DIALOGUE

A Journal of Mormon Thought

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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Halfway Covenant?

As someone who has worked over the past several decades to try and bring greater understanding to the experiences of gays and lesbians in Mormon culture, I was pleased to read John Gustav-Wrathall's "Trial of Faith" (40, no. 2 [Summer 2007]: 78–107). A number of years ago at the annual Affirmation conference, I gave the keynote address, "Sacred or Secular: The Choice for Latter-day Homosexuals." In it, I argued that many of the homosexuals I knew desperately wanted a relationship with the Church, one that would allow them to worship, sing the songs of Zion, and be a part of a religious community with which they had deep spiritual connection and for which they had an earnest longing. I had also found that the majority who were no longer associated with the Church (because of official or self-excommunication—or who had just quietly lapsed) found it difficult to connect with another faith tradition and so had no active religious life.

What Gustav-Wrathall is demonstrating is that, within a very limited scope, homosexuals can worship in a Mormon community. Of course, as he honestly reveals, doing so under present conditions requires an amazing degree of faith and hope, to say nothing of charity. That is, to be openly gay (in a committed relationship or otherwise) in a Mormon congregation requires one to be committed enough to tolerate homophobia in its various manifestations, many of which are extreme. It also requires one to live within such a faith community under a heavy burden of limited expression and opportunity. Nevertheless, given an understanding and supportive bishop, which Gustav-Wrathall has, he demonstrates that it is possible.

Several years ago I wrote to a General Authority friend that, given its present position on homosexuality, I thought the Church should consider doing something similar to what the seventeenth-century New England Puritans did for church members who could not claim conversion: institute a method of accommodation for homosexuals who were willing to enter into committed relationships (which are now officially and legally binding in some states and countries). What is now known as the Halfway Covenant was the inspired and practical solution of the Congregational churches to accommodate the second- and third-generation children of those who came to America to find religious freedom. Since one of the requirements of membership was that one had to have had a conversion experience and testify of such in the congregation, when the children of the first generation of believers could not rise to that level of piety, they were forbidden baptism and the sacrament. This created a crisis since it meant that, within a short time, membership would diminish and, worse, that children of the faithful would be separated from the communion of their parents.

The Halfway Covenant solved the problem by allowing such children

(and others in the same situation) to be baptized but forbade them from voting and from partaking of the sacrament until such time as they could have a sufficiently powerful religious experience to constitute conversion.

While such an accommodation would not satisfy many Latter-day Saint homosexuals, who understandably want nothing less than full acceptance, including all the rights and privileges available to heterosexual members, some "halfway" status could provide a means whereby those wishing to could be considered members "in good standing" and therefore enjoy many of the privileges of membership. Such an official accommodation would also greatly diminish the intolerance and prejudice many homosexuals and their families currently experience in the Church. Further, it would allow homosexual members with children to worship together.

A Mormon halfway covenant for homosexuals living in committed relationships might allow them to be baptized, partake of the sacrament, receive patriarchal blessings, and serve in many positions. It might exclude temple attendance and certain ecclesiastical callings. While not a perfect solution to the present situation, it might provide a way whereby homosexuals and heterosexuals could work together "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come to a unity of the faith . . ." (Eph. 4:12–13).

Robert A. Rees
Brookdale, California

Appreciation for Dialogue

I grew up in a very loving, traditional LDS family. I love the Church, and the Lord has been there for me. I started reading *Dialogue* when my intellectual mom introduced it to me several years ago. I didn't subscribe right away; I would read it at her house and she would give me old copies. I found many articles that addressed issues that weren't addressed as much or at all in our "normal" LDS culture. I would read about divorce or single parenthood. I would read about issues and conflicts related to abortion and women's rights. I ended up leaving an abusive marriage and found some strength in the pages of *Dialogue* as I read about diversity in the lives of many LDS Saints who are also struggling and questioning. When my mother moved away, I, of course, subscribed. I appreciate the discount for students as I am trying to make it on my own, finish raising my last two boys and go to school almost full-time. I don't agree with all the articles but I appreciate the intellectual stimulation and can relate to many of them. I like articles on women's issues (including priesthood and women, women's rights, and motherhood), art as I am an artist, traditions in faith, and history.

Thank you for being there.

Melanie H.
Roseville, California

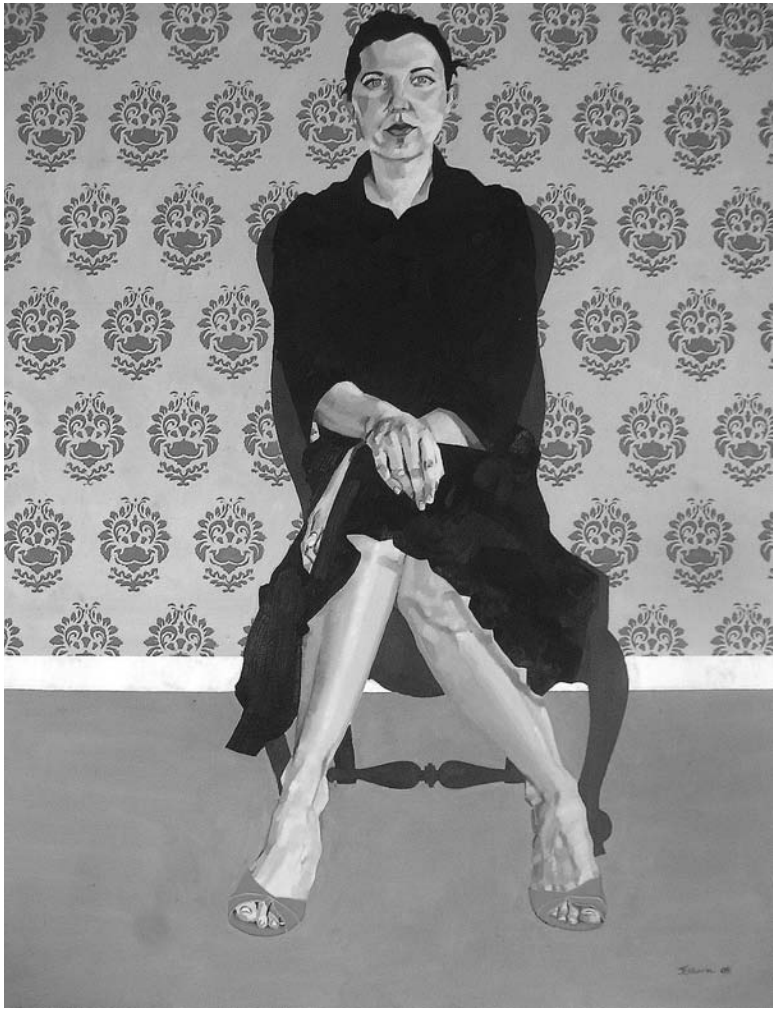
A Rigorous Examination

The best thing in your summer 2007 issue is Michael Quinn's letter to the editor ("Filling Gaps and Responding

to 'Silences in Mormon History,'" 40, no. 2 [Summer 2007]: ix) informing us of his latest (110 pages, 248 footnotes) exposition on Joseph Smith's "First Vision" of 1820, not 1824, as oft-argued by Rev. Wesley Walters and wrongly conceded by some LDS historians. (To read Quinn's paper, go to www.dialoguejournal.com and click on "E-Paper #3" in the *Dialogue Paperless* section. It is downloadable free.)

It's pleasant to see a rigorous examination of historical evidence exhaustively investigating an important topic. Quinn's evidence shows not only an extensive Methodist (exactly as Smith stated) Palmyra "camp meeting" religious revival in 1820, but also an interdenominational (Methodists and others) Palmyra camp meeting revival in 1818 as well. We may now safely ignore historical criticism that no such religious revivals occurred in Palmyra until 1824.

Gerry L. Ensley
Los Alamitos, California



Jacob Fossum, *Audrey*,
oil on canvas, 55 x 45 in., 2005

Can Deconstruction Save the Day? "Faithful Scholarship" and the Uses of Postmodernism

John-Charles Duffy

Writing in the mid-1990s, Mormon-watcher Massimo Introvigne made a counterintuitive observation about debates over Book of Mormon historicity among Mormon intellectuals, as compared to analogous debates between Protestant fundamentalists and liberals. Fundamentalists, despite their reputation for being anti-scientific, were "deeply committed to Enlightenment concepts of 'objective knowledge,' and 'truth,'" confident that an impartial view of the data would confirm the historical authenticity of the Bible. Protestant liberals, in contrast, deployed a "post-modern, anti-Enlightenment epistemology" to undermine absolutist readings of the Bible. The opposite dynamic, however, prevailed in the Book of Mormon debates. Liberals publishing with Signature Books—such as Edward Ashment and David P. Wright—were "staunch defenders of the Enlightenment," with its ideals of disinterested reason and the unfettered search for truth, while conservatives publishing with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) held "the late modernist and post-modernist position that knowledge is by no means objective, and that 'true,' universally valid, historical conclusions could never be reached."[1]

For observers who equate "postmodern" with relativism or use "deconstruction" as academese for "destruction" (as in "the deconstruction of traditional values"), Introvigne's analysis must be puzzling. Why would defenders of a religious orthodoxy that claims access to absolute truth and an exclusive dispensation of divine authority align themselves with postmodern epistemologies that destabilize claims to truth and authority?

Little wonder that one liberal critic, Brent Lee Metcalfe, has branded the alignment contradictory.[2]

Whether the use of postmodern appeals by orthodox LDS scholars is philosophically consistent or contradictory is not a question I will address in this essay.[3] Partly this is because I lack the training to engage that question with philosophical rigor; partly it is because I see more interesting, and useful, questions to ask. My project here is to provide historical perspective on the use of postmodern appeals by "faithful scholars" over the last twenty-five years, inquiring into these appeals' rhetorical efficacy and political uses. By invoking postmodern authorities and lines of reasoning, what new discursive and institutional spaces have LDS scholars carved out for themselves? How have orthodox scholars used postmodern appeals to intimidate rivals? And how effective are those appeals likely to be at persuading non-Mormon academics to take seriously the work of faithful scholars at a time when Mormon studies is starting to be institutionalized in the academic mainstream?

While I reject "contradiction" as a term of analysis for my purposes, I do want to underscore the unresolved ambiguities involved when postmodern rhetorics are pressed into the service of LDS orthodoxy or a conservative brand of cultural politics. We will see that LDS scholars hold conflicting or ambivalent attitudes toward postmodernism. At the same time, ambivalence among postmodern scholars outside Mormonism constrains faithful scholars' ability to invoke postmodern grounds to legitimize scholarship grounded in orthodox LDS presuppositions. In certain respects, postmodernism has been a godsend for LDS scholars wanting to challenge skepticism about their faith's supernatural claims, but it is not clear how efficacious a savior postmodernism will prove in the long run.

Key Terms

Faithful Scholarship

"Faithful scholarship" is a preferred self-identifying label for what I have elsewhere called "orthodox scholarship," meaning scholarship predicated on the literal, historical reality of LDS supernatural claims (such as the antiquity of the Book of Mormon), on the LDS Church's exclusive claim to divine authority, and on the deference owed to Church leaders.[4] Though Richard Bushman coined a precursor term, "faithful history," in 1969, the terms "faithful scholarship" and "faithful scholars" came into vogue in LDS parlance beginning in the late 1980s, after Neal A. Maxwell

expressed his pleasure that "faithful Latter-day Saint scholars" were helping to demonstrate the divinity of the scriptures.[5] Cognate terms include "believing history" and "the perspective of faith."

"Faithful scholarship" does not name a clearly defined school or methodology, but it does point to an orientation or approach toward scholarship that, as we will see, emerged by distinguishing itself from other approaches within the LDS intellectual milieu, such as the new Mormon history. Faithful scholarship has become normative for institutions affiliated with the Church, including *BYU Studies,* FARMS, the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History (prior to its dissolution in 2005), and the Church and Family History Department of the LDS Church. A number of faculty in BYU Religious Education do faithful scholarship as well, though Religious Education is officially committed to something it calls "gospel scholarship," which is more overtly faith-promoting and less academically rigorous than "faithful scholarship."[6] *Sunstone* and *Dialogue* occasionally publish works of faithful scholarship; but faithful scholars, given their commitments to orthodoxy, are likely to view *Sunstone* and *Dialogue* as unsafe forums in which to publish. The Mormon History Association remains open to scholarship reflecting a variety of orientations but has somehow managed to avoid the stigma attached to *Dialogue* and *Sunstone.*

Deciding who counts as a "faithful scholar" is tricky because that label doubles as a description of a particular scholarly orientation and also as a claim about a scholar's good standing in the Church. Leonard J. Arrington and Eugene England would have insisted that they were faithful Church members, but neither exemplified the orientation I am calling faithful scholarship. Both were too wedded to objectivity as a scholarly ideal (rather than working from "the perspective of faith") and too closely affiliated with *Sunstone* and *Dialogue.* For the most part, "faithful scholars" are those who affiliated during the 1990s or beyond with institutions that used rhetoric about faithful scholarship or working from the perspective of faith to define their missions. By this criterion, the label applies to John W. Welch, Louis Midgley, Daniel Peterson, Noel Reynolds, Grant Underwood, Ronald K. Esplin, Jill Mulvay Derr, Richard Lyman Bushman, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Robert L. Millet, among others. The label also applies to Terryl Givens. Other scholars have affinities with faithful scholarship but don't quite fit into the "faithful scholar" category, perhaps because they keep some distance from the institutions of faithful scholar-

ship, because they evince certain "liberal" tendencies, or perhaps because they're simply not interested in working from an overtly LDS perspective. Such scholars include Philip Barlow, Kathleen Flake, and Armand L. Mauss. Scholars who clearly work outside the faithful scholarship category—because their work is too revisionist in tenor or their religious views too heterodox—include D. Michael Quinn, Klaus Hansen, Newell G. Bringhurst, Margaret Merrill Toscano, and Thomas W. Murphy, to name just a few. Mormon scholars outside faithful scholarship, it should be noted, are a highly diverse crowd; they can, in fact, be separated into additional categories, as I will do below.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is notoriously difficult to define: The term is applied very widely, at times to the work of figures who do not claim the label for themselves. One explicator of postmodernism writes that "the term . . . hovers uncertainly in most current writings between—on the one hand—extremely complex and difficult philosophical senses, and—on the other—an extremely simplistic mediation as a nihilistic, cynical tendency in contemporary culture."[7] Routine academic usage falls somewhere in-between; in that usage, "postmodernism" refers to a theoretical turn—or a set of related theoretical turns—that have transformed scholarly inquiry in many disciplines, beginning in the 1960s but making greatest headway in the 1980s and 1990s.

Postmodernism has been most influential in the arts and humanities, somewhat less so in the social sciences, and considerably less so in the natural sciences. Entirely new fields have emerged from the academy's turn toward the postmodern: cultural studies, gender studies, gay/lesbian studies, queer theory, postcolonial theory, and science studies, among others.[8] Critics on the political right charge postmodernists with enforcing an orthodoxy of political correctness, a reaction to the prominence of left-wing identity politics in postmodern scholarship. However, contrary to the impression this charge may create, postmodernism is not a monolith or well-defined school of thought. Postmodernism encompasses, rather, a number of different philosophies or critical theories, and writers commonly accepted as postmodern may be in sharp conflict with one another. For the purposes of my analysis, however, I will hazard the following generalizations.[9]

The "modern" in "postmodern" refers to the intellectual and social transformations that followed from the Enlightenment in eighteenth-cen-

tury Europe. Those transformations included the rise of democracy and capitalism, European and American imperialism, scientific and technological advances, and the secularization of many social sectors (e.g., as a result of principles of church-state separation). Postmodernists are preoccupied with the totalitarian or destructive aspects of these developments. In the Enlightenment's pursuit of progress and freedom, who has been excluded or oppressed? Deeply skeptical of grand theories or narratives that profess to account for all phenomena and experience, postmodern scholars shift the focus of attention to those who are rendered invisible or voiceless by accounts of reality that profess to be total or universal. For this reason, postmodern scholarship tends to focus on the voices, knowledges, and interests of those who were marginalized by the Enlightenment: women, racial minorities, sexual minorities, colonized peoples, the working classes, or people stigmatized as irrational or insane. This shift in focus from elites to the social periphery has led to the stereotype of postmodernists as people with a knee-jerk disdain for "dead white males."

Especially relevant to understanding faithful scholars' use of postmodernism is the postmodern rejection of professions of objectivity; postmodernists see such professions as characteristic of scholarship in intellectual streams descended from the Enlightenment. Based on sophisticated reflections in epistemology and linguistics, postmodern theorists maintain that human beings cannot apprehend reality as it is—or at least, we could never *know* if we have apprehended reality as it is—because our knowledge is inescapably mediated by language and culture. To borrow the language of Doctrine and Covenants 93:24, our knowledge of things as they are and were and are to come is confined to *representations* or *interpretations* of things as they are and were and are to come.

In this view, truth is not "out there" waiting to be discovered; what human beings take to be truth is something that we ourselves have constructed. Here postmodernism displays the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche's perspectivist philosophy, according to which we can know things only from a specific perspective.[10] Postmodern scholars are often self-conscious about viewing their subject from a particular social location or position (hence the terms "particularity" and "positionality"), not from the perspective of a universal "everyman" detached from the historical, cultural, economic, political, and linguistic contexts that shape our knowledge. Postmodernists squirm at statements that begin, "All rational people would agree that . . ." They recognize that human beings are never dis-

interested—that our approach to a subject is always shaped in advance by presuppositions, conceptual categories, or theories, and that there are always agendas at stake (our own or others') in how we conduct scholarship and what representations we construct as a result.

While postmodernism is undeniably relativistic, it is many times more sophisticated than popular understandings of relativism as "Anything goes," or "Everyone is right." For one thing, a postmodern critic would question the concept of the self implicit in popular relativism, i.e., the assumption that we are autonomous individuals capable of making free choices about our beliefs and morals. Postmodernists would want to know how we came to believe that about ourselves: What is the history, or genealogy, of that understanding of the self? Postmodernists would call attention to the historical and cultural forces that produce—and by the same token, restrict—our perceptions of the philosophical or moral options available to us. They would be interested in identifying the social processes that construct the desires which guide our choices. Postmodernists would point out (contra popular versions of relativism) that not all philosophical or moral options are equal because, when we encounter them, they are already embedded in systems that lend some philosophies or moralities greater privilege or power than others. All this is to say that postmodernism is less interested in making pronouncements about what is true than in investigating the historical origins of our ideas about what is true and analyzing the political implications of those ideas. Whose interests are served, and who is disadvantaged, by particular systems of belief or morality? One common mode of postmodern scholarship is to problematize the categories on which dominant constructions of truth rely—for instance, by showing that these categories depend on neat dualisms that cannot, in fact, be neatly maintained, or by showing how ideas assumed to be timeless or obvious arose at specific historical moments to serve particular interests. These destabilizing strategies are often referred to as deconstruction.[11]

It should be clear from this discussion that postmodernism is driven by ethical concerns (e.g., concern about the suffering or injustice experienced by marginalized people). At the same time, postmodernists are wary of ethical systems (or other systems of knowledge) that claim an absolute foundation. Instead, postmodernists see knowledge as resting uneasily on foundations that are provisional or cobbled together—and socially constructed, not originating in a transcendent source such as the

will of God or an indubitable conception of the good. This philosophical outlook is known as antifoundationalism. As an extension of their antifoundationalism, postmodernists tend to be drawn toward pluralistic visions of a world in which diverse communities, truths, and moralities negotiate a constantly shifting shared existence.

Among the varieties of knowledge that the Enlightenment heritage has tended to classify as "irrational" is religion—at least the kind of unabashedly supernaturalist religion that Mormon orthodoxy represents. For that reason, religious conservatives from a number of traditions have, during the past couple of decades, adopted postmodern appeals against being marginalized in the name of universal rationality. Mormons in academia are among the religious conservatives making these moves. As I hope is apparent by now, there are some aspects of postmodernism to which LDS scholars could readily subscribe—concern for the marginalized, for instance. At the same time, there are other aspects—such as antifoundationalism—that are more difficult to reconcile with the absolute truth claims of Mormon orthodoxy. We now turn to examining the particular uses that faithful scholars have made of postmodernism and the ambiguities that surround their doing so.

Antipositivism and the New Mormon History

The history of postmodern appeals among orthodox Mormon scholars begins with the antipositivist critiques that BYU political science professors Louis Midgley and David Bohn led against the new Mormon history in the 1980s and early 1990s. Like "faithful scholarship" and "postmodernism," "new Mormon history" is a problematic label. It has been imprecisely applied, and efforts to identify "new Mormon historians" have yielded different names. Nevertheless, the term was commonly used, by critics and defenders alike, to describe a discernible histor- iographical orientation that dominated the wave of professional Mormon histories written during the 1960s and 1970s. The most prominent representatives of this orientation were Leonard J. Arrington and Thomas G. Alexander—Arrington because of his influence as Church historian, Alexander because he undertook to publicly respond to the antipositivists' criticisms.

The chief defining characteristic of the approach to Mormon history championed by Arrington and Alexander was that it aspired to be objective in the sense of transcending pro- versus anti-Mormon polemics. Arrington and Alexander described the new Mormon history as a "mid-

dle ground" between veneration and antagonism or between evangelism and secularism.[12] The key to this *via media* was to maintain what one colleague of Arrington's called a "restrained religious voice" and what another observer dubbed "sympathetic detachment."[13] *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* and *The Mormon Experience*, both produced by the Arrington-led History Division in the Church's historical department, exemplified this dispassionate approach.[14]

After the new Mormon historians came under attack from the antipositivists, Arrington and Alexander denied that they had ever professed objectivity in the naive sense of believing themselves to be perfectly disinterested or purged of preconceptions. Arrington did, however, characterize the historian's task as being "impartial and objective."[15] The new Mormon history aspired to a supposedly universal knowledge—"to understand as scholars of any faith or no faith would seek to understand."[16] The aspiration to objectivity and universality revealed the deep influence of the Enlightenment on the new Mormon history, although that influence was channeled by way of a Romantic humanism. In this Romantic discourse, religion was interiorized as individual "experience," a subjectivizing move that allowed the new Mormon historians to sidestep questions about the objective reality of Mormon claims to revelation.[17]

Another figure whose work was targeted by the antipositivist critique was non-Mormon scholar Jan Shipps, author of the first booklength study of Mormonism to use the methods of religious studies (rather than history). Shipps's "history of religions" approach complemented the *via media* of the new Mormon history because, like Arrington, Alexander, and others, Shipps declined to evaluate questions about the truth of Mormon faith claims like the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Instead she focused on "reconstructing the picture of early Mormonism *as perceived from the inside*."[18] Shipps described her approach as "bracketing" questions of ultimate truth.[19] She derived the concept of bracketing from the phenomenology of religion, a tradition that emerged in Dutch theological faculties in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similar to the new Mormon historians, phenomenologists of religion aspired to blaze a third way between the confessional affirmations of theology and what they saw as the reductive—that is, strictly secular—theories about religion that had developed in the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Phenomenologists believed that their approach was simultaneously objective and sympathetic toward the religions they studied and

that it was therefore able to successfully capture the understandings of religious insiders. Although phenomenology of religion opposed more militantly secular forms of Enlightenment-descended scholarship (as represented, for instance, by Freud), phenomenology itself was grounded in Cartesian, and thus quintessentially Enlightenment, ideals of objectivity.[20]

Midgley and Bohn launched their antipositivist critiques of the new Mormon history in the early 1980s together with Neal Kramer, then a doctoral student in English language and literature. Kramer and Bohn accused "the new Mormon historians and their supporters" of having bought into the "positivist ideology" that Kramer and Bohn alleged controlled the discipline of history. Among "new Mormon historians and their supporters," Bohn named Leonard J. Arrington, Davis Bitton, Robert B. Flanders, Klaus Hansen, Lawrence Foster, and Jan Shipps.[21] In calling these scholars positivists, Kramer and Bohn meant that their work excluded "non-scientific testimony of the role of God" in Mormon history, relying instead on "psychological, sociological, and economic explanations" that claimed to be objective and neutral. Kramer and Bohn rejected that claim, citing in their support a roll call of philosophers and theorists whose work either participated in or anticipated the postmodern turn: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Richard Rorty, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. "Precisely because theories are not neutral," Bohn argued, "Mormon historians can legitimately take issue with secular explanation."[22]

Midgley was more strident, accusing the new Mormon historians of having committed an "act of treason" against the faith by attempting to be neutral about Joseph Smith's prophetic claims. Because there is no such thing as objectivity in history, Midgley insisted, LDS historians ought therefore to unabashedly adopt the role of "defenders of the faith."[23]

Midgley and Bohn pressed their case through the late 1980s and into the 1990s, joined by other voices such as Daniel Peterson, who also lent Midgley the *FARMS Review* as a forum for his criticisms.[24] After its publication in 1988, historian Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream* became a favorite authority to support the antipositivists' contention that the new Mormon historians' aspirations to objectivity were futile and naive.[25] To the list of postmodern authorities already cited, the antipositivists would eventually add Dominick LaCapra, Jean-François Lyotard, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Stanley Fish.

In opposing the new Mormon history's ostensibly neutral approach, Midgley and Bohn extended a critique that had already been made by CES personnel and Apostle Boyd K. Packer, who found the new Mormon history too secular and inadequately faith-promoting. In his controversial 1981 address, "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect," Packer rejected the quest to be "objective, impartial, and scholarly" in writing Church history on the grounds that Latter-day Saints were at war. The "posture of detachment" or "sympathetic neutrality" to which some LDS scholars aspired (Packer was almost certainly thinking of Arrington, specifically) risked "giving equal time to the adversary."[26]

At its core, the antipositivist complaint was identical to Packer's: Mormon historians needed to stand on the side of the gospel, not on some fictitious objective middle ground. But Midgley, Bohn, and other antipositivists couched that complaint in much more sophisticated language than Packer. In doing so, they altered the terms of the historiographical debate. When Arrington's History Division had come under fire during the 1970s from apostles Ezra Taft Benson, Mark E. Petersen, and Boyd K. Packer, media coverage of the controversy framed it in terms of simple anti-intellectualism: "Apostles vs. Historians."[27] That frame was obviously not applicable to a criticism voiced in the idiom of antifoundationalist philosophy.

The sophistication of the antipositivist critique caught the new Mormon historians off guard. Around the same time, the demise of Arrington's History Division and the "Petersen inquisition" of 1983—when Mark E. Petersen instructed local Church leaders to interview more than a dozen LDS writers, including Thomas G. Alexander, Armand Mauss, Linda King Newell, David John Buerger, and Lester E. Bush—drove home that Mormon historians were vulnerable to losing their Church membership and, for BYU faculty, their jobs if Church leaders perceived their work as a threat.[28] Probably for this reason, the new Mormon historians were reluctant at first to let the antipositivist controversy enter print.[29] Finally, Alexander broke silence in 1986 with a *Dialogue* article in which he defended the new Mormon history from the charge of positivism by tracing its intellectual genealogy to a Romantic historical tradition that began with Goethe and Schleiermacher and extended—Alexander claimed—to Max Weber and Michel Foucault.[30] If the mention of Foucault was Alexander's attempt to invoke a postmodern authority, it

was far from obvious what the new Mormon history had in common with Foucault's sophisticated analyses of power and discourse.

Observers recognized that Alexander had not effectively answered the antipositivists' objections on the question of objectivity.[31] Alexander was unprepared to deploy antifoundationalism as the political scientists had done. Furthermore, he continued to place the new Mormon history in a middle ground between "traditionalists" and secularists, a position that was becoming indefensible in an increasingly restrictive Mormon intellectual climate. By the mid-1990s—after Church leaders had taken a number of steps to check heterodoxy among intellectuals, including the Statement on Symposia, the September Six excommunications, and the firing of BYU professors—defenders of Arrington's universalist approach to historiography had fallen silent.[32] The last word in the debate was left to Bohn's philosophically dense and intimidating 1994 *Sunstone* essay, "The Larger Issue." Several years later, a speaker at a Smith Institute symposium on historiography assured his audience that the "positivism" of new Mormon historians—among whom he named Thomas Alexander and Jan Shipps—had been "thoroughly discredited."[33]

It is doubtful that the postmodern authorities cited by the antipositivists would concur that, from their theories, it followed that Mormon historians ought to defend affirmations of supernatural interventions in history and exclusivist claims to divine authority. Postmodern theorists were useful to the antipositivists because they wielded academic authority against the Enlightenment ideals undergirding the new Mormon history (as well as more radically revisionist scholarship). But Midgley's and Bohn's defenses of LDS orthodoxy represented an *antimodern* rather than a *postmodern* position. Ultimately, the antipositivists' agendas had little in common with those of the postmodern authorities whose words they appropriated; although postmodernists and antipositivists alike were critical of the Enlightenment, they had very different motives for being so.[34]

Nevertheless, the antipositivist critiques were highly significant within the Mormon intellectual world because they opened up an important new line of argument for scholars who wanted to be both religiously orthodox and academically credible. In the 1970s, even Boyd K. Packer had conceded that orthodox claims would have to be toned down in a history written for a non-LDS audience.[35] Midgley and Bohn, in contrast, had modeled a way of articulating a commitment to LDS orthodoxy that

could make a bid for academic legitimacy. That possibility would be pursued from other angles during the 1990s and beyond.

Faithful Scholarship as Perspectivism

The antipositivist critiques were the forerunner to a diffuse postmodern sensibility among orthodox LDS scholars during the 1990s. This sensibility was not typically expressed in philosophically rigorous language like that with which Bohn had bowled over defenders of the new Mormon history. Instead, the postmodern turn among LDS scholars in the 1990s consisted of the widespread adoption of a rhetoric that asserted the legitimacy of scholarship reflecting an orthodox LDS "perspective." This appeal for legitimacy relied on a broader turn toward perspectivism that had occurred in academia under the influence of postmodernism. As we will see, it is not evident that orthodox LDS scholars have embraced perspectivism as a *philosophy* or *worldview.* But perspectivist *language* has played important roles: as a potent instrument in contests to elevate "faithful scholarship" over rival orientations among LDS intellectuals and as the primary rhetorical resource for those who hope to win credibility for faithful scholarship within the academic mainstream.

When Neal A. Maxwell popularized the term "faithful scholars" in the late 1980s, he used it to indicate scholars' commitment to the Church and its doctrines and their willingness to use their intellectual gifts to "protect our flanks" from detractors.[36] It is not clear that Maxwell's usage implied an appeal to perspectivism. The term "faithful scholarship" took on its perspectivist cast during the subsequent decade as leading centers for the production of Mormon scholarship at BYU incorporated commitments to the faithful-scholarship orientation into their mission statements. When FARMS founder John W. Welch became editor of *BYU Studies* in 1991, the journal's mission statement was expanded to accentuate its commitment to LDS perspectivism, namely, to "publish articles that openly reflect a Latter-day Saint point of view."[37] Similarly, the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute, until it was disbanded in 2005, defined itself as "a center for the scholarly study of Mormon history from the perspective of faith."[38] Although its language was not explicitly perspectivist, FARMS, too, announced the particularity of its knowledge production when it explained that "work done in the name of FARMS rests on the conviction that the Book of Mormon, the Bible, and other ancient scripture . . . are authentic, historical texts."[39] This stance was far removed

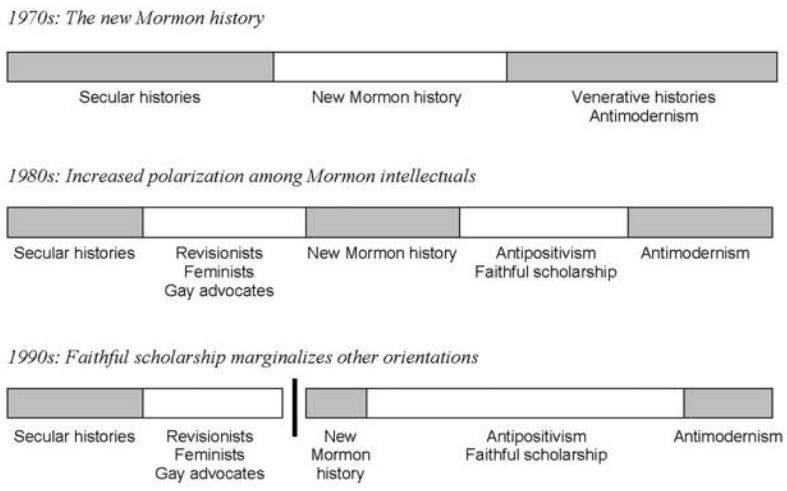
from Arrington's attempt to understand as someone "of any faith or no faith" would understand—a universalizing project that FARMS's Daniel Petersen had pronounced doomed to failure.[40]

These three institutions—*BYU Studies,* the Smith Institute, and FARMS—were not the only sites for producing and disseminating scholarly knowledge about Mormonism; and the perspectivism these institutions employed in explaining their missions was by no means universal among LDS scholars working on Mormon topics. As we will see later, not even all of those who embraced a commitment to "faithful scholarship" understood that commitment in perspectivist terms. However, perspectivism gained greater influence within the LDS intellectual milieu over the course of the 1990s as "faithful scholarship" successfully marginalized all rival scholarly orientations to become normative for LDS scholarship under Church auspices. As a result of that process, *BYU Studies,* FARMS, and (to a lesser degree) the Smith Institute, together with the scholars associated with them, became advantageously positioned to develop and promote their perspectivist modes of scholarship.

How did this happen? During the 1970s, the chief divide in Mormon intellectual politics had lain between the new Mormon history and the antimodernism represented by CES and leaders such as Packer. This was the conflict that the media had framed as "Apostles vs. Historians." Arrington's History Division had been the conflict's epicenter. In the course of the 1980s, polarizing developments such as the antipositivist critiques, debates around the Hofmann forgeries, and an expanding body of revisionist, feminist, and gay-affirmative literature, had made it possible to map additional "camps" onto the Mormon intellectual spectrum.[41] To the left of the new Mormon historians stood revisionists such as Edward Ashment, George D. Smith, Dan Vogel, Brent Metcalfe, and D. Michael Quinn, who went farther in challenging canonical accounts than new Mormon historians such as Leonard Arrington and Thomas Alexander had done.[42] The revisionists' work, together with the writings of feminists and gay advocates, created a heightened sense of threat for orthodox Latter-day Saints, as reflected in Boyd K. Packer's famous 1993 warning against intellectuals, feminists, and gays.[43]

Meanwhile, occupying a space on the Mormon intellectual spectrum between the new Mormon history and the antimodernism of CES were the antipositivist arguments of Louis Midgley and David Bohn and the work being produced, especially at FARMS, by the cohort Neal A.

Figure 1. The Shifting Mormon Intellectual Spectrum, 1970s-1990s



Maxwell called "faithful Latter-day Saint scholars." Maxwell directly encouraged the work of this cohort through quarterly meetings held, beginning in 1984, with fellow junior apostle and former BYU president Dallin H. Oaks, then-BYU president and future apostle Jeffrey R. Holland, and faculty members from Religious Education, the Smith Institute, and FARMS. Maxwell and Oaks urged LDS scholars to write effective responses to challenges posed by revisionists like George D. Smith or the awkward revelations of the historical documents being "discovered" by Mark Hofmann. Maxwell was particularly supportive of FARMS.[44] Of these four "camps"—revisionists, new Mormon historians, faithful scholars, and antimodernists—the antimodernists were in the strongest position, institutionally, at the end of the 1980s, given that theirs was the dominant orientation at CES. Faithful scholarship, however, was rapidly rising, while the new Mormon history was in retreat.

The early- to mid-1990s were a period of intense contestation in the Mormon intellectual milieu on several fronts. By the time the dust settled, scholars and institutions that embraced faithful scholarship had achieved a dominant status and, with that status, access to material resources and political clout surpassing those of any other camp along the intellectual spectrum. Despite criticism from leading antimodernists at CES, who feared that FARMS's scholarly approach to the Book of Mormon was a

slippery slope away from faith and testimony, FARMS's success at defending orthodoxy and winning a good name for the Church through its contributions to Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship did much to convince Church leaders and members of the value of faithful scholarship.[45] As already noted, the debate between antipositivists and defenders of the new Mormon history ended after 1994, with the antipositivists taking the last word. And a succession of controversies in the early 1990s clarified and enforced the boundaries of orthodoxy in ways that placed revisionism beyond the pale. These boundary-clarifying controversies included attacks by FARMS on revisionist anthologies published by Signature Books, the First Presidency Statement on Symposia, the exposure of the Strengthening Church Members Committee, and the "September Six" excommunications.[46] The stigma attached to *Sunstone,* Signature Books, and, to a lesser degree, *Dialogue* as a result of these controversies encouraged LDS scholars to do their work in venues connected to BYU—primarily FARMS, the Smith Institute, and *BYU Studies*—thus enhancing those venues' importance as centers for Mormon scholarship. The normative force of faithful scholarship was further strengthened by BYU's academic freedom controversy. As BYU President Merrill Bateman explained, the Statement on Academic Freedom implemented by the administration in 1992 reflected a "paradigm" of "faithful scholars involved in extending the frontiers of knowledge."[47]

While rhetoric about "faithful scholarship" was not always perspectivist, the ascendance of faithful-scholarship rhetoric in general did lend greater weight to perspectivist versions of that rhetoric as exemplified by *BYU Studies,* the Smith Institute, and FARMS. A soft-focus pers- pectivist influence was evident as well in the Statement on Academic Freedom. By defining BYU as "an openly and distinctively LDS university" where "faithful Latter-day Saints . . . pursue knowledge from the baseline of religious belief," the statement linked rhetoric about faithful scholarship to the promotion of knowledge grounded in LDS particularity.[48] It is evident from the sources cited in the statement that its authors had encountered the work of Michael W. McConnell and George Marsden, scholars who, in the early 1990s, attempted to turn postmodernism against itself by invoking its pluralist values on behalf of conservative religious perspectives. McConnell's and Marsden's arguments took the form of a protest: that pluralists who championed the distinctive perspectives or worldviews of marginalized groups (women, racial minorities, sexual minorities, colonized peoples)

withheld that same tolerance from religious worldviews—by which McConnell and Marsden meant, more specifically, conservative religious worldviews. Marsden, a fundamentalist Presbyterian by upbringing and lifelong Calvinist, expressed the argument this way in a *First Things* article cited in BYU's Statement on Academic Freedom:

> The post-1960s, postmodernist generation . . . [d]espite their rhetoric of pluralism and their deconstructionist ideologies, . . . behave as though they held Enlightenment-like self-evident universal moral principles. As with the old champions of liberal consensus, they want to eliminate from academia those who do not broadly share their outlook. . . . If in public places like our major universities we are going to operate on the premise that moral judgments are relative to communities, then we should follow the implications of that premise as consistently as we can and not absolutize one, or perhaps a few, sets of opinions and exclude all others. In other words, our pluralism should attempt to be more consistently inclusive, including even traditional Christian views.[49]

Essentially, McConnell and Marsden accused the postmodern academy of reverse discrimination. Both raised the specter of a homogenizing secularism that, by threatening to destroy religious higher education, belied liberal or postmodern professions of pluralism. Writings of Marsden and McConnell—especially McConnell—were influential in shaping the Statement on Academic Freedom's notion of "institutional," as distinct from individual, academic freedom, meaning the imperative to protect the university's distinctive religious identity from secularization. That imperative motivated the dismissal of professors whose work administrators perceived as incompatible with the Church's teachings or standards.

The assertion that the postmodern turn in contemporary scholarship ought to translate into legitimacy for Mormon particularity was echoed by young up-and-coming LDS scholars in the 1990s and 2000s. In a 1995 *Dialogue* article, LDS literary critic Michael Austin invoked the turn toward the particular in literary studies to make a bid for bringing Mormon literature into the American canon alongside other minority literatures. By analogy to the hyphenated designations for other American ethnic groups, Austin coined the expression "Mormo-American" to encapsulate "the claim that we, as Mormons, and particularly as American Mormons, represent a cultural entity whose traditions, heritage, and experience deserve to be considered a vital part of the American mosaic. . . . [A]nyone who doesn't think we deserve our own place in the canon is a

'Mormophobe' whose position should not be taken seriously by an academy that values tolerance, difference, and diversity."[50]

A decade later, LDS graduate students Reid Neilson and Jed Woodworth drew inspiration from George Marsden's argument on behalf of Christian perspectives in the academy as expressed in the postscript to his historical study of secularism in higher education, *The Soul of the American University.* (Marsden had already made the same argument in his *First Things* article quoted in BYU's Statement on Academic Freedom.) Neilson and Woodworth credited Marsden with helping to create "a climate more favorable to religious views than in years past." They were also heartened by a reiteration of Marsden's appeal to particularity made by Marsden's colleague, fellow evangelical historian Grant Wacker, who specifically championed the academic legitimacy of faithful LDS scholarship. "There is no reason," Neilson and Woodworth quoted Wacker as saying, "that a . . . Mormon spin on the past should be any less acceptable in the academic marketplace than a Freudian or Marxist one."[51] A more senior LDS scholar, BYU history professor Grant Underwood, quoted Marsden to assure a largely LDS audience at the 2005 Joseph Smith symposium at the Library of Congress that faithful scholarship was compatible with academic methodologies. "Scholars today," Underwood asserted, claiming Marsden as his example, "do not rule it out as a theoretical possibility" that Joseph Smith was "God's spokesman."[52] Underwood was less interested than Neilson and Woodworth in Marsden's use of postmodernism; but for all three of these LDS scholars, Marsden offered hope that distinctively LDS perspectives could gain a hearing in the contemporary academy.

Ambiguities and Ambivalences

The invocation of Marsden provides an entrance point into exploring the ambiguities and ambivalences that surround faithful scholars' use of postmodernism. Marsden cites the postmodern turn toward positionality to argue that, since postmodern scholars have abandoned Enlightenment pretenses to objectivity and neutrality, "the contemporary academy *on its own terms* has no consistent grounds for rejecting all religious perspectives."[53] That is, the academy cannot exclude religious perspectives without violating the principles it professes to embrace. Simply put, Marsden charges the academy with not playing by its own rules. This is not to say, however, that *Marsden* embraces postmodernism. On the

contrary, Marsden believes that "relativistic postmodern anti-realist naturalism" threatens the moral center of the academy and of society more broadly.[54] Ultimately, Marsden does not want to bring Christian perspectives into the academy in order to enrich a perspectivist kaleidoscope of "truths." Rather, Marsden seeks to bring Christian influence into the academy as part of an ambitious project to make Christ's sovereignty visible over the entire domain of human existence. Like Midgley and Bohn, Marsden enlists postmodern arguments in support of an agenda that is more antimodern than postmodern.[55]

Marsden's opposition to "relativistic postmodern anti-realist naturalism" finds an analogue in a strain of cultural conservatism that, during BYU's academic freedom controversy, advocated faithful scholarship as a counteragent to moral and epistemological relativism. The citation of a number of articles from the journal *First Things* in the Statement of Academic Freedom is one sign of a connection between some versions of faithful-scholarship rhetoric and the "culture wars" of the 1990s, when conservatives moved to check what they perceived as the pernicious excesses of multiculturalism and an oppressive regime of political correctness.[56] The need for BYU to preserve its religious identity in order to resist the trend toward moral relativism in higher education was a key theme of Merrill Bateman's inaugural address as BYU president; Bateman drew heavily from a *First Things* article on the subject by Gertrude Himmelfarb. Provost Bruce Hafen likewise promoted conservative cultural politics when he held up *First Things* as a model for the kind of work he would like to see faithful scholars at BYU produce.[57] A similar politics fueled calls for "faithful criticism" from English professor Richard H. Cracroft, director of BYU's Center for the Study of Christian Values in Literature. The BYU English Department, a hotspot for academic freedom controversies, was deeply divided for and against postmodern modes of critical theory—feminist, multiculturalist, deconstructionist, and so on. Cracroft, who had long been a voice calling for orthodoxy from LDS writers and critics, became strident during the early 1990s in denouncing "Marxism, Deconstructionism, Post-Structuralism, [and] Feminism," together with "immoralism, atheism, nihilism, negativism, perversity, rebelliousness, doubt, disbelief, and disorder." "We need Faithful Critics," Cracroft exclaimed, "who cultivate the presence of the Holy Ghost" and reject the "creeds of secularism."[58] Yet another expression of conservative opposition to postmodernism was BYU law professor Lynn Wardle's complaint,

during the academic freedom controversy, that some faculty wanted to turn BYU "into a bastion of post-modern ideology."[59]

For cultural conservatives in this vein, promoting faithful scholarship at BYU meant taking a stand against deconstruction, identity politics, and the flurry of -isms that threatened to undermine the great moral and intellectual traditions. This was a decidedly *anti*-postmodern version of the faithful scholarship project. But how do the anti-postmodern sentiments voiced by Merrill Bateman, Bruce Hafen, Richard Cracroft, and Lynn Wardle relate to the postmodern bids for legitimacy made by younger scholars such as Michael Austin, Reid Neilson, and Jed Woodworth, or to the loose perspectivism embraced by *BYU Studies,* the Smith Institute, and FARMS? Do they represent opposing LDS attitudes toward postmodernism? Or is the coexistence of these voices symptomatic of a lack of clarity among LDS academicians about the tensions involved in attempting to harness postmodern language and sensitivities in the service of orthodoxy?

When LDS scholars invoke postmodern trends to support faithful scholarship, it is not always clear whether they have somehow reconciled orthodox LDS faith with postmodern understandings of truth as social construction[60]—or whether, like George Marsden, they are simply using the postmodern turn to argue that the academy "*on its own terms*" is obliged to recognize faithful scholarship as legitimate. Richard Bushman seems to hint at the latter option when he describes himself as "tak[ing] advantage of the postmodern moment" for the sake of undermining "positivist science."[61] Elsewhere, though, Bushman comes across as ambivalent about the potential for purchasing academic legitimacy on postmodernism's tab. In a 2001 *BYU Studies* article (later distributed to the media by LDS Public Affairs during the Joseph Smith bicentennial), Bushman recognized that the postcolonialist impulse to see "colonized people on their own terms" had yielded a "broad tolerance" that makes it possible for non-LDS scholars to approach Mormonism sympathetically despite the faith's challenging historical claims. It was thanks to this postmodern tolerance that non-Mormon presses were willing to publish Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* and *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling,* studies that reproduced LDS understandings of the Restoration. But the terms of this sympathy worried Bushman. "By giving in to tolerance," he warned, "there is a danger that Mormonism will be treated like voodoo"—publicly respected, privately dismissed. Repeating a

doubt he had first expressed in the late 1960s, Bushman wondered if perhaps Mormons hadn't been better off back in the days when the historiography of Mormonism was racked by pro- and anti-Mormon polemics. "Wouldn't we prefer," Bushman wrote in 2001, "to be taken seriously enough to be directly opposed rather than condescended to?"[62]

In the field of religious studies, which is the sector of the academy where emerging Mormon studies is finding its institutional home, the postmodern turn has produced a number of trends that, in theory at least, could gain a hearing for orthodox accounts of Mormonism in non-Mormon forums. As Russell McCutcheon, a critic of these trends, has observed, "Postmodern critiques of authority are often appropriated by scholars of religion acting as caretakers and used to legitimize and relativize all contexts; in other words, because we are all contextually bound, or so the argument goes, then all viewpoints deserve equal time in any one discourse."[63] Faithful scholars make their own versions of this move when they cite the postmodern rejection of claims to objectivity and neutrality to legitimize scholarship from an orthodox LDS perspective. LDS scholars making this move have found allies among the "new evangelical historians" like George Marsden, Mark Noll, and Grant Wacker, who model similar arguments to legitimize scholarship from an avowed Christian perspective. Marsden and Wacker have specifically championed the right of faithful LDS scholars to bring their "spin on the past" into the academy.[64] (At the same time, Marsden has expressed reservations about faithful LDS scholarship, discussed below.) Other scholars outside Mormonism have used postmodern critiques of the Enlightenment to push for relaxing the boundaries between theology and religious studies, which, though often conflated by the public, are organized as separate disciplines.[65] In theory, this push could support efforts to bring faithful LDS scholarship into the academic mainstream by bestowing a greater measure of academic authority on the confessional discourses of religious insiders.

The impact of the phenomenology of religion on the field of religious studies, especially during the 1960s, when religious studies departments proliferated, has produced a widespread sense among scholars that they ought to "take seriously" the perspectives of religious insiders or to study religions "on their own terms." Not coincidentally, two of the scholars widely perceived as Mormonism's most sympathetic outsider observers, Jan Shipps and Douglas Davies, self-consciously use phenomenological methods.[66] Although it would be a stretch to call phenomenology of

religion "postmodern," the sympathy it inculcated for religious insiders' own accounts of their traditions has been reinforced in recent decades by intellectual traditions that are indisputably postmodern. Karen McCarthy Brown, author of a highly influential ethnography of Vodou that was influenced by postmodern and feminist critiques of her field's traditional methodologies, argues that scholars have an ethical imperative to allow "the people who are being studied . . . to speak for themselves whenever possible."[67]

Postcolonialism provides another vocabulary for legitimizing insider self-representations. Jewish studies professor Peter Ochs argues that religious studies scholars echo "colonialist behaviors we otherwise disavow" when they "resituate [religious phenomena] within conceptual universes of our own devising." To "repair these colonialist tendencies," Ochs calls upon religious studies scholars to make room in the classroom for religious traditions' self-representations: "how they tend to describe and account for their practices."[68] American religious historian Ann Taves has written of the "danger" that scientific vocabularies for explaining religion will "*subsume* the experience of others into what becomes, in effect, a reified colonizing discourse," thus "violating the lived experience" of the religious.[69] There are affinities between Taves's concern and antipositivist David Bohn's warning that "histories of the Mormon past that seek to account for the sacred in secular terms . . . necessarily do violence to the past they are seeking to re-present."[70] Taves has expressed her commitment to "level[ing] the playing field" between "religious and secular perspectives"[71]—an especially significant statement for faithful scholars given that Taves was a member of the Mormon studies council at Claremont until she left to take a position elsewhere.

While these developments in religious studies may be encouraging to faithful scholars who aspire to greater status for their work, it remains to be seen how far faithful scholars can actually go on the strength of these postmodern trends. As there is ambivalence among faithful scholars about postmodernism, so there is ambivalence among postmodern scholars about faithful Mormon scholarship. Religious studies scholars who champion insider perspectives or a more welcome reception for theology commonly qualify their advocacy with concessions to certain standards of academic rigor, rationality, or plausibility.[72] These standards are not precisely defined. However, they probably rule out orthodox LDS beliefs about Israelite colonies in ancient Mesoamerica and the miraculous trans-

lation of golden plates, judging from the fact that non-Mormon scholars who write on these subjects routinely signal their skepticism in a variety of ways, ranging from overt deprecation to subtle rhetorical distancing.[73] Even George Marsden, who has specifically defended LDS scholars' right to bring assumptions distinctive to their faith to mainstream scholarly venues, draws the line when it comes to claims related to the historicity of the Book of Mormon. "Some of their scholarly concerns," Marsden diplomatically explains, "such as those regarding the ancient Native Americans, may have to be addressed to other Mormon scholars alone." Marsden's advocacy for religious perspectives in scholarship is not prepared to go so far as to argue that non-LDS scholars should have to engage historical claims made by the Book of Mormon.[74] Just how broad is postmodern tolerance, really? The boundaries that emerge from the negotiations involved in establishing Claremont's Mormon studies chair will prove a revealing case in point. Thus, the emergence of Mormon studies has the potential to force clarity among religious studies scholars about the credibility of insider perspectives—or at least will expose the unspoken limits in scholars' willingness to take those perspectives "seriously."

As faithful scholars have run up against those limits, a curious thing has happened. They have adapted by reverting to rhetorical moves reminiscent of the new Mormon history. LDS scholars who move frequently in mainstream academic circles sense what can and cannot be said credibly in those circles. Elsewhere, I have demonstrated that faithful scholars seeking to reproduce an orthodox LDS perspective on the Book of Mormon in scholarship written for non-Mormon audiences (Richard Bushman and Terryl Givens are the leading examples) have always done so in ways that *appear* to disavow intending to actually persuade readers of the truth of this perspective.[75] In 2001, Bushman had asked whether "believing biographers" wouldn't "prefer to have the question of authenticity laid squarely before our readers."[76] But he declined to lay that question squarely before readers of *Rough Stone Rolling,* published three years later. Instead, Bushman told readers that he would be describing events from an LDS perspective—without the "purportedlys" and other qualifiers that had offended critics of the new Mormon history—in order to "reconstruct the beliefs of [Joseph Smith and his] followers as they understood them."[77] This was the familiar project of phenomenology of religion. It was, in fact, the project Jan Shipps had pursued twenty years earlier in

Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition, a project for which she was criticized by Louis Midgley.[78]

Faithful scholars assure each other that the "perspective" of LDS orthodoxy is as legitimate a foundation for scholarship as the perspectives of feminism, Marxism, or any other established variety of critical theory. At the same time, they recognize in practice the extent to which the Enlightenment heritage continues to define the boundaries of credible academic discourse. Furthermore, as the emergence of Mormon studies at non-Mormon institutions prompts faithful scholars to seek common ground with non-Mormon colleagues, faithful scholars have begun to adopt lines similar to those that were criticized in the 1980s and early 1990s by proponents of more conspicuously and militantly LDS approaches to scholarship. When the new Mormon historians sidestepped the prophet/fraud debate in the 1970s and 1980s, Midgley and Bohn denounced this approach as treacherous and epistemologically impossible. In contrast, in 2006 Robert Millet of BYU Religious Education declared himself satisfied that scholars were at least "thinking seriously" about Smith even if they didn't accept him as a prophet. This was a departure from Millet's 1987 insistence that the story of the Latter-day Saints "must be told in the Lord's own way if it is to accomplish what the Savior and his anointed servants have envisioned."[79] In 2004, Richard Bushman described himself as someone who has "to fight on two fronts": against "unbelieving" historians who find his faith absurd and against "self-satisfied" Latter-day Saints who expect their historians to "confir[m] the traditional Mormon view."[80] In representing himself as standing between secularism and uncritical traditionalism, Bushman replicated a move that Leonard Arrington and Thomas Alexander had attempted twenty years earlier, only to encounter much heavier criticism than has fallen on Bushman. Ironically, after defining itself over against the new Mormon history during the 1980s and 1990s in the name of postmodernism, faithful scholarship now shows signs of being pushed by the limits of postmodern tolerance back in the direction of its former foil.

Conclusion

Postmodern appeals among "faithful," or orthodox, LDS scholars have taken two forms. Beginning in 1981, antipositivists such as Louis Midgley and David Bohn deployed antifoundationalist critiques of Enlightenment claims to objectivity as an instrument to undercut the new

Mormon history's efforts to produce scholarship that was neutral vis-à-vis polemics about LDS claims to revelation. The antipositivists argued that, because knowledge is never neutral, LDS historians should abandon efforts "to understand as scholars of any faith or no faith would seek to understand" and should instead embrace the role of defending the faith from naturalistic or secularist attacks. The second kind of postmodern appeal among faithful scholars has been a diffuse perspectivism, expressed in scholars' commitment to working from a distinctively LDS "perspective" or "point of view." This perspectivist rhetoric gained increased currency during the 1990s as a faithful-scholarship orientation became normative and rewarding for Church-affiliated scholars. Echoing arguments by other religious conservatives, LDS perspectivists maintain that, in the postmodern academy, an orthodox Mormon perspective ought to be as acceptable as any other form of epistemological particularity or positionality.

There is no question that the postmodern turn has benefited Mormon studies in the sense that it has generated interest in scholarship on religious minorities. There's also no question that postmodern lines of inquiry could lead to innovative and illuminating Mormon scholarship.[81] How successful postmodern appeals will be at securing academic legitimacy for *faithful* Mormon scholarship is less certain. The uncertainty is due partly to a lack of clarity within religious studies regarding just how seriously scholars should "take seriously" extraordinary claims by religious insiders. The uncertainty is also due to LDS scholars' own unsettled attitudes toward postmodernism. No doubt many faithful scholars find it gratifying to be able to cite canonical postmodern authorities against the Enlightenment rationalism that would dismiss LDS faith as self-evidently absurd. At the same time, most faithful scholars do not appear to share the left-leaning politics that postmodern scholarship usually promotes in practice. Entirely apart from questions of their philosophical consistency, postmodern appeals on behalf of cultural conservatism or religious absolutism are an odd duck, politically speaking.

I suspect that faithful scholars, like other religious conservatives, will find that postmodern appeals work best at assuring intellectually inclined *insiders* of the credibility of the faith and at discomfiting Enlightenment liberals *within* the Mormon community. If even George Marsden balks at admitting faithful scholarship on the Book of Mormon into the mainstream of academic conversation, it would appear that the prevailing

politics of knowledge militates against non-Mormon academicians being persuaded to put orthodox accounts of the Restoration on a par with secular accounts. Even avowed postmoderns can tolerate only so much deconstruction of the Enlightenment edifice within which they have built their careers. The fact that faithful scholars have begun to shift back toward rhetorical moves associated with the new Mormon history—the very moves that antifoundationalists attacked—suggests that faithful scholars must capitulate to secular ground rules more than they might prefer as the price for participating in the academic mainstream, postmodern challenges to the Enlightenment notwithstanding. Leonard Arrington's style of Mormon scholarship may yet see a comeback; Louis Midgley, I imagine, will not be pleased.

Notes

1. Massimo Introvigne, "The Book of Mormon Wars: A Non-Mormon Perspective," in *Mormon Identities in Transition,* edited by Douglas Davies (London: Cassell, 1996), 25–28.

2. Brent Lee Metcalfe, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 155 note 7.

3. For a response by one FARMS scholar to charges of philosophical inconsistency, see William J. Hamblin, "An Apologist for the Critics: Brent Lee Metcalfe's Assumptions and Methodologies," *FARMS Review of Books* 6, no. 1 (1994): 434–523, http://farms.byu.edu/display.php?table=review&id=146 (accessed August 1, 2007); see especially "Metcalfe on Objectivity."

4. John-Charles Duffy, "Defending the Kingdom, Rethinking the Faith: How Apologetics Is Reshaping Mormon Orthodoxy," *Sunstone,* Issue 132 (May 2004): 33.

5. Richard L. Bushman, "Faithful History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1969): 11–25; Neal A. Maxwell, *But for a Small Moment* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 56.

6. Brigham Young University Religious Education, "Frequent Questions," http://religion.byu.edu/students.htm; "Welcome to *The Religious Educator,*" http://www.tre.byu.edu (accessed May 15, 2006).

7. Thomas Docherty, ed., *Postmodernism: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 1.

8. Robert Barksy, "Postmodernity," in *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism,* edited by Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winquist (London: Routledge, 2001), 304–8.

9. For introductions to postmodernism, see Ray Linn, *A Teacher's Introduction to Postmodernism* (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996); Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Arthur Asa Berger, *The Portable Postmodernist* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira Press, 2003); Stuart Sim, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism,* 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 2005).

10. Linn, *A Teacher's Introduction,* 18–21; Berger, *The Portable Postmodernist,* xv.

11. This is, however, an imprecise usage of the term. Strictly speaking, deconstruction is a method of literary analysis that shows how, because of the irreducibly complex nature of language and the instability of the distinctions that people use to organize their conceptual worlds, a text always works against the writer's intended message. Deconstruction is associated principally with Jacques Derrida. See Nicholas Brins, "Deconstruction," in Taylor and Winquist, eds., *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism,* 84–86.

12. Leonard J. Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1966): 20, 24–25; Thomas G. Alexander, "The Place of Joseph Smith in the Development of American Religion: A Historiographical Inquiry," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 3; Thomas G. Alexander, "Toward the New Mormon History: An Examination of the Literature on the Latter-day Saints in the Far West," in *Historians and the American West,* edited by Michael P. Malone (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 347.

13. Ronald W. Walker, "Mormonism's 'Happy Warrior': Appreciating Leonard J. Arrington," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 116; Robert B. Flanders, "Some Reflections on the New Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 35.

14. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976); Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

15. Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 69–70; see also Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience,* xiii.

16. Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience,* xiii.

17. The conception of religion as interior experience is often traced back to Friedrich Schleiermacher, whose classic 1799 text *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers,* translated and edited by Richard Crouter (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), relocated religion from the realm of objective propositions to subjective emotions to shield it from ratio-

nalist debunking. The equation of religion and interior experience became fundamental to liberal Protestant thought.

18. Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), xii; emphasis hers.

19. Shipps, *Mormonism,* x–xii; Jan Shipps, "An 'Inside-Outsider' in Zion," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 142.

20. For an article-length introduction to phenomenology of religion, see Douglas Allen, "Phenomenology of Religion," in *Encyclopedia of Religion,* edited by Lindsay Jones, 2d ed., 15 vols. (Detroit, Mich.: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 10:7086–7101. For a more extensive overview, see Summer B. Twiss and Walter H. Conser, Jr., eds., *Experience of the Sacred: Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion* (Hanover, N.H.: Brown University Press, 1992). "Bracketing" and other key concepts in phenomenology of religion are derived from the phenomenology of philosopher Edmund Husserl, who developed those concepts as part of a revival of Descartes's search for the indubitable. Husserl aimed to apprehend reality as it is, prior to all theories or presuppositions. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology,* translated by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960).

21. David E. Bohn, "No Higher Ground: Objective History Is an Allusive Chimera," *Sunstone,* Issue 39 (May–June 1983): 27–28.

22. Neal W. Kramer, "Looking for God in History," *Sunstone,* Issue 37 (January-April 1983): 16–17; Bohn, "No Higher Ground," 31.

23. Midgley's opening salvo against the new Mormon history was read at a meeting of the Western History Association but never published. My Midgley quotations are from Clayton's article: James L. Clayton, "Does History Undermine Faith?" *Sunstone,* Issue 32 (March-April 1982): 33.

24. Louis Midgley, "Faith and History," in "*To Be Learned Is Good, If . . .*," edited by Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 219–26; Louis Midgley, "The Challenge of Historical Consciousness: Mormon History and the Encounter with Secular Modernity," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday,* edited by John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1990), 2:502–51; Louis Midgley, "The Shipps Odyssey in Retrospect," Review of *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition,* by Jan Shipps, *FARMS Review* 7, no. 2 (1995): 219–52; David E. Bohn, "Our Own Agenda: A Critique of the Methodology of the New Mormon History," *Sunstone,* Issue 77 (June 1990): 45–49; David E. Bohn, "The Larger Issue," *Sunstone,* Issue 94 (February 1994): 45–63; David B. Honey and Daniel C. Peterson, "Advocacy and Inquiry in the Writing of Latter-day Saint History," *BYU Studies* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 139–79.

25. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

26. Boyd K. Packer, "The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 259–78.

27. Kenneth L. Woodward, "Apostles Vs. Historians," *Newsweek,* February 15, 1982, 77. For Arrington's account, see Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian,* chaps. 9–10.

28. Lavina Fielding Anderson, "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 20–22; Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 182–83; Devery S. Anderson, "A History of *Dialogue,* Part Three: 'Coming of Age' in Utah, 1982–1998," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 15–19.

29. A *Sunstone* staffer reported that "a number of historians" had resorted "to great lengths to discourage" the magazine from publishing Bohn's 1983 essay. Scott C. Dunn, "So Dangerous It Couldn't Be Talked About," *Sunstone,* Issue 42 (November–December 1983): 47–48. Bohn later alleged that the new Mormon historians used their influence to try to block the political scientists from publishing in *Dialogue* and *Journal of Mormon History* or, failing that, to at least censor the names of the Mormon historians being criticized. Bohn, "Our Own Agenda," 48 note 1; Bohn, "Larger Issue," 59 note 4.

30. Thomas G. Alexander, "Historiography and the New Mormon History: A Historian's Perspective," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 3 (Fall 1986): 25–49.

31. M. Gerald Bradford, "The Case for the New Mormon History: Thomas G. Alexander and His Critics," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 143–50. See also the acknowledgement that new Mormon historians and their antipositivist critics "talked past each other." Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen, eds., *Mormon History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 111 note 185.

32. The last attempts to defend the new Mormon history were Malcolm Thorp, "Some Reflections on New Mormon History and the Possibilities of a 'New' Traditional History," *Sunstone,* Issue 85 (November 1991): 39–46; and Marvin S. Hill, "Positivism or Subjectivism? Some Reflections on a Mormon Historical Dilemma," *Journal of Mormon History* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 1–23.

33. Alan Goff, "The Mormon *Positivismusstreit:* [positivism debate] Modern Vs. Postmodern Approaches to Telling the Story of Mormonism," in *Telling the Story of Mormon History: Proceedings of the 2002 Symposium of the Jo-*

seph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History at Brigham Young University, edited by William G. Hartley (Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Institute for Latter-day Saint History, 2004), 49–64.

34. I take the term "antimodern" from Mauss, *Angel and the Beehive,* 98. The term is synonymous with "fundamentalist" as that word is used in reference to conservative Protestantism.

35. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian,* 187–88. The history in question was the History Division's *The Mormon Experience,* authored by Arrington and Davis Bitton (though with the participation of most of Arrington's colleagues); Packer approved *The Mormon Experience* for publication.

36. Maxwell, *But for a Small Moment,* 56; see also Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple's Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 509.

37. Mission statement, *BYU Studies* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 4.

38. Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, "Welcome," http://smithinstitute.byu.edu/welcome.asp (accessed May 15, 2006).

39. Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, "About FARMS," http://farms.byu.edu/aboutfarms.php (accessed April 1, 2004).

40. Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience,* xiii; Honey and Peterson, "Advocacy and Inquiry," 166–67. The article by Honey and Peterson came as close as anything in print to accusing Arrington of wanting to sidestep Mormon claims to revelation in his historiography because he did not personally believe those claims.

41. Like all maps, my discussion of "camps" along the Mormon intellectual spectrum simplifies for the sake of intelligible generalizations. My categories are not all-encompassing: not all LDS scholars can be neatly assigned to one of these "camps." Still, I trust these categories are helpful as signposts indicating the range of positions and approaches that developed within the Mormon intellectual milieu while at the same time identifying the fault lines along which major controversies developed.

42. Edward H. Ashment, "The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham: A Reappraisal," *Sunstone,* Issue 17–18 (December 1979): 33–48; George D. Smith, "'Is There Any Way to Escape These Difficulties?' The Book of Mormon Studies of B. H. Roberts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 94–111; Dan Vogel, *Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon: Religious Solutions from Columbus to Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986); Dan Vogel, ed., *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990); Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (Salt Lake

City: Signature Books, 1993); D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987). I place Quinn among the revisionists because of the controversy produced by *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* and because of his editorship of an anthology of "revisionist" historical writings: *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992). However, Quinn stands out from the other revisionists I have listed in that he professes to believe in Mormon supernatural claims, whereas the others appear to embrace a naturalistic, rationalistic outlook that could with some justice be called positivist.

43. "Elder Packer Names Gays/Lesbians, Feminists, and 'So-Called' Scholars Three Main Dangers," *Sunstone,* Issue 45 (November 1993): 74–75.

44. Hafen, *A Disciple's Life,* 509–11; Anderson, "A History of *Dialogue:* Part 3," 30–32.

45. On the tensions between prominent BYU Religious Education faculty and writers for FARMS, see Duffy, "Defending the Kingdom," 30–31. On FARMS's incorporation into BYU as a "stamp of approval" from Church leaders, see Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 152–53.

46. Eugene England, "Healing and Making Peace—In the World and the Church," *Sunstone,* December 1991, 38; Daniel C. Peterson, "Editor's Introduction: Questions to Legal Answers," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): vii–lxxvi; "Church Issues Statement on 'Symposia,'" *Sunstone,* October 1991, 58–59; Bryan Waterman and Brian Kagel, *The Lord's University: Freedom and Authority at BYU* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), chap. 7.

47. Merrill J. Bateman, "A Zion University and the Search for Truth," address to the BYU Annual University Conference, Provo, Utah, August 25, 1997, http://speeches.byu.edu/reader/reader.php?id=419 (accessed August 1, 2007).

48. Brigham Young University, "Statement on Academic Freedom at BYU," September 14, 1992, http://fc.byu.edu/tpages/tchlrn/acadfree.html (accessed August 1, 2007), point IB1.

49. George M. Marsden, "The Soul of the American University," *First Things*, January 1991, 34–47, http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=5665 (accessed August 1, 2007). See also Michael W. McConnell, "God Is Dead and We Have Killed Him: Freedom of Religion in the Post-Modern Age," *Brigham Young University Law Review,* Winter 1993, 163–88; George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

50. Michael Austin, "The Function of Mormon Literary Criticism at the Present Time," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 134.

51. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth, eds., Introduction, in *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays, by Richard L. Bushman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), x–xi.

52. Grant Underwood, "Attempting to Situate Joseph Smith," in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress,* edited by John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2006), 46–47.

53. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea,* 30; emphasis his.

54. Ibid.

55. I should in fairness acknowledge that Marsden's theology is more complex than this brief summary can convey. I have analyzed more fully the intersection of Marsden's theological views with his intellectual politics, especially vis-à-vis postmodernism, in an unpublished conference paper, "Mark Noll's God: The Theology and Politics of Evangelical Historiography," Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion Regional Meeting, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, March 12, 2005, available online at http://www.unc.edu/~jcduffy/noll.pdf.

56. "Statement on Academic Freedom at BYU," note 11. On the culture wars in general, see James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); on the culture wars in relation to Mormon intellectual controversies, see Waterman and Kagel, *The Lord's University,* chap. 10.

57. Waterman and Kagel, *The Lord's University,* 384–88, 430–31.

58. Richard H. Cracroft, "Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide in LDS Literature," *Sunstone,* July 1993, 52, 56.

59. Quoted in Waterman and Kagel, *The Lord's University,* 387.

60. An example of an LDS scholar who does clearly make a move toward reconciling postmodernism with LDS faith is Alan Goff. During a presentation given as part of the same MHA panel at which I read an earlier version of this article, Goff linked a postmodern sense of the limitations of human knowledge to the scriptural assertion that "we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12). Alan Goff, "Modernity, Its Second Coming as Postmodernism, and Modern History: Slouching toward Salt Lake City," Mormon History Association Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah, May 25, 2007.

61. Bushman, *Believing History,* 37.

62. Richard Bushman, "A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-first Century," *BYU Studies* 40, no. 3 (2001): 161.

63. Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 74.

64. Robert Orsi, George Marsden, David Wills, and Colleen McDannell, "Forum: The Decade Ahead in Scholarship," *Religion and American Culture* 3 (1993): 11; Grant Wacker, "Understanding the Past, Using the Past: Reflections on Two Approaches to History," in *Religious Advocacy and American History,* edited by Bruce Kuklick and D. G. Hart (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 178. "Spin on the past" is Wacker's phrase.

65. Linell E. Cady and Delwin Brown, eds., *Religious Studies, Theology, and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); Paul J. Griffiths, "On the Future of the Study of Religion in the Academy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 66–74.

66. Shipps, "An 'Inside-Outsider' in Zion," 142; see also her *Mormonism,* x–xii; Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation* (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2000), 14–16.

67. Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn,* expanded ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 14.

68. Peter Ochs, "Comparative Religious Traditions," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 126.

69. Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 9, 353.

70. Bohn, "The Larger Issue," 46.

71. Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions,* 11.

72. See, for example, Ellen T. Armour, "Theology in Modernity's Wake," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 11; Delwin Brown, "Academic Theology in the University, or Why an Ex-Queen's Heir Should Be Made a Subject," in Cady and Brown, eds., *Religious Studies, Theology, and the University,* 134; Linell E. Cady, "Territorial Disputes: Religious Studies and Theology in Transition," in ibid., 122; Gavin Flood, "Reflections on Tradition and Inquiry in the Study of Religions," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 48, 54.

73. I have documented this observation at length in John-Charles Duffy, "Just How 'Scandalous' Is the Golden Plates Story? Academic Discourse on the Origin of the Book of Mormon," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 142–65.

74. Orsi, Marsden, Wills, and McDannell, "Forum: The Decade Ahead," 11. LDS assumptions that Marsden deems appropriate for work ad-

dressed to the larger scholarly community are LDS scholars' "beliefs in deities or in Mormon moral values."

75. Duffy, "Just How 'Scandalous' Is the Golden Plates Story?" 154–58.

76. Bushman, "A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-first Century," 161.

77. Richard L. Bushman with the assistance of Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), xxi–xxii.

78. Midgley, "The Shipps Odyssey in Retrospect."

79. Robert L. Millet, as quoted in Carrie A. Moore, "LDS Founder's Life, Legacy Explored," *Deseret News,* March 24, 2006, printout in my possession; Robert L. Millet, "How Should Our Story Be Told?" in Millet, ed., "*To Be Learned Is Good, If . . .*," 2.

80. Bushman, *Believing History,* viii, 281–82.

81. See, for example, Joanna Brooks's sadly neglected essay, "Prolegomena to Any Future Mormon Studies," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 125–39.

Shadows on the Sun Dial: John E. Page and the Strangites

William Shepard

William Wine Phelps, an influential Mormon high priest at Nauvoo, Illinois, wrote a long emotional letter on Christmas Day in 1844 which praised Mormonism, the martyred Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, Smith's deceased brothers (Hyrum, Don Carlos, and Samuel), and current Mormon leaders. He also composed pseudonyms for the twelve apostles, the group which assumed the leadership of the Mormon Church following Joseph Smith's death, pseudonyms which became associated with the twelve men. For example, he described Brigham Young as "the lion of the Lord," Orson Hyde as "the olive branch of Israel," and John E. Page as "the sun dial."[1]

It is not known why Phelps labeled Page "the sun dial." Whatever the reason, there is no question that, as one of the martyred Prophet's incumbent apostles, Page occupied a position of high respect and influence. Yet for many reasons, Page was not destined to remain in harmony with the majority of his fellow apostles. This article follows the career of John E. Page from the death of Joseph Smith in 1844 to his own death in 1867, with particular emphasis on Page's little-known and generally misunderstood four-year association with James J. Strang, who claimed the mantle of the martyred prophet Joseph Smith. In his post-Strang years, Page associated himself successively with two other claimants to Joseph Smith's authority, James C. Brewster and Granville Hedrick.

Two important elements that provide context are Page's stormy relationship with Orson Hyde and Page's inability to magnify his calling as one of the Twelve during Joseph Smith's final years. Of particular note is Page's desire to have his temporal needs met by Church members, a con-

tentious matter that soured his relationship with his associates both before and after the death of Joseph Smith.

Page is mostly remembered as the apostle who failed to accompany Orson Hyde on a mission to dedicate Palestine for the return of the Jews to their homeland. He is also considered an apostate by many Mormons because he was excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (labeled "Brighamites" in those contentious times when a single label no longer sufficed) for accepting Strang (whose followers were labeled "Strangites") as the only legitimate head of the Mormon Church.

The Hyde-Page odyssey began when a letter written by Hyde was published in the April 1840 *Times and Seasons,* a Mormon newspaper at Nauvoo, Illinois, announcing that fellow apostles Hyde and Page had been authorized by a general conference to undertake the previously mentioned mission.[2] Hyde heroically made his way to Palestine where he performed the required dedication and earned the admiration of the Saints, who built him a house at Nauvoo in June 1843.[3]

The fact that Page did not fulfill the assignment to accompany Hyde on this mission led many Mormons to question his dedication. When he published a request in the July 16, 1845, *Nauvoo Neighbor* that the Saints build him a modest, two-story brick home with "a good cellar, wood shed and well" at Nauvoo, the Saints made no effort to do so.[4] At this point, it was a little more than a year since Joseph's death, the Saints were under pressure to leave the area, and their attention, labor, and resources were concentrated on completing the temple.

This request by Page was not uncharacteristic. A study of his life after 1838 provides other evidence that he believed the Church should support him temporally. For example, when Ezra T. Benson, later an apostle, visited him at Pittsburgh in 1842 or 1843 and mentioned that he had traveled by the cheap but uncomfortable form of deck passage on a steamer, Page flared up: "He [also] had done so but shouldn't do so any more," as Benson reported his defensive comments, "for he had labored faithfully [in the service of the Church] eight years, and he considered the Church owed him a living, and should travel after this in cabins and eat warm meals."[5]

A second example is a letter that Page sent from Nauvoo to Strang at Voree (now Burlington), Wisconsin, on February 1, 1846. It is replete with references to his past missionary successes, demands for support by others, self-pity, and jealousy:

> I have been incessantly employed in the vineyard, and have baptized more than one thousand souls. I began my work in extreme Poverty, and have suffered every privation imaginable, my family has been drag[g]ed through an Earthly hell in my absence, and I am as poor and destitute as when I first entered into the ministry. I have served this people in all diligence for ten years past, thinking most implicitly, that when ever I should return to any of the stakes of Zion to settle I should be reciprocated by the Church and its authorities and be sustained in my capacity equal with my brethren of the same calling. . . . [M]y brethren of the same quorum appear to enjoy a reasonable plenty to sustain them in their capacity. I do not say they have too much, but I do say, that I do not have enough.[6]

In his excellent biography of Strang, Milo M. Quaife printed a large portion of this letter and concluded that Page's mental state "presented a severe case of inferiority complex."[7] While I would not disagree, I would more charitably add "burn-out" to Quaife's conclusion. But in either case, Page's assertion that the Church owed him a living reveals what is certainly an unattractive attitude.

Factors which caused Page to reject Brigham Young included this belief that others should provide for him, his inability to tolerate criticism, and his belief that his past missionary labors exempted him from further missionary efforts. Added to these problems, Page continued to engage in self-pity—not a trait Young was likely to accommodate. Further, he was uncomfortable with Young as an individual and believed that the apostles did not have the authority to head the Church. The apostles were to preach the gospel outside the stakes, not govern the Church. The person to preside over the Church, according to Page, had to be a single successor, called by Joseph and ordained by angels. Although Page accepted Strang as Joseph Smith's successor and followed him for more than two years, several of the factors that caused him to reject Young also made conflict inevitable with Strang.

In essence, Page seemed to be struggling to retain his faith in, and allegiance, to a system of religion which required sacrifice and obedience, whether it was Joseph Smith's, Brigham Young's, or James Strang's. He would leave Strang as he had left Brigham Young, complaining that his former brethren had been rejected by God and that he was a victim of their malfeasance.

The Pre-Strang Period

Page was born February 25, 1799, in Trenton Township, Oneida County, New York, to Ebenezer and Rachel Page and claimed to be of

English, Irish, and Welsh extraction.[8] He was baptized on August 18, 1833, at Brownhelm, Lorain County, Ohio, by Emer Harris (Martin's brother) and was ordained an elder the following month by Nelson Higgins. In May 1836, he moved to Kirtland, Ohio, with his wife Lorain (also sometimes called Lavonia). The following year, he began an eight-month mission to Ontario, Canada, during which he baptized more than three hundred.[9] After a brief stay in Kirtland, he returned to Ontario in February 1837 with his wife and two sons; there he repeated his 1836 success by baptizing a similar number of converts. These missions marked the high point of Page's ministry, making him the leading missionary in British North America.[10] By his own account, he traveled more than "five thousand miles, principally on foot and under the most extreme poverty."[11]

Page left Ontario in May 1838 with a company of Missouri-bound Mormons and arrived at DeWitt in Carroll County in the first week of October. While this grueling trip was taking place, Joseph Smith received a revelation at Far West, Missouri, on July 8, which called Page, Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, and John Taylor to become apostles and specified that they would depart from the Far West temple site on April 26, 1839, "to go over the great waters [to England], and there promulgate my [Christ's] gospel" (D&C 118:4–6). After arriving at DeWitt, the Page family and the other Mormons were besieged by 400 hostile Gentiles.[12] The destitute Mormons surrendered on October 11, then struggled to reach Far West in Caldwell County where even more intense persecution followed. Here Lorain and their two children, Ephraim and George, died from hunger and exposure or, as Page put it, from "the want of the common comforts of life."[13]

Ebenezer Page, John's brother, was also caught up in the turmoil at Far West, arrested, and told he would be shot the next morning. At the appointed time, according to Ebenezer's account, John joined him at the Far West square. When Ebenezer was called forward, "my brother John put his hand on my shoulder and said, we two share alike: we have buried each a wife in this place, and if we follow them our trials will be over; if you are shot I will avenge your blood." Ebenezer was not shot but was marched with others to Richmond, Missouri, through deep snow with his "toes out" of his broken shoes and was forced to sleep two nights in the snow without a blanket. He said he was incarcerated in the Richmond Jail for five weeks "with no other bed than a brick floor, but little or no fire. I got froze, and my toe nails came off."[14]

John Page was among the poverty-stricken Mormons who were driven from Missouri in late 1838. He found refuge with the Judd family, whom he had converted in Canada, near Warsaw, Illinois. Although it is not possible to know with certainty how the deaths of his wife and children affected Page, it seems likely that this sad event undercut his zeal, lessening his emotional and physical ability to make heroic sacrifices for the Church. Still, he joined other apostles in slipping back quietly to Far West where Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball ordained him an apostle at the temple site on December 19.[15] He returned to Warsaw where he married Mary Judd, nineteen years his junior, in January 1839. He did not accompany his fellow apostles to England in 1839, pleading poverty and personal difficulties.[16] William Smith, another apostle and one of Joseph Smith's brothers, also did not fulfill this mission for reasons similar to Page's. Since other England-bound apostles went in spite of their own penury and illness, Page's and William Smith's reasons were probably received somewhat skeptically.

Following a brief sojourn in Illinois, Page went to the eastern states in April 1840, after receiving the conference assignment of his co-mission to the Holy Land. Evidently, some Page letters in the early part of his eastern activities were deemed "abusive." The Nauvoo High Council conducted an examination and determined that Page "was unanimously approved"—meaning exonerated.[17] He was raising funds for this mission, he said, but later claimed that a series of circumstances beyond his control prevented him from following through. He also claimed that Hyde took all of the available money with him.[18] Page wrote Joseph Smith on September 1, 1841, complaining that Hyde had even "raised money for some land purpose-es [purchases] to some considerable extent besides sending some hansome suplys to his family where as I have not sent one cent though I . . . am poor as poor can be." He added suspiciously: "But I do think that any man that would treat me with that neglect that Elder Hyde has me he would betray me in a more critical hour if by so doing he could save his own life."[19] Page attended the general conference at Nauvoo in April 1842 to defend himself for failing to accompany Hyde; after a hearing, he retained his apostleship, although Joseph Smith said he had "shown a little granneyism" and "should have stuck by Elder Hyde." According to the conference minutes, "A vote was then put and carried that we hold Elder Page in full fellowship."[20]

Despite the confirming vote, Joseph Smith was less than pleased

and roundly criticized Page in an address to the Relief Society three weeks later when he singled him out as one of the "aspiring Elders" who had "trampled" him "under foot."[21] Joseph Smith III, then a boy of about ten, later recalled that his father sent him with Page to procure an item from Page's rented house. Joseph III described it as a "small affair, located on a sandy lot" that was "within sight of the fine homes occupied by some of the Apostles." According to Smith, Page told him "with deep feeling": "Do you think it is just? You know what a fine house Elder Brigham Young has, what a big mansion Heber C. Kimball has, and what a cozy little cottage Elder Hyde has." Joseph III acknowledged that the houses of Young, Kimball, and Hyde had been built with "church monies."[22]

Page returned to the eastern states with his priesthood intact in late 1842 and presided over the Church at Pittsburgh until mid-1843. While there, he published the newspaper *The Gospel Light* and two pamphlets, *Slander Refuted* and *The Spaulding Story.* He also performed Church duties in Cincinnati, New York, Boston, and Washington, where he published a pamphlet: *An Address to the Inhabitants and Sojourners of Washington.* However, his activities in the East did not please Joseph Smith, who on April 28, 1843, told other members of the Quorum of the Twelve: "As for John Page I want him to be called away from Pittsburg, a good elder to take his place. If he stays there much longer he will get so as to sleep with his granny he is so self righteous. When he asked to go back there, he was going to tear up all Pittsburg; and he cannot even get money enough to pay postage on his letters—or make us a visit."[23] (There is no record that Joseph had asked Page to visit Nauvoo.) D. Michael Quinn indicates that Page "was [on] a political mission [in] 1844."[24] Evidently, Page preferred living in the eastern states where he was not immediately subordinate to others and where the members were apparently more willing to underwrite him and his publishing ventures.

The Strang Period

Shortly after Joseph Smith's murder, Page was directed to return to Nauvoo after "publishing the news" of Smith's death in eastern cities "and getting as many in the Church as possible."[25] Over a year later, Page responded, reaching Nauvoo in December 1845. He was promptly appointed president of the Nauvoo Water Power Company and a member of the Council of Fifty, which Joseph had instituted and which Brigham carried on. He and Mary received their temple endowments on December

10, 1845.[26] Page became a polygamist at Nauvoo when he married Lois and Rachael Judd, Mary's sisters (date unknown).[27] However, despite these apparent marks of integration, by February 1846, he had investigated and accepted Strang's succession claims.

Strang, a recent convert to Mormonism, claimed that, shortly before Joseph Smith's murder, the founding prophet had sent him a letter appointing Strang as Joseph's successor. Furthermore, at the time of Smith's death, an angel conferred upon him priesthood authority which made him a prophet, seer, revelator, and translator. He also claimed that an angel revealed to him the location of ancient records which were buried on a hill near his residence at Burlington, Wisconsin. After having four of his followers dig them up, Strang said he translated them using the Urim and Thummin. He represented "primitive" Mormonism to a significant number of Mormons who believed that he alone met all of the succession laws established through revelation by Smith.[28]

In January 1846, Strang sent a well-respected follower, Reuben Miller, to Nauvoo with a summons which ordered the Twelve to cease their "usurpation" and appear before him at Voree by April 1. After listening to the testimonies of Miller and other Strangites and studying the first two issues of Strang's newspaper, the *Voree Herald,* Page signaled his acceptance of Strang in a letter to Strang on February 1.[29] Page then boldly preached about Strang's appointment, ordination, and ministry to his fellow Mormons. Mary Page later told their son Justin that, when his father "found the corruption that was going on" (meaning polygamy and the temple endowment), he warned the populace "of the awful destructions that would surely overtake a people who would advocate and practice such corruption going on there."[30] Yet Page, of course, as a polygamist and an endowment recipient, engaged in these "corruptions" himself.

Strang expected that Page would speedily move to Voree to help convert the Brighamites. Instead, Page wrote him on February 1: "I cannot see the necessity of such a visit," adding that such a displacement would be inconvenient because his wife's widowed sister lived with them.[31] Brigham Young removed fellowship from Page on February 9, 1846, citing as causes of Page's apostasy his failure go to Palestine with Orson Hyde, his "murmuring disposition," and his withdrawal from quorum activities.[32] Norton Jacobs, who believed Page was an apostate, wrote in his journal on March 1: "John E. Page . . . had been declareing himself opposed to the course of the Brethren. Br Hide replyd to him in such a

way as to show that he [Page] had been remiss in his duty ever since he undertook to go with Elder Hide to Jerusalem." Jacob added that, when Page's name was presented for the congregation's sustaining vote in Nauvoo on March 1, "only a few Strangites" voted in his favor.[33] Thomas Bullock, a supporter of Brigham Young, wrote in his journal on the same day: "John E. Page turned Strangite. Preached a Strang Sermon and O. Hyde whipt him on every argument he brought forward."[34]

Two days later, according to Young's *Manuscript History,* Page spoke in favor of Strang outside the Nauvoo Temple and, when Hyde criticized him, retorted, "I will go to hell sooner than take abuse."[35] Bullock recorded this encounter, adding that Page said he was proud "of being cons[idered] an apostate." Page defined his apostasy by saying: "the 1st pres.[ident] must rece[ive] rev[elations] & direct the 12 wherever they shall go—here is my apostasy." He added that the "rev[elation] says he [Joseph Smith] would app.[oint] ano[ther] in his stead" and that Hyde told him that "the Book of D.[octrine] and C.[ovenants] is not to guide the Ch[urch]." Hyde rebutted Page's claim that Strang was the appointed "other" by recounting: "There was an aid de camp present with Joseph" on June 18, 1844, the day he supposedly wrote Strang's "Letter of Appointment" and "no Lre [letter] co[uld] have been written—is it not curious that he never told any one of the 12."[36]

Page and other Strangites held a meeting March 8, 1846, which Bullock described contemptuously as "a begging sermon." The hat they passed for a collection "was returned with a few coppers, buttons, chips, and bits of stick."[37] Bullock recorded on March 12 a report "that C.[harles] W.[esley] Wandell had written the supposed record of Chardolmas which John E. Page preached about on Sunday last and [was] supposed to be translated by J. J. Strang."[38] Three days later, according to Bullock, Hyde, the presiding Brighamite authority at Nauvoo, "read a Revelation which was given him this morning by the Spirit and distributed them [sic] to the congregation."[39]

Page wrote Strang on March 12 from Nauvoo, where he was living with a "Brother and Sister Webster."[40] He told Strang that he feared his own life was in danger and warned, "I think it would not be safe for your person to come here at present." He then pledged Strang his full allegiance: "I therefore say in true sincerity of heart . . . that I am fully persuaded that *you are* the man to fill the place of Joseph Smith as *Prophet*—Seer—and Translator to the church."[41]

Page was so unnerved by the real or perceived danger that he left Nauvoo by night, date unknown, but sometime before late May.[42] Justin Page informed Wilford Poulson that John's brother, Ebenezer Page had warned: "Don't go to the Temple, for your life is in danger . . . [T]he order was given to 'Box up the Sundial and send it down the river.'"[43]

Page attended the Strangite conference at Voree on April 6–7, 1846, and was accepted as an apostle after he disassociated himself from the "Transactions of the Twelve Apostles in their corruption."[44] At the trial where Strang excommunicated the apostles who had not obeyed his orders to come to Voree, Page testified that Heber C. Kimball had built his fine home at Nauvoo by using tithing funds and that Hyde had given orders to have him (Page) killed.[45] Following the conference, Page accompanied Strang and others to visit believers at Norway, LaSalle County, Illinois.[46]

The following month, Page said, he "visited and traveled with" Strang and "minutely investigated" the evidence for and against him. He concluded: "I have been compelled to acknowledge him as a Prophet of God, placed at the head of this dispensation." Page listed his reasons: "Because he [Strang] alone claims the authority according to the Laws of God." Strang "teaches sound and Godly doctrines"; his "teachings carry with them the witness of the Spirit"; he "produces the proper works of a Seer"; he "receives revelations from God"; and "his conduct is fitting to that high calling."[47]

Page was excommunicated from the Brighamite Church on June 26, 1846.[48] Strang desperately needed someone of Page's stature to endorse him and to undertake missions in his behalf. He urged Page to move immediately to Voree, Wisconsin; but instead Page settled at Elgin, Kane County, Illinois. His reason for doing so is unknown but suggests that difficulties plagued his relationship with Strang from the start. Differences over polygamy would certainly be a candidate for causing tensions.

Still, Strang repeatly requested that Page minister or preside in branches in the United States and England, suggesting how valuable Page was in his estimation. However, Page refused to preach outside Kane County. Samuel Shaw, a Strangite official at Elgin, where Page resided, complained to Strang in June 1846: "The Brethren here Do all they are able for Brother Page and have Subscribed liberal to assist him and enough to make his family comfortable But I Do think he is too particular

and ask[s] too much of the Bethern[. I]t seems to me that unless he can have things just so he wont go a step on his mission and I can prophesy to you and the Saints that unless John E. Page humbles himself Before the Lord and Sees himself more than he Does now he will not Be any benefit to the Church."[49] As if in self-defense, Page wrote Strang from Elgin in July: "To all that think I can do more good by preaching, then by laboring with my hands, I have only to say, the '*needful*' is necessary for food, and raiment, whether obtained by preaching, or laboring, with the hands; a word to the wise is sufficient."[50]

Page's situation was clouded not only by poverty but also by ill health. (He suffered for years with asthma, although it is not clear when this ailment became debilitating.) The *Voree Herald* of October 1846, then edited by John Greenhow, announced: "Elder John E. Page has suffered long and painful sickness this past season, and is just getting in health again. A little assistance would bring him again into a rich field of usefulness, where his talents eminently qualify him for success."[51] Two months later, Greenhow referred to Page in *Zion's Reveille,* the newspaper which superseded the *Voree Herald,* as "the venerable president of the college of Apostles" and editorialized: "We hope the Church will soon relieve him from all penury embarrassments so as to enable him to take apostolic charge."[52]

On New Year's Day 1847, Page again defended his declining to take the missions that Strang was pressing on him: "You spoke of Elder G. J. Adams going from Cincinnati to Boston without a cent in his pocket. It means if he could do so, so could J. E. P . . . . [W]hen all things are soberly considered, I must attend to my self and family until the providence of God shall rule in my favor." Despite this refusal, however, Page accepted Strang's invitation for him to preside over the Twelve Apostles and promised to turn his face "towards Voree."[53]

Greenhow printed a February 11 letter from Page in the *Gospel Herald,* which he introduced with a reminder of the good services which Page could render the Strangite Church if he commanded sufficient means: "We have received three letters of Philadelphia since we left there, requesting Brother Page to take apostolic charge there; now as soon as he can be furnished necessary funds it will be seen he is not only at their service but the service of the whole church." In the letter, Page stressed that his "pecunary [sic] embarrassments" were such that unless "a kind providence throws something in our hands sufficient to lift us up out of our present

'embarrassments' the Church must not expect much at our hands in the capacity in which they expect us to serve them." Rather more positively, he affirmed his belief in Strang: *"As for President Strang, he carries with him, in all his deportment and proceedings all the evidence of his divine calling that President Joseph ever did*." Page attacked the ex-Strangites at Voree, derisively called "pseudoes," and accused them of being "so blind as not to see the folly and illegality of your entire course, having established no *affirmative* according to the law of God through Joseph, the first president and prophet of the church."[54]

Only a few weeks later, Page reiterated his support for Strang, asserting at the April 6–8, 1847, conference that he was "the only man now living that presents his claims, as the Book of Doctrine and Covenants warrants. . . . If Christ did not, '*through Joseph,* appoint' [another in his stead] there is not a man appointed. If Christ has not sent an angel to ordain a successor to Joseph, he has not got a successor on this earth."[55]

At an unknown date between February and April, Page had fulfilled his promise to move to Voree. On April 22, 1847, the *Reveille* announced: "Elder John E. Page wishes his correspondents to direct their communications to Voree, Wis., Post Paid, as he has taken up his resident [sic] there for a season."[56] According to an undated bishop's report, Page's brother Ebenezer moved him to Voree, submitting a bill to the Church for $19.25.[57]

The conference had appointed Page to go on a mission to England and Scotland "if his circumstances will admit." A conference resolution read: "That this conference raise by donation the means necessary to remove John E. Page and Mother [Lucy Mack] Smith to Voree in pursuance of their expressed desires."[58]

Zion's Reveille was not printed between April 22 and June 2, 1847, due to Greenhow's sudden resignation as editor. Strang, who desperately needed help with the newspaper, resumed the editorship, but Page filled in during Strang's absences. This responsibility was apparently more to his liking than missionary work, for he diligently attempted to increase the number of subscribers, wrote clear doctrinal articles that are still valued by twenty-first-century Strangites, answered doctrinal questions, preached the importance of gathering to Voree and Beaver Island, and defended the Church against its critics. As there is no record that Page had traditional employment, he may have lived off the limited support he received from his newspaper duties and/or received some assistance from

the Voree Order of Enoch. In any event, he repeatedly made it known that this support was not sufficient. Furthermore, grief struck Page and Mary when their eighteen-month-old son, Justin Enoch, died at Voree in July 1847.

July also found Page defending Strang against former apostle William E. McLellin who taught that Joseph Smith had, in 1834, ordained David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, to become the Church's future president.[59] Ironically, while Strang was away from Voree in July and August, Page published articles condemning polygamy. In the first, he said: "Should any government whatever adopt and sustain the practice of polygamy, it would of necessity be compelled to enact coercive laws to enforce the collection of a grievous taxation of those who had neither wife nor progeny, to sustain those who have many."[60]

Two weeks later, Page reported that he had talked with Strang for hours about polygamy: "We find to our utmost satisfaction that he does not believe in or cherish the doctrine of polygamy in any manner, shape or form imaginable whatever."[61] Strang returned to Voree within days and publicly concurred, saying that Page "truly represented my sentiments." He added, "I am only astonished that it should be necessary to state them at all." Strang continued that, during his extensive visits to Strangite churches during the past three years, he had "uniformly and most distinctly discarded and declared heretical the so called '*spiritual wife system*' and everything connected therewith."[62] Strang's statement was consistent with the position he then held—but it would soon change.

Meanwhile, Page's pecuniary affairs continued to be a topic of discussion. In September, Thompson A. Rude, a Strangite who lived at Knoxville, Illinois, indicated that he was thinking of coming to Voree in the spring to build two brick houses, one for Strang and one for Page. Strang published the letter in the *Gospel Herald,* the newspaper that replaced *Zion's Reveille* (published until June 6, 1850), and wrote a postscript: "We will not, however, ask him to build two houses. . . . [I]t would be a great charity if he would *help* build one for elder Page who has labored long, and has not where to lay his head."[63] Actually, Page's poverty was not unlike that of most Strangites. For example, Strang had published an article in the September 1846 *Voree Herald:* "As the place [Voree] began to be built last April, principally, by a plundered and exiled people, it certainly is not a very rich city. Its population dwells in tents, and houses; in board shanties, and sometimes many of them in the open air."[64] Strang

referred to his own poverty on August 19, 1847, "I have no clerk—I have no salary or income except occasional supplies, so that I seldom have a week's food in my *house*—that though I usually travel by steamboat, *deck passage.* I have not on *any* of my journeys received enough to pay my expense. . . . I have no clothing but what I have worn a year, and very little of that, and *I have a family to support.*"[65]

A month after Strang published Rude's offer to build two brick houses, Page announced his determination to "visit those places first where we can do the most good . . . and contend for the rights and claims of President James J. Strang to preside over the Church as *prophet, revelator, translator and seer.*" However, he qualified this ringing statement of intent by saying his missionary activities would depend on his "*time and means.*"[66] Several Church leaders outside Voree interpreted this pledge to visit those places where he could "do the most good" to mean he would speedily visit their areas and support their activities. For example, Strangite Elder Reuben T. Nichols, during his mission in Genesee County, New York, responded: "We need him here." Strang printed Nichols's request, appending the comment that it was "not probable" that Page would take missions out of the local area as he is "just getting up a little cabin only twelve feet square *in the ground* for his family to occupy while [he] goes out to places nearer at hand."[67]

The next month, Page again lamented his health, poverty, and limitations on his ability to undertake missions: "Yes, here we are, seated in a rough board shanty only twelve feet square, and that set in a hole dug in the ground for the want of means to make a warm house above ground." As for his "strength and constitution of body we are about 33 and 1/3 percent. . . . [M]y wife must have a pair of shoes that she can go to meeting. . . . [M]y children must have winter clothes so they may go to school." He then laid out his conditions: "Now, reader, draw your own conclusions when we may go out to preach. If we should realize anything at any time from any person to assist us . . . we would go the sooner, if not we shall go when it is consistent."[68]

For a while in early 1848, things looked more promising. The February 1848 *Gospel Herald* printed a report from the January 8–9, 1848, conference at Ilson, Herkimer County, New York, with a note from Strangite Elder Samuel P. Bacon, which requested that either Strang or Page attend their June conference. Bacon added the enticement: "This conference has voted to raise means to send you to bear your expenses."

Strang published a comment to the letter, saying that "Brother Page may be looked for with confidence, and possibly myself."[69] In March and April 1848, Page visited the Strangites at Elgin, Illinois, and Porter, Wisconsin, located some seventy miles southwest of Voree. His visit at Porter was apparently an enthusiastic one, since Hiram P. Brown, its presiding elder, wrote Strang that Page was returning to Voree "that he may prepare to go to the east to extinguish Brighamism."[70]

Samuel Graham, the presiding Strangite authority at Jackson, Jackson County, Michigan, wrote Strang in February 1848: "We hope that yourself and brother Page, when you journey east, will come through this State, and visit Albion and Jackson."[71] Reuben T. Nichols wrote Strang on March 28 and requested that Strang and Page visit the Saints in Genesse County, New York, on their way to the Otsego Conference. Strang's response was: "Brother Page will probably attend."[72]

In the June 29 *Gospel Herald,* Page praised the Order of Enoch: "I do wish all the honest in heart in Chicago were here to see for themselves the union and spirit of the Association."[73] He reaffirmed his commitment to Strang the following month, testifying that Strang alone "presents an indisputable 'appointment' and 'ordination' in the form that fills the letter of the word of God."[74]

In August 1848, the *Gospel Herald* belatedly published the minutes of the Brighamite conference, recorded by James Flanagan, held nine months earlier in December 1847 at Council Bluffs. At this conference, the First Presidency had been organized, formalizing Brigham Young's de facto position as head of the Church. Of special interest to the Strangites was Orson Pratt's acknowledgement that the arguments of the "apostates (viz. that the organization [without a First President] was not complete." The minutes also reported Apostle Amasa Lyman's statement that "the time had come when [the] ends of the church could not be saved without a head."[75]

Page responded to this reorganization with what had already become a scriptural technicality: that the Twelve were to serve under the Church president and preach the gospel, not preside over the Church. After citing what is now LDS Doctrine and Covenants 43:1–7, he emphasized "that none other was to be appointed to receive commandments and revelations until Joseph was taken." According to Page, if Joseph Smith was "taken," his "last official act" would be "to appoint another in his stead."

He also explained that Emma Smith had told him and others that Joseph had written Strang's Letter of Appointment, dated June 18, 1844, in her presence and that Young himself had proclaimed in the August 15, 1844, *Times and Seasons:* "Let no man presume for a moment that his [Smith's] place will be filled by another." Young's change of mind was therefore proof of Brighamite duplicity. Page also quoted Doctrine and Covenants 124:45 to "prove" that the Brighamites were driven from Nauvoo because they accepted false leaders: "And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people . . . they shall not be moved out of their place." Another of Page's points was that the Brighamites did not complete the Nauvoo Temple (as commanded in Doctrine and Covenants 124:32) and were therefore "rejected as a church." Page circled back to hammer home the argument that the Twelve were equal in authority to the high council, the high priests' quorum, and the seventies. They were therefore just another quorum of the Church—not the ruling quorum. He concluded: "Thus I close with a consciousness I have discharged a duty which I owed to God and those who were once my companions in the gospel of Christ."[76] Significantly, two weeks later, Page stated: "And could I believe that Joseph Smith did not appoint James J. Strang as his (Smith's) successor I would say amen to Mormonism."[77]

On August 10, focusing on more personal matters, Page emphasized he had paid out enough on postage-due letters to have built a comfortable home and complained: "While I write a blustering north east storm is pelting away on my shanty like cabin, which is not decent to stable a horse in, much less afford a comfortable shelter for a sick wife with a small infant child."[78]

From Voree, Page continued to write against polygamy. In September 1848, in Strang's absence, Page announced: "The saints are hereby instructed that it is their duty and privilege to withdraw their fellowship and support from any and every person that in any form whatever sanctions polygamy, or what is called the '*spiritual wife system.*' Have nothing to do with the unfruitful works of darkness, born of hell and begotten of the devil."[79] After condemning the practice for several years and also, presumably, pressuring Page to give up his plural wives, less than a year later, Strang secretly married Elvira Field on July 13, 1849. Three additional plural marriages followed.[80]

As might be expected, Page did not take a mission to the East that

summer. In fact, he went only as far as Chicago. Gratifyingly, member P. B. Barber extolled his virtues: "I believe that brother Page has done more good here than all the rest that have been here [Chicago] for three years," and Page printed the letter.[81] By October 1848, however, Strang was still reassuring a correspondent: "Bro. Page will start soon for Ohio, and will doubtless make his way through Pennsylvania."[82] Page, however, made only a short visit to Grafton, Wisconsin, a village some thirty miles north of Milwaukee.

By the start of 1849, Page was on his last legs as a Strangite. His broken promises and continued recalcitrance resulted in a public examination of his deficiencies at a conference at Voree on April 6–8, 1849. He was sustained in his office only after pledging "his determination to sustain the work to the extent of his talent and understanding."[83] Page's detractors maintained that he had the ability to take such missions; but his own record establishes persistent conditions of deteriorating health, poverty, and family illnesses. Thus, it must remain an open question about whether such missions would have been impossible or merely inconvenient.

The month after this public pledge, a notice in the *Gospel Herald* announced that Strang, Page, and Apostle James Blakeslee had "gone on a mission."[84] However, while Strang and Blakeslee continued on to the East, Page returned to Voree from Racine, Wisconsin. No details are available beyond Strang's statement: "Bro. J. E. Page has left us and returned towards Voree, out of health."[85] Blakeslee wrote Frank Cooper from Cincinnati on June 8: "The saints here . . . have been greatly disappointed in consequence of Elder J. E. Page not coming to this State last fall. . . . Many knew that he was expected and that he had the means given to him to bring him here."[86]

Further evidence of Page's increasing disaffection from Strang may be seen in his criticism of Strang's Order of Enoch in Voree. According to minutes of the April 1849 conference, Page had previously made the motion to establish the order "after a very careful examination of all points pertaining to it which presented themselves . . . with the sanction of Pres. Strang, and by a unanimous vote."[87] However, despite his early support for the Order of Enoch, this public gesture, Page must have had deep reservations which he did not hesitate to make public when John W. Archer, a disaffected Strangite, filed a lawsuit that same month to recover a wagon

he had consecrated to the Order. Page gave unrecorded testimony against the order.[88]

Possibly as a result of this action and Page's general lack of energetic commitment, on July 4, 1849, Page was "silenced," meaning that he could not exercise his priesthood or perform in any public capacity in the Church. It also meant that he was dropped from his position as president of the Twelve. Page did not attend his trial, although his brothers Finley and Ebenezer (and others) defended him. Accusations included that he lacked faith in Strang, had promoted schism, had not kept his pledges to support the Church, and had taken money designated to support him on missions but then had failed to go. After his guilt had been determined, Ebenezer acknowledged that his brother "must be given for a time to the buffetings of Satin [sic]" but personally pledged to "hold on to John E. with a love and faith that would reach to eternity." Page was excommunicated on July 7, 1849, and immediately joined the ranks of Strang's vocal critics, coordinating attacks on his former prophet.[89]

Page's Post-Strang Period

On August 26, 1849, Page listed four objections to doctrines taught by Strang and offered to debate him. The objections were: (1) secret oaths associated with the Order of Illuminati;[90](2) the legitimacy of the Order of Enoch; (3) Strang's statement that "a prophet is not accountable to any tribunal of the church for what he may say or do"; (4) Strang's statement that "there is no merit in a faith that believed with a reason only in that it believes with a mandate."[91]

In early September, Strang reported from Beaver Island that Uriel C. H. Nickerson, an excommunicated Strangite, had "been assisting J. E. Page in getting up opposition for several weeks previous."[92] At about the same time, a correspondent informed a fellow Strangite that Page was frightening immigrants from "coming to Beaver Island."[93]

Because he did not have the money to move from Voree, Page remained there and became the leader of the pseudoes, whom he had previously denounced for their attack on Strang. In November 1849, Page became a member of the Church organized by James C. Brewster, whose doctrines deemphasized the office of prophet and centralized authority, rejected many of Joseph Smith's revelations, and held the Book of Mormon to be the "rock of our salvation."[94] Page, it appears, was still in search of an authentic replacement for Joseph Smith. In any event, Brewster's

doctrines and perhaps his personality appealed to Page at this moment. According to John Quist, Brewster had shown himself as a competitor for the mantle of Joseph Smith at a precocious age:

> Brewster, born in 1826, claimed at the age of ten, to have been visited by the angel Moroni. In 1842 he published *The Words of Righteousness to All Men,* which he asserted was ancient scripture written by the prophet Esdras. God had chosen him to present it to the world. Apostle John Taylor immediately denounced Brewster in the *Times and Seasons,* arguing that he was unauthorized to speak for God, and Church officials in Springfield, Illinois, where Brewster lived, agreed with Taylor and promptly excommunicated the young prophet. For the next few years, Brewster advanced his claims by publishing a few pamphlets, and then emerged as a serious factional leader in 1848 when he organized a church and began publishing the *Olive Branch* which contained the writings of Esdras and other materials.[95]

For a period, Page endorsed Brewster with something like his former ardor for Strang, writing in his behalf and lamenting that poverty kept him from a more active missionary work. A letter from Page in the November issue of Brewster's newspaper, *The Olive Branch,* edited by Hazen Aldrich, urged that the *Olive Branch* be given a "faithful reading."[96] His changing theology was reflected in a January 1850 letter to the *Olive Branch* which said that the Book of Mormon contained the fullness of the gospel and emphasized that, if a doctrine cannot be proven by that scripture, "we are to shun it as we would a deadly poison."[97]

In mid-December, Page learned Strang was traveling with a young lady in the East and realized that he must have become a polygamist. Bishop Gilbert Watson wrote from Voree to Strang at Baltimore: "I am informed that J. E. [Page] had a letter from Philadelphia that your clerk was in the habit of wearing petticoats until very recently and also that he had another from Baltimore confirming the same thing."[98]

Strang was greatly disappointed by Page's defection, showing how unrealistically he had pinned his hopes on the less than zealous apostle. During this extended eastern mission, accompanied by plural wife Elvira Fields who was wearing men's clothing and posing as Strang's secretary, he wrote a correspondent on January 23, 1850: "It is rumored here that J. E. Page and several of the apostates have become Brewesterites." He added bitterly, "Page will not stir out of Voree to preach unless he gets his money secure before he starts."[99] He added the following day: "To preach up Brewster he must assume that his whole ministry has been in rebellion

against God" since this switch put him in the position of "denying as he now does the existence of the true church." He recalled how Page had previously insisted that if "baptism of the dead was not true the Bible was an imposition." (Strang strongly accepted this particular doctrine of Joseph Smith's.) He then said Page's "ablest" published work "was on the authority of the priesthood" and wryly added "which he now denies." He concluded sarcastically: "A series of revelations by which he professes to have been guided during his whole ministry, have all been false; but he has now just found the truth in a return to sectarianism."[100]

Page was frantic to defend himself in the *Gospel Herald* but that newspaper, not surprisingly, refused to provide him with a forum. Watson wrote Strang in February 1850 that Page had made the request and that Watson had told him to prepare a response; however, Watson had done so only "to put him [Page] to the trouble of writing and to see what he would write."[101]

Mary J. Styles, a Voree supporter of Page and Brewster, wrote Strang at Baltimore on February 21, extolled Brewster's successes, and challenged Strang (whom she called the self-proclaimed "Joseph's successor") to debate Page, whom Strang was (at least in her mind) dismissing as "this little stripling boy."[102] Strang's sharply written response filled seven columns in the *Gospel Herald.* He accused Page of "chang[ing] his position" at least seven times during the past year alone and proposed his own "stripling boy" for the debate: "I have however just consulted Mr. Charles J. Douglass, a clever boy of sixteen, and he has consented that if Mr. Page, Mr. Brewster or any other Brewsterite leader, will take up that cause, he will enter into a discussion in defense of the church of God." ("Charley Douglas" was, in fact, the pseudonym Elvira Fields was using.) Strang added: "Inasmuch as Mr. Page has often asserted that he knew by revelation of God that Mr. Strang was a prophet Mr. Douglas wishes Mr. Page to answer him without equivocation or evasion, whether he lied at the several times when he gave that testimony, or lies now when he contradicts it." Strang then cuttingly said: "If Mr. Douglass is not quite old enough for a debate now, he doubtless will be by the time Page is through these preliminaries."[103]

It is difficult to understand Strang's thinking in bringing "Charley Douglass" into such prominence. The eastern Saints were appalled when it became apparent that Douglass was actually a young woman, and the

fact that Strang tried to deal with the situation by repeatedly denying that Douglass was a woman turned his mission into a disaster.

Ebenezer Page, who was still loyal to Strang at that point, informed him in April that John was trying to "destroy me as well as you."[104] However, John Page's flurry of polemical activity was dwindling away into persistent allusions to his crippling poverty. In May, Page assured Brewster that he was "still as confirmed in the faith of the doctrines and principles taught in the Olive Branch as ever" but "my family circumstances are such that I cannot see it my duty to leave them, to go and preach far from home. As soon as the Lord will break my chains of poverty, I am both willing and ready to go."[105] That time would not come any more for Brewster's church than it had for Joseph Smith's or Strang's, as far as Page was concerned.

In the summer of 1850 when the U.S. Census was enumerated, Page and Mary were living in Spring Prairie Township, Walworth County, Wisconsin. He listed his profession as "Mormon Clergyman." He was fifty-one, and Mary was thirty-two. Their children were fifteen-year-old John G., seven-year-old Celestia E., and two-year-old daughter Celina E. In July 1851, their son Justin E. was born in De Kalb County, Illinois.[106]

Explaining why he did not make more converts, Page rather defiantly informed Aldrich in October 1850 that he had baptized more than a thousand since beginning his ministry and "could have trebled that number, had it not been for men in the eldership who proved to be a blight to the cause, rather than an assistance."[107] In January 1851, Page declined an invitation from Brewsterites in Pittsburgh because "the chains of poverty . . . would not possibly admit" such a visit. Furthermore, he confessed with perhaps inadvertent candor that he had been "so extremely humbugged in doctrines and principles that I verily thought was the truth that I now know to be false, that I feel quite delicate about touching pen to paper for publication." He typically concluded by bemoaning the fact that he "had laid up nothing for old age and was left to the labor of my bare hands, as the only source, with a debilitated constitution for a very co[a]rse livelihood."[108]

Five months later, however, Page was reconfirming his commitment to Brewster: "[I] must humbly confess my faith and confidence in the writings of Esdras is unshaken; they breathe forth the same spirit, morals, and design for which I first embraced Mormonism." He de-

nounced that first embrace, however, calling the gatherings to Kirtland, Far West, and Nauvoo "three of the greatest swindling shops that the same amount of inhabitants ever witnessed in the 19th century." Again he complained that his infirmities made him useless "in any temporal capacity," bade "farewell" to the "sinful world," and sketched a gloomy future of "drag[ing] out the few remaining days of wretchedness and poverty allocated me on earth."[109]

Apparently in the spring of 1851, Page moved his family to Sycamore, De Kalb County, Illinois.[110] At that point, Brewster's colony had failed to move to California, his organization was unraveling fast, and most of Strang's followers had "gathered" to Beaver Island.[111] It is perhaps understandable that an isolated, disillusioned Page could write Hazen Aldrich in January 1852: "Where is Mormonism fled to?" His answer was: "Reader, if it is not in your heart, it is nowhere, as far as you are concerned."[112] He would turn fifty-three the next month.

Hampered by continued poverty and ill health, he refused to join the New Organization, the genesis group which became the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, although he did preach the first principles of the gospel locally. In 1857 Page met with associates of Granville Hedrick, a farmer and school teacher, and united with that organization, the Church of Christ, on November 8, 1862. (Because this name is so similar to that of many others, it is frequently referred to as the Hedrickites.)

Hedrick, born in 1814, had been ordained an elder in 1842 or 1843 and was the guiding force in uniting small groups of Mormons from Half Moon Prairie, Crow Creek, and Bloomington, Illinois, and Vermillion, Indiana in 1853. They claimed to be a true remnant of the authentic Church and believed they possessed the only valid priesthood. They had much in common with Page during his twilight years, for they accepted only the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. (In 1918, they replaced the Doctrine and Covenants by the 1833 Book of Commandments.) Either then or later they rejected elements of Mormonism that Page also opposed: polygamy, plurality of gods, the office of high priest, the gathering to Nauvoo, baptism for the dead, and presidency by lineal descent. Even more important was their belief that Joseph Smith had become a "fallen prophet."[113]

Page ordained four men among the Hedrickites, including Hedrick himself, as apostles. At a conference on May 17, 1863, despite having pre-

viously rejected the office of prophet, seer, revelator, and translator, he ordained Hedrick to these positions.[114] Presumably, Page performed this ordination reluctantly, persuaded by an importuning Hedrick who undoubtedly was eager—like Strang and Brewster before him—for a blessing from an apostle called by Joseph Smith.

Page apparently became dissatisfied with the Hedrickites also, for he asked John Landers, a Canadian convert who was by then a member of the Reorganized Church, to preach his funeral sermon.[115] He died at his home eight miles north of Sycamore on October 14, 1867, from the effects of asthma and was buried on a spot he had selected near the Kishwaukee River. The final appraisal of his estate was $3,116—not pauperism though he was certainly far from affluence.[116]

Mary married William Eaton, a Hedrickite founder, and later joined the Reorganized Church. Her firm opposition to polygamy led many to believe that she and John never practiced the doctrine. For example, in 1903, she wrote Joseph F. Smith in Utah: "I am so thoroughly opposed to poligomy [polygamy] and its kindred institutions as inaugurated and promulgated by Brigham Young and the church he represented."[117]

Conclusions

There was no greater missionary in North America in early Mormonism than Page. His Canadian missions were marked by tremendous successes as he went "without purse or scrip" and converted hundreds to Mormonism. However, Page lost the drive to continue making sacrifices like Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and other apostles. Living in poverty, he became jealous of the temporal possessions of other apostles. By the time they served their famous missions to England and Hyde undertook his equally famous journey to dedicate the Holy Land, Page's missionary zeal had diminished. He never again served as an effective missionary, remaining apart from his peers until he was forced to join them at Nauvoo.

After the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Page was in turmoil. By January 1846, he concluded that the apostles could not preside in Joseph's place for doctrinal reasons; but he may also have been unable or unwilling to undergo the sacrifices associated with departing yet again to some unknown destination. Strang's missionaries approached him at an opportune time, providing the opportunity to break with his "unapprecia-

tive" brethren and unite with a prophet who initially met his understanding of prophetic succession.

Page never revered Strang as he had Joseph Smith, but his joining the Strangites was influenced by his desire to remain a Mormon and to serve under a prophet. This association was also influenced by his declining health and his desire to be supported by others. This trade-off guaranteed that his relationship with Strang would not last. In retrospect, Samuel Shaw's June 1846 letter to Strang was on target: "Unless he [Page] can have things just so he won[']t go a step on his mission . . . and I can prophesy to you and the Saints that unless John E. Page humbles himself Before the Lord and Sees himself more than he Does now he will not Be any benefit to the church."[118]

Shaw was generally accurate. Despite Strang's obvious desire to woo and reward Page, Page was of limited use because he would not undertake the extensive missions needed during those crucial early years of Strangism. Page then withdrew even further from mainstream Mormonism and his transition to a less demanding form of religion under James C. Brewster. His final Mormon experience was with the Hedrikites. After he ordained Hedrick to be a prophet, it is likely that he became less than enthusiastic about the evolution of Hedrick's movement as well.

As he neared death, Page concluded that Joseph Smith had become a "fallen prophet" and denied the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants.[119] He did, however, continue to believe in primitive Christianity and the Book of Mormon.

Page's inconsistent journey through Mormonism was not unique. More than half of the original 1835 apostles rebelled against Joseph Smith. Lyman E. Johnson and John F. Boynton were excommunicated and did not return to the Church. Thomas B. Marsh and Luke Johnson were excommunicated in 1838–39; both were later rebaptized Brighamites but their apostolic office was not restored. William E. McLellin, excommunicated during Joseph Smith's ministry, was briefly accepted as an apostle in Strang's church, then was excommunicated. William Smith was excommunicated by the Brighamites in 1846, was then briefly accepted as a Strangite apostle and patriarch, but was also excommunicated, and later still was affiliated with the Reorganization. During Joseph's lifetime, Orson Pratt and Orson Hyde were excommunicated but later reinstated as apostles. Orson Pratt, Orson Hyde, and Parley Pratt rebelled against Joseph Smith at Kirtland, and the Pratt brothers were labeled as "aspiring el-

ders" along with Page in 1842 at Nauvoo, but all three returned to the apostleship. Furthermore, according to Michael Quinn, approximately half of the membership left the Church within ten years after Joseph Smith's death.[120]

Page's ambiguous reactions and successive commitments and disillusionments provide a window through which to gain insight about this complex period of early Mormon history. If the popular motto of many sundials ("I count only sunny hours") is true, then Page's was obscured by intriguing but sorrowful shadows.

Notes

1. W. W. Phelps, "Remembered Brother William Smith," December 25, 1844, *Times and Seasons* 5 (January 1, 1845): 761. William was the only Smith brother still alive at that point.

2. "To All People unto Whom These Presents Shall Come—Greeting," *Times and Seasons* 1 (April 1840): 86–87.

3. Myrtle Stevens Hyde, *Orson Hyde: The Olive Branch of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Agreka Books, 2000), 165.

4. "Please Read the Following," *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (July 16, 1845): 3.

5. Ezra T. Benson, "Autobiography," *The Instructor* 80 (February 1945): 53. This autobiography's date of composition is not known. Benson died in 1869.

6. "Mister James J. Strang," February 1, 1846, James J. Strang Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Doc. 10 (cited hereafter as Strang Collection).

7. Milo M. Quaife, *The Kingdom of Saint James: A Narrative of the Mormons* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1930), 32. Quaife evaluated the letter and determined: "Jealousy of his fellow members of the Twelve, and bitterness over the inadequacy of the writer's financial situation, is reflected in every line of the long communication" (33).

8. Justin E. Page, son of John E. Page and Mary Judd Page, told Mrs. P. A. Watts in 1936 that his father "was the legitimate offspring of an Indian Chief's daughter, though several generations back." Mrs. P. A. Watts, Letter to Dear Cousin, March 15, 1936, Wilford Poulson Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (cited hereafter as Poulson Collection.) The most complete information on Page is John W. Quist, "John E. Page: An Apostle of Uncertainty," *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985): 53–68, updated and printed in *Mormon Mavericks: Essays on Dissenters,* edited by John Sillito and

Susan Staker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 19–43. Quotations are from this 2002 version.

9. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1951), 2:366 (cited hereafter as *History of the Church*).

10. Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis, eds., *The Mormon Presence in Canada* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1990), 23.

11. "History of John E. Page," *Millennial Star* 27 (February 18, 1865): 103–4.

12. Page described the persecution at DeWitt in "To the scattered abroad . . . " *[Pittsburgh] Morning Chronicle* 1 (January 15, 1842).

13. "History of John E. Page," 104. According to Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 235, the Page family and five others crowded into the Charles C. Rich home where Lorain died. The two Page children died shortly after the Mormon surrender at Far West. Sarah DeArmond Pea Rich, wife of future apostle Charles C. Rich, wrote in her autobiography: "I took in those that had to leave their homes and flee into the city until I took in seven families . . . and among that number was John E. Page and his sick wife. He was then one of the Twelve Apostles of our church; and about one week after, his wife died; and as the mob was troubling us so severely at this time it was impossible to have Sister Page buried for three days; and twice while she lay in the house a corpse, the mob entered the house and made a search all through the house to see what they could find." "The Journal of Sarah DeArmond Pea Rich," n.d., Perry Special Collections, Lee Library.

14. Ebenezer Page, "For Zion's Reveille," *Zion's Reveille* 4 (April 15, 1847): 55–56. Ebenezer remained a loyal Strangite until some twenty-five years after Strang's death when he became a member of Sidney Rigdon's church.

15. *President Heber C. Kimball's Journal* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 75.

16. James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 3.

17. The Nauvoo High Council, Minutes, April 6, 1841, typescript, 46, Archives, Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives).

18. Quist, "John E. Page," 21.

19. "To the President and His Council," September 1, 1841, Letters Received, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives. Benjamin Winchester challenged Page's claim that he lacked money to go to Jerusalem, writing to Joseph Smith from Philadelphia: "[H]e pretends that he has not got mo[ney] enough; to this I say he had money enough according to his own statement." Winchester, Letter to Dear Brother in the Lord," September 18, 1841, Letters Received, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives.

20. *History of the Church,* 4:585. See Quist, "John E. Page," 21–22, for more detail on Page's relationship with Hyde and this hearing in Nauvoo.

21. "Remarks of the Prophet to the Relief Society," April 25, 1842, *History of the Church,* 4:604.

22. Joseph Smith III, "Elder John E. Page," *Saints' Herald* 82 (January 8, 1945): 150.

23. "Mayor's Court at Nauvoo," April 19, 1843, *History of the Church,* 5:367.

24. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 567.

25. Quist, "John E. Page," 23.

26. According to Justin Page, Letter to "My Dear Friend," July 1, 1935, Poulson Collection, his mother, Mary, was "disgusted" with the endowments, denounced the "horrid oaths that were administered to 'avenge the blood of Joseph and Hyrum Smith,'" and referred disparagingly to the anointing as "greasing themselves." Justin also reported that, when she and John "got home and the door was shut, your father turned to me and said, 'Mary, that is all of the Devil.'"

27. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy,* 567, identified six marriages for Page: Betsey Thompson (one child); Lavona Stevens, 1833 (four children); Mary Judd, 1838 (eight children); Nancy Bliss, 1844 (no children), separated 1845; Rachael Judd (Henderson), 1845 (no children), separated 1846; Lois Judd, 1845 (one child), separated 1846, monogamist after 1846. The Ancestral Section of Family Search, Family History Library Program, identifies only Lois and Rachael Judd as plural wives. In a telephone interview January 1, 2007, Hilda Judd Frier of Sandy, Utah, told me that, according to family tradition, Page's child by Lois Judd was a daughter, Rachael Minerva, later sealed to Benjamin Mitchell. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1905), 49–50, said that Mary Page Eaton told him and others at Independence in August 1904 that "she *gave her husband,* John E. Page, other wives" (emphasis his). Rachael Judd Page Henderson Hamblin told Dudley Leavitt, Juanita Brooks's grandfather, that she had been a plural wife of Thomas B. Marsh, evidently either Leavitt's

or Brooks's misunderstanding, since she clearly meant John E. Page. Juanita Brooks, *On the Ragged Edge: The Life and Times of Dudley Leavitt* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, n.d.), 53. Todd Compton, "Civilizing the Ragged Edge: The Wives of Jacob Hamblin," *Journal of Mormon History* 33 (Summer 2007): 155–98, examines the marriage of Rachael Judd to Jacob Hamlin and confirms she had been Page's plural wife. Justin Page, Letter to "My Dear Friend" (Wilford Poulson) December 1, 1934, Poulson Collection, acknowledged his father's polygamy: "My mother was first, last and all the time against polygamy in any form, although she may have endured the practice of it in her family and in some form for a limited season."

28. The best book on Strang is Quaife, *The Kingdom of Saint James.*

29. "Mr. James J. Strang," February 1, 1846, Doc. 10, Strang Collection.

30. Justin Page, "My Dear Friend," July 1, 1935, Poulson Collection.

31. "Mr. James J. Strang," February 1, 1846, Strang Collection, Doc. 10. Page's letter was printed in the March *Voree Herald* minus the sentence about his wife's sister. Likely Strang pressured Page to divest himself of his plural wives, a possible allusion to which appears in his statement: "When he [Page] joined us he confessed his faults, and promised to do better." Strang, Letter to "Dear Frank," March 8, 1850, *Gospel Herald* 5 (March 28, 1850): 12.

32. Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1971), 31.

33. Ronald O. Barney, ed., *The Mormon Vanguard Brigade of 1847: Norton Jacob's Record* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), 73.

34. Greg R. Knight, ed., *Thomas Bullock Nauvoo Journal* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1994), March 1, 1846, 57.

35. William S. Harwell, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1847–1850* (Salt Lake City: Collier's Publishing, 1997), 63.

36. "Thomas Bullock minutes of a meeting held in Nauvoo, March 3, 1846," transcribed from holograph by Robin Scott Jensen, May 2004. LDS Church Archives.

37. Knight, *Thomas Bullock Journal,* March 8, 1846, 61.

38. Ibid., March 12, 1846, 63. According to Harwell, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846–1847,* 40, Young "retired to the historian's office and heard read [the] revelation written by Charles Wesley Wandell, 6 March 1846, to entrap John E. Page, who believed it and bore testimony . . . that it was a revelation from the Almighty. This event afforded much merriment to Wandell and his friends."

39. Hyde's "revelation" states: "Behold James J. Strang hath cursed my people by his own spirit and not by mine. Never at any time have I appointed to that wicked man to lead my people." Revelation reproduced in Stevens,

Orson Hyde: The Olive Branch of Israel, 199–200. See also "Brother Robinson," March 23, 1846, *Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ* [Rigdon] 1 (June 1845): 479–80, and Hyde, "Dear b[r]other Ward," April 5, 1846, *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* 10 (May 15, 1846): 156.

40. "Dear Sister [Phoebe] Woodruff," May 4, 1846, LDS Church Archives.

41. John E. Page, Letter to Elder James E. [J.] Strang, March 12, 1846, emphasis his; P13, f67, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri; emphasis his.

42. Wandle Mace, Journal, n.d., 99, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

43. Justin Page, Letter to "My Dear Friend," July 1, 1935, Poulson Collection.

44. "Conference at Voree," *Chronicles of Voree,* a holographic Church record of the proceedings at Voree transcribed by James Hajicek, April 6–7, 1846, 62–67 (hereafter cited as *Chronicles of Voree.*)

45. "Page testimony at the 6 Apr. 1846 High Council trial at Voree," Doc. 6, Strang Collection. William Smith, along with Page, was the only other apostle to accept Strang; but Strang postponed action on Wilford Woodruff's status because he was in England.

46. "Conference at Norway, Illinois," April 17–18, 1846, *Chronicles of Voree,* 77.

47. "To the Saints Scattered Abroad," *Voree Herald* 1 (May 1946): 2.

48. Harwell, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1846–1847,* June 26, 1846, 198.

49. Samuel Shaw, Letter to "Brother Strang," June 1846, Doc. 485, Strang Collection.

50. John E. Page, Letter to "Pres. J. J. Strang," July 6, 1846, Doc. 35, Strang Collection, emphasis his. Page wanted this hinting letter printed in the *Voree Herald* but Strang did not comply.

51. "Elder John E. Page Has," *Voree Herald* 1 (October 1846): 3.

52. "John E. Page," n.d., *Zion's Reveille* 2 (December 1846): 1.

53. John E. Page, "Dear Bro[ther]," January 1, 1847, Doc. 149, Strang Collection.

54. "Brother Greenhow," n.d., *Zion's Reveille* 2 (February 11, 1847): 20, emphasis his. Less than three weeks later, Page again attacked the "pseudoes": *O Pseudoes! Children will laugh at you, and men of sense will pity you for your folly.*" John E. Page, "Brother Greenhow," n.d., *Zion's Reveille* 2 (March 1847): 31–32, emphasis his.

55. John E. Page, "Brother John Greenhow," April 13, 1847, *Zion's Reveille* 2 (April 22, 1847): 57–58, emphasis his.

56. "Elder John E. Page Wishes," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (April 22, 1847): 60.

57. "President James J. Strang," Doc. 183, Strang Collection.

58. "Conference at Voree," *Chronicles of Voree,* April 6–8, 1847, 135–43.

59. "Another Hoax Invented by Apostates," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (July 15, 1847): 74–75, emphasis his. Five months later, Page attacked David Whitmer, William Smith, and Brigham Young for claiming to be prophets. "Forgetful Prophets," *Gospel Herald* 2 (December 9, 1847): 176.

60. John E. Page, "Polygamy Not Possible in a Free Government," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (July 22, 1847): 75.

61. John E. Page, "To the Saints—Greeting," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (August 5, 1847): 83.

62. James J. Strang, "Elder John E. Page Has," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (August 12, 1847): 88; emphasis his.

63. James J. Strang, Postscript to "Brother Strang," September 20, 1847, *Gospel Herald* 2 (October 7, 1847): 119.

64. James J. Strang, "Voree," *Voree Herald* 1 (September 1846): 4.

65. James J. Strang, "To Private Correspondents," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (August 19, 1847): 90, emphasis his.

66. John E. Page, "Preaching," *Gospel Herald* 2 (October 14, 1847): 124, emphasis his.

67. James J. Strang, "Extract of a Letter," November 10, 1847, *Gospel Herald* 2 (November 25, 1847): 153, emphasis his.

68. John E. Page, "Here We Are," *Gospel Herald* 2 (December 2, 1847): 166–67. Ironically, Page emphasized Strang's poverty in the same issue when he urged the Saints to send him money sufficient to let Strang hire an editor for the newspaper. "President James J. Strang," 167.

69. "Minutes of a Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," January 8–9, 1848," *Gospel Herald* 2 (February 2, 1848): 220.

70. Hiram P. Brown, "Brother James," March 22, 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (April 20, 1848): 20.

71. Samuel Graham, "Dear Brother J. J. Strang," February 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (March 26, 1848): 260.

72. Reuben T. Nichols, Letter to "Beloved Brother," February 28, 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (March 26, 1848): 259–60.

73. John E. Page, Letter to "Bro. Calhoon," July 10, 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (June 29, 1848): 59.

74. John E. Page, "Answer to the Above," *Gospel Herald* 3 (July 13, 1848): 67–68.

75. James Flanagan, "Brighamite Conference," *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 3, 1848): 77–79.

76. John E. Page, "Remarks on the Brighamite Conference," *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 17, 1849): 92–95.

77. John E. Page, "Lyman Wight and His Position," *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 31, 1849): 107.

78. John E. Page, "Pay Your Postage," *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 10, 1848): 83. This infant was Celina E. Page, born at Voree earlier that year.

79. John E. Page, "Spiritual Wifery," *Gospel Herald* 3 (September 7, 1848): 115.

80. Vickie Cleverley Speek, *God Has Made Us a Kingdom: James Strang and the Midwest Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006), 68.

81. P. B. Barber, "Mr. Editor—Sir," n. d., *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 21, 1848): 103.

82. "President J. J. Strang," Letter, September 28, 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (October 19, 1848): 155.

83. "Conference at Voree," April 6–8, 1849, *Chronicles of Voree*, 186–93.

84. "On the 13th Inst," *Gospel Herald* 4 (April 19, 1849): 20.

85. "Editorial Correspondence—No. 3," *Gospel Herald* 4 (May 10, 1849): 31.

86. James Blakeslee, Letter to "Dear Frank [Cooper]," June 8, 1849, *Gospel Herald* 4 (July 5, 1849): 73.

87. "Discussion in the Church," *Gospel Herald* 4 (July 5, 1849): 75.

88. "John W. Archer vs. James J. Strang and John Cole, Walworth County, Wisconsin, Justice of the Peace Court (1849)," Perry Special Collections, Lee Library. As a revealing detail, Page's brother, Finley, submitted a deposition supporting the Order of Enoch in this lawsuit.

89. "Conference at Beaver Island," *Gospel Herald* 4 (August 2, 1849): 89–90.

90. Quaife, *The Kingdom of Saint James,* 49–57, discusses the Order of Illuminati.

91. "Objections to Points of Doctrine Taught by J. J. Strang," August 26, 1849, Doc. 154, Strang Collection, emphasis Page's.

92. James J. Strang, "Dear Frank," September 8, 1849, *Gospel Herald* 4 (October 27, 1849): 127.

93. E. J. Moore, Letter to "Brother [Samuel] Graham," October 6, 1849, Doc. 231, Strang Collection. A week later, Strang told another correspondent: "I find that J. E. Page and J. M. Adams [an ex-Strangite at Voree] are joined in close league in correspondence with whomsoever they hope to exert

an influence over." James J. Strang, Letter to "Dear Frank," October 12, 1849, *Gospel Herald* 4 (October 25, 1849): 155.

94. According to Gilbert Watson in Voree, Letter to "Brother Strang," November 13, 1849, Doc. 511, Strang Collection, Page "had turned Brewsterite." Alden Hale, December 30, 1849, Doc. 513, Strang Collection, likewise gloomily informed Strang that "br. Hewits folks have gone after Brewster & most of the pseudoes John E not excepted who is his principle advocate here red hot & I think from all appearance Brewsterism will make nearly a clear sweep of all of those who have left the word of the Lord."

95. Quist, "John E. Page," 29.

96. "To All My Friends and Acquaintances," October 19, 1849, *Olive Branch* 1 (November 1849): 79. In "To My Friends," n.d., *Olive Branch* 4 (January 1850): 104, Page wrote: "This is to tender you my thanks for the tokens of respect you have manifested in writing to me; but I must tell you that my temporal circumstances are such, that I cannot pay postage on communications . . . without robbing my children of their daily bread."

97. James J. Strang, "Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ," n.d., *Olive Branch* 1 (February 1850): 113–15.

98. Gilbert Watson, "Dear Bro. Strang," February 11, 1850, Doc. 515, Strang Collection.

99. James J. Strang, "Dear Frank," January 23, 1850, *Gospel Herald* (February 7, 1850): 275.

100. James J. Strang, Letter to "Dear Frank," January 24, 1850, *Gospel Herald* 4 (February 14, 1850): 287.

101. Gilbert Watson, "Dear Bro. Strang," February 11, 1850, Doc. 515, Strang Collection.

102. Mary J. Styles, "Postscript of a Letter to Pres. Strang," *Gospel Herald* 4 (February 21, 1850): 292. Alden Hale, a loyal Strangite, commented to Strang on December 30, 1849, that Mrs. Styles "wears his [her husband's] under clothes" and "says she will do all she can to prevent folks from joining the association [Order of Enoch]. In "I have somewhat more to wright," December 30, 1849," Doc. 513, Strang Collection.

103. James J. Strang, Letter to "Mrs. M. J. Stiles," January 30, 1850, *Gospel Herald* 4 (February 21, 1850): 292–95.

104. Ebenezer Page, Letter to James J. Strang, March 7, 1870, Doc. 231, Strang Collection. In a letter to Frank Cooper in Voree, Ebenezer, who was then in Hunt's Hollow, New York, had asked Cooper, somewhat ironically, to transmit Ebenezer's good wishes to John and to inform him that "all the letters he writes to put down James J. Strang, can do nothing against us, but for

us." Ebenezer Page, Letter to "Dear Frank," January 14, 1850, *Gospel Herald* 4 (February 14, 1850): 286.

105. John E. Page, "Brother Brewster," May 18, 1850, *Olive Branch* 2 (June 1850): 186.

106. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1850, Wisconsin, Spring Prairie Township, Walworth County. Justin Page supplied his birth information to Poulson in Letter to "Prof. M. Wilford Poulson," September 3, 1934, Poulson Collection.

107. John E. Page, Letter to "Brother Aldrich," n.d. *The Olive Branch* 3 (October 1850): 33.

108. John E. Page, Letter to "Brother Aldrich," October 27, 1850, *Olive Branch* 3 (January 1851): 96.

109. John E. Page, Letter to "Brother Aldrich," March 10, 1851, *Olive Branch* 3 (June 1851): 169–71.

110. Justin E. Page said: "It took three weeks for our folks to make the trip, with two yokes of oxen from Voree to what is now DeKalb [County]. They arrived there on May 28th." Justin Page, Letter to "Dear Friend," September 5, 1934, Poulford Collection.

111. Dan Vogel, "James Colin Brewster: The Boy Prophet Who Challenged Mormon Authority," in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History,* edited by Roger C. Launius and Linda Thatcher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 131–34.

112. John E. Page, Letter to Hazen Aldrich headlined "I Believe [in] Mormonism, But Where Is It," *Olive Branch* 4 (January 1852): 90.

113. Information concerning Hedricks and his church is best available in the *Crow Creek Record,* typescript, Church of Christ headquarters, Independence, Missouri, and *An Outline History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)* (Independence: Church of Christ Board of Publications, 1953).

114. *The Crow Creek Record,* 14, contains Page's statement: "This [is] to certify . . . that I, John E. Page . . . laid my hands on Brother Granville Hedrick's head . . . and ordained him to the office of the First Presidency and head of the Church to preside over the priesthood, and to be a seer, revelator, translator and prophet, to have all the gifts that God bestows upon the head of the church." He had announced in "Information Wanted," *Olive Branch* 3 (November 1850): 60: "The idea that one law-giver should ordain another to the same capacity . . . is *fake[,] vain* and *uncalled* for" (emphasis his).

115. Quist, "John E. Page," 41 note 61.

116. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy,* 568.

117. Mary Page Eaton, Letter to "Mr. Joseph F. Smith," May 1903, P13, f743, Community of Christ Archives. Other documents confirm her opposi-

tion to polygamy, including her letters: "Editors of the Herald," November 27, 1877, *Saints' Herald* 24 (December 15, 1877): 381; "Polygamy Mormons Not Biblical," August 19, 1888, *Saints' Herald* 27 (October 15, 1881): 655; "Answer to a Letter from Utah," August 5, 1888, *Saints' Herald* 35 (September 1, 1888): 557–58.

118. Samuel Shaw, Letter to "Brother Strang," June 1846, Doc. 485, Strang Collection.

119. Quist, "John E. Page," 33.

120. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy,* 242–43.

A Playwright with a Passion for Unvarnished Depictions: An Interview with Tom Rogers

Todd Compton

One day when my BYU Greek class was awaiting the arrival of our teacher, Tom Rogers popped his head in the doorway and talked to us for ten or fifteen minutes or so. (One of my fellow students must have been a friend of his.) At that point he was well known for his plays Huebener *and* Fire in the Bones, *which dealt with two conflicted tragic heroes in Mormon history, Helmuth Huebener and John D. Lee. Someone asked him why he wrote about such problematic figures. His answer, as I remember it, was, "Those kinds of situations are just so interesting!"*

*Recently, I've been preparing an article on problems in Mormon history as an avenue toward faith. That made me think of Tom Rogers's response, and I thought it would be worthwhile to probe further, in an informally written email interview (summer 2006), how he came to write his three plays on Mormon subjects–*Huebener *(1976),* Fire in the Bones *(1978), and* Reunion *(1979).*[1] *These plays show the dramatic power of problem issues in Mormon history. Leonard Arrington, in his essay, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," warned against the "theological marionette" bias in Church history: "One gets the impression from some of our literature and sermons that the prophets and their associates in the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were pious personages who responded somewhat mechanically, as if by conditional reflex, to explicit instructions from on high, and that God manipulated the leaders much as marionettes in a puppet show."*[2] *Instead, I believe, a mature Mormon history (or literature) must deal with real people in conflict, sometimes Church members or leaders in conflict because they have differing views of what the gospel or the Church means. Another major flaw of the marionette fallacy is that it results in non-stimulating, sometimes sentimental history. Rogers's plays show how examin-*

ing problems can bring history to vivid life. They also show how almost indescribably painful tragedies can both challenge and affirm our faith.

Todd: Tom, were you raised in the Church? Could you give us a little information on your Church background?

Tom: I was born in Salt Lake City in a Mormon family with multiple pioneer and early convert roots, of which for some reason I was only slightly aware until I had married and founded my own family—not perhaps until I was forty. On my mother's side are both handcart pioneers from South Africa and converts from Herefordshire who were among and were related to one of the ministers of the United Brethren, preached to and baptized en masse by Wilford Woodruff. One of these, Daniel Collett, was later one of Joseph Smith's bodyguards in Nauvoo. Also, from the Isle of Man and Liverpool and, along with the Herefordshirers, were Thomas Karren and Ann Radcliff Karren. This couple was among the earliest settlers of Lehi. Thomas participated in the Mormon Battalion and, with George Q. Cannon, served an early mission to the Sandwich Islands. From their and the Herefordshirers' union stemmed a great-grandfather, Sylvanus Collett, who was the constable of Lehi, an Indian agent, colonel in the Utah Nauvoo Legion, close cohort of Orrin Porter Rockwell, and the lone defendant in the 1878 trial in Provo regarding the Aiken murders which shortly followed the Mountain Meadows Massacre in the fall of 1857. On my father's side are some of the Church's early New York state converts, particularly Isaac Rogers and Susan Mills Rogers, who received patriarchal blessings from Joseph Smith Sr.

My South African progenitors were handcart pioneers. Alexander Sims, one of Utah's and Idaho's first burr millers and a former spiritualist, was born in Aberdeen, Scotland. His wife, Elizabeth McDermott Sims, had truly exotic ancestry. Her father was Irish and her mother's lineage extends through generations of mostly Dutch Boers, with some German, Austrian, and possibly Portuguese antecedents and—due to the Dutch East India Company's ruthless exile of its local competition in Indonesia—a smattering of Indonesian Muslims, East Indians from Calcutta and Ceylon, and one Chinese, Bao Shen Ke.

In more recent times most of our Rogers line has repudiated the Church—even though its patriarch, my grandfather, had once been the young David O. McKay's colleague and possible supervisor at the Weber Academy. I suspect that the constant, self-sacrificing devotion of my mother's family and the more independent and skeptical position of my

father and his line have to some extent influenced my own tendency both to appreciate and to serve, as well as to sometimes engage, perhaps too critically, in the work of the Church. In practice, I have always deferred to my mother's example of faithful adherence to the gospel and am pleased to see the same pattern and attendant blessings in the lives of most of our children.

Todd: How did you get interested in being a dramatist? Your field of study, Russian literature, focuses more on novels.

Tom: I was, as an actor, already involved in plays while in high school and at the University of Utah. At the time, I was bent on majoring in international relations and a likely future career with the foreign service. Debate seemed like good training, so—along with my peers Gene England, Bob Bennett, Doug Alder, and Steve Covey—I was active in debate both at East High and during my freshman year at the University of Utah. Meanwhile, I had a few roles on the U of U stage and even more challenging ones at the Barry Lynn theater on Salt Lake's lower avenues. However, scheduling conflicts finally forced me to choose between debate and theater, and I opted for the latter—eventually fulfilling the requirements for a B.A. in both theater and political science. I think what led me to prefer the stage to debate was the sense that we get closer to real life when we involve ourselves in its affective side rather than in often equally staged polemics on a more abstract and theoretical level. The psychological and often irrational emotional causes of human action struck me as both more intriguing and more enlightening.

I also started Russian studies as a freshman, considering that particular language a critical and useful adjunct to political science. It was during the outset of the Cold War and the nadir of the McCarthy era, and we knew so very little about our former World War II allies, by then our demonized enemies, the Russians. The current parallel with Arabs and the Muslim world seems obvious. Russian was at least being taught back then in the Salt Lake City public schools. It seems unbelievable that the same cannot be said as yet for either Arabic or Mandarin Chinese.

Only after my mission to Germany and while I was in graduate school did I become fully aware of the wonders of classical Russian literature. Again, it was in an aesthetically intuitive way more than a rationally didactic discipline. It further underscored for me the universality of all human experience rather than its purported divisiveness, and it eventually served as the core subject matter I ended up teaching.

Earlier, simply because it was offered then, I took my first course in playwriting during my initial freshman quarter from the incomparable Robert Hyde Wilson. Out of it came my first full-length script, later directed by Professor David Morgan at the U of U's small "auxiliary" theater, the Play Box. Although this play, *Nest of Feathers,* was an inferior script and far too imitative of William Inge, the attempt and its production whetted my appetite to try again—particularly with submissions to a playwriting competition then sponsored by the Church's MIA. Later, due to a fluky misunderstanding of my qualifications for studying Russian on the graduate level, I applied for Yale's DFA program in playwriting and dramatic literature instead of Russian, which I pursued for the first two years there, again turning out more uninspired scripts because I hadn't yet connected my writing with my own psyche and truly fascinating Mormon concerns. In the meantime, I more fully discovered the profundity of Russian literature, which prompted me, while only a year away from completing that DFA, to switch disciplines. I've never regretted it, though it cost me another six years in graduate school.

Todd: I'm sure any list of the top ten plays written by Mormons would include your Huebener. *How did you get the idea for writing about Helmuth Huebener?*

Tom: My first mission was in northern Germany, with headquarters in Berlin. Hamburg, Huebener's home town and the site of his clandestine activity, was one of our cities. I recall a fellow missionary there mentioning Huebener's story on one occasion. He'd heard about it from a local member. This was fairly unusual, since our members and investigators were rather tight-lipped about their personal experience during World War II, which had ended just a decade earlier. I was only dimly aware that a number of those we worked with then had been members of the Nazi Party.

After my mission, I put the whole thing out of my mind. It was almost two decades later, as I served on the BYU faculty, that my colleague Alan Keele gave a presentation to our college faculty about Huebener's impact on important post-war German authors, notably Nobel Prize winners Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass. Knowing of my interest in writing plays, Alan singled me out during the same lecture and challenged me to write a play on the subject. Alan and history professor Douglas Tobler were about to publish a book about it and generously shared their research, which became the play's principal source.[3] Till that moment I'd al-

most forgotten I'd ever written plays—so immersed had I meanwhile become in my career discipline, Russian literature.

Alan's unexpected challenge forcefully re-released the creative juices. The gracious interest and support just then of the BYU theater faculty was also an important catalyst.

Todd: Could you tell the basic Huebener story for readers who might be unfamiliar with it?

Tom: Helmuth Huebener, who, during his show trial in Berlin was characterized by the prosecution as having the mind of a thirty-year-old professor, was—despite the existing law protecting minors—condemned to death and beheaded at the age of seventeen. While listening to BBC shortwave accounts of the war (itself an illegal act), he'd become convinced that Hitler's propaganda machine was lying to the German nation about the war's progress. He was also strongly persuaded of the Nazi regime's tyrannous aggression against other peoples. As the trusted clerk to the LDS Hamburg District presidency, Huebener had access to a mimeograph machine, which he subsequently used to run off leaflets attacking Hitler and official Nazi accounts of the war. Recruiting two other young Latter-day Saints, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe and Ruddi Wobbe, he then proceeded to distribute the leaflets throughout Hamburg.

Later, he approached other youth to assist, including a co-worker at the state welfare office who eventually informed their supervisor, a loyal Nazi. The young men were arrested and brought to trial. To protect Schnibbe, who was technically no longer a minor, Helmuth took full responsibility for their deeds. Clearly, their discovery placed the Church, which was already viewed as an American entity, in great jeopardy. Huebener's conflict—to choose between his conscience and the loyalty required of him by those in power—is the common dilemma of classical tragedy—perhaps its most notable exemplar being Sophocles's *Antigone,* whose fatal heroism closely resembles Huebener's own. In part to protect the Church in Germany, Huebener was immediately excommunicated by his local priesthood leaders. After the war, when his story came to the attention of the General Authorities, Huebener's membership was reinstated by the First Presidency.

Todd: What themes attracted you in the Huebener story?

Tom: As I've suggested, it had the depth and proportion of a classic tragedy. I find similar dramatic impact in Mormonism's still most imposing novel-to-date, Maurine Whipple's *Giant Joshua,* whose plot uncannily

resembles the Hippolytus myth, first treated by Euripides, then brilliantly reworked in Racine's *Phaedra.* In a historical setting that would surely interest Mormon audiences, Huebener's story simply cried out for dramatic treatment. That was my only consideration at the time. It was also a story of which few Latter-day Saints were aware.

Todd: In the actual writing stage of the play, did you ever think, Oh-oh, my bishop (or brother, or conservative colleague) isn't going to like this?

Tom: No. Unlike Huebener and the outcomes he doubtless anticipated from his own authorial projects—his anti-Nazi pamphlets—I all along presumed that the play would receive a positive reception, which for the most part it, in fact, did. My bishop was actually one of its most enthusiastic viewers.

Again, the play was written during the heady period when LDS historians, particularly Arrington and company, were boldly moving forward with their own stimulating account and interpretation of our culture's past. Deseret Book had, for instance, just brought out Jim Allen and Glen Leonard's *The Story of the Latter-day Saints,* intended, I'm told, for courses in the Church's seminaries and institutes and only subsequently critiqued and not reprinted because of its allusions to nineteenth-century polygamy.

At the same time, in almost unprecedented fashion, my views as BYU Honors director were featured in a two-page centerfold of the university's alumni magazine, *BYU Today,* under the heading, "Mormon Scholars: Thoughts from a Person Who Believes in the LDS Intellectual," and with a large cover photo of yours truly sporting his ubiquitous Richard Nixon four-o'clock shadow. Even the otherwise extremely cautious theater faculty were, at that time, strong champions of new plays like *Huebener* that dealt with LDS heritage and present-day Mormon life. The department sponsored a student production of *Reunion,* and, along with Lael Woodbury, then dean of the College of Fine Arts, both Charles Metten, department chair, and Ivan Crosland, *Huebener's* director, eagerly petitioned Academic Vice President Robert K. Thomas for permission to move ahead with a campus production of *Fire in the Bones,* a first-ever literary treatment of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. In a two-hour discussion, Thomas, who had keen instincts about political correctness, explained to the four of us why it would be imprudent to perform this play at BYU. At the time, even allusions to historical polygamy, which prominently figures in the play, proved taboo. *Fire in the Bones* was subsequently

produced in the Salt Lake Valley by the short-lived Greenbriar Theater, made up of former BYU student thespians. I was out of the country at the time and never saw it.

Todd: Just out of curiosity, were your wife and family supportive of plays like this? (Juanita Brooks's sister was angry with her when her book on the Mountain Meadows Massacre came out.)

Tom: Again, there was no sense or suspicion in those halcyon days that, in our explorations, we were at all dissident. In their *Story of the Latter-day Saints,* Allen and Leonard constantly reassure the reader of their faith and fundamental commitment to the Church. In the same spirit, I wrote my plays, enjoying all the good will and trust one could ever ask for. It was truly a Camelot, not unlike the Arrington group's history-writing enterprise.

Todd: Tell us about the first performance of Huebener *[fall 1976, Margetts Arena Theater, BYU, Provo, Utah].*

Tom: I certainly didn't expect the sensational response we got. As few plays ever do, it became a true "happening." After the penultimate dress rehearsal, I turned to our director, Ivan Crosland, and exclaimed, "This is *Danton's Death* warmed over! It's so heavy, so somber." From the opening curtain, the actors representing Huebener's family all felt so sorry for themselves because they could already foresee the play's dismal conclusion. Recognizing this, Ivan encouraged them instead to be elated about the pending arrival of Huebener's half-brother Gerhard, on leave from the front. They had to be cheerful and optimistic because they were oblivious at this point about Helmuth's clandestine activity. That made all the difference.

For both the premiere performance and the anniversary of Helmuth's execution, about a month later, we had intentionally rigged what proved to be an extremely dramatic "postscript." After the initial applause, a line of three equally placed spotlights again lit the stage. In the first stood the real Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, in the third the real Ruddi Wobbe—Huebener's two principal teenage LDS co-conspirators. The middle spot remained empty, commemorating Huebener's own unavoidable absence. The effect was to bring events portrayed through artistic representation vividly into the audience's awareness—almost into their laps in the tiny Margetts Arena Theater. Two others who had known Huebener—the sister who had been his Sunday School teacher and to whom he had written one of his last letters, which we quote in the play, and the brother who had

Russ Card as Huebener, and Margaret Blair Young as Huebener's mother, in the 1976 premiere performance. Courtesy of Mark A. Philbrick University Photographer, Brigham Young University.

replaced him as the Church's district clerk—were also present and introduced to the audience, together with Lotte and Siegfried Guertler, professional thespians who, before their own post-war emigration, had as local Church members in Hamburg also known the young Huebener and the other principals. (Karl-Heinz and I had both played roles together on the stage of the Guertlers' Deutsches Teater, Salt Lake City.)

The effect was stunning, and word quickly spread. The play's initial run was extended for a number of additional weeks, so that its small experimental theater venue (with a seating capacity for at most 250 persons) finally accommodated, by my estimate, an approximate 5,000 viewers. Aaronic Priesthood advisors brought their quorums to it and so forth. On the Monday of the final advertised week, students sat in long serpentine lines on the Fine Arts Building's main floor, already queued to purchase the last batch of tickets, as normally happens only for athletic events at the Marriott Center.

Its Pardoe Theater main-stage audiences during the 2000 BYU revival were equally interested and enthusiastic. More recently, I directed a production for the Bountiful Fine Arts Theater, which was acclaimed by the *Deseret News* as among the state's five best for that year's season.

Todd: You compare the moral conflict in Huebener *to the conflict in* Antigone *where she had to choose between two admirable ideals: loyalty to family and loyalty to state. I was struck by how sympathetic and reasonable you make both Huebener and his branch president Zoellner, and their ideals. You can argue that both are completely right and completely wrong. What Huebener did by supporting the principles of honesty and liberty went against the Church policy of supporting local governments; he endangered the Church in Nazi Germany and all Mormons could have been sent to extermination camps as a result of his actions. On the other hand, Zoellner, being loyal to a local government in accordance with Church policy, was thereby supporting a state practicing pre-emptive war, mass murder, and open racism, which the play brings out in the scene when a Mormon Jew is prevented from attending church. Would you say your play treats the difficulty of finding absolute right or wrong in many situations?*

Tom: That is what makes the situation such an intriguing dramatic dilemma: competing "goods," only one of which one can be settled on. I agree that I probably idealized both Huebener and, for sure, his branch president to some extent. I've been told the branch president was a fanatically loyal Nazi and would have been far less sympathetic toward Helmuth, had he at all known about his activities prior to the latter's arrest. I've been told on good authority, in fact, that, when the branch president did find out about Huebener's activities, he exclaimed, "If I'd known, I'd have shot him myself!" Some have suggested that the play's Helmuth is almost too fearless and self-composed. Sensing this, I've tried to encourage those who portray him to reflect with body language, furtive looks, etc., what would be normal apprehension about what he was undertaking.

I also gave him a line in which he admits his fear. On the other hand, our best source about Helmuth's truly unusual personality, his still-living, close friend Karl-Heinz, who has, over the years, generously attended and fielded questions at a number of post-performance discussions in Provo, Bountiful, and elsewhere, has always contended that Helmuth *was* unusually determined and courageous—clearly a motivating inspiration for Karl-Heinz to this very day.

Todd: My last question was a bit awkward. Perhaps better: In Huebener

and Antigone *the protagonist has to choose between conflicting loyalties and conflicting truths. Would you say that some truths take precedence over other truths?*

Tom: I'm sure they do, but as often as not from a very limited personal and unavoidably subjective perspective—as with faith itself. There is no question that Huebener's position vis-à-vis Hitler and Hitler's war machine was the only morally correct one. What he could have ever really accomplished that would make a lasting difference by so openly defying it is, nevertheless, moot. I suppose those of us who so oppose the relentless Karl Rove machine and our present government's ongoing and, in my view, both unfounded and counter-productive actions in the Middle East may be a further instance—and we believe ourselves to belong to a democratic and not a totalitarian society, where enough people's collective views still have some influence. Doubtless, the unpopularity of the course our leaders took in Vietnam eventually helped bring about the belated conclusion of that particular debacle.

Huebener's prospects were far more limited and, in turn, put the Church and its members in great jeopardy. But who can fully foresee such things? His cause was both noble and extremely heroic; but its outcome, where both he and others were concerned, was as disastrous as where our present government's myopic hubris and incompetence have now led us.

Todd: I recently saw Night and Fog, *a great short documentary on the Holocaust by Alain Resnais. Though I knew all the facts about the Holocaust and have met people whose close relatives survived it, the documentary was still really shocking. At one point, they talked about the people in leadership in the death camps. After the war, these people said, "I'm not responsible." Over and over: "I'm not responsible." The torture, the mass murders—all open and widely known; but the administrators saying, "I'm not responsible." It made me realize that Huebener did the right thing morally. If you tacitly support the Nazi government, you're partially responsible. No question here, but I'm sure you have a comment.*

Tom: Only to add, Todd, that we see such denial everywhere, don't we—in ourselves and in a variety of contexts? Think of Enron, etc. Or the alibis almost all politicians resort to, figuratively or not, when they're caught with their pants down: "I never inhaled." Or "As a youth, I was abused by a priest."

Todd: You say that in 1976, you (including Alan Keele and Douglas Tobler) were asked to desist from further productions or publications on the subject of Huebener. Could you talk about that?

Tom: Of course, a few religious dissidents have here and there made

more of it than they should have (much as some have done regarding Richard Bushman's excellent and faithful biography, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*), but the play had immense appeal for the general public. Glowing reviews in the Salt Lake newspapers apparently alerted certain General Authorities to possible unfavorable fallout affecting certain members and the Church's welfare in distant places. I've never been sure why in 1976 we were asked to desist from further productions or publications on the subject. Some have speculated that it might have somehow interfered with plans to erect a temple behind the Iron Curtain in Freiberg, Germany. I've looked into the matter with those East German Saints of my acquaintance to whom authorities of the DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik) first recommended the Church's doing so. However, the timing doesn't exactly coincide. We will never really know.

Todd: Who contacted you? Could you describe how that happened?

Tom: BYU's president, Dallin Oaks, conveyed the request to the three of us. It had come from members of the Board of Trustees responsible for Church affairs in Europe, including East Germany, which was still under Soviet occupation. We also had a number of members in Allende's Chile, which was at that point a socialist nation. It seemed possible, if unlikely, that one or more well-intentioned members in those countries might be inclined, if it came to their attention, to emulate Huebener vis-à-vis their own regimes, with dire consequences for the Church. I and others have speculated about other possible reasons. Suffice it to say that, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, a BYU main stage revival of the play proceeded without any official complaint or censure—as have other productions of the play since then.

Todd: I was struck by that quotation from BYU President Rex Lee on the back of Huebener and Other Plays *with reference to his ancestor John D. Lee, the only person convicted and executed for participating in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. He said: "I have always struggled with why any rational human beings could have done what my great grandfather and others did on September 11, 1857. I still don't understand it. But I get more of an insight from your play than I ever had before. It's not that you present any more facts. I knew them all. . . . I doubt you could have written an essay that would have recreated the dynamics that may have existed in Cedar City on that Sunday evening quite as helpfully as did your play." How did that blurb on your book come about? Did Rex write you a letter?*

Tom: I had the temerity to share the play with President Lee when I read about the conciliatory event he had helped organize at Mountain

Meadows between his own clan and that of the Fanchers. His response was the gracious letter of acknowledgment you cite, which he then gave me permission to use on the anthology's back cover.

Todd: How would you advise Mormon playwrights to deal with problem issues? Will this be healthy for the Mormon community?

Tom: We constantly need to remind ourselves—despite our idealistic striving—of our humanity, our flawed natures. We need existential humility as much as others, maybe even more so as we represent the restored gospel and its fulness to them. Such narratives can serve us in a cautionary fashion, both individually and as a society. All that we have to share, which is so vital and precious, would have even greater appeal if we operated on a more horizontal level, both with one another and with everyone else. Otherwise, we are less than genuine: we play a hypocritical role and are self-deceived. As a Polish non-member visiting professor put it to me after seeing my play, *Reunion:* "The people here [in Utah] are sincerely trying to be artificially better than they are." In this regard, the Savior was, as in all else, our finest, purest, most reliable role model.

Todd: One theme I noticed in my recent re-reading of your plays is the danger of complete, morally unexamined obedience. John D. Lee (who, as you say in the introduction to Huebener and Other Plays, *is a more ambiguous protagonist than Huebener, but still heroic in some ways) might be an example. On the one hand, he followed the orders of his leaders (Haight, his stake president, and Dame, also a stake president and his commanding officer in the militia), and participated in the massacre. By the principles of "mechanical" Church obedience, he was right. But on another level, the massacre was terribly wrong, and Lee should have rejected obedience in that situation. In some ways, he strikes me as more comparable to Zoellner, in* Huebener, *than he is to Huebener. Would you agree?*

Tom: In his *Gulag Archipelago,* Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn pointedly argues: "If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?" The hero of Solzhenitsyn's novel, *The First Circle,* in turn comes to realize that "not by birth, not by the work of one's hands, not by the wings of education is one elected into the people. But by one's inner self. Everyone forges his inner self year after year. One must try to temper, to cut, to polish one's soul so as to become a human being. And thereby become a tiny particle of one's own people." I think this perception also has application to our

own individual authenticity or lack of it as Latter-day Saints and members of Zion.

I also resonate to the following: "The belief in God does not guarantee the knowledge of God's wishes. This is the most elementary lesson of the history of religious faith. The believer lives in the darkness more than he lives in the light. He does not wallow in God's guidance, he thirsts for it" (Leon Wieseltier).[4] "The spirit of liberty is the spirit that is not too sure that it is right" (Learned Hand).[5] "With or without religion, good people can behave well and bad people can do evil; but for good people to do evil—that takes religion" (Steven Weinberg).[6] "Any religious symbol, so interpreted that it refers not to a thought-transcending mystery but to a thought-enveloping social order, misappropriates to the lower principle the values of the higher and so (to use a theological turn of phrase) sets Satan in the seat of God" (Joseph Campbell).[7] And, finally, from my wife, Merriam: "Consideration can't be any more legislated than morality."

Todd: Would you explain, then, how you see Lee as a scapegoat, and heroic?

Tom: I doubtless use the term "hero" in more than one way: first, simply, as a protagonist or principal character. Then (not always the same) as noble in character. I view Lee more in terms of the former definition—like Arthur Miller's Willy Loman, circumstantially more sinned against than sinning but certainly not of flawlessly saintly stature.

Lee's sacrifice and service as an early missionary and as the chief provisioner of the first Mormon pioneers was nevertheless valiant and truly noteworthy. On the other hand, his involvement in the Mountain Meadows debacle was unfortunate and deeply tragic; there, his response was confused and weak because he lacked what Solzhenitsyn elsewhere refers to as an essential "individual point of view" or conscience, which we might relate to what we call the influence of the Holy Ghost.

I very much doubt that, in the strained circumstances of 1857, the voice of the Spirit was sufficiently sought or listened to. Then, again, there's the matter of competing goods or, in tragedy, vicissitudes, where choosing the high road is fraught with loneliness, pain, and more immediate peril. The branch president in *Huebener* is less flawed because he has not, in fact, betrayed that play's protagonist but only disagreed with him. The actual person on whom he is modeled was also not involved in Huebener's arrest, though, after learning of the event, his response was far less empathetic.

After all the time that has elapsed since the initial production of

Huebener—thirty-two years, in fact—it only now occurs to me why the story and the play's treatment of it have had such universal appeal. Plot-wise, the reason is almost purely situational. Although there is a decidedly external enemy out there—the Nazi regime—the play's real conflict occurs within an otherwise ideologically unified Church congregation and, beyond that, within individual characters. The presumed dichotomy of more righteous Mormons versus less enlightened or less valiant nonmembers isn't even implied. Instead, we witness a welter of confusion, disagreement and viewpoints—as in any body of believers. The same dynamic also takes place in both *Fire in the Bones* and *Reunion.*

Such an approach is, I believe, closer to real life and something with which viewers, whether insiders or the uninitiated, can more readily identify. Such an approach to religious subjects also avoids preaching or special pleading. Any spiritual "lesson"—or sense of inner struggle on the part of earnest believers—comes through subtly and between the lines and is therefore less annoying and more forceful. Such treatments of ourselves and our religious tradition strike me as far more winning in the long run—sparking both broader and keener audience interest because, again, they are that much truer to how things really are.

Todd: Turning again to Fire in the Bones, *how closely would you say your play follows the actual chain of events in the Mountain Meadows Massacre and its aftermath?*

Tom: That play is a fairly faithful account of John D. Lee's involvement in the Massacre. I based it almost wholly upon Juanita Brooks's critically acclaimed history of the event and her biographies of both John D. Lee and his youngest wife, Emma. For dramatic effect, its beginning and concluding scenes reprise the moment of his execution. (Curiously, the noted author Judith Freeman used a similar narrative frame in her recent novel on the same subject, *Red Water.*) Lee, of course, is a complex character because, while he took a principal part in the massacre, he is generally regarded as having been unjustly singled out in 1877 for punishment. Interestingly, as I mentioned before, my own great-grandfather, Sylvanus Collett, went to trial in Provo in 1878, accused, in concert with the recently deceased Orrin Porter Rockwell and two other men, of having dispatched, in all, four ill-fated emigrants from California, the Aiken party, a month or so after Mountain Meadows. I've written a play on that subject entitled *First Trump* (not yet produced) and also recently completed the draft of a related first novel whose working title is *The Book of Lehi.* How-

ever, when I wrote *Fire in the Bones,* I was but dimly aware of my ancestor's escapades. So there was no personal motive in writing a play about the Mountain Meadows Massacre—only that, like *Huebener,* it struck me as, in addition to its historical interest and fascinating moral complexity, ideal material for dramatic treatment.

Todd: You said that Fire in the Bones *was performed at the Greenbriar Theater after its BYU performances. What did you hear about the production? Has it been performed since then?*

Tom: Fire in the Bones had won a cash award in a Utah State Fine Arts play writing competition. The award gave the competition the right to offer it for a production to any performing group in the state. The short-lived Greenbriar Theater, based in Sandy, was founded by several recently graduated BYU theater alumni. At the time of my play's production, I was directing the BYU Study Abroad program in Vienna and was unaware of its disposition to that theater. I first got wind of it when the State Fine Arts division mailed me pre-publicity notices from the Salt Lake newspapers. Their tone made the play sound like an anti-Mormon tract, and I wondered if there might be repercussions since I was in the Church's employ. Compounding this concern was the fact the play's performances would coincide with another LDS general conference—as had the premiere performances of *Huebener.* I returned from abroad after the play's run had ended, so I never saw it. This time there was, to my knowledge and considerable relief, no public controversy. The production appears to have died a quiet death and is, as far as I know, the only one thus far. However, the play was recently reprinted in the Association for Mormon Letters journal *Irreantum.*[8]

It has always amazed me, parenthetically, that at the time of their premieres in, respectively, Dublin and Rome—and not unlike the initial reception of Stravinsky's *The Rites of Spring* in Paris—two of the plays I was privileged to direct for the BYU Department of Theater, both by now tame enough pieces in the classical repertoire, actually provoked public riots—Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* and Pirandello's *It Is So If You Think So.*

Todd: Just incidentally, I'm writing a biography of Jacob Hamblin, who is viewed fairly unsympathetically in your play. He's a lot more complex than people realize.

Tom: I'll be eager to read your account. The scene in which Hamblin berates Emma Lee for not divorcing John D. after his excommu-

nication derives from Juanita Brooks's biography, *Emma Lee,* based on her journal, published by Utah State University. I took a certain dramatic license in suggesting that Hamblin wanted to woo Emma to become another of his own wives. However, the fact that Hamblin gave damning hearsay testimony against Lee at the latter's second trial—asserting that Hamblin's Indian boy had witnessed Lee cutting the throats of Fancher women—is on record.

Todd: I read over your first three plays recently; and in the first two plays, I was struck by the theme of excommunication. The experience of actual excommunication, for a true believer like Huebener, must have been overwhelming. One of the problem themes in those two plays, for a person with an institutionally conservative point of view, would be that excommunications can be carried out at one time and rescinded years later (though after death, in our two cases). This certainly detracts from the moral force of excommunications. Was this a theme that you were drawn to, or would you say it simply happened to occur in both Huebener *and* Fire in the Bones?

Tom: It was strictly coincidental that the protagonists of my first two important plays—Huebener and John D. Lee—were excommunicated and, in both cases, had their membership posthumously restored. Naturally, that very circumstance added special poignancy to their stories. Only after both plays were written and received productions did I in fact realize that, plot-wise, I'd fallen into a rut. It was then, in order to right what seemed like a kind of thematic imbalance or too limited focus in what I'd so recently explored as a playwright, that I conceived of the play, *Reunion,* in which two brothers square off at each other regarding their diametrically opposed viewpoints about life and the gospel. They were, if you will, the thesis and antithesis whose synthesis—articulated and personified by their dying father, a former institute teacher—is that ultimate truth transcends both their passionate and so universally human positions.

Incidentally, I had a passing acquaintance as a Danforth Fellow with John Danforth, the former Missouri senator and U.N. ambassador who is also an Episcopalian minister. (His family, the Ralston cereal-Purina chow magnates, sponsored those fellowships.) John Danforth has recently brought out a book similarly arguing that, while allowing our moral and religious concerns to influence our response to government and social issues, none of us ought so smugly to equate our strong political biases, whether conservative or liberal, with God's omniscient will.[8]

Todd: Was Reunion *easier or harder to write than your former two plays?*

Members of the BYU English faculty and others giving a staged reading of Reunion, *1979–80. Courtesy of Thomas F. Rogers.*

Tom: Reunion wrote itself. I recall having heard practically every line out of the mouth of one or another acquaintance. Or having said it myself on some occasion.

Todd: Could you summarize the main characters and main dramatic conflicts in the play?

Tom: Reunion is mostly an *agon* [Greek: competition or contest], an argument between two brothers who represent what the LDS historian Richard Poll suggested were the Iron Rod versus the Liahona mentalities among Church members.[9] It's a sort of dialectic in which the Robison family's dying patriarch transcends his sons' bickering with a more Christlike perspective, insisting that ultimate truth and wisdom surpass the partisan disputations we are so prone to as we mutually contend about our righteousness and which moral stance is correct. Instead, Arthur Robison urges reconciliation.

Intuitively, his less articulate wife conveys the same transcendent perspective. A younger brother is momentarily dissuaded from serving a mission; but during a blessing requested by their father, he is possibly persuaded to reconsider his options—as is a hitherto wayward sister. I've rather facetiously called this play the first Mormon "soap."

Todd: You performed in Reunion, *and so did some of your personal friends, such as Marden and Harlow Clark. Can you tell us about those early rehearsals and performances?*

Tom: I recruited the cast largely from the BYU English faculty. They all felt a quick affinity with the play's characters and the issues it explored—which, I believe, made their acting so persuasive and credible. They were wonderfully supportive during the play's frequent staged readings in the BYU law school auditorium. Harlow had recently returned from a mission, and his father Marden read the part of the father with deep and sensitive understanding—reflecting, I suspect, his own past experience with students and members of his own family. For ten years after his retirement, he served as a campus bishop in a married student ward.

Todd: On the phone, you told me about varied reactions to Reunion. *Could you repeat what you told me?*

Tom: At the end of each reading, we held a lively discussion with audience members. Quite often someone would first say that he or she found the characters artificial and a caricature of real Latter-day Saints. Invariably, someone then popped up and declared, "No. That's my family." Or "That's my mother," etc. For most, the discussion seemed cathartic—a recognition that we are all flawed and vulnerable and limited in perspective, even as we earnestly attempt to live gospel-oriented lives. Acknowledging our common human detritus seemed to encourage those present to feel they were on an even playing field with everyone else, that they were more accepted, more capable of persevering and fighting the good fight. During one such discussion, an associate dean from the School of Business disparaged the play as "a slur on the Mormon family," but his response was atypical. The fact that the play so viscerally involved its audience was, I felt, an indication of its effectiveness as a "think piece."

Todd: I'm really struck by how idealized we want our lives and our history—and our ancestors—to be. It's a very human desire. I remember once a family friend told us we (my family) were the "perfect family"; we just laughed heartily at that one. We knew all about our painful moments and our moments of conflict. But it raises the question: What is the value of looking at dysfunctional families and relationships?

Tom: To humble us and help us recognize that dysfunctionality and find encouragement in the realization that we all partake of the same human condition. As that visiting professor colleague from Poland put it to

me after viewing the play, "The people here [in Utah] are sincerely trying to be artificially better than they are."

Todd: Sam Taylor tells the story of having characters in his fiction that were widely criticized as unrealistic. So in his next novel, he included a character drawn totally from life. And the critics pounced on that one as the least lifelike character of all!

Tom: Truth, as we often say, is indeed stranger than fiction—to which some wag has quipped that art is less strange than real life because art has to make a certain sense. I suspect, however, that there are readers and viewers (including some critics) who are only comfortable with stereotypes and would therefore tend to react in the way you describe. For me, an effective idiosyncratic trait or gesture individualizes and consequently brings a character all the more to life.

Todd: That person called your play a slur on the Mormon family, yet I know many families where some members are active Mormons and others are less active or actively disbelieving or apathetic. It's a difficult challenge for the active Mormons, who can easily come off as judgmental. The liberals can be just as judgmental, in a different way.

Tom: Are there possible limits to our so thoroughly "institutionalizing" the Spirit? We all know jack Mormons with hearts of gold who are less smug and far more generous and giving than many of the rest of us. (Now that he has left us, I can perhaps mention that the otherwise circumspect Leslie Norris once conveyed to me a similar impression of many Mormons, using that same adjective, "smug.") We need to be more aware of how others see us. For all that, I both acknowledge and am inclined to believe what a partially disaffected member recently wrote in an anonymously authored letter to *Dialogue:* "It [the Church] contains some of the most wonderful people we have ever met, and it does more good in the world, 'pound for pound,' than any other organization we know of."[10]

Todd: I liked the ending of Reunion, *where the very active son (flawed) and the liberal, inactive son (flawed) come together under the leadership of their (flawed) father. Why did you choose a ritual to end the play?*

Tom: It wasn't calculated. It just occurred to me and felt right—much as I often feel uncomfortable hearing actors mouth prayers on stage. On such occasions, I've even seen BYU audience members close their eyes and bow their heads in unison. Claudius's vain prayer in *Hamlet* is certainly an exception, but it is highly dramatic—ironically self-accusing and far from pious. You'll notice that, in *Reunion*, the stage directions indi-

cate a dimming of lights and "Curtain" before any words can be spoken. I will admit an instinctive penchant on my part to conclude this and other plays with a kind of ritual. As I wrote in the preface to the first anthology of my plays, *God's Fools*: "The ritual—be it a toast [as in *Huebener*], an execution [*Fire in the Bones,* also *Huebener*], or a blessing [*Reunion* and *God's Fools*]—is foreshadowed early in each play and, in each case, concludes it. The nature of this ritual, or at least the use made of it in its particular dramatic context, serves and was motivated, I'd now like to think, to affirm some transcendent, post-mortal connection between the hero and his eternal destiny."[11]

Todd: Would you say that the ending of the play leaves us with a family that is not necessarily different in their Church activity, but is more loving?

Tom: Yes, probably so. But that's already a great step forward, wouldn't you say? As important as a formal commitment or any amount of affirmative rhetoric. Words alone are cheap.

Todd: You could interpret Reunion*'s ending as a statement about Church activity versus love. How do you see the interplay of love and the institutional church at the end of the play?*

Tom: Well, the blessing by a patriarch (in this case, husband and father) is, as such, prescribed and encouraged by the Church. Without such an institutional incentive, I doubt it would even occur to the principals, let alone take place. But note this particular blessing's intimacy, its spontaneity. Although impelled by Arthur's desperate calculation to bring his children together, the home teachers, for instance, who also appear as characters in the play, did not recommend it. Nor did any other ecclesiastical leader.

Todd: As a writer of Mormon history, I see the need to look frankly and carefully at problems in Mormon history, practice, and scripture, in order to view them with full, authentic faith and come to resolution with them. Would you say that's a dramatic theme in all three of the plays we've discussed?

Tom: By its very nature, drama deals with conflict and with what is problematic—if successful and relevant, addressing real life, not necessarily offering solutions but raising issues and related questions. In a Mormon context, therefore, dealing with such problems is unavoidable. And, yes, I agree with you that awareness of the facts as we can best know them is a firmer and more honest foundation for faith. If we appear to have something to hide, doubts readily arise.

Besides, the historical or biographical nitty-gritty, once you delve

into it, is far more fascinating than air brushing or spin. If properly apprehended, it also fosters even greater admiration for the very human struggle all men and women, including our idols, have been through. Think of President Kimball's marvelous biographies, Elder Busche's refreshingly candid autobiography,[12] the Bible's frequent depiction of personal flaws in Old Testament patriarchs and kings as well as Christ's apostles, the confessions of youthful waywardness by various Book of Mormon prophets, not to mention Joseph Smith's self-effacing personal history in the Pearl of Great Price and the reproaches and admonishments he receives from the Lord in various revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. These unvarnished depictions encouragingly help us identify with such figures and render them even more heroic—as do the circumstances and portrayal of character that underlie all viable tragedy and realism.

I was called to serve as a director of BYU's Honors program about the time I started writing these plays. I was also, simultaneously, a campus branch president. Perhaps I was naive at the time, but in those days there appeared to be a seamless relationship between free intellectual inquiry and faith. That was, of course, before the culture wars and before more widespread radical dissent descended upon us. I will add that, in the late sixties, I was induced to further pursue my teaching career by moving to BYU from a state institution, in part because I felt that my students at the latter school were extremely self-assured and their minds were already fairly well made up, often skeptically, about life and its ultimate purposes. In contrast, it seemed to me, many a more committed LDS young person, as at BYU, was in considerable need of humanistic broadening—which, in turn, gave me a personal sense of "mission" I felt less at the University of Utah. Though largely subconscious, I think that same impulse underlay my urge to write the plays we've been discussing.

Todd: Here's a general one. If you were to pick the five plays that have influenced you the most, what would they be? Feel free to add other plays, but start with five.

Tom: That's hard. I'd rather just mention particular playwrights. In my early years I fell under the sway of the three leading contemporary American playwrights, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge. With my penchant for biographical and historical subjects, I am probably closer to Miller, whose Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* is based on an uncle of his, whose *After the Fall* revisits his marriage with Marilyn Monroe, and whose *Crucible* is, as we know, an allegory for the

McCarthy era "witch hunts." Of the more recent English language playwrights, I have often cited as our finest the British absurdist Harold Pinter (*The Homecoming, The Caretaker*), the Irishman Brian Friel (*Dancing at Lughnasa*), the late American black August Wilson (*Fences, The Piano,* etc.) and the, for me, utterly amazing Sam Shepard (whose actual surname, incidentally, is also Rogers) (*Buried Child, Fool for Love, Lies of the Mind*).

For me, Shakespeare has always been something of an enigma. I admire him from a distance but more readily relate to his earthier contemporary, Ben Jonson. Late in the day, critics like Yale's Harold Bloom, Harvard's Stephen Greenblatt, and Oxford's late A. D. Nuttall have helped me better fathom from the subtle clues that relate various plots and seemingly disparate characters the pattern of Shakespeare's ultimate sympathies and world view. As Nuttall keeps insisting, "Shakespeare did everything. . . . It is remarkably hard to think of anything Shakespeare has not thought of first."[14] Everyone should read Nuttall's very recent *Shakespeare the Thinker.*

Of the classic Greek triad, I prefer and resonate most with Euripides, who, with his larger number of extant plays, was also clearly the most popular of the three in the ancient world. If more sensational than Aeschylus and Sophocles, he is also, psychologically, the most profound, the most modern. In a number of respects, Euripides is, for me, a supreme model. I believe that his frequent female protagonists are also emblems of his beloved city-state, Athens, and that, in ways hard to fathom, their tragic destinies reflect that nation's decline. His last play, *The Bacchae,* is an amazing commentary on political hubris as well as on the perils of both spiritual and artistic pretension.

Back to Shakespeare: As Harold Bloom has observed, the Bard was the very first writer in all human history to portray characters debating within themselves a course of action. That strikes me as, in turn, what playwrights do when they assign this or that opposed viewpoint to various characters. They are really just debating within themselves the issues that so fascinate and compel them.

Allow me, in conclusion, to say just this much more about truly serious literature—realistic fiction and tragedy—which, despite Aristotle's claim for its "purgation of the emotions," seems so off-putting to many. Just recently, in fact, another emeritus scholar chided my enthusiastic endorsement of Cormac McCarthy's latest profound if predictably stark novel, *The Road,* indicating that, as a patriarch, he could not recommend

it to others. His declaration was a reminder that temperamentally we are all different, but it left me wondering how he handles the Book of Mormon's depictions of slaughter and carnage—whether he sees in them any elevating purpose? Or how he would respond to Joseph Smith's "Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss."[15]

For me, anyway, if not for everyone, the honest depiction of tragic events has important spiritual-ethical import. Besides serving as an object lesson, it arouses Christlike compassion for those less fortunate and also conveys to us—even in its default and frequent absence—the nobility of self-sacrificing behavior as, when necessity dictates, the greatest of goods and the most beautiful thing imaginable. If we can catch tragedy's transcendent vision and allow it to inspire us, then we, too, will strive for that same nobility and cherish its beauty above all else that self-indulgently lures us. If we can respect it sufficiently, it might just "save" some of us.

Todd: Many thanks, Tom. This conversation has been very interesting and enlightening.

Tom: Thanks, Todd, for your questions.

Notes

1. Both have been published in *God's Fools: Plays of Mitigated Conscience* (Midvale, Utah: Eden Hill, distributed by Signature Books, 1983) and *Huebener and Other Plays* ([Provo, Utah]: Poor Robert's Publications, 1992).

2. Leonard J. Arrington, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 3 (Summer 1968): 56–66; reprinted in D. Michael Quinn, ed., *The New Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 1–12. I use the Quinn source. The quotation is on p. 6.

3. Blair R. Holmes and Alan F. Keele, eds., *When Truth Was Treason: German Youth against Hitler: The Story of the Helmuth Huebener Group Based on the Narrative of Karl-Heinz Schnibbe* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995). See also Alan F. Keele and Douglas F. Tobler, "The Führer's New Clothes: Helmuth Huebener and the Mormons in the Third Reich," *Sunstone* 5, no. 6 (November-December 1980), 20–29.

4. Leon Wieseltier, *New Republic,* November 22, 2004.

5. Learned Hand's swearing-in speech before some 150,000 new U.S. citizens in New York's Central Park, 1944, in Gerald Gunther, *Learned Hand: The Man and Judge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 549.

6. Steven Weinberg, "A Designer Universe?" *New York Review of Books*, October 21, 1999, 46–48.

7. Joseph Campbell, *The Flight of the Gander* (Washington, D.C.: Gateway Publishing, 1960), 206–7.

8. Thomas R. Rogers, *Fire in the Bones, Irreantum* 8, no. 2 (2006): 34–85.

9. John Danforth, *Faith and Politics: How the "Moral Values" Debate Divides America and How to Move Forward Together* (New York: Viking, 2006).

10. Richard D. Poll, "What the Church Means to People Like Me," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1967): 107–17; rpt. in Richard D. Poll, *History and Faith: Reflections of a Mormon Historian* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), chap. 1, also online at http://www.signaturebookslibrary.org/history/chapter1.htm.

11. Name Withheld, "Shall I Go or Shall I Stay?" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2006): vi.

12.Thomas R. Rogers, *God's Fools: Plays of Mitigated Conscience,* xi.

13. Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball: The Early and Apostolic Years* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006); Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005); F. Enzio Busche, *Yearning for the Living God: Reflections from the Life of F. Enzio Busche*, edited and compiled by Tracie A. Lamb (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004).

14. A. D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 265.

15. Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980 printing): 3:295.

FICTION

Entertaining Angels Unaware

Laura McCune-Poplin

Lucy hated arguing with her companion in public, even though they argued in English so most people couldn't understand what they were saying, and those who did could probably care less. They didn't argue often, mostly because Lucy had only been in La Rochelle for two weeks and still depended on Soeur Paxton's knowledge of the city and people to function. But the more accustomed Lucy became to her surroundings, the less comfortable she became with her companion, and their arguments grew longer and more frequent.

"But President Martin said we needed to maintain daily contact with our *amies* if we want to see them progress toward baptism," Soeur Paxton said louder than necessary. They were standing over their bikes, having just unlocked them, debating how to spend the next two hours. Soeur Paxton wanted to visit Charlotte, an *amie* the *soeurs* had met tracting the week before, and Lucy wanted to visit Florence, an older *amie,* who after four years of investigating the Church still wasn't ready to get baptized, although she attended church every week and even sang in the ward choir. Soeur Paxton dismissed Florence as a lost cause and a waste of their time, but Lucy admired her unwillingness to join a Church she did not fully understand. It meant she took her conversion seriously.

Soeur Paxton strapped a helmet over shoulder-length hair, so straight and smooth rubber bands would not stay put. She was younger than Lucy, but taller and just as thin. She had a small nose and a small mouth, which would have made Lucy jealous (because her own nose had a slight bump and her mouth was too big) except Soeur Paxton had a habit of setting her lips in a line so thin and stubborn it made Lucy want to scream.

"President Martin says a lot of things," she said, thinking about her previous city, Bordeaux, where she had an *amie* named Sylvie, who didn't

get baptized even though she had finished the discussions in less than three weeks like the mission president suggested, and even though Lucy had fasted every week, which ended the day Sylvie said she no longer wanted to meet with the *soeurs*. That day, Lucy's hope had crumbled like wet sand falling through her fingers, and Elder Tyler had talked to her for over an hour, telling true-life missionary stories so sad and pathetic they were funny, just to make her laugh. Lucy wondered if Sylvie would have been baptized had the *soeurs* refused to follow President Martin's advice. Maybe all she had needed was more time.

Soeur Paxton placed her fist on the outside of her yellow raincoat and thumped her chest. "I just really feel in my heart that this is something we need to do," she said, her expression pained. Lucy resisted the urge to groan and instead looked down the street at stone arcades covering sidewalks and windows full of shoes and bright fabrics and music posters. In less than two weeks and without a single friend in her district, La Rochelle had become Lucy's favorite city.

Lucy had wanted to serve in La Rochelle since she discovered it on her first day in France, but she kept it secret like a wish over a birthday cake, because spoken wishes never came true. While waiting at the mission office to meet President Martin for the first time, Lucy stood in front of a giant map with spokes of string connecting passport photos to red pushpins, whispering the names of cities where she might serve. When she whispered the name "La Rochelle," she got so excited her breath caught in her throat and she had to step away from the map, unprepared for the rush of emotion that accompanied those syllables. She looked around the office as though something extraordinary had happened and wondered if anybody else noticed, but the elders working in the alcove next to the front door hadn't looked up from their telephones or files of paper. When Lucy learned the name of her first area (Pau, not La Rochelle) she pushed the experience to the back of her mind where it would be safe from hope or disappointment, and where it would be forgotten.

By the time Lucy left her second area, Bordeaux, she couldn't imagine serving in another city nor remember ever wanting to. But when she arrived in La Rochelle, she walked outside the *gare* to wait with suitcases at her side and looked through sheets of rain like mercury at the six-hundred-year-old towers and sailboats and cobblestone streets and fell in love with the city. She straightened her shoulders beneath the weight of her bags and breathed slowly, the salt air spreading through her head and

clearing out the murkiness that had lodged in her mind the morning Elder O'Neill called with transfers. Standing under the awning, Lucy allowed La Rochelle to seep into her skin and between her bones and clean out her insides so that she felt empty in a good way.

Lucy loved La Rochelle so much that she almost forgot how much she disliked her companion.

"My heart is telling me to leave Charlotte alone," Lucy said finally.

"We can't both be right, and President Martin is on my side."

Lucy pulled her handlebars to disengage her front tire from the bike rack. "President Martin doesn't know Charlotte. He didn't hear her say I'll see you Friday. Or I need some time to think about this. Or I want to go slow because I'll wig out if I'm rushed into something and pressured to do things I don't want to do."

Soeur Paxton frowned. "Charlotte didn't say 'wig out.'"

"That's because Charlotte speaks French," Lucy said in her most patronizing voice. Soeur Paxton had the worst accent of anybody she had ever met, talking as though her mouth were crammed with mothballs, and Lucy suspected she had as hard a time understanding French as she did speaking it.

"If she doesn't get baptized, it will be your fault."

"And if she tells us to go away?"

"She won't if we're acting in faith."

"Acting in whose faith? Not my faith."

"That's because you don't have any."

So angry that she no longer saw the city or the people surrounding her, Lucy looked at Soeur Paxton and said, "You know nothing about my faith."

* * *

The *soeurs* passed beneath the clock tower on their way to Charlotte's apartment, and Lucy caught a glimpse of the ocean reflecting sunlight that illuminated the underbelly of clouds as it disappeared into the water and lessened. The ocean calmed Lucy and made her feel better because it reminded her she wasn't alone in the world, and she felt instantly connected to distant places. But for the first time since she could remember, Lucy didn't look at the ocean longing to be some place else, just with someone else. She wanted to stay where she was.

Swinging her right leg over the bike seat, Lucy stood on the left

pedal and coasted up the sidewalk to where her companion sat waiting to lock their bikes together. Soeur Paxton smiled, having gotten her way, but Lucy didn't return the smile, protesting her complicity in silence. She would enable her companion with her presence, but she would refuse to participate.

As they climbed the spiral staircase made of cement and iron to the third floor, the back of her companion's skirt swished at Lucy's eye level. Even the way Soeur Paxton walked annoyed Lucy, flicking her heels like a prancing pony. But the more they worked, the less they talked, the faster the day was spent and the sooner Lucy could take refuge in her pajamas, a cup of warm milk, and the pile of letters waiting in the mailbox. Elder Tyler had already written her once from Nantes, and she had been so happy to hear from him, she would have started crying if Soeur Paxton hadn't been watching for her reaction. Missionaries weren't supposed to correspond within the same mission.

"Do you want to knock?" Soeur Paxton asked as though there had been no argument—sweetly, almost kind.

Lucy shook her head without making eye contact. Standing together on the straw doormat, the *soeurs* waited for the door to open. After a minute, Soeur Paxton tried again, knocking longer and louder than before, but the silence within the apartment echoed equally loud, and Lucy's heart slowed down as she recognized the sound of an empty room. She hadn't realized she was nervous.

Allowing Soeur Paxton to knock a third and fourth time, because somehow she knew Charlotte wouldn't appear, Lucy fought the urge to comment on the futility of their argument and Soeur Paxton's spiritual inspiration, choosing rather to enjoy the satisfaction of not being proven wrong.

When Soeur Paxton raised her arm to knock a fifth time, the expression on her face so determined her jaw muscles bulged like she was sucking on marbles, Lucy leaned over and said, "We should probably go." She desperately wanted to tack on a remark about how much time they'd already wasted—because Soeur Paxton loved to proclaim her own efficiency almost as loudly as the gospel, but Lucy didn't say anything else. Instead, they quietly exited from the building, stepping into the dark blue of an early dusk with less than half the windows from the surrounding buildings looking down on them with light.

* * *

Six weeks passed before the *soeurs'* next real argument, which was merely a continuation of the last one. Soeur Paxton wanted to stay at the chapel with their newest *amie,* Virginie, and Lucy wanted to visit Florence. But this time Lucy would not give in. Secretly, she didn't like Virginie. She flirted too much with the elders; and she wore blue contacts and blue eye make-up that reminded Lucy of her sophomore year in high school, when she wore blue mascara to play up her eyes so nobody would look at her acne.

Initially, the *soeurs* had invited Virginie to attend beginning English classes at the chapel, but she preferred studying intermediate English with the elders even though the grammar went beyond her abilities and she frustrated the other students who actually wanted to learn. But the elders let her stay because, even with blue make-up, Virginie was beautiful.

That night, only two students came for the *soeurs'* class, so they decided it would be easier to tutor them individually. Soeur Paxton offered to work with Hervé, a seventy-year-old man with a white mustache and a cane, who wore a wool hat that he would take off every time a woman came in or out of the room. Hervé didn't care about language or grammar. He only wanted someone to ask him questions about the war and the *résistance,* which would have to be translated because he didn't understand English, so he could tell long stories that changed slightly with each telling, spit accumulating at the corners of his mouth as his eyes glossed over with excitement and memory. Taking Hervé by the elbow, Soeur Paxton led him to the corner of the room where she set up two chairs facing each other, so they could sit and nod and pretend to understand what the other was saying.

Lucy, on the other hand, spent the hour helping Émile with his homework, reciting for him a *dictée* in English so he could transcribe the paragraph word for word, which Lucy would then check for spelling or grammar errors. Soeur Paxton didn't like helping Émile, who became frustrated easily, crying when he made too many mistakes and then getting angry or embarrassed and throwing pencils or books because fourteen-year-old boys weren't supposed to cry. But Lucy didn't mind, she liked Émile; he gave her handmade bookmarks decorated with miniature daisies that he pressed between the pages of his textbooks, and he knew the words to every song on the Bee Gee's Greatest Hits album.

Once *cours d'anglais* ended and their students left—Hervé making

the sign of the cross as he walked out the door because he refused to understand that they weren't Catholic—Lucy stood up and announced to her companion that it was time to go.

"I want to visit Florence," she said, putting on her coat and backpack.

"But what about Virginie?"

"What about her?" Lucy looked at the other side of the chapel where Elder Schaeffer stood in front of a chalk-drawn hangman, asking the students to guess a letter. Elder Jenson sat with the students in a semi-circle facing the blackboard and Virginie, who sat two seats away, kept leaning across laps to beg hints from him.

"She'll be fine. She's with the elders."

"But she's our *amie*."

Instead of answering Soeur Paxton, Lucy glanced again at the elders, whose hangman was only two hands from being hung. Really, Virginie's salvation belonged to the entire district because Elder Schaeffer insisted on attending all of Virginie's rendezvous so that, as district leader, he could supervise the effectiveness of the *soeurs'* teaching. Last week, he even went so far as to request a special meeting with Lucy to evaluate her personal worthiness. Apparently, Soeur Paxton had complained about Lucy's letters to Elder Tyler and the late night phone calls from Elder O'Neill, and Elder Schaeffer worried that her lack of obedience might cripple Virginie's spiritual progression in particular and the success of their district in general.

Lucy had started to ask him why, if he was such a stellar missionary, didn't he have any *amis* of his own to teach, but she decided to give Elder Schaeffer the benefit of her many doubts and agreed to a meeting the following morning.

Sitting on the steps in front of the house that was their chapel, the early sunlight illuminating breath from their mouths and noses, Lucy had tried not to shiver as she listened to Elder Schaeffer recite excerpts from the Missionary Guide. She squinted at his blond hair, combed to the side and so well shaped she wondered if he used gel, and understood that he was trying to be the perfect missionary. The kind that appeared on brochures and in motivational literature. The kind that Lucy, disillusioned by the enormous discrepancy between the expectations generated by the MTC and her actual experience thus far, suspected did not exist.

But as he spoke, pounding his fist into his hand as though it were a

baseball glove, while confessing that no matter how hard he worked he hadn't taught past the third discussion nor served as zone leader, Lucy also understood that he was trying to be the perfect missionary because that's how he thought best to love God. And she couldn't find it within herself to persuade him otherwise because she didn't know how best to love God either. So although Lucy hadn't wanted the elders to attend their rendezvous with Virginie, she hadn't had the heart to tell Elder Schaeffer not to come. It might be his only chance to teach a fourth discussion.

Except they didn't actually teach a fourth discussion. Instead, Soeur Paxton and the elders had spent two and a half hours trying to convince Virginie (who dressed up for the occasion in a blue mini-skirt and heels) to be baptized. Sitting on velvet pillows around a glass-topped coffee table set with *tisane* and cookies, they took turns trying to say the magic words that would illuminate her soul and change her mind. But Virginie would only laugh or twirl her hair, and ask if they would like more tea.

At first Lucy worried that Virginie might take offense at the missionaries' complete lack of tact as they stooped to lower and lower levels in their attempts to see her baptized. Elder Jenson, with his thin face made longer by his thin nose and thin hair, even taught Virginie about outer darkness, where the souls of those who rejected the truth after having received it were banished forever from the presence of God, and Lucy leaned over when he had finished to ask in English, "What discussion was that from, Elder?"

Looking at the other missionaries seated around Virginie's table, Lucy felt disconnected from what was taking place, as though she were watching a play from a front-row seat that she couldn't get up and leave, even though she wanted to. But the more Virginie laughed, the less Lucy worried, and she began to realize that she would never fit in with her district no matter how long she stayed in La Rochelle.

* * *

Outside the chapel, the sky was deep purple and the streetlights were on. The clock above the piano showed quarter past eight. At night with no traffic, the *soeurs* could ride to Florence's house in less than ten minutes, which would give them forty-five minutes to visit and still make it home before nine-thirty. Soeur Paxton insisted on making curfew. Lucy didn't want to miss any phone calls.

"We need to leave right now," she said, repositioning her backpack, which jingled full of books and pens and keys and loose francs.

Soeur Paxton didn't stand up. She didn't look at Lucy either, but crossed her arms while looking at the floor. "I don't think we should leave Virginie here alone."

"I'm not asking for your opinion." Lucy felt the faintest desire to slap her companion. She had heard stories about elders fighting, about eyes blackened and noses broken in three places because one person worked too little or too much depending, but Lucy had never heard of a *soeur*-fight.

She picked up her companion's backpack and stood in front of her chair, so close their skirt hems were touching.

"I've been senior comp since my fifth week in the mission," she said, "and I've never had to play the senior comp card before. But I'm the senior comp and I'm going to Florence's and you're coming with me." Lucy dropped the backpack in her companion's lap. The elders had stopped teaching and the entire class was staring at Lucy with mouths agape. She hadn't realized she was yelling.

"Elder Schaeffer," Lucy called across the room without looking in their direction, "we're leaving." She let the screen door slam behind her as she went to untangle her bike from the pile of others at the bottom of the stairs. Tucking the back hem of her skirt into the front waistband and converting her skirt into genie pants, Lucy straddled her bike, buckled her helmet beneath her chin, and left.

Ignoring the impulse to turn around and check on her companion, Lucy concentrated on looking straight ahead, although she wasn't conscious of what she was seeing. When she glided up Florence's driveway and jumped off in front of the gate, Lucy couldn't remember how she got there, only that she had refused to look back. However, Lucy could remember what she had thought about because she was still thinking—mostly about how much she didn't like her companion, but she was now comfortable enough with her malaise to render it innocuous, like a sliver gradually absorbed into the body.

Wanting to lock her bike, but needing to wait for Soeur Paxton, Lucy finally allowed herself to look for her companion, who was turning the corner at the end of the block, her helmet low enough over her face to cast a shadow from the street lamps so Lucy couldn't read her expression. It was then Lucy noticed Sebastian's car.

Like Florence, Sebastian had met the missionaries four years ago; and for two of those years, he successfully conned everyone into believing he was a descendant of the disenfranchised nobility, whose dukedom had disappeared under Napoleonic law. He lived on a sailboat but spent most of his days at Church members' houses, eating their food and taking the clothing or bedding offered in response to his less than subtle hints. When his many promises of repayment failed to materialize, however, even the most gullible members realized he was using pending baptism to prey upon their generosity. And although many members stopped supplying him with food or money, for the most part they chose to ignore his lies and accept him as part of the congregation, simply because he came.

Opening Florence's black iron gate, which squealed in both directions, Lucy rolled her bike inside the small courtyard and propped it against a wooden trellis, naked with winter. Soeur Paxton joined Lucy on Florence's porch, her face like stone.

Lucy knocked on Florence's door and tried to force all negative thoughts out her nose with a long, slow exhale. She genuinely loved Florence. She realized this the day Florence took the *soeurs* to the coast so they could buy a bucketful of mussels, which they soaked in white wine without telling Soeur Paxton, who would have refused to eat any had she known, but who repeatedly proclaimed it the best meal she had ever tasted. Florence reminded Lucy of her grandmother, but ten years younger, so that Lucy had the impression of having lived lost time.

When Florence opened the door, she smiled so wide her eyes disappeared. "I was praying you would come so he would leave," she whispered, waving the *soeurs* into the hallway half-lit by lamps in the salon. Lucy stepped inside, bending down to kiss Florence on both cheeks as she passed.

"Bonjour, Sebastian," she said, holding out her hand. He stood up from the overstuffed armchair to grab her fingertips loosely in a handshake. Sebastian was tall, and his hair was slightly long and starting to turn gray. He wore a shirt tied loosely over his shoulders and canvas shoes. He was dressed like a wealthy man on vacation.

"I was just leaving," he said, smiling. Lucy wondered if he knew that she didn't believe him.

"Bonjour," Soeur Paxton said, nodding as Sebastian took her hand and made an excuse about the time and the important matters requiring his attention. Florence was standing by the open door, and as he leaned

forward to *bise* her three times before leaving, Lucy heard him thank Florence for dinner. Florence waved goodbye while shutting the door, which she locked and leaned her head against, sighing deeply.

"He doesn't like missionaries, because he knows that what he's doing is wrong."

"Why do you feed him if you don't want him to come over?" Soeur Paxton asked.

"It's not so simple as that," Florence said, before clasping her hands and changing the subject. "Now, how about I make some *tisane* and then we can read for a while."

During the five minutes it took for the kettle to whistle and for Florence to return with linden tea and madeleines, her dog-eared copy of the Book of Mormon pinned to her side with her elbow, the *soeurs* didn't exchange a single word. Instead, Lucy was thinking about Florence and how Lucy had helped God answer Florence's prayer. It gave Lucy hope that maybe she had answered other prayers without knowing it. Like maybe there wasn't just one guardian angel for every person, but rather every person was a guardian angel for somebody else. Maybe angels didn't have to be perfect.

There was only one moment in Lucy's life that she could point to and say with absolute certainty that God had answered her prayer. It was her holy moment. One she would never dismiss as coincidence. One that she could return to in memory when the rest of her mind was filled with doubt. It proved that God not only existed but also that God knew Lucy existed, something she had never before believed. Because with Jesus busy saving the rest of humanity from Adam onward, why should he bother with Lucy at all? And as much as it terrified her to acknowledge such thoughts, Lucy was convinced she was an ordinary person with ordinary needs, which, in the eternal scheme of things, were negligible at best.

When Lucy was eighteen and first determined to see the world, she flew to Paris on her father's frequent flyer miles with a thousand dollars in her pocket that she had been saving since the summer she was fifteen, when a German exchange student named Bjorn stayed with her family for a month—long enough to make Lucy fall in love with the idea of faraway places and the German hockey players with brown hair and green eyes who lived there. Lucy intended for her thousand dollars to last the two months she planned to wander Europe, and she would have left with

fifty-three dollars remaining, if her wallet had not been stolen somewhere between Frankfurt and Paris the day before her flight home.

Without money and because the debit card that her bank assured her would work in Europe didn't, Lucy decided she would spend the night in the Gare St. Lazare, where the trains ran all night and where the airport shuttle bus would pick her up the following morning at six. Impressed by her own sensible decision and calm, Lucy found a chair on the balcony above the *Trains Grand Depart,* and sat down to wait. Her calm lasted for nine hours and forty-five minutes.

At nine hours and forty-six minutes, Lucy's headache reached migraine status, intensifying the ammonia smell wafting from the seat dripping with urine two chairs over, where a homeless man had peed while Lucy's eyes were closed. Lucy needed to pee herself, but public toilets cost money and she didn't have enough energy to explain herself to the bathroom attendant, or try to sneak by without being seen while carrying a twenty-five-pound backpack overstuffed with cumbersome souvenirs like books and shoes.

Tired enough to sleep, but afraid she would oversleep and miss her ride to the airport, Lucy concentrated instead on ignoring her thirst because in the Gare St. Lazare, even water cost money. The irony of simultaneously needing to pee and drink more than she had ever needed to pee or drink in her life, frustrated Lucy until her throat constricted, and she leaned against her backpack and closed her eyes, trying unsuccessfully to will her bladder into reabsorbing excess liquid back into her bloodstream.

Lucy felt a drop of warmth on her chest and realized she was crying. I need help, she thought. Please. And let it be somebody who speaks English. She took a deep breath and exhaled through her mouth while counting to ten, trying to calm herself before she opened her eyes.

"American, right?"

Startled, Lucy looked up and saw a man with white hair, a white polo shirt with thin blue stripes around the sleeves and collar, and white pants. He pointed to the seat next to Lucy and sat down when she nodded.

"How did you know?" Lucy sat up straight, disentangling her arms from the straps on her pack. She wiped her eyes.

He unfolded a train schedule and handed it to Lucy. He wore copper bracelets on both wrists. "Do you think you could help me read this?" he asked, "All the information kiosks are closed."

Lucy took the schedule. The man wanted to take a night train to London and was under the impression that one would be leaving in the next fifteen minutes. Glancing at the black signboard above the lobby, Lucy matched times and destinations with the schedule in her lap until she found it. She pointed to it with her finger. The train would be leaving Paris at 1:45 A.M. and arriving in Dieppe at 3:15. Then he would take a ferry to Brighton and another train to London. He'd arrive in Waterloo Station at 8:16 the following morning. Lucy pointed to the sign and leaned her head closer to his so they might share sightlines.

"It says your train is on *voie* 4," she said, handing the paper back and smiling with lips closed.

The man stood up and put the folded schedule into his back pocket. "I'd better go tell my wife," he said. "This is for your trouble." He held a palm full of francs out to Lucy and smiled kindly, but she shook her head from embarrassment.

"Please. Banks won't exchange coins." He flipped his hand over and held the coins in his fingertips, which trembled slightly and Lucy thought he might drop them. She held her hand out and said, "Thank you," looking the man in the eyes for the first time, which were the same pale blue as her brother's. The coins felt warm against her skin and she watched him leave until he reached the top of the escalator and floated out of sight. Only when he had gone did she count the money in her hand. Thirty-seven francs. Enough for a baguette sandwich, a Fanta, a Lion bar, and two trips to the bathroom.

* * *

After reading with Florence for a half hour, Lucy closed her Book of Mormon and announced it was time for them to leave. Florence accompanied the *soeurs* into the garden, which doubled in size during the winter months when there were no leaves, and leaned over their bikes to kiss their cheeks and say thank you one more time.

When the *soeurs* coasted down the driveway and into the street, which sloped so they did not have to start pedaling until they rounded the corner, Soeur Paxton said it was a good thing they decided to visit Florence. It was the closest she ever came to offering Lucy an apology.

* * *

An entire week passed before the *soeurs'* next real argument. It was

the morning of an Oil Drop Day, a day set aside by President Martin intended to fill the missionaries' figurative lamps with oil so they would not be found wanting when the bridegroom came. Oil that came in the form of faith produced by works of the most devoted kind. On Oil Drop Day, missionaries left their apartments in the early morning and didn't return until night, not even for lunch or when it rained or got so cold Lucy's toes felt like small chunks of ice. On these days, missionaries couldn't do service or visit members (which felt more like recess than work) so those without *amis* had to tract or contact for twelve continuous hours. The most devoted missionaries worked while fasting, which Lucy tried once, but she had only lasted eight hours without food and drink before her head started pounding and she almost fell off her bike, dizzy and faint.

Their argument started with Soeur Paxton disapproving of Lucy writing letters during morning scripture study, but she would not say as much, only sigh heavily from her chair across the room and glare at the paper in Lucy's lap while making observations about how the whole point of Oil Drop Day was to be as obedient as possible because even the smallest infringement would lessen their effectiveness as missionaries and eclipse whatever miracles might otherwise take place.

Lucy ignored her companion's comments, although she would have put the letter aside had Soeur Paxton stopped sighing and asked her to please stop writing. The real irony, however, was that Lucy was writing Elder Tyler about the verse she had just read in 2 Nephi 4 because she was missing him to the point of melancholy and the part about putting her confidence in God and not in man had made the sadness knocking around her chest like a rock stand still. Most often when Lucy thought about Elder Tyler, her mind was clouded by the intensity of emotions she didn't understand and she worked through it best by writing thoughts down so she could fold them up and either send them away or forget about them altogether. But Soeur Paxton apparently hadn't noticed Lucy reading the Book of Mormon; and by defending her actions, she felt she would cheapen them.

"I think you would be a happier person if you would just say what you're thinking," Lucy said, putting down her pen and looking at her companion who sat with scriptures propped open on her legs folded under her, her face half-veiled by her perfectly straight hair, so blond it looked silver. Like an iron curtain. They were still wearing pajamas, and Soeur Paxton's matching satin pajamas were shiny and smooth. Not like

Lucy's, which had a small hole in the right leg and which bunched in wrinkles around her hips and knees. Her own hair was piled on top of her head and rubber banded into a shape not unlike a bird's nest.

Soeur Paxton looked up from her scriptures, tucking her hair behind her ear so Lucy could see her whole face. "Some people try to be better than their thoughts," she said.

"If you were as righteous as you pretend to be, you wouldn't have to try so hard."

"Who are you to judge me?" Soeur Paxton asked.

"Oh, that's right. You're the only one allowed to pass judgment. I forgot."

"How can I not? You're always writing elders in other cities or talking to them on the phone. And we're supposed to be missionaries, or have you forgotten that, too? Am I supposed to just sit back and let you ruin everything?"

"Why is everything automatically my fault? What about the fact you've been in the country eight months and can't speak French to save your life? How many rendezvous have you botched because nobody can understand what you're saying?"

"Elder Schaeffer is worried about you, too."

"What does Elder Schaeffer have to do with anything?"

"He's tried calling before, and the line has been busy."

"How does he know I'm not talking to Charlotte, or Florence, or Virginie? Because I actually talk to every one of them by themselves more than I talk to all the elders combined."

Soeur Paxton pursed her lips and folded her arms. "We just want to help you be a better missionary. We're trying our best to love you. It's not fair for one person to ruin the efficiency of an entire district because she can't keep the rules."

Up to this point in the conversation, Lucy had succeeded in speaking with a mostly civil, slightly raised voice, but now she stood up and started yelling.

"What about you? How can you teach about the plan of happiness when you're miserable all the time? And if Schaeffer's so righteous, then why hasn't he baptized a single person? There's a reason he hasn't taught beyond the third discussion and it's not because O'Neill calls me on Thursday nights. And Elder Jenson is so busy flirting with Virginie it's a miracle he even knows my name. In fact, I'm not sure he does. And how

dare you talk to the elders about me behind my back? Making yourself feel better by calling it love. I don't hide anything from you even though I know I'll never hear the end of it."

"You can yell all you want, but it doesn't change the fact you care more about elders than rules."

Lucy stopped her ranting to look at her companion. "And this is a bad thing?"

"It is if God makes the rules."

"Maybe I just don't have a testimony of a ten-thirty bedtime."

"Which is why I don't want to be your companion," Soeur Paxton said, shutting her scriptures to indicate the conversation was over, the pages thumping hollow. She placed them on the cushion of her seat still imprinted with the heat and weight of her body as she stood up to go get dressed. It was seven o'clock. "You could have at least tried to keep the rules today of all days."

Lucy opened her mouth but closed it again upon noticing Soeur Paxton's scriptures. Despite every rule to the contrary, Soeur Paxton studied only in English.

* * *

Making it a point to leave the apartment at exactly nine-thirty (holding Soeur Paxton's coat sleeve while looking at her watch, so they wouldn't leave a second before or after), Lucy announced that for the rest of the Oil Drop Day she would be completely perfect, like one of the examples in the Missionary Guide, except in the Missionary Guide, people answered their doors when missionaries came knocking and almost always invited them inside.

Lucy liked working. It made the day pass quickly and kept the *soeurs*' conversation at a minimum. She loved the long bike rides to the opposite corners of the city where their different *amie*s lived, through air so cold and crisp it stained Lucy's cheeks red. She loved how Charlotte preferred to discuss the gospel while walking on the beach in Porte de Minimes even though it was still winter and windy, and Lucy could block out her companion's voice with the sound of the ocean rushing past her ears. And how their newest *amie,* Nada, would serve rose-flavored *tisane* while they sat on the embroidered pillows her mother sent from Morocco. She loved the way Nada's circle windows, designed to make the apartment look like

a cruise ship, made sun spots on the linoleum floor that traveled toward the wall and bent upward as the sun began setting.

Lucy even loved the Church members in La Rochelle more than she had loved the members in any other city. Perhaps she had not needed them as much in her other areas where she had always had at least one friend among the missionaries. In La Rochelle she felt as though the members were the only people who actually loved her back. Especially Odette, who cooked dinner for the *soeurs* every Wednesday and told stories about her third-grade students so funny Lucy had difficulty swallowing her food. Or Renée, who lived in the same building as Charlotte and would rearrange her schedule to help the *soeurs* teach discussions and whose children occupied Charlotte's son with games so their conversations could continue unhindered. Or *la famille* Marsande, who lived in the Caserne des Pompiers and invited the *soeurs* over to celebrate *la Fête des Rois,* their youngest daughter, Julie, crawling beneath the dining table to decide who should be served which portion of *gâteau,* and placing the paper crown painted with gold sparkles on Soeur Paxton's head after she discovered the porcelain fava bean with her fork. It was the only time Lucy believed Soeur Paxton's laugh to be genuine. Or *la famille* Roux, an elderly couple who rode bikes all over the city just like the *soeurs,* and who would draw maps of secret shortcuts through neighborhoods and bike paths on the back of their Church program during sacrament meeting so the *soeurs* could travel farther faster and get more work done.

La Rochelle was Lucy's only city where the *soeurs* had enough *amies* to fill entire days and sometimes weeks with rendezvous, keeping tracting and contacting to a minimum. But on this Oil Drop Day, all their *amies* had already made plans, so they rode their bikes to *centre ville* with backpacks full of Books of Mormon and pamphlets, and chained their bikes to a lamppost bearing flower baskets beneath the stone arch of the clock tower. From where she stood, Lucy could see past the *vieux port,* cradling sailboats that rocked naked and abandoned on the slowly receding tide, to where rolls of ocean water lifted a line of orange buoys on their crests before breaking against the rock wall that *les rochelais* had built four hundred years earlier. Charlotte had told them the buoys marked the spot where Richelieu's armada sat and starved 100,000 Protestants to death because they wouldn't convert to Catholicism. Lucy wondered what she was doing as a missionary in a city renowned for its resistance to religious change. It was a heritage she respected and admired, even though she could make

comparisons between her mission and Richelieu's, except Lucy would never want to hurt anybody.

Watching her companion stop pedestrians on the street, Lucy marveled at Soeur Paxton's ability to pretend all was right with the world and with "*ma compagne,* Soeur Adams," whom she introduced as though they were best friends, even though she hadn't said a single word to Lucy since their argument that morning. Whenever it was Lucy's turn to make a contact, she would speak about the Book of Mormon because it was a true book filled with evidence of Christ's love, something she believed even on her saddest days.

Two hours into working and one pamphlet later, which Soeur Paxton had given to a woman pushing a double stroller with children sleeping limply like rag dolls, Soeur Paxton resumed speaking to Lucy.

"I know this is going to sound a bit off, but I think we need to visit the Sabbatinis," she said, then winced as though afraid of Lucy's reaction, which evolved from surprise to anger to confusion and back to anger. They were standing near the fountain in front of the *grec* shop that sold fried falafel balls drenched in white sauce, and always smelled of grease and garlic even when closed. The fountain was empty and Lucy wondered if it was broken or if the city drained it for winter.

Soeur Paxton sat on the edge of the empty basin.

"I spend five minutes writing to Tyler about a scripture of all things and you freak out like I'm going to hell and dragging you down with me. But now that you want to visit the Sabbatinis, I'm supposed to be okay with this?" Lucy waited for a response but none came, so she looked at the tops of the nearest buildings four stories high and squinted at the blue sky framed by white stone reflecting sunlight.

"I just really feel in my heart we should go."

"You really feel in your heart lots of things," Lucy began, but stopped. This might have been the first time Soeur Paxton had ever felt in her heart to do something contrary to the letter of the law and Lucy was inclined to believe her.

She sat down next to Soeur Paxton on the fountain's edge so they were close, but not touching and angled away from each other facing different directions. She already knew she would agree to go to the Sabbatinis, but she wanted to sit and think. Make her companion wait. She wondered if Soeur Paxton would have been willing to ruin their Oil Drop Day before Lucy had ruined it with her letter writing. Maybe Lucy

was helping her to relax, or at least see things from another point of view. Like last month, when they were tracting and an old woman who had heard the missionary discussions twice before invited them inside for tea, but only because the missionaries were covered in freezing rain and only because she wanted company.

Soeur Paxton had tried to teach a first discussion anyway, asking if *Madame* had heard of Joseph Smith or the Book of Mormon. Of course she had. And she didn't want to hear any more. Well, what about modern-day prophets? Soeur Paxton asked, her smile stretched across her entire face as though she could change her mind with forced gaiety. But *Madame* had known about those, too. She was a practicing Catholic and happy with her faith. When Soeur Paxton asked what Catholics knew about the plan of salvation, Lucy put down her cup of mint tea on the wooden coffee table inlaid with a brightly colored mosaic of a tree, the roots and leaves of which seemed to drip over the sides of the table and down the legs. She looked past the lace curtains to where the wind whipped raindrops in swirling patterns and regretted having to leave the warm room with her warm tea. But she was embarrassed for herself and for her companion who would not be quiet. Afraid of having trespassed on the good will of their hostess, Lucy stood up to thank *Madame* for her generosity and the most delicious and timely tea but they were warm now, thank you, and must be on their way.

Once outside, but still close enough that if *Madame* spoke English she could hear their conversation, Soeur Paxton was so angry she shouted at Lucy, asking why on earth did she not let her finish the first discussion when she only had one principle left? It was the loudest Lucy had ever heard her companion speak.

"Because she didn't want a first discussion," Lucy said, squinting against the small, half-frozen raindrops that felt like sand in her face.

"I don't see why you call yourself a missionary if you refuse to teach the gospel."

"You weren't teaching anything. She'd already heard it. All you did was piss her off, and she was trying to help us."

"We have a responsibility to bring people closer to Christ."

Lucy stopped walking and spoke loud enough to be heard over the sounds of cars splashing through puddles of rain. "She's probably closer to Christ than you and I will ever be."

* * *

"All right. I'm game," Lucy said, holding the straps of her backpack away from her body as she stood up from the fountain. Even on cold days her backpack could make her sweat.

The Sabbatinis lived within walking distance of *centre ville* so the *soeurs* left their bikes chained to the lamppost and walked. The streets were narrow, and some were paved with fifteenth-century cobblestones from Québec which, unlike the stones in other cities, were large and round and distinct, the mortar between them long since disintegrated. Lucy watched the ground as she stepped on only the highest stones, making patterns with her feet like when she was a child playing games in the grocery store and could step only on the brown tiles.

The Sabbatinis lived in a building two windows wide and as deep as the city block. Soeur Paxton rang their buzzer, which the *soeurs* could hear far away above their heads; and at first Lucy thought they weren't home, much like the last time Soeur Paxton had a feeling in her heart. But after the third ring, a sad Frère Sabbatini with bags under his eyes the color of storm clouds opened the front door and invited them inside.

"*Oh là là, les soeurs,*" he said, as he led the way up a spiral staircase tucked into the deepest corner of the building. The wood creaked beneath every step. Frère Sabbatini was born in Greece and spoke French with an accent that was easy for Americans to understand. He was very tall, and his shoulders seemed to extend beyond the width of the stairs so he climbed at an angle. The *soeurs* held their skirts in one hand, placing the other against the wall because the stairs were steep and there was no railing. At the top of the staircase, he stepped to the side and held the apartment door open, allowing the *soeurs* to slip past him on the small landing. "Today is not a good day."

Soeur Sabbatini was sitting at the kitchen table, cradling a cup of warm milk. She leaned back in her chair, exposing the round bulge of her ninth month and set her cup on the table. Otherwise the room was perfectly still, not filled with the laughter and music and the smells of spicy foods that always welcomed the *soeurs,* even when they came by unannounced.

Motioning for the *soeurs* to sit down, she wiped her eyes with the back of her other hand, as though she had been crying. Frère Sabbatini went into the kitchen to fetch a drink for the *soeurs.* The apartment was so quiet Lucy could hear the milk pouring into cups.

Nobody spoke until he returned with a steaming mug in each hand and sat down beside his wife. "We're thinking about leaving the Church," he said as Lucy was drinking her milk, which made her choke she was so surprised. The Sabbatinis had been members of the Church for almost ten years. Soeur Sabbatini could recite entire chapters of the New Testament from memory and Frère Sabbatini remembered the names and faces of every person to have ever come to Church, even if they only came once, and he loved people with a love so genuine, his entire face would smile when saying hello. Except on this day.

When Soeur Paxton asked why, Soeur Sabbatini blew her nose into her napkin and Frère Sabbatini cleared his throat, but neither of them offered a reason. Lucy put down her mug with a thump dulled by the thickness of the tablecloth.

Frère Sabbatini placed both hands on the table, fingers splayed like starfish. "Because we are tired," he said a moment later.

Soeur Sabbatini was staring into her cup which she turned absentmindedly with her hands. "Too tired," she whispered, without looking up. Then they explained why.

For over an hour the Sabbatinis talked about how congregations in France were not like the swollen congregations in Utah. How fifty people could never do the job of five hundred regardless of desire or pure intent. Why it was unfair for the leaders in Utah to expect participation in programs like home teaching when all it required of them was a monthly visit to one or two neighbors who lived at most five blocks away. The Sabbatinis were responsible for fifteen families in five different cities, because they were one of only six families with a car. There were not enough Church members in France to staff the programs the leaders in Utah dreamed up. They taught Sunday School and Primary and gave talks in sacrament meeting at least every other month. Soeur Sabbatini organized weekly youth group activities and monthly enrichment nights and drove five women twelve hours to the nearest temple four times a year. Frère Sabbatini played the piano for every meeting and every choir practice. He arrived at the chapel every Sunday at 7:00 A.M. to set up the chairs and attend ward council meeting. The third Sunday of every month he traveled to faraway wards like Périgueux or Nantes to speak as a high councilman and to pass on the love of the stake president. The Sabbatinis paid their tithing. They organized community service days to improve public relations even though *les rochelais* repeatedly vetoed a permit that would allow

them to build a chapel on land the Church had bought twenty years earlier.

All this they did freely, and with love, while working full time at their respective jobs, because they believed it was what God wanted them to do. That it would make them into better people. But now they were not so sure. Most of their efforts went unnoticed, except when they made mistakes. And most of the time they left Church drained of love and energy because they had given all they had to other people.

As the Sabbatinis talked, their hands echoing their words in motion, Lucy's milk cooled until the porcelain of her cup was cold to the touch. She listened carefully to every word, because Soeur Paxton had suggested they come and Lucy felt obligated to help, as though God himself expected her to make everything right. But she was only twenty-two. She did not have any answers. And she was terrified of saying the wrong thing; now that she was in their home, she believed that whatever happened would be her fault.

"So, what do you think?" Frère Sabbatini asked when they had finished speaking, after a minute had passed in silence.

Lucy waited for her companion to explain how we shouldn't go to church for ourselves but for God. How we are commanded to attend church and should endure to the end and have faith, which were all things Lucy had heard her say before.

However, when Soeur Paxton didn't say anything at all, Lucy realized that the question had been asked of her. They were waiting to see what she would say.

She took a deep breath and wiped the corner of her lips with her fingers while she exhaled. Leaning over the arm of her chair, she unzipped her backpack and pulled out two Books of Mormon, which she opened to 2 Nephi 4, keeping one and handing one to the Sabbatinis, pointing at the open pages with her finger.

"I was feeling really sad this morning, but I read this section and it made me feel better." Lucy paused, trying unsuccessfully to read their expressions. "So maybe we can read it together and take turns?"

As they read, Lucy looked for the words that had comforted her that morning, the ones she had written Elder Tyler about, but now that she was reading the chapter a second time, the words didn't look familiar. She wondered if perhaps she had made a mistake.

When the chapter ended Frère Sabbatini closed the book he was

sharing with his wife who was blinking deeply and often. "I feel very strongly that you were supposed to come to my house today, and that you were supposed to share this chapter with me," he said, emotion making his accent thicker.

Soeur Paxton then told them about Oil Drop Day and how she felt inspired to visit their home even though it was against the rules. "And I always try and keep all the rules," she said. When she bore her testimony of God's love for the Sabbatinis, Soeur Sabbatini started to cry. She cried so hard she made loud gulping sounds when she breathed, which normally would have made Lucy embarrassed for her. But she was too relieved to care.

The *soeurs* stayed for three hours total, talking until they laughed, and then they couldn't stop. When Lucy looked at her watch and said they should be going, Frère Sabbatini asked Soeur Paxton if she wouldn't mind saying a prayer before they left. Afterwards, Soeur Sabbatini grabbed both *soeurs* in an embrace made awkward by her large stomach. It was the first time Lucy had ever hugged Soeur Paxton, and even so, she had hugged only half of her. Frère Sabbatini escorted the *soeurs* downstairs to the front door and kissed them both three times on the cheek even though *soeurs* were not allowed to exchange *bisous* with men.

"Today you are not missionaries. You are my angels," he said. "It is okay to kiss angels."

The *soeurs* walked back to their bikes in silence and Lucy wondered what her companion was thinking. In less than two weeks' time, she had seen two miracles because she didn't know what else to call them. However, instead of feeling as though she had done something good, she mostly felt alone.

"What are you thinking?" Lucy asked finally, tired of her own thoughts. She tried to guess what her companion would say. She was completely wrong.

"That it's four-thirty and I'm starving."

In a rare display of agreement, the *soeurs* decided to buy sandwiches from La Mie Caline and eat on the edge of the port, where they watched the sun sink between the towers and turn the water golden.

The Blessing

Larry Day

You never can tell what April is going to be like in Boise. Sometimes you get sunshine, sometimes you get rain, and sometimes you get blizzards that roar out of the canyons. I died in Boise in April. It was nice. Boise was nice. April was nice. Dying was nice. I was clear-headed, the pain was tolerable, and my boy flew in from Kansas to give me a send-off priesthood blessing.

My wife would have kicked his butt if she had known that. She didn't want me to die. But I didn't mind. I was lying in a narrow, standard-issue hospital bed in a narrow, standard-issue room on the third floor of the Veterans' Hospital. My kidneys were shutting down. They had taped a sheath to my weenie and attached a long plastic tube. The urine ran into a clear plastic bag hanging on the side of my bed. Nurses checked the bag every couple of hours. You know you're in trouble when they start keeping track of your pee.

They took my clothes when I checked into the hospital and issued me one of those gowns that tie in the back and leave your hind end exposed. They took my temple garments, too. I could have insisted on wearing them, but that would have made a lot more work for the nurses, so I didn't. My wife fretted, but I patted her hand and said, "Don't worry about it, sweetheart. The Lord knows I wear 'em."

I had had surgery for bladder cancer in Boise earlier and had been back for periodic checkups. The nurses on the ward remembered me. That was nice. I had been in my seventies when I had that surgery, beyond the three score years and ten that Psalms 90:10 talks about.

I was born in 1890. People who were born back then had a life expectancy of forty years, so the Lord didn't owe me anything. I was past warranty when I died a month before my eightieth birthday. When I got cancer, I decided to go to the Veterans' Hospital because commercial hospitals cost too much. My wife and I were living on our social security and a telephone lineman's pension. I was eligible for the VA because Uncle Sam

had drafted me in 1917 and shipped me over to France. They marched us a lot, and the Huns shot at us some. Then they all signed the Armistice and we came home.

My wife and my oldest boy—he lives in Boise—picked my other boy up at the airport and drove him straight to the hospital. It was late afternoon.

"Dad," he said, "you look a sight."

"Oh, Lord," I said, "things must be bad. They've sent for the cavalry."

"Hush," said my wife. "You're doing just fine."

"Yes, ma'am," I said. Then we settled down for some hospital room chitchat. Somewhere in the conversation, my boy asked me if I could still recite "The Fearless Ride of Rosie O'Toole." It's a Civil War poem about a young woman who warns the Confederates that Union troops are about to ambush them. My grandfather was a Confederate soldier. My boy loved that poem, and I used to be able to recite the whole thing to him, so I gave it a try and did all right. Each time I came to the refrain, "the fearless ride of Rosie O'Toole," he joined in. It was nice, but the effort wore me out; so after Rosie saved the Confederates, I closed my eyes and drifted off.

After my operation—my first trip to the Boise VA—I got to feeling pretty good. My wife and I decided to fly to Kansas to see our boy and his wife and our two grandkids. They wanted to take us to Nauvoo, to see the Mormon history sites.

My boy was a bishop at the time, the head of a small ward in eastern Kansas. He was only thirty-four when he was called and ordained. Being a bishop is like having a second full-time job.

The morning we were supposed to leave for Nauvoo, I didn't think I'd be able to make it. I felt weak and nauseated. But I got dressed and climbed in the car. I'm glad I did, because it was a nice trip. My mother and dad had joined the Church in 1887 in North Carolina, and we eventually moved to Utah. My wife's people were Nauvoo Mormons. Her grandfather was one of Joseph Smith's bodyguards. After the Prophet was martyred and the mobs came, Grandpa Seth joined the exodus to the Salt Lake Valley.

Nauvoo languished after the Mormons were driven out. A century later, the Church came back and bought a lot of property there. It refurbished old homes, shops, and farms. By the time we made our trip, there were Mormon missionaries dressed up in pioneer costumes, taking peo-

ple on tours. We had a nice trip to Nauvoo and enjoyed the rest of that summer a lot.

Autumn was beautiful in Idaho Falls. Then we had a late winter that wasn't too bad. My wife and I read a lot and watched TV. And we went to the temple twice a week. We felt blessed to live in a town that had a temple. The next nearest temple was in Logan, a hundred miles south.

In March I started feeling weak and puny again, and I began to throw up a lot. Sometimes I spent half the night in the bathroom. Early in April after one of those nightly sessions, I crawled back in bed and told my wife, "We have to go back to the VA." She had good cry, and I held her. We lay in bed all morning. That afternoon I called Boise.

Going back to the VA for checkups after the bladder operation wasn't that bad because, a few days after my surgery, they put me in a ward with a bunch of guys, and I got acquainted. We had a good time. We traded war stories, played board games, and kidded the daylights out of the nurses. I loved to go out on the hospital grounds and sit in the sunshine. I liked to feed the squirrels. They'd come down from the trees and sit beside me on the bench. They took peanuts right from my fingers. My wife came to visit every day. Sometimes we'd spread a blanket on the grass and have a picnic.

But this time, things were different. The plane ride lasted forever, and I puked almost the whole way. My boy and his wife drove us straight to the VA. They put me in a private room, the doctor ordered a bunch of tests, and by the next day they were measuring my pee.

My boy that lives in Boise doesn't go to church. He did when he was young, but then he went to college and took some courses that steered him away from the faith. The war came along, and he went overseas. He was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. He and my younger boy, the bishop, used to talk about religion and the Church sometimes, but they didn't fight about it.

After we got to Boise, my wife got in touch with a bishop and asked him to send the elders to give me a blessing. She wanted them to use the power of the priesthood to heal me.

She and the older boy were in my room when they came in, an old geezer like me and a young ramrod with a military haircut. They were wearing the standard Mormon vestments—dark suits, white shirts, and conservative ties. After some obligatory pleasantries about wild flowers in the mountains and the high cost of gasoline, the old guy handed the

young guy a little brown bottle filled with sacred olive oil. He poured a few drops on my head and said the prayer of anointing. Then they both laid their hands on my head, and the old guy pronounced a blessing. I've done the same thing dozens of times. And I've seen people healed by priesthood blessings. The Lord has that power. But I knew it wasn't going to happen this time. The old guy pulled his punches. In the blessing, he commended me for my faithfulness and blessed me that I would rest well and be free from pain. He prayed that the doctors and nurses would do all they could to make me comfortable.

This definitely was not a "take up your bed and walk" blessing.

My wife knew it, too. I could tell she was really disappointed, but she didn't say anything. She thanked the elders for coming and walked to the elevator with them. But then she went straight to a pay phone and called my boy, the bishop, in Kansas.

"Your dad needs you here," she told him.

He packed a bag and caught a plane the next morning.

So after I gave my sterling rendition of "The Fearless Ride of Rosie O'Toole," I dropped off to sleep. When I woke up, my boy was sitting beside my bed. My wife and our other boy had gone home. It was quite late. I blinked my eyes and shifted around to relieve a crick in my back.

"How are you feeling?" he asked.

"I feel like I've been dragged through a knot hole."

"Mom wants me to give you a blessing."

"I've had a blessing," I said.

"I know," he said. "She wants me to give you another one. I'm going to fast and pray about it."

"Okay," I said.

He left after the nurse came to give me my sleeping pill. I dreamed I was a kid back in North Carolina. My dad was showing me how to make traps to catch rabbits. He used to rig a figure-four trigger made from sticks and put it under a heavy wooden box. When the rabbits came to take the bait, they'd jiggle the sticks, and the box would fall down and trap them inside. Sometimes they'd scream. I hated that, but I liked rabbit stew. I taught my own boys how to make figure-four traps when they were small, but they never caught anything.

Something woke me up. A nurse was checking the bag before going off duty.

"Is my output up to VA standards?" I asked.

"You're loafing," she said. "You're going to have to boost production."

"Well, I say it's good enough for government work."

She laughed.

She took my vital signs and fiddled around with some of the equipment, then patted me on my bald head and said, "See you soon."

"If you're lucky," I said and went back to sleep.

Morning came. They tried to feed me some, but I couldn't eat, so they stuck a needle in my arm and hung a bag to give me nourishment. By early afternoon when my wife and the Kansas boy came, it was bad, but I bucked myself up and put on a good face.

We talked, catching up on all the family news and remembering the Nauvoo trip. My wife sat in a chair at the head of the bed and held my hand. I kept drifting off, losing the thread of the conversation. They stayed about an hour, and then said they'd be back about seven.

That evening I had a room full. There was my Boise boy and his wife and my three grown grandkids, my Kansas boy, and my wife. My wife told me our daughters had called from Alaska and New Jersey, sending love and prayers.

I think my dad was there, too, and some others from beyond the veil. I didn't see them, but I felt their presence, especially my dad. I could tell that my wife wanted to get on with the blessing and that my bishop boy didn't. He took her out in the hall for a few minutes; and when they came back, she had settled down. After my boy from Boise dropped out of the Church, his wife didn't stay active either. His kids weren't baptized. I figured my bishop boy had told my wife out in the hall that he didn't want to give me a blessing with everyone around. I guess she thought it was because he'd have a hard time feeling the Spirit to heal me under those conditions, but I knew what he was doing.

We chatted for a while longer, then everyone said good-bye and headed for the elevator.

"Mom, you stay here and say goodnight to Dad," my bishop boy said and left with the others.

He came back a few minutes later. "I'm going to fast a while longer," he said. "They're waiting in the lobby. You go with them, and I'll stay with Dad."

My wife looked at me.

"So long, sweetheart," I said. "He knows what he's doing."

She hugged me. I kissed her, and she left.

"She wanted to stay," he said.

"I know."

"I feel bad."

"I know."

My boy sat beside the bed and held my hand for a long time. We were both crying when he laid his hands on my head and sent me home.

Jacob Fossum, *Cat and Lacey*,
oil on canvas, 60 x 50 in., 2004

Beautiful Black Madonna of Czestochowa

Jamie Naylor

They journey with hope
of a blessing, a healing, a miracle of sorts
for they have heard the stories told
of old.

No longer following the magi's silver star,
they trod a narrow but worn path
to the gates of Our Lady at Jasna Gora,
where the Madonna, luminous in her ebony blush,
holy babe in arms, hangs like Venus in the summer sky
above the horizon of the altar.

For centuries she watched like a gentle cloud
over the sorrowful people of the Polish lands
whose faith lifted in the little cathedral like gauzy curls of smoke
rising from tapers in prayerful hands,
burnishing mother and child in a rich sable patina,
the color of autumn's last leaves—
their halos still glistening gold.

As we enter, the sanctuary sparkles
with candles, like a sea of stars on a moonless night,
held by the faithful spilling from the filled pews, singing praises
in many languages with
one voice, one sight.

Just a tourist, I suddenly feel like a dilettante as I see the devotion
and expectation, like children on Christmas morning, in their eyes.
The emerging intensity startles my daughter Emilee, still young—
she has never seen such need,
such pleading, such pain,
such adoration.

It is said that Mary and Jesus were painted by Saint Luke himself,
only a season after the child become man hung on the cross,
as he sat at the bench of cedar wood
carved by the carpenter's hand.

And while he painted the woman in life, they say
she spoke a wonderful tale, of a birth in a stable,
of hosts of angels, of wise men, of shepherds,
of Gabriel.

"Alleluia, alleluia, to the Mother and her Lamb,"
"Czerna Madonna," "Schwarze Madonna," "Beautiful Black Madonna."
The song ascends with fervor beyond the rafters
in the graceful wooden chapel
and we also are carried up with the wonder of Mother and Child.
Only then do we notice the mountain of crutches discarded in the corner.

City of Brotherly Love

Jamie Naylor

On the hottest of days
in the sweltering summer of Philadelphia—
when city streets sizzled like bacon with
paved heat and the smothered air
hovered like dragonflies and was too heavy to breathe
and even I who rarely perspire
was dripping rivers down my back, like a popsicle on a stick;
even my inner thighs were wet—
we passed a young woman
and her infant daughter
whose face was red, and swollen like the Delaware
from the bites of thirsty mosquitoes swarming
in the dampness, and from tears.
    Do you know where I can buy
    milk for my baby? the woman pled.
Visitors ourselves, we had no idea,
no answer to give. But you, feeling
compassion, reached in your matted pocket
to retrieve ten dollars, to which she replied:
    No, please, I don't want your money
    Only milk for my child.
The mother had already begun to cry.
Seeing this, you gave her another ten.
And she hugged you there, like hunger,
on that hot street, in the city where they
say there is brotherly love. I was
proud of you and your generosity.
Sometimes I pass people begging,
as I've finished shopping in the mall—
and may stop, if I happen to have cash.
But too often I notice the newish
running shoes or the dog
that looks well fed, and pass on by
with the shake of my head.
Then at night, I kneel and beg by my bed.

A Proposal

Evertt Williams

When your snow melts,
pick a late spring day,
and wear your Levis.

I'll find a pair of old boots,
fit you in a worn saddle,
and take you up my canyon,

pass falls and creeks,
crisp with the roar of
winter's flow, up through
fresh green aspens,
stepping over roots and worry,
spurring on through rocks and
muscle, and the sweaty pull
of something bigger
than ourselves.

Then we'll surrender to
a thousand wild mountain
flowers, forcing trails to end.

Three-Legged Dog

Simon Peter Eggertsen

For the little dog who was annoyed and bit me as I stood still at the entrance to the park, and for Cadbury, Minnie, and 'tiba who were sung away some time ago.

An old three-legged dog,
whiskers whitening, coat black
as the carbon of a starless winter night,
slowly hobbyhorses along
the cobblestone street near the
park green and water blue of
Gradina Cismgiu in graying Bucharest.

He canters forward, absent any clear sense
of breed, lopping at the head and tail,
leading a dully clunking, chrome chain,
held lightly in the small, withered hand
of an aging lady, who has ventured out
with him for an October evening stroll.

She is working forward, too,
trying to get used to her liberty.
Faded blue denim trousers,
symbol of Ceaucescu's tattered proletariat,
dangle beneath her simple work smock.

Toe nails sound on the pavement
as the dog hip hops along,
missing the sound of the fourth leg.
Clickityclick, click, clickityclick, click.
I want to speak the fourth click.

Then from one gray day to the next,
near midnight, as far as I can tell
the dog went away, quietly disappearing
from the street, just as he did that eve,
when he turned the corner on three legs.

Clickityclick, click.

This turn he was sung away by the death-timed
lamenting howls of his comrades,
their sounds slapping along the sides of the houses,
    down the street and into my room most of the night,
    until the end of the morn.
Once you leave, you cannot return again.
    Those are the rules here.

I will miss the black three-legged dog
    who clicked for me near Gradina Cismgiu.

Mechanical Failures

Ken Raines

The old man shimminates and coughs
along the shoulder of the road
and veers like the wobble in the wheel
that brought his Airstream to a stop.

He limped it in to Morgan's shop,
and Morgan said he'd see what he
could do. "Just pull around in back,
there, Stranger. This may take a while."

Three decades on, and still he's parked
out back, where every break of day
he lights the propane stove and listens
to the hiss beneath his frying eggs.

He starts a bottle of Jim Beam
for lunch and waits, perhaps, for parts,
thinking of the years since he first noticed
the air was gone from all the tires.

Sometimes he wakes in the afternoon
when radials crackle on gravel and glass
as the wrecker drags another husk
or burned-out shell around in back.

If Morgan is driving, as he passes,
he honks and points at the wreckage and cackles,
"Sooner or later . . . sooner or later . . .
There, Stranger, it's gonna catch us all."

The old man fumes, and profanity gathers
in the back of his throat. But before it can rise,
he forgets what he meant to say, at least
until he sees Morgan again.

And every day the old man totters
along, weaving among the hoods
and the domes and the naked transmissions and rims
that have come to hem him in.

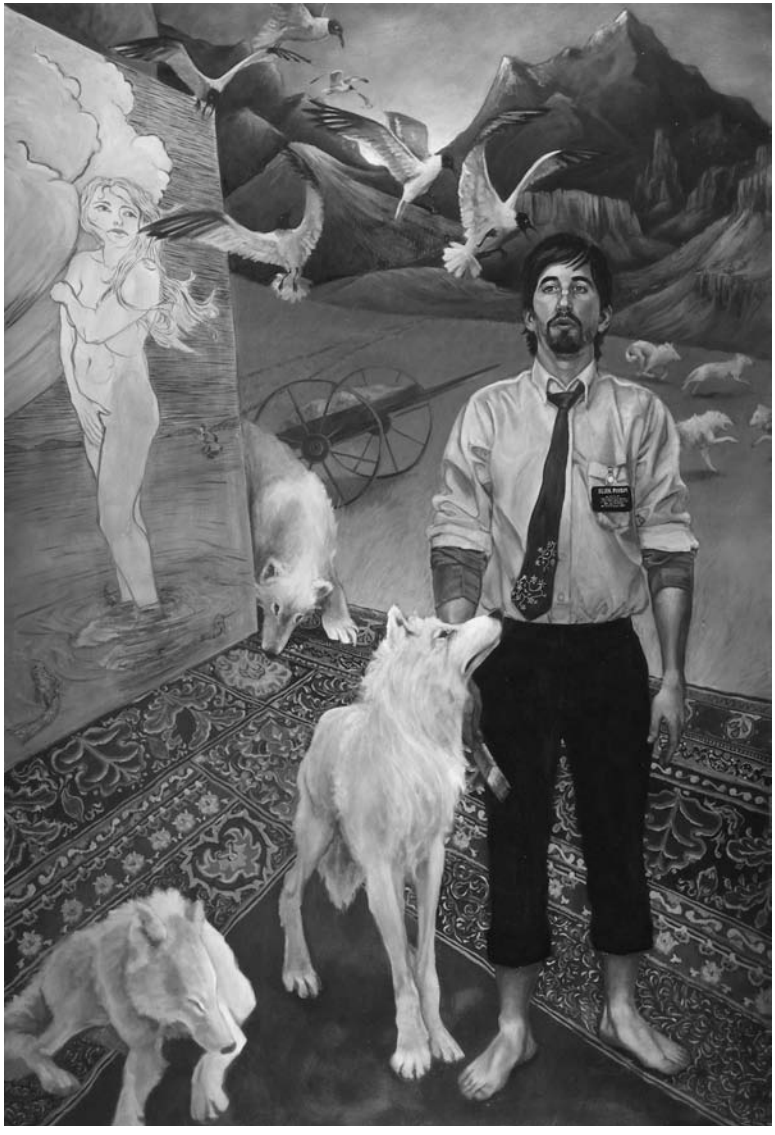
But when he turns for home, he sees
the gleam of sunset on his Airstream,
that stainless, fat torpedo sleeking
through the pitted chrome and twisted steel.

And though his sense of direction has come
unmoored, he glides by engine blocks
and jumbled obstacles worn smooth
in the slow currents of long habit.

Spring Variations on a Theme by Lorenzo Snow

R. A. Christmas

As man, is God—once.
Was—as God is man—
may become *as.* Man is.
God once was, as God is.
Man may become, as man is.
God once was. As God, is
man. May. Become!



Jacob Fossum, *Elder Fossum*,
oil on canvas, 80 x 50 in., 2007

Building "as Great a Temple as Ever Solomon Did"

Matthew McBride. *A House for the Most High: The Story of the Original Nauvoo Temple.* Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007, 448 pp. $34.95.

Reviewed by William Shepard, who is of Strangite heritage and is president-elect of the John Whitmer Historical Association board

It is a pleasure to review this excellent book which will be a standard work on the Nauvoo Temple among the Mountain Saints for many years to come. McBride, the manager of online development at Deseret Book Company and an avid researcher, has written an easy-to-read and well-documented history of the Mormon temple at Nauvoo.

In the opening chapter, McBride cites Joseph Smith's public announcement on July 19, 1840: "Now brethren I obligate myself to build as great a temple as ever Solomon did, if the church will back me up" (2). McBride cites portions of LDS Doctrine and Covenants 124 concerning the temple, emphasizing verses 31, 33, and 37, which state that the temple had to be built "within a sufficient time" or the church would be rejected (35–36).

In Chapter 2, "Laying the Foundation: February 1841 to October 1841," McBride discusses the initial work on the temple foundation and cornerstones and the purchase of lumber mills in Wisconsin, providing the reader with a solid understanding of this early period and explaining why the hierarchy pleaded for members to gather to Nauvoo.

Chapter 3, covering November 1841 to April 1842, includes accounts of the dedication of the temple font and the first baptisms for the dead, also supplying an interesting essay about the temple stonecutters. He presents the first endowments, meetings of the Quorum of the Anointed, and the Prophet's letters on baptism for the dead in a thorough manner, nicely reinforced by essential background information.

Chapter 5 addresses obtaining funds for the temple, the work of the temple committee, logging operations, and the development of endowments. It also covers the introduction of celestial marriage, plural marriage, prayer meetings, and the Relief Society during the 1843 building

season. The deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith headline Chapter 6, and McBride correctly describes accounts of the "last charge" (or the claims that Joseph Smith assigned the Twelve to continue his work of governing the Church) as retrospective. "The Ascendancy of the Twelve: July 1844 to December 1844" is the title of Chapter 7, in which McBride emphasizes the determination of the Twelve to continue building the temple.

Chapter 8, in part, cites the completion of the exterior walls and Sidney Rigdon's declaration that the Church was rejected because the temple was not completed. This chapter also explains that Brigham Young changed the pattern of baptizing (in which any individual could be baptized for any other) by directing that only men could be baptized for men and that only women could be baptized for women.

In Chapter 9, "The Roof and Tower: June 1845 to September 1845," McBride comments: "The summer of 1845 was perhaps the most exciting building season on the temple" (213). As the walls were completed, emphasis shifted to the interior. Under the heading "Heightened Security at the Temple," McBride acknowledges that cannons were rebored in the basement of the temple and explains the Mormons' defensive posture due to the burning of Mormon houses in the countryside by bands of Gentiles. Not included are parallel accounts of Mormon violence. On April 3, 1845, the Nauvoo police "almost beat a man to death in the Temple," an act applauded by both Hosea Stout, captain of Nauvoo's police force, and Brigham Young.[1] Nor does McBride include Stout's September 30, 1845, entry describing a search of the temple by Illinois state militia for the bodies of two murdered Gentiles.[2]

Chapter 10, "Conference in the Temple: October 1845 to November 1845," describes the first general conference held in the temple, during which William Smith's conduct was reviewed and he was not sustained as Church patriarch. (He was excommunicated six days later.) McBride quotes Jesse Wentworth Crosby: "President Young asserted that we owed the United States nothing, not a farthing, not one sermon. They have rejected our testimony, killed the prophets; our skirts are clear from their blood" (251 note 31).

The central theme of Chapter 11 concerns endowments in the temple during the intense months from December 1845 to February 1846. McBride first reviews how the Saints prepared the temple for the endowments and, maintaining a chronological timetable, describes the dedication of the attic story and early attempts to sell the temple, including an

early effort to effect a sale to the Catholic Church: "Despite this optimistic encounter, the sale fell through. One month later, Father Tucker wrote to inform the Twelve and the trustees that 'the Catholic bishop could not raise money enough to purchase our property, but would either purchase or rent one of our public buildings, but would not insure it against fire or mobs.' With evident annoyance, Brigham Young responded that the Twelve 'would not answer the letter and that the Catholics might go to hell their own way'" (270).

Initial endowments were administered on December 9, 1845, under the guidance of the Holy Order or Anointed Quorum. Abraham O. Smoot's record is an example of the ceremony which might have taken more than six hours:

> At the hour of 8 o'clock in the morning I was received into the preparation rooms with several others of my brethren, and I was there prepared to be conducted into the washing and anointing room, where I received my washings in clean and pure water, preparatory to my anointing, which I received under the hands of Samuel Bent, President of the High Council. I was then presented with a garment bearing the marks of the Priesthood, which I was instructed to wear as prevention from evil. I was now prepared for the reception of further ordinances in the House of the Lord which were to me sublime, great and glorious, making on the mind endurable impressions, or as the prophet said "Engraving upon the heart and written on its inner parts." (272)

Young established rules of conduct for behavior in the temple in the second week of December 1845. According to William Clayton, "Some men were doing things which ought not to be done in the Temple of the Lord. Some three or four men and perhaps more, had introduced women into the Temple, not their wives, and were living in the side rooms, cooking, sleeping, tending babies. . . ." (275). McBride did not complete Clayton's statement which ended, after "tending babies," with "and toying with their women."[3]

In an interesting section titled "We Danced before the Lord," McBride describes Mormon dancing in the temple. In an intriguing scene, Joseph Smith III recalled Brigham Young "anointing" Justin Morse's violin for this activity:

> Brigham Young made quite a show of welcoming him, was glad to see him, glad he had brought his violin with him, etc., and then, taking the instrument from Mr. Morse's hand, he proceeded to pour some oil on it, anointing it thoroughly, and laid hands upon it after the manner of a sa-

> cred ordinance, and blessed it for the purpose of making music for the dancing of God's people. The whole thing happened so quickly Mr. Morse said he had not the opportunity to tell Mr. Young that it was a "Gentile" instrument he was blessing and dedicating, even if he had dared to, for he felt sure had he informed the dominating leader of the fact, the borrowed violin would have been thrown down and smashed. The affair made him very indignant and disgusted, for he felt that it was bad enough for the Saints to dance in the Temple, but worse to make such sacrilege of it. He says he never played for them again. (277–78)

McBride does not address the "oath to avenge the blood of the prophets" which became part of the Nauvoo Temple endowment ceremonies[4] and further fails to cite William Clayton's journal entry of December 21, 1845: "There are from seven to twelve persons who have met together every day to pray ever since Joseph's death and this people have been sustained upon this principle. Here is brother [Theodore] Turley [who] has been liberated by the power of God and not of man, and I [Clayton] have covenanted, and never will rest nor my posterity after me until those men who killed Joseph and Hyrum have been wiped out of the earth."[5] McBride also does not quote Brigham Young's address in the temple on January 2, 1846, in which he announced: "And we will go to a land where there are at last no old settlers to quarrel with us, where we can say that we have killed the snakes and made the roads, and we will leave this wicked nation, to themselves, for they have rejected the gospel, and I hope and pray that the wicked will kill one another and save us the trouble of doing it."[6] Such statements would have added texture and richness in re-creating this emotionally fraught time.

Chapter 12, "Monument to a People: March 1846 to August 1848," describes, among other topics, the private and public dedications of the temple. In the latter, Joseph Young prayed "that God would avenge the blood of His servants the Prophets and of the Saints who have been slain for the testimony of the truth and mete out to our enemies the same measure which they had meted out to us" (329–30). An interesting discussion about the completeness of the temple follows, a matter of consequence because of Joseph Smith's revelation in which God threatened to reject the Church if the Saints failed to complete the temple "within a sufficient time." According to Joseph Smith III, the temple was not completed; Young admitted as much in 1877 by asserting that the temple was "nearly" completed (334). McBride then quotes Doctrine and Covenants 124:49, which had, in a parallel way, suspended the Saints' responsibility to build

the temple in Missouri: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that when I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do a work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings."

Efforts to sell the temple form a most interesting part of the narrative. McBride cites the claims of James J. Strang that he would have to approve any sale since he claimed to be "trustee in trust" for the Church. Other obstacles included the claims of Isaac Galland, who said he had a "lien on the temple and other Church properties for $20,000" (339) and Emma Smith Bidamon's threats to sue to stop the sale of the temple. Finally, the battle of Nauvoo and the desecration of the temple by the mob are recounted.

Chapter 13 tells of the dramatic burning of the temple in October 1848, the purchase of its gutted remains by Icarians in March 1849, and the tornado eight months later that finished the demolition. The final chapter, "Epilogue: The Temple Resurrected," contains interesting accounts about how the LDS Church purchased the temple property and ultimately rebuilt the temple.

This book falls short of being a great book because, by its selectivity in excluding difficult or challenging material, it fails to present a more complete portrait of that turbulent period and the enormous energies that focused on the temple. However, it is unquestionably an excellent book in many ways and for many reasons.

Notes

1. Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1861,* 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982), 1:32.

2. Ibid., 1:78.

3. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 235.

4. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 179.

5. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle,* 224.

6. Ibid., 251.

A Must-Read on Gender Politics

Martha Sonntag Bradley. *Pedestals & Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority, & Equal Rights.* Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005. 584 pp., $39.95.

Reviewed by Deborah Farmer Kris, English teacher, founding member of the Exponent II Blog

Martha Sonntag Bradley's *Pedestals & Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority & Equal Rights* needs a new subtitle. This is the story of LDS women (in *and* out of Utah), religious authority, and the Equal Rights *Amendment*. All other historical detail is merely context for this painstakingly researched, riveting account of 1970s feminism and the Church's explosive foray into gender politics.

Bradley begins the story in June 1977 with a personal introductory note. Though she travels back to the nineteenth century and forward to the 1990s, June 1977 is the epicenter for the book, the true climax. An entire chapter is devoted to the events of this month. The scene? The Utah International Women's Year (IWY) Conference. It was a "moment that forever marked my life—a moment of "'before' and 'after'" (viii). Later, IWY chairwoman Jan Tyler likened the experience to being born again—either to a more radical conservatism or a more radical feminism: "Without exception every woman who was there was radicalized . . . and it was painful to watch those births that were mishandled" (214).

My mother missed the IWY conference in June 1977. She was in a Utah hospital, recovering from a different kind of birth—mine. Just as Bradley bookends her carefully footnoted history with personal recollections, I could not adequately review this book without doing the same. The ERA is not within my memory, but it helped shape the cultural milieu of my birth and my development as a "next-generation" LDS feminist. I distinctly remember "discovering" the ERA in high school. The adults I questioned told me that while the amendment might sound like a good idea, it would have resulted in coed bathrooms, the drafting of women for military service, and gay marriage. Also, Sonia Johnson was a crazy "extremist" who left her husband to join a lesbian commune. Yes, some women were upset when the Church registered its opposition, but they got over it. Besides, the Church always reserves the right to speak out on "moral issues."

These conversations intrigued rather than satisfied my curiosity, but my research at the BYU library turned up little more than Rex Lee's *A Lawyer Looks at the ERA,* an *Ensign* article or two, and—quite by accident—Linda Sillitoe's poem, "an early elegy in lower case," written upon the death of President Spencer W. Kimball, which ends, "for my brothers' sake I weep at your death / for my sisters i keep my seat as you pass." The emotion of those lines kept me hunting for more. For fifteen years, I gathered pieces of information, but it took reading Bradley's compelling book—thirty years to the month after the IWY conference debacle—to piece them together into a coherent narrative.

Bradley's first chapter reviews the history of Mormon participation in the nineteenth-century woman's rights movement and describes how women on both sides of the ERA debate used this historical precedent to justify their position. As a stand-alone essay, the chapter is an excellent primer on early LDS female leaders, their fight for suffrage, their defense of polygamy, and the social, academic, and economic accomplishments of the Relief Society. In fact, the Relief Society's ability to organize women for political battles was a prescient foreshadowing of the massive mobilization of women during the ERA battle. Bradley writes, "By the 1970s, nineteenth-century Mormon women had become icons of mythic strength, expansive roles, and profound spirituality. . . . Whatever path an LDS woman chose, her pioneer foremothers had set the standard to follow" (26).

Chapters 2 and 3 provide a brief history of the Equal Rights Amendment and national context for the legal and emotional battles of the 1970s. In particular, Bradley explains the two competing factions that split the women's movement for generations: those seeking unfettered equality with men versus those fighting for gender-specific legal protection for women. In the fight for the ERA, "two value systems, two world views, two cultures suddenly impacted . . . [and] nowhere was this description truer than for Mormonism's women as the national debate over ratification began in 1973" (79). For Church leaders, the one-sentence ERA became a blank slate for fearful projections of what *might* happen if "radical feminism" took root. It "became a symbol of what was wrong with society" (80), a clarion call to preserve traditional family structure and gender roles.

Bradley expertly describes the new "unexpected alliance between Mormonism and the Religious Right," including Church leaders' active collaboration with the John Birch Society and Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Fo-

rum (82). She also examines the difference between a "political issue" and a "moral issue" and how—in the official LDS context—the former *becomes* the latter (84–93).

In Chapter 4, Bradley provides a dispassionate timeline of the Church's involvement in the ERA by describing in detail nine anti-ERA documents produced between 1974 and 1981, including:

1. A 1974 address by Relief Society General President Barbara B. Smith, acknowledging the "social wrongs against women" but cautioning that "the ERA was the incorrect approach" because it might nullify protectionist laws (94). While the address reflected her opinion, it also contained language quoted directly from the Church's in-house position statement.

2. A 1975 *Church News* editorial published at the beginning of Utah's legislative session, "the first in a series of statements over the next five years that would officially establish the Church's opinion" against the ERA (97). Just two months before the publication of this editorial, 63 percent of LDS Utahns supported the ERA.

3. A 1976 First Presidency statement, identifying the ERA as a "moral issue" and asking members to join the fight against ratification (99).

4. A 1978 press release published in the *Ensign* titled "Reaffirmation of the First Presidency's Position on the ERA" (103).

5. *The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue,* a 1980 pamphlet distributed to every adult female member of the Church. The back of the pamphlet contained instructions titled "What Mormon Women Can Do." Suggestions included: "Actively support political candidates who are honest and trust worthy, and who oppose the Equal Rights Amendment" (108).

These documents, along with major addresses by Elders Boyd K. Packer and Ezra Taft Benson left little ambiguity about the Church's position and expectations of its members.

To Bradley's great credit, she does not caricature the anti-ERA forces, despite their well-orchestrated campaign. She allows anti-ERA leaders within the Church to speak for themselves, revealing incisive differences in style and substance. Men and women, in particular, seemed to have different methods for speaking with women about this issue. For example, Elders Packer and Benson spoke in terms of good versus evil, issuing dire warnings, raising up the "cult of womanhood" as a standard, and

condemning any encroachment upon the traditional power structure. Packer describes the ERA as a "threat to the family" in apocalyptic terms: "Without that, when the floods come, in the end what will really be worth saving?" (151). In a 1981 conference address aimed specifically at the ERA, Elder Benson said, "Homemaking is the highest, most noble, profession to which a woman might aspire. . . . Support, encourage, and strengthen your husband in his responsibility as patriarch in the home. . . . A woman's role in a man's life is to lift him up" (111).

In contrast, President Barbara Smith played "an increasingly difficult role: acknowledging the realities of women's lives, including some of their unmet needs, while representing the official Church position" (95). For example, when the *Ensign* asked if someone could be a good Mormon and support the ERA, she replied, "I personally would have difficulty opposing a policy of the First Presidency . . . [but] I would be unhappy if we tried to limit people who express their sincere beliefs" (153). She later expressed frustration at those with aggressive political agendas who tried to "*use* the Relief Society" to prey on the fears of women and advance their cause through unsavory means (187; emphasis mine). For example, after the 1977 IWY conference, she registered her strong disapproval of the tone of the conference—a tone that was created by the very LDS women who attended at the specific request of the Church. She accepted, as Relief Society president, some of the blame and said, "Mormon women are generally uninformed about the women's movement because they don't see a need to be informed. People were able to play on their fears and feelings and we saw what comes of it. If people are uninformed, they are easily panicked" (210).

Two other prominent LDS anti-ERA leaders, Beverly Campbell and Georgia Peterson, are presented as bright, driven women who are more concerned with arguments than fear-mongering. In fact, one of the most salient scenes in the book describes Peterson, a politician and organizer, attending a Conservative Caucus meeting hosted by Dennis Ker, a local bishop who presented himself as having approval from the Church and from Peterson's group "Let's Govern Ourselves." The meeting attracted nearly a thousand women who had been told to attend the upcoming IWY and who were desperately looking for direction. As Ker spoke, Peterson became agitated "to the point that I had the nerve to get up and walk up, uninvited, and take over the microphone." She told the women, "Look, you don't need to go in there and be frightened. I mean, this is a

meeting of women. You can go in, you can voice your opinion, you can [take a] stand, . . . and this can be fun. This is the legislative process" (183–84). Later, in the ruckus of the conference, she exhorted the women to "'Think! Think! You decide what you want! And think! You have a God-given mind. Use it!' I was totally dismayed that women did not know . . . what effect they can have on politics and government" (203). Perhaps the most disturbing observation from this book was the readiness of LDS women to act—even act out of character—at the directive of male leadership without examining an issue fully.

Chapters 5 through 9—a full third of the text—are devoted to the Utah IWY Conference, the National IWY Conference, and their aftermaths. Chapter 7, which describes the Utah IWY conference, is the clear climax of the book, and Bradley allows the women who attended to narrate the events in their own words. She notes that, even twenty-five years later, some of her interviewees broke down while describing the events of that month. As a reader, I had to put down the book at one point during the chapter and walk away, stunned at the anger and chaos unleashed by a few thousand Mormon women a few miles from where I lay in a hospital bassinet. The IWY mêlée is jarring for many reasons—the *open* rudeness and hostility so atypical of LDS women's gatherings, the mob mentality that seemed to overtake the crowd, the image of men patrolling the perimeters with walkie-talkies to help coordinate voting, the line between feminist and traditionalist which seemed to implode in our Church community in the space of forty-eight hours—creating wounds that have yet to fully heal.

Bradley writes movingly about this loss of trust: A "wide gulf" opened up; and "almost without exception, women on each side felt bitterly mistrustful of women on the other side. Perhaps the greatest casualty of the IWY conference was the feeling of sisterhood with other women. For many Mormon women, 'sisterhood' had become a shrinking circle wherein admittance was controlled by politically proper shibboleths" (209).

Chapters 10 through 12 carefully trace the Church's anti-ERA activism in other states, effectively leading to the death of the amendment. Bradley provides minutes from meetings, explores financial contributions, and erases the fuzzy distinction between "grass-roots" individual efforts by concerned citizens and direct Church-sponsored mobilization. Drawing from the painful—but also effective—results of the Utah IWY

conference, the Church "learned how to mobilize an inexperienced but devoted mass of foot soldiers in a holy war against feminism" (222).

Of course, Bradley also describes the efforts of Mormons for ERA (MERA), the success and turmoil of its subgroups, and the excommunication of its president, Sonia Johnson. While she does not dwell on Johnson's case, she gives a fascinating glimpse into the proceedings of the Church court through the testimony of five witnesses. These witnesses appealed not just for Johnson but for the health of the Church. Ralph Payer, a Mormon psychology professor, told the court: "Those outside the Church either did not care about [Sonia's speech] or saw it as a positive sign that the Church could accept and tolerate, without repression, a contrary opinion from within. . . . Damage has been done to the Church's reputation . . . by the convening of this trial" (365).

As one who constantly searches for middle ground—something between stewing silently and flying a Mormons-for-ERA banner over the temple—I was particularly grateful that Bradley added one final chapter: a "case study" on the Alice Louise Reynolds Forum. For nearly fifteen years, a group of diverse, educated LDS women met monthly for "personal support, safe opportunities for discussion, and intellectual rigor that led to refined argument" (420). They hosted speakers, grilled local politicians, and wrote to Church leaders about their concern of the eroding boundary between Church and state. In the very first meeting in BYU's cafeteria, "they focused on how each saw her feminist views intersecting with Church doctrine" (412). From Bradley's description, the group seemed to mirror the energy and efforts of the women who formed *Exponent II* in Boston—and, perhaps, the women who are now forming similar discussion and support groups on LDS blogs.

This book is a necessary read for me and for many of my generation. Thirty years after IWY, I have great hope that the conversation about Mormon feminism is resurging. The LDS blogging community—which is increasingly garnering the attention of the mainstream media, academics, and the Church—in many ways resembles the demographics and energy of the women who began *Exponent II* and the Alice Louise Reynolds Forum. Largely, the women bloggers are in their twenties and thirties. Our blogs differ in specific orientation (motherhood, personal essay, feminism, scholarship); however, the overlap in voices and conversation is enormous, with women from different political and theological perspectives vigorously conversing about the experience of being a Mormon woman.

Perhaps these forums are part of the answer to closing the "gulf" of mistrust between LDS feminists and traditionalists that opened up in the wake of IWY and the ERA. Recently, an Exponent II Blog discussion touched on the history captured by Bradley's book. One respondent reflected on the differences between the feminists of her generation and the younger "blogging feminists," commenting: "Most of the women on feministmormonhousewives and other blogs don't remember Sonia Johnson, or the September Six, or the International Women's Year debacle. . . . [T]he younger feminists don't have the sense of worry about what they say that those of us who remember those times have."

One of the co-founders of the *Exponent* blog responded: "While I remember the September Six and have studied Utah's IWY and the ERA, I didn't actually have to live through those events. While I keep those events in mind when I write a blog, I think I do feel more free to write what I like because I haven't had to watch my contemporaries be censored."

There is danger both in being bound by history and in being ignorant of it. If Mormon feminism wants to have a seat at the table, we need people like Martha Sonntag Bradley who will offer a rich perspective of our own recent history as we seek to build bridges and create a vision for the future.

Balancing Faith and Honesty

Segullah: Writings by Latter-day Saint Women. Online journal, http://Segullah.org.

Reviewed by Darlene Young, secretary of the Association for Mormon Letters and member of Segullah's *editorial board*

I have long bemoaned what I felt was an empty niche in LDS publishing—that is, a publication that is absolutely committed to upholding the doctrines and leadership of the Church but is also equally committed to exploring all aspects of living a life of faith, including its difficulties, without any sugar-coating. I wanted something that avoided both shallowness and cynicism. I'm excited about the possibilities of a new LDS women's literary journal, *Segullah,* which I believe is filling that niche. With its casual, intimate tone, *Segullah* appeals to women of all levels of education,

but its articles and poetry are thoughtful and well written without sentimentality and pat answers.

Segullah began in the spring of 2005 as an outgrowth of a women's writers' group. The name, Hebrew for "peculiar treasure," comes from the Old Testament where the Lord uses it to designate his covenant people (Ex. 19:5; Ps. 135:4). The journal's mission is "to encourage literary talent, provoke thought, and promote greater understanding and faith among Latter-day Saint women." I asked Kathryn Soper, editor of the journal, what makes an essay good for *Segullah*. "Honesty," she answered. "We want to hear from women who lift the veil on their Church face and show what goes on inside as they try to live the gospel—the struggles and the triumphs, the challenges and the joys. Because we have testimonies, we believe that the simple 'Sunday school' answers are true, yet living them can be complex. We are all, after all, just works in progress." Essays in *Segullah* address difficult topics such as learning to accept a child's homosexuality, living with a chronic illness, or simply learning to have faith in the face of ambiguity.

An example of the bold, truthful writing that Soper describes is found in the essay that won the journal's first annual essay contest. "When Life Begins," by Kerry Spencer, describes one woman's experience with in-vitro fertilization, and her agony when she gets a message from the nurse too late:

> "Your embryos," they say when we finally get a hold of them. "We thought two of them were dead, but they weren't. They started dividing again. But now it's too late."
>
> Too late?
>
> "Too late. They're too big to be frozen now; they won't survive."
>
> Two blastocysts in my gut.
>
> Two blastocysts dying in the lab.
>
> 4 blastocysts = 1 human being.
>
> But now it's too late.
>
> I am crying before I am off the phone with the clinic. The nurse is upset too. "Why didn't you take your phone with you?" she is asking. "Why didn't you?"
>
> I was doing genealogy. I was doing the right thing.
>
> I curse the ghosts of my ancestors.[1]

Spencer does not minimize the pain of her unanswered questions by providing an unrealistic happy ending. "Neither of us knows when life begins," she says at the end. "All we know is that *something* has been lost." But

Spencer's loss is our gain: we have taken the journey with her; we have felt her pain, and our souls have grown.

Not all of the essays are about difficulty. Some are just for fun, such as Heather Harris Bergevin's "An Hour in the Life,"[2] detailing her family's effort to get to bed one night, or Courtney Kendrick's "Downtown Sister Brown and the Department of Defense,"[3] about a phone call from the government regarding one of her mission companions. The poetry and artwork are celebratory of all aspects of a woman's life. The editors clearly believe that the gospel is, indeed, good news.

Other than an occasional column dedicated to men ("He Speaks"), male voices are missing from *Segullah.* Originally, this was natural, since it was a women's writers' group that began the journal, but now there is an official policy of not publishing poetry or artwork by men (or essays outside of the "He Speaks" column). "Women speak differently when they know they are speaking to other women," Soper explains. "We want to preserve that intimacy in the discussion. We want to tell stories for each other."

The first four issues are themed on topics that the editors feel speak to women: "Our Potential and Progression as Daughters of God," "Exploring Times of Transition and Upheaval," "Women Proclaiming the Gospel" and "Cleave Unto Charity." A rough survey of the articles in each issue illuminates an overriding theme of trying to increase in charity for others and oneself despite weaknesses. Other common topics include dealing with affliction or ambiguity in the gospel, dealing with differences, and rejoicing. These are the kinds of things women want to know about each other and share with each other but for which we lack time and opportunity in our official meetings.

Reading *Segullah* is like joining in a gathering—one in which women come as they are, stretch out on sofas, and let their hair down. This sense of informal and accepting community is something the editors have deliberately created. When the editors receive an essay that they believe is powerful but not well written, they will put in extraordinary work with the writers to prepare the piece for publication, sometimes through four or five drafts. Serious about upholding high standards from the very beginning, the editors established an editorial board that included such names as Cherry B. Silver (past president of the Association for Mormon Letters), Boyd J. Petersen (UVSC and BYU professor) and Beverly Campbell (noted LDS author and speaker and sponsor of the journal's annual essay

contest). An educated reader will recognize the high quality of editorial work, yet a less-experienced reader will not find the language difficult or exclusive.

In an effort to broaden its community, the editors have created a website and blog that function both as publicity for the journal and as an additional forum for women to share stories with each other. Often the blog entries are direct responses to specific pieces in the journal, inviting discussion at the same time as increasing readership.

In 2007, production has increased to three issues per year. All back issues are archived and available for reading online at the *Segullah* website. Although Soper feels strongly about continuing to make the entire text of each issue available free through the website, the high quality of the artwork and the way women love to share the issues create a continued demand for printed issues.

From what I can tell, many LDS women will enjoy *Segullah*. I'm convinced that its audience is large and thirsty for it, and that the journal's popularity will grow as fast as it is passed around. Sample articles and information about submissions and guidelines for the essay contest are available at http://www.Segullah.org.

Notes

1. Kerry Spencer, "When Life Begins," *Segullah* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 18–19.

2. Heather Harris Bergevin, "An Hour in the Life," *Segullah* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 26–27.

3. Courtney Kendrick, "Downtown Sister Brown and the Department of Defense," *Segullah* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 13–15.

A Novel with a Lot of Way-Out-There Ideas

D. Michael Martindale. *Brother Brigham.* Provo, Utah: Zarahemla Books, 2007. 258 pp., $15.95.

Reviewed by Matt A.Thurston, CPA, MBA, Sunstone board of directors; elders' quorum instructor; avid cinephile, bibliophile, and musicphile; husband and father of three

Joseph Smith received golden plates, magical translating devices, and

countless visits from heavenly messengers, but a host of cognitive and cultural biases combine to render them almost commonplace in our collective Mormon memory. These supernatural events from Mormon history nestle up against ordinary moments from secular history like so many points on a timeline, one point seemingly no more extraordinary than the next: Andrew Jackson was elected U.S. president in 1828; Joseph Smith met Peter, James, and John in 1830; and so on.

But recast any of these same supernatural events with new characters in present-day Utah and their anomalous, singular qualities are given their proper jaw-dropping or head-scratching weight. This was the thought that occurred to me time and time again while reading D. Michael Martindale's *Brother Brigham,* a novel packed with events that struck me as bizarre and even preposterous, only to be followed by the sobering realization that each event was based on either historical or scriptural precedent—in other words, no more bizarre than the original event itself.

In *Brother Brigham,* C. H. Young, a bright, twenty-something husband and father receives a visit from the not-yet-resurrected spirit of his great-great-grandfather, Brigham Young. Brigham tells C. H. of a cache of money hidden in the Utah desert that C. H. is to retrieve "for a wise purpose." From there, the plot one-ups itself with each successive chapter as C. H. wages battle against both spiritual and flesh-and-blood opponents, with his eternal soul and the future of the Church at stake.

An author's bio at the end of the novel notes that Martindale grew up with "a taste for science fiction and a love for telling speculative stories." No kidding! Martindale mines Mormonism for all of the speculative tidbits that never see the light of day in Gospel Doctrine lesson manuals but which endlessly fascinate overzealous missionaries at the MTC or churn out fodder for fanatical bloggers. Take, for example, the "handshake test" found in Doctrine and Covenants 129, where evil spirits can be differentiated from good spirits based on the corporeal condition of the extended hand, a key plot device in the novel. Reading *Brother Brigham* I could imagine Martindale as an animated missionary, leading his fellow missionary roommates in late-night speculative discussions of the arcane and esoteric.

Like a Stephen King novel, perhaps, *Brother Brigham* has no real literary aspirations. Still one does not read a King novel for its prose or rich characterization, but rather for its propulsive, mind-bending plot. Here Martindale succeeds with page-turning gusto. Indeed, though I've never

counted myself a fan of the science-fiction or fantasy genre, I found Martindale's enthusiasm for his subject matter infectious. Speculative fiction fans will certainly embrace *Brother Brigham* as a welcome addition to the growing Mormon SF subgenre.

But non-SF readers need not pass up *Brother Brigham,* for at its heart Martindale's story is also something of a romance novel, albeit from a decidedly male point of view. In that regard, *Brother Brigham* is pretty edgy stuff, if a Deseret Book novel is your primary frame of reference. C. H. is "called" upon by Brother Brigham to get his *Big Love* on, and C. H.'s sexy co-worker Sheila, an aggressive, promiscuous, inactive Mormon, is only too eager to be his mistress, or, what the heck, his second wife. If C. H. needs to rationalize extramarital sex with delusions of polygamous grandeur, who is Sheila to argue if the end result is the same? How C. H. convinces his wife Dani to go along with the plan and how C. H. maneuvers to marry Sheila polygamously in the Salt Lake Temple are two of *Brother Brigham's* more exciting plot threads.

Brother Brigham's handful of descriptive sex scenes (as well as its boundary-pushing speculative theology) seems to be in keeping with Zarahemla Books' stated commitment toward more "frankness and realism, [and] earthier explorations of Mormon culture and experience."[1] In other words, staid *The Work and the Glory* retreads need not apply. That said, *Brother Brigham* is never too steamy or too graphic. Anyone who has read Levi Peterson's *The Backslider* or any number of popular Gentile mystery, crime, spy, science fiction, or romance novels, will not be put off by Martindale's depictions of the "earthier" side of life.

So, if you are looking for something a little different from your typical Mormon novel, something with a little spice and a lotta way-out-there ideas, then *Brother Brigham* is for you. But be forewarned: set foot in Martindale's world and you'd better have your spiritual house in order and be prepared to defend your family by calling on the powers of heaven. Where you're going, you're gonna need it!

Note

1. Statement on Zarahemla Books webpage, http://zarahemlabooks.com/main.sc (accessed in August 2007).

Joseph Smith: Lost and Found

Jane Barnes

I met Joseph out of all Mormon context. I met him between Emerson and the Beatles, between the American Revolution and the sixties, between the conservative New England tilt of my education and the ecstatic, destabilizing, boundary-busting, prolonged years of anti-authoritarian protest against the U.S. government. I met Joseph roaming the corridors of American history in Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History,* portrayed as a genius who would be comfortable at the same table with P. T. Barnum, Walt Disney, and Norman Mailer—to name a few of the wildly imaginative national characters I had been pitching for documentaries.

Somehow I had reached my forties without ever having met a single Mormon and knowing almost nothing about our homegrown prophet. I encountered Joseph amid the smoking ruins of Vietnam, Watergate, Nixon's impeachment, and the country's return to our primal dream of avarice. By that time, "my" priests were Martin Luther King and the Berrigan brothers, men who broke the law for a higher good. Fawn Brodie's Joseph was this kind of man. But the social activist priests always seemed more moral than faithful. Amid their good works, their contradictions and ironies somehow suggested that politics was what we had in a world from which God had withdrawn. In Brodie's biography, when Joseph broke the law for a higher good, I felt he did so as a modern man of faith.

Brodie meant to debunk, and some questioning Mormons are rumored to have left the Church because of *No Man Knows My History.* But for me, her Joseph reawakened religious feelings I thought I'd lost forever. As a child in Providence, Rhode Island, I was a believer. My older brother and sister grumbled when my parents sent us off to church and Sunday School. But I loved coloring pictures of the burning bush and thinking hard about the nun's claim that God was always with each and every one

of us. I believed it was true—but how!? I was intrigued by the mystery. When we moved to Washington, D.C., and my parents no longer enforced church going, I was still ardent. I was eight.

On Sundays, while the rest of my family read newspapers around the breakfast table, I traveled from Georgetown to St. John's Episcopal Church near the White House by taxi. I soon felt like the odd man out. Daddy had come home from World War II and joined the State Department. I didn't want to miss one of his anti-Communist riffs while I was off at church. How could I save America if I didn't know what challenges the free world faced? I won a Bible for memorizing verses in Sunday School, but I felt it was success for success's sake. God wasn't in my words.

The taxi said it all. I had become an uprooted pilgrim, paying strangers to drive me around in search of a place I might really belong. I'd stepped into the particle accelerator in which new energies are constantly released by our atoms colliding at the speed of light. I've come to realize that this is the perpetual shattering modern people call home. I've often felt it's like living in a huge lost-and-found, of doubling and tripling our lives and even our bodies, of trying incarnations that end up in a heap in "unclaimed baggage" centers. There is no rest, only perpetual disintegration and renewal. As a member of the holy order of disappearing sacred cows, I didn't exactly lose interest in God. I just never heard about a God who didn't take himself very, very seriously. . . . Enter Joseph Smith.

He was born in 1805, on a boundary line between rooted traditions and the age of the particle accelerator. The post-revolutionary world was coming unstuck all around him; and strange, new electrical impulses were flying off in every direction. Smith's family on both sides had already been broken into many kinds of energetic nonconformity. They were religious seekers, adventurers, writers, utopians, large-minded, large-hearted men and women trying to get their hands on the meaning of life. They were just the sort of New Worlders that Emerson believed would inherit the earth. They were ready to cast "off the common motives of humanity" and be "godlike," to ask the great religious questions as if for the first time. Joseph was working, as Kurt Vonnegut said of our class (the class of '66) at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, "to get back to moral zero."

There was also a wild anarchy between the lines of Brodie's book, along with an exquisite streak of comedy—especially as Joseph came into his powers. He seemed like a transcendent cross between Huck Finn and Ahab. Meeting him fresh in my middle age was like drinking from the

fountain of youth. I was smitten by the boastful boy who looked into magic stones to track treasure chests zooming around beneath the earth while he marched his men in circles, chanting and sacrificing roosters in the pursuit of gold. I watched adoringly alongside Joseph as an older magician read aloud from Cicero's "Orations" in Latin. How else would you gain favor with the supernatural powers of the night? My spirits soared as Joseph's story grew in wonder—as he spun the pots of gold upward into a great treasure of the spirit, announced by an angelic messenger, guarded by a toad with a rusty sword, sought by a boy with his nose in a hat.

Not since I had colored religious pictures as a child had I felt so close to a divine presence. Joseph's exuberant arc from boy conjurer into frontier prophet with golden plates gave me the most intense delight of which I was capable. It was as if Mark Twain had written a Gospel. The story gave the delight of reading Twain, but more so—like the delight of human love, but different. We do not normally think of God as tickling us until we break into helpless tears of laughter. But this was the God I felt in the early Joseph, a God with a touchingly, meltingly, divinely irreverent sense of humor. Here was a God who dared to clown around with his own image. He had created a story so comic it defied disbelief.

Helen Whitney, the New York producer/director with whom I'd worked for years, was also fascinated by Fawn Brodie's biography. Her interest in Joseph was different than mine, but we were both baffled by the fact that his life wasn't more widely known. The boy who created the Book of Mormon, most of it in three blazing months, lived for fifteen more years. He became a compelling religious leader, an architect of cities and temples, a scapegoat for frontier angst, a bold theologian, a founder of an extraordinary experiment in polygamy. The self-delighting, optimistic boy pilgrim became a self-dramatizing, conflicted seer who flew in the face of every convention and died in a horrific shoot-out. He was the first, but hardly the last, of a representative American type—the self-proclaimed prophet—and the only one of his kind to found a church that is currently growing at astonishing rates of almost 300,000 converts a year worldwide. There was enough in Joseph's story for twenty movies.

In the eighties, we proposed a film about his life to HBO; in the nineties, we proposed a documentary about Joseph in Nauvoo to American Experience. Both times we were turned down. But by 2003, for a variety of reasons (including the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City), American television was ready for a major cultural assessment of the Mormons. PBS

was interested. Helen's growing list of distinguished films about religion made her the natural choice to produce and direct *The Mormons* for a co-production of American Experience and WGBH Frontline. By then, I'd worked as her co-writer on several documentaries in a past that now seemed like prologue.

We spent a year researching and writing a hundred-page treatment. This would be Helen's preliminary guide as she developed the film. Once the treatment is finished, many writers leave during production (the filming period) and come back when it's time to write narration. I'd stayed on in earlier projects out of interest in the subjects and out of fascination with production: searching for characters and experts, interviewing, going on location, and helping with the shoots themselves.

Working on *The Mormons* was no different except that I was a pilgrim as well as a writer on this project. Maybe "pseudo pilgrim" is a better term. After my first encounter with Joseph, and possibly because of it, I had turned to Zen Buddhism for my religious practice. Zen values—even, in its way, celebrates—irrational personal experience; but over time, I missed the irrational transcendence which I'd been raised with. I missed a personal God, even though I no longer believed in one.

As we began our documentary, I wasn't quite looking for a religious experience. I just wanted to observe Joseph's more intimately. Here was my chance. The film was not about my idiosyncratic relation to the Prophet. It was about the sweep of Mormon religion and history from Joseph's founding revelations through the present. Nonetheless, as I went about the rest of my business, I expected I'd be in closer and closer communion with the Prophet's burning core.

It didn't happen. Joseph Smith was everywhere and nowhere in contemporary Mormonism. He was present, but still unaccounted for among the scholars pouring over "the prophet puzzle." In the wake of Brodie's edgy book, historians had turned up a vast amount of new research about magic and nineteenth-century Christianity, the origins of the Book of Mormon, and Joseph's changing accounts of his visions. In the effort to integrate Joseph's story with the new information, biographies—whether faithful or not—had moved toward the explanatory. Authors went to great lengths to "prove" logically, based on the evidence, that Joseph was an authentic prophet—or not. But I felt that the very act of "making sense" of Joseph undermined what I valued most: his shocking religious vitality and originality.

The Joseph evoked by missionaries and in wards across the country was a ceremonial figure: appropriate for the circumstances, but distancing. When faithful Mormons shared their Josephs with me, the traces of their personal connection were like shining instants of mica on a beach, riveting but not revealing. I began to feel the bulwark of Joseph's church for the first time. I was separated from him by the mighty fortress built around his holy flame. Standing in Temple Square and staring up at the 22-karat gold-leaf Moroni, I felt lost. Here at ground zero of the Mormon faith, my fragile sense of the divine was buried under tons of granite.

Where was the boy with his nose in his hat? How did Joseph's magical mystery tour launch the one true church? I was swamped by questions. How could any institution base itself on Joseph's riotous imagination? How had this Houdini of the spirit—a man who was constantly escaping the handcuffs of orthodoxy—how had he been contained inside a church bureaucracy? Could the wildest story ever told justify the Mormons' use of excommunication? Why was irreverence such a divine quality to me? Why did I so rarely meet faithful Mormons who loved the divine humor in Joseph's early story?

One scholar did pick up his hat as we talked about inspired translation; he paused and put his face in it momentarily, then returned to our discussion without missing a beat or changing his tone. His silent—and playful—gesture showed that he knew how funny Joseph must have looked as he dictated the Book of Mormon. His silence also spoke volumes about the mockery Mormons endured because their prophet pulled his scripture out of a hat. It was one of those interviews where I knew I should leave the unspoken alone. These weren't usually laughing matters.

I found that faithful Mormons did not smile at the peep stones, the madcap appearance of dead Indians and feathers, the stately progress of the gold plates at the bottom of a barrel of beans. But among Mormons I met who were leaving the Church were those few who turned on Joseph and his founding stories as the worst of bad jokes. Raging against the Angel Moroni and Hill Cumorah for being laughable, these apostates had a primal bitterness—as if they were tearing out the first taboo—the one which forbade them to admit that Joseph had an inspired sense of fun.

I don't submit this view disrespectfully. The anarchic Joseph gave me one of my very few adult glimpses of God. As I worked on the film, I fought to keep that Joseph alive. I rebelled against the tendency to compare Joseph to ancient prophets or even to see him as a man of his time.

He felt more like a contemporary. Try this. Under the intense inner pressure we associate with budding artists, improvising recklessly and freely, Joseph parlayed a real, but evolving experience of God into an original act of religious performance art. Starting with peep stones and treasure, playing with toads, rusty swords, and quest narratives, moving to angels and gold plates of ancient history, he mixed and remixed the elements at hand until he had transformed them through fantastical vision, theatricality, and the written word into the Book of Mormon. Maybe he was more like Thelonius Monk in a rapture than Moses on the march.

Maybe, but I felt I was becoming guilty of explanation, too. I was turning Joseph into words. A born-again Christian once told me that trying to understand myself without Christ was like being a car trying to change its own spark plug. Somewhere in 2005, between getting my first speeding ticket in Salt Lake City and my second one in the remote canyons outside St. George, I understood what he meant. I didn't have the learning to be a pilgrim. I didn't have the faith. I was racing faster and faster to prove some eccentric point about Joseph—to myself, by myself—and losing him to abstraction.

To abstraction and *distraction.* As production moves toward editing, everyone is doing fifteen things at once: keeping up with new publications, organizing shoots, going to shoots, shooting, interviewing, getting releases, losing releases, collating to-do lists, going back to the drawing board, becoming expert in fields of one's special incompetence, finding photographs, digitizing, losing photographs, digitizing, screaming, going out for coffee, going over budget, and getting back under it. This dizzying activity builds an extraordinary library of materials for Helen and her editor. Their editing suite becomes an island of focus and calm. But production itself is a cross between the wildest scavenger hunt ever and preparing for a graduate seminar exam from hell.

There are almost no dull moments in Mormon history. From its founding, the Mormon journey has brimmed with nonstop, heart-stopping dramas which are almost entirely unknown to most Americans. As we researched the film, we were often told that the Mormons had lost the culture wars to the cowboys and Indians. This seems like a partial explanation for their absence from popular films and novels. Another part of the explanation has to be that Americans still haven't settled where or how the Mormons fit into our national mythology. Mormon identity is still a

work-in-progress and must remain so as long as so much of the story remains hotly debated.

During editing as we wrote and rewrote lines of narration, we began our work by saying, "Abandon hope all ye who enter here." As the Mormons crossed the country, they were enveloped in swarms of contested facts which moved in overlapping clouds from one hive to the next: Kirtland, Missouri, Nauvoo. We spent hours seeking expert opinion just about whether Nauvoo's population "equaled," "rivaled" or "surpassed" Chicago's. It took Herculean research and distillation to get a clean line of documentary narration. Changing a comma, omitting a word often brought a new challenge and meant starting all over on a redhot frontier where you could lose your bona fides if you called a tree by its wrong name.

Crossing the country with the early Saints gave me a chance to deepen what I knew about the older Joseph, the leader of the Church. The boy Joseph had sparked my first passion; he made wonderful, wild sense to me. I had seen troubling complexity in his later self, but I'd never come to terms with it. I'm still not sure I understand the Joseph who was the center of Mormon controversy until his death. A terrible melancholy hangs over the second half of his life. The Prophet was hurtling toward trouble or clawing his way out of it. He had enemies, but he was first among them. The older he got, the thinner he seemed to spread himself. The larger his church, the noisier the controversy, the more people he was for too many others.

As he moved through Missouri and into Nauvoo, there were countless streams of consciousness pressing their disparate claims on Joseph's revelatory powers. He was working as a lawyer, architect, army general, quartermaster, presidential candidate, mayor, medical healer, hotelier, and prophet. I was moved and fascinated by Joseph's visions of Alvin in the afterlife; I was intrigued by baptism for the dead and progression to godhood. I believed he was profoundly serious about polygamy, that all of these theological developments taken together represented a significant, but unconscious deepening of his religious vision. In the end, though, his powerful urge toward safe passage into death lacked the centripetal force of his earlier drive to write the Book of Mormon. Things were flying apart, not together. During the Nauvoo period, at least ten of his lives weren't speaking to each other. Indeed, his warring parts were shouting back and forth. How could the center hold? Finally, he did not seem to care if it did.

He lied about polygamy from the pulpit and burned a newspaper press to keep his enemies from exposing him. A few days later, he was murdered in his jail cell at Carthage.

We went back to Utah for the last shoot in January of 2006. My job was clear cut, but some joy had gone out of me. My attention had been undermined by watching Joseph self-destruct. I began to lose personal things: hair brush, glasses, cell phone. I couldn't take the time to look for them. Every minute on a shoot costs money. Every second has been scheduled. The producer and the cameraman (and their technical crew) have to focus at peak concentration for twelve to fourteen hours a day—day after day—for weeks. I was a floater with the car. I sat in a cubicle at the Alta Club in Salt Lake City, working on interview questions, doing new research, on call at every minute for anything from scotch tape to an assessment of the twentieth-century tithe. There wasn't a free minute to look for lost stuff. Weirdly, things kept turning up. I found my hairbrush, my glasses, my cell phone in my briefcase or pocketbook or some other place I had torn apart to no avail just before I left for work.

I did not think to use the word "miraculous" until one particular snowy morning. As I sat down in my cubicle, I heard a woman's voice in the front lobby, calling out tentatively, "Hello . . . hello? Has anyone lost a little phone book?" Fear and trembling overtook me. I looked, and my little phone book wasn't anywhere. It contained the irreplaceable work of several years: the unlisted numbers, home phone numbers, weekend retreat numbers, email addresses, faxes—all the private information without which you cannot reach important people or anonymous sources or the as-yet-undiscovered champs of your documentary film subject. "Hello, hello . . ." I shouted back, and the angelic stranger followed my quaking voice into my cubby, holding out the little damp phone book. She had been at the red light when I crossed and saw me drop the book; she jumped out of her car, grabbed the thing, parked, and followed me into the club. I was lost without knowing it, and now I was found without having lifted a finger. Miraculous.

A new awareness followed me back home to Virginia where I started organizing a shoot with a noted Mormon professor, his family, and their ward outside Richmond. I needed to "scout" his home and meetinghouse church for light, space, availability of different shots, permissions—all the things that need to be determined before the camera comes. I could drive most of the way from Charlottesville on Route 64; but once I

got off into the countryside, I knew the roads were spaghetti. The church house was in the spaghetti. I had spoken to the professor several times and was familiar with his books, brilliant works about the Book of Mormon, the power and importance of Joseph's theology—and about the hysterical resistance to it. When I phoned him for help, his detailed instructions were models of clarity.

Yet as soon as I got off Route 64—though I did my best to follow his map—I got lost. I called him from the road, and he kindly talked me back onto the right path. I was lost again in moments and had to call again; he repeatedly helped me find my way. I was beginning to panic. I felt I might be lost all afternoon. I'd miss the service, be a total inconvenience, give our project a poor introduction. And then I rounded a corner and saw the T at the end of the road ahead, the place, I'd been told, where I could only go right or left. I was back on track. I was *found.* The words "lost and found, lost and found" went through my mind, and they were the last words before something like lightning struck my brain. I had a terrible headache; I was sobbing in darkness; I felt I was dying.

As I wept, waiting for the worst to pass, people began honking their horns behind me. I wiped my eyes, put the car back into gear, started forward. I've always feared death, more than illness, more than incapacity. I'd had intuitions of the darkness before, but never one so profound and black. This dark was not as bleak. It was rich. The richness *was* the dark. I struggled to hear the words, for it was saying something to me. Its voice was like a muscular swirl in a velvet tent. It wasn't human. The richness didn't speak my language. But then suddenly, without a word being spoken, I understood. The richness was the knowledge that everything on earth was a half-finished sentence which would be completed on the other side.

I began driving as if I'd lived in the spaghetti all my life, turning before I'd even read the street signs and racing toward the church in full confidence that I'd be there in time. Yet I was still afraid. I was terrified of life and death, the road ahead, the road behind, but I'd always been afraid of them. Now I had a new fear. I was terrified of walking into the Mormon Church and joining it. I was back-pedaling in a primal panic. I'd been out with the missionaries and knew people converted all the time for much less than what I'd just experienced. But I could not join a church.

It wasn't the Mormon Church in particular. I couldn't join *any* church, but none had ever threatened as the Mormon Church did that

day. I did not believe in beliefs. I believed in intuitions, revelations, even answers, but they were all provisional. I could not pledge allegiance to the great movements of the Spirit. The Spirit may change and enlarge us; we may position ourselves so that we are in the right place at the right time; we may be grateful when it comes, but we can't command, placate, or even serve the muscular swirl in the velvet tent. I talked to myself sternly as I bore down on the LDS meetinghouse on the side of the road ahead of me. By the time I arrived, I was calm enough to perform in my role as a professional media observer. I was saved from being saved.

I've thought about the experience of my near-conversion many times since. Somehow the fear I felt on the road has lifted, and the reassurance has sunk into my aquifer. The edge of my death terror is not so serrated, not so cutting. For this I will be grateful for the rest of my life. My moment on the road also changed my relation to Joseph. I haven't recanted my delight in the stones in the hat, the toad, and the rusty sword. In fact, their heavenly fun has come back to me with new intensity since we finished the film. If I could find a way to express the divine humor in the birth of Joseph's religion, I would consider that achievement to be another personal miracle. It may not be my place to say, but I wonder if Mormons would feel more secure in the world if they allowed themselves to appreciate the redeeming mischief in their founding stories. It's a unique gift; it could be enjoyed so much more than it is.

The reassurance I had on the road ultimately helped me see the older Joseph as a brother to the boy I love. I'd slipped away from him through disillusion with his second act. I still find that Joseph troubling, but the two characters are parts of a whole. Both are experimental, perpetually open, modern in their willingness to use whatever is at hand. Both are constantly pulling in things and ideas which we don't usually associate with religion. Both parts of the life are religious happenings.

If people can appear upside down and backwards in Picasso's paintings, why can't the Garden of Eden be in Independence, Missouri? If our artists rearrange reality, why shouldn't our prophets? Art isn't religion, or vice versa, but they have always been intimately connected. They are gateways to the unseen, gateways that are refigured according to the times. Joseph's approach to religious expression changed radically in his own life. The boy born into the battle of the Bibles wrote his own. And the man wrestling gods to earth saw more than he could say.

"You don't know me," he cried in a famous sermon toward the end.

"You never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it; I shall never undertake it. I don't blame anyone for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself."[1]

Before I met Joseph, I heard a radio preacher say that God broke men and women the way we broke our horses: so they could learn to do their work. By the time I found Joseph, I'd already been unfitted for church. I was too uprooted. I'd spent too much time in taxis. I'd been broken to the discipline of the atom-smasher—of living in cataclysms of newly discovered (or rediscovered) energy. I was used to doing the work of new relationships, new projects, new ideas—not instant ones, but big bang, understanding and applying it, next big bang, cleaning up after the light fades, starting over again. Until I met Joseph, I did not realize it could be a religious work. Now I do. He showed me that it's the path of revelation.

Note

1. Joseph Smith quoted in Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History,* 2d ed. rev. and enl. (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1971), vii.

What I Would Be If I Weren't a Mormon

Kathleen Petty

When I first asked myself the question in the title, I was wondering specifically what religion I would participate in if I weren't Mormon. I soon tangled myself up in questions about what it means to "be" anything: I "am" a woman, a Mormon, an American, a docent at a public garden, a master gardener, a Relief Society counselor, a mother, a person who likes to cook—we all "are" many things. It is impossible for me to speculate on what I would be if I weren't female. It is interesting, but probably impossible, to speculate on who I would be if "I" had been born into a different family. Mormons believe some part of their "I-ness" is immutable, but it is very hard to know what that part might be, conditioned and entangled as we all are by the genetic code that makes the corporeal us, and then by the social interaction of families, or lack of families.

Some of us identify ourselves by the work we do. I think there is a difference between saying, "I teach" school, aerobics, or hang gliding, and, "I am a teacher," or between "I write" books, advertising copy, limericks, or letters, and "I am a writer." One is an activity one is involved in, while the other implies a deep identity with the process of that activity. I have that deeper identity with being a Mormon. It isn't like a club I have joined that I can leave when my interest flags. I don't believe I could settle into another religion, so why am I writing this essay anyway? For a fifth-generation Mormon, starting on my mother's side of the family with William Clayton, there is a cultural, historical, and familial component to being a Mormon that would never go away for me, although it seems possible for others with the same lengthy heritage to leave the faith. Over the years, I have tried on various other religious ideas and identities. It is their attractions and distractions that I want to compare.

Taking part in a religion involves the teachings of that religion, which have to do with the nature of the divine, the nature of the universe and one's place in it, and usually with moral precepts that teach what right conduct looks like. The teachings of a religion are denominational; in fact, they define the term. Taking part in a religion also involves taking part in the community created by people who all believe the same thing. Just believing the same thing doesn't make a community congenial, however. People have been known to shop for a congregation they feel comfortable with, choosing from several who all believe the same things. Congenial communities form around things other than religions: politics, reading books, playing sports, and so forth.

And then there is the matter of spiritual experiences. "Spiritual" is a difficult term. For my purposes it means a feeling that one has connected with something greater than oneself or that one has received insight from some entity beyond oneself. I am differentiating it from feeling strong emotion, however exalted, or from insight. Spiritual experiences are not denominational, nor are they the property of any one community.

Spiritual experiences within the context of one denomination or another convince a person of its truth, but people report spiritual experiences that have nothing to do with participation in a religion. Spiritual experiences are completely personal, and because of that, there is no arguing with them; you cannot pass judgment on the validity of someone's spiritual experience. This is a long way of saying that examining my thoughts about other religions has to do sometimes with looking at other belief systems and sometimes with seeking more intense spiritual connections or sometimes with looking at the places other people have found spiritual connection. As I have stated, I am completely comfortable with the Mormon community; I feel that I understand it. That is the element of my religion that would be the hardest to replace.

Being a Catholic

I wonder if a lot of girls who aren't Catholic go through a Catholic stage, the way they go through a horse stage. I remember saying emphatically to somebody when I was young that, if I weren't a Mormon, I would be a Catholic. But what I knew of Catholicism came from books and movies; I don't think I was acquainted with a single Catholic growing up in Salt Lake City. I am sure I was attracted by all the wrong things: the stained-glass windows, the altars, the candles, the rosaries, the proces-

sions, the music, its longevity. And of course, nuns. I suppose it was the habit. Maybe it was a proto-feminist desire to identify with an unusual "profession." In early adolescence, I read Kathryn Hulme's *The Nun's Story*, and I also read Rumer Godden's *In This House of Brede*, which cured me of the romance of some earlier reading, specifically *The White Ladies of Worcester* by Florence L. Barclay. This novel (it belonged to my grandmother) was completely improbable but wildly romantic. (It has taken the perspective of age to see that the point of the story was that marriage to a man is better than marriage to God. I looked the author up; she was the wife of an English clergyman.) Now I realize that while I probably could adjust to poverty, chastity, and obedience, I couldn't adjust to boredom and confinement. I am not suited for the contemplative life, and I need to be outdoors. I could probably be an adequate fruit-cake-making nun if it were somehow forced on me.

In Primary when we talked about the first Article of Faith, it was pointed out to me that other Christians believe that God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are one entity, while Mormons believe the obvious other—that they are three beings, and that Joseph Smith has corrected the world on that point. The underlying tone was: "Silly them." Scriptures that supported the Mormon view were duly pointed out. I have since learned that the simple definition of God in the Nicene Creed was not simply arrived at, and I see that the simple sentence of the first article is a gauntlet thrown down, but in a cagey way since Joseph Smith wasn't specific in the first article about what he meant. The three-in-one, ineffable, mysterious God of traditional Christianity creates some logical problems, but so does the Mormon Godhead of three members, two of which (at least) have a face and a body. Now I would only say, to anyone, that it's hard to define God. Probably no one has it exactly right. I am comfortable believing what I grew up with.

Recently I have attended mass in what I take to be an average family parish. I like the way greeting and speaking to the people around you whom you don't know is incorporated into the service. I see parents with children trying to get them to pay attention the way parents in my ward do. In this parish, they don't keep the money part out of sight. The basket came 'round for donations, and the priest openly spoke about how the fund-raising was going. That was a little jarring; Mormons more indirectly take care of such matters in bishopric and quorum meetings. I can see the attraction of a familiar routine and a familiar ritual. I can sense how com-

forting it could be to feel part of such an ancient church. For me, however, the way the priest and the altar boys dress—as people did in the Middle Ages, only using polyester—seems stagey. Seeing the size 12 Nikes and the frayed bottoms of jeans poke out under the altar boys' robes steals the magic. But at least the boys are participating; lots of lay people—male and female, young and old—had a part in the mass.

The mass I attended was a first communion. Various scriptures were read at various points, and I was trying hard to see what thread bound the choices together, but I couldn't. There seemed to be something going on that I couldn't grasp. Even if I ignore purgatory, limbo (now no longer a doctrine, I have heard), transubstantiation, and praying to saints, I can't find a toehold in their theology or their mysticism. I am aware that Catholics and Mormons share the idea that an ordained clergy must administer saving ordinances and that there is one inspired man (a pope in one case, a prophet in the other) who speaks for God to direct the Church and the world. The Mormon priesthood is more democratic, since it is available to all males. Mormons also incorporate a central idea from Protestant religions—the importance of scripture as a guide.

Protestants Lumped Together

When I was a kid, Debbie, my best friend across the street, was Episcopalian. I went to church with her once at St. Mark's Cathedral in downtown Salt Lake. Once again, I loved the beauty of the church even as I was a little confused about the Episcopalians having a cathedral. I learned about Protestantism through the study of history, specifically when the Reformation was covered. The Reformation made sense to me: the corruption of the popes and the clergy, the way they tried to keep the scriptures away from common people. I think I would have been with the half of Europe that was saying "Death to the Pope" rather than "Down with Luther."

One way to look at Protestantism is to say that they believe people can come to God on their own through what they find in the Bible, and not through a priesthood and sacraments. The story of the reformers who translated the Bible into vernacular languages was—and still is—an inspiring one to me. While the struggle was exciting, some of the personalities were not: John Calvin wasn't someone I could put an arm around, nor was John Knox, nor Henry VIII, nor, when you get to America, was Jonathan Edwards. I kind of like John and Charles Wesley.

The problem with allowing people to find their own meaning in the scriptures is that they will find their own meaning in the scriptures. Protestants are constantly splintering, founding churches that rectify the perceived inaccuracies of the former church. It's hard not to see Joseph Smith and Mormonism as part of the same process. Mormons believe God reveals himself in written scripture; they also believe in personal revelation. Isn't it interesting that Mormons accept at the same time the idea of central authority, like the Catholics, and the idea of salvation driven by a direct experience with God, like the Protestants? Mormons solve the contradiction there by saying that true personal revelation will inevitably support the idea of restored authority and prophetic leadership. That puts Mormons in the position of denying the validity of any revelation that doesn't support their leaders' claims, which is awkward to say the least. I am drawn to the aspect of Mormonism that emphasizes personal choice and responsibility for personal choice. I rely on the idea that scriptures are the word of God as filtered through fallible humans, not the inerrant word of God. "As translated correctly" broadly applied is my fallback position for scriptural dilemmas, and I'm glad I have it. With strictly Mormon scriptures, I have to read selectively and hope for "continuing revelation" when I disagree.

My personal experience with Protestant religions is not extensive. Debbie's grandmother died, and for some reason I attended the funeral with her. I don't remember how old I was, but I was younger than eleven. I can remember how dark the room was, and how impersonal the service seemed. It wasn't as though I was a connoisseur of funerals: The only one I had attended earlier was for my own grandmother when I was eight, but I remember one speaker saying that my grandmother was always a peacemaker. I can't remember a single personal remark about Debbie's grandmother.

My children attended a Lutheran grade school—Missouri Synod Lutheran, which is conservative. (When the public schools were in disarray with strikes and contention over a busing program, we simply opted out for a few years.) Everyone was pleasant enough, although I always felt that, as a Mormon, I was suspect. My kids learned a lot about Martin Luther and probably more about the depravity of man than they got at our church. I don't think too much else rubbed off on them or on me. Protestants and Catholics together have a way of intoning rather than offering

their prayers that I can't get used to. I also can't get used to a prayer that sounds like a written speech.

My next-door neighbor goes to the biggest Presbyterian church in the area. This church has an extensive youth program; they have various "missions" that go to build schools in Mexico or start schools for disadvantaged kids in our community. They have near-professional music. In the summer, once a week they allow a farmer's market to be held in their parking lot. This year they allowed the city to use their parking lot for the annual hazardous waste drop-off, where citizens can recycle for free all kinds of materials that shouldn't go into the landfill. Their current pastor is a good speaker and, I gather, is found inspirational. There are various subgroups that meet during the week. My neighbor and his wife have taught a Bible study class for years. At one time it was for women in the church who were divorced or single for some other reason.

My neighbor is very proud of his church and has reason to be. I get the impression that the life of his church is not necessarily in the Sunday meeting. Its life is in all the other things that go on outside that meeting, but that meeting brings them together once a week. My neighbor and I have talked religion some. He is devoted to Christ; and as we have discussed neighborhood problems, he has pointed out the ways in which what he was saying wasn't "Christlike." So why don't I want to make this Presbyterian Church my "church home" as my neighbor puts it? I have to say that it is the vague feeling that they are not "my people." They don't have my vocabulary.

The Far East Nearby

For six or seven years, I met once a week in a meditation group. I was at a spiritual impasse: my energetic efforts to do everything right wasn't leading to the connection to the divine that was promised to the obedient. Feeling that I wasn't a powerful communicator through prayer, I thought I would try a new technique. I was—and am—not a very good meditator, although one of the frustrations with the process was that it is impossible to say when you are "there." There is no way to compare my meditation with yours to see which is "right." Finally accepting that I was the final arbiter of the success of my meditation made it easier to quit something before I got an "A" in it. It's a process taught through metaphor: "Quiet your mind," "the unity of all being is in the space between your thoughts," "breathe out your negative thoughts." Undoubtedly I did-

n't work hard enough at meditating on my own. As a group we chanted, which, once in a while, was mesmerizing. I acquired enough facility that sitting in the correct posture for an hour was not so uncomfortable that it was all I thought about. As an exercise in concentration, it was instructive to see how little I had. It did teach me to pay attention to where my body is tight. The emphasis on breath, the centrality of breath, the effect of breathing in a certain way, is something I continue to think about. At first, I thought it was bizarre to be constantly monitoring breathing, which is something we do automatically. But it is undoubtedly true that when you don't breathe, you die.

Meditating never became a spiritually renewing practice for me. It never changed my life. As with most things in life, there are the gifted, the talented, and the hopeless. I think I was a mediocre meditator. If I had met with what felt like success, I might have persisted longer; but once the structure of the group was gone, I rarely tried it anymore. Nowadays meditation is taught in many contexts. In a medical context, for example, it is taught to help people with intractable pain or to help manage stress to correct hypertension. It is taught as a nonreligious means to experience a feeling of peace and calm. I was learning mediation from someone who studied Tibetan Buddhism, one of the many branches of Buddhism, which, I have since learned, emphasizes the more esoteric interpretations of the Buddha's teaching.

Besides meditating, we read various books on Tibetan Buddhism and discussed them. One was the life of a female Tibetan saint, Yeshe Tsogyal. She was born a princess but had always striven after spiritual things. Her unsympathetic family married her twice to men who were either brutal or dismissive, and finally she was given to a third husband, Lord Padmasamghave, who freed her to follow a spiritual path. She began a life of seeking for insight and ultimately became a buddha herself, disciplining herself with fasts and meditation. It is said that, when she was born, a spring of pure water burst forth and formed a lake, which later became a pilgrimage site for those who worship her. At one point, she was left alone in a cave where the demons of her mind took the forms of devils and tormented her, but she remained steadfast in her meditation. The experience is likened to Christ's forty days in the wilderness. As I read this, I realized I couldn't take the story literally and also realized that the Bible would be equally a hard sell for someone from a completely different culture.

Buddhism is diverse, with no body of doctrine defined to which one must assent to call oneself a Buddhist. Buddha taught that each person could find the truth within himself or herself, but there have always been teachers and preachers to show the way. Some ideas seem consistent among Buddhists. We discussed at length the Buddhist idea that life is hard and that we suffer because of our attachment to things that change and are temporary. It was easy to see the trouble that attachment to wealth or fame or beauty could cause, but are your children, spouse, and friends included in the things you shouldn't be attached to? If a person isn't prepared to renounce everything, to define and stay away from inappropriate cravings is pretty difficult. Wanting something, wanting to do something—that's what gets most of us through the day, choosing one thing rather than another.

Besides there is this undertone of passiveness in how one deals with a less than perfect world that bothers me. To say, "Life is difficult and there is injustice. That will never change, so let us school ourselves not to react to it," is less congenial to me than to say, "Life is difficult and there is injustice. What do we do to change that?" The point of perfect balance—eating only what we need and possessing the minimum for a modest lifestyle—is appealing. Proper speech, proper action, proper livelihood—"proper" defined as that which has compassion rather than greed or something else as its motivation—that is appealing as well. One could easily incorporate these teachings into almost any denomination, including Mormonism, if one chose.

The idea that our lives today are a result of choices made in a previous life, and that we are doomed to endless incarnations until we have become "perfect" at not craving anything was interesting, but I found I wanted to retain my consciousness of being "me." I didn't want to be ignorant of what I used to be. To think that everyone and everything was once someone or something else—it's dizzying. It implies that no one fresh ever comes into the world.

The idea that there is an oversoul that we are part of, that part of this oversoul has been somehow extruded into our physical body, and that we rejoin this great oversoul once we are dead—I never could buy it. One becomes part of this oversoul when one is finally liberated from all cravings. It can't be proved logically, and it didn't appeal to me emotionally or attract me as a metaphor. Through meditation one is supposed to get a sense of this one-ness, but it never did happen to me. There is a joke that is supposed

to illustrate Buddhism. A Buddhist monk goes up to a hotdog vendor and says, "Make me one with everything. And keep the change." The vendor replies, "Change comes from within." I do think change comes from within, but I guess I don't want to be one with everything.

Dreams

In this meditation group, we also discussed dreams. We wrote them down, related them, and tried to find meaning in them. This activity was tangential to learning to meditate, but dreams for many people and for many religious cultures have been a way to receive communication from God. I was willing to consider dreams as an untapped spiritual resource in my life.

After diligently doing it for a while, I concluded that, first of all, it's hard to remember dreams. Second, I concluded that, while a dream would sometimes illustrate my emotional state, sometimes with more cleverness and wit than my waking brain could, my dreams were never prophetic nor did they provide direction. I could look at a dream and say to myself, "Clearly this dream is about insecurity. Why am I dreaming about this right now?" Sometimes I could come up with a connection between the dream and what was going on in my waking life, but more often I couldn't.

We also analyzed these dreams using Carl Jung's universal archetypes. I can't really believe that there are universal archetypes. I can't believe that things in dreams—windows, flying, automobiles—can possibly symbolize the same thing in all cultures. I have the same trouble with Richard Dawkins's idea of a "meme," articulated in his widely read book, *The Selfish Gene* (1976; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). A meme is supposed to be a unit of cultural information that moves from one mind to another and that can be transmitted vertically through generations. An example is the "monotheism meme." Catch phrases, tunes, or twists of fashion that spread rapidly in a culture are supposed to be other examples of memes. For that kind of transmission to be possible, the archetypes or memes would have to be part of the structure of the brain, it seems to me. When the structure is found, call me and I will reconsider. But at this point, I have eliminated dreams as a source of spiritual connection, at least for me.

The Arts

Lots of people like to go to museums on Sunday. Sunday is a day off

when they have time to do it, but I have often thought it is also connected with the idea that Sunday is set aside as a day for worship. If a person doesn't have a church to go to, going to a museum might also be a way of connecting with something "higher." So I have considered whether the arts couldn't be my religion. Could my response to them be a spiritual experience? I have studied art and literature and music some, so why not?

The way some people can, out of their own minds, bring something new into the world is mysterious to me, and I deeply respect it. It amazes me, in fact. I don't feel inclined to worship it, however, and I don't worship artists. I respect people who expand the gifts they are born with, and I am deeply appreciative. The contemplation of beautiful objects, or the journey into a world of someone's creation, is never time wasted for me. That humans can create almost balances out their destruction and stupidity. But I think worship of the artist constitutes idolatry and leaning on the arm of flesh. I agree with that scriptural indictment. A person has to get used to the fact that the artists who produce objects that can be inspirational or comforting to us are often not what we could call evolved human beings. Their lives are often chaotic; their relationships with other people are frequently destructive; they often suffer from depression and addictions. Not too many saintly, well-adjusted people are also significant creative artists.

So what do I call it when a work of art provokes a powerful response from me? What do I call it when music or art can make me tearful or feel elevated? I have eliminated worshipping the human being who makes the art, without eliminating respect for that human. The experience isn't a property of the work of art, because not everyone will respond to it. Rather, I bring a context to my viewing or listening that is constructed from what's in my head and what I have experienced, plus some kind of neural firing that is facilitated by what—the Holy Ghost? Who knows? I do know for myself that these experiences are unpredictable and personal—and that it wouldn't be possible for me to construct a life around seeking those experiences. Artists and musicians don't live on a constant spiritual high; their lives can be humdrum, too.

Nature

A church-going person has probably heard, in the church context, some disparaging remark about the person who says on Sunday he worships God on the golf course. Hiking guides will often remark on whether

the trail is well-used, warning the prospective hiker that he or she might not be alone. Nature lovers want solitude to experience whatever they have gone into nature to find—which I think is a kind of religious experience. I have to consider whether I could join the nondenominational church of nature worship. And I can't, at least not in a formal way.

Time spent outside, in my garden, or hiking, or exercising, does more to soothe my spirit than prayer, scripture study, or temple attendance. Left to themselves, the processes of nature create beauty. The fact that humans can appreciate and crave beauty is one of the arguments against sociobiology. What is the evolutionary advantage of appreciating beauty in a sunset or landscape? Appreciation isn't worship. Nature isn't an entity. When I see a bumper sticker, "Pagan and Proud," or hear recordings of Wiccans gathered to chant, I really can't understand worshipping the earth, the wind, or fire. I don't feel a kinship with them. I could not, with a straight face, dress up, go into the woods, and invoke nature. Like other mantras of the New Age, such as "follow your bliss" or "everything happens for a reason," I find nature worship annoying and poorly thought out. I don't understand what they are trying to make happen. One cannot propitiate nature. I cannot think that the earth, sky, fire, and water have any sense of our love or appreciation.

Another thing that needs to be thought through is how scientific knowledge changes nature worship. When a person knows what causes thunder and lightning (the thermal cells, the exchange of energy, the imbalance of the ions), it's pretty hard to see something to worship behind it. One can be amazed at and respectful of the power of a storm; one can be humbled to think that humans have no ability to change these forces, but these forces are impersonal. To worship them doesn't connect us to them; there is nothing there to connect with.

Where Does This Leave Me?

The final question for me is: If I hadn't been born a Mormon, would I have chosen it? At this point in my life, I am either a Mormon or I don't identify myself with any group. I haven't found anything I would rather "be." The winter 2006 issue of *Dialogue* printed an article about succession in the Community of Christ (formerly Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). Almost in passing, the author, William D. Russell, states that, in the 1960s when he taught at Graceland University, the Community of Christ school, no one in the Religion Department

wanted to teach the Book of Mormon/Doctrine and Covenants course and that "none of the faculty members at that time had even read the Book of Mormon." Later, he quoted W. Grant McMurray, president of the Community of Christ for eight-plus years, beginning in 1996. In 2003, McMurray told the Mormon History Association that he believed Joseph Smith was "brilliant and visionary, probably a religious genius" but that he (McMurray) also believed Joseph was "deeply flawed, with profound human weaknesses, inconsistencies, and short-comings."[1] Unexpectedly I felt sad about that; and in thinking about my impression of the church they have become, my unedited thought was: "Why do they bother? In what way are they different from any Christian church, except in perhaps having autonomy from a much larger organization?" I find I treasure what is different about my church—in its origin and in its teachings.

My Mormonism is a sort of Wild West Mormonism; it's the cheery Mormonism that says individuals make choices and mistakes, grow from them, move toward being better, and move toward more clarification about what's important. The Christian context was a given for Joseph Smith. All his ideas developed within that context, and I suppose that is true for me. I am respectful of the idea of atonement while not completely understanding how it is supposed to work or, frankly, why it is necessary, since people can change their lives for the better (repent) without going through what we would call a repentance process or believing that it's impossible without Christ. I spend my time thinking about how to be a more Christlike person rather than in worshipping Christ.

If I accept the premise that there is a God, that all human beings past and present are his children, and that he cares about them, I would have to conclude that he cares less about what they believe than he cares that they believe *something.* Why wouldn't it be a simple matter for God to reveal himself to everyone in the same way? Obviously he doesn't, so I have to conclude that unity of belief isn't what he is after. I also think that the fully evolved product of all the religions that have endured looks the same. A fully evolved Christian or Muslim or Buddhist would be peaceable and compassionate, understanding and tolerant. So, I conclude, maybe fully evolved people are what God is after, by many routes.

If I had been born a Presbyterian or something else, would I have converted to the Mormon Church? I'm not sure. If I had felt a sense of community in a Presbyterian church, I probably would have stayed with it.

I know this about myself: I don't make big changes easily and I am happiest as part of a community. As a young person I yearned to feel I was communicating with something beyond myself. I wanted—and I still want—the hope for the afterlife I grew up with to be true. I want my life to have the meaning Mormon theology says it does.

On the other hand, I am pragmatic and logical (mostly) and of a cheerful and even disposition. I have to make a lot of excuses for God; I constantly cut him slack. I have elbowed my way into a comfortable spot in Mormonism, which is farther to the left than my ward members suspect. I am discreet about where I stand. I feel as if I am equal parts in the community and an observer of it. I like being in a position to watch people's lives unfold, to watch their children grow, to take part in supporting them in their troubles. I really like the way that constant association with people I don't find congenial makes me appreciate them and see their worth. I like listening to their testimonies, and I don't doubt that the spiritual experiences they relate are "true." I appreciate being part of a group of people who are trying to do better and be better.

But if I were somehow released from being a Mormon, or if I were somewhere Mormons weren't, I think I would worship with the Quakers. I like the pacifism and the social activism. I would like to spend time working for the people who are living instead of the people who have died. I would like the time I spend in Church and on Church-related matters, to be spent, in a Church context, on matters like environmental amelioration or social justice. It's an excuse to say I don't have time to spend on those things in my present Church; but in fact, I don't feel that I do. Depending on what calling I have, two to five hours a week outside of the Sunday block can be spent on Church matters. That's quite a bit.

Since I am not unhappy in the Church and since changing would not be worth the trouble to me, I will stay where I am. But if Quakers still meet in rooms full of light that symbolize the light of the Spirit, and if they still sit silent until someone is moved to speak, I would really like that.

Note

1. William D. Russell, "Grant McMurray and the Succession Crisis in the Community of Christ," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 33, 40.

Should Mormon Women Speak Out? Thoughts on Our Place in the World

Claudia L. Bushman

Note: *This following article is based on the annual lecture honoring Eugene England, delivered March 22, 2007, at Utah Valley State University, in Orem.*

I am happy to pay tribute to Gene England, a vivid and significant twentieth-century intellectual of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Gene influenced many Mormons with his rigorous ethics, his lived religion, his human interactions, and his ability to record his life and get it all down. He certainly influenced me.

One of my most significant memories of Gene has to do with *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, the periodical that he and Wesley Johnson co-founded some forty years ago. One mild evening in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Gene, my husband, Richard, and I were walking through Harvard Yard. I planned to make a nervy suggestion. I wanted to ask Gene if our Boston LDS consciousness-raising group could edit a woman's issue of *Dialogue*. Our group had been meeting monthly for a year, furiously discussing Mormon experience. I thought that energy might be turned toward a project.

This was a long time ago—in the late 1960s. The world was turning upside down as groups demonstrated against the Vietnam War, as the civil rights movement brought exposure and new respect for black citizens, as college students turned insurgent and occupied their campuses, and as women showed surprising spunk and backbone. Our group of LDS women began to discover their history and to discuss authority, birth con-

trol, housework, and additional possibilities for their lives. Most of this group had student husbands, straitened incomes, and young children. We didn't expect to be taken seriously.

But Gene gravely listened to my modest proposal that our women's collective plan a theme, write and solicit articles and art work, edit the materials, and present them ready for publication in *Dialogue.* Gene immediately said, "Yes, go ahead." He was always open to new possibilities. This was an important milestone for our Boston publishing empire still busily churning out materials some forty years later. Speaking up made a big difference for us.

We reinforced some valuable lessons in the process of working on that pink issue of *Dialogue,* which appeared in the summer of 1971 (Vol. 6, no. 2). Trust and encourage each other. Steadily gather others into our enterprises. Build on the rich cooperative Mormon tradition. In doing so, we repeatedly learned that we could so do it.

Gene always appreciated and encouraged women in the Church. In his essay "We Need to Liberate Mormon Men," printed in his collection *Dialogues with Myself,* he praised Mormon women writers as "more free, more daring, inventive, original in thought and unique in voice than Mormon men." He thought quantity and quality of women's literary production were more liberated than those of men and he encouraged us all, men and women, to observe and think about our lives and to describe them in essays.[1] There is no question that his welcoming and encouraging voice in the LDS press liberated many of us to write history and literature, the distilled essence of our lives.

My topic today, "Should Mormon Women Speak Out?" is inspired by Gene. It is a purposely provocative title, the sort that Gene frequently used.

When we issued a call for articles for our pink issue, we noted that this was an issue by and for women in the Church, definitely the silent majority. Any group asked whether Mormon women should speak out would come up with a number of strong negative and positive opinions. I could give both kinds of answers myself. But what is interesting is the question. Most Mormons will immediately recognize the situation. Women do not speak out. They can quote chapter and verse on women who have spoken out and rued the day. For women themselves the question becomes: Should I speak out? And if I do, will I be silenced? Will I be shunned? Will I say things that should be heard? Will I give encouragement to others?

This statement recalls Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's now widely adopted sentiment and the title of her new book, *Well Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007). Does behaving properly mean that we forfeit all chances to be well known and to make contributions in our society? As Susan B. Anthony wondered in 1859: "Why is it that the pages of all history glow with the names of illustrious men, while only here and there a *lone woman* appears, who, like the eccentric camel, marks the centuries?"[2] Is speaking out bad behavior? Does having a voice negate the essential nature of women? In this dilemma do we pit the ambitions of our bright young women against being respectable? What does all this say about us as a people?

This says that the Church is conservative. That it had its American roots in a time before the Nineteenth Amendment granting woman suffrage. Women did not vote and most did not speak out, a wife was considered her husband's property, and a single woman did not count for much at all. At this time women were valued, according to the rhetoric, for their purity and innocence, their removal from the realities of the world. We still have people in the Church who think that, because this situation was once so, it should always be so. Women had limited positions in the Bible, in the Book of Mormon, and in LDS Church history; and because that was the condition then, it should be our model for the present and future. But we live in another world now, and we have quotations from our authorities that are very different.

As President Hinckley counseled the young women of the Church in 2001, "Become the woman of whom you dream. . . . You are creatures of divinity, for you are daughters of the Almighty. Limitless is your potential. Magnificent is your future, if you will take control of it." He encouraged the girls to "find purpose in your life. Choose the things you would like to do and educate yourselves to be effective in their pursuit." Girls should become "qualified to serve society and make a significant contribution to the world." As a model of success, President Hinckley presented a working woman, a skilled nurse he had met, a mother of three who "works as little or as much as she wishes," and was the "kind of woman of whom you might dream, an educated, expert, loyal woman." President Hinckley told the girls that, "for you, the sky is the limit."[3]

But old ideas die hard. We still live with the residue of past teachings. What else does this say about our people? Joseph Smith seldom mentioned women until the end of his short life. Church doctrine was only

gradually revealed and implemented. Until 1842, two years before Joseph's death, women were invisible in the Church organization and absent from ritual events. They exercised their spiritual gifts in small groups, but they had no place in Church structure.

An interesting exception to this general situation is Emma Smith who in 1830, the year the Church was organized, was given a revelation, now Doctrine and Covenants 25. Emma had then been married for three years. Her first child had not survived. This revelation names her an "elect lady" (v. 3), an elevated person chosen for eternal life through divine mercy. She is greeted as a daughter in the kingdom of God; her sins are forgiven; she will receive an inheritance in Zion depending on her faithfulness and virtue. She receives specific instruction to do serious church work. One job is to prepare a hymnal for the new church, organized that year. She is not told to write hymns, but to "make a selection of sacred hymns" (v. 11). Emma undertook this chore and, with the help of W. W. Phelps, created a small volume that is the basis of our hymnal today. She was also told to take dictation from her husband in his translation of the Book of Mormon "while there is no one [else] to be a scribe for him" (v. 6).

The section speaks of her relationship to her husband and by extension to the relationship of all wives to their husbands. She is told to "be a comfort unto . . . thy husband, in his afflictions, with consoling words, in the spirit of meekness" (v. 5). And this word is repeated. "Continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride" (v. 14). Did she offend and belittle her husband, speaking sharply to him? She is clearly told to discontinue any such behavior. "Let thy soul delight in thy husband," the revelation continues, "and the glory which shall come upon him" (v. 14). That's a pretty good prescription for a modest, unassuming, and silent wife.

But when I reread this scripture recently, I was struck by something else, something unexpected, an admonition to Emma to speak out. The Lord also tells Emma Smith: "And thou shalt be ordained under his [Joseph's] hand to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church according as it shall be given thee by my Spirit" (v. 7). This quotation struck me with great force. She was to be ordained by the Lord's servant to "expound scriptures and to exhort the church" (v. 8). She would get direct understanding from the Spirit. She was to speak out.

Did she ever act on these instructions? As far as I know, Emma did not expound the scriptures and exhort the Church or speak out until she was president of the Relief Society some twelve years later. But she could

have. She was to be ordained to take part in teaching and preaching. Just imagine what the Church would look like now if Emma had exercised this opportunity. And she is told: "Thy time shall be given to writing, and to learning much," just the injunction we need to make something of our lives, to go to school, to study, and to write. It's all there in the Doctrine and Covenants, a revelation from 1830, at the very foundation of the Church. And do please note that, in this list of instructions for Emma, there is nothing about cooking nourishing meals, keeping her house in order, or even raising children. Emma, even in 1830, is treated as a Church worker, a leader, an adult, and as a companion-wife, not a housekeeper or even a homemaker.

Twelve years later in Nauvoo, in 1842, at a time when there were plenty of other problems and when Joseph had just a couple of years to live, he responded to an impulse toward organization among the women supporting temple laborers and founded the Relief Society, giving women a role in Church government. Activity concerning women continued. Joseph outlined the operations and theology of celestial and plural marriage in Doctrine and Covenants 132. Procreation was exalted and the family magnified. Baptisms for the dead bound family members together through eternity. Women were central to all these activities. As the new Nauvoo Temple rose, additional rituals were added that required the participation of women. By 1843, women were present in the ordinances, superintending as well as participating in temple rituals. Joseph Smith also supposedly referred to Mother in Heaven. Although no original source of that teaching remains, mentions of Mother in Heaven are found in hymn texts by W. W. Phelps and Eliza R. Snow, two people very close to Joseph. All this happened in the last two years of his life. We can only speculate what he would have revealed had he lived longer. We might have learned many other interesting things.[4] And many things yet to be revealed may have to do with the importance and contribution of women in building God's kingdom.

But the importance of women is not always reflected in the Church's day-to-day life. In the film *First Wives Club,* actress Goldie Hawn, playing an aging movie star, says that there are only three ages for women in the movies: Babe, D.A., and *Driving Miss Daisy.* Taking a lead from Hawn, I tried to think what the roles for men and women in the Church would be. For boys I determined that the roles would be Eagle Scout, student body president, elder, bishop, and mission president. All public

achievements. For women, I had beauty queen, young mother, Relief Society president, then—hmm, how to represent the women of a certain age, those often solitary, old ladies on the edges of things? Grandmothers. People like me. I finally came up with this: recipient of the Christmas basket. You can imagine the conversation in bishopric meeting: "We have to do something for poor old Sister So-and-so."

Many of us have visited the Nauvoo statuary garden where there are sculptures of women at various stages of their lives: Little girls, students, brides, mothers. I thought that this was all very nice until I came to the end of the line. The last statue shows an elderly woman, frail, alone. She sits in a rocking chair sewing on a quilt. The title of this sculpture, which haunts me, is *Fulfillment.* I like to rock. I like to quilt, and it is true that the quilt pattern she is stitching is called "Eternal Marriage," but she is still quiet and alone. That sculpture is not my idea of fulfillment. Surely there is something more for the wise, experienced, creative women of the Church to do than sit, rock, and stitch. My conclusion from this little exercise is that, in general, women in the Church live much more passive, isolated, and silent lives than men.

Another observation is that, in the Church, we tend to consider the basic unit the family rather than the individual, harkening back to that old idea that the married man and woman were one, and that one was the husband. This assumption suppresses woman, frequently erasing her individuality, her imagination, her will, and certainly her ambitions. She is to go along with the views of others. We make much of the concept that our basic unit is the family, but the evidence against it is strong. We come alone into this world. We leave it alone. We are generally alone at some time. Women are abandoned either purposely or accidentally. We make our own way and build our own salvation. We forge our own relationships with our Heavenly Father. We wish we could really depend on someone else in this world other than our own individual selves, but we cannot. We believe we will reconnect with our loved ones, but we have no idea of what it will be like or how it can be done. A recent story in *The New York Times* noted that 51 percent of women in the United States, more than ever before, now live without husbands.[5]

Another development has been the simplification of the Church for ease in exporting it to the growing international Church. The manuals have been rewritten at elementary school levels and many programs have been curtailed. Training sessions have been eliminated. Complex and

challenging positions for women in our wards have disappeared. The organizations that women used to head and manage, the ones that were as demanding as small businesses, are now under priesthood stewardship. Women used to have more opportunities to serve and develop their talents in Church work than they do now.

These observations raise a question: What is the authentic nature of women, and how should that nature be developed for the benefit of themselves, their families, and their communities? What is it that women are supposed to learn in our sojourn on the earth? Is it to be good and quiet, to be always obedient to our superiors? Are we never to try out this famed free agency that we have been given? Is not our responsibility as the children of our Heavenly Father to range widely and learn many things? Can't we use our skills as President Hinckley advised the young women to do? Should we not increase our abilities so that we can take greater leadership responsibilities down the line? Should we not be able to maneuver our way through the world? Do women lose their value as women if they speak out? What will happen if all our very competent women are just good, quiet girls? The result of that dynamic is that they sit and wait for something to happen to them. They cheerfully acquiesce to society's and the Church's dismissal of them. When women do not speak, they are either silenced and sit, or they carp. They have been taught and have learned helplessness. This does not glorify God or the talents we have been given to multiply. The alternative is to build lives of our own.

We know that within limits our women are extremely competent. As one convert observed: "I've never seen such active, liberated women as in the church. I've never been to any other church where women spoke equally with the men. I think it is good that the men have a separate priesthood and the women aren't permitted to participate in it. . . . Look how the women run Relief Society. Can you imagine if they ran the church? The men would be totally out of a job."[6] We know that women can speak, but can they or should they speak out?

Back in 1859, 150 years ago, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, an abolitionist and reformer, wrote about the treatment of women. His essay, "Women and the Alphabet," published in the *Atlantic Monthly,* asked whether women should learn their ABC's. He traveled through much of the gender history of the world, the wisdom of the ages, quoting such juicy tidbits as this sage old Chinese proverb. "For men, to cultivate virtue is knowledge; for women, to renounce knowledge is virtue." He quotes

Molière who says that any female who has actually learned anything would do well to feign ignorance, because knowledge rarely makes men attractive, and females never. The playing field of the past was pretty badly tipped.

Higginson says that these attitudes had one simple basis: "sheer contempt for the supposed intellectual inferiority of woman. She was not to be taught, because she was not worth teaching."[7] And while this contempt did not cause failure, it did perpetuate it, discouraging women from birth to death from trying anything much. This limitation has certainly been true of women and, to some extent, remains true. And when a woman surmounted the problems and discouragements ahead of her and actually did accomplish something, did she get more glory? She certainly did not. She was often considered some sort of freak, a thinking, talking woman—the "eccentric camel" described by Susan B. Anthony. Remnants of this thinking can be seen in our own day. Girls in the Church are sometimes told that their educational achievements have unfitted them for marriage with promising young men who will be intimidated by their abilities and their earning power. You would think that these young men would be looking ahead to their own smart children.

Back to Higginson. Women need preparation to do the things that men do. The few women of accomplishment in the old days were accidentally "educated like boys" by home tutors who were teaching their brothers, or by fond fathers, or clergymen who gave them access to bounteous libraries. Few women had this opportunity. Higginson explains all this by saying that, in the old epochs, physical strength ruled and woman was the weaker. But in his own enlightened day, a new epoch was dawning, one of higher reason, of arts, affections, aspirations, and for that epoch the genius of woman had been reserved. Well, maybe. We've had 150 years of waiting for this flowering, and it still hasn't really happened. Instead the old brute force of warfare dominates, now sucking our young women into it.

But as he said, "There is the plain fact: woman must be either a subject or an equal; there is no middle ground."[8] Once the rulers had yielded the alphabet to women, once women were allowed to read and write, all subjection must be abandoned.

Higginson noted that the final adjustment was in the hands of women themselves. And this is the point I want to make. Men cannot be expected to concede either rights or privileges to women more rapidly than they are claimed. They cannot be expected to be truer to women

than women are to each other. And here is the core of the problem. Women must speak out, showing ability and assuming equal status, taking other women along with them, or they will not get the responsible role they are qualified to fill, the central role that Emma Smith was offered 170 years ago.

I grew up in the Church but knew nothing of LDS women's history. I did not know that the Relief Society operated cooperative stores, spun and wove silk fabric (including hatching the silkworms from eggs and feeding them on mulberry leaves that they gathered by hand), gleaned the fields to save grain for bad times, and trained as midwives and doctors. I didn't know that they were the first women in the United States to vote, even though Wyoming's women were first to receive the right to vote. I didn't know that they edited their own excellent newspaper or that they had large meetings when they spoke up for their rights and beliefs as citizens and as Mormons. Finding all this out was part of our Boston women's study. One of our women discovered bound volumes of the *Woman's Exponent*, the newspaper edited by Lula Greene Richards and Emmeline B. Wells (1872–1914) in the Harvard library. She copied out sections; and we found in our foremothers who spoke out the models we were searching for in our own lives.

A new book by Mary Kelley takes up Higginson's story. Kelley shows how women created for themselves a public presence in an age when they were still denied significant access to church, government, and business positions because of their gender. As Kelley says, many girls, and not just rich, elite ones, took advantage of loopholes in public thinking that made it possible for girls to gain advanced schooling to fulfill their "womanly obligations": to assist their husbands in important positions, to train their sons to be worthy men. They were then acquiring education not for themselves but for the benefit of the men in their lives and for the general culture. This is very much what Mormon women were doing. Their cooperative efforts were to build the greater society.

According to Mary Kelley, after the Revolutionary War, girls in the eastern United States attended academies and seminaries for girls only, taught largely by women. The curricula of these academies, not unlike those for boys, included algebra, chemistry, astronomy, rhetoric, and moral philosophy. This education bestowed "cultural capital" on young women, enabling them to take their places in leadership roles in a civilized society. Whereas in the past parents had provided for their children by giv-

ing the boys farms and the girls dowries, they began to give them education instead, setting children up in the world. An educated daughter with a knowledge of literature, French, and music, as well as rhetoric and mathematics, became a status symbol, as well as a contribution to society. Still, education was expensive and the majority of girls were not expected nor encouraged to go to college. And when they did, they were expected to serve the greater society, "Educate the Mothers and you educate the people,"[9] one school's motto read.

Kelley describes how girls without access to elite academies also found training in voluntary associations. They read and taught and spoke to each other in reading circles, literary societies, mutual improvement associations, and voluntary associations of all sorts. They assembled libraries. They wrote and read their works to other women. They encouraged their sisters toward the publication of poetry or essays or toward public recitations. In these meetings they learned to stand and speak. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a good record on these self-help groups, having even borrowed the names of other associations to identify the Relief Society and the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association. The Church also began an impressive string of elite, coeducational academies that provided education for Mormon boys and girls from Canada to Mexico.

Much of the education that Kelley describes prepared women to continue in the same self-effacing, service realm that they believed was their position in the world, organized benevolence—teaching others, ministering to the sick, and in general aiming at distinguished usefulness. The women provided support for the masculine state. That is, like the Mormons, these girls stopped short of equality. So the young female graduates taught other young women and served as missionaries for their churches in the "heathen" lands of India, Persia, or Africa, or for that matter, in uncivilized communities like Utah. Others embarked on writing careers. They wrote novels, biographies, and poetry, and began to edit periodicals for women and children. They generally chose not to challenge the social and political systems that still kept them subordinate to men. In fact they proclaimed their loyalty to deference as a fundamental principle of gender relations. Catharine Beecher said: "Woman was bound to honor and obey those on whom she depended for protection and support."[10] But behind this rhetoric of subordination was a larger reality as women steadily enlarged their place in civil society. As women stood and spoke, they

found themselves fit for organized politics. These women embraced an education wrapped in their contemporary values that still allowed them some space for activities of their own. They moved back and forth between personal aspiration and social constraint.

Education was a thrilling experience for them. Kelley quotes one as saying, "It makes me proud for it shows what our sex is capable of doing and encourages us to go on improving."[11] This was a heady time for newly educated young women. Mormon women were among the first and best at learning to stand and speak.

But where have we gone since then? Somehow in our liberated society, we have remained as dutiful and quiet daughters and wives. In our Church society where women are valued as daughters of God, as noble followers in the pathway of Eve, we still do not speak out. We know that there are dangers. People don't always understand. Some take umbrage. Instead of being embraced as sisters, we can be shut out. So I propose a practical program of action for Mormon women to encourage them to speak up and out.

What do Mormon women want and how should they get it? What I say they want is respect, acknowledgment, useful positions, and space to make their own way in the Church and the world. They want an equal voice in their families, the Church, and the community. They want to exist outside the confines of the ward or the household. So here is my practical list of ways to manage the system while continuing as members of the Church in good standing. We do not want to sacrifice our membership in the Church or our reputations as reasonable people in a quest to assert ourselves.

1. Get to know the leaders and be sure they know you. Introduce yourself to your bishop and stake president and also Relief Society president. Do this before they seek you out. You want to be known as a person of spirit and independence. You want to talk to them from a position of strength rather than of need. You want to share your ideas and inspiration and offer to help in ways that interest you.

2. Require that you are treated with respect. Our male hierarchy sometimes treats grown women as children. I experienced a striking example of this attitude a couple of years ago. I work in public affairs in our stake, and we received an invitation to send representatives to a meeting of women from many faiths to discuss our religions and experiences. I was assigned to go and invited a couple of other mature women in our stake to

come, too. Several days before the event, I was very surprised to get a long letter from a young high councilor with detailed instructions on what we should or should not say, suggesting answers to potential questions, and giving examples of suitable and unsuitable language. This missive was several pages long, obviously the result of great thought and labor. I am sure that he was proud of it. It was written in simple language, just as if Mormonism was something new to us. This young man was just out of graduate school and he is younger than my youngest son. He felt he was doing his job by sending his instructions in a fatherly way. But he was actually insulting women who knew much more about these situations than he ever would. Didn't he have a mother? I sent him a brief note thanking him for his concern but said we had all had a great deal of experience and could take care of ourselves. Then I copied the whole exchange to the stake presidency and various other sources of power. I got a few apologies down the line.

We should speak up for other women, too. Long ago when my husband was stake president, he and his counselors made a practice, during their talks at stake conferences, of relating charming and amusing tales about their wives and children who sat in the congregation in mute discomfort. They got a few laughs out of these stories. I was more militant about things then than I am now, and so I went to them individually after meetings and said that I didn't think they should tell those demeaning and belittling stories about their families. And they stopped. There are many cases when speaking out makes a real difference.

In fact, it makes a lot of difference. My daughter Margaret is a lawyer, and she is handling a case where a client will negotiate with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management about some serious concessions. The client was concerned about being represented by a woman lawyer and said that he would like to have a man at the table. Margaret discussed this situation with the partners at her firm; they determined that there was no disadvantage in having a woman represent a client—as long as she spoke out. A silent women is a minus. A speaking woman is a plus.

Back to the plan.

3. Present your own ideas to your bishop or stake president in usable form. Don't just throw them off. Be ready to carry them out. We all know that we are open to our own revelation and that female revelation is certainly the equal of the male variety. Get your own good ideas on the table. Realize, of course, that to do something your way means you may have

to do all the work, give someone else all the credit, and pay for it both in labor and cash. But work in the Church on your own terms. I see more and more cases where women make up their own Church jobs. They suggest attractive or useful programs and are often encouraged to go ahead. Our Church life is so rich and complex that there are lots of niches where we can do things that are interesting to us and beneficial to the congregation. We don't need to be commanded in all things. We have lots of very competent female talent and not enough good jobs to go around. We can do something about this situation.

4. Be sure to have a life outside the Church. A life outside the Church gives you experience and credibility. Women can find satisfaction by working in the community in ways that we can import into the Church. Unfortunately, as I have said, much of the opportunity for women to do meaningful and extensive Church work has been discontinued. Finding plenty of opportunities outside the Church is not enough. We need to find such opportunities in the Church, even if we have to create them ourselves. We have to have lives outside the Church to validate our abilities, but we have to create jobs in the Church to represent ourselves.

Of course, there is always lots of space in service and public affairs. And there is endless room to be a friend and love your neighbor and then to come up with joint projects. I think it is always preferable to do things with people rather than for them, to be equal rather than condescending. We need to take action, like the girls who are taking control of their destinies by going on missions. Like Mother Eve. She took action. She had to pay for what she did, but she did not remain an idle princess in paradise. She took action.

In conclusion, I would say the following to all females. Think about something you would like to say to someone who has authority. This may be your bishop, the mayor, a professor, your boss, a friend, a sibling, even your parents. Think about how to couch your ideas and suggestions in a way best suited to informing people and for accomplishing your objective. You want to persuade and convince, not assault. You want to present yourself as an adult. Be charming and assured. No diffidence or apologies are allowed here. Practice your approach and presentation, plan your occasion, put on a smile, and then go and speak out! You will be moving ahead the great cause of women in the family, the Church, the community, the nation, for now and for the eternities.

Notes

1. Eugene England, "We Need to Liberate Mormon Men," *Dialogues with Myself: Personal Essays on Mormon Experience* (Midvale, Utah: Orion Books, imprint of Signature Books, 1984), 154.

2. Quoted in Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 191.

3. Quoted in Julie A. Dockstader, "'Limitless Is Your Potential, Magnificent Is Your Future,'" *Church News,* March 31, 2001.

4. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 310, 436–51.

5. Sam Roberts, "51% of Women Are Now Living without Spouse," *New York Times*, January 16, 2007, 1-news.

6. Susan Taber, *Mormon Lives: A Year in the Elkton Ward* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 321.

7. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet," *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1859, published as the first chapter in *Women and the Alphabet: A Series of Essays* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1881), available at U.S. Women's Workshop, sponsored by Assumption College, the American Antiquarian Society, The Alliance for Education, and the Worcester Women's History Project, http://www.assumption.edu/whw/old/Women_and_the_alphabet.html (accessed August 22, 2007).

8. Ibid.

9. Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 101.

10. Quoted in ibid., 277.

11. Ibid., 149.

Writing: An Act of Responsibility

Phyllis Barber

> *"You can sing sweet and get the song sung, but to get to the third dimension, you have to sing tough, hurt the tune, then something else happens, the song gets large."*—Cathal[1]

You're a writer who loves these big, tough songs that pierce your heart and make you feel alive all over again. You believe in literature with a soul—the book that makes you think, that makes you feel as though you've been somewhere and experienced something, that you're a different person for having read it. Writing just to entertain isn't your goal. Writing to impress others with your cleverness or hoped-for-brilliance doesn't matter as much as it once did. Your desire is something like Chekhov's who spoke about writers describing situations so truthfully that readers could no longer avoid them. Or in your own words, to wrangle with the tough places in yourself and your subject. That's what matters to you.

But you're a Mormon, a Latter-day Saint, and you wonder about your responsibility for building the kingdom of God. You also have some deeply ingrained tendencies to be didactic, prescriptive, even moralistic at times. Having listened to sacrament meeting sermons every Sunday for a lifetime has affected your artistic sensibility and the way you think about things. You're not in the market for a lesson on the "shoulds" of responsibility or yet another dictum placed on your shoulders, but you think it's worthwhile to revisit the idea of responsibility—what it is, what it means, whether you have a strong sense of it and don't even know it, how its nudgings affect you and your stance as a writer.

Nobel Prize winner Nadine Gordimer's essay, "The Essential Gesture," begins:

> When I began to write at the age of nine or ten, I did so in what I have come to believe is the only real innocence—an act without responsibility. For one has only to watch very small children playing together to see how the urge to influence, exact submission, defend dominance, gives away the presence of natal human "sin" whose punishment is the burden of responsibility. I was alone. . . . My poem . . . was directed at no one, was read by no one.
>
> Responsibility is what awaits outside the Eden of creativity. I should never have dreamt that this most solitary and deeply marvelous of secrets—the urge *to make* with words—would become a vocation for which the world and that life-time ledger, conscionable self-awareness, would claim the right to call me and all my kind to account. The creative act is not pure.[2]

If you were born into the human condition which includes suffering (indeed, "opposition in all things"), then what is your responsibility for humanity's suffering, misunderstandings, and injustices? Do you have that "life-time ledger, conscionable self-awareness" calling you to account? And are you really convinced that the "creative act is not pure" or, in other words, not a blissful act of art born out of willows by the side of a stream where the air is clear and no one ever walks?

Remember the *Lord of the Flies* moments in your own childhood when someone ruled the playground with brute force and the times you heard someone taunting a peer who was handicapped, disfigured, or abnormal in some way? Remember when you were asked for a handout on the sidewalks of a big city by someone who was a mystery to you? (Is this a real down-and-outer or just an alcoholic buying his next drink?) You weren't sure whether you were in the middle of great need or involved in a scam. You weren't sure what it meant to be a Good Samaritan.

The term "sin," especially the term "natal human sin," has an ominous ring to you. Too many TV evangelists and neo-Puritan fundamentalists, maybe? But if the word "sin" is considered in the context of suffering (in addition to its original Greek, meaning "missing the mark"), you find this approach more useful. Not only have you been the brunt of playground mentality, but maybe you've reluctantly witnessed the bully in yourself, especially when you've been snagged on the hook of self-righteousness. You've seen your sense of right and wrong in action, your sense of justice and how you've sometimes used it as a blunt instrument or

wielded it without much awareness of the other side of the story. You suspect there might be a gap between your bad-day and good-day self.

If it is assumed that you, the writer, are born with natal human sin, that you will "miss the mark" at some point in your life, that you, too, are one of those human beings full of contradiction, then is it important that you are acknowledging, addressing, or bringing greater awareness to this condition. If so, you're more inclined to paint your characters with brush strokes of paradox, characters whose shoes don't always match.

To the second point of "conscionable self-awareness:" is there something in you—the observer, the writer, the conscience (with its notion of moral goodness or blameworthiness of conduct and intentions and its accompanying feeling of obligation to do right or be good) that wants to address these contradictions, not only in your characters but in yourself? Aware of the discrepancies between your own actions and the self you regard as true-blue nice, does your conscience affect your sense of responsibility? If so, how does it affect your writing?

Your first response to this question could be to examine boldly your assumptions, turn them inside out, upside down. For instance, you might be a valkyrie mother with iron breastplates when your young children come home sobbing because the bully had his way. But after you huff and puff with indignation and soothe the hurt that has become your own, do you teach them to be bullies in return and to fight fire with fire? Do you take a position of passiveness, afraid to show an aggressive face? Do you consider how your response might appear to other people? Do you find solace on higher moral ground on which you enjoy standing, thinking yourself better than the bully, while still and at the same time bullying others with your sense of justice? Or in another instance, you may have developed a fierce gut reaction to being pushed around or to watching someone else get pushed around. As a result, you've developed a crusader's sense of fairness. Does this make you free of that natal human sin of which Gordimer speaks? Crusaders are capable of behaving badly on their side of the fence. They have their own demons to wrestle. You may be an advocate for the underdog because you grew up feeling *you* were the underdog. So are you merely taking care of yourself and your kind in an extended way and calling it compassion or goodness? Are you feeling your own self worth because of someone else's weakness? The ground is uncertain in the land of self-awareness.

You suspect if you want to write something that matters, you need

to examine the biases in your characters which can only be understood after reflecting on the biases in your own character. You, after all, are human. But how willing are you to look at all of what that means? You think you need to view the entire spectrum of possible behavior, not just the "good-hearted" or "vile villain" slices of the pie. You ask how your characters can be less than three dimensional if they are to matter as commentary. Your willingness to blast into the third dimension seems essential if you want to sing those big songs or write those jagged, unpredictable stories with a *real* heart of gold.

One of Gordimer's novels, *July's People,* shows many layers of conscionable awareness. Maureen and Bamford Smales are affluent, progressive liberals from Johannesburg. Raised with house servants, they nonetheless pride themselves on their broadmindedness regarding racial issues in South Africa. After all, Maureen and her husband have always been considerate to the blacks, have been as gracious as they could be and provided their servant July with "two sets of uniforms, khaki pants for rough housework, white drill for waiting at table, given Wednesdays and alternate Sundays free, allowed to have his friends visit him and his town woman to sleep with him in his room."[3]

After a series of riots, arson, occupation of headquarters of international corporations, bombs in public buildings, gunned shopping malls, blazing unsold homes, and a chronic state of uprising in the country, the Smales are forced to flee from Johannesburg with their two children to find refuge in the bush with their long-time native house servant, July.

But gradually, as Bamford, Maureen, and the children become more and more dependent on the people in the bush for their survival, a series of events forces Maureen into a different state of awareness. She begins to notice much of the shallowness of her former life in Johannesburg (the shallow repartee she had carried on with Bamford and the avoid-things-while-looking-good syndrome) and how inadequate it is in these new surroundings.

She realizes that this kind of repartee belonged to a certain "deviousness" that seemed "natural to suburban life." When, in another instance, out in the bush, Maureen has to drown some kittens in a bucket and accepts it as a matter of course—a pointblank case of survival of the fittest—she realizes she and Bamford had been obsessed with the reduction of suffering but that they had given no thought about how to accept suffering. Bamford pities her that she should have to perform such an act, that

she should have to suffer in that way. "Poor girl." He can't accept the fact that this was the best choice in the situation and that the natural cycle of life and death can be witnessed more clearly in primitive surroundings.

Finally, Maureen's shifting state of awareness gradually evolves into a state of terror when she notices, not only the shift of power to July, whose territory they now inhabit because they have no place else to go, but also that July has the keys to their car and drives it when he wants to without asking permission. Power is no longer in her hands—the woman with the precious white skin that has given her an elevated place in her particular life. Her husband is ineffectual in this raw-close-to-nature setting; he can't pull the magic tricks he was used to pulling in civilization with his easy talk and trendy humor; his progressive ideas and habits seem merely laughable in the rawness of the bush country. The Smales are captives of those who were once their captive, no matter how graciously they perceived the way they "kept" July in his servitude.

Gordimer continually goes deeper and deeper into the layers of Maureen Smales's "conscionable self-awareness." The impetus for seeing her shallowness is the fact that she is losing power, that the twisting, turning knife of power is now close to her throat and that she is at the mercy of the captor.

Gordimer spares no one. She doesn't stop with the progressive white liberals and their easy phrases, simple assumptions, and unchallenged thinking. She shows the corrupting effect of power on whoever holds that power—black or white. She probes behind the smiles and the glad handshake and the strings of euphemisms of all her characters. What lurks there? Of what are humans capable?

In her essay, "The Essential Gesture," Gordimer says that "Octavio Paz, speaking from Mexico . . . sees a fundamental function as social critic for a writer who is 'only a writer.' It is a responsibility that goes back to the source: the corpus of language from which the writer arises. 'Social criticism begins with grammar and the re-establishing of meanings.'"[4] Then, it follows that we must ask: What are the real meanings of words such as charity, love, democracy—words that are tossed about freely? What are the things we say and the things we don't do? What do we mean when we talk about our "fellow man" or our "neighbor?"

The third point in this consideration of responsibility is that, if you write to be read, you are answerable. "The creative act is not pure." According to Gordimer, a writer has laid upon her the responsibility for vari-

ous interpretations of the text; she is held before she begins by the claims of different concepts of morality: artistic, linguistic, ideological, national, political, religious. Second, the writer needs to learn that her creative act is not pure even while being formed in her brain. Responsibility surrounded her at birth: genetics, environment, social mores of whatever class she inhabited, and the economic terms given her.

What did your parents tell you was important? What pearls of wisdom were tossed to you when you were young? For the woman to be obedient to or coequal with the man? For the man to be the breadwinner at all costs? Did your parents tell you that the rich are a group of self-absorbed people who have no thought for those who have to sweat when they labor? Did they say that no one really understands an intellectual and that there is no audience for the truly superior mind? Did they insist that the unexamined life is not worth living or that life should not be examined under any circumstances?

What congenital burdens have been placed inside or upon you? What responsibilities do you have of which you are unaware? Maybe your idea of responsibility is unconscious or unknown to you. Maybe your sense of responsibility is a gut reaction to the things you've been taught and don't even realize you are bound to live by.

Gordimer was born in the political hotbed of South Africa to Jewish emigrants from London. She experienced a typical European middle-class colonial childhood, the solitude of which was relieved by extensive and eclectic reading at the local library. Gordimer appears to have settled into her political awareness slowly. In an interview with Carol Sternhell in *Ms.*, she said, "I think when you're born white in South Africa, you're peeling like an onion. You're sloughing off all the conditioning that you've had since you were a child."[5] For you, this raises the question often asked of North American writers: "Does writing have more social significance in wartorn countries where political drama is at the heart of much of its literature, such as in South Africa, the former Soviet Union, Iran, Vietnam, Taiwan, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, to name a few? Would you be a more essential writer if what was happening around you and what you wrote about was a matter of life and death? Dueling with national drama is an important reason to write, but what about the more subtle dramas which most of us face?

In democratic countries, there is (hopefully) little chance of being silenced by the government and sent into exile, but what about the idea

that you are an LDS writer who's supposed to be building the kingdom of God with your work? What kind of responsibility do you have as you face the blank page? There might be a narrowing of possibility before the creative process begins because of given perimeters, even though you hope you have a free and wide world to choose from—the world which God inhabits and where *everything* is sacred and worthy of the literary eye resting upon it.

Can you, as a writer who cares about Mormonism, come to discover your own essential gesture as a writer, and might it differ from another Latter-day Saint's essential gesture? Quoted by Gordimer, Roland Barthes says that a writer's "enterprise"—his work—is his "essential gesture as a social being."[6] How do you put out your hand to society at large? Do you reach out to the LDS society alone or does your essential gesture include a desire to build a bridge between cultures and explore the universals? Chaim Potok, author of *The Chosen,* once said in answer to your question from the audience about how to write the Great Mormon Novel: "Find the universals, those things common to all humans."[7]

Gordimer writes of political issues that spring from her South African culture, but her politics resonate with the universal. Her writing is not purely political, that is to say, written to drive a point home or promote an ideology. It is meant to examine, to probe, to unearth the disparities in her culture and in its politics. Purely political writing is often purely bad writing. But if a broader definition of politics is used, such as "the total complex of relations between people in society," then political writing can be a good thing. The difference between bad political writing and good political writing seems to be promotion versus exploration. The obvious question—though the term "religious writing" covers a broad spectrum of quality, depth, and subject matter—is: Is religious writing a form of political writing and worth considering from a political vantage point?

Italo Calvino writes in *The Uses of Literature* about two wrong ways of thinking of a possible political use for literature: (1) to claim that literature should voice a truth already possessed by politics, that is, to believe that the sum of political values is the primary thing to which literature must simply adapt itself, in other words, to claim that Maoist theory is the only valid cause about which Chinese writers can write; and (2) to see literature as an assortment of eternal human sentiments. This perspective assigns writing the task of confirming what is already known. Basically, literature is responsible for preserving the classical and immobile idea of liter-

ature as the repository of a given truth. Consider the African writer in South Africa, for instance, who is expected to represent the tribal cause in the guise of the noble revolutionary. What about the writer who chooses to look beyond that expected stance of nobility and ask questions?

Calvino then presents two right ways of thinking of a possible political use for literature: (1) Literature is necessary above all when it gives a voice to whatever is without a voice, when it gives a name to what as yet has no name, especially to what the language of politics excludes or attempts to exclude. It is like an ear that can hear things beyond the understanding of ordinary language, an eye that can see beyond the color spectrum perceived in ordinary light; (2) Literature has the ability to impose patterns of language, of vision, of imagination, of mental effort, and to create a model of values that is simultaneously aesthetic and ethical.[8]

After considering Calvino, you think maybe it's your responsibility to distrust politics, literature, and maybe even the way that your LDS heritage/theology is put together in your brain.

Further, if being a writer with an LDS background means that your writing should promote the building of the kingdom of God, does it also mean an unequivocal reverence for all things considered Mormon? How do you deal with difficult subjects such as homosexuality, pornography, infidelity, or sexual abuse without being seen as a traitor to the G-rated and harmonious life seen by this culture as synonymous with the kingdom of God? Does familiarity with or questioning of a suspicious subject automatically mean that a writer has fallen from the pure trajectory of white light?

You agree that you've accepted responsibilities given to you by your heritage, from your birthright, from your being in this world and rising out of your particular society. But even if you've been born into an LDS family, is there such a thing as an average LDS family? Your parents may have been devoted to Mormonism. Or your parents may have been divided over Mormonism. An example of this complexity is illustrated by a man you knew who always wanted to be a writer. He moved every year of his childhood and youth. He was forever the new kid in town. His first friend was always the librarian. He was a scrappy, sensitive, shy, intelligent kid. He always stood up for the underdog fiercely and sometimes to his detriment. He never finished college, and he always talked about how he would have done so much better if he had. The LDS Church gave his family some sense of continuity, even though his father vacillated between be-

ing a religious, stable family man and one who couldn't keep a job because of his love affair with alcohol. To write about Mormonism for this man, then, would be colored by the economic circumstances, the presence of a deeply conflicted father, the unreliable environment in which he found himself as a young boy. What would be the list of responsibilities he carried because of these circumstances? How would he, as a writer, find his essential gesture—the gift he had to give back to society?

How have you, as a writer, been colored by your circumstances? You may have grown up privileged in a homogenous neighborhood where everyone expected conformity from you and you were happy to supply it, at least on the surface. You may have grown up with no money and little hope for it and a burning desire to be seen for the splendor you wished-upon-a-star hoped you had—some kind of Queen Esther or Joan of Arc role model. You may have accepted every tenet from LDS doctrine peacefully and graciously with the hope of a rosy future. You may have challenged your parents' certainty about the "right way to live according to LDS standards." You may have seen your parents as putting you on a train on an infinite track with no windows or doors and, as a result, developed a fierce attachment to the right to question any and every thing.

But here you pause. You need to interrupt yourself to ask how much of what you write is a reaction to the situation that has surrounded you. Is your writing life about action or reaction? You may be a lamb in a flock relieved to have a shepherd or a stubborn bull in a pen, snorting and pawing the ground, running, when you run, in circles. You've made choices of your own; you've also accepted many norms. You think your responsibility may be to move away from definition and be willing to see those things that might shock you were someone else to pass you the news.

Rosa Burger, the main character in Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter,* is the daughter of Lionel Burger, the great white revolutionary for anti-apartheid in South Africa. She therefore inherits the cause at her birth. Rather than weddings or bar mitzvahs, her social life consists of events connected to the revolution. "What'd you celebrate in your house?" asks Conrad, the character who challenges Rosa's commitment to the cause. "The occasions were when somebody got off, not guilty, in a political trial. Those were your nuptials and fiestas."[8] The responsibility laid upon Rosa Burger at birth was not pure for her. She wasn't supposed to ask questions, yet she is left to agonize over her place in the machinery set in motion.

Maybe your responsibility is to see that the whole of who you think

you are may not be the whole of who you actually are. How do you find that conscionable self-awareness that sees clearly all facets of the crystal you call yourself? And then, how do you find your essential gesture, those things you have to give that no one else has to give, that view of the world, that glimpse, that angle?

Your essential gesture may include a sense of compassion for all ways of being. It may be a questioning of the establishment or an attachment to the idea of democracy that all humans are created equal and are growing to something finer than exists on this earth. You're aware, however, that this sensibility has been forged by your religion, your culture, your economic roots, your parents who had parents before them who may have been shaky citizens, proud pioneers or denizens of the deep. And sometimes you suspect you don't have anything called a self. You have that niggling feeling at the back of your mind that "I" is a grain of sand, a letter of the alphabet, a pronoun, an entity meant to surrender to the will of God and to follow the Essential Essence so much wiser than that of the puny self. That thought stays with you and is part of that wild bird seed mix that comes out in your writing.

All of this must be to ask yourself what responsibility you've taken on as a writer. What have you knowingly and unknowingly accepted? What is authentic to you, and for what do you care deeply? You want to use your gift of imagination. You hope it's possible to lift your experience from its limited boundaries and transform it into a unique bloom of perception.

And so you're writing what you're bidden to write, however you're bidden to do it. You are fascinated with the responsibility of being ruthlessly honest with yourself about why you are saying what you want to say and how you say it. Calvino's statement that literature and politics (and, you add, even religion) must above all know itself and distrust itself is of value to you: So you have an axe you want to grind; okay, grind the axe; but do you understand the whole of why you're grinding the axe? Are you writing mainly soothing phrases for the ears of your comrades-in-arms? Or do you want to go beyond and behind the obvious?

I suspect you want that raw encounter with God and pristine creativity. You want to ask the hard questions and look in all the corners. Then, when that's all said and done, you want to let loose your imagination to play in the fields and meadows and even in the middle of the mean

streets. This is what you think might be your responsibility for now, at this moment in time and maybe forever.

Notes

1. I heard this quotation during a lecture entitled "Duende," delivered by William Smith at the Vermont College MFA in Writing Program Winter Residency, January 1998. I assume Cathal is the well-known Cathal and the Boys of the Lough, who perform all over the world in concert, but I heard only this name with the quotation. The Cathal I have in mind plays the penny whistle and fiddle and sings Irish folk songs with his band.

2. Nadine Gordimer, "The Essential Gesture," *The Essential Gesture*, edited and introduced by Stephen Clingman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 285.

3. Gordimer, *July's People* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 9.

4. Gordimer, *The Essential Gesture,* 295.

5. Carol Sternhell, "Nadine Gordimer: Choosing to be a White African," *Ms. Magazine* 16, no. 3 (September 1987): 28.

6. Roland Barthes, quoted in Gordimer, *The Essential Gesture,* 286.

7. Informal question and answer session in conjunction with Chaim Potok's appearance at Kingsbury Hall, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, September 29, 1982; the question was mine.

8. Italo Calvino, *The Uses of Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1986), 97.

9. Nadine Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter* (New York: Penguin, 1980), 52.

Jacob Fossum, *Oh the cleverness of me*,
charcoal on paper, 60 x 40 in., 2006

CONTRIBUTORS

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LARRY DAY's mother, Edna Hickman Day, a gifted poet and writer, and his father, William Franklin Day, a gifted electrician and a telephone company pioneer, were born in the late nineteenth century. They are central to everything good Larry has accomplished. Now, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Larry is grateful to *Dialogue* for the opportunity to say, "Thank you, Mom; thank you, Dad."

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Jacob Fossum

Jacob Fossum has little sense of belonging to a specific place, having lived in a number of states while growing up. He currently lives in Sacramento. He derives from a long line of Mormon pioneer stock, and he served an LDS mission in Argentina. He says his Mormon heritage and his experience as a missionary infuse his art, providing "a profound pool of myth and symbols from which I can dip, then compare and relate to others around me." When he showed an interest in painting upon completing high school, his mother—a baker—traded bread for private art lessons from a local portrait painter, Martha Lower, to whom he acknowledges a great debt. He holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from Utah State University and a master of fine arts in studio painting from Hoffberger School of Painting, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore. He has participated in group shows and recently a solo show, "Ganesha Gone Wild" and other paintings in the Rodger LaPelle Galleries in Philadelphia. "I find honesty," he writes, "in trying to create images that reflect the spiritual and physical truths of my surroundings. . . . Attempting to render images as I see and feel them is akin to my attempts at sensing truth." For more about his life and art, visit his website at www.jacobfossum.com.

Front cover: *Ganesha Gone Wild,* 96 x 96 inches, oil on canvas, 2007.

Back cover: *The Flight of the Wendybird,* 80 x 50 inches, oil on canvas, 2006.

Jacob Fossum, *Grace Hartigan and Her Dolls,*
charcoal and conté on paper, 60 x 40 in., 2007

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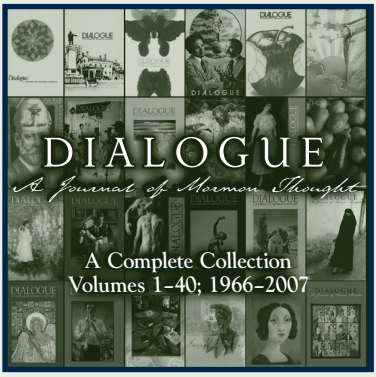

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