses, and filled the computers of anyone even remotely interested in Mormon studies with emails. No one could escape.

In 2000 Gene received a rare \$25,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to start a Mormon cultural studies program on the UVSC campus. Though swamped with a new volley of Gene’s rapid-fire calls and all the assignments they brought, I realize now that those were happy days. We were busy, but Gene, with his boundless energy, pulled it all off, putting together conference after conference, seminar after seminar, and generally turning the campus on its ear.

More suddenly than not, or maybe I just hadn’t noticed at first, Gene started to age. It began when he became terribly sick for three days. When I called to get some instructions, I could barely hear his voice on the other end of the line.

“I don’t know what’s happening to me, Steve,” he said, “I’ve never been this sick in my life.” He dropped the phone and didn’t pick it back up.

A few days later he seemed to be back on his feet. But his face, which had once been too full of life to give any credence to its age lines, had withered discernibly. His grand eyebrows, the kind reserved for wizards, started to droop lower over his half moon eyes, shadowing them, so I could only see the light glinting off his dark irises. He no longer sat in chairs; he folded into them like a marionette. A pad and pillow appeared in his office, and he would frequently call me to ask that I wake him up in time for appointments. Sometimes I had to knock two or three times before I could hear movement in the room.

One day Gene took me into his office and started to talk.

“I don’t know what’s wrong with me, Steve. I’m just so tired all the time, and I get so depressed. Nothing like this has ever happened to me before.”

He said that same sentence often, almost like a mantra, "Nothing like this has ever happened to me before." His health, which had apparently been with him throughout his life even more faithfully than taxes, had been pulled out from under him like a tablecloth in a Flamenco dance.

He groped for some reason to explain this black hole inside him. He hypothesized at length with me a few times. At first he thought it might be a kind of post-traumatic stress syndrome resulting from his last experiences at BYU when some of his writings had incurred displeasure from the BYU and church hierarchy. "You don't know what it was like to hear what I heard from men I believe have authority from God," he said. Interesting, I thought at the moment, that he uses "believe" in the present tense.

Gene seemed to envision some sort of mental cancer inflicted during those hard days, corroding him silently from within while his body and life had continued, unsuspecting. He started sending me out on assignments to the library to find books on post-traumatic stress syndrome and depression. Perhaps he hoped that an understanding of his disease would enable him, if not eventually to cure it, at least to learn to live with it.

Sometimes at night when everyone had gone home, either Melanie or I would be startled by the muted hum of the office printer spitting out sheets of paper. It always took a few seconds for me to remember that Gene had a connection to the printer as well; usually Gene was behind the mystery printouts. He often forgot to come in to retrieve his papers, so Melanie or I would take them out of the printer tray and set them in his box. Most of the pages had poetry printed on them. I realized later that they were pieces Gene had turned out during his free time in his office. I caught the basic drift of the poems by what I saw at a glance of the pages. One still haunts me. It starts by describing the trek of a woman and her three children in Central America who are trying to escape an oppressive husband and government by taking a one-way hike to another country. While crossing some railroad tracks, one of her children is struck and killed by a train. Gene's description of the child's broken body overflows with the pain he must have felt when he contemplated the scene. Then he switches to an incident where a president of the church is warned by the Spirit to return to his seat on a train. He obeys just before the train hits a bump that would have thrown him from his previous position, standing in the small patio at the rear of the train, probably to his death. The poem ends with Gene talking with Jesus Christ. Gene's character demands to know which of these situations God had his hand in. The Savior turns to him, tears streaming down his face and "his brow set like flint," replying, "Both."

Despite his illness, Gene continued to plan seminars for the next semester and for his study abroad trip to London. But he also continued to deteriorate. During the seminars and lectures he attended, his character-

istic pose—legs and arms crossed, head cocked slightly, denoting deep thought and attention—sagged into sporadic bouts of slumber, his head bobbing as if it were floating gently on slow wavelets of water.

Gene had one final upswing just before his brain hemorrhaged. As human beings, many of Gene's co-workers, and especially I, fell quickly and optimistically into the habit of believing that the old (meaning young) Gene was back with us again. We breathed this small pocket of clean air deeply just before the storm hit.

Early on a pleasant February morning, Charlotte dragged Gene to the hospital for the emergency surgery that left him looking, as Robert Kirby put it, "as if he had been given a good work over with a highly effective tire iron. The reports sounded grim: a lobe incised, cysts removed, and no promises that the cancer inside his brain had been completely removed. Imagine my surprise the next morning when my phone rang and Gene started issuing instructions through the half of his mouth that still worked. It is one of my few marks of undeserved distinction that I was one of the first people Gene thought of calling after he woke from the anesthesia. Charlotte kept trying to take the phone away from him, but Gene had awakened remembering that plays and flats needed reserving for his study abroad program. Nothing could stop him, not even brain surgery. We were all glad he seemed to have retained his personality and thinking power despite having fewer gray cells to work with.

What he didn't have, however, was the use of the left side of his body. With his almost embarrassing candor, Gene told me on the phone about two weeks after his operation that he was doing all right except for the fact that he could not yet "eliminate" by himself. Charlotte almost got the phone away from him that time.

"It's discouraging to see how much I have to do to recover," he told me, "but I have lots of help and love." His goal was to rehabilitate soon enough to go to London that summer.

After the surgery, Gene's previous depression began to make sense. We started to understand that the pressure leveled on his brain from the growing cysts was the most likely cause. Instead of suffering only from psychological distress, the inner space of Gene's own body had started to boil with cancer. The question we had was: How far had the cancer spread? The doctors couldn't tell.

One day I accepted an invitation to meet a few of Gene's colleagues at the Utah Valley Regional Medical Center and visit him. As I waited for them to arrive, I caught sight of Gene's head, recognizable by the huge hieroglyph of a scar the surgeons had carved into his skull. A gray stubble of hair had just started to grow back. Charlotte was wheeling Gene down the hall toward the therapy pool. He saw me, too, and raised his good right hand, flashing one of his famous smiles at me. In the therapy

room, we watched as Gene limped painstakingly through the simple exercises his therapist had assigned to him. One side of his body still retained the toned muscle he had maintained through his years of daily jogs, but the muscles and skin on the other half of his body hung from his bones like thick honey, completely surrendering to gravity. Gene worked methodically in that pool to reconnect the left side of his body to his brain. His focus on these rudimentary tasks reminded me of the intellectual intensity of his best essays. I wondered briefly how he might translate these experiences into later writings.

Half an hour later we sat in Gene's hospital room. Dressed in a T-shirt and sweat pants, his left arm posed, mannequin-like on a tray hooked to his wheel chair, Gene talked with us about literature, theology, and one of his most recent ideas: writing an article about tidbits of information Christ gives about his own mortal life in the Doctrine and Covenants. But soon he tired. In the course of our good-byes he told us, "Some people don't believe me when I say this, but I have spent my entire life being an apologist for the gospel, because I know it's true."

I only saw Gene once after that. He flagged me down in the parking lot outside the David O. McKay Events Center, just after the Dalai Lama had spoken. He gave me an avalanche of instructions, as if he had never missed a day at UVSC.

"Check my phone messages," he said, "and my email. And see if you can find my file on 'Pastwatch.' It should be in my . . ."—his eyebrows buckled in concentration—"my right-hand bottom desk drawer. And if it's not there, it may be on the floor next to the bookcase—unless of course I put it in the filing cabinet. Oh, and Steve, make sure to remind the study abroad students of the next orientation meeting. Make sure we have cookies and punch there."

During the year I spent working for Gene, my wife and I had been preparing to go to grad school. We finally chose to attend the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the most isolated and distant university we could find while still staying in the United States. A few days before we left, I received my last assignment at UVSC as I emptied out my desk. "Gently and carefully," I was told, "clean out Gene's office." The thought shocked me, but I realized that we had no idea if Gene would ever return, and office space at UVSC is coveted. To add to it all, a few weeks previously we had received the news that cancer had been found in Gene's spine, leaving us almost without hope.

Fortunately Gene had been in this particular office for less than a year, because already his ineffable filing system covered most of his office floor while the filing cabinets remained mostly empty except for a Tupperware container full of trail mix and a few other odds and ends. Anyone who knows Gene could predict my findings as I sorted through his stacks and loaded boxes. Scores of books on Mormon literature and

Shakespeare filled the shelves. There was also a stockpile of Gene's own published books along with photographs and playbills. One of Mark England's mammoth pencil drawings towered over the desk, telling Gene's geologic biography in a language of amoebic continents, states and towns baled together by whorls of telephone wires. On the back wall, portraits of Dickens, Keats, and Melville watched over my shoulder as I scoured Gene's desk, clearing out little jars of almond butter, vitamins, unused sticky notes, and finally, his four-in-one scripture set. Compact, brown, and well used, the book had Gene's name on it, literally and figuratively. I remembered that quite often I had seen it lying open on his desk. It always seemed to rest on top of the stacks of papers that inevitably piled up in his workspace.

When I had finished boxing up Gene's academic life, I left the Ethics Center for the last time and drove home, watching the contrails of smoke that circled Mount Nebo as a wildfire burned a jagged path up its slope. That summer, the mountains around Utah Valley burned constantly. A wildfire on one mountain would finally be contained only to have another break out nearby—like a Whack-a-Mole game. During the warm evenings, the people in Utah Valley peered through their telescopes and binoculars as the fires spread like opening mouths over the darkened mountainsides.

Just as fire season ended, Gene and I both left Utah. My family and I flew out past the angular mountains of the Wasatch Front and followed the sun toward Fairbanks.

A Dining Room Table

Allison Pingree

IN THE TAPESTRY THAT IS my intellectual and spiritual life, Eugene England's influence not only figures as a prominent color, but helps to shape the pattern of the weave itself. Many of the moments I spent with Gene are akin to Wordsworth's "spots of time"—moments that leave our minds "nourished and invisibly repaired" when "depressed by false opinion and contentious thought," or caught up in "trivial occupations" (*The Prelude*, 12:208-215). The imprints of Gene that live on in me most certainly have nourished me when I've been depressed and invigorated me in the midst of complacency.

LEARNING HOW TO LEARN

For the past four years, I have directed Vanderbilt's Center for Teaching—a center dedicated to promoting teaching excellence across the university. One of the foundational premises of our center's work (and of faculty and curriculum development more broadly) is that teaching and learning are inextricably linked—one learns in profound ways by teaching another, and viewing material from the learner's point of view enables one to teach most effectively.

A second premise is that frontiers of knowledge are pushed forward in the most compelling ways by questions that reach across disciplines and divisions and draw on a broad range of voices, expertise, and experience. Thus, there is great richness in interdisciplinary conversation about teaching and learning. A final principle that guides our approach to teaching and learning is the need to engage the "whole person," not only cognitive structures, but emotions and beliefs as well.

I internalized all of these principles when I took the Freshman Honors Colloquium called "Learning How to Learn" that Gene co-taught with colleagues from English, Physics, and Psychology. My peers and I learned the learner-teacher interchange through the "Gong Method"—a process (developed by Walter Gong) of capturing, expanding, applying, and then teaching someone else about what we had learned. My patient roommate was the most frequent target of my pedagogical attempts.

We saw traditional structures of classroom authority and disciplinary boundaries become blurred as our professors became students in each other's lectures, sometimes stumbling as much as we did to understand Kafka or the theory of relativity or George Kelly's notions of "core role constructs." And we were nourished by five wise and generous adults who took personal interest in our well-being: they invited us into their homes, sponsored small discussion groups, and stayed afterwards for individual conversations; they shared candid views on topics that pressed our freshman minds and hearts such as career paths, marriage, and spiritual doubt and belief.

The model that Gene helped fashion, then, deeply impressed in me the principles of learner-teacher interdependence, interdisciplinary inquiry, and the value of attending to the "whole person." I can honestly say that after three subsequent years at BYU and six more of doctoral work at Harvard, "Learning How to Learn" remains one of the most compelling models of learning and teaching I know of—and one I reference frequently in my current work.

SOMETHING UNRESOLVED BUT DEEPLY FELT

In 1984 I took Gene's LDS Literature course. There, I read the spare, moving account in Mary Goble Pay's pioneer journal and discovered the voices of other Mormon women I had never heard of. Gene taught us the power of the personal essay as a genre. Drawing on the work of Mary Bradford and others, he emphasized the "I," "eye," and "aye" in such writing— "self-reflection, precise and honest perception, and powerful affirmation." I reviewed Gene's newly-published book of essays, *Dialogues with Myself*, for my final course project. Inspired by his example, I made my own attempt at a personal essay—one which, aided by Gene's editorial challenges and encouragement, became my first publication.

My essay described the experience of living with my grandmother for the summer and came to a tidy close by praising her "zest for life, love for her family, and gutsy way of facing reality." I still have that early draft on which Gene scrawled his response, the tails of his g's curling eccentrically backwards:

Good ideas and details but too carefully constructed-too neatly packaged. Where is the mystery of another being, your passion for life and for knowing her and despair at facing her death and your own mortality? Isn't there an experience you can relate—or create from some hints—that will give us the living person, unexplained perhaps, but real, living, dying and your literal progenitor? Take some risks. Leave something unresolved but deeply felt.

These comments certainly applied to the essay—but, more importantly, they illustrated Gene's own credo. Taking risks, sensing the mys-

tery of others (and in ourselves), facing the despair of mortality, giving way to the passion and pulse of things unresolved but deeply felt—these are lessons Gene both lived and taught.

I learned to live adventurously through travel when I joined Gene and his family—and a remarkable group of other students and faculty—on a six-month Study Abroad to London in 1985. Gene introduced us to the raw beauty of the medieval Mystery Plays showing at the National Theatre that year. He pushed us to move through space with passion and drive, to scramble for the best theater seats, to take in one more castle or museum before boarding the bus. Traveling with Gene left such an imprint on me that a few years later, after arriving at the Maui hotel where my husband and I were to spend our honeymoon, I instinctively blurted out: “If Gene England were here, he’d be unpacked and out sightseeing by now!”

Gene also encouraged risk-taking in the questions he asked—and pushed his students to ask. Once in a class discussion he wondered whether Abraham actually may have failed his test in his willingness to kill Isaac—a question that echoed my own discomfort with the violence embedded in that narrative. Gene taught to ask questions of theodicy—the mystery of why bad things happen to good people. And Gene framed what is “unresolved but deeply felt” as an opportunity, not a threat, through his ongoing love affair with “paradox”—the tensions that make us come alive. He never gave up on the possibility of dialogue, even when he was stung to the core by reprimands from high-ranking church authorities he worked hard to support. He blessed Chevrolets as well as people. His essay “That They Might Not Suffer” describes the most healing, redemptive view of the Atonement I have ever encountered, layered within his own struggle to reconcile himself with failure. And he taught the power that ritual—even “games” like those in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—can hold in the face of the paradox of mortality.

The mystery I struggle with now is Gene’s own mortality. He always seemed to surface wherever the action was—getting food to Poland during martial law or witnessing an assassination attempt on the Pope. On September 11th, I wondered almost immediately what mission would have emerged for Gene out of the tragedy, for he surely would have pursued one. He embodied perpetual motion. Several years ago, when doing some research at Harvard’s Houghton Library, Gene stayed with me and my husband in our cramped graduate student apartment. On Sunday afternoon after dinner, Gene lay down for a brief rest on the futon-couch that was his bed. I walked through the living room at one point to see how he was doing, and found him in a deep sleep. I instinctively reached for my camera: I was too struck by his utter *stillness* to resist capturing it on film. I never imagined that Gene would come so quickly to the more somber stillness of death. How can it be that this

man's frenetic vitality, his full head of hair, his restlessness, is actually extinguished?

Of course, parts of Gene stay alive in all of us—much as, at the end of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie's beloved Tea Cake lives on even after his death: "Of course he wasn't dead. He could never be dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made pictures of love and light against the wall. Here was peace. She pulled in her horizon like a great-fish net. . . . So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see."

Last fall, I bought a dining room table and chairs. Having separated from my husband and moved into my own townhouse in the last year, I have been struggling to build home and community for me and my eight-year-old daughter out of the loneliness I often feel. Buying this particular furniture was, therefore, a big step: this table—like the large one constantly used in Gene and Charlotte's home—would be the site where I could gather dear ones for food, drink, and conversation. Before its first use—before I even laid down the cloth, dishes, and silverware for that first meal—I found myself reaching out my hands to touch the smooth, dark surface. And then I found myself simply blessing my dining room table and my attempts to create community around it. It was a prayer that was brief and "unresolved" but certainly "deeply felt."

My life path, my home, my writing, and my questions cannot and should not replicate those of Eugene England. But I will always be grateful for the ways in which he has offered a moral compass, an intellectual spur, and a kind voice in my head that taught me to bless even broken things.

Eugene England: Our Brother in Christ

Robert A. Rees

BRIGHAM YOUNG SAID THERE NEVER WAS a time when he did not know Joseph Smith. What Brigham meant, I believe, is that when he first met Joseph Smith there was such a deep and immediate kinship he somehow felt a mysterious bond between them, as if he had known Joseph before. Whether that was an unconscious thread of some pre-existent memory or simply a deep magnetic attraction, we do not know, but Brigham's dying words were not the names of any of his wives or children but rather, "Joseph! Joseph! Joseph!"

In many ways I feel about Gene England the way Brigham felt about Joseph. When I first met him on the Stanford campus in the mid-sixties, I experienced an instant bond. Over time, I have felt closer to Gene than to all the men in my life, except for my own sons, but including my father and my brothers. He was my brother, friend, mentor, and his passing has left a giant absence in my heart. We talked about everything, shared essays and poetry, words of consolations, and dreams of a better church and a better world. In thirty-five years of friendship we never quarreled, not even when we had differences, as we did over the administration of *Sunstone* during the last year of his life. He worried and expressed concerns that he had somehow caused a rift between us. I assured him I could not imagine anything doing that.

I first knew Gene, as I suspect most people of my generation did, through the essay he wrote for the inaugural issue of *Dialogue*, "The Possibilities of Dialogue: A Personal View."¹ I vividly remember the excitement and even joy I felt reading this essay for the first time in the house my wife and I rented on North Carroll Street in Madison, Wisconsin, where we were in graduate school. Here was someone who articulated

1. *Dialogue* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1966): 8.

my own thoughts and feelings with clarity and power. In some ways, almost everything Gene wrote, spoke, and did in his life was an unfolding of the words of this essay. I take here expressions from that essay to remember my dear friend and the enormous contribution he made to my life and to the lives of so many others of our generation.

I am motivated in my relationship to Christ and my desire to build His Kingdom by both the questing openness and the loving authority exhibited in His life and in His revelations to His prophets.

The central, overarching motive in Gene's life was to follow Christ and build his Kingdom. He was one of the most Christ-centered people I have ever known, centered not just on the idea of what it means to be a Christian, but on the expression of that ideal in action. It was the imitation of Christ's vigor, his courage and boldness, as much as his love and mercy that characterized Gene's discipleship. Gene loved the Savior and he loved teaching and telling others about him. As he himself observed, and as many of his students have reported, much of his teaching focused on the theme of redemption, especially through the atonement of Christ. He was one of the first in the modern church to make meaningful the term "Mormon Christian."

Gene's imitation of Christ included his questing openness. Perhaps no one in the contemporary church was more eager in his quest for truth or more open to both its possibilities and the need to continually reexamine his own beliefs in the light of his discoveries. As with Tennyson's Ulysses, his quest in plumbing the depths of the mind and the heart was "to strive, to seek, to find"; unlike Ulysses, however, he was willing to yield when he was wrong or when he was convinced that it was a blessing to others to do so.

My faith encourages my curiosity and awe; it thrusts me out into relationship with all creation.

Gene had an abiding curiosity about things both temporal and eternal, and an awe of creation, both human and divine. He loved fly-fishing as much as he loved poetry. His enthusiasm, whether for tennis or teaching, was infectious. Being with Gene—climbing a mountain up Provo Canyon or seeing a Shakespearian play at Stratford Upon Avon—was always an adventure. I remember meeting him in London on one occasion. He was excited to take me to a play he had just seen, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, because he knew how much I would enjoy it. We talked about it all the way back to South Kensington.

For all of Gene's maturity, there was always his little-boy's enthusiasm for nearly everything he did. Recently I watched a home video of Gene and me playing football with our children on the UCLA campus

sometime during the seventies. In the film Gene runs, chases, and throws with more exuberance than any of the children. It was lovely to see him so alive and vibrant.

We must be willing to consider that anything we believe or base our lives upon may be a partial truth—at best something seen (as Paul said) “through a glass darkly”—or even may be dead wrong. We must take seriously the jovial words of Henry Eyring, “In this Church we don’t have to believe anything that isn’t true.”

It was Gene’s absolute dedication to “prove [ing] all things [and] hold[ing] fast that which is good” (one of his favorite scriptures) that marked his uniqueness among those of us within the Mormon community who have tried to reconcile our faith with our reason. It was his willingness to put his faith on the line, to both ask and then try to answer the hard questions (and not shrink from the revelations that came) that made him the most important Mormon intellectual in the latter half of the twentieth century. Yet to call him an intellectual is misleading. Although he was certainly that, it was the deep searchings of his heart and soul as well as his mind that set him apart. For example, like many of us, Gene tried desperately to reconcile his Christian faith with the church’s practice of denying the priesthood to Blacks (calling it “the heaviest cross I have to bear”), even writing an eloquent defense of the “ecclesiastical authority” which continued the practice, while at the same time saying he believed the Lord wanted a change.² However, he continued to read the scriptures about this subject, pray for a new revelation, and talk with others about it. Once he invited me to go with him to see President Hugh B. Brown about the subject. Later, he came to believe that the practice was not inspired and the scriptures used for over a century to justify this “false theology” had been misused.³ His essay on this topic is remarkable, as most of Gene’s were, for its new insights, its thoughtfulness, and its balance and charity. Other less generous writers might have used such an occasion to attack the church or show their superior insight. Gene used it to challenge Mormons to end their racism and sexism, and at the same time to reaffirm his belief in the church and its leaders.

Gene was just as open to his own limitations and prejudices, to those things he saw through a dark glass or concerning which he discovered he was wrong. Unlike many of us, he was more interested in finding the truth than in being right. He was quick to apologize and ask forgiveness when he found he had offended someone. Our conversations during the

2. “The Mormon Cross,” *Dialogue* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 78-86.

3. “Are All Alike unto God? Prejudice against Blacks and Women in Popular Mormon Theology” *Sunstone* 14 (April 1990): 16-25.

months just prior to his passing were filled with what for me were painful expressions of his doubt about the value of his life's work and a deep self-examination of his motives. I tried to reassure him that what he had done was both right and good as attested to by all those who had been blessed by his influence.

A DIALOGUE CAN REALIZE ITS FULL POSSIBILITIES ONLY IF THERE IS CHARITY

Gene was a charitable man, in the original meaning of that word: having a Christ-like love. At the memorial service held in his honor at the Provo Tabernacle there were hundreds who had been blessed to know that love. His was a genuine and far-reaching love. It extended not only to those who knew him, but also to strangers and, most challenging of all, to those who spitefully used him. I don't think Gene had an enemy in this life although there were those who behaved toward him as if they were his enemies.

Gene had an abundant heart. For all of the controversy he generated, and for all the anguish it caused him, he was both a peaceful man and a peacemaker. He was always trying to reconcile those who were on the opposite sides of a conflict, especially those conflicts in which he represented one of the sides. His essay, "'No cause, no cause': An Essay towards Reconciliation," in the issue of *Sunstone* honoring him, exemplifies his generous spirit of peace and reconciliation.⁴ The quote in that title comes, of course, from Gene's favorite play, Shakespeare's *King Lear*. He saw the scene in which the penitent king receives unconditional forgiveness from his Christ-like daughter, Cordelia, as "perhaps the greatest scene in all drama," and it exemplifies the love and forgiveness he gave so readily to others.

As time goes on, I believe our entire culture (not just those of us who know and admire him) will feel the loss of so great a soul. It is an irony of some magnitude that someone so Christ-centered as Gene was, so committed to the life of the mind and spirit, so faithful in honoring his covenants, so devoted to the gospel, and so supportive of church authorities, should have been seen, as Gene sometimes was, as an enemy of the church, as a heretic and a trouble-maker. Rabbi David Wolpe says, "God moves between the poles of night, danger and promise." I believe that those who serve Him well also move between these poles. Certainly Gene England did.

I have sensed the risk of choice, the limitation of commitment to a defined context in this world that is full of richly complex possibilities and allows us only finite vision into their worth.

4. *Sunstone* 121 (January 2002), 31-39.

Gene may have sensed the risk of choice, but I doubt even he could have imagined how risky a path he had set upon in challenging “the limitation of commitment to a defined context.” In spite of the misunderstanding, rejection, ostracism, and even punishment Gene experienced for his courage in challenging certain axioms in Mormon culture, he never flinched from the task. There is no doubt that he paid a high price, including public censure by a general authority, open disdain by some of his colleagues, and unceremonious release from the university he had served with full heart and mind for so many years.

Few scholar-teachers have explored their history and culture as did Gene ours. He informed his understanding far beyond the “defined context” of contemporary Mormonism by his reading of philosophy, theology, history, anthropology, sociology and other fields. No one of whom I am aware had such a broad understanding of our Latter-day Saint religious culture as Gene did.

The faith I hold fast impels me. . .to express honestly and fully and as gracefully as possible the convictions that shape my life, to try to demonstrate the things I find as I think and do research and experience the holy.

Perhaps no Mormon of our generation expressed his faith more fully, honestly, and gracefully than Gene England did. The fullness is attested to by the wide range of his published expression (biographies, textual studies, critical studies, short stories, edited collections, poems, sermons, letters, and, especially, personal essays), the broad range of his teaching (both religion and the wide sweep of the humanities, showing that he was equally at home with the Bible, Shakespeare, Melville, contemporary Mormon literature, and contemporary drama, to name only a few of the subjects which he taught), the incredible reach of his intellect (leaving no aspect of Mormon culture and religion unexplored or unexamined; being equally articulate about points of doctrine as about experiences of holiness), and the vast number of his publications (his bibliography running to many pages).

Gene was an excellent editor. As the editor of *Dialogue* and as a member of the editorial boards of *Dialogue*, *Sunstone* and other publications, he raised the level of both scholarship and expression. Dozens of Mormon writers were made better by his critical insights. There is scarcely an essay or poem I have published on Mormon subjects that was not improved by his incisive but charitable editorial pen. It is one of the losses I have sensed most keenly since his passing.

Gene excelled in writing personal essays. He always attempted to get beneath the surface and beyond the apparent, to get at the heart of Mormon history and theology, on the one hand, and to imagine its ultimate possibilities on the other. His essays were always provocative in

both the root meaning of that word—"to call forth"—and in its archaic fifteenth century meaning—"to arouse to a feeling or action." Gene's essays always caused me to think more deeply, to feel more profoundly, and, most importantly, to act better. Through his words and his life, he taught us how to be more courageous, more tolerant, more understanding, more merciful, and more loving.

I will give just one example of this. For much of my life I had anger and resentment for the woman who was my stepmother during a critical part of my young life. Due to her own poor upbringing and poverty, among other things, she was physically and verbally abusive to me and my siblings. I held in my heart a hardness for her that I could not (more accurately, did not want to) give up. At a fireside in which Gene talked about mercy with passion and eloquence, he asked those of us in the audience who wished, to share any personal experiences we had had with mercy. I spoke of the fact that during Gene's presentation I had been blessed to feel complete forgiveness for this woman, and I realized I no longer had room in my heart for any animosity toward her. Gene's teaching had liberated me from a heart-bondage in which I had been held for forty years.

In terms of honesty, Gene was more exacting in his honesty with himself than he was with either the church or others. It was his honesty, in fact, that often got him into trouble. Gene seemed incapable of dissembling or cant. Some faulted him for speaking out on so many subjects, feeling that he should be more discriminating, but his honesty compelled him to speak on those subjects about which he felt passionately, and he felt passionately about many things—the Viet Nam war, nuclear testing, racial prejudice, sexism, academic standards, corruption in government, polygamy, censorship, widening the highway in Provo Canyon, tearing down Brigham Young Academy—to name only those that come readily to mind.

As passionately as he felt about certain issues and as wide ranging as were his interests, Gene was a gifted writer, one who expressed his feelings and ideas, his faith and his reason with clarity and grace. He had a distinctive style and it was always a pleasure to read him, for it was possible to have one's mind stimulated at the same time one's heart rejoiced at the exactness and beauty of his way with words. Many of his essays are classics both in terms of their substance and their stylistic modeling. He was also an accomplished poet. In his last months he wrote some of his most beautiful and moving poetry. His last, a love poem written to Charlotte not long before he died, is stunning in its ability to capture the essence of their relationship and to convey the reality of that relationship continuing into the eternities.

[Christ] insists that my words and actions be integrated with each other and

relevant to the world—that they not just speak to it but really make the connection.

Whatever others may have accused Gene of, none, I believe, could accuse him of lacking integrity. Integrity was the hallmark of his life. I admired Gene for his courage, for his willingness to sacrifice his own comfort for the comfort of others, for his willingness to sacrifice personal peace for the peace of others, for his willingness to risk exclusion and loneliness in order to be obedient to his own inner integrity.

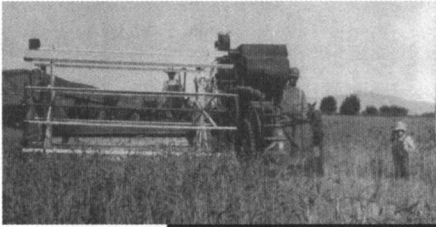
Where others wept and prayed for the poor, Gene wept, prayed, and did something. His and Charlotte's home was always open, not just for an occasional visitor, but for "foreigners and strangers," some of whom stayed for years! When my wife, Ruth, and I were on a mission in Lithuania, we arranged for a Lithuanian teacher to pursue her master's degree at BYU. Like most Lithuanians, she had very little money. We were able to get her a tuition scholarship and a job teaching at the MTC, but she had no funds for room and board. Gene and Charlotte graciously took her in and cared for her for three years. She was one of many who enjoyed the Englands' hospitality.

I miss Gene immensely. I have a frequent longing to talk to him. I want to know what he thinks and feels about many things. I look forward to the time when he and I, as Melville wrote to his close friend Hawthorne, "shall sit down in Paradise, in some little shady corner by ourselves, [where] we shall cross our celestial legs in the celestial grass. . . and pleasantly discourse on all the things manifold which now so distress [and excite] us."⁵

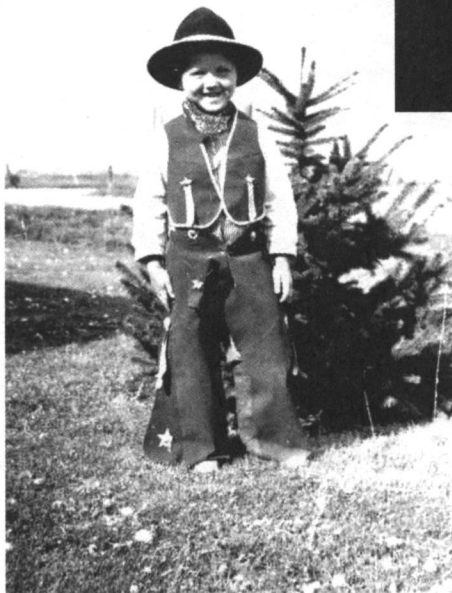
I have imagined Gene entering heaven. I see him reluctantly approaching Christ's throne. In my imagination Gene begins to apologize to the Lord for his mistakes, his pride, his shortcomings, telling the Lord there is cause for the Lord to be disappointed in his stewardship. But before the words are out of his mouth, I imagine Christ lifting Gene up, clasping him to his bosom and saying with cosmic tenderness, "No cause, no cause."

On the 6th of October 1855, Brigham Young declared in General Conference, "I feel like shouting hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith, the Prophet." Those are the sentiments I feel about Eugene England. Hallelujah for such a good man! Hallelujah for such a teacher and scholar! Hallelujah for such a Latter-day Saint! Hallelujah for such a brother in Christ!

5. Herman Melville. Letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, June 1851.



I am convinced, both in theory and from experience, that it is possible to find truth and to find God—truth that matters and a God who is personal, captivating, and a trustworthy and accessible model. I believe the quest must start in hope, which I define as an active desire that this universe we live in is a meaningful and potent one. Such hope includes an energetic yearning for immortality—for meaningful, individual life after death—and also some willingness to accept the responsibilities that such potential life implies, such as eternal marriage and continual repentance and preparation to meet God.



The Quality of Mercy.
"On Finding Truth and God"
Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992.
page 110

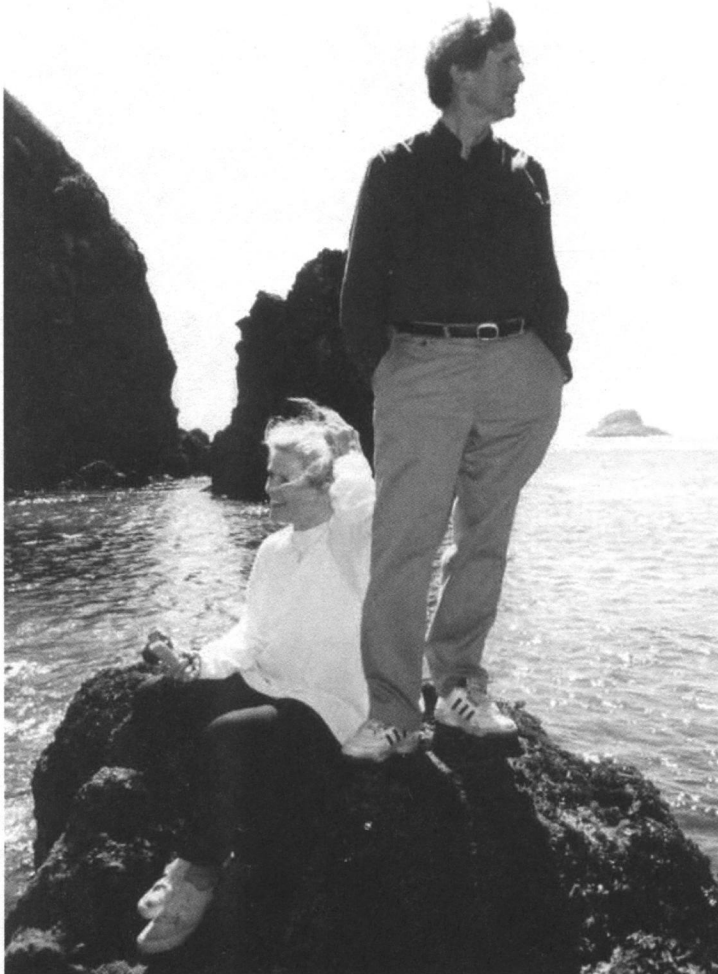
Church involvement teaches us compassion and patience as well as courage and discipline. It makes us responsible for the personal and marital, the physical and spiritual welfare of people we may not already love (may even heartily dislike), and thus we learn to love them. It stretches and challenges us, even when we are disappointed and exasperated, in ways we would not otherwise choose to be stretched and challenged. Thus, it gives us a chance to be made better than we may have chosen to be - but need and ultimately want to be.

Dialogues With Myself: Personal Essays on Mormon Experience.
Midvale, Utah: Orion Books,
1984, page 5



*It seems that all of us must go
through some kind of
Gethsemane, some version of
Abraham's test in which he
was asked to give up his
beloved son and his most
cherished moral beliefs in order
to know God.*

*The Quality of Mercy. "On Finding
Truth and God" Salt Lake City:
Bookcraft, 1992. page 123*



Blessing the Chevrolet¹

Eugene England

...For a moment Abijah felt stunned; in this, his first real emergency, he had almost forgotten God!

He turned to Brother Tuckett.

Clory, sitting on a boulder near-by, wondered at the sudden purpose in Brother Tuckett's movements. What were they going to do? And then she saw Brother Tuckett appear with the bottle of consecrated sweet oil. She heard Lon say, "You be 'Mouth,' Brother Abijah," and the full significance of the scene burst upon her. Why, they were preparing for "the laying on of hands"! For Abijah would have to be "Mouth" since he held the higher priesthood! She sat up in horror. Administering to an ox!

She saw Melanchton Tuckett rub the oil between the animal's red ears and then both he and Abijah rest their hands, one over the other, on its head.

"We unitedly lay our hands upon thy head, O ox. . .this oil which has been dedicated and consecrated and set apart for the healing of the sick in the household of faith. . ."

Bewilderedly Clory grasped the fact that this prayer had all the earnest supplication of the ceremony performed for any ailing human being.

...Clory watched him calmly speak to the ox. Opening its eyes, it stared at the men with its gentle, liquid gaze. She was not greatly surprised when it scrambled to its feet.

Maurine Whipple, *The Giant Joshua*

AT VARIOUS TIMES I HAVE HEARD AND READ, with mild curiosity, of the anointing of animals by the power of the priesthood in pioneer times, but it wasn't until I found myself with my own hands placed in blessing on the hood of my Chevrolet that I really felt what that experience meant to those early Saints, who depended on their animals, as we do our cars, for quite crucial things.

1. This essay first appeared in *Dialogue*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Autumn 1974). When Gene wrote it, the Englands were living in Northfield, Minnesota, and Gene was teaching literature at St. Olaf's College.

One evening last fall, Charlotte and I drove about sixty miles to visit a young couple in our branch, converts of a few years who had slipped into inactivity and growing doubt but were now trying to rebuild their faith. We had supper and a good visit and gave a blessing to their new daughter, who had been ill for some time with a vague disorder that kept her crying severely for long stretches. When we tried to return home, the car would not start. We managed to push it to the only garage in that small town just before it closed and were told that the trouble was apparently a broken timing gear, which would take about two days to order and install. Our young friends lent us their car to drive to our home and bring back when we came for ours. When I phoned to check two days later, I was told that the timing gear was installed, but for some reason the car would not start. I drove over anyway and tried to help, but as the afternoon wore on and we tried all kinds of variations of the timing apparatus, plugs, etc., we could only get an occasional rough chug and some backfiring. The mechanic finally said he was afraid he would have to tear out the new timing gear and check it, which would take well into the next day. But I had to be back home to conduct an important branch meeting that night, and when my anxiety reached a certain point, I found that it was quite natural, while the mechanic was helping at the gas pumps out front, to literally place my hands on the car and give it a blessing, explaining to the Lord that I was about his work, that my branch needed me, and I needed some extraordinary help to get there. The mechanic came back, made another adjustment, and half-heartedly tried the starter again for the hundredth time. So help me, I was not even surprised when, after a few mild growls, the engine started. The mechanic was incredulous and insisted on a test drive before he would let me go; after a few miles the engine was still running quite roughly, but he agreed that I could probably get home and then have it tuned up some more later—I was off. It was only on the long ride back that I became properly aware of what had happened, was amazed, and gave thanks.

I have had many occasions to bless my wife and my children and have not been surprised to see them healed, against all the odds, or relax from pain into peace or sleep under my very hands. And on a couple of occasions when we had car trouble during our many trips back to Utah from California or Minnesota, they have suggested that we pray for help, and it has seemed to come. I now remember, while on a little used Nevada back road in early spring, driving onto the shoulder to look at some flowers, finding myself stuck in hub-deep mud, and after a family prayer, inexplicably making it back up onto the pavement. And a number of times, following such a prayer, we have limped across hundreds of miles of desert or a nighttime of closed stations with leaking radiators or worn bearings or something else that should have stopped us. But those

things have occurred in fairly naturalistic ways that I sort of took for granted—as nice experiences for my children but nothing miraculous—and haven’t thought much about until recently when I started blessing my Chevrolet.

At Christmas this year we visited our folks in Utah and on our way home noticed there was a certain nagging mushiness when we tried to accelerate and also that a noisy muffler was getting louder. Crossing South Dakota on a Saturday afternoon, we found few mechanics available, but finally one took time to look at the car and found a dirty fuel filter, which he replaced, and a loose tailpipe connection, which he tightened and wired together, so it couldn’t work loose again. When the car still had no pickup—in fact, seemed worse—he took a look at the mileage (84,000) and cheerfully declared that the transmission was probably going (\$400), but I could probably make it home. We started out again but found that now we couldn’t get up over 40 miles an hour on the level, could barely make it over those infinitesimal variations in the landscape they call hills in South Dakota, and were getting about three miles per gallon. I calculated that even if things didn’t get worse, it would take us well into Sunday to get home and we would probably run out of money for gas before then or stall out on one of the (comparative) mountains of Minnesota. And if things *did* get worse, we could be marooned on the South Dakota prairie (fairly dangerous in January) or, at best, stuck in some motel until Monday when someone might be able to put in a new transmission—except that we couldn’t pay for it.

Suddenly I found myself gripping the wheel with a special intensity and giving the car a blessing again. I told the Lord that my family was in danger and that our branch needed us the next day and it was time once more for some special help. I felt impressed to take the next exit, which led us to a town some distance from the freeway, and without any surprise felt directed to a certain station. The owner looked things over, disconnected a vacuum tube, and had me drive off for a test. There was no change, and I went back disappointed and for the first time surprised. But the station owner greeted me with a grin and said, “I’ll bet I know what the problem is; I heard it as you drove off.” He put the car on the hoist and soon found out he was right. Disconnecting the tailpipe at the place the previous mechanic had wired it, he pushed a hose inside and found that the inner wall had collapsed almost shut. He explained that my Chevrolet had been built in one of those few years when the company had experimented with double-walled tailpipes. Sometimes, in the extremes of heat and cold of the upper Midwest, that inner wall collapsed, shutting off the exhaust and producing symptoms much like a bad transmission or an engine that needs overhauling. In fact, the reason he’d recognized the problem was that a friend of his had, just the month before, wasted \$500 on his engine before he discovered this very trouble

with the tailpipe. I wouldn't have been getting any power at all if the pressure had not forced the tailpipe connection loose so that the exhaust could escape; and when the previous mechanic had wired the connection, so it couldn't be forced open, the engine's power was shut down.

I found myself quite calm, without surprise, as he told me these things, without anxiety when he was unable to locate a new tailpipe at that late hour on a Saturday, but then called one supply-house just barely in time to get a length of flexible pipe and some clamps, and thereafter managed to cut out the curved section where the collapse had taken place and clamp in the flex-pipe securely enough for us to get home.

I do not understand fully why or how the Lord does these things—though I know he does. In fact, if I think about it much, there are difficulties: how about our free agency and our need to learn to solve our own problems and be maturely independent—not like infants always asking for help? How did this all fit with the Lord's assurances that he makes his sun and rain to come down equally on all his children—the just and the unjust? How about all that suffering, apparently uninterrupted by God, in the Sub-Saharan famine, Southeast Asia's constant bloodshed, the animal-like packs of deserted children in South American cities, the emotional destruction during slow death in American nursing homes? Couldn't God have veered the typhoon that killed thousands in Bangladesh or the earthquake that killed thousands in Iran as well as guide the mechanic to straighten out the timing on my Chevy or me to someone who could find and cure collapsed exhaust?

I don't know. Perhaps it has something to do with God *guiding people* rather than interfering with nature; perhaps it has something to do with his being asked in faith and for reasons that have to do with his most important purposes, which have to do not just with keeping people alive but with saving their souls. Yet he seems mysteriously selective about helping there as well. And of course, even when he does clearly respond, it isn't always the way we want or expect. In that almost too painfully moving autobiographical account, "The Death of a Son" by Carole Hansen that appeared in *Dialogue* (Autumn 1967), we were powerfully reminded that God, in response to a priesthood blessing, can give assurance and peace, even to the point of being misunderstood—and then eventually can give conviction of his care and the child's ultimate welfare—*without* giving parents what emotionally they want most, the child's life. Again, I don't know why or how.

All I really know is that I continue to ask for blessings and to see them given. Last week our branch held a special fast and had a prayer session for the four-year-old daughter of some friends of one of our members. She had to come from Colorado for extremely dangerous heart surgery at the Mayo Clinic to correct a congenital defect. The parents had lived with the specter of losing this child for four years as she grew into

a poignantly frail, elfin joy while they waited for her to be old enough to risk the operation, and they had fasted each week over the past months as the time grew close. They had been told the chances were about fifty-fifty, but somehow none of us was surprised when the last exploratory catheterization at the Clinic revealed the condition to be less serious than the doctors had supposed and when (after an anointing by her father and a local Rochester Branch brother) the operation went extremely well, and she was up and skittering around after only a few days in intensive care.

Last fall I felt moved to give a special blessing to a dear and extremely capable friend who was suffering anxiety and self-reproach under the pressure of his professional responsibilities and fear of failing his family and himself by not meeting them. I had no doubt that the Lord would bless him with the measure of self-confidence he needed to succeed—as the Lord did. And yesterday a faithful, long-suffering father and I were suddenly called out of our Sunday School preparation meeting to find his daughter in the chapel having a severe seizure. (She has had a condition from birth that causes a reaction at entirely unpredictable moments.) As the father took her in his arms and held her jaw, so she wouldn't bite her tongue, I placed my hands on her head and through the power of the priesthood rebuked the uncontrolled shaking of her entire body. While I continued to stroke her head, the shaking quickly quieted, and then we carried her to the car to be taken home to rest, and I returned to explain to those who had been present what had happened and to ask their prayers for her.

The opportunities, the needs, come often, and the Lord's response forms a bright thread in the texture of gospel living. But I don't fully understand why or how. I only know that I continue to ask—and to acknowledge the Lord's hand in all things.

Encounter

Linda Sillitoe

Absently, I opened the medicine cabinet
in my folks' house (searching for a comb),
then stood stunned as you wafted out
like a genie, so generous with cologne
and aftershave, I glanced behind me.
The room wavered like my knees.
Staring into that worn square of shelves,
I wondered, *Has she kept everything?*
Two years later, even your shaving brush
bristles from its cup amid the scents
of you spruced up, agenda laid, ready to go.
Alone, does she press this latch to summon you,
who left without giving notice? Will it
ever become easier to let you out the door?

On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage¹

Eugene England

THIS IS AN ESSAY IN SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY. In it I explore an idea—the general Mormon expectation of future polygamy—that has important religious and moral implications, but about which there is little definite scriptural direction and no clear official doctrine. I attempt here, in the spirit of a venerable tradition in Mormon thought from Joseph Smith’s “King Follett Discourse” and Orson Pratt’s *The Seer* to the sermons and writings of Hugh B. Brown and Lowell Bennion, to make a reconsideration, non-authoritative but serious. I suggest some new, possibly beneficial ways we might think and feel about celestial marriage—both as it is and as it might be. My essay is not a critique of official Mormon practice or doctrine, but an invitation to reexamine some unofficial ideas and expectations which persist among most Mormons because of a past practice—a practice I believe was divinely inspired but also divinely, and permanently, rescinded.

Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* contains a crucial scene after Brutus has decided to join the conspiracy and kill Caesar. Brutus is reflecting on that decision in his orchard in the early morning when his wife Portia joins him. Awakened when he left her side and further alarmed by the voices and cloaked figures of the departing conspirators, she worries that all this may be related to his “musing and sighing” at dinner the evening before and the “ungentle looks” and “impatience” with which he waved her aside. Even now Brutus claims he is merely “not well in health” and tells her to “go to bed.”) But Portia will not be dismissed and speaks straight to the heart of his real illness:

You have some sick offense within your mind,
Which, by the right and virtue of my place,

1. This essay first appeared in Vol. 20, No. 4 (Winter, 1987).

I ought to know of. . . .
 I [ask] you, by my once commended beauty,
 By all your vows of love, and that great vow
 Which did incorporate and make us one,
 That you unfold to me, yourself, your half,
 Why you are heavy. . . .
 Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus,
 Is it [there stated] I should know no secrets
 That appertain to you? Am I yourself
 But, as it were, in sort or limitation,
 [That is, am I one with you in only a limited way?]
 To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
 And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs
 Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,
 Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.²

Portia then reminds Brutus of the qualities of lineage and character that first drew him to her and, as further proof of her firmness and courage to bear his painful and intimate secrets, reveals that she had wounded herself in the thigh but has suffered patiently all night without troubling him. Brutus exclaims, "O ye gods. Render me worthy of this noble wife!" But then he does nothing to achieve that worthiness. A knock at the door signals an additional conspirator to be won over, and Brutus readily allows this crucial opportunity with his wife to be interrupted. Although he promises Portia that "by and by thy bosom shall partake/The secrets of my heart," he never keeps that promise. Had he shared his deepest self with his other half, his wife, and been advised by her better perspective, this man, whom Marc Anthony later calls "the noblest Roman of them all," might have been deterred from bringing greater evil on Rome than the evil he sought to cure. Instead, he also destroys the life of the intrepid Portia, who kills herself by swallowing hot coals after she learns what he has done and sees his fate. And Brutus finally takes his own life after Octavius and Anthony defeat his armies at Philippi.

Shakespeare, thus, shows how well he understood the importance of *fidelity*, the complete faithfulness, loyalty, and sharing that is possible only when a man and a woman join their full lives—physical, mental, and spiritual—in what he called "the marriage of true minds" (Sonnet 116). He saw fidelity as central to married love, which he portrayed as the supreme form of human happiness and wholeness at the end of each

2. William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, et al. (Boston: Houghton Miffling, 1974), 2.1.268-75; 280-87.

of his comedies, and the violation or interruption of which lies at the heart of most of the tragedies and late romances.

I believe Shakespeare is right. Marital fidelity is central to mortal joy and eternal life, even godhood, and great catastrophes are already resulting from our current neglect of it in society generally and in too many Mormon marriages. It is the key to our concept of sexual morality before and after marriage. And there is, I believe, a serious danger to the ideal of fidelity—and, thus, both to our sexual morality and to our concepts of ourselves as eternal men and women—in the expectation, shared I fear by many Mormons, that the highest form of marriage in the celestial realm is what is technically called polygyny, plural wives for a single husband.

I believe official Mormon polygamy, as it was practiced in the nineteenth century, was inspired by God through his prophets. I am the descendant of polygamists. I honor those literal ancestors and my many spiritual ancestors who lived that law—faithfully, morally, and at enormous costs to themselves and the church. Those costs included alienation from American culture and from their own moral training, martyrdom for a few, and very nearly the total destruction of their church and culture by the United States government, which was willing to use brutal and unconstitutional means to force Mormon conformity. I believe that the good achieved by polygyny outweighed those costs and made possible the establishment and success of the restored kingdom of God on earth during its beginning period. And when that practice had achieved its purposes, limited to a specific historical period and place, God took it away.

I believe God removed polygyny by direct inspiration to his prophets and did so because polygyny was no longer worth the costs it exacted. He did not remove it because our ancestors lacked the courage or ability to continue to pay those costs or merely wanted to accommodate themselves to mainstream American values. I believe that any persons who thoroughly and honestly examine the evidence will conclude that there were terrible difficulties and mistakes, embarrassing vacillations and equivocations, even transgressions and deceptions (by both leaders and lay members of the church), that accompanied both the beginning and the end of polygyny. But if such persons also tender some faith in the restored gospel and its prophetic leadership, and if they exercise some human empathy and compassion, they will find that the terrible problems that came with plural marriage did not come, as some have alleged or implied, because Joseph Smith was uninspired or merely lustful or because Brigham Young and John Taylor persisted in a mistake against God's will. As I read their letters, journals, and sermons, and the accounts and testimony of those who knew them best, I find ample evidence, despite the serious mistakes and problems, that Joseph Smith had

great self-control and that all three prophets were deeply inspired leaders, who would not have persisted in a form of marriage—the supreme sacrament of Mormon theology—that was contrary to God’s will.

The anguish, mistakes, and problems that instituting polygyny brought to the Mormons came precisely because most of the people involved were trying heroically both to be moral (that is, true to God’s laws given in the past) and also to respond to what they believed was undeniable new revelation—revelation that directly countered their own moral inclinations and Christian training. And I believe that in that clash of the old moral code with new revelation lies the best answer to the question of why. Why would God require such a strange practice, one counter to standard Christian morality and inherited rationality, one that even contradicted sensible and God-given moral laws—and, thus, could be practiced only at enormous cost?

I believe the answer is similar to the answers to other similarly difficult questions, such as: Why would God command his faithful prophet Abraham to kill his son Isaac, when God himself condemned human sacrifice as immoral? Or why would God allow his prophets to deny priesthood blessings to blacks, counter to his own teachings about universal equality? Polygyny was indeed (as the Lord himself tells us in Doctrine and Covenants 132 by explicitly comparing Abraham’s taking of a second wife to his offering of Isaac) what can be called an “Abrahamic” test, that is, a command by God to violate an earlier commandment:

God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. . . .Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? . . .Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it. Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac; nevertheless, it was written: Thou shalt not kill. Abraham, however, did not refuse, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness (D&C 35; see 34-37).

God apparently uses such a unique and uniquely troubling test because it is the only way to teach us something paradoxical but true and very important about the universe—that trust in our personal experiences with divinity must sometimes outweigh our rational morality. Obedience to the divine commands that come directly to us must sometimes supersede our understanding of earlier commands if we are ever to transcend the human limitations of even our best inherited culture and religion. We must learn, sometimes very painfully, to be open to continuous revelation. We must learn such a lesson partly because truth and history are too complex to be reduced to simple, irrevocable commandments—even from past prophets—like “Thou shalt not kill” or “Thou shalt always have only one spouse.” Truth is ultimately “rational,” but it is not always or immediately clear to our present reason.

Our ancestors’ painful obedience, then, to the new and “contradic-

tory" revelation of polygyny both tested and confirmed them as saints, worthy to build God's kingdom. They learned, as Shakespeare also knew, that "Sweet are the uses of adversity" (*As You Like It* 2.1.12). And they learned that lesson from the most wrenching human adversity—when opposites are posed by God himself. But precisely because it was an Abrahamic test and, thus, a means to reveal and develop qualities necessary in one particular and unusual historical setting, polygyny is not a practice to project into the eternities as the basis for a celestial order. Heaven is, by definition, a place where the cultural limitations and historical peculiarities of earth-life no longer prevail. Abrahamic tests and other special historical requirements, such as "lower" laws like the Levitical priesthood and tithing, teach us much about God's flexible dealing with human limitations and historical conditions but little or nothing about a supernatural celestial order, beyond such temporary mortal conditions.³

What, then, is such an order like? What should be our model of celestial marriage? Though we are given very little direct description of that highest heaven, the scriptures clearly stress fidelity and union of opposed equals:

Neither is the man without the woman nor the woman without the man, in the Lord (1 Cor. 11:11).

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. . . . Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Gen. 2:23-24).

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things (2 Ne. 2: 11).

Black and white, bond and free, male and female. . . all are alike unto God (2 Ne. 26:33).

Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds (Jacob 2:35).

These and other scriptures, together with the teachings of modern prophets and the temple marriage sealing ordinance, support a theology

3. Joseph F. Smith, in a discourse in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, 7 July 1878, suggested both the danger of polygyny, a powerful principle "that savors of life unto life, or of death unto death," if it were misunderstood or misused and that he understood it was applicable "when commanded and not otherwise" and was "particularly adapted to the conditions and necessities. . . the circumstances, responsibilities, and personal as well as vicarious duties of the people of God in this age of the world" (Journal of Discourses [hereafter JD] 20: 26).

of absolute and equal fidelity between a man and a woman as the basis for sexual morality, marital happiness, eternal increase, and, in its fullest implications, for godhood itself, the creative power that makes all existence possible. This theology of marriage is unique to Mormonism and is to me the most attractive and impressive part of the gospel—after the atonement of Christ. And just as the atonement is the key to our salvation from sin and death in this life, so celestial marriage is the key to exaltation, our eternal progression in the life to come.

The Mormon theology of marriage has two main characteristics. First, it implies that complementary oppositions lie at the very heart of physical, moral, and social existence. The most fundamental of these is the male-female polarity. That fundamental opposition, when it is tamed and matured into physical and spiritual unity, makes possible the creation and proper nurture both of mortal children and of spirit children to populate new universes. Female-male unity (which God has powerfully imaged in the concept of becoming “one flesh”) ideally involves complete sharing—with a separate, co-eternal individual and without loss of our own individuality—of all our singularity, vulnerability, trust, hopes, and potentialities.

Since celestial marriage is the crucial requirement for exaltation to godhood, Mormon theology suggests that the maturity essential to discovery and exaltation of the self is ultimately possible only in a fully equal, bi-polar but, thus, complementary, individual-to-individual synthesis. The supreme figure for this ideal, powerfully reinforced each time faithful Mormons attend temple endowment or sealing ceremonies, is that of the earth’s first lovers and parents: We are each invited to become, figuratively, an Adam or an Eve. We are, thus, imaginatively united in that perfect one-to-one unity established in the beginning by God because “it is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). Hebrew “alone” means incomplete, unfulfilled, rather than lonely.⁴ We are united that we might “know” each other, meaning in Hebrew to fully comprehend and share our being.⁵ The highest model for marriage, then, established in the garden and reinforced in the most sacred LDS ceremonies, is monogamous and centered in full one-to-one fidelity.

The image of becoming one flesh is realized most literally, of course, in conception, when our bodies actually unite to make new life. The sexual relationship perfectly represents spiritual union within polarity, that one-to-one sharing that ultimately makes possible the creativity of godhood. We can violate that creative union of two opposites in various

4. David J. Whittaker, “A Covenant People: Old Testament Light on Modern Covenants,” *Ensign* 10 (Aug. 1980): 36.

5. *Ibid.*

ways—by immature haste or promiscuity, by self-gratification or lust (either outside marriage or within it, if sex is used selfishly), by lying to each other, by not sharing fully and often our deepest feelings and hopes, by refusing to be vulnerable and, thus, walling off parts of ourselves, by not working constantly to justify and build complete trust.

The second main idea about marriage in Mormon theology is that since the highest form of love in the universe is the fully sexual and exclusive love of a man and a woman eternally committed to each other, it is the key to our highest joys and exaltations—and our greatest pains and failures. It is the love that ultimately, whatever the accidents of mortal life which may prevent children now, is able to continue the work and glory of Godhood through eternal increase and creation. Therefore, heterosexual married love is the ideal held out for all and made available to all.

Mortal probation continues for a long time after death to provide equal opportunities to all, and our theology promises that any genetic, developmental, or cultural problems or physical accidents that prevent marriage or children in this life will be resolved and that opportunities for such marriages and children will be provided in the next life.

But Mormon theology also promises dire results if we willfully oppose or neglect that ideal, even the piercing of our hearts with deep wounds. There are absolute prohibitions against homosexual activity and extramarital intercourse and very strong discouragements of lust—of promiscuous, selfish, or obsessive eroticism—even within marriage. The only rational explanation, it seems to me, for such warnings and prohibitions is that by their very nature certain practices tend to center on self rather than relationship and to deny the creative integrity of sexual intercourse—that is, its unique capability, at least in potential, to produce new life—or to violate the perfect trust and fidelity that the vulnerability and creative power of male-female union both nurture and need.

What, then, about polygyny? It, of course, does not fit the model of one-to-one fidelity I have described. First, we must consider the possibility that polygyny really does not violate fidelity, that if people are good enough they can have trust and sexual wholeness with more than one person. This could well have been true of our polygynous ancestors. Might it be even more likely in the celestial realms where the conditions and our capabilities will be much better than what we know now? I have found that this is the hope and assumption of many, perhaps most, Latter-day Saints who have seriously considered the possibility they might eventually be required to live in plural marriage.

I find two serious problems with such a hope. First, it is based on a dangerous notion: that simply getting more of a good thing is always better—that a great love for one person is even better if extended into great love for many persons. Consider, however, the differences between the elements that make up truly complete love. They include charity or

unconditional, Christlike love—but also friendship and erotic love, love that makes choices, love that is based on differential desires. The unconditional, redemptive love God has for all his children and commands us all to learn is certainly capable of being multiplied. But such unconditional love is only a part of married love. And the other elements of a complete, married love, including restrictive obligations, covenants of complete and exclusive sharing, and the creative sexual love that makes new children and universes possible, are not improved by multiplication. In fact, they are usually destroyed or at least weakened by it. Romantic, married love is, I believe, strengthened by being exclusive, even for the gods.

Eternal marriage uniquely includes all the elements of love: the exclusive as well as the inclusive and unconditional. Although it can expand to include sacrificial love for populous worlds of spirit children, it will nevertheless be injured by forces that weaken by division the powerful bonds of filial obligation and sexual fidelity. In other words, celestial married love differs from mortal love not because it includes a larger group of individuals, but because it includes more kinds of love than any other relationship—sexual love and quite idiosyncratic “liking” as well as charity or Christ-like love. But those unique and exclusive extra qualities, which give married love the greatest potential of any relationship, require the fully mutual fidelity only possible between one whole woman and one whole man.

Such fidelity, I believe, moves us beyond polygyny or polyandry, beyond patriarchy or matriarchy, even beyond priesthood in its usual functions and meaning. It seems to me that those are all lower laws, serving their inspired purposes—but only during certain mortal times with their cultural limitations. The ideal celestial order of marriage—of power, of creation, and of administration—will be the one the temple marriage sealing ceremony invites us to look forward to if we are faithful: the full and equal complementarity of a queen and a king, a priestess and a priest. It will be what President Ezra Taft Benson has called, after giving the term his own unusual definition, the “patriarchal order.” In “What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children About the Temple,” President Benson lists three priesthood orders, the Aaronic, Melchizedek, and “patriarchal,” pointing out that the third is “described in modern revelation as an order of family government where a man and woman enter into a covenant with God—just as did Adam and Eve—to be sealed for eternity, to have posterity, and to do the will and work of God throughout their mortality.”⁶

6. Ezra Taft Benson, “What I hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple,” *Ensign* 15 (Aug. 1985): 6-10. Note that Joseph Smith preached on 27 August 1843 regarding three priesthoods:

Just as the lower Aaronic (or Levitical) priesthood is superseded by the Melchizedek when historical conditions or individual maturity warrant, so I believe the Melchizedek priesthood is a preparatory order, to some extent superseded by the fully equal order that men and women receive when sealed in the temple. And though we are apparently not yet mature enough for God to inspire us to implement that order fully and administratively on earth, we should, it seems to me, try to imagine it for the future, at least in the celestial kingdom, and prepare ourselves for it by living it as fully as possible now.

And that brings me to a second problem with the dubious argument that celestial marriage will be polygynous because we will be morally superior there, more able to love inclusively. Such an expectation can tempt us to love inclusively and superficially—even promiscuously—in this life. Mormons sometimes joke about looking forward to polygamy—because it will be more sexually diversified for men or less sexually demanding or psychologically intense for women (or simply allow a division of labor in a household to the advantage of women). The serious edge under these jokes sometimes emerges in open longing for something “better” than we have known in monogamy, perhaps a wider circle of easy friendships, unfettered by the full demands and resultant exclusions of being one flesh.

The trouble with these jokes and serious hopes is their projected

The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right from the eternal God, and not by descent from father and mother, and that priesthood is as eternal as God Himself, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.

The 2nd Priesthood is Patriarchal authority. Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.

The 3rd is what is called the Levitical Priesthood, consisting of priests to administer in outward ordinances, made without an oath; but the Priesthood of Melchizedek is by an oath and covenant.

This version, which appears in Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 14th printing (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1964), 323, is, in turn, quoted from Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, B. H. Roberts, ed., 7 vols., 2nd ed. rev. (1949; rpt. ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1951), 5:555. This sermon was reconstructed from Joseph Smith’s diary for that date, kept by Willard Richards. The original text reads:

[The Melchizedek priesthood is] a priesthood which holds the priesthood by right from the Eternal Gods.—and not b[y] descent from father and mother.

2d Priesthood, patriarchal authority finish that temple and god will fill it with power.

3rd Priesthood. Levitical.

Priests made without an oath, but the Priesthood of Melchizedek is by oath and covenant (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps. and eds. *The Words of Joseph Smith* [Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980], 244-45)

flight from the full responsibilities of married love, which include loving unconditionally—but also include being a special, intimate friend, having children, sharing one's deepest self, and being fully vulnerable. In Michael Novak's words, "Seeing myself through the unblinking eyes of an intimate, intelligent other, an honest spouse, is humiliating beyond anticipation."⁷ And we are tempted to avoid that humiliation, however redemptive it is. Having comparatively shallow, friendly, intellectual, artistic relations with a group of people, even having merely sexual adventures with a variety, is not as difficult as developing a full relationship of fidelity with one person. And I fear that many Mormon men and women let the expectation of polygyny as the ideal future order justify their inclination to be vaguely promiscuous or superficial in sexual relationships, to flirt or share their identity with a number of people, or simply to withdraw from the struggle into blessed singularity—and there, too often, to be satisfied with some version of love of self. In short, some Mormons, assuming future polygyny, practice for it now by diverting their affections and loyalties away from the arduous task of achieving full spiritual and physical unity with the one person they would otherwise inescapably have to face, an imperfect spouse.

The nineteenth-century Mormon experience shows that such temptations are related to the very nature of polygyny. Those who lived it best, most devotedly and successfully, apparently found they could do so only by making the relationships more superficial—that is, less romantic, less emotionally intense and focused. Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs Smith Young, wife of three men, including Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and one of the strongest public advocates of polygamy, was quoted in the *New York World*, 19 November 1869, as saying, "A successful polygamous wife must regard her husband with indifference, and with no other feeling than that of reverence, for love we regard as a false sentiment: a feeling which should have no existence in polygamy."⁸ Vilate Kimball, first wife of Heber C., counseled an unhappy plural wife that "her comfort must be wholly in her children; that she must lay aside wholly all interest or thought in what her husband was doing while he was away from her."⁹

Diaries, letters, and reminiscences of polygynous wives and children reveal that regular down-playing of the romantic dimension of married love was indeed one of the costs of polygyny, whatever its compensating values. Even the best relationships appear to have been bittersweet. But I

7. Michael Novak, "The Family Out of Favor," *Harper's Magazine* 252 (April 1976): 41.

8. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 102.

9. *Ibid.*, 102-103.

fear that such a flight from the complete love that includes romance may actually appeal both to overly idealistic, unmarried Mormons and to Mormons who are not completely happy in their marriages now. If so, it is an unfortunate compromise, one without genuine compensating values and one to be repented of rather than rationalized by the hope that eternal marriage will be polygynous. One of the horrifying results of this idea, conveyed by some teachers of LDS youth, that polygyny is a "purer" love since it is a more inclusive and less selfish love and, thus, the celestial form of marriage, is that they, thus, help prepare some young Mormon women to be seduced by the argument of fundamentalists that they can engage in that "higher" order right now! Such thinking also tends to encourage promiscuity in the young and married, who may, therefore, share their deepest feelings, even sexual interests, too broadly; it encourages passivity in the middle-aged, who may, thus, neglect the constant struggle for full fidelity, which includes romance and friendship as well as charity; and it encourages irresponsibility in the old, who may finally retreat from their life-long task of building a deep and full celestial love into bored tolerance or silent alienation.

Now let me turn to a consideration of why, in addition to the serious danger to fidelity, I believe polygyny, though it was once an inspired practice, is not an eternal principle. I have five main reasons.

1. A requirement so central and important to our eternal salvation should be firmly grounded in the scriptures, but this one is not. In fact, the clearest scriptures state that polygyny is only an occasional requirement, otherwise extremely dangerous. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Jacob reports the Lord's insistence that David's and Solomon's polygyny was "abominable," apparently, as the Lord suggests to Joseph Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 132:37-38, because they went beyond what he'd commanded them. The Lord tells the Nephite men categorically to have one wife only and no concubines—no divided fidelity of any kind (Jacob 2: 27). In this general exhortation to chastity and monogamy, God offers only one exception: "For if I will. . .raise up seed unto me, I will command my people" (Jacob 2:30). The only such exception that we know about since that time is documented in Doctrine and Covenants 132 where the Lord commands his young church to practice polygyny, and we must assume that commandment was given for the fundamental purpose stated in the Book of Mormon—to raise up seed unto him.

I think the operative words in the Lord's statement of his one exception are "unto me." Polygyny, historical evidence indicates, did not produce a larger number of children; it was more likely instituted because of the Abrahamic test which it provided parents and because it concentrated children in well-organized and elite families. My sense is that it produced a more devout and religiously well-trained progeny, seed unto

God. That is certainly what some leaders, such as Brigham Young¹⁰ and Erastus Snow¹¹, believed was a central purpose and effect of polygyny. My chief evidence that they were right is the subjective one that well into the 1950s and 60s, when the surge in converts began, I was present at a number of meetings where standing count indicated that a huge majority of active Mormons, especially leaders, were descendants of polygynists, a much larger percentage than the percentage of Mormons who actually practiced polygyny.

At any rate, Doctrine and Covenants 132 does not say or imply that polygyny is anything more than an exception, commanded for a specific purpose relevant to a specific historical circumstance and, by implication, to be rescinded when those circumstances changed or when the costs began to outweigh the benefits.

All of the passages in section 132 about eternal conditions and promises relate to "the new and everlasting covenant," to what will happen "if a man marry a wife. . .and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise" (132:19), that is, to eternal marriage, not to plural marriage. The language concerning plural marriage, it seems to me, simply grants permission to engage in this unusual practice then required of some Mormons, with precise conditions designed to make certain that such an extremely difficult and dangerous requirement be controlled within the moral and religious bounds of the priesthood and the temple: "If any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another [by the law of the priesthood], and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second. . .then is he justified" (132:61).

Only two verses of Section 132 could be read as support for *eternal* polygyny. Verse 39 declares that David will not inherit his wives "out of this world" because of his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba, possibly implying that, had he not sinned, he would inherit those wives in the next life. And verse 63 states that plural wives are given to a man "to multiply and replenish the earth. . .and to fulfill the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified." This latter verse is ambiguous. It could mean simply that obedience to God's command of polygyny on earth, by those so commanded, makes possible their exaltation and, thus, the continued bearing of spirit children in their eternal marriages, of one woman and one man, in the celestial kingdom. Or it could mean that some polygyny is eternal: that for those who are sealed into it in this life, polygyny in heaven is necessary for their exaltation,

10. JD 3: 264.

11. JD 24: 165.

since it makes it possible for the wives involved to “bear the souls of men” in the celestial kingdom.

If verse 39 means that David could have inherited his plural wives and the second interpretation of verse 63 is correct, at most these verses suggest that polygyny will continue for those sealed into it here on earth, not that it will be required of others. Yet that second interpretation of verse 63 seems to me completely unacceptable because it requires that we see the purpose of plural wives as simply, or mainly, to bear more spirit children. Such a notion strikes directly at the heart of our concept of men and women as coeternal and equal partners in the celestial realms. It is based on one of the popular rationales for eternal polygyny, but the one which is perhaps most repugnant to an increasing number of faithful Mormons—that since women take nine months to bear mortal children and presumably will take that long to bear spirit children as well, each man must have many wives, keeping them all pregnant most of the time, to produce those billions of spirit children for “the eternal worlds” referred to in Doctrine and Covenants 132:63. That argument seems to me so obviously wrong I am tempted to simply dismiss it, but I have found that enough influential Mormons and teachers of religion espouse such an argument that I must respond.

Suppose it would take a woman, bearing a child each nine months, 60 billion years to produce the spirit children for an earth like ours (the 80 billion or so people demographers compute will have lived on earth by 2000 A.D.). It does not seem reasonable to me that God would require polygyny, with all its attendant problems, simply to reduce that time to twenty or even ten billion years by giving each man four or six wives. If humans can already produce test-tube babies and clones, God has certainly found more efficient ways to produce spirit children than by turning celestial partners into mere birth machines. To anticipate such a limited, unequal role for women in eternity insults and devalues them.

My basic point is that the scriptures are at most ambiguous about the place of polygyny in celestial marriage. I find no scriptural evidence that polygyny is required either for all of us or for those who are to be the most exalted. The silence of the scriptures concerning something so important and fundamental cannot be an oversight: “Surely, the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3: 7).

Yet a number of nineteenth-century Mormon apostles and prophets, in their defense of polygyny, claimed it *was* the celestial order of marriage, including Brigham Young¹² and Joseph F. Smith.¹³ However, in the

12. JD 11:269, 271; 16:166.

13. JD 20:28.

same sermons where they declared polygyny to be the celestial order, these leaders also asserted or implied, with the same conviction, one or more of the following: that the wives of those who do not practice polygamy will, in the next life, be given to those who do;¹⁴ that the more wives and children one has, the greater one's future glory;¹⁵ that if Utah did not receive statehood before polygamy was abolished, it never would;¹⁶ and that the practice of polygyny by the church would never be taken away.¹⁷ Since we no longer believe—or accept as inspired—those other claims, the associated claim, that celestial marriage is polygynous, is at least called into question.

I can understand that it might have been necessary for nineteenth-century Mormons and their leaders, who invested so much in the practice of polygamy and paid such terrible individual and group costs for it, to justify their commitment in part by the belief that it was more than an inspired but temporary practice. However, that does not make their belief true—or at least does not universalize eternal polygyny. The situation is similar to that of denial of priesthood to blacks. Some apostles and prophets until fairly recent times have stated that the denial was more than an inspired church practice—that it was rooted in pre-existent choices and the eternal nature of blacks or their ancestors.¹⁸ But in the same sermons or writings, they also recorded their equally firm beliefs that interracial mixing with blacks should bring death¹⁹ or that the Civil War would not free the slaves²⁰ or that blacks would never receive the priesthood in this life until all whites had.²¹ All of those claims have been proven false, one by direct revelation from God, and that fact, I believe, at the very least leaves us free to question the associated claim that dark skin or black ancestry is a sign of a mistake in the pre-existence.

Because God spoke in the 1978 revelation to end the practice of priesthood denial to blacks, we should seriously question the rationale that well-meaning church members developed to explain that practice: the racist and unscriptural doctrine still persisted in by some that blacks were not “valiant” in the pre-mortal world. And because God spoke in 1890 to end the practice of polygyny, we should also question the ratio-

14. JD 16: 166.

15. JD 1: 61; 20: 29-31.

16. JD 11:269.

17. Especially John Taylor, see Van Wagoner, 128.

18. JD11:272; See also “First Presidency Statement” 17 Aug. 1949, copy in Church Historical Department; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 102.

19. JD 10:110.

20. JD 10:250.

21. JD 11:272; 7:291; also First Presidency Statement 1949; McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 476.

nale that well-meaning church members had developed to justify it: the sexist and unscriptural doctrine of post-mortal plural marriage.

We should all aspire to the courage of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, who after the 1978 revelation had flatly contradicted his earlier teachings that blacks would never receive the priesthood on earth, apparently recognized he must also discard some associated teachings: "Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever [sic] has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world [about how 'all are alike unto God. . .black and white' (2 Ne. 26:33)]."²²

We now have additional light and knowledge because of the 1890 revelation and subsequent church teachings and practices on what that same Book of Mormon passage means in claiming "all are alike unto God. . .male and female." Certainly analogies do not provide proof by themselves, but this one should encourage us to reassess past teachings which were linked to teachings we now know to be false and that are contrary to our post-Manifesto understanding of marriage.

I realize this is a troubling, perhaps dangerous position: If we start questioning some statements of church leaders, why not all? If they were wrong about some of their rationales for polygyny and priesthood denial, why are they not wrong about God's involvement in first instituting those practices—or anything else in the Restoration? Though I sympathize with—even share—this anxiety, the assertion that revelation is either totally true or totally untrue is still a false dichotomy: We simply do not believe, as Mormons, that we must accept all scripture and prophetic teaching as equally inspired, and we have no doctrine of prophetic infallibility. The scriptures and our modern church leaders themselves have made this point again and again and have given us some guidelines for distinguishing binding truth and direction from good advice and both of these from "the mistakes of men."²³

In the particular case of polygyny, a reasonable guideline can be formulated: If a church practice which served valuable historical purposes is rescinded, thus, proving false some statements which were made in the process of defending it as permanent because it is based in some eternal doctrine, then all such statements are called into question and can be thoughtfully and prayerfully assessed in relation to other fundamental scriptures and doctrines (as I am trying to do here) without opening the

22. Bruce R. McConkie, "All Are Alike Unto God," speech given 18 Aug. 1978, publ. *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 153.

23. "Preface" to the Book of Mormon; see also D&C 1:24-27.

Pandora's box of complete skepticism. I can (and do) believe that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were divinely called prophets who received direct revelation across a remarkable range of important practices and doctrines. I am not, thereby, constrained to believe (and do not) that they never made a mistake or never suffered from the human limitations of understanding that plague us all. Modern prophets themselves have explicitly renounced specific practices and teachings of both those earlier prophets (the Adam-God theory, for instance), sometimes even supplying rational arguments to help us understand how such mistakes or changes could occur, without thereby calling into question those prophets' general inspiration or prophetic authority.

2. My second reason for questioning eternal polygyny, in addition to the lack of scriptural support for such a doctrine, is that if polygyny were the highest order of marriage, surely the Lord would want us to practice it whenever and wherever we could on earth. But he does not. I feel certain, and those I have consulted who are trained in the law agree, that a serious effort by the church to strike down the anti-polygamy laws as unconstitutional would succeed. But the church not only does not make such an effort; I understand it takes action against those who seriously advocate doing so. We do not even allow our members to continue practicing polygyny in countries where it is legal. Thus, one of the strangest paradoxes of Mormon history is that the Reorganized Church [now Community of Christ], which claims the Lord never revealed polygyny, allows members to practice it in India and Africa, while the Utah-based LDS church, which claims the Lord did reveal it, does not allow *anyone* to practice it.

3. There is a general Mormon assumption that the plural wives who were sealed to polygynists (or are sealed to widowers) are bound in eternal sealings that cannot be broken and so at least *those* marriages must be plural in eternity. But this assumption has been essentially refuted by the modern church practice, initiated by President David O. McKay, of sometimes sealing a woman to *more than one man*. Of course, this form of plural marriage (polyandry) usually occurs only in temple work done for a dead woman who was married to more than one man during life. She is now sealed to all her husbands without our presuming to make a choice for her—and, of course, her choice in the spirit world of one eternal companion must then invalidate the other sealings and leave those men free to find eternal companions. Sealings, thus, seem to guarantee bonds only when they are subsequently agreed upon but do not forcibly bind anyone. But if this is so in such polyandrous sealings, then it might just as well be the case in polygynous ones. The man involved could have the opportunity to work out a one-to-one relationship as the basis for celestial marriage from among the women to whom he was sealed, and the other sealings must then be invalidated by mutual consent; thus,

freeing those women to form one-to-one celestial marriages with others.

Who would those others be? Possibly the "extra" husbands of widows similarly released by *their* choice of one eternal companion, or, of course, the many single men who have lived on earth, but also, it has been half-seriously suggested, the surplus of male babies who die and inherit celestial glory. Being required to make such a choice may sound like harsh doctrine for those women who in good faith look forward to being with the one man they have known and loved, even if he has other wives. But that doctrine is no harsher than the same doctrine for the man married to one woman whom he loves deeply, even though she has been married to others, perhaps sealed to one of them and now, under President McKay's change, sealed to all. All but one of these men must find new companions. Obviously, we must trust in the great and almost unique Mormon principle of continued life and development after death but before judgment, when opportunity will abound for single men and women, as well as unmatched spouses, to find their eternal companions.

4. That semi-serious aside about surplus male babies leads to my fourth argument: Another popular rationale for polygyny is that there are and will be more righteous women than men. This rather patronizing and certainly unprovable sentiment cloaks a sexist assumption, demeaning to both men and women. And a fine satire on the question, "In the Heavens Are Parents Single? Report No. 1," by the "Committee on Celestial Demographics," published in the Spring 1984 *Dialogue*, makes a plausible case that there will actually be *many more men than women* in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. We know that 104 males are born for every 100 females and 47 percent of males born into the world have died before age eight, as opposed to only 44 percent of females. If we accept the usual interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 137—that all children who die under eight are exalted—then already, from the over 70 billion who have come to earth, nearly 17 billion males and 15 billion females are destined for the highest degree of the celestial kingdom on the basis of premature death alone, a surplus of nearly 2 billion males.²⁴ Even if women were naturally more righteous, it would take a huge disproportion in that righteousness to merely equalize those numbers, to say nothing of creating a situation that required plural wives.

Of course, that "Report" is extremely speculative and fundamentally wrong-headed, as good satire always is. I believe it is more likely and certainly more consistent with free agency that children who die and are, thus, in the words of Doctrine and Covenants 137:7, "heirs of the celestial kingdom," are not, thus, guaranteed exaltation but only guaranteed an

24. Committee on Celestial Demographics, "In The Heavens Are Parents Single?" *Dialogue: a Journal of Mormon Thought* 17, No. 1 (Spring 1984): 85-86.

opportunity for exaltation—and that the number of males and females in the celestial kingdom is essentially equal.

Actually, I believe those numbers are exactly equal. Since celestial marriage itself is a prior requirement for the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, then it would seem that we arrive there, not as different numbers of men or women who then must pair off—or pluralize off—into marriages, but only after having achieved, as part of our righteousness, a celestial marriage. We arrive partnered. In other words, arguments about relative numbers of righteous men and women are irrelevant; the highest degree of the celestial kingdom will be, by definition, a place made up entirely of eternal male-female couples.

5. My fifth reason for believing celestial marriage is not polygynous—and my main reason for thinking that we must not simply say, “We can’t possibly imagine what it will be like in heaven and so shouldn’t worry about it”—is that it seems to me, from reflection and from talking with Mormon women, that the devaluation of women inherent in the expectation of polygyny is destructive of their sense of identity and worth *now*. For instance, the argument considered above, that there must be polygyny because there are more celestial women than men, sounds at first complimentary to women. But if we reflect a bit, it is simply a way of saying that one good man is in some sense the equivalent of more women than one, however “righteous” those women are compared to the average man. Can one man emotionally and sexually satisfy more than one woman? Or is he capable of being “equally yoked” to more than one woman—spiritually or intellectually or managerially or whatever? In either case, the implications seem to diminish women, reducing them, in some essential way, to less than full equivalence with men.

If we believed that the celestial order would be truly polygamous, allowing either polygyny or polyandry because somehow we would all—men and women—be capable of a “higher,” more inclusive love than could accommodate various groupings, the case would at least be rational and non-sexist. However, both the historical order Mormons once practiced and the celestial order many Mormons anticipate are purely polygynous. They accept in the eternal marriage unit only plural wives, not plural husbands. Since there is no good reason to believe that polygyny will be needed to accommodate an excess of women in the celestial kingdom, then the expectation that there will be plural wives but not plural husbands cannot help but imply fundamental inequalities between men and women that have to do with their most central qualities and feelings, those involving sexual and spiritual identity and relationships (such as the insulting concept discussed above, that women are needed chiefly as birth machines for spirit children).

I believe we can remove that vague implication of inferiority without becoming alienated either from nineteenth-century Mormonism or from

our present faith in the gospel and the church. It is possible and spiritually healing, I believe, to affirm our polygynous ancestors for their obedient sacrifices and courageous achievements, which made the foundations of the restored church secure—and yet to reject the expectation of future polygyny. For too many of us, that expectation undermines the foundations of our present identities as women and men and diverts us from the difficult struggle for complete fidelity in our marriages that the gospel standard of morality and the expectation of celestial marriage as the basis of godhood require.

I do not presume to speak for others. My intent is simply to help free us, as Mormon men and women, to think about our marriages and the future with more openness, less bound to the expectation of future polygyny. Let us not be limited to our past understanding. In the speech I referred to earlier, Elder McConkie observed, “Since the Lord gave this revelation on the priesthood, our understanding of many [scriptures] has expanded. Many of us never imagined or supposed that they had the extensive and broad meaning that they do have.”²⁵ And though he then discussed only how our understanding of how black and white are “alike unto God” had expanded, I suggest that we also need to consider that our understanding of how men and women are alike and equal unto God may still be narrow, in need of further expansion. Men who have suffered from an unhealthy sense of superiority and women who have felt degraded by the assumption of future polygyny should feel free to seek the inspiration that may help unburden them.

Certainly none of us can presume an exact knowledge of the celestial order and what we will be capable of there, but our whole religion is built on the assumption that this life is, in its essentials, very much like that future life and a direct preparation for it. We have been clearly commanded to try to develop perfect one-to-one fidelity in our marriages here, and in the temple marriage sealing ceremony we have been given, I believe, a clear vision of what the highest future order of marriage will be: It will be a full and equal, one-to-one partnership of a king and a queen, a priestess and a priest, a perfectly balanced and yet dynamic bipolar union that makes possible “a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19).

Difficult as complete married fidelity and unity is to achieve, there is nothing sweeter on earth than our approximations of it. And we have been given no clear evidence that it will not continue to be the sweetest thing in heaven, the foundation of godhood and a blessing available to all who, freed from this world’s limitations, really want it.

25. All Are Alike Unto God, 152.

Out in the Shop: In Memory of Grandpa

Candace Kearl

The sun shines a triangle through the hazed glass
of the shop door, spotlighting the eternal snow of dust
falling and collecting, as if by magnetic force,
on drill bits, saw blades, and boxes of nails.

Shavings from wood you cut form tiny dunes now,
ebbing and flowing at the feet of sawhorses and other machinery.
The stacks of uncut lumber lie in wait and want of use;
their silence hammering as I sit and stare.

You worked here often amid the whirl of blades,
the whistle of a Glenn Miller tune, and sketches
scribbled in pencil and still taped onto the cupboard,
the nicks in the workdesk like hoofprints in frozen earth.

The wood, like you, is firm in its constitution, the nicks
and cuts worn down by sandpaper, course and fine.
Its honest aroma mixed with the memory of your sweat
enlivens the deeper grains: yellow pine, honey oak, pink cherry.

Such firm tenderness is found elsewhere in flesh of chokecherries,
Grandma's begonias, and quaking aspens.
Your "quakies," you called them when you counted them in the
yard,
though thin-skinned, show the muscle of wood beneath, like a
horse's flank.

Their leaves, like coins green on one side, silver on the other,
shake as with age,
like your hand when you attended to minute details:
sanding, pressing putty into nail holes, pulling stain along the
grain.
Your works stand strong, like ceremony: a chair for sitting, a bed
to sleep.

The Weeping God of Mormonism¹

Eugene England

IN THE BOOK OF MOSES, revealed to Joseph Smith in 1830 as part of his revision of the Bible, we learn of a prophet named Enoch, who is called to preach repentance to his people. He succeeds so well they are called "Zion" and are translated into heaven. Then, despite his obviously great knowledge of the Gospel, Enoch has an experience that shocks and amazes him and completely changes his concept of God: He is "lifted up, even in the bosom of the Father" and given a vision of those he had taught who resisted evil and "were caught up by the power of heaven into Zion." Then, "It came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?" (Moses 7:24, 28; my emphasis).

Enoch is able to focus his surprise at God's unexpected emotion into questions which disclose, even after his previous visions and his achievements as a prophet, what is for him an entirely new understanding of the nature of God. The answers to Enoch's questions reveal a concept of God which, I believe, is the essential foundation of all Mormon theology, one that makes our theology radically different from most others. However, it is also a concept which many Mormons, like the younger Enoch, still have not understood or quite accepted. Enoch asks God in amazement, "How it is thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?" (Moses 7:29). In other words, Enoch wonders, how can an absolute and, thus, all-powerful being do such a human thing as weep? Humans weep in response to tragic events they cannot change; God *can* change or prevent them, so why should he weep?

Enoch even sounds a bit put out with God because of this surprising challenge to his traditional understanding as he goes on to remind God at some length of his infinite powers. God patiently responds with an ex-

1. This essay is previously unpublished.

planation of his own limitations: These people in the vision are “thy brethren” who have “agency” (Moses 7:32). I gave them a commandment “that they should love one another,” but “they are without affection, and they hate their own blood.” As a result “misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them. . . ; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?” (7:37). In other words, agency is real and cannot be abrogated. God’s power to remove sin and other causes of human suffering is limited. He can send prophets like Enoch to warn and preach repentance, and he can send his son to provide those who accept him with power to repent: “Wherefore, he suffereth for their sins; inasmuch as they will repent in the day that my Chosen shall return to me” (7:39). But he cannot simply change or do away with his creation, so until his children repent, “they shall be in torment. Wherefore for this shall the heavens weep” (7:39-40). Enoch here sees into God’s heart, changes his concept of God, and, very significantly, is moved to new compassion himself: He “wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned: and all eternity shook” (7:41).

We have in this experience of Enoch, of course, a version of the basic theological paradox, “How can God be all-powerful and still allow evil?” Enoch is encountering a completely new theodicy, a “justification” of God or explanation of how he can be considered just. It is a theodicy which, if not unique to Mormonism, makes Mormonism unique among large, growing churches. It is also, I believe, a theodicy which can make a crucial contribution to Mormonism’s emergence as a mature, compassionate world religion, one able to contribute in important ways to God’s efforts to save all his children, not just through conversion but also through sharing our revealed insights into the nature of God by dialogue with others.

Traditional theodicies tend to solve the paradox either by (1) redefining evil as not really evil from God’s infinite perspective, as illusory, or “necessary” to build souls, or as merely the “absence of good,” the holes in God’s swiss-cheese universe, or (2) by equivocating on agency, which is “given” because for some unexplained reason an omnipotent God “has” to give it in order to have beings who “freely” love him. Many Mormon thinkers have used these approaches, but the theodicy revealed to Enoch and foundational to Mormonism’s orthodoxy denies the other pole of the paradox: God’s omnipotence. God allows evil because there is much of it he can’t prevent or do away with. Therefore, like a human, he weeps. Of course, I don’t mean that all evil is beyond God’s literal power to prevent. That would make him impotent indeed. Certainly he can and often does interfere with evil. The weeping God of Mormon finitism whom I am trying to describe creates a world for soul-building, which can only succeed if it includes exposure of our souls to the effects of nat-

ural law, as well as maximum latitude for us to exercise our agency as we learn how the universe works. Evil is a natural condition of such a world, not because God *creates* evil for soul-building, but because evil inevitably results from agency freed to grapple with natural law in this mortal world. You can't have one without the other, not because God says so, but rather because the universe, which was not created *ex nihilo* and, thus, has its own intractable nature, says so. Thus, God is not omnipotent.

In a remarkable personal testimony written to a young man dying of cancer, Reynolds Price explores all the traditional answers to the fundamental question, "If a loving, all-powerful God exists, why does he let a gifted young man be tormented and killed?" Price flirts briefly with the notion that God's nature itself contains the seeds of evil or at least was incapable of preventing it, but he finally offers mainly his own undeniable (for him) experience with a God who has given him moments of calm assurance and an actual vision of Christ—in which he was both forgiven of his sins and healed of his own cancer. Price also provides a more intellectual solace based on his own experience and his reading of the great religious texts, especially Job and the Bhagavad Gita, that "the God who is both our omnipotent Creator and the mute witness of so much agony. . . is what *is* or is *in* all that exists: that he is our only choice,"² and that since "God has made us for his glory and that glorification is pleasing to him. . . wouldn't that glory be augmented by a wider spectrum of light and dark in our own dim eyes if we saw and granted and tried to live in the glare of a fuller awareness of his being?"³

The articulate and tender testimony of Price is moving and impressive, but it seems to me somewhat short of what may be available through the weeping God of Mormonism. That God, like Job's God and the one in the Gita, suggests we would change our perspective on our individual griefs if we could see the grandeur of God's universe and purposes, if we could have been with God "when I laid the foundation of the earth." But when our weeping God, in what seems a similar imperious gesture, tells us, "In nothing doth man offend God. . . save those who confess not his hand in all things" (D&C 59:21), we are not, like Price, left to struggle to "confess his hand," or express gratitude and acceptance to a God who "is surely the full proprietor or the impassive witness of AIDS and Bosnia, Oklahoma City and Rwanda,"⁴ to say nothing of the Holocaust. I believe God means we, like Job, must recognize that the universe itself, not a finite God, is the "proprietor" of those things; we *could*

2. Reynolds Price, *Letter to a Man in the Fire* (New York: Scribner, 1999), 76.

3. *Ibid.*, 77-78

4. *Ibid.*

not have all the good of it, including the means to grow and know beauty and have joy and become more God-like, without the evil, not because God is that way, but because the universe, which he did not make, is that way. Furthermore, because of Enoch, we especially know, as apparently Price does not, that God is not an "impassive witness" of all this: He weeps.

One of the evidences for me that Joseph Smith was a true prophet, both translating and receiving by direct revelation material from real ancient cultures and their living prophets, is that he produced material he didn't yet understand or agree with. A great example, of course, is the claim in the Book of Mormon that "all are alike unto God," black and white, male and female (2 Nephi 26:33), which probably no one in America believed in 1830, including Joseph Smith, and which many, of course, still don't believe. It's also clear that the Prophet Joseph didn't quite understand the implications of Enoch's experience, which I believe he recorded by direct revelation from God. For some time after that revelation, and despite its implications, Joseph apparently took literally the passages in the Book of Mormon which refer to God as having all knowledge and all power (such as 2 Nephi 9:20 and Alma 26:35). We know this because the earliest Mormon doctrinal exposition, the "Lectures on Faith" (1834-35), uses the traditional Christian categories of omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence in describing God and claims that "without the knowledge of all things God would not be able to save any portion of his creatures."⁵

Joseph Smith's part in authoring the "Lectures on Faith" is still uncertain; they seem mainly the work of Sidney Rigdon, with significant input from Joseph.⁶ Obviously, as many readers have suspected, the Lectures reflect a very early stage of Mormon doctrinal expression about God, one still heavily influenced by traditional Christian ideas and categories. For instance, God is described as a personage of Spirit, Christ only as a personage of tabernacle, and the Holy Ghost not as a personage at all but a kind of unifying mind of the father and son. Those who teach from the Lectures on Faith have had to editorialize and add footnotes and explanations, to make it conform to later orthodox Mormon thought, which Joseph Fielding Smith, for example, did at the beginning of his book, *Doctrines of Salvation*. This problem can be seen in the inclination by church authorities to revise the Lectures on Faith in the early 1900s, or

5. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985), 4:11.

6. On authorship and decanonization, see Leland H. Gentry, "What of the Lectures on Faith?" *BYU Studies* 19 (Fall 1978): 5-19, and Richard S. Van Wagoner, Steven C. Walker, and Allen D. Roberts, "The 'Lectures on Faith': A Case Study in Decanonization," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 71-77.

at least to add a footnote, and also in their subsequent decision to exclude them from the Doctrine and Covenants in 1921.⁷ However, Joseph Smith never repudiated them, and while it is likely that, had they been written later as his understanding developed, he too might have qualified or explained some of the terms used there, I think he eventually saw no inherent contradiction between the Lectures and his later understanding of God as having “all” knowledge and power, sufficient to provide us salvation in our sphere of existence (and thus being “infinite”), but also as one who is still learning and developing in relationship to higher spheres of existence (and thus “finite”). God is thus, as Joseph understood, *redemptively* sovereign, not absolute in every way, but absolutely able to save us.

This complex understanding had been received and amplified over a number of years before it was most clearly, comprehensively, and publicly declared in the famous “King Follett Discourse,” which was given at the April 1844 General Conference a few months before Joseph’s death. The King Follett Discourse itself has somewhat questionable status because it was recorded only in the rather sketchy way possible at that time: in longhand by four scribes whose work was later amalgamated. In the Discourse, Joseph Smith nowhere states definitely that God is “finite” or progressing in knowledge and power, but there and in the Doctrine and Covenants he certainly implies that God is not supreme and does not have all power, by stating that there are Gods above him and by naming specific, substantive things that cannot be done, even by God, such as create out of nothing. It seems to me that Joseph Smith also clearly describes an eternal process of learning and growth by which Godhood is attained, and he at least *implies* that this process *continues* for God:

First God Himself who sits enthroned in yonder heavens is a Man like unto one of yourselves—that is the great secret! . . . The first principle of truth and of the Gospel is to know of a certainty that character of God, and that we may converse with Him. . . that He once was a man like one of us. . . You have got to learn how to make yourselves Gods. . . and be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done by going from a small capacity to a great capacity, from a small degree to another, from grace to grace. . . from exaltation to exaltation. [Jesus said], “I saw the Father work out His kingdom with fear and trembling and I am doing the same, too. When I get my king-

7. In editing the *History of the Church*, B. H. Roberts noted that the Lectures on Faith were “not of equal authority in matters of doctrine,” compared with the regular sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, because, when they were originally presented to the church for acceptance they had been separately designated as not inspired revelation, “though judiciously written and profitable for doctrine” (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, ed. B. H. Roberts [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1912], 2:176).

dom, I will give it to the Father and it will add to and exalt His glory. He will take a higher exaltation and I will take His place and also be exalted, so that He obtains kingdom rolling upon Kingdom. . . ."

All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement and improvement. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. God Himself found Himself in the midst of spirits and glory. Because He was greater, He saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest, who were less in intelligence, could have a privilege to advance like Himself and be exalted with Him, so that they might have one glory upon another in all that knowledge, power, and glory.⁸

Notice the lack of traditional Christian absolutism here. Instead, the emphasis seems to be on God's similarity to humans, on God as the same kind of being we are, one who makes available to us a process of growth he himself has been engaged in and apparently is still engaged in, "whereby the less intelligent. . . could have a privilege to advance like Himself." (The verb structure implies he *still is* advancing.) God is a "greater" intelligence, not absolute intelligence, and he is moving to *higher* and *higher* exaltations, not to some absolute state of the highest possible exaltation; one glory is added to another "in all that knowledge, power, and glory" (my emphases).

The concept of a plurality of Gods had been taught by Joseph Smith since 1835 and was clearly understood by his close associates, such as Hyrum Smith and Brigham Young.⁹ Hyrum himself is quoted in George Laub's Journal as teaching, on April 27, 1843, that there is "a whole train and lineage of gods."¹⁰ In fact, in that sermon he offers the basic scriptural text for the shift in perspective which makes it possible to talk about many gods, of ascending spheres of power and intelligence, and then, without contradiction, to turn around and talk of one God, our God, sufficiently "perfect" in intelligence and power and, thus, able to save his children on the earth. Hyrum begins his discussion with a quotation from 1 Corinthians 8:5-6: "There be gods many and lords many. But to us there is but one God the Father." Despite the context of this scripture, which is a discussion by Paul of belief in idols, Brigham Young, B. H. Roberts, Joseph Fielding Smith, and many others have used it as a brief explanation of how it is possible to be both a Christian polytheist (technically a henotheist) and a monotheist. Roberts specifically used it to

8. Stan Larson, "The King Follet Discourse: A New Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 200, 203, 204.

9. Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 209.

10. Eugene England, ed., "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 176.

justify how we can talk sometimes in an adventuresome mode about multiple orders of godhood in which our God is limited and still progressing, and yet at other times, without contradiction, talk in a worshipful mode about the one God and his perfect knowledge and redemptive power relative to our sphere.

However, despite Roberts's apologetic efforts to demonstrate that his belief in a finite, progressing God was consistent with both the Bible and orthodox Mormon thought, it seems clear that he simply believed and gloried in the doctrine as delightfully true and as the chief legacy of Joseph Smith, whom he called "The Prophet-Teacher." In his book of that name and in his most important theological work, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, he expounds and defends what he calls Joseph's "eternalism," thus, grounding Mormon theology in a philosophical position that is its main strength and for many, such as me, its main attraction. Let me quote from Sterling McMurrin's "Introduction" to the 1967 reprinting of *Joseph Smith the Prophet-Teacher*, both to honor McMurrin, whom we deeply miss, and to express with some authority how important this matter is:

More than any other, Roberts sensed the radical heresy in Mormon theology, its complete departure from the traditional Christian doctrines of God and man, its denial of the divine absoluteness, and its rejection of the negativism of the orthodox dogma of the human predicament. Roberts was not a creator of doctrine, in these matters, but he had a clear vision of what was entailed by the basic ideas already laid down by his predecessors, and he did more than any other person to set forth the full character of the Mormonism that followed inevitably from the ideas of Joseph Smith, from the doctrine, for instance, of the uncreated intelligence or ego and the denial of the orthodox dogma on the creation of the world. Roberts was not repulsed by the unorthodox implications of the finitistic conception of God. He delighted in them, for they made room for a positive doctrine of man. Yet he kept the discussion of the nature of God on a more defensible level than did some who confused the old absolutism with the new doctrine. It was a bold and audacious religion, which combined elements of traditional fundamentalism with the modern liberal doctrine of man and the optimism of the nineteenth century, and it required a bold and rebellious and spacious mind to grasp its full implications.¹¹

Despite Roberts's achievement, the "old absolutism" McMurrin refers to has remained alive and well in Mormonism and now seems on

11. Sterling M. McMurrin, "Notes on a Mormon Philosopher-Historian," introduction to B.H. Roberts, *Joseph Smith the Prophet Teacher* (Princeton, N.J.: The Deseret Club of Princeton University, 1967), xvi.

the ascendant. Joseph Smith seems to have progressed in his understanding, at least to the point where he could see the absolutistic language of scripture as metaphorical or only pertaining to God in a partial description of his perfections relative to us. Brigham Young went even further along that path, as did his namesake Brigham H. Roberts. But in the same General Conference of April 1844, where Joseph gave the "King Follett Discourse," his brother Hyrum Smith expressed a position that has persisted in the church, especially through Hyrum's own family. It is clear from the context that Hyrum's concern was with the Saints' faith in Christ's power to save, which he apparently felt had been undermined by too literal or exclusive a focus on a limited God: "I want to put down all false influence. If I thought I should be saved and any in the congregation be lost, I should not be happy. . . . Our Savior is competent to save all from death and hell. I can prove it out of the revelations. I would not serve a God that had not all wisdom and power."¹² He apparently could not quite see how God could be both redemptively sovereign and finite, although he had himself earlier recorded the key in his reference to the passage in Corinthians about many gods and yet one.¹³

Brigham Young felt that the idea of eternal progression was what he called "the mainspring of all action" and acted strongly to assure that the central concepts he had learned from Joseph concerning progression in both humans and a finite God would be kept alive in the Mormon heritage. He reprinted the "King Follett Discourse" a number of times and engaged in continuing and remarkably public doctrinal disagreements with the apostle Orson Pratt about these matters. Brother Brigham was concerned not only that Elder Pratt was wrong in insisting without qualification on God's absolute perfection and the impossibility of his further progression, but also that such an influential speaker and writer would convince many to follow after him, leaving to posterity the impression that only his view and emphasis were part of Mormon thought. President Young felt it so crucial to keep before the Saints Joseph Smith's emphasis that he pushed Elder Pratt to a public recantation in 1865.¹⁴ Then he published the recantation in the *Deseret News*, along with a denunciation of specific absolutistic doctrines of Elder Pratt, signed by the First Presidency.

12. Quoted in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954) 5; from Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:300.

13. See note 5.

14. This experience is thoroughly reviewed in Gary J. Bergera, "The Orson Pratt-Brigham Young Controversies," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 7-49, and in Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1985) 209-17.

Part of Brigham Young's concern that caused him to publicly deny the truth of Pratt's ideas was the presumption of actually *limiting* God while seeming to describe him as having limitless power and knowledge. It was this concern which motivated a statement of Brigham Young that seems directly to contradict Hyrum Smith:

Some men seem as if they could learn so much and no more. They appear to be bounded in their capacity for acquiring knowledge, as Brother Orson has, in theory, bounded the capacity of God. According to his theory, God can progress no further in knowledge and power, but the God that I serve is progressing eternally, and so are his children; they will increase to all eternity, if they are faithful.¹⁵

I find this admirably relevant to the irony that many absolutistic thinkers, including Mormons, in trying to exalt God by contrasting him to the mere human, instead begin to demean him as impersonal, passionless, even cruel. We tend to forget that all our attempts to understand and describe God are anthropomorphic, originating in our human notions and comparisons, and that using the more abstract, irrational, supposedly *superhuman* images may only make God appear more *inhuman*, in the worst sense.

Brigham Young's concern was also with spiritual psychology, the importance (in motivating mankind toward salvation) of retaining a certain vision: that what was most rewarding in earthly progression would continue forever and would make celestial life, or Godhood, genuinely attractive. Godhood is not a mysterious stasis or a mere endless repetition of the same process of creating spirits and saving them. It is most attractive to us, and the best motivator to moral and religious living, when it attracts us for the same reasons the highest forms of human life attract us: learning, creating, experiencing joy and tragedy, even weeping.

Although Orson Pratt's absolutism about God which harked back to the Lectures on Faith had been rejected by Brigham Young, and the Lectures themselves were demoted in status, President Joseph F. Smith, like his father Hyrum Smith, was concerned that some in the church were inclined to reduce too much the distance between God and man and, thus, to undermine the confidence in God's saving power essential for human salvation.¹⁶ (I remember some Mormons in my youth who were so caught up with the vision of eternal progression that they could hardly wait to die to be like God!)

15. *Journal of Discourses* 11 (Liverpool, England: B. Young, January 1867), 286.

16. See, for instance, his denunciation of those who were denying miracles and, thus, the perfection of God's power, in *Conference Report, April 1914* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1914) 5.

President Joseph F. Smith's son, Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., took a similar position. In his influential book, *Doctrines of Salvation*, he quotes the passage from his grandfather Hyrum about not serving a finite God, and also the passages from the Lectures on Faith on the perfections of God. It is clear that his concern, like that of his father and grandfather, is with God's power in relation to humans. Following the quotation from Hyrum, he asks, "Do we believe that God has all wisdom? . . . Does he have all power? If so then there is nothing in which he lacks. If he is lacking in 'wisdom' and in 'power' then he is not supreme and there must be something greater than he is, and this is absurd."¹⁷ We know Joseph Fielding Smith is speaking hyperbolically here, and in the single, mortal sphere mode (the one bounded by the idea that *to us* there is only one God the Father), because he obviously knew that both his grandfather and Joseph Smith taught there is "something greater" than God, that God is in fact (if we speak in terms of the multiple, eternal spheres) *not* supreme, that there are Gods above God, a Father of God, who gave him salvation, and a Father of that god and so on, apparently to infinity. But President Smith also shared, it seems to me, his father's concern about belittling God and also his grandfather's concern about the saints losing faith in God's absolute power to save; he focused his own writing and talking about God in the single sphere mode, and influenced his son-in-law Bruce R. McConkie to do the same: In *Mormon Doctrine* Elder McConkie states unequivocally that God is not progressing in knowledge or power, and references the same passage from President Smith's *Doctrines of Salvation* which I have discussed above.¹⁸ In this spirit, both Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie preferred the Lectures on Faith to the King Follett Discourse. Elder Smith was responsible for the last-minute excision of the Discourse from the first printing of B. H. Roberts's edition of Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* in 1912 (although he included it in his own edition of *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* in 1938), and Elder McConkie wrote of the Lectures: "in them is to be found some of the best lesson material ever presented on the . . . character, perfections, and attributes of God."¹⁹

The influence of these two highly-respected and prolific Gospel scholars and general authorities—and the more intangible influences of our crisis-ridden and anxiety-producing past century—have encouraged a rather negative, pessimistic neo-orthodoxy in Mormonism generally and especially in the semi-official Mormon theology taught in the LDS Church Education System, particularly in the BYU religion department.

17. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:5.

18. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 221.

19. *Ibid.*, 439.

O. Kendall White has documented these changes most fully,²⁰ and Thomas Alexander has given the best historical consideration to what he calls "the reconstruction of Mormon doctrine" away from its original radical adventuresomeness, as part of the twentieth-century accommodation to American culture.²¹ Robert L. Millett, who later became the head of BYU's religion department, sounded in 1989 a note of defiance in the face of the claims of White and Alexander when he wrote, "[The movement they describe] is a movement toward a more thoroughly redemptive base to our theology. . . one that may be long overdue. These recent developments [neo-orthodox emphasis on an absolute God, human depravity, and salvation by grace] may represent more of a retrenchment and a refinement than a reversion [to primitive Mormonism]."²²

But the chief evidence for the desertion of the "weeping God" of Mormonism by some of the most influential LDS teachers of religion is the publication in 1997 of *How Wide the Divide: A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*, by Evangelical theologian Craig L. Blomberg and BYU religion professor Stephen E. Robinson. This book is a model for religious dialogue between Mormons and other faiths, as well as dialogue among Mormons themselves, written by two devoutly believing and thoughtful, gracious men. The bad news is that Robinson ends up, I believe, sounding more Evangelical than Mormon on crucial issues like the inerrancy and sufficiency of the Biblical canon, salvation by grace alone, the "substitutionary" Atonement, and—most importantly—the nature of God. Robinson effectively faults Evangelicals who claim biblical sufficiency yet at the same time base much of their thought and language on post-biblical councils; they are thus "wedded to Greek philosophical categories and assumptions." However, Robinson seems to accept quite uncritically the unbiblical concept of God which arose in those councils, as "omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent," an absolute being entirely different in nature from humans. As Robinson puts it (and, thus, directly addresses perhaps our major difference from other Christians): "Many Evangelicals are convinced, wrongly, that Latter-day Saints believe in a finite, limited or changeable god, even though that notion is repugnant to us."²³

20. O. Kendall White, Jr., *Mormon Neo-orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987); "The Transformation of Mormon Theology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1970): 9-24.

21. Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology," *Sunstone* 5 (July/August 1980): 24-33.

22. Robert L. Millett, "Joseph Smith and Modern Mormonism: Orthodoxy, Neoorthodoxy, Tension, and Tradition," *BYU Studies* 29, no. 3 (1989): 49-68.

23. Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide: A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997) 88, 92.

"Repugnant" to Mormons? What about Brigham Young: "The God that I serve is progressing eternally [in knowledge and power], and so are his children"?²⁴ Or the twentieth century apostle, John A. Widstoe: "If the great law of progression is accepted, God must have been engaged, and must now be engaged, in progressive development"?²⁵

Yes, I know these are what Blomberg and even Robinson would call "non-canonical" sources, and *literal* interpretations of certain scriptures do support an all-powerful, absolute and static God. But that shows precisely how dangerous scriptural literalism is. The three "omni's" directly contradict what modern revelation and common sense tell us about God, and we have no need to be bound to literal interpretation of their scriptural use. The scriptures, including the Book of Mormon, say that God is "all-powerful" and "infinite," but they also say "God is love" and God is "a consuming fire." These are all hyperboles or metaphors and not to be taken as literal doctrine.

Let's consider what seems more reasonable and consistent with the scriptures taken as a whole and with what should be our touchstone of interpretation, the fundamental teachings of Christ. The Evangelical understanding seems to be that God is an absolute and infinite being, perfect and self-sufficient in every way, existing "before" and, therefore, unconditioned by time and space and material and law, or by us as agents. "He" decides for some unaccountable reason (he certainly doesn't *need* anything, by definition) to create beings to love him—makes them out of nothing—and thus wholly determines what they will be. Yes, I know the arguments that he then "gives" them agency, but that is certainly one thing that can't, logically or meaningfully, be created out of nothing: To the Evangelical, what God makes of you is all there is, including *whatever* in yourself or your environment goes into your "decisions," and God is, thus, unavoidably responsible for the results of those decisions.

Then, the Evangelical posits, God puts billions of us in a world where the huge majority endure mainly pain and sorrow, comes among us as Christ, and rewards those who believe on him with eternal bliss, punishing those who don't (including the huge majority who have never heard of him!) with eternal torment, all without shedding a tear. No wonder many good and intelligent people in our century have decided that such a God is at best absurd and at worst a cruel monster and have turned in droves from the churches to some form of agnosticism. If he was already perfect, why did he "need" to create this mess at all, and if he's all-powerful, why couldn't he just make an Adam and Eve who would have done things right in the first place, or (since they were made

24. *Journal of Discourses* 11:286.

25. John A. Widstoe, *A Rational Theology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1915-1965), 30-31.

out of nothing) destroy them and start over, again and again until he got the world he wanted, or at least just send those sinners who fail his plan back into nothingness rather than to eternal torment (or make Christian teaching available to more than ten percent of his children, or prevent the Holocaust, etc., etc.)?

Would you really prefer that to a concept of God as an exalted *person*, existing in time and space with a real environment of matter and energy and law which can be organized and created within but cannot be called into being or destroyed or absolutely controlled, and which therefore must be wept over? Consider the rational and experiential attractiveness of a Being who exists with other eternal beings whom it is his work and glory to help develop in the ways he himself has developed, so they can enjoy his work and glory, too. This God sacrifices his son in an atonement of infinite love, powerful enough to resurrect us all to immortality and to move those of us who *will* to repent and improve until we become like him, with the same joy and creative and loving powers. This God does not punish with hell nor reward with heaven, but makes his teachings and atoning power available to all his children on equal conditions and unendingly: He loves and helps them throughout a pre-existence, mortality, and post-existence until all have the same opportunity to become more like him and enjoy his creative, progressive eternal life. Even then, rather than punishing those who don't fully measure up, he simply lets those beings experience the results of what they have become or can still become, in infinite variety, rather than consigning them absolutely and irrevocably—and thus unredemptively—to pain.

I know my Evangelical God is somewhat of a caricature, but there is enough truth in it to worry me, especially when it seems that popular Mormon theology may be slipping toward such a concept—and there is sufficient evidence in *How Wide the Divide* to justify such a worry. While reading the book, I found myself, despite the intelligence and graciousness of Blomberg, increasingly depressed by the dreary, even mean-spirited, implications of his theology ("[Although] it is not fair to imagine the . . . Adolf Hitlers of this world experiencing the same punishment as the friendly, hardworking non-Christian homeowner down the street. . . . they will spend an unpleasant eternity apart from God and all his people").²⁶ And I found myself, despite my personal knowledge that Robinson is an affable, generous Latter-day Saint, offended at his similar acceptance of a scriptural literalism that makes God into an unredemptive punisher: "After the resurrection. . . those who are filthy still. . . are cast eternally into the lake of fire."²⁷

26. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide*, 174.

27. *Ibid.*, 151.

Such notions certainly fail the marvelous test Joseph Smith suggested for his revealed claims in the King Follett Discourse about God's finitude and man's potential deification: "This is good doctrine. It tastes good. . . . [W]hen I tell you of these words of eternal life that are given to me by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the revelations of Jesus Christ, you are bound to receive them as sweet. You taste them and I know you believe them."²⁸ Joseph certainly didn't mean that mere emotional preference is an adequate test for truth. He meant something like a delighted, inspired response of the human spirit to what is simply and obviously good.

However, I have to recognize that, in another way, the attractions of a weeping God may be mostly a matter of basic temperament rather than overwhelming rational evidence or even authority. Some of us in each age seem genuinely attracted to the securities of an absolute, sovereign, justice-oriented God and some to the adventuresomeness of an open, progressive universe and a limited but infinitely loving God working with us eternal mortal agents. I remember how shocked I was when I first read the great Evangelical divine, Jonathan Edwards, tell how he, after previously being "full of objections" to what seemed "a horrible doctrine," became converted to "God's sovereignty, in choosing whom He would to eternal life, and rejecting whom He pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell." From the time of his conversion, his "reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it" and "the doctrine has very often appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright, and sweet."²⁹ I was appalled; such a horrible doctrine did not, and does not, taste sweet to me at all. But I could see, and accept, that a good, intelligent person could feel that way and I might have something to learn from him.

The bad news for me is that those (both Evangelicals and Mormons) with the absolutistic temperament seem so unwilling to tolerate and learn from those with the finitistic, and that partly through that influence, American culture and now our Mormon culture seem to be increasingly intolerant of others, even within our culture, both politically and theologically. There seems to be a tendency for those who believe in an absolute, sovereign, all-determining and punishing God to have absolute assurance that he has given them (perhaps through an "inerrant" Bible) absolute truth, which they are justified in using any means, including the law and even illegal force, to impose on others. A few years ago I confronted some evangelical "Ex-Mormons for Jesus" who, in an effort to

28. *Journal of Discourses* 6: 7.

29. Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative," *Jonathan Edwards: Basic Writings*, Ola Elizabeth Winslow, ed. (New York, Signet New American Library, 1966), 83.

embarrass the church, had dishonestly obtained and then circulated a private letter. They claimed they had a perfect right to do *anything* to destroy Mormonism since their absolute God had told them it was evil. I worry that Evangelical Mormons may incline to the same “end-justifies-means” thinking and that they also seem unwilling to allow both the absolutistic and finitistic strains of Mormonism to continue, as Brigham Young so much desired.

The unspoken premise of *How Wide the Divide* seems to be that we *have* to believe more alike in order to be more tolerant. I’m sorry, but even if Blomberg and Robinson are totally wrong and we really do have very different beliefs, we shouldn’t be treating each other the way we do—as Evangelicals and Mormons, absolutists and finitists, conservatives and liberals. There is a spirit of “no compromise” under Blomberg’s urbane, well-informed politeness. He and other Evangelicals “hope and pray that influential modern LDS authors like Prof. Robinson are indeed shifting the balance back toward grace,”³⁰ and they are already starting to call such people, in print, “Evangelical Mormons,” apparently the only Mormons thus acceptable as Christians.

Robinson and others may indeed be shifting the balance of popular Mormon theology because many of them are influential Church Education System teachers and popular speakers. This is not necessarily bad news. Perhaps it is just an historical shift in temperament or a response to our terrible, anxiety-producing century or even, as Millett suggests, a useful “correction” to an over-emphasis on salvation by works or God’s finitude. But if, as our experience with Evangelical Christians suggests, “Evangelical Mormons,” rather than following the example of Robinson’s book, are more inclined to be intolerant of those who differ with them—to ostracize or belittle or, especially, to attempt to use their power over the official and semi-official press and their authority as Church Education employees to silence others—that would be very bad news indeed.

Finally, if believing in an absolutistic, punishing God tends to make us more judgmental and punishing, does believing in a weeping, genuinely compassionate God tend to make us more compassionate? Not necessarily, of course, but as Blomberg points out, the Evangelical concept of an absolute, sovereign God is crucial to their concept of a “substitutionary” atonement sufficient to save, and that concept, I believe, has very different effects on believers from the Mormon concept of a weeping God. The Evangelical imagines Christ’s suffering as a necessary and sufficient substitute for our sins, demanded by God’s justice and available to those whom he chooses to save into eternal bliss while the rest

30. *Ibid.*, 177.

burn in hell, quite independent of our actions and state of soul; the Mormon concept of a “participatory” Atonement imagines that suffering as a necessary and sufficient expression of God’s unconditional love, which “appeases the demands of justice” and provides “means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:15). Ironically, while Hyrum Smith and his son Joseph F. Smith were concerned about finitistic concepts undermining faith in the Atonement, these concepts instead provide the strongest possible support for the Atonement as a powerful, mercy-generating, influence in our religious lives.

A related concern is social action. Blomberg and Robinson end their book with a call for greater “cooperation” between Evangelicals and Mormons in social and political action. That seems to me to translate into active social conservatism, which in recent times has meant, in my judgment, mainly negative and divisive activities: pro-family through narrowing our definition of family, anti-pornography through censorship, anti-abortion through restricting choice, anti-gay rights, anti-affirmative action, anti-gun control. It’s certainly fine for Mormons to choose to engage in such activities, but it is a tragedy that, increasingly, those are made to appear as the official and only appropriate forms of political action for Mormons. They seem to me the very forms which tend to reflect the absolutistic temperament, which seems on the ascendant.

David Hare is probably England’s finest contemporary playwright (author of the award-winning *Amy’s View*) and certainly one of the most clear and trenchant critics of English society and culture. He is an agnostic, but in 1996 he was invited by an old school friend who is now an Anglican priest to give the annual memorial lecture at Westminster Abbey in honor of the former Dean of the Abbey. He spoke with great respect of those with a religious calling, especially those he saw working in personal poverty and at great personal risk to improve the lives of the poor and dispossessed and discriminated against. But he pointed out rightly, I think, that even such people have a kind of escape clause because they believe in an absolute, all-powerful God, who will somehow, sometime, make everything right—or worse, they try to tell others that “the suffering we endure here in this world is somehow justified, that it even has meaning because it is part of an absent God’s large plan and purpose.”³¹ He believes, after careful observation, that such a belief tends ultimately to limit the quality and persistence of Christian service, that justice on this earth matters less if justice will one day be delivered by another. I don’t know how you could prove this either way, but I have noticed a certain tendency in Mormon absolutists to finally throw up their hands

31. David Hare, “When Shall We Live,” *Via Dolorosa and When Shall We Live* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 62.

in the face of our huge social problems and leave things to God. It seems to me that those who can believe in the weeping God of Mormonism cannot escape. They must stand with David Hare and with the compassionate, passionate agnostics of the world in making it better, confident that God is doing and will do all he can, but that what we do and don't do has irrevocable, sometimes tragic, consequences. As David Hare asks, quoting Seneca, "When shall we live, if not now?"³²

These, then, are some reasons the weeping God of Mormonism must survive the assaults of the neo-orthodox, Evangelical Mormonism that is becoming almost official because of the influence of the Church Education System: to keep alive a concept of the Atonement which emphasizes Christ's mercy and our own response to it in becoming new creatures; to keep before us the concept that moved Enoch to compassion "as wide as eternity" and might also move us; and to stem our inclinations to various forms of violence with each other. There currently seems to be no one like Brigham Young at the highest level to ensure that such a God survives. Ironically, although Orson Pratt's absolute, non-progressing, certainly non-weeping God was condemned by Brigham Young and the Quorum as heresy, even in the form of Official Proclamation #3 in 1865, it has won out in BYU's College of Religion and increasingly in popular Mormonism. This seems to me a bad case of loss of nerve, of preferring negative, safe religion to the positive, adventuresome kind. Sterling McMurrin concluded that the ascendancy of neo-orthodoxy in this century was because Mormons had come, like many others, to "prefer the comforts of resignation to the dangers and uncertainties of crusade and adventure." He had earlier pointed out the main problem with a weeping God theology, "It's hard to take your problems to a God who may have problems."³³ He nevertheless remained hopeful that the orthodox Mormonism of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young and B. H. Roberts would survive:

Today religious liberalism is largely spent and the facts of life too often fail to support its claims. . . . We prefer the comforts of resignation to the dangers and uncertainties of crusade and adventure. But however sanguine its claims and extravagant its vision, there is something noble and heroic about the authentic Mormon orthodoxy which Roberts and his generation believed and defended, and which is still the religion of the uncorrupted Mormon. For it joins faith in God with faith in man, and unless this can be done effectively not only in theology but as well in the minds and experience of men, religion in any viable and acceptable form may not prevail.³⁴

32. Ibid., 72.

33. Sterling M. McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* Salt Lake City: University of Utah press, 1965), 35.

34. McMurrin, *Notes on a Mormon Philosopher-Historian*, xvi-xvii.

My heart says McMurrin is right, but my head recognizes that it is Mormonism in its absolutistic form, and also the absolutistic Evangelical churches, which are growing most rapidly in many places in the world. My belief in a weeping God who can't solve our pain and problems or promise to make everything right in the end, who calls us to live with him in a tragic universe, makes life at times very difficult. Much of both my private reading of the scriptures and my public religious life is filled with stories and testimonies about how God has intervened in people's lives, destroying their enemies, helping them find a coin, protecting them from accidental injury or death, putting a book or person or divine voice in their way that led to their conversion. But while I tend to believe such witnesses because I too have experienced what I believe is such intervention from God in my life, I increasingly experience those stories as tragic. Each one reminds me of the innumerable occasions when my weeping God does not intervene, when a Hitler is not destroyed, a crucial passport is not found, a faithful missionary is killed, a young man pleads with God for a witness of the Book of Mormon and hears silence. At such times God seems too limited, too finite, too powerless in his weeping. It is a tragedy to believe in such a God; it would be a tragedy to lose such an understanding of him.

At the very end of the Bible, John the Revelator is given a vision much like Enoch's; in fact, he sees Enoch's holy city, the New Jerusalem in the latter days "coming down from God out of heaven. . . And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. . . . And God shall wipe away all tears from their eye" (Rev. 21:3-4). This is the great hope and consolation for all believers. For Mormons, it has the added poignance that as he wipes away those tears, God himself will be weeping for the residue of his children who are not there.

Two Trains and a Dream

Eugene England
January 2000

Et in Arcadia Ego.

Virgil

The ways of God are unknowable to man.

Saint Augustine

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and justice bends the arrow at your heart.

Jonathan Edwards

All the minds and spirits God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement and improvement.

Joseph Smith

I. OCTOBER 8, 1908: A TRAIN

Pulled out of Green River, Wyoming, heading
West toward Salt Lake City. The Mormon prophet,
Joseph F. Smith, was going home from a visit
to Boston, with his traveling companion.
He saw the flash of white butts as a herd
Of antelope, coming in from the north, turned
Away from the train and bounced through the sage,
And he thought how sixty years before, aged twelve, he had
Watched such plenitude of beasts on this same route,
Then on a wagon seat next to his mother
As she managed their team on the pioneer trek
After his father, Hyrum, was shot
With Joseph at Carthage. The car was hot,
So he walked to the back, out onto
A polished wood platform with a wrought iron rail—
And heard a voice say, "Go in and sit down."
He turned back but then stopped, wondering if he had
Imagined the voice, when it came again: "Sit down."

Just as he reached his seat, the train hit
 A broken rail and the engine and most
 Of the cars (not his) went off the tracks.
 The companion later wrote that the prophet
 Would have been badly hurt if he hadn't sat down,
 Because all of the cars were "jammed up bad."

II. MAY 25, 1999: A TRAIN OUT OF

Boston, leaving Providence, Rhode Island,
 Struck Julia Toledo, from a
 Mormon family in Ecuador
 And her four sons, walking on the tracks.

All were killed instantly, except Jose, ten,
 Who died in two days. They had just left a
 Transition shelter where they stuffed their packs
 With clothes, coloring books, tiny dolls—all found
 Along the tracks, with shoes, torn packs, a bloody
 Bible. Julia had led them through a break
 In the fence for a shortcut to someplace,
 Fleeing, some said, an abusive husband
 Who had tried to steal his sons. But he,
 Located in Ecuador, heart-broken, said no,
 There was trouble with his in-laws because he was
 Still Catholic. Others said it was
 Julia's sister, tired of baby-sitting,
 Had driven them out to homelessness.
 They had climbed a short trail up the traprock
 Of the railbed, walked two miles before Jose
 Got separated, to the north side.
 Julia, carrying Pedro, pulling Angel
 And Carlos, was just lunging across
 To reach him when the train struck them all.

III. IN MY DREAM GOD IS LISTENING, CAREFULLY,

As I tell him these stories and ask him,
 "Which of these trains, children, was in your hands?"
 We are both seated, quite comfortably,
 On a green satin French provincial
 Couch, in a room painted by Watteau—
 The transition room in Kubrick's *2001*.
 God asks me if I am proud or rebellious.
 I notice that he is luminous under his robe,

And his face is serene beyond all description,
His skin young, downy, but full of pores.
I can see small white scars across his forehead.
Then tears gather in his eyes, and slowly
Tears begin to drop like blood from every pore.
I ask again, "Which train is on your hands?"
And he sets his face toward me like flint: "Both. All."

The Rose Jar

Emma Lou Thayne

Musky as the cedar drawer
in Grandmas' standing metal trunk,

a genie scent, improbable and
distant as the sound of hooves on sand

in some Arabian tale read by Father
in the hall between bedrooms to say goodnight.

Rose petals, five generations of fragile crinkles
once supple, fresh, pressed on at a precious time

into the four-inch cloisonné on pointed golden legs
fat as a Buddha tummy, bottled in

by a cloisonné hat with wobbly lifter,
an ancient pine cone of blackened silver.

Lift it, raise the smooth bowl with its infinite expertise
laid with tweezers into a miniature mozaic:

flowers rusty orange, circles and shields aged before aging
curls of gold small smaller smallest and red,

edging a sapphire river spilled into dusky green.
Watch. See the centuries of Chinese have their way.

Feel the careful hands that plucked each piece in place.
Raise the lid, bring the smooth round closer. Tiny gusts

of history waft the gatherings of births, graduations,
weddings, funerals, celebrations—one petal each,

pink, red, yellow, orange, crisping, sinking into petals
then to holy mash, salted into decades collecting

but never filling to the top the space, mysterious
space, defying definition, only wafting life

like some subtle, still surprising breath of God.

Selling the Chevrolet: a Moral Exercise¹

Clifton H. Jolley

THIS IS THE SADDEST STORY I HAVE EVER TOLD. Not because *The Chevrolet* is gone, but because it probably is not.

This much is known. During the Christmas season of 1973, Gene and Charlotte England traveled to Salt Lake City from Northfield, Minnesota. They made the trip in *The Chevrolet*—a brown stationwagon of uncertain origin.

The Chevrolet did not manage the trip very well. Little wonder, since Gene is known for keeping his automobiles well past their prime and for his hellbent-for-naugahyde driving style.

But this was no normal automobile. In “Blessing the Chevrolet,” an essay that appeared in the Autumn 1974 issue of *Dialogue*, Gene explained how on several occasions of mechanical emergency he had administered to this car, and how the car subsequently had been healed. There may be those who will question the orthodoxy of blessing an automobile; but if you allow the practice, it is difficult to imagine an automobile more in need of blessing than one driven any distance by Gene England.

As for apologizing for the practice, the pioneers blessed their oxen, which most religionists find more defensible than blessing tin lizzies, but only because modern religionists have no experience with oxen. I recently delivered a yoke of Red Durham oxen from New Hampshire to Pioneer Trail State Park in Salt Lake City. How such a fate should befall a twentieth-century writer with no agrarian pretensions is another story; but it left me prepared to bear witness that it is not possible for anything to be less deserving of blessing than oxen. Not even Chevrolets.

According to “Blessing the Chevrolet,” as the Englands crossed

1. This essay first appeared in *Dialogue*, Vol.16, No.3.

South Dakota on a Saturday afternoon, a long ways from Salt Lake City (as South Dakota is from anywhere), the car began to suffer. And once again, Gene healed it.

That much is known.

What I tell you now has not been known publicly. I have treasured it in my heart, waiting for an occasion to finish the story begun a decade ago.

During the winter of 1978, Gene and Charlotte were preparing to travel east from Provo, Utah, where Gene was now teaching. Were I to think a bit about it, I might remember where they were off to. But maybe not. All memories of that trip and the events surrounding it have been overwhelmed by what for me has become the paramount event of 1978.

Gene arrived at our house late that evening. We also were living in Provo, in Indian Hills, just a block from Bert Wilson, who had grown up with Gene in Downey, Idaho. Bert frequently would walk past our house, stop, and we'd talk. Talk about the mountains, and the sun off them in the evenings, and about Bert's pickup which had been destroyed moving salvaged bricks from a demolition site in Orem. Gene had been building his home north of BYU's Marriott Center parking lot—a new home built to look like an old one. Complete with a tower study behind a walnut tree, some of whose roots were severed when the foundation was poured. Hopeless case. But Gene blessed the walnut, too. We all waited for the tree to die. Everyone but Gene, who hauled bricks to build his tower behind it and watched it blossom that spring. It is the largest, healthiest tree on the block.

"You know, he destroyed my pickup," Bert would tell me as the sun blanched the scrub oak on the mountains behind our homes.

"It wasn't much of a pickup to begin with, Bert."

"What are you talking about? It was a great old pickup until it broke its back hauling twenty ton of brick out of Orem."

Bert may have been right. But he needn't have worried. What Gene breaks, he fixes. Wonderfully. But Bert moved to Logan before there was time for a proper healing. And Bert never mentioned the demise of his pickup with rancor. It was a sacrifice. The sort of sacrifice friends make for one another. Especially Gene's friends.

Gene came over late that evening. We had just built a fire, and the light of it glistened on Gene's teeth as he walked into the living room. (I don't remember that detail, but I am certain it is accurate; Gene always smiles when he is about to propose something absurd.)

"We're leaving tomorrow. How'd you like to sell our car while we're gone?"

I had been lucky in selling an old car of ours the week before; a stationwagon I had advertised for weeks, finally selling it well below low book, and happy to have it gone. Gene evidently deduced from that happy accident that I was good at selling used cars. Maybe even enjoyed it.

"I don't know, Gene. I'd hate to screw it up some way, take less for it than you wanted, or something."

"Don't worry about it. Anything you get will be fine," he said, putting his arm around my shoulder and leading me outside.

Parked in my driveway was the old stationwagon I'd seen parked for months in front of Gene's house. I had thought it was a junker, a derelict that would have to be hauled away. But there it was, derelictly in my driveway—mismatched tires, no hubcaps, shredded upholstery, and paint oxidized to an opaque gray that made description of its color a guess.

"I was thinking \$500."

"Five hundred dollars! Gene, this is very much a car you would pay someone to haul away and not tell you what they did with it. When people talk about 'scrap metal,' this is what they're talking about. You should have used this to haul the bricks in."

Again he put his arm around my shoulder. "Clifton," he said, his voice slightly sententious and low, "this isn't just another car. This is. . . *The Chevrolet.*"

I suspect there are words to describe my feelings at that moment. But "awe" is inadequate. And "reverence" doesn't work for a car with no hubcaps. When I was in Rome a number of years ago, I visited a reliquary wherein was enshrined a strap of leather from Peter's sandals. It looked old enough to be, and for just a moment I thought, "What if it is. . . ?"

That's how I felt about *The Chevrolet*.

Not because I had always believed. When I had first read Gene's essay about blessing the car, I had said to my wife, Marcia, "Too bad it wasn't a Buick; would have given him an alliterative title." And for days after, I felt the cynic's need to wisecrack about "Gene England's program of metaphysical automotive maintenance—change the oil every 2,000 miles; get a lube each 4,000; and bless as needed." Nevertheless, for a family home evening just before leaving on a trip to California, I read the essay to my children. They liked it. More—they believed it.

We always pray before leaving on a trip. We prayed before leaving for California. But not enough of a prayer to keep the car from having trouble late at night between Mesquite and Las Vegas, in that long, dark stretch of desert that worries adults. And terrifies children.

My six-year-old son Calvin sat in the front seat between Marcia and me as the car began to sputter going up one of the desert hills. Beginning as something of a gurgle, the missing quickly developed into a lurching indecision. I had no idea what the trouble might be. But as Marcia and I quickly discussed the alternatives if the car should break down, I felt Calvin's hand on my thigh.

"Are we gonna be okay?" he asked.

"Sure," I said, trying to concentrate on the rhythm of the engine.

"But what happens if it stops?"

"Everything's fine."

"But it's dark. I can't see any lights out there. What if it stops?"

Calvin was afraid. And as his fear distracted me from the car, I also looked into the night. He was right. It was really dark out there. And no cars coming.

I had no idea what we would do if the car broke down.

"Daddy. You remember that story you read us, about the man who prayed for his car? Remember that?"

I remembered.

"Maybe we should say a prayer."

I wasn't going to pray! I'd had too much fun over Gene's essay. I might break down and be devoured by the dark monsters that live in the desert between Mesquite and Las Vegas, but I would not be a hypocrite. I would not bless the Ford!

"Daddy's driving and can't close his eyes, so maybe you'd better pray."

And he did. I remember Calvin's prayer, exactly. "Heavenly Father, please bless the car so it won't break down and get us stuck in the dark."

As he prayed, the car staggered up a long incline, between frequent cutaways of the hill. The engine seemed to be missing more than running. Missing to the very moment of Calvin's ". . . in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."

It did not miss after that. It ran smoothly to California. It ran smoothly till the day I sold it, a week before Gene approached me about *The Chevrolet*.

"You're selling *The Chevrolet*?"

"Yes. For \$500. See you when we get back." And he was gone, like one of the Three Nephites, leaving me *The Chevrolet*. To sell.

I parked it on the street. Put a sign in the window. "\$500 or best offer." Any offer. However unique its history, however often blessed its past, however much I had come to believe in the blessing of oxen and children and automobiles, this was a car that had seen better days, a long time ago.

I knew what was going to happen. The car wouldn't sell, at any price. Gene would get back from his trip and say something like, "You're doing a good job, Clifton. You just go ahead and keep doing what you're doing." The car would stay in front of my house until it collapsed into its own rust.

I was very discouraged. But it was *The Chevrolet*. And Gene was Gene. What was there for me to do?

I needed to do very little.

Three days after Gene left, I was again sitting in front of the fire, working on an essay about the sacrifices friendship can demand. About

bricks and pickups; about stationwagons whose blessings are used up.

I had just gotten up to stoke the fire when I heard the crash. Not quite a crash. More a crunch. Not enough of a noise to go see about.

In a moment, there was a knock at my door. "I'm really sorry," the frightened young man apologized, "but I ran into your car. The station-wagon. I just didn't see it. Seemed to come out of nowhere."

I put my arm around his shoulder, as I imagined Gene might do. "Don't worry, son. Believe me when I tell you this isn't your fault. It's the car. Selling itself. Nothing you could have done about it."

The boy pulled away from me, uncertain whether he might not be in more trouble than he had imagined.

We called his father to find out his insurance company, and the next day I drove the further-mangled Chevrolet down for an appraisal. The settlement came to \$332. A little less than \$200 short. But I wasn't worried. No faith is stronger than the faith of the faithless converted.

Two days later a seminary teacher offered me \$200 for *The Chevrolet*. "For parts," he said.

I didn't tell him about the car's history. You can never be certain about the religion of a seminary teacher, and I didn't want to screw up the deal *The Chevrolet* had arranged. I took the \$200 and watched *The Chevrolet* move off down the street.

However remarkable its past, I was glad to have it gone. Not because I hadn't grown fond of the car or because I had the least suspicion of its being a Mormon monkey's paw, but because I would have the money for Gene.

When I gave it to him, he smiled, not the least amazed. Nor was I.

A few months later, I saw the seminary teacher to whom I had sold the car. He was driving along Main in downtown Provo.

He was driving *The Chevrolet*.

He was smiling.

Proud Flesh

Anita Tanner

Dad doctors Rudy's leg,
torn and jagged
just above the hoof
enmeshed in barbed wire.
I watch him smooth salve,
his fingers caressing
our horse's wound grown dark,
the flesh made stronger
by Father's benediction.
He teaches me about proud flesh,
how growth fills the hole
of every wound.

Over time
in Father's flesh
that abundance comes back
with the same passion—
the reddened mound
in the center of his chest
after the bolthole
when he fell from a runaway,
the scar tissue like a night crawler
encircling and stiffening
his forefinger that slipped
into a blade at the sawmill,
the traffic of time
making wounds, lines
to harrow his face
like a farm field.

Inside his casket
where his flesh lies
withered from his normal weight,
wounds echo in my head,
reverberate in my flesh,
all flesh being proud,
proud all the way
through the end.

History, Memory, and Imagination in Virginia Eggertsen Sorensen's *Kingdom Come*¹

William Mulder

MANY YEARS AGO VIRGINIA SORESENSEN wrote me a prophetic letter. She had just read my article, "Through Immigrant Eyes: Utah History at the Grass Roots."² She sounded breathless: "For years and years," she wrote, "I have believed—for what reason, I wonder, since I never really lived in the houses where the true tradition was but could only visit a while, and listen, and pause always by the gate where I could hear and see it?—that I was the one to tell this story you speak of. Almost I have heard The Call!" That letter (dated January 29, 1954) begat a sustained exchange of letters and materials between us for several years and started her on her Danish Mormon immigrant novel, *Kingdom Come*, published in 1960 after six arduous years of research, writing, and re-writing, and several extended stays in Denmark itself.³

By December of 1954 (the very year of that prophetic letter), she was already in her ancestral homeland on a Guggenheim fellowship, being befriended by blood relatives met for the first time, and looking into the archives of such collections as the *Folkemindesamling* (the folklore collection) at the Royal Library in Copenhagen and the *Historisk Samling* and *Den gamle By* at Aarhus, seeing firsthand the realistic genre painting, *Mormon praedikanter* by Christen Dalsgaard at the Statens Museum for

1. This paper was first presented Thursday, 29 June 2000, at the 35th annual meeting of the MHA in Aalborg, Denmark.

2. *Utah Historical Quarterly* 22 (January 1954): 41-55.

3. Virginia Sorensen, *Kingdom Come* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960). Hereafter KC.

Kunst, and, at one time or another, absorbing the sights and sounds of Copenhagen and the physical and human landscapes of Jutland's countryside.⁴ One January, for example, found her in Aalborg, Mariager, and Hvidsten Kro near Randers, and a family farm at Vedddum. She wanted, she said, "to see Jutland in the grip of winter, especially how it is on the old farm."⁵ Jutland and Copenhagen would become the poles of action in her narrative, their prominence reflected in the gratitude she expressed in her published acknowledgments to "Christian and Li Ostergaard and to young Chris, and to Gregors and Kate and Jorgen and Gunni, and to all the good folks on the farm at Vedddum, and to Bendt and Tove at Charlottedal." The Ostergaards, she told me, checked her work for any "unDanishness."

Before she ever left the States, I had sent her reprints of pertinent articles, copies of diaries and personal narratives—some on microfilm (a medium she hated to read)—and, as I approached the finish line, carbon copies of the chapters of my Harvard thesis on the Mormon migration from Scandinavia. This left her feeling quite overwhelmed, yet, as she put it, remembering something she didn't know she knew. "[I] discovered something better than I knew," she wrote: "'[C]ousin' Gregers Christensen of Copenhagen is an authority on ancient history!"⁶ "My need," she said, "is to go and look and listen and absorb for a few months."⁷ In fulfilling that need, she was as intrepid as any historian doing fieldwork, with the result that *Kingdom Come* was universally praised in the reviews for its authenticity.

In this first novel of what she planned as a trilogy spanning three generations, she had to work backward from the familiarity of being one of, and living among, the descendants of the early settlers in Sanpete Valley, widely known as "Little Denmark." She regretted having "missed Great Grandfather Eggertsen's household. The wrong generation, born too late!" she lamented,⁸ but she had lived in Manti from age five to thirteen, when as a curious youngster she had created a "world in a closet," a space under the staircase at home to which she brought her books from the town's Carnegie Library and scribbled stories. Later she would reminisce about "people with marvelous and comical accents who came from a country they called The Lovely Land, across the sea" and confess she never would have felt complete in herself had she not finally traveled to that place.⁹

4. Virginia Sorensen to William Mulder, 30 January 1955, 8 February 1955, 28 February 1955.

5. Ibid., 30 January 1955.

6. Ibid., 18 May 1954.

7. Ibid., 22 April 1954.

8. Ibid., 18 May 1954.

9. Virginia Sorensen, "World in a Closet," *TJLA Newsletter* (Spring 1956).

As a mature writer, she wrote two novels treating second- and third-generation descendants in Sanpete: *On This Star* in 1946,¹⁰ the story of a tragic rivalry between half-brothers of the polygamous Eriksen family, with Manti thinly disguised as Templeton; and *The Evening and the Morning* in 1949,¹¹ the story of Kate Alexander, who late in life returns to face her past. Bruce Jorgensen has said that this novel is notable for its "moral realism." Virginia's short stories collected in *Where Nothing Is Long Ago: Memories of a Mormon Childhood*, which appeared in 1963,¹² drew from the same well, essentially the era of the 1920s, when Manti, Virginia said, "was as bilingual as you can get."¹³ Edward Geary describes her Manti books as "historical fiction of a particular kind, rooted in what Henry James calls a 'visitable past,' a period within memory yet sufficiently remote to allow for some imaginative freedom."¹⁴ This is "the past," says James in Geary's continuing quotation, "fragrant of all. . .the poetry of the thing outlived and lost and gone, and yet in which the precious element of closeness. . .remains appreciable." Denmark presented Virginia with a broader canvas, a greater antiquity, but through her living connections with a contemporary generation of Danish friends and kin and their memories and her immersion in the history of both the country and the Mormon mission in Scandinavia, she achieved in *Kingdom Come* another "visitable past."

In her Sanpete childhood and through later visits to survivors and descendants, Virginia had a rich source of Danish remembrances. One letter, midway in her labors, describes a delightful evening spent with Aunt Annie: "What a wonderful time we had with Aunt Annie and her Danish memories! . . .She wants me to hurry with the book and said, 'I cannot die in peace until I have seen it.' We read some parts aloud—a fine experience for me, with her smiles and comments."¹⁵ When *Kingdom Come* appeared four years later, the dedication read "For Ane Grethe Nielsen Eggertsen, for her 92nd festival."

Two years after her initial determination to create the ancestral story, Virginia wrote that "a hundred pages are now told and nary a Mormon in sight! Not even so much as a Baptist. . . .Yet so very much has happened to these good people already I am breathless. . . .Maybe they'll get a move on now we're all acquainted."¹⁶

10. New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1946.

11. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949; Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999.

12. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963.

13. Mary Bradford, "Virginia Sorensen" (master's thesis, University of Utah, 1956), 23. Quoted in Edward A. Geary, "A 'Visitable Past': Virginia Sorensen's Sanpete," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 216-31.

14. *Ibid.*, Geary, 220.

15. Virginia Sorensen to William Mulder, 9 August 1956.

16. *Ibid.*, 3 February 1956.

It's time for us to get acquainted with "these good people." Virginia confines her story to the beginnings of Mormon activity in Scandinavia, from the spring of 1850, just ahead of Erastus Snow's arrival, to the end of December 1852, when the first large group of converts known as the Forsgren Company embarks at Christianshavn in Copenhagen on the first leg of their journey to Zion. She tells her story in a chronological succession of five major divisions, each about 100 pages long and each firmly anchored by place and season.

She opens the novel in Jutland in the early spring of 1850 at the fictional farmstead of Johannedal near Mariager. There we meet the fictional characters who in time will hear of and encounter the historical characters, the Americans who have come to Scandinavia with a new gospel. At Johannedal we meet the landowner Henrik Dalsgaard, upright and authoritative, his inflexible wife Amalie, and their sixteen-year-old daughter Hanne, spirited and beautiful, who at one point is told by her friend Thea she resembles a Thorvaldsen sculpture.

Also on the estate lives the Malling family, the house servants and field hands who know they must never enter the big house by the front door. We meet Martha, the visionary grandmother; Stig, her sturdy son; his wife, Maren, soon to give birth to a son Paul; and another son, the skeptical Arne, who loves the sea and is a good friend to Svend Madsen, an eighteen-year-old orphan. Handsome and self-reliant, he lives with them as one of the farmhands. His most precious possession is his late mother's Bible in which she had marked many passages that will prove providential.

Svend and Hanne, the landowner's daughter, are strongly attracted to each other, a dangerous crossing of class lines. Their love story lies at the heart of the novel, a love story intertwined with a conversion narrative when Svend goes off to fight in the Slesvig-Holstein war with Prussia and—on his return with victorious troops—encounters a fellow soldier, the ardent Baptist Simon Peter (one of Virginia's notable creations), who takes him to Pastor Peter Mønster's meeting. Mønster is in the history books as the friendly Baptist who, it turned out, lost half his congregation to the Mormons. Svend and Simon Peter have doubts when they read a tract called *A Voice of Warning*, and they decide to seek out the Americans.

By the time Svend meets Erastus Snow—portrayed to the life, including his habit of smacking his lips when he talks—we are on page 153 of the novel. Virginia is faithful to the facts of mission history, using the real names of the first American missionaries (Erastus Snow, Peter O. Hansen, John Forsgren, George P. Dykes) who were on the scene by June of 1850, and the real names of a number of their converts whose diaries and memoirs served Virginia well in constructing her story. "How did I

know my plot was going to require that nice little ship?" she wrote me.¹⁷ She was referring to convert Svend Larsen, skipper of a small vessel he christened *Zions Löve* (the *Lion of Zion*) in which he did, in fact, ferry native missionaries to Norway and back, as he does in the novel, including Svend Madsen, sent on a mission to Norway. I had forgotten about Larsen, but found him in the index to *Homeward*.¹⁸ It illustrates how a single factual sentence becomes a fully developed scene in the novel.

Virginia valued Andrew Jenson's *History of the Scandinavian Mission* for its portraits and biographies of the valiant early missionaries and converts, converts who were baptized one day and sent out the next as missionaries themselves with a supply of *A Voice of Warning* or Snow's *En Sandhed's Røst* (*A Voice of Truth*). "[F]aith is a feeling and belief a strength," Virginia wrote. "I have it with the old Saints. I can say 'I know.'" ¹⁹ Virginia's imagination is at work everywhere, transforming history and memory to serve her creative ends, resulting in what one reviewer called "a deftly described panorama of life, its social and intellectual climate, in [mid-nineteenth century] Denmark."²⁰ At Johannedal she takes that hundred pages she mentioned to create her characters "in the round," as the British novelist E. M. Forster said they should be. We come to know what they think and how they feel. Virginia tells her story as the omniscient author, but there is little exposition. Everything is reported through the eyes and sensibilities of the characters, both real and fictional. Dialogue predominates—dialogue without dialect, but which nevertheless characterizes the speakers, whether the formal preaching of the establishment ministry or the folksay of the Malling family at Johannedal.

All, including both classes, landlord and laborers, are members of Pastor Lauritz Olrik's congregation and attend his country church, complete with bell tower and old Ole, who rings the bells and blows the bellows for the organ. Virginia is respectful of the Lutheran establishment, its history and culture, and lavishly—even lovingly—describes the interiors of the old churches. At the same time she allows members of the Malling family to voice their disillusionment with a church that has lost its vitality. When Svend after his conversion visits Johannedal (entering the big house by the front door, by the way) and is allowed to speak at

17. *Ibid.*, 13 October 1956.

18. William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957; Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000).

19. Virginia Sorensen to William Mulder, 23 November 1956.

20. *Chicago Tribune*, n.d.

the old grandmother's funeral in the parish church, everyone, including Pastor Olrik, is impressed by the simplicity and strength of his remarks. Hanne now knows she loves him and harbors the illusion she can bring him back to the established church with a scholarship from the bishop to prepare him for the ministry. Svend is left wondering whether this might be God's way of reformation, not as a Mormon but as a Lutheran priest, but he shakes off the temptation.

The two levels of Danish society and culture, represented by the landowner's big house and the lowly cottage of his laborers, provide Virginia with opportunities to explore the Danish past and the late nineteenth century present at both levels: a sophisticated level, on the one hand, expressed in conversation when Hr. Dalsgaard's circle of friends come together; and a vernacular level on the other, with the Malling family's conversations rich in folklore and proverbial country customs, such as the belief that housewives butter their lips when they go to market to hire a maid, or the good luck a stork brings when it builds its nest on a cottage chimney. In Martha, the grandmother, a natural storyteller, Virginia has created a perfect remembrancer of the indigenous past. One reviewer said Virginia's characters "sometimes bring to mind, though they are less tragic, the men and women in Sigrid Undset's novels."²¹

Danish and Mormon antiquities meet when Svend, as missionary, visits the Mallings and tells them Joseph Smith's story. "There were sheets of gold telling of the old time in America," he says, "just like the old stories written on rune stones here in Denmark." "I saw such a stone once," says Ole. "A farmer ran onto it after a rain when he was plowing the field." And Maren, Stig's wife, says, "It's like a wonder story. H. C. Andersen might tell such a tale."²² We encounter Andersen in person, by the way, "with a face like a knot of oak," in Copenhagen at the royal festival celebrating the end of the Slesvig-Holstein war, with Svend and Simon Peter also there, you may remember.

Svend continues with his comparisons. Answering a question about the Dippers (as the Mormons and Baptists were called), Svend quotes Luther himself, who wrote that "baptism should be by immersion, but he could never get his followers to break from their old customs. . . and the bishops and pastors never speak of it."²³ As a New England reviewer observed, "[Sorensen] has a magical way with simple folk."²⁴ Virginia treats with some amusement, even indignation, what becomes "the coffee question." Stig Malling, after his conversion, astounds the family

21. *American Statesman* (Austin, Texas), 13 April 1960.

22. KC 228.

23. *Ibid.*, 229.

24. *Telegram* (Worcester, Mass.), 8 May 1960.

when he says, "The elders say the Saints in America never drink coffee." "What do they drink then?" his wife Maren demands. "Nothing but tea?" "No tea either. Or beer. Or snaps. But chocolate they can drink." "Well, that settles it, Bedstemoder," she says and begins to laugh. "I will never go where there's no coffee or tea." When Stig tells the family about plans for a farewell dinner in Copenhagen for Apostle Snow where three hundred people will sit down together at the Hotel du Nord, Maren snaps, "And all three hundred Danes without coffee."²⁵ Late in the novel, when Simon Peter lectures on the Word of Wisdom, Virginia calls it "surely as unpopular an edict as could ever be delivered in the State of Denmark."²⁶

Svend, who as a missionary violated Norway's ban on proselyting, has been released from custody in Oslo, and he speedily heads for Copenhagen to help John Forsgren organize a company of about 300 Saints who, after several transfers by way of Kiel and Hamburg, will finally board the *Forest Monarch* in Liverpool, a sailing vessel, which I have called the Mayflower of the Mormon migration, chartered by and for the Mormons. Stig and his family, motivated by the promise of an inheritance in a valley in Utah set aside for the Scandinavians, are also going.

Hanne, now 18, is angry that both her mother and Pastor Olrik have been keeping Svend's letters from her. She makes her way to Copenhagen, relieved to find Svend. She plays the piano for the congregational singing, including songs from the new Latter-day Saint hymnal in Danish about a land they have never seen but long for, such as "O Du Zion i Vest," the Danish version of "O Ye Mountains High," and "Zion, when I think of thee, I long for pinions like the dove."

To her great surprise, her mother has relented and sent Hanne her big, carved dowry chest, almost too heavy to wrestle aboard. She knows it could never cross the plains. She tells Svend they can sell its silver and linens and all its precious contents in England to pay their emigration debt to Brother Thomsen, who sold his land to enable sixty Saints to emigrate. That's one of the historical facts among many in the preparations for the emigrants' departure which Virginia's narrative skills illuminate as the fictional and historical characters mingle in the novel's final tableau.

Hanne has yet another surprise: Onkel Hans, who lives in Copenhagen, has come to see them off, almost too late, and sends a package hand over hand to her, already aboard the ship. It is the Kitchen Book, a final gift from her mother. "This," says Virginia, "no Danish housekeeper could ever do without."

25. KC 334.

26. KC 390.

As the ship *Obetrit* moves out, an old sea captain from Falster “came and stood by Hanne. ‘Well, there goes Denmark,’ he said, his hands hard on the rail. ‘She’s a Lovely Land, that’s the truth. But on a voyage, it’s a strange thing. . . . Soon you begin to look for land the other way.’” But as the water widens between the ship and the pier, Hanne thinks, “I could swim so far,” and “for a time she had a foretaste, a knowledge that flowed up and filled her mouth with gall.”

That dark sentence anticipates Virginia’s plan to develop her trilogy. We catch a glimpse in her reply to a late reader who hoped Hanne “did not need to give up her big beautiful chest” and urged Virginia to get on with the sequel.²⁷ Virginia replied:

So somebody still reads *Kingdom Come*. I’m glad. If there had been more of you, I’d probably have done the other book. Too bad. I wrote outlines and even chapters but my life changed just then, and I moved to North Africa with my wonderful British husband and forgot all about poor Hanne. I wrote that she left her chest with some “Saints in Liverpool for the missionaries to send to Utah” when she and Svend could afford to send for it. But Svend went back on a mission and brought home a Norwegian girl he converted, daughter of the jailer, you recall. Hanne couldn’t stomach another wife and was a convert on his account anyhow—so she inherited Johannedal. . . . and went back to play the organ. Should she marry the poor [blank], after all? *You decide!*²⁸

Equally light-hearted, but less cavalier, Virginia wrote me a brief hand-written note that same year, 1982, about her notion to write a Svend and Hanne Madsen Family Reunion novel. “So simple and natural to use the same characters. . . . Make it a single volume quite on its own, since *Kingdom Come* is long out-of-print.” [It had sold some 10,000 copies, by the way, not bad for her, she said elsewhere.] “Much of this Reunion Novel,” she continued, “is already done.” Nothing came of it, although it seemed a perfect solution to get the monkey of the unfinished trilogy off her back.

Almost a decade later, four months before her death in 1991 at seventy-nine years of age, Virginia wrote me a disheartened but revealing letter: “I feel a great flood of remorse and sadness when I think of my failures, especially that I abandoned the *Kingdom Come* trilogy. I was troubled that KC was never translated and published in Denmark, and of course felt that it was not good enough. . . . I went back several times to look and work, did you know? I am still very chagrined that somehow Bedst[e]moder was printed møder. I wanted very much to have an edition I could correct.”

27. Virginia Eddings to Virginia Sorensen, 17 November 1982.

28. Virginia Sorensen to Virginia Eddings, 2 January 1983.

I'm afraid I have dwelt more on the history and making of *Kingdom Come* than on the elements of history, memory, and imagination in the novel itself. It comes from looking over Virginia's shoulder as page by page emerged from her manual typewriter, and from her letters, a *Babette's Feast* of words.

The Handing

—for Beth Rich

Emma Lou Thayne

She was seventy-one, moving on. Her five-foot-two
leukemia-lessened to eighty pounds, only
her hands the same, large, fanned storehouse of comfort, her
vitaligo, the brown pattern of taking on
the sun to map the journeys:

the girl pulling beets in an Idaho field,
the cheerleader hanging spirit on a megaphone,
the bride, her hand fingering his off to war,
the teacher chalking the books to read for AP English,
what she touched not a point of arrest
but a core to develop around;
the mother of seven spilling into a full house
aromas of roast beef and pumpkin pie, her savor
the center where reflections circle, events accrue.

He, a newborn seven pounds eleven ounces, her grandson, hands
big like hers even in their smallness
searching the improbable air, strands of fingers
bent on ancient clinging to other fingers,
limbs to climb by.

The day before she died, they laid him, three days old,
beside her, their hands magnets, his curls of pink
like miniature shrimp wrapping themselves around
her square straightened ones no longer taking on the holding,
about the ultimate business of letting go.

Her skeleton smile says Yes
to the One who holds our falling
with infinite softness.
I, the other grandmother, gather him in,
kiss the newest finger, my tears as unmeasured
as water sealed in glass, aligned with years,
and hold like him, like her, level with the coming
and the going home.

Eggertsen Men: Male Family Influences in Virginia Sorensen's *Kingdom Come* and *The Evening and the Morning*¹

Sue Saffle

—to the memory of my aunt Virginia Sorensen Waugh

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE HEROINES in Virginia Sorensen's adult fiction, their real-life counterparts, and inspirations. By contrast, relatively little attention has been given to her male characters and the family figures on whom many were based. As a self-proclaimed family chronicler, Sorensen found in her male forbears, indeed all members of the Eggertsen family, a significant source of information and ideas for her fiction.

Heroic Svend Madsen in *Kingdom Come*² was largely based on her paternal great-grandfather, Simon Peter Eggertsen, for example, just as the down-to-earth, iconoclastic railroad-man Ike in *The Evening and the Morning*³ was faithfully based on Simon's grandson and Sorensen's father, Claude E. Eggertsen. The two real-life men shared both blood and many of the same values, but while Simon Peter was a dedicated convert and true believer, Claude was a dedicated skeptic and unbeliever. In emulation of her family's philosophical divide, Sorensen recreates this schism in the "male personality" of her family in such a way that both believing and doubting Danes speak with equal authority and

1. This paper was first presented Thursday, 29 June 2000, at the 35th annual meeting of the MHA in Aalborg, Denmark.

2. Virginia Sorensen, *Kingdom Come* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960).

3. Virginia Sorensen, *The Evening and the Morning* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949).

conviction in her fiction. In the end, we are impressed not, I think, by the piety or lack thereof in her characters, but rather by their loveable, albeit flawed, humanity.

KINGDOM COME

Set in Denmark 1850-52, *Kingdom Come* relates the historical and religious impetus for the earliest migration to America of Scandinavian converts to the LDS church. It also relates the touching love story between idealistic but indigent Svend Madsen and beautiful but spoiled Hanne Dalsgaard, daughter of the rich land-owner for whom Svend works. Orphaned at age five, Svend and a brother, Anders, have lived ever since "at the mercy of relatives whose houses were already overcrowded," then "put out to work. . .to whatever place in the neighborhood might need a handy boy" (21). Svend is separated from his brother Anders at an early age and, some time after coming to Johannedal, "having nothing and nobody," he falls in love with Hanne and "[t]o the bottom of his soul, he want[s]. . .nothing but to be the kind of man Hanne Dalsgaard might marry" (99). However, Svend is asked to leave Johannedal when Hanne's mother discovers their budding romance. He joins the Danish army to do battle against the Prussians, acquits himself with honor, and, along with his mentor and compatriot Simon Peter Melchiorson, is introduced to Mormonism. It is through Apostle Snow, who preaches about helping "his people to a still greater perfection" (157), that Svend is reunited with his long-lost brother Anders, who works at an apothecary in Copenhagen. Taking their reunion as a "sign," Svend is shortly thereafter converted to Mormonism along with Simon Peter, the former Baptist. Both catch what Danish doctors of the time were calling "preaching sickness" (204).

When Hanne discovers Svend's new passion, she demands to know why he must "believe all those crazy things?" and laments that it "was bad enough before" (245). Despite her objections, Svend proselytizes all over Denmark and Norway and eventually wins Hanne over—if not to his faith, then to his love—so that at the end of the novel both are poised to take their journey across the North Sea to Liverpool and on to America.

We see many similarities to this story in the life of Simon Peter Eggersten, Sorensen's great-grandfather, born near Odense in 1826. Like Svend, Simon Peter had been orphaned at five; afterwards, he was sent from family to family, working for his board and room while going to school. From 1848 to 1850, he fought with the Danish Army, taking an active part in twelve important battles, and, like Svend, survived to enjoy the "gigantic festival, celebrating the victorious end of the war in Slesvig-Holstein" (105). At 24, he found work with an apothecary in Copenhagen and remained for four years, during which time he became converted to Mormonism. Later, he served a three-year mission, then emigrated (like

Svend) to the United States. Unlike Sorensen's fictional hero, however, Simon did not meet his future mate Johanna Thomasen in Denmark; instead, he was introduced to her, or so it is believed, on board the *Westmoreland* after that ship sailed from Liverpool in 1857. Both crossed the plains pushing handcarts and were married in Salt Lake City in 1858.

It is interesting to note that, rather than giving the name of her great-grandfather (Simon Peter) to Svend, on whose life he is modeled, Sorensen instead gave it to Svend's compatriot and fellow Mormon convert. Nevertheless, by borrowing her Danish progenitor's history and namesake, she pays tribute to him. A less superficial difference in the narratives of the real Simon Peter and the fictional Svend is that Sorensen's great-grandfather left his sweetheart, an unbeliever, behind in Denmark and met his future wife en route to America. However, in terms of Sorensen's own background and concerns—especially regarding religious belief and disbelief—perhaps the most significant departure from the real Simon Peter's life has to do with the invention of his lost-then-found brother Anders. While Sorensen's great-grandfather had four brothers, there is no evidence he was reunited with any of these after they were orphaned. Why then did Sorensen invent Anders, and what purpose does he serve in the novel? In a letter to Bill Mulder in which Sorensen describes the "Gallery of Saints" she is creating for *Kingdom Come*, she also refers to "a Voice I had to invent, a very minor character really but one that became more and more necessary to object to everything!" Further, she finds in this character and in "many of his ideas about religion" that "this abominable one [is] ME—!"⁴ Anders (the German root of this name, meaning "other"), is the doubter to whom Sorensen refers and the character who voices Sorensen's own objections, then, to Svend's (and her great-grandfather's) religion. Although he is blood kin to Svend and overjoyed at their reunion, Anders worries, for instance, that his brother is too naive to "know about the strange people in the world—the quacks, the pretenders, the peddlers of everything under God's sun"—in this case, the Mormons (176). Anders argues with Svend's companion Simon Peter about the Book of Mormon's assertion that, "as a punishment for their iniquities the . . . skin [of American Indians, or 'Lamanites'] had been darkened," since, he insists, "[t]hose who live in hot countries always have dark skin" (176). Anders also reads from "an exposure. . . about [the Mormons]. . . in the *Tidende*" in which the "true" motives of Mormon missionaries are laid bare: "They are recruiting whatever members of the European working and peasant classes they can find who are ignorant enough to listen and to be influenced,

4. Letter by Sorensen from Edinboro, Pa., to Bill Mulder, dated 8 February 1954.

taking them to the American West where they are treated as indentured servants" (178). Anders argues that, according to this Danish newspaper, thousands of Mormon emigrants are being exploited for profit, and that the young Mormon women among them are being forced "into illegal marriages with the so-called 'Apostles' of the Mormon Church" (179). While Anders's arguments fail to shake his brother's newfound faith, neither do Svend's nor Simon Peter's counter-arguments change Anders's mind. Sorensen reinforces this "Doubting Dane" theme through other characters in the novel, but none is as intransigent or articulate in his skepticism as Anders Madsen. Nor does the position each brother takes alienate Sorensen's readers, as each is prompted out of love for his brother—Anders wanting to spare Svend humiliation and misery and Svend desiring to bring the light of religious truth, as he sees it, into Anders's life.

THE EVENING AND THE MORNING

Just as Lutheran suspicion of Mormonism is a palpable presence in *Kingdom Come*, so is the Mormon intolerance of "anybody different"⁵ in Sorensen's most autobiographical novel, *The Evening and the Morning*. Most of the Mormon outrage in this novel is reserved for its heroine, Kate Black Alexander, modeled on Sorensen's maternal grandmother Geraldine Alice Alexander Blackett, who was, like Kate in the novel, one of "the natural ones who refuse to bother to pretend" (30). Yet another "natural one" in the novel who speaks his mind in opposition to the Mormon establishment is Ike Cluff, husband to Dessie, Kate's love child from an adulterous relationship. Modeled closely on Sorensen's father, Claude E. Eggertsen, Ike voices anti-church rhetoric similar to that Sorensen heard growing up. As she recalled in an interview with Mary Bradford: "My Dad made light of what we learned in Sunday School and never let us take it seriously." But unlike her Grandmother Blackett—one of twenty-seven children from a polygamous family—Sorensen's father showed "[n]o bitterness at all. Grandma caused the children to leave the church out of bitterness, but there was not a bitter hair on my father's head. He had that wonderful Danish humor and he dealt with things by teasing. All his life he had that marvelous humor."⁶

Thus, Sorensen's beloved father, also known as "Old Dad" in the family, was the inspiration for Kate's free-thinking son-in-law, Ike Cluff. Kate, who has returned to Manti in 1922 to see about a pension due her

5. Sorensen, *The Evening and the Morning*, 238.

6. Mary Lythgoe Bradford, "'If You Are a Writer, You Write!': An Interview with Virginia Sorensen," *Dialogue* 13, no. 3 (Fall 1980): 22.

from her late husband's participation in the Black Hawk War, recognizes in Ike a kindred spirit whose most "vivid characteristic" is his "wistful humor" (216). A down-to-earth railroad man married to a fearful, possessive wife who worries over "what people were going to think, hear, say" (240), Ike (like his Danish forbears) has a tendency to "poke. . .fun at serious, important things" (105). He is also severely rational, which prevents him from making promises, since "acts of God made. . .promise[s] ridiculous" (106). An inveterate pipe smoker, he also drinks wine given him by Italian workers on the railroad. Yet he is fiercely loyal to his family and considerate of their needs. After Kate comes to town, he repairs her guitar so that she and the family might enjoy her playing (109). And at mealtimes, he "never ma[kes] conversation at table which could not be called talk for children as long as children were there" (169). And his love for Dessie is legendary: "There was an old story he told the children how she had lost him two jobs before they were married, because he would walk a ways with her and then she a ways with him and he a ways with her until he was hours late and the whole thing was off with the railroad" (110).

Kate feels a great "bond" with Ike "because of his very weakness, because of the way he turned off his hurt in humor," and because of his "courage to stand apart, to be different" (208). When Ike stands up to Kate's detractors—"God's spies"—he proves himself not only her ally but her "champion" (309). He is deeply egalitarian in his dealings with others and takes umbrage when the Italian wives of his fellow railroad workers are snubbed at the July 24th celebration, believing it "symbolic of the whole mess," that is, the tyranny and unhappiness caused by the paranoid obsessions of people in this small Mormon town. He is also selflessly compassionate, so that when one of the Italian workers, Paolo, is incapacitated by heart trouble, the already overworked Ike fills in as timekeeper until Paolo can get his promotion to a desk job in Salt Lake (219). Modestly, Ike keeps this to himself, so that Dessie begins to suspect he's having an affair with an Italian woman. The "physical shock of disapproval" she feels when he drinks too much of Paolo's homemade wine is clearly prompted less by concern for Ike's health than by jealousy (172). Yet this overly "fussy" (27), worried woman cannot help adoring this man who teases, smokes, sometimes drinks, makes "friends with queer people" (105), and speaks his mind. She "loved Ike. . .extravagantly. . . She loved his humor with the amazed appreciation of one who has spent too much time with seriousness. . . She loved his differences from other people" (108).

As alike as Sorensen's fictional Kate (the apostate grandmother in *The Evening and the Morning*) and her Grandma Blackett (the apostate in the short story by that title in *Where Nothing is Long Ago*) are Ike and Claude E. Eggertsen or "Old Dad." The name "Cluff" that Sorensen

gave to Ike comes from an Eggertsen connection as well: Simon Peter, Sr., on whom Svend Madsen was based in *Kingdom Come*, had four children—Simon Peter, Jr., Andrew (Claude's father), Lars, and Sarah who married a Cluff. Born in Provo in 1887, Claude was the middle son of Andrew Thomas Eggertsen, who appears as himself in the short story "The Other Lady" in *Where Nothing is Long Ago*.⁷ When Andrew's mercantile business went bankrupt around 1901, Claude, only 13, was compelled to quit school and go to work, despite his outstanding athletic ability and excellent scholarship:

[He] got himself a job delivering telegrams for the railroad and slept and lived on a cot in the railroad station for some years. He. . . quickly picked up telegraphy which led to more responsible jobs for the railroad. . . [becoming] a clerk and typist. . . with only two fingers, the index and middle finger, of each hand [just like Ike!]. . . [and later he] became station agent on the mid-night shift in several different very rural stations, those lonely places along the railroad with water towers and supplies of coal or wood for the refueling. . . lacking radios, the trains had to get orders and warnings about on-coming or approaching traffic before the age of easy signals.⁸

After arriving in Thistle to work as a night operator, he met Deva, Grandma Blackett's 15-year-old daughter, and fell passionately in love. He soon became a regular caller at the Blackett home, frequently staying away from his job longer than permitted, so that eventually, his "neglect of duty"⁹ led to his being discharged, just as Ike loses two jobs because of Dessie in the novel. Claude describes this time in his personal history when romance got in the way of work: "I got in the habit of leaving the depot whenever an opportunity presented itself, along in the evening and walking down to her house. Frequently I stayed longer than conditions at the office permitted and had a lot of trouble with the dispatchers, finally being turned in when I caused a big delay to a hot shot train and was discharged."¹⁰ Claude and Deva were married, and eventually he was reinstated on the D&RG. In Thistle, where he worked as "third trick operator . . . from 11 pm to 8 am daily. . . [Deva], afraid to be left alone. . . usually stayed with [him] at the office, sleeping as best she could in the road-master's office at the end of the telegraph office."¹¹

Children arrived—Claude, Jr., in 1909, Helen in 1910, and Virginia in

7. Virginia Sorensen, *Where Nothing Is Long Ago* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955).

8. Paul Eggertsen's personal history, 2.

9. Claude Eggertsen's personal history, 3.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 4.

1912. In 1922 when *The Evening and the Morning* is set, their ages would have been the same: Virginia would have been 10 as Jean is in the novel, Helen (like Lou) 12, and Claude (like Carl) 13. Sorensen told me that Ike's family is her own, and that she was "Jean," during its happy Manti years when Claude Eggertsen, or "Old Dad" (as he was known), was railroad agent there.

As Old Dad's granddaughter (and Sorensen's niece), I myself remember vividly his good-natured humor. Just as he ribbed his own children about their Sunday School lessons, so too did he tease his grandchildren. Since we visited the Eggertsen home on Sundays after we'd been to church, we came to look forward to our parleys with Old Dad and his entertaining confabulations of what we'd been taught that morning. When I was first learning about Joseph Smith and the golden plates, for instance, Old Dad listened, apparently fascinated, to a recital of the facts, then, with great concern on his face, asked, "But what about poor old Mrs. Cumorah? Was that very nice of Joseph to steal her special plates?" Confounded, we didn't know whether to laugh or argue, but he got us thinking—and thinking in the Eggertsen home was a commandment that hung in the air, much as the ten commandments hung in the air at my paternal grandfather's house.

Paul Eggertsen, Claude's and Deva's fifth child, recollects in his personal history, that, while neither of his parents went to high school, "Both were extremely capable persons. . . well-read for their time, alert to politics and sociology and science and almost worshipful of books. . . . My mother simply ached for education. She seemed to live and be sustained by the fond hope that some day she would achieve some kind of educational or intellectual opportunities."¹² In fact, over "Munner's" (my grandmother Deva Eggertsen's) sink, hung a sign I shall never forget which read, "Your mind is your best weapon." An odd sign, I thought many years later, to have been hanging over a sink in a small Springville, Utah, home!

Both Old Dad and Munner saw to it that all their children completed college, and during their early years, they were encouraged to attend the LDS church—not so they might "get religion," but so they would have friends and recreational opportunities. Uncle Paul remembered them both with great admiration and love, as did his sister Virginia and my mother Geraldine. Munner's grandchildren remember her as warm, generously aware of everyone's needs, and conversationally witty, but also as something of a worrier like Dessie. What we remember most nostalgically about Old Dad, though, is his humor. Consistent with Kate's "inner vision" of Ike, Old Dad's humor was the "one [most] vivid characteristic

12. Paul Eggertsen's personal history, 3.

which seemed to permeate everything [he]. . . did" (216). Like Ike, Old Dad "considered teasing—learning to be teased—a necessary part of a child's education for life, and he loved to attend to it" (88). I was powerfully reminded of Old Dad during the scene in which Ike teases Aline, Jean's best friend and the bishop's daughter, while she nervously toys with the firebox poker and says, "I don't care" to repeated offers of toast and jam. It would have been characteristic of Sorensen's own father to respond as Ike does in the novel by saying, "Well, then. . . if she—don't—care, Dessie, let's just forget the whole thing and make a new rule—anybody without toast and jam on her face before nine o'clock in the morning has to stand by the stove and monkey with a poker *all day long*" (89). Old Dad's teasing, like Ike's, was never cruel, just provocative, jolly, and wonderfully tailored to the foibles of the person being teased. Rather than feeling humiliated or embarrassed, one felt privileged to have been singled out, a rare experience for many children.

Our pious paternal grandfather left quite a different impression on me and my siblings. One running joke Old Dad had with my brother Jim was prompted by this other grandfather, referred to by them as "Goober." During Jim's childhood years my family lived in Byron, Wyoming, where my father was superintendent of schools. In one letter remaining from that time, Old Dad writes to Jim about that name:

Jimmy—Jimmy—Jimmy, I'm surprised at you! Taking the definition given by some ignorant Southerner in preference to one furnished by an admitted authority like Webster or me. It just goes to show how dangerous a little learning can be. You must work harder at your lessons. But to the question at hand—and I must say that I very much appreciate your confidence in me, as evidenced by your asking my advice—such an important question as to the meaning of the term "goober." Always refer these difficult questions to your "Old Dad," and you can be sure of perfectly reliable and well-considered information on small inconsequential matters. I may fool around a little, but on [certain] questions, you can rely on me. Now as to the question at hand—Goober—Gooseberry—Goosey—Goosey Gander—all derived from the Spanish meaning a vegetable—a fruit—a big duck. Therefore, Goober could not be a peanut unless such peanut is half-baked—a small round potato, slightly decayed—is a vegetable everyone could properly designate as a goober. But all jokes aside—I sure enjoyed your letter. Got a big laugh out of it—but if I had you here, I'd flip your nose. Love, Old Dad [underlined].

Whether or not this was typical of Danish humor, it was surely typical of Old Dad's. Also, of course, there is some satire at "Goober's" expense in the implication that he is not only "half baked," but also "slightly decayed." At the same time, these negative implications are somewhat offset by Old Dad's self-deprecating assertion that he's an authority only on "inconsequential" matters.

Despite his rare humor, Old Dad was also, like Ike, severely rational in his thinking and took nothing on faith. When his two sons, Paul and Hal, entered his hospital room as he lay dying, he:

emerged from his oxygen tent with obvious pleasure. . . looked at [them]. . . and said, "Well, to get you two here together with me in this awful place I must be in a hell-of-a-shape. Well, I am in a hell-of-a-shape and I'm going to die very soon and I'm glad. Don't expect any of those fancy death-bed conversions or confessions from me, though. I believe that dead is dead and there isn't anymore to come and I'm damn glad of that too."¹³

So much for his Grandfather Simon Peter Eggertsen's religious faith! Here was the Doubting Dane persisting *even unto death*. Like Ike, Old Dad clearly believed that "religion serves a purpose for weak people—keeps 'em straight and honest. . . . But some are strong enough without it" (178).

Also like Ike, Old Dad had strong political and social ideas and expressed them openly around the family. I remember many enthusiastic political debates at the table, debates that would sometimes go far into the night. Paul, Sorensen's younger brother, remembered that his folks would talk politics with their children and that during the thirties and forties, "the family sang a lot of labor songs."¹⁴ Sixty years with the railroad before his retirement, Old Dad was an avid union man, active in the Democratic Party, serving four terms as a city councilman in Springville. In 1950 he ran for County Auditor, losing by only 600 votes out of a total 28,000 cast. In a letter to Virginia written Thanksgiving 1950, his humor is overwhelmed by his sense of injustice when he condemns the election in which:

[a]ll of the democratic candidates, including myself, were castigated as Communists, Un-American and Socialistic [at] General Conference, quarterly conferences, ward meetings, and relief society platforms [where]. . . people [were warned] of the disasters in store for them if the Socialists, Labor Unions and other such subversive organizations were returned to power.

The outcome of the election proved for him that "they [the Mormon voters, had] thought more of the hereafter than the here," but, he writes that, despite the fact that he had been:

"rated as a radical or communist, a non-believer, non-supporter of the church, and general no-account [in the campaign], I didn't have anything to

13. Paul Eggertsen's personal history, 20.

14. Ibid.

lose. . . as I never was noted for my conformity when it came to church or political affairs and didn't stand too high with the conservative element in our community."

When Ike drinks the Italian homebrew he is given in gratitude for helping Paolo, his talk turns to immoral industrialists, oppressive small-town politics, and Utah's religious Puritanism, all concerns of Sorensen's father (177-84). Like Kate, the heroine of the novel, he would have despised the practice of home teachers "inform[ing] a brother how to vote as often and as naturally as they advised him in his prayers" (7-8) as well as the subservience of church members who allowed their "thoughts and feelings [to be] determined at conference" (11). Also like Old Dad, when Ike sees an injustice, such as when he is falsely accused by Dessie of having an affair, he "feels his anger coming over him." At this point in the novel, he thinks but doesn't say, "If Dessie thought she could stick her nose into his business, he'd teach her a thing or two—damn it to hell" (239).¹⁵

Ike, like his real-life counterpart, is too proud to defend himself when unfairly accused; however, his social and intellectual self-sufficiency is not something he passes on to his oldest son. In the novel, Ike and Karl have father-son difficulties. Described as "good [and], soundly like Ike" (137), Karl bears no other obvious resemblance to his father, and unlike his father, Karl decides to tow the line in society, as "there's no use making people mad. . . like he [his father] does." An over-achiever, he suffers because of his father's public smoking and imbibing and explains to his grandmother that "[w]hen you've got a feeling that people are sort of—well, suspicious, or something, you work harder. You do all kinds of things you might not do if you were—well, ordinary" (139).

Of her older brother Claude, Jr., Sorensen writes, "I was proud of Claudie, my big brother, who was the smartest student in his class and who was an Eagle Scout who had his name in the paper. He told me recently that he had to be the best and most polite boy in town because Dad and Mamma never went to church and Dad smoked that terrible

15. Another outspoken railroad man in the novel is Peter Jansen, Kate's lover of years gone by, who was likely inspired by Fred Sorensen, the author's first husband, and a conflation of the various doubting Danes Sorensen knew growing up. He is red-haired—like Fred—and, after emigrating from Denmark as a young man, is quite a rebel, "refus[ing] to bow as [his father] Hans did to an Authority which claimed to give and to owe allegiance only to Almighty God, dictating to men in His name even where a man should live and even, often enough, who a man ought to love and marry" (55). He tells his father that he's a "fool" for giving the church his property, and—like Ike and Old Dad—Peter smokes, drinks coffee, and abhors church policy. In an interview Sorensen gave in 1990, she describes how her first husband Fred "fought every policy the Mormon Church [and its conservative teachings] had" (Mary Kenyon, 19 July 1990). Like her husband Fred, Peter has an adulterous affair, and tells Kate he is "not sorry for anything" (60).

pipe."¹⁶ In a letter to Sorensen written in 1952, her brother Paul castigates Claude, Jr., on whom Karl was clearly based, then apologizes, saying, "I feel remiss in so discussing Claude. It is unkind, for he did suffer the most from the folks. . . . He was first and had to conform the hardest and it must've gotten to be an unbreakable habit." In another letter from 1952, Paul complains again about Claude, Jr.'s conservatism and "social ideas [that] are miserably come to." Sorensen's two younger brothers, Paul and Hal, emerged as social rebels, whereas Claude, Jr., seems to have joined, according to Paul, the "die-hard categorizers." It could have been Old Dad writing when Paul complains about people like his older brother Claude, Jr.: "They make me so damn mad because they have no humility in the face of complication."¹⁷

Unfortunately, pride interfered powerfully with Claude, Sr.'s, lifelong desire to become a lawyer and politician. While initially it was his father's bankruptcy that checked Claude, Sr.'s, aspirations, Paul relates in his personal history that at one point a wealthy Eggertsen cousin offered to send him to law school, but that he "spurned [the] offer of support. . . out of pride." Paul regrets his father's choice, as "a good deal of help would have come out of this. . . and he would have been much more satisfied with his life."¹⁸ Likewise, in the novel Karl (Ike's son) tells his grandmother Kate that "his father started out in law, but. . . there wasn't enough money, he couldn't get through." He tells Kate about his father's "big books in the attic," law books that his father can't bear to give away (141).

Possibly it was pride as well that prevented Sorensen's father from parting amicably with his own father Andrew when he visited the Eggertsen house for the last time. Sorensen has written movingly of this occurrence in the fact-based short story "The Other Lady," included in *Where Nothing is Long Ago*. Andrew, Claude, Sr.'s, father and the second son of Simon Peter, Sr., seems even as a child to have been dogged by bad luck and discriminated against by his "hard-fisted, puritanical, hard-working [and] devout" father.¹⁹ A famous story handed down in the family illustrates this: When his three sons, Simon Peter, Jr., Andrew, and Lars were small, their father bought two horses, a black one and a white one (though color varies from teller to teller). Then Simon Peter, Sr., made the pronouncement that his oldest son, Simon Peter, Jr., could ride the black horse and that his youngest son, Lars, could ride the white

16. Sorensen, "Houses in Earnest," first draft of an unpublished autobiographical essay, dated 12 February 1991, 9.

17. Letter from Paul Eggertsen to Virginia Sorensen, dated 1956.

18. Paul Eggertsen's personal history, 3.

19. *Ibid.*, 1.

horse, and that Andrew could ride "sometimes." Sorensen's brother Paul writes that:

[a]pocryphal or not, this story, or whatever situation it arose from, did in fact divide the family over three generations. Andrew remained as rebellious as his own father had been demanding and unforgiving. The estate followed through [to] . . . the oldest . . . and the youngest son[s]. . . and little came Andrew's way.²⁰

Even after Andrew succeeded in business with "a big store of his own," the "Cleveland Depression" brought about the ruination of this thriving enterprise.²¹

Another story I grew up hearing is that, after Andrew's bankruptcy, his two wealthy brothers bought him out with the promise that when he could afford to do so, Andrew would repay them and all three would own equal shares in the store. Legend has it, however, that when, eventually, Andrew produced the money he owed them, he was denied an equal share, while his brothers went on to become millionaires. Was the offer of financial support made to Claude, Sr., then, an expression of remorse for this crime? One has to wonder. In any case, Sorensen's story treats the last months of Andrew's life, in which he falls in love with a pretty milliner from Ephraim, divorces his wife, and dies on his honeymoon, with great compassion. She also describes in "The Watcher"²² the deep depression into which her father fell after Andrew's death.

Simon Peter, Sr., Andrew, Claude, Sr., and Claude, Jr., are all important presences in Sorensen's adult fiction. Moreover, the conflicts and losses which shaped these men appear to have been influential in the development of the characters they inspired. Just as the women in Sorensen's early life had a profound impact on who she was and what she wrote, so too did the men. A middle child who "longed to go away and dreamed of excelling at something to prove that poor descendants of a Middle Son. . . were also worth notice,"²³ Sorensen escaped the Mormon ethos that her great-grandfather had so wholeheartedly embraced. Yet she could never escape the complexity of her rich family story, nor the "imagined community" of ancestors left behind in Denmark. These she was able to know and love through both their pious and impious descendants. In identifying with all of them, Sorensen is able to suspend judgment and, at her finest, allow us to do the same.

20. Ibid., 1.

21. Sorensen, *Where Nothing is Long Ago*, 130.

22. Ibid.

23. Letter by Sorensen from Edinboro, Pa., to Bill Mulder, dated 8 February 1954.

The Danish Genesis of Virginia Sorensen's *Lotte's Locket*¹

Susan Elizabeth Howe

DESCRIBING HER RESEARCH FOR *THE PROPER GODS*, a novel about the Yaqui Indians and their culture, Virginia Sorensen said her work had been "an excursion into cultural anthropology" that she thought would continue the rest of her life.² This prediction proved to be especially true of the preparation for her children's novels. In each of them Sorensen undertook the study of a different culture and locale. For example, *Curious Missie* is set in rural Alabama; *Plain Girl* is about an Amish child; and Sorensen's last children's novel, *Friends of the Road*, is set in contemporary Morocco. But probably the cultural anthropology that Sorensen enjoyed most was her study of Denmark, which enabled her to write, in addition to her novel *Kingdom Come*, a children's novel entitled *Lotte's Locket*.

A novelist can minimize the difficulty of using an unfamiliar setting by writing about characters who are also unfamiliar with that place; thus, the novelist can simply present an outsider's view of the culture. It is much more difficult to create characters who are at home in a setting that is exotic to the author. If the characters are natives, the writer must develop such a complete understanding of the culture as to weave it through the fabric of the story in the same way it is woven through the lives of local inhabitants. Sorensen was particularly adept at such blending of culture and story, and *Lotte's Locket* is a particularly good book to examine in order to understand and appreciate her thorough study and preparation. The Danish elements of *Lotte's Locket* are presented so naturally that the story seems to be narrated by a native.

1. This paper was first presented Thursday, 29 June 2000, at the 35th annual meeting of the MHA in Aalborg, Denmark.

2. Virginia Sorensen, "The Novelist and His Materials." *Western Humanities Review*, 7 (1953), 288.

Because of her ancestry and upbringing, Sorensen certainly had an affinity for the Danish culture. In an unpublished manuscript entitled *Scandinavian Americans*, she writes:

The important fact is that I always *felt* Danish. . . .The Danes in my father's family were important to me and I saw more of them, always, than I did of my mother's scattered family. My favorite Great-aunt was pure Dane, Anegrethe Nielsen Eggertsen. . . .My Great-Uncle Simon, the eldest son of three (my grandfather was Andrew, the middle son), had his father's [Simon Peter Eggertsen's] journal and translated it lovingly into English, so making it accessible to me. . . .He and his wife went to the old country when I was a young girl, and at the family party welcoming them back, I heard about the relatives still over there and about the places where Simon Peter and his Johanna had been born.

Widowed early, Aunt Anegrethe also went to Scandinavia with her daughter Esther and her Norwegian husband, Oliver Petersen, bringing back to me stories of her early life and a vivid picture of the old farm at Ved-dum, in Jutland. I knew that there was still "family" over there who would welcome me when I managed to go myself.³

Members of the Eggertsen family, Sorensen's father's family, were strongly connected to Denmark and visited it enough to make Virginia identify herself as Danish and feel proud of that heritage. Furthermore, Sorensen grew up in Manti, Utah, in Sanpete Valley, which was known as "Little Denmark" because the majority of its first settlers had been Danish immigrants. In 1956 Sorensen wrote about her childhood home:

. . .even now if you go to see the fine white Mormon Temple that dominates the landscape night and day you will likely be shown about the grounds by somebody with a Danish name, perhaps even with a Danish accent. He will tell you about the famous spiral staircases in the towers which were built by skilled Danish craftsmen not long ago. . . .

My first school principal and ward choir-leader was Brother Johnsen. My sister studied piano with Mr. Jensen. We ate bread baked in a Danish bakery with a sign like a pretzel over the door. There was a Danish Pasture, a Danish Wood, a Danish Ditch in our neighborhood. People held Danish meetings and bore testimonies in a Danish-English language that we children found side-splitting. They also subscribed to a Danish magazine called *Bikunden* and loved the works of a Danish poet C.C.A. Christensen who once studied in the Royal Academy in Copenhagen.⁴

3. Sorensen, Foreword to *Scandinavian Americans*. Unpublished manuscript in Sorensen's papers in Boston University Library's Special Collections. Not paginated.

4. Sorensen, unpublished manuscript identified "Utah. October 1956" in Sorensen's papers in Boston University Library's Special Collections. Not paginated.

Surrounded by so many town folk of Danish origin, her reaction to Denmark is not surprising:

No wonder that when I went to Denmark I felt that I had been there before. The food was prepared as I had seen it from the beginning of my time in the world. The faces of Danish farmers and shopkeepers were like the faces I had known all my life, ruddy and square. The tow-headed beauty of the children I had always known at home. The loving-teasing of my father and uncles was so familiar that I knew what the family in Vedddum was laughing about, around the table, before I knew ten words of their language. I knew how bread was made in Line's kitchen before I watched her make it, and beer soup, and cottage cheese and the best coffee in the world. . . . I knew how to combine red raspberries and red currents [sic] (both fresh from the bushes) for a pudding called Rødgrød med Fløde.⁵

In a sense, then, Sorensen already had some preparation for writing *Lotte's Locket* before she ever went to Denmark because during much of her early life, she had been surrounded by both family and neighbors of Danish ancestry, who continued to practice many aspects of Danish culture. But, of course, she did go to Denmark, her first trip—from December 1954 until June 1955—made possible by a Guggenheim Fellowship. The primary purpose of her excursion was to collect information that would enable her to write a novel about the early Danish Mormons,⁶ but always observant, she used many of her experiences and much of her research in creating an additional children's novel, *Lotte's Locket*, which was focused neither on the Mormons nor on the 19th century, but on recent Danish history. She spent much of her time in Copenhagen where she worked in the Royal Library, and she also visited the farm called Vedddum, in Jutland, where her Aunt Anegrethe had been born. Both locations are important in *Lotte's Locket*.

A brief summary of the plot makes evident how Sorensen uses these two locations in the novel. Lotte is almost eleven and lives with her mother and grandmother (her *Farmor*, her father's mother) on a farm in Jutland. Both her father and grandfather have been killed in World War II, probably about eight years earlier. One of her father's fellow pilots, Patrick, an American from Texas, has come to Denmark in hope of meeting his old friend, only to learn of his death. He strikes up a friendship with Lotte's mother that quickly blossoms into romance, and they decide to marry in the two weeks before Patrick has to leave Denmark. This is devastating news for Lotte, who is used to her mother's complete attention and affection and who wants to remain in Denmark on the farm

5. Foreword to *Scandinavian Americans*, not paginated.

6. *Kingdom Come* was published in 1960 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World).

Lottegaard, for which she has been named and which she should inherit. Despite Lotte's disapproval, her mother and Patrick marry and set out for Copenhagen where they will take a boat to America. Lotte and her grandmother accompany the new couple to Copenhagen to send the newlyweds off on the ship. Then the novel returns to the farm in Jutland where Lotte is to finish her year in school before she, too, travels to America though all-the-while she tries to come up with some plan that will enable her to stay in Denmark. Finally, as Lotte herself has to leave Denmark, there is another trip to Copenhagen where she must board the ship that will take her to America. Thus, the novel is set in Copenhagen and Jutland—the two locations in Denmark that Sorensen visited for extended periods of time.

Sorensen evokes and recreates these settings with a wealth of cultural detail, and this paper will focus mainly on two important though very dissimilar cultural subjects central to the novel—Hans Christian Andersen and the Danish resistance movement of World War II. First, however, we'll survey other examples of the novel's abundant cultural detail to show how carefully the author studied the physical environment, the customs, and the history of Denmark to prepare herself to write.

Soon after she arrived in Denmark, she described Copenhagen in a letter to William Mulder:

. . .no wonder the books are entitled "Wonderful Copenhagen" and "Beautiful Copenhagen" and are written with such love and excitement. . . .I have seen much of the city already and have decided to stay on at this hotel a while. . . .because I can walk from here all over the old city. I am on the harbor and look out at dozens of marvelous boats, coming and going. On the next street is the house where Hans Andersen lived, along one of the canals. A few blocks away is the Amalienborg palace where the guards walk.⁷

The places Sorensen mentions in this letter all appear in *Lotte's Locket*. She used her own experiences in creating the novel. Her hotel was on the harbor just like the hotel where Lotte and her family stay when in the book they come to Copenhagen. Sorensen has Lotte look down on the harbor activity from her hotel room. She describes the scene in this way: "Huge cranes were working, picking up automobiles and boxes the size of summerhouses as if they were buttons. The whole harborside was a lively mixup of barrels and sailors and ropes and bicycles and motor-bikes and trucks and people and, of all funny things, horses with hats on. . . ." ⁸ The nearby street where Hans Christian Andersen once lived,

7. Virginia Sorensen to William Mulder, December 26, 1954. Letter, a copy of which is in the possession of Mary Bradford.

8. Virginia Sorensen, *Lotte's Locket* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964) 82. Hereafter the novel will be cited in the text by page number.

Nyhavn, appears in the novel in a scene in which Patrick drives Lotte from their hotel to City Hall. He talks of all the sailors on the street and then points out the plaques that indicate Andersen's rooms. Sorensen makes use of the Royal Guard and their daily parade to the palace when the king is in residence. She has Lotte follow them and then get lost because they don't return to the same place from which they began their march. Lotte becomes frightened and finally a policeman tries to help her, asking if she knows anyone in Copenhagen. She remembers that she knows Hr. Axel, a family friend who works for the newspaper *Politiken*, a genuine Copenhagen newspaper. The policeman takes her to see Hr. Axel, who not only arranges for her to be reunited with her mother, but also writes a human interest story for the next day's edition about Lotte's being lost in the city. We should note here that soon after Sorensen arrived in Copenhagen, a story about her appeared in *Politiken*. Moreover, a letter from her daughter Beth indicates that in 1961 Sorensen was still subscribing to "*Politiken Weekly*."⁹

Much of the specific cultural information in the book is the result of straightforward research. For instance, Sorensen includes ancient Danish mythology. There is the myth of Gefion, a goddess promised by her father that she could have as much Swedish land as she could plow around in one day. Lotte tells Patrick the story: "So she turned her four sons into oxen. . . and yoked them to that big plow and put them to work. . . .They carved out the whole island of Zealand that one day. . . .And there's a lake in Sweden exactly the same size and shape, so everybody knows the story is true" (93). Another myth Sorensen includes is that of Holger Danske, or Holger the Dane, who sleeps as a statue in the dungeon of Elsinore Castle, "his arms folded and his beard grown into a table of stone" (90). In the novel Lotte remembers their outing to the castle where a guide told them that Holger Danske "had really lived in the eighth century and that he grew to be seven feet tall and could drink five quarts of mead without stopping to take a breath. He won every battle he ever fought, even against the giant Burman and Strong Dietrich from Bern who passed through Jutland with 80,000 horses" (90).

Besides mythology, Sorensen also incorporated a great deal of Danish history, for example, the story associated with the castle Clausholm, which is not far from Lottegaard in Jutland: "Farmor said King Frederik IV came to visit the family that lived at Clausholm and fell in love with their daughter, Anna Sophie. Soon he came riding back in the middle of the night and carried her off to Copenhagen to be his queen" (78). In addition to stories of kings and queens, there are a number of interesting

9. Beth Sorensen Anderson to Virginia Sorensen, September 25, 1961. Letter, a copy of which is in the Sorensen files of Brigham Young University Library's Special Collections.

and surprising facts about Danish history: "The Virgin Islands are still very much Danish, even though they belong to America. . .the capital of St. Thomas is named after a Danish queen—Charlotte Amalie" (79); "America was *really* discovered by Leif Ericson" (124); and "the first known ancestor of George Washington was a Dane named Hvass. He went from Jutland to England about 900 AD." (124). The novel also mentions many famous Danes, including the astronomer Tycho Brahe, philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, playwright Kaj Munk, and Jutland poet Steen Steensen Blicher. It is, in fact, extraordinary that all this cultural information does not seem superimposed on the novel but rather appears integral to the telling of the story.

Perhaps Sorensen's use of Hans Christian Andersen is the best way to illustrate her blending of culture and story. The first mention of Andersen in the novel refers to one of his starker tales in which a proud father squanders his fortune and brings his children to ruin. This story is told by the wind, and Lotte remembers it at night in bed as she listens to the wind. She is very upset because she has just learned that her mother is going to marry Patrick and that she will have to move with them to America. Unable to sleep, "She remembered H.C. Andersen's story of Valdemar Daae and his daughters, and what the wind had said to them. It could tell all the things that had happened since time began, for, of course, the wind could go anywhere and could see and hear everything" (31). What would the all-knowing wind one day have to say about Lotte? For the reader familiar with Andersen's story, the clear implication is that she fears her life will be as tragic as the ruined lives of Valdemar Daae's innocent daughters. Thus, the Andersen story serves to heighten the anxiety Lotte already feels about the changes going on in her home.

Andersen's stories appear often in the novel. "The poor Match Girl" is introduced when Lotte tries to light the lamp in her freezing tree house where she has gone after the wedding to feel sorry for herself (49). Sorensen makes no explicit comparison between the Match Girl's pathetic death and Lotte's plight, but the implications about the suffering and ill treatment Lotte thinks she is enduring are there for the reader familiar with Andersen's story. Later in the novel, after Lotte and Farmor have sent Patrick and Lotte's mother off on their ship and returned to Lottegaard, Farmor asks Lotte if she would like a bedtime story, continuing the custom Lotte and her mother have had of reading a Hans Christian Andersen tale every night. Lotte thinks of and rejects several, finally choosing "The Little Mermaid." But this story proves, too, to heighten her fears about being separated from her mother:

When Farmor got to the part about the ship sinking, she held her breath. For six days now, Mor would be on the sea. Already, tonight, she was far out on the rocking waves. Farther and farther away every minute. Her heart felt

faint to think of it, and as Farmor read about all the terrible things at the bottom of the sea, she felt worse and worse and wished she had decided on a different story. There were polyps down there, stretching out their writhing arms to seize the Little Mermaid. "Every one of them held something that it had caught. The white bones of men who had perished at sea!" (143-144)

Of course Andersen's tale feeds Lotte's fear for her mother, who is at sea and very far away. She might lose her mother to the sea—and if not to the sea, then to her new husband. The fear Lotte already feels is underscored and heightened ironically by an exercise—the familiar reading of a bedtime story—that is intended by Farmor to calm her. The Andersen tale thus intensifies the tension that already drives the narrative in *Lotte's Locket*. In this and the other instances in which Sorensen uses Andersen's stories, they are not simply thrown in for local color or cultural authenticity. Rather, they echo and enhance the emotions of the novel's characters and move the story forward.

Sorensen not only makes use of Andersen's stories, she includes many details of his life as well and presents these in a manner and context that seem altogether natural. In Copenhagen, Lotte's family dines in a restaurant that features a sandwich called the "Hans Christian Andersen," because it was his favorite: "crisp bacon laid like a lattice on thick yellow butter, and on top of this were thin slices of tomato and in the middle a nice big hill of liverpaste with a long tassel of horseradish" (110). The same restaurant offers Andersen's favorite dessert, "Peasant Girl With a Veil," which is "buttered crumbs covered with mulberry jam and a big pile of whipped cream" (111).

Later Sorensen has the family and then Lotte's school class visit important locations commemorating Andersen's life. In Copenhagen, the family visits Rosenborg palace, on the grounds of which is a statue of Andersen, sitting "alone at the end of a long avenue of trees with a book in his hand" (94). The family attends the Royal Theatre, which, Lotte remembers, Andersen "had loved. . . so much that he came there every single night" (85). Farmor says that her mother had seen Andersen several times in Copenhagen, and that "he used to take walks. . . every day, getting ideas for his stories" (95). Later, Lotte's class is able to spend an hour in Odense, the place of Andersen's birth and early life. They visit "the wonderful little house on Jensenstraede where H.C. Andersen had lived," in which they saw "books and letters and drawings and cuttings and hundreds of things he had himself owned and saved" (234). They went to St. Knud's Church, where Andersen was confirmed, and toured the Hans Christian Andersen Garden behind it. They also went through the cottage across the street where he had lived as a child.

By referring so often to Andersen's stories, by recalling important details of his life, and by commemorating the places in Denmark that

were important to him, Sorensen makes Hans Christian Andersen a presence in the novel. He is, of course, one of the world's most famous Danes and possibly the world's best-known and best-loved children's author, but there are also personal and pragmatic reasons that lead Sorensen to feature Andersen so prominently in the novel.

Like Lotte, Sorensen made her first acquaintance with Andersen in childhood when her mother read his stories to her even before she could read:

My oldest friends were The Ugly Duckling and the Stalwart Tin Soldier and the Princess who could not sleep on account of a pea in her bed. . . . So many others, too! I knew about the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden and Ole Lukoie who was a kind of Danish sandman, except that he put milk into the children's eyes instead (I thought it would hurt much less) and held an umbrella over their sleeping heads to give them happy dreams.¹⁰

She mentions many other Andersen stories in the same passage: "Little Claus and Big Claus," "The Tinderbox," "Little Ida's Flowers," "Thumbelina," "The Little Match Girl," "The Nightingale," "The Emperor's New Clothes," "The Swineherd," and "The Fir Tree," most of which stories are also mentioned in *Lotte's Locket*. Sorensen also says that Bishop Petersen, her first bishop, "was proud to tell everybody that he had come from. . . 'the fairy Island of Fyn,'" on which Hans Christian Andersen had been born,¹¹ and her own first Danish ancestor, Simon Peter Eggertsen, was born in Odense, Andersen's birthplace on the island.¹²

Virginia Sorensen, thus, had a long personal interest in this author, but the major reason for her preoccupation and familiarity with the details of his life was that, as she wrote *Lotte's Locket*, she was also working on a biography of Andersen for young readers.¹³ She had been commissioned to write this biography in 1956 and for the next six years, she said, she "read little else." She studied previous biographies and met the

10. Sorensen, unpublished and untitled typescript on Hans Christian Andersen in Sorensen's papers in Boston University Library's Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 5.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ben Zevin and his wife heard Sorensen speak at the luncheon at which she received the Child Study Association of America award for her second children's novel *Plain Girl*. In her remarks she mentioned her affection for Hans Christian Andersen, recalling that the current date, April 2, 1956, was "one year to the day from [her] celebration of H.C. Andersen's 150th birthday in Odense." Zevin had been looking for someone to write a biography of Andersen and immediately after the luncheon approached her with his request. She signed a contract and received an advance on this book. This incident is recounted in *The Most Incredible Thing*, Sorensen's unpublished biography of Hans Christian Andersen, in Sorensen's papers in Boston University Library's Special Collections, Box 12, Folder 3.

scholars who wrote them; she worked in the Jean Hersholt Collection of Hans Christian Andersen papers in the Library of Congress.¹⁴ She also spent a summer at the British Museum reading about Andersen's friendship with Charles Dickens and his visit to Dickens's home in England.¹⁵ She compiled an extensive collection of research cards that are now in her papers in the Special Collections of Boston University Library. She wrote two drafts of this biography, which she titled *The Most Incredible Thing*, naming it after one of Andersen's stories, but the biography was never published.

Meanwhile, however, her work and fascination with Hans Christian Andersen found published expression in *Lotte's Locket*. For her own part, Sorensen identified closely with Andersen. "My career is in several ways very like that of H.C. Andersen," she states. "I too wrote novels and short pieces for many years, writing for adults with some success but nothing out of the ordinary. . . ." ¹⁶ She then describes the awards and success her children's novels have brought her, adding, "It seemed that with books for children I had at last found my proper voice, just as it seemed so for Andersen when he finally began to be noticed for his Wonder Stories." Sorensen modestly denies that she shares Andersen's genius, but adds, ". . . all the same, these facts of our two careers are the same, and I feel they help me to understand his feelings better than I might otherwise have done."¹⁷

The unpublished Andersen biography includes several examples of Sorensen's sense of a particular understanding of the Danish author's feelings. The first is the admiration and respect each felt for poetry and the desire of each to be a poet. She also felt she understood Andersen's pain at the lack of respect he had received in his hometown. After quoting Andersen's pleased and grateful response to the Odense Common Council at their invitation to a festival in his honor, she adds, "As a writer who had thought now and then of the old saying about a prophet and the absence of honor in his own country, I read his words with feeling."¹⁸

A 1957 letter from Sorensen to William Mulder suggests another way in which she felt herself to understand Andersen; she, too, appreciated the affectionate and enthusiastic response of children to her stories and was somewhat amazed by their success:

14. Ibid.

15. Sorensen, "The Libraries in My Life; Library Dedication—Edmond, Feb. 9, 1969," speech, manuscript in Sorensen's papers in Boston University Library's Special Collections, Box 8, Folder 5.

16. Sorensen, *The Most Incredible Thing*, not paginated.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 5. (The first section of the manuscript is paginated.)

The Children's Field is its own world with its own enthusiasms, its own kind of dignity. People are not afraid to shout and say "We love you." And the children themselves. . . Bill, I do sometimes feel like H.C. Andersen! This may sound extravagant, but I had long since read his amazed statements about the success of "the little tales" as compared with the difficult, heart-rending struggle of the novels.¹⁹

It is evident that she admired Andersen, especially his extraordinary talent as a writer. In her biography she wrote, ". . . when we think of him and of his life, we must think of his effect upon the world and of his influence upon children everywhere. I have told his stories to children in schools as far apart as San Francisco and Morocco, Norway and Jugoslavia [sic], always to wide eyes and happy laughter[,] and sometimes even a few tears have rewarded me."²⁰ With this background in mind, one can read *Lotte's Locket* as a sort of homage to Hans Christian Andersen as well as Sorensen's opportunity to use some of the material she had acquired for her biography. Given the circumstances, it might have been tempting for her to set the material as a series of weighty monuments to the great Danish author and to show off her own reach and grasp of the material (something known technically among writers as "research dumping"). That instead she incorporates this interest and wealth of information with restraint and in ways that seem natural to and, in fact, help drive the narrative in *Lotte's Locket* is a great tribute to Sorensen's own talent as a writer.

With similar intensity and similar technique, Sorensen also studied and made literary use of a specific group of the *Holger Danske*, the Danish resistance forces of World War II.²¹ She learned of the Hvidsten Group while she was visiting her relatives at Veddum. In January 1955 she wrote to Bill Mulder:

I was taken on grand tours all around Veddum, and to Ars and to Mariager and Hvidsten Kro near Randers. I am returning to Hvidsten Kro (you'll know it is the most famous Inn hereabouts, its owner, Marius Fiil, having been killed in the resistance along with his sons. His widow Gudrun now runs the inn, and how very charming it is. If only I could really talk with her and know the story. . .)²²

19. Virginia Sorensen to William Mulder, April 15, 1957. Letter, copy of which is in the possession of Mary Bradford. The ellipsis is in the original letter; nothing is omitted from the passage.

20. Sorensen, *The Most Incredible Thing*, 12.

21. The novel explains the reason the underground army called themselves *Holger Danske* by recounting Andersen's story about the mythic *Holger Danske*: "There was a belief in Denmark that if the country were ever in danger, old *Holger Danske* would rise from his chair and draw his beard from the table the way King Arthur drew his sword from the stone" (90).

22. Virginia Sorensen to William Mulder, January 30, 1955. Letter, copy of which is in the possession of Mary Bradford.

Her curiosity was piqued, and she did not stop inquiring until she got the information she was after. Two months later she wrote in another letter to Bill Mulder that a friend had located a Danish manuscript about the Hvidsten Group, and that she and her Danish teacher were translating it into English.²³ Sorensen finally hired the teacher, Emilie Andersen, to complete the translation, which was sent to her two years later in two packets—the bulk of the text on August 11, 1957 and the epilogue on November 7, 1957. The title of the work was *The Hvidsten Group*, its author Axel Holm. This translation is now in Sorensen's papers in the Boston University Library's Special Collections. It is a moving and powerful account of the quiet, unpretentious Danes at Hvidsten and the surrounding area and their heroism in organizing to receive air drops of men and materiel to sabotage German operations in Denmark during World War II.

The manuscript first describes Hvidsten. It then introduces several individuals who eventually participate in the drops, including Niels Fiil, the son of the innkeeper; Niels Kjær Hansen, a bachelor and jack of all trades; Henning Andersen, the miller; Søren Peter Kristensen, the carriage maker; the veterinarian Albert Iversen; and Johan Kjær, the mechanic. Marius Fiil is described at length:

In the inn is Marius Fiil. He has become a very well-to-do man because his inn is known all over the country. It is worth a visit there just to see him. With his tall, thin body, his bald crown, his hawklike nose and the small, gay, daring eyes, he looks like an old scotch pirate. He is full of mischief and he loves to gather people around a good table. He is innkeeper of second generation, and an innkeeper's opportunity to talk and philosophize has developed him strongly in that direction. . . .

The innkeeper at Hvidsten is known far and wide. People come from all over the country to the inn. When especially fine visitors arrive, he doesn't take time to put on his wooden shoes but runs out in his stocking-feet to receive them.²⁴ Journalists and artists gather around him. He himself is a peasant artist. He can play and he can lay bricks. He has built a house, with his own hands, for his oldest daughter.²⁵

Marius Fiil is central to the community and has expressed his nationalistic feelings despite the German presence, so he is the one the leaders approach to see if he'll "receive something from the air out at Skrødstrup

23. Virginia Sorensen to William Mulder, March 31, 1955. Letter, copy of which is in the possession of Mary Bradford.

24. Sorensen uses this and subsequent details to describe the innkeeper in the novel.

25. Axel Holm, *The Hvidsten Group*, 4-6. Translated by Emilie Andersen. Unpublished manuscript in Virginia Sorensen's papers in Boston University Library's Special Collections.

and fetch it." He asks his wife Gudrun whether he should do it or not, and she answers, "I cannot see any other way, Marius, than that you must harness the little dabbled one to the wagon and go out and get those things"²⁶

Receiving parachutists, explosives, guns, and ammunition, hiding them, and then transporting them to where they needed to go—these were complex operations and required the help of many. Marius eventually organized several family members, neighbors, and friends who were willing to participate in the work. The manuscript notes that each of these men, aware of the danger, asked his wife about joining the movement. For example, Johan Kjær told his wife, "Rigmor, you must be prepared to hear that some night I am going to go out together with a few others to fetch ammunition not far from here." At first she responded, "What nonsense is that?" but then when she realized her husband was in earnest, answered, "I think there is satisfaction in being in on it." The carriage maker's wife said, "I think you are doing right," and the wife of the veterinarian said, "I was rather proud to learn that my husband was such a good Dane."²⁷

The manuscript describes one of these parachute drops in detail; most of the passage is quoted verbatim in *Lotte's Locket* (175):

On a solid place out on the heath they lighted three red lanterns and a stronger white one throwing light in the direction of the wind.

They waited and listened again. They thought they heard a whirl from the clouds.

Axel Nielsen carried a radio on him and attempted to call the flyers by saying in the microphone in English:—Hitler is calling Mussolini, Hitler is calling Mussolini, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

A faint buzzing. The plane came down gliding. They heard the bomb scuttles [hatches] being opened and saw small parachutes with containers and one large one with a man come down [descend] in the white light.

The Hvidsten men stood as fixed. It was so fantastically beautiful and strange.²⁸

In the novel this passage has been written by Hr. Axel, the *Politiken* writer and family friend Lotte goes to when she is lost in Copenhagen. It is likely that Sorensen named Hr. Axel for Axel Holm, the author of the Hvidsten Group manuscript from which she obtained the information.

The contributions of the Hvidsten Group are noted in other accounts of the Danish Resistance Movement. Jørgen Haestrup's three-volume

26. Axel Holm, 16. Sorensen uses this incident in the novel; Gudrun's answer is quoted almost word for word, including the misspelling of *dappled*, 162.

27. *Ibid.*, 22.

28. *Ibid.*, 24-26.

study calls them "the famous Hvidsten group," and says that they were the among the first to receive drops from the RAF. Hastrup quotes the official report sent to London by Flemming B. Muus of the first parachute drops at Hvidsten: "The reception of Lamp [the parachutist Kaj Lund] as well as of Habit [the parachutist Lok Lindblad] went very well. Immediately the men reached the ground, trained personnel 'undressed' them, brought them to a waiting car and within 10 minutes of landing they were—in both cases—seated before a well laid table in a famous country inn. The reception committee dealt most efficiently with 'chutes, containers, goods, etc.'"²⁹

Hastrup also comments on the complexity of the tasks undertaken by the Hvidsten group. After all the preparations of the air crew, he says, "it remained for the men in the Field to place the reception teams at each point, to organise the alarm system, to provide guards, to make arrangements for light signals, to organise transport and storage, as well as to work out the further distribution of the materiel after reception."³⁰ He then notes:

It must then be clear that the work carried out in Hvidsten in the spring of 1943, with so little previous experience, must take an outstanding place in the history of the Resistance. These men had every right to the words from England: "First of all we all send you and the boys our hearty thanks and congratulations. . . your receptions have been first-class and the air boys wish me to convey a special word of thanks."³¹

Although the work of these resistance fighters was excellent, it was always fraught with danger. They operated successfully for about a year, but early in December 1943 three of the parachutists they had helped to enter Denmark were caught by the Gestapo and immobilized before they could take the cyanide pills that would keep them from revealing under torture the names of other resistance fighters. Marius Fiil knew about the arrests but chose to remain at home, ready to receive more drops, rather than to try to go underground or escape to Sweden.³² Unfortunately, on March 11, 1944, the Gestapo struck and arrested several of the Hvidsten Group. Three of these who were not arrested and might have fled did not because they didn't want to cast suspicion on the others. Two days later the carriage maker, the miller, and the radio dealer were also arrested.³³

29. Jørgen Hastrup, *Secret Alliance: A Study of the Danish Resistance Movement, 1940-45*, trans. Alison Borch-Johansen, (New York: New York University Press, 1976-77), 1:184-185.

30. *Ibid.*, 227.

31. *Ibid.*, 229. The message from England is from a letter by R.C. Hollingsworth, to Flemming B. Muus May 9, 1943.

32. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 306-309.

33. Axel Holm, 65.

The men were held separate from each other and interrogated by the Gestapo for ten days. Finally, they were taken to a concentration camp with other Danes. For several weeks the prisoners alternated between hope and fear about what the Germans would do to them. As long as they were in the concentration camp, they hoped they would simply be forgotten. Eventually, however, they were moved to another prison and in late June court-martialed. Eight of them were condemned to die: the innkeeper Marius Fiil, his son and son-in-law; Johan Kjær, the mechanic; and also the radio dealer, carriage maker, miller, and veterinarian. Fiil's daughter was given a life sentence in prison along with Jens Stenz, and three others were given lesser penitentiary sentences. The night of June 28 those to be executed were informed that they would be shot at four o'clock the next morning.

Each of the men had time to write a letter to his family, and these letters are included in the epilogue to the manuscript:

From the innkeeper, Marius Fiil to his wife, Gudrun, his children, son-in-law and grandchild:

My darling Gudrun, Bitten, Tulle, Gerda, Ritta, Otto and to Baby,

The clock has struck eleven and is going on twelve. And we shall soon depart. God is calling us home and we will all be under His care and better off than any human being on this earth.

We are all in good spirits for we know that we are going home to eternal rest and peace in God's arms. And when all of you, Dear ones, keep our homes as when we were there, and work for them, then we shall meet again some day in the house of God where there is peace and no war. But until then you must all keep together and work for the home and for the cause of Denmark so the coming generations, who shall carry on our names and traditions, can say: Our fathers died with honor for Denmark and for our King. Remember, many went before us. Remember the Danish seamen all over the world. The Danes here at home before us, and those who come after us. We have all done our best—be it ever so little—and we are not ashamed. We say as Blicher said: "Let us always behave in such a way that our Father will own his children." And we can be proud of our children, Gudrun. Carry on your fine work then they will honor our memory. There will be sorrowful days for you, my Darling, days of struggle and work, but you will bear your burdens in the name of God and trust in Him. He has helped me through these last days, only place your fate in His hands and he will help all of you too. God will keep you, He will give you peace and He will be with you always, you dear ones at home. Amen, in Jesus' name. Your father, and your husband Marius.

The second letter is similarly moving:

Letter from mechanic, Johan Kjær, to his wife and children, written in prison the night he was going to be shot, together with the seven other Hvidsten men.

Vestre Faengsel, the 28 of June, 1944
(Western Prison)

Dear Rigmor and Henning and Jørgen,

Father is now going to die but you must not cry. I die with honor. Boys, you must now be good to Mother, always. Darling Rigmor, we have had many good hours and days together, do not forget that, now that you must live in the memories. I have had the great joy that Niels Kjær has willed you his house, take good care of it, little Rigmor, and you must not grieve too much because of me. I shall surely be happy where I am going. Darling Rigmor, I am prepared to die. It is only when my thoughts go to all of you at home that I wish to stay, for I have only good memories of our life together and I know that [our sons] will grow to be men of the right fibre, who do not say Yes when they mean No, and the other way around. . . .say Good-bye to all our good friends from me. . . . Little Rigmor, think of the others when you grieve, and say to yourself that we died for Denmark, as Danish men, and, once more, explain that to the boys when they grow up.

I still have some time left. At four o'clock it is all over. Please give the boys each something that has belonged to me so they can say, this has been my father's, and kiss them both from me and tell them to be brave, they must not cry. You must also be brave, dear little Rigmor, and you can do it, I know it. . . .I kiss the lower right corner of the paper. It is my last kiss to you, and once more, thanks for all the happy hours you have given me. Our life together has been short and yet so rich.

Goodbye, you dear ones, Rigmor, Henning and Jørgen,
God keep you and protect you now and forever.

Your father and your John³⁴

How the execution of their neighbors affected members of the community is evident from their response. By noon that day, news of its occurrence had spread from house to house throughout the area. Each house lowered its flag to half staff. On Sunday all the people, not generally church goers, flocked to the services, which were about the fallen men. Despite the fear of German presence in the congregation, one minister said of those executed:

Their memory shall remain honored among us, those who gave their lives for Denmark's freedom. We will never tolerate one blot on the sacrifice they brought. One often hears, "They didn't have to do it," or "What is the use?" But

Wherever Danish hearts beat,
wherever the sound of Danish rings,
shall everybody, big and small,
bring forth their country's thanks to you.

. . .In the midst of the misery and distress of the present time our dead friends shall bear witness that there is life in the old tree of Denmark. Their death is fresh shoots on the old trunk. We have been in great fear for the

34. Axel Holm, Epilogue

future of our country. Some of us were willing to die for it. We know quite well that our country is not saved by that, but if some were willing to die for it, there ought to be many who are willing to live for it.³⁵

Sorensen wrote on the envelope that contains the translation of this manuscript: "This is very important for *Lotte's Locket* background." Indeed, the substance of this story becomes part of her novel. She uses the neighborhood of Hvidsten as the location of Lottegaard. Lotte's own grandfather and her mother's brother are, in the novel, two of those who were executed (72), as are Lotte's schoolteacher's husband, the miller, and the innkeeper (whose wife, Tove, now runs the inn in the novel, just as in real life Gudrun Fiil, the widow of Marius Fiil, ran the Hvidsten Kro where Sorensen first heard of the story). Lotte's own father had been a pilot who enlisted in England's Royal Air Force and then flew the planes that brought the parachutists, guns, and explosives, and dropped them for the Hvidsten Group to receive. He was not executed with the others; his plane failed and he was killed in the crash.

The memory of these powerful events has become one of the forces that holds Lotte's community together and one of the major stories of her life. And of course, this war story has a compelling character of its own. Sorensen tells it simply, as Lotte understands it, revealing parts of it gradually, in the ways it has affected the community. The importance of the sacrifice to the children enters the novel when at school their teacher says, "I will give a prize to the student who writes the best composition about the meaning of the Liberation" (153), the end of the German occupation of Denmark and of World War II. Thus, the Danish Resistance story becomes the focus of attention for Lotte and all her friends.

At this point the role of the war resistance story in the novel's overall structure is to provoke and carry the crisis and breakthrough to insight that will lead Lotte finally to accept her mother's marriage and Patrick, the American, as her new stepfather. Lotte's composition for the contest is a poem about Denmark as "the Motherland" and about how the sacrifice of the local heroes has returned peace to Denmark. Her friend Ole, the grandson of the famous executed innkeeper, has written a poem about the actual day of the Liberation. Lotte and Ole win third and second prizes in the contest, respectively. It is Lotte's friend Lisa, who wins first prize. She has written about the friendship of nations and the way they helped each other to bring peace. "Our newspapers were full of appreciation for the gifts of pilots who flew over Denmark during the war, like our American friend Patrick, who says he loved Denmark before he ever stood upon her soil" (203). She describes the friendship of nations in

35. Ibid.

times of peace as well as war, especially of Denmark and the United States, and mentions Rebild Park, a gift from Danish Americans to Denmark, "where Danish and American flags flew together even during the war" (203) and where Danes and Americans together celebrate the Fourth of July, America's Independence day. "This is a wonderful thing," Lisa says, "and we wonder why more and more countries cannot celebrate Independence Days for and with each other" (203) because, she concludes, "peace in Denmark is not enough. We must find a way to have peace in the whole world" (204). Lotte somewhat grudgingly admits that Lisa's ideas are better—more current, important, and original—than her own. It is a culminating moment in the novel.

Sorensen is excellent at implication and understatement, and the novel doesn't talk about the effect of Lisa's composition on Lotte, but there clearly seems to be one. Patrick was courageous in Denmark's defense, flying missions with Lotte's own father to drop the parachutists and supplies for the underground. On a larger scale, the United States presence in the war was very important in bringing about the liberation of Denmark that Danish heroes had died for. In finally accepting Patrick, Lotte seems finally to understand his gift to her country and people and the relationship of that gift to her father's sacrifice. She needs to include this generous stranger in her concept of home and family. The coming together of Denmark and America in Rebild Park mirrors the coming together of Lotte's new family, each union serving as metaphor for the other, and so, of course, at the end of the novel, Lotte, her mother, her grandmother, and Patrick will go to Rebild Park to celebrate the Fourth of July.

Sorensen went herself to the Fourth of July ceremony in Rebild Park in 1964, the year *Lotte's Locket* was published. It must have given her great satisfaction to have brought so much that was important to her—Danish history, the Danish way of life, the stories of Hans Christian Andersen, and the real life incidents of the Danish Resistance forces during World War II—into a story for young readers. In a letter to her sister Gerry, she wrote that her editor had called *Lotte's Locket* Virginia's "lovesong to Denmark"³⁶ The richness and authenticity of its Danish content show that her editor was right.

36. Virginia Sorensen to Gerry Simmons, May 5, 1964. Letter, a copy of which is in the possession of Susan Saffle, Gerry Simmons's daughter.

Lament for My Eyes in a Mirror

Ronald Wilcox

I am Ron involved in me now Norma's gone.
Norma knew me more than my mind only.
I know me only in eyes gone dead as mirrors.
More than I Norma knew me in my eyes.
Inside my soul she knew me body-bound
near her dear and sorrowing heart the night
she sighed aloud her last sound and died.
O my soul alone shall sigh again her sigh.
I shall lie alone and close my eyes and
know my Norma knows I love her always
long and knowingly and all involved
to slip away as silver gleams in mirrors.
Reversed in the mirror my Norma knowing
my mind: *Norma I am Ron, Norma I am Ron,*
endlessly repeating our names intertwined
into eternity, in verse reverse reversed,
I write again my eyes in her *I am Ron.*

I closed her eyes gently when she died,
her eyes gone hard, unfeeling as marbles,
the soft lids open on their own I closed them.
Her dead eyes shown as round mirrors.
As I touched the orbs she did not blink.
"What love this?" I whispered.
"Still warm? Still mine?"
And then her secret name only I know:
"Nay, oh my soul, be still as ashen snow
upon your skin in bending rays
alive in your eyes in smiles—
and all-consuming Love of Christ—*Live!*"
I testify she lives in my eyes in a mirror
beyond seeing: I see my angel waiting
to say my name as I say hers: xxxxx
We will flower in veils of fleeting light
forever rearranging toward perfection.

A Voice from the Land of Zion: Elder Erastus Snow in Denmark, 1850 to 1852¹

Val G. Hemming

A FEW YEARS AGO WHILE VISITING a used bookstore in the Old City (Gamla Stan) section of Stockholm, I asked the proprietor whether he had any materials about Mormons. He brought out a small and likely unique (3½" x 5½") 39-page pamphlet titled, "Om Mormonerne" (About the Mormons), by S. B. Hersleb Walnum, a "Prison Priest," published in Bergen, Norway, in 1852.² A brief review of the pamphlet revealed a heartfelt alert to the "faithful" of Norway from a Lutheran priest, warning of the newly arrived Mormon threat. Here was a contemporaneous window through which one could glimpse the missionary messages

1. This paper was presented in part at the Mormon History Association Conference in Aarhus, Denmark, June 27, 2000.

2. S. B. Hersleb Walnum, Fængselspræst, "Om Mormonerne. Efter Opfordring aftrykt efter Søndagsblad for Lutherske Christne, No 29, 30, 31, og 32" (Bergen: F. D. Beyers Forlag, 1852). This pamphlet is not listed in Mormon bibliographies. A different pamphlet, probably by the same author, is listed in Flake's bibliography as an 1855 anti-Mormon pamphlet: "Vogt Eder for de falske Profeter: Et Advarsels-ord imod Mormonerne" (Flake, citing Jørgen W. Schmidt, *Oh, Du Zion i Vest* [København: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1965], 251, in Chad J. Flake, *A Mormon Bibliography, 1830-1930: Books, Pamphlets, Periodicals, and Broad-sides Relating to the First Century of Mormonism* [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1978]). Svend Borchmann Hersleb Walnum, *Sognepræst* (parish priest) is listed in the 1875 Census (*Digitalarkivet*) for Bergen, Norway. This S. B. H Walnum was born in 1816 in Alstahaug in Helgeland, Norway. His wife was Anne Elizabeth Lovise, maiden name "Suur." Three children are listed: Svend Borchmann Hersleb, Jacob Rosted Suur and Anna Ludia Lovise. Also, in the Norwegian State Church record of "Baptisms in Bergen" for 1815-1894 is a listing for an April 22, 1855 baptism of Jørgen Svendrup Hersleb Walnum, son of Fængselspræst Svend Borkman Hersleb Walnum and Anne Elisabeth Lovise. (See <http://www.hist.uib.no/cgi-win/webcens.exe>.) No further information was found about Walnum.

brought by Erastus Snow and his companions to mid-nineteenth century Scandinavians.

Pastor Walnum concluded his pamphlet with a plaintive plea³:

We pray, therefore, for each of your dear souls! Pray in God's holy name; stay firm with what you have; let no one take your faith. Hold firm with the simple enfolding word of God found in the Bible. Stay firm in the faith you received at your baptism and your confirmation! With this faith and the Bible you shall collect consolation in life, hope in death and salvation provided by Him who purchased it with His blood! To this end help us all dear Lord and God! Amen in the name of Jesus Christ.⁴

Walnum's sober warning makes one wonder about the gospel messages heard and read by early Scandinavian Mormon investigators, converts, or by their detractors. Why did so many Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes, often at substantial personal risk, heed the call to Zion? While these questions can never be fully answered, a rehearsal of some early history of the Scandinavian Mission and a comparison of the contents of Walnum's pamphlet with early Scandinavian missionary tracts such as "A Voice of Truth to the Pure in Heart"⁵ or "A Voice from the Land of Zion,"⁶ published between 1850 and 1852 by Elder Erastus Snow, would be instructive.

Brigham Young's October 1849 missionary call for Elder Erastus Snow⁷ to carry the message of the restoration to Denmark would dramatically alter the ethnic heritage of Mormon Zion. The faith, energy, commitment, and resourcefulness of Snow and his co-workers and successors ensured that, in the twentieth century, Zion would be home to thousands of Saints with Scandinavian surnames.

On October 19, 1849, a nearly penniless company of 35 missionaries departed Great Salt Lake City for their missions to the eastern United States, to Britain, and to Europe. One could have reasonably doubted

3. Note that the author translated the documents and is solely responsible for any errors in the translations.

4. *Ibid.*, 39.

5. Erastus Snow, "En Sandheds-Røst Til de Oprigtige af Hjertet" (Kjøbenhavn: F. E. Bording, no date [1850?]). Xerox copy available in the LDS Church Historian's Office.

6. Erastus Snow, "En Röst från Landet Zion: Vittnesbörd af de Levande och de Döde," *Samlat af Erastus Snow från Stora Saltsjö Staden i Nord Amerika* (Köpenhamn: Trykt vid E. Snöws Bekostnad hos Sally B. Salomon; 1852).

7. Andrew Jenson, "Erastus Snow" in *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901), 103-115. See also Andrew Karl Larson, *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971). Snow was born in 1818 and was just past thirty years of age when ordained to the Council of the Twelve. He already had nearly fifteen years of experience as a Mormon missionary and teacher.

that when Elder Snow returned to Salt Lake City thirty-three months later, he would leave behind a successful and well-organized Scandinavian Mission with hundreds of committed Saints. Also, with the assistance of several of his colleagues, he would have written, translated, and published in Danish or Swedish several pamphlets, the Book of Mormon,⁸ the Doctrine and Covenants,⁹ a hymnal, and a monthly Mormon journal called *Scandinavians' Star* (*Scandinaviens Stjerne*)¹⁰.

Just before Mormonism arrived, Europe had boiled with social, economic, and political change. While many recognize the impact of the 1848 revolutions on the histories of Germany, France, and Russia, the changes wrought on Scandinavia—and particularly on Denmark—are less appreciated. The fortuitous 1848 death of Danish King Christian VIII (1839-1848), leaving no direct heir, allowed Danish liberals to force a constitutional monarchy on the new king, Frederick VII (1848-1863). The resulting Danish Constitution of June 1849 granted Danish citizens important new religious freedoms found nowhere else in Europe, except perhaps Great Britain. While not effectively enforced, the constitution permitted the 1850 introduction of Mormonism into Denmark, and ultimately to the rest of Scandinavia.¹¹

Mormon history in Scandinavia began with the arrival of four missionaries in Denmark. The first was Peter Olsen Hansen,¹² a Copenhagen native, who arrived in Copenhagen on May 11, 1850. On June 14, Hansen went to a Copenhagen wharf to greet Elder Erastus Snow, John Erik Forsgren¹³ (a native of Sweden), and George Parker Dykes.¹⁴ Hansen's

8. Erastus Snow, *Mormons Bog. Oversat paa Engelsk fra Grundterten af Joseph Smith den Yngre. Udgivet og forlagt af Erastus Snow* (Kjøbenhavn: Trykt i F.C. Bordings Bogtrykkeri, 1851).

9. *Lærdømmens og Pagtens Bog før Jesu Christi Kirke af Sidste Dages Hellige: Samlet udaf Guds Aabenbaringer af Joseph Smith, President. Oversat fra anden engelske Udgave. Udgivet og forlagt af Erastus Snow* (Kjøbenhavn: G. Trier, 1852).

10. Erastus Snow, *Skandinaviens Stjerne: Organ for de Sidste Dages Hellige* (Kjøbenhavn: trykt hos F. E. Bording, October 1851). The *Stjerne*, first published October 1, 1851, served as the church's journal for Scandinavian Mormons well into the twentieth century.

11. Scandinavia is defined here as Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, and the portion of Finland colonized or occupied by Swedes.

12. Andrew Jenson, "Peter Olsen Hansen (1818-1895)" in *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1914), 766-67. See also *An Autobiography of Peter Olsen Hansen* (privately published by Leland Hansen Ashby, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1988), copy in the BYU Library.

13. Andrew Jenson, "John Erik Forsgren (1816-1890)" in *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1920), 370-71. See also Oluff Petersen, "Historical Sketch of J. E. Forsgren," *Box Elder News*, 1 August 1916. Forsgren was a member of the Mormon Battalion, as was his missionary colleague, G. P. Dykes.

14. Andrew Jenson, "George Parker Dykes (1814-1888)" in *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1914), 762. See also Frank

arrival a month earlier than the others was not in compliance with Elder Snow's instructions. He had been requested by Snow to meet at Hull, England, for travel to Denmark. Hansen's sense of history was a great temptation, and he chose to disobey. He later wrote:

Now, as far as I know, I might have complied with his wish as well as not, but there laid a fine packet, offering me a fair opportunity for me to get over before anybody else, when I would have the pleasing satisfaction to know that I, indeed, was the first Mormon missionary to tread that soil and I gave way to the temptation. . . . Now this was not forgetting that Bro. Snow was my Pres. for I obeyed Presidency, but I done what I did understanding and simply for to gain the privilege already mentioned. I had weighed the matter and evaluated the cost.¹⁵

Hansen's insubordination proved nevertheless important to the early success of the missionaries. The day after his arrival in Copenhagen in May 1850, he attended Baptist worship services and quickly made several new friends. He later wrote: "[T]wo [of these] families were afterwards among the first baptized into the new and true church."¹⁶

In June, Hansen took his newly arrived missionary companions to the Baptist services where they met with Peter C. Mönster, a well known Danish religious reformer and leader of the Baptist congregation. Shortly thereafter meetings began with several families from Mönster's congregation, and to Mönster's consternation, fifteen of his flock were baptized by Snow on August 12, 1850.

These were not, however, the first convert baptisms in Scandinavia. Elder Forsgren, called by Brigham Young to preach in Sweden, had already left Copenhagen in June 1850 for his birth home at Gävle (*Gefle*), Sweden. On July 26 he baptized his brother Peter Adolph, and on August 9, his sister Christina Erika. Soon afterward, Forsgren was arrested for preaching, transported to Stockholm, and deported from Sweden aboard a ship bound for the United States. He eluded the Swedish authorities by jumping ship at Elsinore, Denmark, and rejoined his colleagues in Copenhagen on September 18. Forsgren's leadership was important to the missionaries' success. He energetically disseminated Snow's printed materials and served briefly as Scandinavian Mission President after

Essholm, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Utah Pioneers Book Publishing Company, 1913), 852. In the early 1840s Dykes visited the Fox River settlement in Illinois and baptized a number of prominent Norwegian immigrants. See William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 7-17.

15. Ashby, 74.

16. *Ibid.*, 75.

Snow's departure. When Forsgren later returned to Utah, he led a large company of Scandinavian and English emigrants.

Snow neither spoke nor wrote Danish when he arrived in Denmark. He believed deeply in the power of the printed word, and by necessity employed the language skills of Hansen as well as the talents of several new converts to prepare and publish gospel teaching materials for use in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. By September 1850 he succeeded in publishing "A Voice of Truth for the Honest in Heart," which, he said, outlined "the gospel's first principles, or the Lord's means to save mankind."¹⁷

Peter O. Hansen had been laboring over a translation of the Book of Mormon into Danish since his days in Nauvoo, and Snow assigned him to continue that work. In a February 24, 1851 letter to his brother Zerubabel, Snow wrote of the urgency of completing the translation.¹⁸ Only five months later, Snow reported to Brigham Young that the Book of Mormon had been printed.¹⁹

Other publications followed in rapid succession. By October 1851, the first issue of the *Scandinavians' Star*, "a journal for the Latter-day Saints," had been printed, as had a translation of Orson Pratt's *Remarkable Visions*.²⁰ Elder Dykes had also published his *Chronologic Table* which summarized 6000 years of human history. This chronology, Dykes wrote, "showed the coming of our Savior is near."²¹

In March 1852, before his departure for England and then home, Snow also published a pamphlet in Swedish titled, "A Voice from the

17. See n. 6.

18. Erastus Snow, *One Year in Scandinavia* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1851), 12: "I am now very busily engaged with Brother Hanson (sic) in translating the Book of Mormon; it is a very laborious and tedious task to get it issued clean and pure, according the simplicity of the original; and requires closest attention. I am publishing three thousand copies—have only one hundred and sixty-eight pages finished, it will take me until May or June."

19. Ibid. (Letter to Brigham Young, dated July 10, 1851).

20. Orson Pratt, *Mærkværdige Syner* (Kjøbenhavn: F. E. Bording, 1851): "Visions of Joseph Smith—discovery of gold plates filled with Egyptian characters and hieroglyphics—their translation into the English language by the aid of the Urim and Thummim—the sacred history of ancient America, now clearly revealed from the earliest ages after the flood, to the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian era,—a sketch of the rise, faith, and doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." This was translated from the 1848 English version, *An Interesting Account...* (Liverpool: R. James), a sixteen-page pamphlet with four pages of added notes (*Tillæg*) by Erastus Snow. Snow begins by stating that it is his intention to finish this *skrift* with excerpts from famous writers who, though unacquainted with the Book of Mormon, Indians' stories (*sagn*), or the antiquities of the Americas, provide evidence that in earlier times America was peopled by two different races and that the Indians' forefathers were Israelites who had prophets and holy scriptures and used both the Hebrew and Egyptian languages.

21. G. Parker Dykes, *Chronologisk Tabel* (in Andrew Jenson, *Andet Uplug* [Aalborg: Bechske Bogtrykkeri, 1874]).

Land of Zion: A Testimony of the Living and the Dead."²² The publication of this historical and doctrinal survey of Mormonism ensured that Scandinavian missionaries could provide their contacts with the story of Joseph Smith, the history of the church, and an outline of Mormon doctrine. The church in Scandinavia was poised for vigorous proselyting efforts by its new members.

In a pattern set by Joseph Smith and consistent with the church's practice in the United States and in Great Britain, Snow called many of the new Scandinavian members to missionary service.²³ Their newly acquired faith, zeal, and enthusiasm, coupled with their knowledge of the languages, peoples, and cultures, undoubtedly contributed to their impressive success.

One such example of missionary service by a new member is important to this discussion. In September 1851, a recently baptized Dane, Hans Frederik Petersen, was called to preach in Østerrisør, Norway. Upon arrival in Norway he promptly, though unsuccessfully, requested permission from the parish priest to conduct meetings in the local school. The priest apparently knew about the Mormons and asked with considerable emotion, "Have the Mormons now really come to Norway?" Despite several setbacks, Petersen found a few homes where he could teach, and within a month he had baptized several Norwegians. However, vigorous persecution led by clerics and the police forced him and his companions to leave Østerrisør and teach in other towns along the coast of Norway.

Early in 1852 several Norwegian Saints applied to have their names removed from the state Lutheran Church. They also requested permission to organize a Christian dissenter society. Existing law would not permit the establishment of a new church denomination, and their request was denied.²⁴ The State Lutheran Church, concerned by the Mormon presence, sought to warn its members of the Mormon heresy. Similar warnings had already appeared in religious and secular publications in Denmark and Sweden prior to the publication of Walnum's tract.²⁵

22. See n. 6.

23. Christian John Larsen, *Autobiography of Christian John Larsen*, from a holograph document in possession of Camma Zollinger, edited, extracted, and organized into chapters by Camma Zollinger. Typed copy in the possession of the author with kind thanks to Camma Zollinger. Larsen was born March 21, 1831 in Greis, Jutland, Denmark, and was baptized by G. P. Dykes on August 19, 1850: "On March 11th, 1851, I was ordained a Priest by Apostle Erastus Snow and appointed to go as a missionary in company with Elder Christen Christiansen to the city of Aalborg, to assist Elder George P. Dykes, who had established a branch of the church there."

24. Andrew Jenson, *History of the Scandinavian Mission* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927), 56.

25. Schmidt, *Oh, Du Zion i Vest*.

Pastor Walnum's warning to the faithful in Norway began:

One of the present time's greatest marvels is Mormonism, or as its adherents call it, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . In England there may be 30,000 Mormons. They have apostles, disciples and teachers whom they send to the ends of the earth to win converts. They have also come to our distant fatherland to seduce valuable souls with their lies.²⁶

Walnum's exposé of Mormonism continued with a recitation of many of the historical or religious claims made by Mormon writers and preachers, as well as some by their detractors to explain or expose Mormonism. Several of the issues discussed in Walnum's pamphlet are cited here:

- He charged that Solomon Spaulding and Joseph Smith were the authors of the Book of Mormon.²⁷
- He related a claim that Professor Anthon had denied the hieroglyphics brought to him by Martin Harris were Egyptian.²⁸
- He reported that many of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon later denied their testimonies and left the church.²⁹
- He correctly noted that some revelations published in the *Book of Commandments* were changed in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. This proved, he said, "the God from whom the Mormons receive revelation is not a God of truth, but is a God of lies."³⁰

26. Walnum, "Om Mormonerne," 2.

27. Walnum, "Om Mormonerne," 3-4: "A man, who hardly appreciated it was responsible for the beginnings of Mormonism. The man was Solomon Spaulding, who was born in the village of Ashford, was first a priest, a real estate man and finally was inclined to become a writer. . . . Once finished with his book, he sought to have it printed in Pittsburgh, and he left his handwritten manuscript with a printer but there was someone who hindered publication. In the meantime the manuscript remained on a shelf in the print shop, and anyone who wished could take it down and read it. And by this means many knew it, until it disappeared and thereafter no one knew what had become of it. But 16 years later a book was published in Palmyra in the western part of the state of New York which was called The Book of Mormon." See E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville: Printed and published by the author, 1834) 278-90. See also Lester E. Bush, Jr., "The Spaulding Theory, Then and Now," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1977): 40-69.

28. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 270-72.

29. Walnum, "Om Mormonerne," 7: "[L]ater the 8 witnesses were similarly worthy of belief for one of them was Joseph Smith's ungodly father and 2 of them were his unworthy brothers; yes! Of all the 11 witnesses 5 were unable to hold firm in their testimonies. Three are dead as adherents of Mormonism, and Joseph Smith's brothers still claim the truth; but the other 6 witnesses are later fallen away and have become foes of Mormonism."

30. *Ibid.*, 8-9: "A book called Doctrine and Covenants was issued in 1833. But their dreadful and impudent deception is evident, for in 1835 they reissued the just named book with several inconsistencies with the earlier edition. For example there is a revelation from

- He surveyed Mormon history, including Kirtland, Ohio, the Missouri experience and Nauvoo, Illinois, and described how the aggrieved citizens of Nauvoo turned on Joseph Smith and killed him. Smith's replacement by Brigham Young and the settlement of the Saints in the "Colony of Deseret" was also reported.
- He passionately rejected the Mormons' claim to be the only true church and objected to what he said was a Mormon view that the great religious reformers like Luther and the churches they founded were all heathen.³¹ It was grievous to him that the Mormon church had apostles and prophets ordained by the laying on of hands, and these were not, he charged, chosen by Christ or his successors, but instead by Joseph Smith.³²
- He declared Joseph Smith's claim that the Bible was incomplete, thus requiring other scriptures to be provided by revelation, to be heretical. He also lamented that Mormon leaders' interpretations of the Holy Scriptures were far too literal.³³ Walnum correctly identified an inconsistency between Joseph Smith's and Erastus Snow's teachings about the nature of God.³⁴ Smith had spoken of

1833 which directs that Smith shall not receive another gift other than the gift of translation. But after the 1835 edition he was given power to carry out any task. We see therefore, that the God from whom the Mormons receive their revelation is not a God of truth, but a God of lies."

31. Ibid., 14: "The Mormon Church is the only true church that can bring salvation. All other expressions of faith are heathen."

32. Ibid.: "The leaders of the Mormon church have the gift and authority of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. Apostles and Prophets are necessary for the existence of the church. But the first Apostles named no successors. The successors were chosen by God's Prophet, Joseph Smith. Until he was taken from the earth he received God's revelations, and so the church must accept his commandments as though they came from the mouth of God. . . . He described being ordained to Aaron's Priesthood by John the Baptist, and to the Melchizedek Priesthood by Peter James and John, and he was named their successor."

33. Ibid. 15, "The scriptures are presented as proof and a literal interpretation is taught. But our holy scriptures are not the final guide for God gave Smith the Book of Mormon as the complete gospel where are found numerous teachings which reverse our holy scriptures. This belief is proper so long as it is properly translated and interpreted as Smith taught them. They are called the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, a revelation to Smith: 'For I bless you that you may study in your own mind, then you should ask me if it is correct, and if it is so your heart shall burn within thee, thereby shall ye know that it is correct. But if it is wrong so shall you not have the feeling, then shall your thoughts leave you and you will forget that which is incorrect. Therefore you cannot write holy words unless they are given of me.' By this means the holy scriptures are thereby subject to Smith's interpretation."

34. Ibid. 16, "The Mormons recognize the tripartite God; but after what Joseph Smith wrote in the *Millennial Star* they denied that God is a spirit without body parts, for in the just named magazine Smith wrote: 'What is God? He is a material intelligence who has a body of parts! He is in the shape of a human.'"

three separate Gods—the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost—who were one only in unity and purpose. Smith's concept contradicted the classic Christian view that God is a spirit without body parts and is one with Christ and the Holy Ghost. Furthermore, Smith had stated that God is of the same species as man and that God-like perfection may be achieved by man. However, Walnum recorded that Snow had written, "[T]he person of the Father is spirit, glory and power, but the son has a body similar to man and the Holy Ghost is in the image of the Father and the Son."³⁵ In retrospect, Snow's doctrinal view closely resembled the teaching found in the *Lectures on Faith*,³⁶ rather than Joseph Smith's later views as expressed in his King Follett funeral sermon.³⁷ This apparent contradiction suggests that the assimilation of some of Joseph Smith's teachings into church doctrine was slower than is generally appreciated.

- Another point of contention was Snow's teaching that individual faith was necessary for participation in Christ's atonement. Faith came from learning and obeying the teachings of God's prophets and apostles rather than, as Walnum asserted, being a direct gift of God. Thus, in the Mormon view, faith in God and knowledge of His character comes from the testimony of witnesses whom God raises up and sends out to spread his word.
- Walnum was offended by the claim that baptism by immersion is required at the age of accountability and that infant baptism is not efficacious.³⁸

35. See n. 6.

36. See *The Book of Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; The Revelations of God*. By Joseph Smith, President, 4th European ed. (Liverpool; published for Orson Pratt by S. W. Richards, 1854) 5:45- 46: "They are the Father and the Son—the Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power, possessing all perfection and fullness—the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle. . . ; he is in the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father; or the same fullness with the Father; . . . possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son; and these three are one; . . .and these three constitute the Godhead, and are one."

37. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Brigham Young University, 1980), 344: "God who sits in yonder heavens is a man like yourselves. That God if you were to see him today that holds the worlds you would see him like a man in form, like yourselves" (quoted from the diary of Wilford Woodruff).

38. Walnum, "Om Mormonerne," 24: "As a consequence of Christ's instruction the Mormons have rejected infant baptism, and describe it as a fraud. They reject every baptism, which is not conducted by immersion, and conducted by one with authority from God (one of the servants of the Mormons). Baptism is declared to be necessary for salvation; the justification is the forgiveness of sins; and after baptism is the Holy Ghost given by the laying on of hands. . . .But, were this the truth, so follows therefrom, that according to the teachings of the scriptures none can be a true Christian and be saved unless he is

- He quoted at length from Judge Brochus' report on Brigham Young's malfeasance and on the Mormon practice of polygamy.³⁹

Pastor Walnum then concluded with the entreaty: "Dear souls, have you never felt the blessings you received when you were baptized as an infant?" He added that Mormons even baptized living people to save the dead, and that one could be baptized again and again for the forgiveness of his own sins.

Walnum's recitation of Mormon historical claims was faulty but consistent with much that was being published by Mormon detractors at this time.⁴⁰ His review of Mormon doctrine, though written in a derogatory tone, reasonably represented Snow's teachings contained in his "Voice of Truth"⁴¹ and "Voice from the Land of Zion."⁴² As Walnum considered the Mormon presence in Norway, he was seriously concerned with many doctrinal threats by Mormonism to the faith of susceptible members of the Norwegian Church. Mormonism's overestimated but apparent huge successes in the United States and Great Britain, must have seemed a possible threat to repeat itself in Norway and the rest of Scandinavia.⁴³ As noted earlier, Walnum was exercised over Mormonism's very literal interpretation of the Bible, views which sharply denigrated the teachings of the strongly Calvinist Scandinavian Lutheran churches. Probably most troubling to him were Joseph Smith's claims to priesthood authority that permitted ongoing revelation from the Heavens and allowed changes in the gospel which Walnum thought directly contradicted teachings of the Bible and the Church Fathers.

Other doctrines provoking Walnum's exposé included Snow's view that man could earn salvation by repentance and obedience. Walnum vigorously disagreed. For him, grace could not be earned, but was a gift from God. Neither Snow nor Walnum wrote about Joseph Smith's First

baptized. So infant baptism was necessary. Still in all these years, none have been baptized by a Mormon priest, so there has not, in all this time, been one true Christian. Hence, Luther, Franke and all the heroes of the faith who lived in the past hundreds of years were nothing more than heathens. Dear Soul! Can you believe this?"

39. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Latter-day Saints: Century 1* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 3:520-44, and Benjamin G. Ferris, *Utah and the Mormons* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856), 342-46.

40. Charles MacKay, *The Mormons: or Latter-Day Saints with Memoirs of the Life and Death of Joseph Smith, the American Mahomet* (London: Office of the National Illustrated Library, 1851).

41. See n. 5.

42. See n. 6.

43. In his introduction, Walnum ("Om Mormonerne," 1) states: "About 20 years ago there were no Mormons, and now they approach 180,000 souls in the United North American States. . . . In England there may now be 30,000 Mormons."

Vision. The vision probably played little role in Mormon proselyting between 1850 and 1852.⁴⁴

Snow emphasized the apostasy of the ancient church which necessitated a restoration of divine authority in order to restore the fullness of the gospel. Walnum was confident that the gospel, as taught by his church, enlivened by God's spirit, was sufficient.

Walnum did not discuss the Mormon doctrine of gathering. It is likely that the implications of this doctrine on the Scandinavians were not apparent in 1852, since only one small group had emigrated by the time of Snow's departure. Later, Nordic critics of Mormonism would warn against emigration and describe the oppression of immigrants by Brigham Young's distant mountain Zion.

Snow, in fact, waxed eloquent when it came to the gathering. He preached that believers would be gathered to Zion's mountain and there be preserved from the great plagues that were to come over the earth in the last days. The ten tribes would be gathered, and the Jews would return to Jerusalem. Christ's Second Coming "is not far off. . . . We believe that this generation which presently lives on the earth shall not all perish before the Savior comes." He painted a strikingly idyllic picture: "All is peace and quiet. . . .no war in our little world; how peaceful and quiet, how still, how happy, how lonely. . . .[I]t is the poet's dream realized in this life. . . .Here we are all equally rich. There are none who are truly poor as each has free access to land. . . .for the good of all without money or price" He suggested that the trip to Zion could be made at minimal expense, either by traveling to New Orleans and then overland or to California and then overland, euphemistically saying it was only a hundred or so miles from the coast of California to Salt Lake City.

By the winter of 1851-1852, Elder Snow had set the course for what followed in the Scandinavian Mission. As he prepared the Saints for his coming departure, a second "General Conference" of the church in Scandinavia was held in Copenhagen on February 20-22, 1852. Snow reorganized the mission, ordained new priesthood officers, and made assignments to ensure continuity of his programs. He lamented the severe persecution of the Saints throughout Denmark, Norway, and southern Sweden. During the conference, he asked church leaders to prepare a petition to the parliament and the king requesting them "to give us recognition for our worship of God and secure for us the rights and freedoms which the constitution provides. Write it in powerful language, but in humility and submissiveness of heart."

44. *Skandinaviens Stjerne* (August 1852, 161-64) began a serial of Joseph Smith's life called "Joseph Smiths Levnetsløb: skrevet af ham selv." This included a translation of the 1838 version of the First Vision.

At the conclusion of the conference, more than 300 people gathered at the Hotel du Nord for a “festive dinner” to honor Brother Snow before his departure to Zion. The description of this event in the *Star* shows the great affection held by the Scandinavian converts for Snow.⁴⁵ To them, he became known as the “Apostle of the North.”

Snow’s farewell letter to the Saints published in the March 1852 edition of the *Star* is apologetic, prayerful, and tender:

Dear Brothers and Friends:

With this number my duties as editor and my work in this land come to an end. But, my concerns for you will not end here. I pray my Heavenly Father and my brethren for forgiveness for whatever mistakes I have made in the conduct of my duties. My sole purpose has been to honor God and bless my fellow men. . . . My beloved ones, indulge not in prayers for this God’s servant, but that wisdom and revelation will flood over them [his successors] in His name. Take pleasure and give respect to their counsel, guidance and instructions which will be provided for you by the Lord. Double your diligence in spreading the *Star* and the other materials that I have printed for you, so will God let His light shine in the darkness and give you much fruit from your work. Always be glad. Pray unceasingly and give thanks for everything the almighty God blesses you [with] through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.—E. Snow⁴⁶

Shortly after Snow’s departure for Liverpool, the requested petition was completed, signed by 850 persons and submitted to the king and parliament on March 15, 1852.⁴⁷ There is no evidence that the petition received serious consideration, and persecution continued throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century although it manifestly failed to deter church growth.

Thousands of Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes ignored the pleas and warnings of Pastor Walnum and his contemporaries. Elder Snow, his companions, and their converts found many deeply religious, Bible-reading Scandinavians with concerns about salvation, who accepted the Mormon claims of the need for a restoration of Christ’s church and his gospel. They also accepted the doctrine of God-given priesthood authority and the need for proper execution of the saving ordinances as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The immanence of Christ’s Second Coming seemed confirmed by “the signs of the times.” Many of the newly converted brethren were called to missionary service. Their

45. *Skandinaviens Stjerne*, 15 March 1852, 96.

46. *Ibid.*

47. “Til vore hoistørede danske Rigsdagsmænd” (To our most honored members of the Danish Parliament), *Skandinaviens Stjerne*, April 1852, 102-103. The two-page petition ends: “Copenhagen, the 15th of March, 1852 with 850 signatures.”

successful preaching and the use of Elder Snow's books, pamphlets, and *Scandinaviens Star* caused the church to grow rapidly.

Many Scandinavians had little prospect of overcoming their poverty and the barriers to ownership of their own homes and farms. The principle of "gathering" to Zion, as well as the prospect of abundant free agricultural land, must have been exciting to many poor but enterprising "hearers of the word." Enveloped in their new faith, many of these Saints survived bitter persecution and later took substantial personal risks to travel to Zion to establish new homes and lives among their kindred believers. Their faith and hopes were well stated in the first stanza of a hymn written in 1854 in Christiana, Norway,⁴⁸ by a young Danish missionary named Charles Christian Anton Christensen (the famous Danish-Mormon artist C. C. A. Christensen) and published in the *Star*:⁴⁹

The message of peace sounds from Zion;
Light from the morning star shines forth;
Many have joy from heavens light
And obediently covenant with God
As heirs to freedom's home.

The Mormon missionaries' success undoubtedly provoked the stewards of the Scandinavian churches, such as Pastor Hersleb Walnum, to respond from the pulpit, in written word and deed, and even sometimes to self-righteously lead anti-Mormon mobs. At a time of enormous social, political, and economic change, the Lutheran clerics probably deterred many from listening to the Mormon missionaries. However, Erastus Snow would have warned them, as he did during an 1859 speech in the *Salt Lake Tabernacle*, that to resist was in vain: "Do any of you ask how this came to pass that so many thousands have gathered from that land. . . rejoicing in the testimony of the Gospel in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, etc.? It was not done by the wisdom and learning of man, or by any influence that man himself could exert over that distant people. . . .[I]t was not of man, but of God."⁵⁰

48. Christiana was renamed Oslo after Norway won independence from Sweden.

49. C. C. A. Christensen, "Christi Kirke og den faldne Christenhed" (Christ's church and fallen Christianity), *Skandnaviens Stjerne*, 1 February 1854, 143-44:

*Fredens Budskab nu fra Zion lyder;
Morgenstjernen herlight straalet frem;
Mange nu ved himelens Lys sig fryder
Og gjør Pagt med Gud som Order byder.
Haabende en Arv i Fredens Hjem.*

50. *Journal of Discourses* (1860, Liverpool: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1966 lithographed copy) 7:129.

In the Kitchen on a Saturday Morning

Marilyn Bushman-Carlton

Three men
in a circumference of scant sentences,
slow dull sounds
trade expertise,
repeat each other's names,
sounds solid as boards—
Tom, Michael, Blaine (the contractor,
the architect, my husband).
Mingling with pots and plates
are the fragrances of just-washed bodies,
after-shave, detergents, denim and soil,
nothing intimate or sticky.
If not invisible, I might intrude.

None of the three rushes to assent
nor to fill the acreage between phrases.
There are parts of the self to give out,
parts to keep in.

Weeks before tools will drop to the floor
and bits of wood inhabit the cracks,
before sweat broils
in the brown wires of muscular arms,
the trio shift and divide
the sum of their weight,
limber their knees,
unknot the coins in their pockets.
Occasional questions escape their mouths,
then flatten out
at the ends of the lines.

David O. McKay and Blacks: Building the Foundation for the 1978 Revelation¹

Gregory A. Prince

"If THERE WAS EVER A PERSON, in terms of social justice in our society, for fairness, it would have been David O. McKay. Had it been up to him, alone, he would have given the Black the priesthood that quick!"² So spoke one general authority recently, who was called to his position by President McKay and who discussed with him the issue of ordination of Blacks.

In one sense, there is no surprise ending to the story of David O. McKay's relationship with Blacks, for the policy of not extending the priesthood to black males was not changed until eight years after his death. However, to look upon that relationship only in terms of whether or not the policy was changed is to overlook the deep concern felt by President McKay toward Blacks throughout his tenure as church president, and the administrative changes he enacted which moved in the direction of full inclusion, signaled by the 1978 revelation.

The question of ordination of Blacks was often on McKay's mind, and on several important occasions during the nineteen years of his presidency it became a front-burner issue for the First Presidency and others of McKay's inner circle. Most notably, the weeks preceding McKay's death saw a furious exchange of actions and reactions by the two dominant general authorities, Hugh B. Brown and Harold B. Lee, as one sought to change the policy while the other sought to block his initiative,

1. First presented as a paper at the Mormon History Association Annual Meeting, Ogden, Utah May 22, 1999.

2. Paul H. Dunn, interview by the author, 18 February 1995.

neither of them appreciating that their efforts were irrelevant to the question at hand.

In a letter written in 1947 when he was second counselor to President George Albert Smith, McKay outlined his own views of the basis of church policy denying priesthood to blacks.³ He cited one scriptural precedent for the policy, the well-known verse in the Book of Abraham, but stated that the complete rationale lay in the pre-existence. Declaring that God does not act unjustly, he postulated that conditions in that pre-mortal existence were linked to birth through black African lineage. He did not, however, invoke a "less valiant in the War in Heaven" argument, or a curse relating to Cain, and thus differentiated his position from that of his more conservative colleagues. In a further departure, he allowed for the eventual reversal of the policy without restricting it to a post-mortal period.

In essence, McKay's 1947 position on the basis of the policy remained intact through the rest of his life, perhaps softening in one respect: He may have rejected his earlier speculation about a link to the pre-existence. This was suggested in a 1961 news conference in England where, when asked by a reporter about the policy, he replied that it rested solely on the Book of Abraham. "That is the only reason," he said. "It is founded on that."⁴

Upon becoming church president in 1951, McKay became increasingly concerned, not about the validity of the policy, but with the fairness with which it was being applied. He was particularly focused on South Africa where existing policy required male members desiring ordination to demonstrate first that all their ancestry was non-African. In other words, "guilty unless proven innocent." The inability or unwillingness of white members in the South African Mission to undergo such an ordeal had resulted in a critical shortage of priesthood, to the point of compromising regular church function.

In 1954, McKay traveled to South Africa "to observe conditions as they are." Seeing the ambiguity—and harm—caused by the policy, he changed it on the spot, stating: "Unless there is evidence of Negro blood you need not compel a man to prove that he has none in his veins." (In other words, "innocent unless proven guilty.") He continued, "I should much rather make a mistake in one case and if it be found out afterwards suspend his activity in the priesthood than to deprive 10 worthy men of

3. David O. McKay (hereafter DOM) letter dated 3 November 1947. Published in Llewelyn R. McKay, *Home Memories of President David O. McKay* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1956), 226-31.

4. Press conference held in the Hyde Park Chapel, London, 24 February 1961. Transcript in David O. McKay Office Journal (hereafter DOMOJ), entry for 25 February 1961.

the priesthood."⁵ He notified his counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve of this change after the fact, and received their unanimous endorsement.⁶

This willingness to make a mistake in the name of mercy characterized his attitude throughout the remainder of his life. Deciding on a case in 1963, in which a boy of possible but unproven black ancestry was ordained, he said, "We shall face the Savior and tell what our decision is with a clear conscience."⁷

Within weeks of his return from South Africa, McKay met privately with Sterling McMurrin. In the course of their conversation, and to McMurrin's surprise, McKay told him that the church position on ordination of blacks was "policy," not "doctrine," and that the practice would someday be changed.⁸ The distinction between "policy" and "doctrine" in McKay's mind was crucial, yet was misunderstood at the time by McMurrin, and much later by Hugh B. Brown, Harold B. Lee, and others in McKay's inner circle, resulting in a crisis shortly before McKay's death.

McMurrin considered the conversation personal, and did not make it public knowledge until the final year of McKay's life. Although McKay reiterated the message a decade later to newly sustained General Authority Paul Dunn,⁹ he apparently never made a point of it to his counselors or to members of the Quorum of the Twelve, as evidenced by their reaction to first learning of it in 1969. McMurrin's and Dunn's accounts were unquestionably accurate, for McKay's son, Llewelyn, verified the story with his father in 1968.¹⁰ Furthermore, an examination of McKay's own record on the subject verifies that he used "policy" and not "doctrine" in referring to it.

McKay chose his words carefully, and it is clear in retrospect that his use of the word "policy" did *not* mean the practice of priesthood denial could be reversed merely by administrative decision. Indeed, he always affirmed, both in public and in private, that it would take a revelation for such to occur. However, he also affirmed that such a revelation *could*

5. "Minutes of a Special Meeting by President David O. McKay, 17 January, 1954," in DOMOJ, 19 January 1954.

6. DOM letter to Presidents Stephen L. Richards and J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Capetown, South Africa, 19 January 1954, in DOMOJ; also "Report of President David O. McKay's 32,500-mile-journey to Missions of the Church," a report given to the Council of the Twelve, 25 February 1954, in DOMOJ.

7. Account of meeting of Presiding Bishopric and First Presidency, 1 November 1963, in DOMOJ.

8. Untitled account of the meeting, written by Sterling M. McMurrin on 6 March 1979. Photocopy in author's possession.

9. Paul H. Dunn, interview by author, 21 May 1996.

10. McMurrin, Untitled Account.

occur, and therein lay the distinction in his own mind. To him, a policy could be changed, albeit in this case only upon receipt of a revelation, whereas a doctrine could not be changed. The subtlety of that difference was not appreciated by his colleagues.

McKay clearly did not receive such a revelation. What is less clear, however, is that he sought such divine intervention unsuccessfully. One general authority recalled his saying privately that he had prayed and pleaded with the Lord, but "I haven't had an answer."¹¹

The question of reversing the policy next arose in the context of a multi-year effort to open a mission in Nigeria where thousands who had obtained LDS literature had requested baptism. In discussing the matter with his counselors in January 1962, McKay said the decision to open Nigeria was as crucial to the modern church as the decision to proselytize to the Gentiles had been to the ancient church.¹²

Aware of the logistical problems of trying to administer a Nigerian church without local priesthood, Hugh B. Brown suggested, "I wonder if the time is coming when we will give the Lesser Priesthood to them." Although declining to accept Brown's suggestion, McKay acknowledged, "You can't deal with this in a proper way unless you [change the policy]."¹³

Nine months later, the First Presidency again discussed the possibility of extending the Aaronic Priesthood to Nigerians, this time with McKay broaching the subject:

If we could just give them the Aaronic Priesthood. I suppose there is no way to differentiate. The Lord will have to do it. The Lord did that after the priesthood was taken away from the ancient prophets. That law was added as a school master to bring them to Christ. And that is all they had for hundreds of years.¹⁴

To this, Brown replied, "I secretly hoped that the time would come when we could give them the Aaronic Priesthood." The discussion ended with McKay concluding, as he always would, "Only the Lord can change it."¹⁵

The final chapter of this saga occurred in 1969. A college student by the name of Stephen Taggart wrote a monograph of the history of the church's policy toward Blacks, and in researching the topic became aware of the contents of McMurrin's 1954 conversation with McKay, as

11. Marion D. Hanks, interview by the author, 27 May 1994.

12. Transcript of First Presidency Meeting, 9 January 1962, in DOMOJ.

13. Ibid.

14. Transcript of First Presidency Meeting, 11 October 1962, in DOMOJ.

15. Ibid.

well as Llewelyn McKay's report that President McKay had confirmed its authenticity. With the permission of McMurrin and Llewelyn McKay, he included this information in his monograph.¹⁶

A copy of the manuscript passed from Hugh B. Brown, First Counselor in the First Presidency, to Lawrence McKay, oldest of President McKay's children. On September 10, 1969, Lawrence and his brother Llewelyn, along with Alvin R. Dyer of the First Presidency, met with President McKay on the matter. This was the first that Dyer had known of McKay's considering the matter one of "policy" rather than "doctrine." The concept was apparently new to Brown, and to Lawrence McKay, who asked his father "if this was not the time to announce that the Negro could be given the Priesthood," and "to do so now voluntarily rather than to be pressured into it later."¹⁷

Shocked at the apparent prospect of ordination of Blacks, to which he was vehemently opposed, Dyer later wrote, "I felt it my responsibility to make some comments concerning this vital matter." He thereupon launched into a lengthy and forceful rehearsal of all of the traditional arguments in favor of the ban on ordination, including one held by some of his conservative colleagues but never embraced by President McKay: the so-called "curse of Cain."¹⁸

The immediate effect of Dyer's counteroffensive was to cause Lawrence McKay to abandon the topic. Said Lawrence, "Perhaps, father, we had better leave this with you and you can think about it."¹⁹ However, Dyer—threatened by the prospect of a change in policy—scrutinized Taggart's manuscript throughout the subsequent days. One week later, in a First Presidency meeting on September 17, 1969, Dyer pronounced Taggart's article "one of the most vicious, untrue articles that has ever been written about the Church."²⁰ President McKay, in failing health only four months prior to his death, was not in attendance at this meeting.

The events which unfolded over the subsequent weeks pitted two strong-willed leaders, Hugh B. Brown, First Counselor in the First Presidency, and Harold B. Lee, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, against each other. Viewed through the retrospective of three decades, we are able to see that this tragic confrontation between two great men

16. The information is found in McMurrin, *Untitled Account*. Taggart's monograph was later published as *Mormonism's Negro Policy: Social and Historical Origins* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1970).

17. "Minutes by President Alvin R. Dyer on the visit of Roy A. Cheville, and the Negro Question," 10 September 1969, in DOMOJ.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. Minutes of First Presidency meeting, 17 September 1969, in DOMOJ.

was unnecessary, and that it occurred because both men, as well as Alvin R. Dyer (who appears to have borne the message to Lee), misunderstood the connotation of McKay's use of the term "policy," which always assumed a mandatory linkage to new revelation if change were to occur. By contrast, both Brown and Lee interpreted the information in Taggart's article to mean that change could come through simple administrative action, in the absence of revelation.

Brown had felt, as early as the 1930s that Blacks should hold the priesthood,²¹ and in a 1963 interview with *New York Times* reporter Wallace Turner, he appeared to push in that direction when he said, "We are in the midst of a survey looking toward the possibility of admitting Negroes."²² McKay was displeased with Brown's comment and privately chastised him when Turner's article was published.²³

Given the hitherto unknown information in Taggart's article, Brown renewed his effort to have the ban reversed. One month after Dyer's first knowledge of the article, he and Brown met privately. Brown strongly advocated to Dyer that "we should give the Negro the priesthood, that we had only one scripture in Abraham that suggested otherwise." Dyer strongly disagreed, later noting with disapproval that Brown "had tried twice of late to get President McKay to withdraw the withholding of the Priesthood from the Negro, but President McKay had refused to move on it."²⁴ In retrospect, of course, it is clear why McKay had refused to move on it: Only a revelation could move him to do so, and he had received none. Brown misunderstood the crucial fact that absent such a revelation, not even his first counselor could nudge McKay into changing the policy.

Another who misunderstood was Harold B. Lee, who sided with Dyer in strongly opposing a change in the policy. Indeed, on more than one occasion he indicated that McMurrin had apparently misunderstood McKay, that McKay "would not have made a statement of this kind."²⁵ Furthermore, in earlier years he had said privately that Blacks would not hold the priesthood as long as he was alive, a statement which ultimately proved true.²⁶ The Taggart article, combined with Brown's renewed efforts to persuade McKay to change the policy, presented him with what he interpreted as a real threat of the ban on ordination being lifted. Had

21. Edwin Firmage (grandson of Hugh B. Brown), interview by the author, 10 October 1996.

22. Wallace Turner, "Mormons Weigh Stand on Negroes," *New York Times*, 7 June 1963, 1.

23. DOMOJ, 7 June 1963.

24. "Minutes by President Alvin R. Dyer," 8 October 1969, in DOMOJ.

25. McMurrin, Untitled Account.

26. John T. Bernhard, interview by the author, 5 December 1998.

he understood McKay's usage of the word "policy," he would not have reacted as he did.

Convinced that the threat of change was both real and imminent, Lee moved to block such an eventuality. In an October conversation with N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency, he adamantly stated he "would not consent to any change of policy as respects the Negro problem."²⁷ In the ensuing weeks, he worked with the Quorum of the Twelve to draft a policy statement blocking Brown's initiative by reconfirming the church's ban on ordination of Blacks.²⁸ In its final version, the document began by implicitly acknowledging differences of opinion as to the current status of the ban:

In view of confusion that has arisen, it was decided at a meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve to restate the position of the Church with regard to the Negro both in society and in the Church.

The document then set a backdrop for its central message:

We believe that this work is directed by God and that the conferring of the priesthood must await His revelation.²⁹

The intent of the document was, thus, to close the door on the possibility of reversing the ban through administrative action as Brown had been attempting to do. The statement was highly unusual in that it appeared over the signatures of two members of the First Presidency, but was written by the Quorum of the Twelve. McMurrin noted that the letter "was produced by leaders among the Twelve in response to my report set forth in the letters to the McKay brothers."³⁰ Dyer also reported that "Elder Lee had been the one who had prompted and directed the preparation of the policy article,"³¹ which, while based on President McKay's prior writings and statements on the subject, contained no contemporaneous contribution from him. (It is worth noting that McKay was 96 years old, in rapidly failing health, and the statement was dated only one month prior to his death.) Also unusual was the fact that the statement was released for distribution to church leaders by Harold B. Lee and not by action of the First Presidency.³²

27. Ernest L. Wilkinson diary, 27 October 1969.

28. Alvin R. Dyer, minutes of a meeting with David O. McKay, 26 December 1969, in DOMOJ.

29. First Presidency Circular Letter (signed by Hugh B. Brown and N. Eldon Tanner), 15 December 1969.

30. Sterling M. McMurrin to the author, 30 October 1994.

31. Alvin R. Dyer minutes, 26 December 1969 meeting with McKay.

32. "Church Policy on Negroes Told in Wards," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 January 1970.

The statement, signed only by Brown and Tanner, was distributed to church leaders on December 15, 1969. No plans were made to publicize it until it became apparent that Wallace Turner of the *New York Times* had obtained a copy and planned to publish it, whereupon it was quickly published in the *Church News* on January 10, 1970.³³

The story does not end there. On Christmas Day, 1969, an article written by Lester Kinsolving of the *San Francisco Chronicle* was published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. The article read in part: "The Mormon Church's denial of its priesthood to Negroes of African lineage 'will change in the not too distant future,' according to Hugh B. Brown, one of the highest ranking officials of the Church." The article also disclosed that Brown had recently spoken to Willard Wyman, assistant to the President of Stanford University, stating, "The church is not prejudiced in any way but this one, but I think that will change."³⁴

The day the article was published in the *Tribune*, Brown telephoned Sterling McMurrin and, McMurrin later said, "told me that he wanted me to know that he [had] signed this [First Presidency] document under great pressure."³⁵ Brown's statement to the reporter from the *Chronicle* thus appears to have emerged from his frustration at being obliged to sign a statement shutting the door on what he had strived to achieve.

The following day, December 26th, Dyer met with McKay to urge that the statement now be published, and that three other signatures of First Presidency members—David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, and himself—be added to those of Brown and Tanner. "By making such a release," Dyer wrote, "it would counteract the confusion and misunderstanding that had developed because of the statements made by President Hugh B. Brown as reported by Lester Kinsolving of the *San Francisco Chronicle*."³⁶

Learning of Dyer's plan to publish the letter over five signatures, Harold B. Lee intervened and asked that the article not be published at that time, to "lessen the possibility of further breach in the impression that President Brown had given."³⁷ On his part, Brown had by this time qualified his statement by saying it was "his own opinion and not necessarily a policy statement of the Church," and Lee felt no further clarification was necessary.³⁸ Wallace Turner, however, forced his hand, and the statement was published, over only two signatures, on January 10, 1970.

33. "Policy Statement of Presidency," 12.

34. "LDS Leader Says Curb on Priesthood to Ease," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 25 December 1969, 4D.

35. Sterling M. McMurrin to the author, 30 October 1994.

36. Alvin R. Dyer minutes, 26 December 1969 meeting with McKay.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

One week later, David O. McKay died at the age of 96, and Joseph Fielding Smith became the tenth president of the church. For the first time since 1877, a counselor in the First Presidency was not retained by the succeeding president, as Hugh B. Brown was released and Harold B. Lee sustained in his place. The subject of the priesthood ban faded quickly from the front page as church members, and Americans in general, became more preoccupied with the Vietnam War and Watergate. It would not reappear until June 1978, when all the principals of the events of late 1969 were deceased.

For those who either knew David O. McKay personally or who were in the church during his lengthy and memorable presidency, there is no question that he possessed a Christ-like character rarely seen in our time. As stated at the beginning of this paper, it is the opinion of at least one general authority who knew him well that he would have moved quickly to change the policy if it had been merely up to him, but it wasn't up to him, and he knew this better than anyone else—even better than his closest advisors. In a temple meeting in the mid-1960s another general authority asked, "President McKay, will the time ever come, maybe in our lifetime, when the Blacks will hold the priesthood?" McKay replied: "The question sounds like *I* make the decision. When the Lord tells me, then we'll do it."³⁹

While McKay did not change the policy on ordination of Blacks, there is no question that he always viewed all members of the church with compassion. In the case of Blacks, this came through in several of his policy decisions. First, as mentioned earlier in this paper, McKay relaxed the rule governing ordination of men whose black African ancestry may have been suspected but not proven, thereby opening the doors of the priesthood to thousands, particularly in South Africa and Brazil. Second, he allowed Blacks to be called to leadership positions in auxiliary organizations. Third, he allowed Blacks to enter temples to be baptized for the dead. Fourth, on occasion when white parents adopted children of black ancestry, he authorized those children to be sealed to their adopted parents.

Of course, we are left to ponder why the revelation he repeatedly sought did not occur until eight years after his death. It is a question none of us is able to answer.

39. Paul H. Dunn interview, 18 February 1995.

Spiritualizing the Organic

Anne Elizabeth Berbert

The garden heaves with what does not belong—
plastics, agent orange, rubber cement, land mines
that won't biodegrade, disintegrating corpse
bones, sanded into earth by worms
whose progeny will someday dismember us, too.
We chant things that grow, generate
heat, reproduce, breathe, eat, drink.
We have tasted the sun freckling our skin,
watched cows' flesh darken in the iron pan,
felt the poppy seed reconfigure the brain.
We weep, embarrassed, changed
by slaves' sweat, Jews' ashes, embryos' blood,
the inhumanity of humans,
the irony that dead flesh sings the spirit's psalm.

We question: Are we circumscribed
by ethereal sky? Or are we mud?
If we ask the rose, the raw ornament says:
"I grace your tables, scent your clothes,
spawn love in romantics,
then decorate your caskets and graves."

Eclipsed by the Sons

Bessie Soderborg Clark

I ORIGINALLY WROTE THIS ESSAY for a panel discussion at the second Counterpoint Conference for Mormon Women in 1994 in Salt Lake City. The eight years since then have changed the relative position of women in our society, but maybe not enough. We have seen women's lib free us in ways that were only beginning back then. Those changes form the base of this essay. I had been reared in a family of five brothers and no sisters. Another member of the panel had a totally contrasting experience: She was reared in a family of nine girls with no boys. Our assignment was to compare these experiences of being reared in such contrasting Mormon families. My essay still seems pertinent to LDS society today.

I want to review some of my experiences in growing up in that family of mostly brothers, then explore how I gradually achieved a kind of independence that took me to BYU, to marriage, and to my own husband and children.

Some of my first memories are of having lots of brothers, almost too many, and wishing one of them had been a sister, or that I could turn one of them into a girl or maybe a frog—or at least that my parents would adopt me a sister. I was the only girl among seven children. (The last born lived only a day). My father was a bishop, a member of the board of education, and an active politician, elected mayor of Highland Park just before it was dissolved to be reincorporated as South Salt Lake. I figured he knew everything and everybody. When people commented on the fact that he had only one daughter, he would say, "Yes we're glad we have a daughter, but only one. She's more trouble than all the boys put together." Being overly sensitive, I might have missed a twinkle in his eye and misinterpreted his teasing, but every time he made comments like this, I was sure he wished I had been another boy. I hated when people said, "I'll bet you're really spoiled with all those brothers."

Reflecting back, I realize that my father was probably just trying to be clever, but oh how I would have loved him if he had only said, just once, "You bet. We're glad to have a girl. I wish we had some more like her."

We lived a block from my grandparents' home. My grandmother was one of the last of the original pioneers, walking the final 500 miles in one of the last wagon trains to come to Utah before the railroad. She was eight years old at the time. Both of my grandparents were stumpy little Welsh people, Grandma barely five feet tall, and Grandpa not over five-and-a-half. Grandma had a New Year's Day tradition which might have been a Welsh one: To the first *grandson* with brown eyes who wished her a happy New Year she would give a quarter. During those depression years that seemed a lot of money. I could easily have gotten my Happy New Year to Grandma first for that quarter, but I was only a girl. Even Grandma made me feel that girls were not as special as boys.

At church, too, the boys were honored as scouts, deacons, teachers, and priests. Much praise was heaped upon them, but little notice was taken of Beehive activities while Gleaner Girls were just that—left to glean what recognition they could. My brothers assumed they deserved all the honors. Many of my suggestions were met with their favorite comment: "Oh, don't be dumb." I knew they used it on each other, but it seemed especially harsh aimed at me. Even so, my brothers were good boys, often protective toward me, especially warning me not to wear my too-tight sweater nor to keep company with the wrong kind of boys. If I wanted to do something that didn't meet my mother's approval, she would often say, "People will think you're a fool if you do that!" Maybe that's why, after I had children of my own, we adopted in our family a saying: "Don't worry what people will think. They seldom do."

We lived in a semi-rural area, just south of the dividing line between Salt Lake City and the county. Across the street from my grandparents' house lived two Chinese brothers who were vegetable farmers, Ju Gin and Ju Hoy. When they had saved enough money, Ju Gin went to China to get the wife his parents had picked out for him. As his daughters tell it, his parents took him to a park, and on the other side of the park was another couple with a teen-aged girl. They asked him if he would like to marry that girl, and he said, "She looks all right to me." The girl's parents asked her if she would like to marry that man, and she said, "He looks all right to me." Knowing of arranged marriages didn't help much with my sense of a girl's importance.

My mother and grandmother befriended that young bride and taught her to bathe, dress, and take care of her babies as they came along. Since it was the heart of the depression, I often helped my mother tend those babies. In exchange, the Ju Gins would give our family a few dollars and lots of produce. On hot summer days, I tended the babies in our orchard while their mother worked in the fields. When it was feeding time, I pushed the new baby in a big wicker buggy up through the field to where Mrs Ju was working, so she could nurse it.

The Chinese couple's first baby was a beautiful little girl. Of course,

they were disappointed because they wanted a boy. They named her Mary. My mother, as the bishop's wife, felt the baby should be taken to church and given a proper name and blessing. The little Chinese mother agreed, saying only that, if she didn't have to keep her eyes closed, she would go. She dressed little "Melly" in cute clothes, put layers of rouge, powder, and lipstick on her own face, and went to church with us. This was the beginning of her large family of nine children. Each time she was expecting a baby, they wanted a boy! Out of the nine children, she had five girls and four boys. There was much rejoicing at the birth of a boy, but not much for the girls. When one of the boys died at a very young age, the parents were grief stricken and said they wouldn't have cared so much if it had been one of the girls. Mother taught them that they would have that little boy again in the hereafter. This comforted them. The mother eventually joined the church, and the babies were duly given a name and a blessing and then baptized at eight, thus saving them from being "heathens."

As they grew up, my mother saw to it that the children went to primary and Sunday school. On their way to church, they would drop in at our home for inspection. My job was to comb the girls' hair. Mother made sure they were clean and their clothes were in proper condition, so the other children would not tease them or make fun of them.

These Chinese people felt that my parents were indeed favored by the gods because they had so many sons. My brothers earned their money for school and spending by helping Ju Gin get his produce ready for market. There were rough boys in the neighborhood who cheated Gin and played mean tricks on him, but I remember my mother counseling my brothers to work an extra ten minutes and not charge him, to be honest, and not do the mean things the other boys were doing. The Ju family thought highly of my brothers.

When World War II began, my parents told Ju Gin there was farm land available in Southern California and advised him to go there. They would have done anything my parents suggested. Mother told the children to find the church where they would have many friends. The faith seemed justified: Of the eight children, three or four of the daughters stayed active in the church.

Gin bought a farm near Knott's Berry Farm, prospered on the land, and came close to selling to Walt Disney. Eventually the land became too valuable to farm. Today several of the family, including the parents, are very wealthy business people, apartment owners, and store owners.

Several grandchildren of the Ju family attended BYU, went on missions, and married in the temple. When one of the granddaughters was contemplating marriage with a Caucasian, the grandparents said they would not come to the wedding, but when she explained he was a Mormon, they said, "Like the Soderborg boys?"

"Yes," she replied.

They then consented to attend the wedding. His being like the Soderborg boys was what made the difference. No mention of the one Soderborg girl!

My parents may not have put so little value on their one daughter as these Chinese did on their five, but it often seemed to me that they did. They seemed to always plan for my brothers: My brothers *must* go to the university. They *must* go on missions. Yet nobody made any long-range plans for me. Oh, how I felt left out, having no special plans and almost no plans of any kind made for me. After high school, there seemed to be only three or four choices for girls: to become secretaries, nurses, or school teachers, or to get just any job and a hope chest and talk about meeting the right boy. Missions cost a lot of money, and it was more important for the boys to go. I don't remember any talk about my going on a mission. I don't even remember thinking about it much. If a girl went, she was usually thought to be an old maid who had given up on finding a husband, or perhaps she wasn't attractive enough to get a man.

I don't remember my parents talking about college for me, either. They liked to display my brothers' graduation pictures on the mantel in their caps and gowns, but they didn't seem concerned about the absent picture of their daughter. All my brothers graduated from the University of Utah. When I decided to go to Provo to BYU, I had to arrange everything myself. To save money for college, I worked for a year in the diet kitchen at the county hospital, then headed for Provo. My friends accused me of saying there were better boys there. Perhaps there were. There was certainly a different emphasis. In 1940 I took a speech class from Alonzo Morley, in which he gave us some sage advice: "You boys work hard and get your degrees, but you girls find yourselves a good husband."

Such advice must have been part of the general atmosphere; I don't even remember being particularly shocked or irritated at the time. I vowed I would not marry a man who was not a college graduate nor who had not been on a mission. I did find myself a husband during that freshman year, though, even if he wasn't going to school at the time and had not been on a mission. About the second or third time I went out with Marden, he took me home to Morgan to meet his family. I was surprised to find he had five sisters. They were refined and soft spoken. They treated me as if I were one of them. His mother was a beautiful, gentle woman starting into her fifties, but in the beginning stages of crippling arthritis. His father scolded a son who made jokes about my name, but all three of the brothers had good manners. About fifteen people sat down to dinner that Sunday. I couldn't even see any fidgeting while Father Clark offered a long but grateful blessing on the food.

No doubt the sisters were a refining influence on Marden. I've often

said that I fell in love with his family before I fell in love with him. I couldn't help seeing how thoughtful he was to his mother and sisters. How fortunate I was to find a man who was especially sensitive to his mother.

While I was attending the Y, it seemed that the male students dominated the class discussions. The girls had been conditioned not to be too competitive with the boys, to let them beat us in sports, not to let them know if we got higher grades, because it would hurt their tender egos. The men should be in charge of all business deals and of almost anything else that required brains, as they supposedly had better abilities than the girls in such matters. For me personally, I kept hearing my brothers' "Don't be dumb!" That freshman year in college didn't do much to help me develop any real sense of self-esteem.

The war in Europe was threatening our young men. That summer Marden and I decided to get married, so I stayed home for part of the next year, mostly to earn some money, gather a trousseau, and generally prepare for marriage. I learned to be a teletype operator for Western Union, so I could be transferred. After giving me an engagement ring in June 1941, my husband-to-be left for Los Angeles, where his first job was in a Glendale restaurant waiting tables and doing dishes. He was soon doing war work at Lockheed. We were married that October and moved immediately to Hollywood just six weeks before Pearl Harbor. We often joked about our first child being born just nine months and one hour later. Diane was a dainty blue-eyed daughter. I was elated to have a girl, but at the same time wondered if I shouldn't be a little disappointed at my first baby not being a boy. Whatever sense of worth I had lacked with my own family, though, becoming a wife and mother made me feel that being a woman might not be so bad after all.

My six children were much better distributed than my parents' children: girl then boy, girl then boy, then (after a seven-year doctoral period for my husband) boy then girl. I'm afraid, though, that I'd been conditioned to praise the boys a little more than the girls for their academic achievements. More than eighteen years separate our oldest daughter from our youngest. When Diane, our oldest, went through college, the choices seemed pretty much the same as when I was a freshman. We all just took it for granted that girls couldn't be engineers, doctors, architects, scientists, etc., because we didn't have the kinds of minds that could understand those subjects, especially physics, math, engineering, or other technical courses. Diane became a very fine junior high school English teacher, perhaps influenced by her father. Sherri, our second, majored in French, but with no particular profession in mind. She is now a writer, editor, and public relations officer for the Salt Lake school district.

By the time our youngest daughter, Krista, started college, I had become an enlightened feminist, responding to both current ideas and my

own college experiences and reflections. I told her she could be anything she wanted. When she chose physical therapy, little did I realize she'd have to study physics, math, and other things girls weren't supposed to comprehend. Why, she'd even have to carve cadavers. She received her degree in physical therapy from the Chicago Medical School/University of Health Sciences and had a year of intensive residency training at Kaiser Permanente in orthopedic manual therapy, specializing in back problems. She practices now in North Carolina. Compared to me at their age, all three are liberated women.

It took me a long time and lots of study and experience to feel at all liberated. By selling Tupperware in Seattle, I helped my husband through a Ph.D. program, I also bore six children, and helped design and build three homes—all this before I decided to get serious about my own education. I figured that my husband was educated beyond me and I had better try to catch up. Twenty-seven years after my freshman year, I graduated with a B.S. in Housing and Home Management (Environmental Design). Diane graduated three years before I did.

In 1970 I accompanied my husband, together with our three youngest children, to Finland, where Marden was a Fulbright professor at the University of Oulu, at the time "the northernmost university in the world," only a hundred miles below the Arctic Circle. I thought we would find many peasant women sweeping the streets (we did find a few) and doing heavy manual labor. I felt that everyone would envy us, being from America, where women no longer had to do such jobs. To my surprise, I found many professional women doctors, dentists, architects, and professors, many of them speaking four or five languages and sometimes more, which made many of our American women seem almost illiterate. Even in Russia, when we visited there, we noticed far more professional women than we were used to seeing in America.

After that year in Europe, I felt I needed more education. I was restless for something. I took a few exploratory courses and decided to go back to school, seriously, for a master's degree in educational psychology. I found it quite challenging to study with students who were my children's ages. Oh, how times had changed since my freshman days. The women were more competitive, more challenging, and more willing to express themselves. I discovered many new and exciting ideas in psychology. I discovered Freud, Jung, Maslow, Fromm, Rank, and Karen Horney, who soon became one of my favorites. If she felt some of the men's theories were wrong, she wasn't afraid to disagree.

After studying Freud, I felt that he either didn't like women or didn't understand them and had set womanhood back about fifty years. His theories of penis envy and the Oedipus complex disturbed me. After working with Freud for several years, Horney came to the conclusion, just as I had years later, that he was wrong about some of his most basic

theories. She claimed that a child can feel hostile impulses toward a parent without needing an Oedipus complex to explain them. A child, she argues, tries to deal with anxiety by clinging to the parents for security reasons, not from a desire to possess them sexually, as Freud taught. I found Horney's theory made much more sense. She became my heroine, an example of thinking women who were courageous enough to disagree with men when they seemed wrong.

By the time I got my M.Ed., I was over 50, and too old to enter the school system. But I found my training wonderfully appropriate for being the wife of the bishop of the BYU 29th Ward, made up of young married students, for over ten years. I developed much insight into the lives of these young families and the many problems they were facing. Marden and I team-taught a family relations class, where we stressed how important it was to treat each other with dignity and love. We especially warned against being sarcastic and against telling jokes at a partner's expense. We knew how much sting those little barbs could have (I remembered some of my father's teasings only too well). Even with such teaching, though, we saw too many husbands and wives very much in love but hurting each other with little jokes or slighting remarks, often made just to be clever. We also saw distressing examples of husbands using their priesthood authority to control or subdue their wives. They apparently felt that because they held the priesthood, their judgment was automatically better than their wives'; they were the bosses and should have the final say. Long years of tradition and example had gone into such attitudes, and they were difficult to counter. One of our young wives was valedictorian for the school of engineering, and another was a top student in the law school. We were occasionally amused when a wife excelled over her husband academically.

In the spring of '89, my husband and I took a tour to China. We were simply fascinated. We were in Tienanmen Square about three weeks before the demonstrations started. The next fall, some of our friends were returning to China to teach, for the third time. We decided we would go too if my husband were released as bishop in time. I was 69 when I put in my application to go to China as a teacher, although I had never taught school before. My husband and I were assigned to Qingdao University, located about halfway between Shanghai and Beijing on the coast of the Yellow Sea and across from the Korean Peninsula.

In China women are expected to retire at age fifty-five, yet here I was beginning a new career and already fourteen years beyond that age. When our students saw us, they immediately dubbed us Grandma and Grandpa and treated us with great respect. I had between forty and fifty students of my own. When I walked into that first classroom, you can be sure I was nervous. That first class had some brash young people who could attend school for only one year because their test scores were not

high enough to allow them to go the full four years. Some were government officials' children and weren't motivated to study much. After my first stage fright, I figured I knew more than they did, spoke better English than they, and could teach them something.

After a month of teaching, one student told me the report my students were giving of me: My lines were good (indicating the way I dressed), my colors were pretty, my body language was nice, and my speaking voice was very good (they could understand what I was saying). Thus I had all the qualifications of a foreign expert.

One of the most interesting questions I was asked (by a boy) was, "Why did you want to give up your old age and come to China to teach English?" I assured him we weren't giving up anything, that we enjoyed being with young people and hoped we were giving as much joy to the students as we were getting from them. As you might suspect, the boy students were usually given preference over the girls. I could sense that some of my girl students believed the boys were smarter; the girls were also timid about expressing themselves in class.

During one quiz I noticed a boy copying from a girl's paper with her consent. When I checked them, they were word-for-word, even to the mis-spelt words and bad sentence structure. When I confronted them, they explained, "We used the same dictionary and chose the same words." The boy wasn't even sensitive enough to feel he was doing anything wrong.

My students were very curious about family life in America. I told them that in America there were people who, if they could have only one child, would rather have a girl. Some of my male students were deeply offended and made appointments with me to come to my apartment and set me straight about this strange statement. Remembering my childhood and my Chinese friends, I was somewhat prepared for these sessions.

I asked the boys why they wanted sons instead of daughters. "Because they're stronger and can work on the farm." But you don't live on a farm, I countered, and besides girls can drive tractors just as well as boys. "They're smarter than girls," they ventured. I said some of my smartest students were girls. They said, "Boys can carry on the family name." I told them that in America some girls retained their family names or were given family names for middle names, as I was. Finally I said, "Wouldn't it be nice if every family could have one of each?" One boy responded for all of them: "Yes, every boy needs a sister to do his home work." (Maybe that explains something of the cheating.)

A girl we called Janet, who was not really one of my students, but was one of the smartest and most talented girls in the school, asked if I would help her with a speech she was preparing for a contest. She started by saying how frightened she was and that her knees were shak-

ing. She then went on to give a good speech about being a woman. I said, "Janet, you must never begin a speech with an apology. I want you to go out on the stage, stand tall with your shoulders square, look straight at the audience, and say in a loud clear voice, 'I am proud to be a woman,' and then tell why." I think she kind of startled some of the male students, but she walked off with first-place honors.

On our brief visit to India, I noticed little girls acting as nursemaids to their younger siblings, sometimes carrying babies almost as big as they were, or little girls who couldn't have been more than seven or eight working at looms while the boys were carefree and having a good time. Maybe every boy does need a sister to do his homework.

I would hope the days of any girl being eclipsed by the sons is past, but recently I was reminded of my father's attempts at wittiness. One of my brothers was destined to be an old bachelor, or so we thought. When the rest of us were having our babies and a girl was born, he would say, "A total loss, a total loss." When he was thirty-nine, he surprised us by marrying a wonderfully sensitive girl. They had four sons, rather close together. Our daughter, Krista asked her uncle Ray, "Isn't you going to have any girls?" I told her no, that the Lord had heard what he had said about girls and wasn't going to trust him with any. However, the fifth child was a beautiful little girl, the leavening influence in the family of rowdy boys.

Recently this brother and his wife came to visit us. Her face was scarred quite badly from falling off a ladder while picking fruit. As I commiserated with her, my brother spoke up with his rough humor and said, "I finally gave her what she deserved!" This time his humor had gone awry: I observed the twitch of hurt in his wife's face. I hope he hasn't passed that insensitive humor on to his sons, but having heard it for so many years, how could they escape?

I have another brother, Don, who had four daughters in a row. He had great hopes for a son. When the fifth baby arrived and was another girl, he was so unhappy that he wouldn't tell the men at work for several days that his wife had had another girl. The sixth child was the longed-for son, but in a deformed, imperfect body that allowed him only four or five weeks of life. Today Don is the recipient of much love and attention from his daughters. A man who has daughters is indeed fortunate.

Very recently, we attended the missionary farewell of a young man. His younger brother had just been made a deacon and was asked to speak. The young boy said how proud he was to be a deacon, then he would become a teacher, then a priest, then an elder, and then he could go on a mission like his brother. During this recitation, it occurred to me that I had never heard a twelve-year-old girl looking forward to the next seven or eight years of going through Beehive and all the other artificially-named classes for girls or even going on a mission.

On July 22, 2000, I traveled to Cerritos, California, to celebrate Ju Gin's one hundredth birthday with his eight children, thirty grandchildren, and forty-seven great grandchildren. Of our own twenty-one grandchildren, only five have been girls. We hope they have all been made to feel at least as desired as their brothers and much more important than if they had been born in India or China. We love and admire them and couldn't do without them. We certainly desired them and feel no sense of their being less than their brothers. We believe their parents feel the same way. In fact, their scarcity in the family may make them seem even more precious.

Gary Owen, My Darling

Sigrid Olsen

ON JUNE 25, 1876, GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER and five troops of the Seventh Cavalry met a combined force of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors near the Little Bighorn River in Eastern Montana. They were surrounded and killed “to a man,” history books solemnly intone. The bad news reached Philadelphia, which was wrapped in bunting for the nation’s hundredth birthday. It was an unbelievable defeat. Grim tidings awaited Custer’s parents in Monroe, Michigan, for with Custer were two brothers, a brother-in-law and a nephew. Custer’s youngest brother, Boston, was afraid that he would miss out on the action. At the last minute, he hurried from the pack train to be with his brother.

For two nights the bodies lay in the moonlight, a pale and bloated “*Tableau on Last Stand Hill*.” Custer, shot in the head and the chest, sat between two soldiers. Nearby was his brother Tom, whose skull was smashed, and his adjutant, W. W. Cooke, one side of his long whiskers scalped. Boston was a little farther down the hill. To be sure, his last moments rivaled any of his dreams. Close to the river, in a deep ravine, lay the men who tried to escape near the end of the battle. Here the soldiers were quickly surrounded and butchered. They clawed their way up the steep sides, but to no avail. When it was over, the bodies tumbled to the bottom in a heap.

The corpses lay for two days in the sweltering summer sun before the burial parties arrived. The soil was hard, and there were few shovels. The men couldn’t stop vomiting. They gave up, cut sage brush and scattered dirt to cover their friends, and returned to camp. A stench filled the air and few wanted to eat. In his diary a soldier wrote: “*Let us bury the dead and flee this rotting atmosphere.*”

To lovers of western history, Little Bighorn Battlefield is hallowed ground. The battle itself involved a relatively small number of participants, and it didn’t drag on—as one participant said, it lasted just about as long as it took a hungry man to eat his lunch. It wasn’t Antietam or Gettysburg. And yet, this battlefield attracts thousands of amateur historians and Custer fanatics. I guess I’m one of the many.

A few years ago, I was invited down to work at the battlefield. It was early spring when I drove down through Alberta to the eastern corner of Montana. In a day, one can cover a lot of history. I cross the Marias River, not far from where, on his way to rendezvous with Clark, Lewis killed an Indian. Then briefly I follow the Musselshell, along the same route as Chief Joseph when he fled toward Canada with the Nez Perce. By this time, the moccasins were thin and the children cried from the cold.

A spring blizzard is bearing down when I check into the Lariat Motel at midnight. A huge Grizzly with outstretched claws stands in the lobby, and the sign above the check-in counter reads "Welcome to Custer Country." The next morning, I drive up to the battlefield. It is easy to see from the highway. Tall firs mark the National Cemetery, and to the right is a large stone house built for the first superintendent. I have been here before, many times. Once, a Crow Indian, hair to his waist, was our guide. When I asked about the placement of the "Native American" teepees, he snickered at my political correctness. "You mean *Injun*?" Well, there'd been plenty of Injuns around on that afternoon of the twenty-fifth.

A granite obelisk stands atop a mass grave where the remains of the soldiers are buried, though there are fewer bones in the ground than there were men in the battle. Early photographs show human and horse bones all jumbled together, and the remains of the officers weren't retrieved until a year after the battle. Custer was picked up, packed up, and placed in a vault in Poughkeepsie until his burial at Westpoint. Wolves and coyotes do not distinguish rank, and I'd bet a paycheck that not all of Custer lies in that revered tomb.

I walk into the visitor center and meet the other volunteer, Bill Dunn, a big Texan and Little Bighorn buff. After we are introduced, he reaches out and grabs my hand, and says in a drawl, "I say! You're purty." Bill is a charmer, and I settle in for the fun.

We stay in adjoining apartments on the battlefield. Bill has thick glasses, a bum knee and a powerful snore that I hear every night through my bedroom wall. As a boy, he read every book he could find about the Little Bighorn. "I tell you," he says, "I would stay up into the wee hours reading those books. Then one day I put away the books and started looking at girls. All of a sudden, I was an old man—Imagine, seventy two years old! And I started to read *everything* again." After many inquiries, he was invited to return to the place that captivated his youth. He drives a black Cadillac and when he arrives at my door that first night wearing a mink coat and cowboy hat, I gasp in astonishment and run in to put on a dress. From then on, we are inseparable.

Sometimes we go for dinner in nearby Hardin. On our way there, Bill always puts in a tape of *Gary Owen*, the regimental song of the Seventh Cavalry and a favorite of Custer's. The phrase "Gary Owen" is used like

a Masonic handshake among Custer enthusiasts: they say it as a greeting or a farewell. Bill drums his fingers in rhythm on the steering wheel.

We walk up to the obelisk in the cold night and toast the General, and then go further along Custer Ridge. White grave markers are clustered in Horseholder's Draw, where the men tried to keep the horses calm while the battle unfolded around them. "Damn," says Bill, "it must have been hard to keep those horses down." One evening near midnight, we drive out to the Reno Entrenchment site. Bill puts in the soundtrack from "The Magnificent Seven," and the Cadillac glides slowly over the battlefield. Bill roars with laughter, and I giggle in delicious anticipation of getting caught. Sure enough, the following day, people in the valley report the spectral lights to the superintendent. He turns to us, and Bill confesses. We promise not to do that again. Afterwards, Bill walks by my desk and winks. We talk into the night about history, politics, good food, and opera. As the weeks go by, I start each morning by tapping on the wall, and he taps back. But this isn't a holiday romance in the Caribbean—I mean, it can't be—he's old enough to be my dad.

During the day, we assist with various tasks, volunteer things. Bill loves to talk, and he handles most of the visitors. The 1950's visitor center was not built with any archeological sensitivity in mind—it was plunked down a few yards from Last Stand Hill. To the right is the National Cemetery. At the end of the Indian Wars, forts were torn down all over the west. The graves were re-interred here. On my way to work, I pass by the Indian Scouts, Curley and White Swan. In the first row lie Captains Fetterman and Brown, who led their men into an ambush a few years before the Little Bighorn. Legend has it that at the end they pointed their guns at each other and fired at the count of three—no doubt a tricky thing to do. Indian Scouts, laundresses, babies, and soldiers who died at Normandy and Korea are all commingled together. It will be an interesting resurrection day.

In the early years, visitors took any souvenirs they could find. It is even rumored that one superintendent "salted" the field with cartridges, so the curious would not leave empty handed. Bill, however, has the prize—an 1873 Springfield Carbine that was issued to the Cavalry at Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory, while Custer was there. His hands smooth the stock, and he carefully points out the cartouche on the side. With obvious pride he tells me, "Honey, this gun may have been a box away from glory." It is a Cavalry gun, lighter than a rifle and accurate at a distance. But the Indians crept up the ravines, within pistol range. And that was too close. As Bill puts it: "Six shots, shaking hands, and that was that."

On the battlefield, marble markers show where the soldiers fell. Some are far away, mysterious sentinels. The men here were either the first to die or the last to flee. Clusters of stones tell of last moments of panic. Men bunch together; then they die.

In the evening the battlefield is locked up. Security is tight enough to discourage souvenir hunters and drunken high school students. There are stories of ghosts who haunt the field at night, howling with their wounds. Who can blame them? Would you rest easily? Chief Gall's two children were killed during the first skirmish, and then, "It made my heart bad," he said. "After that I killed all my enemies with a hatchet." Thighs slit, testicles slashed, arms chopped, and faces smashed. For the initial survivors, it wasn't the time to play 'possum.

After dinner I'm usually at Bill's apartment. We watch his favorite film, *Vertigo*, for the fourth time, and I don't mind feigning interest. "You would have loved Ernie's—it was a fabulous place," he tells me as he pops olives into his mouth. And when Kim Novak sits down, he sighs, "Oh, those Hitchcock blondes."

We talk a lot about the battle and argue certain points. Despite extensive archaeology—when the battlefield was sifted like flour—there is the endless mystery of what actually happened. Our books are scattered and the maps unfurled on the tables. Along the counter are the rocks that he has picked up at various places on the battlefield. They are all carefully marked: Deep Ravine, Cedar Coulee, Medicine Tail Coulee. I warn Bill he'll be arrested for snitching them. He nods his head, "Yep, it'll happen, but not before I find a bullet. I know it's out there. The last one unturned, waiting for me."

Almost everyone has an opinion about Custer. A couple arrives from Colorado, and the husband tells Bill, "I wanna hear about the baby killer." Bill tries to be fair to both sides, but he weighs in privately, "By God, if Custer had showed up in *my* back yard, I would've shot him." The museum contains many of Custer's belongings that were donated by his widow, Elizabeth Bacon Custer. Libbie did everything she could to continue the legend of her fearless general. Few dared to say anything negative about her husband while she was still living, and Mrs. Custer lived a long time. When she died in 1933, at ninety two, she had buried most of her husband's detractors.

Here is Custer's Westpoint cadet uniform and the buckskin suit he wore on the Blackhills expedition that ultimately led to this reckoning. He wasn't a big man, and Bill says that most of the 7th Cavalry were "runty fellows, not big guys like me." They were a mixed lot, both experienced and new recruits, and many were born in Europe. Shock and terror filled their last moments, and I doubt they all cried for their mothers in English.

There are hundreds of books that debate what happened during that hot afternoon long ago. They range from *mea culpas* to radical theories about the last movements of the companies. Soon, there will be a new memorial to honor the Indians who fought to protect their families.

And though the Indian opponents were Sioux and Cheyenne, the

battlefield lies in the middle of a Crow Indian Reservation. How this came to be is a longer story, but it is apparent the white man won. Feral dogs roam the reserve, where, a few years ago, a child was attacked by a pack near Lodgegrass. Yards are littered with refuse and rusted cars. The nearest bank machine is in a casino.

There aren't a lot of visitors, but as summer approaches it becomes busier. Visitors take the road out to the Reno-Benteen entrenchment sight, and halfway there they come across a draw where a small stream winds down to the Little Bighorn. This is Medicine Tail Coulee where Custer may have first tried to cross. Off to the side of this Rubicon is a shack sitting on the section of privately owned land that intersects the battlefield. The words "Navajo Souvenirs" are painted on the side in large black letters. Not far from here, the General waved his hat and shouted, "Hurrah, boys! We've got them!"

Bill tells me that he's always wanted to walk out to Reno crossing. I didn't take my late father back to Normandy, but I will get Bill across the Little Bighorn. I make some inquiries and arrange for us to ride horseback across the river at the exact place where Reno and his men fled. On my last day, we drive down to the valley where our horses are waiting. Bill smiles when I tell him he looks quite dashing on horseback, "kinda like Gary Cooper." On our way to the river, we stop and talk to an Indian who tells us a dirty joke about Custer, something about *balls* stuffed somewhere. Bill gets upset. He sidles up to me and whispers "Bastard" under his breath. I find his anger amusing and know that for a few moments he's irrational: it's a hundred and twenty-five years on—but an Indian is not going to criticize our General.

After the first skirmish disintegrated, Reno's men tried to cross the river in a panicked stampede. Thirty-seven men were killed as they tried to gain safety. Even today, the banks are steep and our horses struggle to climb to the other side. We stop at Bennie Hodgson's marker. After he was shot, he grabbed hold of one of the men's stirrups and horse and rider drew him across the river where he died. Reno insisted on going down to check on Hodgson's body while Custer struggled for survival farther down the ridge. It wasn't exactly fiddling while Rome burned, but disaster was imminent, and Reno was flustered. Bill says that "Reno didn't know if he was comin' or goin'."

I've always had a lot of sympathy for Reno, even though he wasn't well-liked: he was arrogant and an alcoholic. It must be said that, for him, all hell broke loose after the battle. Despite a sterling Civil War career, he became a scapegoat and an embarrassment. Elizabeth Custer called him a coward and blamed him for her husband's death. He died in poverty and disgrace, "a *broken* man" one would say in a Victorian whisper.

I would like to have been a fly on the wall in his death room. I bet he cursed his luck, Custer, and the whole mess! Perhaps his spirit roams the

casinos in his namesake city. There is liquor, there are pretty girls, and there are thousands who have barely survived their own debacles. They buy their chips and slide into defeat.

After we cross the river, Bill nudges his horse to the top of the steep ridge. I stay behind on the bank, too chicken to join him. It was no easy feat racing up those bluffs, scared out of your mind with arrows and bullets flying in all directions. I turn around and look toward the top of the ridge. There's Bill waving his hat back and forth like some shoot 'em up cowboy. My eyes start to water, and I wonder if he thought he'd ever get there, to the place where the young boy and old man meet.

He comes down off the hill and gallops toward me. He pulls along side and squeezes my hand, "Well, I know now what it was like, but I'm a hell of a lot slower, and no Indians are chasing me." We dismount on the other side of the Little Bighorn, and I reach down and choose a white rock off the riverbank. I hand it to Bill, another paper weight for his desk.

The next morning, I tap on Bill's door. He hollers "Come in!" We embrace and he pushes his glasses up on the bridge of his nose. "Well, you're off." He walks me to the car. I check my map, and Bill starts waddling up the hill through the cemetery, favoring his good knee. I drive real slow to catch a last glimpse, and there he is—can you see him—resting by the flagpole. I honk the horn and drive out the gate.

The night before he leaves for Houston, Bill calls, and we make arrangements to rendezvous at the battlefield that October. But the next day, while driving through South Dakota, he pulls off to the side of the road and dies of a heart attack.

By the time I find out, it is too late to say a proper goodbye, and he's scattered somewhere over Texas. That's it for me. Bill understood about the mystery, and I won't go back. I see his ashes as they blow across the plains, over sagebrush, dry creek beds, and dusty tracks. They gather and sweep upwards along the bluffs and rest on the Little Bighorn of our memories.

Out of the Woods

Karen Rosenbaum

HERE THEY GO, Carma without her cane—she'll hang onto Dan if her legs give way—through the glass doors into the maze of parents and teenagers and little brothers and sisters, milling, waving, shrieking, whimpering.

"I can't find the camera," screeches a frantic woman up to her elbows in a canvas bag. Stepping serenely around the woman, Carma and Dan raise eyebrows at one another and attach themselves to the end of the line that snakes through the lobby to the locked high school auditorium. *Their* camera is around Dan's neck. From Carma's canvas bag erupts an enormous bouquet of yellow roses.

"Oooh, roses," a voice behind them squeals. "Who're they for?"

Carma turns and smiles. "Our daughter."

A girl in tight Levis and a sequined halter smiles back. "What's her name? What's she playing?" A rhinestone, or maybe another sequin, pierces her tongue. She is tugging on the belt loop of a torpid boy with chartreuse hair.

"Sophie Cusins," Carma says. "She plays the witch."

"Sophie!" The boy stirs and becomes alert. "Sophie's in honors English. She's way cool."

"And the witch!" the girl adds.

"She's been rehearsing for it all her life," says Dan.

"Says her father." Carma wrinkles her nose at him. The girl lets escape a thin, sequiny laugh.

The doors are pushed open—late, as always—and the throng streams in, the teenagers coalescing in bunches and yelling at each other. Carma and Dan take their usual places, on the aisle, right side, third row, where Dan's fullback frame won't block too many views. From here, he can bound to the front at the end of each act, kneel, and snap away.

Carma settles into the rickety folding seat. Even though she left work early and tried to nap this afternoon, her joints throb. She takes a breath and composes her face carefully. "Look at the bright side," those insipid self-help manuals say. The bright side of rheumatoid arthritis is that Sophie has never had to deal with a zealous stage mother like Alicia

Sanchez, standing over there in the middle section, flailing her lumpy arms around. Her daughter Maddy looks a lot like her—meaty, freckled. Maddy usually gets those character parts. She's Jack's mother in this production. She wanted to be the witch. But in *this* version of the fairy tales, Stephen Sondheim's version, the witch turns into a gorgeous vamp, and Sophie has all the equipment to be a gorgeous vamp. She sings better than Maddy, too. Carma doesn't understand why that is. Sophie doesn't seem to work very hard at it. When Grace was in these musicals, she was always crouched over the piano, practicing her part, and her part was never a big part. But Sophie—every evening she sits at that same piano bench, sings her songs through once, then curls up on her bed with her telephone.

"Hello Dan, Carma." It's Natalie Green, motioning towards the seats to her right. "Those taken? May we sit there?"

Dan stands and Carma swivels her legs to the side, wincing at the pain in her hip. Natalie and her husband—Ted? Tom?—shake Dan's hand, try to suck in their bodies, and squeeze by. Natalie plops down next to Carma so the husband has to press past everyone to get to the seat next to the wall.

"We almost didn't make it." Natalie fans herself with her program. "We had to arrange for the Sorensons to pick Billy up from soccer, and the babysitter wasn't ready when Tim went to get her, and then Peggy had a tantrum. Oh, you brought Sophie flowers!" Carma's bag is wedged under the seat in front, the flowers spilling out, one crushed by Natalie and Tim-Tom-Ted. "We should have brought Craig something. What do you bring boys?"

Carma tries to remember what part Craig plays. One of the princes certainly; he's such a pretty boy, Sophie has told them with a dismissive lilt in her voice. "Balloons maybe," Carma says, "but I don't know where you'd keep them during the show."

"Oh, balloons." Natalie makes a face. "I didn't think of balloons. Craig says Sophie is just marvelous. She's so talented. You know there's a great group of kids at church now, just like when Grace was in high school. Sophie would really fit in."

Sophie would not fit in, Carma thinks, but she says mildly, "Sophie's free to go to church if she wants to. Any church."

Natalie pretends not to hear the addition. "Craig could give her a ride. We let him take a car. He's so responsible."

"She can always get a ride with Dan." Carma peers through her glasses at her program and checks Sophie's name. For a change, it's spelled correctly.

"We'd love it if you came too," Natalie says hopefully. "If you feel well enough. And you know we make tapes for people who can't come to meetings."

Carma forces a smile. "Dan relays the most interesting bits." She feels Dan's light touch on her shoulder. Knowing how heavy his arm can be, he rests it mostly on the back of her chair. She turns away from Natalie, and the auditorium is suddenly black except for the music light on the piano.

The music teacher drops her hands onto the keyboard and starts to play. When the curtains are drawn, Cinderella and Jack and the Baker are all lamenting their losses. The music is shrill yet sweet, thinks Carma, like sweet and sour. She's been listening to Sophie's songs for weeks. They all sound alike.

The preliminaries over, Red Riding Hood has skipped off into the woods, and Sophie steps forward to witchily harass the Baker with the salient points of his family history and the reason it is to end with him: She caught his father "rooting through my rutabagas."

"Don't ever never ever mess around with my greens," Sophie spits out, and the audience snickers and guffaws.

She's always been good at working the audience. Now she is offering to reverse the curse—for a price. She controls this scene, Sophie does. Ah, but Carma knows that before the act is over, the witch will be only a beautiful woman stripped of her magical powers, at which point she'll turn her full attention to the creaky seats and work her theatrical sorcery on those in them.

Carma never worries about Sophie forgetting her lines or even losing her composure if she misses a note. When you belt them out, what's a wrong note here and there? This isn't opera. She and Dan just lean back and enjoy the show, wincing only at the other kids' performances. When Natalie's son squeaks out his adoration of Rapunzel, Natalie and Tim exchange little moans and shuffle their feet.

That's how it was with Grace. "You know," Dan said once, "it was more of an achievement for Grace to sing in an octet than for Sophie to be the star."

Carma understands Grace's inclination to gravitate to the back of the stage; she understands Grace's penchant to please. But she can't understand how Grace could put college on hold to marry someone as sweetly bland as Ryan. And a baby now before she is 21. The baby, though—Carma smiles to think about Bradley, fat-cheeked and sunny, she calls him Buddha-ley. The baby is spectacular.

"How is Grace?" Natalie asks after the Act I curtain drops and the whistles and foot stomping die down. Carma does happen to have two shiny snapshots of Grace and the baby lying on the red and blue sailboat quilt that Carma and Sophie, mostly Sophie, had put together and tied.

"He's gorgeous." Natalie stands and shows the pictures to Tim.

"He is, isn't he?" Carma pushes herself to her feet.

"They're still in Utah?"

Carma nods.

"When does her husband graduate?"

"He's got two more years." Alicia Sanchez is pushing her way towards them. Dan has stepped across the aisle and is shaking someone's hand.

"Sophie's great," Alicia gushes. "She's got the part down pat. Bernadette Peters couldn't do it better."

"Maddy's doing well, too," Carma says. "They're all doing well." She stands back so Natalie isn't excluded.

"And Craig. Craig's doing just fine," Alicia says, without conviction. "Oh, there!" She points at someone and swooshes up the aisle.

Natalie hands the photos back to Carma. "They're very different, your daughters."

"Yes."

"Is Sophie," she hesitates, "more like you?"

Carma laughs. "I don't think either one is very much like me."

"Sophie has your lovely thick hair."

"With pink streaks instead of gray."

"Kids shout with their hair now, neon colors, everything." Natalie sighs. "I don't know how I'd raise mine without the church." For a minute, Carma realizes, Natalie has forgotten her. Then she remembers and laughs nervously. "Their world is so different from the world I grew up in."

Carma lowers herself into her seat. "Where did you grow up?"

"Idaho. Rexburg." Glancing at the children rushing back to front-row center, Natalie sits down. "You know, my kids aren't like me either. To get up on a stage in front of the whole school and sing with nothing but a piano behind you—I would have died first. I was never any good at anything that people might watch. Sports. One summer I played tennis every morning and by the end of August I was still missing half the balls and hitting the other half past the base line."

Carma has to nod. "Sounds like me. I tried volleyball once. And badminton." She laughs. "I was always a klutz. And that was even before the arthritis."

Natalie lowers her voice. "How long have you have had it?"

"Twenty years." Carma looks at her hands, covers one with the other. "I was diagnosed right after I had Grace. I couldn't get out of bed."

"Is it—inherited?"

Carma shrugs. "It seems to run in families. The girls *probably* won't get it, but you never know." She pauses. "I'll never forgive myself if they get it."

Natalie looks alarmed. "There's nothing you could do."

"I could have *not* had them."

"No," Natalie says. "You had to have them. We can't any of us know

what will happen to our kids. We just pray for the best." Her voice goes up as if this is a question.

Carma answers it with a sigh.

"Is it—do you hurt all the time?"

"No." Carma stops herself from making an accordion fan out of her program. She wants to make copies for the grandparents. "Sometimes it's in remission. I felt great when I was pregnant with Sophie. But afterwards it was a lot worse."

Natalie touches her very lightly on the arm. "I didn't know it was so bad. Do you hurt right now?"

Carma doesn't want to itemize, quantify her pain. Suddenly she doesn't want to talk at all. "You get used to it."

Dan creaks in the seat beside her. The theater darkens. Behind them, she can hear two boys talking. "I know Sophie," one says. "Oh yeah? What do you know?" asks the other. Carma holds her breath. "She's all right." Carma lets her breath out as the piano starts the monotonous jingle that begins Act II.

Sophie as Witch is mother-by-bribery, and she is quite a convincing mother, especially after the Giantess squashes her Rapunzel. Carma's glasses steam up as Sophie sings out, "Children don't listen." She is surprised at her tears and can see that Dan's cheeks are wet too.

Their daughters have listened, but it was hard to know what they heard. She and Dan didn't shout. Dan, in fact, always sounded calm, whereas she always sounded—at least to her own ears—whiny. Dan didn't pretend to have answers for all her questions. He honestly didn't have questions himself. "I don't know about religion, organized or disorganized," she wept after he baptized Sophie. "I just don't believe it anymore. I've tried to believe it. I'm not saying it's not true. It's true for you. I even want it to be true for you. You should do what you have to do. And I should do what I have to do. I have to stop pretending it works for me."

Eight years ago now. That whole year the arthritis flared and nothing helped and nobody slept well. Grace was sad. Carma's mother was sad. Dan's parents, visiting from Seattle, were sad. But Dan was shocked when Carma asked if he wanted to divorce her and find someone who could believe as he believed, who could join him in that hierarchical hereafter. And she was grateful that he protected her, as he must have done, from visits by those who wanted to persuade her that she was ruining her family's chances for salvation. "Take the girls to church," she had said. But given the choice, Sophie usually opted to "stay home with Mom."

In Carma's childhood home, it was her father who didn't go to church. The common pattern—believing, determined women; rebellious, indifferent men. But at least she had some kind of precedent. Carma did

what her father had done—if Grace were giving a talk or getting an award or singing in a group, Carma would go.

But she couldn't go everywhere Grace went. When Grace got that scholarship—the one she gave up after a single year—and set off for Provo, Carma surmised, correctly, that her daughter would eventually be married in a ceremony she could not witness. Twenty-three years after she and Dan had driven quietly to Arizona to get married so that no one would feel left out, Grace and Ryan had driven quietly to Utah to marry so that Carma wouldn't feel left out. "You go," she had insisted to Dan, and he went. A week later at the reception in Carma and Dan's garden, Grace, in the simple white dress she and Sophie had sewn together, greeted guests with a tranquility that astonished her mother, that separated them in a way the sadness couldn't. Ryan's true-believing family treated—still treat—Carma with profuse, bewildering courtesy.

The light is focused on Sophie, singing, "It doesn't matter now, it's the last midnight." She is singing as if it matters very much. "I'm not good, I'm not nice, I'm just right, I'm the witch," she croons. "I'm what no one believes."

Sophie is not sexually active, Carma is almost sure, not yet. She hasn't had Grace's reasons for chastity, but she has held onto it, up to now. How will she feel when Sophie lets it go? Dan will be devastated. Dan is good. Grace is good. Sophie is good. And she, even *she* is good. Probably. Where do our ideas of goodness come from, Carma wonders. Can anyone get there all on her own, no current church or past church, no great mentors or influential parents, no Dostoevskys or Kierkegaards? Can she get there? And where oh where is there?

Dan takes her hand and holds it, touches lightly the fused joint in her ring finger. The finger is swollen so that if she did want to take off her wedding band, someone would have to cut the gold.

"Careful the things you say," Sophie is singing with the Baker. "Children will listen." The rest of the cast is singing now, children themselves, children playing children and children playing adults. Natalie and Tim's prince son Craig swells up his chest and looks, indeed, very handsome. Sophie and Cinderella and the Baker are in the center, and their eyes are shiny and their voices sweet and strong. The piano is barely audible as they all sing, then shout, "Happily ever after!"

No one believes it of course, the happily-ever-after, but the audience has been transported out of the woods. They stand and shriek and clap and stomp and whistle. Dan is on his knees at the front of the aisle, with four or five other parents, snapping pictures, offering homage. The curtain closes, opens again, and the whistles and applause resume.

Natalie sits back down beside Carma. "You must be proud."

Carma nods and smiles. "You too."

"Yes."

"Go on ahead. We'll wait till the aisles are clear." The cast will be in the lobby, surrounded by ecstatic friends. Natalie and Tim edge by her. Up front, Dan is staggering under a bear hug from the Baker's mother, a willowy woman, pretty, young enough to have given birth to the Baker when she was 14. A hug like that would break Carma in two. I don't have to worry about Dan, Carma thinks. Why is it she doesn't worry? Is it because of the church that separates them? Is it the code that one is responsible for a partner, no matter how she changes? Neither of them had envisioned that she would be unable to pick up either baby, that at times she would be fat-faced and dopey from the drugs, that she would be taken apart by surgeons, that some days she would stare out the window at the laurel hedge and disappear into it for hours. And neither of them had envisioned her arthritic soul.

Natalie returns and crouches beside Carma's seat. "I was just thinking—I guess you've had blessings," she hesitates, "to ease the pain?"

"A lot of blessings," says Carma. She pats Natalie's hand. "And maybe they helped."

As Natalie stands, she brushes Carma's cheek with her lips. "I'll be praying for you," she says and, eyes lowered, runs back to the lobby.

Carma says suddenly, silently, to Natalie, to Dan, to God, if there is a God, even to herself, "Yes. Pray for me." Then she smiles at Dan, now disentangled from the Baker's mother. She hands him the bag of yellow roses and pushes up out of her chair. "Shall we make merry?"

"Let's," he says and offers her his arm, and they set out, stumbling just a little, up the empty aisle.

Plenty

A Morning Poem at 75

Emma Lou Thayne

You do not have to do it again
any of it. Only if you care to.

You do not have to hold onto being anyone, anywhere.
Enough is more than plenty.

Soft winds and harsh
have ripened you, sent your breath echoing

ecstasy and despair. You have only
to let your fingers

tell you what you love;

Tracing an idea across a page,
putting a ball in flight.

spanning the back of a new born,
touching a beloved cheek,

finding a fit,
eschewing an alarm,

knowing when to let go
as the pages tear away.

Ireland, young mothering, a first of much
will not come again.

Sun of morning visible or not,

your intimate acquaintance with the Night
says only this, this private arrival

bears forever repeating
until there is no repeating at all.

Speaking for Edgar Mint

The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint, by Brady Udall (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 384 pp.

Reviewed by P. Jane Hafen, associate professor of English, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

IN AN EPISODE in *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint*, the main character chastises his friends who have masqueraded as Mormon missionaries to rescue him from placement with a Mormon family. The friends have studied the culture and are dressed for the part with white shirts and ties, they know they can't smoke and must "stick together at all times" (295), and they carry scriptures and wear name tags. Though a young convert, Edgar knows the language is not quite right: "Mormons don't say 'Praise the Lord.' . . . And they don't say 'Praise Jesus' either" (295). Likewise, in this well-received novel, much of the outer appearance seems right, but some of the details reveal an author speaking in a voice outside his own culture.

The fictional Edgar Mint is a mixed-blood San Carlos Apache boy whose life is shaped by a singular event revealed in the novel's first line: "If I could tell you only one thing about my life it would be this: when I was seven years old the mailman ran over my head" (13). Edgar then narrates his tale of hospital recovery, boarding school horrors, Mormon conversion, placement with the Mormon

family in fictional Richland, Utah, and quest to let the mailman know he survived the accident. Flashbacks reveal that his Indian mother was alcoholic, his white father absent, and his maternal grandmother harsh and condemning. Indeed, Edgar may suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome in addition to brain injury.

Among the strengths of the book are the layers of complexity in depicting small-town Mormonism, a culture Brady Udall knows well from his upbringing in Arizona. The Madsens, Edgar's host family, are working out their own difficulties in coping with tragedy, a hormone-driven teenage daughter, and a nerdy younger son. Their family, the neighbors, and the ward are rendered in such precise and rounded details that they will seem quite familiar to Mormon readers. Udall's care with detail, including Edgar's talismans that accompany his journeys—a urinal tablet and an old typewriter to compensate for the brain damage that leaves him unable to write by hand—creates a compelling and seemingly realistic tale.

The novel has been widely praised, even listed as one of the "Best Books of 2001" in the *Los Angeles Times* where Jonathan Levi observes, "Brady Udall's prose strikes a perfect balance, sometimes minimalist, sometimes lush." Several reviewers call Udall's realistic descriptions of the "orphaned" boy and particularly the boarding school as Dickensian. Sanford Pinsker ad-

mires "the sheer pleasure that the shape and ring of its sentences bring," and Jennifer Reese acclaims Edgar's character as "lovely and complex. . . an innocent whose struggle to survive is at odds with his fundamentally gentle nature." The Association for Mormon Letters list has featured three very positive reviews emphasizing Udall's craft and his frank depiction of Mormonism. After brief mention, though, none of these critics discuss the complicated nature of Edgar's ethnicity.¹

Edgar's Indian identity influences every major plot development: his treatment at Indian Health Services, where he encounters an idealistic doctor who saves his life and will follow him throughout the book; the boarding school on the White River Apache reservation; the Indian Placement program with the Mormon family; and the final revelation that a white couple had intended to adopt him. These events would not be plausible if Edgar were not Indian. Yet the Indian issues do not figure in these plot events. At the boarding school, the students are fundamentally tribally indistinct. Once Edgar is placed with the Madsens, there is no commentary or seeming awareness about the complications he faces as an Indian child immersed in an all-white social environment. Edgar's Indianness virtually disappears.

Udall has spoken of his own experience at a high school football game on the White River reservation at

Teddy Roosevelt boarding school (Willie Sherman in the novel). He remembers the hateful stare of one of the students and describes that event as the root of this story: "I knew one day when I wrote a novel it would be the first thing I'd write about. I'll never know anything about that boy, but as the god of my own little universe, I decided to give him a story and a name."² That character becomes Edgar Mint.

Vincent DeLaine, a minor character, is a thinly veiled representation of Sherman Alexie (Spokane/Coeur d'Alene): "a Native American poet of great stature, author of five books at only thirty three years of age, a voice of his generation" (203). Alexie has been particularly critical of writers who appropriate Indian voices. In his review of Ian Frazier's *On the Rez*, which was generally favorably reviewed for its representation of Oglala Sioux life, Alexie observes: "[Frazier] admires the Oglalas because of who he believes them to be, not because of who the Oglalas believe themselves to be." Alexie also questions: "Does [Frazier] ever admit that somebody from 'the rez' has a different life experience than somebody who is just writing about the rez?"³

By assuming the first-person voice of Apache boy Edgar Mint, Udall, however sympathetic he may be, is writing from a world view he can only imagine. And he imagines this world without distinctive San Carlos Apache cul-

1. Jonathan Levi, "Best Books of 2001," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 December 2001; Sanford Pinsker, "He Lived to Tell His Ferociously Funny Tale," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 June 2001; and Jennifer Reese, "Edgar's Ordeals," *New York Times Book Review*, 1 July 2001. AML-List reviews by Andrew R. Hall, David Hanson, and Terry L. Jeffress available at www.xmission.com/~aml/reviews/index.html.

2. Quoted in Brandon Griggs, "Udall Mints a Dickens of a Tale in 'Miracle Life,'" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 17 June 2001.

3. Sherman Alexie, "Some of My Best Friends: Review of *On the Rez* by Ian Frazier," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 January 2000.

tural markers other than skin tone and locale. The fiction of any contemporary American Indian writer is embedded with subtle allusions to complex tribal histories and practices. Udall's only nod to such history is a one paragraph summary about the U.S. Army's pursuit of Geronimo and establishment of Ft. Apache (later the boarding school) to deal with "unpredictable savages" (106). This characterization is made in Edgar's voice, apparently without irony. Later Udall again has Edgar resort to stereotype as the students set a fire: "we kept it up, circling the blaze, bare-chested and heedless, our eyes full of fire, stomping and howling like the savages we were" (182).

Granted, Udall is writing fiction and his invented character has the convenience of being separated from his Apache mother and grandmother, from his tribal roots. Yet his Apache uncle assists in caretaking at Willie Sherman, so Edgar would not be totally detribalized. The potential adoption by a white couple and later by the Madsens completely ignores the kinds of problems that led to the Indian Child Welfare Act (1978), designed to protect Native children from being assimilated by non-Indian families. As with the fake missionaries, the details do not ring true.

Udall justifies his position by saying, "I grew up around Native Americans; they were my friends. . . . What I saw were people who were living their lives just like we were. They weren't talking about being Indians all day long. They were just regular people."⁴ Simply to dismiss criticisms as "political correctness," however, is to fail to see the complexities of history and the

moral implications of appropriation and resistance. When an author presumes to speak in behalf of another, he or she has a tremendous burden to speak truthfully. Consider how defensively Mormons react when they are misrepresented in history, the media, or literature. Udall does catch Edgar's sense of humor, a survival humor, but the Indians in the novel are consistently portrayed as violent, drunk, hateful, as victims and "savages." Much of American Indian survival humor works by providing an avenue for people to endure with their indigenous identities intact. Edgar survives the external challenges, but at the novel's resolution he is assimilated without regard to his origin. His redemption comes at the price of his tribal affiliation.

Udall may see American Indians (tribally undefined) as "regular people," but he gives no indication of how they might tell their own stories from their own perspectives. Unfortunately, this novel falls into a five-hundred-year pattern of literary colonization, from Cabeza de Vaca's encounter narratives to the enormously popular Tony Hillerman detective series. Such writers appeal to—and reaffirm—the mainstream imagination. One has only to read the works of Alexie, Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), or Laura Tohe (Navaho) to recognize the differences in voice and detail when American Indian writers tell their own stories. Perhaps the most revealing example is the way in which Udall's great-grandmother, Louise Udall, let Helen Sekaquaptewa speak for herself as a Hopi and a Mormon in *Me and Mine*.⁵

4. Brady Udall, "Interview," KUER, 21 June 2001; available at www.kuer.org.

5. *Me and Mine; the Life Story of Helen Sekaquaptewa*, as told to Louise Udall (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969).

New York Believers

New York Glory: Religions in the City, edited by Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis (New York City: New York University Press, 2001), 440 pp.

Reviewed by Tania Rands Lyon, Ph.D. candidate in sociology, Princeton University.

CHURCH GOING IS NOT USUALLY one of the primary images associated with New York City, but it seems that “the-city-that-never-sleeps” may not be such a godless metropolis after all. *New York Glory* is an anthology of twenty-five articles that challenges the assumption that New York City is an exception to America’s high levels of religiosity. Most of the contributors are sociologists, anthropologists, or historians; some, like Manhattan lawyer James W. Lucas, who wrote the chapter on Mormons, are religious insiders.

The book’s territory covers all of New York City’s five sprawling boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx. As it turns out, there are more Roman Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, Rastafarians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and religious Jews in New York City than in any other U.S. city. Church is the fastest growing institution in Hispanic neighborhoods and about 20% of all New York school-children are in religious schools. In 1991, 90% of New Yorkers identified with a religious group and believed in God, 82% said that religion was important to their lives, and 46% attended religious services at least once a month.

New York Glory is not a comprehensive survey of religions as they

have evolved in New York. It is more a random sampler of some religious cultures in the city and the unique issues they face in its hyper-urban, transient, diverse environment. Rather than being organized along denominational lines, some chapters focus more on ethnic groups (i.e., assimilation in Italian parishes, religious diversity among Latinos, or African-American church leaders) or on religious sub-groups within denominations (i.e., Orthodox Jewish women studying the Torah, religion class at Sing-Sing prison, or therapeutic counseling in “neo-puritan” evangelical churches). Although the writing is somewhat uneven in quality across chapters and could have benefited from more careful editing, the book is a fascinating romp through this dense religious landscape.

The chapter on Mormons, titled “Mormons in New York City,” is located in the “ethnic diversification” section of the book (along with Islam, which now sports a Spanish-speaking mosque in East Harlem, and Seventh-Day Adventism, which claims the highest percentage of immigrants of any denomination). Although hampered in his research by the lack of ethnic data in church records and by the fact that most church statistics are not made public at the stake level, Lucas (co-author of *Working Toward Zion*) has lived as a Mormon in New York for nearly thirty years. He served on the high council when all five boroughs of the city constituted a single stake (three stakes and two districts now cover the same territory). For his chapter Lucas attended multiple wards and branches in every borough and interviewed stake, district, and unit lead-

ers, as well as a small cross-section of members.¹

Written for a non-LDS audience, the chapter contains background on how the church is organized, describes the demographics of Mormons in each borough, and details several salient issues, including economic disparity, gender and leadership, and the high levels of transience among church members in New York City. Perhaps the most interesting contributions Lucas makes for LDS readers concern the issues of retention and ethnic integration. Thus, his chapter is a helpful addition to the literature on Mormonism's struggles with rapid growth and increasing diversity.

Of the 46 units in New York City in 1998, 21 were Spanish-speaking, two used American Sign Language, and one unit each spoke Chinese and Korean, thus, putting English-speaking units into the minority. Lucas (like many sociologists of religion) argues that social networks are critical to retention and that the large Spanish-speaking wards, with their commonality in culture and language, are doing the best job of holding on to their members and keeping them active. The second most successful units in terms of retention are the more diverse English-speaking wards: "when no one ethnic group is dominant, the congregation can develop a culture-neutral ethos that facilitates the adoption of an LDS religious identity and lifestyle" (206). This may be an important lesson to learn for a rapidly expanding multi-cultural church.

Lucas also makes an important

point about the long-term retention of ethnic Mormons. He finds that many second-generation Mormon Hispanics prefer to stay in their Spanish-speaking wards due to family ties or a desire to maintain their heritage, culture, and language. This trend, however, would mean that the church would gradually become more split by ethnic than by linguistic lines—something antithetical to the emphasis church leaders place on unity over diversity (208). Given that abolishing language wards would be seen as insensitive coming from a predominantly white Anglo leadership, Lucas suggests that the best course may be simply to encourage the slow integration into English-speaking wards that takes place now, facilitated by the fact that every Spanish-speaking unit shares a building with an English-speaking unit. Although it is a constant balancing act, Lucas argues that by emphasizing language rather than ethnicity as the line of separation, the LDS church is in a good position to retain second-generation ethnic members, whom other, ethnic-based churches are prone to lose as they assimilate to American society.

New York Glory is a wonderfully eclectic read for anyone fascinated with the many faces of religion in America. The example of Mormonism in New York, which enjoys the same kind of ethnic diversity that Mormonism is projected to have worldwide in five to ten years, may well be a microcosmic proving ground for the church as it learns how to integrate multiple cultures and grow worldwide.

1. Telephone interview with James W. Lucas, October 13, 2001.

Remembering the 1849-50 Pratt Expedition

Over the Rim: The Parley P. Pratt Exploring Expedition to Southern Utah, 1849-50, edited by William B. Smart and Donna T. Smart (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1999), 270 pp.

Reviewed by Janet Burton Seegmiller, Special Collections Librarian, Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah.

IT IS FITTING THAT THE 1850 EXPLORATION of the Mormon corridor through the Great Basin area of Brigham Young's State of Deseret and the settlement that followed a year later received attention from Utah historians during their sesquicentennial years. It is also interesting that books which detail Parley P. Pratt's 1849-50 exploration and the 1850-51 settlement of Iron County are so similar in nature. Published first, in 1999, was *Over the Rim: The Parley P. Pratt Exploring Expedition to Southern Utah, 1849-50*, edited by William B. Smart and Donna T. Smart. It was followed in 2001 by *Trial Furnace: The Story of Southern Utah's Iron Mission*, by Morris Shirts and Kathryn Shirts (Brigham Young University Press). Both books represent the culmination of years of research to supplement the original diaries kept during the journeys and included in the text. Each offers a day by day—sometimes mile by mile—narrative, helping to establish exact routes, camp sites, and events. For many who long to know more about their ancestors' participation, these books fill in details, telling stories that have not been easily available regarding these key events in the colonization of the Great Basin and the southwestern frontier.

Over the Rim is the work of a husband and wife editorial team, William

B. and Donna T. Smart. Their research began with an interest in Donna's great-great-grandfather, William Henrie, one of fifty men in Pratt's party. Unfortunately, they found only a few references to him. However, they were so moved by the four diaries kept by members of the party and their courageous and little-known story that they decided to continue their research and document the whole expedition. Now they have published those diaries with textual commentary and biographical information on the men who made up the expedition.

The four diarists were Robert Campbell, clerk of the expedition, John C. Armstrong, John Brown, and Isaac C. Haight. The diary entries range from Campbell's lengthy official record with a detailed account of mileage, obstacles, feed, and other matters to the stirring thoughts and briefer commentary of the others, who were often moved by the scenery and adventure of a mid-winter trek into the unknown wilderness. What keeps the reader involved in the narrative of the trek is the differences in what these four diarists have to offer and the contextual commentary that the editors have added.

The Smarts trace the most probable route of the exploration, including the extremely difficult mountain crossing from Sanpete to the Little Salt Lake. They write:

To appreciate the incredible labor of that crossing, the country must be seen close up. An extremely rough jeep road contours south from the Birch Creek campground at about the eight-thousand-foot level, close to the ex-

plorers' route. Six times the road plunges in and out of ravines and deeper canyons, often at grades only manageable in the lowest gear of four-wheel drive. Wagons don't do well on sidehills, so Pratt's wagons had to be hauled up the ascents and lowered down the descents, not at an angle as the road goes but directly up and down, on much steeper grades. (61)

After following the road through this rugged area, albeit during better weather, the authors could more authoritatively state that the journals of December 18 "reflect the expedition's hardest day" (63) and conclude:

No wonder stalwart John Brown wrote of discouragement and Parley felt the need to beseech the Lord not to hedge up their way out of these mountains. And no wonder that Schuyler Jennings,

probably exhausted and with nerves frayed by incessant labor, would curse and threaten with a club over what would seem a minor annoyance. (p. 63)

Over the Rim is divided into four sections: Journals, Official Report, Epilogue, and Appendices (including related papers and biographies of expedition members). It also includes a lengthy bibliography, which will be useful to others researching life histories of the participants. While it is evident that the editors have made a thorough contribution to the history of western exploration as well as Utah and Mormon history, this work is more readable and more enjoyable history because of their exceptional skills as writers and editors. Long after the sesquicentennial, interested readers will be discovering the contribution of this expedition through their fine volume.

Remembering the Chevrolet

Clifton H. Jolley

1. The Miracle

"The tumor...apparently responsible for his recent emotional decline."

Gene's criticism is a stone upon my mouth. He accused:
"You resurrect words I like, like bodies brought too often
from the tomb to be surprising, interesting, new." Like Clint, who
loved saying "portico," and Gene himself: speaking all that religion

as though he knew. My words are adjectivals: qualifying
what someone else more cleverly construed. Which may be
right, since I really, really never had a clue. Gene would nod
and tell me how little harm there is not having read much,

not speaking Latin or French, having cheated
my way through graduate Greek, and other things
I do. I believed him. Not because of anyone's pretension:
if what one intends is not interesting, why trouble its being true?

Which is why when I learned about the operation,
I intended to telephone Gene, and tell him how
my touch typing has suffered from the palsy in my hands,
and wonder with him whether not spelling well precedes

the objective correlative in one's fingers, and is,
after all, not a lack of skill at all, but all the same
and well? Which was about the time I learned of his collapse,
and of the tumor removed with the right frontal orb of his brain,

and of the explanation emailed me that perhaps the tumor could explain
"his recent emotional decline." As though anything can explain.
As though disappointment were a disease to be excised, a kind of
redundancy of flesh, the resolution of which is surgery.

As though everyone knew: "We'll find and remove his sadness.
And when we're through: A new heaven and a new earth.
The New Jerusalem he thought he knew; but *we* have better known the truth."
No more words. No more disappointment or decline. No more wounds.

Except, of course, this necessary removal of his brain.
Which I would have liked discussing with him, to be sure
the thoughts discarded with that repetition of tissue did not remove
his forgiveness of my sins; that in the morning when he wakes in his tomb,

Gene England does not expect me to retake the French
I pretended learning, does not think I'm a fool
for disbelieving and for not reading all the books I should.
I would not want Eugene's cure to be: stop loving me.

Others will, of course, want Eugene alive.
Others will, of course, know precisely why
he was sad, and the reason for his declining health,
and all the wonderful religion he had in that amputated brain.

All I really, really know is this: fly fishing for native trout
on the upper Weber River. Gene taught me
to dry the feather in the air and told me: "That's all
you really, really need to know." Which I remember. So,

if he remembers (with such a loss of flesh),
perhaps he still will know to love me
and to forgive what I less know than when he first forgave
my ignorance and suffered me his love.

2. Muerte.
"...He is Dead."

On the evening Gene England died I was thinking something.
I was sitting somewhere eating carrots and thinking something
I can't remember. I can't remember what I was imagining on the evening
Eugene England died. Which is what I had to say when Rudy Silva told me:

Nothing. I said: "Thanks for calling," and something about
would he call to tell me when the funeral was to be.
I admit: Gene's dying took me by surprise, because I believed him
when he told me he had the miracle, and I assumed he meant:

"To save my life." When I saw him in the hospital
we kissed (the ancient, peculiar Mormon ritual)
and he said: "I've had a miracle," and I thought he meant
to stay alive. His eyebrows were the size of burning bushes

against the desert of his shaved head,
the distance of his anxious eyes.
I said, "You look just fine." But the comedy
had gone from him. He was serious in the way

I now suspect the least of us become
when the miracle is not to be alive.
I had not anticipated he would die. Which is why
I was eating somewhere, something when he died.

Eugene: Tonight I'm watching through the house
for draperies. I'm covering the mirrors. I'm
tearing clothing. I'm putting ash upon my face.
I'm remembering each less deserving living thing

that is still alive. I'm thinking of myself
and wondering: did you ever really, really
know what you have done? Did you ever feel so guilty
as you have become for so inconveniently having died?

I'm putting towels on the long mirror in the hall.
I'm draping each bathroom with newspaper, taped.
I'm thinking nothing anymore. I'm remembering nothing.
I'm only feeling this wound in me, this ulcer I've discovered

in the belly I've become. And I know what you are saying:
that there still are huge omissions in my reading, that I am
irreverent of the miracles you have seen. I always knew I was,
as I know you have forgiven me. Forgive me still, Eugene,

that I did not anticipate your dying, that I did not believe
this ultimate miracle of your life. That I still am blind
to what you now can see. I think Karl Keller may have been in
love with you, which was a blessing I can now believe. I love you

for the inevitability of your larger life in this smaller life in me.
And I imagine death as changed because you have gone
to where I cannot yet proceed to go, but now believe, now feel
in the wound that has so deeply and so permanently wounded me.

I will never again eat meat. I will never again believe
it possible to apprehend the distance from this retreat
to Kolob, except as calculated by the twine required to bail
a bail of hay, the distance from the hand of a boy to pitch it

on the truck. And if I remember anything again
it will be the trick to dry a fly in the air before
allowing it—at the end of a filament stretched straight
against the ether of the Utah sky—to touch the water

and float upon the surface of the stream. I
do not forgive you having died. I do not forgive
not having understood nor understanding nor believing
I will remember what I was thinking when you died.

This is what I've learned about fly fishing:
Since Eugene gave me the nine-foot graphite rod
(for having helped him build his home), I've stopped
catching fish, or caring for the catching or the catch.

Instead, I'm learning this higher education:
the naming of the fly, the silicon wash
to help it float, the arc of line, the brilliant water,
the clear and empty sky, the hook that is to die.

And finding holes, the "Glory Holes"
where Gene and Doug Thayer caught fish,
and I watched the fly tempt the rise of imaginary trout
I hoped to catch the fly and be caught. You may

say I am no longer a fisherman, since fish
are no longer the resolution of my fishing.
And you might be right. Eugene resolved
in me what otherwise was inevitability:

anyone would agree to not catch fish
is like not doing anything, except to die.
Which is why I asked Mary Bradford: "Will you
cover my face with kisses the way you did Eugene

when it was inevitable he would not survive?"
And she replied: "Will you cover mine?"
When I close my eyes, I can see Mary's kisses
On Eugene's face, taste Gene's kiss on mine.

I can see the arc of line, the trust of fly.
I've not caught fish since bait. No longer try,
nor more than learn this trick that turns graphite into
a tool. I have never turned a hole to glory,

nor shall since Gene has gone down to death.
When I close my eyes, I see him saying:
"You have not read enough. There is an emptiness
in your education as still as water, as deep as sky."

My mourning is complete, Eugene.
I despair in rod and line and fly.
I catch nothing anymore, but watch death catch you
as it would a lesser academic who has not studied

what it is to die. Rainbow. Brown. Golden.
The albino trout the Fish & Game bred to be seen
against the green water, the green rocks, the green stream.
You caught every one, the magic in you like a dream

of water, of sky, of stream. And the Green Man
marching in you as though decapitation were
no more than inconvenience, which inconvenience
we now perceive as death: your final trick, Eugene.

What I hope to dream is God catching us,
not as in a snare, but on a fly. What I hope to see
is you, Eugene, caught up to glory, whole, as every Mormon
believes he'll be: a fish caught by God and carried to the sky.

3. Sitting Shiva *"I've had a miracle!"*

On the morning of his funeral, I was more
than a little drunk. I'm sorry, Charlotte. I began
drinking on the plane from Disneyland to Salt Lake City,
thinking of the Pope shot and Eugene alarmed as though

ordained to be alarmed. Which, of course, he was.
And I was thinking: "Disneyland to Salt Lake City,
then south to Provo and the Tabernacle. The trip I once
described" when teaching technical writing for Shipley

Associates, having flown from Bountiful, Utah,
to Pleasanton, California, and the inquisitor said,
"Little bit of the Yellow Brick Road there, isn't there?"
And at the time I was amused, but on the plane that morning

I was not. I was remembering the photo
on the cover of a German magazine: the Pope
recoiling (shot) and Gene recoiling (as though he were shot)
and somewhere in the crowd: the less evident assassin.

And I was pretty certain that is what had happened:
somewhere in the crowd: a villain. And I was
pretty sure I knew who it was. And I was about to say his name,
when between the dwarfs and Zion, I lost the action and the name.

Because what, after all, does any of it matter now.
Clint dead (whose poetry excused his living),
and Arthur King, and Aunt Delilah, and now Eugene.
And I was wondering: "What is it worth, to be alive?"

So, I was drinking Bloody Mary's and happy.
No, I was sad, and getting sadder when I came
into the tabernacle to cry. That's it. Bert's eulogy,
the singing and the prayers. This is what it is to die.

No more fishing now, Eugene. No more flies.
No more Bert Wilson's beautiful, loving lie:
"I shot the Commissioner's Goose, but Gene broke my truck"
before he died. And I remember how Bert told me he threw up

and told Eugene, "I shot his goose, and here he comes!"
Is that how it is to die, Eugene? To be discovered, to be
found out? Or is it hopeful, like a trout rising to the dry and floating fly?
I don't care as much as that you've died. And I suspect what you would say:

"Except, it isn't a lie, a trick, a fiction, an effort to surprise.
Death is merely knowing what it has been to be alive."
I'm remembering the fly. I'm remembering to be alive. I'm thinking
of the Chevrolet, Gene; and of the question: Why?

I am no longer so afraid to die, if they sing for me these songs,
if they make for me these reasons why I was once alive.
Your daughter told me: "A woman said the world is not ready
to lose Gene England, and I wondered: 'What about my Father.'"

Eugene: I think you may have found a good day to die.
I think you may have told me, had I listened:
"The Miracle is not what, but why," and I did not hear you, already
made deaf by loneliness. Which is how I know: *this may also be a lie.*

But if it is, you are sitting in your Mormon heaven to tell me:
"Do not believe nor hope in me; I am not the hope to die,
but what I said: Jesus is the Christ. Believe in Him and live, live, live."
Which I cannot do, Eugene, although for you, I would try.

If I am Jewish, Gene, then what Messiah should I expect
with you dead, since the savior we had hoped was you?
*Holy Eugene, full of grace, speak to us now, sinners, in the hour of our
need.* I am a garden full of sterile seeds that will not blossom to fruit.

I am a stream where trout go blind and cannot see the fly.
So, what was it you were thinking when you died?
That we were through? That we had no more use of you?
We needed of who you had become as the day has need of sun.

But you are not The Man, nor have pretended.
In the end, Eugene, I miss nothing more than you.
Not your words nor the argument they proposed, but the way
you displaced air. I want you in a room not so narrow, so removed.

Toll the bell. Close the book. Extinguish the candle.
All your enemies are dead, or soon will be. And you
so soon apologized: *in decline.* Years from now, Eugene,
I'll salt the lake, cover the mirrors, tear my clothes

and none of this will have mattered more than you supposed.
I know that now that you've gone down to worms, up to sky,
no more to float upon the tide of the upper Weber River. Now
that you have died, Eugene, you make it difficult
to be alive.

CONTRIBUTORS

STEPHEN CARTER is an associate editor and staff writer for *The Sugar Beet*, an online Mormon satire publication. He and his wife, Noelle, are currently working on their MFA degrees in creative writing at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

BESSIE SODERBORG CLARK began writing stories 25 years ago to entertain her grandchildren. Recollections of her life provide the basis for her essay. She has personally known seven generations of her family, beginning with her Mormon pioneer great-grandfather. Bessie graduated with her B. A. degree on the same day her daughter Sherri, the third child of six, graduated from high school. She earned an M. Ed. in educational psychology several years later. Wanderlust has taken her and her husband of 60 years, Marden Clark, to every continent except Antarctica, including the world's northernmost city, Hammerfest, Norway, and southernmost city, Ushuia, Chile. They lived a year in Finland, and both taught a year at Qingdao University in the People's Republic of China.

EUGENE ENGLAND, teacher, essayist, critic, and leading scholar of Mormon letters, was a founding co-editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. He also co-founded the Association of Mormon Letters and promoted Mormon writing and writers through reviews, anthologies, critical writing, and direct personal encouragement. The author or editor of numerous books and anthologies, he published countless essays and articles and taught literature, including especially Mormon literature, at Brigham Young University for many years and thereafter at Utah Valley State College. He died August 17, 2001.

VAL G. HEMMING was born and raised in Rexburg, Idaho, and served a mission in Sweden from 1957 to 1960. He completed his undergraduate education and medical school at the University of Utah and was an Air Force officer and pediatrician from 1965 to 1990. On the faculty of the F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences for 22 years, he was Dean of the School of Medicine from 1995-2002. He enjoys reading and researching Mormon history and is an avocational Mormon scandiaphile. His wife Alice and he have four children and seven grandchildren. They reside in Kensington, Maryland, where he continues to carry out medical research.

SUSAN ELIZABETH HOWE lives with her husband in Ephraim, Utah, and teaches at Brigham Young University. Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Southwest Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Shenandoah*, and other journals. She has also published stories and plays, and she has been editor of *Exponent II* and *The Denver Quarterly* and is the poetry editor for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. Her collection, *Stone Spirits* (1997), received the Association for Mormon Letters Award in poetry.

CLIFTON H. JOLLEY taught for more than a decade in the Church Education System: Seminaries and Institute, BYU, and BYU-Hawaii. For nearly a decade, he was a writer for *The Spoken Word* and a daily columnist for the *Deseret News*. While completing his Ph.D. in English at BYU, he helped Gene England sell the Chevrolet, build Gene and Charlotte's home, and in the process wreck Bert Wilson's truck. Dr. Jolley now lives in Dallas, Texas, where he is President of Advent Communications, feeds his wife's two beagles, and is a convert to Judaism. He is studying to teach yachting at Yale.

WILLIAM MULDER, Professor Emeritus of English and American Studies at the University of Utah, is the author of *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* and co-editor of *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers*. He has authored numerous articles and essays on America and American literature, including the essay "Mormonism and Literature." He served fourteen years as editor of *Western Humanities Review* and was for many years fiction editor of *Dialogue*.

SIGRID OLSEN is a graduate of Brigham Young University ('82). She has published in the *Globe and Mail*, *Calgary Herald*, and *Jewish Living*. She teaches high school history in Salem, Oregon. She recently was given two Springfield cartridges found at the Reno Entrenchment in 1963.

LEVI S. PETERSON, Professor Emeritus of English at Weber State University, is the author of two collections of short stories, *The Canyons of Grace* and *Night Soil*; two novels, *The Backslider* and *Aspen Maroonery*, and a prizewinning biography, *Juanita Brooks: Mormon Woman Historian*. He lives in Washington state.

ALLISON PINGREE received her Ph.D. in English and American Literature from Harvard. She is Director of the Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, and she lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her daughter Emma.

GREGORY A. PRINCE is president and CEO of Virion Systems, Inc., a Maryland biotechnology company. His first book, *Power From on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Signature Books), was published in 1995. The current article is part of his forthcoming biography of David O. McKay.

ROBERT A. REES, a former LDS bishop and current president of the University Religious Council at the University of California at Santa Cruz where he teaches literature, is also a past editor of *Dialogue: a Journal of Mormon Thought*.

KAREN ROSENBAUM lives with her husband Ben McClinton in Kensington, California. She is the official newsletter editor and the unofficial historian of the Berkeley Ward. Her short stories and essays have been published in journals, magazines, anthologies, and newspapers. Recently she did a set of articles on bats for the Northern California section of the Sierra Club.

SUE SAFFLE earned degrees in English from the University of Utah ('75) and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University ('82). A free-lance journalist as well as instructor of English at Virginia Tech, she has lived and taught in Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Finland. She is currently collaborating with Mary Bradford and Susan Howe on a biography of her aunt, novelist Virginia Sorensen Waugh.

DOUGLAS THAYER lives in Provo, Utah, with his wife Donlu and family. He teaches creative writing at BYU. He has published the novel *Summer Fire* and two collections of short stories, *Under the Cottonwoods* and *Mr. Wahlquist in Yellowstone*. A close friend and long time colleague of Gene England, he graciously agreed to guest edit the tribute to Gene in this issue.

WILLIAM A. "BERT" WILSON is Humanities Professor Emeritus of Folklore and Literature at BYU. A Fellow of the American Folklore Society, he is an Honorary Lifetime Member of the Association for Mormon Letters and a recipient of Utah's Governor's Award in the Arts and the Mormon History Association's Leonard J. Arrington Award. He and his wife, Hannele, recently returned from a Public Affairs mission in Finland.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

After 15 years working as a photographer and graphic designer for BYU Publications and Graphics, John Snyder left BYU to freelance in January of 2000. Currently he is pursuing commercial assignments and personal interests, among them a photographic and written study of the Palouse region of Eastern Washington/Northern Idaho. Of the cover photograph, he says, "It was a poignant experience—in the process of trying to arrange these objects from Gene's life in a pleasing way—to reflect on my association with the England family and to consider Gene's patience and kind influence on me. I included the engraving of Samuel Johnson because I'd heard Gene read from *Rasselas* during a visit to London in 1985 and still reflect on the insights I gained then."

Cover Photo: John Snyder

*The central truth [of
the gospel] seems
to be God's uncondi-
tional love, the
unique power of
mercy to heal our
souls and bring
peace to our lives—
but it must touch
our hearts and wills
as well as our minds
and understandings.*



*Making Peace: Personal
Essays. Salt Lake City:
Signature, 1995. Page 3*

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